

Track 11 : Canto Three, Satyavan and Savitri : Section 1, lines 1 to 322

Out of the voiceless mystery of the past
In a present ignorant of forgotten bonds
These spirits met upon the roads of Time.

Yet in the heart their secret conscious selves
At once aware grew of each other warned
By the first call of a delightful voice
And a first vision of the destined face.

As when being cries to being from its depths
Behind the screen of the external sense
And strives to find the heart-disclosing word,
The passionate speech revealing the soul's need,
But the mind's ignorance veils the inner sight,
Only a little breaks through our earth-made bounds,
So now they met in that momentous hour,
So utter the recognition in the deeps,
The remembrance lost, the oneness felt and missed.

Thus Satyavan spoke first to Savitri:

"O thou who com'st to me out of Time's silences,
Yet thy voice has wakened my heart to an unknown bliss,
Immortal or mortal only in thy frame,
For more than earth speaks to me from thy soul
And more than earth surrounds me in thy gaze,
How art thou named among the sons of men?

Whence hast thou dawned filling my spirit's days,
Brighter than summer, brighter than my flowers,
Into the lonely borders of my life,
O sunlight moulded like a golden maid?

I know that mighty gods are friends of earth.

Amid the pageantries of day and dusk,
Long have I travelled with my pilgrim soul
Moved by the marvel of familiar things.

Earth could not hide from me the powers she veils:
Even though moving mid an earthly scene
And the common surfaces of terrestrial things,
My vision saw unblinded by her forms;
The Godhead looked at me from familiar scenes.

I witnessed the virgin bridals of the dawn
Behind the glowing curtains of the sky
Or vying in joy with the bright morning's steps
I paced along the slumbrous coasts of noon,
Or the gold desert of the sunlight crossed
Traversing great wastes of splendour and of fire,
Or met the moon gliding amazed through heaven
In the uncertain wideness of the night,
Or the stars marched on their long sentinel routes
Pointing their spears through the infinitudes:
The day and dusk revealed to me hidden shapes;
Figures have come to me from secret shores
And happy faces looked from ray and flame.

I have heard strange voices cross the ether's waves,
The Centaur's wizard song has thrilled my ear;

- I have glimpsed the Apsaras bathing in the pools,
I have seen the wood-nymphs peering through the leaves;
The winds have shown to me their trampling lords,
55 I have beheld the princes of the Sun
Burning in thousand-pillared homes of light.
- So now my mind could dream and my heart fear
That from some wonder-couch beyond our air
Risen in a wide morning of the gods
60 Thou drov'st thy horses from the Thunderer's worlds.
- Although to heaven thy beauty seems allied,
Much rather would my thoughts rejoice to know
That mortal sweetness smiles between thy lids
And thy heart can beat beneath a human gaze
65 And thy aureate bosom quiver with a look
And its tumult answer to an earth-born voice.
- If our time-vexed affections thou canst feel,
Earth's ease of simple things can satisfy,
If thy glance can dwell content on earthly soil,
70 And this celestial summary of delight,
Thy golden body, dally with fatigue
Oppressing with its grace our terrain, while
The frail sweet passing taste of earthly food
Delays thee and the torrent's leaping wine,
75 Descend. Let thy journey cease, come down to us.
- Close is my father's creepered hermitage
Screened by the tall ranks of these silent kings,
Sung to by voices of the hue-robed choirs
Whose chants repeat transcribed in music's notes
80 The passionate coloured lettering of the boughs
And fill the hours with their melodious cry.
- Amid the welcome-hum of many bees
Invade our honied kingdom of the woods;
There let me lead thee into an opulent life.
- 85 Bare, simple is the sylvan hermit-life;
Yet is it clad with the jewelry of earth.
- Wild winds run—visitors midst the swaying tops,
Through the calm days heaven's sentinels of peace
Couched on a purple robe of sky above
90 Look down on a rich secrecy and hush
And the chambered nuptial waters chant within.
- Enormous, whispering, many-formed around
High forest gods have taken in their arms
The human hour, a guest of their centuried pomps.
- 95 Appareled are the morns in gold and green,
Sunlight and shadow tapestry the walls
To make a resting chamber fit for thee."
- Awhile she paused as if hearing still his voice,
Unwilling to break the charm, then slowly spoke.
- 100 Musing she answered, "I am Savitri,
Princess of Madra. Who art thou? What name
Musical on earth expresses thee to men?

- What trunk of kings watered by fortunate streams
Has flowered at last upon one happy branch?
- 105 Why is thy dwelling in the pathless wood
Far from the deeds thy glorious youth demands,
Haunt of the anchorites and earth's wilder broods,
Where only with thy witness self thou roamst
In Nature's green unhuman loneliness
- 110 Surrounded by enormous silences
And the blind murmur of primaeval calms?"
- And Satyavan replied to Savitri:
- "In days when yet his sight looked clear on life,
King Dyumatsena once, the Shalwa, reigned
- 115 Through all the tract which from behind these tops
Passing its days of emerald delight
In trusting converse with the traveller winds
Turns, looking back towards the southern heavens,
And leans its flank upon the musing hills.
- 120 But equal Fate removed her covering hand.
A living night enclosed the strong man's paths,
Heaven's brilliant gods recalled their careless gifts,
Took from blank eyes their glad and helping ray
And led the uncertain goddess from his side.
- 125 Outcast from empire of the outer light,
Lost to the comradeship of seeing men,
He sojourns in two solitudes, within
And in the solemn rustle of the woods.
- Son of that king, I, Satyavan, have lived
- 130 Contented, for not yet of thee aware,
In my high-peopled loneliness of spirit
And this huge vital murmur kin to me,
Nursed by the vastness, pupil of solitude.
- Great Nature came to her recovered child;
- 135 I reigned in a kingdom of a nobler kind
Than men can build upon dull Matter's soil;
I met the frankness of the primal earth,
I enjoyed the intimacy of infant God.
- In the great tapestried chambers of her state,
- 140 Free in her boundless palace I have dwelt
Indulged by the warm mother of us all,
Reared with my natural brothers in her house.
- I lay in the wide bare embrace of heaven,
The sunlight's radiant blessing clasped my brow,
- 145 The moonbeams' silver ecstasy at night
Kissed my dim lids to sleep. Earth's morns were mine;
Lured by faint murmurings with the green-robed hours
I wandered lost in woods, prone to the voice
Of winds and waters, partner of the sun's joy,
- 150 A listener to the universal speech:
My spirit satisfied within me knew
Godlike our birthright, luxuried our life
Whose close belongings are the earth and skies.
- Before Fate led me into this emerald world,

- 155 Aroused by some foreshadowing touch within,
An early prescience in my mind approached
The great dumb animal consciousness of earth
Now grown so close to me who have left old pomps
To live in this grandiose murmur dim and vast.
- 160 Already I met her in my spirit's dream.
As if to a deeper country of the soul
Transposing the vivid imagery of earth,
Through an inner seeing and sense a wakening came.
A visioned spell pursued my boyhood's hours,
- 165 All things the eye had caught in coloured lines
Were seen anew through the interpreting mind
And in the shape it sought to seize the soul.
- 170 An early child-god took my hand that held,
Moved, guided by the seeking of his touch,
Bright forms and hues which fled across his sight;
Limned upon page and stone they spoke to men.
High beauty's visitants my intimates were.
- The neighing pride of rapid life that roams
Wind-maned through our pastures, on my seeing mood
- 175 Cast shapes of swiftness; trooping spotted deer
Against the vesper sky became a song
Of evening to the silence of my soul.
- I caught for some eternal eye the sudden
King-fisher flashing to a darkling pool;
- 180 A slow swan silvering the azure lake,
A shape of magic whiteness, sailed through dream;
Leaves trembling with the passion of the wind,
Pranked butterflies, the conscious flowers of air,
And wandering wings in blue infinity
- 185 Lived on the tablets of my inner sight;
Mountains and trees stood there like thoughts from God.
The brilliant long-bills in their vivid dress,
The peacock scattering on the breeze his moons
Painted my memory like a frescoed wall.
- 190 I carved my vision out of wood and stone;
I caught the echoes of a word supreme
And metred the rhythm-beats of infinity
And listened through music for the eternal Voice.
- I felt a covert touch, I heard a call,
- 195 But could not clasp the body of my God
Or hold between my hands the World-Mother's feet.
- In men I met strange portions of a Self
That sought for fragments and in fragments lived:
Each lived in himself and for himself alone
- 200 And with the rest joined only fleeting ties;
Each passioned over his surface joy and grief,
Nor saw the Eternal in his secret house.
- I conversed with Nature, mused with the changeless stars,
God's watch-fires burning in the ignorant Night,
- 205 And saw upon her mighty visage fall

A ray prophetic of the Eternal's sun.

I sat with the forest sages in their trance:
There poured awakening streams of diamond light,
I glimpsed the presence of the One in all.

210 But still there lacked the last transcendent power
And Matter still slept empty of its Lord.

The Spirit was saved, the body lost and mute
Lived still with Death and ancient Ignorance;
The Inconscient was its base, the Void its fate.

215 But thou hast come and all will surely change:
I shall feel the World-Mother in thy golden limbs
And hear her wisdom in thy sacred voice.

The child of the Void shall be reborn in God,
My Matter shall evade the Inconscient's trance.

220 My body like my spirit shall be free.

It shall escape from Death and Ignorance."

And Savitri, musing still, replied to him:
"Speak more to me, speak more, O Satyavan,
Speak of thyself and all thou art within;

225 I would know thee as if we had ever lived
Together in the chamber of our souls.

Speak till a light shall come into my heart
And my moved mortal mind shall understand
What all the deathless being in me feels.

230 It knows that thou art he my spirit has sought
Amidst earth's thronging visages and forms
Across the golden spaces of my life."

And Satyavan like a replying harp
To the insistent calling of a flute

235 Answered her questioning and let stream to her
His heart in many-coloured waves of speech:

"O golden princess, perfect Savitri,
More I would tell than failing words can speak,
Of all that thou hast meant to me, unknown,

240 All that the lightning-flash of love reveals
In one great hour of the unveiling gods.

Even a brief nearness has reshaped my life.

For now I know that all I lived and was
Moved towards this moment of my heart's rebirth;

245 I look back on the meaning of myself,
A soul made ready on earth's soil for thee.

Once were my days like days of other men:
To think and act was all, to enjoy and breathe;
This was the width and height of mortal hope:

250 Yet there came glimpses of a deeper self
That lives behind Life and makes her act its scene.

A truth was felt that screened its shape from mind,
A Greatness working towards a hidden end,
And vaguely through the forms of earth there looked
Something that life is not and yet must be.

I groped for the Mystery with the lantern, Thought.

Its glimmerings lighted with the abstract word
A half-visible ground and travelling yard by yard
It mapped a system of the Self and God.

260 I could not live the truth it spoke and thought.

I turned to seize its form in visible things,
Hoping to fix its rule by mortal mind,
Imposed a narrow structure of world-law
Upon the freedom of the Infinite,

265 A hard firm skeleton of outward Truth,
A mental scheme of a mechanic Power.

This light showed more the darknesses unsearched;
It made the original Secrecy more occult;

270 It could not analyse its cosmic Veil
Or glimpse the Wonder-worker's hidden hand
And trace the pattern of his magic plans.

I plunged into an inner seeing Mind
And knew the secret laws and sorceries
That make of Matter mind's bewildered slave:

275 The mystery was not solved but deepened more.

I strove to find its hints through Beauty and Art,
But Form cannot unveil the indwelling Power;
Only it throws its symbols at our hearts.

280 It evoked a mood of self, invoked a sign
Of all the brooding glory hidden in sense:
I lived in the ray but faced not to the sun.

I looked upon the world and missed the Self,
And when I found the Self, I lost the world,
My other selves I lost and the body of God,
285 The link of the finite with the Infinite,
The bridge between the appearance and the Truth,
The mystic aim for which the world was made,
The human sense of Immortality.

290 But now the gold link comes to me with thy feet
And His gold sun has shone on me from thy face.

For now another realm draws near with thee
And now diviner voices fill my ear,
A strange new world swims to me in thy gaze
Approaching like a star from unknown heavens;
295 A cry of spheres comes with thee and a song
Of flaming gods. I draw a wealthier breath
And in a fierier march of moments move.
My mind transfigures to a rapturous seer.

300 A foam-leap travelling from the waves of bliss
Has changed my heart and changed the earth around:
All with thy coming fills. Air, soil and stream
Wear bridal raiment to be fit for thee
And sunlight grows a shadow of thy hue
Because of change within me by thy look.

305 Come nearer to me from thy car of light
On this green sward disdaining not our soil.

For here are secret spaces made for thee
Whose caves of emerald long to screen thy form.

Wilt thou not make this mortal bliss thy sphere?

310 Descend, O happiness, with thy moon-gold feet
Enrich earth's floors upon whose sleep we lie.

O my bright beauty's princess Savitri,
By my delight and thy own joy compelled
Enter my life, thy chamber and thy shrine.

315 In the great quietness where spirits meet,
Led by my hushed desire into my woods
Let the dim rustling arches over thee lean;
One with the breath of things eternal live,
Thy heart-beats near to mine, till there shall leap

320 Enchanted from the fragrance of the flowers
A moment which all murmurs shall recall
And every bird remember in its cry."