

Track 17: Section 2c, lines 519 to end

Then cried the sage piercing the mother's heart,
520 Forcing to steel the will of Savitri,
His words set free the spring of cosmic Fate.

The great Gods use the pain of human hearts
As a sharp axe to hew their cosmic road:
They squander lavishly men's blood and tears
525 For a moment's purpose in their fateful work.

This cosmic Nature's balance is not ours
Nor the mystic measure of her need and use.

A single word lets loose vast agencies;
A casual act determines the world's fate.

530 So now he set free destiny in that hour.
"The truth thou hast claimed; I give to thee the truth.

A marvel of the meeting earth and heavens
Is he whom Savitri has chosen mid men,
His figure is the front of Nature's march,
535 His single being excels the works of Time.

A sapphire cutting from the sleep of heaven,
Delightful is the soul of Satyavan,
A ray out of the rapturous Infinite,
A silence waking to a hymn of joy.

540 A divinity and kingliness gird his brow;
His eyes keep a memory from a world of bliss.

As brilliant as a lonely moon in heaven,
Gentle like the sweet bud that spring desires,
Pure like a stream that kisses silent banks,
545 He takes with bright surprise spirit and sense.

A living knot of golden Paradise,
A blue Immense he leans to the longing world,
Time's joy borrowed out of eternity,
A star of splendour or a rose of bliss.

550 In him soul and Nature, equal Presences,
Balance and fuse in a wide harmony.

The Happy in their bright ether have not hearts
More sweet and true than this of mortal make
That takes all joy as the world's native gift
555 And to all gives joy as the world's natural right.

His speech carries a light of inner truth,
And a large-eyed communion with the Power
In common things has made veiless his mind,
A seer in earth-shapes of garbless deity.

560 A tranquil breadth of sky windless and still
Watching the world like a mind of unplumbed thought,
A silent space musing and luminous
Uncovered by the morning to delight,
A green tangle of trees upon a happy hill
565 Made into a murmuring nest by southern winds,
These are his images and parallels,
His kin in beauty and in depth his peers.

A will to climb lifts a delight to live,
Heaven's height companion of earth-beauty's charm,
570 An aspiration to the immortals' air
Lain on the lap of mortal ecstasy.

His sweetness and his joy attract all hearts
To live with his own in a glad tenancy,
His strength is like a tower built to reach heaven,
575 A godhead quarried from the stones of life.

O loss, if death into its elements
Of which his gracious envelope was built,
Shatter this vase before it breathes its sweets,
As if earth could not keep too long from heaven
580 A treasure thus unique loaned by the gods,
A being so rare, of so divine a make!

In one brief year when this bright hour flies back
And perches careless on a branch of Time,
This sovereign glory ends heaven lent to earth,
585 This splendour vanishes from the mortal's sky:
Heaven's greatness came, but was too great to stay.

Twelve swift-winged months are given to him and her;
This day returning Satyavan must die.”

A lightning bright and nude the sentence fell.

590 But the queen cried: “Vain then can be heaven's grace!
Heaven mocks us with the brilliance of its gifts,
For Death is a cupbearer of the wine
Of too brief joy held up to mortal lips
For a passionate moment by the careless gods.

595 But I reject the grace and the mockery.
Mounting thy car go forth, O Savitri,
And travel once more through the peopled lands.

Alas, in the green gladness of the woods
Thy heart has stooped to a misleading call.

600 Choose once again and leave this fated head,
Death is the gardener of this wonder-tree;
Love's sweetness sleeps in his pale marble hand.

Advancing in a honeyed line but closed,
A little joy would buy too bitter an end.

605 Plead not thy choice, for death has made it vain.
Thy youth and radiance were not born to lie
A casket void dropped on a careless soil;
A choice less rare may call a happier fate.”

But Savitri answered from her violent heart,—
610 Her voice was calm, her face was fixed like steel:
“Once my heart chose and chooses not again.
The word I have spoken can never be erased,
It is written in the record book of God.

The truth once uttered, from the earth's air effaced,
615 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.

620 My heart has sealed its troth to Satyavan:
Its signature adverse Fate cannot efface,
Its seal not Fate nor Death nor Time dissolve.

Those who shall part who have grown one being within?

Death's grip can break our bodies, not our souls;
If death take him, I too know how to die.

625 Let Fate do with me what she will or can;
I am stronger 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."

630 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.

635 To her own despair 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 strings:

640 "O child, in the magnificence of thy soul
Dwelling on the border of a greater world
And dazzled by thy superhuman thoughts,
Thou lendst eternity to a mortal hope.

Here on this mutable and ignorant earth
Who is the lover and who is the friend?

All passes here, nothing remains the same.

645 None is for any on this transient globe.

He whom thou lovest now, a stranger came
And into a far strangeness shall depart:
His moment's part once done upon life's stage
Which for a time was given him from within,

650 To other scenes he moves and other players
And laughs and weeps mid faces new, unknown.

The body thou hast loved is cast away
Amidst the brute unchanging stuff of worlds
To indifferent mighty Nature and becomes
655 Crude matter for the joy of others' lives.

But for our souls, upon the wheel of God
For ever turning, they arrive and go,
Married and sundered in the magic round
Of the great Dancer of the boundless dance.

660 Our emotions are but high and dying notes
Of his wild music changed compellingly
By the passionate movements of a seeking Heart
In the inconstant links of hour with hour.

665 To call down heaven's distant answering song,
To cry to an unseized bliss is all we dare;
Once seized, we lose the heavenly music's sense;

Too near, the rhythmic cry has fled or failed;
All sweetnesses are baffling symbols here.

670 Love dies before the lover in our breast:
Our joys are perfumes in a brittle vase.

O then what wreck is this upon Time's sea
To spread life's sails to the hurricane desire
And call for pilot the unseeing heart!

675 O child, wilt thou proclaim, wilt thou then follow
Against the Law that is the eternal will
The autarchy of the rash Titan's mood
To whom his own fierce will is the one law
In a world where Truth is not, nor Light nor God?
Only the gods can speak what now thou speakst.

680 Thou who art human, think not like a god.

For man, below the god, above the brute,
Is given the calm reason as his guide;
He is not driven by an unthinking will
As are the actions of the bird and beast;
685 He is not moved by stark Necessity
Like the senseless motion of inconscient things.

The giant's and the Titan's furious march
Climbs to usurp the kingdom of the gods
Or skirts the demon magnitudes of Hell;
690 In the unreflecting passion of their hearts
They dash their lives against the eternal Law
And fall and break by their own violent mass:
The middle path is made for thinking man.

695 To choose his steps by reason's vigilant light,
To choose his path among the many paths
Is given him, for each his difficult goal
Hewn out of infinite possibility.

Leave not thy goal to follow a beautiful face.

700 Only when thou hast climbed above thy mind
And liv'st in the calm vastness of the One
Can love be eternal in the eternal Bliss
And love divine replace the human tie.

705 There is a shrouded law, an austere force:
It bids thee strengthen thy undying spirit;
It offers its severe benignancies
Of work and thought and measured grave delight
As steps to climb to God's far secret heights.

710 Then is our life a tranquil pilgrimage,
Each year a mile upon the heavenly Way,
Each dawn opens into a larger Light.

Thy acts are thy helpers, all events are signs,
Waking and sleep are opportunities
Given to thee by an immortal Power.

715 So canst thou raise thy pure unvanquished spirit,
Till spread to heaven in a wide vesper calm,
Indifferent and gentle as the sky,
It greatens slowly into timeless peace."

But Savitri replied with steadfast eyes:

“My will is part of the eternal Will,

720 My fate is what my spirit's strength can make,
My fate is what my spirit's strength can bear;
My strength is not the Titan's; it is God's.

I have discovered my glad reality
Beyond my body in another's being:

725 I have found the deep unchanging soul of love.

Then how shall I desire a lonely good,
Or slay, aspiring to white vacant peace,
The endless hope that made my soul spring forth
Out of its infinite solitude and sleep?

730 My spirit has glimpsed the glory for which it came,
The beating of one vast heart in the flame of things,
My eternity clasped by his eternity
And, tireless of the sweet abysses of Time,
Deep possibility always to love.

735 This, this is first, last joy and to its throb
The riches of a thousand fortunate years
Are poverty. Nothing to me are death and grief
Or ordinary lives and happy days.

And what to me are common souls of men
Or eyes and lips that are not Satyavan's?

740 I have no need to draw back from his arms
And the discovered paradise of his love
And journey into a still infinity.

Only now for my soul in Satyavan

745 I treasure the rich occasion of my birth:
In sunlight and a dream of emerald ways
I shall walk with him like gods in Paradise.

If for a year, that year is all my life.

And yet I know this is not all my fate

750 Only to live and love awhile and die.

For I know now why my spirit came on earth
And who I am and who he is I love.

I have looked at him from my immortal Self,
I have seen God smile at me in Satyavan;

755 I have seen the Eternal in a human face.”

Then none could answer to her words. Silent
They sat and looked into the eyes of Fate.

End of Canto One