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## USE OF MYTH AND SYMBOL IN SRI AUROBINDO'S SAVITRI

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### ABSTRACT:

*Sri Aurobindo was great revolutionary poet philosopher, and dramatist. He was also a remarkable social reformer and his poetry is milestone symbolical poetry and he also wrote philosophical essay. He composed symbolical poetry in a new phase with legend poetry. In his time poetry reached to a new dimension and he composed a new type of poetry. Sri Aurobindo described about three aspects which are very important for future poetic creation. Sri Aurobindo has widely used quantitative hexameter in his poetry. The epic Savitri is one of the best examples of spiritual and religious poems. The beginning of the epic is full of spiritualism and this spiritualism can be seen in the epic from beginning to end. His poetry is a synthesis of the best of the romantic and the classical traditions. According to Sri Aurobindo, the function of poetry is neither to teach truth, nor to pursue knowledge, and serve any ethical purpose, but to have a life its own, to embody beauty and give delight. His critics are of the opinion that Sri Aurobindo has used classical quantitative meters with great skill. It is extra ordinary thing that the English poets couldn't catch his metre.*



**KEYWORDS:** use of Myth and Symbol, Spirituality, Tradition, Legend.

### INTRODUCTION

The major part of Sri Aurobindo life is his discipline for Internal Yoga, doing and practice of Yoga; Aurobindo spent about his entire life, so it is very essential to accept Sri Aurobindo's spiritual philosophy and practice of Integral Yoga. Sri Aurobindo has enormous contribution in the field of literature and he has given his supreme excellence in composing poetry. His range of writing covers almost the whole

world literature with his greatly philosophical and spiritual sense. The present paper is modest attempt to focus on Myth and Symbol his main work *Savitri* in the light of spiritual philosophy and his contribution and place in the Indian literary canon.

Of all modern Indian writers Sri Aurobindo is a great spiritual poet, yogi, guru, philosopher, critic, scholar, thinker, humanist, lyricist, and a true nationalist. He is the most considerable, significant and perhaps the most interesting. The main theme of his idea was the

evolution of human life into a life divine. He had consideration in a spiritual realization that not only liberated man, but transformed his nature, enabling a divine life on earth. His outstanding literary work is *Savitri: A Legend and a Symbol*, an epic poem which refers to a passage in the *Mahabharata*, where its characters actualise Integral Yoga in their lives. His works also contain philosophy, poetry, and translations on the Vedas, Upanishads and the *Bhagavad Gita*.

Sri Aurobindo's most famous works are: *The Life Divine*, *Savitri: A Legend and a Symbol*, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, *Essays on the Gita*, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, *The Human Cycle: The Psychology of Social Development*, *Human Cycle*, *Ideal of Human Unity*, *War and Self-Determination*, *The Upanishads*, *Secret of the Veda*, *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*, *The Mother*, *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, *The Future Poetry*, *Lights on Yoga*, and *Letters on Yoga*. He was a prolific writer, produces a large number of works. His works were highly praised worldwide.

Sri Aurobindo joined the Indian movement for independence from British rule. For a short time he was one of influential leaders for freedom and then became a spiritual reformer, introducing his visions on human progress and spiritual and philosophical progression. He was also nominated two times for the Nobel Prize in 1943 for Literature and in 1950 for Peace. He has a great contribution to the Indian literary Renaissance, and Indian Writing in English. Thus, he is a *world-renowned* personality known all over the world for his spiritual poetry and philosophy. The present paper explores Sri Aurobindo's approach towards the use of Myth and Symbol in *Savitri*.

Sri Aurobindo was curious about the old traditions and values of India. That is why, he learnt about different Indian traditions and he also implied these traditions in his poetry. Sri Aurobindo increased his height in Indo-English poetry with philosophical poetry in a symbolical way. The poem *Savitri* begins, in true epic tradition. The beginning canto is titled The symbol Dawn. This is completely suitable for this is no ordinary dawn. It is an era-making dawn for mankind because a new, a splendid future is to be carved out for him on this day. The importance of the dawn is hinted at right from the beginning; it is invested with symbolic profundity. It is a dark night, but it is such darkness as is instinct with the possibility of light—a darkness that does not charm us. It is the dawn of a day for which Savitri has already prepared herself through hard penance for many days, really for a whole year ever since her marriage. She now makes herself prepare mentally on this dawn, gathering all her spiritual forces. Savitri gathered strength on that day when Satyavan must die.

The theme of the epic *Savitri* revolves around the transcendence of man as the consummation of terrestrial evolution, and the appearance of an immortal supramental gnostic race upon earth. Savitri is the symbol of immortal love. It can be seen clearly in the following lines:

**All might and greatness shall join in her;  
Beauty cell walk celestial on the earth.  
Delight shall sleep in the cloud-net of her hair  
And in her body as on his homing tree  
Immortal Love shall beat his glorious wings.  
A music of griefless things shall we her charm;  
The harps of the perfect shall attune her voice,  
The streams of Heaven shall murmur in her laugh,  
Her lips shall be the honeycombs of God,  
Her limbs his golden jars of ecstasy,  
Her breasts the rapture-flowers of Paradise  
She shall bear Wisdom in her voiceless bosom,  
Strength shall be with her like a conqueror's sword  
And from her eyes the Eternal's bliss shall gaze.  
A seed shall be shown in Death's tremendous hour,  
A branch of heaven transplant to human soil;  
Nature shall overleap her mortal step;  
Fate shall be changed by an unchanging will.**

(Book iii: Canto iv- 346)

The main theme of the epic *Savitri* is love but love is found in the surroundings of the epic. This love is occurred by Sri Aurobindo's philosophical and mystical concerns. It reveals the power of love, grandeur and vastness. In the epic Savitri's love is not only for Satyavan and her fight are not for the life

of her husband only but her struggle is also for mankind. In the epic, Savitri is presented as an eternal lady. She is the great World Mother. Her heart is filled with universal love. She has decided to change the fate of man. She is also bold and fearless. She does not fear from death and she challenges Death herself:

**I am stranger than Death and greater than my fate;  
My love shall outlast the world, doom falls from me  
Helpless against my immortality,  
Fate's law may change, but not my spirit's will.  
An adamant will, she cast her speech like bronze.  
But in the queen's mind listening her words  
Rang like the voice of a self-chosen Doom  
Denying every issue of escape.  
To her on her despise answer the mother made;  
As one she cried who in her heavy heart  
Labours amid the sobbing of her hopes  
To wake a note of help from sadder string.**

(Book v: Canto I-332)

It is Savitri's spiritual love that she craves for. In the book v of Savitri, The book of Love, Savitri meets Satyavan after her long search. She wanders very much in the forest and her wandering feet lead her to the hermitage where young Satyavan is in attendance on his blind aged parents, king Dyumanthsena and his Queen, now deprived from their throne. Satyavan and Savitri meet and recognize the hand of fate. Satyavan tells Savitri about his father's loss of kingdom. He sees in Savitri an expectation of great change coming to the Earth. Savitri also accepts him as her soul's companion. Her quest of Satyavan is the quest of truth. She returns from hermitage to her father and she is about to tell her joy. Her face is transfigured by happiness and she tells her father about Satyavan. She tells her father about her desire to marry Satyavan but Narad informs them that Satyavan's death is very near. But Savitri is firm in her decision to marry him and she asserts:

**Once my heart chose and chooses not again.  
The word I have spoke can never erased,  
It is written in the record book of God.  
The truth once uttered, from the earth's air effaced,  
By mind forgotten, sounds immortally  
For ever in the memory of Time.  
Once the dice fall thrown by the hand of Fate  
In an eternal moment of the gods.  
My heart has seated its troth to Satyavan:  
Its signature adverse Fate cannot efface,  
Its seal not Fate nor Death nor Time dissolve.**

(Book VI: Canto I-345)

Savitri has to face a number of difficulties to save Satyavan's life and her struggle has made her immortal. Ultimately Savitri has received her soul's desire and the life of her husband has been restored, a sage asks her to explain about the miracle. Then she replies:

**Awakened to the meaning of my heart  
That to feel love and oneness is to live  
And this the magic of our golden change  
Is all the truth I know or seek, or say.**

(Book VI: Canto I-357)

However, in this poem we find the use of myth in our Indian English literature. As *Savitri* is a symbol it might be helpful to know the place of symbols in life and in literature. One has only to revolve to ancient scriptures of the world like the Veda and the Bible to find that symbols have been used abundantly by men from the earliest times to convey their meaning. To men in those times everything seemed symbolic. Mr. H. W. Garrod rightly says, "Once upon a time the world was fresh, to speak was to be a poet, to name objects an inspiration; and metaphor dropped from the creative mouths like some natural exudation of the vivified senses". Before man began to imagine he observed with his soul.

The first identifying of objects was definitely an act of inspiration or innate observation, for, there is no logical cause for names given to objects in languages, e.g., the sound "Cow" has nothing inborn in it, nothing rational in it, to indicate the animal known by that name. Even when he developed the intellect, symbols seem to have transpired to man in the form of metaphors. Metaphor does not rise in the mind as a consequence of rational thinking but wells up in the observation as a natural flash. Natural things, like the sun, the moon, the sky, rivers, and singularities like the dawn were perhaps the first, to be naturally perceived as symbols. The sun and the light were symbols of knowledge, night and darkness of ignorance. The ocean and the sky symbolize wideness and enormity in all literatures of the world. Birds like the eagle, the swan and the dove, animals like the lion and the ass; flowers like the lotus and the rose have been used as symbols. Even signs like the cross and the *swastik* have been symbols. Aside from symbols that can be called universal there are others suitable for the individual as also there are symbols created or rather created by the understanding of man. We find these most abundantly in mathematics where they are very useful for the sake of their briefness, and power of generalisation. Besides these, man uses symbols in religious ceremonies, in mystic rites, even in expressing his political ideology, party emblems and national spirit. In Hebrew language every letter of the alphabet is a symbol.

In verse, symbols come naturally as very effectual means for conveying the poet's experience, besides being economical. According to C. Day Lewis, the distinctive faculty of the poet is the "power of creating images". These "images" that a poet creates are a kind of sign-language which forces itself on him under the stress of the innovative desire or in the moments of intensity of his creative faculty. The "image" created by the poet is effective and therefore authentic in proportion as it conveys the experience or the state of his consciousness, without diminution or distortion. When the image is authentic it is a symbol, that is to say, it does not only represent the experience but carries the experience and is the most effective expression of it in language. Sri Aurobindo calls this "the finding of the inevitable word" and "inspired phrase". Sri Aurobindo in the *Candle of Vision* speaks of his experience of visions and rightly calls in question all the modern theories of psychology that make an attempt to give details them or rather explain them away on a materialistic basis. He finds that the visions he saw had the character of self-existent forms made available to his internal-subtle sight under definite internal conditions. However, Sri Aurobindo is even more optimistic about this matter. He says, "Vision is the characteristic power of the poet, as is discriminative thought the essential gift of the philosopher and analytic observation the natural gift of the scientist".

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