



Rising of Human Life to Divine Life: A Study of Sri Aurobindo's Spiritual Odyssey *Savitri*

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Abstract

India has contributed immensely towards humanity in the field of spiritualism and mysticism and Sri Aurobindo's contribution towards it has been unique and commendable. He is well known in the world of literature and spiritualism as the master of Indian cultural and spiritual knowledge along his multi-faceted genius. The story of Savitri: A Legend and Symbol is taken from the ancient legend of the Indian epic, Mahabharat and it is based on conjugal love conquering death. The transformation of human life into divine life is the central idea of this spiritual odyssey of Sri Aurobindo. The vision of Sri Aurobindo as a poet is like a searchlight, turning its revealing light from plane to plane where it brings into our view worlds of being, unknown to the ordinary gaze, their workings and their influences upon earth and man, and the part they play in the evolutionary consciousness of the race from the Inconscient to the Superconscient. Savitri has also been called as the spiritual epic of Modern age which represents the drama of integral self-realization. Savitri offers a vision of truth that goes beyond the ordinary mind through realms of overmind and supramental truth. Savitri offers a vision of truth that goes beyond the ordinary mind through realms of overmind and supramental truth. Hence Savitri can not be described only rationally, but must be felt, experienced, and realized. Hence Savitri cannot be described only rationally, but must be felt, experienced, and realized.

Key words: spiritualism, mysticism, transformation, Inconscient, Superconscient, supramental truth

Introduction

The character of Savitri significantly alters the Indian concept of the Avatar, the descent of the Divine in earthly consciousness i.e. perhaps in order to help her children on earth fight the forces of inconscience and give birth to a new race of men who embody the higher Supramental Consciousness, the Divine Mother should descend in all her love, sympathy, and profound understanding. Even though the Avatar is the Divine who came to earth, he is not meant to share in human frailties as per to the current Indian concept of the Avatar. However, in general he descends to perform a divine task, such as saving humanity during a crisis or advancing its development, yet, he

remains always and forever Divine, and as we know that nothing is impossible to the Divine. He only works at his task so as to comply with human law because his experiences differ from those of other men; an avatar is in humanity but not of it. For the first time, Sri Aurobindo has made it abundantly evident that in order to save humanity, the Avatar identify himself/herself completely with human nature.

Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*, an epic poem, is a complicated and mystic work that explores the themes of love, death, spiritual evolution, and the transformation of human consciousness. It uses the framework of the ancient legend of Savitri and Satyavan to delve into profound philosophical and mystical ideas. The poem is not merely a retelling of the myth but a symbolic representation of the human soul's journey towards self-discovery and divine realization. *Savitri* as a spiritual odyssey achieves two challenging goals: first, it gives human-divine Savitri a personality; second, it makes all of man's inner spiritual experiences tangible, direct, and real. It is common knowledge that the most profound spiritual experiences are difficult to describe in words. For the first time, however, Savitri is able to objectify them so thoroughly in terms of pictures and symbols that the perceptive reader can actually feel their concreteness.

Savitri, the spiritual odyssey of Sri Aurobindo, deals with a realm of experience that is unknown to the common man, so it is possible that it would not initially meet with the general appreciation or understood by the average human being since *Savitri* is a record of a seeing, of an experience, which is not of the common kind, and it is often very far from what the general human mind sees or experiences. However, not even the modernist poet can claim that his work is understood and appreciated by everyone. The epic *Savitri* requires a certain minimum of visual ability in addition to a broad, enlightened, cosmopolitan perspective that is up to date with the most recent developments in a number of fields of human knowledge. However, that cannot negate its great epic qualities. Instead, it gives the reader access to a whole new and rich world of experience, and if he must try to get into the spirit of it, he will find that his efforts are more than well worth it.

When comparing the vast subject matter of *Savitri* to that of other epics from various eras, we discover that Dante describes inferno, or hell, which the human spirit must endure in order to reach purgatory, where it must be cleansed of all its filth in order to reach the vision beatific. *Savitri* is commonly considered the spiritual epic of our time. However, the Beatitude is located far away in the Divine's heaven, and this earth is destined to remain a valley of tears. It is a place where man's soul is put to the test to determine whether it is worthy of entering God's kingdom outside of this world.

In contrast to *Savitri*, which is a poem of hope and fulfillment on earth, Milton failed in his attempt "to justify the ways of God to man" because it's possible that the inspiration of puritanical Christianity was insufficient. In that it incorporates the circumstances of man's greatest fulfillment into its epic pattern; it is a poem of knowledge. According to Sri Aurobindo, his *Savitri* is smaller-scale in scope than *Rāmāyana*, but it is full-bodied in terms of subject matter, so it should be regarded as an epic. Even though *Savitri* is already longer than all other European epics, serious critics would concur with Abercrombie that a poem cannot become an epic masterpiece based

solely on its length. The poem's key elements are its high tone of poetical expression and its continuous breath of inspiration.

The originality of the poet scintillates when he addresses the life of Savitri and Satyavan after the conquest, of Death. In the legend, they return to the earth and Satyavan regains his father's realm and rules it for many years and is happy ever after. But, in the poet's symbol both Savitri and Satyavan rise from the kingdom of Death to the region of Eternal Day where the Sun of Troth never sets, where Ignorance is unknown and Death has no place. After staying in this region of Truth for some time, they look upon the earth and return to it so as to accomplish their Divine Work—the creation of a new humanity. Thus the legend is completely transformed by the creative vision of the great Master into a cosmic symbol.

Sri Aurobindo frequently discusses the two ladders—the ascent from Nescience to the Supreme and the descent of the Absolute into the Nescience. Instead of Eternity opposing Time-movement, Savitri's grand vision continuously introduces Eternity into Time. In reality, our mind's divided consciousness and incapacity to reconcile what appear to be the opposites are the cause of this opposition between Time and Eternity. The mistake made by the mind is to apply its own logic—that of the finite—to the infinite, whose logic is different. As a result, our minds are only able to provide us with a limited perspective of the Infinite. In order to highlight their interdependence—or more specifically, the dependence of Time-Eternity on Timeless-Eternity—the questions of Eternity and Time and their relationship are repeatedly raised in various contexts throughout *Savitri*. The unfolding of the universe is carried by the Timeless-Eternity of the Absolute as it wells out into the flow of Time-Eternity. For the first time in the history of thought, Sri Aurobindo articulated the idea of Time-Eternity as a dynamic Reality that naturally depends on Timeless-Eternity. Eternity and Time are not only reconciled but also become organic and invisible in any ultimate vision of reality.

Indian knowledge System (Vedas) and *Savitri*-

Sāvitrī possesses the Vedas' and Upanishads' extreme directness, scope, and thoroughness. *Savitri* also opens us to the realm of the Eternal as the Veda and the Upanishads open. It is not merely a reproduction of the experience of the past; for, Sri Aurobindo has discovered new realms of the spirit. *Savitri*, therefore, is charged with a similar inspirational afflatus but is also at the same time, "a springing forward". We are not here concerned with the difference of spiritual content, which could take us far,—but with the similarities in their content and mode of expression.

The picture does not address the issue of man's struggles on Earth, where he is subject to ignorance and his potential release from seemingly unbreakable bonds during his earthly existence. However, despite the content differences, there are sections in which the Upanishads' expression ascends to the impersonal plane of the Illumined Mind, which perceives life in vast, compact masses while simultaneously being filled with a deep and pervasive sense of the tragedy of life subject to human ignorance. There is a situation in *Kathopanishad* that seems to be comparable to the one we find in *Savitri*. There, Yama, the God of Death, is confronted by the young

Nachiketa, who is similar to Savitri. However, the only reason the similarities are noticeable is that neither Death nor Nachiketa are confronted with the fact that death is inevitable. The bright boy approaches Death, makes him his teacher, and learns from him how to become the immortal Self. There, the issue of world-existence does not come up.

Savitri as Poetic Expression

The origin of poetry according to modern ideas lies in the primitive peoples' faith in the power of words, or more properly, in their faith in the mystic power of incantation. The primitive people believed that they were surrounded by forces which were not physical and that it was possible to connect themselves with those supraphysical forces in order to fulfill some of their desires. Thus it was accepted even by the uncivilised man that life was surrounded and influenced by super-life and that it was possible for him by incantation to influence those beings of the super-life so as to secure their helpful intervention. Hence the earliest form of poetry—incantation—was mystic in a certain sense. There is a striking agreement between the primitive man's belief and that of the Greeks who recognised inspiration as a source of highest creation. They described the psychic state of the poet as that of an exaltation or "enthusiasm", the state of being in God.¹ In India, the idea that poetry and all artistic creation of the highest order comes from a supranational source was well established even in the earliest dawn of its culture—the Vedic Age. There is plenty of poetry written dominantly from the imaginative intelligence or from the rich field of experience of life, there is classical and romantic poetry but the Indian aesthete never forgot the distinction between poetry coming from the supranational source and that coming from the ordinary levels of being.

Since the poet does not speak from the bottom of his mind or focus primarily on what is commonly understood as "thought," the most remarkable strength of Savitri as poetry is its power of Truth, its Light of Knowledge. Unquestionably, the primary purpose of poetry is to communicate ideas, but this does not imply that Savitri lacks any thought-related elements. It is present, but in a condensed form—almost like the light of Truth—which can illuminate or shed light on a variety of ideas. Man is elevated to a higher status in Sāvitṛī despite his struggles and sufferings because he recognizes that he is a transitional state between the Inconscient and the unachieved Superconscient. According to this perspective, every aspect of a person's life contributes to the realization of a greater good or ultimate will. Man and God have a direct relationship in Sāvitṛī.

Cosmic Canvas:

The epic *Savitri's* canvas is as vast as the universe, and it encompasses worlds of being that are related to humanity but that it is unable to perceive due to its ignorance. These levels do, however, have an impact on human consciousness. They also consist of higher planes of consciousness that are vying for manifestation within earthly consciousness but have not yet shown up here. They include entities, forces, and presences that inhabit the worlds of Truth, the planes of Light, Consciousness, and Bliss. As a conscious witness, the soul of aspirant

humanity, represented by Aswapathy, the Lord of manifested Life, initially descends from his human consciousness into the lower vital's heaven and hell, as well as the nether regions of unconsciousness and materiality. After that, he ascends to the higher Vital's Heavens and then moves on to the Mind's Heavens. He travels beyond the boundaries of manifested creation to the center from which creation originates after terrifying into regions above Mind, the Heavens of the Ideal, and the Illumined Mind.

Aswapathy encounters the World-Soul, the Two-in-One, after traveling through a tunnel that leads to the center and a vast shaft of Light. He encounters the Divine Mother, who sustains the universe, there. She, the Supreme Power, who upholds the universe, is the one who grants him the blessing that delivers humanity from the bleak confinement of ignorance and death. As a force of Truth-Consciousness, Savitri not only frees humanity but also establishes the framework for the manifestation of the Light Supreme. She demonstrates how a divine life can fulfill man's life here. The earth's importance as a key hub of a divine experiment is enhanced by this intricate, rich, and unmistakable cosmogony that Aswapathy's journey reveals, and it elevates man's life beyond his wildest expectations. It also illustrates the type of task that Savitri would face and the overwhelming odds that she would have to overcome. Aswapathy has made significant progress toward self-actualization and "he traveled in his mute and single strength bearing the burden of the world's desire" during his extensive journey through the many worlds.

The Contemporary Relevance: *Savitri's* Modernism

However, it is obvious that Savitri bears affinity to Vedic and Upanishadic content and manner, one might be led to think that *Savitri* is something very much of the past and may have no bearing to the present age. This will be a grave mistake because to have similarity of content and manner with the Veda and the Upanishad is not at all to be antiquated or obsolete. These ancient writings deal with perennial problems of life and in that sense they are as modern as the most modernist expression. Besides, Sri Aurobindo, in spite of his long retirement from the outside world, has not ceased to be constantly in contact with the contemporary life to which he himself has contributed a lot. He has kept himself abreast of all the movements of progress in every line of cultural activity. *Savitri* dealing with the entire expanse of evolution from the human life to divine life covering all problems of fundamental importance touched by the intellect of the man and dealing with every aspect of mystical living, could not naturally be supposed to be shut up in some obsolete and narrow vision, however brilliant it may be, of the past dawns of humanity. The contemporary relevance naturally and spontaneously emerges as *Savitri* contains a rich variety of style and subject matter, furthermore, the whole vision of it does not turn away from the life on earth

Savitri also ceases to be a mere accomplished princess and becomes the manifestation of the Grace of the Supreme coming down to humanity to share in its burden of suffering and ignorance in order to enable it to achieve the victory over forces of Darkness and Death. Savitri achieved this by facing Yama, the God of Death, at that moment when he came to take the life of Satyavan. It is by the extension of her protection, of her own Infinity and Immortality, that she saved Satyavan from the God of Death. The rest of the story,—her growth from

childhood to age, her going out to choose the partner for life, her selection of Satyavan in the hermitage, her return to her parents and meeting the sage, Narad,—has been kept intact by the poet with the difference that Savitri, throughout, is treated as one conscious of her Divinity and simultaneously conscious of her humanity.

Conclusion

Thus, Aswapathy's strong desire for the Divine's assistance in establishing divine perfection in this place led to the creation of Savitri. How dissimilar this is from the legendary childless king offering sacrifices and austerities for a child! The poet has given the entire legend of Aswapathy's austerities a profound cosmic significance by transforming it into an epic ascent of the human soul on its journey from human life to the very gates of the divine level. Aswapathy's sacrifices represent the hardships of humanity's changing soul, and his victories represent the progress made by humanity in its protracted quest for the truth.

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