

# 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.