The Conditions of Attainment to the Gnosis

Knowledge is the first principle of the Vijnana, but knowledge is not its only power. The Truth-consciousness, like every other plane, founds itself upon that particular principle which is naturally the key of all its motions; but it is not limited by it, it contains all the other powers of existence. Only the character and working of these other powers is modified and moulded into conformity with its own original and dominant law; intelligence, life, body, will, consciousness, bliss are all luminous, awake, instinct with divine knowledge. This is indeed the process of Purusha-Prakriti everywhere; it is the key-movement of all the hierarchy and graded harmonies of manifested existence.

In the mental being mind-sense or intelligence is the original and dominant principle. The mental being in the mind-world where he is native is in his central and determining nature intelligence; he is a centre of intelligence, a massed movement of intelligence, a receptive and radiating action of intelligence. He has the intelligent sense of his own existence, the intelligent sense of other existence than his own, the intelligent sense of his own nature and activities and the activities of others, the intelligent sense of the nature of things and persons and their relations with himself and each other. That makes up his experience of existence. He has no other knowledge of existence, no knowledge of life and matter except as they make themselves sensible to him and capable of being seized by his mental intelligence; what he does not sense and conceive, is to him practically non-existent, or at least alien to his world and his nature.

Man is in his principle a mental being, but not one living in a mind world, but in a dominantly physical existence; his is
a mind cased in Matter and conditioned by Matter. Therefore he has to start with the action of the physical senses which are all channels of material contact; he does not start with the mind-sense. But even so he does not and cannot make free use of anything conveyed by these physical organs until and unless they are taken hold of by the mind-sense and turned into stuff and value of his intelligent being. What is in the lower subhuman submental world a pranic, a nervous, a dynamic action and reaction that proceeds very well without any need of translation into mind-terms or government by mind, has in him to be raised and offered to some kind of intelligence. In order to be characteristically human it has to become first a sense of force, sense of desire, sense of will, sense of intelligent will-action or mentally conscious sense of force-action. His lower delight of being translates itself into a sense of mental or mentalised vital or physical pleasure and its perversion pain, or into a mental or mentalised feeling-sensation of liking and disliking, or into an intelligence of delight and failure of delight,—all phenomena of the intelligent mind-sense. So too that which is above him and that which is around him and in which he lives,—God, the universal being, the cosmic Forces,—are non-existent and unreal to him until his mind awakes to them and gets, not yet their true truth, but some idea, observation, inference, imagination of things supersensuous, some mental sense of the Infinite, some intelligent interpreting consciousness of the forces of the superself above and around him.

All changes when we pass from mind to gnosis; for there a direct inherent knowledge is the central principle. The gnostic (vijñānamaya) being is in its character a truth-consciousness, a centre and circumference of the truth-vision of things, a massed movement or subtle body of gnosis. Its action is a self-fulfilling and radiating action of the truth-power of things according to the inner law of their deepest truest self and nature. This truth of things at which we must arrive before we can enter into the gnosis,—for in that all exists and from that all originates on the gnostic plane,—is, first of all, a truth of unity, of oneness, but of unity originating diversity, unity in multiplicity and still unity
always, an indefeasible oneness. State of gnosis, the condition of \textit{vijñānamaya} being, is impossible without an ample and close self-identification of ourselves with all existence and with all existences, a universal pervasiveness, a universal comprehension or containing, a certain all-in-allness. The gnostic Purusha has normally the consciousness of itself as infinite, normally too the consciousness of containing the world in itself and exceeding it; it is not like the divided mental being normally bound to a consciousness that feels itself contained in the world and a part of it. It follows that a deliverance from the limiting and imprisoning ego is the first elementary step towards the being of the gnosis; for so long as we live in the ego, it is idle to hope for this higher reality, this vast self-consciousness, this true self-knowledge. The least reversion to ego-thought, ego-action, ego-will brings back the consciousness tumbling out of such gnostic Truth as it has attained into the falsehoods of the divided mind-nature. A secure universality of being is the very basis of this luminous higher consciousness. Abandoning all rigid separateness (but getting instead a certain transcendent overlook or independence) we have to feel ourselves one with all things and beings, to identify ourselves with them, to become aware of them as ourselves, to feel their being as our own, to admit their consciousness as part of ours, to contact their energy as intimate to our energy, to learn how to be one self with all. That oneness is not indeed all that is needed, but it is a first condition and without it there is no gnosis.

This universality is impossible to achieve in its completeness so long as we continue to feel ourselves, as we now feel, a consciousness lodged in an individual mind, life and body. There has to be a certain elevation of the Purusha out of the physical and even out of the mental into the \textit{vijñānamaya} body. No longer can the brain nor its corresponding mental “lotus” remain the centre of our thinking, no longer the heart nor its corresponding “lotus” the originating centre of our emotional and sensational being. The conscious centre of our being, our thought, our will and action, even the original force of our sensations and emotions rise out of the body and mind and take a free station above them. No longer have we the sensation of living in the body, but
are above it as its lord, possessor or Ishwara and at the same
time encompass it with a wider consciousness than that of the
imprisoned physical sense. Now we come to realise with a very
living force of reality, normal and continuous, what the sages
meant when they spoke of the soul carrying the body or when
they said that the soul is not in the body, but the body in the soul.
It is from above the body and not from the brain that we shall
ideate and will; the brain-action will become only a response
and movement of the physical machinery to the shock of the
thought-force and will-force from above. All will be originated
from above; from above, all that corresponds in gnosis to our
present mental activity takes place.\(^1\)

But this centre and this action are free, not bound, not
dependent on the physical machine, not clamped to a narrow
ego-sense. It is not involved in body; it is not shut up in a
separated individuality feeling out for clumsy contacts with the
world outside or groping inward for its own deeper spirit. For in
this great transformation we begin to have a consciousness not
shut up in a generating box, but diffused freely and extending
self-existently everywhere; there is or may be a centre, but it
is a convenience for individual action, not rigid, not constitu-
tive or separative. The very nature of our conscious activities is
henceforth universal; one with those of the universal being, it
proceeds from universality to a supple and variable individual-
isation. It has become the awareness of an infinite being who
acts always universally though with emphasis on an individual
formation of its energies. But this emphasis is differential rather
than separative, and this formation is no longer what we now
understand by individuality; there is no longer a petty limited
constructed person shut up in the formula of his own mecha-
nism. This state of consciousness is so abnormal to our present
mode of being that to the rational man who does not possess it
it may seem impossible or even a state of alienation; but once

\(^1\) Many, if not all, of these conditions of the gnostic change can and indeed have
to be attained long before we reach the gnosis, — but imperfectly at first as if by a
reflection, — in higher mind itself, and more completely in what we may call an overmind
consciousness between mentality and gnosis.
possessed it vindicates itself even to the mental intelligence by its
greater calm, freedom, light, power, effectivity of will, verifiable
truth of ideation and feeling. For this condition begins already
on the higher levels of liberated mind, and can therefore be
partly sensed and understood by mind-intelligence, but it rises
to perfect self-possession only when it leaves behind the mental
levels, only in the supramental gnosis.

In this state of consciousness the infinite becomes to us the
primal, the actual reality, the one thing immediately and sensibly
true. It becomes impossible for us to think of or realise the
finite apart from our fundamental sense of the infinite, in which
alone the finite can live, can form itself, can have any reality
or duration. So long as this finite mind and body are to our
consciousness the first fact of our existence and the foundation
of all our thinking, feeling and willing and so long as things
finite are the normal reality from which we can rise occasion-
ally, or even frequently, to an idea and sense of the infinite,
we are still very far away from the gnosis. In the plane of the
gnosis the infinite is at once our normal consciousness of being,
its first fact, our sensible substance. It is very concretely to us
there the foundation from which everything finite forms itself
and its boundless incalculable forces are the origination of all
our thought, will and delight. But this infinite is not only an
infinite of pervasion or of extension in which everything forms
and happens. Behind that immeasurable extension the gnostic
consciousness is always aware of a spaceless inner infinite. It is
through this double infinite that we shall arrive at the essential
being of Sachchidananda, the highest self of our own being and
the totality of our cosmic existence. There is opened to us an
illimitable existence which we feel as if it were an infinity above
us to which we attempt to rise and an infinity around us into
which we strive to dissolve our separate existence. Afterwards
we widen into it and rise into it; we break out of the ego into
its largeness and are that for ever. If this liberation is achieved,
its power can take, if so we will, increasing possession of our
lower being also until even our lowest and perversest activities
are refashioned into the truth of the Vijnana.
This is the basis, this sense of the infinite and possession by the infinite, and only when it is achieved, can we progress towards some normality of the supramental ideation, perception, sense, identity, awareness. For even this sense of the infinite is only a first foundation and much more has to be done before the consciousness can become dynamically gnostic. The supramental knowledge is the play of a supreme light; there are many other lights, other levels of knowledge higher than human mind which can open in us and receive or reflect something of that effulgence even before we rise into the gnosis. But to command or wholly possess it we must first enter into and become the being of the supreme light, our consciousness must be transformed into that consciousness, its principle and power of self-awareness and all-awareness by identity must be the very stuff of our existence. For our means and ways of knowledge and action must necessarily be according to the nature of our consciousness and it is the consciousness that must radically change if we are to command and not only be occasionally visited by that higher power of knowledge. But it is not confined to a higher thought or the action of a sort of divine reason. It takes up all our present means of knowledge immensely extended, active and effective where they are now debarred, blind, infructuous, and turns them into a high and intense perceptive activity of the Vijnana. Thus it takes up our sense action and illumines it even in its ordinary field so that we get a true sense of things. But also it enables the mind-sense to have a direct perception of the inner as well as the outer phenomenon, to feel and receive or perceive, for instance, the thoughts, feelings, sensations, the nervous reactions of the object on which it is turned. It uses the subtle senses as well as the physical and saves them from their errors. It gives us the knowledge, the experience of planes of existence other than the material to which our ordinary mentality is ignorantly attached and it enlarges the world for us. It transforms similarly the

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2 This power, says Patanjali, comes by "sanyama" on an object. That is for the mentality, in the gnosis there is no need of sanyama. For this kind of perception is the natural action of the Vijnana.
sensations and gives them their full intensity as well as their full holding-power; for in our normal mentality the full intensity is impossible because the power to hold and sustain vibrations beyond a certain point is denied to it, mind and body would both break under the shock or the prolonged strain. It takes up too the element of knowledge in our feelings and emotions, — for our feelings too contain a power of knowledge and a power of effectuation which we do not recognise and do not properly develop, — and delivers them at the same time from their limitations and from their errors and perversions. For in all things the gnosis is the Truth, the Right, the highest Law, devānām adabdāhāni vratāni.

Knowledge and Force or Will — for all conscious force is will — are the twin sides of the action of consciousness. In our mentality they are divided. The idea comes first, the will comes stumbling after it or rebels against it or is used as its imperfect tool with imperfect results; or else the will starts up first with a blind or half-seeing idea in it and works out something in confusion of which we get the right understanding afterwards. There is no oneness, no full understanding between these powers in us; or else there is no perfect correspondence of initiation with effectuation. Nor is the individual will in harmony with the universal; it tries to reach beyond it or falls short of it or deviates from and strives against it. It knows not the times and seasons of the Truth, nor its degrees and measures. The Vijnana takes up the will and puts it first into harmony and then into oneness with the truth of the supramental knowledge. In this knowledge the idea in the individual is one with the idea in the universal, because both are brought back to the truth of the supreme Knowledge and the transcendent Will. The gnosis takes up not only our intelligent will, but our wishes, desires, even what we call the lower desires, the instincts, the impulses, the reachings out of sense and sensation and it transforms them. They cease to be wishes and desires, because they cease first to be personal and then cease to be that struggling after the ungrasped which we mean by craving and desire. No longer blind or half-blind reachings out of the instinctive or intelligent mentality, they
are transformed into a various action of the Truth-will; and that will acts with an inherent knowledge of the right measures of its decreed action and therefore with an effectivity unknown to our mental willing. Therefore too in the action of the \textit{vijñānamaya} will there is no place for sin; for all sin is an error of the will, a desire and act of the Ignorance.

When desire ceases entirely, grief and all inner suffering also cease. The Vijnana takes up not only our parts of knowledge and will, but our parts of affection and delight and changes them into action of the divine Ananda. For if knowledge and force are the twin sides or powers of the action of consciousness, delight, Ananda — which is something higher than what we call pleasure — is the very stuff of consciousness and the natural result of the interaction of knowledge and will, force and self-awareness. Both pleasure and pain, both joy and grief are deformations caused by the disturbance of harmony between our consciousness and the force it applies, between our knowledge and will, a breaking up of their oneness by a descent to a lower plane in which they are limited, divided in themselves, restrained from their full and proper action, at odds with other-force, other-consciousness, other-knowledge, other-will. The Vijnana sets this to rights by the power of its truth and a wholesale restoration to oneness and harmony, to the Right and the highest Law. It takes up all our emotions and turns them into various forms of love and delight, even our hatreds, repulsions, causes of suffering. It finds out or reveals the meaning they missed and by missing it became the perversions they are; it restores our whole nature to the eternal Good. It deals similarly with our perceptions and sensations and reveals all the delight that they seek, but in its truth, not in any perversion and wrong seeking and wrong reception; it teaches even our lower impulses to lay hold on the Divine and Infinite in the appearances after which they run. All this is done not in the values of the lower being, but by a lifting up of the mental, vital, material into the inalienable purity, the natural intensity, the continual ecstasy, one yet manifold, of the divine Ananda.

Thus the being of Vijnana is in all its activities a play of
perfected knowledge-power, will-power, delight-power, raised to a higher than the mental, vital and bodily level. All-pervasive, universalised, freed from egoistic personality and individuality, it is the play of a higher Self, a higher consciousness and therefore a higher force and higher delight of being. All that acts in the Vijnana in the purity, in the right, in the truth of the superior or divine Prakriti. Its powers may often seem to be what are called in ordinary Yogic parlance siddhis, by the Europeans occult powers, shunned and dreaded by devotees and by many Yogins as snares, stumbling-blocks, diversions from the true seeking after the Divine. But they have that character and are dangerous here because they are sought in the lower being, abnormally, by the ego for an egoistic satisfaction. In the Vijnana they are neither occult nor siddhis, but the open, unforced and normal play of its nature. The Vijnana is the Truth-power and Truth-action of the divine Being in its divine identities, and, when this acts through the individual lifted to the gnostic plane, it fulfils itself unperverted, without fault or egoistic reaction, without diversion from the possession of the Divine. There the individual is no longer the ego, but the free Jiva domiciled in the higher divine nature of which he is a portion, $par\text{\hat{a}} pr\text{\acute{a}}kr\text{\acute{t}}ir jivabh\text{\acute{u}}t\text{\acute{a}}$, the nature of the supreme and universal Self seen indeed in the play of multiple individuality but without the veil of ignorance, with self-knowledge, in its multiple oneness, in the truth of its divine Shakti.

In the Vijnana the right relation and action of Purusha and Prakriti are found, because there they become unified and the Divine is no longer veiled in Maya. All is his action. The Jiva no longer says “I think, I act, I desire, I feel”; he does not even say like the sadhaka striving after unity but before he has reached it, “As appointed by Thee seated in my heart, I act.” For the heart, the centre of the mental consciousness is no longer the centre of origination but only a blissful channel. He is rather aware of the Divine seated above, lord of all, $adhi\acute{s}th\acute{b}ita$, as well as acting within him. And seated himself in that higher being, $par\acute{a}rd\acute{b}he, paramasy\acute{a}m par\acute{a}vati$, he can say truly and boldly, “God himself by his Prakriti knows, acts, loves, takes delight
through my individuality and its figures and fulfils there in its higher and divine measures the multiple līlā which the Infinite for ever plays in the universality which is himself for ever.”