CHAPTER - V
SAVITRI - PART III
THE BOOK OF ETERNAL NIGHT

The Book of Eternal Night describes the journey of Savitri, Satyavan and Death through the Eternal Night of the Inconscient. Savitri's progress through Eternal Night is meant to explain the name and nature of Hell, the function of Darkness, the power of Death. Hell is the active prison of human life, and Death is its king and chief actor in the drama. This Death is a presence, a feeling, but not something physically recognizable.

Savitri found herself in a dense forest, alone with the body of lifeless Satyavan:

So was she left alone in the huge wood,
Surrounded by a dim unthinking world,
Her husband's corpse on her forsaken breast.

But Savitri is unafraid because she knows the true nature of her soul. She is the veritable force of purity, power and love and she receives waves of strength from her own secret soul. Savitri is fully prepared to face the 'dreadful God' to liberate man from the iron laws of fate. Savitri enters the Eternal Night in a trance, "a moment of a secret body's sleep". Savitri's journey represent the voyage of entire mankind, as we ourselves are the voyagers in Death's Kingdom. The conversation between Savitri and Death have the purpose of exposing the roots of cosmic law and creation's movement. Death exhorts Savitri to go back otherwise she will have to suffer the wrath of Furies:

"O mortal, turn back to thy transient kind;
Aspire not to accompany Death to his home,
As if thy breath could live where time must die."

Death describes himself as the Supreme God who gives shelter to all departed souls. Death's ego is vast because evolution has not yet overleapt Death's seeming finality:

I am the Illimitable, the mute Alone.
I, Death, am He; there is no other God.
I have made a world by my Inconscient Force...
Man has no other help but only Death;
He comes to me at his end for rest and peace. 97

Savitri does not reply but she keeps herself calm. Death tries to tempt her by saying that if she wants to be immortal, she will have to forget Satyavan. Besides, she will have to work for her own self-perfection without taking the help of anyone else:

If thou desirest immortality,
Be then alone sufficient to thy soul:
Live in thyself; forget the man thou lov’st. 98

But Savitri continues her journey without fear. She says: "I bow not to thee, o huge mask of Death," and "world — spirit, I was thy equal spirit born. I am immortal in my mortality." Savitri is provoked to speak out what she feels. But she maintains self-restraint and does not indulge in arguments. But Death had not prepared for the emergence of man’s Spiritual Power. When Savitri emphatically says:

"O Death, who reasonest, I reason not
Reason that scans and breaks, but cannot build
Or builds in vain because she doubts her work.
I am, I love, I see, I act, I will." 99

Then hell has to lose its occupation, the darkness to fall back and the long night to fade away welcoming the glimmer of the Double Twilight and with it hope for man’s ascension. The monosyllabic words used in the last line suggests her determination to live. Undaunted by the threats of Death she continues to pursue him and refuses to return the earth without Satyavan.

Thus, Savitri wins the first round of her battle when her will-power withstands the terror of Eternal Night.
THE BOOK OF DOUBLE TWILIGHT

Savitri's journey now moves through the realms of the Double Twilight. Between Hell and paradise – Night and Day is this region and time of Twilight where man sees the shadow and aspires for the light. This is the Twilight Period when man is aware of the past and the future, that is, sin and grace. In passing through the Morning Twilight of the Gods Savitri enters into the Dreamland of Twilight of the Ideals and atones for her "original sin". The original sin is the 'will to be' or the desire to live in time forgetting timelessness:

In that tremendous darkness heavy and bare
She atoned for all since the first act whence sprang
The error of the consciousness of Time, ... 100

Among the regions of the symbol worlds, the Double Twilight is nearest to earth in its physical atmosphere as well as its centrality to the struggle. It is indeed the Kurukshetra where the issue is fiercely fought and decided. The major confrontation between Savitri and Death takes place in this region. It is a Sense – lulling world and Savitri has to make the choice here: Life or Death. The question now faces Savitri: Is the soul only a dream? Is it only immortality in suffering? She answers her own question saying that an occult truth has made this world:

By light we live and to the light we go. 101

The air of the Double Twilight dared not suffer too much Light:

Vague fields were there, vague pastures gleamed, vague trees,
Vague cattle white roamed glimmering through out the mist;
Vague spirits wandered with a bodiless cry. 102

The Double Twilight was a world in which:

Desires that hurt not, happy only to live
Always the same and always unfulfilled
Sang in the breast like a celestial lyre
Thus all could last, yet nothing ever be. 103
In this world, Death ridicules the ideals and calls them to be the illusions or reflection of mind. He tells that ideals exist neither in heaven nor on earth. He goes to the extent of saying that Savitri's love for Satyavan is also not an ideal love; it is only the passion or the lust of her body. So, her love would fade away with the passage of time. Furthermore, Death argues that even if there are some so-called ideals, they cannot be established in the world to be followed by man. And man cannot follow ideals because he is the victim of fate. He is forced to live a life of labour and despair. Even the avatars (incarnations) cannot help him much:

The Avatars have lived and died in vain,
Vain was the sage's thought, the prophet's voice;
In vain is seen the shining upward way. 104

Savitri is annoyed to hear Death's accusation. She cuts short the speech of Death and affirms that her love is not just a passion or a body's desire, but a gift from God. It is not ephemeral but eternal:

But I forbid thy voice to slay my soul.
My love is not a hunger of the heart,
My love is not a craving of the flesh;
It came to me from God, to God returns. 105

Savitri tells Death that he is the God of shadows, whereas she cherishes "God the Fire, not God the Dream."

Death then tells her what matters is not Love but Knowledge. Even Mind and Life are tricks of Nature's force and that Energy is a motion of old nought and the ideal a malady of her mind. She should not ask for the return of Satyavan. He will be happier there in 'my long calm night of everlasting sleep.' Then the confrontation between Love and Death follows. Savitri tells the Dark-browed sophist:

O' Death, thou speakest Truth, but Truth that slays,
I answer to thee with the Truth that saves. 106

Savitri then gives an account of evolution from her own angle, pointing out how it is the descent of Spirit into Inconscience, through the various ranges from Supermind to Matter, that has created the worlds. Matter is the mirror of
God and this world is God fulfilled in outwardness. Though all is now plunged into the riddling night, all will be raised to meet a dazzling sun.

Savitri accepts that man is subjected to the apparent laws of Matter; yet she believes that man will enjoy Eternal Bliss in times to come when he realises the portion of divinity seated within him. Man is not eternally doomed:

Indifferent to the threat of Karmic law,
Joy dares to grow upon forbidden soil,
Its sap runs through the plant and flowers of pain.  

Savitri does not claim Satyavan for her own sake, but for fulfilling God's message beneath the stars. She also makes a strong plea for love on earth; she says:

For I the woman am the force of God
He the Eternal's delegate soul in man
My will is greater than thy law, O Death:
My love is stronger than the bonds of Fate.
Love is man's lien on the Absolute.  

Death replies saying that she cannot make two eternal foes wed:

Where matter is all, there spirit is a dream
If all are the spirit, Matter is a lie
The Real with the Unreal cannot Mate.

When Savitri persists, Death even promises her a second marriage. But when Savitri repeats that the eternal bride and the eternal bridegroom shall meet, the limbs of Death shudder in silence at the speech and Twilight trembles. But the speech is ineffective. It is only a verbal victory. She now ingather herself for meditation, for only in meditation would the soul's firm truth dwell.

The Second Twilight through which Savitri passes is the Dream Twilight of the Earthly Real. The atmosphere is one of restless human activity. Death says that all this pageantry of recurrence is fixed under immutable laws. All that man can ask for is the release in the happy nothingness of the void – the calm Nirvana of the dream of self. There is no
aim behind creation – only a will to be. All knowledge is vanity. The saviour creeds save themselves. The earth cannot be transformed. God sees all things with a calm, indifferent gaze. There can be perfection only in Heaven. Death contradicts Savitri and tells her that the world is just a myth; there is no joy at all. Infact, there is neither God nor Truth in the world:

Truth comes not there but only the thought of Truth,
God is not there but only the name of God.

Savitri answers this by saying that Death is using light to blind her. The world is imperfect and paradoxical. But it is true that it is not cut off from Truth and God. A gradual evolution will lead earth to Light. She says that there is God and Truth in the universe but he is not seen by the ignorant people. She poses a question: If Light is hidden by Darkness for sometime, can we say that Light does not exist at all?

Already God is near, the Truth is close:
Because the dark atheist body knows him not,
Must the sage deny the Light, the seer his soul?

Death tells Savitri that her wisdom has made her omniscient like the Gods. But she has too much love and this makes her violate God and His established laws. But Savitri replies, “I claim from time my will's eternity.” Death asks: ‘way should one stoop to the trivial joys of earth and forget the Eternals’s path? Are thy arms sweeter than the courts of God?’

Savitri says that it was an easy task for God to create Heaven and the Gods. The high spirit of man has been charged by God with the task of building a Heaven on Earth. But Death tells her that the ephemeral passion of her heart cannot break the iron rampart of accomplished things, for Truth and Falsehood are two co-eternal powers. Satyavan is dead and no magic truth can bring the dead to life.

Death fails to terrorise Savitri; so he changes his method of persuasion. He appeals to her to respect his eternal law on the grounds that it has been honoured by gods too. But Savitri turns a deaf ear to him. She defies his law:
I trample on thy law with living feet;
For to arise in freedom I was born. 112

Savitri warms up and tells Death that he himself is the black shadow of God. God is full of contraries and the two poles of existence are: ’Darkness below, a fathomless Light above’. God transcends both and enters the Absolute. There is a hidden plan behind the hybrid mystery of the world and the supreme Truth, which has created this world has also decreed that man should rise to the heights of Supermind:

There the perfection born from eternity
Calls to it the perfection born in Time. 113

She says that man will be remade in the image of God and this earthly life will become the Life Divine.

Death becomes desperate; he poses a challenge to her. He asks her to show him the body of truth if she can. He says that if she does so, he will be happy to worship Truth. Savitri replies that Truth cannot be shown to Death, for if he sees Truth, he will cease to be.

O death, if thou couldst touch the supreme Truth
Thou wouidst grow suddenly wise and cease to be.144

But death insists on seeing her divinity. He promises that he would give back Satyavan to her if she reveals the face of the Divine Mother to him. Savitri looks at Death and stands silent for a while. In a flash she looks to be the embodiment of Eternity:

In a flaming moment of apocalypse.
The Incarnation thrust aside its veil...
Eternity looked into the eyes of Death,
And darkness saw God’s living Reality.115

Death is dazzled to see the ultimate Reality, but he is not prepared to accept his defeat yet. He requests Night, Hell and Matter to help him; but none of them comes to his rescue. Hence he is forced to retreat:

The dire universal shadow disappeared
Vanishing into the void from which it came.116

Savitri has passed the severe test. The epic battle between Love and Death has come to a close, and Love has triumphed.
THE BOOK OF EVERLASTING DAY

The Book of Everlasting day takes the trial to a new plane, for even after death's defeat Satyavan and Savitri do not return immediately to the earth. For Savitri the trance is not yet over although the soul ensnaring Twilight has lifted:

God's everlasting day surrounded her,
Domains appeared of sempiternal light.
Invading all nature with the Absolute joy.\(^{117}\)

Beneath the triple mystic heaven of Existence, Consciousness-Force and Bliss, appeared the seven immoral earths, even the lowest of them being changed into heaven. There arose a new humanity with transformed senses, vital and bodily. Savitri also saw, the higher worlds of gods, apsaras, gandharavas and ancient seers and poets – our forefathers. The worlds of Illumined Mind and Intuition were also seen in their transfigured form. The Everlasting Day is a place of light, beauty, calm, and sweet music. Savitri is not overwhelmed by these experiences. What strikes her is not what paradise contains but what earth misses. Between these heavens and our earth there is no 'clasp' to hold them together. It is Death that divides earth and heaven. In the Overmen World, she saw Death in his divine shape as God:

One whom her soul had faced as Death and Night
A sum of all sweetness gathered into his limbs
And blinded her heart to the beauty of the suns.\(^{118}\)

Death is seen as the four fold being, Brahman, containing
Virat, Hiranyagarbha, Ananta or
Yogarayana and Jyotirmaya.\(^{119}\)

Death is a destroyer, antaka; as such he disappear after watching the face of \(\ldots\). But he reappears as the Lord of Dharma, Dharmaraja, who has a fourfold aspect. First, he is Subtle Matter, Virat, which exists as the stratum of the dense Physical Matter. In this poise, he can be equated with Pranmaya – Kosha. Secondly, he is the author of thoughts and dreams, Hiranyagarbha. He seems to be what is called Manomayakosha which leads
man "On the inner roads." Thirdly, he is the Supramental Consciousness or vijnanmaya – Kosha, which is the “seed and core” of our creation. Lastly, he is the sheath of Bliss or Anandamayakosha which takes the form of Love and Delight.

The Death is now transfigured reappears before her as a being of light. He tells Savaitri that the marriage of heaven and earth has yet to take place, for the silent gulfs of sleep lie between them. Till the consummation comes, Savitri and Satyavan can serve the dual law, making division their happy means of delightful oneness. If they would like to abandon the vexed world, they can ascend into their blissful home of an unsetting sun. Savitri tells the being:

I climb not to thy everlasting day
Even as I have shunned the eternal night 120

She wants Satyavan to be restored to her. The Godhead then replies that, if men were not there and all were brilliant gods, the mediating stair would be lost, the stair by which the spirit, awake in Matter, winds its way to God. The individual soul will reach God at any time. The earthly race may be left to its imperfect light now.

But Savitri tells the Godhead that neither she nor Satyavan will be tempted by solitary bliss. The lives of the two were born:

To raise the world to God in deathless Light,
To bring God down to the world on earth we came.121

The godhead then tells her that he has taken from her the load of utter ‘Day’. It she wants to force her will on time and fate in order to liberate man, she will have to ascend into her timeless self, rise upon the ladder of the higher worlds to the infinity where no world can be, hear the firm command of the Eternal who alone has the mediating links and then choose destiny’s curve and stamp her will on time. Since Savitri will not be deflected from her purpose, the Godhead finally withdraws leaving Savitri to settle the matter with the Transcendent Invisible Supreme, who alone could grant her desire. The Supreme Power, who speaks to her presently offers four times the choice of everlasting felicity in paradise. Savitri first participates in the “energy of the
Triune Infinite”, and her unitive consciousness embraces the cosmos in its entirety.

Savitri found herself in the ineffable world of the Triune Infinite. In the phantom of abolished space, an unheard voice asked her to make her supreme choice which would not be given again. Would she like to have an immense extinction in eternity, the felicity of the extinguished flame? At that moment, someone yearned within a bosom unknown. It was the yearning of humanity for her. Her woman’s heart asks for Divine Peace to keep within herself for the magnificent soul of man on earth, amid the roar and ruin of wild time. She rejects his offer of permanent paradisal felicity for the first time and prayed for Divine Calm that bears the Eternal’s hand of joy.

The eternal cry arose a second time, limitless like an ocean round a lonely isle: “the gates are open. The Eternal’s own spirit will lean down to break the knot of earth. Would Savitri like to unweave the stars and pass into silence?” At this moment, Savitri heard a million creatures cry to her which was like a world destroying pause. Savitri asks for eternal’s oneness in many approaching hearts, for the sweet infinity of his numberless souls and rejects his offer of paradisal felicity for the second time and prayed for Divine Consciousness.

The admonishing call swelled a third time, retreating like a sea in ebb. Would Savitri like the refuge of the Eternal’s wings, His power’s mastery of sleep above the whirling of the world. Savitri passionately asks for Divine Energy to gather all creatures into a mother’s arms:

Thy energy, Lord, to seize on woman and man,
To take all things and creatures in their grief,
And gather them into a mother’s arms.\textsuperscript{122}

The warning sound was heard for the last time, solemn and distant like a seraph’s lyre. The voice spoke of that voiceless rapture of the eternal, which rests in an exquisite hush from that sweet madness of the dance out of whose beat the throb of hearts was born. But a music beat of winged uniting souls was then heard. A hymn of adoration climbed tirelessly, breaking the silence
with appeal and cry. Moved by it again, Savitri’s heart asked yearningly for Divine Joy for earth and men.

The ultimate “Perfect Godhead” understands and applauds Savitri’s determination:

O sun — word, thou shalt raise the earth — soul to Light
And bring down God into the lives of men.
Earth shall be my work — chamber and my house,
My garden of life to plant a seed divine.\textsuperscript{123}

The Eternal’s splendid yoke will be laid upon her soul and his marvellous works will be done in her. The universe will find in her all that is eternal. She will be one with the Eternal on every plane and through all pain and joy. If Satyavan is the soul of man climbing to God, Savitri is the power of the Eternal’s Spirit. The two will lead man to God through many incarnations. Then shall the earth open to divinity and the earthly life become the Life Divine. “The Superman shall wake in man” —

Thus shall the earth open to divinity
And common natures feel the wide uplift.
Illumine common acts with the spirit’s ray
And meet the deity in common things.
Nature shall live to manifest secret God.
The spirit shall take up the human play,
Thus earthly life become the life divine.\textsuperscript{124}

The long journey of Savitri and Satyavan comes to an end. The vision of the struggle and victory is concluded.
The book of epilogue tells us about the return of Savitri and Satyavan to earth to fulfil their mission. Savitri’s woke out of abysmal trance:

She saw the green—clad branches lean above
Guarding her sleep with their enchanted life,
And overhead a blue—winged ecstasy
Fluttered from bough to bough with high-pitched call.  

Savitri pressed the body Satyavan and bore the blissful burden of his head between her breasts. She lost the immense remoteness of her trance and was once more human, earth’s Savitri. She felt in her an illimitable change:

A power dwelt in her soul too great for earth,
A bliss lived in her heart too large for heaven.
Light too intense for thought and love too foundless
For earth’s emotions lit her skies of mind
And spread through her deep and happy seas of soul.  

There was a marvelous tranquility in Savitri’s thoughts and the whole world clung to her created for her rapt embrace of love. Savitri’s life was a dawn’s victorious opening. She recollected her old happy thoughts and small treasured memories and sent her gaze around. She leaned down over Satyavan to all his mind back to her with a travelling touch and settled her look on his closed eye-lids. Satyavan too awakes from his sleep and murmurs her name with hesitating lips recollecting his past. He cried:

"Whence hast thou brought me captive back, love-chained,
To thee and sunlight’s walls, o golden beam
And casket of all sweetness, Savitri,
Godhead and woman, moonlight of my soul?"  

Satyavan says that he has travelled in strange worlds in the company of Savitri and they have disdained the gates of night. Satyavan asks Savitri:

Where now has passed that formidable shape
Which rose against us, the spirit of the void,
Claiming the world for death and nothingness,
Denying God and soul? Or was all a dream
Or a vision seen in a spiritual sleep,\textsuperscript{128}

Savitri replies:

\begin{quote}
Our parting was the dream;
We are together, we live, O Satyavan.\textsuperscript{129}
\end{quote}

Savitri says that their parting was a dream. They are together and they live together forever. Their home, the forest is also unchanged with its thousand cries and whispers of wind among leaves. Only their souls have left Death's night behind changed by a mighty dream's reality and stood at godhead's gates limitless and free.

Then filled with the glory of their happiness they rose with safe clinging fingers locked and hung on each other in a silent look. Satyavan with a new wonder in his heart and a new flame in his eyes says:

\begin{quote}
"What high changes is in thee, O Savitri? Bright
Ever thought wast, a goddess still and pure,
Yet dearer to me by thy sweet human parts
Earth gave thee making thee yet more divine."	extsuperscript{130}
\end{quote}

Savitri clasped his feet by her enshrining hair consenting to his will and says that she is the madran princess who came to him mid the murmer of sunlit leaves upon the forest verge and all that she was before, she is to him still. She is the slave and sovereign of his desire. Savitri answers softly like a murmuring lute:

\begin{quote}
"All now is changed, yet all is still the same.
Lo, we have looked upon the face of God,
Our life has opened with divinity.
We have borne identity with the supreme
And known his meaning in our mortal lives.
Our love has grown greater by that mighty touch
And learnt its heavenly significance,
Yet nothing is lost of mortal love's delight."	extsuperscript{131}
\end{quote}

They left the solemn place hand in hand full of unusual memories returning to their sylvan home to begin a new life and go through the new world that is the
same. Their spirit came not for themselves alone but to give joy to all and lead man’s soul towards Truth and God.

The dusk and shadowy trees stood close around. The pensive evening heard their steps. The neared many of the floating voices and sound topped by a flaring multitude of lights. They saw many unknown faces with gold—fringed headdresses, gold—broidered robes, glittering of ornaments, fluttering of hems and hundreds of eyes searching the entangled glades. Dyumatsena was no more blind. He and his restored courtiers came in search of Satyavan and Savitri “topped by a flaring multitude of lights”. The queen, Dyumatsensa’s wife finds them first—a mother above everything. Dyumantsena cried tenderly chiding Satyavan:

The fortunate gods have looked on me today.
A kingdom seeking came and heaven’s rays.
But where wast thou? Thou hast tormented gladness
With fear’s dull shadow, o my child, my life.
What danger kept thee for the darkening woods?  

Satyavan replied with smiling lips that Savitri is the cause of all marvels. He wandered in far-off eternities in the company of Savitri yet still captive in her golden hands. Savitri stood beside Satyavan with a deepening redder gold upon her cheeks; a gleaming marvel of the earth and skies.

One of the priest spoke:

"O women soul, what light, what power revealed,
working the rapid marvels of this day.
Opens for us by thee a happier age?"

Savitri replies:

"Awakened to the meaning of my heart,
that to feel love and oneness is to live
and this the magic of our golden change
is all the truth I know or seek, O stage."

Savitri thought deeply through her dead silence on as thought deep guarded by her magic folds of Light and in her bosom nursed a greater dawn:
Night, splendid with the moon dreaming in heaven
In silver peace, possessed her luminous reign
She brooded through her stillness on a thought
Deep-guarded by her mystic-folds of light,
And in her bosom nursed a greater dawn.\textsuperscript{135}

The epic poem Savitri ends with the possibility of a greater dawn that is the
dawn of the supermind which will help men get his self - Perfection. Sri
Aurobindo emphasizes that one has to realise one’s soul in order to achieve
one’s divinity. The fateful day is over with all its storm and the future unfurls a
great promise not only to Savitri and Satyavan but to all of us. Savitri conveys
the message of hope to the contemporary society which is confronted with the
alarming danger of annihilation and destruction due to the explosion of
technological knowledge. The present state of man’s existence should be
taken as a temporary phase of a dark night that precedes the dawn of
illumination. Indeed Savitri is “a massive epic of hope.”