

*Canto Three*

*The Entry into the Inner Countries*

AT FIRST out of the busy hum of mind  
As if from a loud thronged market into a cave  
By an inward moment's magic she had come.  
A stark hushed emptiness became her self:  
Her mind unvisited by the voice of thought  
Stared at a void deep's dumb infinity.  
Her heights receded, her depths behind her closed;  
All fled away from her and left her blank.  
But when she came back to her self of thought,  
Once more she was a human thing on earth,  
A lump of Matter, a house of closed sight,  
A mind compelled to think out ignorance,  
A life-force pressed into a camp of works  
And the material world her limiting field.  
Amazed like one unknowing she sought her way  
Out of the tangle of man's ignorant past  
That took the surface person for the soul.  
Then a Voice spoke that dwelt on secret heights:  
"For man thou seekst, not for thyself alone.  
Only if God assumes the human mind  
And puts on mortal ignorance for his cloak  
And makes himself the Dwarf with triple stride,  
Can he help man to grow into the God.  
As man disguised the cosmic Greatness works  
And finds the mystic inaccessible gate  
And opens the Immortal's golden door.  
Man, human, follows in God's human steps.  
Accepting his darkness thou must bring to him light,  
Accepting his sorrow thou must bring to him bliss.  
In Matter's body find thy heaven-born soul."  
Then Savitri surged out of her body's wall

And stood a little span outside herself  
And looked into her subtle being's depths  
And in its heart as in a lotus-bud  
Divined her secret and mysterious soul.  
At the dim portal of the inner life  
That bars out from our depths the body's mind  
And all that lives but by the body's breath,  
She knocked and pressed against the ebony gate.  
The living portal groaned with sullen hinge:  
Heavily reluctant it complained inert  
Against the tyranny of the spirit's touch.  
A formidable voice cried from within:  
"Back, creature of earth, lest tortured and torn thou die."  
A dreadful murmur rose like a dim sea;  
The Serpent of the threshold hissing rose,  
A fatal guardian hood with monstrous coils,  
The hounds of darkness growled with jaws agape,  
And trolls and gnomes and goblins scowled and stared  
And wild beast roarings thrilled the blood with fear  
And menace muttered in a dangerous tongue.  
Unshaken her will pressed on the rigid bars:  
The gate swung wide with a protesting jar,  
The opponent Powers withdrew their dreadful guard;  
Her being entered into the inner worlds.  
In a narrow passage, the subconscious's gate,  
She breathed with difficulty and pain and strove  
To find the inner self concealed in sense.  
Into a dense of subtle Matter packed,  
A cavity filled with a blind mass of power,  
An opposition of misleading gleams,  
A heavy barrier of unseeing sight,  
She forced her way through body to the soul.  
Across a perilous border line she passed  
Where Life dips into the subconscious dusk  
Or struggles from Matter into chaos of mind,  
Aswarm with elemental entities

And fluttering shapes of vague half-bodied thought  
And crude beginnings of incontinent force.  
At first a difficult narrowness was there,  
A press of uncertain powers and drifting wills;  
For all was there but nothing in its place.  
At times an opening came, a door was forced;  
She crossed through spaces of a secret self  
And trod in passages of inner Time.  
At last she broke into a form of things,  
A start of finiteness, a world of sense:  
But all was still confused, nothing self-found.  
Soul was not there but only cries of life.  
A thronged and clamorous air environed her.  
A horde of sounds defied significance,  
A dissonant clash of cries and contrary calls;  
A mob of visions broke across the sight,  
A jostled sequence lacking sense and suite,  
Feelings pushed through a packed and burdened heart,  
Each forced its separate inconsequent way  
But cared for nothing but its ego's drive.  
A rally without key of common will,  
Thought stared at thought and pulled at the taut brain  
As if to pluck the reason from its seat  
And cast its corpse into life's wayside drain;  
So might forgotten lie in Nature's mud  
Abandoned the slain sentinel of the soul.  
So could life's power shake from it mind's rule,  
Nature renounce the spirit's government  
And the bare elemental energies  
Make of the sense a glory of boundless joy,  
A splendour of ecstatic anarchy,  
A revel mighty and mad of utter bliss.  
This was the sense's instinct void of soul  
Or when the soul sleeps hidden void of power,  
But now the vital godhead wakes within  
And lifts the life with the Supernal's touch.

But how shall come the glory and the flame  
If mind is cast away into the abyss?  
For body without mind has not the light,  
The rapture of spirit sense, the joy of life;  
All then becomes subconscious, tenebrous,  
Inconscience puts its seal on Nature's page  
Or else a mad disorder whirls the brain  
Posting along a ravaged nature's roads,  
A chaos of disordered impulses  
In which no light can come, no joy, no peace.  
This state now threatened, this she pushed from her.  
As if in a long endless tossing street  
One driven mid a trampling hurrying crowd  
Hour after hour she trod without release  
Holding by her will the senseless meute at bay;  
Out of the dreadful press she dragged her will  
And fixed her thought upon the saviour Name;  
Then all grew still and empty; she was free.  
A large deliverance came, a vast calm space.  
Awhile she moved through a blank tranquillity  
Of naked Light from an invisible sun,  
A void that was a bodiless happiness,  
A blissful vacuum of nameless peace.  
But now a mightier danger's front drew near:  
The press of bodily mind, the Inconscient's brood  
Of aimless thought and will had fallen from her.  
Approaching loomed a giant head of Life  
Ungoverned by mind or soul, subconscious, vast.  
It tossed all power into a single drive,  
It made its power a might of dangerous seas.  
Into the stillness of her silent self,  
Into the whiteness of its muse of Space  
A spate, a torrent of the speed of Life  
Broke like a wind-lashed driven mob of waves  
Racing on a pale floor of summer sand;  
It drowned its banks, a mountain of climbing waves.

Enormous was its vast and passionate voice.  
It cried to her listening spirit as it ran,  
Demanding God's submission to chainless Force.  
A deaf force calling to a status dumb,  
A thousand voices in a muted Vast,  
It claimed the heart's support for its clutch at joy,  
For its need to act the witness Soul's consent,  
For its lust of power her neutral being's seal.  
Into the wideness of her watching self  
It brought a grandiose gust of the Breath of Life;  
Its torrent carried the world's hopes and fears,  
All life's, all Nature's dissatisfied hungry cry,  
And the longing all eternity cannot fill.  
It called to the mountain secrecies of the soul  
And the miracle of the never-dying fire,  
It spoke to some first inexpressible ecstasy  
Hidden in the creative beat of Life;  
Out of the nether unseen deeps it tore  
Its lure and magic of disordered bliss,  
Into earth-light poured its maze of tangled charm  
And heady draught of Nature's primitive joy  
And the fire and mystery of forbidden delight  
Drunk from the world-libido's bottomless well,  
And the honey-sweet poison-wine of lust and death,  
But dreamed a vintage of glory of life's gods,  
And felt as celestial rapture's golden sting.  
The cycles of the infinity of desire  
And the mystique that made an unrealised world  
Wider than the known and closer than the unknown  
In which hunt for ever the hounds of mind and life,  
Tempted a deep dissatisfied urge within  
To long for the unfulfilled and ever far  
And make this life upon a limiting earth  
A climb towards summits vanishing in the void,  
A search for the glory of the impossible.  
It dreamed of that which never has been known,

It grasped at that which never has been won,  
It chased into an Elysian memory  
The charms that flee from the heart's soon lost delight;  
It dared the force that slays, the joys that hurt,  
The imaged shape of unaccomplished things  
And the summons to a Circean transmuting dance  
And passion's tenancy of the courts of love  
And the wild Beast's ramp and romp with Beauty and Life.  
It brought its cry and surge of opposite powers,  
Its moments of the touch of luminous planes,  
Its flame-ascensions and sky-pitched vast attempts,  
Its fiery towers of dream built on the winds,  
Its sinkings towards the darkness and the abyss,  
Its honey of tenderness, its sharp wine of hate,  
Its changes of sun and cloud, of laughter and tears,  
Its bottomless danger-pits and swallowing gulfs,  
Its fear and joy and ecstasy and despair,  
Its occult wizardries, its simple lines  
And great communions and uplifting moves,  
Its faith in heaven, its intercourse with hell.  
These powers were not blunt with the dead weight of earth,  
They gave ambrosia's taste and poison's sting.  
There was an ardour in the gaze of Life  
That saw heaven blue in the grey air of Night:  
The impulses godward soared on passion's wings.  
Mind's quick-paced thoughts floated from their high necks,  
A glowing splendour as of an irised mane,  
A parure of pure intuition's light;  
Its flame-foot gallop they could imitate:  
Mind's voices mimicked inspiration's stress,  
Its ictus of infallibility,  
Its speed and lightning heaven-leap of the Gods.  
A trenchant blade that shore the nets of doubt,  
Its sword of discernment seemed almost divine.  
Yet all that knowledge was a borrowed sun's;  
The forms that came were not heaven's native births:

An inner voice could speak the unreal's Word;  
Its puissance dangerous and absolute  
Could mingle poison with the wine of God.  
On these high shining backs falsehood could ride;  
Truth lay with delight in error's passionate arms  
Gliding downstream in a blithe gilded barge:  
She edged her ray with a magnificent lie.  
Here in Life's nether realms all contraries meet;  
Truth stares and does her works with bandaged eyes  
And Ignorance is Wisdom's patron here:  
Those galloping hooves in their enthusiast speed  
Could bear to a dangerous intermediate zone  
Where Death walks wearing a robe of deathless Life.  
Or they enter the valley of the wandering Glean  
Whence, captives or victims of the specious Ray,  
Souls trapped in that region never can escape.  
Agents, not masters, they serve Life's desires  
Toiling for ever in the snare of Time.  
Their bodies born out of some Nihil's womb  
Ensnare the spirit in the moment's dreams,  
Then perish vomiting the immortal soul  
Out of Matter's belly into the sink of Nought.  
Yet some uncaught, unslain, can warily pass  
Carrying Truth's image in the sheltered heart,  
Pluck Knowledge out of error's screening grip,  
Break paths through the blind walls of little self,  
Then travel on to reach a greater life.  
All this streamed past her and seemed to her vision's sight  
As if around a high and voiceless isle  
A clamour of waters from far unknown hills  
Swallowed its narrow banks in crowding waves  
And made a hungry world of white wild foam:  
Hastening, a dragon with a million feet,  
Its foam and cry a drunken giant's din,  
Tossing a mane of Darkness into God's sky,  
It ebbed receding into a distant roar.

Then smiled again a large and tranquil air:  
Blue heaven, green earth, partners of Beauty's reign,  
Lived as of old, companions in happiness;  
And in the world's heart laughed the joy of life.  
All now was still, the soil shone dry and pure.  
Through it all she moved not, plunged not in the vain waves.  
Out of the vastness of the silent self  
Life's clamour fled; her spirit was mute and free.

Then journeying forward through the self's wide hush  
She came into a brilliant ordered Space.  
There Life dwelt parked in an armed tranquillity;  
A chain was on her strong insurgent heart.  
Tamed to the modesty of a measured pace,  
She kept no more her vehement stride and rush;  
She had lost the careless majesty of her muse  
And the ample grandeur of her regal force;  
Curbed were her mighty pomps, her splendid waste,  
Sobered the revels of her bacchant play,  
Cut down were her squanderings in desire's bazaar,  
Coerced her despot will, her fancy's dance,  
A cold stolidity bound the riot of sense.  
A royalty without freedom was her lot;  
The sovereign throned obeyed her ministers:  
Her servants mind and sense governed her house:  
Her spirit's bounds they cast in rigid lines  
And guarding with a phalanx of armoured rules  
The reason's balanced reign, kept order and peace.  
Her will lived closed in adamant walls of law,  
Coerced was her force by chains that feigned to adorn,  
Imagination was prisoned in a fort,  
Her wanton and licentious favourite;  
Reality's poise and reason's symmetry  
Were set in its place sentinelled by marshalled facts,  
They gave to the soul for throne a bench of Law,  
For kingdom a small world of rule and line:

The ages' wisdom, shrivelled to scholiast lines,  
Shrank patterned into a copy-book device.  
The Spirit's almighty freedom was not here:  
A schoolman mind had captured life's large space,  
But chose to live in bare and paltry rooms  
Parked off from the too vast dangerous universe,  
Fearing to lose its soul in the infinite.  
Even the Idea's ample sweep was cut  
Into a system, chained to fixed pillars of thought  
Or rivetted to Matter's solid ground:  
Or else the soul was lost in its own heights:  
Obeying the Ideal's high-browed law  
Thought based a throne on unsubstantial air  
Disdaining earth's flat triviality:  
It barred reality out to live in its dreams.  
Or all stepped into a systemed universe:  
Life's empire was a managed continent,  
Its thoughts an army ranked and disciplined;  
Uniformed they kept the logic of their fixed place  
At the bidding of the trained centurion mind.  
Or each stepped into its station like a star  
Or marched through fixed and constellated heavens  
Or kept its feudal rank among its peers  
In the sky's unchanging cosmic hierarchy.  
Or like a high-bred maiden with chaste eyes  
Forbidden to walk unveiled the public ways,  
She must in close secluded chambers move,  
Her feeling in cloisters live or gardened paths.  
Life was consigned to a safe level path,  
It dared not tempt the great and difficult heights  
Or climb to be neighbour to a lonely star  
Or skirt the danger of the precipice  
Or tempt the foam-curl'd breakers' perilous laugh,  
Adventure's lyrist, danger's amateur,  
Or into her chamber call some flaming god,  
Or leave the world's bounds and where no limits are

Meet with the heart's passion the Adorable  
Or set the world ablaze with the inner Fire.  
A chastened epithet in the prose of life,  
She must fill with colour just her sanctioned space,  
Not break out of the cabin of the idea  
Nor trespass into rhythms too high or vast.  
Even when it soared into ideal air,  
Thought's flight lost not itself in heaven's blue:  
It drew upon the skies a patterned flower  
Of disciplined beauty and harmonic light.  
A temperate vigilant spirit governed life:  
Its acts were tools of the considering thought,  
Too cold to take fire and set the world ablaze,  
Or the careful reason's diplomatic moves  
Testing the means to a prefigured end,  
Or at the highest pitch some calm Will's plan  
Or a strategy of some High Command within  
To conquer the secret treasures of the gods  
Or win for a masked king some glorious world,  
Not a reflex of the spontaneous self,  
An index of the being and its moods,  
A winging of conscious spirit, a sacrament  
Of life's communion with the still Supreme  
Or its pure movement on the Eternal's road.  
Or else for the body of some high Idea  
A house was built with too close-fitting bricks;  
Action and thought cemented made a wall  
Of small ideals limiting the soul.  
Even meditation mused on a narrow seat;  
And worship turned to an exclusive God,  
To the Universal in a chapel prayed  
Whose doors were shut against the universe;  
Or kneeled to the bodiless Impersonal  
A mind shut to the cry and fire of love:  
A rational religion dried the heart.  
It planned a smooth life's acts with ethics' rule

Or offered a cold and flameless sacrifice.  
The sacred Book lay on its sanctified desk  
Wrapped in interpretation's silken strings:  
A credo sealed up its spiritual sense.

Here was a quiet country of fixed mind,  
Here life no more was all nor passion's voice;  
The cry of sense had sunk into a hush.  
Soul was not there nor spirit but mind alone;  
Mind claimed to be the spirit and the soul.  
The spirit saw itself as form of mind,  
Lost itself in the glory of the thought,  
A light that made invisible the sun.  
Into a firm and settled space she came  
Where all was still and all things kept their place.  
Each found what it had sought and knew its aim.  
All had a final last stability.  
There one stood forth who bore authority  
On an important brow and held a rod;  
Command was incarnate in his gesture and tone;  
Tradition's petrified wisdom carved his speech,  
His sentences savoured the oracle.  
"Traveller or pilgrim of the inner world,  
Fortunate art thou to reach our brilliant air  
Flaming with thought's supreme finality.  
O aspirant to the perfect way of life,  
Here find it; rest from search and live at peace.  
Ours is the home of cosmic certainty.  
Here is the truth, God's harmony is here.  
Register thy name in the book of the elite,  
Admitted by the sanction of the few,  
Adopt thy station of knowledge, thy post in mind,  
Thy ticket of order draw in Life's bureau  
And praise thy fate that made thee one of ours.  
All here, docketed and tied, the mind can know,  
All schemed by law that God permits to life.

This is the end and there is no beyond.  
Here is the safety of the ultimate wall,  
Here is the clarity of the sword of Light,  
Here is the victory of a single Truth,  
Here burns the diamond of flawless bliss.  
A favourite of Heaven and Nature live.”  
But to the too satisfied and confident sage  
Savitri replied casting into his world  
Sight’s deep release, the heart’s questioning inner voice:  
For here the heart spoke not, only clear daylight  
Of intellect reigned here, limiting, cold, precise.  
“Happy are they who in this chaos of things,  
This coming and going of the feet of Time,  
Can find the single Truth, the eternal Law:  
Untouched they live by hope and doubt and fear.  
Happy are men anchored on fixed belief  
In this uncertain and ambiguous world,  
Or who have planted in the heart’s rich soil  
One small grain of spiritual certitude.  
Happiest who stand on faith as on a rock.  
But I must pass leaving the ended search,  
Truth’s rounded outcome firm, immutable  
And this harmonic building of world-fact,  
This ordered knowledge of apparent things.  
Here I can stay not, for I seek my soul.”  
None answered in that bright contented world,  
Or only turned on their accustomed way  
Astonished to hear questioning in that air  
Or thoughts that could still turn to the Beyond.  
But some murmured, passers-by from kindred spheres:  
Each by his credo judged the thought she spoke.  
“Who then is this who knows not that the soul  
Is a least gland or a secretion’s fault  
Disquieting the sane government of the mind,  
Disordering the function of the brain,  
Or a yearning lodged in Nature’s mortal house

Or dream whispered in man's cave of hollow thought  
 Who would prolong his brief unhappy term  
 Or cling to living in a sea of death?"  
 But others, "Nay, it is her spirit she seeks.  
 A splendid shadow of the name of God,  
 A formless lustre from the Ideal's realm,  
 The Spirit is the Holy Ghost of Mind;  
 But none has touched its limbs or seen its face.  
 Each soul is the great Father's crucified Son,  
 Mind is that soul's one parent, its conscious cause,  
 The ground on which trembles a brief passing light,  
 Mind, sole creator of the apparent world.  
 All that is here is part of our own self;  
 Our minds have made the world in which we live."  
 Another with mystic and unsatisfied eyes  
 Who loved his slain belief and mourned its death,  
 "Is there one left who seeks for a Beyond?  
 Can still the path be found, opened the gate?"

So she fared on across her silent self.  
 To a road she came thronged with an ardent crowd  
 Who sped brilliant, fire-footed, sunlight-eyed,  
 Pressing to reach the world's mysterious wall,  
 And pass through masked doorways into outer mind  
 Where the Light comes not nor the mystic voice,  
 Messengers from our subliminal greatnesses,  
 Guests from the cavern of the secret soul.  
 Into dim spiritual somnolence they break  
 Or shed wide wonder on our waking self,  
 Ideas that haunt us with their radiant tread,  
 Dreams that are hints of unborn Reality,  
 Strange goddesses with deep-pooled magical eyes,  
 Strong wind-haired gods carrying the harps of hope,  
 Great moon-hued visions gliding through gold air,  
 Aspiration's sun-dream head and star-carved limbs,  
 Emotions making common hearts sublime.

And Savitri mingling in that glorious crowd,  
Yearning to the spiritual light they bore,  
Longed once to hasten like them to save God's world;  
But she reined back the high passion in her heart;  
She knew that first she must discover her soul.  
Only who save themselves can others save.  
In contrary sense she faced life's riddling truth:  
They carrying the light to suffering men  
Hurried with eager feet to the outer world;  
Her eyes were turned towards the eternal source.  
Outstretching her hands to stay the throng she cried:  
"O happy company of luminous gods,  
Reveal, who know, the road that I must tread, —  
For surely that bright quarter is your home, —  
To find the birthplace of the occult Fire  
And the deep mansion of my secret soul."  
One answered pointing to a silence dim  
On a remote extremity of sleep  
In some far background of the inner world.  
"O Savitri, from thy hidden soul we come.  
We are the messengers, the occult gods  
Who help men's drab and heavy ignorant lives  
To wake to beauty and the wonder of things  
Touching them with glory and divinity;  
In evil we light the deathless flame of good  
And hold the torch of knowledge on ignorant roads;  
We are thy will and all men's will towards Light.  
O human copy and disguise of God  
Who seekst the deity thou keepst hid  
And livest by the Truth thou hast not known,  
Follow the world's winding highway to its source.  
There in the silence few have ever reached,  
Thou shalt see the Fire burning on the bare stone  
And the deep cavern of thy secret soul."  
Then Savitri following the great winding road  
Came where it dwindled into a narrow path

Trod only by rare wounded pilgrim feet.  
A few bright forms emerged from unknown depths  
And looked at her with calm immortal eyes.  
There was no sound to break the brooding hush;  
One felt the silent nearness of the soul.

END OF CANTO THREE