APPENDIX I

RELEVANT QUOTATIONS FROM LETTERS THROWING LIGHT ON THE HISTORY OF SAVITRI AND ITS QUALITY.

I
"Savitri was originally written many years ago before the Mother came, as a narrative poem in two parts, Part I Earth and Part II Beyond (these two parts are still extant in the scheme, each of four Books – or rather Part II consisted of three books and an epilogue).

Twelve books to an epic is a classical superstition, but new Savitri may extend to ten Books – if much is added in the final revision it may be even twelve. The first Book has been lengthening and lengthening out.... As for the second Part, I have not touched it yet. There was no climbing of planes there in the first version – rather Savitri moved through the worlds of Night, of Twilight, of Day – all of course in a spiritual sense – and ended by calling down the power of the Highest Worlds of Sachchidananda. I had no idea of what the supramental World could be like at that time, so it could not enter into the scheme...." (Letter 1936)

II
"The poem was originally written from a lower level, a mixture perhaps of the inner mind, psychic, poetic intelligence, sublimised vital, afterwards with the Higher Mind, often illumined and intuitivised, intervening.... Moreover there have been several successive revisions each trying to lift the general level higher and
higher towards a possible Overmind poetry. As it now stands there is a general Overmind influence, I believe, sometimes coming fully through, sometimes colouring the poetry of the other higher planes fused together, sometimes lifting any one of these higher planes to its highest or the psychic, poetic intelligence, or vital towards them.... It is only occasionally that it is pure Higher Mind – a mixture of the Intuitive or Illumined is usually there...." 

*Letters on "Savitri – 1936*

### III

"...I do not work at the poem once a week; I have other things to do. Once a month perhaps, I look at the new form of the first Book and make such changes as inspiration points out to me - so that nothing shall fall below the minimum height which I have fixed for it"

*Life, Literature and Yoga* - letter 31

### IV

"The poems come as a stream beginning at the first line and ending at the last.... *Savitri* is a work by itself unlike all the others. I made some eight or ten recasts of it originally under the old insufficient inspiration. Afterwards I am altogether rewriting it, concentrating on the first Book and working on it over and over again with the hope that every line may be of a perfect perfection - but I have hardly any time now for such work".

*Letters on Savitri" – 1934*
V
"Moreover if it is really new in kind, it may employ a new technique, not perhaps absolutely new, but new in some or many of its elements; in that case old rules and cannons and standards may be quite inapplicable;... We have to see whether what is essential to poetry is there and how far the new technique justifies itself by new beauty and perfection, and a certain freedom of mind from old conventions is necessary if our judgment is to be valid or rightly objective."

VI
... "if I have not poetical genius, at least I can claim a sufficient, if not an infinite capacity for painstaking: that I have sufficiently shown by my long labour on Savitri.... Since it was not a labour in the ordinary sense,... I may describe it as an infinite capacity for waiting and listening for the true inspiration and rejecting all that fell short of it, however good it might seem from a lower standard until I got that which I felt to be absolutely right."

VII
"There may still be a place for a poetry which seeks to enlarge the field of poetic creation and find for inner spiritual life of man and his now occult or mystical knowledge and experience of the whole hidden range of his and the world's being, not a corner and a limited expression such as it had in the past, but a wide space and as manifold and integral an expression of the boundless and innumerable riches that lie hidden and unexplored as if kept apart under the direct gaze of the Infinite as has been found in the past of man's surface and finite view and experience of himself and... it as best he can with a limited mind and senses. The door that has been shut to all but a few may open; the kingdom of the Spirit may be
established not only in man's inner being but in his life and his works. Poetry also may have its share in that revolution and become part of the spiritual empire."

Appendix II

Savitri's Appearance

Savitri is admittedly a divine Incarnation and some people may find her too ethereal or symbolic. In order to show how the Master has solved this difficult problem it is interesting to study Savitri's appearance and the description of her inner state in different situations.

Though the first Canto gives Savitri's detailed description, sequentially it should come third or fourth. The very first prophetic description is given on the occasion of the boon to Aswapathy by the Divine Mother. It is her description before the birth.

The appendix begins with that description. Then in order of time comes the vision which Aswapathy sees when Savitri approaches him in the palace. It is one which shows how the subtle sight can work independently of the physical appearance. The third description is that by Narada when she returns after her choice of Satyavan. It is the vision of a Divine Man. The fourth occasion is when she prepares herself to meet Death—on the last day. It is the one with which the book opens.

The last occasion is when Savitri actually faces Death and unveils her Divinity.
The reader will see that Aswapathy sees her as some unknown divine soul full of immense spiritual possibilities. He awakens in her the sense of those vast possibilities. She goes in search of her partner. When Narada sees her on her return after the choice he finds in her the exuberance of beauty, and delight due to the fulfilment of Love. But his description of Savitri is one of the most wonderful feats of poetic inspiration giving voice to Overmental sight. It is one of the most impassioned and yet impersonal descriptions.

The description of Savitri on the last day before she faces Death is suffused with strains of cosmic pathos mingled with the grandeur of Divine Grace. It has sufficient elements to make her human and yet it is her divinity that dominates. As Sri Aurobindo himself wrote it contains the Overmental intuition at its highest.

The occasion when Savitri faces Death furnishes the reader another view of Savitri as an Incarnation. The reader will note the difference in the physical detail as well as in psychological elements on each occasion.

**Prophetic Vision**

I

A limitless Mind that can contain the world,
A sweet and violent heart of ardent calms
Moved by the passions of the gods shall come. [91.5]

All mights and greatnesses shall join in her;
Beauty shall 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. \[91.6\]

A music of griefless things shall weave 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. \[91.7\]

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. \[91.8\]

A seed shall be sown 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.” \[91.9\]

II

Aswapathy sees Savitri

Approached through sun-bright spaces Savitri. \[98.29\]

Advancing amid tall heaven-pillaring trees,
Apparelled in her flickering-coloured robe,
She seemed burning towards the eternal realms
A bright moved torch of incense and of flame
That from the sky-roofed temple-soil of earth
A pilgrim hand lifts in an invisible shrine. [98.30]

There came the gift of a revealing hour:
He saw through depths that reinterpret all,
Limited not now by the dull body’s eyes,
New-found through an arch of clear discovery,
This intimation of the world’s delight,
This wonder of the divine Artist’s make
Carved like a nectar-cup for thirsty gods,
This breathing Scripture of the Eternal’s joy,
This net of sweetness woven of aureate fire. [98.31]

Transformed the delicate image-face became
A deeper Nature’s self-revealing sign,
A gold-leaf palimpsest of sacred births,
A grave world-symbol chiselled out of life. [98.32]

Her brow, a copy of clear unstained heavens,
Was meditation’s pedestal and defence,
The very room and smile of musing Space,
Its brooding line infinity’s symbol curve. [98.33]

Amid her tresses’ cloudy multitude
The long eyes shadowed as by wings of Night
Under that moon-gold forehead’s dreaming breadth
Were seas of love and thought that held the world;
Marvelling at life and earth they saw truths far. [98.34]
A deathless meaning filled her mortal limbs;
As in a golden vase’s poignant line
They seemed to carry the rhythmic sob of bliss
Of earth’s mute adoration towards heaven
Released in beauty’s cry of living form
Towards the perfection of eternal things. [98.35]

Transparent grown the ephemeral living dress
Bared the expressive deity to his view. [98.36]

Escaped from surface sight and mortal sense
The seizing harmony of its shapes became
The strange significant icon of a Power
Renewing its inscrutable descent
Into a human figure of its works
That stood out in life’s bold abrupt relief
On the soil of the evolving universe,
A godhead sculptured on a wall of thought,
Mirrored in the flowing hours and dimly shrined
In Matter as in a cathedral cave. [98.37]

Annulled were the transient values of the mind,
The body’s sense renounced its earthly look,
Immortal met immortal in their gaze. [98.38]

Awaked from the close spell of daily use
That hides soul-truth with the outward form’s disguise,
He saw through the familiar cherished limbs
The great and unknown spirit born his child. [98.39]

III
Narada sees Savitri

Her radiant tread glimmered across the floor. [106.21]

A happy wonder in her fathomless gaze,
Changed by the halo of her love she came;
Her eyes rich with a shining mist of joy
As one who comes from a heavenly embassy
Discharging the proud mission of her heart,
One carrying the sanction of the gods
To her love and its luminous eternity
She stood before her mighty father’s throne
And, eager for beauty on discovered earth
Transformed and new in her heart’s miracle-light,
Saw like a rose of marvel, worshipping,
The fiery sweetness of the son of Heaven. [106.22]

He flung on her his vast immortal look;
His inner gaze surrounded her with its light
And reining back knowledge from his immortal lips
He cried to her, “Who is this that comes, the bride,
The flame-born, and round her illumined head
Pouring their lights her hymeneal pomps
Move flashing about her? From what green glimmer of glades
Retreating into dewy silences
Or half-seen verge of waters moon-betrayed
Bringst thou this glory of enchanted eyes? ||106.23||

Earth has gold-hued expanses, shadowy hills
That cowl their dreaming phantom heads in night,
And guarded in a cloistral joy of woods,
Screened banks sink down into felicity
Seized by the curved incessant yearning hands
And ripple-passion of the up-gazing stream:
Amid cool-lipped murmurs of its pure embrace
They lose their souls on beds of trembling reeds. ||106.24||

And all these are mysterious presences
In which some spirit’s immortal bliss is felt,
And they betray the earth-born heart to joy. ||106.25||

There hast thou paused, and marvelling borne eyes
Unknown, or heard a voice that forced thy life
To strain its rapture through thy listening soul? ||106.26||

Or, if my thought could trust this shimmering gaze,
It would say: thou hast not drunk from an earthly cup,
But stepping through azure curtains of the morn
Thou wast surrounded on a magic verge
In brighter countries than man’s eyes can bear. ||106.27||
Assailed by trooping voices of delight
And seized mid a sunlit glamour of the boughs
In faery woods, led down the gleaming slopes
Of Gundhamadan where the Apsaras roam,
Thy limbs have shared the sports which none has seen,
And in god-haunts thy human footsteps strayed,
Thy mortal bosom quivered with god-speech
And thy soul answered to a Word unknown. ||106.28||

What feet of gods, what ravishing flutes of heaven
Have thrilled high melodies round, from near and far
Approaching through the soft and revelling air,
Which still surprised thou hearest? They have fed
Thy silence on some red strange-ecstasied fruit
And thou hast trod the dim moon-peaks of bliss.||106.29||

Reveal, O winged with light, whence thou hast flown
Hastening bright-hued through the green-tangled earth,
Thy body rhythmical with the spring-bird’s call. ||106.30||

The empty roses of thy hands are filled
Only with their own beauty and the thrill
Of a remembered clasp, and in thee glows
A heavenly jar, thy firm deep-honied heart,
New-brimming with a sweet and nectarous wine. ||106.31||

Thou hast not spoken with the kings of pain. ||106.32||
Life’s perilous music rings yet to thy ear
Far-melodied, rapid, grand, a Centaur’s song,
Or soft as water plashing mid the hills,
Or mighty as a great chant of many winds.  ||106.33||

Moon-bright thou livest in thy inner bliss.  ||106.34||

Thou comest like a silver deer through groves
Of coral flowers and buds of glowing dreams,
Or fleest like a wind-goddess through leaves,
Or roamest, O ruby-eyed and snow-winged dove,
Flitting through thickets of thy pure desires
In the unwounded beauty of thy soul.  ||106.35||

These things are only images to thy earth,
But truest truth of that which in thee sleeps.  ||106.36||

For such is thy spirit, a sister of the gods,
Thy earthly body lovely to the eyes,
And thou art kin in joy to heaven’s sons.  ||106.37||

O thou who hast come to this great perilous world
Now only seen through the splendour of thy dreams,
Where hardly love and beauty can live safe,
Thyself a being dangerously great,
A soul alone in a golden house of thought
Has lived walled in by the safety of thy dreams.  ||106.38||
On heights of happiness leaving doom asleep
Who hunts unseen the unconscious lives of men,
If thy heart could live locked in the ideal’s gold,
As high, as happy might thy waking be! [106.39]

If for all time doom could be left to sleep!” [106.40]

IV
Savitri Before Facing Death

And Savitri too awoke among these tribes
That hastened to join the brilliant Summoner’s chant
And, lured by the beauty of the apparent ways,
Acclaimed their portion of ephemeral joy. [2.1]

Akin to the eternity whence she came,
No part she took in this small happiness;
A mighty stranger in the human field,
The embodied Guest within made no response. [2.2]

The call that wakes the leap of human mind,
Its chequered eager motion of pursuit,
Its fluttering-hued illusion of desire,
Visited her heart like a sweet alien note. [2.3]

Time’s message of brief light was not for her. [2.4]
In her there was the anguish of the gods
Imprisoned in our transient human mould,
The deathless conquered by the death of things. \[2.5\]

A vaster Nature’s joy had once been hers,
But long could keep not its gold heavenly hue
Or stand upon this brittle earthly base. \[2.6\]

A narrow movement on Time’s deep abysm,
Life’s fragile littleness denied the power,
The proud and conscious wideness and the bliss
She had brought with her into the human form,
The calm delight that weds one soul to all,
The key to the flaming doors of ecstasy. \[2.7\]

Earth’s grain that needs the sap of pleasure and tears
Rejected the undying rapture’s boon:
Offered to the daughter of infinity
Her passion-flower of love and doom she gave. \[2.8\]

In vain now seemed the splendid sacrifice. \[2.9\]

A prodigal of her rich divinity,
Her self and all she was she had lent to men,
Hoping her greater being to implant
That heaven might native grow on mortal soil. \[2.10\]

Too unlike the world she came to help and save,
Her greatness weighed upon its ignorant breast,
And from its deep chasms welled a dire return,
A portion of its sorrow, struggle, fall. [2.15]

To live with grief, to confront death on her road,—
The mortal’s lot became the Immortal’s share. [2.16]

Thus trapped in the gin of earthly destinies,
Awaiting her ordeal’s hour abode,
Outcast from her inborn felicity,
Accepting life’s obscure terrestrial robe,
Hiding herself even from those she loved,
The godhead greater by a human fate. [2.17]

A dark foreknowledge separated her
From all of whom she was the star and stay;
Too great to impart the peril and the pain,
In her torn depths she kept the grief to come. [2.18]

As one who watching over men left blind
Takes up the load of an unwitting race,
Harbouring a foe whom with her heart she must feed,
Unknown her act, unknown the doom she faced,
Unhelped she must foresee and dread and dare. [2.19]

Even in this moment of her soul’s despair,
In its grim rendezvous with death and fear,
No cry broke from her lips, no call for aid;
She told the secret of her woe to none:
Calm was her face and courage kept her mute. [2.22]
Yet only her outward self suffered and strove;
Even her humanity was half divine:
Her spirit opened to the Spirit in all,
Her nature felt all Nature as its own. \[2.23\]

Apart, living within, all lives she bore;
Aloof, she carried in herself the world:
Her dread was one with the great cosmic dread,
Her strength was founded on the cosmic mights;
The universal Mother’s love was hers. \[2.24\]

Against the evil at life’s afflicted roots,
Her own calamity its private sign,
Of her pangs she made a mystic poignant sword. \[2.25\]

A solitary mind, a world-wide heart,
To the lone Immortal’s unshared work she rose. \[2.26\]

At first life grieved not in her burdened breast:
On the lap of earth’s original somnolence
Inert, released into forgetfulness
Prone it reposed, unconscious on mind’s verge,
Obtuse and tranquil like the stone and star. \[2.27\]

In a deep cleft of silence twixt two realms
She lay remote from grief, unsawn by care,
Nothing recalling of the sorrow here. \[2.28\]
Then a slow faint remembrance shadowlike moved,
And sighing she laid her hand upon her bosom
And recognised the close and lingering ache,
Deep, quiet, old, made natural to its place,
But knew not why it was there nor whence it came. [2.29]

The Power that kindles mind was still withdrawn:
Heavy, unwilling were life’s servitors
Like workers with no wages of delight;
Sullen, the torch of sense refused to burn;
The unassisted brain found not its past. [2.30]

Only a vague earth-nature held the frame. [2.31]

But now she stirred, her life shared the cosmic load. [2.32]

At the summons of her body’s voiceless call
Her strong far-winging spirit travelled back,
Back to the yoke of ignorance and fate,
Back to the labour and stress of mortal days,
Lighting a pathway through strange symbol dreams
Across the ebbing of the seas of sleep. [2.33]

Her house of Nature felt an unseen sway,
Illumined swiftly were life’s darkened rooms,
And memory’s casements opened on the hours
And the tired feet of thought approached her doors. [2.34]
All came back to her: Earth and Love and Doom,
The ancient disputants, encircled her
Like giant figures wrestling in the night:
The godheads from the dim Inconscient born
Awoke to struggle and the pang divine,
And in the shadow of her flaming heart,
At the sombre centre of the dire debate,
A guardian of the unconsoléd abyss
Inheriting the long agony of the globe,
A stone-still figure of high and godlike Pain
Stared into space with fixed regardless eyes
That saw grief’s timeless depths but not life’s goal. ||2.35||

Afflicted by his harsh divinity,
Bound to his throne, he waited unappeased
The daily oblation of her unwept tears. ||2.36||

All the fierce question of man’s hours relived. ||2.37||

The sacrifice of suffering and desire
Earth offers to the immortal Ecstasy
Began again beneath the eternal Hand. ||2.38||

Awake she endured the moments’ serried march
And looked on this green smiling dangerous world,
And heard the ignorant cry of living things. ||2.39||

Amid the trivial sounds, the unchanging scene
Her soul arose confronting Time and Fate. ||2.40||
Immobile in herself, she gathered force. ||2.41||

This was the day when Satyavan must die. ||2.42||

V

Savitri Facing Death

And Savitri looked on Death and answered not. ||147.1||

Almost it seemed as if in his symbol shape
The world’s darkness had consented to Heaven-light
And God needed no more the Inconscient’s screen. ||147.2||

A mighty transformation came on her. ||147.3||

A halo of the indwelling Deity,
The Immortal’s lustre that had lit her face
And tented its radiance in her body’s house,
Overflowing made the air a luminous sea. ||147.4||

In a flaming moment of apocalypse
The Incarnation thrust aside its veil. ||147.5||

A little figure in infinity
Yet stood and seemed the Eternal’s very house,
As if the world’s centre was her very soul
And all wide space was but its outer robe. ||147.6||
A curve of the calm hauteur of far heaven
Descending into earth’s humility,
Her forehead’s span vaulted the Omniscient’s gaze,
Her eyes were two stars that watched the universe. [147.7]

The Power that from her being’s summit reigned,
The Presence chambered in lotus secrecy,
Came down and held the centre in her brow
Where the mind’s Lord in his control-room sits;
There throned on concentration’s native seat
He opens that third mysterious eye in man,
The Unseen’s eye that looks at the unseen,
When Light with a golden ecstasy fills his brain
And the Eternal’s wisdom drives his choice
And eternal Will seizes the mortal’s will. [147.8]

It stirred in the lotus of her throat of song,
And in her speech throbbed the immortal Word,
Her life sounded with the steps of the World-Soul
Moving in harmony with the cosmic Thought. [147.9]

As glides God’s sun into the mystic cave
Where hides his light from the pursuing gods,
It glided into the lotus of her heart
And woke in it the Force that alters Fate. [147.10]

It poured into a navel’s lotus depth,
Lodged in the little life-nature’s narrow home,
On the body’s longings grew heaven-rapture’s flower
And made desire a pure celestial flame,
Broke into the cave where coiled World-Energy sleeps
And smote the thousand-hooded serpent Force
That blazing towered and clasped the World-Self above,
Joined Matter’s dumbness to the Spirit’s hush
And filled earth’s acts with the Spirit’s silent power. ||147.11||

Thus changed she waited for the Word to speak. ||147.12||

Eternity looked into the eyes of Death. ||147.13||

And Darkness saw God’s living Reality. ||147.14||
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