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# Essence of Savitri

(Savitri – A Legend and a Symbol, Sri Aurobindo)

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'Savitri is a mantra for the transformation of the World.' – The Mother<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Salient Themes in Savitri:

- **Savitri** is a declaration of Divine Life upon Earth and Advent of Superman upon Earth.
- **Savitri** is a Promise of the Descent of the Superamental Force and the Transformation of the World.
- **Savitri** proclaims Victory of Love over Death.
- **Savitri** talks about the limitations of man and the greatness hidden within him.
- **Savitri** talks about Soul – the immortal portion of the God and the Light and the Guide within.
- **Savitri** describes various hidden worlds, their Beings and Forces that interact and affect the earthly life.
- **Savitri** talks about Gods that control and govern the working of the World and help man in his journey to Superman.
- **Savitri** talks of the **Adwaita** of Veda and Upanishads and the **Purshottama** of Gita. It talks of the **Unknowable**, the **Divine Mother** and the **Nihil** – the **Shunya**.
- **Savitri** beautifully explains the working of the world – the **Lila** or the play between the **Purusha** and the **Prakriti**.

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## 2. **Uniqueness and Wideness of Savitri:**

As the river of spiritual knowledge flowed in India, uninterrupted through many millenniums, a number of scriptures have appeared in this holy land at regular interval. **Savitri** holds a unique and grandiose place among them. **Savitri** is the latest Veda – it is the vision of a Seer, received from the highest regions of the consciousness.

**Savitri** is unique in the sense that while all the existing philosophies, Indian as well as Western, without exceptions, have said that perfection is not possible for man on earth and advocated heaven as the cherished and ultimate resting place where man can find eternal peace, bliss and moksha after serving an arduous religious life upon earth. **Savitri** vehemently rejects this view<sup>2</sup>. **Savitri** says that perfection or Divine Life is not only possible on earth, it is the Divine Will and the goal of the Nature. It is for this grandiose aim the ages toil.

How this splendid goal of Divine Life will be achieved? Indian scriptures have talked about evolution and modern science supports the theory of evolution. **Savitri** too accepts the birth of man from the primordial dust<sup>3</sup>. It talks about the time before the creation began<sup>4</sup>, the big bang<sup>5</sup>, the evolution of the consciousness from Inconscient to Matter to Life and then to Mind or Man<sup>6</sup>. However, while both, the existing spiritual philosophies and the modern science are silent about the future of evolution, **Savitri** declares that the process of evolution has not stopped. It proclaims the advent of superamental being, a superman or the gnostic being<sup>7</sup> – a being who, unlike man, would be guided by Truth, possess superamental consciousness that encompasses and harmonises all and would have the direct knowledge through identification.

However high and magnificent our destiny may be, we have to move from the state we are standing at the present. But our present is not at all assuring.

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**Savitri** knows this - it not only talks about the past and the future of the mankind, it delves deep into the present state of the mankind, its errors, its limitations and its potentialities. It discusses three major problems of the mankind, i.e. Pain<sup>8</sup>, Fate<sup>9</sup> and Death<sup>10</sup>, that have troubled mankind since man won the struggle for survival. It reveals the spiritual secrets behind them while explaining their necessity in the evolutionary scheme of the Nature. But **Savitri** doesn't stop there. It talks about yoga, the path to transcend from the half illumined mental consciousness into the bright realms of Ananda. It talks about soul<sup>11</sup>, our eternal and true being - the portion of God within that is the promise of our splendid destiny, the light and the guide within that can take us to the kingdom of God, as quickly and as safely as a mother carries her child.

The Eternal's Play is too complex. It involves many actors - many beings and many forces. There are many planes of consciousness at which the play is being enacted. The canvas of **Savitri** is equally wide. It talks about the hidden worlds, their forces, their beings and their impact on our life<sup>12</sup>. It beautifully captures the working of the world – the Lila<sup>13</sup> or the play between the 'Purusha' and the 'Prakriti'. It talks about gods<sup>14</sup> who oversee and govern the working of this creation and help man in his journey to immortality. It talks of 'Nihil'<sup>15</sup> – the Shunya, the Divine Mother<sup>16</sup> who manifests God in this world and carries out His Will, the 'Adwait' of Veda and Upanishads, the 'Purshottama'<sup>17</sup> of Gita and the Unknowable.<sup>18</sup>

### 3. **The Physical Features of Savitri:**

**Savitri** has been written around the legend of **Satyavan** and **Savitri** that appears originally in Mahabharata (Vanaparva, cantos 291-297). The story of Satyavan and **Savitri** is the story of Victory of Love over Death. It is for the first time, in the history of the humankind, that man got victory over death without losing life up on earth. That is why Sri Aurobindo selected the legend of Satyavan and **Savitri** as the basis of his epic.

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The earliest known manuscript of **Savitri** is dated 1916. The fourth and revised edition of the book was printed in 1993. It consists of 12 books, 49 cantos and 23,856 lines covering 724 pages.

**4. Levels of Savitri:**

Three levels are distinctly visible in this epic.

At the base, it is a story of conjugal love—a tale of Satyavan and Savitri.

At the middle, it is a book of knowledge - a Vision of a Seer that unveils the secret of the Nature's working and the destiny of the World.

At the highest level it is Mantra – a received knowledge, that has power to transform the reader to highest levels of consciousness. In the words of the Mother, “Each verse of **Savitri** is like a revealed Mantra which surpasses all that man possesses by way of knowledge, and is arranged in such a way, that the sonority of the rhythm leads you to the origin of sound, which is OM.” She added, “**Savitri** is a mantra for the transformation of the World.”<sup>19,20</sup>

**5. The Mother on Savitri:**

It is difficult for anyone to appreciate the greatness of **Savitri**. Its greatness can be experienced only from the consciousness from which it has been received— a level which no human has ever reached. Fortunately, we have 'Mother' with us, who was the spiritual collaborator of Sri Aurobindo. There is none better than her to speak about the greatness of **Savitri**. She said,

- a) “...it is **a quest of the Infinite, the Eternal.**”
- b) “In truth, **the entire form of Savitri has descended “enmasse” from the highest region ---.**” “It may then be said that Savitri is a revelation, ....”
- 3) “Each verse of Savitri is like **a revealed Mantra which surpasses all that man possesses by way of knowledge - - -**”
- 4) “**it is something immortal and eternal - - - there is nothing like it in the whole world.**”

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- 5) “My child, yes, everything is there: **mysticism, occultism, philosophy, the history of evolution, the history of man, of the gods, of creation, of Nature. How the universe was created, why, for what purpose, what destiny – all is there. You can find all the answers to all your questions there. Everything is explained, even the future of man and of the evolution, all that nobody yet knows.**”
  - 6) I assure you **there is nothing under the blue sky to compare with Savitri. It is the mystery of mysteries.** It is a **super-epic, it is super-literature, super-poetry, super-vision,** it is a **super-work** even if one considers the number of lines, He has written. **No, these human words are not adequate to describe Savitri.**
  - 7) “**To read Savitri is indeed to practise Yoga, ...;** one can find there all that is needed to realise the Divine. **Each step of Yoga is noted here,** including the secret of all other Yogas.”
  - 8) “**Savitri alone is sufficient to make you climb to the highest peaks.** ---. For him who wishes to follow this path, **it is a concrete help as though the Lord himself were taking you by the hand and leading you to the destined goal.**”
  - 9) “Savitri is **a mantra for the transformation of the World.**”
  - 10) “**It is the most beautiful thing He (Sri Aurobindo) has left for man, the highest possible.**”

#### 6. Glimpses of Savitri:

**Savitri** is as wide as the creation. It is difficult to capture the greatness and the wideness of **Savitri** in a short article. Only few of the themes mentioned above, have been extracted from the original text and presented here to encourage the readers to refer to the original text. The themes that have been picked up are –

- **The State of Man—the Ignorant, the Imperfect, and the Limited Man.**

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- **Our Soul - The Light and the Guide within.**
  - **Our Soul – the eternal portion of God and our true being.**
  - **Divine Will – to establish Divine Life upon Earth**
  - **Evolution – Nature's way of executing the Divine Will**

**7. The State of Man – the Ignorant, the Imperfect, and the Limited Man:**

**a.) The Ignorant Man (p. 053/16-33):**

*Inheritor of the brief animal mind,  
Man, still a child in Nature's mighty hands,  
In the succession of the moments lives;  
To a changing present is his narrow right;  
His memory stares back at a phantom past,  
The future flees before him as he moves;  
He sees imagined garments, not a face.*

*Armed with a limited precarious strength,  
He saves his fruits of work from adverse chance.*

*A struggling ignorance is his wisdom's mate:  
He waits to see the consequence of his acts,  
He waits to weigh the certitude of his thoughts,  
He knows not what he shall achieve or when;  
He knows not whether at last he shall survive,  
Or end like the mastodon and the sloth  
And perish from the earth where he was king.  
He is ignorant of the meaning of his life,  
He is ignorant of his high and splendid fate.*

**b.) The Ignorant Man (pp. 336/33-337/31):**

*His day is a moment in perpetual Time;  
He is the prey of the minutes and the hours.*

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*Assailed on earth and unassured of heaven,  
Descended here unhappy and sublime,  
A link between the demigod and the beast,  
He knows not his own greatness nor his aim;  
He has forgotten why he has come and whence.*

*His spirit and his members are at war;  
His heights break off too low to reach the skies,  
His mass is buried in the animal mire.*

*A strange antinomy is his nature's rule.*

*A riddle of opposites is made his field:  
Freedom he asks but needs to live in bonds,  
He has need of darkness to perceive some light  
And need of grief to feel a little bliss;  
He has need of death to find a greater life.*

*All sides he sees and turns to every call;  
He has no certain light by which to walk;  
His life is a blind-man's-buff, a hide-and-peek;  
He seeks himself and from himself he runs;  
Meeting himself, he thinks it other than he.*

*Always he builds, but finds no constant ground,  
Always he journeys, but nowhere arrives;  
He would guide the world, himself he cannot guide;  
He would save his soul, his life he cannot save.*

*The light his soul had brought his mind has lost;  
All he has learned is soon again in doubt;  
A sun to him seems the shadow of his thoughts,*

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*Then all is shadow again and nothing true:  
Unknowing what he does or whither he tends  
He fabricates signs of the Real in Ignorance.*

*He has hitched his mortal error to Truth's star.*

*Wisdom attracts him with her luminous masks,  
But never has he seen the face behind:  
A giant Ignorance surrounds his lore.*

**c.) Man's Mind and Heart hide from him the God  
(pp. 442/34-443/05):**

*O queen, thy thought is a light of the Ignorance,  
Its brilliant curtain hides from thee God's face.*

*It illumines a world born from the Inconscience  
But hides the Immortal's meaning in the world.*

*Thy mind's light hides from thee the Eternal's thought,  
Thy heart's hopes hide from thee the Eternal's will,  
Earth's joys shut from thee the Immortal's bliss.*

**d.) Human Mind is incapable of seeing God (pp. 645/34-646/03):**

*If Mind is all, renounce the hope of bliss;  
If Mind is all, renounce the hope of Truth.*

*For Mind can never touch the body of Truth  
And Mind can never see the soul of God;*



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**8. Our Soul - The Light and the Guide within:**

**a.) Only the spiritual gaze can unveil the true meaning of our life (p. 049/24-31):**

*But all is screened, subliminal, mystical;  
It needs the intuitive heart, the inward turn,  
It needs the power of a spiritual gaze.*

*Else to our waking mind's small moment look  
A goalless voyage seems our dubious course  
Some Chance has settled or hazarded some Will,  
Or a Necessity without aim or cause  
Unwillingly compelled to emerge and be.*

**b.) We may know the secret meaning of our life (p. 052/29-35):**

*Absorbed in a routine of daily acts,  
Our eyes are fixed on an external scene;  
We hear the crash of the wheels of Circumstance  
And wonder at the hidden cause of things.*

*Yet a foreseeing Knowledge might be ours,  
If we could take our spirit's stand within,  
If we could hear the muffled daemon voice.*

**c.) Only the spirit's vision is wholly true (p. 525/10-11):**

*Our sight and sense are a fallible gaze and touch  
And only the spirit's vision is wholly true.*

**9. Our Soul—Eternal portion of God and our true being:**

**a.) It lives hidden within our heart (p. 442/28-33):**

*Hidden in the mortal's heart the Eternal lives:  
He lives secret in the chamber of thy soul,  
A Light shines there nor pain nor grief can cross.*

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*A darkness stands between thyself and him,  
Thou canst not hear or feel the marvellous Guest,  
Thou canst not see the beatific sun.*

**b.) The delegate of the God, who has willingly come down to participate in the Divine Comedy (p. 526/03-25):**

*A being stood immortal in transience,  
Deathless dallying with momentary things,  
In whose wide eyes of tranquil happiness  
Which pity and sorrow could not abrogate  
Infinity turned its gaze on finite shapes:  
Observer of the silent steps of the hours,  
Eternity upheld the minute's acts  
And the passing scenes of the Everlasting's play.*

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

*A joy in the world her master movement here,  
The passion of the game lighted her eyes:  
A smile on her lips welcomed earth's bliss and grief,  
A laugh was her return to pleasure and pain.  
All things she saw as a masquerade of Truth  
Disguised in the costumes of Ignorance,  
Crossing the years to immortality;  
All she could front with the strong spirit's peace.*

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**10. Divine Will – to establish Divine Life upon Earth:**

**a.) The earth would grow Divine(p. 055/07-19):**

*A Voice ill-heard shall speak, the soul obey,  
A Power into mind's inner chamber steal,  
A charm and sweetness open life's closed doors  
And beauty conquer the resisting world,  
The Truth-Light capture Nature by surprise,  
A stealth of God compel the heart to bliss  
And earth grow unexpectedly divine.*

*In Matter shall be lit the spirit's glow,  
In body and body kindled the sacred birth;  
Night shall awake to the anthem of the stars,  
The days become a happy pilgrim march,  
Our will a force of the Eternal's power,  
And thought the rays of a spiritual sun.*

**b.) God has become Man so that Man may become God  
(p. 067/19-35):**

*The Absolute, the Perfect, the Immune,  
One who is in us as our secret self,  
Our mask of imperfection has assumed,  
He has made this tenement of flesh his own,  
His image in the human measure cast  
That to his divine measure we might rise;*

*This transfiguration is earth's due to heaven:  
A mutual debt binds man to the Supreme:  
His nature we must put on as he put ours;  
We are sons of God and must be even as he:  
His human portion, we must grow divine.*

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**c.) To manifest himself on earth was God's desire (p. 311/35-312/05):**

*In absolute silence sleeps an absolute Power.*

*Awaking, it can wake the trance-bound soul  
And in the ray reveal the parent sun:  
It can make the world a vessel of Spirit's force,  
It can fashion in the clay God's perfect shape.*

*To free the self is but one radiant pace;  
Here to fulfil himself was God's desire.*

**d.) Satyavan and Savitri were born to establish Divine Life on earth (p. 692/10-16):**

*"In vain thou temptst with solitary bliss  
Two spirits saved out of a suffering world;  
My soul and his indissolubly linked  
In the one task for which our lives were born,  
To raise the world to God in deathless Light,  
To bring God down to the world on earth we came,  
To change the earthly life to life divine.*

**e.) A declaration - Earthly life shall become the Life Divine (p. 710/34-36):**

*Nature shall live to manifest secret God,  
The Spirit shall take up the human play,  
This earthly life become the life divine."*

**11. Evolution – Nature's way of executing the Divine Will:**

**a.) We awaiting to realize our immortality (p. 046/14-16):**

*A deathbound littleness is not all we are:  
Immortal our forgotten vastnesses  
Await discovery in our summit selves;*

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**b.) Yoga of the Earth – the earth is seeking a being who is true representative of its soul, or a Divine Being (pp. 050/22-052/07):**

*Along a path of aeons serpentine  
In the coiled blackness of her nescient course  
The Earth-Goddess toils across the sands of Time.*

*A Being is in her whom she hopes to know,  
A Word speaks to her heart she cannot hear,  
A Fate compels whose form she cannot see.*

*In her unconscious orbit through the Void  
Out of her mindless depths she strives to rise,  
A perilous life her gain, a struggling joy;  
A Thought that can conceive but hardly knows  
Arises slowly in her and creates  
The idea, the speech that labels more than it lights;  
A trembling gladness that is less than bliss  
Invades from all this beauty that must die.*

*Alarmed by the sorrow dragging at her feet  
And conscious of the high things not yet won,  
Ever she nurses in her sleepless breast  
An inward urge that takes from her rest and peace.*

*Ignorant and weary and invincible,  
She seeks through the soul's war and quivering pain  
The pure perfection her marred nature needs,  
A breath of Godhead on her stone and mire.*

*A faith she craves that can survive defeat,  
The sweetness of a love that knows not death,  
The radiance of a truth for ever sure.*

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*A light grows in her, she assumes a voice,  
Her state she learns to read and the act she has done,  
But the one needed truth eludes her grasp,  
Herself and all of which she is the sign.*

*An inarticulate whisper drives her steps  
Of which she feels the force but not the sense;  
A few rare intimations come as guides,  
Immense divining flashes cleave her brain,  
And sometimes in her hours of dream and muse  
The truth that she has missed looks out on her  
As if far off and yet within her soul.*

*A change comes near that flees from her surmise  
And, ever postponed, compels attempt and hope,  
Yet seems too great for mortal hope to dare.*

*A vision meets her of supernal Powers  
That draw her as if mighty kinsmen lost  
Approaching with estranged great luminous gaze.*

*Then is she moved to all that she is not  
And stretches arms to what was never hers.*

*Outstretching arms to the unconscious Void,  
Passionate she prays to invisible forms of Gods  
Soliciting from dumb Fate and toiling Time  
What most she needs, what most exceeds her scope,  
A Mind unvisited by illusion's gleams,  
A Will expressive of soul's deity,  
A Strength not forced to stumble by its speed,  
A Joy that drags not sorrow as its shade.*

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*For these she yearns and feels them destined hers:  
Heaven's privilege she claims as her own right.*

*Just is her claim the all-witnessing Gods approve,  
Clear in a greater light than reason owns:  
Our intuitions are its title-deeds;  
Our souls accept what our blind thoughts refuse.*

**c.) Advent of Supramental Beings – A Declaration (p. 344/24-35):**

*Even as of old man came behind the beast  
This high divine successor surely shall come  
Behind man's inefficient mortal pace,  
Behind his vain labour, sweat and blood and tears:  
He shall know what mortal mind barely durst think,  
He shall do what the heart of the mortal could not dare.*

*Inheritor of the toil of human time,  
He shall take on him the burden of the gods;  
All heavenly light shall visit the earth's thoughts,  
The might of heaven shall fortify earthly hearts;  
Earth's deeds shall touch the superhuman's height,  
Earth's seeing widen into the infinite.*

**12. References:**

1. The Mother was spiritual collaborator of Sri Aurobindo. She was born as Mirra Alfassa in Paris on 21 February 1878. In 1914 the Mother met Sri Aurobindo for the first time at Pondicherry, whom she at once recognised as the one who had guided her spiritual development for many years. The Mother rejoined Sri Aurobindo in Pondicherry on 24th April 1920 and remained there until she left her body on 17 November 1973.

<https://www.sriarobindoashram.org/mother/>

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2. Savitri – A Legend and a Symbol, Sri Aurobindo, p. 344/24-35.
  3. Ibid., p. 101/04-28.
  4. Ibid., pp. 001/01-003/11.
  5. Ibid., p. 101/05-07.
  6. Ibid., pp. 050/22-052/07, 055/20-23, 101/04-28.
  7. Ibid., pp. 055/07-19, 344/24-35, 692/10-16.
  8. Ibid., pp. 443/06-444/35.
  9. Ibid., pp. 458/09-36, 459/36-03, 691/05-06
  10. Ibid., p. 600/26-01
  11. Ibid., pp. 049/24-31, 052/29-35, 525/10-11, 442/28-33, 526/03-25
  12. Ibid., Book-2
  13. Ibid., pp. 061/19-066/24.
  14. Ibid., pp. 057/05-058/30.
  15. Ibid., Book-7, Canto-6
  16. Ibid., p. 314/13-30.
  17. Ibid., pp. 061/14-18, 067/13-18
  18. Ibid., pp. 308/11-309/15.
  19. "Sweet Mother Harmonies of Light", Part - I, PP 21-32
  20. "Invocation" No. 9, P24, "Invocation" No.12, P 12