Chapter XVII

The Divine Soul

He whose self has become all existences, for he has the knowledge, how shall he be deluded, whence shall he have grief, he who sees everywhere oneness?  

Isha Upanishad.¹

By the conception we have formed of the Supermind, by its opposition to the mentality on which our human existence is based, we are able not only to form a precise instead of a vague idea of divinity and the divine life,—expressions which we are otherwise condemned to use with looseness and as the vague wording of a large but almost impalpable aspiration,—but also to give these ideas a firm basis of philosophical reasoning, to put them into a clear relation with the humanity and the human life which is all we at present enjoy and to justify our hope and aspiration by the very nature of the world and of our own cosmic antecedents and the inevitable future of our evolution. We begin to grasp intellectually what is the Divine, the eternal Reality, and to understand how out of it the world has come. We begin also to perceive how inevitably that which has come out of the Divine must return to the Divine. We may now ask with profit and a chance of clearer reply how we must change and what we must become in order to arrive there in our nature and our life and our relations with others and not only through a solitary and ecstatic realisation in the profundities of our being. Certainly, there is still a defect in our premisses; for we have so far been striving to define for ourselves what the Divine is in its descent towards limited Nature, whereas what we ourselves actually are is the Divine in the individual ascending back out of limited Nature

¹ Verse 7.
to its own proper divinity. This difference of movement must involve a difference between the life of the gods who have never known the fall and the life of man redeemed, conqueror of the lost godhead and bearing within him the experience and it may be the new riches gathered by him from his acceptance of the utter descent. Nevertheless, there can be no difference of essential characteristics, but only of mould and colouring. We can already ascertain on the basis of the conclusions at which we have arrived the essential nature of the divine life towards which we aspire.

What then would be the existence of a divine soul, not descended into the ignorance by the fall of Spirit into Matter and the eclipse of soul by material Nature? What would be its consciousness, living in the original Truth of things, in the inalienable unity, in the world of its own infinite being, like the Divine Existence itself, but able by the play of the Divine Maya and by the distinction of the comprehending and apprehending Truth-Consciousness to enjoy also difference from God at the same time as unity with Him and to embrace difference and yet oneness with other divine souls in the infinite play of the self-multiplied Identical?

Obviously, the existence of such a soul would be always self-contained in the conscious play of Sachchidananda. It would be pure and infinite self-existence in its being; in its becoming it would be a free play of immortal life uninvaded by death and birth and change of body because unclouded by ignorance and not involved in the darkness of our material being. It would be a pure and unlimited consciousness in its energy, poised in an eternal and luminous tranquillity as its foundation, yet able to play freely with forms of knowledge and forms of conscious power, tranquil, unaffected by the stumblings of mental error and the misprisions of our striving will because it never departs from truth and oneness, never falls from the inherent light and the natural harmony of its divine existence. It would be, finally, a pure and inalienable delight in its eternal self-experience and in Time a free variation of bliss unaffected by our perversions of dislike, hatred, discontent and suffering because undivided in
being, unbaﬄed by erring self-will, unperverted by the ignorant
stimulus of desire.

Its consciousness would not be shut out from any part of
the inﬁnite truth, nor limited by any poise or status that it might
assume in its relations with others, nor condemned to any loss of
self-knowledge by its acceptance of a purely phenomenally indi-
viduality and the play of practical differentiation. It would in its
self-experience live eternally in the presence of the Absolute. To
us the Absolute is only an intellectual conception of inﬁnftable
existence. The intellect tells us simply that there is a Brahman
higher than the highest,2 an Unknowable that knows itself in
other fashion than that of our knowledge; but the intellect can-
not bring us into its presence. The divine soul living in the Truth
of things would, on the contrary, always have the conscious
sense of itself as a manifestation of the Absolutes. Its immutable
existence it would be aware of as the original "self-form"3 of
that Transcendent, — Sachchidananda; its play of conscious be-
ing it would be aware of as manifestation of That in forms
of Sachchidananda. In its every state or act of knowledge it
would be aware of the Unknowable cognising itself by a form of
variable self-knowledge; in its every state or act of power, will
or force aware of the Transcendence possessing itself by a form
of conscious power of being and knowledge; in its every state or
act of delight, joy or love aware of the Transcendence embracing
itself by a form of conscious self-enjoyment. This presence of
the Absolute would not be with it as an experience occasionally
glimpsed or ﬁnally arrived at and held with diﬃculty or as an
addition, acquisition or culmination superimposed on its ordi-
inary state of being: it would be the very foundation of its being
both in the unity and the diﬀerentiation; it would be present to
it in all its knowing, willing, doing, enjoying; it would be absent
neither from its timeless self nor from any moment of Time,
neither from its spaceless being nor from any determination of
its extended existence, neither from its unconditioned purity

2 *paratpara.*

3 *svarupa.*
beyond all cause and circumstance nor from any relation of circumstance, condition and causality. This constant presence of the Absolute would be the basis of its infinite freedom and delight, ensure its security in the play and provide the root and sap and essence of its divine being.

Moreover such a divine soul would live simultaneously in the two terms of the eternal existence of Sachchidananda, the two inseparable poles of the self-unfolding of the Absolute which we call the One and the Many. All being does really so live; but to our divided self-awareness there is an incompatibility, a gulf between the two driving us towards a choice, to dwell either in the multiplicity exiled from the direct and entire consciousness of the One or in the unity repellent of the consciousness of the Many. But the divine soul would not be enslaved to this divorce and duality. It would be aware in itself at once of the infinite self-concentration and the infinite self-extension and diffusion. It would be aware simultaneously of the One in its unitarian consciousness holding the innumerable multiplicity in itself as if potential, unexpressed and therefore to our mental experience of that state non-existent, and of the One in its extended consciousness holding the multiplicity thrown out and active as the play of its own conscious being, will and delight. It would equally be aware of the Many ever drawing down to themselves the One that is the eternal source and reality of their existence and of the Many ever mounting up attracted to the One that is the eternal culmination and blissful justification of all their play of difference. This vast view of things is the mould of the Truth-Consciousness, the foundation of the large Truth and Right hymned by the Vedic seers; this unity of all these terms of opposition is the real Adwaita, the supreme comprehending word of the knowledge of the Unknowable.

The divine soul will be aware of all variation of being, consciousness, will and delight as the outflowing, the extension, the diffusion of that self-concentrated Unity developing itself, not into difference and division, but into another, an extended form of infinite oneness. It will itself always be concentrated in oneness in the essence of its being, always manifested in variation
in the extension of its being. All that takes form in itself will be the manifested potentialities of the One, the Word or Name vibrating out of the nameless Silence, the Form realising the formless essence, the active Will or Power proceeding out of the tranquil Force, the ray of self-cognition gleaming out from the sun of timeless self-awareness, the wave of becoming rising up into shape of self-conscious existence out of the eternally self-conscious Being, the joy and love welling for ever out of the eternal still Delight. It will be the Absolute biune in its self-unfolding, and each relativity in it will be absolute to itself because aware of itself as the Absolute manifested but without that ignorance which excludes other relativities as alien to its being or less complete than itself.

In the extension the divine soul will be aware of the three grades of the supramental existence, not as we are mentally compelled to regard them, not as grades, but as a triune fact of the self-manifestation of Sachchidananda. It will be able to embrace them in one and the same comprehensive self-realisation, — for a vast comprehensiveness is the foundation of the truth-conscious supermind. It will be able divinely to conceive, perceive and sense all things as the Self, its own self, one self of all, one Self-being and Self-becoming, but not divided in its comings which have no existence apart from its own self-consciousness. It will be able divinely to conceive, perceive and sense all existences as soul-forms of the One which have each its own being in the One, its own standpoint in the One, its own relations with all the other existences that people the infinite unity, but all dependent on the One, conscious form of Him in His own infinity. It will be able divinely to conceive, perceive and sense all these existences in their individuality, in their separate standpoint living as the individual Divine, each with the One and Supreme dwelling in it and each therefore not altogether a form or eidolon, not really an illusory part of a real whole, a mere foaming wave on the surface of an immobile Ocean, — for these are after all no more than inadequate mental images, — but a whole in the whole, a truth that repeats the infinite Truth, a wave that is all the sea, a relative that proves to be
the Absolute itself when we look behind form and see it in its completeness.

For these three are aspects of the one Existence. The first is based upon that self-knowledge which, in our human realisation of the Divine, the Upanishad describes as the Self in us becoming all existences; the second on that which is described as seeing all existences in the Self; the third on that which is described as seeing the Self in all existences. The Self becoming all existences is the basis of our oneness with all; the Self containing all existences is the basis of our oneness in difference; the Self inhabiting all is the basis of our individuality in the universal. If the defect of our mentality, if its need of exclusive concentration compels it to dwell on any one of these aspects of self-knowledge to the exclusion of the others, if a realisation imperfect as well as exclusive moves us always to bring in a human element of error into the very Truth itself and of conflict and mutual negation into the all-comprehending unity, yet to a divine supramental being, by the essential character of the supermind which is a comprehending oneness and infinite totality, they must present themselves as a triple and indeed a triune realisation.

If we suppose this soul to take its poise, its centre in the consciousness of the individual Divine living and acting in distinct relation with the “others”, still it will have in the foundation of its consciousness the entire unity from which all emerges and it will have in the background of that consciousness the extended and the modified unity and to any of these it will be capable of returning and of contemplating from them its individuality. In the Veda all these poises are asserted of the gods. In essence the gods are one existence which the sages call by different names; but in their action founded in and proceeding from the large Truth and Right Agni or another is said to be all the other gods, he is the One that becomes all; at the same time he is said to contain all the gods in himself as the nave of a wheel contains the spokes, he is the One that contains all; and yet as Agni he is described as a separate deity, one who helps all the others, exceeds them in force and knowledge, yet is inferior to them in cosmic position and is employed by them as messenger, priest.
and worker, — the creator of the world and father, he is yet the son born of our works, he is, that is to say, the original and the manifested indwelling Self or Divine, the One that inhabits all.

All the relations of the divine soul with God or its supreme Self and with its other selves in other forms will be determined by this comprehensive self-knowledge. These relations will be relations of being, of consciousness and knowledge, of will and force, of love and delight. Infinite in their potentiality of variation, they need exclude no possible relation of soul with soul that is compatible with the preservation of the inalienable sense of unity in spite of every phenomenon of difference. Thus in its relations of enjoyment the divine soul will have the delight of all its own experience in itself; it will have the delight of all its experience of relation with others as a communion with other selves in other forms created for a varied play in the universe; it will have too the delight of the experiences of its other selves as if they were its own — as indeed they really are. And all this capacity it will have because it will be aware of its own experiences, of its relations with others and of the experiences of others and their relations with itself as all the joy or Ananda of the One, the supreme Self, its own self, differentiated by its separate habitation of all these forms comprehended in its own being but still one in difference. Because this unity is the basis of all its experience, it will be free from the discords of our divided consciousness, divided by ignorance and a separatist egoism; all these selves and their relations will play consciously into each other’s hands; they will part and melt into each other as the numberless notes of an eternal harmony.

And the same rule will apply to the relations of its being, knowledge, will with the being, knowledge and will of others. For all its experience and delight will be the play of a self-blissful conscious force of being in which, by obedience to this truth of unity, will cannot be at strife with knowledge nor either of them with delight. Nor will the knowledge, will and delight of one soul clash with the knowledge, will and delight of another, because by their awareness of their unity what is clash and strife and discord in our divided being will be there the meeting, entwining and
mutual interplay of the different notes of one infinite harmony.

In its relations with its supreme Self, with God, the divine soul will have this sense of the oneness of the transcendent and universal Divine with its own being. It will enjoy that oneness of God with itself in its own individuality and with its other selves in the universality. Its relations of knowledge will be the play of the divine omniscience, for God is Knowledge, and what is ignorance with us will be there only the holding back of knowledge in the repose of conscious self-awareness so that certain forms of that self-awareness may be brought forward into activity of Light. Its relations of will will be there the play of the divine omnipotence, for God is Force, Will and Power, and what with us is weakness and incapacity will be the holding back of will in tranquil concentrated force so that certain forms of divine conscious-force may realise themselves brought forward into form of Power. Its relations of love and delight will be the play of the divine ecstasy, for God is Love and Delight, and what with us would be denial of love and delight will be the holding back of joy in the still sea of Bliss so that certain forms of divine union and enjoyment may be brought in front in an active upwelling of waves of the Bliss. So also all its becoming will be formation of the divine being in response to these activities and what is with us cessation, death, annihilation will be only rest, transition or holding back of the joyous creative Maya in the eternal being of Sachchidananda. At the same time this oneness will not preclude relations of the divine soul with God, with its supreme Self, founded on the joy of difference separating itself from unity to enjoy that unity otherwise; it will not annul the possibility of any of those exquisite forms of God-enjoyment which are the highest rapture of the God-lover in his clasp of the Divine.

But what will be the conditions in which and by which this nature of the life of the divine soul will realise itself? All experience in relation proceeds through certain forces of being formulating themselves by an instrumentation to which we give the name of properties, qualities, activities, faculties. As, for instance, Mind throws itself into various forms of mind-power, such as judgment, observation, memory, sympathy, proper to its
own being, so must the Truth-consciousness or Supermind effect the relations of soul with soul by forces, faculties, functionings proper to supramental being; otherwise there would be no play of differentiation. What these functionings are, we shall see when we come to consider the psychological conditions of the divine Life; at present we are only considering its metaphysical foundations, its essential nature and principles. Suffice it at present to observe that the absence or abolition of separatist egoism and of effective division in consciousness is the one essential condition of the divine Life, and therefore their presence in us is that which constitutes our mortality and our fall from the Divine. This is our “original sin”, or rather let us say in a more philosophical language, the deviation from the Truth and Right of the Spirit, from its oneness, integrality and harmony that was the necessary condition for the great plunge into the Ignorance which is the soul’s adventure in the world and from which was born our suffering and aspiring humanity.