Chapter XIII

The Divine Maya

By the Names of the Lord and hers they shaped and measured the force of the Mother of Light; wearing might after might of that Force as a robe the lords of Maya shaped out Form in this Being.

The Masters of Maya shaped all by His Maya; the Fathers who have divine vision set Him within as a child that is to be born.  

Rig Veda.¹

EXISTENCE that acts and creates by the power and from the pure delight of its conscious being is the reality that we are, the self of all our modes and moods, the cause, object and goal of all our doing, becoming and creating. As the poet, artist or musician when he creates does really nothing but develop some potentiality in his unmanifested self into a form of manifestation and as the thinker, statesman, mechanist only bring out into a shape of things that which lay hidden in themselves, was themselves, is still themselves when it is cast into form, so is it with the world and the Eternal. All creation or becoming is nothing but this self-manifestation. Out of the seed there evolves that which is already in the seed, pre-existent in being, predestined in its will to become, prearranged in the delight of becoming. The original plasm held in itself in force of being the resultant organism. For it is always that secret, burdened, self-knowing force which labours under its own irresistible impulse to manifest the form of itself with which it is charged. Only, the individual who creates or develops out of himself, makes a distinction between himself, the force that

¹ III. 38. 7; IX. 83. 3.
works in him and the material in which he works. In reality the
force is himself, the individualised consciousness which it instru-
mentalisés is himself, the material which it uses is himself, the
resultant form is himself. In other words it is one existence, one
force, one delight of being which concentrates itself at various
points, says of each “This is I” and works in it by a various play
of self-force for a various play of self-formation.

What it produces is itself and can be nothing other than
itself; it is working out a play, a rhythm, a development of
its own existence, force of consciousness and delight of being.
Therefore whatever comes into the world, seeks nothing but
this, to be, to arrive at the intended form, to enlarge its self-
existence in that form, to develop, manifest, increase, realise
infinitely the consciousness and the power that is in it, to have
the delight of coming into manifestation, the delight of the form
of being, the delight of the rhythm of consciousness, the de-
light of the play of force and to aggrandise and perfect that
delight by whatever means is possible, in whatever direction,
through whatever idea of itself may be suggested to it by the
Existence, the Conscious-Force, the Delight active within its
deepest being.

And if there is any goal, any completeness towards which
things tend, it can only be the completeness — in the individual
and in the whole which the individuals constitute — of its self-
existence, of its power and consciousness and of its delight of
being. But such completeness is not possible in the individual
consciousness concentrated within the limits of the individual
formation; absolute completeness is not feasible in the finite
because it is alien to the self-conception of the finite. Therefore
the only final goal possible is the emergence of the infinite con-
sciousness in the individual; it is his recovery of the truth of
himself by self-knowledge and by self-realisation, the truth of
the Infinite in being, the Infinite in consciousness, the Infinite
in delight repossessed as his own Self and Reality of which the
finite is only a mask and an instrument for various expression.

Thus by the very nature of the world-play as it has been
realised by Sachchidananda in the vastness of His existence
extended as Space and Time, we have to conceive first of an
involution and a self-absorption of conscious being into the den-
sity and infinite divisibility of substance, for otherwise there can
be no finite variation; next, an emergence of the self-imprisoned
force into formal being, living being, thinking being; and finally
a release of the formed thinking being into the free realisation
of itself as the One and the Infinite at play in the world and by
the release its recovery of the boundless existence-consciousness-
bliss that even now it is secretly, really and eternally. This triple
movement is the whole key of the world-enigma.

It is so that the ancient and eternal truth of Vedanta receives
into itself and illumines, justifies and shows us all the meaning of
the modern and phenomenal truth of evolution in the universe.
And it is so only that this modern truth of evolution which is
the old truth of the Universal developing itself successively in
Time, seen opaquely through the study of Force and Matter, can
find its own full sense and justification, — by illuminating itself
with the Light of the ancient and eternal truth still preserved for
us in the Vedantic Scriptures. To this mutual self-discovery and
self-illumination by the fusion of the old Eastern and the new
Western knowledge the thought of the world is already turning.

Still, when we have found that all things are Sachchid-
ananda, all has not yet been explained. We know the Reality
of the universe, we do not yet know the process by which that
Reality has turned itself into this phenomenon. We have the
key of the riddle, we have still to find the lock in which it
will turn. For this Existence, Conscious-Force, Delight does not
work directly or with a sovereign irresponsibility like a magician
building up worlds and universes by the mere fiat of its word.
We perceive a process, we are aware of a Law.

It is true that this Law when we analyse it, seems to resolve
itself into an equilibrium of the play of forces and a determi-
nation of that play into fixed lines of working by the accident
of development and the habit of past realised energy. But this
apparent and secondary truth is final to us only so long as we
conceive of Force solely. When we perceive that Force is a self-
expression of Existence, we are bound to perceive also that this
line which Force has taken, corresponds to some self-truth of that Existence which governs and determines its constant curve and destination. And since consciousness is the nature of the original Existence and the essence of its Force, this truth must be a self-perception in Conscious-Being and this determination of the line taken by Force must result from a power of self-directive knowledge inherent in Consciousness which enables it to guide its own Force inevitably along the logical line of the original self-perception. It is then a self-determining power in universal consciousness, a capacity in self-awareness of infinite existence to perceive a certain Truth in itself and direct its force of creation along the line of that Truth, which has presided over the cosmic manifestation.

But why should we interpose any special power or faculty between the infinite Consciousness itself and the result of its workings? May not this Self-awareness of the Infinite range freely creating forms which afterwards remain in play so long as there is not the fiat that bids them cease,—even as the old Semitic Revelation tells us, “God said, Let there be Light, and there was Light”? But when we say, “God said, Let there be Light”, we assume the act of a power of consciousness which determines light out of everything else that is not light; and when we say “and there was Light” we presume a directing faculty, an active power corresponding to the original perceptive power, which brings out the phenomenon and, working out Light according to the line of the original perception, prevents it from being overpowered by all the infinite possibilities that are other than itself. Infinite consciousness in its infinite action can produce only infinite results; to settle upon a fixed Truth or order of truths and build a world in conformity with that which is fixed, demands a selective faculty of knowledge commissioned to shape finite appearance out of the infinite Reality.

This power was known to the Vedic seers by the name of Maya. Maya meant for them the power of infinite consciousness to comprehend, contain in itself and measure out, that is to say, to form— for form is delimitation—Name and Shape out of the vast illimitable Truth of infinite existence. It is by Maya that
static truth of essential being becomes ordered truth of active being — or, to put it in more metaphysical language, out of the supreme being in which all is all without barrier of separative consciousness emerges the phenomenal being in which all is in each and each is in all for the play of existence with existence, consciousness with consciousness, force with force, delight with delight. This play of all in each and each in all is concealed at first from us by the mental play or the illusion of Maya which persuades each that he is in all but not all in him and that he is in all as a separated being not as a being always inseparably one with the rest of existence. Afterwards we have to emerge from this error into the supramental play or the truth of Maya where the “each” and the “all” coexist in the inseparable unity of the one truth and the multiple symbol. The lower, present and deluding mental Maya has first to be embraced, then to be overcome; for it is God’s play with division and darkness and limitation, desire and strife and suffering in which He subjects Himself to the Force that has come out of Himself and by her obscure suffers Himself to be obscured. That other Maya concealed by this mental has to be overpassed, then embraced; for it is God’s play of the infinities of existence, the splendours of knowledge, the glories of force mastered and the ecstasies of love illimitable where He emerges out of the hold of Force, holds her instead and fulfils in her illumined that for which she went out from Him at the first.

This distinction between the lower and the higher Maya is the link in thought and in cosmic Fact which the pessimistic and illusionist philosophies miss or neglect. To them the mental Maya, or perhaps an Overmind, is the creatrix of the world, and a world created by mental Maya would indeed be an inexplicable paradox and a fixed yet floating nightmare of conscious existence which could neither be classed as an illusion nor as a reality. We have to see that the mind is only an intermediate term between the creative governing knowledge and the soul imprisoned in its works. Sachchidananda, involved by one of His lower movements in the self-oblivious absorption of Force that is lost in the form of her own workings, returns towards Himself
out of the self-oblivion; Mind is only one of His instruments in
the descent and the ascent. It is an instrument of the descending
creation, not the secret creatrix,—a transitional stage in the
ascent, not our high original source and the consummate term
of cosmic existence.

The philosophies which recognise Mind alone as the cre-
ator of the worlds or accept an original principle with Mind
as the only mediator between it and the forms of the universe,
may be divided into the purely noumenal and the idealistic. The
purely noumenal recognise in the cosmos only the work of Mind,
Thought, Idea: but Idea may be purely arbitrary and have no
essential relation to any real Truth of existence; such Truth, if
it exists, may be regarded as a mere Absolute aloof from all
relations and irreconcilable with a world of relations. The ideal-
istic interpretation supposes a relation between the Truth behind
and the concepitive phenomenon in front, a relation which is
not merely that of an antinomy and opposition. The view I am
presenting goes farther in idealism; it sees the creative Idea as
Real-Idea, that is to say, a power of Conscious Force expressive
of real being, born out of real being and partaking of its nature
and neither a child of the Void nor a weaver of fictions. It is
conscious Reality throwing itself into mutable forms of its own
imperishable and immutable substance. The world is therefore
not a figment of conception in the universal Mind, but a con-
scious birth of that which is beyond Mind into forms of itself.
A Truth of conscious being supports these forms and expresses
itself in them, and the knowledge corresponding to the truth thus
expressed reigns as a supramental Truth-consciousness\(^2\) organ-
ising real ideas in a perfect harmony before they are cast into
the mental-vital-material mould. Mind, Life and Body are an
inferior consciousness and a partial expression which strives to
arrive in the mould of a various evolution at that superior expres-
sion of itself already existent to the Beyond-Mind. That which

\(^2\) I take the phrase from the Rig Veda, — \(\text{ṛta-cit}\), which means the consciousness of
essential truth of being (satyam), of ordered truth of active being (ṛtam) and the vast
self-awareness (brhat) in which alone this consciousness is possible.
is in the Beyond-Mind is the ideal which in its own conditions
it is labouring to realise.

From our ascending point of view we may say that the Real
is behind all that exists; it expresses itself intermediately in an
Ideal which is a harmonised truth of itself; the Ideal throws
out a phenomenal reality of variable conscious-being which,
inevitably drawn towards its own essential Reality, tries at last
to recover it entirely whether by a violent leap or normally
through the Ideal which put it forth. It is this that explains the
imperfect reality of human existence as seen by the Mind, the
instinctive aspiration in the mental being towards a perfectibility
ever beyond itself, towards the concealed harmony of the Ideal,
and the supreme surge of the spirit beyond the ideal to the tran-
scendental. The very facts of our consciousness, its constitution
and its necessity presuppose such a triple order; they negate the
dual and irreconcilable antithesis of a mere Absolute to a mere
relativity.

Mind is not sufficient to explain existence in the universe.
Infinite Consciousness must first translate itself into infinite fac-
ulty of Knowledge or, as we call it from our point of view,
 omniscience. But Mind is not a faculty of knowledge nor an
instrument of omniscience; it is a faculty for the seeking of
knowledge, for expressing as much as it can gain of it in certain
forms of a relative thought and for using it towards certain
capacities of action. Even when it finds, it does not possess; it
only keeps a certain fund of current coin of Truth — not Truth
itself — in the bank of Memory to draw upon according to its
needs. For Mind is that which does not know, which tries to
know and which never knows except as in a glass darkly. It is
the power which interprets truth of universal existence for the
practical uses of a certain order of things; it is not the power
which knows and guides that existence and therefore it cannot
be the power which created or manifested it.

But if we suppose an infinite Mind which would be free from
our limitations, that at least might well be the creator of the
universe? But such a Mind would be something quite different
from the definition of mind as we know it; it would be something
beyond mentality; it would be the supramental Truth. An infinite Mind constituted in the terms of mentality as we know it could only create an infinite chaos, a vast clash of chance, accident, vicissitude wandering towards an indeterminate end after which it would be always tentatively groping and aspiring. An infinite, omniscient, omnipotent Mind would not be mind at all, but supramental knowledge.

Mind, as we know it, is a reflective mirror which receives presentations or images of a pre-existent Truth or Fact, either external to or at least vaster than itself. It represents to itself from moment to moment the phenomenon that is or has been. It possesses also the faculty of constructing in itself possible images other than those of the actual fact presented to it; that is to say, it represents to itself not only phenomenon that has been but also phenomenon that may be: it cannot, be it noted, represent to itself phenomenon that assuredly will be, except when it is an assured repetition of what is or has been. It has, finally, the faculty of forecasting new modifications which it seeks to construct out of the meeting of what has been and what may be, out of the fulfilled possibility and the unfulfilled, something that it sometimes succeeds in constructing more or less exactly, sometimes fails to realise, but usually finds cast into other forms than it forecasted and turned to other ends than it desired or intended.

An infinite Mind of this character might possibly construct an accidental cosmos of conflicting possibilities and it might shape it into something shifting, something always transient, something ever uncertain in its drift, neither real nor unreal, possessed of no definite end or aim but only an endless succession of momentary aims leading — since there is no superior directing power of knowledge — eventually nowhere. Nihilism or Illusionism or some kindred philosophy is the only logical conclusion of such a pure noumenalism. The cosmos so constructed would be a presentation or reflection of something not itself, but always and to the end a false presentation, a distorted reflection; all cosmic existence would be a Mind struggling to work out fully its imaginations, but not succeeding, because they
have no imperative basis of self-truth; overpowered and carried forward by the stream of its own past energies, it would be borne onward indeterminately for ever without issue unless or until it can either slay itself or fall into an eternal stillness. That traced to its roots is Nihilism and Illusionism and it is the only wisdom if we suppose that our human mentality or anything at all like it represents the highest cosmic force and the original conception at work in the universe.

But the moment we find in the original power of knowledge a higher force than that which is represented by our human mentality, this conception of the universe becomes insufficient and therefore invalid. It has its truth but it is not the whole truth. It is law of the immediate appearance of the universe, but not of its original truth and ultimate fact. For we perceive behind the action of Mind, Life and Body, something that is not embraced in the stream of Force but embraces and controls it; something that is not born into a world which it seeks to interpret, but has created in its being a world of which it has the omniscience; something that does not labour perpetually to form something else out of itself while it drifts in the overmastering surge of past energies it can no longer control, but has already in its consciousness a perfect Form of itself and is here gradually unfolding it. The world expresses a foreseen Truth, obeys a predetermining Will, realises an original formative self-vision,—it is the growing image of a divine creation.

So long as we work only through the mentality governed by appearances, this something beyond and behind and yet always immanent can be only an inference or a presence vaguely felt. We perceive a law of cyclic progress and infer an ever-increasing perfection of somewhat that is somewhere foreknown. For everywhere we see Law founded in self-being and, when we penetrate within into the rationale of its process, we find that Law is the expression of an innate knowledge, a knowledge inherent in the existence which is expressing itself and implied in the force that expresses it; and Law developed by Knowledge so as to allow of progression implies a divinely seen goal towards which the motion is directed. We see too that our reason seeks to
emerge out of and dominate the helpless drift of our mentality and we arrive at the perception that Reason is only a messenger, a representative or a shadow of a greater consciousness beyond itself which does not need to reason because it is all and knows all that it is. And we can then pass to the inference that this source of Reason is identical with the Knowledge that acts as Law in the world. This Knowledge determines its own law sovereignly because it knows what has been, is and will be and it knows because it is eternally, and infinitely cognises itself. Being that is infinite consciousness, infinite consciousness that is omnipotent force, when it makes a world — that is to say, a harmony of itself — its object of consciousness, becomes seizable by our thought as a cosmic existence that knows its own truth and realises in forms that which it knows.

But it is only when we cease to reason and go deep into ourselves, into that secrecy where the activity of mind is stilled, that this other consciousness becomes really manifest to us — however imperfectly owing to our long habit of mental reaction and mental limitation. Then we can know surely in an increasing illumination that which we had uncertainly conceived by the pale and flickering light of Reason. Knowledge waits seated beyond mind and intellectual reasoning, throned in the luminous vast of illimitable self-vision.