Canto One

The Word of Fate

In silent bounds bordering the mortal’s plane
Crossing a wide expanse of brilliant peace
Narad the heavenly sage from Paradise
Came chanting through the large and lustrous air.
Attracted by the golden summer-earth
That lay beneath him like a glowing bowl
Tilted upon a table of the Gods,
Turning as if moved round by an unseen hand
To catch the warmth and blaze of a small sun,
He passed from the immortals’ happy paths
To a world of toil and quest and grief and hope,
To these rooms of the see-saw game of death with life.
Across an intangible border of soul-space
He passed from Mind into material things
Amid the inventions of the inconscient Self
And the workings of a blind somnambulist Force.
Below him circling burned the myriad suns:
He bore the ripples of the etheric sea;
A primal Air brought the first joy of touch;
A secret Spirit drew its mighty breath
Contracting and expanding this huge world
In its formidable circuit through the Void;
The secret might of the creative Fire
Displayed its triple power to build and form,
Its infinitesimal wave-sparks’ weaving dance,
Its nebulous units grounding shape and mass,
Magic foundation and pattern of a world,
Its radiance bursting into the light of stars;
He felt a sap of life, a sap of death;
Into solid Matter’s dense communion
Plunging and its obscure oneness of forms
He shared with a dumb Spirit identity,
He beheld the cosmic Being at his task,
His eyes measured the spaces, gauged the depths,
His inner gaze the movements of the soul,
He saw the eternal labour of the Gods,
And looked upon the life of beasts and men.
A change now fell upon the singer's mood,
A rapture and a pathos moved his voice;
He sang no more of Light that never wanes,
And oneness and pure everlasting bliss,
He sang no more the deathless heart of Love,
His chant was a hymn of Ignorance and Fate.
He sang the name of Vishnu and the birth
And joy and passion of the mystic world,
And how the stars were made and life began
And the mute regions stirred with the throb of a Soul.
He sang the Inconscient and its secret self,
Its power omnipotent knowing not what it does,
All-shaping without will or thought or sense,
Its blind unerring occult mystery,
And darkness yearning towards the eternal Light,
And Love that broods within the dim abyss
And waits the answer of the human heart,
And death that climbs to immortality.
He sang of the Truth that cries from Night's blind deeps,
And the Mother-Wisdom hid in Nature's breast
And the Idea that through her dumbness works
And the miracle of her transforming hands,
Of life that slumbers in the stone and sun
And Mind subliminal in mindless life,
And the Consciousness that wakes in beasts and men.
He sang of the glory and marvel still to be born,
Of Godhead throwing off at last its veil,
Of bodies made divine and life made bliss,
Immortal sweetness clasping immortal might,
Heart sensing heart, thought looking straight at thought,
And the delight when every barrier falls,
And the transfiguration and the ecstasy.
And as he sang the demons wept with joy
Foreseeing the end of their long dreadful task
And the defeat for which they hoped in vain,
And glad release from their self-chosen doom
And return into the One from whom they came.
He who has conquered the Immortals’ seats,
Came down to men on earth the Man divine.
As darts a lightning streak, a glory fell
Nearing until the rapt eyes of the sage
Looked out from luminous cloud and, strangely limned,
His face, a beautiful mask of antique joy,
Appearing in light descended where arose
King Aswapati’s palace to the winds
In Madra, flowering up in delicate stone.
There welcomed him the sage and thoughtful king,
At his side a creature beautiful, passionate, wise,
Aspiring like a sacrificial flame
Skyward from its earth-seat through luminous air,
Queen-browed, the human mother of Savitri.
There for an hour untouched by the earth’s siege
They ceased from common life and care and sat
Inclining to the high and rhythmic voice,
While in his measured chant the heavenly seer
Spoke of the toils of men and what the gods
Strive for on earth, and joy that throbs behind
The marvel and the mystery of pain.
He sang to them of the lotus-heart of love
With all its thousand luminous buds of truth,
Which quivering sleeps veiled by apparent things.
It trembles at each touch, it strives to wake
And one day it shall hear a blissful voice
And in the garden of the Spouse shall bloom
When she is seized by her discovered lord.
A mighty shuddering coil of ecstasy
Crept through the deep heart of the universe.
Out of her Matter’s stupor, her mind’s dreams,
She woke, she looked upon God’s unveiled face.

   Even as he sang and rapture stole through earth-time
   And caught the heavens, came with a call of hooves,
   As of her swift heart hastening, Savitri;
   Her radiant tread glimmered across the floor.
   A happy wonder in her fathomless gaze,
   Changed by the halo of her love she came;
   Her eyes rich with a shining mist of joy
   As one who comes from a heavenly embassy
   Discharging the proud mission of her heart,
   One carrying the sanction of the gods
To her love and its luminous eternity,
She stood before her mighty father’s throne
And, eager for beauty on discovered earth
Transformed and new in her heart’s miracle-light,
Saw like a rose of marvel, worshipping,
The fire-tinged sweetness of the son of Heaven.
He flung on her his vast immortal look;
His inner gaze surrounded her with its light
And reining back knowledge from his immortal lips
He cried to her, “Who is this that comes, the bride,
The flame-born, and round her illumined head
Pouring their lights her hymeneal pomps
Move flashing about her? From what green glimmer of glades
Retreating into dewy silences
Or half-seen verge of waters moon-betrayed
Bringst thou this glory of enchanted eyes?
Earth has gold-hued expanses, shadowy hills
That cowl their dreaming phantom heads in night,
And, guarded in a cloistral joy of woods,
Screened banks sink down into felicity
Seized by the curved incessant yearning hands
And ripple-passion of the upgazing stream:
Amid cool-lipped murmurs of its pure embrace
They lose their souls on beds of trembling reeds.
And all these are mysterious presences
In which some spirit’s immortal bliss is felt,
And they betray the earth-born heart to joy.
There hast thou paused, and marvelling borne eyes
Unknown, or heard a voice that forced thy life
To strain its rapture through thy listening soul?
Or, if my thought could trust this shimmering gaze,
It would say thou hast not drunk from an earthly cup,
But stepping through azure curtains of the noon
Thou wast surrounded on a magic verge
In brighter countries than man’s eyes can bear.
Assailed by trooping voices of delight
And seized mid a sunlit glamour of the boughs
In faery woods, led down the gleaming slopes
Of Gandhamadan where the Apsaras roam,
Thy limbs have shared the sports which none has seen,
And in god-haunts thy human footsteps strayed,
Thy mortal bosom quivered with god-speech
And thy soul answered to a Word unknown.
What feet of gods, what ravishing flutes of heaven
Have thrilled high melodies round, from near and far
Approaching through the soft and revelling air,
Which still surprised thou hearest? They have fed
Thy silence on some red strange-ecstasied fruit
And thou hast trod the dim moon-peaks of bliss.
Reveal, O winged with light, whence thou hast flown
Hastening bright-hued through the green tangled earth,
Thy body rhythmical with the spring-bird’s call.
The empty roses of thy hands are filled
Only with their own beauty and the thrill
Of a remembered clasp, and in thee glows
A heavenly jar, thy firm deep-honied heart,
New-brimming with a sweet and nectarous wine.
Thou hast not spoken with the kings of pain.
Life’s perilous music rings yet to thy ear
Far-melodied, rapid and grand, a Centaur’s song,
Or soft as water plashing mid the hills,
Or mighty as a great chant of many winds.
Moon-bright thou livest in thy inner bliss.
Thou comest like a silver deer through groves
Of coral flowers and buds of glowing dreams,
Or fleest like a wind-goddess through leaves,
Or roamst, O ruby-eyed and snow-winged dove,
Flitting through thickets of thy pure desires
In the unwounded beauty of thy soul.
These things are only images to thy earth,
But truest truth of that which in thee sleeps.
For such is thy spirit, a sister of the gods,
Thy earthly body lovely to the eyes
And thou art kin in joy to heaven’s sons.
O thou who hast come to this great perilous world
Now only seen through the splendour of thy dreams,
Where hardly love and beauty can live safe,
Thyself a being dangerously great,
A soul alone in a golden house of thought
Has lived walled in by the safety of thy dreams.
On heights of happiness leaving doom asleep
Who hunts unseen the unconscious lives of men,
If thy heart could live locked in the ideal’s gold,
As high, as happy might thy waking be!
If for all time doom could be left to sleep!”

He spoke but held his knowledge back from words.
As a cloud plays with lightnings’ vivid laugh,
But still holds back the thunder in its heart,
Only he let bright images escape.
His speech like glimmering music veiled his thoughts;
As a wind flatters the bright summer air,
Pitiful to mortals, only to them it spoke
Of living beauty and of present bliss:
He hid in his all-knowing mind the rest.
To those who hearkened to his celestial voice,
The veil heaven’s pity throws on future pain
The Immortals’ sanction seemed of endless joy.
But Aswapati answered to the seer; —
His listening mind had marked the dubious close,
An ominous shadow felt behind the words,
But calm like one who ever sits facing Fate
Here mid the dangerous contours of earth’s life,
He answered covert thought with guarded speech:
“O deathless sage who knowest all things here,
If I could read by the ray of my own wish
Through the carved shield of symbol images
Which thou hast thrown before thy heavenly mind
I might see the steps of a young godlike life
Happily beginning luminous-eyed on earth;
Between the Unknowable and the Unseen
Born on the borders of two wonder-worlds,
It flames out symbols of the infinite
And lives in a great light of inner suns.
For it has read and broken the wizard seals;
It has drunk of the Immortal’s wells of joy,
It has looked across the jewel bars of heaven,
It has entered the aspiring Secrecy,
It sees beyond terrestrial common things
And communes with the Powers that build the worlds,
Till through the shining gates and mystic streets
Of the city of lapis lazuli and pearl
Proud deeds step forth, a rank and march of gods.
Although in pauses of our human lives
Earth keeps for man some short and perfect hours
When the inconstant tread of Time can seem
The eternal moment which the deathless live,
Yet rare that touch upon the mortal’s world:
Hardly a soul and body here are born
In the fierce difficult movement of the stars,
Whose life can keep the paradisal note,
Its rhythm repeat the many-toned melody
Tirelessly throbbing through the rapturous air
Caught in the song that sways the Apsara’s limbs
When she floats gleaming like a cloud of light,
A wave of joy on heaven’s moonstone floor.
Behold this image cast by light and love,
A stanza of the ardour of the gods
Perfectly rhymed, a pillared ripple of gold!
Her body like a brimmed pitcher of delight
Shaped in a splendour of gold-coloured bronze
As if to seize earth’s truth of hidden bliss.
Dream-made illumined mirrors are her eyes
Draped subtly in a slumbrous fringe of jet,
Retaining heaven’s reflections in their depths.
Even as her body, such is she within.
Heaven’s lustrous mornings gloriously recur,
Like drops of fire upon a silver page,
In her young spirit yet untouched with tears.
All beautiful things eternal seem and new
To virgin wonder in her crystal soul.
The unchanging blue reveals its spacious thought;
Marvellous the moon floats on through wondering skies;
Earth’s flowers spring up and laugh at time and death;
The charmed mutations of the enchanter life
Race like bright children past the smiling hours.
If but this joy of life could last, nor pain
Throw its bronze note into her rhythmmed days!
Behold her, singer with the prescient gaze,
And let thy blessing chant that this fair child
Shall pour the nectar of a sorrowless life
Around her from her lucid heart of love,
Heal with her bliss the tired breast of earth
And cast like a happy snare felicity.
As grows the great and golden bounteous tree
Flowering by Alacananda’s murmuring waves,
Where with enamoured speed the waters run.
Lisping and babbling to the splendour of morn
And cling with lyric laughter round the knees
Of heaven’s daughters dripping magic rain
Pearl-bright from moon-gold limbs and cloudy hair,
So are her dawns like jewelled leaves of light,
So casts she her felicity on men.
A flame of radiant happiness she was born
And surely will that flame set earth alight:
Doom surely will see her pass and say no word!
But too often here the careless Mother leaves
Her chosen in the envious hands of Fate:
The harp of God falls mute, its call to bliss
Discouraged fails mid earth’s unhappy sounds;
The strings of the siren Ecstasy cry not here
Or soon are silenced in the human heart.
Of sorrow’s songs we have enough: bid once
Her glad and griefless days bring heaven here.
Or must fire always test the great of soul?
Along the dreadful causeway of the Gods,
Armoured with love and faith and sacred joy,
A traveller to the Eternal’s house,
Once let unwounded pass a mortal life.”
But Narad answered not; silent he sat,
Knowing that words are vain and Fate is lord.
He looked into the unseen with seeing eyes,
Then, dallying with the mortal’s ignorance
Like one who knows not, questioning, he cried:
“On what high mission went her hastening wheels?
Whence came she with this glory in her heart
And Paradise made visible in her eyes?
What sudden God has met, what face supreme?”
To whom the king, “The red asoca watched
Her going forth which now sees her return.
Arisen into an air of flaming dawn
Like a bright bird tired of her lonely branch,
To find her own lord, since to her on earth
He came not yet, this sweetness wandered forth
Cleaving her way with the beat of her rapid wings.
Led by a distant call her vague swift flight
Threaded the summer morns and sunlit lands.
The happy rest her burdened lashes keep
And these charmed guardian lips hold treasured still.
Virgin who comest perfected by joy,
Reveal the name thy sudden heart-beats learned.
Whom hast thou chosen, kingliest among men?”
And Savitri answered with her still calm voice
As one who speaks beneath the eyes of Fate:
“Father and king, I have carried out thy will.
One whom I sought I found in distant lands;
I have obeyed my heart, I have heard its call.
On the borders of a dreaming wilderness
Mid Shalwa’s giant hills and brooding woods
In his thatched hermitage Dyumatsena dwells,
Blind, exiled, outcast, once a mighty king.
The son of Dyumatsena, Satyavan,
I have met on the wild forest’s lonely verge.
My father, I have chosen. This is done.”
Astonished, all sat silent for a space.
Then Aswapati looked within and saw
A heavy shadow float above the name
Chased by a sudden and stupendous light;
He looked into his daughter’s eyes and spoke:
“Well hast thou done and I approve thy choice.
If this is all, then all is surely well;
If there is more, then all can still be well.
Whether it seem good or evil to men’s eyes,
Only for good the secret Will can work.
Our destiny is written in double terms:
Through Nature’s contraries we draw nearer God;
Out of the darkness we still grow to light.
Death is our road to immortality.
‘Cry woe, cry woe,’ the world’s lost voices wail,
Yet conquers the eternal Good at last.”
Then might the sage have spoken, but the king
In haste broke out and stayed the dangerous word:
“O singer of the ultimate ecstasy,
Lend not a dangerous vision to the blind
Because by native right thou hast seen clear.
Impose not on the mortal's tremulous breast
The dire ordeal that foreknowledge brings;
Demand not now the Godhead in our acts.
Here are not happy peaks the heaven-nymphs roam
Or Coilas or Vaicountha’s starry stair:
Abrupt, jagged hills only the mighty climb
Are here where few dare even think to rise;
Far voices call down from the dizzy rocks,
Chill, slippery, precipitous are the paths.
Too hard the gods are with man’s fragile race;
In their large heavens they dwell exempt from Fate
And they forget the wounded feet of man,
His limbs that faint beneath the whips of grief,
His heart that hears the tread of time and death.
The future’s road is hid from mortal sight:
He moves towards a veiled and secret face.
To light one step in front is all his hope
And only for a little strength he asks
To meet the riddle of his shrouded fate.
Awaited by a vague and half-seen force,
Aroused of danger to his uncertain hours
He guards his flickering yearnings from her breath;
He feels not when the dreadful fingers close
Around him with the grasp none can elude.
If thou canst loose her grip, then only speak.
Perhaps from the iron snare there is escape:
Our mind perhaps deceives us with its words
And gives the name of doom to our own choice;
Perhaps the blindness of our will is Fate.”
He said and Narad answered not the king.
But now the queen alarmed lifted her voice:
“O seer, thy bright arrival has been timed
To this high moment of a happy life;
Then let the speech benign of grieless spheres
Confirm this blithe conjunction of two stars
And sanction joy with thy celestial voice.
Here drag not in the peril of our thoughts,
Let not our words create the doom they fear.
Here is no cause for dread, no chance for grief
To raise her ominous head and stare at love.
A single spirit in a multitude,
Happy is Satyavan mid earthly men
Whom Savitri has chosen for her mate,
And fortunate the forest hermitage
Where leaving her palace and riches and a throne
My Savitri will dwell and bring in heaven.
Then let thy blessing put the immortals’ seal
On these bright lives’ unstained felicity
Pushing the ominous Shadow from their days.
Too heavy falls a Shadow on man’s heart;
It dares not be too happy upon earth.
It dreads the blow dogging too vivid joys,
A lash unseen in Fate’s extended hand,
The danger lurking in fortune’s proud extremes,
An irony in life’s indulgent smile,
And trembles at the laughter of the gods.
Or if crouches unseen a panther doom,
If wings of Evil brood above that house,
Then also speak, that we may turn aside
And rescue our lives from hazard of wayside doom
And chance entanglement of an alien fate.”
And Narad slowly answered to the queen:
“What help is in prevision to the driven?
Safe doors cry opening near, the doomed pass on.
A future knowledge is an added pain,
A torturing burden and a fruitless light
On the enormous scene that Fate has built.
The eternal poet, universal Mind,
Has paged each line of his imperial act;
Invisible the giant actors tread
And man lives like some secret player’s mask.
He knows not even what his lips shall speak.
For a mysterious Power compels his steps
And life is stronger than his trembling soul.
None can refuse what the stark Force demands:
Her eyes are fixed upon her mighty aim;
No cry or prayer can turn her from her path.
She has leaped an arrow from the bow of God.”
His words were theirs who live unforced to grieve
And help by calm the swaying wheels of life
And the long restlessness of transient things
And the trouble and passion of the unquiet world.
As though her own bosom were pierced the mother saw
The ancient human sentence strike her child,
Her sweetness that deserved another fate
Only a larger measure given of tears.
Aspiring to the nature of the gods,
A mind proof-armoured mailed in mighty thoughts,
A will entire couchant behind wisdom’s shield,
Though to still heavens of knowledge she had risen,
Though calm and wise and Aswapati’s queen,
Human was she still and opened her doors to grief;
The stony-eyed injustice she accused
Of the marble godhead of inflexible Law,
Nor sought the strength extreme adversity brings
To lives that stand erect and front the World-Power:
Her heart appealed against the impartial judge,
Taxed with perversity the impersonal One.
Her tranquil spirit she called not to her aid,
But as a common man beneath his load
Grows faint and breathes his pain in ignorant words,
So now she arraigned the world’s impassive will:
“What stealthy doom has crept across her path  
Emerging from the dark forest’s sullen heart,  
What evil thing stood smiling by the way  
And wore the beauty of the Shalwa boy?  
Perhaps he came an enemy from her past  
Armed with a hidden force of ancient wrongs,  
Himself unknowing, and seized her unknown.  
Here dreadfully entangled love and hate  
Meet us blind wanderers mid the perils of Time.  
Our days are links of a disastrous chain,  
Necessity avenges casual steps;  
Old cruelties come back unrecognised,  
The gods make use of our forgotten deeds.  
Yet all in vain the bitter law was made.  
Our own minds are the justicers of doom.  
For nothing have we learned, but still repeat  
Our stark misuse of self and others’ souls.  
There are dire alchemies of the human heart  
And fallen from his ethereal element  
Love darkens to the spirit of nether gods.  
The dreadful angel, angry with his joys  
Woundingly sweet he cannot yet forego,  
Is pitiless to the soul his gaze disarmed,  
He visits with his own pangs his quivering prey  
Forcing us to cling enamoured to his grip  
As if in love with our own agony.  
This is one poignant misery in the world,  
And grief has other lassoes for our life.  
Our sympathies become our torturers.  
Strength have I my own punishment to bear,  
Knowing it just, but on this earth perplexed,  
Smitten in the sorrow of scourged and helpless things,  
Often it faints to meet other suffering eyes.  
We are not as the gods who know not grief  
And look impassive on a suffering world,  
Calm they gaze down on the little human scene
And the short-lived passion crossing mortal hearts.  
An ancient tale of woe can move us still,  
We keep the ache of breasts that breathe no more,  
We are shaken by the sight of human pain,  
And share the miseries that others feel.  
Ours not the passionless lids that cannot age.  
Too hard for us is heaven’s indifference:  
Our own tragedies are not enough for us,  
All pathos and all sufferings we make ours;  
We have sorrow for a greatness passed away  
And feel the touch of tears in mortal things.  
Even a stranger’s anguish rends my heart,  
And this, O Narad, is my well-loved child.  
Hide not from us our doom, if doom is ours.  
This is the worst, an unknown face of Fate,  
A terror ominous, mute, felt more than seen  
Behind our seat by day, our couch by night,  
A Fate lurking in the shadow of our hearts,  
The anguish of the unseen that waits to strike.  
To know is best, however hard to bear.”  
Then cried the sage piercing the mother’s heart,  
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  
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.  
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,
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.
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,
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.
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
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 veilless his mind,
A seer in earth-shapes of garbless deity.
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
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,
An aspiration to the immortals’ air
CANTO I: The Word of Fate

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,
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
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,
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.º
A lightning bright and nude the sentence fell.
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.
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.
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.
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,—
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,
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.
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.
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.”
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.
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:
“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.
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,
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
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.
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.
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 sweetmesses are baffling symbols here.
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!
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.  
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;  
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;  
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.  
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.  
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.  
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.  
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.  
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,
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:
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?
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 abysms of Time,
Deep possibility always to love.
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?
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
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
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;
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.