

## The Manifestations of Sound of Silence in R.N. Tagore's *Gitanjali* and the Power of Soundless Words in Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*: A Comparative Study

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### Abstract

This paper foregrounds the effective use of the theme of silence in the two Indian literary masterpieces viz. Tagore's *Gitanjali* and Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*. Firstly, it makes a critical discussion on the philosophical notions of silence quoting Kierkegaard as he says it is essentially a spiritual state that helps establishing relationship between God and human being. Then, the Hindu philosophical views have been focused critically quoting lines from the *Gita*, the *Upanishads*, and the writings of both Adishankara and Raman Maharshi that advocate silence to be the state of trance providing eternal happiness obtained after profound introspection, meditation, ultimate realization and gaining spiritual attainment or enlightenment. Both Tagore and Aurobindo have vividly used the tenets of silence very much attributed to their characters as well as the narrative perspectives of their writings. Silence is apparent in them in terms of the value of both the ethereal as well as spiritual forms. It is noticed that they carry on the threads of their writings by making us realize the silence of five categories and concepts. They are the silence of the natural elements like the forest, sea, hills, valleys, etc.; five ethereal elements like earth, water, air, fire, and the sky; the silence of cosmic elements like darkness, light, the stars, the planets, and the space; the silence of personal elements like heart and mind, tolerance, efforts, thoughts, intuitions, and looks. What is more, they philosophize the silence of soul and the glorification of the supreme soul—the absolute and the relative; and the silence of the mystics and the mysteries that abounds the matrix of the communion between the Creator and the creation. Finally, lines from William Wordsworth's "Address to Silence" have been quoted to examine the uniformity of thoughts and approaches towards the theme of silence.

**Keywords:** silence, spiritual state, philosophical views, natural, cosmic, personal, soul, mystics

## Introduction

Silence as a word is normally interpreted as lack of sound. It refers to the state of being calm or still or meditative. There are lots of rhetorical and pragmatic interpretations of silence made such as a person is dead can be termed as obtaining eternal silence. There are popular sayings like “Speech is silver, silence golden.” Or “Silent is consent” or “Silence is the best answer” or “Silence is wisdom’s best reply,” etc. Silence has profound philosophical and spiritual implications both in philosophy and literature. From a spiritual perspective, quoting Soren Kierkegaard (1813–1855), Kobierzycki (2013) says that silence is considered as a relation between God and human being. In his opinion, what was divine in the man can only be expressed in silence. Human being is created out of speech and silence, a binary state of that which is divine and mundane. He adds that human life is an algorithm of images and thoughts, of the silence’s speech.

## Explaining Silence in Terms of Hindu Philosophy

There are several potential references regarding silence in the *Gita*, the *Upanishads*; and there are explanations of the great intellectuals like Adishankar too. In *TheGita*, it is said that:

*aṇḍo damayatām asmi nītir asmi jigīṣhatām  
maunaṁ chaivāsmi guhyānām jñānaṁ jñānavatām aham. (10.38)*

It says in relation to the law of nature that I am just punishment amongst means of preventing lawlessness, and guiding principles for those who seek victory. Amongst secrets, I am silence, and in the wise I am their wisdom. *Maitri Upanishad* says that there is something beyond our mind which abides in silence within our mind. It is the supreme mystery beyond thought. Let the mind and subtle body rest upon that and not rest on anything else. In Hindu philosophy, *mauna* (Silence), which has a voice of its own, synonymously known as peace of mind, inner quietude, Samadhi, and the Absolute Reality. The Hindu texts insist upon proper understanding of silence by experiencing it through control of speech and practice. Ramana Maharshi in the 6th paragraph of *Nān Yār* reminds us that:

Only after firmly establishing our mind in our heart will our primal thought "I" which is the root of all thoughts disappear for the ever-existing real self to shine; the place (innermost core of our being) devoid of even a little trace of our primal thought "I" is *svarupa* (our own essential self) which alone is called *mauna* (silence), it is the state of egolessness. The sensitive mind ready to receive the subtlest intimation of *Brahman* responds to the voice of silence. The mind liberated from even the attribute of *sattva* must stand in front of utter silence. The state of absorptive concentration named *Samadhi* is the boundless ocean of silence. (Happiness of Being)

### **Attribute-less *Brahman* Denoted by Silence**

*Brahma Sutras* III.ii.17, Sankara tells that:

Silence is that Self. Silence is Awareness, it is the *atman*, the Self (*Mundaka Upanishad* II.ii.6). The absolutistic interpretation is that silence is the genuine teaching about the ultimate Reality, because the Absolute is beyond the scope of speech and thought. True transcendence is also silence, but not the silence that is opposed to movement or change because its inherent nature is not disturbed. True transcendence is not the silence of death benumbing the creative flow of life but the silence of which both death and immortality are equal shadows — यस्यच्छायामृतंयस्यमृत्युः (*Rig Veda* X.121.2).

Yama tells Naciketa (*Katha Upanishad* I.iii.13) that:

The discriminating mind should merge the organ of speech into the mind; he who has extracted and tasted the real essence enjoys true happiness in total silence and all alone united with the source and protecting it (*Rig Veda* I.79.3). Sankara also refers to silence as the indescribable nature of *Brahman* is meant to be felt somewhere deep within. It is of far greater magnitude than mere looking into one's own mind, far more acute than even the sharpest intellect that can ever read into and decipher its codes. This silence compels the framing of questions, and by itself is the answer not merely in the sound of speech that covers it and reaches the ears. Rishi Ayasya. (*Rig Veda* IX.46.2)

## A Brief Review of Western Theories of Silence

According to Plato (429?–327 BCE), “Silence is the distinguishing feature of a sacred place (*Phaedrus* 238c) and the condition for a mystery situation that causes anxiety or religious ecstasy, as well as divine speech (*The Republic* 394a)” (qtd in Kobierzycki). Wittgenstein (1889–1951) considers philosophically silence as a state of transcendence and it is often mystical. Silence accommodates:

...peaceful accord with other persons or communion with the cosmos. It reveals a beautiful combination of peace and curiosity when we feel a sense of oneness with what we see. We quietly accept the unknown but want to know more.  
([www.convisioning.com](http://www.convisioning.com))

The theoretical framework of this work thus is based on the notions of Indian concepts of silence understood as the “wisdom of the wise;” “that inculcates supreme mystery;” “inner quietude” bringing about *samadhi*; *mauna*, i.e., a manifestation of “I;” the awareness of *atman*; “religious ecstasy;” “a state of transcendence;” and “often mystical.” In the context of foregrounding silence in literary writings, Indian classics such as R.N. Tagore (1861–1941) and Sri Aurobindo (1872–1950) excel in their mediocre artistry, meditative, in-depth and intellectual subtlety presenting the glories and glimpses of silence(s) in its different philosophical manifestations by leaving an indelible print in the heart of the august readers those who are in pursuit of the mystery as well as the mastery of the spiritual craft in the microcosmic reality of this creation—its being and becoming.

Following the lines of textual analysis outlined by Hawkins, it deals with a methodology that involves understanding language, symbols, and/or imageries present in the texts to obtain meaning.

### The Manifestations of the Joy of Silence in Tagore’s *Gitanjali*

Tagore’s *Gitanjali* (1912) is apparently based on the Vedantic notion of complete devotion to God, who is omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent. The poet has become totally absorbed in

an emotional note of surprise as he uses the phrase “silent amazement” (Chapter 3, *Gitanjali*) as a pantheist to find that flow of eternal note of music the soul sung by the master. When nature is alive in summer and passes a serene and tranquil moment all the way at his window; bees are busy plying; groves look flowery, the poet says that it is better to realize the potential of the supreme soul as he says, “Now it is time to sit quiet, face to face with thee” (Chapter 5, *Gitanjali*). He feels blessed with the rejoicing of the world in festivities. This celebration is for glorifying the Creator in which he must get deeply involved himself fully engaging from sensual self to spiritual self all along till he gets exalted to get a chance of meeting the Creator and “offer thee my silent salutation” (Chapter 16, *Gitanjali*). The poet as a seeker of the supreme soul feels that even if the master does not speak, then “I will fill my heart with thy silence and endure it” (Chapter 19, *Gitanjali*), because he knows that if he keeps still and waits “like the night with starry vigil,” then in the morning “the darkness will vanish, and thy voice pour down in golden streams breaking through the sky” (Chapter 19, *Gitanjali*). Also, in the rainy season in July, the poet feels the presence of the Creator as his best friend, as best beloved and lets his gates open for his visit. His “gates of conscience and consciousness are open in the pretext of complete surrender of him.” He would feel “thou walkest, silent as night, eluding all watchers” (Chapter 22, *Gitanjali*) to the house of the poet whose gates are always open for the master. The poet realizes the depth of darkness which is associated with silence. He wants to go without carrying even the shadow of self because he wants to be completely devoid of any possession while meeting the lord, a complete non-existent entity. When the poet comes out, “alone on my way to my tryst,” he happens to come across “the silent dark,” and he cannot “avoid his presence but I escape him not” (Chapter 30, *Gitanjali*).

He realizes that the Creator has the ability to create storm; can prevail darkness all over, or make the sky full of lightening. So, he is ready to accept whatever the Creator sends down to his creation. However, since he realizes that the Creator has the capacity to bring about all pervasive silence, he invokes the lord to bring silence all over with the grace of downpour just like the sympathy of mother over the wrath of father. He identifies in lord, the presence of sound and silence in tune with the creator, the preserver and the destroyer as mentioned in the following lines that:

Send thy angry storm, dark with death, if it is thy wish, and with lashes of lightning startle the sky from end to end.

But call back, my lord, **call back this pervading silent heat**, still and keen  
And cruel, burning the heart with dire despair. (Chapter 40)

Since the poet has accepted the lord as his soul companion, he feels like sailing along with him on a pilgrimage which is going to be an eternal one, full of spiritual joy in visiting shoreless ocean, continuous melody of silence which inculcates the eternal freedom of self and soul too. He further adds that:

Early in the day it was whispered that we should sail in a boat, only thou and I, and never a soul in the world would know of this our pilgrimage to no country and to no end. In that shoreless ocean, at **thy silently listening** smile my songs would swell in melodies, free as waves, free from all bondage of words.  
(Chapter 42, *Gitanjali*)

He draws a metaphor of morning, full of silence which is indicative of meditative moment which is slowly broken with the chirping of birds, merry blossoms, and golden embroidered patches of cloud in the rising sun shine.

The morning sea of **silence broke into ripples** of bird songs; and the flowers were all merry by the roadside; and the wealth of gold was scattered through the rift of the clouds while we busily went on our way and paid no heed.  
(Chapter 48, *Gitanjali*)

Here, the poet is devoid of desire. He has a complete trust on the lord. As a result, he does not want anything from him. It is because he himself and all his wants are merged within the body of the Creator. Thus, he remains silent to see him goodbye and thus writes:

I asked nothing from thee; I uttered not my name to thine ear. When thou took'st thy leave **I stood silent.**(Chapter 54, *Gitanjali*)

Then, he feels that there is no use showing light to the light-giver. In the silence of night, he feels the presence of light in the form of illumination of insight and says:

I stood alone among tall grasses and watched the timid flame of her lamp  
uselessly drifting in the tide. **In the silence of gathering night**, I asked her,  
“Maiden, your lights are all lit—then where do you go with your lamp?  
(Chapter 64, *Gitanjali*)

He also appreciates the systems of the creation in which the cyclic process includes appearance and disappearance of colours, sounds, and odours; light and darkness coming with a sense of serenity of celebration and commitment that they have made before the Creator to crown the earth.

Thou art the sky and thou art the nest as well.  
O thou beautiful, there in the nest it is thy love that encloses the soul with  
colours and sounds and odours.  
There comes the morning with the golden basket in her right hand bearing the  
wreath of beauty, **silently to crown the earth**. (Chapter 67, *Gitanjali*)

Standing before the lord face to face is the greatest moment of meeting just as the meeting of the soul with the supreme soul. It is a paradox for the poet that he realizes at heart that wherever he stands belongs to the lord—the vast sky with solitude and silence is the umbrella under which the poet would like to stand is but the creation of the lord too. He reveals by saying:

Day after day, O lord of my life, shall I stand before thee face to face. With  
folded hands, O lord of all worlds, shall I stand before thee face to face.  
**Under thy great sky in solitude and silence**, with humble heart shall I stand  
before thee face to face. (Chapter 76, *Gitanjali*)

While taking an unceasing search for the lost star, the other stars smile and whisper among themselves providing highest aesthetic relish in the deepest silence of night:

Only in **the deepest silence of night** the stars smile and whisper among  
Themselves—“Vain is this seeking! Unbroken perfection is over all!”  
(Chapter 78, *Gitanjali*)

The poet at times has the unique, primitive, and desolated spiritual experience as engineered by nature herself. He finds the still and silent air, vagrant spring breeze blows all along the deities with gifts of tiding flowers.

The bells in the evening proclaim not your time of worship. **The air is still  
and silent about you.**

In your desolate dwelling comes the vagrant spring breeze. (Chapter 88, *Gitanjali*)

He at times feels as if the lord acts as his comrade, faithful enough to take care of his daily chore. Although he was unable to understand the meaning of his master’s songs, still then, he remembers its tunes and rejoice over its cadence to which even the silent stars gaze at.

The world with eyes bent upon thy feet stands in awe with all its **silent stars.**  
(Chapter 97, *Gitanjali*)

Nature has numerous mysteries in itself and for all these, the lord is responsible. The mystery of the sucking of honey from the lotus is one such mystery. The poet feels that all these are noticed by the creator with a smile and at times “summon me in silence.” There is continuous influx of the stream of devotion towards the Creator as he says:

From the blue sky an eye shall gaze upon me and **summon me in silence.**  
(Chapter 98, *Gitanjali*)



We in the creation get crushed in the currents and cross-currents of life. We struggle to survive; go on doing this and that; and get confused over the petty matters—performing the roles of either as winners or losers. But, as a matter of fact, there is nothing as such for the creator. It silently puts up with defeat.

What there is to do will be instantly done. Vain this struggle.

Then take away your hands and **silently put up with your defeat....**

(Chapter 99, *Gitanjali*)

The prayer before the formless is called for the tuning of silence. The attempt to dive deep into the ocean in search for the pearl is also a formless quest in silence.

I dive down into the depth of the ocean of forms, hoping to gain the perfect pearl of the formless.

...I shall tune it to the notes of forever, and, when it has sobbed out its last utterance, **lay down my silent harp at the feet of the silent.**

(Chapter 100, *Gitanjali*).

Tagore's *Gitanjali* has elevated the sense of silence providing the reader a deeper aesthetic relish.

### **The Power of the Soundless Words in Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri***

Following is the extract from Sri Aurobindo's Introductory Note on *Savitri*:

The tale of Satyavan and Savitri is recited in *The Mahabharata* as a story of Conjugal love conquering death. But this legend is, as shown by many features of the human tale, one of the many symbolic myths of the Vedic cycle. Satyavan is the soul carrying the divine truth of being within itself, but descended into the grip of death and ignorance; Savitri is the Divine Word, daughter of the Sun, goddess of the supreme Truth who comes down and is born to save; Aswapati, the Lord of the Horse, her human father, is the Lord of Tapasya, the concentrated energy of

spiritual endeavour that helps us to rise from the mortal to the immortal planes; Dyumatsena, Lord of the Shining Hosts, father of Satyavan, is the Divine Mind here fallen blind, losing its celestial kingdom of vision, and through that loss its kingdom of glory. Still this is not a mere allegory, the characters are not personified qualities, but incarnations or emanations of living and conscious Forces with whom we can enter into concrete touch and they take human bodies in order to help man and show him the way from his mortal state to a divine consciousness and immortal life. (Author's Note, *Savitri*)

The first book begins with a description of the dawn of the day on which Satyavan was destined to die. And the second section introduces Savitri to us and we know that in some sense Savitri is an extraordinary person emphasizing on silence. The poet introduces the spiritual dawn saying:

...the inert black quietude' of night. Barring the path of the Divine Manifestation, there lies immobile upon the bosom of **Silence the mind of Night**. Alone in the stretch of timelessness the mind of Night is huge and portending. (*Savitri* 3)

This part also reflects on Savitri as the symbol of cosmic beauty and grandeur present 'In a deep cleft of silence twixt two realms' (*Savitri* 9) who remains unaffected by grief.

Then, we get closer to Savitri. The poet explains to us why it is that you and I should be concerned with this person, her life's struggle, her life's problem, her destiny. That is why this canto is called "The Issue." Thus, the poet finds it apt to say on her destined day that while recollecting the sweet and bitter memories, she happens to be the victim of "**silent shadow of doom**" (*Savitri* 11). Savitri knows exactly one year to live with Satyavan. The gravity of the situation heightens 'the stature of the spirit' to become "The genius of **titanic silences**" (*Savitri* 14).

However, Savitri is the princess of ecstasies, she has "**A heart of silence** in the hands of joy" (*Savitri* 15) making her creative searching for possibilities rather than impossibilities. Her

character traits manifest “the stillness and the word” (*Savitri* 16)—“An ocean of self-diffusing peace” and she possesses:

The strength, **the silence of gods** were hers.

At once she was the stillness and the word. (*Savitri* 16)

She possesses no ego; never affected by the earthly possessions; she goes deep into

A world unseen, unknown by outward mind,

Appeared in **the silent spaces of the soul**. (*Savitri* 27)

This recurrent theme of the unknown stillness continues while portraying Ashwapati as the poet says is the presence of spiritual force which brings about transformation by gleaming into the “endless corridors,” “Silent and listening in **the silent heart**” (Book 1, “The Book of Beginnings,” *Savitri* 28). The poet feels the presence of ultimate truth on the “cosmic surfaces” heard “Only mid and **omniscient silence**” (*Savitri* 29) when the heart is intuitive.

He finds that his mind is not anymore confined to be the “earthly mind.” It is elevated to a stage in which he attains “a vision that surpasses forms, Into a living that surpasses life” only through “**A power of seeing silence**” (*Savitri* 32). Where peace prevails and awaits for the “Unconceived” to come alone, there is no need of any voice or any form to come “There only were **Silence and the Absolute**” to be present which can help express the truth which was once inexpressible—it turns out to be “a self-revealing voice” (*Savitri* 34).

Knowledge comes flowing firmly forming “the Eternal’s realm” a place of “safety in the Silence and the Ray” which is “Immutable” and brings about “A poised serenity of tranquil strength” and “unaltered peace” (*Savitri* 36). Silence has the power to illumine in order to be a visionary as the poet says, “Inspired by silence and the closed eyes’ sight” (*Savitri* 36), the feeling of deep spirituality leads to “wordless thoughts;” brings stillness; shines like “A crystal of the ultimate Absolute” and expresses truth by “**silence to the silent soul**” (*Savitri* 38). The “silent Power” helps us realize a mystic vision in which one can visit the “Still regions of

imperishable Light” and can realize “...calm immensities of spirit space” (Canto 4, “The Secret of Knowledge,” *Savitri* 47). It is as a matter of fact of ultimate spiritual realization that he emphatically says that when human being becomes increasingly spiritually conscious and opens up all the avenues of mind inviting the true knowledge comes in illuminating, it in fact comes “Invading from **spiritual silences**” (*Savitri* 48).

Our mind as a physical entity may have ignorance and therefore would like to perpetuate whatever condition it finds itself. But, once you turn your attention to the inner being, there is no accident in life. Wherever the horse of human mind runs, it cannot go beyond the “...the **silence of the hills** of God” (*Savitri* 54). While advocating unity in the being, the poet says that Self constitutes spirit and nature in an organic form “In the unchanging **Silence white and nude**” (*Savitri* 57), and it rejoices in “the solitude of the thoughts of God.” He continues his description of the fact that the spiritual forces are not subject to barter and bribery. They are unmoved by the so-called hue and cry which forsakes human being. “They are guardians of **the silence of truth**...keepers of immutable decree” (*Savitri* 57).

The Creator has nothing to show off. His name is enough, and what is more, “**His silence is his signature to her deeds.**” This means that *prakriti* and *purusha* are inseparable and mutually exclusive in carrying out the cosmic drama in the cycle of creation, continuation, and destruction (*Savitri* 64). Her activities make us move and feel the life. Her omnipresent self is distinctly visible and “Her Word that in the silence speaks to our hearts, Her **silence that transcendence the summit Word**” (*Savitri* 64).

The praise for the Creator comes out from the poet in multiple ways as he finds him to be “The Absolute, the Perfect, the Alone, Has entered with his silence into space,” who has fashioned countless creatures and million figures. He himself is the space as well as time. (*Savitri* 67). The creator makes us realize the truth being the Truth himself; makes us realize the play being the Player himself; the thought of each of us being the sole Thinker; and “He is the many who was the silent One” (*Savitri* 68). He is beyond the geographical boundary; outside of multitudinous cries; and “Across the rapt **unknowable silences**” (*Savitri* 71).

Aswapati achieved greatness only by going to the height of self and soul making “The Silence was his sole companion left” (Book1, Canto5) and remained unaffected by earthly influences and is able to reach infinity with his invisible wings of knowledge of the lord. Thus, he passed beyond “The **Immobile’s ocean-silence**” just like “An arrow leaping through eternity” (*Savitri*79). The potent soul can see “the unseen,” and do “the impossible” and also “It moves events by its bare silent will” (*Savitri*85). In such an ecstatic system, “The music born in **Matter’s silences**” matching with fathomless meanings which was held “but could not voice” (*Savitri*89). Immortality surged through the “Acts that brought out from Silence its dumb sense,” and the universal power acted upon the sublimity of her (*Savitri*95). The Creator is “A formless Stillness,” “a nameless Light,” and an “immobile Ray” which is present “Around him the **eternal Silences**” (*Savitri* 102).

Passing beyond the subtle physical realms, Aswapati enters into the domains of Life. He travels in the vast spreading before him, their horizons ever receding. There is no fixity anywhere, all is in a flux. He finds:

Some glimmer of the Transcendent’s hem was there.  
 Across the white **aeonic silences**, Immortal figures of embodied joy.  
 (*Savitri*123)

While introducing the awakening of divinity in him, the poet says:

The poised inconscience shaken with a touch,  
 The **intuitive silence** trembling with a name (*Savitri* 129).

The empty space supported “by the silence of the Void” (*Savitri* 154) contains the visible shapes and appear in the “eternal consciousness.” “A Silence listening to the cry of life,” (*Savitri* 160) leads towards eternal stillness.

In BookII, silence helps him get rid of “his life pain” and “He is saved by her silence from his rack of self,” the one possessed with “tranquil beauty” and always blissful (*Savitri* 165).

Sri Aurobindo is going to take us from this present reality of our limitations, into the possibility of the immense through “A work is done in the **deep silences**” (*Savitri* 170).

The poet realizes that life is of greater height and the seeker of “some highest light.” “It can feel the Silence that absolves the soul” (*Savitri*179) in order to achieve beauty and truth. Although the influence of the Soul is clear on this plane and not confused and hidden by other lower influences like it is on earth, beings on this world can still choose to submit to that influence or disregard it. The poet presents it as:

Across a luminous dream of spirit-space  
She builds creation like a rainbow bridge  
Between the original **Silence and the Void**. (*Savitri* 182)

Aswapati is accepted as “A comrade of Silence on her austere heights” (*Savitri* 190). He is bestowed with attributes from his “spiritual home,” “But stopped half-way and failed, a silent world” (*Savitri*197). This illusion brings him many “invaders,” and this made “In silence the audible voices spoke” (*Savitri*204) of the imposing of “a law of sin.” While feeling the healing touch of the eternal force, it is accompanied by “A single and infallible look comes down, A **silent touch** from the supernal’s air” (*Savitri*272). Here, he gives a maximum credential to truth by saying:

Above the parting of the roads of Time,  
Above the Silence and its thousand-fold Word,  
In the immutable and inviolate Truth,  
Forever united and inseparable.... (*Savitri* 282)

In the plan of God, “A seeing Self and potent Energy met;” whereas “The Silence” (*Savitri*284) was fully aware so that it supplemented thought to took form leading to the victory of the Self and the Silence in the cosmos in inculcating peace and true knowledge. “**The silent Soul** of all the world...” and it is alive being “Transfigured into divine and pure” (*Savitri* 291).

Then, it is found that the spirit of Aswapati wanders “from state to state” and finally “Finds here the silence of its starting-point” (*Savitri*294). His soul is drunk with “a deep golden spiritual wine” (*Savitri*296) and thus surrenders before the creator all his knowledge and achievements “of his **silent heart**” (*Savitri*296) and “He stood in a realm of **boundless silences**” waiting for the “Voice” of the Creator of “the worlds.” God’s truth is purely spiritual and full of “sea of happiness” that comes “Out of the **neutral silence of his soul**” (*Savitri*298). The voice of the creator is reverberated “On peaks where Silence listens with still heart” and perceives the rhythm of the “rolling worlds” (*Savitri*299). From the soul-state, Aswapati returns to the surface. He stands in a **realm of Silence**, alone and still. At the end of his search, Aswapati finds that all his Knowledge ends in an Unknowable. A Silence in the form of “**Being’s silence**” (*Savitri*307) settles on his striving heart. “Life’s question met by its silence died on her lips” (*Savitri*308) and the sense is swallowed up. But that is not the end. This escape is not the crown for the labours of the soul; the soul has a purpose to fulfil, a mystery to solve. The silence and the release is only a gate on the Journey. “Self’s **vast spiritual silence** occupies Space” (*Savitri*310) and soul “has reached the **boundless silence of the self**” (*Savitri*310). He tries to give an ultimate sense regarding the “great mysterious world” that “In **absolute silence** sleeps an absolute Power” (*Savitri*311). The infinite and the absolute are realized in terms of “**the silence of the ultimate Calm**” (*Savitri*312). This is how the purpose of the soul can be realized and mystery can be solved. Then, the Divine Mother, stands at the head of Time, she is “The luminous heart of the Unknowable” (*Savitri*314), consisting of “A power of silence in the depths of God” (*Savitri*314). All Nature calls to her alone. She is the Way and She is the Goal. Her rapture fills the limbs of Aswapati; all his seekings are fulfilled in Her. The meditative mind brings thoughts “In the mind’s silence the Transcendent acts” (*Savitri*, 315).

In Book II, “The House of the Spirit and the New Creation,” Aswapati now turns to the Source of all being. In the utter silence of his soul, he aspires for the Strength that is not of the earth but of the Truth. Aswapati realizes that “The world was silent for a cyclic hour....No voice came down from the high Silences, None answered from her desolate solitudes. A stillness of cessation reigned...” (*Savitri*322). The thought abounds “A word, a laughter, sprang from Silence’s breast, A rhythm of Beauty in the calm of Space, A knowledge in the fathomless heart of Time” (*Savitri*325).

Suddenly, Aswapati finds that there is a stir “Amid the lifeless **silence of the Void**” (*Savitri* 334). A sound comes quivering, an influence approaches and a mystic Form envelops Aswapathy’s earthly form. The Divine Mother whom he has worshipped is now before him and all of him flows to her. Then something moves on the distant border of the calm; a gentle wave of earthly sound of notes of grief and joy glides in. The depths of Silence are opened up and the moveless and stillness yields to the incoming mortal breath; the trance breaks as the mind wakes as he says, “Unlocked was the deep glory of Silence’ heart; The absolute unmoving stillnesses’ (*Savitri* 347).

In Part2 of the epic that is “The Birth and Childhood of the Flame” (Book4, Canto1), there is a description of a deep and vast silence follows the earth in her uncontrollably rapid course; she is in communion with the Soul born in Space. Under the unfathomed stillness of the stars, the earth moves towards some event not yet unveiled, “A vast immutable silence with her ran” (Book 4, Canto1, *Savitri* 349) her rhythm measuring the revolution of Time.

While reflecting on the child Savitri, the embodied divine flame, grows up in a land lavishly endowed by Nature:

Silence swallowing life’s acts into the deeps  
And surrounded with the silence of her deeps  
(*Savitri* 366)

A similar tone is echoed further as the poet write:

O **rubies of silence**, lips from which there stole  
Low laughter, music of tranquility....  
(*Savitri* 374)



Savitri's mind is occupied with the strangeness of the scenes opening before her as she drives her chariot "...large immune entangled silences" (*Savitri*, 380). The poet here mentions that Savitri is an embodiment of many virtues associate with silence:

The rhythm of the intenser wordless Thought,  
That gathers in the silence behind life, (*Savitri* 380)

x x x

They reached the oneself in all through boundless love.  
Attuned to Silence and to the world-rhyme... (*Savitri* 381)

x x x

Their speech, their silence was a help to earth. (*Savitri* 383).

x x x

A mind remembering ancient silences (*Savitri* 384)

Then, in Book Five titled *The Book of Love*, Satyavan first addresses Savitri saying:

O thou who hast come to me out of the distant **Time's silences** (*Savitri*400)

While describing their forest kingdom as well as introducing himself, he says that forestis: "Screened by the tall ranks of these **silent kings**" (*Savitri*402). This is further emphasized by the lines: "In Nature's green unhuman loneliness, Surrounded by **enormous silences**" (*Savitri*402). This subsequently forms a deep impression "Against the vesper sky became a song, of evening to the **silence of my soul**" (*Savitri*405). The union of both is like the joining the two halves of Love "In the silence and murmur of that emerald world" (*Savitri*411).

In Book6, section "The Word of Fate," the poet talks of the soul of Satyavan which is like "Retreating into **dewy silences**" (*Savitri*418) and "A **silence waking to a hymn of joy**" (*Savitri* 419) and "Pure like a stream that kisses **silent banks**" (*Savitri* 430). The poet gives a delicate deliberation regarding the meeting between Satyavan and Savitri dealing with the critical juncture of life and death by saying that all sit in silence and peer into the face of Fate, as if to discover what she holds in store for Savitri (*Savitri*436). The poet in Canto 2 titled "The Way of

Fate and the Problem of Pain” mentions brilliantly: “A silence sealed the irrevocable decree...” (*Savitri* 437). All these tragic events in time are watched by a profound Silence which is the very essence of the Spirit as he says, “An awful Silence watches tragic Time” (*Savitri* 444) and “All rose from the silence, all goes back to its hush”(Savitri 450). The truth-conscious world gets “Awaking its silence to immortal thoughts...” (*Savitri* 451). Savitri then stands in the firmament of the huge world, ready to rewrite her destiny. In this context, the poet says that Savitri must either conquer all by herself alone, or fall alone “In that tremendous silence lone and lost, Of a deciding hour in the world’s fate” (*Savitri* 461).

In Book 7, “The Book of Yoga,” Canto1 titled ‘The Joy of Union; the Ordeal of the Foreknowledge of Death and the Heart’s Grief and Pain,’ he says that:

At night she woke through the slow silent hours  
 Brooding on the treasure of his bosom and face... (*Savitri*471)  
 x x x x x  
 She pressed the out surging grief back into her breast  
**To dwell within silent**, unhelped, alone. (*Savitri*472)

In *The Parable of the Search for the Soul*, he says that Savitri sits sleepless through the slow, heavy night, repressing the grief in her heart “As in the vigilance of the sleepless night, Through the slow heavy-footed silent hours...” (*Savitri* 474). But her meditative resolution leads her to the highest level of inspiration in order to strengthen her soul:

**In silence seek God’s meaning** in thy depths,  
 Then mortal nature change to the divine. (*Savitri* 476)

In Canto Four of Book7 titled *The Triple Soul-Forces*, she meets a Woman with a bright face who is sitting on a rugged ground with a sharp and wounding stone beneath her feet. She embodies divine pity, for she is a spirit touched by the grief of all that lives in the world. She is the Mother of Seven Sorrows. In between, the poet uses phrases such as “Death’s silence leave...” (*Savitri*5 13) and introduces the spiritual force saying:

I am silence mid the noisy tramp of life;  
 I am Knowledge poring on her cosmic map.  
 (*Savitri* 515)

In Canto5 titled *The Finding of the Soul*, “Day came, priest of a sacrifice of joy, Into the worshipping silence of her world” (*Savitri* 523). In Canto6, that is *Nirvana and the Discovery of the All-Negating Absolute*, the poet says that it is autumn. Savitri is happy and she knows the aim of her being. All around her feel the charm of her inner change and receive a heightening impulsion. Even grief finds solace in her proximity. Savitri no more sees the shadow of Fate above Satyavan’s head. He is luminous and shares her joy always as he says:

A rolling surge of silent death, it came  
 Curving round the far edge of the quaking globe;  
 (*Savitri*534)

Savitri gets inspired by the spiritual voice which is described as “...burden with bliss the **silent still Supreme**” (*Savitri*535). She hears this mighty and uplifting Voice. She bows her head and muses, delving into her own depths in the solitude of her soul, in that Night of silence(*Savitri*538).

In this book, the poet has made use of the word silent very effectively like “silent office gate” (*Savitri* 542), “fall silent in the silence of Infinity” (*Savitri* 543),“silent city of the brain” (*Savitri* 544) in order to make us feel that Savitri rises above the mind in order to free herself from the law of the mind. In Canto7, “The Discovery of the Cosmic Spiritand the Cosmic Consciousness,” Savitri realizes that the cosmic spirit is ‘Impassive, sole, silent, intangible.’ (*Savitri*552).Something unknown, unreached, and mysterious from that Vast sends down messages of its supraphysical light and its flashes of superhuman thought across the **moveless silence** of her mind. Thus, Savitri is able to pass “beyond Time into eternity” (*Savitri* 553) and “...found no end to **the silent mystery**” (*Savitri* 555).

In Book 8, *The Book of Death*, the poet while presenting us the conjugal experience of Satyavan and Savitri followed by Satyvan's death, he emphasizes on the role of silence too. He says that nature can be felt communing in a profound silence with the secrecy of God. Savitri realizes "...that solemn world, Where beauty and grandeur and unspoken dream, Where Nature's **mystic silence** could be felt" (*Savitri*562).

In the Part3 (Books IX–XII), Savitri is left alone in the huge forest; around her spreads a world that is sub-human; on her lone breast lies the dead body of her husband. She does not brood over her loss helplessly, nor does she try to mitigate her pain with tears. She does not rise yet to meet the dreadful god of Death. Her husband's corpse on her forsaken breast. In her vast **silent spirit motionless**, She measured not her loss with helpless thoughts (Book 9, Canto1, *Savitri* 571). The poet has used phrases such as "**silent thought**," "silence and swiftness" (*Savitri* 572), "**silencing earthly sounds**"(*Savitri* 574), "**silent rest**,""flaming-silent" (*Savitri* 575), "perilous silences" (*Savitri* 577) reflecting on the adventurous journey of Savitri from sensual to a highly spiritual level in order to revive and restore the life of Satyavan. This sense is further propagated with the use of the phrases "**eternal silence brink**" (*Savitri* 582), "a silent gulf" (*Savitri* 584), "silent dark immensity" (*Savitri* 585), "**silent will**" (*Savitri* 639), "Word in silence" (*Savitri* 644), "silent the great hills" (*Savitri* 651) until it makes us realize that "The Silence bears the Eternal's great dumb seal" (*Savitri* 656) and "A stir of thoughts out of some silence born, Across the sea of her dumb fathomless heart"(*Savitri* 588), aiming to meet the silent Lord of all" (*Savitri* 594). This meeting makes "the sun to burn through **silent Space**" (*Savitri* 658).

Savitri's arrival and appeal at the Creator has been glorified greatly through the alleys of silence. The poet continues to highlight the importance of silence by using "living verge of silence" (*Savitri* 674), worldless silence brings the immortal word" (*Savitri* 681), "immobile silence" (*Savitri* 682), "the silence gulfs of sleep" (*Savitri* 684), "**the ineffable silences**" (*Savitri* 693), in order to make us realize that the victory of Savitri over time and space of the earth. She could venture into the soul force by breaking the Silence with appeal and cry (*Savitri*706) before "his **silent might**" (*Savitri* 712).

In the *Epilogue*, Book 12, it is noticed that Savitri's spirit awakes from the deep trance. She finds herself on the calm breast of the earth-mother with green branches above guarding her sleep. Evening is near. She holds the living body of Satyavan close to her, bearing his head on her bosom. The remoteness of the trance has passed and Savitri is once more human. And yet she feels an illimitable change. A new Power, a new Bliss, a new Light are in her. This is expressed by “**silent look**” and “**silence in my templed spirit**” (*Savitri* 718) as Savitri heralds finally “...Make still my life through thee a song of joy, And all **my silence wide and deep with thee**” (*Savitri* 719).

### **Critical Discussion and Conclusion**

In order to understand the depth and delight of silence, one has to practice the art of being silent physically and mentally. Scores of philosophers, spiritual leaders, poets, and thinkers have realized that silence helps one to introspect and live life with self. The world of poetry in this context is replete with the effective reverberation of silence in its musical strings. Quoting William Wordsworth (1770–1850) in this context would be pertinent enough. He addresses silence saying:

Silence! Calm, venerable majesty:  
Guardian of contemplation and of love.  
Thy voice, in marvelous words of nature, speaks  
Not to the ear, but to the eye of man;  
x x x  
Eternity of calmness is thy joy;  
Immensity of space is thine abode;  
The rolling planets own thy sacred power;  
Our little years are moments of thy life;  
Our little world is lost amid thy spheres.  
 (“Address to Silence”)

It seems as if like William Wordsworth, Walt Whitman, Robert Frost, and R.W. Emerson, both R.N. Tagore and Sri Aurobindo have profound love and respect for silence. The same spirit

flows in all of them. They have made it the interlude in the musical notes of their poems. Silence forms the constructs in both the aesthetical masterpieces of *Gitanjali* and *Savitri*. Both Tagore and Aurobindo lapse into amazement; their physical and spiritual entities get coloured with silence; the science of silence gets a solid form in their poetic experiment ranging from microcosmic to the macrocosmic forms. Silence in them is intuitive force; the absolute and the omnipresence. Tagore gazes at the silence of the glittering stars in the vast dark sky whereas Aurobindo looks for it in the dewy meadows as well as in the templed spirit. Both find silence in death as well. From life to death; even beyond death; from earth to the sky and even beyond the sky—silence prevails all over leading to the evolution of mystic knowledge; their souls are crowned with silence. It is “the anchor of their purest thoughts, the nurse, the guide, the guardian of their hearts, and the soul of their moral beings.” (Wordsworth, “Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey”). It seems as if both the poets form their basis of creative imagination sprung from the essence and existence silence spread along the ethereal to celestial; from illusion to reality; and from time to eternity. Both have made intelligent efforts to spread the message of the Vedas, Vedantas and Upanishads simply recreating a series of the panoramic as well as iconic poetic images that abound the glory of the almighty and show us the ultimate path of life proving their artistic works as the outcomes of wisdom and profound divinity adorned with the voice of silence. Tagore’s *Gitanjali* is a spiritual adventure that undertakes silence to be the stuff of purifying body and mind through the evolution of intuition and the realization of the Creator that abounds beauty, wisdom, and perfection. In the same line, *Savitri*, the spiritual Odyssey of both Savitri and her father Asvapati, strive to reach a higher stage of evolution by resolving to adopt silence as a meditative transition towards transformation and discovery of the truth in the form of Satyavan, a divine consciousness.

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