

Ritam
(Dmitrii Melgunov)

THE LEGEND OF IMMORTALITY

The Key to the World's Salvation

The Vedic Legend of Princess Savitri
In the Light of Sri Aurobindo's Revelatory Epic

SAVITRI

www.savitri.su

www.ritam-art.com

Dedicated to all whom I love.

*O Sun-Word, thou shalt raise the earth-soul to Light
And bring down God into the lives of men...*

Sri Aurobindo. *Savitri*, p. 710

The face of Truth is hidden by a golden lid; that remove, O Fostering Sun, for the Law of the Truth, for sight. O Sun, O sole Seer, marshal thy rays, gather them together,— let me see of thee thy happiest form of all; that Conscious Being everywhere, He am I.

Isha Upanishad. Verses 15, 16.

I purify earth and heaven by the Truth.

Rig Veda. I. 133. 1. (*The Life Divine*, p. 1015)

*A day may come in all-fulfilling Time
 When mortal eyes shall see the Immortal's face,
 When mortal minds blaze with the Sun-rhyme
 And mortal lives soar in the termless Grace —*

*Then breaking rocks of the eternal Night,
 The lightning gods leap from their wakeful skies,
 Like flaming birds from nests of deathless Light,
 Smiting our hearts with glories of Paradise —*

*And this rebellious, fallen, struggling earth
 The splendours meet of the undying Sun
 That light the clay with the Eternal's birth
 To manifest the hidden God in man.*

*The day is coming and our souls divine
 The Life immortal's sun-rayed honey-wine.*

Ritam

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I

The Vedic Legend of Savitri And Its Hidden Symbolism

*O Immortal, thou art born in mortals in the
law of the Truth, of Immortality, of Beauty...*

Rig Veda. IX. 110. 4 (The Life Divine, p. 964)

A mystery drama of divine delight...

Savitri, p. 328

WHY THE LEGEND?

This sacred legend and immortal myth? ...

Myth suckled knowledge with her lustrous milk; ...
Thus worked the Power upon the growing world...

Savitri, pp. 610, 242-3¹

A lonely splendour from the invisible goal...
A message from the unknown immortal Light...
Interpreting a recondite beauty and bliss...
It wrote the lines of a significant myth...
A brilliant code penned...

Savitri, p. 4

And half a godhead with great glances came
The large-eyed poets of the Vedic chant...

Urvashi. Collected Poems, p. 209

THE ANCIENT legend of princess Savitri, a faithful wife whose unshakable love and immaculate righteousness enable her to conquer death and restore her beloved husband prince Satyavan to life, is very well known and popular in India. It is known even abroad and attracted interest and attention of many noble minds and hearts in many lands. It has been inspiring through centuries many creative personalities of various times and climes to depict it in their own way and express its appealing beauty in their art. Sri Aurobindo, a great son of India, its national hero freedom fighter, a renowned thinker and scholar, a deep seer-poet and, foremost, a grand Yogi, a Guru of humanity, stands before your eyes as a solitary Himalayan peak even among greatest

¹ Wherever the author of the quotation is not mentioned it is a quotation from Sri Aurobindo's works.

personalities of the modern time, if you take trouble to know deeper his vast and profound legacy and his life and work for the world. His followers and disciples, from his own words and writings as well as from the personal contact with the Guru and from innumerable proofs of his saving spiritual interventions into their lives and destinies, know irrevocably that he was a divine incarnation, an Avatar as it is called in Vedic tradition, of our age who has come to bring down to the world and to plant on earth a higher Consciousness and Force that will gradually transform the whole world into a new World of Love and Light and Freedom and Immortality and our human life into a life divine. It is no wonder that Sri Aurobindo's epic Savitri, the main revelation of his fathomless spiritual experience and wisdom and love, stands as well among various creations inspired by Savitri's legend as an unachievable peak of truly divine Beauty and Height and Vastness.

But why did the modern Avatar choose this particular ancient legend as a frame and a base of his supreme message to the world? Why at all did he choose a legend's frame as a body for his grandiose Message of Truth? Of course, even at a glance the legend is unique in many aspects. First of all, its protagonist is a heroic woman saving her beloved and husband from death, not a male hero saving his female beloved as is the case in the absolute majority of ancient tales and myths and legends produced by various cultures. Second, this hero woman is able to conquer Death himself, and not only to conquer him, but to win his heart with her unswerving love to her husband and her faultless virtue as well as with her perfect irresistible speech converting him into none else as her devotee! Moreover, unlike all other characters of the similar narratives, not only she has not to pay a tribute to Death for restoring her beloved to life, but, on the contrary, she manages to acquire from Death all the plenitude of earthly life for herself and her consort as well as for their whole numerous family!

These are weighty reasons, no doubt, but still they may not be quite convincing of why at all the spiritual genius of humanity was set to choose as a vestment for his message of immense knowledge and depth an ancient

legend, a fairytale (even though a beautiful and unusual one) as perhaps could not but qualify it our materially bound skeptical mentality.

We can indeed understand that only if we will try to look deeper into the hidden meaning of the legend and grasp its true message covered by the garbs of the outward story which then shall appear to our astonished view as only a covert symbol of the still unknown to us deepest fundamental truths of the creation, of cosmos and man and God.

THE LEGEND IN BRIEF

Myth suckled knowledge with her lustrous milk; ...
 Thus worked the Power upon the growing world...
Savitri, pp. 610, 242-3

THE LEGEND of Savitri is narrated in the great Indian epic the Mahabharata as a side episode of the Book of the Forest. It is very remarkable that the narrator is a famous Rishi Markandeya who is himself renowned for conquering Death!

His father a great Rishi Mrikandu performed difficult asceticism, tapasya, to get a child. As a result he was granted by God Shiva himself a choice of two options, whether a son who will live for a hundred years, but will be ordinary and silly, or a son who will be a great knower of the Vedas, but will live only for 12 years. The Rishi chose the latter. When a son was born to him named Markandeya, he indeed was also a great Rishi from his early childhood knowing the Vedas perfectly and teaching them even to high Brahmins (the Hindu priests, adepts of sacred knowledge). So, when the predestined hour of his death was close, he was perfectly aware of it and went into so deep and all-embracing a meditation on eternity that God of Death himself, Yama as he is called in Hindu scriptures, when he came to take away his soul, could not find him anywhere, for his whole being was absorbed with the consciousness of eternity; so that finally Yama had to depart empty-handed. By that Markandeya acquired faculty of physical immortality! It is believed that he went into a very deep meditation for several manvantaras (epochs) and awoke from it only in the present manvantara. So now in the forest hermitage he narrates this legend of princess Savitri to Pandavas, the heroes of the Mahabharata, to console and support them being exiled for 12 years of forest reclusion from the kingdom which they were entitled to inherit. So, here is the tale.

My narration of the story is still being worked on, so for the time being I am giving here a brief narration of the legend found on the site indianetzone.com with corrections of some inaccuracies in their narration. The link to this narration is,

http://www.indianetzone.com/35/savitri_wife_king_satyavan_mythical_character.htm

The legendary story of Savitri and Satyavan is elaborately told by Markandeya, the great sage, when Yudhisthir asked him whether there was ever a woman whose dedication and loyalty matched to that of the virtues of his queen Draupadi. As per the legend, there was a king by the name Aswapati or the Lord of Horses. He was the king of Madura. The king was childless and thus undertook a virtuous life of austerity for many years and offered many oblations to Goddess Savitri. At last, the Goddess Savitri appeared to him and blessed him with a daughter. The daughter of Aswapati was born and named Savitri in honor of the Goddess.

Savitri, the daughter of Aswapati, grew up to be a very beautiful princess. When she was of a marriageable age, no one dared to marry that lady of the lotus eyes, for the radiant splendour and the ardent spirit that were in her daunted every suitor. Thus, her father asked Savitri to choose a husband of her own choice. Then Savitri meekly bowed to feet of her father and went forth with her attendants. Mounting a royal car she visited the forest hermitages of the sages and worshipped the feet of the revered saints and roamed throughout the forests till she found her lord.

Marriage of Savitri and Satyavan

After finding the perfect person to marry, Savitri returned to the court of her father, and, seeing her father seated beside the great rishi Narada, she bowed to his feet and greeted him. Then Aswapati asked Savitri if she had found someone to be her husband. Standing with folded hands before the king and sage, Savitri narrated the incident in the forest and told her father about a virtuous king of the Shalwas, Dyumatsena by name. He became blind and then an ancient foe wrested the kingdom from his hands, and he, along with his wife and little son, had to take refuge in the woods, where he practiced the

austerities appropriate to the hermit life. His son grew up in that forest hermitage and he was worthy to be her husband and she had accepted him to be her husband.

Then Narada told the king that Savitri had done a great mistake by choosing Satyavan to marry. Even though he knew him well, and told that Satyavan excelled in all good qualities, still Savitri was wrong since Satyavan was fated to die in a year on the same day. Then the king asked his daughter to marry someone else other than the son of Dyumatsena, but Savitri told that she was not able to choose another lord for her since she had already given her heart and soul to Satyavan. Then Narada gave his approval for the marriage of Savitri with Satyavan and both got married and Savitri with her lord left her father's kingdom for the hermitage of Dyumatsena.

In the forest hermitage Savitri laid aside her jewels and garbed herself in bark and brown and delighted all by her gentleness and self-denial, her generosity and sweet speech. But the words of Narada never went away from her mind. As the hour appointed for the death of Satyavan approached and when it was only four days left for the death of Satyavan, Savitri fasted day and night, observing the penance of 'three nights'. In the morning of the fated day she fulfilled the usual rites, and came to stand before the Brahmins and her father and mother in laws, and they prayed that she would never be a widow.

Death of Satyavan

Satyavan went out into the woods with axe in hand to bring home wood for the sacrificial fire. Savitri prayed to go with him but Satyavan asked her to take the permission from his father and mother. Savitri prayed the father and mother of Satyavan to go with her husband to the forest and they permitted her. So Savitri departed with her lord, seeming to smile, but heavy-hearted, since she remembered the words of Narada and even pictured her husband as already dead. Both of them passed beside the sacred streams and goodly trees and after a while Satyavan selected a mighty tree and started to work. As he

hewed at the branches of that tree he felt sick and came to his wife complaining that his head was racked with darting pains and that he is fainting. Savitri sat on the ground and laid his head upon her lap; that was the appointed time of the death of Satyavan.

Arrival of Yama, Lord of Death

At that time, while Satyavan fainted with his head on her lap, Savitri saw a shining ruddy deity, dark and red of eye and terrible to look upon and he had a noose in his hand. He stood and gazed at Satyavan. Then Savitri rose and humbly asked about the identity of the person and to Savitri, the person replied that he was Lord Yama, the Lord of Death, and he came there for Satyavan, whose appointed span of life was over. By saying this to Savitri, Yama drew forth the soul from the body of Satyavan, bound in the noose, and departed toward the south, leaving the body of Satyavan with Savitri, cold and lifeless.

Savitri Follows Yama

When Yama took the soul of Satyavan and departed from that place, Savitri followed him. Yama requested Savitri to go back and perform the funeral rites of her husband and asked her not to pursue further. But Savitri replied that she would go there where her husband went and told that it was the lasting law that the wife would follow her husband. She then explained virtue and friendship and truth. Yama was pleased with her words and told her to ask for a boon, except the life of her husband. Savitri prayed that Dyumatsena should regain his sight and health, and Yama granted it. Again she followed Yama and told that friendship with the virtuous must ever bear good fruit. Yama admitted the truth and granted her another boon, again except the life of her husband. That time she asked that father of Satyavan should regain his kingdom and Yama granted the same. Still Savitri followed Yama and spoke of the duty of the great and good to protect and aid all those who seek their help.

Yama granted Savitri a third boon, but again except the life of Satyavan, and Savitri asked that her father should have a hundred sons. Even after that Savitri did not stop following Yama and told him that men ever trust the righteous; for the goodness of heart inspires the confidence of every creature. When Yama granted a fourth boon, again except the life of her husband, Savitri prayed for a hundred sons born of herself and Satyavan. Yama granted the same and asked Savitri to return. But Savitri again declared unto Yama a truth-word of the greatness of spiritual sages and their truth upholding and protecting the world. Then Yama granted her a fifth, "incomparable" boon. So Savitri argued with Yama that if her husband was not granted life, then it would not be possible for her to be the mother of hundred sons as blessed by Yama. Thus Yama granted life to Satyavan, promising them prosperity and a life of four centuries. Then Savitri returned to Satyavan's body, and she lifted his head upon her lap; and then he came to life, like one returning home from sojourn in a strange land. Then those two returned, walking through heavy night along the forest paths.

In the hermitage, Dyumatsena and his wife and all the sages remained in grief. But the Brahmins were of good hope, for they deemed that the virtues of Savitri would avail even against fate, and they gave words of comfort to the king. Dyumatsena suddenly got back his eyesight, and all took it as an omen of good fortune. Then Savitri and Satyavan returned through the dark night, and found the Brahmins and the king seated beside the fire. Both of them were warmly welcomed and Savitri related all that had befallen, and all saluted her. The next day, at dawn, an ambassador came from the kingdom of the Shalwas to give the news that the usurper of Dyumatsena's kingdom was killed, and the people invited Dyumatsena to return and be their king again. So, the old king regained his health and strength and returned to Shalwa and reigned long. Savitri's father Aswapati got a hundred sons. Savitri and Satyavan were also blessed with hundred sons. Thus, due to the goodness and virtues, Savitri was able to raise herself from a poor estate to the highest fortune for her, her husband and their parents, and all those descended from them.

THE SYMBOLISM OF THE CHARACTERS OF THE LEGEND: KEYS TO THE ‘BRILLIANT CODE’

All was revealed there none can here express...

...fables spoken by truth
Or symbols more veridical than fact...

Savitri, p. 30

And every symbol hides a living power...

Savitri, p. 183

The Main Clues

As one who spells illumined characters,
The key-book of a crabbed magician text,
He scanned her subtle tangled weird designs
And the screened difficult theorem of her clues...

Savitri, p. 188

According to Sri Aurobindo,

The tale of Satyavan and Savitri is recited in the Mahabharata as a story of conjugal love conquering death. But this legend is, as shown by many features of the human tale, one of the many symbolic myths of the Vedic cycle.

Savitri, Author’s Note

Sri Aurobindo provides the main keys to understand that deep symbolism hidden behind the outward human tale, in his brief, but extremely profound and important note premising the epic. He reveals in it the true meaning of all the four main characters of the ancient legend. According to him, the main clues to understand that symbolism hide in the names of the characters and their deeper Sanskrit meaning.

Thus, King Aswapati's name literally means in Sanskrit 'The Lord of the Horse'². It may seem a bit strange name, but Sri Aurobindo discloses that in the deeper sense it means "*the Lord of Tapasya, the concentrated energy of spiritual endeavour that helps us to rise from the mortal to the immortal planes*" for in Vedic symbolism a horse stands for energy, force, *tapas*. And in his epic Sri Aurobindo depicts Aswapati according to this true meaning of his figure. He is the spiritual leader of humanity, an incarnation of "*the All-Wise who leads the unseeing world*" (*Savitri*, p. 22), an Avatar of the Supreme '*the strong forerunner*' representing and leading the aspiration of the soul in Matter to unite with its highest Source and linking the fallen world with the Divine's Mother-Grace that takes up earthly human embodiment to save it,

*One in the front of the immemorial quest,
Protagonist of the mysterious play...
A pointing beam on earth's uncertain roads...*

Savitri, p. 22

Revealing his true nature, Sri Aurobindo speaks of him as

*... Spirit aspiring in an ignorant frame...
... Voice arisen from the Inconscient's world...
... Son of Strength who climbst creation's peaks...*

Savitri, p. 335

² In earlier versions of the epic even the first section on Aswapati's Yoga had the title "The Yoga of the Lord of the Horse" and Sri Aurobindo wrote in a letter regarding the title that it is Aswapati's name and that "it will be explained elsewhere" adding that "I don't want to be allegorical, only mystic and allusive". (10 November 1936. Letters on Poetry and Art, p. 278)

or

*Adept of the self-born unfailing line...
Traveller upon the bare eternal heights...
The eternal seeker in the aeonic field...*

Savitri, pp. 340, 347

King Dyumatsena's name means literally 'Lord of the Shining Hosts'; according to Sri Aurobindo, in the deeper sense he represents "*the Divine Mind here fallen blind, losing its celestial kingdom of vision, and through that loss its kingdom of glory.*"

Satyavan which in Sanskrit means 'the one carrying truth within oneself, possessing truth, the one of truth, devoted to truth', as disclosed by Sri Aurobindo is "*the soul carrying the divine truth of being within itself but descended into the grip of death and ignorance.*" In Sri Aurobindo's epic Satyavan represents the soul of the world itself. Thus Savitri revealing that truth says to God of Death,

*Release the soul of the world called Satyavan
Freed from thy clutch of pain and ignorance...*

Savitri, p. 666

And Savitri's name is derived from the Sanskrit root 'su' which means 'to impel', 'to create'. Her name in Sanskrit is exactly pronounced and written as Sāvitrī, with the long 'a' and the long last 'i'. The long 'a' means that she belongs to Savitar, the Sun-God, the 'Creator', the 'Impeller' for she is his daughter and thus springs up from him. Savitar's name may be interpreted even more exactly not simply as a Creator, but rather 'The One who brings something out of some depths into existence'. He is the One who brings the manifestation out of the Transcendence. The syllable 'sa' may also mean 'to possess', 'to extend one's influence', 'to bestow upon'. There is also a tint of radiance in it. So her name may be expressed as 'she of that supreme effulgent Creator-Impeller', 'she full of radiance, possessing the universe and bestowing

upon it the shining plenitude of light'. Sri Aurobindo reveals that in the true sense behind the symbol she is "the Divine Word, daughter of the Sun, goddess of the supreme Truth who comes down and is born to save" or "the incarnate Light, the Sun Goddess." (*Letters on Poetry and Art*, p. 278) She is called Savitar's 'daughter' because she is an emanation of the Sun-Truth of the Supreme, a portion of him, his effulgent Truth-force missioned to descend on earth to save. Sri Aurobindo in his epic reveals the true symbolic meaning of Savitri being the Divine Mother herself who takes human birth as a 'radiant power' in response to the 'earth's dumb need' to save the world and its soul from the grip of ignorance and pain and falsehood and death. For the mystic Truth is that the Divine Word is the Divine Creatrix, the Supreme Mother of all the endless manifested worlds and their innumerable beings (read more on this in the next chapter):

*She is the golden bridge, the wonderful fire.
The luminous heart of the Unknown is she,
A power of silence in the depths of God;
She is the Force, the inevitable Word,
The magnet of our difficult ascent,
The Sun from which we kindle all our suns,
The Light that leans from the unrealised Vasts,
The joy that beckons from the impossible,
The Might of all that never yet came down.*

Savitri, p. 314

Therefore, it is Her that Aswapati, the spiritual leader of humanity, seeks for the world to heal its pangs:

*O Truth defended in thy secret sun,
Voice of her mighty musings in shut heavens
On things withdrawn within her luminous depths,
O Wisdom-Splendour, Mother of the universe,
Creatrix, the Eternal's artist Bride,
Linger not long with thy transmuting hand*

*Pressed vainly on one golden bar of Time,
As if Time dare not open its heart to God.
O radiant fountain of the world's delight
World-free and unattainable above,
O Bliss who ever dwellst deep-hid within
While men seek thee outside and never find,
Mystery and Muse with hieratic tongue,
Incarnate the white passion of thy force,
Mission to earth some living form of thee.
One moment fill with thy eternity,
Let thy infinity in one body live,
All-Knowledge wrap one mind in seas of light,
All-Love throb single in one human heart.
Immortal, treading the earth with mortal feet
All heaven's beauty crowd in earthly limbs!
Omnipotence, girdle with the power of God
Movements and moments of a mortal will,
Pack with the eternal might one human hour
And with one gesture change all future time.
Let a great word be spoken from the heights
And one great act unlock the doors of Fate.*

Savitri, p. 345

This is how he implores the Divine Mother to descend and save the aching world. It is so that

*All Nature dumbly calls to her alone
To heal with her feet the aching throb of life
And break the seals on the dim soul of man
And kindle her fire in the closed heart of things.*

Savitri, p. 314

For

Alone her hands can change Time's dragon base.

Savitri, p. 314

Sri Aurobindo in his *Savitri* gives a tremendous description of the grandiose Yoga of Aswapati (this description extends for as wide as a half of the huge epic!),

Aswapati's Yoga falls into three parts. First, he is achieving his own spiritual self-fulfilment as an individual and this is described as the Yoga of the King [...this part of Aswapati's spiritual development consisted of two yogic movements, one a psycho-spiritual transformation and the other, a greater spiritual transformation with an ascent to a supreme power...]. 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 [The Book of the Traveller of the Worlds]: 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.

Letters on Poetry and Art, pp. 329-30

In this grand formulation Sri Aurobindo reveals the true significance of the figure of Aswapati and his *tapasya* as a symbol of the great arduous and manifold endeavour of the spiritual leader of humanity, encompassing all possible ways and spheres and planes of the individual and then universal experience and realization to reach finally the supreme goal of all earthly endeavour and to call down the saviour descent of the Divine Mother-Force. So finally as the result of Aswapati's tremendous efforts the Divine Mother herself descends on earth and takes human birth as Savitri, *Tat Savitur varam rupam*, That Savitar's 'most auspicious form' (Sri Aurobindo's *Gayatri Mantra*) which 'is born to save', *jyotih parasya*, "the light of the Supreme which shall illumine us with the Truth" (Sri Aurobindo's *Gayatri Mantra*), for

A world's desire compelled her mortal birth.

Savitri, p. 22

and Aswapati is the living embodiment and vehicle and propeller of this dateless desire or aspiration of the world fallen and struggling for resurrection. So he is finally able to link the fallen creation with the saviour Mother-Grace who is Savitri.

Savitri is represented in the poem as an incarnation of the Divine Mother. ... 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 Immortality³”.

Letters on Poetry and Art, p. 276

Sri Aurobindo's spiritual collaborator Mirra Alfassa in whom he saw an incarnation of the Divine Mother calling her the Mother, and who was the one manifesting Sri Aurobindo's Spirit and Vision into concrete material creation⁴, explains,

The earth has been chosen for the big work of bringing back the manifested to its Origin. The world has become the symbol of the whole universe and upon the earth the Sovereign Mother has incarnated from the beginning, to hasten the waking up of the world to the consciousness of its Origin.

It is to this Consciousness of the Mother that the legend gave the name of Savitri and then the whole story was built.

The Mother. *About Savitri. II*, 18

Things has got so wrong that the possibility of failure was becoming more and more evident. To prevent the realisation of this possibility, a direct descent from the Supreme came upon earth, organised for the work of redeeming.

³ Sri Aurobindo quotes a line from *Savitri*, p. 17.

⁴ You can read biographical note on the Mother (Mirra Alfassa) at the end of the book.

This earth has been created as a concentrated centre for the Supreme to come down and save the universe.

The Mother. *About Savitri. III*, 25

Goddess Savitri may be perceived in the true sense as the creative Power or Word of the Supreme Creator, for he creates with his Word-Power. So this Supreme Divine Truth-Word is missioned on earth to be born in a human form as princess Savitri, daughter of king Aswapati, with the aim to bring down Salvation and the Life Divine to earth and humanity.

THE FIVE BOONS OF SAVITRI

No victory she admits of Death or Fate.
Savitri, p. 353

The main episode of the legend is, of course, Savitri's dialogue with God of Death and her five boons granted by him. If Savitri is the Divine Mother incarnate who battles with Death for the soul of the world to release it from the clutch of ignorance and suffering and death, then the whole story appears to us in an entirely new light. The five boons of Savitri acquired from God of Death reveal much deeper and grander meaning than can be grasped from the merely surface narration.

The First Boon: Restoring Sight to Dyumatsena

Then shall the Truth supreme be given to men...

Savitri, p. 705

The first boon in the context of the outward story may seem a bit too illogical or at least somewhat irrational and unpractical. Savitri receives a boon from God of Death himself and she may ask whatever she likes except the life for Satyavan. What a unique opportunity! But she desires that King Dyumatsena may gain back his sight and again "*be mighty and glorious like the fire and the sun.*" This is a compassionate and generous act, no doubt, but would it not be more appropriate for her to ask something more important for herself or, at least, for her own father and not for her father-in-law? As a virtuous daughter she perhaps even ought to have asked the most desirable boon for her own father, the sons whom he had been dreaming to get aspiring and labouring so much for it. Or she might have asked the boon of a hundred sons for herself which she does ask later (the boon more important for herself, no doubt!). But instead of all that, she asks Yama to restore sight to her father-in-law. What is that, a strange slip on her part or just a fancy of the unknown ancient author

(authors) of the legend? We may perhaps guess in the context of the outward story that Savitri in her unearthly compassion and magnanimity and self-giving was deeply moved by bitter sufferings of a blind human being right near her, especially tragic as he had been earlier a mighty sovereign, and now lost everything so pitifully, even his sight,

*A deep of compassion, a hushed sanctuary,
Her inward help unbarred a gate in heaven...*

*A wide self-giving was her native act;
A magnanimity as of sea or sky
Enveloped with its greatness all that came
And gave a sense as of a greateened world...*

Savitri, p. 15

Hence her choice of the first boon may have come. Or, perhaps, her choice might be in conformity with Indian culture's perception of an ideal wife for whom her husband's interests and needs and aspirations are the most important thing in life. The ideal of self-effacement and sacrifice is rooted deep in the Indian tradition. But this sacrifice is not self-immolation but self-ennoblement, an act of love and not a self-pity, a sacrifice undertaken from a position of strength and not ours of a helpless choice and weakness. We see this fully at play in the personality of Savitri, which thus seen also becomes a greatest possible tribute to womanhood apart from other high elements that constitute this wonderful poem-narrative. King Dyumatsena's pitiable physical disability was, probably, the main cause of suffering for Satyavan, his only son. So Savitri, knowing that, wanted most of all to repair this misfortune. It is in this way that Sri Aurobindo presents the first choice of Savitri in his epic,

*“...First I demand whatever Satyavan,
My husband, waking in the forest’s charm
Out of his long pure childhood’s lonely dreams,
Desired and had not for his beautiful life.*

Give, if thou must, or, if thou canst, refuse."
Death bowed his head in scornful cold assent, ...
Uplifting his disastrous voice he spoke:
"Indulgent to the dreams my touch shall break,
I yield to his blind father's longing heart
Kingdom and power and friends and greatness lost
And royal trappings for his peaceful age,
The pallid pomps of man's declining days,
The silvered decadent glories of life's fall. ...
The sensuous solace of the light I give
To eyes which could have found a larger realm,
A deeper vision in their fathomless night.
For that this man desired and asked in vain
While still he lived on earth and cherished hope."

Savitri, p. 589

It is interesting to notice that here Death first mentions kingdom and power as being restored by him to Dyumatsena and then only sight. Probably, in Sri Aurobindo's narration Dyumatsena, being a true king, first of all, would have his power restored, not even his sight. Besides, here both kingdom and sight are won as one boon which Death describes as 'sensuous solace' saying that,

To one who wiser grew by adverse Fate,
Goods I restore the deluded soul prefers
To impersonal nothingness's bare sublime.

Ibid

This is the delusive language of Death, but in truth it means that in Sri Aurobindo's poem Savitri as the first 'boon' wins from Death the lost fullness of life for king Dyumatsena — which means she wins first all that which Satyavan desired for his beautiful earthly life. Sri Aurobindo just generalized the full possession of the earthly life for Dyumatsena, having back both power and sight, as the first 'boon.' Death has to yield to Savitri, the boon combining all that Satyavan dreamed of for his happy life on earth. In the ancient legend

Savitri first wins back sight for Dyumatsena and with the separate second ‘boon’ she wins back for him the lost power and kingdom. We will clarify later that there is a deep reason behind such arrangement of the outward story symbolically expressing very profound truths of this world and its salvation. In any case, it is clear that in Sri Aurobindo’s synthetic vision, worldly life and spiritual life, each has its own place, each is needed for the fulfillment of the other. To merely escape from death is not the goal but to live life in its fullness but with a transformed consciousness, an illumined consciousness (for thus alone can we truly live) is the high aim before mankind.

But coming back to the outward story, one still can object to these arguments that Savitri’s own father also suffered greatly of not having sons to inherit his kingdom, so she, as a virtuous daughter, perhaps, must have asked first of all the boon of sons for her father. But if we remember the deeper symbolic meaning of the characters of the legend revealed to us by Sri Aurobindo, then we can understand the true message the tale was to convey to the initiate, and from the point of view of this deeper cryptic significance the choice of Savitri becomes very clear and perfectly logical. Moreover, it is unveiled as the only boon she must have won from Death first.

If Dyumatsena symbolizes the Divine Mind, then the loss of ‘sight’ by him, through the lapse of Divine Consciousness, i.e. of his “*celestial kingdom of vision*”, is the main cause of the fallen state of this universe which he creates being blinded for certain reason (which we shall study later), i.e. losing his Light of Awareness. It is due to that loss of “sight” that he loses also his “kingdom”, i. e. his almighty effectuating power. And it is because of this that Satyavan, the son of Dyumatsena, i. e. the incarnate soul created or rather emanated by that Divine Mind, or Consciousness, has no future (which is symbolized by the fact that Satyavan is bound to die in just one year at so young an age), has no kingdom to inherit (which means the soul has no real power in this world) and is to live in seclusion in a deep forest away from the stream of civilization (which means the soul is separated from the life of the world and has no possibility of any effective influence on it). Satyavan as the child of King Dyumatsena is also symbolic of the fact that normally we first

become aware of the inmost soul is through some illumination falling upon the higher parts of our mind. Man is first a mental being and only later, through spiritual conversion that he becomes a spiritual being. Hence the epic depicts Satyavan, the representative of the soul trapped in the forest of Ignorance as the child of Dyumatsena, the Divine Mind here fallen blind, hence unable to restore its rightful place to the soul.

It is important to notice here that in the beginning of the story all the four of its characters has no future! Aswapati has no future being issueless; Satyavan has no future as he is to die in just one brief year; Dyumatsena has no future as he is blind and powerless and exiled and his only son is going to die so soon; finally, even Savitri has no future as nobody dares to marry her, i. e. she has no proper response from the human world to be able to enter into the true union with it and give birth to her new creation in it. Besides even when she has chosen someone, he is destined to die soon, which may also symbolize a fragile human vessel that cannot hold the Truth for long! This situation may indeed touch us as a poignant human tragedy of the characters of the tale. But knowing now the clues for understanding the deeper message of the legend, we may be really overwhelmed with all the abysmal tragedy of the universe in which we live, that the ancient tale reveals to us. It is the world where the Divine Mind is fallen, blind, powerless and as yet manifested at best as the human weak and limited inferior mentality and is incapable to see luminously and create triumphantly with its vision, to act directly and freely on Matter and in Matter in which it is incarnate and has to try to manifest itself in the conditions of this impenetrable mass of utter unconsciousness and inertia entirely opposite to its free and luminous nature. It is the world where the Lord of Spiritual Endeavour has no progeny of human aspirants and vessels being ready to follow him, to aspire with him, to transcend with him their lower nature and to inherit and manifest in themselves and establish on earth his high spiritual kingdom rising humanity into a base for manifestation of the future superhuman divine species. It is the world where the incarnate soul is bound by the densest Nescience and utter distortion of the divine Truth, the Falsehood, and cannot manifest its All-blissful, All-powerful, All-true and All-wise immortal divine reality and is therefore subject to suffering and death.

Finally, it is the world where even the supreme Divine Force and Grace who seeks to descend and save the soul in the world and thus the world itself, cannot find a single soul who would give true response to Her, who would dare to dedicate himself entirely to Her, to fall in love with Her and to engender in union with Her the new divine race totally free from the limitations of the human species and establishing triumphantly on earth and in this entire universe the Kingdom of the Divine Mind restored to His vision and might, the Kingdom of the Union of Soul incarnate and the supreme creative Force as his almighty Spouse and executive Energy, the Kingdom of God: “*My sweet infinity of thy (God’s) numberless souls*” as Savitri puts it (*Savitri*, p. 697), — that is the formula of the New Creation. Later Savitri creates future for herself as well as for all other by the power of her mighty Yoga unfolding her omnipotent Self of the Divine Mother. And it is only the direct intervention of the supreme divine Grace and Power, the manifestation of the Divine Mother Herself in Savitri as her true Soul-Force in the course of her confronting Death, in that moment of her utter trial when she must ‘stand unhelped’ on the ‘last desperate verge’,

*Alone with death and close to extinction’s edge ...
When being must end or life rebuild its base...*

Savitri, p. 461

when she fights to

*...reach an apex of world-destiny
Where all is won or all is lost for man...*

Savitri, p. 461

that saves all and opens or perhaps creates a new future for the universe and for the soul embodied in it. “*She alone can save...*” (*Savitri*, p. 461)

From that point of view it is clear that restoring the fallen Divine Mind here to his vision, restoring the darkened Consciousness to his full Light had actually to be the first gain the Divine Mother incarnate had had to recover from Death, from the Great Fall. Without that ‘boon’ Dyumatsena the Divine Mind

himself has no future as well as his son or the soul of the world, i. e. the world itself. That is why she utters as her first desire that King Dyumatsena may regain his sight and again “*be mighty and glorious like the fire and the sun.*” This is not just a beautiful poetic metaphor, but the utterance of the Divine Word restoring to the fallen Mind its divine nature of the luminous All-Knowledge and the fiery Almightiness. These similes of the fire and the sun may be counted a poetic expression, with the aid of significant images, of the fundamental attributes of the Supermind, as Sri Aurobindo calls it, the Truth-Consciousness of which Savitri is the decisive decent being able therefore to bring them back to the Mind-Consciousness here with her mantric speech.

It is also extremely interesting to notice how Yama grants that very first (and perhaps the most important, though it may not seem so in the context of the outward story) boon to Savitri,

O unblamable, return now; in true accent and knowing the letters well and making the right use of the words, and with the proper reasoning that you speak, I am pleased with you. Ask for a boon which I shall grant, but excluding life for the dead.

Vyasa’s Savitri, p. 46⁵

First of all, he stresses that Savitri is ‘*unblamable*’, i. e. her being has no fault in it; and it is solely due to that faultless integral purity that she is able to confront Death and to win ‘boons’ from him. Secondly, we cannot but be astonished by the words of God of Death that follow. He says that “*in true accent and knowing the letters well and making the right use of the words ... that you speak*”. What does this strange phrase mean? Every more or less educated human being generally speaks ‘*in true accent*’ and ‘*making the right use of the words*’, and of course, he or she knows the letters well (especially Savitri who is a princess)! Why then he points that out and is so pleased with it that grants such a great opportunity to Savitri of asking anything she likes ‘*excluding life*

⁵ Here and afterwards in the book the original legend of Savitri is quoted from the rendering by R. Y. Deshpande: R. Y. Deshpande. *Vyasa’s Savitri*. Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry, 1996.

for the dead? In reality, this phrase is one more clue to the true sense of the ancient legend. Symbolically this phrase means that God of Death recognizes that Savitri has perfect almighty command over speech being the Divine Word herself; she expresses her will in supreme sound-formations (“...*in true accent and knowing the letters well and making the right use of the words...*”) which are mantric utterances of her divine idea-intention (“...*and with the proper reasoning that you speak...*”). So actually God of Death does not grant ‘boons’ to Savitri. He yields to her what she demands being the supreme Truth-fiat.

I bow not to thee, O huge mask of death...
Conscious of immortality I walk.
A victor spirit conscious of my force,
Not as a suppliant to thy gates I came:
Unslain I have survived the clutch of Night. ...
I stoop not with the subject mob of minds
Who run to glean with eager satisfied hands
And pick from its mire mid many trampling feet
Its scornful small concessions to the weak.
Mine is the labour of the battling gods...
Imposing on the slow reluctant years
The flaming will that reigns beyond the stars...

Give, if thou must, or, if thou canst, refuse.

Savitri, pp. 588-9

So she says in Sri Aurobindo’s *Savitri*. And elsewhere,

If the eyes of Darkness can look straight at Truth,
Look in my heart and, knowing what I am,
Give what thou wilt or what thou must, O Death.

Savitri, p. 636

In Sri Aurobindo’s epic *Savitri* as the consummation of her fight with Death meets the Supreme himself and he reveals her,

*O beautiful body of the incarnate Word,
Thy thoughts are mine, I have spoken with thy voice.
My will is thine, what thou hast chosen I choose...*

Savitri, p. 698

And elsewhere,

*O Savitri, thou art my spirit's Power,
The revealing voice of my immortal Word,
The face of Truth upon the roads of Time...*

Savitri, p. 703

For she is indeed his supreme creative omnipotent Truth-Word, or the Divine Mother.

So now we can understand the true meaning of the outward symbol: Savitri is able to win from Death all that the embodied soul desired for its full realization, for its '*beautiful life*' in this world. From Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* we come to know that what Satyavan desired was regaining by his father sight and kingdom. That means that for the soul of the world the most essential 'desire' is regaining by its 'father' the Divine Mind, the Divine Consciousness, his omniscience and omnipotence in this world because only that brings naturally that kingdom of vision and glory to the soul in Matter and opens for it the future of immortal life divine in this world.

In that view the second boon of Savitri (as well as all the rest of her boons) are clearly the natural consequence of her first and perhaps decisive boon, her first victory over Death.

*In front King Dyumatsena walked, no more
Blind, faltering-limbed, but his far-questing eyes
Restored to all their confidence in light
Took seeingly this imaged outer world...*

Savitri, p. 722

...the mighty King Dyumatsena got back the sight, clear and pellucid, with which he began seeing everything very well.

Vyasa's Savitri, p. 73

The Second Boon: Restoring Kingdom to Dyumatsena

The supermind shall claim the world for Light
 And thrill with love of God the enamoured heart
 And place Light's crown on Nature's lifted head
 And found Light's reign on her unshaking base.

Savitri, p. 707

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.

Savitri, p. 705

As the second boon Savitri asks God of Death to restore kingdom to her father-in-law King Dyumatsena adding, “*let him never abandon the dharma.*” From the point of view of the deeper symbolism the second boon means that Savitri restores to the fallen Divine Mind his almighty power which he has lost. Her additional phrase then is not merely a moral admonition, but with this word she establishes that the Divine Consciousness here will never deviate from the Truth for that was the cause of his fall as we will see afterwards. And Yama grants that he shall regain his lost kingdom ‘*and never will depart from Righteousness*’, from the Truth of his existence.

A question may arise why doesn’t Savitri ask to restore both sight and kingdom to Dyumatsena as one boon, for she even speaks about both the losses at once before asking the first boon,

My father-in-law has lost his kingdom and is exile, abiding in the forest, and he is blind...

Vyasa’s *Savitri*, p. 47

Moreover, she even mentions the loss of kingdom as prior to the loss of sight! Nevertheless, she asks first to restore sight to the King, for it is clear from the point of view of the deeper symbolism of the legend that the Divine Mind has first to regain his vision which will enable him to regain his kingdom as well. Why she asks kingdom as a separate (the second) boon, we will try to clarify in the Section ‘A Metaphysical Exposition’.

We may mark that Savitri calls Dyumatsena her ‘*wise father-in-law*’ and her ‘*preceptor*’. Dyumatsena is also time and again called in the legend ‘*the King-sage*’; Aswapati also addresses him in this way. These may be indications of the true nature of the character of Dyumatsena as the symbol of the Divine Mind who is ‘*wise*’ and in certain aspect of the supreme Reality may indeed be considered Savitri’s ‘*preceptor*’, her guiding Source.

Now, after the second victory of Savitri, Dyumatsena, formerly “*A regal pillar of fallen mightiness*” (*Savitri*, p. 467), becomes ‘*the golden tower*’ (*Savitri*, p. 702) of omnipotence arisen. Now

Firmly he trod with monarch step the soil.

Savitri, p. 722

The Third Boon: Getting A Hundred Sons For Aswapati

The past receded and the future neared...

Savitri, p. 466

O woman soul, what light, what power revealed, ...
Opens for us by thee a happier age?

Savitri, p. 723

Protagonist of the mysterious play...
A thinker and toiler in the ideal's air,
Brought down to earth's dumb need her radiant power.

Savitri, p. 22

Some shall be made the glory's receptacles
And vehicles of the Eternal's luminous power.

Savitri, p. 705

As the third boon Savitri gets from God of Death a hundred sons for her father King Aswapati, his most desirable boon. We may understand now what it means from the point of view of the deeper symbolic message of the legend. Once the Divine Mind regained his lost vision and power, the Lord of Spiritual Endeavour of humanity acquires a possibility to get his 'progeny' of those capable of becoming the needful vessels of his force and aspiration. Some transformative processes start in humanity which gradually create in it an elite of enlightened vehicles of higher spiritual Light and Power manifesting them in the life of mankind,

*Some shall be made the glory's receptacles
And vehicles of the Eternal's luminous power.
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.*

Savitri, p. 705

It is interesting to remember here that once Sri Aurobindo made a remark that he needs ‘a hundred complete people free from petty selfishness’ to transform the world. It also brings to our mind the ancient Vedic idea where the seer prayed for strong and many progenies. To the uninitiated it meant the physical children but to the initiated it meant powers and forces of nature, new births into the realms of the Spirit and a collectivity that is growing in the Light of the Truth witnessed and experienced by the Seer!

Thus Sri Aurobindo describes it is *Savitri*,

*Abandoning the dubious middle Way,
A few shall glimpse the miraculous Origin
And some shall feel in you the secret Force
And they shall turn to meet a nameless tread,
Adventurers into a mightier Day.
Ascending out of the limiting breadths of mind,
They shall discover the world’s huge design
And step into the Truth, the Right, the Vast.*

Savitri, p. 704

By ‘you’ Savitri and Satyavan are meant bringing on earth the new Supramental Force from ‘a mightier Day’, from ‘the Truth, the Right, the Vast’ as Sri Aurobindo describes that Supramental plane using the formula of the ancient seers, *Satyam Ritam Brihad* — the static Truth as the foundation of the Supramental plane (*Satyam*); the dynamic Truth as the self-formulation and self-expression of the Supramental Creation (*Ritam*); and the Vastness and Plenitude of the Supramental Creation by the Truth-Power (*Brihad*).

Thus Aswapati receives fulfillment of his line, and the race of his ‘sons’ manifests on earth, the greater spiritualized humanity,

*Man too shall turn towards the Spirit's call.
 Awake to his hidden possibility,
 Awake to all that slept within his heart
 And all that Nature meant when earth was formed
 And the Spirit made this ignorant world his home,
 He shall aspire to Truth and God and Bliss. ...*

*Man shall desire to climb to his own heights. ...
 Even the multitude shall hear the Voice
 And turn to commune with the Spirit within
 And strive to obey the high spiritual law...*

*A heavenlier passion shall upheave men's lives,
 Their mind shall share in the ineffable gleam,
 Their heart shall feel the ecstasy and the fire. ...
 Mortality's bondslaves shall unloose their bonds,
 Mere men into spiritual beings grow...*

*The Truth shall be the leader of their lives,
 Truth shall dictate their thought and speech and act,
 They shall feel themselves lifted nearer to the sky,
 As if a little lower than the gods.
 For knowledge shall pour down in radiant streams
 And even darkened mind quiver with new life
 And kindle and burn with the Ideal's fire
 And turn to escape from mortal ignorance. ...*

*Thus shall the earth open to divinity
 And common natures feel the wide uplift,
 Illumine common acts with the Spirit's ray
 And meet the deity in common things.*

The Fourth Boon:
Getting A Hundred Sons of Her Own from Satyavan

At once she seemed to found a mightier race. ...
A mightier race shall inhabit the mortal's world.

Savitri, p. 355, 706

Never have I heard such holy utterances, O well-learned and bright lady, in anyone speaking to me, —

Vyasa's *Savitri*, p. 53

So Yama says to Savitri and grants her the fourth boon! (though adding once more “*But not the life for the deceased*”.) This phrase of his is again not merely a poetic exaggeration, but a revealing hint disclosing in its true sense that Savitri possesses the power of Supreme Speech, the Mantra of Truth which the Darkness of the World has never heard as yet. And he is yielding to Her whatever She demands according to the irresistible truth of Her Supreme Self which She manifests in Her transforming Word.

*The Woman answered to the mighty Shade,
And as she spoke, mortality disappeared;
Her Goddess self grew visible in her eyes,
Light came, a dream of heaven, into her face.*

Savitri, p. 656

No wonder, he might have been quite astonished by meeting such a lady! And Sri Aurobindo marvelously depicts it. Death asks amazed,

*Who then art thou hiding in human guise?
Thy voice carries the sound of infinity,
Knowledge is with thee, Truth speaks through thy words;
The light of things beyond shines in thy eyes.*

Savitri, p. 663

Now she wins from Death the possibility to manifest on earth her new race, the superhuman divine race born of union of Satyavan with Savitri, the soul embodied in Matter with the descending Supramental Force. This is the true meaning of the symbol of a hundred sons of Savitri with Satyavan.

*When superman is born as Nature's king
His presence shall transfigure Matter's world...*

*Interpreter of a diviner law
And instrument of a supreme design,
The higher kind shall lean to lift up man.
Man shall desire to climb to his own heights.
The truth above shall wake a nether truth...*

*The superman shall reign as king of life,
Make earth almost the mate and peer of heaven,
And lead towards God and truth man's ignorant heart
And lift towards godhead his mortality.*

Savitri, p. 708, 709, 706

You shall have, O woman, a hundred sons, mighty and heroic, who shall gladden your heart...

Vyasa's *Savitri*, p. 54

....that Yama is to admit and grant her now. So she gets her sons with Satyavan, “*noble and heroic in deed, well-born, extending the glory of the house*”, the house of Savitri and Satyavan, the house of Dyumatsena, the house of Aswapati. They indeed will ‘gladden’ at last the heart of the Divine Mother, “*the flaming silence of her heart of love*”,

*For since upon this blind and whirling globe
Earth-plasm first quivered with the illumining mind
And life invaded the material sheath
Afflicting Inconscience with the need to feel,*

*Since in Infinity's silence woke a word,
A Mother-wisdom works in Nature's breast
To pour delight on the heart of toil and want
And press perfection on life's stumbling powers,
Impose heaven-sentience on the obscure abyss
And make dumb Matter conscious of its God.*

Savitri, p. 352-3

In spite of everything, in spite of all the impossibility and resistance,

*Although our fallen minds forget to climb,
Although our human stuff resists or breaks,
She keeps her will that hopes to divinise clay;
Failure cannot repress, defeat o'erthrow;
Time cannot weary her nor the Void subdue,
The ages have not made her passion less;
No victory she admits of Death or Fate.*

Savitri, p. 353

And now at last she is going to win the final victory over Death and Fate. Winning the boon of a hundred sons for her and Satyavan means in fact that Satyavan will live. Otherwise this boon of Yama cannot be fulfilled. And that seems to be an unbelievable, incomprehensible slip on his part! Many commentators of the ancient legend presume that Savitri somehow proved more subtle, that she managed to 'outwit' or even 'cajole' the luckless god! It is as if speaking with such a beautiful and courteous and affable woman outpouring such sweet and suave and enchanting speech even the Lord of Death finally lost his head altogether and granted her a boon which he was not able to fulfill without granting one more boon, the "incomparable" one!

*They say the anarchy of love disturbs
Gods even: shaken are the marble natures,*

*The deathless hearts are melted to the pang
And rapture.*

Eric, p. 556

Thus Sri Aurobindo describes the power of love in his magnificent play *Eric*. There may be a glimpse of truth in such a view of the nature of this boon of Yama, but from the point of view of the deeper meaning of the legend we may fuller understand all the profound significance of this ‘boon’. Savitri manifests in herself the supreme Reality in all its integrality and completeness. She the Supreme is so overmastering in Her unimaginable Beauty, Splendour, Light, Bliss, Truth, Perfection that even God of Death cannot resist Her and finally even he gets enamoured of Her, falls in love with Her, that is with his own supreme Self of whom he is a black mask (“*The lover knows not ‘tis himself he loves*”. *Collected Poems*, p. 168):

...and beauty conquer the resisting world...

Savitri, p. 55

Now he is conquered by love of adoration of the Divine Mother; so the heart of Darkness opens to the supreme Love.

*I made an assignation with the Night;
In the abyss was fixed our rendezvous:
In my breast carrying God’s deathless light
I came her dark and dangerous heart to woo.*

Collected Poems, p. 144

So Sri Aurobindo describes this labour of Love in his sonnet *The Pilgrim of the Night*. This is what is happening, the Darkness does fall in love with the supreme Truth and by that it is finally converted back into the Light.

The Fifth Boon: Restoring Satyavan to Life

A flaming warrior from the eternal peaks
Empowered to force the door denied and closed
Smote from Death's visage its dumb absolute
And burst the bounds of consciousness and Time.

Savitri, p. 21

O devoted and chaste lady, the more in well-adorned verses, full of great significance and agreeable to perception, you speak of the noble things conformable to the dharma, the more does my excellent devotion for you increase...

Vyasa's Savitri, p. 56

Now God of Death even speaks of his 'excellent devotion' for Savitri! In truth it means that even he finally becomes a devotee of the Divine Mother! He devotes himself entirely to Her.

*Not only is there hope for godheads pure;
The violent and darkened deities
Leaped down from the one breast in rage to find
What the white gods had missed: they too are safe;
A mother's eyes are on them and her arms
Stretched out in love desire her rebel sons.*

Savitri, p. 613

One day it shall happen, so says Savitri,

*One day I shall behold my great sweet world
Put off the dire disguises of the gods,
Unveil from terror and disrobe from sin.
Appeased we shall draw near our mother's face,
We shall cast our candid souls upon her lap;*

*Then shall we clasp the ecstasy we chase,
Then shall we shudder with the long-sought god,
Then shall we find Heaven's unexpected strain.*

Savitri, p. 613

Then even the demons shall weep with joy celebrating...

*...the end of their long dreadful task
And the defeat for which they hoped in vain,
And glad release from their self-chosen doom
And return into the One from whom they came.*

Savitri, p. 417

And now it is happening to God of Death; he is overcome with the beauty and bliss and might of her triumphant truth-word,

*A Godhead stands behind the brute machine.
This truth broke in in a triumph of fire;
A victory was won for God in man,
The deity revealed its hidden face.
The great World-Mother now in her arose...*

Savitri, p. 21

*She spoke; the boundless members of the god
As if by secret ecstasy assailed,
Shuddered in silence as obscurely stir
Ocean's dim fields delivered to the moon.*

Savitri, p. 638

*A concrete mass of conscious power, he bore
The tyranny of her divine desire. ...
Light like a burning tongue licked up his thoughts,
Light was a luminous torture in his heart,
Light coursed, a splendid agony, through his nerves;
His darkness muttered perishing in her blaze.*

*Her mastering Word commanded every limb
And left no room for his enormous will...*

Savitri, p. 667

This is how Sri Aurobindo describes the victory of Savitri over the dire God stressing that she conquers Death by her mastering omnipotent Word, for in her true essence she is the Word of the Supreme as he himself reveals to her disclosing the truth of Savitri's being,

*O Savitri, thou art my spirit's Power,
The revealing voice of my immortal Word...*

Savitri, p. 703

“*O living power of the incarnate Word*,” thus he addresses her (*Savitri*, p. 693),

*“O beautiful body of the incarnate Word,
Thy thoughts are mine, I have spoken with thy voice.
My will is thine, what thou hast chosen I choose...”*

Savitri, p. 698

This is a tremendous truth he discloses to her, i. e. Sri Aurobindo discloses to us. For the Divine Mother is the creative Word of the Supreme. It is by his Word, that is by her and through her, that he creates the worlds,

*Yes, He creates the worlds and heaven above
With a single word...*

Rishi, p. ??

So

*...The word was used as a hieratic means
For the release of the imprisoned spirit...*

Savitri, p. 360

Now God of Death cannot but yield to Savitri the last ‘incomparable’ boon, the one for which she had been struggling so long, the life for Satyavan. The descent of the new supramental race brings immortality on earth. The soul of the world, the ‘*imprisoned spirit*’, is released from the bonds of death forevermore.

*A living choice reversed fate's cold dead turn,
Affirmed the spirit's tread on Circumstance,
Pressed back the senseless dire revolving Wheel
And stopped the mute march of Necessity.*

Savitri, p. 21

As we know from Sri Aurobindo’s *Savitri*, the adoration, the love, the bhakti of God of Death to the Divine Mother brings about his transformation and reunites him with his luminous eternal Self.

*Night the dim mask had grown a wonderful face. ...
One whom her soul had faced as Death and Night
A sum of all sweetness gathered into his limbs
And blinded her heart to the beauty of the suns.*

Savitri, p. 678-9

Now,

*...the strong god is free.
He has withdrawn from his own darkness and is now
His new great self at an Olympian height.*

Perseus the Deliverer, p. 528

But is it really possible that Gods themselves can change? Indeed,

How can the immortal gods and Nature change?..

But Sri Aurobindo reveals to us that,

*Man most must change who is a soul of Time;
His gods too change and live in larger light.*

Perseus the Deliverer, p. 528

With this knowledge we may view Satyavan as the soul trapped in the darkness of terrestrial nature. Death is the godhead, the shadow of God Himself, who guards this darkness and is its embodiment. The overthrowing of the reign and siege of Death means the freedom of human soul from this siege and slavery to Ignorance and Darkness. It means opening the doors to this possibility of man recovering his essential immortality amidst the dance of transient and mortal things. The transformation of Death however means, that man shall embody a luminous nature, free in the Light and by the Light of the divine Soul. He shall not only be free in his soul but also in his nature, the all-wise and all-powerful and all-blissful spirit-lord of his inner as well as outer world which shall become one. That is the great promise we see in Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* towards its consummation. And this is actually the main message of Sri Aurobindo affirming the invincible mightiness of the soul in us, for,

*...man too may arise to greater heights,
His being draw nearer to the gods...*

Perseus the Deliverer, p. 528

These lines of Sri Aurobindo's great play *Perseus the Deliverer* were written at approximately the same time when he was composing *Savitri* and resonate with it so evidently.

Such is the power of our divine soul of whom we are to become pure, perfect vessels and channels of manifestation rebuilding our entire being into a temple of God.

*Out of the wood and stone of our nature's stuff
A temple is shaped where the high gods could live. ...*

So that one day,

*Within we have found the kingdom here of God,
His fortress built in a loud ignorant world.*

Savitri, p. 531

And that finally we would see that

*The world is turned into a temple ground
And all discloses the unknown Beloved.*

Savitri, p. 278

That is verily the main revelation of *Savitri*. It is that, according to Sri Aurobindo, that actually is “*what it chiefly concerns man to know*” (*Collected Poems*, p. 297). See also the Chapter ‘The Relevance of the Message of *Savitri* for All of Us’.

(*To be continued*)

Please, feel free to send me your feedback to my email:

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Thank you!