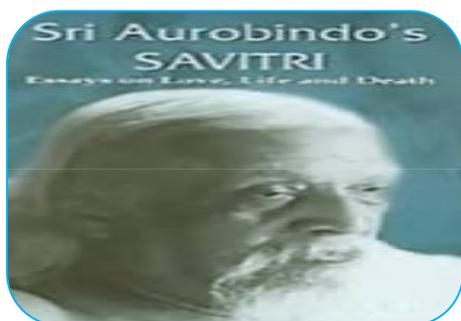




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TREATMENT OF LOVE IN SRI AUROBINDO'S SAVITRI- A CRITICAL APPRECIATION

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ABSTRACT:

Sri Aurobindo took to writing in a period when the colonial India, probably, could not have even thought of an effort of decolonizing English Literature, as it is today. But this enlightened Yogi of India, though attained a very high watermark of excellence in European thought and means of expression, did not compromise with his Indianness. The struggle for liberation by the Indians from the imperialistic Britishers had temporarily converted him into the extremist of the extremists but his conception of 'liberty itself was ultimately dictated, as it appears, by his vision of permanent peace. On ultimate analysis it may be prognosticated that the absolute serenity of his mind created a divine urge in him for invoking the great Indian Muse'. The divine Muse, in response, was pleased to award him a life of rare creativity. He was, now

free to philosophize events, politics to the eternal Indian mythology, for hiring a better life on the Earth's crest.

The entire literary bulk of Sri Aurobindo is, basically, reframing of the Classical Indian thoughts. With these eternal Indian thoughts, what he added, probably, was the blending of his ascetic knowledge about the essence of Integral YOGA. His was the notions typically Indian and their judgement can only be apt, if the criteria are fixed to be the "Decolonized Indian Perspective." My assumptions are critically illustrated with reference to his famous epic Savitri though, I confess, know very little about this grand epic. As regards the periphery of my discussion, the paper highlights Sri Aurobindo's treatment of the theme of love in Savitri, and how it attains an uniqueness vis-a-vis the European standards.

KEYWORDS: colonial India, probably , basically, reframing.

INTRODUCTION:

Sri Aurobindo took to writing in a period when the colonial India, probably, could not have even thought of an effort of decolonizing English Literature, as it is today. But this enlightened Yogi of India, though attained a very high watermark of excellence in European thought and means of expression, did not compromise with his Indianness. The struggle for liberation by the Indians from

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Perspective'. My assumptions are critically illustrated with reference to his famous epic *Savitri* though, I confess, know very little about this grand epic. As regards the periphery of my discussion, the paper highlights Sri Aurobindo's treatment of the theme of love in *Savitri*, and how it attains an uniqueness *vis-a-vis* the European standards. *Savitri* is a divinised and reconstructed love-legend of prince Satyavan and his wife Savitri. The basic framework of the story is taken from the *Mahabharata*. Sri Aurobindo worked on this ambitious epic for a period of more than fifty years to write 23,813 lines, still some parts of this *magnum opus* remained unfinished. It is a story where pure love empowers Savitri to defeat mortality. Sri Aurobindo utilized this story to symbolically preach his philosophy of Man's realization of making life divine on this earth. In his own words *Savitri* is a "spiritual poetry cast into a symbolic figure" (Sri Aurobindo: 750). The external framework of the story is not much changed from its original, except in few cases as in Aswapathy's Yoga, Savitri's penance and her confrontation with death. The significant changes are there at the level of internal action. The internal action of the epic is directed unidimensionally to tell about the power of love [...] where love is considered as the divine scaller, riding through which man gains heavenly qualities and becomes as powerful as the Almighty. The major external change of Savitri's confrontation with death is made nearly tenfold to its original for enabling the poet to impart his spiritual message. This deliberate spiritualization lends a symbolic possibility to the epic, where Savitri is "The Divine Word, daughter of Sun. Goddess of the Supreme Truth, who comes down and is born to save [...]." Satyavan is explained as "the Soul carrying the Divine Truth of Being within itself, but descended into the grip of death and ignorance," and Aswapathy completes his penance of eighteen years to 'concentrate energy of spiritual endeavour' which assists man "to rise from the mortal to the immortal Planes" (Sri Aurobindo: 265). The story of *Savitri* as is clear is purely Indian in origin and treatment. The evaluation of such an episode of mystic Indian love may prove to be alien to the European standard. However, an analysis of the main story, in brief, may help us penetrate the underlying classical Indian faith in humanity.

The eternalized love story of *Savitri* starts on the fateful day when Satyavan is to die. The first three Books of Part-I narrate the quest of an earthly Yogi for the salvation of human beings. To his philosophy, salvation is not possible until the World Soul gains Absolute knowledge. Not satisfied with the personal salvation, he continues his ardent asceticism to let the Divine Mother lovingly promise [...]. 'One shall descend and break the iron law/ change Nature's doom to the lone Spirit's power.' The happy Yogi returns and finds this earth a fit place for the fruition of the blessing. It was an intrinsic love for humanity, not for any particular individual, so he gets away from the reach of sage Durbasa's curse as was in Abhijnan Sakuntalam.

The opening volumes of Part-II (Books IV to VII) narrate the stories of Savitri's birth and her upbringing, her search for a life partner, almost in the manner of a flash-back. In spite of the Divine Sage Narada's warning, she finds her dream-mate in the person of Satyavan ('I know that thou-only thou art he'). The concluding Book of this section describes Savitri's Yoga for strengthening herself for the ensuing encounter with Death. Her internalized quest for self-realisation provides the power to deglamourize Death. Towards the last part of this quest she meets her 'Secret Soul' in the last chamber of a mystic cave and 'They rushed into each other and grew one.' This in turn provides her a superior consciousness to defeat the forces of Negation by passing through a divine instrument called worldly sufferings. Here in this epic though the love-story starts in the worldly manner it is ultimately elevated to the level of spirituality.

The first three books of Part-III describe the confrontation of Savitri with Death-the character which makes the soul of deceased Satyavan captive. The laborious debate between Death and the 'Dark-brewed Sophist' did not have a bearing on the adamant spirit of Savitri. The proof of Savitri's Divine Truthfulness makes Death flee. As a result Satyavan returns to life. In Book XI, Death is also transformed into a Being of Light to show its true colour to the worldly people. Refusing the temptation of a married life in heaven, she comes back to the earth, 'to change the earthly life to a life divine.' In the final Book of this epic, the happy couple comes back to 'the many voiced human world' in the evening, while Night in her bosom nurses a greater dawn. Here also Savitri's Love for humanity makes her happy to create a paradise on this earth.

The theme of love and love-relations are also illustrated by the English poets; like William Shakespeare, John Donne, Tennyson, Keats, Browning etc. In Shakespearean sonnets, we find an elevated conception of love's ever-lastingness and love's power to have a victory over Time and Death. This feeling, in Shakespeare, plays the most dominant role so far as the Dark lady affair, *i.e.*, man-woman relationship was concerned. The usage of platonic conception of love by John Donne and other Cavalier poets and the Romantic love of Tennyson and Browning could not dive deeper to unfold the manifold layers of love. But in *Savitri*, the word 'love' has a multiple layer of meanings. The story of love is related to various levels [...] man-women (as in Savitri and Satyavan), father-daughter (as in Aswapathy and Savitri), God-disciple (as in Divine Mother and Aswapathy), individuals-Society (as in Savitri-Satyavan couple and the earthly people), Soul-Oversoul, the world Soul and Supreme Soul, lastly the human soul and its 'Secret Soul' as was witnessed in the mystic cave. So Sri Aurobindo's vision of love has greater credibility and mobility. In this context, it may be hypothesized that the classical Indian society, after a prolonged experimentation, could come up with a working realisation about the means and end of 'love' and 'life,' whereas the European Community is still experimenting with the nature of both. 'Love' in classical Indian meaning may be compared to a sun-beam whereas its Western thought is only one of the scattered rays through a fine prism.

According to the modern theory of Eugenics, originated and advanced in European soil, all love affairs are guided and regulated by a force. In 'elan vital,' Bergson defined it as Life Force. The conception of life force had been modernized several times by the philosophical thinkers like Samuel Butler, Neitzche, Schopenhauer, G.B. Shaw, Christopher Fry etc. According to European thoughts, not only the beginning, but also the end of all successful love affair is the progenitor of a new generation which is more advanced in all respects from the earlier one. The mutual attraction for the opposite sex, in any love affair, is initiated by the urge created by the unborn body. Here also the conception of biological love, European in origin, is deeply rooted in body wisdom. The latest development in this field tells that the force works in the process of trial and error. The guiding force in love is not the God, or Almighty, but a compulsive Life Force striving to be so. But in Sri Aurobindo, the force seems to be enormously powerful and works to the dictates of the Omniscient. Here the earthy process of trial and error is of no use and hence the wastage of unsuccessful experimentation is nullified. The Western philosophy of life force, seems to have, produced the Incarnation of a diety which is God defying. This force, at times, appears to be a representative of self declared god between a Jusus and Jesus. But God in any classical faith does not tolerate blasphemy. God is habituated to see His devotees peer-handed. According to any religious faith the root of all satisfaction is the absolute surrender to Him. Even in love affair, as directed by Life Force, there is no compensation for the unsuccessful experimentations. This may produce evil which will definitely be a hindrance to the progress of godliness. But Sri Aurobindo's faith, as it appears, in the power of man for creating a God's world is firmly rooted in the heart of goodness. He believes in a God who is the Absolute Donor. The classical Hindu religion in Sri Aurobindo's faith provides a better substitute for it, in the form of a never-dying Omniscient. His has the belief dominated by love. To him love is the quality common in man and God. So love is the factor which can convert God into man or man into God.

In *Savitri*, it seems that, Sri Aurobindo takes the assistance of a well-known love legend to rejuvenate the element of goodness which is already there in the heart of the present generation. Here the Savitri-Satyavan Couple, symbolically becomes the progenitor of a new Indian generation where love is the guiding force to banish "barrenness" and "unfertility" love from human life. Probably, Sri Aurobindo believed that, to end spiritual anarchy for regenerating humanity, a holocaust is not required. His had a firm faith in killing the badness rather than the bad men. With the 'dawn' of good sense, faithlessness and frustration will be eliminated from our minds. The World-soul, devoid of all ugliness, will be able to commune with the Oversoul. In this process, *Savitri* becomes an inner epic of love between soul and Oversoul. The process of attaining salvation, in this religious epic, tells about the conception of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga, according to which, 'God must be born on this earth and be as man/ than Man being hum grow even as God.' So, it appears that, the epic was written with a purpose [...] the purpose of elevating the mortals to the level of divinity. He took upon himself the task

of transforming this earth into the God's world, where love is the guiding principle. To usher a newer world of humanity, he clings to the Hindu views of life, reinforced by his own philosophy of Yoga. His had a firm faith that, if man becomes godly, earth becomes heaven. So, the classic story of Savitri and Satyavan is aimed at giving birth to a heavenly generation which will convert mother Earth into Heaven.

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