

SRI AUROBINDO'S SAVITRI, THE HARBINGER OF THE NEXT RUNG IN THE EVOLUTIONARY PROCESS

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ABSTRACT

The human civilization has reached its pinnacle of glory with a retinue of innovations that keep coming up simplifying many complex phenomena of Science and Technology. The astronomical development of mankind in many arenas also highlights the strategic channelizing of the Human Resource. Both men and women vie with each other to scale up the developmental phase. This 21st century has provided many powerful avenues for both men women to explore their full potential. Standing at the cross roads, it is high time to take stock of the ideologies down the centuries regarding the status of women. Women, in general, were relegated to a secondary position right from time immemorial as depicted in the literature of the specific periods. Though the male chauvinistic society has not bothered to acknowledge the power of women, there are many writers who raised their voices for the equanimity of the fairer sex. Among such men stalwart writers, Sri Aurobindo stands unique by sketching the impressive profile of women in his epic poem, 'Savitri' against a mythological canvas.

Key words: Domain, Patriarchal, Connubial, Manifestation, Invocation, Supramental

1. Introduction

'*Frailty, thy name is woman*' goes the adage from time immemorial picturing women as the weaker sex. The society has given women the brand that the fairer sex is also the weaker sex incapable of any leadership qualities, doing any work of great stature, any noteworthy piece of administrative work and any work of high calibre. But women over the years have disproved the false theory propounded about her personality by the patriarchal society with her exceptional prowess in mental, psychological and moral domains. She has by her assertiveness and charisma created a niche for herself to show that she can transcend any limits to show her leadership characteristics and high calibre profiles.

The wide prevalence of child widowhood and child marriage may be considered to be the part of our ancient tradition along with some of the horrible beliefs and superstitious practices which offend women's dignity. When we look back at the ancient models of womanhood - Sita, Savitri, Damayanti, Draupadi who were held in high reverence and venerated for their moral strength; they were not passive, weak women. If by strength is meant brute strength, then, indeed woman is less brute than man. If by strength is meant moral power, then woman is immeasurably man's superior. Has she not great intuition? Is she not more self – sacrificing? Has she not greater powers of endurance? Has she not greater courage? Women's marvelous power is lying dormant. She is the personification of self – sacrifice, but unfortunately today she doesn't realize what tremendous advantage she has over man. This paper explores various facets of Savitri's character and Sri Aurobindo's spiritual precepts that lay a strong foundation for the next stage in the evolutionary process by crafting women with a supramental power.

2. About The Poet

Sri Aurobindo is the one incontestably outstanding figure in Indo-Anglian Literature. There are people who read Sri Aurobindo seeking an answer to the seeming riddle of his extraordinary career. There are many who see in him the promise of the superman, the profounder of Integral yoga, the prophet of the Life-Divine. Sri Aurobindo's masterful command over English, his infallible power of expression, his sharp intellect, his poetic genius and above all his yogic insight and his love for humanity make it a veritable experience reading his works.

3. The Matriarchal Power of Savitri

Sri Aurobindo, the supreme master of the English language has crafted with meticulous care the greatest epic, Savitri, an episode of the Mahabharata. The alchemic touch of Sri Aurobindo has transformed the ordinary story of connubial love into an immortal verse vibrating with the beauty of a mystical experience not of a Sybil but of a great seer. This superwoman of Sri Aurobindo, the matriarch par excellence overcomes the Ignorance, Suffering, and Death in the world through her spiritual quest, setting the stage for the emergence of a new Divine life on Earth.

The feminine principle Sri Aurobindo elucidates in his Divine composition, has its range from a primordial cosmic void, through earth's darkness and struggles, to the highest realms of supramental spiritual experience. The mythological character of Savitri is thus bestowed with a Herculean mission and a spiritual adventure of a massive dimension to lead the human race to a higher realm of evolution.

The evolution of the character, Savitri- the daughter of Light, the birth of the Flame of Sri Aurobindo's spiritual saga has in the making every attribute of a great matriarchal Assertiveness. It is not the assertiveness born of blind dogmas and power aggression

Though Sri Aurobindo's protagonist Savitri lives among men who take normal life, she does not participate in the little joys of life. Savitri freely radiates what she carries, hoping that the greater consciousness will flower on earth. She lives in the world far from her natural felicity of heights and equally away from the sorrows of mortal life which she has come to redeem. She is too great to communicate her peril to others. She keeps it to herself.

In this hour of crisis her exterior personality is displaced by her inner spirit which steps forth and takes hold of the situation. The destiny of the body can be changed by the will of the soul. With her it is not a question of her personal submission but it is a challenge of Death to Life, of Doom to Love. She does not seek any external help, nor does anyone know of the part in the cosmic struggle she is preparing for. She does not accept the challenge and stay content with her lot. She means to change the order that has prevailed so far by asserting the supremacy of Light over Darkness. She summons all her resources and links her with the transcendent force and get ready for the momentous encounter. The Divine power influences her being and breaks through the finite into the infinite.

Sri Aurobindo asserts that Savitri in particular, women in general are the very powerful and promising tool to create the new social order where sun-eyed children walk in the sun lit path of positive aspiration laying the foundation for the next rung in the evolution process. Behind the supermen of Sri Aurobindo's creation and vision like many 'mute, inglorious, silent Miltons' superwomen of very high

spiritual calibre silently work to perfection to bring out the highest and the noblest aim of life- the manifestation of the Divine. From the smallest work of an avid traveller of worlds in search of her soul-mate Satyavan the perfect complementary spirit who fills all her soul to the measured movement of her plan of revealing her soul-choice to the Queen Mother to the extent of establishing firmly that satyavan is to be her soul's companion in the journey of life, to the dauntless voyage pursuing Satyavan's soul to the kingdom of Death, to the final moments when she wins Satyavan back to earth, she manifests Divine assertiveness. Every facet of her personality shines in remarkable brilliance-a brilliance that challenges the very core of darkness and ignorance- a brilliance by its mere radiance can transform the unquestioned and unparalleled king of Darkness into Brightness- the darkness that shudders when light touches and finally succumbs too willingly to be transformed into Light.

4. The True Role of Women

The question before us is how women in general and Savitri in particular can play their role in realizing the great teaching of Sri Aurobindo. The question can be analyzed from two angles: What work can be done by women in collaboration with men and what is the role which women alone are qualified to fulfill. These questions lead us to the concept of the true potential of women. The Mother once told that women have the power, the shakthi – what is this in the ladies and how can they use it to the best advantage of mankind. This power refers to the spiritual power, the psychic power, and the divine presence. This probably means that women are more receptive to it than men but unfortunately have not manifested it to the extent expected of them. It is against this background that we will try to understand how Savitri evokes this power, this Supramental power, in her mind, life and body and how in its light, she reorganizes her life, her family life and plays her true role for her own benefit and that of mankind.

This power permeates her entire being- mind, life, body and psychic being. She awakens it by her aspiration and invocation and grows it by her surrender. The first principle that we learn from her life is that she realizes that she has to mould not only her own life, but the life of her husband and the lives of the people into a supramental life. She organizes her whole life from that angle. How is she able to achieve this supramental life for herself and for the whole of humanity? She realizes that the divine creates conditions which are necessary for the growth of every individual. If the individual is open and receptive to divine forces, this process can be expedited.

When Savitri is confronted with the problem of her husband's fate, she does not complain about her problem, or surroundings or her fate to anyone; rather she waits in total silence to listen to the Divine voice. She lets the divine will to shape her thoughts, vision and action. Once she gets the divine guidance, she is steadfast in keeping herself in that higher state of consciousness. She never allows her mind or vital to decide upon the course of action. God not only guides her but gives her the necessary power to help her organize her life. She does not allow herself to be deterred or crushed by her circumstances. She turns to the Divine and invokes His help and makes Him to work on a programme for the divine manifestation. His entire help and support is with her to help her surmount her problem. That is why she asserts with an iron will:

‘All can be done if the god-touch is there’.

5. The Three-Fold Faith of Savitri

Savitri's strength of will and assertiveness to create a supramental transformation for mankind takes a concrete vision due to her three fold faith:

Faith in the supramental Truth;

Faith in herself; in her capacity to achieve;

Faith in Guru (the Inner Light whose help she would receive)

Her conviction is so deep that it is not shaken by any doubt or denial nor is she weakened by any seeming obstruction. Her faith is not based on any extraneous reasons rather it's rooted on the perception of her soul's intimacy with the supernal Truth. This faith is further extended to the personal plane – she has faith in herself that gave her the confidence to brave all the countering elements and to stick to the pursuit. Her strength of will and power in herself enabled her to fulfill the demands of the path and respond to the needs of the situations from time to time. A strong faith in her capacity is itself a sign that the super human strength is there, if not fully expressed at first but lying in wait to be discovered, developed and brought out for a winning goal.

This inner process of discovering, developing and bringing out the supramental strength is going on simultaneously while she is seen undertaking perilous adventures to the land of the unknown warrior, Death. But the highest human capacity alone is not enough to realize this goal which is new for the human seeking on earth. It needs the help and guidance of the one who has already established contact with the divine Truth. It is her psychic being which takes the role of a guru to lead her on the path of the Sadhana. A Guru's help is needed for a special concentration and for a special end, unlike the general grace which is open to all like the all pervading rays of the sun.

6. Thy soul has strength and needs no other guide

Equipped with this threefold faith she enters the path of unventured and uncharted routes to the kingdom of death. The three sentinels and musketeers in her journey to the land of Death are: Peace, Power and Light.

Peace helps her to rise above the normal conditions of restlessness in the being, movement of thoughts and vital impulses which may hold one a prisoner. She keeps herself calm. This inner calmness aids her to keep her consciousness at rest, free from disturbance of whatever ruffles are seen on the surface. The traditional yoga of Patanjali recommends an incessant suppressing of all thought movements whereas Sri Aurobindo gives a simpler and a more natural formula.

There is a silence behind every movement. Be open to it. Instead of attempting to get hold of the silence, be open to it and let it get hold of you. Into this silence Savitri plunges and relaxes instantly. This is not the mental calm but a spiritual calm. The supramental calm is different from the mental calm. This calm deepens into peace – not an inert peace but a dynamic peace which shoots out the power, the Shakti to Savitri to take up a mission and fulfil it when she has acquired the needed poise and stationed herself in the silence. When this power works on her silence it gives rise to Ananda- which courses her entire being and she receives the intimation of her progress in the distances of the heights scaled through the revelation of Light. The supramental Truth is bodied in Light. It shines as a supramental sun

of which our physical sun is a material symbol. From this Light emanate all Lights; all forces of creation issue out of this Truth are heralded by luminous flashes of Light. The yoga of Savitri implies the expansion of one's consciousness beyond the narrow confines of the physique. The physical body, the solid base of matter should also be transformed.

7. Conclusion

The author has made interesting clarification about his intention of writing Savitri in his letter of 1947. Based on Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*, Matriarchy can be viewed as a superior power to create a new era where bliss and light rule every walk of life manifesting the divine will in every ordinary mortals act. Such a dynamic, dominant, assertive feminine character needs to be painted not on a puny canvas but demands a vast canvas to portray stroke by stroke the myriad nuances of a legendary character. It shows the meaning, the world vision, description and expression of spiritual experiences traversing the length and breadth of various planes before arriving at the highest plane of consciousness for a great mission. So the author has worked out an exhaustive exposition of its world vision.

Like an architect of an inimitable edifice of a grand stature, he gives out its layout enjoying its making grain by grain, brick by brick carefully laying pieces and cementing and plastering it with his spiritual adventure omitting nothing that is fundamental to the completeness. He has given in this poem what he has seen, felt and experienced spiritually. So this experience cannot be judged by intellect or by any set of poetic rules but by an intuitive feeling. The author went on changing it until he had received the absolutely right inspiration. Sri Aurobindo's long labour on *Savitri*, his painstaking construction and his infinite capacity for waiting and listening for the true inspiration and rejecting all that fell short of it – all have to be taken into consideration for a fuller and deeper appreciation of *Savitri*.

All said and explained, this paper is concluded with the words of The Mother: '*Savitri* is a Mantra for the transformation of the world'.

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