

**TIME AND SPACE
IN
SRI AUROBINDO'S SAVITRI**

Thesis submitted to the University of Calicut
for the award of the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

by

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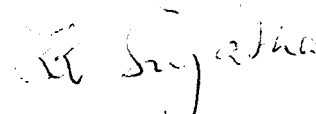
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a humble act of consecration to
the Divine Mother

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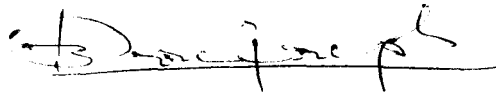
This is to certify that the thesis entitled "Time and Space in Sri Aurobindo's Savitri," submitted to the University of Calicut for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, is a record of bona fide research carried out by V. Uma, under my supervision and guidance. No part of this thesis has been submitted earlier for the award of any degree, diploma, title or recognition.

Trichur
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DECLARATION

I, V. Uma, part-time Research scholar at the Research Centre, Department of English, St. Thomas College, Trichur, affiliated to the University of Calicut, hereby declare that this thesis, entitled "Time and Space in Sri Aurobindo's Savitri," which is submitted to the University of Calicut for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, is a bona fide record of research work done by me, and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship, or other similar title or recognition.

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PREFACE

The notions of Time and Space have always had a fascination for man since time immemorial. Various theories have been adduced from time to time by scientists, philosophers and thinkers. They exert a significant influence on literary theory and composition. But the variety is quite bewildering, often contradictory. It is against such a background that this thesis endeavours to probe into the treatment of Time and Space in Savitri, a significant inner epic by Sri Aurobindo, a versatile genius, mystic, philosopher and writer in the realm of Indo-Anglian literature.

The primary aim of this research is to investigate and analyse the two metaphysical concepts, the assumption being that Sri Aurobindo employs them in the epic to reinforce many of his thematic concerns. Science, psychoanalysis, philosophy and Theosophy offer valuable perspectives on the subject at hand. The method followed is chiefly analytical and expository. Sufficient citations from several other works of the writer are brought in, wherever relevant, as they furnish a theoretical basis for the depiction of Time and Space in Savitri. Another approach resorted to is the juxtaposition of Sri Aurobindo's concepts with the theories of representative thinkers, philosophers, scientists and writers. Such a method of comparison and contrast helps to view the integral presentation of Time and Space in Savitri in the right perspective.

The thesis comprises seven chapters. The first chapter is an Introduction to the multidimensional genius of Sri Aurobindo. It sets forth the salient features of Savitri as an epic of the soul, and relates it to the theme of Time and Space. It sketches the evolution of the poet's vision of these concepts, which attains a point of culmination in the epic. A survey of earlier probes on the epic in question is done, and an attempt is made to establish the need and relevance of an in-depth study of Time and Space in Savitri.

The second chapter tries to illustrate how Sri Aurobindo's notions of Time and Space are basically founded on the intuitive wisdom of the Vedas and the Upanishads. It studies the role of the Mind, Thought and Reason in limiting our perception of these notions. A brief survey of several theories of Time and Space is made with the intention of bringing out similarities and differences, and in order to highlight the spiritual and comprehensive nature of Sri Aurobindo's integral ideas of Time and Space.

In the next chapter, Sri Aurobindo's Time-Space concepts are studied in relation to "Ignorance" and "Consciousness". An attempt is made to exemplify from the epic how a heightened awareness of these concepts is related to the awakening of *Kundalini*, the Serpent Power.

The fourth chapter elaborates Aswapathy's Yoga of transcending Time and Space through an awakening of the *Kundalini*. Likewise, the next chapter, which

constitutes a direct sequel to it, describes Savitri's Yoga of surmounting Time, Space and Death with the help of the Serpent Force and interiorised yoga.

The sixth chapter concentrates on the aesthetic and visionary qualities of the epic, as well as the *mantric* potency of its verse to elevate human consciousness. It sets forth the numerous images and expressions of Time and Space that adorn Savitri and tries to study their functional significance in elucidating the subject at hand.

The final chapter brings together the main conclusions drawn from the research work. It brings out, on the one hand, the unique features of Sri Aurobindo's treatment of Time and Space in Savitri. On the other hand, it attempts to establish the relevance of such a treatment in effecting a change of consciousness, which is the burning need of the present times.

In order to eliminate the tedium of iteration, the following abbreviations have been used in parenthetical documentation.

1. Collected poems : CP
2. Integral Yoga : IY
3. Life Divine : LD
4. Synthesis of Yoga : SY

Shorter titles have been used in several cases, taking care to avoid ambiguity.

Introduction

V. Uma "Time and space in Sri Aurobindo's Savitri" Thesis. Department of English , St. Thomas College, Trichur, University of Calicut, 2004

Chapter I

Introduction

Indian Aesthetics assigns a very high status to the poet. The Vedas and the Upanishads asserted that the poets were Gods. Ganesha, the Lord of obstacles, was addressed as *kavim kavinam* 'the poets' poet'. The word *kavi* signified an omniscient seer, a *rishi* 'a revealer of self-visions,' and a mediator between life and spirit. The *darsana* 'vision' implied the intuitive perception of *Brahman* 'the Absolute Reality' underlying the variegated objects of the universe, both animate and inanimate, with all their intrinsic characteristics. Sri Aurobindo was one such *rishi* or seer-poet. Prolific writer, literary critic, radical thinker, Extremist national leader, mystic, exponent of Integral Yoga, prophet of Life Divine, erudite scholar and interpreter of the Vedas and the Upanishads, Sri Aurobindo has been acclaimed, particularly by his followers, as a *mahayogi* and an *avatar* or a rare and singular phenomenon. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar notes how the various 'parts' that Sri Aurobindo played during the several decades of his terrestrial existence were integrally related to one another (Indian Writing in English 152). But, as the poet constantly reiterated, his life was lived inwardly most of the time (Purani, The Life of Sri Aurobindo v). Arabinda Basu highlights his enigmatic personality : "BRAHMAN defies description, mind and speech return baffled from it. Likewise Sri Aurobindo

defies description, no adjective, no epithet, no appellation seems to be adequate" ("Sri Aurobindo" 1). In short, Sri Aurobindo was the possessor of an extraordinary character, which, to use his own words, combined "an inner passivity and an outer action independent of each other" (The Synthesis of Yoga 389). Indeed, all his utterances and activities were parts of a most daunting odyssey to higher levels of intuitive perception. Scholars have attempted to capture the inscrutable personality and multifaceted genius of Sri Aurobindo in their biographies and critical writings, which constitute a very valuable contribution, for the bulk of the sage-poet's writings, as Manoj Das aptly observes, "is deeply involved in that adventure of consciousness" (Sri Aurobindo 7).

Brought up in an exclusively European atmosphere right from his childhood, upon the insistence of his father, a thorough Anglophile, Sri Aurobindo returned to his Indian roots in 1893, at the age of twenty one, when he had the experience of the Infinite descending upon his personality, that is, "the Infinite pervading material space" (Sri Aurobindo, Letters on Yoga 1:121). With reference to this experience Subhas Chandra Saha expresses a prophetic comment about the young man's future evolution: "That Sri Aurobindo would grow into a great sage who could realise within himself the Brahman is amply presaged by the mystical experience that he had when he touched the soil of India" (98). He studied and mastered the Vedas and the Upanishads. He attended seances or occult sessions which revealed to him the

existence of supraphysical agencies and planes of consciousness as well as the possibility of attaining them. Subsequently, he underwent a series of decisive spiritual experiences which established the direction of his future mission. In particular, he had two mystic experiences: his first realization of the *Vedantic Advaitic* experience of the Silent, Spaceless and Timeless *Brahman*, or the total silence of the mind, under the influence of Yogi Lele in 1908, and secondly, his ineffable mystic experience of cosmic consciousness and the direct apprehension of omnipresent Reality described as *Narayana Darsan* while he was detained for a year from 1908 to 1909 by the British government in Alipore Jail. Shuddhananda Bharati interprets this solitary confinement of the poet as fortuitous, for the Divine engaged the young political activist from within, "ripened his soul" and "opened his third eye" (24).

After his acquittal in 1910, Sri Aurobindo abruptly left for Pondicherry, following an *adesh* or an inner voice beckoning him to do so. The remaining forty years of his life were spent in seclusion, intense *sadhana*, 'penance,' silent yoga, meditation and other acts of austerities, when Sri Aurobindo experienced a third major breakthrough in his spiritual evolution. Joan Price describes it thus:

This realisation was a vision of the supreme Reality as the One and the Many, "simultaneously static and dynamic, characterized by silence and expression, emptiness and creativity, infinite and

yet composed of manifold forms". (13)

We have a description of this vision in "The Meditations of Mandavya," a short poem of Sri Aurobindo composed in 1913:

Not sound, nor silence, neither world nor void,
 But the unthinkable, absolute, unalloyed
 One, multitudinous, nameless, yet a Name,
 Innumerably other, yet the same.
 Immeasurable ecstasy where Time
 And Space have fainted in a swoon sublime!

(Collected Poems 92)

This description evokes in our mind the vision of Lord Dakshinamurti, the symbol of bliss and silence, beyond all time and space. His spiritual odyssey completely transformed Sri Aurobindo's perception of the earth as mere matter, and his principal interest now was in the realm of the spirit. Clearly, the sage poet was well evolving in Time and Space, transcending narrow spaces and limitations, and containing within himself all countries and all peoples. In other words, he attained the state of cosmic consciousness.

A significant landmark in Sri Aurobindo's upward journey was the arrival of the young French woman Mirra Richard in 1914, which eventually enabled the

inception of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram at Pondicherry. Mirra, who came to be known as the Mother, was to be the true collaborator in Sri Aurobindo's unique yoga for the evolution of mankind known as Integral Yoga, about which the poet remarks:

It is the way of a complete God - realisation, a complete Self-realisation, a complete fulfilment of our being and consciousness, a complete transformation of our nature - and this implies a complete perfection of life here and not only a return to an eternal perfection elsewhere. ("What Is Integral Yoga" 33)

Evidently, this spiritual partnership between the Master and the Mother signified a most fruitful meeting of the East and the West, a fusing of all spaces in man's ultimate journey to his Timeless, Spaceless abode.

Sri Aurobindo seems to have been very conscious of the need to use time as efficiently as possible. In 1923, a visitor to the Ashram noted that Sri Aurobindo "appeared as one highly cognizant of the value of time" (qtd. in Purani, Life 189). After December 1926, Sri Aurobindo retired completely from the physical atmosphere in order to bring about the descent of what he termed the Supermind, the gateway to the Timeless, Spaceless *Brahman*. He attained *mahasamadhi* 'salvation' in 1950, transcending Time and Space altogether.

Sri Aurobindo was a prolific writer. He started composing verse from the tender age of thirteen and continued his literary and critical endeavours to the very end of his life. In the realm of literature, he has left a deep and indelible mark as an outstanding poet, a fine dramatist, a perceptive critic and the inaugurator of what he calls the Overhead Aesthesis. Some of his major works include The Life Divine, his philosophical masterpiece, The Synthesis of Yoga, his magnum opus on Integral Yoga, The Human Cycle, Letters on Yoga, The Secret of the Veda, The Upanishads, Essays on the Gita, The Future Poetry, his elaborate treatise on Overhead aesthesis, Collected Plays and Short Stories, Collected Poems comprising more than 15,000 lines, Savitri, a full-fledged monumental epic, and a plethora of correspondence with his numerous *sadhaks* or seekers on a wide range of subjects. Sri Aurobindo's compositions, obviously, constitute a staggering bulk even by modest standards. The yogi, the mystic poet and, above all, the visionary jostle in him to proclaim his literary splendour and to elevate him to a pre-eminent position among the Classical poets in World literature. In Rajanikanta Mody's estimate, Sri Aurobindo cannot be merely branded as ancient or modern. "For he is beyond Time: he accepts whatever is good from the past equally as whatever is good in the present. But pre-eminently he is a poet of the future" (372). The most astonishing fact about his writing is that none of it was pre-meditated. The poet himself has remarked that everything he wrote "came from Yogic experience, knowledge and inspiration" (On Himself 221). Over the years, he had assimilated the quintessence of the cultures

of the East and the West, achieved a command over the English language, and kept evolving to higher levels of inspiration and consciousness. Naturally, what came out of his pen was a spontaneous outpouring. Navajata sums up the transcendental quality of Sri Aurobindo's writings thus: "In the writings of Sri Aurobindo the past, the present and the future, the Divine and the creation, all become integrated in an experience and expression of an integrated consciousness. They are the boons of the Supreme to humanity" (Sri Aurobindo 113).

Of all his writings, the most painstakingly composed is the epic Savitri. It marks the culmination of Sri Aurobindo's long and intense poetic career. It is "the peak - or rather the many - peaked Himalaya - of Aurobindonian poetry" (Sethna, "Lights from Passages in Savitri" 200). It is the projection of its author's integral personality, his beliefs and his yogic experiences. The epic is indeed a poetic rendering of all the important concepts of Yoga, metaphysics and philosophy that are dwelt upon in The Life Divine, The Synthesis of Yoga and several other works of Sri Aurobindo. As the poet evolved in Space and Time from a mere mortal to a *mahayogi*, the tenor and texture of his epic likewise underwent a transmutation. Evidently, an appraisal of the treatment of Time and Space in Savitri involves both the author and the entire corpus of his writings, as all these are emanations from the same soul, and are inextricably bound with one another.

Perhaps the most striking feature about this work is that all the utterances of

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother seem to merge in it like rivers and tributaries falling into the ocean. When we compare the other writings of Sri Aurobindo with Savitri, we feel that they were all preparations or tentative attempts pointing to the grand finale that was to follow. Three lines from his poem, "The Greater Plan," may be aptly cited to point out that these other writings were "the slow prelude of a vaster theme, / A sketch confused of a supernal plan, / A preface to the epic of the Supreme" (CP 147).

Savitri is the only epic poem by an Indian of repute writing in English. It is in this genre that Sri Aurobindo's evolving poetical consciousness and his splendid cosmic vision of the future find the most comprehensive expression. Raymond Frank Piper has described the work as "probably the greatest epic in the English language" (qtd. in Mitra, Liberator 258). The epic is a retelling of the well-known legend of Satyavan and his loyal wife Savitri, the beautiful daughter of King Aswapathy, how she rescues her husband from the clutches of Death, and thus demonstrates the potency or efficacy of her chastity. This story, which is recounted in about seven hundred lines in the *Vanaparva* in Ved Vyasa's Mahabharata, is hardly a theme fit for building a great epic; rather, it is a subject that may, at best, be treated in a love poem or a tragi-comedy. But, as the subtitle indicates, Savitri is both a legend and a symbol, and hence the story element is relatively less consequential. Sri Aurobindo has transmuted the Savitri - Satyavan legend of the

past and presented it as a symbol of the future. Pandit epitomises the thematic content of the epic :

Adapting the story of Savitri-Satyavan from the Mahabharata, Sri Aurobindo portrays the entire history of man in the cosmos, his origin and his goal, the birth and the organisation of the universe, the growth of Consciousness and its several planes or worlds through which the spiritual evolution of the earth-being proceeds, and much more. ("Sri Aurobindo Literature" 135)

Savitri, with its appropriately 24,000 lines, like Valmiki's Ramayana, is the longest epic originally composed in English. While Paradise Lost is half its length, Faerie Queene remains incomplete. The epic is truly the outcome of 'silence and slow time'. Sri Aurobindo probably began the first version of Savitri around the turn of the twentieth century, but it took him nearly fifty years to complete it, for it was his practice, or rather his *tapasya* 'penance,' to revise and redraft whatever portion of the epic he had composed, until he was fully satisfied that the literary creation was the perfect expression at the level of consciousness he had attained at that point of time. Nirodbaran, a close associate, gives vent in a profound passage, to the sense of wonder and admiration he felt at the overwhelming task of the Master:

One fact alone makes me dumb with a reverent awe and exalted admiration: the colossal labour Sri Aurobindo put forth to build this unique structure. It reminds me of one of those majestic ancient temples like Konarak or of a Gothic architecture like Notre Dame before which you stand and stare in speechless ecstasy, your soul takes a flight beyond time and space. ("Savitri - A Factual Account of its Composition" 83)

Probably, no other work, either of Sri Aurobindo or of any other author, has been revised so meticulously and fastidiously as Savitri. During the five decades as he worked on the epic, Sri Aurobindo was continually progressing in his silent Yoga of transformation. Each major *siddhi* 'occult power' saw him on the peak of a higher level of consciousness, and he attempted to write the epic from that new level. He has explained this in one of his letters in Savitri:

I used *Savitri* as a means of ascension. I began with it on a certain mental level, each time I could reach a higher level I re-wrote 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 own yogic consciousness and how that could be made creative.

(728)

During the last decade of his terrestrial existence, Savitri became a major preoccupation with Sri Aurobindo. Nirodbaran would patiently take down the cascade of hundreds of lines of blank verse that would flow out with unpremeditated ease from the sage-poet's quill. "By 1950, it was as though a sense of urgency had seized even the unhurried imperturbable Sri Aurobindo. "I want to finish *Savitri* soon," he told Nirod, and the dictations continued as if there was now a race with time" (Iyengar, "A Survey of Savitri" 276).

Savitri is a poetic demonstration of Sri Aurobindo's Overhead aesthesis summed up in The Future Poetry, and it incorporates the key concepts of his Integral Yoga. The poetics is remarkable for its spiritual and visionary character. In Sri Aurobindo's view there are four planes of being, between the mental and the highest consciousness, which, in the order of their ascending spiritual luminosity, he designates as Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuitive Mind and Overmind, each producing poetry characteristic of its own specific intensity. He has explained these terms exhaustively in The Life Divine and The Synthesis of Yoga, besides picturesquely portraying them in Savitri. The epic is "unique in its sustained grandeur and sublimity revealing to us plane after plane of spiritual illumination and each plane a tier-terraced mountain" (Khanna 254). The first step of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga, which is imperative for attaining to these higher levels of consciousness, is what is termed the psychic opening. By the expression "psychic

being" Sri Aurobindo means the inmost soul-being and the soul-nature of man, "the godhead small and marred; / In this human portion of divinity [. . .]" (Savitri 7.5. p. 527). It is an "incognito of the Imperishable," a "spirit that is a flame of God," which is "Immortal in our mortal poverty" (1.3. p. 23), and so on. The seer-poet postulates the doctrine of ascent and descent, indeed, a unique characteristic of his yoga. While the ascending soul aspires to greater planes of consciousness by rejecting the false and the low, and by resorting to intense concentration and meditation, it is helped by the Divine Grace from above like a magnet.

Savitri is an excellent blossom of Overmind poetry. In the poet's scheme, the Overmind is a plane of consciousness freed from all ignorance and falsehood, and characterised by an inherent light of knowledge and a natural experience of the infinite. In the process of composing the epic, both Sri Aurobindo and Savitri evolved and attained greater peaks of transformation or heightening of consciousness by breaking into "another Space and Time" at each stage, to use the poet's words (Savitri 1.5. p. 91).

The response of readers to Savitri is marked by much diversity. Three groups of readers can be distinguished. Firstly, there are those who summarily avoid the epic on the ground that it is too ponderous or obscure. The second group comprises the harsh critics, both in India and abroad. "I don't see Sri Aurobindo as a poet at all . . ." observes Kathleen Raine, an acknowledged British writer and critic. This

harsh verdict is upheld by other literati, among them William Irwin Thomson, who suggests that Yogis like Sri Aurobindo "should on principle be debarred from expressing themselves in verse, since they do it so badly [. . .]" (Shraddhavan 373). Indian critics of the likes of P. Lal, K. Raghavendra Rao and others take strong objection to the mental journeys and the philosophy embedded in the epic, thereby betraying a Johnsonian intolerance and a prejudicial attitude towards a poetry they cannot understand or appreciate (Nandakumar, "Aurobindonian Inspiration" 87). Sisirkumar Ghose, who praises Savitri as "the climax of Aurobindean creativity," is, however, quick to perceive that discouraging comments such as "A controversial work, the charge of obscurity, abstraction, non-poetry and monotony" continue to be heard. Probably, it is because the epic is "a work unlike all the others" ("Rare, Inward Fire" 44).

The third group of readers, clearly the most significant one, comprises the *sadhaks*, poets and critics, who have taken infinite pains to study the epic, and who have striven to fathom its mysteries and meanings. Prominent among them are Iyengar, Purani, Pandit, Nolini Kanta Gupta, Sethna, Prema Nandakumar, Gokak, Deshpande, Ananda Reddy and a host of others. Every researcher on Savitri is indebted to these Aurobindonians for the light they shed on otherwise opaque or untractable parts of the monumental work.

Sri Aurobindo knew well that Savitri was not intended for the casual reader at

all. In one of his Letters on "Savitri" he suggests leaving the value of his mystical creation to be determined by the future, for "there are only two judges whose joint verdict cannot easily be disputed, the World and Time." He adds that "the world's verdict is secure only when it is confirmed by Time" (Savitri 806). Palit, a perceptive critic, dwells on the unique nature of the work:

Savitri is a work which has no parallel in English, perhaps in the world literature-for its whole turn, approach, its language, its imagery and symbolisms are of a radically different type we meet in the poets - past or present. This is because Sri Aurobindo deals with facts of consciousness, the vast drama of subtle realities, powers and truths. ("Sri Aurobindo's Savitri and Its Critics" 35)

In fact, the epic is an elitist poetical work and consequently envisages an ideal reader or a *sahrdaya*. "The divided modern consciousness cannot experience, much less unify different levels of reality, it is this that largely explains the lack of response" (Sisirkumar Ghose, "Savitri - A Subjective Poem" 257). Sri Aurobindo's aesthetics requires that both the poet and the reader are souls. The true understanding and appreciation of Savitri presupposes a necessary minimum equipment of an openness of mind, a basic knowledge of Integral Yoga and Overhead Poetics as well as an aspiration to expand and to attain higher levels of perception by transcending body consciousness and the limitations of Time and Space.

One of the baffling and perplexing questions that has engaged the attention of thinkers throughout the history of human civilisation has been about Time and Space, for the problem arises naturally in the mind as it contemplates the external world of matter and change. These are elusive concepts, and the attempts at defining or describing them have often been frustrating. Hanlon, a Theosophist, quotes from a sonnet to bring out this point :

So I, too, lost in midnight contemplation
 Have sought to pierce the age-old mystery
 Of time and space, and felt myself upon
 The brink of some transcendent revelation
 When lo! intrudes one bright irrelevancy,
 And those immortal whisperings are gone. (7-8)

Several theories and concepts have been adduced by philosophers, scientists and spiritual seers on Time or Space or both. Works like Samuel Alexander's Space, Time, and Deity, F.H. Bradley's Appearance and Reality, Henri Bergson's Creative Evolution, and Time and Free Will, Norman E. Pearson's Space, Time and Self, Fritjof Capra's The Tao of Physics, Stephen Hawking's A Brief History of Time, James S. Perkins's A Geometry of Space-Consciousness, G.S. Herbert's Time - A Metaphysical Study, C.K. Raju's The Eleven Pictures of Time, anthologies of essays

like The Philosophy of Time, The Study of Time, etc, as their titles suggest, throw much light on the concepts under consideration, but the variety and diversity in the views are quite confounding, often contradictory, and therefore inconclusive. Hinduism, Greek philosophy, Buddhism, Christianity and Judaism mention both temporal and non-temporal aspects. Eternity and cosmological time were known to the ancient minds. Einstein's Relativity theories, Quantum Mechanics and the mind-boggling findings of Atomic Physics have blasted Newton's classical concept of Absolute time, rendering both Time and Space relative. With the immense development of psychoanalysis in the modern times these concepts have come to be associated with "mind," "memory," "ego," "dream," "consciousness," and so on. Contemporary thought, in general, favours the probings of the inner mind, and hence Time and Space have begun to assume a personal tone and significance.

Time constitutes a more frequent subject matter than space, although it is customary to treat the two concepts as a single unit. In Time and Man, Elton and Messel explain that it is possible to conceive spatial relations without an extension in time, while it is not possible to conceive temporal relations without an extension in space. To corroborate their view they cite Piaget: "Space is a still of time, while time is space in motion" (85). Einstein formulates a space-time continuum, where the three dimensions of space and one of time are accorded equivalent status. Bergson, on the other hand, advocates in Time and Free Will that the true nature of

time can be known only when we consider time apart from space (101). Bradley's view is that "It is usual to consider time under a spatial form" (Appearance and Reality 33). Indian Classical thought refers to our phenomenal world as characterised by time, space and causality. Time happens to be more puzzling than Space, which appears to be static for all practical purposes. It is because Time seems to flow and pass, or else we appear to advance through it.

Sri Aurobindo was not, strictly speaking, a time philosopher, nor did he write any exhaustive treatise on Time and Space. But his writings bear evidence that he was quite preoccupied with these metaphysical notions. There are several references to Time and Space and other related concepts like *karma*, death, fate etc. in The Life Divine and The Synthesis of Yoga. An entire chapter entitled "Towards the Supramental Time Vision" is included in the latter work (853-72).

Time and Space do not figure conspicuously in Sri Aurobindo's short stories and plays. The mystic vision is not predominant, although there are pointers to his future evolution. In a revealing passage Iyengar asserts :

Sri Aurobindo was thinking and poetising and dramatising at once: he was looking at life steadily and in its totality, he was also peering into the future, throwing out suggestions, hinting at possibilities, invoking inspiring visions of the future. Like the

poems, the dramas too were a part of Sri Aurobindo's life: the outer projections of the richer or quintessential part of his life - the imponderables of his "inner" life. (Sri Aurobindo 113)

In his play "Perseus the Deliverer," there is a reassurance that man will transcend time, and the earth will be divinised eventually, but certainly. In his concluding utterance Perseus declares: "Man must change who is a soul of Time," and adds: "But the blind nether forces still have power / And the ascent is slow and long is Time." Yet there is hope that cosmic consciousness will become a reality, since "little by little earth must open to heaven / Till her dim soul awakes into the Light" (Collected Plays and Short Stories Part I: 201).

Nandakumar states authoritatively that the concluding speech of Perseus is indeed "Sri Aurobindo speaking on the subject which was to be the base-plank of his sumptuous epic, *Savitri*" ("Savitri: A Spiritual Princess" 32). Clearly, the ideas of Time and Space which were to blossom into lucid visions in Savitri subsequently were beginning to sprout and germinate in this play.

Poetry preceded philosophy and metaphysics in Sri Aurobindo's literary endeavours. In his early poems composed in adolescence, which are mostly romantic, melancholic or lyrical effusions, there is little awareness or preoccupation with the concepts of Time and Space except for the fleeting nature

of mortal time and the consequent need to make the most of available time. The *yogic* experiences and *sadhana* of his adulthood paved the way for a gradual evolution of Sri Aurobindo's poetic vision, and deepened his comprehension of Time and Space. They did much to heighten his psychic awareness which, in turn, transmuted his poetry both in theme and temper. His mature poems started becoming more and more autobiographical. Sisirkumar Ghose aptly mentions that "in his maturer verse, his more intimate utterances Sri Aurobindo deals almost exclusively with states of being, subtle ranges of experience that are never easy to grasp, much less to judge" ("Sri Aurobindo - Poet as Seer" 43). "A God's Labour," "Thought the Paraclete," "Rose of God," "The Triumph-Song of Trishuncou," (CP 99-102, 582, 584, 53) are just a few poems in which there is the reiterated aspiration of the soul for the Infinite, and the yearning that the Eternal should manifest itself in Time. Likewise, most of Sri Aurobindo's sonnets including "Transformation," "Nirvana," "Evolution," "Cosmic Consciousness," "The Cosmic Spirit," (CP 133, 134, 136, 144, 161) are "snaps of spiritual autobiography, and what is essential in these has also gone to enrich the total content of *Savitri*" (Iyengar, Sri Aurobindo 626).

Sri Aurobindo's Bengali poem, "*Mahakal*," composed around 1918 and subsequently translated into English by Richard Hartz under the title "Time," is a clear indication of the epic poet's preoccupation with the Time theme. An added

evidence is the editorial note by Sethna: "There are several manuscripts of this poem, which in a shorter form was entitled *Kal*" (Mother India March 2004: 195). The poet wonders at the nature of Time: "We see your body, know your moods, O Time; / Where is your soul?" (197). The final dissolution is spoken of as Time arriving in the guise of Sleep when behind "the screen of space" World-mother gathers "all into her trance" (197). The cyclic nature of Time, and the possibility of the pilgrim-soul hearing "the grandiose call of the Beyond" are mentioned (pp. 198-99). Written in the form of an ode in a rapturously romantic vein, the poem depicts Time as *Kalapurusha* 'destroyer,' who is blissfully engrossed in his cosmic dance of creation and destruction, ruthlessly playing with the life of man, a puppet in his hands, like a happy child (Mother India April 2004: 270-74). Probably, Sri Aurobindo was already toying with the idea of transcending Time and death, which was to become the major concern of his epic. In short, the seminal ideas on Time and Space and related experiences, that lie scattered in the numerous poems, find the fullest treatment in Savitri.

"Judging from his writings one has no hesitation in saying that he certainly had *trikaladrsti*, the vision of the three times - past, present and future." Basu's comment ("Sri Aurobindo" 2) is especially true of Savitri, the inner epic, in which the poet's role is that of a successful pathfinder for evolving humanity. His poems, particularly his mature verse including his long poems like "Ahana" (CP 523-53)

and his sonnets are a transparent record of the evolution of his poetic vision with special reference to Time and Space, and thereby serve as a running commentary on the subtle, mystical experiences depicted in his epic. In a similar manner, The Life Divine and The Synthesis of Yoga provide a theoretical basis for Sri Aurobindo's ideas of Time and Space presented in the same work.

Mother declares authoritatively: "*Savitri* is the supreme revelation of Sri Aurobindo's vision" (qtd. in Nirodbaran, "Savitri - A Factual Account of its Composition" 68). It is a record of what the seer poet perceives with his inner eye, what he experiences through his yoga as he visualises them. In the words of Krishna Prem, himself a great yogi and open to occult communications, Savitri "is neither subjective fancy nor yet philosophical thought, but vision and revelation of the actual inner structure of the Cosmos and of the pilgrim of life within its sphere [. . .]" (qtd. in Nadkarni Savitri 14). The entire epic describes an endless journey, in which the soul is pictured as a pilgrim or a traveller in Time with Eternity as its destination. The voyages and encounters of the soul through the ocean of Time, Space and Causality are purely symbolic. To a lesser extent, Dante's The Divine Comedy and Milton's Paradise Lost also share this visionary quality. But, while the emphasis in the Western epics is on Theology or Christianity, the stress in Savitri is on the spiritual odyssey of the soul through mystic planes, higher and deeper, till the supramental plane beyond Time and Space is reached. Nandakumar

has a few illuminating observations to make on this score in her scholarly treatise,

A Study of Savitri:

Savitri may be said to be the third and final term in the series, of which the earlier terms are the *Commedia* and *Paradise Lost*. It is an attempt to "reveal from the highest pinnacle and with the largest field of vision the destiny of the human spirit and the presence and ways and purposes of the Divinity in man and the universe". (450)

Similarly, Savitri shares this visionary dimension with the two Indian scriptures, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Sitaramayya extols Savitri as "the latest and the greatest of the Scriptures; it includes and transcends the essence and significance of all other Scriptures" (215). Evidently, like Valmiki and Vyasa, Sri Aurobindo too could look into the mystery of things and know the unknown.

Dwelling at length on the stature of the epic as a poetical form and its future possibilities in The Future Poetry, Sri Aurobindo asserts that the epic "need not necessarily be a vigorous presentation of external action," and adds: "The epics of the soul most inwardly seen as they will be by an intuitive poetry, are his [the poet of the future] greatest possible subject [. . .]" (254). Savitri bears testimony to Sri Aurobindo's theory, for he intended his poetical masterpiece to be an epic of the

soul or an inner epic. Lotika Ghose describes Savitri as "perhaps the greatest epic of the human soul yet written," in which "the poet records his knowledge of whatever wisdom the human soul is heir to" (412). Sisirkumar Ghose expounds the features of Savitri as an epic of the soul. He affirms that in enlarging awareness Sri Aurobindo has gone beyond Homer, Milton, and even Dante. To quote the critic:

It is the reality of the unseen that dominates the book and determines its nature, texture and structure. [. . .] Cosmic, impersonal, the poet does not fail to remind us that all the action takes place in 'soul-space', "where space is a vast experiment of the soul", "an unchanging muse of deep self-space". [. . .] These events do not take place in time but in an Eternal Now, beyond time. ("Rare, Inward Fire" 47)

It becomes clear that the concepts of Time and Space are interwoven into the fabric of the epic of the soul.

A unique feature of Savitri is that it is replete with references to Time and Space, unlike most other epics in which we do not find any serious preoccupation with these concepts. In such works these terms, wherever or whenever mentioned, are invariably employed in the conventional sense. Fleeting time, the destructive power of time, and the hope of Eternity find casual mention. The treatment of

Space as a concept is altogether neglected. On this score Sri Aurobindo's epic stands out most conspicuously. Statistics based on the computerised compilation Savitri Concordance by Jyoti and Prem Sobel reveal that the epic contains around two hundred references to Space, and about five hundred references to Time. On every second or third page, the poet uses these words, either singly or in combination, in various modes and aspects throughout Savitri to identify different planes of consciousness, their innate characteristics and their relations to man. All these ideas and observations properly arranged, collated, analysed and studied, can help us to formulate Sri Aurobindo's vision of Creation, Evolution and the divinisation of the earth with special reference to Time and Space, Eternity and Infinity. It is striking to note that the poet invariably begins the words "Time" and "Space" with capital letters, probably highlighting the importance of the two concepts.

Admittedly, a few critics including Purani, Pandit, Mehta and Reddy have made certain general references to the Time element in Savitri. These lie scattered in their critical writings, and there is no attempt at collating and systematising them. Purani touches on this aspect in his treatise Savitri: An Approach and a Study (41-44). To cite his words: "Throughout *Savitri* one finds the question of Eternity and Time and their relation constantly repeated in different contexts to bring out their interdependence, or rather, the dependence of Time - Eternity on

Timeless - Eternity" (41). Singh Shahi mentions casually that one finds in the epic both the temporal and the timeless (23). Albuquerque touches briefly on certain philosophic aspects such as the meaning of time, destiny, *karma*, the need to be conscious and so on. His view is that "The most appealing aspect in *Savitri* is basic human life, life that is seen in time that passes into eternity" (303).

No full-length or in-depth study of Time and Space in Savitri has come to light so far. Hardly any mention of the "Space" element is made whatsoever in any critical work. A serious research or a deep probe into the two metaphysical notions of Time and Space, their relationships, various aspects, their role in defining Reality, scientific, psychological and philosophic approaches to these concepts, all in relation to Sri Aurobindo's epic, is relevant and affords much scope for research. Time and Space are embedded into the framework of the epic so organically that a serious attempt can be made to study how they are integral to the structure and meaning of Savitri.

Space and Time : The Warp and Woof of Creation

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Chapter II

Space and Time : The Warp and Woof of Creation

The Vedas constitute the self-manifest revealed scripture of India, and the Upanishads form the very crest-jewel of the Vedas. Indian mystical thought displays a great preoccupation with Time in relation to human destiny. Raimundo Panikkar, the great Vedic scholar, observes that the "poet-sages of the Rg Veda do not mention the term "time" nor do they try to elaborate on the nature of time"; yet they are constantly conscious of the temporal nature of human existence, that life is ever fleeting and always too short (216). In other words, they seem to have taken for granted notions of Time, Timelessness and Eternity, as well as Space, Spacelessness and Infinity. Everything was attributed to the *Brahman*, 'the Eternal, Infinite One' or 'the Absolute'. The various Upanishads expound the nature and attributes of the *Brahman* which are beyond the ordinary ken, and instruct the aspirants to realise it. A unique feature of the Upanishads is that they first realised 'All this is Brahman' (Chandogya Upanishad 3.14.1) and then 'I am Brahman' (Brhadaranyaka Upanishad 1.4.10). Clearly, the Vedic and Upanishadic perception of Time and Space was intuitive and experiential.

In the main, Sri Aurobindo was influenced by the Vedas and the Upanishads in his attitude to Time and Space. Accordingly, *Brahman* is the source and origin of

the universe, though it is beyond time and space, and not bound by name or form. When Sri Aurobindo writes about *Brahman* in The Life Divine: "He is the Timeless and Time; he is Space and all that is in Space [. . .]" (324), he is, indeed, echoing the Maitrayini Upanishad (6.15): "Two are the forms of Brahman, Time and the Timeless," (qtd. in LD 501).

In Savitri, *Brahman* is variously alluded to as the "Eternal," "The Spirit, the innumerable One" (1.4. p. 66), "The Absolute, the Perfect, the Immune" (1.4. p. 67), the "All-Conscious" (1.4. p. 66), "The ineffable Wideness" (1.5. p. 80), "the Omniscience supreme" (1.5. p. 76), "the Unborn who never dies" (2.1. p. 96), and so on. The epic poet asserts: "Space is himself and Time is only he" (1.4. p.67), echoing the description of the *Brahman* in the Katha Upanishad that he is the Lord of the past and the future, and that he is today and tomorrow (4.13) and in the Chandogya Upanishad: "Space is Brahman" (7.12). In Sri Aurobindo's view, it is not possible to define or know the true nature of time and space. To cite his words: "To describe the fundamental character of the universe as Space or Time or Space - Time does not help us [. . .]" (LD 297). He further remarks that Time is that mysterious condition of the universal mind which alone makes the ordering of the universe in Space possible (Upanishads 341).

Sri Aurobindo propounds the Emergent, creative theory of evolution in conformity with the Upanishadic concept of the world of time, space and causality

being a manifestation or an emanation of the Supreme *Brahman*. Accordingly: "Time and Space are that one Conscious - Being viewing itself in extension, subjectively as Time, objectively as Space" (LD 133). Employing a metaphor from the weaving of cloth he illustrates that *Space is the warp and Time is the woof of creation*. He writes that "the Spirit has filled in on the canvas of his self-existence conceptually extended, woven of the objective warp of Space and the subjective woof of Time, the myriad wonders of his self creation [. . .]" (LD 482-83).

There are several references in the epic about how the transcendental One, *Purusha*, or Pure Consciousness, has multiplied into the Many conjointly with *Prakriti* or 'Nature' by weaving "his hidden threads of consciousness," and building "bodies for his shapeless energy" (1.5. p. 84). The supreme consciousness is Space as well as Time. Here is a passage from the epic marked by great power and authenticity:

The Absolute, the Perfect, the Alone

Has entered with his silence into space :

He has fashioned these countless persons of one self ;

He has built a million figures of his power ;

He lives in all, who lived in his Vast alone ;

Space is himself and Time is only he. (1.4. p. 67)

Brahman, therefore, remains undivided in its transcendental Timeless, Spaceless status, although it appears in multifarious forms and names in the phenomenal world of Time and Space.

Sri Aurobindo advocates *lilavada* or the theory of creation as a cosmic play for the joy of the divine. Accordingly, the inherent nature of *Brahman* is *ananda* 'bliss', so the entire universe is a miraculous manifestation of His cosmic *lila* or play. The poet affirms in the epic:

The Spirit, the innumerable One,
 He has left behind his lone eternity,
 He is an endless birth in endless Time,
 Her finite's multitude in an infinite Space. (1.4. p. 66)

In this blissful game *Purusha* condescends to play a subservient role. The poet elaborates: "Her endless space is the playground of his thoughts; /She binds to knowledge of the shapes of Time [. . .]" (1.4. p. 64). Marvelling at the consummation of the process of creation, Sarma states: "In such a form we find the synthesis and likeness of the Infinite and the finite, the eternal and temporal" (48).

The beginning of creation is shrouded in mystery. At first, there was only an etheric Space or unmanifested ether, which was pervaded by Pure Consciousness.

In the initial stages of this material creation, there was continual motion in the cosmos which, "caught and held / In the mysterious and unchanging change / Of the persistent movement we call Time," waited upon life, sense and the waking Mind (Savitri 2.5. p. 156).

Thus, time seems to have been cyclic and recurrent from the moment of its creation in space. This is in agreement with the scriptural belief that the *kalpas*, *yugas* or aeons keep on recurring endlessly. Anirvan explains that the Divine urge for creation appears as "the Desire for self-multiplication which postulates a self-extension in Space and a self-procession in Time" (38). But this Divine *lila*, in fact, lies beyond the pale of our intellect. In short, the purport of Time and Space at the mental or logical level is, at best, speculative; for their "source is lost in the Ineffable" (Savitri 2.10. p. 254).

Sri Aurobindo's concept of the origin of the cosmos and of Time bears great resemblance to the theory upheld by the Greek philosopher Plotinus who defines Time as "the Life of the Soul in movement as it passes from one stage of act or experience to another" (32). Employing a similar metaphor from clothing as Sri Aurobindo does, the Greek philosopher observes that in order to bring this Cosmos into being, "the Soul first laid aside its eternity and clothed itself with Time" (31).

Sri Aurobindo speaks about two selves in man. One is the desire self or the surface - self which is hedged by the senses, revolves round the ego and wallows in

ignorance. In the epic, the poet describes it thus: "This little being of Time, this shadow soul, /This living dwarf-figurehead of darkened spirit [. . .]" (2.5. p. 171). It is aware of itself only by its growth in Time experience. Sri Aurobindo describes the nature and characteristics of the surface self:

We, human beings, are phenomenally a particular form of consciousness, subject to Time and Space, and can only be, in our surface consciousness which is all we know of ourselves, one thing at a time, one formation, one poise of being, one aggregate of experience [. . .]. (LD 145)

The surface-self has forfeited the truth of the indivisibility of Absolute Time and Space. People existing ordinarily with such a surface consciousness are only "lords of the hours" or "Moulders and measurers of fragmented Space" (Savitri 2.11. p. 266). This surface self corresponds to Observer I of J.W. Dunne, the exponent of the theory of Serial Time. Following Dunne, Priestley, the British playwright, observes that it is the lot of Observer I, the ordinary mortal, to view just one slice of the endless multi-dimensional panorama of Time because his mind and brain are engaged in his flesh-and-blood existence (Midnight on the Desert 252-67).

However, in his unending journey to the Superconscient's realm, the aspiring

mortal "must cast from him his surface soul / And be the ungarbed entity within [. . .]" (Savitri 1.2. p. 11). This second self in man, Sri Aurobindo states, is our real self, our deeper eternal self, "who is obviously capable of both the mobility in Time and the immobility basing Time [. . .]" (LD 508). It is "a larger self / That lives within us by ourselves unseen [. . .]" (Savitri 1.4. p. 48). It is the soul, the divine inhabitant in man, that is the detached observer of the unfolding of the cosmic play in the field of Time and Space, Fate, Circumstance and Death. Unlike the surface self:

It reckons not the moments and the hours ;
Great, patient, calm it sees the centuries pass,
Awaiting the slow miracle of our change
In the sure deliberate process of world-force
And the long march of all-revealing Time. (1.4. p. 48)

The poet further notes that, being a "soul not wrapped into its cloak of mind," our deeper self can "glimpse the true sense of a world of forms" (Savitri 2.6. p. 176). It is truly a spark of the Absolute projecting itself as an adventurer on the terrestrial plane. But as soon as it descends into the phenomenal world of Time and Space clothed in a mortal garb, the human soul begins to think, feel, perceive and act in terms of fleeting time, for Nature "binds to knowledge of the shapes of Time/And

the creative error of limiting mind [. . .]" (1.4. p. 64).

Human Time and Space are directly linked with our minds. As long as we are limited by our little ego, trapped in body consciousness, and walled by the mind, we comprehend the world and all that is in it through our thought, and take the *namarupatmakamjagat* 'the world of names and forms' to be real. In his present, imperfect condition man's main faculty for apprehending Reality is the mind. Sri Aurobindo observes that for the human mind, Time is a mobile extension measured out by the succession of past, present and future. The mind stations itself at a certain point and cognizes only the little of it which it can seize from moment to moment by "fragmentary experience of its surface self-manifestation in Time and Space" (LD 505). Thought and reason, likewise, play only limited roles in comprehending the universe, as they too exist in Time and Space. They cannot cut across the limitations of the mind. Thus ill-equipped, man is only a "leader here with his uncertain mind, / Alone who stares at the future's covered face [. . .]" (*Savitri* 1.1. p. 6). He is a bonded creature who is at best an "animal limited by its feeding-space" (2.4. p. 149) and his "thought labours, a bullock in Time's fields" (1.4. p. 65). Through these animal images the poet emphasises the primitive or beastly element latent in human nature, which prevents man from rising to higher levels of consciousness. Sri Aurobindo analyses the stereotyped manner in which the mind functions: "The mental man thinks and acts in a radius determined by the smallness

or largeness of his mentality and of its experience [. . .] thinks and sees on the level of the present life [. . .] and his view is obstructed on every side" (SY 807). Viewed from the standpoint of the mind, life seems to be an "unceasing drama carried by Time" (Savitri 1.3. p. 29), plagued by a "moment-ridden flux" (1.3. p. 33). Man's "little hour is spent in little things" such as a "brief companionship with many jars" (2.5. p. 164).

Reason, like thought, can only be a partial help to the mind. Explaining the functioning of the reasoning faculty Sri Aurobindo writes: "The reason dwells in the diversity [. . .] it deals with things separately and treats each as a separate existence, as it deals with sections of Time and divisions of Space [. . .]" (SY 464). Moreover, reason deals with the finite and is helpless before the infinite (465). There are several passages in the epic in which the poet elucidates this aspect. In one instance, he personifies Reason as "the squat godhead artisan," who came to "her narrow house upon a ridge in Time," viewed the world of names and forms and "the body of Space and the fleeing soul of Time". Inventing "the geometric curves of her time-plan,/ She multiplied her slow half-cuts at Truth [. . .]" (2.10. pp. 249-50). Nadkarni offers an erudite explanation for the restricted functioning of man's reasoning faculty: "It is at best an eternal advocate but often fancies itself as the judge. Time cancels all its judgements in appeal" ("Aswapati's Travels Through the Worlds" 291).

Sri Aurobindo's views on the relation between time and mind are endorsed by several independent thinkers and Theosophists. Jiddu Krishnamurti, an intellectual, a self-styled philosopher and world-teacher, describes the time thus rooted in the human mind as "psychological time" (Mehta, The Nameless Experience 45). He too believes that the "mind cannot function save in the duration of time" (117). In The Wholeness of Life, Krishnamurti states that thought is a movement of time as the self or the ego (188); when there is direction, space is limited (177). Again, the Theosophist Hanlon holds a similar view as Sri Aurobindo in the matter of the functioning of the mind: "Because time and space are of the very fabric of the mind it is compelled to conceive the eternal in terms of separation and movement, the eternal as events in time and space" (22). The implication is that in the thinking process, the mind becomes time - bound and its space is narrowed down in identification.

Savitri portrays man's temporal existence as precarious and transitory. As a mental being with a "prisoned consciousness," trapped in "Inconscient's sealed infinitude" (2.4. p. 140), "Man, still a child in Nature's mighty hands,/ In the succession of the moments lives [. . .]" (1.4. p. 53). Subjected to a narrow fringe of clamped experience and a constricted view of Reality, man drifts helplessly in the fleeting current of time. Apparently: "To a changing present is his narrow right; / His memory stares back at a phantom past, / The future flees before him as he

moves [. . .]" (53). Man seems to be trapped in a recurring cyclic pattern of an unchanging, meaningless existence.

In Sri Aurobindo's view, there is a thread of continuity running through our lives underlying the past, the present and the future. Hence he states authoritatively: "Our past lives still in our unconscious selves / And by the weight of its hidden influences / Is shaped our future's self-discovery" (Savitri 7.2 p. 483). Here the sage-poet proclaims his conviction in *karma* 'action' and rebirth. Our *vasanas* and *samskaras* 'past propensities' acquired over previous births lie dormant in our present existence like a dead weight. Consequently: "The unremembering hours repeat the old acts, / Our dead past round our future's ankles clings [. . .]". The poet is convinced that the past is always with us, for he states firmly: "An old self lurks in the new self we are; / Hardly we escape from what we once had been [. . .]" (483). Bergson subscribes to this view, for he upholds the thesis that the whole of our past life is preserved in memory and that it conditions our present state (Herbert 38-39).

In Sri Aurobindo's view, *avidya* or ignorance is the root cause of all our notions of human existence including Time and Space. Ignorance is not a permanently deterring element; on the contrary, it is only a temporary phase in man's evolution, the first step to *atmabodha* 'self realization'. "Ignorance is the consciousness of being in the successions of Time [. . .] divided in its conception

of self-being by dwelling in the divisions of Space and the relations of circumstance, self-prisoned in the multiple working of the unity" (LD 506).

Of the seven types of Ignorance classified in the above-mentioned work, two relate to Time and Space. Sri Aurobindo states: "We are ignorant of our eternal becoming in Time; we take this little life in a small span of Time, in a petty field of Space, for our beginning, our middle and our end, - that is the fourth, the temporal ignorance" (654). Alluding to this aspect of human nature, the poet comments in the epic: "He, ignorant, is the Knower beyond Time,/ He is the Self above Nature, above Fate" (1.5. p. 78). But, tragically, man clings hard to his ignorance, and hence never fathoms his true identity. "Our present fate, child of past energies" (1.2. p. 12) baffles us. Sri Aurobindo elaborates the idea of ignorance further:

We are ignorant of our universal self, the cosmic existence, the cosmic consciousness, our infinite unity with all being and becoming; we take our limited egoistic mentality, vitality, corporeality for our true self and regard everything other than that as not-self, - that is the third, the egoistic ignorance. (LD 654)

This type of ignorance may be called "spatial ignorance" as it engenders notions of limitation, division and separation. It is our body-consciousness that lies at the root of "spatial ignorance". Man hardly understands that his body is truly the

"transient house of the divine Idea." "a Time-inn for the Unborn" (2.2. p. 109), and that to "live this Mystery out our souls came here" (2.1. p. 101).

It is clear that both temporal ignorance and spatial ignorance go together, being rooted in existential conditions. Every bit of space, or every duration of time is presumed as comprising the very basis and vital aspect of our life, and man fails to realise or experience the fact that his true nature is somehow beyond these personalised spatial and temporal dimensions. The fear of death or extinction signifies transitory time. Being bound by temporal and spatial ignorance man lives in the phenomenal world as a finite, limited creature, whose inevitable and ultimate fate is annihilation at the cruel hands of Death. The poet indicates man's pathetic state of ignorance in poignant lines: "He must ever exist without extinction's peace / In a slow suffering Time and tortured Space, / An anguished nothingness his endless state" (2.7. p. 218).

Like Sri Aurobindo several writers in the West have handled the concept of human Time in their works. The general impression one gets about Time in its relation to our terrestrial existence is that it is destructive, for Death is a leveller. "Father Time not only carries an hourglass but also a scythe" (Elton and Messel 96). The "mutability of time" was a favourite theme of Elizabethan writers; the destructive force of time is one of the most consistently developed themes of Shakespeare's sonnets and plays (Sengupta 90). The Victorians in general, Thomas

Hardy and Matthew Arnold in particular, were pessimistic and fatalistic in their outlook upon life and time. Arnold recognizes his inability to conquer Time and Space in "The Scholar Gipsy" and "Thyrsis," and the two poems are "devoted to demonstrating his own thralldom to Time" (Drew 219).

Priestley and Eliot are two time-haunted writers, who have taken pains to tackle the problem of human time. Priestley, who dabbles with various Time theories in his novels and plays, has a nostalgic attitude to the past: what is lost to Time the tyrant is irrevocably lost. Eliot, on the other hand, revolts from the past, and tries to "redeem" time. The French poet Baudelaire's attitude to human time resembles that of Eliot. The Baudelairean remorse is that the past will "never cease to be the past that has been lived" (Poulet 140).

The twentieth century attitude to Time is even more bleak and pessimistic. Sartre, an exponent of Existentialism, wondered what happened to his todays when they became yesterdays (I.P. Singh 36). He asserts that in the view of the American novelist William Faulkner, "Man's misfortune lies in his being time-bound" ("On the Sound and the Fury" 87). The exponents of Absurd literature, Samuel Beckett in particular, depict in their works the poignant problem of a futureless mankind. Ungvari presents the Beckettian world most succinctly: "This bleak world cannot link any past to any future but [. . .] it works out a curious link between *present* and *eternity*" (477).

"Book Six: The Book of Fate" of Savitri is an illustration of Sri Aurobindo's understanding of the average man's attitude to time. Narad explodes a bomb shell in the Queen mother's heart when he discloses to her that Satyavan, whom Savitri has chosen to marry, is fated to die in a year's time (6.1. p. 431). For a while, the Queen falls to the level of the human mind and experiences "what common hearts endure in Time" (6.2. p. 437). She is so perturbed and overwhelmed with fear and distress that she questions the Sage: "Since That we are and out of That we came,/ Whence rose the strange and sterile interlude / Lasting in vain through interminable Time?" (6.2. p. 441). It is the same dilemma, namely, the onslaught of Time the destroyer, that one comes across in the above examples of Western literature. Narad clinches all doubts and questionings and arguments by attributing the cause of human suffering in the world of Time and Space to ignorance. He tells the Queen that her "thought is a light of the Ignorance" (6.2. p. 442), adding "Where Ignorance is, there suffering too must come [. . .]" (6.2. p. 443).

Through Narad's brilliant exposition the epic poet makes us see that man suffers on the terrestrial plane from the malady of the mind, that is, its incapacity to see wholly or at a higher level of perception. Maitra endorses the poet's view on pain when he observes: "Much of what we call pain is due to a failure to adjust ourselves to a higher level of consciousness" (66). The implication is that spatial ignorance and temporal ignorance do not permit man to visualise the Eternal, Infinite

God "in the hidden heart of Time" (Savitri 6.2. p. 447). The epic poet is convinced that man's "own worst foe" is he himself and that "Nothing has he learned from Time and its history [. . .]" (6.2. p. 440).

That brings us to the crux of the matter: What is the thematic significance of Time and Space in Savitri? The answer to this question lies in the metaphysical essence of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga, that is, the transmutation of the imperfect human life into a perfect divine life, culminating in the divinisation of the whole earth. The soul, a pilgrim on the highway of Time, has left its original abode in the Timeless, Spaceless *Brahman* on an adventure of consciousness. Having descended into the depths of Inconscient Matter, it seeks release and yearns to return to the Spirit. Sri Aurobindo, indeed, believes in the ultimate evolution of man into a much higher, more conscious being, which he calls the Superman.

Though rated as the crowning glory of all creation man, in Sri Aurobindo's view, is only a transitional being on this onward march to Supermanhood. He is "a vessel of the imprisoned spark," which seeks relief from "Time's envelopment" (Savitri 6.2. p. 453), and:

Our life's uncertain way winds circling on,
Our mind's unquiet search asks always light,
Till they have learned their secret in their source,

In the light of the Timeless and its spaceless home [. . .].

(2.5. p. 153)

However, man is little aware of his inherent potential for evolution. Bali explains man's present predicament as visualised by the poet:

Sri Aurobindo felt that man in his association with the past and present and in his life of the world could not possibly imagine the state of perfection which he has to attain during the course of evolution [. . .] because in respect to the possible higher evolution man is much in the position of the original Ape of the Darwinian theory. (154)

Man, in fact, is special in the sense that he alone, of all creations, can transcend Time and Space. Pandit highlights this distinguishing quality of the leader of all creatures on the evolving earth: "Man is unique inasmuch as he is not content to live in the present, as do other creatures; he dares to look ahead and peer into the future which is in the womb of time" ("The Symbol Dawn" 167). There is both assurance and certainty in Sri Aurobindo's prophetic proclamation that the goal and purpose of terrestrial existence is evolution to a state beyond Time and Space through a process of ascent and descent:

There is no end to the world's stupendous march,

There is no rest for the embodied soul.

It must live on, describe all Time's huge curve.

An Influx presses from the closed Beyond

Forbidding to him rest and earthly ease,

Till he has found himself he cannot pause. (Savitri 3.4. p. 339)

A brief, comparative survey of Sri Aurobindo's Space - Time concepts and those of prominent philosophers, mystics and scientists will help in understanding these metaphysical concepts in the right perspective. To begin with, Alexander, an exponent of the doctrine of Emergent evolution, asserts that "Space - Time, the universe in its primordial form, is the stuff out of which all existents are made" (1: 342). Chaudhuri's observation is perceptive: "Space - Time has been conceived by him as an infinite and continuous whole, of which space may be metaphorically described as the body, and Time as the soul. It is impregnated from the beginning with a creative nîsus" (The Philosophy of Integralism 93). God, for Alexander, is not deity but something striving and evolving towards deity (Space, Time, and Deity 2: 349). The main defect of this theory, as Goswami rightly points out, is that "we do not see anywhere the source of the emergent qualities" (7). Sri Aurobindo goes a large step ahead of Alexander's theory by postulating that Space - Time is the primordial self-extension of *Sachidananda* or *Brahman*, and not the ultimate stuff of existence.

Bergson, the chief representative of Monistic Vitalism, adduces the doctrine that life or reality is a continuous, flowing process through which runs a vital impulse or *elan vital*. For the French philosopher time is the fundamental principle and essence of the whole universe. The words "time" and "life" are synonymous for him. Though *elan vital*, which he elaborates in Creative Evolution, and Time and Free Will, is a richer creative principle than Alexander's "deity," his theory suffers from a serious flaw: "For him Reality is just Becoming. He rejects the Being, and this makes it impossible for him to explain the reality of unity, oneness, etc. without which becoming, multiplicity, dynamic flow all remain practically unexplained" (Goswami 6). Sri Aurobindo advances over Bergson's creative evolution in the same way as over Alexander's theory.

Kant, the German philosopher, is the most important exponent of the Phenomenological theory of Time and Space. In Critique of Transcendental Reason he expounds the theory that all human knowledge is conditioned by Time, Space and similar categories. Explaining the theory Ramesh Chandra Sinha observes: "Kant says that we do not see things-in-themselves but as they appear to us through space, time and other categories. So the knowledge provided by reason remains confined to the "phenomena" and does not extend to the "noumena" (16). The various citations on the fragmentary power of reason that lie scattered in Savitri make it clear that Sri Aurobindo sees eye to eye with Kant in so far as he exhibits the

finitude of reason and its inability to grasp reality. Kant's shortcoming is that he totally denies the possibility or means of knowing the "noumena" or Reality, whereas Sri Aurobindo believes that the Timeless, Spaceless *Brahman* can be apprehended by means of intuition and supramental consciousness.

Einstein's Theory of Relativity, regarded as possibly the most influential Space - Time theory of modern times, holds that the three dimensions of Space and one of Time are to be viewed together as an integrated Space - Time continuum having four dimensions, which are interpenetrating and indistinguishable. Sri Aurobindo's ideas on Time and Space bear much resemblance to those implied by Einstein's theory. Sethna illustrates how the Relativity theory leads to the supraphysical or the mystical, so characteristic of Eastern mystics including Sri Aurobindo:

To be precise, Einstein's continuum carries the suggestion of what philosophers have conceived as *Totum Simul*, the All-at-once, a state of existence in which the whole past and present and future are a grand simultaneity and all that is in space is not only existent together but each thing is existent in its reality at all moments past, present and future! (Science, Materialism, Mysticism 41)

The above passage applies very well to the main characters in the epic. While Narad is endowed with the supramental consciousness of all the three times, Savitri,

the heroine, is an epitome of both Time and Eternity, Space and Infinity. All the three times exist in the *Brahman*, who is Space. Chaudhuri brings out the parallel between Einstein and Sri Aurobindo in a conclusive manner in the following passage:

Prof. Einstein is perfectly right when he says that space - time is not itself the basic stuff but rather a form of some more ultimate stuff or substance the precise nature of which is more than science can determine. Sri Aurobindo is definite on this point and firmly affirms that space and time are cosmic forms of the Infinite's self-extension and self-revelation. They are the media through which God pours out its inexhaustible riches and spreads out its infinite being. (The Philosophy of Integralism 222)

There is much similarity in the views held by Sri Aurobindo and Whitehead, a mathematician and contemporary thinker, on Time and Space. In Whitehead's view, time and space are not so primordial as to constitute the receptacle of the universe. Objects have emerged out of time and space. God, in his primordial nature, is neither temporal nor spatial. All these views are more or less in harmony with those of Sri Aurobindo's. Satya Prakash Singh makes a perceptive statement of comparison: "Just as Whitehead rescues the concepts of time and space from the Einsteinian physical abstraction, similarly Aurobindo liberates them from the

Kantian mental abstraction" (108).

Being a champion of *lilavada*, Sri Aurobindo repudiates the Vedantic theory of illusion known as *mayavada*, according to which the phenomenal world, and hence Time and Space are illusory. Sankara, F.H. Bradley and Mc Taggart figure among the staunch supporters of the Unreality of Time and Space. Their view is that these notions are only a figment of our fancy, a product of ignorance. In Bradley's view expounded in Appearance and Reality, reality is non-temporal and therefore cannot reveal the nature of time, for time ceases to be time in the Absolute (Herbert 91). Mc Taggart agrees that past, present and future are fundamental to time, but they are only characteristics that we ascribe to events (106).

It is to Sri Aurobindo's credit that he comprehends and acknowledges both Time and Timelessness, and Space and Spacelessness, whereas the Vedantists and the advocates of the Unreality of Time accept only Eternity and the Infinite as real or absolute. The sage-poet has a clearly intuitive perception of the "space-time" character of Reality. At no stage of his life was he blind to the Absolute Reality veiled in the material facade of mortal existence. Thus, while Time and Space are real from the human point of view, they disappear in the Absolute state of the *Brahman*. Hence, he writes with conviction in the epic: "In finite things the conscious Infinite dwells" (10.4. p. 658).

Islamic notions of Time and Space tally well with those of Sri Aurobindo's. Allah is regarded as the ultimate source, the only Reality beyond Time, Space and Causation. "Allah is the only Reality . . . We must eliminate the conception of causality from the universe except as to the immediate, moment by moment, working of Allah" (qtd. in Coomaraswamy, Time and Eternity 88-89). Mohammed Iqbal, poet and intellectual, who was greatly influenced by Islamic thinkers and also by Bergson and Nietzsche, declares that Time and Space are relative. He seems to echo Sri Aurobindo when he comments: "They are relative not only to the different grades of being, but also to the different levels of experience of the same being" (Lal 319). Like Sri Aurobindo and Bergson, he too believes that intuition can reveal the true nature of the physical world of Time and Space.

Christianity appears to have had a definite impact on Sri Aurobindo's ideas of Time and Space. Ramesh Chandra Sinha perceives a parallel in the views of Sri Aurobindo and Paul Tillich, a great Christian theologian of the twentieth century, about the finitude of reason and its four main categories namely, time, space, causality and substance: "Time, according to Tillich as well as Sri Aurobindo, is the main category of finitude" (37). It is reiterated in Savitri that reason and thought are in the realm of Time and that they cannot break free of the bonds of temporality to comprehend or attain the Eternal. Goswami points out how Christianity has influenced Sri Aurobindo's vision of the future:

One aspect in which Christianity seems to have had a strong impact on Sri Aurobindo is his conception of the future. As against the conventional Indian idea of a Golden Age in the distant past, he conceived of a Golden Age in the future. Christianity, like Judaism from which it emerged, has always looked forward to the kingdom of God. (66)

Sri Aurobindo is in agreement with St. Augustine, the first thinker to grasp the nature of psychological time. Both the Indian and the Christian thinkers interpret time as a psychological phenomenon and hold that time exists in man's soul. In the matter of the measuring of times, past and future, Augustine writes about the mind that "it expects, it attends and it remembers" (The Confessions 358). In other words, there exists in the human mind a present of things past as memory, a present of things present as attention and a present of things future as expectation. The relation between Time and mind has been elaborately dealt with in Savitri, particularly in Book Six in the dialogue between Narad and the Queen.

Critics have noted much similarity between Sri Aurobindo's vision of *Sachidananda* as an entity beyond Time and Space and the *Omega Point* introduced by Teilhard de Chardin, to signify the highest point in the evolution of the human consciousness. Aykara's Cosmic Consciousness is a study in point. Also, there is an affinity between Sri Aurobindo and Christian thinkers in the matter of the

deification of Time and Space: "The traditional concern of Christian thinkers, from Augustine to Whitehead and Teilhard de Chardin, about a possible *religious* meaning for Space, Time and cosmology is something rooted in the presuppositions of Christian beliefs" (Heelan 84). Sri Aurobindo substitutes *Brahman* for God in order to denote the origin of Time and Space. According to Biblical thought, Time is a function of the divine purpose. "But the power to transcend time for all those who are within the limitation of time can only come from Jesus Christ who is "Yesterday, Today, and For Ever" (Hb 13:8); and therefore in the final analysis, only from God who is the Lord of both time and eternity" (Pathrapankal 344). Clearly, the Biblical concept of Time is a reflection of Sri Aurobindo's assertion about *Brahman*: "Space is himself and Time is only he" (Savitri 1.4. p. 67).

The various theories mentioned in the foregoing paragraphs help to place Sri Aurobindo's integral philosophy of Time and Space in proper light. Accordingly, Time and Eternity, Space and Infinity are all real, being inseparable dimensions of the same integral being. The creativity of Time and Space is but the spontaneous outflow of the fullness of Being. Our perception of these elusive concepts depends on the level of consciousness attained at each juncture during the course of evolution. A greater widening of consciousness can reveal subtler worlds of Time and Space. Savitri is a poetic presentation of these ideas.

The Powers Within

V. Uma "Time and space in Sri Aurobindo's Savitri" Thesis. Department of English , St. Thomas College, Trichur, University of Calicut, 2004

Chapter III

The Powers Within

The general characteristic of the Indian philosophical systems, that which constitutes their real profundity, is the paramount importance attached to the concept of Consciousness. The term "Consciousness" in general, denotes a state of perception or awareness of something within oneself, extending from animal or physical sensations on the one end, through mental perceptions, to entirely ecstatic experiences on the other end. The Vedas and the Upanishads declare intuitively: *Pragyanam Brahman* that is 'Consciousness is Brahman'. The Mandukya Upanishad, in particular, depicts the whole range of human consciousness, beginning with the waking state (*jagrat*) and culminating in the Supreme absolute state of superconsciousness (*turiya*) where all objective relations, perceptions of duality, Time and Space disappear.

Sri Aurobindo's notions of Time and Space are intrinsically rooted in the concept of Consciousness, which he has elaborated in The Life Divine, The Synthesis of Yoga etc. Pure Consciousness for Sri Aurobindo is an infinite, self-aware existence, namely, *Sat* full of *ananda* 'bliss', it is an illimitable, vast, transcendental state *Chit*, full of *shakti* or infinite Force. "The Transcendent, the Supracosmic is absolute and free in itself beyond Time and Space and beyond the conceptual

opposites of finite and infinite" (LD 39). Sri Aurobindo looks at the whole universe from the vantage point of the highest consciousness which he designates as *Sachidananda*. All terms are contained in the Eternal. In the poet's words:

The timeless Infinite holds in itself, in its eternal truth of being, beyond this manifestation, all that it manifests in Time. Its time consciousness too is itself infinite and maintains in itself at once in a vision of totalities and of particularities, of mobile succession or moment sight and of total stabilising vision or abiding whole sight what appears to us as the past of things, their present and their future. (SY 853)

In profound, poetical expressions Sri Aurobindo presents a vivid picture of Pure Consciousness. It is "Infinite, eternal, unthinkable, alone"; it is the "One by whom all live, who lives by none". It is a Vastness "free from sense of Space,/ An Everlastingness cut off from Time [. . .]". At the peak of meditative calm, the poet realizes intuitively that Pure Consciousness "dwelt aloof in its bare infinite,/ One and unique, unutterably sole" and that it "knew itself by its own timeless self" (Savitri 3.1. pp. 308-09).

The true aim and goal of all life on earth, which is to return to "the light of the Timeless and its spaceless home,/ In the joy of the Eternal sole and one"

(2.5. pp. 153-54), is through an evolution of consciousness. The journey may be long, but its end is certain. "Till That is reached our journeying cannot cease" (2.10. p. 238).

Sri Aurobindo states that man has to surmount three conditions of consciousness before he can move on to the highest levels. "The first condition of our consciousness, that in which we now move, is this mind of ignorance that has arisen out of the inconscience and nescience of material Nature [. . .]" (SY 855). In the epic this is how he describes it: "Something pent up in dead insentient depths,/ Denied conscious existence, lost to joy,/ Turned as if one asleep since dateless time" (Savitri 2.3. p. 129). In this state of *avidya* 'ignorance' matter appears to obey classical notions of absolute Time and Space, for inconscience is only a metaphor for Newtonian inertia as far as human consciousness is concerned. Man has no inkling about other interior worlds or subtle mind spaces. He experiences Time as something fleeting, hastening everything to its inevitable end. "His day is a moment in perpetual Time;/ He is the prey of the minutes and the hours" (3.4. p. 336). As long as Divine Grace in the form of Consciousness - Force does not intervene we continue to wallow in interminable inconscience, being:

Ourselves incapable to build our fate
 Only as actors speak and strut our parts
 Until the piece is done and we pass off

Into a brighter Time and subtler Space. (2.5. p. 163)

"The second condition of consciousness," observes Sri Aurobindo, "is potential only to the human being and gained by an inner enlightening and transformation of the mind of ignorance [. . .]" (SY 855). In this state the mind suffers from self-forgetful knowledge and it turns inward in search of the true source of knowledge. Man's soul is then an "island in the sea of the Unknown"; his consciousness is "a torch lit to be quenched," because he embodies "the eternal Spirit" (Savitri 1.5. p. 78). In the course of his mundane existence, a time may come when the mind of man may feel motivated, even determined, to exert a strong will in order to cut through the bondage of ignorance, pain and death. "At last the soul turns to eternal things, / In every shrine it cries for the clasp of God" (10.3. p. 631). At this stage some parts in him seek to grow towards the light of the home of Pure Consciousness, where it stays involved in the Superconscient, and thereby attain a "finer consciousness with happier lines" (2.2. p. 104). The evolving soul endeavours to feel a sense of oneness with all souls and to "live in the consciousness of universal mind with the personal mentality only as a projection, a marking board or a communicating switch on the surface" (SY 856). This marks a clear stage in the odyssey of the soul. The inward flight has begun and body consciousness is considerably surmounted. Commenting on the nature and condition of this plane of consciousness, the poet observes:

Our consciousness is cosmic and immense,
 But only when we break through Matter's wall
 In that spiritual vastness can we stand
 Where we can live the masters of our world
 And mind is only a means and body a tool.

(Savitri 7.6. pp. 542-43)

About the third stage of consciousness Sri Aurobindo remarks that it is "of the mind of knowledge in which all things and all truths are perceived and experienced as already present and known and immediately available by merely turning the inner light upon it [. . .]". This mind of knowledge is essentially "a power of potential omnipotence, but in its actual working on the level of mind it is limited in its range and province" (SY 856). The soul has to go beyond the mind, beyond thought and reason, before it can experience an integral view of Absolute Time and Space. Sri Aurobindo signifies these ascending levels of consciousness as Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuitive Mind and Overmind. Each plane is characterised by its own perception of Time and Space. The seer-poet echoes the wisdom of the Upanishads in this matter in the following passage:

The human mind developing into supermind has to pass through all these stages and in its ascent and expansion it may

experience many changes and various dispositions of the powers and possibilities of its time consciousness and time knowledge.

(SY 856-57)

The Higher Mind, which is immediately above the normal mental level, is essentially a luminous thought mind which is exposed to "the lustre of Infinity". The poet adds: "There man can visit but there he cannot live" (Savitri 10.4. p. 659). Obviously, the Higher Mind is not totally free from the realm of thought, which is in Time and Space. At this level of consciousness man has a theoretical or perceptual cognition of the concepts of Time and Space, but he has no direct experience of the same.

The Illumined Mind is a mind no longer of higher thought, but of spiritual light. It works primarily by means of vision, which is outside the domain of Time and Space. To quote from the epic :

A burning head of vision leads the mind,
Thought trails behind it its long comet tail ;
The heart glows, an illuminate and seer,
And sense is kindled into identity. (10.4 p. 660)

The Illumined Mind marks the first range of the mind which is above the confines of Time and Space.

The Intuitive Mind is the first plane in which there is a real opening to the full possibility of realization, for it is through it that the evolving soul can advance further - to the Overmind and then to the Supermind. Its chief function is to lead the consciousness through a sort of transitional stage. In a brilliant passage, packed with sparkling poetic gems, the poet delineates the functioning of the Intuitive Mind:

Intuition's lightnings range in a bright pack
 Hunting all hidden truths out of their lairs,
 Its fiery edge of seeing absolute
 Cleaves into locked unknown retreats of self,
 Rummages the sky-recesses of the brain,
 Lights up the occult chambers of the heart [. . .].

(Savitri 10.4. p. 660)

The illuminating power of the Intuitive Mind functions like a flash of lightning breaking through the clouds of ignorance, and reveals the true self that dwells behind the manifested world. Thought is transmuted into "revelation's sun-bright eyes"; then: "The Word, a mighty and inspiring Voice, / Enters Truth's inmost cabin of privacy / And tears away the veil from God and life" (10.4. p. 660).

The next step of the ascent of consciousness takes us to the Overmind, which, metaphorically speaking, is a sort of delegation from the Supermind that supports

our terrestrial plane. It is a power of cosmic consciousness. However, the Overmind functions as "Time's buffer state bordering Eternity," fencing "eternity from the toil of Time," for that level of consciousness is too "vast for the experience of man's soul". On attaining the Overmind consciousness, "Thought crowds in masses seized by one regard; / All Time is one body, Space a single look [. . .]" (10.4. pp. 660-61).

Supermind is the name given by Sri Aurobindo to denote the transcendent plane of Truth - Consciousness, which is the true source of all manifestations. In contrast to the mind at the lowest end of the ladder of consciousness, the Supermind forms the penultimate rung, serving as the intermediate link between *Sachidananda* and the phenomenal universe. It ever dwells in Truth, and in the perfect knowledge of the Infinite and the Eternal. It is a logical necessity for the transition from the Timeless, Spaceless "One" to the "Many" which is in Time and Space. The poet affirms that the Supermind is a plane of consciousness that is :

Above the stretch and blaze of cosmic Sight,
 Above the silence of the wordless Thought,
 Formless creator of immortal forms,
 Nameless, investitured with the name divine,
 Transcending Time's hours, transcending Timelessness [. . .].

(Savitri 10.4. p. 661)

He further adds in the same passage that "In the realms of the immortal Supermind," a "cosmic vision, a spiritual sense / Feels all the Infinite lodged in finite form," and "There the perfection born from eternity / Calls to it the perfection born in Time," and, on reaching that elevated plane of consciousness in "the truth of a moment, in the moment's soul / Can sip the honey - wine of Eternity" (10.4. pp. 661-62).

Each of the levels of the mind discussed in the above paragraphs embodies a finer, subtler quality of consciousness in ascending grades, in which the individual or psychological Time - Space consciousness is superseded by the cosmic dimensions of the Absolute. In the opinion of Umar: "Supermind is not something unknown to the ancient sages. The Rishis of the Veda called it the *satyam rtam brhat*, the Truth the Right the Vast. The seers of the Upanishads called it Vijnana" (56). What is of significance is the fact that there is such authenticity in Sri Aurobindo's recordings that we are led to believe that he must have actually experienced all these levels of perception.

In Savitri, Sri Aurobindo illustrates how Time and Space can be transcended, following the opening of the psychic being. The author categorically affirms: "The true and direct knowledge or vision of past, present and future begins with the opening of the psychical consciousness and the psychical faculties" (SY 861). In the epic the poet indicates that in moments "when the inner lamps are lit," our souls can experience "calm immensities of spirit space" in solitude, for a "wider

consciousness opens then its doors" (Savitri 1.4. pp. 47-48).

The universal energy or cosmic force is flowing all around us and into us all the time, sustaining everything and every being. The poet asserts:

The Spirit's greatness is our timeless source

And it shall be our crown in endless Time.

A vast Unknown is round us and within;

All things are wrapped in the dynamic One [. . .]. (2.2. p. 110)

What is needed is to make a psychic contact with this divine *Shakti* 'power', and the science of *Tantra* deals with the means of accomplishing this feat. Savitri bears ample testimony to the fact that Sri Aurobindo's concept of transcending Time and Space through a heightening and widening of consciousness, is essentially based on the effect of the rousing of *Kundalini*, which constitutes the focal theme of *Tantrasastra*.

Tantrasastra, or more specifically *Tantrik Srividya Upasana*, is a prevalent mode of worship centred on the *Shakti* as the Divine Mother. The entire universe, in all its manifestation from the most subtle down to the grossest, is regarded reverentially as the transmutation of *Shakti*: in the gross, macrocosmic aspect as *Brahmanda* 'the phenomenal world of Time and Space', and in the subtle, microcosmic aspect as the six *chakras* 'wheels of energy' in the human body. There

are several authoritative texts and commentaries which expound the enigmatic secrets of *Tantrasastra*. Pandit, an ardent *sadhak* of Integral Yoga, observes that the functions and the potentialities of the *chakras* have been acknowledged in various traditions both in the East and the West. They were known to many Christian mystics and to the Sufis. They find a mention in the Egyptian tradition and Theosophist literature too (Studies in the Tantras and the Veda 99).

Integral yoga incorporates the essentials of *Tantrasastra*, particularly the supreme status accorded to the Divine Mother. Sri Aurobindo asserts that our universe is not a casual or meaningless creation. It is, on the contrary, a willed purposive manifestation of the Supreme *Shakti* or Pure Consciousness. In his words:

An almighty occultist erects in Space
 This seeming outward world which tricks the sense ;
 He weaves his hidden threads of consciousness,
 He builds bodies for his shapeless energy [. . .].

(Savitri 1.5. p. 84)

The above passage brings to mind the *Sri Chakra*, which is the most significant *yantra* or symbol, according to the Vedic texts: "Sri Chakra is a master plan of manifestation drawn by the divine Draughtsman on the board of the Infinite, a

transcript of the Transcendent, a symbol image of the supernal verities" (qtd. in Pandit, Studies 93).

Kundalini is the name for a living symbol of the latent divine power in the human system lying dormant and curled up like a snake in the region of the spine. Hence the name *Kundalini* (meaning 'coiled up') or the Serpent Power. The signification of the word 'serpent' is purely figurative or symbolic. "It could very well be translated in scientific terminology as 'potential power' " ("What are Tantra Philosophy and Kundalini Yoga?" 21). Just as a coiled up or wound spring is a source of potential energy, which can be transformed into kinetic energy, *Kundalini* indicates the presence of a reservoir of tremendous untapped power within man.

Sri Aurobindo's concept of *Kundalini* is that it is an all-pervasive force that accompanies the growth and the perfect evolution of the new consciousness, that of the Superman. He dwells upon it in The Integral Yoga:

This force is the Yoga - Shakti. It is here coiled up and asleep in all the centres of our inner being (Chakras) and is at the base what is called in the Tantras the Kundalini Shakti. But it is also above us, above our head as the Divine Force - not there coiled up, involved, asleep, but awake, silent, potent, extended and wide; it is there waiting for manifestation and to this Force we have to open ourselves - to the power of the Mother. (221)

Accordingly, one who succeeds in rousing *Kundalini* and realizing the true nature of the Divine Mother, transcends the phenomenal world of Time and Space.

Man is a multiple personality, in the view of Tantra. There are distinct planes or layers of consciousness in an individual which interpenetrate, co-ordinate and blend to constitute a harmonious unit of the entire being. Each of these planes is governed by a number of conscious centres or sources of dynamic power which function as focal points for the Pure Consciousness to operate. These centres are picturesquely portrayed as *chakras* signifying wheels of power, or *padmas* or lotuses found in our subtle body, arranged in an ascending series along the spine. In Sri Aurobindo's Yoga, they signify different levels of consciousness, or the degree of our mental purity and spiritual elevation, which lead us to a greater awareness of Time and Space.

Savitri is strewn with picturesque descriptions of the centres of consciousness. The *Muladhara* is the seat or basic receptacle of the presiding energy. Sri Aurobindo observes that this *chakra* "governs the physical down to the subconscious" (IY 32). In the epic it is alluded to as "the deep place" where the Serpent sleeps; it is a "firm ground" or *muladhara* for "Heaven's descending might" (7.5. p. 530). The abdominal centre, the *Swadhishtana*, which is just below the navel, governs the lower vital. It is the "narrow nether centre" (530). Both these lower *chakras* are regions of darkness. Man's vision of Reality at this level of

perceive the possibility of the co-existence of the temporal-spatial aspects of Reality along with the Timeless, Spaceless, Pure Consciousness. So we may say that the *Anahata* functions as the "link of the finite with the Infinite, / The bridge between the appearance and the Truth [. . .]" (Savitri 5.3. p. 408).

The throat centre, *Visuddha*, is a region of light. When the *Kundalini* rests here, the darkness of ignorance is removed from the heart of the devotee, there is an upsurge of the light of the higher Consciousness, and he tends to evolve into it. Sri Aurobindo refers to it as "the lotus of the throat / Where speech must rise and the expressing mind / And the heart's impulse run towards word and act" (7.5. p. 529). Manifestly, this is the visionary stance of the seers, who uttered the *vak*, the *mantra* or the 'all-revealing word' which was received from the higher realms of Pure Consciousness, as an emanation of *Sabda Brahman*.

The *Ajna chakra*, situated in the middle of the eye brows (*bhrumadhya*), is one of the two important centres for concentration in Integral Yoga, the other one being the *Anahata*. It "governs the dynamic mind, will, vision, mental formation [. . .]" (IY 32). It is the synergic centre of command, "the castle of the lotus twixt the brows" (7.5. p. 529), the station from which the Divine Mother controls all the three times. While the two physical eyes symbolise the cognizance of the physical world of ordinary Time and Space, the third eye, located at the *Ajna*, represents the expansion of vision in the human consciousness. Sri Aurobindo presents before

us a graphic description of the location and function of the *Ajna*. It is the centre of the brow:

Where the mind's Lord in his control - room sits ;

There throned on concentration's native seat

He opens that third mysterious eye in man,

The Unseen's eye that looks at the unseen [. . .].

(Savitri 10.4. p. 665)

Evidently, at this level of consciousness, there is a tremendous upsurge of visionary perception and an intuitive seeing of all times and all spaces. The Brahmakumaris endorse Sri Aurobindo's opinion when they remark: "It symbolises the stage when one has deeply realised the world with its past, present and future aspects [. . .]" ("What are Tantra Philosophy and Kundalini Yoga?" 24). In Sri Aurobindo's *Yoga*, the *Ajna* is the highest centre of consciousness within the human body or "mortal Space" (Savitri 3.4. p. 343). It is from here that man begins to break free of the bondage of human existence and transcend the temporal - spatial tiers of mundane creation. Pandit explains: "This centre is the channel of communication between the Higher Consciousness and the inner mind as also the outer mind" (Studies 103). On reaching this plane, the *sadhak* becomes one with the Supreme Soul, the witness of the universe. This is how the epic poet depicts him: "A Seer within who knows the ordered plan / Concealed behind our momentary

steps, / Inspires our ascent to viewless heights [. . .]" (Savitri 2.1. p. 101).

The *Sahasrara* or the thousand - petalled lotus is the highest *chakra*. Sri Aurobindo pictures it variously as "the country of the lotus of the head" (7.5. p. 529), as "the mystic lotus" in the head, a "thousand - petalled home of power and light" (9.1. p. 573), and so on. In fact, this centre is not located within the human body; it is above the head and the brain, functioning as a centre linking all the higher realms of the mind from the Higher Mind to the Overmind, and the still higher altitudes of consciousness to the ordinary mental apparatus. Commenting on its function, the author writes that it "commands the higher thinking mind, houses the still higher illumined mind and at the highest opens to the intuition [. . .]" (IY 32). The *Sahasrara* symbolises a superconscious state. To cite the poet's words, it is "a consciousness mind cannot touch, / Its speech cannot utter nor its thought reveal. / It has no home on earth, no centre in man," yet it is "the origin of all truth here" (Savitri 11.1. p. 705). It is at this peak of perception that the individual consciousness expands into cosmic consciousness. Until the final opening and realization are experienced, the *Sahasrara* functions as the connecting link between the macrocosm and the microcosm. But when the *chakra* opens, "it acts like a lid opened between the Higher Consciousness and the ordinary mind" (Pandit, Studies 103).

The *Tantrik* concept of the various levels of consciousness, represented by

the *chakras* of the subtle body, symbolises the Indian awareness of the multilayered and multifaceted nature of Reality. The *chakras* are potential sources of subtle forces and inner powers, or windows opening out into cosmic sight. The poet affirms, that there do exist "slumbering in a sealed and secret cave / The powers that sleep unused in man within" (*Savitri* 1.3. p. 26). Pandit explains that the *chakras* "act as switchboards, as it were, to enter into relation with corresponding fields of Consciousness in the manifestation around" (*Lamps of Light* 33). However, these focal centres of latent powers of liberation are found only in human beings and not in lower organisms. That is why the Vedas and the Upanishads extol human birth, whose ultimate goal is liberation through evolution.

Following *Tantra Sastra*, Sri Aurobindo speaks of three *granthis* or knots, which may be construed as so many terminals marking off different levels of consciousness. Accordingly, the Serpent Power holds together the entire spread of consciousness from the invisible abysses of the subconscious to the zenith of the superconscious beyond sight. The three *granthis* are truly so many strongholds or citadels of power regulating the flow of the cosmic energy in the human apparatus. But for them, the system would collapse under the mighty "influx of the Unknown" (*CP* 133), for the rousing of the *Kundalini* is not an unmixed blessing. Sri Aurobindo presents before us a picturesque passage in sublime verse to this effect:

In the flower of the head, in the flower of Matter's base,

In each divine stronghold and Nature - knot
 It held together the mystic stream which joins
 The viewless summits with the unseen depths,
 The string of forts that make the frail defence
 Safeguarding us against the enormous world,
 Our lines of self-expression in its Vast. (Savitri 7.5. p. 528)

In Sri Aurobindo's Yoga, the highest possible level of consciousness attained so far is the Supermind, which is the ultimate source of all knowledge. There is no mention of this in the several treatises on the subject. Pandit acknowledges the unique contribution of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in this regard:

It is only Sri Aurobindo and the Mother who have devoted their present life to this object and succeeded in their *tapasya* to receive and embody the Supramental Truth for establishment in the Earth-consciousness. And we have it on their authority that the Centre which receives the Supramental Consciousness is above the head, *above the thousand petalled - Lotus*. (Studies 110-11)

A man's spiritual consciousness is awakened when his *Kundalini* is aroused. Savitri contains several passages, which depict such an expansion of perception.

In one passage, Sri Aurobindo briefly indicates how a heightening of Consciousness can lead man to the Absolute:

In this soar from consciousness to consciousness
 Each lifted tops to That from which it came,
 Origin of all that it had ever been
 And home of all that it could still become. (Savitri 1.5. p. 89)

With each such leap of consciousness his perception of Time and Space increases. Such a heightening of time-awareness is ratified by the renowned Theosophist Arundale:

Indeed does kundalini break down barriers, not merely of
 consciousness in terms of matter but no less in time. The ridges
 between present and past, and present and future, become
 transcended, at all events within limits, and the Eternal becomes
 the Real rather than the modes of time. (73)

Integral Yoga is predominantly based on the psychological methods of meditation and concentration. The Mother rightly described Savitri as a meditation, as a quest of the Infinite, the Eternal ("On Savitri" 45). The epic poet, therefore, advocates the negation of the ego, the rejection of the lower, impure impulses, and an intense aspiration to ascend to higher planes of perception as prerequisites.

And finally, what is needed is an openness to the Divine Force, or rather a total, sincere surrender to the Divine Grace.

There are two distinctive features about his Yoga which Sri Aurobindo sets forth in the following passage :

In our yoga there is no willed opening of the chakras, they open of themselves by the descent of the Force. In the Tantric discipline they open from down upwards, the Muladhar first; in our yoga, they open from up downward. But the ascent of the force from the Muladhar does take place. (IY 32)

Clearly, in Sri Aurobindo's view, the awakening of the human consciousness is a spontaneous process. The more evolved centres or the readier ones open first revealing their respective planes of consciousness to the *sadhak*. It is like buds blossoming in favourable conditions: "Our hidden centres of celestial force / Open like flowers to a heavenly atmosphere [. . .]" (Savitri 2.12. p. 278).

Time plays a significant role in the rousing of the Serpent Power. In Integral Yoga, *Kala* or Time is the fourth aid, the other three being *Sastra* 'scripture', *utsaha* 'aspiration' and *Guru* 'preceptor'. We have no control over Time, and have to keep on persevering, reposing unflinching faith in the Divine Grace. Sri Aurobindo declares vehemently that "nothing happens in the cosmic play / But at its time [. . .]"

(Savitri 5.1. p. 389).

To withstand the downward pull of our subconscious nature, and to elevate our consciousness more and more in order to attain newer and subtler dimensions of existence, it requires a strength and a tenacity that far surpasses our fragile nature. It is here that the role of the Divine Grace assumes paramount importance. With conviction Sri Aurobindo declares that She is a patient "trustee of slow eternal Time," who absolves "from hour to hour her secret charge" (1.4. p. 60). "She seats the greatness of the Soul in Time / To uplift from light to light, from power to power, / Till on a heavenly peak it stands, a king" (7.5. p. 527). Thus, the poet affirms: "Only the Eternal's strength in us can dare / To attempt the immense adventure of that climb / And the sacrifice of all we cherish here" (Savitri 2.12. p. 280). There is much similarity between Sri Aurobindo and the Christian mystics in the matter of the Divine Grace. Both assert strongly that man cannot raise himself solely by dint of self effort, however powerful. God's Grace is indispensable. "Grace is a generous gift which the Divine communicates to man and unites man to Him" (Nityabodhananda 89).

Everything we see, think, imagine or dream ordinarily occurs in elemental space or *mahakasa*. The yogi who has transcended Time and Space perceives supersensuous objects in mental space or *chittakasa*. When perception becomes objectless, and the soul shines in its own nature, it is knowledge space or *cidakasa*.

This too is accomplished by the rousing of *Kundalini*. Echoing this Vedic wisdom Sri Aurobindo metaphorically describes how a yogi is able to comprehend *akasalipi* 'etheric page' when his soul attains release from Ignorance because of the mighty fire. Time's secrets then become an oft-read book, and he can read the records of the future and the past intuitively (Savitri 1.3. p. 44).

Sri Aurobindo mentions in more than one place that Time, like Space, has different statuses depending on the observer's level of consciousness. The following passage from The Synthesis of Yoga is illuminating:

Time presents itself to human effort as an enemy or a friend, as a resistance, a medium or an instrument [. . .].

To the ego it is a tyrant or a resistance, to the Divine an instrument. [. . .] When the divine working and the personal are combined in our consciousness, it appears as a medium and condition. When the two become one, it appears as a servant and instrument. (61-62)

As the *Kundalini* rises even higher to the *Ajna* and beyond, all the subtler realms of Timelessness and Spacelessness are gradually revealed. The ascending soul realizes that there is not only no dichotomy between Time and Space taken together on the one hand, and Eternity and Infinity on the other hand, but also that

all these can coexist. In a majestic cascade of blank verse the poet presents before us the culmination of the journey from the mind to the Supermind: "At last the traveller in the paths of Time / Arrives on the frontiers of eternity." Then:

A beam of the Eternal smites his heart,
 His thought stretches into infinitude;
 All in him turns to spirit vastnesses.
 His soul breaks out to join the Oversoul,
 His life is oceaned by that superlife. (Savitri 1.3. pp. 23-24)

He thus becomes a *Jivanmukta* 'a liberated soul' endowed with a supramental vision of Time and Space, he experiences cosmic consciousness, which enables him to realize that he is merely a dot of concentration in the cosmic extension of the One Spirit, free of all the physical and mental limitations of terrestrial existence. His state can be thus epitomised: "A silence overhead, an inner voice, / A living image seated in the heart, / An unwalled wideness and a fathomless point [. . .]" (1.4. p. 49).

The supramental consciousness, in Sri Aurobindo's view, is "a triple time knowledge" based, firstly on "its eternal identity beyond the changes of time," secondly, on "a simultaneous eternity of Time" characterised by the coexistence of all the three times; and thirdly, on "a total view of the three times as one movement".

In contrast with the ordinary mental consciousness, the Supramental Consciousness will, therefore, have the knowledge of the three times, *trikaladrsti* "not as an abnormal power, but as its normal way of time knowledge" (SY 854).

Savitri abounds in passages that depict the superconscious vision of Time and Space. For instance, alluding to the Kingdoms of the Greater Knowledge the poet observes: "There consciousness was a close and single weft; / The far and near were one in spirit - space, / The moments there were pregnant with all time" (2.15. p. 301). In another passage, he remarks :

In the endless moment of Eternity,
 It saw from timelessness the works of Time.
 Overpassed were the leaden formulas of the Mind,
 Overpowered the obstacle of mortal Space:
 The unfolding Image showed the things to come. (3.4. p. 343)

Everything then is perceived by "a spiritual sense," as the result of the "touch of consciousness on consciousness" (2.14. p. 292). At the level of supramental vision, there exists a perfect unanimity of perceiving souls. Time and Space cease to exist. With their disappearance ego, division, pain, suffering, fate, and the fear of death also vanish. All that remains is Pure Consciousness.

The significance and relevance of Sri Aurobindo's ideas on Time, Space and

Consciousness can gain better currency by comparing them with the findings (both empirical and experimental) of modern psychology, Quantum Mechanics and the transcendental experiences of the Buddhist mystics. Fritjof Capra, the British physicist, observes that Eastern mystics including Sri Aurobindo "seem to be able to attain non-ordinary states of consciousness in which they transcend the three-dimensional world of everyday life to experience a higher, multidimensional reality" ("Space-Time" 52). He corroborates his finding by quoting from Savitri: "Thus Aurobindo speaks about "a subtle change which makes the sight see in a sort of fourth dimension"(52). This supramental Space - Time vision of Sri Aurobindo is similar to the one given in Relativistic Physics. Louis de Broglie interprets it in the following passage:

In space - time, everything which for each of us constitutes the past, the present, and the future is given en bloc. . . . Each observer, as his time passes, discovers, so to speak, new slices of space - time which appear to him as successive aspects of the material world, though in reality the ensemble of events constituting space-time exists prior to his knowledge of them. (qtd. in Capra, "Space-Time" 54)

Capra however adds that the dimensions of Space - Time may not be identical in science and mysticism (52).

There is some similarity between Sri Aurobindo's triple time knowledge and Priestley's notion of the three times. In Man and Time, the British playwright speculates: "We are at least entitled to say that it is as if there are three kinds of time" (qtd. in Susan Cooper 222). Accordingly, Time One is the passing time in which we live; Time Two denotes the time of dreams or precognition. All the alternative possibilities exist in Time Three. A distinction nevertheless exists: While Priestley merely toyed with his time theory without any personal conviction or experience, Sri Aurobindo had actually attained the supramental plane, and hence his triple time knowledge has the quality of authenticity. To cite Capra: "Consciousness is a central aspect of our inner world and thus, first of all, an experience" (qtd. in Kiran Kumar 143). This observation applies to Sri Aurobindo *in toto*.

Synchronicity, a theory of consciousness advanced by Carl Jung, is comparable with Sri Aurobindo's ideas of transcending Time and Space, especially, his insistence on the psychic opening as a prerequisite for attaining the supramental consciousness. Like Sri Aurobindo, Jung also believes that the individual self has fragmented itself from the general field of consciousness with the result that whole areas or planes of consciousness are lost to direct awareness. Following Jung, David Peat affirms that it is possible for the mind to reach down into its deeper and more subtle areas (234). He dilates on the concept of transformation:

Synchronicity is an image of the creative source, for within its timeless moment, awareness floods over the whole of consciousness and matter to produce a profound sense of identity. Out of this timeless moment flow the events and patterns of [. . .] a more creative life in which the self takes its proper place within consciousness. (237)

In Jung's view, such a state of existence is necessarily transcendental, "since, as the knowledge of future spatially distant events shows, it is contained in an irrepresentable space-time continuum" (qtd. in Kothari 49). The principle of Synchronicity indicates the possibility of attaining the supramental Space - Time vision, which eventually leads to the Timeless Infinite. Jung is at best perceptive, intuitive. Sri Aurobindo goes far ahead of him in that he illustrates in Savitri how Synchronicity can become a real experience. The Yogas of Aswapathy and Savitri are actual demonstrations of how the mighty powers within can be tapped in order to accelerate the elevation of consciousness.

Scaling the Heights

V. Uma "Time and space in Sri Aurobindo's Savitri" Thesis. Department of English , St. Thomas College, Trichur, University of Calicut, 2004

Chapter IV

Scaling the Heights

In the symbolic, time - transcending epic, there are primarily two elaborate movements towards self-realization and cosmic consciousness, namely Aswapathy's Yoga and Savitri's *sadhana*. If one is a flight that scales greater and greater spiritual heights into the Spaceless, Timeless abode of the Absolute, the other is an inward, deepening journey which plunges into the occult depths of material existence. The exalted purpose of both the yogas is the same, namely, to "hew the ways of Immortality" (*Savitri* 1.2. p. 17), but the processes and intermediary experiences vary. Also Aswapathy's Yoga is a prelude to Savitri's Yoga, which enables mankind to conquer Death, under whose ominous shadow lies the phenomenal world of Time and Space, chafing and groping in ignorance. Indeed, as R.K. Singh observes, Aswapathy's yoga is "actually the search for a creative principle of which Savitri is the answer" ("The Structure of *Savitri*" 75).

In the original Mahabharata story, Aswapathy is the virtuous and pious monarch of Madra who observes charity and performs severe penance for eighteen years to propitiate Goddess Savitri. Consequently, the Divine Mother bestows upon him the boon of a daughter, who would be a portion of her self. In Sri Aurobindo's epic this seemingly insignificant episode becomes the subject matter of twenty two

cantos spanning three Books and comprising over a ten thousand lines, that is, constituting almost half the epic. Manifestly, the yogi-poet discerned the spiritual significance of the legendary material; he transformed and transmuted it so as to make it a means for conveying his revolutionary concept of Integral Yoga in poetical language. R.K. Singh elaborates about this process of restructuring:

Sri Aurobindo reconstructs the legendary Aswapathy through his action of psychic and mental disciplining, which has a transforming influence, in that, instead of the goddess being propitiated, the yogic consciousness raises him to the wideness of the Eternal and he experiences an accession of strength down "into his mortal limbs". ("The Structure of *Savitri*" 26)

Aswapathy in Savitri is not a King who is childless. Purani asserts that he is "a representative of the human race trying to fulfil the inmost aspiration of the human being by bringing down to the earth a kind of perfection in life" (Lectures on Savitri 10). Sri Aurobindo portrays him variously as a "colonist from immortality," who was affiliated to "cosmic Space and Time" (Savitri 1.3. p. 22), "a shining Guest of Time" (1.3. p. 25), who retained mighty memories of the past, and so on. Thus, Aswapathy's soul lived as "eternity's delegate" (1.3. p. 23), who had modelled his rhythmic parts in inward Time (1.3. p. 25) in order to demonstrate that human life was:

An endless spiral of ascent and fall
 Until at last is reached the giant point
 Through which his Glory shines for whom we were made
 And we break into the infinity of God. (1.3. p. 24)

Aswapathy's Yoga is spread over Cantos Three, Four and Five of Book One: *The Book of Beginnings*, the whole of Book Two: *The Book of The Traveller of the Worlds*, comprising fifteen cantos, and Book Three: *The Book of the Divine Mother*, made up of four cantos. Sri Aurobindo elucidates the triple yoga of the King in one of his "Letters" in Savitri:

Aswapati's Yoga falls into three parts. First, he is achieving his own spiritual self-fulfilment as the individual and this is described as the Yoga of the King. Next, he makes the ascent as a typical representative of the race to win the possibility of discovery and possession of all the planes of consciousness and this is described in the Second Book: but this too is as yet only an individual victory. Finally, he aspires no longer for himself but for all, for a universal realisation and new creation. That is described in the Book of the Divine Mother. (Savitri 778)

The processes undertaken by Aswapathy to expand his consciousness are the same as the steps of Integral Yoga. The King in-gathered all his energies with an

intense concentration; hearing the call of the Beyond, he let his mind expand into infinity. The petty, self-separated, self-centred egoistic individuality, so rigidly established in the human being, gradually disintegrated and dissolved and became one with the transcendent One. In the poet's superb phrasing: "The landmarks of the little person fell, / The island ego joined its continent" (Savitri 1.3. p. 25). In the first part of his yoga, Aswapathy realised his psychic being, went beyond Reason and Mind, and underwent both a psycho-spiritual and a spiritual transformation with an ascent to a supreme power (Savitri 778). The Serpent Force was awakened in his being. There are several references to this phenomenon in the epic. To cite a few:

In hands sustained by a transfiguring Might
 He caught up lightly like a giant's bow
 Left slumbering in a sealed and secret cave
 The powers that sleep unused in man within. (1.3. p. 26)

and:

Lifting the heavy curtain of the flesh
 He stood upon a threshold serpent-watched,
 And peered into gleaming endless corridors,
 Silent and listening in the silent heart
 For the coming of the new and the unknown. (1.3. p. 28)

Gradually, Aswapathy was endowed with many supernormal powers. Even miracles became a common feat with him. He became a witness soul, his inner sight was opened, and he "owned the house of undivided Time" (1.3. p. 28). He was no longer harassed by fleeting time or the transience of earthly life, for it dawned on him that subtler spaces existed beyond. Sri Aurobindo dwells at length on Aswapathy's *sakshi avastha* or 'witness-state' in the following lines:

His soul stood free, a witness and a king.
 Absorbed no more in the moment-ridden flux
 Where mind incessantly drifts as on a raft
 Hurried from phenomenon to phenomenon,
 He abode at rest in indivisible Time. (1.3. p. 33)

Aswapathy acquired astral clairvoyance, which enabled him to view what was hidden from ordinary physical sight. As a result :

A door parted, built in by Matter's force,
 Releasing things unseized by earthly sense:
 A world unseen, unknown by outward mind
 Appeared in the silent spaces of the soul. (1.3. p. 27)

The partition between his external sense of awareness and the dormant regions of subtler consciousness was removed, and Aswapathy consciously experienced

those ranges of existence which lay extended in the domains of the soul, beyond the pale of the mind's realm of thought and logic. According to the Theosophist Leadbeater, an observer [like Aswapathy] who has left behind the physical plane, and has gained astral vision "finds a new and transcendent sense opening within him, which unfolds to his enraptured gaze yet another and a higher world [. . .]". It is a subtle world "where the omnipresent life which pulsates ceaselessly around and within him is of a different order altogether [. . .]" (The Devachanic Plane 15-16).

Breaking through the shell of egoistic separativity, Aswapathy continued to expand all the more till his "inner self grew near to others' selves" (Savitri 1.3. p. 27). He crossed the earth zone and soared to higher and still higher occult planes. This "aspirant to supernal Timelessness" (1.3. p. 26) experienced thus: "While there, one can be wider than the world; / While there, one is one's own infinity" (1.3. p. 32). His mystic eye (*Ajna chakra*) was opened, and his astral vision disclosed to him his cosmic past; that is to say, he could see the past as well as the future in the present moment or the Eternal Now. The epic poet employs a picturesque image to delineate the seeker's state:

As if a story long written but acted now,
In his present he held his future and his past,
Felt in the seconds the uncounted years

And saw the hours like dots upon a page. (1.3. p. 33)

As an individual experience, Aswapathy had overcome body consciousness and acquired *trikaladrsti*. We learn from the epic that his "walk through Time outstripped the human stride" (1.3. p. 45). Plunging his roots into infinity, and basing his life upon eternity, he resumed his "epic climb" (1.4. p. 46) from the alone to the Alone. After his personal liberation, Aswapathy continued his *sadhana* assiduously, seeking the key to the realisation of the mystic knowledge for all mankind. Vesting an unflinching faith in the Divine Grace he withdrew into an inner silence in order to make further forages in consciousness.

Silence is one of the attributes of *Brahman*. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have written extensively on the potency of inner silence to lead us to transcendental knowledge. To Sri Aurobindo silence implies freedom from thoughts and vital movements so that the whole consciousness is quite still. "It is on the Silence behind the cosmos that all the movement of the universe is supported" ("What does 'Silence' Mean" 4). About Aswapathy the epic poet remarks that the "Silence was his sole companion left" (1.5. p. 79). This silence opened into the vastitudes beyond earthly Space and Time. In a significant passage the epic poet brings out the inter-relatedness between the Silence and the "secret knowledge" which dawned on Aswapathy:

The Absolute, the Perfect, the Alone
 Has called out of the Silence his mute Force
 Where she lay in the featureless and formless hush
 Guarding from Time by her immobile sleep
 The ineffable puissance of his solitude. (1.4. p. 67)

The commentary of Madhusudan Reddy is pertinent here: "The earth is the scene of the growing manifestation of Spirit in space and time, and man is a mode of its conscious manifestation in whom the finite is destined to integrate with the Infinite" (Savitri 23). It is this "secret knowledge" of the *Rishis* that Aswapathy's soul, a "sailor on the flow of Time" (Savitri 1.4. p. 69) arrived at.

Elaborating on Aswapathy's state at the moment, Sri Aurobindo remarks: "He dwelt in the wideness of the Eternal's reign. / His being now exceeded thinkable Space [. . .]" (1.5. p. 79). He broke the "triple cord of mind" (1.5. p. 82) or the *hrdayagranthi*, thereby freeing himself of his ego and *avidya* 'ignorance'. With an upsurge of *Kundalini* his consciousness widened immeasurably, so that he felt that a "boundless being in a measureless Time / Invaded Nature with the infinite [. . .]" (1.5. p. 83). Having passed the familiar earth zone at the end of the first stage of his austerity, Aswapathy entered into subtle occult realms which were totally strange and formidable, being cast into moulds of Space and Time quite different from those of terrestrial dimensions. This is how the poet describes the entry:

A voyager upon uncharted routes
 Fronting the viewless danger of the Unknown,
 Adventuring across enormous realms,
 He broke into another Space and Time. (1.5. p. 91)

Each plane of existence has its own grade of Time and Space based on the nature and frequency of vibration of its matter and on the peculiar modes of extension and duration of the manifesting Spirit. The word "broke" is purposefully employed by the epic poet to suggest that the movement into another spatio-temporal plane can never be a gradual process; it is always abrupt. All this "breaking" process is analogous with the sudden Quantum leap of electrons to the next orbital or subshell inside an atom, whenever there is a change in energy levels.

The fifteen cantos of Book Two describe Aswapathy's spiritual odyssey in minute, picturesque particulars. Driven by an insatiable thirst for the ultimate Truth, the protagonist sojourned into several supraphysical worlds, which are mapped out in psychic terms, such as the worlds of gross matter, subtle matter, little life, higher life or heaven, and even the nether regions of hell. Paranjape notes: "There is a general pattern of ascension in these fifteen cantos from matter, to life, to the mind, and finally beyond the mind" ("Savitri" 108). And in the estimate of Nadkarni, "Book Two, which describes Aswapati's exploration of the various worlds of

consciousness, is probably the hardest part of the whole epic" (Preface, "On Savitri" xii).

It has to be rightly understood that Aswapathy's journey is not a geographical movement. On the contrary, it is an occult movement which enables the king to soar to different planes by means of his astral or mental body instead of the physical vehicle. Leadbeater elucidates this point in The Astral Plane:

So when we speak of a man as rising from one plane or subplane to another, we do not think of him as necessarily moving in space at all, but rather as transferring his consciousness from one level to another - gradually becoming unresponsive to the vibrations of one order of matter, and beginning instead to answer to those of a higher and more refined order; so that one world with its scenery and inhabitants seems to fade slowly away from his view, while another world of a more elevated character dawns upon him in its stead. (16)

Another point to be borne in mind is that the words "higher" and "lower" with reference to different planes of consciousness do not refer in any sense, to their location in physical space, for in fact, they all occupy the same space. There are several spaces other than the gross, physical space or *sthulakasa*. We find in the Upanishads and the *Tantras* repeated allusions to subtle spaces such as *cittakasa*,

cidakasa, mahakasa, and so on. The term *akasa* connotes space. Iyengar touches on this concept of subtle spaces when he presents a precise picture of the various worlds visited by Aswapathy:

This occult world is a model world, an "overt universe", mediating between the world we live in and the omnipresent universe that is *Sachchidananda*. It is not one world but all possible worlds - one might say, what Yasoda saw in little Krishna's mouth, all the worlds together but forged as one world. The occult world - stair defies and transcends *our* notions of Space and Time. (Dawn to Greater Dawn 44)

Aswapathy first entered the kingdom of subtle matter which overtops our physical world. It was a region of the dream-world where preparations were on for everything that was to manifest on earth subsequently. Madhusudan Reddy brings out the theatre imagery inherent in this world: "It is in this master theatre that the drama of earth-existence is first enacted to the full satisfaction of its supreme author-director before it is staged in our Space-Time auditorium" (Savitri 72). The subtle beings dwelt "Immortal in a world of motionless Time / And an unchanging muse of deep self-space" (Savitri 2.2. p. 109). Indeed, it was a fixed, immobile world in frozen Time and Space. The sense of separateness and distance from all objects outside oneself, which is very typical of the phenomenal world, was absent

in the subtle world, for there a "fourth dimension of aesthetic sense / Where all is in ourselves, ourselves in all, / To the cosmic wideness re-aligns our souls" (2.2. p. 112). The fourth dimension implies an expansion of consciousness and a total release from the petty confines of the ego, and an ability to visualise higher and higher orders of reality which lie beyond the scope of ordinary perception. Hanlon's perceptive comments deserve mention here: "The act of visualizing a higher figure is an act of self-realization, of not only widening one's mental and material horizons, but of increasing the spaciousness of the soul" (Into the Fourth Dimension 32).

Passing beyond the subtle physical realms Aswapathy entered into the domains of life, where everything was in a flux, being subject to "Time's inconstant wheel" (2.3. p. 117). He was temporarily fascinated by the Life planes at the peaks, which melted into the vastitudes of the Self where the finite blended with the infinite, where Time merged with the Eternal. He saw that:

On a spiritual and mysterious peak

Only a miracle's high transfiguring line

Divided life from the formless Infinite

And sheltered Time against eternity.

Out of that formless stuff Time mints his shapes [. . .]. (2.3. p. 120)

But Aswapathy was quick to see that Death reigned supreme in that region, so that immortality appeared to be powerless before it.

An overall sense of inertia and inconstancy characterised the realm of the Little Life into which Aswapathy next entered. About the ephemeral creature's daily life, he noted: "Time has he none to turn his eyes within / And look for his lost self and his dead soul" (Savitri 2.5. p. 165). In the Inconscient was present an involved consciousness with infinite possibilities, but the matter was so gross that there was felt no need to grapple with higher notions such as Infinity or Eternity.

Escaping from the grey anarchy of the lower life, Aswapathy travelled into the kingdoms of the greater life. It was predominantly a world of dreams and aspirations waiting to be fulfilled. Life's mission was to manifest the Unmanifest. About this region, the poet states: "A timeless mystery works out in Time" (2.6. p. 178). Aswapathy noticed that the beings of that world were tenants of a freer space and enjoyed "universal widenesses" (2.6. p. 183), though reluctantly, to the infiltration of true knowledge and pure love. The creative life force of that realm devised innumerable bodies for the infinite and the disembodied. Commenting on this region Madhusudan Reddy writes: "In its vesture of Time, this greater life-force conceals the immortal flame [. . .]" (Savitri 82). In spite of cosmic dimensions there, no "silent peak is found where Time can rest" (Savitri 2.6. p. 197). Aswapathy observed that life there was perpetually on the move, having lost touch with Eternity. Sri Aurobindo remarks that "indifferent the Eternal watches Time" (2.6. p. 201). Clearly, this was a region where the aspiration for the Timeless Infinite was not

keen enough, and where, thus, the limitations of Time and Space prevailed.

Seeking calmly to find the cause of the world failure, Aswapathy penetrated the surface view of Nature where he perceived the dark, hostile and perverted mind of Nescience looking up at creation. "It was a space where nothing could be true" (2.7. p. 206), for it was the region of Hell in all its naked horror. The yogi realised that while there, man's endless state of perverse pains and sufferings was nothing but an "anguished nothingness" (2.7. p. 218). Time and Space had no meaning, because all the time "the soul lived on and suffered more" (2.8. p. 227), due to "the dull aching hours" of this "life's long hell (2.8. p. 228). Sri Aurobindo's delineation of the hellish existence, in which Time and Space have lost their meaning, is comparable to the long accounts of *narakavarnana* 'accounts of hell' one comes across in Vyasa's Bhagavatam, Dante's Divine Comedy, and the portrayal of life in the existential literature of the West. Like Nilakanta (Shiva), Aswapathy consumed the poison of that soulless place, and by a sacrificial act of sheer identity with it, he "saw in Night the Eternal's shadowy veil, / Knew death for a cellar of the house of life [. . .]" (2.8. p. 231). He continued to strive to discover the secret key of change in the deep slumber of the cosmic will.

Aswapathy had to pass through nights of doubt and depression before it dawned on him that even the darker aspects of our terrestrial drama had some significance in our evolution through Time and Space. He needed time to assimilate his

experiences before moving on. In the next plane, he experienced, "a wide intimate and blissful Dawn" where "all things that Time's torn heart had made" were healed (2.8. p. 232). Division ceased to be, and he could perceive the integral union of matter and spirit. Aswapathy then flew into the paradise of the Life Gods, a region characterised by perpetual joy and a bright felicity. The yogi rose to the stature of the gods and he was suffused with a sense of immortality. In Sri Aurobindo's crisp statement: "Immortality captured Time and carried Life" (2.9. p. 237). Mehta's observations on the pilgrim of Time are quite revealing:

He had seen for long the endless succession of Time, but the flow of Time by itself made no sense. He wanted to know the meaning of Time - succession. But for this he must touch the realm of Timelessness, for it is the Timeless that contains the meaning of time. (Dialogue with Death 38)

What the epic poet indicates is that it is only through Time that Eternity can be experienced.

With an ever-expanding consciousness the King moved next to the realms of the Mind which had packed "into its sealed small infinity, / Its endless time-made world outfacing Time [. . .]" (2.10. p. 238). Here, the "moments stretched towards the eternal Now, / The hours discovered immortality [. . .]" (2.10. p. 238). What the

poet means is that for an instant, Aswapathy was able to taste the concentrated bliss of the everlasting Now and the boundless Vast. In that instant Time appeared to stand still, and immortality was unveiled. The Christian mystic Meister Eckhart uses a similar term "Eternal Present" to denote Sri Aurobindo's "eternal Now". He too believes that God consolidates the past and the future in the present. "The three divisions of Time are an open book to Him, an intense Eternity where all movement stops, so also all becoming" (Nityabodhananda 88). But at the level of awareness attained so far, such an ecstatic, liberating experience was only a momentary one for Aswapathy.

Rising even more above the limits of the human mind, Aswapathy perceived that the ascending planes of the greater Mind exposed the "omniscient immensities" (Savitri 2.11. p. 261) beyond. This was a luminous region where the gulf between the human and the divine happened to close up. About this level of consciousness, the epic poet affirms: "Our present feels sometimes their regal touch, / Our future strives towards their luminous thrones [. . .]" (2.11. p. 263). The awakened soul climbs back to unborn heights where "Time's last ridges touch eternity's skies/ And Nature speaks to the spirit's absolute" (2.11. p. 264). We may say that here we have an intersection of Time and the Timeless, Space and the Spaceless, for thought, which is in Time and Space, gives way to vision, which transcends these two parameters. Obviously, such an ascent is through a triple realm of thought. Ordinary

thoughts are "World-Time's enjoyers" and "Moulders and measurers of fragmented Space" (2.11. p. 266). Still higher are the lords of Thought, whose all-surveying gaze embraces Time and Space. Aswapathy had attained this height of perception characteristic of the greater mind. He had made of Space his "wide all-seeing gaze/ Surveying the enormous work of Time [. . .]". This realisation dawned on him: "The cosmos is no accident in Time [. . .]" (2.11. p. 271). Nadkarni elaborates that the powers of the greater mind "try to squeeze termless truths into transparent systems and to make the Timeless accountable to time" ("Aswapati's Travels through the Worlds" 294). Neither thought nor mind could help him grasp the "secret knowledge" of the seers and the *Rishis*. He realised the need to transcend mind and thought, and to surrender to the Divine. As a result: "The timeless Ray descends into our hearts / And we are rapt into eternity" (2.11. p. 276).

The King left the frontiers of awakened thought to scale the summits of the unseen and the unknown mounting "in haste to the Eternal's house" (2.12. p. 277). His *Kundalini* was slowly reaching the *Sahasrara*. Sri Aurobindo's depiction of the mystic phenomenon is both colourful and picturesque:

Time's sun-flowers' gaze at gold Eternity:

There are the imperishable beatitudes.

A million lotuses swaying on one stem,

World after coloured and ecstatic world

Climbs towards some far unseen epiphany. (2.12. p. 279)

When our subtle centres of consciousness open like flowers to a celestial atmosphere, we are released from "the rude and tragic hold of Time" (2.12. p. 279).

At the level of consciousness then attained, Aswapathy became fully aware that his further ascent to greater, unknown and unseen heights would be impossible without Divine aid. Sri Aurobindo firmly believes: "Only the Eternal's strength in us can dare / To attempt the immense adventure of that climb [. . .]" (2.12. p. 280). Avoiding the various *siddhis* or occult powers that accrue with the rise of the Serpent Power, Aswapathy passed on to a more divine sphere which was above the realms of the diverse gods and godheads, above "the parting of the roads of Time, / Above the Silence and its thousandfold Word [. . .]" (2.12. p. 282).

Leaving behind him the world of the Ideal, the King entered the realm of the self of Mind. Detaching himself from his physical moorings, he became a witness self, silently looking on at the passing phenomena. This witness silence, the poet says, is "the mystic birthplace of the soul" (2.13. p. 283). Clearly, Aswapathy had attained *atmabodha* or self-realization; through the intensely spiritual nature of his inmost self he could identify himself with the immensity of the Infinite and the Eternal: "He stood on a wide arc of summit Space / Alone with an enormous Self

of Mind / Which held all life in a corner of its vasts" (2.13. p. 283). His soul experienced the peace of silence that comes as a result of the freedom from a cluttering of thoughts in the mind, and it comprehended the cosmic whole. All on a sudden, a ray of light fell on the scene. It then dawned on the traveller in Time that all the knowledge erected by the mind was unsound and unreliable.

Aswapathy resumed his spiritual odyssey tirelessly. He noticed a recluse-gate in the background of Mind-Space. He soon found a nook which could embrace all the worlds and spaces from the most gross to the most subtle. It was a "point that was the conscious knot of Space, / An hour eternal in the heart of Time" (2.14. p. 290). This was the realm of the disembodied, the heart of Space, the heart of Time. There, the King noted that "Distance could not divide, Time could not change," and all there was "soul or made of sheer soul-stuff" (2.14. p. 291). By then, Aswapathy had reached the expanse of the World-Soul, which was the centre of all. The poet comments: "His soul passed on, a single conscious power, / Towards the end which ever begins again," in a bold attempt to arrive at the ultimate source of all things, human and divine (2.14. p. 295).

Above the World-Soul Aswapathy found a huge being. It was the "figure of the deathless Two-in-One, / A single being in two bodies clasped [. . .]" (295). It was *Ardhanariswara* or the dual power of Shiva and Shakti, whose trance of bliss sustained the mobile world. Aswapathy felt that his entire being was becoming a

channel for the influx of the unknown. Currents of omnipotence flowed into him as he perceived the One, the "sole omnipotent Goddess ever veiled" (295), who was the Creatrix or the *Mulaprakriti* from whom all things including the dual power had emerged. Overwhelmed by the resplendent brilliance of the Divine Mother's face, Aswapathy made a "surrender of his boundless mind," a "self-giving of his silent heart," and he "fell down at her feet unconscious, prone" (2.14. p. 296).

Aswapathy's overwhelming experience brings to mind Arjuna's bewilderment and consternation when the Lord Krishna revealed his *Visvarupa* 'cosmic form' to him on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. As long as we are fettered by Time and Space, the effulgence of the incommensurable Omniscience will be unbearable in intensity to the physical vehicle. Mukherjee brings out the potency or overwhelming nature of the yogic state when the mortal consciousness confronts the Transcendental:

We may recall in this connection the stern warning uttered by the supreme Lord to Moses so that the latter might not try to go near Him and "see" Him in his original Form. For no consciousness lodged in any material embodiment can ever succeed in doing so.

(87)

What Aswapathy experienced was truly a most profound moment, pregnant with all times and all spaces, suffusing him with indescribable joy. But the timeless

experience lasted for only a split second:

After a measureless moment of the soul
 Again returning to these surface fields
 Out of the timeless depths where he had sunk,
 He heard once more the slow tread of the hours.

(Savitri 2.15. p. 297)

Arising, the King had a vision of the "one same stupendous All" with its "inexhaustible acts in a timeless Time, / A space that is its own infinity" (2.15. p. 298). Pandit epitomises Aswapathy's realisation at that juncture lucidly: "An all-revealing Light leads him to the regions of transcendent Truth where Time and Space are seen in their true nature as self-extensions and self-durations of the Spirit" (A Summary of Savitri 82). Aswapathy realised that: "There distance was his own huge spirit's extent; / Delivered from the fictions of the mind / Time's triple dividing step baffled no more [. . .]" (Savitri 2.15. p. 299).

Aswapathy had reached the Overmind region where Space did not divide and Time was one idea. Henceforth, everything was perceived in visions, which lay beyond the realms of Space and Time. This is how Mukherjee explains the state of Aswapathy's soul, which had caught a momentary glimpse of the Body of the Divine:

The soul admitted to this awe-inspiring vision beholds all things

in one view, not with a divided, partial, and therefore bewildered seeing of the mental consciousness but with the all-embracing and therefore all-reconciling courageous vision of the heroic spirit. (78)

In the course of his spiritual odyssey Aswapathy succeeded in experiencing every level of consciousness, each endowed with its characteristic Time and Space. He ranged freely both in the manifest and the unmanifest planes, explored the secrets of the Infinite in the Superconscient. As a fitting finale to his long voyage, he "scanned the secrets of the Overmind, / He bore the rapture of the Oversoul," and as a result, his "finite parts approached their absolutes, / His actions framed the movements of the Gods, / His will took up the reins of cosmic Force" (Savitri 2.15. p. 302). To put it in a nutshell, he became, through identification, the unborn, eternal self.

At the near end of his adventure of consciousness, Aswapathy saw through the evanescence of temporal existence. Earthly power and knowledge seemed to him to be mere "gifts of Time" (3.1. p. 305). A silence settled on the yogi's striving heart and he turned to the "Ineffable's timeless call" (305). Having transcended the ego once and for all, he was passing beyond the manifest world of forms and names. Mukherjee furnishes a brilliant commentary on this experience:

When one reaches the horizons of manifestation, standing on the dividing line of separation between manifestation and non-manifestation, one seems to discover that sight and form cannot cross the line and one is left with a pure perception alone and if this ends, the whole *namarupatmakam jagat*, the world of names and forms, will vanish into nothingness. (82)

This is what transpired in the case of Aswapathy who realised thus: "All he had been and all towards which he grew / Must now be left behind or else transform / Into a self of That which has no name" (Savitri 3.1. p. 307). The yogi became omnipotent, "a lonely seer of Time" (307). He found himself in a state of divine abyss or void. In the words of Sri Aurobindo: "A Vastness brooded free from sense of Space, / An Everlastingness cut off from Time [. . .]" (3.1. p. 308). Obviously, the King resumed his upward flight with increasing weightlessness so that he could travel easily into the domains of mystical spacelessness. Mehta clarifies that it was "not so much the space of nature as the Space of Consciousness" (Dialogue 69).

Aswapathy had reached the fag end on the road of Time. To quote from the epic: "What seemed the source and end was a wide gate, / A last bare step into eternity" (3.2. p. 311). Suddenly, there appeared before him in that utter silence a most marvellous presence. It was the Divine Mother, the mediatrix who connected

the earth with the Supreme, standing at the head of Time. "The Adoration of the Divine Mother" (3.2) offers us the vintage of Aurobindonian poetry, a true blend of picturesqueness, cadence and mysticism. The King perceived that a "Mother Might brooded upon the world," that the "Formless and the Formed were joined in her," and that she stood at the head of "birth and toil and fate" (3.2. pp. 313-14). The Divine Mother is both *nirguna* 'formless' and *saguna* 'with form'. Vyasa's Devi Bhagavatam underscores this idea throughout. Sri Aurobindo apparently echoes Vyasa when he postulates that the Divine Mother, in brief, is the origin of Time, Space, form and relativity. His portrayal of this enigmatic phenomenon is both elevating and prophetic:

This was a seed cast into endless Time.

A Word is spoken or a Light is shown,

A moment sees, the ages toil to express.

So flashing out of the Timeless leaped the worlds;

An eternal instant is the cause of the years. (3.2. p. 315)

What the poet means is that the seed of aspiration for the Divine was sown in Aswapathy's being. It is the *bijakshara* or the primal sound *Aum*. *Sabdabrahman* or *Aum* reverberates, and in an instant the vision of the Ultimate Reality or the "bodiless Namelessness" (Savitri 1.3. p.40) flashes. But it takes ages for the Many to emerge from the One and manifest on earth. Pandit supplements: "A moment's

vibration in the Eternal is at the root of these unrollings of Time" (Readings in Savitri 7: 79). At the acme of his mystical climb, Aswapathy could identify the Divine Mother in both her *saguna* and *nirguna* aspects. That was "the mystery the Night conceals" (Savitri 3.2. p. 314). One who unravels this enigma intuitively, obviously goes beyond Time and Space. Sri Aurobindo affirms that it is by dint of the Divine Grace that Aswapathy succeeded in his yoga. Her descent and compassion alone can alter the powerful foundations of inexorable Time. She is "the magnet of our difficult ascent," indeed. "Alone her hands can change Time's dragon base" (314).

Aswapathy made a total, unconditional and unhesitating surrender before the Divine Mother. The poet declares: "His soul was freed and given to her alone" (3.2. p. 316). At once, a last and overwhelming transformation came over him. His soul spread out like a sea and embraced the entire universe in one unity. Sri Aurobindo portrays Aswapathy's attainment of cosmic consciousness in a manner which has a high quality of immediacy: "Infinity swallowed him into shoreless trance" (3.3. p. 320). As a result:

He abode defended in his shoreless self,
 Companioned only by the all-seeing One.
 A Mind too mighty to be bound by Thought,

A Life too boundless for the play in Space,
 A Soul without borders unconvinced of Time,
 He felt the extinction of the world's long pain,
 He became the unborn Self that never dies [. . .]. (3.3. p. 322)

The light of bliss and might penetrated his inmost being and infused him with the rapture of beatific energies which joined "Time to the Timeless, poles of a single joy" (3.3. p. 323). Evidently, at the end of his arduous journey through overmental and supraphysical planes of consciousness, Aswapathy succeeded in transcending the mind, thought, Time, Space and therefore, pain and misery.

When he was thus blessed with the beatific vision of the Mother Divine, the Seer-King, who was magnanimity incarnate, beseeched Her to grant a similar transformation for the entire earth, but the Creatrix cautioned him: "Speak not my secret name to hostile Time; / Man is too weak to bear the Infinite's weight" (3.4. p. 335). Occult or mystic truths and revelations are invariably kept secret by those who know them, lest the ignorant should mock at or abuse them. Sri Aurobindo emphasises the importance of the opportune moment. Hence, the Divine Mother exhorted Aswapathy to anticipate the right time, reassuring him: "All things shall change in God's transfiguring hour" (3.4. p. 341). But the noble king persisted: "Mission to earth some living form of thee. / One moment fill with thy eternity, / Let thy infinity in one body live [. . .]" (3.4. p. 345). Aswapathy was manifestly

pleading with the *nirguna shakti* to condescend to restrict and confine her transcendental Self, and assume a mortal form in the co-ordinates of our space-time continuum, in order to redeem mankind, struggling and chafing under the yoke of mortality. He implored to her: "Pack with the eternal might one human hour / And with one gesture change all future time" (345). Complying with his ardent prayer the Mother, out of compassion, granted him the boon that all things shall be fulfilled in Time:

A seed shall be sown in Death's tremendous hour,

A branch of heaven transplant to human soil ;

Nature shall overleap her mortal step ;

Fate shall be changed by an unchanging will. (3.4. p. 346)

Critics and scholars are of the general opinion that Aswapathy's *Yoga* is highly autobiographical. "Aswapathy is a projection of the Saint's heroic self-image," observes Murti (8). Likewise, Som Ranchan regards the king to be Sri Aurobindo's mouthpiece ("Appendix - II" 164). S.D. Sharma's remark is quite relevant in the context: "Wading through the quagmire of worldly allurements with a dauntless spirit, the poet stretches his soul in this epic poem out to infinity - telescoping the past, the present and the future [...]" ("Spiritual Pabulum" 47). Georges Van Vrekhem is very vehement in equating the epic hero with the epic poet himself. He states categorically that "the Protagonist of the first three Books of *Savitri* is not the

Aswapati of the Mahabharata, but Sri Aurobindo himself." He adds that, these three books together with his later sonnets and shorter poems - are his spiritual autobiography ("Sri Aurobindo and Aswapati in Savitri" 258). He notes that Sri Aurobindo mentions for the first time the name of Aswapati only on page 341 ["But Aswapati's heart replied to her" (3.4)], evidently discounting the importance of the legendary king and sage, and to prevent the dimming of our perception of "Sri Aurobindo's world-transforming action" (262).

Vrekhem's observations are not unfounded. A close perusal of Sri Aurobindo's later sonnets (1930-1950) in particular reveals a parallel personal odyssey to Aswapathy's *sadhana*. For instance "The Pilgrim of the Night," "The Inconscient," "The Infinite Adventure," (CP 144, 145, 147) etc. describe the epic poet's sojourn through the various planes of the mind. "Transformation" records his supramental change as a result of his arduous travel into the inner occult fields. The poet has "drunk the Infinite like a giant's wine" and realises that "Time is my drama or my pageant dream" (133). In "Cosmic Consciousness," he affirms: "I have wrapped the wide world in my wider self / And Time and Space my spirit's seeing are" (144). Again, in "The Self's Infinity," the poet states: "I have become what before Time I was," that "My life is a silence grasped by timeless hands," that "I am alone with my own self for space," and that "I stretch to an eternal everywhere" (152). "Immortality" depicts the state of consciousness of the poet whose *Kundalini* has been roused:

having abolished death and time, his nature lives in the deep heart of immortality. The Serpent Power has crossed the *Ajna* and reached the *Sahasrara*, for Sri Aurobindo declares: "God's contract signed with Ignorance is torn; / Time has become the Eternal's endless year, / My soul's wide self of living infinite Space [. . .]" (167). In Iyengar's view, the Rishi's travels in Sri Aurobindo's poem of the same name "might be a first foreshadowing of Aswapathy's more extensive travels in *Savitri*" (Sri Aurobindo 157).

More examples may be adduced to substantiate the point in question. The fact is that on perusing the three books pertaining to Aswapathy's immense *sadhana*, one does get the feeling that the poet is not writing about something of which he does not possess first-hand knowledge. In fact, the King's yoga of transcendence is a clear reflection of Integral Yoga. Little wonder therefore, that there is an immediate quality in the poet's meticulous or even clinical description of each state of consciousness experienced by Aswapathy. Raghavacharyulu displays a deep, penetrative insight when he writes trenchantly on this aspect:

Aswapathy is the focus of the outer epic which formulates Sri Aurobindo's own pursuit of Integral Yoga and serves as a frame for the inner epic describing Savitri's plunge into the interior distance of the Eternal, Infinite, Universal Being [. . .].

His transcript and testimony of the mystic experiences provide an exact, comprehensive and profound record of the Yogic climb of the *Kundalini* from the *Muladhara* to the *Sahasrara* through the involuted spiral of the various *Chakras* and *Mandalas* as described in Patanjali's great work. ("The Immense Journey" 65-66)

The similarities between Aswapathy's *sadhana* and Sri Aurobindo's yoga should not lead us to suppose that there is a one-to-one correspondence in each detail; nor is it proper to assume that there is a chronological presentation in the narration of the occult phenomena. Iyengar staunchly endorses this view: "The identification of Aswapati's Yoga with Sri Aurobindo's should not, however, mean equating Aswapati's with Sri Aurobindo's life at all points or in every particular" ("A Survey of Savitri" 309). Deshpande elucidates this point comprehensively. He remarks that Sri Aurobindo's approach to Aswapathy's yoga is neither chronological nor "Newtonianly linear in the successive manner of a cause-and-effect series". He adds:

In fact it transcends the dimensions of Time [. . .]. We may say that when Sri Aurobindo is describing the upward journey of Aswapati climbing the ascending hierarchy of these innumerable worlds [. . .] it is not a curve of Time that he is tracing in sequence.

[. . .] it is a work which graphically characterises the entire evolutionary march of the Soul of the Earth. That is why the autobiography is a legend, an intense and powerful Legend of the Future, a future that is being enacted all along. ("Apropos of Savitri" xxii)

The fact that Sri Aurobindo's unique yoga derives from the seed idea of the *Tantra* is illustrated by Aswapathy's yoga. Nandakumar argues, for example, that the Tantric mode that helps one "to connect" with the Unknowable helps Aswapati not to be lost in the "Everlastingness cut off from Time" ("Savitri: The Devikavyam" 190). He is transformed as a result of the *Kundalini* adventure of consciousness, into a sort of divine spaceship existing beyond Time and Space, endowing him with supramental Time vision. The various tiers of the World-Stair that he "sees" are truly the externalised image of his inmost thoughts "that resemble the different *avaranas* or coverings in Sri Chakra where the one Divine is also seen as the many in gradations of divinity [. . .]" (199). No longer is there any division of Time or Space. "For worlds were many, but the Self was one" (Savitri 3.3. p. 323).

Aswapathy's *sadhana* is an upward mode of expansion of consciousness, which enables one to perceive the true nature of Time and Space. Through his marvellous forages into the unknown and uncharted territories of soul-space

undertaken with the utmost tenacity, the king understands how Time and Space are different, often bizarre, on different subtle planes. Throughout the odyssey of the soul, there is a sustained contrast between the ephemeral and the eternal. Purani makes an observation to this effect: "An ascending and a descending order of worlds from Eternity into Time and from Time back to Eternity was thus revealed to Aswapathy" (Sri Aurobindo's Savitri 167). In the words of the epic poet: "Ascending and descending twixt life's poles / The seried kingdoms of the graded Law / Plunged from the Everlasting into Time," and "Climbed back from Time into undying Self[. . .]" (1.5. pp. 88-89). Aswapathy could clearly perceive the relation between Eternity and the Time movement.

Thus, at the end of his occult climb, Aswapathy is so evolved in consciousness that he becomes, we may say, an authority on Time and Space. Dilating on the relevance of such an all - comprehending enlightenment Iyengar makes a remark, which serves to sum up the King's immense *sadhana*:

It is only from the ground of such total knowledge of past, present and future that he can be in a position to locate current ills and seek their removal, and to infer the evolutionary trends and pray or strive for their early and full realisation. (Dawn 39)

And it is left to Savitri to continue and complete the great task.

The Inward Plunge

V. Uma "Time and space in Sri Aurobindo's Savitri" Thesis. Department of English , St. Thomas College, Trichur, University of Calicut, 2004

Chapter V

The Inward Plunge

The latter half of Sri Aurobindo's epic is devoted to Savitri's Yoga, which forms a natural sequel to Aswapathy's *sadhana*. Whereas the King's Yoga is an individual, preparatory effort, triggered off by the prospect of personal beatitude initially, Savitri's *sadhana* aims at the divinisation of the earth, and the redemption of mankind through the resurrection of Satyavan. It is a deep probe into the nature and function of death. In temporal and spatial terms, Savitri's yoga demonstrates how one can transcend Time and Space by breaking free of the dread of Death, the pitiless lord of the realm of terrestrial existence, and how through an increasingly inward voyage, involving an intensification of consciousness, the soul can attain its original status in the "Unknowable's vast estate" (Savitri 1.3. p. 39).

The titular heroine's birth and growth, her quest for her divine collaborator, Satyavan, her confrontation with *Yama* and her ultimate triumph over Time and Space are all recounted in nine Books, from Book Four to Book Twelve of the epic. The birth and growth of the divine child Savitri, her meeting with Satyavan, the Shalwa prince, and her marriage to him, form the subject matter of Books Four to Six, Book Seven, Canto One, and Book Eight. Savitri's yogic *sadhana* is elaborated in six cantos in Book Seven, Cantos Two to Seven. Her encounter with

Death, which marks the climax of her spiritual efforts, comprises the bulk of Books Nine to Eleven. The final Book Twelve is the Epilogue of the epic, and it relates the story of Savitri's "return to earth" with Satyavan, after her phenomenal victory over Death. In Sri Aurobindo's hands, all the three - Savitri, Satyavan and Death - become symbols, and so the conquest over death assumes metaphysical connotations.

Vyasa depicts Savitri variously as *kanya tejasvini* the 'radiant daughter', as *devakanya* or 'celestial damsel' who is endowed with heavenly splendour, and as *devarupini*, the very embodiment of auspiciousness in every sense. In Sri Aurobindo's vision she becomes the timeless incarnation of the Divine Mother herself. He adds: "This incarnation is supposed to have taken place in far past times when the whole thing had to be opened, so as to "hew the ways of Immortality" " (Letters, Savitri 729). To cite from the poet's quill, "The omniscient Goddess" Savitri is an "Ambassadress twixt eternity and change" (1.1. p.4). Savitri, therefore, has to be understood as an *avatar* like Krishna or Christ, who had come down to the world of Time and Space with a mandate from the Absolute to redeem humanity from the sepulchral inconscience of *Yama's* reign of terror. Nolini Kanta Gupta succinctly elucidates Savitri's task as an *avatar*: "The task of the incarnate Supreme Consciousness is to revive the death-bound divinity, to free the human consciousness, re-install it in its original radiant status of the Divine Consciousness"

("Savitri - The Word of Sri Aurobindo" 54).

Sri Aurobindo's comment about Savitri's advent is: "A WORLD's desire compelled her mortal birth" (Savitri 1.3. p. 22). Indeed, the divine child is the *yagnaphala* or *yagnaprasad* or fruit of Aswapathy's ardent askesis, just as Rama, an *avatar* 'incarnation' of Vishnu, was born as a result of Dasaratha's *Putrakamesti yaga* or a sacrifice for progeny, or just as Draupadi emerged from the fire as a boon-daughter to King Drupada in the Mahabharata. The Mother of the Universe descended "into earth's imperfect mould" and resumed "her divine unfinished task" of hastening the evolutionary process towards Supermanhood (4.1. p. 353). Savitri's birth is an eternal sacrifice, for the descent into the spatio-temporal mould is indeed a limitation. It is an eternal phenomenon, a cosmic occurrence. Deshpande's words illuminate this point very well. He explains that Savitri's coming as the daughter of the timeless king Aswapathy is "an eternal birth which is also the birth in eternal Time". It is "an unfolding Story of the Eternal himself," which "cannot be set into the domains of what we see as the past, present, and future" ("Apropos of Savitri" xix). Thus the poet writes about her incarnation: "Once more with her fathomless heart she fronted Time," thereby disclosing the "secret contact broken off in Time" (Savitri 4.1. p. 353).

Being a divine incarnation, Savitri was an unusual child. "Immortal rhythms

swayed in her time-born steps [. . .]" (1.2. p. 15). So she displayed emotions and attitudes which were in keeping with the realm of eternity from where she had descended, but far above this world in Time and Space. To cite the poet's words:

Even in her childish movements could be felt
 The nearness of a light still kept from earth,
 Feelings that only eternity could share,
 Thoughts natural and native to the gods. (Savitri 4.1. p. 355)

Naturally, "Time's message of brief light was not for her" (1.1. p. 6). However, as Iyengar remarks, her surface human reactions did not "really belie the veiled divinity in her heart" (Indian Writing 200). We may say that Savitri was a *jivanmukta* 'a liberated soul' with a double consciousness: she retained in her innermost recesses the infinite wealth of the Supreme Consciousness; at the same time, she displayed a superficial perception of the world like ordinary mortals. Swami Sivananda's observations are highly enlightening in this matter:

The double consciousness of the Jeevanmukta places him in a unique position like the man on the wall to be aware of both the spheres of consciousness. His realization of Brahman is irrevocable. He cannot be shaken from his supreme consciousness. Yet for the good of humanity he engages a part of

his consciousness to function in the worldly sphere. (201)

Thus, Savitri lived simultaneously in a Timeless-Spaceless stance within a Time-Space framework. At times one and, at other times the other, came to the surface. Nolini Kanta Gupta exemplifies Savitri's function in elevating human consciousness to the utmost bounds beyond the phenomenal world:

Savitri is the Divine Consciousness but here in the mortal body she is clothed in the human consciousness; it is the human consciousness that she is to lead upward and beyond and it is in and through the human consciousness that the Divine Realisation has to be expressed and established. (On "Savitri" 6)

Besides preparing the ground for Savitri's great *sadhana*, Aswapathy also initiates her into it. By dint of "the gift of a revealing hour" he gazed at her brow which was the "very room and smile of musing Space, / Its brooding line infinity's symbol curve" (Savitri 4.3. p. 372). With his inner vision he knew that the Divine Mother had granted him a boon in the form of his daughter. Addressing Savitri as "spirit, traveller of eternity," who had come to the earth from the "immortal spaces here" in order to establish her foothold on "Chance and Time," he exhorted her to "meet a greater god, thy self beyond Time" (4.3. pp. 373-75). The words of her seer-father had the effect of a *mantra* on Savitri. They created a groove in her

consciousness and she "turned to vastnesses not yet her own" (375). The seed of transformation was sown and Savitri awoke to newer and higher dimensions of perception.

The meeting of Savitri and Satyavan in the forest signifies a decisive development in the heroine's *sadhana*. Unawares, the divine maiden "had neared her nameless goal" (5.1. p. 389) at the destined spot and hour. Satyavan is depicted in glowing terms as the human soul evolving from the Inconscience to Immortality, a "Veda-knower of the unwritten book" (5.2. p. 393). Deshpande comments: "Satyavan has, in the process of evolving Time, taken on himself the burden of inconscient horror and suffering" ("Satyavan Must Die" 16). On seeing Savitri, he instantly recognised in her, his soul's reply across dividing time. Madhusudan Reddy points out: "Savitri and Satyavan, missioned souls as they were, are drawn together from their long journeyings through time immemorial, for the fulfilment of earth's destiny" (Savitri 41). The two are portrayed in the epic as archetypal man and woman. Satyavan is the Eternal's delegate soul in man, while Savitri is the divine *Shakti*, who has descended in the process of evolving Time. They are "Travellers across the limitless plains of Time" drawn together from "fate-led journeyings." When they met on earth: "A moment passed that was eternity's ray, / An hour began, the matrix of new Time" (Savitri 5.2. p. 399). Symbolically speaking, the Timeless, Spaceless Supreme Creatrix had chosen the aspiring human soul as her mate;

naturally, there was hope that the soul could break itself free out of its imprisonment in Time-Space.

The omniscient Narad functions as a soothsayer or a *nimittakarana* 'causal agent'. On seeing Savitri, who had just returned after choosing Satyavan, he immediately intuited the future course that matters were going to take. He made an ominous prognostication: "Twelve swift-winged months are given to him and her; / This day returning Satyavan must die" (6.1. p. 431). In an apparently casual manner, he set free destiny in that hour.

Savitri's mother, in a characteristically human manner, tried to dissuade her daughter from marrying the ill-fated Satyavan, but the young maiden refused to revoke her decision. In a calm and resolute voice Savitri announced: "Once my heart chose and chooses not again." Neither Fate nor Death nor Time could ever dissolve her seal of truth to Satyavan (6.1. p. 432). Once and for all, she clinched all arguments masterfully: "I have looked at him from my immortal Self, / I have seen God smile at me in Satyavan; / I have seen the Eternal in a human face" (6.1. p. 436). Narad, who could foresee with his divine eye the ultimate blessed outcome of the whole drama, endorsed Savitri's choice. He convinced the Queen to let things take their course. He prophesied that a day was bound to come when Savitri would have to launch on her mystic voyage single-handed and unhelped, and "cross alone a perilous bridge in Time." He added: "In that tremendous silence lone and

lost / Of a deciding hour in the world's fate, / In her soul's climbing beyond mortal time," Savitri would have to confront Death" on "some verge between Time and Timelessness" (6.2. p. 461). Her conquest or otherwise would have serious repercussions on human destiny, for Savitri was a ray of the Transcendent, who alone had the power to smite Death.

The one year that Savitri spent in the blissful company of her beloved husband brought out the human aspect of the *avatar*. At that stage she obviously lived in her outer surface self, and hence experienced poignantly the poverty of time and the fleeting hours. She tried to drink life to the lees, clutching at every moment she could, to be with Satyavan, but in his absence, the grief-stricken woman "saw the desert of her coming days / Imaged in every solitary hour" (Savitri 7.1. p. 472).

Savitri had only twelve months of terrestrial existence to perform and perfect her *sadhana* before she could adventure "into infinite mind-space" (7.2. p. 479) and confront Death. Her plight is comparable to that of King Parikshit in Vyasa's Bhagavatam. A change of consciousness occurred in Savitri. The surface crust of silent, inner agony was suddenly broken. A Voice "from her being's summit" summoned her to her mission in life as she sat "staring at the dumb tread of Time," tied like "a sacrifice on the altar of Time," and exhorted her to arise and "vanquish Time and Death" (Savitri 7.2. p. 474). As Savitri was still in her outer consciousness, she initially responded like an ordinary human being, feeling overwhelmed and

defeated before the mighty force of Death. But the stentorian Voice admonished and challenged her for forgetting "man and life and time and its hours," forgetting "eternity's call, forgetting God" (7.2. p. 475). Had she not been sent with a special "mandate from eternity" with extraordinary powers and potentialities to fulfil the special destiny of leading "man to Truth's wide and golden road / That runs through finite things to eternity ?" (7.2. pp. 475-76). These words sank into Savitri's consciousness; her inner self was suddenly illumined and she expressed a readiness to comply with the exhortions of the "deathless Voice" (476).

The Voice instructed Savitri to plunge into her inner depths, seek her soul, remove the clutter of thoughts from her mind, and to establish a contact with the silence of the ultimate calm which would impart to her the strength to vanquish death. The Voice proclaimed: "Thy nature shall be the engine of his works, / Thy voice shall house the mightiness of his Word: / Then shalt thou harbour my force and conquer Death" (7.2. p. 476). In short, what Savitri received was a lucid account of the steps of Integral Yoga.

Instantaneously and unflinchingly, Savitri made a living choice to seek the Infinite. Being *dhyanyogaparayana* 'adept in meditation' she began in right earnest her interiorised yoga of self-realisation for the ordeal ahead. She plunged within, came out of her body in an occult way. With her inner eye opened, she gazed more and more inward, resolute to strive, to seek, and to find her soul. At

first, a "dream disclosed to her the cosmic past" (7.2. p. 477). Savitri perceived in her inner vision, the entire panorama of the past evolutionary history of the phenomenal universe, including the formation of life and mind, the generation of pain and pleasure as "the deed of a blind World-Energy" (477). Iyengar comments that in "an arc of wide comprehension, past and present mingle and overflow into the future" (Dawn 62).

Being an archetypal woman, Savitri gradually identified herself with everything she met. Sri Aurobindo asserts that "the whole destiny of mankind was hers" (Savitri 4.4. p. 377). This part of Savitri's Yoga bears a certain resemblance to Aswapathy's exploration of the subtle worlds. The repetition, far from being a mere reiteration of the yogic procedure, is truly an emphasis on the efficacy of Integral Yoga in transcending Time and Space. Iyengar endorses this view: "That Aswapathy, in a certain situation, had received a series of illuminations, does not make it redundant for his daughter to go over the ground again [. . .]" (Dawn 79).

Savitri saw space filled with the seeds of life, and human creatures being born in Time. In her deep meditative state she felt that "Time, life and death were passing incidents [. . .]" (Savitri 7.2. p. 487). The lower, inconscient nature had to be overcome in order to attain a higher level of consciousness. She resumed her inward plunge and passed through occult regions where Time and Space were of a different order from that of the external world. In the poet's words: "She crossed

through spaces of a secret self/ And trod in passages of inner Time" (7.3. p. 490). By slow degrees she surmounted the barrier of body consciousness. Savitri's tenacious entry into the inner countries is tellingly pictured in the epic: "Hour after hour she trod without release" fixing "her thought upon the saviour Name". As a result her mind grew still and empty. She became free. "A large deliverance came, a vast calm space" (7.3. p. 491).

In the course of her yogic plunge Savitri encountered three soul forces, each of which was only a portion of her soul, projected to redeem mankind from the travails of Time. Passing on, Savitri experienced an inner silence. The epic poet affirms: "In endless Time her soul reached a wide end, / The spaceless Vast became her spirit's place" (7.5. p. 523). She emerged into the realm of "a deathless sun" (7.5. p. 525) where she encountered the Eternal and Absolute, turned towards Time and the finite. The poet declares: "There suddenly she met her secret soul" (7.5. p. 526). She could vaguely apprehend the presence of the Oversoul, which was a being "immortal in transience". Sri Aurobindo dilates:

Infinity turned its gaze on finite shapes:

Observer of the silent steps of the hours,

Eternity upheld the minute's acts

And the passing scenes of the Everlasting's play. (526)

Savitri realised her unique role in the cosmic drama:

In the Divine Comedy a participant,
 The Spirit's conscious representative,
 God's delegate in our humanity,
 Comrade of the universe, the Transcendent's ray,
 She had come into the mortal body's room
 To play at ball with Time and Circumstance. (526)

Her soul joined the Oversoul, of which it was truly an inseparable part. In the happy phrasing of the poet: "Then with a magic transformation's speed / They rushed into each other and grew one" (7.5. p. 527). To put it in another way, the human Savitri merged into the divine Savitri.

The intensity of Savitri's concentration, as she sat in meditation rose, and she went into a trance. A divine power descended into her being, causing her *Kundalini* to rise, which transformed her and transported her to a plane beyond Time and Space. In a splendid passage characterised by authenticity and *mantric* resonance, Sri Aurobindo portrays Savitri's inner change in terms of the sacred lotus imagery, *chakras* and *granthis*:

A mighty movement rocked the inner space
 As if a world were shaken and found its soul:

Out of the Inconscient's soulless mindless night
 A flaming Serpent rose released from sleep.
 It rose billowing its coils and stood erect
 And climbing mightily, stormily on its way
 It touched her centres with its flaming mouth ;
 As if a fiery kiss had broken their sleep,
 They bloomed and laughed surcharged with light and bliss.
 Then at the crown it joined the Eternal's space.
 In the flower of the head, in the flower of Matter's base,
 In each divine stronghold and Nature-knot
 It held together the mystic stream which joins
 The viewless summits with the unseen depths,
 The string of forts that make the frail defence
 Safeguarding us against the enormous world,
 Our lines of self-expression in its Vast. (7.5. p. 528)

Evidently, such a sublime-passage, which contains not a word more or less, can emanate only from the quill of a poet like Sri Aurobindo, who had a direct experience of *Kundalini*, and who was, moreover, endowed with *kavivyapara* or the poetic genius to give expression to it in such a sincere and picturesque manner.

The Serpent Power elevated Savitri's level of consciousness beyond the mind.

She beheld the innumerable manifestations of thoughts in Time, which were, in fact, the projections from the realm of the Timeless: "For the Eternal's powers are like himself, / Timeless in the Timeless, in Time ever born" (7.6. p. 541). The merging of her soul with the Oversoul enabled Savitri to perceive the One behind and beyond the Many. The poet uses the Passive voice to bring out the enigmatic nature of the One: "It was perceived, yet hid from mind and sight. / The One only real shut itself from Space / And stood aloof from the idea of Time" (7.6. p. 547). That "One" met Savitri like a point from Space, omnipresent, dimensionless and without direction in the recurring moment in Time, the Eternal Now. It was a "spaceless and a placeless Infinite" (7.6. p. 548), obviously beyond the pale of the human mind. But even at the level of perception which Savitri had attained then, "eternity and infinity seemed but words" (548). The *yogini* had to plunge into even greater depths of consciousness in order to truly experience Timelessness and Spacelessness.

At the zenith of her *sadhana*, Savitri actually attained oneness with the Timeless, Spaceless Absolute. From her surface consciousness it had been a very long voyage to cosmic consciousness. Having made her being a temple of the *yogasakti* or cosmic power, the traveller of eternity became a witness soul. "She passed beyond Time into eternity, / Slipped out of space and became the Infinite [. . .]" (7.7. p. 555). She surmounted the invisible barrier that divided soul from

soul. "She was all vastness and one measureless point" (555). From that point, Savitri strove to hold all in one large embrace. She ascended beyond the boundaries of Time and Space into the Superconscient, which is characterised by Infinity and Eternity. Sri Aurobindo's delineation of this ascent is marked by poetic grandeur and stateliness, and is a fitting finale to the yoga of Savitri:

The cosmos flowered in her, she was its bed.
 She was Time and the dreams of God in Time ;
 She was Space and the wideness of his days.
 From this she rose where Time and Space were not ;
 The superconscient was her native air,
 Infinity was her movement's natural space ;
 Eternity looked out from her on Time. (7.7. p. 557)

Sitaraman comments on Savitri's attainment of cosmic consciousness:

Having thus the whole of the cosmos in her consciousness she rises into the Transcendental and so becomes the conscious bridge between the Eternal and the Temporal, the Infinite and the Finite, the Superconscient and the Inconscient. (95)

Thus, at the end of her *sadhana* Savitri found her soul which was both cosmic and supracosmic. She passed beyond Time into the realm of eternity, and dwelling

perennially in the consciousness of the Divine Mother, she began to equip herself to confront Fate and Time.

Book VIII entitled "Death in the Forest" opens with a picture of Savitri's yoga of preparation to face the inevitable death of her husband. Tyberg observes how Savitri is depicted as struggling with the burdens of her *Karmic* past, striving to be relieved of the legacy of past selves which were "a block on the immortal road" (421). Sri Aurobindo's account of Satyavan's physical cessation and Savitri's realisation of this naked fact of mortality at the end of the Book is marked by poignancy:

As if from a Silence without form or name
 The Shadow of a remote uncaring god
 Doomed to his Nought the illusory universe,
 Cancelling its show of idea and act in Time
 And its imitation of eternity.
 She knew that visible Death was standing there
 And Satyavan had passed from her embrace.

(Savitri 8. pp. 565-66)

Once again, Savitri sat in meditation and plunged into her inner soul-space. She achieved clairvoyance and clairaudience. Things which existed normally beyond

the human sight were suddenly disclosed to her "limitless gaze". Her *Kundalini* started ascending and she broke free of "the cords of self-oblivion" (9.1. p. 572). The sovereign Divine Grace, silently and swiftly descended into Savitri, linking "Time's seconds to infinity". When the ascending Serpent Power reached her *Sahasrara*, it rendered her most mighty and unassailable by mortal Time. In the poet's vision:

It entered the mystic lotus in her head,
 A thousand - petalled home of power and light.
 Immortal leader of her mortality,
 Doer of her works and fountain of her words,
 Invulnerable by Time, omnipotent,
 It stood above her calm, immobile, mute. (9.1. p. 573)

Evidently, Savitri had entered into a trance. She had crossed the borders of the dividing sense. Thought, Time and Death were absent from her.

Next followed Savitri's journey with Death, a journey initially in Time and Space, and eventually transcending such limitations imposed by the remorseless dictator of the terrestrial domain. Death, who contemptuously looked upon the transient human being as a mere "bubble on Time's sea" (10.4. p. 654), admonished her for following him, as though her "breath could live where Time must die" (9.1.

p. 580). He ordered her to return to the mortal realm. But the divine woman's "high nude soul, / Stripped of the girdle of mortality" (9.1. p. 581), and equipped with an adamantine will, resolutely followed him into an Abyss where both Time and Space apparently ceased. Sri Aurobindo presents before us a graphic picture of the Timeless Void:

As if through passages of receding time
 Present and past into the Timeless lapsed ;
 Arrested upon dim adventure's brink,
 The future ended drowned in nothingness. (9.2. pp. 582-83)

Death tried his utmost to intimidate Savitri by trumpeting his unlimited power as an annihilator of Time and Space. He proclaimed arrogantly:

I am the shapeless formidable Vast,
 I am the emptiness that men call Space,
 I am a timeless Nothingness carrying all,
 I am the Illimitable, the mute Alone.
 I, Death, am He; there is no other God. (9.2. pp. 592-93)

Unperturbed by Death's sophistry, Savitri plodded on tenaciously. Death was annoyed that a mortal should interfere with matters over which he had been the lord and master till then. He wanted Savitri to abandon the problem of the earth,

namely, its terrible fear of death caused by ignorance, to be solved by the tardy process of Time. But she persisted: "I claim from Time my will's eternity, / God from his moments" (10.4. p. 652). The verbal encounter went on for some time, when Death understood that Savitri was extremely obstinate and determined. At last, he challenged her: "But where is thy strength to conquer Time and Death?" (10.4. p. 664).

For a third time, the primordial coiled World Energy arose in Savitri. Sri Aurobindo declares: "A mighty transformation came on her." She became a "little figure in infinity" who, nevertheless, appeared to be "the Eternal's very house" (10.4. p. 664). In other words, she attained cosmic consciousness. It was as though her soul was the centre of the universe, whose circumference embraced the entire, wide Space. Savitri dealt a crushing blow to Death by declaring that, though powerful himself, he was after all, only a grandiose instrument of the Divine Mother, whose task is to "force the soul of man to struggle for light / On the brevity of his half-conscious days" (10.4. p. 666). Savitri revealed her divinity, and Death was swallowed up. The "dire universal Shadow" of Death disappeared, leaving a "mute invisible and translucent wall" (10.4. p. 668) between Savitri and Satyavan. Indeed, it was the wall that separated Death and Immortality, the Manifest world of Time and Space and the Unmanifest realm of the Timeless, Spaceless, *Brahman*. Mehta's comment is that the wall has its existence in the sphere of Time (Dialogue 327).

Sri Aurobindo pinpoints Savitri's state of consciousness at this juncture: "Her soul stood close to the founts of the infinite" (11.1. p. 671). Savitri's dialogue with Death had started in the precincts of Time and Space. Now, she ascended to a plane where "Time dwelt with eternity as one" (11.1. p. 678).

A Voice from her heart's cave tempted Savitri to choose personal, solitary bliss. Savitri refused firmly as she was aware of her heavenly mandate as well as of her own potential to fulfil it in collaboration with Satyavan. She implored to the Voice for the creation of a new man, the "superhuman with the Eternal mate," for otherwise, this entire world with all its creations would be a "nothing that in Time's moments seems to be" (11.1. p. 693). In reply, the Voice exhorted her: "But if thou wilt not wait for Time and God, / Do then thy work and force thy will on Fate" (11.1. p. 694). She had to heighten her consciousness still further and to climb "upon a ladder of greater worlds / To the infinity where no world can be." She would then be able to hear "the Eternal's firm command" (694).

The Voice explained to Savitri: "Two are the Powers that hold the ends of Time; / Spirit foresees, Matter unfolds its thought [. . .]" (694). The world of forms and shapes was a manifestation of the Spirit expanding and extending itself in Time and Space, and evolving "inevitably a charged content, / Intention of his force in Time and Space, / In animate beings and inanimate things [. . .]" (694). To Savitri who had come to emancipate mankind and to divinise the earth, the Voice announced:

"Ascend, O soul, into thy timeless self; / Choose destiny's curve and stamp thy will on Time" (11.1. p. 695).

The Voice faded, and a Power shook the phenomenal world. Savitri found herself in an ineffable world in "spaceless orbits and on timeless roads" (695). She had obviously gone beyond the *namarupatmakamjagat*, had become one with all, her consciousness having expanded infinitely. Still rejecting personal salvation in the form of an "immense extinction in eternity, / A point that disappears in the infinite [. . .]" (11.1. p. 696), Savitri chose the Almighty Lord's peace as "a boon within to keep / Amid the roar and ruin of wild Time / For the magnificent soul of man on earth" (696).

The Lord, who was pleased with the *yogini*, addressed Savitri and Satyavan as a "dual power of God" whom he had sent down into "an ignorant world / In a hedged creation shut from limitless self" to divinise the earth and to lift "earth-beings to immortality" (11.1. p. 702). He proclaimed to Savitri: "You are my Force at work to uplift earth's fate [. . .]" (702). Satyavan was God's soul who climbed from the night of ignorance through life, mind and the supernature's Vast to the "supernal light of Timelessness / And my eternity hid in moving Time / And my boundlessness cut by the curve of Space" (11.1. pp. 702-03). The Voice reiterated the avowed purpose of the *avataric* descent of Savitri and her union with Satyavan, "the godhead growing in human lives" (703) in clear tones:

These are the high forerunners, the heads of Time,
 The great deliverers of earth-bound mind,
 The high transfigurers of human clay,
 The first-born of a new supernal race.
 The incarnate dual Power shall open God's door,
 Eternal supermind touch earthly Time. (11.1. p. 705)

When the Voice ceased, Savitri held the soul of Satyavan within her all -
 encompassing soul. The mighty wings of the Superconscient closed upon her, and
 she found herself buried in the bosom of Mother Earth, suffused with the bliss and
 peace of Eternal Silence. Sri Aurobindo furnishes us with a splendid and stately
 description of the acme of Savitri's yoga:

Then from a timeless plane that watches Time,
 A Spirit gazed out upon destiny,
 In its endless moment saw the ages pass.
 All still was in a silence of the gods.
 The prophet moment covered limitless Space
 And cast into the heart of hurrying Time
 A diamond light of the Eternal's peace,
 A crimson seed of God's felicity [. . .]. (11.1. p. 712)

Savitri had attained the Eternal Now which contained all Times and all Spaces. From a timeless stance, the Transcendental Spirit watched in silence the unrolling of the Timeless, Spaceless Absolute on the terrestrial plane. All the mystic secrets in cosmic history were now revealed before Savitri's inner eye. "A key turned in a mystic lock of Time," observes the poet (712). The Power or Divine Grace descended into Savitri's entire being, and an infinite bliss and peace pervaded the whole earth.

The transformed Savitri returned to earth along with Satyavan. Her unhorizoned consciousness encompassed everything that existed in Time and Space. Sri Aurobindo states: "All things in Time and Space she had taken for hers [. . .]" (12. p. 715). She was no longer agitated by the fleeting instant or temporality. "Now in her spaceless self released from bounds / Unnumbered years seemed moments long drawn out, / The brilliant time-flakes of eternity" (12. p. 716). In short, Savitri had become the repertoire of all Times and all Spaces. The macrocosm had merged with the microcosm. Savitri, the human incarnation, had blended harmoniously with her Divine Mother-self ready to redeem earthly Time and Space. Here is the poet's lofty description of the new Savitri:

Boundless she was, a form of infinity.

Absorbed no longer by the moment's beat

Her spirit the unending future felt

And lived with all the unbeginning past. (12. p. 716)

Savitri's Yoga is an intrinsic study of death, its nature, function and significance. Death is presented conventionally as the absolute despot of the mortal world, who looks upon the earthly being most contemptuously as something trivial and immaterial. His bold statement to Savitri: "My will once wrought remains unchanged through Time" (10.3. p. 636) is a projection of his nonchalant overconfidence in his own power to wield absolute sway over the world of Time and Space. Verma aptly points out: "The submission to the death-state, as we may conclude from the polemic between Yama and Savitri, is submission to the state of matter" (15). Accordingly, the anxiety of the moment's beat is caused by the actuality of death.

Savitri is convinced that death, or more precisely, the fear of death, is only a mental phenomenon. She asserts that Death has "woven the ignorant mind into a screen / And made of Thought error's purveyor and scribe" (10.3. p. 621), so that life on earth seems only "as a dream in endless suffering Time" (10.3. p. 629). R.K. Singh pursues a similar line of argument:

She sees the problem of death not as an inherent characteristic of life's rhythm but only as subject to the operation of mind. As long as life is subject to the control of mind, the fear of Death is

bound to remain but as soon as life is freed from control of mind, giving way to supermind controlling it, there will be no death.

("The Structure of Savitri" 50)

Bound to the wheel of Time and Space, and trapped in the mire of ignorance, man erroneously puts down Death to Chance, Fate or Time. All these parameters become inter-related in the mental process. Writing at length about the synonymous nature of Time and Death, Mehta expresses a number of pertinent opinions: "Death is not the problem, it is Time which is the problem, for out of Time arise conditions of Fate. Death is only an expression of Time" (Dialogue 345).

It dawns upon Savitri that the way to the realm of the Nameless without Time and Space is inevitably through death. In Sri Aurobindo's words: "Death is a stair, a door, a stumbling stride / The soul must take to cross from birth to birth [. . .]" (Savitri 10.1. p. 600). What that means is that the universe has been created for the soul to adventure into Time and Space and to wrestle with the adamant necessity, namely, death. Though powerful, death is not the most powerful. Death is also a functionary in the cosmic *lila* of the Lord, one of the "aspects of God's face" in "a relative world of Time" (10.4. pp. 656-57). When Savitri becomes *mrityuvijayini* 'the conqueror of death', Time and Space cease to have divisions; names and forms disappear. The young *yogini* actually illustrates through her immense spiritual efforts how the supreme wisdom about death can help to liberate man from temporal

and spatial ignorance.

Whereas Aswapathy's yoga is a lone task, Savitri's yoga is entwined with Satyavan's fate. If he is the Eternal's representative, the aspiring, activated human consciousness stationed originally in the earth, she represents the Supermind. Satyavan symbolises aspiring humanity endowed with the potential to regain its original Timeless, Spaceless state, but which is helpless without the Divine Grace. When Savitri's *shakti* descends into him he is able to ascend. Both his meeting with Savitri and his death are momentous events. "The death of Satyavan," according to Deshpande, "is the central theme of the Savitri - tale around which the entire occult action revolves" ("Satyavan Must Die" 1). As Satyavan represents phenomenological reality, his death, on the symbolic and metaphysical levels, indicates the ending of the ephemeral and the transient. Albuquerque interprets Narad's phrase about Satyavan's predestined death to imply both the "fulfilment of eternity in time as much as time opening to eternity" (307). In other words, Satyavan's death signifies the disappearance of Time and Space and all the dualities of the phenomenal world associated with them ; and that is a prerequisite for Time to merge with Eternity, and Space with Infinity.

Savitri's triumph over Death is not to be regarded as a physical one. It symbolically implies freedom from the bondage of ignorance through a heightening of consciousness. Her ignorance of the true nature of Death ended. To cite

Deshpande: "The veil of Inconscience spread over the process of Time has now gone, thus revealing the true nature of Death" ("Respecting Savitri" xxiv). As a result of her yoga, Savitri succeeded in cutting a door to immortality through the void of Death.

Also, Savitri's return to the earth with Satyavan after her victorious confrontation with Death should not be conceived as a physical event. The body of Satyavan, which belonged to the world of Time and Space, was no more. Death had claimed it as his legitimate prize. With his physical cessation the pot space of his body had diffused into the *akasa* or surrounding space. However, Savitri's consciousness had expanded so widely that her soul could meet Satyavan's soul. So, what she had retrieved was Satyavan's timeless, spaceless self. She had reached a point where Death had lost its sting.

Savitri's yoga is a happy blend of Integral Yoga and *Tantricism*. In tune with the *Tantric* beliefs Sri Aurobindo accords a pre-eminent status to the indivisible Divine as the incarnate *Shakti*. Deshpande asserts that in the entire Occult-Yogic literature Savitri's *Shakti* Yoga is undoubtedly unique:

We have here the true meaning and purport of the Tantrik sadhana, Shakti Upasana, as a means for the effective transformation of Nature from her inconscient mode of working in the dumb

inconscient body into a luminous dynamism of her consciousness-force. ("The Legend of Savitri" 545)

The fact that Aswapathy gets the boon of a *daughter*, and not a son, is noteworthy in the context. Nandakumar endorses the opinion that the incarnation is cast as a female figure "to draw our minds to the efficacy of drawing close to Tantra in the Integral Yoga" ("Savitri: The Devikavyam" 184). The epic delineates Savitri at different ages or stages of her life: as a child, as a young maiden, as a blissfully happy wife, and as a tenacious *yogini*, which taken together bring to mind the Divine Mother's evolution in Time. To quote from Nandakumar again:

One of the important ways used by our ancients to help the aspirant get settled in the concept of the Supreme's motherhood is to see the Divine Mother in different stages of age which is an easily assimilable experience for man who is controlled by the concept of Time. ("Savitri: The Devikavyam" 203-04)

Love and *Kundalini* together constitute a solid basis for Savitri's *sadhana* for transcending the body and attaining cosmic consciousness. In the beginning, Savitri's love for Satyavan obviously has a physical dimension, but through her ardent yogic efforts, the young wife converts it into divine love. Deshpande emphasises the necessity of Savitri's physical relationship with her husband in her effort to transcend Time and Space:

Her one-year association with him in love's oneness was occultly essential when whatever had to be worked out was worked out in the enduring greatness of efficacious love. Time prepared the destiny that goes beyond time's cycles. The sanction of one-year period was a necessary and sufficient condition for the intense yogic preparation. ("Apropos of Savitri" xxxviii)

Likewise, Marudanayagam argues that the kind of "denigration of love" one finds in the Latin poet Lucretius is summarily dismissed, categorically rejected in Savitri which truly is "the greatest celebration of human love" (351).

The rise of the "coiled World-Energy" (Savitri 10.4. p. 665) in the young wife is accompanied by a psychic transformation from human love and self consciousness into the highest, self-transcending, all-embracing love. Som Ranchan offers a psychodynamic interpretation of the sublimation of human love and its efficacy as seen in Savitri:

In a word, Savitri's approach to kundalini is through psychic transformation in which her relationship with Satyavan is crucial. The psychic transformation, grounded in faith, fuelled by aspiration, tied to a relationship of deep *anteros* and *pothos*, alone can take charge of body, life and mind. ("The place of Kundalini in Savitri's Sadhana" 127)

What transpires as a result of the process is that the human love that Savitri feels for one person, and which is confined to the temporal-spatial existence, expands phenomenally into cosmic love which transcends the body, the mind, life, Time and Space. To put it more explicitly, the human element in Savitri is transmuted into a divine entity so that she becomes capable of a timeless, spaceless dimension of pure love that is all-embracing, unconditional and therefore, elevating. And for this to happen, the death of Satyavan is necessary, even indispensable, as it symbolises the end of body consciousness and spatio-temporal bondage. Deshpande makes a perceptive remark: "Yes, Satyavan must die that Death be dead" ("Satyavan Must Die" 12). Thus love, *Kundalini* and death become welded in Savitri's yoga.

We find reflected in Savitri's yoga certain time-related themes such as Choice, Original Sin, Martyrdom, Resurrection and Redemption of Time, which have a Christian ring about them. On this score, Savitri's *sadhana* finds echoes in Eliot's poems and plays. In choosing to marry the ill-fated Satyavan, Savitri virtually elects to relinquish an ordinary existence in the world of Time and Space. In a sense, she courts martyrdom, for life without her Eternal companion is death for her too. Savitri's choice and martyrdom are very similar to the predicament of Thomas Beckett, the protagonist of Eliot's Christian play Murder in the Cathedral. But, while Beckett initially doubts the spiritual validity of his choice, and has to overcome several temptations before he submits himself before God, Savitri has no such

vacillation for, being an emanation of the Timeless, Spaceless Divine Mother, she has an unflinching faith in God's plan for man and the earth. Beckett affirms: "A Christian martyrdom is never an accident," and that it is "always the design of God, for His love of men, to warn them and to lead them, to bring them back to His ways" (Murder in the Cathedral 53). Beckett implies that martyrdom is an act of timelessness, and not one constrained by the limits of temporality. Through Savitri's momentarily decisive choice Sri Aurobindo likewise illustrates that he who has chosen the Infinite has already been chosen or earmarked by the Divine Mother out of her boundless grace. That is why her omniscient father tells Savitri: "I approve thy choice". He has realised that "Death is our road to immortality" (Savitri 6.1. p. 424). For the same reason Narad dissuades the Queen from changing the secret will, namely, God's plan for Savitri. He asserts: "Time's accidents are steps in its vast scheme" (6.2. p. 460). Savitri's choice is made in a moment of Time which is pregnant with all times.

By means of her yoga Savitri realised her "deep original sin, the will to be / And the sin last, greatest, the spiritual pride [. . .]". She "atoned for all since the first act whence sprang / The error of the consciousness of Time [. . .]" (10.1. p. 599). In Sri Aurobindo's view, the original sin is *avidya* or ignorance, which causes the soul to feel itself separate from its original timeless, spaceless self, and forfeit its supreme abode. Breaking away, and moving farther away from its source, it

experiences both the pains and pleasures of the flux of Time and Space, recurrence, and the never ending cycle of death and rebirth.

The Resurrection of Satyavan is the culmination of Savitri's yoga. Satyavan is the manifestation of truth on the phenomenal plane. His death metaphorically signifies the eclipse of truth by the forces of darkness, which is a mere phase in the natural cycle of change; hence it is no cause for lamentation. Narad explains to the Queen in lucid terms: "His death is a beginning of greater life, / Death is the spirit's opportunity" (6.2. p. 459). Thus interpreted, the Resurrection of Satyavan refers to the retrieving of his Timeless, Spaceless self from the jaws of *avidya* 'ignorance'. R.K. Singh elaborates how that involves an elevation of consciousness:

The death and resurrection of Satyavan is characterised by a displacement: it is the shifting over from the old psyche to a new one, the disintegration and sloughing of the ignorance - bound old consciousness and formation of a new consciousness. His is a 'mock death' in that he dies the death of ignorance [. . .] and is resurrected to the birth of spiritual life [. . .] living the life of Spirit, which is deathless. In other words, he is transformed into a new consciousness through death. ("Some Reflections on the Mythical Construction of Death in Sri Aurobindo's Savitri" 34)

Evidently, the death and resurrection of Satyavan signify how, through the yogic elevation of consciousness, man can transcend the limitations of phenomenal Time and Space. Savitri, the embodiment of the potent *Gayatri mantra*, is the Saviour Word. She, who is established in the transcendental consciousness, strives to uplift Satyavan, who is only at the cosmic level. It is with the merger of the two that Satyavan's resurrection becomes complete. Sri Aurobindo declares in clear tones: "A vast intention has brought two souls close / And love and death conspire towards one great end" (6.2. p. 459). Ranchan's appropriate remarks further clarify the "one great end": "Both Savitri and Satyavan can be considered as two ontological principles which merge into one another - just as a wave merges into the waters of the sea" ("Appendix -I" 160).

The redemption of Time and Space occurs as a result of the resurrection of Satyavan. Leonard Unger explains that the phrase "to redeem the time" implies a desire that such a time as was conducive to "the higher dream" be restored (60). "Redeeming time" was a favourite preoccupation of Eliot's. To quote from his

Four Quartets:

Time present and time past

Are both perhaps present in time future,

And time future contained in time past.

If all time is eternally present

All time is unredeemable. (13)

What Eliot means is that it is through the temporal, purgatorial experience that time or temporality is conquered. He adds in the same poem: "Only through time time is conquered" (16). When the still point, which is the point of intersection of Time and Eternity is reached, one experiences the presence of all times. Eliot's plays dramatise the idea of "redeeming time," but they remain rather vague and empirical.

Sri Aurobindo towers majestically beside Eliot, for in place of occasional and vague glimpses of other worlds of reality that the British dramatist enjoyed, the Indian yogi-poet had a direct apprehension of Truth and Reality. Savitri's exploration of the hidden realms of consciousness and her apocalyptic visions which are projected in the occult theatres of her inner life serve as a prelude to the transforming action at the climactic moment of the epic crisis namely, the "death" of Satyavan. Having enjoyed transcendental bliss, Savitri, in all compassion and magnanimity like Christ or the Buddha, descends to raise Satyavan, who represents the evolving humanity, to taste the ecstasy of the *Brahmic* consciousness, far above the region of Time and Space, far beyond Thought and Mind. Obviously, in Savitri redemption is an authentic experience of the psychic strata both in the individual mind and the Universal Mind. Ignorance and the concomitants of the lower

consciousness naturally vanish at the emergence of the higher consciousness, and for Sri Aurobindo, redemption takes place "here and now" (Rameshwar Gupta, "Savitri in World Literature" 110). This is how Time and Space are redeemed and restored through the resurrection of Satyavan.

"To be one with the Eternal is the object of Yoga," asserts Sri Aurobindo. He elaborates:

To be one with the Eternal is also to live in the Eternal and in his presence and from his infinite nature, - *sayujya*, *salokya*, *samipya*, *sadrishya*. These four together are one way of being and one perfection. (qtd. in Anand 8)

In the process of elevating herself to the superconscious state of Timelessness and Spacelessness, Savitri enjoys all the four levels of mystic experience of *Isvara* or *Saguna Brahman*, namely, *samipya* (proximity), *salokya* (sameness of abode), *sarupya* (sameness of form) and *sayujya* (union). The twelve months of her married life with Satyavan give Savitri a foretaste of the bliss to come, on a physical and emotional level. When, later, she in-gathers her energies, plunges within and discovers her psychic being, she attains *samipya*. Her sojourn into the interior worlds or inner spaces of the mind and beyond leads her to dwell in the inner temple of the Lord, that is, *salokya*. When she transcends the *namarupatmakam*

jagat, she becomes aware that she is not the perishable body, but is truly a spark of the Divine. She attains *sarupya* through this knowledge or awareness of her original state as a soul of bliss. In the final part of her *sadhana* Savitri identifies herself and merges with the Absolute and she experiences *sayujya*. The fourth phase is the culmination of the earlier ones. Savitri's experience of *Saguna Brahman* in the form of Satyavan is thus consummated in the ultimate experience of *Nirguna Brahman*, which is a state of Pure or Absolute Consciousness. The human bride of the mortal Satyavan is thereby transformed into the Eternal Bride of the Timeless Infinite, in a moment of divine Time.

Savitri's yoga is therefore a Purna yoga or a complete demonstration of Integral yoga for transcending Time and Space. While it forms a natural sequel to Aswapathy's yoga, it also serves as a complement to it. But, whereas Aswapathy's *sadhana* is more psychological, Savitri's *tapasya* is psychosomatic, that is, involving both body and mind. Considered together, the two yogas constitute a double spiritual autobiography of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, a fact that can be easily verified by comparing Savitri with the records and diaries of their yogic experiences. Little wonder, therefore that the yogas are characterised by authenticity and immediacy which, in turn, are seen reflected in Sri Aurobindo's diction, style and imagery, for style is an index of personality.

The Seeing Word

V. Uma "Time and space in Sri Aurobindo's Savitri" Thesis. Department of English , St. Thomas College, Trichur, University of Calicut, 2004

Chapter VI

The Seeing Word

Vedic poetry is the earliest utterance of the perceiving soul attired in polyvalent symbols and intuitive images. Word and vision are regarded as inseparable and hence the expression *pasyanti vak* or the seeing word. Echoing Vedic wisdom Sri Aurobindo holds the view that the intensity of poetic vision is a must, for without it, the *mantra* of the Real, the apt garb for the supreme truths is not possible (Future Poetry 17). Most of the time man merely drifts in a "world of fragile forms / Carried on canvas-strips of shimmering Time [. . .]" (Savitri 1.2. p. 16). However, there are moments in his terrestrial existence when "the inconstant tread of Time can seem / The eternal moment which the deathless live [. . .]" (6.1. p. 421). In such instants "vision climbs beyond the reach of Time" (2.15. p. 299). "A cosmic vision, a spiritual sense / Feels all the Infinite lodged in finite form [. . .]" (10.4. p. 662) and hears "the sole timeless Word" that "carries eternity in its lonely sound" (2.1. p. 97). The visionary quality of Savitri bears out this fact.

It is generally agreed that Savitri is in the direct line of the incantatory Vedic hymns, the poetry of vision, in which Sri Aurobindo, like an ancient *rishi*, intuits an aspect of reality and transfers its vibrations to the "word". Sri Aurobindo affirms that the occult experiences of subtle hearing and subtle seeing take place in a state

of utter silence linking us to the Timeless, Spaceless Absolute, and that such moments are rare: "Few are the silences in which Truth is heard, / Unveiling the timeless utterance in her deeps ; / Few are the splendid moments of the seers" (11.1. p. 689). The poet elucidates how the images are spontaneously born:

The Timeless looks out from the travelling hours ;
 The Ineffable puts on a robe of speech
 Where all its words are woven like magic threads
 Moving with beauty, inspiring with their gleam [. . .].

(10.4. p. 662)

These experiences gush forth out of his golden quill in a torrential flow of images and pictorial expressions. Savitri, indeed, is replete with numerous word pictures and picturesque turns which constitute the very fabric of the epic's poetic utterance. Sri Aurobindo's imagery and symbolism are characterised by a bewildering variety, depending on the vastness and depth of his spiritual vision.

Temporal and spatial images figure prominently in Savitri. Every page contains invariably an image or, at least, a picturesque expression of Time and Space or related ideas causing the reader to marvel at Sri Aurobindo's genius. As Mody observes: "Not a single page passes under his eyes without unloading its rich and varied cargo of imagery before him [. . .]." He elaborates that it is a cargo of

"dreamlike realities and of eternal verities lying beyond our poor limited human vision" (354). Based on a close reading of the first canto, Flick asserts that images related to three main lines of contrasting themes, namely, "Time vs. Timelessness, World and Nature vs. Spirit and God, and Darkness and Sleep vs. Light and Awakening" lie scattered with varying levels of density and effect at various places of the epic (405). These images may be classified as word-groups, epigrams, word-pictures, and long, sustained metaphors.

Firstly, groups of words or phrases consisting of symbolic ideas or images are interspersed pervasively so as to become an integral part of the epic style. In Ganguli's view: "Though only made of a few words, yet these expressions suggest a world of hidden meanings to the responsive sensibility of the reader" (426). To cite a few such expressions from the epic at random: "spirit-space" (2.6. p. 182), "vibrant secrecies of Space" (2.9. p. 234), "stainless space" (4.1. p. 357), "soul space" (2.14. p. 292), "trance of Space" (1.1. p.1); "time-walk" (2.1. p. 97), "timeless heart" (2.2. p. 111), "toiling Time" (1.4. p.51), "earth-time's sea" (2.2. p. 104), "magic waves of Time" (1.4. p. 71), "timeless Time" (2.15. p. 298), "slate of hourless Time" (6.2. p. 453), and so on. Time and Space are variously personified as a banker, a tyrant, a slave driver etc. in such effective expressions like "Time's credit bank" (2.13. p. 285), "Time's dull yoke" (4.4. p. 383), "Time's slipshod caprice" (2.5. p. 162), "iron Lords of Time" (2.8. p. 226), "Time's heavy cup" (2.8. p. 228),

"knot of Space" (2.14. p. 290), etc. The heart or the bosom is highlighted in such personifications like "bosom of Space" (2.11. p. 264), "hidden heart of Time" (6.2. p. 447), "calm of Space" and "fathomless heart of Time" (3.3. p. 325), and the like. Murti rightly remarks: "Personification (or Apostrophe) is the *tour de force* of the Saint-Poet" (77).

In the second place, there are several single, end-stopped lines packed with concentrated, symbolic expressions of Sri Aurobindo's poetic vision. They are pithy aphorisms which often transcend the limitations of the context in which they occur. A few instances may be presented to illustrate this point: "The Earth-Goddess toils across the sands of Time" (Savitri 1.4. p. 50); "The voice of Time sang of the Immortal's joy" (2.3. p. 123); "Speak not my secret name to hostile Time" (3.4. p. 335); "A mighty Supernature waits on Time" (2.5. p. 169); "All Time is one body, Space a single look" (10.4. p. 660); "The visage of Space and the shape of Time is lost" (11.1. p. 698); and so on. Some of these lines are highly alliterative, thereby enhancing the cadence of the verse. To mention a few examples: "A silent spirit pervaded silent Space" (7.6. p. 544); "Wings of vague questioning met the query of Space" (2.6. p. 173); "Timeless in the Timeless, in Time ever born" (7.6. p. 541); "He gives to his timeless thoughts a form in Time" (1.4. p. 61); etc. Evidently, the poet's purpose in all these cases is to drive home the truth through a bare minimum of words, directly uttered.

The third category includes symbolic portraits which are perfect paintings in words, characterised by truth and beauty and the chiselled finish of a fine figure. In the following image, for example, we have a vision of Aswapathy, "an aspirant to supernal Timelessness" (1.3. p. 26), leaving the world of Time and Space in the course of his onward journey to his Timeless, Spaceless abode:

He has turned from the voices of the narrow realm

And left the little lane of human Time.

In the hushed precincts of a vaster plan

He treads the vestibules of the Unseen [. . .]. (1.5. p. 80)

The fourth type of imagery employed in Savitri comprises long and sustained metaphors or clusters of images which augment and furnish a cumulative effect to the Truth conveyed. Explaining Sri Aurobindo's technique Ganguli writes that the poet takes up "a symbol with a vast universal or even a transcendental canvas that would symbolise the universal or transcendental truth-vision of the poet" (428). This class includes three superb symbols in the epic, namely, the Symbol Dawn, the World-Stair, and the Sailor Image. These image clusters produce various effects such as reinforcing the meaning, evoking a certain mood or atmosphere, or advancing the narrative.

However, an alternate way, in fact, a much more relevant approach to the

imagery in Savitri, is to study it in relation to the epic's thematic significance, in other words, to analyse how the images of Time and Space contribute to the structural unity and the total meaning of the multilayered epic. Verma's authoritative statement validates such an approach: "Although the structure of *Savitri* is intricate, self-defiant and elusive, the poem is extremely well-unified and tightly knit. The nature of its unity is not literal but symbolic, that is, the unity of form and meaning" ("Sri Aurobindo As a Poet" 13).

The theory of Emergent Evolution, which forms the background of the epic, is exemplified in terms of fine images and symbols. Murti's analytical view is pertinent here: "The Saint's spiritual flight (or vision) refracts, in his imagery, towards the Normal, and the unseen Divine is brought through the imagery nearer, magnified and beautified to the readers' perception" (79).

In Sri Aurobindo's vision, "The cosmos is no accident in Time [. . .]" (Savitri 2.11. p. 271). On the contrary, it is "the riddle of the Immortal's birth in Time" (1.4. p. 50). Time is conceived as a disguise or an attire worn by Purusha in this cosmic game, that is, "the Everlasting puts on Time's disguise" (1.3. p. 36). To depict the Eternal Sacrifice of the "Universal and Sole" (1.5. p. 81) in order to confine itself to the Space-Time continuum, a triad of disconnected conceits - a garb, a drop and a house - are used in succession with a magnificent effect:

A miracle of the Absolute was born;
 Infinity put on a finite soul,
 All ocean lived within a wandering drop,
 A time-made body housed the Illimitable. (2.1. p. 101)

In another brilliant picture, the Divine manifestation on the terrestrial plane is compared to the act of sketching a plan of the Universe, just as a draughtsman would do, for the unhampered adventure of the pilgrim-soul:

Annulling an original nullity
 The Timeless took its ground in emptiness
 And drew the figure of a universe,
 That the spirit might adventure into Time
 And wrestle with adamant Necessity
 And the soul pursue a cosmic pilgrimage. (10.3. pp. 621-22)

A related image is that of a divine playground, a secret bower for the Lord's pastimes. Here, Time and Space are conceived as the living presence of God infused with His many miracles and acts of love:

The Spirit's white neutrality became
 A playground of miracles, a rendezvous

For the secret powers of a mystic Timelessness:

It made of Space a marvel house of God,

It poured through Time its works of ageless might [. . .].

(3.3. p. 326)

In another instance, the poet mentions: "A camp of God is pitched in human time" (7.5. p. 531). There is yet another image which depicts the Lord as a tenant occupying a circumscribed space for a limited period of time. Thus the "little plot of our mortality / Touched by this tenant from the heights became / A playground of the living Infinite" (1.3. p. 23). There is a quaint image from Grammar in which Sri Aurobindo explains how *Sachidananda* organises itself for manifestation in the way one would achieve concord or agreement between mood and tense, or between style and syntax: "United were Time's creative mood and tense / To the style and syntax of Identity" (1.5. p. 90). In Mody's opinion: "It is the word "mood" and its association with grammar that has given rise to the whole image" (365).

The cosmic *lila* of the Divine is envisaged as the "cry of birth into mortality / And the opening verse of the tragedy of Time" (Savitri 1.5. p. 75). Such a yoking together of two radically distinct images has a Metaphysical streak about it and is indeed a stroke of poetic genius or *kaviprathibha*. The poet follows it up with the depiction of the Eternal sacrifice as a rhythmic act: "The Immortal bound to earth's mortality / Appearing and perishing on the roads of Time / Creates God's moment

by eternity's beats " (6.2. p. 447).

In order to indicate the origin of Time and Space in the phenomenal world, Sri Aurobindo employs an image from the smithy to show how "Unending Space was beaten into a curve" and "Indivisible Time into small minutes cut" (2.11. pp. 266-67). Then comes another impressive image from Mechanics and metal-casting. The role of each moment in the unrolling of Time that shies away from Eternity like a runaway prisoner is determined and fixed permanently by the earthly powers of possibility which act like a groove of bronze. To cite the poet's words:

A groove of bronze prescribed for force and act
 And shown to each moment its appointed place
 Forewilled inalterably in the spiral
 Huge Time-loop fugitive from eternity. (267)

The ephemerality and insubstantiality of mortal existence is dwelt upon several times in the epic. Sri Aurobindo presents in geometrical terms the triviality of human existence in relation to the entire cosmic scheme as a "little curve cut off in measureless Space, / A little span of life in all vast Time" (2.4. pp. 148-49). In another image, the poet compares the transience of earthly life to some mediocre music which can, at best, provide entertainment for the time being. "An evanescent music it repeats / Wasting on transience Time's eternity" (2.6. p. 195). Business, commerce, economics and banking, rather prosaic and mundane matters, are deftly

employed by the epic poet to drive home his point. For instance, even the greatest triumphs and highest raptures won in the battle of life eventually turn out to be as useless as an invalid cheque drawn on Time's bank, which is a monument of ignorance. "For all we have acquired soon loses worth, / An old disvalued credit in Time's bank, / Imperfection's cheque drawn on the Inconscient" (1.5. p. 78). In another context, Sri Aurobindo draws on the same source for imagery when he declares that all that we take for "reality's shining coin" appear "as frauds upon Time's credit bank / Or assets valueless in Truth's treasury" (2.13. pp. 284-85). Commenting on the poet's repetition of the figure of speech, Mody writes: "Here we can see that even when a figure is repeated, it is so very different and so uniquely lovely, that we hardly feel or even become aware of its repetition" (364). In fact, it serves to highlight the point in question.

The fleeting nature of Time and its termination at the cruel hands of death, which is the burning issue in the young Savitri's life, is conveyed by Narad by means of a bird-metaphor, which sets the ball rolling. Narad begins his awesome prognostication thus: "In one brief year when this bright hour flies back / And perches careless on a branch of Time," then, after elaborating, he winds up: "Twelve swift-winged months are given to him and her; / This day returning Satyavan must die" (6.1. p. 431). There is an evident touch of novelty in the sustained image of the bird of Time. In another moving, though conventional picture, the poet imagines

the passing of each day as a golden leaf being torn in a most unkind manner from Savitri's thin book of marital joy. The young wife looked on with mute despair: "Each day a golden leaf torn cruelly out / From her too slender book of love and joy" (7.1. p. 469). In one other instance Sri Aurobindo fuses two diverse figures, that of an accountant taking stock of his inadequate resources and of a threatening stranger, in order to highlight Savitri's gnawing grief:

A trembling moved accountant of her riches,
 She reckoned the insufficient days between:
 A dire expectancy knocked at her breast;
 Dreadful to her were the footsteps of the hours:
 Grief came, a passionate stranger to her gate [. . .]. (469)

As the fatal hour of Satyavan's destined end draws closer and closer, Savitri becomes all the more conscious of Time stopping in the dark. She is depicted as an anxious, miserly merchant economising on every second as though it were gold:

Her life was now in seconds, not in hours,
 And every moment she economised
 Like a pale merchant leaned above his store,
 The miser of his poor remaining gold. (8. p. 563)

Sri Aurobindo has yet another splendid image-cluster to offer in order to illustrate how Savitri longs to arrest the relentless, irrevocable passage of time. The poet resorts to the images of imprisonment, compression and construction in a highly innovative way:

Intolerant of the poverty of Time
 Her passion catching at the fugitive hours
 Willed the expense of centuries in one day
 Of prodigal love and the surf of ecstasy;
 Or else she strove even in mortal time
 To build a little room for timelessness [. . .]. (7.1. p. 471)

Sri Aurobindo employs several images to portray the predicament of man trapped in the snare of Death and Time. Man is a beast of burden, or a toy for the idle amusement of "the iron Lords of Time" (2.8. p. 226), who keep a stern watch over this masquerade in Space-Time. All these impressions come to us in a single cascade of images:

A creature born to bend beneath the yoke,
 A chattel and a plaything of Time's lords,
 Or one more pawn who comes destined to be pushed
 One slow move forward on a measureless board

In the chess-play of the earth-soul with Doom,-

Such is the human figure drawn by Time. (1.2. pp. 17-18)

Man goes through life like a sleepwalker listlessly, as though he were in a dream, totally under the spell of a ghostly or unreal time. In the poet's view man, in his ignorant surface self, is a "somnambulist walking under the moon, / An image of ego treads through an ignorant dream / Counting the moments of a spectral Time" (2.5. p. 166). The choice of the figure of the somnambulist is a happy one suggesting that the soul is in an ignorant state of unspiritual sleep. In an equally effective image Sri Aurobindo describes the plight of man subject to the constant change of body, due to the unending cycles of birth and death, in terms of a nomadic existence. Thus man is a "traveller in his oft-shifting home / Amid the tread of many infinities, / He has pitched a tent of life in desert Space" (3.4. p. 336).

Human nature, with all its salient characteristics and limitations in relation to Time and Space, is elaborated in a series of scattered images in the epic. In one brilliant image, Sri Aurobindo visualises the human body as a taxpayer making a mandatory payment in the form of pain and death for the great soul-destiny or the assurance of the final beatitude that he enjoys. "Our bodies are an engine cunningly made," begins the poet, and he then adds:

Its payment of the tax of Time and Fate,

Its way to suffer and its way to die.

This is the ransom of our high estate,

The sign and stamp of our humanity. (6.2. pp. 438-39)

The human mind is pictured as a puppet king of an unstable kingdom who merely dances to the tune of Time and who is ever at the beck and call of Time like a wretched slave:

In his floating house upon the sea of Time

The regent sits at work and never rests:

He is a puppet of the dance of Time;

He is driven by the hours, the moment's call [. . .]. (7.2. p. 478)

In a similar manner, the poet yokes together images from metallurgy and despotism to show that the phenomenal world is like a prison with Mind as a despot who enslaves Timelessness: "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" (2.11. p. 268). The pun on the word 'cast' suggests the double image.

Sri Aurobindo metaphorises Time as a dilapidated building to demonstrate how the mind can function only within the precincts of Time and Space, and how it sticks to the known and the familiar: "In decayed and crumbling offices of Time / It

keeps close guard in front of custom's wall [. . .]" (2.10. p. 246).

In order to clarify that Thought can have only a limited perception of time, the poet imagines Time as luring and capturing Eternity into the prison of temporality: "This was the play of the bright gods of Thought. / Attracting into time the timeless Light, / Imprisoning eternity in the hours [. . .]" (2.11. p. 274). In short, man, with his bloated ego and limited mind, ciphers "his thought on a slate of hourless Time" (6.2. p. 453). Little wonder therefore, that terrestrial existence appears to be a "strange and sterile interlude / Lasting in vain through interminable Time [. . .]" (6.2. p. 441). Apart from such telling pictures, the epic is interspersed with picturesque phrases like "Time's slipshod caprice" (2.5. p. 162), "endless clamour of Time's mart" (10.4. p. 654), "perilous bridge in Time" (6.2. p. 461), "suffering Time and tortured Space" (2.7. p. 218), etc. which conjure up a bleak, uncertain picture of human existence in the mind of the sensitive reader.

Man is essentially a pure and peaceful soul, a concentrated projection of the Timeless in the realm of Time, a formation of the Spaceless in Space. Sri Aurobindo resorts to Projective Geometry for an explanatory image:

This faint and fluid sketch of soul called man
 Shall stand out on the background of long Time
 A glowing epitome of eternity,

A little point reveal the infinitudes. (2.1. p. 100)

Our present destiny as an embodied soul, which is the outcome of all our past *karmas*, is a stumbling block on the road to Immortality. The epic poet employs a highly effective image from commerce and banking to explain how it is obligatory for the soul to exhaust all its *prarabhda karma* or accumulated deeds just as one pays off prolonged debts at exhorbitant rates of interest, in order to shake off servility at the hands of the lords of *karma*. Thus Savitri realised that:

Acquittance she must win from her past's bond,
 An old account of suffering exhaust,
 Strike out from Time the soul's long compound debt
 And the heavy servitudes of the Karmic Gods [. . .]. (1.2. p. 13)

In order to return to its Origin the evolving soul has to consciously withdraw from its involvement in the world movement and cross through the belt of silent infinity. Sri Aurobindo adapts a splendid metaphor from archery to describe how the soaring soul of Aswapathy passed through that region with the ease and agility of an arrow: "An arrow leaping through eternity / Suddenly shot from the tense bow of Time, / A ray returning to its parent sun" (1.5. p. 79). However, if the pilgrim soul is not ever vigilant, he may miss his sole chance, and be written off as a failure. The poet's employment of an image from an official register is indeed quaint:

So might one fall on the Eternal's road
 Forfeiting the spirit's lonely chance in Time
 And no news of him reach the waiting gods,
 Marked "missing" in the register of souls,
 His name the index of a failing hope [. . .]. (2.7. pp. 210-11)

Transcending Time and Space is ultimately the choice of the soul to climb beyond terrestrial bounds and meet Death "upon a silent desperate brink" "on some verge between Time and Timelessness" (6.2. p. 461). In order to drive home the idea that time ceases in the realm of Death, Sri Aurobindo utilises the picturesque simili of passing through receding passages behind heavy walls which demarcate life and mortality; all the three times appear to fade into a vacuum one after the other. To quote from Savitri's experience:

The rock-gate's heavy walls were left behind;
 As if through passages of receding time
 Present and past into the Timeless lapsed;
 Arrested upon dim adventure's brink,
 The future ended drowned in nothingness. (9.2. pp. 582-83)

Perhaps the most conspicuous image in the epic pertaining to Time and Space is that of the human soul as a traveller or voyager, who has embarked on an endless

return journey to the starting point. In a characteristic metaphor, man's life is delineated as a long voyage across the aeons of Time in which his body is a fragile ship which "conveys through the sea of years / An incognito of the Imperishable" (1.3. p. 23). Elsewhere, Sri Aurobindo refers to human existence most aptly as a "Time-inn for the Unborn" (2.2. p. 109). He asserts that the trajectory from the temporal to the eternal, that is, the pathway along which life on earth flows in the passage of Time to the origin has been impeccably drawn: "Infallibly the curves of life are drawn / Following the stream of Time through the unknown [. . .]" (6.2. p. 456). There is much novelty in the following image which depicts the advancement of the soul towards its ultimate destination. The epic poet projects before us the terrific picture of a full fledged army equipped with spears making a forced advance; the long series of births spanning several centuries is metaphorically portrayed as a long array of soldiers: "Adventurer through blind unforeseeing Time, / A forced advance through a long line of lives, / It pushes its spearhead through the centuries" (6.2. p. 459).

Besides being a traveller on the roads of Time, the evolving soul is also a "voyager upon uncharted routes" continually breaking into "another Space and Time" (1.5. p. 91). The most spectacular word-painting of the voyaging human consciousness that Sri Aurobindo displays before us is the "sailor" metaphor. It is a very long and sustained metaphoric passage of one hundred and four lines of

majestic verse (1.4. pp. 69-72), resembling a Homeric or Miltonic Simili in grandeur, picturesqueness and magnitude. It delineates the symbolic voyage of the human soul as a sailor on the river of Time, who ventures out on a daring adventure to higher and subtler realms of consciousness in the ship of his body moving into the sea of Timelessness. Marvelling at this symbolic metaphor Sisirkumar Ghose observes: "The sea, the sailor, the voyage, the search, and the secret are all in you. On the raft of a single metaphor, we have gone round the world and found ourselves" ("The Symbol Quest" 33). This is how the image unfolds:

This is the sailor on the flow of Time,
 This is World-Matter's slow discoverer,
 Who, launched into this small corporeal birth,
 Has learned his craft in tiny bays of self,
 But dares at last unplumbed infinitudes,
 A voyager upon eternity's seas. (69)

Ganguli remarks: "At each stage of this symbolic journey the poet uses a different image to suit that stage" (432). At the outset, the voyage is undertaken very cautiously "on the trade-routes of Ignorance" for the sake of "the world's commerce in the riches of Time." But soon the traveller "turns to eternal things his symbol quest; / Life changes for him its time-constructed scenes, / Its images

veiling infinity" (Savitri 1.4. p. 70). The poet declares: "A greater world Time's traveller must explore" (71) on his way back home. "He looks out on the magic waves of Time." He continues to sail "on the Inconscient's fathomless sea" (71):

And never can the mighty Traveller rest

And never can the mystic voyage cease

Till the nescient dusk is lifted from man's soul

And the morns of God have overtaken his night. (72)

Little wonder that one feels like asking with Ganguli: "What adventure can be more daring, more perilous and yet more satisfying and joyous than [. . .] his symbolic quest into the unknown for a new mind and body in the city of God?" (433).

Another memorable and outstanding image of a sustained nature found in Savitri is that of the World-Stair, which appears in Aswapathy's Yoga. Through intense *sadhana*, verging on trance, the King experiences great stairs or rungs of consciousness climbing up to unborn heights, where "Time's last ridges touch eternity's skies" (2.11. p. 264). Aswapathy perceived that: "Ascending and descending twixt life's poles / The seried kingdoms of the graded Law / Plunged from the Everlasting into Time," and climbed "back from Time into undying Self, / Up a golden ladder carrying the soul, / Tying with diamond threads the Spirit's

extremes" (1.5. pp. 88-89). Paranjape offers a lucid explanation of the ladder image: "The whole of creation is a continuum of Time-Space, like a ladder of consciousness or a great chain of being ascending above man to God and Eternity, and descending beneath man into matter and Time" (116). The World-Stair image is a marvellous specimen of architectural design reminiscent of Jacob's ladder in the Bible. It symbolically represents Sri Aurobindo's theory of Ascent and Descent. Accordingly, in the evolving soul's efforts to transcend Time and Space, "A mighty Supernature waits on Time" (2.5. p. 169). *Sachidananda* watches with confidence the moments as they hurry towards their ultimate goal: "It sees the hurrying crowd of moments stream / Towards the still greatness of a distant hour" (2.5. p. 160). The World-Stair is evidently a kinetic image of Space and Time.

Numerous sensuous images of Time and Space lie scattered in a pervasive manner in the epic. These reveal that, at heart, Sri Aurobindo could be more romantic and passionate than the greatest of the Romantic and Victorian poets. We come across poetic turns like "young and virgin Time" (1.3. p. 38), "dreaming Space" (2.12. p. 277); epigrams like "In Time he waits for the Eternal's hour" (1.4. p. 58); "She has lured the Eternal into the arms of Time" (2.6. p. 178); "His soul left naked to the timeless One" (1.5. p. 80), and so on. Further, the epic poet employs several superbly sensuous word-pictures to bring out the inherent attraction or affinity of Eternity for Time, or of Infinity for Space by portraying them as lovers. In one

case, for example, he pictures the Timeless Reality as chivalrously rescuing Life from the tragic hold of Time and holding Life in Time in his arms: "Eternity drew close disguised as Love / And laid its hand upon the body of Time," and thus "Immortality captured Time and carried Life" (2.9. p. 237).

The poet employs a flower image to indicate the innate propensity of Time to gaze in the direction of Eternity just as the sunflower's gaze is always directed toward the sun:

Here upon earth are early awakenings,
 Moments that tremble in an air divine,
 And grown upon the yearning of her soil
 Time's sun-flowers' gaze at gold Eternity [. . .]. (2.12. p. 279)

The marriage motif is repeatedly used by Sri Aurobindo to highlight the aim of attaining the bliss of the Supreme by transcending body consciousness. He speaks about it in terms of a happy wedding of Time and Eternity, of Space and Infinity: "Only when Eternity takes Time by the hand, / Only when infinity weds the finite's thought, / Can man be free from himself and live with God" (7.4. p. 516). In another instance of splendid verbal mosaic, Nature and Soul (*Prakriti* and *Purusha*) are depicted as bride and bridegroom, who can no longer be separated by space or time, when once the ignorance of their true self is dissolved. Displaying a high

flight of poetic imagination, the poet conjures up Space as a semi-transparent curtain, and Time as the vibration of their conjugal joy:

Then never more can space or time divide
 The lover from the loved ; Space shall draw back
 Her great translucent curtain, Time shall be
 The quivering of the spirit's endless bliss. (11.1. p. 684)

In all these sensuous images we perceive a happy fusion of love and spirituality which becomes acceptable for two reasons. In the first place, man-woman relationship is an acknowledged symbol used in mystical poetry to denote the bond between soul and God, or between the human consciousness and the blissful "All-Conscious" (1.4. p. 66). Secondly, love and marriage as conceived by Sri Aurobindo is never gross or sensational. Mody's perceptive remarks endorse these opinions:

It would appear queer that such figures should be woven into a poetry that is purely spiritual; for it is usually supposed that spirituality is something that should remain above all such human relations, especially marriage and love between the opposite sexes. But [. . .] it is never the vital or grossly sexual love that is pictured in the images. (373-74)

What is most striking about the sensuous images of Time and Space found in Savitri

is that even drab metaphysical notions are miraculously transformed into flesh and blood entities through the warm personification by a poet of keen sensibility, who is also endowed with a flight of imagination.

No discussion of the symbolism in Savitri will be complete without a mention of the Symbol Dawn. The epic begins and culminates in dawn. The first line is: "It was the hour before the Gods awake" (1.1. p. 1); and the last line is: "And in her bosom nursed a greater dawn" (12. p. 724). The poem, indeed, moves from dawn to greater dawn. In the epic "dawn" does not allude so much to the physical phenomenon as to the evolution of the human consciousness from its inconscient state symbolised by Night to the superconscient state, the *Eternal Now* and the *Spaceless Here*, where all things exist simultaneously, and hence Time and Space are perceived in a "fourth dimension of aesthetic sense" (2.2. p. 112). Savitri is portrayed as the Dawn of the Supramental consciousness on earth trying to emancipate aspiring humanity caught up in the mesh of Time and Space. Nolini Kanta Gupta attests to this view:

Savitri represents one such divine dawn at a crucial moment of the earth-life. She embodies creation's entire past and shows in her life how that past is transformed through the alchemy of Divine Grace into glorious future- the inevitable destiny that awaits man

and earth. ("The Opening Scene of Savitri" 67)

Ganguli indicates two purposes which are served by the Dawn symbol in the thematic design of the epic:

First, it is the God-touch, the supreme Grace and Light that touches
 inconscient Matter to bury its seed of grandeur in evolutionary
 Time as to lift and release the imprisoned consciousness from
 Night. [. . .] Secondly, its manifestation paves the way for the
 Divine Mother to enter into Space and Time and look for herself
 the situation and difficulties of creation [. . .]. (431)

Dawn is the most pervasive symbol used in the epic. Sri Aurobindo's depiction of this image is in line with the Vedic *Usha*, who symbolises an eternal succession of dawns, whose beginning or end no one knows, who stands for a constant ascent of consciousness to higher and ever higher levels till the pilgrim soul attains "the calm of Space" in "the fathomless heart of Time" (*Savitri* 3.3. p. 325).

The supramental vision of Time and Space finds expression in several, marvellous word-carvings. In one image the epic poet resorts to weaving in order to illustrate how everything is woven into a single compact whole: "There consciousness was a close and single weft; / The far and near were one in spirit-space, / The moments there were pregnant with all time" (2.15. p. 301). In another

vision, Sri Aurobindo employs the quaint idea that Aswapathy's supernal consciousness is similar to a story written long ago but enacted now, so that all the events therein from start to finish are already known to him. The smaller units of Time resemble dots on the page of Time:

As if a story long written but acted now,
 In his present he held his future and his past,
 Felt in the seconds the uncounted years
 And saw the hours like dots upon a page. (1.3. p. 33)

Sri Aurobindo describes the process of attaining the consciousness of all times and spaces with the help of a fantastic metaphor - of entering a house and going more and more into the inner rooms and hidden passages to arrive at the ultimate. The mind is spoken of as the wall and the subtler realms of consciousness are the interior apartments or ante-rooms in the house of Time and Space. In such an unhorizoned state of consciousness, the soul is no more a prisoner of the present, the past does not fade out into oblivion; nor is the future concealed to sight. On the contrary, all the three times are seen in one vision. Here is Aswapathy's experience of supramental vision:

In the Witness's occult rooms with mind-built walls
 On hidden interiors, lurking passages

Opened the windows of the inner sight.

He owned the house of undivided Time. (1.3. p. 28)

In an interesting study on the use of gold and precious stones in the epic, Keshari illustrates that "diamond" is employed almost exclusively to connote a spiritual significance. After winning the momentous battle for mankind's transformative redemption in the Everlasting Day Savitri returns to earth with Satyavan:

The prophet moment covered limitless Space

And cast into the heart of hurrying Time

A diamond light of the Eternal's peace,

A crimson seed of God's felicity [. . .]. (Savitri 11.1. p. 712)

Commenting on this passage Keshari writes:

The prophet moment that penetrates into the future can travel more swiftly than the measure of Time and overtake it. It sows into Matter's inner fields God's peace and beatitude, so that diamond-like Savitri's victory remains a permanent feature. (507)

What has been presented in the foregoing paragraphs are only a handful among the numerous images and verbal paintings of Time and Space that adorn the epic,

and which constitute a "caravan of the inexhaustible / Formations of a boundless Thought and Force" (2.6. p. 177). However, taken together, they serve as signposts in a long track which help to exemplify the thematic design of the epic, namely the endless journey of the human soul, the pilgrim of eternity.

There are many unique aspects about the temporal and spatial images contained in Savitri. In the first place, they are not "detachable ornaments" employed merely for decorative purposes. The mystic Truth is first perceived and experienced ; the symbol then becomes a garb or a vehicle through which the poet's vision is conveyed to the reader. Romen notes that Sri Aurobindo's similes refer to subjective experience. He adds that "they are there to make living the subjective experience, by reference to another living vibrant and subjective experience" (338). Secondly, the same image is sometimes repeated, probably because the poet's mystic experiences were recurrent and repetitive. But, sometimes the same image is employed with differences. To prove the poetic practice with an example, Sri Aurobindo uses the image of an inn twice to refer to Time. In the first case, the poet alludes to man's "figure of a Time-inn for the Unborn" (2.2. p. 109). Later, he writes: "The home of a perpetual happiness, / It lodged the hours as in a pleasant inn" (3.3. p. 328). While it is Time that is imagined as an inn in the former case, in the latter case, it is substituted by Matter, which gives lodging to the hours as in a comfortable inn, implying a temporary existence. Mody commends Sri Aurobindo's

kaviprathibha in a pithy statement: "This shows what a great poet can do, even when he is using the same image" (359).

Thirdly, the range and source of the temporal and spatial imagery in *Savitri* is astounding, even bewildering, in variety and complexity. The epic poet draws his images from many reservoirs, both traditional and modern ones, ranging from the most mundane to the most metaphysical. Whatever be the source or nature of the image, they do help us to probe into the poet's vision. Rameshwar Gupta writes perceptively in this regard:

As images they may not in their details be scientifically correct; but in their symbolic significance they do give us an apprehension of a deeper reality. Night, Nothingness, Infinity, Eternity are no mere conventional Personifications (or empty abstractions) but are seen and felt as actual Presences, Powers and Beings. ("The Opening Lines of Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*" 48)

Sri Aurobindo's poetic style and technique enhance the effect caused by his images. He employs blank verse with a consummate ease, preferring end-stopped lines to enjambment, which infuses a rare *mantric* quality to the words and the sounds which, in turn, evoke visions in the mind of the sensitive reader. But, unlike several other writers, Sri Aurobindo does not strain himself to arrive at the best

words in the best order. In fact, as Romen testifies, words "come to him packed with the power, the bliss, the grandeur, the richness of another world. He invokes them, and makes silent his vessel for their reception" (350). Sri Aurobindo's poetic speech resembles the Vedic and Upanishadic utterances through which the Timeless, Spaceless Absolute is gleaned. This is an experiential fact endorsed by Rameshwar Gupta: "One appreciative of the music that is in the Vedic Verses could hear in each a sound coming from the cosmic deep with the deep-toned ring of the Vedic mantras" ("Opening Lines" 49). Like Vedic chanting or melodiously divine music the majestic lines of Savitri, packed with *mantric* power, can silence our thought-cluttered mind and elevate our consciousness to ever-widening vistas of the realities that lie beyond. This makes Ghosal assert that "there are moments in *Savitri* where new revelations flow down to us, sometimes in a series of end-stopped lines, but often in wonderful "run-on" images" ("Savitri" 480).

It is to Sri Aurobindo's immense credit that he has been able to fuse the revelatory powers of word and vision in a language like English, to which his subjective, occult experiences are rather alien matters. Rameshwar Gupta is all praise for the painstaking efforts and the poetic inspiration which enabled the epic poet to accomplish this stupendous task:

Metaphorising apart, the task was not so easy, still by his persistence aided by inspiration, the poet succeeded in forcing

and dislocating from the deep mine a language and an idiom that could bear the sound of Eternity and give to timeless thoughts a form in time: He had discovered symbols equal to the Truth. ("Opening Lines" 49-50)

Much adverse criticism has flowed out of the pens of many critics about Sri Aurobindo's use of language and imagery in Savitri. Confining ourselves to the spatial and temporal images and expressions, we note that Sastri finds some of the compounds like "time-born", "space-tenancy" (1.1. p. 5) etc. to be not felicitous. He points out expressions like "trance of space" (1.1. p. 1) "infinity's centre" (1.1. p. 4) and the like to prove that Sri Aurobindo's diction is "full of abstractions which have a place in metaphysics and not in poetry" (91).

If Sri Aurobindo places before us images of Time and Space which sometimes turn out to be marvellous or fantastic, it is because he is trying to communicate the incommunicable. Gokak's explanation is convincing : "A soul-state or superconsciousness can be experienced. But it is not easily communicable, for it is only through figures of speech and images of earthly life that some idea of it can be conveyed to the reader" ("Diction of Savitri" 236). The more open and receptive we are, the more we can experience the inevitable bond between vision and *vak* throughout the epic. Shukla's profoundly poetic lines serve to firmly establish the fact that the temporal and spatial images hide the golden key to Savitri. "Only when

the reader awakens to the radiance of an inner dawn illuminating his psychological space does the clearly mapped - out landscape of *Savitri* begin to unravel the infinity of its horizons" (826).

Conclusion

V. Uma "Time and space in Sri Aurobindo's Savitri" Thesis. Department of English , St. Thomas College, Trichur, University of Calicut, 2004

Chapter VII

Conclusion

Savitri is an epic of tomorrow, in which a legend of the past has been transformed into a symbol of the future. Hence the epic is characterised throughout by double time and multispaces. Considered as an epic in the conventional sense, Savitri adheres to the three Dramatic Unities. The action comprises the titular heroine's successful confrontation with Death in a stupendous effort to retrieve her husband's soul from his iron grip. There is little digression. The story starts *in medias res*, in keeping with epic traditions. Aswapathy's yoga, Savitri's birth and her marriage to Satyavan, and the ominous prophecy of Satyavan's death within a year of their marriage, are all given as a flashback. The epic action opens on the day Satyavan must die. The place of action is the forest where Satyavan has gone to cut wood, and Savitri has accompanied him. The actual encounter with Death takes place then and there. Thus, the epic sticks to the Unities of Time and Place. Shahi adopts a similar line of thought: Part I (Books I-IV), recounting Aswapathy's yoga in all its essence, is Time Past. Part II (Books V-IX), which describes Savitri's *sadhana*, denotes Time Present, racing towards the crisis. Part III (Books X-XII), which sets forth the dialectic between Savitri and Yama, the God of Death, for the soul of Satyavan, may be described as Time Future (25). He adds:

Though the tale of Savitri belongs to remote days, when Sri Aurobindo decided to retell it, he had to reinterpret it in the light of his experience. So the action of Part III is shown as happening directly before our eyes. (26)

In reinterpreting the legend of something that took place in the history of man, Sri Aurobindo has transmuted it into a symbol of what is going on, and of what is going to be. Far from being a conventional composition Savitri is an epic of the soul. The supreme crisis of the bereaved Savitri's encounter with death provides the backdrop of the inner epic. In symbolic terms, the poem's action takes place in an inner chamber or soul-space or soul-scene. Hence, Aswapathy's travels are to be construed as forages into multispaces within the soul, beyond the mind. Obviously, Time assumes a psychological, subjective or occult meaning. "The drama unrolls itself through a psychological rather than a time sequence. Its "endless moment" is also for ever - again, a symbol rather than a legend" (Ghose, "Savitri - A Subjective Poem" 261). In the inner epic, things are perpetually happening, all the events being psychic, occurring in subtle soul-spaces and subtle time orders. These subtle Time-Space continua are designated by Sri Aurobindo as the Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuitive Mind, Overmind and Supermind.

Time and Space are employed in the "legend" part of the epic in the ordinary sense. Time is linear, it is a relentless flux. Space is physical, actions are physical

occurrences. In a word, it is the conventional world of Newtonian Time and Space. But, the "symbol" part of the epic depicts a journey from Time to Timelessness, from Space to Spacelessness. Touching on the aspect of double time in Sri Aurobindo's work, Purani asserts that Savitri throughout portrays the vision of the true reconciliation of the opposition between Timeless Eternity of the Absolute and Time-Eternity, which is constantly flowing. He elaborates :

The conception of a Time-Eternity as a dynamic Reality depending organically upon Timeless Eternity is one enunciated clearly for the first time by Sri Aurobindo in the world of thought. [. . .] Far from Eternity being in opposition to Time-movement the grand vision of *Savitri* constantly brings Eternity in moments of Time.

(Sri Aurobindo's Savitri 41-42)

The effect of the blending of such a double time and space in Savitri is that a "cosmic-transcendental dimension is thus already set in the story narrated as a simple human tale belonging to early times" (Deshpande, "The Legend of Savitri" 525).

Sri Aurobindo's notions of Time and Space have influenced the narrative technique employed in the epic. The narrative part of the legend is mixed up with his commentary on Integral Yoga like a shuffled pack of cards. While the former follows a double time sequence, the latter is invariably in the present tense. The jumping from one to the other is abrupt, and takes place unawares throughout the

epic. To a casual or an uninitiated reader, such a narrative mode is likely to cause confusion. However, by isolating the two parts like sorting out the cards, and stringing them together in order, we arrive at two sets: the story in a chronological sequence following the normal order of Time and Space, and the commentary on Integral Yoga, which serves as a background for it. The reason why Sri Aurobindo employs such a narrative technique is that he is illustrating his own yogic experiments using the story as a pretext. The method used by him is commonly seen in modern fiction, where the preoccupation is with the psyche and in which what happens internally is more significant than what happens externally. Amitav Ghosh's The Shadow Lines, Milan Kundera's The Joke and R.K. Narayan's The Guide adopt similar jumbled narrative techniques, ignoring Time and Space, as Sri Aurobindo does in his epic. This narrative mode makes Savitri a poetic epitome of the other masterpieces of Sri Aurobindo, particularly The Life Divine, The Synthesis of Yoga and Letters on Yoga. Further, it reinforces the argument that in estimating the treatment of Time and Space in Savitri, one invariably arrives at an appraisal of the poet's life and yogic evolution as well as his other writings, considered as a corpus.

The double aspect of the epic is reflected in the characters too. Considered from the perspective of the story, all the characters appear to be well drawn, more or less in keeping with Vyasa's delineation of them. But, viewed from the standpoint

of an inner epic, the same flesh-and-blood characters become symbol-powers representing various planes of consciousness. Iyengar's observations reinforce this finding:

The characters, then, are at once symbol-powers and real human beings. They didn't figure in the mythic past alone, but are also constituents of the current climate of striving, pressing towards the future. ("A Survey of Savitri" 286)

There is a hierarchy among the characters in their relation to Time and Space. At the lowest rung stand Savitri's mother, the Queen, and Satyavan's father, Dyumatsena, the fallen king, who are caged in the mind, and who perceive the phenomenal world as through a fog dimly, totally unaware of the subtle worlds that lie beyond. The Queen, in her ignorance, resembles Yasoda, the foster mother of Lord Krishna, *Kalapurusha* 'the lord of Time'. She is limited by ordinary notions of fleeting time and physical spaces. "A future knowledge is an added pain," as far as she is concerned, for she cannot bear the "dire ordeal that foreknowledge brings" (Savitri 6.1. pp. 425-26). The Queen and Dyumatsena symbolise an ordinary mortal's awareness of Time and Space. Satyavan represents the aspiration for evolution in the human form. He is "eternity hid in moving Time" (Savitri 11.1. p.702). He is "a pilgrim soul, a seeking heart and a mind that understands the purpose and the goal of life" (Sitaramayya and Swarna Gouri 12). Satyavan's words exude confidence

and reassurance in the life divine: "My Matter shall evade the Inconscient's trance. / My body like my spirit shall be free. / It shall escape from Death and Ignorance" (Savitri 5.3. p. 406).

Aswapathy is depicted as a daring hero-traveller of the Infinite, a symbol of humanity ever trying to exceed itself so as to embody higher and higher levels of consciousness. Purani throws a flood of light on his character:

Aswapathy's character as a seeker of the Divine and as an adept of the great spiritual and mystic realisation of the past gives us a wonderful picture of man's growth from mental consciousness through various intermediate stages to the Supreme Divine Mother - Consciousness. (Sri Aurobindo's Savitri 151)

Aswapathy symbolises the level of perception of all times and spaces, being blessed by Divine Grace.

Narad is the omniscient sage of the Puranas "whom the Mother once saw standing between the Overmind and the Supermind" (Sitaramayya and Swarna Gouri 25). Obviously, he is capable of the supramental vision of Time and Space. The heroine Savitri is portrayed in the epic as possessing a double consciousness. Though she appears to be an ordinary mortal in her outer surface self, she is potentially an incarnation of the Divine Mother who stands at the head of Time.

Thus, Savitri is the epitome of Time and Eternity, Space and Infinite. If Aswapathy is the Paraclete, Savitri is the Rose of God.

Being an inner epic, Savitri is characterised by an intense and abundant subjectivity. All the characters including the demons and the gods are potentially present in each one of us as varying levels of consciousness. "Both events and *dramatis personae* are within us. We are its locale and our lives its grand theatre" (Sisirkumar Ghose, "Savitri - A Subjective Poem" 260).

Time and Space as presented in Savitri is in line with the Vedas and the Upanishads. Accordingly, Time and Space are inscrutable indeterminates, which issue from the Unmanifest when it manifests itself as the phenomenal world of names and forms as a divine *lila*. Though it would be an exaggeration to claim any novelty of concept, it has to be conceded that Sri Aurobindo has treated these two metaphysical concepts in a unique manner. The influence of Vyasa is evident too. Nevertheless, Sri Aurobindo has given a new turn to the idea of time in Savitri. An all-embracing atmosphere of eternity rather than a restricted view of temporality pervades Vyasa's works like the Mahabharata, the Bhagavatam and particularly, the Devi Bhagavatam, which is an epitome of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, and which contains the Savitri episode too. The Divine Mother is extolled as the Creatrix. Everything is attributed to her Divine Will. Death is accepted with a calm resignation because of the assurance of a heavenly existence or the liberation

that will follow thousands or lakhs of divine years of penance (Devi Bhagavatam III. 20.24, 35, 46; V. 27. 12, 27; IX . 8. 101,108 etc). In accordance with his philosophy Sri Aurobindo deviates from Vyasa in rejecting death as the end of the world of Time and Space. "Whereas in Vyasa time is ultimately Death the Ender, in Sri Aurobindo even in Time there shall come the end of Death" (Sarkar 456).

Savitri is a poetic rendering of the steps of Integral Yoga to transcend Time and Space. "Each step of Yoga is noted here, including the secret of all other Yogas" ("The Mother on Savitri" 45). The triple yogas of Aswapathy, Savitri and Satyavan furnish us with a demonstration of Sri Aurobindo's theory of Ascent and Descent in the evolution of the soul and the divinisation of the earth. All the three yogas are indispensable like terms in an infinite series. Aswapathy attempts to bring closer the Future, symbolised by Savitri, to redeem the present, represented by Satyavan, with the grace of the Divine Mother, who steers the ship of Time and Space. Despite superficial differences, the yogas of Aswapathy and Savitri are only different approaches to Integral Yoga. "Quintessentially, it is the same consciousness, although it may seem to divide itself into two: the two complementary halves of the one cosmic or supramental consciousness" (Iyengar, Sri Aurobindo 660). If Aswapathy is the forerunner, Savitri is the *avatar* on the endless, evolutionary march to the Timeless, Spaceless origin. Mother adds: "In the eternity of becoming each Avatar is only the announcer, the forerunner of a

more perfect future realisation" (Darshan Messages 38). Satyavan has taken upon himself the mortality-bound birth in order to engage himself in the Yoga of the Earth or the *Prithvi Yoga*, as a natural sequel to Savitri's *Shakti yoga*. Deshpande elaborates: "Because the supermind has entered into time, time itself shall unfold the dynamism of its growing ages" ("Apropos of Savitri" xli).

Sri Aurobindo is probably the first poet to have actually traced the path through Time and Space to the Ultimate source. Employing Aswapathy, Savitri and Satyavan as potent symbols, he has elaborately charted out in the epic the separate, although related, yogic *sadhana* and the amazing occult experiments of his and of the Mother's, so that Savitri becomes a double spiritual autobiography, a genuine recordation of their combined quest for the Eternal and the Infinite. "As is the identity of Savitri and the Mother, so too is the oneness of Aswapati of the timeless past and ageless Sri Aurobindo" (Deshpande, "Apropos of Savitri" xxix). Deshpande further adds that Sri Aurobindo is "*kalatit*, beyond the circumscribing boundaries of time, yet growing in time to take time along with him" (xxix). Consequently, the poet's meticulous descriptions of the various occult or subtle worlds, the World - Stair with its different beings and different grades of Time and Space are not a faded copy of what some one else has felt, thought or seen, as many "pious" utterances are, but truly, freshly-minted and authentic expressions emanating from a living human soul. A.K. Sinha substantiates this point:

It seems that he had direct intuitive vision of the ultimate reality, and he records his spiritual experience in vivid detail. His interpretation of the Indian spiritual tradition is not, therefore, like those of other classical scholars, but it is the result of the direct intuitive comprehension of the various aspects of reality.

(51)

Mother, the supreme authority on Savitri, certifies the authenticity of Sri Aurobindo's tireless endeavour to transcend Time and Space: "He is the first to have traced the path in the Unknown, so that we may be able to walk with certitude towards the Supermind" ("The Mother on Savitri" 47).

In this respect Sri Aurobindo towers majestically above the handful of writers who have poetised and dramatised the problem of transcending Time (but who have omitted Space) in their works. Eliot, for instance, is preoccupied with the attainment of the point of intersection of Time and Eternity through suffering and atonement; clearly, it is a typically Christian approach. Rameshwar Gupta airs the view that despite "the experience of the still moment of interaction between Time and Eternity," Eliot would nevertheless, "like a true Catholic, doubt if man could transcend the Original sin before the Doom's Day" ("Savitri in World Literature" 120). Priestley, who is more explicit, grapples with the idea of ascending the spiral of Time with the help of esoteric knowledge (which he does not elaborate),

attaining a level of perceiving all times in a single survey etc., which are merely borrowed from Ouspensky and Dunne; he has no personal conviction. Also, he vaguely perceives a better world beyond the shadow of what he calls a Time-wall, but provides no clue as to how to reach there. The Romantic poets Blake, Wordsworth and Shelley do have some inkling of the Supreme principle behind the world of manifestation, but it is invariably influenced by their religious or philosophical beliefs. Yeats is deeply mystical and familiar with occultism, but his poetic expressions fail to convince us of any authentic or permanent experience. Whitman often writes about his experience of transcending Time and Space, of cosmic consciousness, of shedding body-consciousness, and of arriving at the frontiers of eternity. His magnum opus, Leaves of Grass, brings out, among other things, the transcendentalist in the poet. Evidently, none of these writers ever saw the light that Sri Aurobindo had seen, or reached the summit of consciousness that the epic poet had attained. Beside the fidelity of the epic recordings of different grades of Time and multipyschic spaces, they sound and seem vague verbal accounts, at best.

Sri Aurobindo is perhaps the first writer to relate Time-Space concepts with the concept of Consciousness, especially, the rousing of *Kundalini*, the coiled power within the subtle human body. He has successfully welded the principles of Tantra, Theosophy and psychoanalysis in his treatment of Time and Space in Savitri.

This is a rare accomplishment indeed, and it bears testimony to the fact that the poet had experimented, researched and probed the depths of the higher realms of consciousness. Over the millennia, the *rishis* of India had developed the science and art of transcending the normal consciousness, and of attaining a poise that might be described as superconscious. While the poet of Savitri cannot claim to have discovered the concept, he deserves credit on two scores: his discovery of the Supermind and its realisation in himself, in the first place, and secondly, his exhaustive presentation in the epic about how Time and Space can be transcended through a heightening of consciousness, accompanied by the awakening of the *Kundalini*. This is amply demonstrated by the yogas of Aswapathy and Savitri. Charusheel Singh, modern poet and critic, is the exponent of the Mandala literary theory, whose structural principle is the symbolism of the *Kundalini Yoga*. He deals with concepts like Consciousness, Time and Space, but unlike Sri Aurobindo, he focuses on the correlation between forms of art and readerly competence in terms of *chakras* and levels of consciousness attained. In Singh's own words:

Literary artifacts, like human beings are informed by *mandalas* or circles one into the other. As we move from outward to inward, to the centre within, there are transformations of energy which give us a vision of the Infinite and endow us with super-mundane consciousness (*Sat-Chit-Anand*). (Preface vi)

Singh's theory validates Sri Aurobindo's principle of relating different grades of Time and Space to the various levels of consciousness attained by the characters in Savitri.

Sri Aurobindo's notions of Time and Space obviously have a solid spiritual basis, for the poet asserts, time and again in Savitri, that they are enigmatic but inevitable emanations of the One when it expands into the Many in the cosmic drama. This spiritual dimension distinguishes the epic poet from several other writers who have handled these metaphysical concepts. The main defect of each Western theory of evolution *vis-a-vis* Sri Aurobindo's conviction, in Maitra's view, is "the absence of any true spiritual principle underlying it" (34). This is the case with Alexander, Bergson, Bradley, McTaggart and others. Of all such thinkers it is Whitehead who comes closest to Sri Aurobindo. Both believe in recurrence. In the system of Whitehead God, though present, is imperfect and evolving. "As for their fundamental differences, Whitehead's theory of evolution is naturalistic, whereas Sri Aurobindo's is spiritualistic" (Madhusudan Reddy, "Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy" 19). Sri Aurobindo and Hegel agree that evolution is a process of home return of the Absolute spirit, but, as Maitra states trenchantly, "even the Hegelian view of evolution, in spite of its vaunted spirituality, is not sufficiently spiritual" (34). Besides spiritualising Time and Space in the epic, Sri Aurobindo accords the highest status to the Divine Mother as *Kundalini*, who stands at the

head of Time and Space, and whose grace alone can help the aspiring soul to attain the Timeless, Spaceless abode of *Brahman*.

Sri Aurobindo's treatment of Time and Space in Savitri vitiates Existentialism, the most unspiritual Western theory of evolution. In its rigorously philosophical form, as developed by Heidegger and Sartre, Existentialism is founded on Nietzsche's solemn proclamation that God is dead. This is tantamount to a rejection of the non-temporal, the non-spatial as well as the higher and the more subtle dimensions of the universe depicted in the epic, particularly in the Yoga of Aswapathy. Chaudhuri pinpoints the chief shortcoming of the theory: "Existentialism overemphasises the temporality of man and ignores his non-temporal dimension" ("Mysticism and Existentialism" 32). Through the delineation of Savitri's mother, the Queen, (Savitri 6.3), the seer-poet exemplifies that such a myopic view of Time and Space stems from *avidya* 'ignorance'. The yogas of Aswapathy and Savitri are truly the demonstration of how to break out of temporal-spatial bounds into non-temporal, non-spatial realms of consciousness. Likewise, Sri Aurobindo refutes the theory of the Unreality of Time upheld by Sankara. More than any other work perhaps, Savitri sets out to illustrate how Time and Space as well as Eternity and Infinity are all real at the respective levels of apprehension, being integral dimensions of the One Supreme Reality.

Time and Space as presented in Savitri furnish a re-interpretation of some of the key Biblical ideas. Thus the "Original sin" is ignorance, which leads the individual soul to develop a sense of separativity, and venture into the world of Time and Space. The Queen is depicted as an epitome of temporal and spatial ignorance. Death is not so much the cessation of the clayey body; it spells the ending of the feeling of separativity or de-centralisation. The Mother describes the phenomena of death and the defying of death in Integral Yoga very clearly:

Death is the de-centralization of the consciousness contained in the cells of the body. The cells constituting the body are held in a certain form by a centralization of the consciousness within them. As long as the power of centralization prevails, the body cannot die. (qtd. in Gyanchandra 20)

Savitri's encounter with Death is a true demonstration of how Integral Yoga can help to surmount temporal and spatial ignorance. The Resurrection of Satyavan symbolises the emancipation of aspiring humanity from the clutches of ignorance, culminating in its attainment of its original status in the Timeless, Spaceless *Brahman*. Savitri is Divine Grace incarnate without which the Resurrection of Satyavan is not possible. Thus interpreted, the redemption of Time and Space are psychologically and spiritually much more meaningful. Savitri becomes the Messiah born to save and redeem mankind, but in Sri Aurobindo's vision she

transcends the Christ figure, being an emanation of the Divine Mother, who is the origin of all times and spaces. It is certainly to Sri Aurobindo's credit that in his treatment of Time and Space in Savitri's yoga he has transmuted Biblical ideas into universally acceptable beliefs.

In dealing with drab metaphysical concepts in the epic, Sri Aurobindo does not lose sight of the beauty of words, style and imagery. More than Blake, Yeats or any other mystic poet, Sri Aurobindo is essentially a visionary or a symbolic poet of the most subjective kind. No other poet, probably, has such a plenitude of images and verbal expressions of Time and Space as Sri Aurobindo proffers in Savitri. Flick elaborates on their effect upon the mind of the sensitive reader:

It is the sounds, images, and ideas employed by the poet that enable us to enter into the poem's consciousness, as into a holy temple, and carry us beyond the outer edifice to a supreme spiritual truth and experience. (382-83)

Besides being characterised by picturesqueness and appropriateness, all the temporal and spatial images in the epic are living entities as far as the poet is concerned. In range and diversity he surpasses even Kalidasa and Shakespeare. Likewise, "Valmiki's description is physically concrete whereas Sri Aurobindo's is a concretisation of abstract experiences of the subtle psycho-spiritual world [. . .]"

(Sarkar 453). With his poetic genius and intuitive power, he has poured into the several wonderful verbal portraits of Time and Space in Savitri the nectar of Vedic wisdom, thereby creating new scientific and psychological grooves of modern consciousness. If some of these images turn out to be marvellous or fantastic, especially when they pertain to different orders and grades of Time and Space, it is because Sri Aurobindo could perceive them through his third eye. Dilip Kumar Roy vehemently advocates this opinion: "He knows this because he has peeped into something behind the veil and is not only delighted but overawed by what he has glimpsed" ("The Message of Savitri" 393).

The most distinguishing quality of the epic poet's vision is its integration of the different worlds from the grossest to the subtlest characterised by their respective levels of consciousness, and the corresponding grades of Time and Space. "Thus the three symbolic expressions - the World Stair, the Descent into Night, and the World-Soul stand identified to give a unitary approach to the movements of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga" (Ganguli 438). Neither the symbols nor the verse appear to be "manufactured" laboriously. Parallels, if they do exist, may indeed be exceptional. One does get the impression that the poet of Savitri must have travelled intuitively through the various soul spaces before he arrived at the supramental Time-Space vision, which is picturesquely portrayed in the yogas of Aswapathy and Savitri. Highlighting the visionary quality of Sri Aurobindo

Shraddhavan observes: "We recognise a writer as a poet purely to the extent that, by means of word-music, image and suggestion, he can bring us into touch with some vividness and colour and truth our normal unpoetic perceptions miss" (375). Dwelling upon the *avritti* 'repetition' of words, lines and images in the epic Pandit observes: "*Āvritti* is a technique of our ancient seers to create grooves in the consciousness through sound waves by which the idea, the truth that is clothed in the sound, gets embedded in the being of the reciter" (Introducing Savitri 8-9). Going by such norms we may conclude that the author of Savitri fulfils the Indian archetype of *kavi* 'omniscient poet' by draping his images of Time and Space in the most potent and colourful language.

The relevance of Sri Aurobindo's treatment of Time and Space in Savitri cannot be overstated. In the first place the epic makes an exploratory probe into the problem of existential anguish. Sri Aurobindo categorically attributes the pain, suffering, alienation and estrangement of the phenomenal world to temporal and spatial ignorance. The only time and space known to that world are psychological duration and material existence. Terrestrial life is perpetually threatened by the nagging fear that Time and Space will be annihilated by Death. Against this bleak prospect of a hopeless future matched by a desperate present, Savitri portrays Sri Aurobindo's bold probings and explorations in supraspatio-temporal realms which come as a welcome and much needed panacea for the "devastating degeneration and

deformation which befog the present man, the man in the whirlpool, the man in the flux" (Aniruddha Smart 5).

It may be argued that the means of transcending Time and Space as chalked out in Savitri are idealistic and utopian; for, pain and suffering, disease and death, poverty and wretchedness are not illusory; they are real experiences, and try as one might, one cannot but be bowed down by despair when the tragedy of life is overwhelming. Such is the predicament in the worlds of Beckett, Faulkner, Kafka Camus, Sartre and other practitioners of Absurd literature. Another allegation could be that the poet's attitude is facile and escapist, for, indeed, Time and Space are experienced by most people as they are by Savitri's mother. All such charges are quite legitimate, *but only at the mental level*. Transcending Time and Space, as elaborated in Savitri, signifies a total deliverance from pain, sorrow and death. But the remedy lies far beyond the world of names and forms, in higher realms of consciousness. It calls for a heightening of one's sense of awareness, step by step, through a turning inward or a meditative process.

The Mother affirms that Savitri is "a meditation, it is a quest of the Infinite the Eternal" ("The Mother on Savitri" 45). Meditation is a timeless, spaceless experience which enables man to gradually outgrow the barriers of body consciousness and ego, to extend his degree of perception and to cultivate the ability to be in the present moment, without taking flight into the unknown future

or seeking shelter in the known past. Meditation helps us to make our consciousness vast and to disidentify ourselves with Time and the mind. The Mother explains that if we begin to think of the eternity of time and the immensity of space, that is, "see the whole as one unity, and from far above," gradually "the sense of limitation disappears," and we enter "the perception of a kind of indefinite duration beginningless and endless, of something which has always been and always will be" ("How to Change One's Consciousness" 7). In addition, if we can realise that our little person, our ego, is only "a fragment of a second in eternity," even "the deepest sorrows" are swept away ("How to Make One's Consciousness Vast" 14).

Savitri demonstrates throughout how to expand one's consciousness infinitely and go beyond the mind by means of Integral Yoga. By learning to de-clutter the mind of wasteful thoughts and egoistic desires, we create more space. "Awareness of these peaceful spaces between thoughts brings us right into the present and gives us the feeling that we have 'room for manoeuvre', time to spare" ("Time Waits for No One" 14). This is what Aswapathy and Savitri attempt with success. In the utter silence beyond the mind, love (symbolised by Savitri) enters. As the habit strengthens one begins to feel a oneness with all creations. Time and Space, with all their dualities and limitations, cease to matter. One becomes a point of light and might, like the epic heroine, radiating peace and bliss, embracing all creation in an infinite circle eternally. The several temporal and spatial images as well as

the *mantric* quality of the verse in Savitri enable the sensitive reader to move through Time and Space to supramundane levels of perception.

The significance of meditation in surmounting the restraints of temporal existence is endorsed by thinkers and philosophers world-wide. "Thinking about the timeless Being is the fundamental activity of the being in time [. . .]" (Yadav 347). In fact, the very purpose of time is to lead us to a mystical perception of the timeless. At the peak of meditation, the "timeless illuminates the temporal" (Ninian Smart 323). Dwelling upon the purpose of time Mahadevan observes: "Meditation on time is recommended in the Upanishads as a means for getting beyond time to the timeless reality which is Brahman" (327). He adds that the "fruit of time-meditation is not to cling to time as if it were ultimately real, but to transcend it" (328). The veteran Theosophist H.P. Blavatsky has left a Diagram of Meditation on Time and Space as an aid to spiritual transformation. Accordingly, meditation on the conception "I am all Space and Time" leads to the acquisition of desirable qualities, the deprivation of negativities, and a feeling of "UNITY by Expansion in Space and infinite in Time" (Roger Price 300-09). A comparative study reveals a basic similarity between the principles of the Diagram and Integral Yoga.

The process of transcending Time and Space as outlined in the epic is akin to therapeutics and holistic healing, a remedy for the malady of the modern man, namely, his radical self-estrangement and alienation from the totality of awareness,

and all the ills associated with it. In order to extricate himself from the self-made time warp man has to learn to experience the "Eternal Now" which Sri Aurobindo illustrates through the double yogas in Savitri. It is to live in the present instead of wallowing in the past or worrying about the future. Eckhart Tolle's views in The Power of Now bears much resemblance to Savitri in this regard. To cite a single instance:

Time and the manifested are as inextricably linked as are the timeless Now and the Unmanifested. When you dissolve psychological time through intense present-moment awareness, you become conscious of the Unmanifested, both directly and indirectly. (qtd. in Tattvāloka 74)

Likewise, Integral Yoga bears great resemblance to the several *Kundalini*-based techniques of meditation and holistic healing such as *Rajyoga*, *Kriyayoga*, *Reiki*, *Pranic healing* and so on. Despite certain differences in finer details, all these methods aim at raising the consciousness of the practitioner above the level of the mind. Initiation into any of these techniques is of immense help in understanding Sri Aurobindo and his treatment of Time and Space in Savitri.

It is quite likely that Savitri will prove to be a major force in effecting a radical change of consciousness in the near future from the finite to the Infinite.

The Mother had indicated that the twenty first century "would be the century of consciousness, where the technology of consciousness would be developed to its full potential" (qtd. in Ranade 11). In the Mother's words:

We are at a moment of transition in the history of the earth. It is merely a moment in eternal time, but this moment is long compared to human life. Matter is changing in order to prepare itself for the new manifestation, but the human body is not plastic enough and offers resistance [. . .]. ("Cure of Illness" 3)

Also, Maurice Bucke wrote decades ago that cosmic consciousness is before the race and will gradually come to it in the future where Time and Space will be swallowed up and gone without trace like all unreality (qtd. in Sivananda 32). It is increasingly being felt that a dynamic adventure of the human spirit towards a change of consciousness is the burning need of the hour. Paula Horan, Reiki practitioner, rightly remarks: "A quantum leap in the consciousness of mankind is now needed to defeat this old feeling of separation" (150). The yogas of Aswapathy and Savitri envisage the possibility of such an experiment in human consciousness.

The resurrected Satyavan, in Sri Aurobindo's theory of evolution, will be the Superman, that is, the next evolute after man. The epic poet describes the Superman as one "who can rise above this matter - regarding broken mental human unit and

possess himself universalised and deified in a divine force [. . .]" (Darshan Messages 39). In him the faculty of the mind will be replaced by the Supermind or the mind of light which is "the inner and outer extension of the Infinite who is beyond Space, the unfettered Time of the Eternal who is timeless, the supernal harmony of all absolutes of the Absolute" (Synthesis of Yoga 466). In the epic the poet writes about "a world of everlasting Light, / In the realms of the immortal Supermind" where "the perfection born from eternity / Calls to it the perfection born in Time [. . .]" (10.4. p. 661). Obviously: "The supermind has the vision of the three times, *trikaladrsti*; it sees them as an indivisible movement and sees too each containing the others" (SY 762). Sri Aurobindo is convinced that the "Spirit's greatness is our timeless source / And it shall be our crown in endless Time" (2.2. p. 110). Eventually, the Eternal Supermind will touch earthly Time. This idea is dramatised and symbolically depicted in the latter part of the epic comprising the redemption of Satyavan by the Grace that is Savitri:

The superman shall wake in mortal man

And manifest the hidden demigod

Or grow into the God-Light and God-Force

Revealing the secret deity in the cave.

Then shall the earth be touched by the Supreme [. . .].

(11.1. p. 705)

At the acme of supramentalisation, Matter and Spirit, Time and Eternity, Space and Infinity, the One and the Many will all be perceived in one vision:

The Spirit shall look out through Matter's gaze

And Matter shall reveal the Spirit's face.

Then man and superman shall be at one

And all the earth become a single life. (11.1. p. 709)

In Savitri, Sri Aurobindo thus makes a magnificent prognostication in an absolutely confident voice, which rings with the authenticity of a Revelation or an epiphany: Time and Space will be transcended when humanhood evolves into Supermanhood. His prophecy sounds all the more plausible considering the findings of modern science. Vrekhem is of the opinion that modern science is "one of the many barely touched upon subjects concerning Sri Aurobindo and the Mother awaiting to be studied in depth" (265). He substantiates his view:

For instance, when writing the *Arya*, i.e. years before the formulation of the theory of quantum mechanics, Sri Aurobindo predicted that the deeper science would penetrate into Matter the more Matter would seem to evaporate till none would be left. In *Savitri*, an explanation of the origin and evolution of the cosmos in addition to so much more, we find numerous revealing examples of this kind of knowledge. (266)

In modern Particle Physics the tendency is increasingly more towards integrating time and space, rather than thinking of each as separate entities. Quantum Physics and Wave Mechanics assert that Space is not really void, but is full of vibrations of electromagnetic waves. A post-Einsteinian theory called the Superstring theory takes us back to the beginning of time, back to an era when all the forces of the world were perfectly symmetrical and united as one primal superforce. The theory may provide answers to questions about phenomena that are at the centre of our existence, but beyond all human experience (Kaku 192). Modern Science is seriously speculating the possibility of the existence of multidimensional universes (189). Probably, the "one primal superforce" corresponds to the Timeless, Spaceless *Brahman*; the multidimensional universes may be comparable to the subtle worlds or the inner countries through which Aswapathy travels. At the present level of our knowledge, it is all pure conjecture. "However, more recent scientific thought supports the perception of Theosophists that, at a profound level, science and spiritual wisdom meet" (Ramakrishna Rao 291). As physicists search for a Unified Field theory, psychologists and psychoanalysts are looking for Synchronicity, or a unifying principle behind individual consciousness and the totality of space and time. Savitri is a standing monument to prove that Sri Aurobindo could grasp intuitively the real nature of Time and Space without resorting to any mind-boggling calculations and

speculations. Vrekhem supplements: "To a high degree atomic physics has become occultism, as predicted by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, though without the scientists realising it" (268).

In estimating Sri Aurobindo's handling of Time and Space in Savitri it becomes evident that the poet has an absolutely sure command and an intuitive knowledge of the two concepts. He does not propound any specific theory of Time and Space; nor does he try to define them. He interweaves the two terms with several related concepts like love, pain, death and Consciousness. In the epic he has restated "the ancient Truths as suited to the present times and the need of the future" (Navajata, "The Importance of Sri Aurobindo's Teaching and Work" 8). Truly, his apprehension of these elusive categories is broad and ocean-like, for it can compare with any and every theory of Space-Time, ancient or modern, in Science, Psychology, Philosophy or Literature, in the East or in the West. Sri Aurobindo would certainly have been familiar with such theories, but his presentation of Time and Space in Savitri is founded purely on intuition, and is hence original.

Most other Time philosophers and writers have highlighted only certain aspects of Time, invariably sidelining or overlooking the concept of Space. Sri Aurobindo towers above them all by probing into every aspect of not only Time but also Space metaphysically, and presenting them artistically. The bizarre speculations of post-Einsteinian scientists become experienced actualities in the epic poet's

vision. Also, Sri Aurobindo is possibly the only writer to have handled Space elaborately in a literary composition.

However, the most outstanding or striking quality of the treatment of Time and Space in Savitri is the integrality or the total comprehensiveness of Sri Aurobindo's poetic vision. Kleinman's erudite words endorse this finding:

One of the most appealing characteristics of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy is that one can choose, almost at random, a central concept [like Time or Space] and then use it to throw light upon the development of that concept throughout the course of world philosophy. This is due to the unsurpassed comprehensiveness of Sri Aurobindo's vision of Reality. (71)

In summing up, Savitri, indeed, is an epic of hope, optimism, and affirmative spirituality. When man eventually transcends Time and Space, and attains the Supermind, he possesses the vision of the past, the present, and the future in one sweep. Then he realises, like Aswapathy and Savitri, that nothing is lost, everything is ever present, so that death loses its sting. Thus, amidst the present day existential angst there shines a ray of hope in the Master's pithy statement: "Our being must move eternally through Time" (Savitri 2.6. p. 197). And:

Only when Eternity takes Time by the hand,
 Only when infinity weds the finite's thought,
 Can man be free from himself and live with God.

(Savitri 7.4. p. 516)

Sri Aurobindo is challenging, or gently coaxing, every willing or prepared reader of the epic to try the experiment at supramentalisation, which he and the Mother successfully performed during their lifetime. The Mother adopts the same line of thought in one of her Darshan Messages:

Without care for time, without fear for space, surging out purified
 from the flames of the ordeal, we shall fly without stop towards
 the realisation of our goal, the supramental victory. (36)

Earth is now in a trance of waiting - waiting for man to go beyond Time and Space, evolve into a supramental being, and divinise the entire planet. Savitri shows the way.

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