

The Yoga of Death in Savitri – Battling the Inconscient

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Abstract

When it is darkest before dawn, the battle is the fiercest, the most acute and perilously precarious; such is the current world-scape during the turn of the next spiral-arc of cosmic movement. The various conflictual blood-baths we see smearing and tearing apart the world today in the political, social, religious, cultural and economic spheres, are but tell-tale signs of a colossal occult duel between the evolutionary and anti-evolutionary forces fighting for dominion in this watershed phase of human history. The evolutionary forces are warring for and on behalf of the Superlife or promise of heaven-on-earth, while the anti-evolutionary forces are waging a massive attack from the camp of death, in an Armageddon-like passage from the age of falsehood and suffering to the next age of Truth and Bliss. In Savitri, the apocalyptic Veda of the future, Sri Aurobindo uses the power of mantric poetry to detail the great conquest of *Death* by divine love through a mythological allegory, but which is also an epic wrestle underway in our inner psycho-spiritual spaces, whether we are conscious of it or not. This essay captures the broad contours of that dialectical-energetic interchange between the two sides which presages the new terrestrial creation. The unmasking of Death to divulge the immortal godhead in the subjective soul-soil of knowing is a necessary passage through 'hell as a short cut to heaven's gates.' *Savitri*'s victorious ordeal offers pointers to the Sadhana that must be undertaken by spiritual soldiers who seek both direction and protection in this mortal combat, as also a direct wormhole to the Supreme Himself.

Keywords: Sri Aurobindo, Divine Mother, spiritual philosophy, integral yoga, death

Clarifications On Terms Used

Savitri	The poem of ~ 24000 lines in blank verse penned by Sri Aurobindo (A Book-wise, high-level summary and overview can be heard here)
Savitri	The eponymous protagonist in Savitri – the incarnation of the Divine Mother
Death	The god of death in Savitri
divine	When used as an adjective rather than as the noun (Divine)
Yoga	Union with the Divine
Jnana Yoga	The Yoga of divine knowledge
Sadhana	The concentrated spiritual effort undertaken for the Yoga
Sadhaka	The individual who undertakes the Sadhana
Adhara	That in which the consciousness is contained, the mind-life-body complexus
Tamas	The quality of inertia, sloth, resistance, weakness and cowardice in man's lower nature
Gunas	The three modes of nature's in man's lower status of existence– Tamas, Rajas and Sattva
Samata	Spiritual Equality and Peace
Antaratman	The spark of the Divine entering the evolution as the human soul
Jivatman	The individualized Divine that remains outside the evolution but presides over it
Jiva	The human being in the world with the *Antaratman* as his being-centre
Viveka	Intuitive judgement between the higher and lower, true and false, right and wrong
Ananda	Delight – the raison d'être of the divine play in creation
Trigunatita	Beyond the enmeshment of the three gunas i.e. the poise of the higher nature
Shudra	The soul-quality of unconditional self-giving and service including menial tasks
Mahasaraswati	The Divine Mother's quality of perfection in action, flawless and meticulous execution

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What is Savitri?

Savitri is an epic in the category of apocalyptic literature, a prophetic vision of existential history. It is once a legend and a symbol – a legend about what happened in the past and a symbol of what is happening in the present and what is to come in the future. In addition to the history, Savitri also presents the occult geography of the cosmos. Savitri as an apocalyptic epic is different from the traditional scripture in that it narrates cataclysmic events of cosmic proportions which necessitate the in-breaking of God directly in human affairs, for the unveiling of a new kind of knowledge which was earlier hidden due to epistemological limitations as also the terrifying dangers in the ascension process to uncharted territory, especially during the end of the old creation when a new one takes shape. Savitri is the New Veda, 'the diamond script of the imperishable' carrying the time-spirit of the Eternal, the mantric announcement of the earth's future – both the promise & the roadmap of her cosmic pilgrimage. It is not a scripture as a static, stipulative list of to dos and don'ts, but a stirring awake of the living dynamic scripture within the prepared and deserving seeker-recipient.

Through our modernist lens, Savitri can be seen as a kaleidoscopic synthesis of mythology, science and spiritual praxis. Mythology that harnesses the power of a story to bring philosophy into a living and breathing reality, science that enables the seeker to creatively experiment, practice and verify those realities in personal subjectivity, and spiritual praxis to leverage the practice in his odyssey for a personal and universal transformation. These are done with the power of poetic reverberation which progressively tunes the consciousness of the reader to the loftiest frequency she is capable of opening herself to.

Savitri's central theme is the invoked arrival of the highest *Shakti* or supramental *Mahashakti* of the Supreme and its installation in the soil of earth-nature. The Divine Mother as *Savitri* is the incarnational embodiment of that *Mahashakti*.

What does Death represent in Savitri?

Death here is not merely the physical demise of Satyavan, but the entire suite of denials, the entire basket of antagonism and obstruction put up by universal nature against the Supramental Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, which in the context of Savitri translates into the conquest of human mortality by The Love Divine. That obstruction includes the employment of many cherished positions and contentions of traditional religious and even spiritual paths and philosophies, and assumes the dreadful shape of *Death* as the fearsome adversary to humanity's greatest venture to-date.

Something stood there, unearthly, sombre, grand,
A limitless denial of all being
That wore the terror and wonder of a shape.
(p. 574)

Some of these assertions and arguments are also used as temptations to coax *Savitri* to settle for a lesser ideal or goal. The god of death, venerated as a god because of pre-eminent status as a benefactor of

humanity, seems to offer solace to mortal hearts weary of the holocaust of earthly life for which they are not yet battle-ready, by allowing them to 'rest in peace'.

Eternal Night
In the dire beauty of an immortal face
Pitying arose, receiving all that lives
For ever into its fathomless heart, refuge
Of creatures from their anguish and world-pain.
(p. 574)

The god of death embodies all his life-antithetical qualities in his epic dialogue with *Savitri*, to dissuade and subvert her glorious mission of terrestrial immortality. This is not merely a verbal debate but also a mighty show of power in a tremendous battle on which the future of the supramental promise of the Integral Yoga for humanity depends.

We can also see in *Death*'s voice the greatest critique of Sri Aurobindo's work, using elaborate sophistry at its most incisive finesse and manipulative wizardry, of which the only person truly capable is Sri Aurobindo himself, because the god of death uses the power of the same mantric poetry as *Savitri* does!

Death uses the specious power of half-truths, or truths available and applicable to mankind in his incomplete evolutionary trajectory to-date, to postulate the final and definitive picture of reality, of the Divine and of man's position and status in the scheme of things, thereby painting a picture of incapacity, futility and fatalism.

A dangerous music now thou findst, O Death,
Melting thy speech into harmonious pain,
And flut'st alluringly to tired hopes
Thy falsehoods mingled with sad strains of truth.
(p. 612)

The term Yama (the name of the god of death in scripture, though not mentioned in Savitri) signifies rules that must be obeyed, and in that vein, *Death* represents persuasive truths about the human condition which are however intermediate truths, truths of provisional and temporary validity, but not the final truth in the evolutionary scheme of things as envisioned by Sri Aurobindo for the new earth. *Death* thus is the guardian of the law of inertia, an extrapolator of the past onto the future, denying the possibility of a discontinuous change by the Grace.

In the planar scheme of integral psycho-metaphysics, *Death* represents the dreadful Inconscient, the black hole that threatens to suck in and swallow the upsurge of life and the crusade of the soul struggling in nature. It is the great void which ironically shows up as the most inexorable and tenacious force of nature impeding the soul's advance. The conquest of the darkest pit is only possible by the combined action of the

highest consciousness-force and the same force involved/concealed below, and the cellular transformation of matter which is the strongest fortress of the Inconscient.

His shape was nothingness made real, his limbs
Were monuments of transience and beneath
(p. 574)

Death is the opposite-most image of God and a legacy remnant of his original plunge into the nescience which has a sticky tendency to preserve its drag.

O Death, thou too art God and yet not He,
But only his own black shadow on his path
As leaving the Night he takes the upward Way
And drags with him its clinging inconscient Force.
(p. 656)

In the most flagrant example of travesty, *Death* also imitates the eternity that it denies. It puts on qualities of the Superlife which it seemingly obstructs and nullifies.

Brows of unwearying calm large godlike lids
Silent beheld the writhing serpent, life.
Unmoved their timeless wide unchanging gaze
Had seen the unprofitable cycles pass,
Survived the passing of unnumbered stars
And sheltered still the same immutable orbs.
(p. 574)

All of the above constitute Nature's view and perception of *Death*. From the point of view of the Spirit, *Death* is an accelerator towards conscious immortality. Behind the outer façade of the battle, he is a covert ally of *Savitri* in ushering in the new creation, unbeknownst to him. *Death* is not an ineluctable, permanent feature in the creation, but has a circumstantial necessity in the evolutionary temporal scheme for forcing the lower nature to rise above itself and conquer the forces and patterns associated with decay and disintegration. The power of destruction granted to *Death* is a provisional endowment for heralding a greater creation, which *Death* himself has no sight of. Once that is ready, *Death* dies to himself, which is another way of saying that the Inconscient extinguishes itself whilst revealing the secret superconscient hidden deep within it.

All here is a mystery of contraries:
Darkness a magic of self-hidden Light,

Suffering some secret rapture's tragic mask
And death an instrument of perpetual life.
Although Death walks beside us on Life's Road,
A dim bystander at the body's start
And a last judgment on man's futile works,
Other is the riddle of its ambiguous face:
Death is a stair, a door, a stumbling stride
The soul must take to cross from birth to birth,
A grey defeat pregnant with victory,
A whip to lash us towards our deathless state.
(p. 600-601)

It is in that spiritual enterprise that the Yoga of *Death* also becomes inevitable, from two angles. First, the individual human soul must defeat death, psychologically at least, by a total conquest of fear and of the physical ego attached to a body-form, of itself and of others. Second, *Death* as a cosmic force or god must itself outlive its own utility and discover its real identity as the concealed Godhead of immortality of which it is a mask and disguise. The individual and the universal mutually support the respective transformations in the supramental yoga. Only divine love, the most powerful, redemptive and creative force can achieve this right up till the outer extremities of physical nature in earthly life – that is the central truth of Savitri and the essence of the Divine Mother's work.

***Death*'s Strategies Against the Evolution**

There are at least a dozen themes of *Death*'s strategic approach to refuse *Savitri*'s demand and demoralize her seminal undertaking. He spares no effort of disparagement, contempt, misrepresentation, casuistry, obstinacy, desperation in his survival battle against the divine light.

1. Sombre Cynicism and Dark Pessimism

Death infects and attacks with his chilling vibration exuding the misery, hopelessness and nihilism of the abyss which is his station of consciousness.

Abolishing hope, cancelling life's golden truths,
Fatal its accents smote the trembling air.
(p. 607)

A sceptic facing Light with adamant No
Or chilling the heart with dry ironic smile,
A cynic stamping out the god in man;
A darkness wallows in the paths of Time
(p. 626)

Death identifies the urge to live and the predisposition to hope as grievous errors, because they threaten that vibration of his being and kingdom.

In its motion-parable of human life
Here thou canst trace the outcome Nature gives
To the sin of being and the error in things
And the desire that compels to live
And man's incurable malady of hope.
(p. 643)

Many Vibhuti-like great men aimed and claimed to solve man's problems but were themselves swept away by fate and time; ditto with scientists, *Death* adduces as examples of futility.

The saviour creeds that cannot save themselves,
But perish in the strangling hands of the years,
Discarded from man's thought, proved false by Time,
Philosophies that strip all problems bare
But nothing ever have solved since earth began
(p. 644)

Even the Avatars, supposedly the most advanced among the human lot, have come and gone and yet earth remains more or less the same.

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.
Earth lies unchanged beneath the circling sun;
(p. 609-610)

2. Mockery of Mortal Capacity

Death makes disparaging allusions to *Savitri*'s testaments of strength and resolve, likening her to the ordinary mortal in the tentacles of the inconscience.

Hast thou god-wings or feet that tread my stars,
Frail creature with the courage that aspires,
Forgetting thy bounds of thought, thy mortal role?
(p. 590)

He also disdainfully dismisses the possibility of the transmutation of the human nature mired in the lower nature, to divine nature.

For how in the soiled heart of man could dwell
The immaculate grandeur of thy dream-built God,
Or who can see a face and form divine
In the naked two-legged worm thou callest man?
O human face, put off mind-painted masks:
The animal be, the worm that Nature meant
(p. 634)

He questions *Savitri*'s claim as the new force of creation heralding a new order of truth which he (*Death*) has never heard before, and hence ostensibly is of dubious credentials.

A forerunner of a greater Truth to come,
Thy soul creator of its freer Law,
Vaunting a Force behind on which it leans,
A Light above which none but thou hast seen,
Thou claimst the first fruits of Truth's victory.
But what is Truth and who can find her form
(p. 654)

3. Deprecation of Soul as Nature's Bond-Slave

Death annunciates the human soul as a slave of nature bound by her laws, the most certain of which is the yoke of death. The body is the living grave of the soul in which the human lives almost unconscious, and which has to be forsaken as a piece of clothing once its ephemeral utility is outlived.

"Unclasp", it cried,
"Thy passionate influence and relax, O slave
Of Nature, changing tool of changeless Law,
Who vainly writh'st rebellion to my yoke,
Thy elemental grasp; weep and forget.
Entomb thy passion in its living grave.
Leave now the once-loved spirit's abandoned robe
Pass lonely back to thy vain life on earth."
(p. 575)

The human cannot breathe in realms where time stops, and *Savitri* must stop pursuing Satyavan's soul in its journey to the nether world because human capability has its limits. Even the gods do not have their way on matter which is *Death*'s primary stronghold.

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.

Only in human limits man lives safe.
Trust not in the unreal Lords of Time
(p. 580)

The soul pretends God-like strength to conceal its fragility and fill his existential void, to satisfy its yearnings and to try to perpetuate that which is transient. It propitiates imaginary nature-powers to help itself, but is instead subject to their exploitative manipulation, much like lost cattle.

A fragile miracle of thinking clay,
Armed with illusions walks the child of Time.
To fill the void around he feels and dreads,
The void he came from and to which he goes,
He magnifies his self and names it God.
He calls the heavens to help his suffering hopes.
(p. 586)

They gave him hungers which no food can fill;
He is the cattle of the shepherd gods.
His body the tether with which he is tied,
They cast for fodder grief and hope and joy:
His pasture ground they have fenced with Ignorance.
(p. 587)

Death claims proprietary rights on man's soul as his plaything, in conjunction with strategies (5) and (6) explained later.

My Force is Nature that creates and slays
The hearts that hope, the limbs that long to live.
I have made man her instrument and slave,
His body I made my banquet, his life my food.
Man has no other help but only Death;
He comes to me at his end for rest and peace.
I, Death, am the one refuge of thy soul.
(p. 593)

The soul perishes with the body and the mind, because it is an offshoot of mentalized abstraction rooted in the dull earthly soil of disintegrative affinity.

Thy soul is a brief flower by the gardener Mind
Created in thy matter's terrain plot;
It perishes with the plant on which it grows,
For from earth's sap it draws its heavenly hue
(p. 615)

Nature allows brief and temporary joys which the mortal must rest satisfied with, instead of demanding the impossible beyond the earthly law and expecting to vanquish grief forever.

O earthly creature with thy dream of heaven,
Obey, resigned and still, the earthly law.
Accept the brief light that falls upon thy days;
Take what thou canst of Life's permitted joy;
Submitting to the ordeal of fate's scourge
Suffer what thou must of toil and grief and care.
(p. 620)

Nothing can change if nature does not change (the curl of the proverbial dog's tail), is the hypothesis that the earth-consciousness assumed and submitted to, prior to the Integral Yoga.

Where Nature changes not, man cannot change:
Ever he obeys her fixed mutation's law;
In a new version of her oft-told tale
In ever-wheeling cycles turns the race.
(p. 643)

There is merit in keeping the great spiritual wisdom away from the earth lest it prove dangerous and upset the apple-cart of ignorant equilibrium and complacency. *Death* likens *Savitri*'s 'ambition' as a titanic effort and advises caution, oblivious of the fact that the Divine is free to change his own laws in the evolutionary march.

The wise think with the cycles, they hear the tread
Of far-off things; patient, unmoved they keep
Their dangerous wisdom in their depths restrained,
Lest man's frail days into the unknown should sink
Dragged like a ship by bound leviathan
Into the abyss of his stupendous seas...
...Use not thy strength like the wild Titan souls!

Touch not the seated lines, the ancient laws,
Respect the calm of great established things.
(p. 651)

4. Exploiting the Mind Conundrum

Death first identifies man as a mental being and not a spiritual being, which may be a valid statement in man's current station of development but not his essential nature and inherent potential. From this assertive standpoint of the divisiveness and weakness of the human mind, *Death* formulates many arguments to deter and frustrate *Savitri*'s endeavour.

Mind is the author, spectator, actor, stage:
Mind only is and what it thinks is seen.
If Mind is all, renounce the hope of bliss;
If Mind is all, renounce the hope of Truth.
For Mind can never touch the body of Truth
(p. 645)

Man's idealism is a misplaced utopian pipe-dream constructed from idle speculation and from fear of facing the stark reality of death. Even if he manages to visualize something in his dreamscape, *Death* can demolish it at his whim and fancy, as happens with 'the dream twilight of the ideal.'

Prisoner of Nature, many-visioned spirit,
Thought's creature in the ideal's realm enjoying
Thy unsubstantial immortality
The subtle marvellous mind of man has feigned,
This is the world from which thy yearnings came.
When it would build eternity from the dust,
Man's thought paints images illusion rounds;
Prophesying glories it shall never see,
It labours delicately among its dreams.
(p. 607)

Mental idealism of the 'mock suzerain' does not work where *Death* reigns.

Armed vainly with the Ideal's borrowed might,
Dare not to outstep man's bound and measured force
(p. 580)

The mind is too weak to alter the laws of nature, and its imaginings and aspirations either have only a hallucinogenic temporality or a demoralizing setback.

The Ideal is a malady of thy mind,
A bright delirium of thy speech and thought,
A strange wine of beauty lifting thee to false sight.
A noble fiction of thy yearnings made,
Thy human imperfection it must share:
Its forms in Nature disappoint the heart,
And never shall it find its heavenly shape
And never can it be fulfilled in Time.
(p. 619)

5. Promulgating the Rest-in-Peace Finality of the Human

Death sermonises that the soul embattled in nature needs the sanctuary of rest and relaxation, and so it is not compassionate on *Savitri*'s part to deny Satyavan this relief especially since she is also fated such, when her time comes. Grief and pining for kith and kin of the deceased cause misery to the departing soul in its onward journey, and must be desisted from. *Savitri* can keep the dead body if she wishes but must forfeit her claim to Satyavan's soul since that belongs to the god of death (i.e. him) who is a greater power than a mere mortal.

"Wilt thou for ever keep thy passionate hold,
Thyself a creature doomed like him to pass,
Denying his soul death's calm and silent rest?
Relax thy grasp; this body is earth's and thine,
His spirit now belongs to a greater power.
Woman, thy husband suffers."
(p. 575)

Also, Satyavan has been saved from the poisonous snares of mortal love through his death, *Death* declares.

He now is safe, delivered from himself;
He travels to silence and felicity.
Call him not back to the treacheries of earth
And the poor petty life of animal Man.
In my vast tranquil spaces let him sleep
(p. 611)

Satyavan deserves the early release and the comfortable company of gods, which *Savitri* wants to deny him as if her company is greater than the supernal splendour; isn't this presumptuous selfishness?

For him thou lov'st cancelling the grand release,

Keeping from early rapture of the heavens
His soul the lenient deities have called?
Are thy arms sweeter than the courts of God?
(p. 652)

Death expresses a relative truth that for a harried soul imprisoned in the lower nature, eternal life would be pure misery and death a welcome relief. This argument however ignores the possibility of the soul's ascendency and sovereignty over nature as the perfect recipe for immortal life.

Immortality thou claimest for thy spirit,
But immortality for imperfect man,
A god who hurts himself at every step,
Would be a cycle of eternal pain.
(p. 618)

6. Appropriation of the Divine's Title

Death claims to be the Source of all things, including *Savitri* and Satyavan and the stars, all playthings in his kingdom of matter; in fact, the stars precede the human soul. How can a mortal refute his commandment and wish something whimsically – that is tantamount to misplaced sincerity, he posits.

Their orbs were coiled before thy soul was formed. (Orbs of the stars)
I, Death, created them out of my void;
All things I have built in them and I destroy.
I made the worlds my net, each joy a mesh.
(p. 590)

Hast thou beheld thy source, O transient heart,
And known from what the dream thou art was made?
In this stark sincerity of nude emptiness
Hopest thou still always to last and love?
(p. 586)

The deity inspiring *Savitri* is only delaying the inevitable, but cannot prevail against *Death*'s diktat which will eventually hold. The gods are ultimately his minions, he boasts.

What shall the ancient goddess give to thee
Who helps thy heart-beats? Only she prolongs
The nothing dreamed existence and delays
With the labour of living thy eternal sleep.
(p. 586)

The Gods to whom man prays can help not man;
They are my imaginations and my moods
Reflected in him by illusion's power.
(p. 593)

Malevolent conceptions of the Divine such as a megalomaniacal carrot-and-stick arbiter-dispenser who must be apprehensively appeased, find their place in some systems of religious thought. *Death* cunningly uses these thought-forms to fortify his position and scare *Savitri*.

Blind slave of my deaf force whom I compel
To sin that I may punish, to desire
That I may scourge thee with despair and grief
And thou come bleeding to me at the last,
Thy nothingness recognised, my greatness known,
Turn nor attempt forbidden happy fields
Meant for the souls that can obey my law
(p. 591)

Death also uses the notion of illusoriness and impermanence as enshrined in some philosophical systems to instil a sense of hopelessness in *Savitri*, while claiming that he is the only permanent and final authority. (Also used in strategy 8 described later)

What is thy hope? to what dost thou aspire?
This is thy body's sweetest lure of bliss,
Assailed by pain, a frail precarious form,
To please for a few years thy faltering sense
Death only lasts and the inconscient Void.
I only am eternal and endure.
I am the shapeless formidable Vast,
I am the emptiness that men call Space,
I am a timeless Nothingness carrying all,
I am the Illimitable, the mute Alone.
I, Death, am He; there is no other God.
(p. 592-3)

As God, *Death* supposedly demonstrates his munificence by granting the body and the soul their deserved rest, as per Strategy (5).

Two only are the doors of man's escape,

Death of his body Matter's gate to peace,
Death of his soul his last felicity.
In me all take refuge, for I, Death, am God
(p. 635)

7. Temptations and Threats

Death uses concessional praises and the bait of lesser goals or existential objectives to thwart *Savitri*'s formidable mission and thereby scuttle the Divine's initiative of total victory over the lower triplicity for which she is the torch-bearer.

Yet since thy strength deserves no trivial crown,
Gifts I can give to soothe thy wounded life.
The pacts which transient beings make with fate,
And the wayside sweetness earth-bound hearts would pluck,
These if thy will accepts make freely thine.
Choose a life's hopes for thy deceiving prize.
(p. 588)

He also induces a false urgency to settle for the minor boons so that the Furies (goddesses of vengeance) or other gatekeepers of the laws do not attack *Savitri* for their sacrilegious violation.

Back from the grandeur of my perilous realms
Go, mortal, to thy small permitted sphere!
Hasten swift-footed, lest to slay thy life
The great laws thou hast violated, moved,
Open at last on thee their marble eyes.
(p. 589)

Mortal, whose spirit is my wandering breath,
Whose transience was imagined by my smile,
Flee clutching thy poor gains to thy trembling breast
Pierced by my pangs Time shall not soon appease.
(p. 591)

Based on his appropriation of the spiteful form of God (6), he tries to induce obedience and supplication to his iron-law on which no other power has any say.

Dread lest in skies where passion hoped to live,
The Unknown's lightnings start and, terrified,
Lone, sobbing, hunted by the hounds of heaven,

A wounded and forsaken soul thou flee
Through the long torture of the centuries,
Nor many lives exhaust the tireless Wrath
Hell cannot slake nor Heaven's mercy assuage.
(p. 591)

Death offers boons of concession to pacify *Savitri*'s indomitable focus with the hope of deflecting her from her death-defying mission.

For self demand
And yet from self and its gross masks live free.
Then will I give thee all thy soul desires,
All the brief joys earth keeps for mortal hearts.
Only the one dearest wish that outweighs all,
Hard laws forbid and thy ironic fate.
(p. 636)

He suggests that other men will capture her heart and fill the gap in her life due to Satyavan's departure, which is a temptation laced with satirical derision on human love's perishability.

Soon shalt thou find appeased that other men
On lavish earth have beauty, strength and truth,
And when thou hast half forgotten, one of these
Shall wind himself around thy heart that needs
Some human answering heart against thy breast
(p. 637)

Death induces and extols the 'virtue' of selfish enjoyment in heaven rather than deal with the mundane earthly problems, which has been the refrain of many a spiritual path and goal of the past.

If heavens there are whose gates are shut to grief,
There seek the joy thou couldst not find on earth;
Or in the imperishable hemisphere
Where Light is native and Delight is king
And Spirit is the deathless ground of things,
Choose thy high station, child of Eternity.
(p. 647)

8. Proclamation of the All-Negating Absolute

The cosmos behind its forms is merely emptiness in which the hope of personal possessions is a human folly, to learn which the tribulations of adversity become necessary. Since it is beyond *Death*'s

province to grant the supreme bliss of immortality that man is destined for, all he can do is take away the smaller pleasures and impose the 'fathomless night' and avow it as the eschatological destiny.

To one who wiser grew by adverse Fate,
Goods I restore the deluded soul prefers
To impersonal nothingness's bare sublime.
The sensuous solace of the light I give
To eyes which could have found a larger realm,
A deeper vision in their fathomless night.
(p. 589)

Declaring his decree as the final one in consonance with the title appropriation strategy (6) he also disdainfully disavows *Savitri*'s battle for Satyavan as the soul's rightful claim for permanence.

Insisting on the immutable Decree,
Insisting on the immitigable Law
And the insignificance of created things,
Out of the rolling wastes of night there came
Born from the enigma of the unknowable depths
A voice of majesty and appalling scorn.
(p. 590)

Everything is fated to ultimately collapse back into its antecedent Nihil after a brief flutter amidst mechanical forces of nature, as is sacralized in some traditional thought-systems of mankind.

All here emerges born from Nothingness;
Encircled it lasts by the emptiness of Space,
Awhile upheld by an unknowing Force,
Then crumbles back into its parent Nought:
Only the mute Alone can for ever be.
(p. 608)

Death praises the goal of Nirvana as venerated by many seekers in history to reinforce his point.

Then disappointed to the Void he turns
And in its happy nothingness asks release,
The calm Nirvana of his dream of self:
The Word in silence ends, in Nought the name.
(p. 644)

9. Distortion of Love

Death makes an example of the usual frailties and failings of human love as prevalent in the unregenerate vital nature to challenge and derail *Savitri*'s proclamation and espousal of divine love as the basis of her mission.

With honey of physical longings and the heart's fire
And, a vain oneness seeking, to embrace
The brilliant idol of a fugitive hour.
And thou, what art thou, soul, thou glorious dream
Of brief emotions made and glittering thoughts,
A thin dance of fireflies speeding through the night,
A sparkling ferment in life's sunlit mire?
(p. 592)

Human love is as transient as the body because it is epiphenomenon of the physical mechanism and shares its hungry angst and susceptibility.

This angel in thy body thou callst love,
Who shapes his wings from thy emotion's hues,
In a ferment of thy body has been born
And with the body that housed it it must die.
It is a passion of thy yearning cells,
It is flesh that calls to flesh to serve its lust
(p. 608)

A sweet secretion from the erotic glands
Flattering and torturing the burning nerves,
Love is a honey and poison in the breast
Drunk by it as the nectar of the gods.
(p. 618-619)

It is a disguise of man's animalism which he so glorifies to make it acceptable to his moral-ethical sentiment.

A beast of prey that pauses in its prowl,
It crouches under a bush in splendid flower
To seize a heart and body for its food:
This beast thou dreamst immortal and a god.
(p. 608)

Even if Satyavan had lived, the fervour of love would wane with time and desecrate the idealism of the eternality of love; with his passing his memory would soon wane and the so-called love – 'the red rapture and torture of thy heart' - would find some other suitor or recipient, so why so much ado about nothing?

If Satyavan had lived, love would have died;
But Satyavan is dead and love shall live
A little while in thy sad breast, until
His face and body fade on memory's wall
Where other bodies, other faces come.
(p. 610)

Even in its finer hues love is an evanescent emotion of frangible substance that either corrupts into bitterness or flattens into indifference, artifice, a stifling convention or an ego-fight, as many stale human marriages typify.

The snake is there and the worm in the heart of the rose.
A word, a moment's act can slay the god;
Precarious is his immortality,
He has a thousand ways to suffer and die.

A dull indifference replaces fire
Or an endearing habit imitates love:
An outward and uneasy union lasts
Or the routine of a life's compromise

Two egos straining in a single leash,
Two minds divided by their jarring thoughts,
Two spirits disjoined, for ever separate.
(p. 611)

Death clearly rules out the possibility of psychic love which is purer, sweeter, more contained, more intense and more powerful than vital love.

And love no gleaming angel from the skies;
If they aspire beyond earth's dullard air,
Arriving sunwards with frail waxen wings,
How high could reach that forced unnatural flight?
But not on earth can divine wisdom reign
And not on earth can divine love be found;

Heaven-born, only in heaven can they live;
Or else there too perhaps they are shining dreams.
(p. 619)

10. Misrepresentation of the Divine

Death paints a picture of an impersonal and uncaring god if any such exists, who enjoys alone, and coaxes *Savitri* to aspire likewise without the sentimental attachment to, or dependent on the other (i.e., Satyavan), and hence accede to his departure on which he (*Death*) is executing.

But if there were a Being witnessing all,
How should he help thy passionate desire?
Aloof he watches sole and absolute,
Indifferent to thy cry in nameless calm.
His being is pure, unwounded, motionless, one.
(p. 593)

It wears no living face, it has no name,
No gaze, no heart that throbs; it asks no second
To aid its being or to share its joys.
(p. 594)

Such a God doesn't bother about the little details whether an animal or a human suffers because that would disrupt his calm and aloof impersonality.

If God there is he cares not for the world;
All things he sees with calm indifferent gaze....

.... Unmoved, untouched by aught that he has made,
He sees as minute details mid the stars
The animal's agony and the fate of man
(p. 646)

Such a God prefers to be alone is his immutable and immobile peace, so *Savitri* must also emulate the same qualities, cast away the nature instead of trying to change his laws of nature. *Death* uses a truncated portion of a profound truth to gainsay *Savitri*.

If thou art Spirit and Nature is thy robe,
Cast off thy garb and be thy naked self
Immutable in its undying truth,
Alone for ever in the mute Alone.

Turn then to God, for him leave all behind;
Forgetting love, forgetting Satyavan,
Annul thyself in his immobile peace.
O soul, drown in his still beatitude.
(p. 647)

Death erects a false dichotomy of God wanting us to great things which thereby precluding our getting involved or expending energy in little or transient things. In other words, He whose hand sends Jupiter spinning through heaven cannot spend all its cunning to fashion a curl, says *Death*.

Or is this the high use of strength and thought,
To struggle with the bonds of death and time
And spend the labour that might earn the gods
And battle and bear agony of wounds
To grasp the trivial joys that earth can guard
In her small treasure-chest of passing things?
(p. 652)

11. Splintering of the Being

Death creates a schism between the impersonal and the personal sides of the nature, as if the two are mutually incompatible. Knowledge is superior to, and incompatible with emotion, will, action, attachment. To know dispassionately one has to extricate oneself from the trappings of love and attachment to temporary things such as the human body and soul.

Know also. Knowing, thou shalt cease to love
And cease to will, delivered from thy heart.
So shalt thou rest for ever and be still,
Consenting to the impermanence of things.
(p. 594)

Death magnifies the oft-cherished virtues of renunciation and a cold, detached austerity practiced in traditional disciplines where passive peace ('worldless calm') is privileged over the messy difficulty of redemptive love and care.

Renounce, forgetting joy and hope and tears,
Thy passionate nature in the bosom profound
Of a happy Nothingness and worldless Calm,
Delivered into my mysterious rest.
One with my fathomless Nihil all forget.
(p. 612)

Dispassionate knowledge does not and cannot afford to listen to pleadings of the anguished heart, else it would lose its unbiasedness of pure truth, as if thought and feeling need to be permanently divorced, as often sanctified in some masculine *Jnana Yoga* paths.

Words winged with the red splendour of thy heart.
But knowledge dwells not in the passionate heart;
The heart's words fall back unheard from Wisdom's throne.
(p. 615)

Not only knowledge from love, *Death* also suggests a discord between the Self and the life and mind of the human.

Cast off thy life and mind, then art thou Self,
An all-seeing omnipresence stark, alone.
(p. 646)

Death also recommends the abolition of love as if immortality requires a lone status with no place for the beloved.

If thou desirest immortality,
Be then alone sufficient to thy soul:
Live in thyself; forget the man thou lov'st.
My last grand death shall rescue thee from life
(p. 594)

12. Spirit and Matter Divide

That schism between knowledge and love is also broadened to imply the incommensurable qualities of the material earth and the spiritual heavens and admit the unbridgeable chasm between the two realms, to undermine *Savitri*'s herculean assignment. This dualist metaphysics has been the cornerstone of many philosophical systems of thought, which *Death* employs to his polemical advantage.

If heavens there are they are veiled in their own light,
If a Truth eternal somewhere reigns unknown,
It burns in a tremendous void of God;
For truth shines far from the falsehoods of the world;
How can the heavens come down to unhappy earth
Or the eternal lodge in drifting time?
(p. 609)

If one is real then the other is unreal or vice versa, but both cannot be simultaneously real and in harmony with each other.

How canst thou force to wed two eternal foes?
Irreconcilable in their embrace
They cancel the glory of their pure extremes:
An unhappy wedlock maims their stunted force.
How shall thy will make one the true and false?
Where Matter is all, there Spirit is a dream:
If all are the Spirit, Matter is a lie
(p. 635)

He who wants God has to renounce the world, and he who wishes to enjoy the world cannot hope to find God; these two ambitions cannot coexist, as pronounced in many religious texts and philosophies.

The Real with the unreal cannot mate.
He who would turn to God, must leave the world;
He who would live in the Spirit, must give up life;
He who has met the Self, renounces self.
(p. 635)

Even if heaven were to try such a marriage, earth would refuse or resist such a supernal suffusion because she is in love with her ignorance, bondage and erroneous ways, unwilling to change except superficially, perfunctorily and grudgingly.

In vain is seen the shining upward Way.
Earth lies unchanged beneath the circling sun;
She loves her fall and no omnipotence
Her mortal imperfections can erase,
Force on man's crooked ignorance Heaven's straight line
Or colonise a world of death with gods.
(p. 610)

Death also voices the doctrine of material monism, the negation of anything supraphysical, and all mental idealization is adaptive escapism and ultimately subject to matter's yoke because mind is ruled by the vital and the physical and cannot overrule or transform them.

A bright hallucination are thy thoughts.
A prisoner haled by a spiritual cord

Artificer of Ideal and Idea,
Mind, child of Matter in the womb of Life,
To higher levels persuades his parents' steps

All thy high dreams were made by Matter's mind
To solace its dull work in Matter's jail,
Its only house where it alone seems true.
(p. 615)

God is at best a magnified self-image which is illusory and incompatible with the mechanical basis of material nature.

But where is room for soul or place for God
In the brute immensity of a machine?
A transient Breath thou takest for thy soul,
Born from a gas, a plasm, a sperm, a gene,
A magnified image of man's mind for God,
A shadow of thyself thrown upon Space.
(p. 618)

Even if someone has spiritual powers of the higher realm, these are insufficient to alter the workings of the material nature which are cast in stone.

However mighty, whatever thy secret name
Uttered in hidden conclaves of the gods,
Thy heart's ephemeral passion cannot break
The iron rampart of accomplished things
(p. 654)

Death, however, does betray the unsoundness of the materialist foundational proposition as concluded in modern physics, though he himself ignores and twists that for his devious purposes as per (5).

Yet this security and guarantor
Pressed for credentials an impostor proves:
A cheat of substance where no substance is,
An appearance and a symbol and a nought…
…Yet change arrives and the last change is death.
What seemed most real once, is Nihil's show.
(p. 616)

13. The Avatar Interrogation

Death, after a prolonged dialogue with *Savitri* during which all his strategies have either failed or been neutralized, finally raises the cardinal question on who would consent to bridge the yawning, parlous gulf between spirit and matter.

What bridge can cross the gulf that she has left
Between her and the dream-world she has made?
Or who could hope to bring her down to men
And persuade to tread the harsh globe with wounded feet
Leaving her unapproachable glory and bliss,
Wasting her splendour on pale earthly air?
(p. 663)

Suspecting that *Savitri* is herself the personification of the answer to his question, he asks for a show of the divine power in addition to knowledge, as the last condition for his own surrender.

O human claimant to immortality,
Reveal thy power, lay bare thy spirit's force,
Then will I give back to thee Satyavan.
Or if the Mighty Mother is with thee,
Show me her face that I may worship her;
Let deathless eyes look into the eyes of Death,
An imperishable Force touching brute things
Transform earth's death into immortal life.
(p. 664)

***Savitri*'s Rebuttal and Actions**

Savitri, as the Divine Mother incarnate, does not use her power prematurely to annihilate *Death* or entirely disregard his arguments, because that would deprive him the opportunity of his own Yoga. Instead, she painstakingly takes him on, counterpoint to point, until he runs out of steam and is compelled to surrender – which is the Avatar's evolutionary way of transformation of earth nature.

1. Silent Aloofness and Self-Confidence

Savitri does not get carried away by *Death*'s importunities or prevarications, and sometimes chooses not to answer or respond but instead stay calm and composed, as if not granting even the slightest importance of acknowledgement to his dubious ministrations.

The Woman answered not. Her spirit refused
The voice of Night that knew and Death that thought.
In her beginningless infinity
Through her soul's reaches unconfined she gazed;
She saw the undying fountains of her life,
She knew herself eternal without birth.
(p. 586)

Towards the end when *Death* is almost at the point of giving up, she calmly reveals her true identity.

A curve of the calm hauteur of far heaven
Descending into earth's humility,
Her forehead's span vaulted the Omniscient's gaze,
Her eyes were two stars that watched the universe.
(p. 665)

2. Leveraging the Gleam of Hope

Even when all seems lost the soul musters the capacity to look for and find the gleam of hope because there is no place where the Divine is not with his full power and glory, even if concealed.

Her heavy long monotony of pain
Tardily of its fierce self-torture tired.
At first a faint inextinguishable gleam,
Pale but immortal, flickered in the gloom
As if a memory came to spirits dead,
A memory that wished to live again,
Dissolved from mind in Nature's natal sleep.
(p. 584-5)

In the earthly endeavour there may be failures and breakdowns but the effort of Sadhana never goes waste in the Divine's balance sheet and simply awaits a greater bounce-back and resurgence. He who chooses the infinite has been chosen by the Infinite.

The heavens accept our broken flights at last.
On our life's prow that breaks the waves of Time
No signal light of hope has gleamed in vain.
(p. 638)

3. The Indefatigable Human Spirit

Savitri does not supplicate or beg as a victim but steadfastly demand her known birthright, where the pangs of grief, however acutely felt, cannot weaken the resolve or scale down the goal, but instead turn into a divinity-infused soul-strength and persistence.

I bow not to thee, O huge mask of death,
Black lie of night to the cowed soul of man,
Unreal, inescapable end of things,
Thou grim jest played with the immortal spirit.

Conscious of immortality I walk.
A victor spirit conscious of my force,
Not as a suppliant to thy gates I came:
Unslain I have survived the clutch of Night.
My first strong grief moves not my seated mind;
My unwept tears have turned to pearls of strength:
I have transformed my ill-shaped brittle clay
Into the hardness of a statued soul.
(p. 588)

Savitri arrogates at least an equal status as *Death* and musters the verve to look him in the eye unfazed and unwavering.

World-spirit, I was thy equal spirit born.
My will too is a law, my strength a god.
I am immortal in my mortality.
I tremble not before the immobile gaze
Of the unchanging marble hierarchies
That look with the stone eyes of Law and Fate.
My soul can meet them with its living fire.
(p. 589)

Savitri exemplifies an endless capacity of endurance, energy and anti-fragility, attributes of both spiritual equality and spiritual power.

For I who have trod with him the tracts of Time,
Can meet behind his steps whatever night
Or unimaginable stupendous dawn
Breaks on our spirits in the untrod Beyond.
Wherever thou leadst his soul I shall pursue
(p. 590)

A freedom from the clutches of *Death*'s nihilistic persuasion and obstinacy is *Savitri*'s own choice and prerogative, which has the Divine's blessing.

O Death, I have triumphed over thee within;
I quiver no more with the assault of grief;
A mighty calmness seated deep within
Has occupied my body and my sense:
It takes the world's grief and transmutes to strength,
It makes the world's joy one with the joy of God.

(p. 633)

A heart-strength that can overpower *Death*'s clutches because it beats with the Heart of the One Transcendent in all, and can bear the load of the entire creation as He does, is *Savitri*'s.

My heart is stronger than thy bonds, O Death.
It sees and feels the one Heart beat in all,
It feels the high Transcendent's sunlike hands,
It sees the cosmic Spirit at its work;
In the dim Night it lies alone with God.
My heart's strength can carry the grief of the universe
And never falter from its luminous track
(p. 635)

Savitri emphasizes that the human is the tail-end of the Divine, fragile and struggling currently but seeded with the potential to ascend to divine nature eventually and inevitably.

Yes, I am human. Yet shall man by me,
Since in humanity waits his hour the God,
Trample thee down to reach the immortal heights,
Transcending grief and pain and fate and death.
Yes, my humanity is a mask of God
(p. 634)

Savitri looks at *Death* straight in the face, unwaveringly and in calm confidence demands what is due as per the Divine's decree.

If the eyes of Darkness can look straight at Truth,
Look in my heart and, knowing what I am,
Give what thou wilt or what thou must, O Death.
Nothing I claim but Satyavan alone
(p. 636)

4. The Asseveration of Soul-Freedom

No outward nature-movement can abrogate the soul's inherent royalty. It is out of its free choice that the soul descends into the evolutionary struggle to re-establish its sovereignty in the realm of death and suffering. The pretence of self-loss while being ruled by nature's drama here on earth is a greater testament to its heroic freedom than withdrawing into an actionless bliss, *Savitri* enunciates.

Freedom is this with ever seated soul,
Large in life's limits, strong in Matter's knots,

Building great stuff of action from the worlds
To make fine wisdom from coarse, scattered strands
And love and beauty out of war and night,
The wager wonderful, the game divine.
(p. 653)

5. A Clarified Picture of the Supreme and His Lila

Savitri first forcefully refutes the malevolent conception of God which has sullied many religions into fearful gruels or cold austerities.

Who is this God imagined by thy night,
Contemptuously creating worlds disdained,
Who made for vanity the brilliant stars?
Not he who has reared his temple in my thoughts
And made his sacred floor my human heart.
(p. 591)

The nothingness is not spiritually empty but pregnant with God's presence because it is He who wilfully plunged into the inconscient to spur the adventure of consciousness for the soul in nature, and train it for eventual mastery over *Death*.

God wrapped his head from sight in Matter's cowl,
His consciousness dived into inconscient depths,
All-Knowledge seemed a huge dark Nescience;
Infinity wore a boundless zero's form.
(p. 621)

The Timeless took its ground in emptiness
And drew the figure of a universe,
That the spirit might adventure into Time
And wrestle with adamant Necessity
And the soul pursue a cosmic pilgrimage.
(p. 622)

God is not an impersonally aloof creator who stands apart from his creation but is intimately involved in and supportive of the soul's labour, himself descending into the clay to mould it in his shape.

My God is will and triumphs in his paths,
My God is love and sweetly suffers all.
(p. 591)

A traveller of the million roads of life,
His steps familiar with the lights of heaven
Tread without pain the sword-paved courts of hell;
There he descends to edge eternal joy.
(p. 592)

God sows and conceals in man the seeds of his own qualities so that they flower with passion and vibrancy and love through the mysterious battle of contraries in which man has to live those values here rather than escape elsewhere.

I run where his sweet dreadful voice commands
And I am driven by the reins of God.
Why drew he wide his scheme of mighty worlds
Or filled infinity with his passionate breath?
Or wherefore did he build my mortal form
And sow in me his bright and proud desires,
If not to achieve, to flower in me, to love,
Carving his human image richly shaped
In thoughts and largenesses and golden powers?
(p. 653)

The Divine Mother is the mother of all and no one is left behind including those who oppose her in this Lila-scape.

Not only is there hope for godheads pure;
The violent and darkened deities
Leaped down from the one breast in rage to find
What the white gods had missed: they too are safe;
A mother's eyes are on them and her arms
Stretched out in love desire her rebel sons. (Including *Death*)
(p. 613)

All is the play between He and She, the Lord and his Executive Power. This brings into light that the notion of rejecting nature to retire into an aloof association with the Divine is not the intention of the creation; instead, his play is the complete integration of Soul and Nature in its highest poise at every level of reality.

His bliss laughs to us or it calls concealed
Like a far-heard unseen entrancing flute
From moonlit branches in the throbbing woods,
Tempting our angry search and passionate pain.

Disguised the Lover seeks and draws our souls.
He named himself for me, grew Satyavan.
For we were man and woman from the first,
The twin souls born from one undying fire.
(p. 614)

6. The Evolutionary Scheme

Savitri explains how at the core of the Divine's Lila is the evolution of consciousness and form which is the mirror movement inevitable from an antecedent involutionary plunge. Neither the past nor the present holds the complete key to the future because of a perpetual novelty in the unfolding of the transcendent scheme.

She swung her formless motion into shapes,
Made Matter the body of the Bodiless.
Infant and dim the eternal Mights awoke.
In inert Matter breathed a slumbering Life,
In a subconscient Life Mind lay asleep;
In waking Life it stretched its giant limbs
To shake from it the torpor of its drowse
(p. 622)

In God concealed the world began to be,
Tardily it travels towards manifest God
(p. 623)

Just because man is imperfect today doesn't mean that cannot approach perfection tomorrow, since his maker dwells within him and is guiding his baby steps.

How shall the child already be the man?
Because he is infant, shall he never grow?
Because he is ignorant, shall he never learn?
In a small fragile seed a great tree lurks,
In a tiny gene a thinking being is shut;
A little element in a little sperm,
It grows and is a conqueror and a sage.
(p. 623)

Errors, challenges, darkness and evil are all temporary instruments of the supreme good for a greater fulfilment than would be possible without them. But they are not of any intrinsic, permanent necessity in the divine scheme, and are outgrown when their role is over; the same applies to *Death* too.

His knowledge he disguised as Ignorance,
His Good he sowed in Evil's monstrous bed,
Made error a door by which Truth could enter in,
His plant of bliss watered with Sorrow's tears…
…Through this wrestle and wrangle of the extremes of Power
Earth's million roads struggled towards deity.
(p. 625)

Savitri refutes *Death*'s insistence on the status quo and disowns *tamas* as a *guna* which shrinks from change in fear of error and disturbance; *tamas* is *Death*'s sway on the human to keep him tied to stagnation and atrophy, that must make way for *Samata* which is a basis for Spirit's working.

What is the calm thou vauntst, O Law, O Death?
Is it not the dull-visioned tread inert
Of monstrous energies chained in a stark round
Soulless and stone-eyed with mechanic dreams?
Vain the soul's hope if changeless Law is all
(p. 651)

The creation was made from bliss and for bliss, not for darkness and pain which are merely intermediate passages to the final goal, for immortality and not death, for everlasting day and not eternal night.

Yet for joy and not for sorrow earth was made
And not as a dream in endless suffering Time.
(p. 629)

Out of the Void this grand creation rose,—
For this the Spirit came into the Abyss
And charged with its power Matter's unknowing force,
In Night's bare session to cathedral Light,
In Death's realm repatriate immortality.
(p. 632)

Even the mind which is currently the instrument of division as *Death* sardonically avers, can, through surrender, come under the direct influence of the Truth-Light and serve as an instrument of synthesis, organization and translation of the divine Word.

My mind is a torch lit from the eternal sun…
…How sayst thou Truth can never light the human mind
And Bliss can never invade the mortal's heart

Or God descend into the world he made?
(p. 648)

Not just mind, but the entire nature is bound to reveal the glory of the indwelling spirit even if it currently not fully aware of that covert presence and its workings.

How shall the nameless Light not leap on men,
And unknown powers emerge from Nature's sleep?
Even now hints of a luminous Truth like stars
Arise in the mind-mooned splendour of Ignorance;
Even now the deathless Lover's touch we feel:
If the chamber's door is even a little ajar,
What then can hinder God from stealing in
Or who forbid his kiss on the sleeping soul?
(p. 649)

7. A Re-definition of Divine Love

Just because love begins on an inferior mode does not mean it will remain that way, because love is an evolutionary force, *Savitri* underscores.

All our earth starts from mud and ends in sky,
And Love that was once an animal's desire,
Then a sweet madness in the rapturous heart,
An ardent comradeship in the happy mind,
Becomes a wide spiritual yearning's space.
(p. 632)

Savitri then reverses the notion of love from taking to giving as a circulation of divine energy between the lover and the loved, and hence inexhaustible in the supply.

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.
Even in all that life and man have marred,
A whisper of divinity still is heard,
A breath is felt from the eternal spheres.
(p. 612-3)

Love brings with it a commitment that no challenge can disarm or divert, because it is a soul-to-soul bond of divine communion.

In the sweet transiency of human limbs
To do with him my spirit's burning will.
I will bear with him the ancient Mother's load,
I will follow with him earth's path that leads to God.
(p. 590)

Divine love is wedded to power in as a biune potentiality that is brought to actuality in the darkest conditions imposed by *Death*.

Love's golden wings have power to fan thy void:
The eyes of love gaze starlike through death's night,
The feet of love tread naked hardest worlds.
He labours in the depths, exults on the heights;
He shall remake thy universe, O Death.
(p. 592)

Love empowered by the Divine's sanction and will can ultimately bridge spirit and matter like nothing else can, because the Divine Himself is not just a master but also a slave of Love, and hence ordains as well as serves accordingly.

My Love is stronger than the bonds of Fate:
Our love is the heavenly seal of the Supreme.
I guard the seal against thy (Death's) rending hands.
Love must not cease to live upon the earth;
For Love is the bright link twixt earth and heaven,
Love is the far Transcendent's angel here;
Love is man's lien on the Absolute.
(p. 633)

Love for the human and love for the Divine are not at loggerheads, neither are personal love and impersonal love, but they have a higher complementary synthesis that fulfils both and is the only way to also fulfil the purpose of creation by doing God's work.

For Love must soar beyond the very heavens
And find its secret sense ineffable;
It must change its human ways to ways divine,
Yet keep its sovereignty of earthly bliss.
O Death, not for my heart's sweet poignancy
Nor for my happy body's bliss alone
I have claimed from thee the living Satyavan,
But for his work and mine, our sacred charge.

(p. 633)

8. Calling out *Death*'s Subterfuge and Putting him in his Place

Savitri exposes *Death*'s strategy of using half-truths to twist the bigger picture to serve his treacherous ends ('truth that slays'), and for enjoying the seamy and gloomy representation of reality.

O dark-browed sophist of the universe
Who veilst the Real with its own Idea,
Hiding with brute objects Nature's living face,
Masking eternity with thy dance of death,
Thou hast woven the ignorant mind into a screen
And made of Thought error's purveyor and scribe,
And a false witness of mind's servant sense.
An aesthete of the sorrow of the world,
Champion of a harsh and sad philosophy
Thou hast used words to shutter out the Light
And called in Truth to vindicate a lie.
(p. 621)

She admonishes *Death* for mocking humanity besieged by the darkness but still battling his agents to nurse the heart's secret expedition towards conscious immortality.

O dark ironic critic of God's work,
Thou mockst the mind and body's faltering search
For what the heart holds in a prophet hour
And the immortal spirit shall make its own.
(p. 638)

She reminds him to try his mendacity with weaker, world-weary souls but not the divine emissaries who are here to challenge *Death*'s tenure.

Offer, O King, thy boons to tired spirits
And hearts that could not bear the wounds of Time,
Let those who were tied to body and to mind,
Tear off those bonds and flee into white calm
Crying for a refuge from the play of God.
(p. 647)

She calls out the eventual futility of his imposition of the veil between the original truth and the manifest creation, which is bound to dissolve in the fire of the soul's aspiration and the Divine's response.

The world is not cut off from Truth and God.
In vain thou hast dug the dark unbridgeable gulf,
In vain thou hast built the blind and doorless wall:
Man's soul crosses through thee to Paradise
(p. 648)

Savitri reveals to *Death* his temporary role as the dark mask of the Supreme, and as such, herself, which has been allowed for a bigger game which is unknown to *Death* as he gloats in his seeming power.

O Death, this is the mystery of thy reign.
In earth's anomalous and magic field
Carried in its aimless journey by the sun
Mid the forced marches of the great dumb stars,
A darkness occupied the fields of God,
And Matter's world was governed by thy shape.
Thy mask has covered the Eternal's face
(p. 627-8)

Although God made the world for his delight,
An ignorant Power took charge and seemed his Will
And Death's deep falsity has mastered Life.
(p. 629)

Of God unconscious thou art the dark head,
Of his Ignorance thou art the impenitent sign,
Of its vast tenebrous womb the natural child,
On his immortality the sinister bar.
(p. 656)

Thou art my shadow and my instrument.
I have given thee thy awful shape of dread
And thy sharp sword of terror and grief and pain
To force the soul of man to struggle for light
On the brevity of his half-conscious days.
(p. 666)

9. Outdoing *Death* in Obstinacy

Death is the most ineludibly obstinate force of universal nature, but the divine feminine can and does surpass *Death* in obstinacy, and that is the only way for *Death* to undergo the Yoga by being beaten in own province at his own terms.

Give me back Satyavan, my only lord.
Thy thoughts are vacant to my soul that feels
The deep eternal truth in transient things.
(p. 637)

Savitri reminds *Death* that she knows God's will and all doubts have been cleared up in her thought-scape and heart's vision is unshakeable, and hence *Death*'s attempts at misleading her are futile.

Why dost thou vainly strive with me, O Death,
A mind delivered from all twilight thoughts,
To whom the secrets of the gods are plain?
For now at last I know beyond all doubt,
The great stars burn with my unceasing fire
(p. 638)

Savitri reaffirms her will to change *Death*'s iron law for which he uses man's lethargy as a base and an excuse, but which can be superseded if the immanent Divine is awakened.

I trample on thy law with living feet;
For to arise in freedom I was born.
If I am mighty let my force be unveiled
Equal companion of the dateless powers,
Or else let my frustrated soul sink down
Unworthy of Godhead in the original sleep.
(p. 652)

Savitri reveals her identity as the emanation of the One playing hide and seek in a vast game which includes *Death* for his transformation also, along with the entirety of universal nature.

I am not bound by thought or sense or shape;
I live in the glory of the Infinite,
I am near to the Nameless and Unknowable,
The Ineffable is now my household mate.
(p. 649)

10. Reconciliation of Opposites

Savitri defeats *Death*'s 'either-or' basis of argumentation that is the usual lower mental characteristic, with a 'both-and' basis of a higher synthesis in the complex interplay of forces and positions used by God to goad the evolution.

All contraries are aspects of God's face.
The Many are the innumerable One,
The One carries the multitude in his breast;
He is the Impersonal, inscrutable, sole,
He is the one infinite Person seeing his world

These wide divine extremes, these inverse powers
Are the right and left side of the body of God;
Existence balanced twixt two mighty arms
Confronts the mind with unsolved abysms of Thought.
(p. 656)

Two contraries needed for his great World-task,
Two poles whose currents wake the immense World-Force.
(p. 657)

The highest is concealed in the lowest with its greatest potency, awaiting discovery and conscious release.

Yet in the exact Inconscient's stark conceit,
In the casual error of the world's ignorance…
…A Truth supreme has forced the world to be;
It has wrapped itself in Matter as in a shroud,
A shroud of Death, a shroud of Ignorance.
(p. 658)

11. Effectuating the Death of *Death* and his Transfiguration

The Divine Mother's way is not to forcefully demolish Death but engineer his consent to the Yoga of universal nature. Her presence, courage, tenacity and soul-love have an occult influence on the dark veil that *Death* has shrouded himself in.

She spoke; the boundless members of the god
As if by secret ecstasy assailed,
Shuddered in silence as obscurely stir
Ocean's dim fields delivered to the moon.
Then lifted up as by a sudden wind
Around her in that vague and glimmering world
The twilight trembled like a bursting veil.
(p. 638-639)

After the dialectical battle is won, *Savitri* has to turn up the inward concentration of energy to enter the dreadful inconscient in search of the highest light that is concealed in the lowest ebbs; this is the grimmest and toughest battle.

But now her spirit's flame of conscient force
Retiring from a sweetness without fruit
Called back her thoughts from speech to sit within
In a deep room in meditation's house.
For only there could dwell the soul's firm truth:
Imperishable, a tongue of sacrifice,
It flamed unquenched upon the central hearth
Where burns for the high houselord and his mate
The homestead's sentinel and witness fire
From which the altars of the gods are lit.
(p. 639)

There came a slope that slowly downward sank;
It slipped towards a stumbling grey descent.
(p. 641)

The Divine Mother's love and compassion is such that she consents to bear the gravitational drag of universal nature at its heaviest nadir of doom and despair.

A straining taut and dire besieged her heart;
Heavy her sense grew with a dangerous load,
And sadder, greater sounds were in her ears
(p. 641)

Because of that, in course of the protracted debate with *Savitri*, *Death*'s own outlook softens and becomes more pliable, slowly permeable to the revealed truth.

As if beneath its weight of sterile law
Oppressed by its own obstinate meaningless will,
Disdainful, weary and compassionate,
It kept no more its old intolerant sound
(p. 649)

His form of dread was altered and admitted
Our transient effort at eternity
(p. 650)

He even steps down from his high-horse and begins to voice a reverence towards a higher power, and considers the concession that was earlier inviolable.

Or if she dwells within thy mortal heart,
Show me the body of the living Truth
Or draw for me the outline of her face
That I too may obey and worship her.
Then will I give thee back thy Satyavan.
(p. 655)

Towards the end when *Death* is on his last leg, the incarnate thrusts aside its veil and delivers the mantra to *Death* of his own death/ salvation.

But now, O timeless Mightiness, stand aside
And leave the path of my incarnate Force.
Relieve the radiant God from thy black mask
(p. 666)

When his nature tried to keep clinging to its old law despite the command, he was finally consumed and extinguished by the divine light.

Light like a burning tongue licked up his thoughts,
Light was a luminous torture in his heart,
Light coursed, a splendid agony, through his nerves;
His darkness muttered perishing in her blaze…
…He called to his strength, but it refused his call.
His body was eaten by light, his spirit devoured.
(p. 667)

And then came the moment of Death's Yogic salvation and transmutation which Savitri witnesses as a precursor to sighting the Supreme.

Transfigured was the formidable shape.
His darkness and his sad destroying might
Abolishing for ever and disclosing
The mystery of his high and violent deeds,
A secret splendour rose revealed to sight
Where once the vast embodied Void had stood.
(p. 679)

Death's sombre cowl was cast from Nature's brow;
There lightened on her the godhead's lurking laugh.
(p. 680)

Learnings for the Integral Yoga Sadhaka

Death according to Sri Aurobindo is not merely the disintegration of the body but the disintegration of the consciousness. It represents the propensity to remain unconscious, not just in the medical sense, but in the psycho-spiritual sense, which is the programming script of the inconscient. A death-bound existence is existence in the grapple of nescience or ignorance. To rise in the knowledge and power of consciousness, is to grow from darkness towards the light and is the way to the conquest of death. To grow to light entails the death of egoism after a full soul-individuation from the mass-consciousness of ignorance towards a universalized vessel that can fulfil the unique transcendental intent coded in the soul; it is the ego that ties man down to this lower consciousness which is the domain of death, and the only antidote of egoism is love, love humanly divine and divinely human.

The heart that loved man thrills to the love of God,
A body is his chamber and his shrine.
Then is our being rescued from separateness;
All is itself, all is new-felt in God:
A Lover leaning from his cloister's door
Gathers the whole world into his single breast.
Then shall the business fail of Night and Death
(p. 632-633)

Savitri's tete-a-tete with *Death* offers the Sadhaka helpful guidelines to remember during his own Sadhana while battling the inconscient, remembering all that she has herself gone through and responded.

Cultivation of Immobility

To learn and train to remain absolutely still and unfazed during the intense psychological storms is a great vantage point for soul-mastery. This stance becomes easier as the soul-perception of immortality establishes itself in the *Adhara* with the strengthening integration of the *Antaratman* with its parent *Jivatman* and the intimate knowledge of the time-sequence of the soul-work destined in the divine economy of universal nature. It helps to learn to banish all 'twilight' thoughts and impulses that tend to invade the vulnerable Adhara and dissipate the concentrated energy, create confusion and undermine the determination during lean periods or attacks. Immobility however must not be conflated with *tamas* or the slump of inert subjection which is an opening to *Death*'s downward drag.

He felt the beating life in other men
Invade him with their happiness and their grief;

Their love, their anger, their unspoken hopes
Entered in currents or in pouring waves
Into the immobile ocean of his calm.
(p. 27)

A happiness never lost, the immortal's ease
(p. 673)

Instantaneous Responsiveness

The integrality of union demands not just the peace of the static Self but also the Ananda of the dynamic Self in the *Trigunatita* poise. There has to be lightning-speed response to the divine command when it comes, but a with a sense of repose and calm, even in the flurry and melee of the crossfire of forces that may besiege the *Adhara*. This becomes easier with the activation of the true vital that is able to connect with and draw on the infinite reservoir of the Mother's energy that expels all tardiness and action-hesitancy. Psychic discrimination or *viveka* is indispensable to distinguish between the true call to action from various false commands or red herrings.

I am thy portion here charged with thy work,
As thou myself seated for ever above,
Speak to my depths, O great and deathless Voice,
Command, for I am here to do thy will.
(p. 476)

Amid the swaying Forces in their strife
Sovereign was her word of luminous command,
Her speech like a war-cry rang or a pilgrim chant.
(p. 508)

A favourite and intimate of the Gods
Obeying the divine command to joy,
It was the sovereign of its own delight
And master of the kingdoms of its force.
Assured of the bliss for which all forms were made
(p. 233)

Conviction of certitude

The child of the Divine Mother has to use and deploy the triple armour of faith, will and sincerity during the torturous passage through the jaws of *Death* to bear whatever comes of the self-load and world-

load. Universal nature is currently struggling under Death's vice-grip with its suggestions of incertitude, apathy, cowardice, selfishness and ultimately hopelessness.

It was drawn to hazard's call and danger's charm,
It yearned to the pathos of grief, the drama of pain,
Perdition's peril, the wounded bare escape,
The music of ruin and its glamour and crash,
The savour of pity and the gamble of love
And passion and the ambiguous face of Fate.
A world of hard endeavour and difficult toil,
And battle on extinction's perilous verge,
A clash of forces, a vast incertitude
(p. 455)

The Sadhaka has to face and battle these dark emotions not only for himself but also on behalf of others around and the world as arranged for his soul-purpose in his life situation and zone of impact. Faith offers the 'gleam of hope' even when everything seems irretrievable and adverse, will musters the indefatigable warrior spirit even when down in the dumps, and sincerity creates the opening for the Grace in the crucible for personal transformation as the means for universal transformation. The triple armour coalesces into the rock-solid conviction of certitude that come what may, the divine will ultimately prevail and hence if one's own will is aligned to the All-will, there is nothing to doubt or worry about.

Unmoved by fear and grief and the shocks of Fate
And unalarmed by the breath of fleeting Time
And unbesieged by adverse circumstance,
It breathed in a sweet secure unguarded ease
Free from our body's frailty inviting death,
Far from our danger-zone of stumbling Will.
(p. 233)

Ego-death

The ego is the separative energy-formulation from the inconscient which serves as the initial lever of individualisation of the nature, but which is incompatible with the spiritual life. The ego-desire master-knot has a thousand ways of asserting itself, most of which are stealthy subterranean predilections or circumconscient invasions creeping into the nature without conscious awareness of the Sadhaka until it is too painful or too late to amend or consequence-manage. Within the triplicity of the *gunas*, the ego masquerades in its corresponding lower forms.

The tamasic ego wallows in self-pity, victimhood and world-deprecation and perversely revels in self-flagellation, prolongs the drama of suffering and paints a sombre image of the Divine that becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

I am the Man of Sorrows, I am he
Who is nailed on the wide cross of the universe;
To enjoy my agony God built the earth,
My passion he has made his drama's theme.
He has sent me naked into his bitter world
And beaten me with his rods of grief and pain
That I might cry and grovel at his feet
And offer him worship with my blood and tears
(p. 505-506)

The rajasic ego distorts the indwelling presence and aggrandizes the self-identity into a vitalistic ambition for superhuman status forgetting the god-seed in others whom he seeks to dominate and control. This is what *Death* does in his dialogue with *Savitri*, many times.

I have grown greater than Nature, wiser than God.
I have made real what she never dreamed,
I have seized her powers and harnessed for my work…
…No magic can surpass my magic's skill.
There is no miracle I shall not achieve.
What God imperfect left, I will complete,
Out of a tangled mind and half-made soul
His sin and error I will eliminate;
What he invented not, I shall invent:
He was the first creator, I am the last.
(p. 512)

The Sattvic ego finds itself trapped in its own constructions of virtue and is unable to surpass the mental limitations of reach, integrative incapacity and surrender, thereby compromising its transformative power over the lower members and hijacking its transcendence potential and universality of nuanced acceptance.

Our human knowledge is a candle burnt
On a dim altar to a sun-vast Truth;
Man's virtue, a coarse-spun ill-fitting dress,
Apparels wooden images of Good;

Passionate and blinded, bleeding, stained with mire
His energy stumbles towards a deathless Force.
An imperfection dogs our highest strength;
Portions and pale reflections are our share.
(p. 280-281)

The Sattvic ego is prone to a subtler trap which is more challenging than the tamasic and rajasic ego because of its virtue-shelter and adulation-gratification.

His kindness an investment for return,
His altruism is ego's other face:
He serves the world that him the world may serve.
(p. 507)

An unflagging commitment to self-vigilance on these habitual inclinations with a continual redirection towards the highest power for their removal and redressal is indispensable for ego-effacement. A concomitant and unconditional slavery to the Divine in both his transcendent status as the Master of Nature and his immanent status in other service-worthy *Jiva*'s, helps in progress towards ego-extinction. *Savitri* embodies this in her resolute stance on Satyavan's soul-release, who is not just her partner but also represents the human soul trapped in nature.

Conquest of Craving

The abyss of the inconscient is a primal suction pump that grasps at anything and everything finite to compensate for its perceived absence of the Infinite; much like the astronomical Black Hole from whose gravitational pull even light cannot escape. In the human *Adhara*, this vacuum translates into a perpetual, ravenous craving which the Upanishads refer to as 'Hunger that is Death'.

To fill the aching and disastrous gap
Between earth-pain and the bliss from which Life fell.
A world that ever seeks for something missed,
Hunts for the joy that earth has failed to keep.
Too near to our gates its unappeased unrest
For peace to live on the inert solid globe:
It has joined its hunger to the hunger of earth,
It has given the law of craving to our lives,
It has made our spirit's need a fathomless gulf.
(p. 132)

The Sadhaka has to assiduously scan for all hunger-pangs in himself in various life-situations that challenge his vulnerability, abolish them at their root, desist compensating for one vital desire with another coping mechanism as far as possible, and replace the ensuing voids with the divine afflatus and succour.

Yet some minutest dissident might escape
And still a centre lurk of the blind force.
For the Inconscient too is infinite;
The more its abysses we insist to sound,
The more it stretches, stretches endlessly.
Then lest a human cry should spoil the Truth
He tore desire up from its bleeding roots
And offered to the gods the vacant place.
(p. 318)

All forms of vital craving have to be transmuted to psychic love and eventually supramental love so that the heart, instead of drying up in ascetic bareness and aloofness, is suffused with a universalised compassion, a sincere goodwill, an inexhaustible service-availability and the perfect marriage of love with power.

On the body's longings grew heaven-rapture's flower
And made desire a pure celestial flame
(p. 665)

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.
(p. 532)

Cadence with Death

The intrepid Sadhaka will have to enter the psychological realm of death in waking state and face it with all attendant manifestations of unpredictability, desolation, despondency, angst, helplessness, spacetime-panic, brink-walk terror, dread and grief.

A formless void oppressed his struggling brain,
A darkness grim and cold benumbed his flesh,
A whispered grey suggestion chilled his heart;
Haled by a serpent-force from its warm home
And dragged to extinction in bleak vacancy

Life clung to its seat with cords of gasping breath;
Lapped was his body by a tenebrous tongue.
Existence smothered travailed to survive;
Hope strangled perished in his empty soul,
Belief and memory abolished died
And all that helps the spirit in its course.
There crawled through every tense and aching nerve
Leaving behind its poignant quaking trail
A nameless and unutterable fear.
(p. 218)

The brooding on *Death* and the perception of its Damocles sword-like hovering presence with the menacing threat of the unexpected, is a seemingly unending but necessary passage to conjure the call for the Divine's Presence and Power into the deepest recesses of the being with an intensity and tenacity that may not be possible without this constant threat.

There thought and life were a long punishment,
The breath a burden and all hope a scourge,
The body a field of torment, a massed unease;
Repose was a waiting between pang and pang.
(p. 227-228)

Armed with or in invited anticipation of that descending power, the soul must then turn to transmute its pangs into mystic swords and its tears into pearls of strength.

Against the evil at life's afflicted roots,
Her own calamity its private sign,
Of her pangs she made a mystic poignant sword.
A solitary mind, a world-wide heart,
To the lone Immortal's unshared work she rose.
(p. 8-9)

Concentrated Osmosis

Kaliyuga is the age of the direct working of Spirit in matter, for which the Sadhaka has to combine the *Shudra*-like slavery to the Divine with the *Mahasaraswati*-like execution perfection. The Devil-in-the-detail has to make way for the Divine-in-the-detail, so to speak, wherein spiritual perfection is not at the cost of, but at the service of, material perfection.

The Adhara has to be pure and strong to install, retain and intensify the dynamic presence of the *Mahashakti*. The last vestiges of subconscient fear, doubt and impatience have to be expelled under the pressure of the Mother's presence from every nook and corner. The presence has to reach the outer extremities of the nature (finger tips of the digits, symbolically) to leave no stone unturned in the transmutation, so that *Death* has no foothold left.

Earth's doubting future hides our heritage:
The Light now distant shall grow native here,
The Strength that visits us our comrade power;
The Ineffable shall find a secret voice,
The Imperishable burn through Matter's screen
Making this mortal body godhead's robe.
(p. 110)

The Supramental *Karmayoga* requires a fully functional *Trigunatita* status wherefrom the subjective self-concentration in divine absorption inward leads to self-expansion of divine conscious force outward for objective results in changing Nature's outdated laws. Concentrated (re)direction of the presence/ force to remove all obstacles will be necessary in the universalized subtle field; every new force invoked during an exigency adds to the new (re)creation of oneself and the world, instant to instant. The Sadhaka's *Adhara* will be the occult vessel for this cosmo-cellular osmosis.

A Magician's formulas have made Matter's laws
And while they last, all things by them are bound;
But the spirit's consent is needed for each act
And Freedom walks in the same pace with Law.
All here can change if the Magician choose.
(p. 457)

The Everywhere-Always Perception:

The hazardous courtship with *Death* is both necessitated and handled by the perception, not merely conception, of the Divine's action in everything and all the time, whether veiled or unveiled, whether in trepidant apprehension or in the process of dawning comprehension, whether in oneself and in others.

An absolute supernatural darkness falls
On man sometimes when he draws near to God:
An hour arrives when fail all Nature's means
(p. 11)

And saw her hand in every circumstance
And felt her touch in every limb and cell
(p. 529)

The audacious adventurer of consciousness ventures into the proverbial ogre's den, both in deep solidarity with his fellow souls who are floundering there, and also in a wager with himself on sighting the immanency of the Supreme even in the darkest corners of the cosmos.

Because he is there the Inconscient does its work,
Because he is there the world forgets to die.
(p. 681)

To meet me in the abyss and on the heights,
To feel me in the tempest and the calm,
And love me in the noble and the vile,
In beautiful things and terrible desire.
The pains of hell shall be to thee my kiss,
The flowers of heaven persuade thee with my touch.
(p. 700)

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