

## Track 45: Canto Three full

Now it was here in this great golden dawn.

By her still sleeping husband lain she gazed  
Into her past as one about to die  
Looks back upon the sunlit fields of life

5 Where he too ran and sported with the rest,  
Lifting his head above the huge dark stream  
Into whose depths he must for ever plunge.

All she had been and done she lived again.

10 The whole year in a swift and eddying race  
Of memories swept through her and fled away  
Into the irrecoverable past.

Then silently she rose and, service done,  
Bowed down to the great goddess simply carved  
By Satyavan upon a forest stone.

15 What prayer she breathed her soul and Durga knew.

Perhaps she felt in the dim forest huge  
The infinite Mother watching over her child,  
Perhaps the shrouded Voice spoke some still word.

At last she came to the pale mother queen.

20 She spoke but with guarded lips and tranquil face  
Lest some stray word or some betraying look  
Should let pass into the mother's unknowing breast,  
Slaying all happiness and need to live,  
A dire foreknowledge of the grief to come.

25 Only the needed utterance passage found:  
All else she pressed back into her anguished heart  
And forced upon her speech an outward peace.

“One year that I have lived with Satyavan  
Here on the emerald edge of the vast woods  
30 In the iron ring of the enormous peaks  
Under the blue rifts of the forest sky,  
I have not gone into the silences  
Of this great woodland that enringed my thoughts  
With mystery, nor in its green miracles  
35 Wandered, but this small clearing was my world.

Now has a strong desire seized all my heart  
To go with Satyavan holding his hand  
Into the life that he has loved and touch  
Herbs he has trod and know the forest flowers  
40 And hear at ease the birds and the scurrying life  
That starts and ceases, rich far rustle of boughs  
And all the mystic whispering of the woods.

Release me now and let my heart have rest.”

45 She answered: “Do as thy wise mind desires,  
O calm child-sovereign with the eyes that rule.

I hold thee for a strong goddess who has come  
Pitying our barren days; so dost thou serve  
Even as a slave might, yet art thou beyond  
All that thou doest, all our minds conceive,

50 Like the strong sun that serves earth from above."  
Then the doomed husband and the woman who knew  
Went with linked hands into that solemn world  
Where beauty and grandeur and unspoken dream,  
Where Nature's mystic silence could be felt  
55 Communing with the secrecy of God.

Beside her Satyavan walked full of joy  
Because she moved with him through his green haunts:  
He showed her all the forest's riches, flowers  
Innumerable of every odour and hue  
60 And soft thick clinging creepers red and green  
And strange rich-plumaged birds, to every cry  
That haunted sweetly distant boughs replied  
With the shrill singer's name more sweetly called.

He spoke of all the things he loved: they were  
65 His boyhood's comrades and his playfellows,  
Coevals and companions of his life  
Here in this world whose every mood he knew:  
Their thoughts which to the common mind are blank,  
He shared, to every wild emotion felt  
70 An answer.

Deeply she listened, but to hear  
The voice that soon would cease from tender words  
And treasure its sweet cadences beloved  
For lonely memory when none by her walked  
And the beloved voice could speak no more.

75 But little dwelt her mind upon their sense;  
Of death, not life she thought or life's lone end.

Love in her bosom hurt with the jagged edges  
Of anguish moaned at every step with pain  
Crying, "Now, now perhaps his voice will cease  
80 For ever."

Even by some vague touch oppressed  
Sometimes her eyes looked round as if their orbs  
Might see the dim and dreadful god's approach.

But Satyavan had paused. He meant to finish  
His labour here that happy, linked, uncaring  
85 They two might wander free in the green deep  
Primaeval mystery of the forest's heart.

A tree that raised its tranquil head to heaven  
Luxuriating in verdure, summoning  
The breeze with amorous wideness of its boughs,  
90 He chose and with his steel assailed the arm  
Brown, rough and strong hidden in its emerald dress.

Wordless but near she watched, no turn to lose  
Of the bright face and body which she loved.

Her life was now in seconds, not in hours,  
95 And every moment she economised  
Like a pale merchant leaned above his store,  
The miser of his poor remaining gold.

But Satyavan wielded a joyous axe.

100 He sang high snatches of a sage's chant  
That pealed of conquered death and demons slain,  
And sometimes paused to cry to her sweet speech  
Of love and mockery tenderer than love:  
She like a pantheress leaped upon his words  
And carried them into her cavern heart.

105 But as he worked, his doom upon him came.

The violent and hungry hounds of pain  
Travelled through his body biting as they passed  
Silently, and all his suffering breath besieged  
Strove to rend life's strong heart-cords and be free.

110 Then helped, as if a beast had left its prey,  
A moment in a wave of rich relief  
Reborn to strength and happy ease he stood  
Rejoicing and resumed his confident toil  
But with less seeing strokes.

115 Now the great woodsman  
Hewed at him and his labour ceased: lifting  
His arm he flung away the poignant axe  
Far from him like an instrument of pain.

120 She came to him in silent anguish and clasped,  
And he cried to her, "Savitri, a pang  
Cleaves through my head and breast as if the axe  
Were piercing it and not the living branch.

Such agony rends me as the tree must feel  
When it is sundered and must lose its life.

125 Awhile let me lay my head upon thy lap  
And guard me with thy hands from evil fate:  
Perhaps because thou touchest, death may pass."

130 Then Savitri sat under branches wide,  
Cool, green against the sun, not the hurt tree  
Which his keen axe had cloven,—that she shunned;  
But leaned beneath a fortunate kingly trunk  
She guarded him in her bosom and strove to soothe  
His anguished brow and body with her hands.

All grief and fear were dead within her now  
And a great calm had fallen.

135 His suffering, the impulse that opposes pain  
Were the one mortal feeling left.

It passed:  
Griefless and strong she waited like the gods.

140 But now his sweet familiar hue was changed  
Into a tarnished greyness and his eyes  
Dimmed over, forsaken of the clear light she loved.

Only the dull and physical mind was left,  
Vacant of the bright spirit's luminous gaze.

145 But once before it faded wholly back,  
He cried out in a clinging last despair,  
"Savitri, Savitri, O Savitri,  
Lean down, my soul, and kiss me while I die."

And even as her pallid lips pressed his,  
His failed, losing last sweetness of response;  
His cheek pressed down her golden arm. She sought

150 His mouth still with her living mouth, as if  
She could persuade his soul back with her kiss;  
Then grew aware they were no more alone.

Something had come there conscious, vast and dire.

155 Near her she felt a silent shade immense  
Chilling the noon with darkness for its back.

An awful hush had fallen upon the place:  
There was no cry of birds, no voice of beasts.

160 A terror and an anguish filled the world,  
As if annihilation's mystery  
Had taken a sensible form.

A cosmic mind

Looked out on all from formidable eyes  
Contemning all with its unbearable gaze  
And with immortal lids and a vast brow  
It saw in its immense destroying thought  
165 All things and beings as a pitiful dream,  
Rejecting with calm disdain Nature's delight,  
The wordless meaning of its deep regard  
Voicing the unreality of things  
And life that would be for ever but never was  
170 And its brief and vain recurrence without cease,  
As if from a Silence without form or name  
The Shadow of a remote uncaring god  
Doomed to his Nought the illusory universe,  
Cancelling its show of idea and act in Time  
175 And its imitation of eternity.

She knew that visible Death was standing there  
And Satyavan had passed from her embrace

**End of Book Eight**

**End of Part Two**