A calm slow sun looked down from tranquil heavens.
A routed sullen rearguard of retreat,
The last rains had fled murmuring across the woods
Or failed, a sibilant whisper mid the leaves,
And the great blue enchantment of the sky
Recovered the deep rapture of its smile.
Its mellow splendour unstressed by storm-licked heats
Found room for a luxury of warm mild days,
The night’s gold treasure of autumnal moons
Came floating shipped through ripples of faery air.
And Savitri’s life was glad, fulfilled like earth’s;
She had found herself, she knew her being’s aim.
Although her kingdom of marvellous change within
Remained unspoken in her secret breast,
All that lived round her felt its magic’s charm:
The trees’ rustling voices told it to the winds,
Flowers spoke in ardent hues an unknown joy,
The birds’ carolling became a canticle,
The beasts forgot their strife and lived at ease.
Absorbed in wide communion with the Unseen
The mild ascetics of the wood received
A sudden greatening of their lonely muse.
This bright perfection of her inner state
Poured overflowing into her outward scene,
Made beautiful dull common natural things
And action wonderful and time divine.
Even the smallest meanest work became
A sweet or glad and glorious sacrament,
An offering to the self of the great world
Or a service to the One in each and all.

Canto Six

Nirvana and the Discovery of the
All-Negating Absolute
A light invaded all from her being’s light;
Her heart-beats’ dance communicated bliss:
Happiness grew happier, shared with her, by her touch
And grief some solace found when she drew near.
Above the cherished head of Satyavan
She saw not now Fate’s dark and lethal orb;
A golden circle round a mystic sun
Disclosed to her new-born predicting sight
The cyclic rondure of a sovereign life.
In her visions and deep-etched veridical dreams,
In brief shiftings of the future’s heavy screen,
He lay not by a dolorous decree
A victim in the dismal antre of death
Or borne to blissful regions far from her
Forgetting the sweetness of earth’s warm delight,
Forgetting the passionate oneness of love’s clasp,
Absolved in the self-rapt immortal’s bliss.
Always he was with her, a living soul
That met her eyes with close enamoured eyes,
A living body near to her body’s joy.
But now no longer in these great wild woods
In kinship with the days of bird and beast
And levelled to the bareness of earth’s brown breast,
But mid the thinking high-built lives of men
In tapestried chambers and on crystal floors,
In armoured town or gardened pleasure-walks,
Even in distance closer than her thoughts,
Body to body near, soul near to soul,
Moving as if by a common breath and will
They were tied in the single circling of their days
Together by love’s unseen atmosphere,
Inseparable like the earth and sky.
Thus for a while she trod the Golden Path;
This was the sun before abysmal Night.
Once as she sat in deep felicitous muse,
Still quivering from her lover’s strong embrace,
And made her joy a bridge twixt earth and heaven,
An abyss yawned suddenly beneath her heart.
A vast and nameless fear dragged at her nerves
As drags a wild beast its half-slaughtered prey;
It seemed to have no den from which it sprang:
It was not hers, but hid its unseen cause.
Then rushing came its vast and fearful Fount.
A formless Dread with shapeless endless wings
Filling the universe with its dangerous breath,
A denser darkness than the Night could bear,
Enveloped the heavens and possessed the earth.
A rolling surge of silent death, it came
Curving round the far edge of the quaking globe;
Effacing heaven with its enormous stride
It willed to expunge the choked and anguished air
And end the fable of the joy of life.
It seemed her very being to forbid,
Abolishing all by which her nature lived,
And laboured to blot out her body and soul,
A clutch of some half-seen Invisible,
An ocean of terror and of sovereign might,
A person and a black infinity.
It seemed to cry to her without thought or word
The message of its dark eternity
And the awful meaning of its silences:
Out of some sullen monstrous vast arisen,
Out of an abysmal deep of grief and fear
Imagined by some blind regardless self,
A consciousness of being without its joy,
Empty of thought, incapable of bliss,
That felt life blank and nowhere found a soul,
A voice to the dumb anguish of the heart
Conveyed a stark sense of unspoken words;
In her own depths she heard the unuttered thought
That made unreal the world and all life meant.
“Who art thou who claimst thy crown of separate birth,
The illusion of thy soul’s reality
And personal godhead on an ignorant globe
In the animal body of imperfect man?
Hope not to be happy in a world of pain
And dream not, listening to the unspoken Word
And dazzled by the inexpressible Ray,
Transcending the mute Superconscient’s realm,
To give a body to the Unknowable,
Or for a sanction to thy heart’s delight
To burden with bliss the silent still Supreme
Profaning its bare and formless sanctity,
Or call into thy chamber the Divine
And sit with God tasting a human joy.
I have created all, all I devour;
I am Death and the dark terrible Mother of life,
I am Kali black and naked in the world,
I am Maya and the universe is my cheat.
I lay waste human happiness with my breath
And slay the will to live, the joy to be
That all may pass back into nothingness
And only abide the eternal and absolute.
For only the blank Eternal can be true.
All else is shadow and flash in Mind’s bright glass,
Mind, hollow mirror in which Ignorance sees
A splendid figure of its own false self
And dreams it sees a glorious solid world.
O soul, inventor of man’s thoughts and hopes,
Thyself the invention of the moments’ stream,
Illusion’s centre or subtle apex point,
At last know thyself, from vain existence cease.”
A shadow of the negating Absolute,
The intolerant Darkness travelled surging past
And ebbed in her the formidable Voice.
It left behind her inner world laid waste:
A barren silence weighed upon her heart,
Her kingdom of delight was there no more;
Only her soul remained, its emptied stage,
Awaiting the unknown eternal Will.
Then from the heights a greater Voice came down,
The Word that touches the heart and finds the soul,
The voice of Light after the voice of Night:
The cry of the Abyss drew Heaven’s reply,
A might of storm chased by the might of the Sun.
“O soul, bare not thy kingdom to the foe;
Consent to hide thy royalty of bliss
Lest Time and Fate find out its avenues
And beat with thunderous knock upon thy gates.
Hide whilst thou canst thy treasure of separate self
Behind the luminous rampart of thy depths
Till of a vaster empire it grows part.
But not for self alone the Self is won:
Content abide not with one conquered realm;
Adventure all to make the whole world thine,
To break into greater kingdoms turn thy force.
Fear not to be nothing that thou mayst be all;
Assent to the emptiness of the Supreme
That all in thee may reach its absolute.
Accept to be small and human on the earth,
Interrupting thy new-born divinity,
That man may find his utter self in God.
If for thy own sake only thou hast come,
An immortal spirit into the mortal’s world,
To found thy luminous kingdom in God’s dark,
In the Inconscient’s realm one shining star,
One door in the Ignorance opened upon light,
Why hadst thou any need to come at all?
Thou hast come down into a struggling world
To aid a blind and suffering mortal race,
To open to Light the eyes that could not see,
To bring down bliss into the heart of grief,
To make thy life a bridge twixt earth and heaven;
If thou wouldst save the toiling universe,
The vast universal suffering feel as thine:
Thou must bear the sorrow that thou claimst to heal;
The day-bringer must walk in darkest night.
He who would save the world must share its pain.
If he knows not grief, how shall he find grief’s cure?
If far he walks above mortality’s head,
How shall the mortal reach that too high path?
If one of theirs they see scale heaven’s peaks,
Men then can hope to learn that titan climb.
God must be born on earth and be as man
That man being human may grow even as God.
He who would save the world must be one with the world,
All suffering things contain in his heart’s space
And bear the grief and joy of all that lives.
His soul must be wider than the universe
And feel eternity as its very stuff,
Rejecting the moment’s personality
Know itself older than the birth of Time,
Creation an incident in its consciousness,
Arcturus and Belphegor grains of fire
Circling in a corner of its boundless self,
The world’s destruction a small transient storm
In the calm infinity it has become.
If thou wouldst a little loosen the vast chain,
Draw back from the world that the Idea has made,
Thy mind’s selection from the Infinite,
Thy senses’ gloss on the Infinitesimal’s dance,
Then shalt thou know how the great bondage came.
Banish all thought from thee and be God’s void.
Then shalt thou uncover the Unknowable
And the Superconscient conscious grow on thy tops;
Infinity’s vision through thy gaze shall pierce;
Thou shalt look into the eyes of the Unknown,
Find the hid Truth in things seen null and false,
Behind things known discover Mystery’s rear.
Thou shalt be one with God’s bare reality
And the miraculous world he has become
And the diviner miracle still to be
When Nature who is now unconscious God
Translucent grows to the Eternal’s light,
Her seeing his sight, her walk his steps of power
And life is filled with a spiritual joy
And Matter is the Spirit’s willing bride.
Consent to be nothing and none, dissolve Time’s work,
Cast off thy mind, step back from form and name.
Annul thyself that only God may be.”

Thus spoke the mighty and uplifting Voice,
And Savitri heard; she bowed her head and mused
Plunging her deep regard into herself
In her soul’s privacy in the silent Night.
Aloof and standing back detached and calm,
A witness of the drama of herself,
A student of her own interior scene,
She watched the passion and the toil of life
And heard in the crowded thoroughfares of mind
The unceasing tread and passage of her thoughts.
All she allowed to rise that chose to stir;
Calling, compelling nought, forbidding nought,
She left all to the process formed in Time
And the free initiative of Nature’s will.
Thus following the complex human play
She heard the prompter’s voice behind the scenes,
Perceived the original libretto’s set
And the organ theme of the composer Force.
All she beheld that surges from man’s depths,
The animal instincts prowling mid life’s trees,
The impulses that whisper to the heart
And passion’s thunder-chase sweeping the nerves;
She saw the Powers that stare from the Abyss
And the wordless Light that liberates the soul.
But most her gaze pursued the birth of thought.
Affranchised from the look of surface mind
She paused not to survey the official case,
The issue of forms from the office of the brain,
Its factory of thought-sounds and soundless words
And voices stored within unheard by men,
Its mint and treasury of shining coin.
These were but counters in mind’s symbol game,
A gramophone’s discs, a reproduction’s film,
A list of signs, a cipher and a code.
In our unseen subtle body thought is born
Or there it enters from the cosmic field.
Oft from her soul stepped out a naked thought
Luminous with mysteried lips and wonderful eyes;
Or from her heart emerged some burning face
And looked for life and love and passionate truth,
Aspired to heaven or embraced the world
Or led the fancy like a fleeting moon
Across the dull sky of man’s common days,
Amidst the doubtful certitudes of earth’s lore,
To the celestial beauty of faith gave form,
As if at flower-prints in a dingy room
Laughed in a golden vase one living rose.
A thaumaturgist sat in her heart’s deep,
Compelled the forward stride, the upward look,
Till wonder leaped into the illumined breast
And life grew marvellous with transfiguring hope.
A seeing will pondered between the brows;
Thoughts, glistening Angels, stood behind the brain
In flashing armour, folding hands of prayer,
And poured heaven’s rays into the earthly form.
Imaginations flamed up from her breast,
Unearthly beauty, touches of surpassing joy
And plans of miracle, dreams of delight:
Around her navel lotus clustering close
Her large sensations of the teeming worlds
Streamed their dumb movements of the unformed Idea;
Invading the small sensitive flower of the throat
They brought their mute unuttered resonances
To kindle the figures of a heavenly speech.
Below, desires formed their wordless wish,
And longings of physical sweetness and ecstasy
Translated into the accents of a cry
Their grasp on objects and their clasp on souls.
Her body’s thoughts climbed from her conscious limbs
And carried their yearnings to its mystic crown
Where Nature’s murmurs meet the Ineffable.
But for the mortal prisoned in outward mind
All must present their passports at its door;
Disguised they must don the official cap and mask
Or pass as manufactures of the brain,
Unknown their secret truth and hidden source.
Only to the inner mind they speak direct,
Put on a body and assume a voice,
Their passage seen, their message heard and known,
Their birthplace and their natal mark revealed,
And stand confessed to an immortal’s sight,
Our nature’s messengers to the witness soul.
Impenetrable, withheld from mortal sense,
The inner chambers of the spirit’s house
Disclosed to her their happenings and their guests;
Eyes looked through crevices in the invisible wall
And through the secrecy of unseen doors
There came into mind’s little frontal room
Thoughts that enlarged our limited human range,
Lifted the ideal’s half-quenched or sinking torch
Or peered through the finite at the infinite.
A sight opened upon the invisible
And sensed the shapes that mortal eyes see not,
The sounds that mortal listening cannot hear,
The blissful sweetness of the intangible’s touch;
The objects that to us are empty air,
Are there the stuff of daily experience
And the common pabulum of sense and thought. 
The beings of the subtle realms appeared 
And scenes concealed behind our earthly scene; 
She saw the life of remote continents 
And distance deafened not to voices far; 
She felt the movements crossing unknown minds; 
The past’s events occurred before her eyes. 
The great world’s thoughts were part of her own thought, 
The feelings dumb for ever and unshared, 
The ideas that never found an utterance. 
The dim subconscious’s incoherent hints 
Laid bare a meaning twisted, deep and strange, 
The bizarre secret of their fumbling speech, 
Their links with underlying reality. 
The unseen grew visible and audible: 
Thoughts leaped down from a superconscient field 
Like eagles swooping from a viewless peak, 
Thoughts gleamed up from the screened subliminal depths 
Like golden fishes from a hidden sea. 
This world is a vast unbroken totality, 
A deep solidarity joins its contrary powers; 
God’s summits look back on the mute Abyss. 
So man evolving to divinest heights 
Colloques still with the animal and the Djinn; 
The human godhead with star-gazer eyes 
Lives still in one house with the primal beast. 
The high meets the low, all is a single plan. 
So she beheld the many births of thought, 
If births can be of what eternal is; 
For the Eternal’s powers are like himself, 
Timeless in the Timeless, in Time ever born. 
This too she saw that all in outer mind 
Is made, not born, a product perishable, 
Forged in the body’s factory by earth-force. 
This mind is a dynamic small machine 
Producing ceaselessly, till it wears out,
With raw material drawn from the outside world,
The patterns sketched out by an artist God.
Often our thoughts are finished cosmic wares
Admitted by a silent office gate
And passed through the subconscient’s galleries,
Then issued in Time’s mart as private make.
For now they bear the living person’s stamp;
A trick, a special hue claims them his own.
All else is Nature’s craft and this too hers.
Our tasks are given, we are but instruments;
Nothing is all our own that we create:
The Power that acts in us is not our force.
The genius too receives from some high fount
Concealed in a supernal secrecy
The work that gives him an immortal name.
The word, the form, the charm, the glory and grace
Are missioned sparks from a stupendous Fire;
A sample from the laboratory of God
Of which he holds the patent upon earth,
Comes to him wrapped in golden coverings;
He listens for Inspiration’s postman knock
And takes delivery of the priceless gift
A little spoilt by the receiver mind
Or mixed with the manufacture of his brain;
When least defaced, then is it most divine.
Although his ego claims the world for its use,
Man is a dynamo for the cosmic work;
Nature does most in him, God the high rest:
Only his soul’s acceptance is his own.
This independent, once a power supreme,
Self-born before the universe was made,
Accepting cosmos, binds himself Nature’s serf
Till he becomes her freedman — or God’s slave.
This is the appearance in our mortal front;
Our greater truth of being lies behind:
Our consciousness is cosmic and immense,
But only when we break through Matter’s wall
In that spiritual vastness can we stand
Where we can live the masters of our world
And mind is only a means and body a tool.
For above the birth of body and of thought
Our spirit’s truth lives in the naked self
And from that height, unbound, surveys the world.
Out of the mind she rose to escape its law
That it might sleep in some deep shadow of self
Or fall silent in the silence of the Unseen.
High she attained and stood from Nature free
And saw creation’s life from far above,
Thence upon all she laid her sovereign will
To dedicate it to God’s timeless calm:
Then all grew tranquil in her being’s space,
Only sometimes small thoughts arose and fell
Like quiet waves upon a silent sea
Or ripples passing over a lonely pool
When a stray stone disturbs its dreaming rest.
Yet the mind’s factory had ceased to work,
There was no sound of the dynamo’s throb,
There came no call from the still fields of life.
Then even those stirrings rose in her no more;
Her mind now seemed like a vast empty room
Or like a peaceful landscape without sound.
This men call quietude and prize as peace.
But to her deeper sight all yet was there,
Effervescing like a chaos under a lid;
Feelings and thoughts cried out for word and act
But found no response in the silenced brain:
All was suppressed but nothing yet expunged;
At every moment might explosion come.
Then this too paused; the body seemed a stone.
All now was a wide mighty vacancy,
But still excluded from eternity’s hush;
For still was far the repose of the Absolute
And the ocean silence of Infinity.
Even now some thoughts could cross her solitude;
These surged not from the depths or from within
Cast up from formlessness to seek a form,
Spoke not the body’s need nor voiced life’s call.
These seemed not born nor made in human Time:
Children of cosmic Nature from a far world,
Idea’s shapes in complete armour of words
Posted like travellers in an alien space.
Out of some far expanse they seemed to come
As if carried on vast wings like large white sails,
And with easy access reached the inner ear
As though they used a natural privileged right
To the high royal entries of the soul.
As yet their path lay deep-concealed in light.
Then looking to know whence the intruders came
She saw a spiritual immensity
Pervading and encompassing the world-space
As ether our transparent tangible air,
And through it sailing tranquilly a thought.
As smoothly glides a ship nearing its port,
Ignorant of embargo and blockade,
Confident of entrance and the visa’s seal,
It came to the silent city of the brain
Towards its accustomed and expectant quay,
But met a barring will, a blow of Force
And sank vanishing in the immensity.
After a long vacant pause another appeared
And others one by one suddenly emerged,
Mind’s unexpected visitors from the Unseen
Like far-off sails upon a lonely sea.
But soon that commerce failed, none reached mind’s coast.
Then all grew still, nothing moved any more:
Immobile, self-rapt, timeless, solitary
A silent spirit pervaded silent Space.
In that absolute stillness bare and formidable
There was glimpsed an all-negating Void Supreme
That claimed its mystic Nihil’s sovereign right
To cancel Nature and deny the soul.
Even the nude sense of self grew pale and thin:
Impersonal, signless, featureless, void of forms
A blank pure consciousness had replaced the mind.
Her spirit seemed the substance of a name,
The world a pictured symbol drawn on self,
A dream of images, a dream of sounds
Built up the semblance of a universe
Or lent to spirit the appearance of a world.
This was self-seeing; in that intolerant hush
No notion and no concept could take shape,
There was no sense to frame the figure of things,
A sheer self-sight was there, no thought arose.
Emotion slept deep down in the still heart
Or lay buried in a cemetery of peace:
All feelings seemed quiescent, calm or dead,
As if the heart-strings rent could work no more
And joy and grief could never rise again.
The heart beat on with an unconscious rhythm
But no response came from it and no cry.
Vain was the provocation of events;
Nothing within answered an outside touch,
No nerve was stirred and no reaction rose.
Yet still her body saw and moved and spoke;
It understood without the aid of thought,
It said whatever needed to be said,
It did whatever needed to be done.
There was no person there behind the act,
No mind that chose or passed the fitting word:
All wrought like an unerring apt machine.
As if continuing old habitual turns,
And pushed by an old unexhausted force
The engine did the work for which it was made:
Her consciousness looked on and took no part;
All it upheld, in nothing had a share.
There was no strong initiator will;
An incoherence crossing a firm void
Slipped into an order of related chance.
A pure perception was the only power
That stood behind her action and her sight.
If that retired, all objects would be extinct,
Her private universe would cease to be,
The house she had built with bricks of thought and sense
In the beginning after the birth of Space.
This seeing was identical with the seen;
It knew without knowledge all that could be known,
It saw impartially the world go by,
But in the same supine unmoving glance
Saw too its abysmal unreality.
It watched the figure of the cosmic game,
But the thought and inner life in forms seemed dead,
Abolished by her own collapse of thought:
A hollow physical shell persisted still.
All seemed a brilliant shadow of itself,
A cosmic film of scenes and images:
The enduring mass and outline of the hills
Was a design sketched on a silent mind
And held to a tremulous false solidity
By constant beats of visionary sight.
The forest with its emerald multitudes
Clothed with its show of hues vague empty Space,
A painting’s colours hiding a surface void
That flickered upon dissolution’s edge;
The blue heavens, an illusion of the eyes,
Roofed in the mind’s illusion of a world.
The men who walked beneath an unreal sky
Seemed mobile puppets out of cardboard cut
And pushed by unseen hands across the soil
Or moving pictures upon Fancy’s film:
There was no soul within, no power of life.
The brain’s vibrations that appear like thought,
The nerve’s brief answer to each contact’s knock,
The heart’s quiverings felt as joy and grief and love
Were twitchings of the body, their seeming self,
That body forged from atoms and from gas
A manufactured lie of Maya’s make,
Its life a dream seen by the sleeping Void.
The animals lone or trooping through the glades
Fled like a passing vision of beauty and grace
Imagined by some all-creating Eye.
Yet something was there behind the fading scene;
Wherever she turned, at whatsoever she looked,
It was perceived, yet hid from mind and sight.
The One only real shut itself from Space
And stood aloof from the idea of Time.
Its truth escaped from shape and line and hue.
All else grew unsubstantial, self-annulled,
This only everlasting seemed and true,
Yet nowhere dwelt, it was outside the hours.
This only could justify the labour of sight,
But sight could not define for it a form;
This only could appease the unsatisfied ear
But hearing listened in vain for a missing sound;
This answered not the sense, called not to Mind.
It met her as the uncaught inaudible Voice
That speaks for ever from the Unknowable.
It met her like an omnipresent point
Pure of dimensions, unfixed, invisible,
The single oneness of its multiplied beat
Accentuating its sole eternity.
It faced her as some vast Nought’s immensity,
An endless No to all that seems to be,
An endless Yes to things ever unconceived
And all that is unimagined and unthought,
An eternal zero or untotalled Aught,
A spaceless and a placeless Infinite.
Yet eternity and infinity seemed but words
Vainly affixed by mind’s incompetence
To its stupendous lone reality.
The world is but a spark-burst from its light,
All moments flashes from its Timelessness,
All objects glimmerings of the Bodiless
That disappear from Mind when That is seen.
It held, as if a shield before its face,
A consciousness that saw without a seer,
The Truth where knowledge is not nor knower nor known,
The Love enamoured of its own delight
In which the Lover is not nor the Beloved
Bringing their personal passion into the Vast,
The Force omnipotent in quietude,
The Bliss that none can ever hope to taste.
It cancelled the convincing cheat of self;
A truth in nothingness was its mighty clue.
If all existence could renounce to be
And Being take refuge in Non-being’s arms
And Non-being could strike out its ciphered round,
Some lustre of that Reality might appear.
A formless liberation came on her.
Once sepulchred alive in brain and flesh
She had risen up from body, mind and life;
She was no more a Person in a world,
She had escaped into infinity.
What once had been herself had disappeared;
There was no frame of things, no figure of soul.
A refugee from the domain of sense,
Evading the necessity of thought,
Delivered from Knowledge and from Ignorance
And rescued from the true and the untrue,
She shared the Superconscient’s high retreat
Beyond the self-born Word, the nude Idea,
The first bare solid ground of consciousness;
Nirvana and the All-Negating Absolute

Beings were not there, existence had no place,
There was no temptation of the joy to be.
Unutterably effaced, no one and null,
A vanishing vestige like a violet trace,
A faint record merely of a self now past,
She was a point in the unknowable.
Only some last annulment now remained,
Annihilation’s vague indefinable step:
A memory of being still was there
And kept her separate from nothingness:
She was in That but still became not That.
This shadow of herself so close to nought
Could be again self’s point d’appui to live,
Return out of the Inconceivable
And be what some mysterious vast might choose.
Even as the Unknowable decreed,
She might be nought or new-become the All,
Or if the omnipotent Nihil took a shape
Emerge as someone and redeem the world.
Even, she might learn what the mystic cipher held,
This seeming exit or closed end of all
Could be a blind tenebrous passage screened from sight,
Her state the eclipsing shell of a darkened sun
On its secret way to the Ineffable.
Even now her splendid being might flame back
Out of the silence and the nullity,
A gleaming portion of the All-Wonderful,
A power of some all-affirming Absolute,
A shining mirror of the eternal Truth
To show to the One-in-all its manifest face,
To the souls of men their deep identity.
Or she might wake into God’s quietude
Beyond the cosmic day and cosmic night
And rest appeased in his white eternity.
But this was now unreal or remote
Or covered in the mystic fathomless blank.
In infinite Nothingness was the ultimate sign
Or else the Real was the Unknowable.
A lonely Absolute negated all:
It effaced the ignorant world from its solitude
And drowned the soul in its everlasting peace.

END OF CANTO SIX