Chapter XXII

The Problem of Life

This it is that is called the universal Life.

*Taittiriya Upanishad.*

The Lord is seated in the heart of all beings turning all beings mounted upon a machine by his Maya.

*Gita.*

He who knows the Truth, the Knowledge, the Infinity that is Brahman shall enjoy with the all-wise Brahman all objects of desire.

*Taittiriya Upanishad.*

Life is, we have seen, the putting forth, under certain cosmic circumstances, of a Conscious-Force which is in its own nature infinite, absolute, untrammelled, inalienably possessed of its own unity and bliss, the Conscious-Force of Sachchidananda. The central circumstance of this cosmic process, in so far as it differs in its appearances from the purity of the infinite Existence and the self-possession of the undivided Energy, is the dividing faculty of the Mind obscured by ignorance. There results from this divided action of an undivided Force the apparition of dualities, oppositions, seeming denials of the nature of Sachchidananda which exist as an abiding reality for the mind, but only as a phenomenon misrepresenting a manifold Reality for the divine cosmic Consciousness concealed behind the veil of mind. Hence the world takes on the appearance of a clash of opposing truths each seeking to fulfil itself, each having the right to fulfilment, and therefore of a mass of problems and mysteries which have to be solved because behind all this confusion there is the hidden Truth and unity pressing for the

1 II. 3. 2 XVIII. 61. 3 II. 1.
solution and by the solution for its own unveiled manifestation in the world.

This solution has to be sought by the mind, but not by the mind alone; it has to be a solution in Life, in act of being as well as in consciousness of being. Consciousness as Force has created the world-movement and its problems; consciousness as Force has to solve the problems it has created and carry the world-movement to the inevitable fulfilment of its secret sense and evolving Truth. But this Life has taken successively three appearances. The first is material, — a submerged consciousness is concealed in its own superficial expressive action and representative forms of force; for the consciousness itself disappears from view in the act and is lost in the form. The second is vital, — an emerging consciousness is half-apparent as power of life and process of the growth, activity and decay of form, it is half-delivered out of its original imprisonment, it has become vibrant in power, as vital craving and satisfaction or repulsion, but at first not at all and then only imperfectly vibrant in light as knowledge of its own self-existence and its environment. The third is mental, — an emerged consciousness reflects fact of life as mental sense and responsive perception and idea while as new idea it tries to become fact of life, modifies the internal and attempts to modify conformably the external existence of the being. Here, in mind, consciousness is delivered out of its imprisonment in the act and form of its own force; but it is not yet master of the act and form because it has emerged as an individual consciousness and is aware therefore only of a fragmentary movement of its own total activities.

The whole crux and difficulty of human life lies here. Man is this mental being, this mental consciousness working as mental force, aware in a way of the universal force and life of which he is part but, because he has not knowledge of its universality or even of the totality of his own being, unable to deal either with life in general or with his own life in a really effective and victorious movement of mastery. He seeks to know Matter in order to be master of the material environment, to know Life in order to be master of the vital existence, to know Mind in
order to be master of the great obscure movement of mentality in which he is not only a jet of light of self-consciousness like the animal, but also more and more a flame of growing knowledge. Thus he seeks to know himself in order to be master of himself, to know the world in order to be master of the world. This is the urge of Existence in him, the necessity of the Consciousness he is, the impulsion of the Force that is his life, the secret will of Sachchidananda appearing as the individual in a world in which He expresses and yet seems to deny Himself. To find the conditions under which this inner impulsion is satisfied is the problem man must strive always to resolve and to that he is compelled by the very nature of his own existence and by the Deity seated within him; and until the problem is solved, the impulse satisfied, the human race cannot rest from its labour. Either man must fulfil himself by satisfying the Divine within him or he must produce out of himself a new and greater being who will be more capable of satisfying it. He must either himself become a divine humanity or give place to Superman.

This results from the very logic of things because, the mental consciousness of man not being the completely illumined consciousness entirely emerged out of the obscuration of Matter but only a progressive term in the great emergence, the line of evolutionary creation in which he has appeared cannot stop where he now is, but must go either beyond its present term in him or else beyond him if he himself has not the force to go forward. Mental idea trying to become fact of life must pass on till it becomes the whole Truth of existence delivering itself out of its successive wrappings, revealed and progressively fulfilled in light of consciousness and joyously fulfilled in power; for in and through these two terms of power and light Existence manifests itself, because existence is in its nature Consciousness and Force: but the third term in which these, its two constituents, meet, become one and are ultimately fulfilled, is satisfied Delight of self-existence. For an evolving life like ours this inevitable culmination must necessarily mean the finding of the self that was contained in the seed of its own birth and, with that self-finding, the complete working out of the potentialities deposited
in the movement of Conscious-Force from which this life took its rise. The potentiality thus contained in our human existence is Sachchidananda realising Himself in a certain harmony and unification of the individual life and the universal so that mankind shall express in a common consciousness, common movement of power, common delight the transcendent Something which has cast itself into this form of things.

All life depends for its nature on the fundamental poise of its own constituting consciousness; for as the Consciousness is, so will the Force be. Where the Consciousness is infinite, one, transcendent of its acts and forms even while embracing and informing, organising and executing them, as is the consciousness of Sachchidananda, so will be the Force, infinite in its scope, one in its works, transcendent in its power and self-knowledge. Where the Consciousness is like that of material Nature, submerged, self-oblivious, driving along in the drift of its own Force without seeming to know it, even though by the very nature of the eternal relation between the two terms it really determines the drift which drives it, so will be the Force: it will be a monstrous movement of the Inert and Inconscient, unaware of what it contains, seeming mechanically to fulfil itself by a sort of inexorable accident, an inevitably happy chance, even while all the while it really obeys faultlessly the law of the Right and Truth fixed for it by the will of the supernal Conscious-Being concealed within its movement. Where the Consciousness is divided in itself, as in Mind, limiting itself in various centres, setting each to fulfil itself without knowledge of what is in other centres and of its relation to others, aware of things and forces in their apparent division and opposition to each other but not in their real unity, such will be the Force: it will be a life like that we are and see around us; it will be a clash and intertwining of individual lives seeking each its own fulfilment without knowing its relation to others, a conflict and difficult accommodation of divided and opposing or differing forces and, in the mentality, a mixing, a shock and wrestle and insecure combination of divided and opposing or divergent ideas which cannot arrive at the knowledge of their necessity to each other or grasp their
place as elements of that Unity behind which is expressing itself through them and in which their discords must cease. But where the Consciousness is in possession of both the diversity and the unity and the latter contains and governs the former, where it is aware at once of the Law, Truth and Right of the All and the Law, Truth and Right of the individual and the two become consciously harmonised in a mutual unity, where the whole nature of the consciousness is the One knowing itself as the Many and the Many knowing themselves as the One, there the Force also will be of the same nature: it will be a Life that consciously obeys the law of Unity and yet fulfils each thing in the diversity according to its proper rule and function; it will be a life in which all the individuals live at once in themselves and in each other as one conscious Being in many souls, one power of Consciousness in many minds, one joy of Force working in many lives, one reality of Delight fulfilling itself in many hearts and bodies.

The first of these four positions, the source of all this progressive relation between Consciousness and Force, is their poise in the being of Sachchidananda where they are one; for there the Force is consciousness of being working itself out without ever ceasing to be consciousness and the Consciousness is similarly luminous Force of being eternally aware of itself and of its own Delight and never ceasing to be this power of utter light and self-possession. The second relation is that of material Nature; it is the poise of being in the material universe which is the great denial of Sachchidananda by Himself: for here there is the utter apparent separation of Force from Consciousness, the specious miracle of the all-governing and infallible Inconscient which is only the mask but which modern knowledge has mistaken for the real face of the cosmic Deity. The third relation is the poise of being in Mind and in the Life which we see emerging out of this denial, bewildered by it, struggling — without any possibility of cessation by submission, but also without any clear knowledge or instinct of a victorious solution — against the thousand and one problems involved in this perplexing apparition of man the half-potent conscient being out of the omnipotent Inconscience of the material universe. The fourth relation is the poise of being
in Supermind: it is the fulfilled existence which will eventually solve all this complex problem created by the partial affirmation emerging out of the total denial; and it must needs solve it in the only possible way, by the complete affirmation fulfilling all that was secretly there contained in potentiality and intended in fact of evolution behind the mask of the great denial. That is the real life of the real Man towards which this partial life and partial unfulfilled manhood is striving forward with a perfect knowledge and guidance in the so-called Inconscient within us, but in our conscient parts with only a dim and struggling prevision, with fragments of realisation, with glimpses of the ideal, with flashes of revelation and inspiration in the poet and the prophet, the seer and the transcendentalist, the mystic and the thinker, the great intellects and the great souls of humanity.

From the data we have now before us we can see that the difficulties which arise from the imperfect poise of Consciousness and Force in man in his present status of mind and life are principally three. First, he is aware only of a small part of his own being: his surface mentality, his surface life, his surface physical being is all that he knows and he does not know even all of that; below is the occult surge of his subconscious and his subliminal mind, his subconscious and his subliminal life-impulses, his subconscious corporeality, all that large part of himself which he does not know and cannot govern, but which rather knows and governs him. For, existence and consciousness and force being one, we can only have some real power over so much of our existence as we are identified with by self-awareness; the rest must be governed by its own consciousness which is subliminal to our surface mind and life and body. And yet, the two being one movement and not two separate movements, the larger and more potent part of ourselves must govern and determine in the mass the smaller and less powerful; therefore we are governed by the subconscient and subliminal even in our conscious existence and in our very self-mastery and self-direction we are only instruments of what seems to us the Inconscient within us.

This is what the old wisdom meant when it said that man imagines himself to be the doer of the work by his free will,
but in reality Nature determines all his works and even the wise are compelled to follow their own Nature. But since Nature is the creative force of consciousness of the Being within us who is masked by His own inverse movement and apparent denial of Himself, they called that inverse creative movement of His consciousness the Maya or Illusion-Power of the Lord and said that all existences are turned as upon a machine through His Maya by the Lord seated within the heart of all existences. It is evident then that only by man so far exceeding mind as to become one in self-awareness with the Lord can he become master of his own being. And since this is not possible in the unconsciente or in the subconscious itself, since profit cannot come by plunging down into our depths back towards the Inconscient, it can only be by going inward where the Lord is seated and by ascending into that which is still superconscient to us, into the Supermind, that this unity can be wholly established. For there in the higher and divine Maya is the conscious knowledge, in its law and truth, of that which works in the subconscious by the lower Maya under the conditions of the Denial which seeks to become the Affirmation. For this lower Nature works out what is willed and known in that higher Nature. The Illusion-Power of the divine knowledge in the world which creates appearances is governed by the Truth-Power of the same knowledge which knows the truth behind the appearances and keeps ready for us the Affirmation towards which they are working. The partial and apparent Man here will find there the perfect and real Man capable of an entirely self-aware being by his full unity with that Self-existent who is the omniscient lord of His own cosmic evolution and procession.

The second difficulty is that man is separated in his mind, his life, his body from the universal and therefore, even as he does not know himself, is equally and even more incapable of knowing his fellow-creatures. He forms by inferences, theories, observations and a certain imperfect capacity of sympathy a rough mental construction about them; but this is not knowledge. Knowledge can only come by conscious identity, for that is the only true knowledge, — existence aware of itself. We know
what we are so far as we are consciously aware of ourself, the rest is hidden; so also we can come really to know that with which we become one in our consciousness, but only so far as we can become one with it. If the means of knowledge are indirect and imperfect, the knowledge attained will also be indirect and imperfect. It will enable us to work out with a certain precarious clumsiness but still perfectly enough from our mental standpoint certain limited practical aims, necessities, conveniences, a certain imperfect and insecure harmony of our relations with that which we know; but only by a conscious unity with it can we arrive at a perfect relation. Therefore we must arrive at a conscious unity with our fellow-beings and not merely at the sympathy created by love or the understanding created by mental knowledge, which will always be the knowledge of their superficial existence and therefore imperfect in itself and subject to denial and frustration by the uprush of the unknown and unmastered from the subconscient or the subliminal in them and us. But this conscious oneness can only be established by entering into that in which we are one with them, the universal; and the fullness of the universal exists consciently only in that which is superconscient to us, in the Supermind: for here in our normal being the greater part of it is subconscient and therefore in this normal poise of mind, life and body it cannot be possessed. The lower conscious nature is bound down to ego in all its activities, chained triply to the stake of differentiated individuality. The Supermind alone commands unity in diversity.

The third difficulty is the division between force and consciousness in the evolutionary existence. There is, first, the division which has been created by the evolution itself in its three successive formations of Matter, Life and Mind, each with its own law of working. The Life is at war with the body; it attempts to force it to satisfy life’s desires, impulses, satisfactions and demands from its limited capacity what could only be possible to an immortal and divine body; and the body, enslaved and tyrannised over, suffers and is in constant dumb revolt against the demands made upon it by the Life. The Mind is at war with both: sometimes it helps the Life against the Body, sometimes
restrains the vital urge and seeks to protect the corporeal frame from life’s desires, passions and over-driving energies; it also seeks to possess the Life and turn its energy to the mind’s own ends, to the utmost joys of the mind’s own activity, to the satisfaction of mental, aesthetic, emotional aims and their fulfilment in human existence; and the Life too finds itself enslaved and misused and is in frequent insurrection against the ignorant, half-wise tyrant seated above it. This is the war of our members which the mind cannot satisfactorily resolve because it has to deal with a problem insoluble to it, the aspiration of an immortal being in a mortal life and body. It can only arrive at a long succession of compromises or end in an abandonment of the problem either by submission with the materialist to the mortality of our apparent being or with the ascetic and the religionist by the rejection and condemnation of the earthly life and withdrawal to happier and easier fields of existence. But the true solution lies in finding the principle beyond Mind of which Immortality is the law and in conquering by it the mortality of our existence.

But there is also that fundamental division within between force of Nature and the conscious being which is the original cause of this incapacity. Not only is there a division between the mental, the vital and the physical being, but each of them is also divided against itself. The capacity of the body is less than the capacity of the instinctive soul or conscious being, the physical Purusha within it, the capacity of the vital force less than the capacity of the impulsive soul, the vital conscious being or Purusha within it, the capacity of the mental energy less than the capacity of the intellectual and emotional soul, the mental Purusha within it. For the soul is the inner consciousness which aspires to its own complete self-realisation and therefore always exceeds the individual formation of the moment, and the Force which has taken its poise in the formation is always pushed by its soul to that which is abnormal to the poise, transcendent of it; thus constantly pushed it has much trouble in answering, more in evolving from the present to a greater capacity. In trying to fulfil the demands of this triple soul it is distracted and driven to set instinct against instinct, impulse against impulse, emotion
against emotion, idea against idea, satisfying this, denying that, then repenting and returning on what it has done, adjusting, compensating, readjusting _ad infinitum_, but not arriving at any principle of unity. And in the mind again the conscious power that should harmonise and unite is not only limited in its knowledge and in its will, but the knowledge and the will are disparate and often at discord. The principle of unity is above in the supermind: for there alone is the conscious unity of all diversities; there alone will and knowledge are equal and in perfect harmony; there alone Consciousness and Force arrive at their divine equation.

Man, in proportion as he develops into a self-conscious and truly thinking being, becomes acutely aware of all this discord and disparateness in his parts and he seeks to arrive at a harmony of his mind, life and body, a harmony of his knowledge and will and emotion, a harmony of all his members. Sometimes this desire stops short at the attainment of a workable compromise which will bring with it a relative peace; but compromise can only be a halt on the way, since the Deity within will not be satisfied eventually with less than a perfect harmony combining in itself the integral development of our many-sided potentialities. Less than this would be an evasion of the problem, not its solution, or else only a temporary solution provided as a resting-place for the soul in its continual self-enlargement and ascension. Such a perfect harmony would demand as essential terms a perfect mentality, a perfect play of vital force, a perfect physical existence. But where in the radically imperfect shall we find the principle and power of perfection? Mind rooted in division and limitation cannot provide it to us, nor can life and the body which are the energy and the frame of dividing and limiting mind. The principle and power of perfection are there in the subconscious but wrapped up in the tegument or veil of the lower Maya, a mute premonition emerging as an unrealised ideal; in the superconscient they await, open, eternally realised, but still separated from us by the veil of our self-ignorance. It is above, then, and not either in our present poise nor below it that we must seek for the reconciling power and knowledge.
Equally, man, as he develops, becomes acutely aware of the discord and ignorance that governs his relations with the world, acutely intolerant of it, more and more set upon finding a principle of harmony, peace, joy and unity. This too can only come to him from above. For only by developing a mind which shall have knowledge of the mind of others as of itself, free from our mutual ignorance and misunderstanding, a will that feels and makes itself one with the will of others, an emotional heart that contains the emotions of others as its own, a life-force that senses the energies of others and accepts them for its own and seeks to fulfil them as its own, and a body that is not a wall of imprisonment and defence against the world,—but all this under the law of a Light and Truth that shall transcend the aberrations and errors, the much sin and falsehood of our and others’ minds, wills, emotions, life-energies,—only so can the life of man spiritually and practically become one with that of his fellow-beings and the individual recover his own universal self. The subconscient has this life of the All and the superconscient has it, but under conditions which necessitate our motion upwards. For not towards the Godhead concealed in the “inconscient ocean where darkness is wrapped within darkness”,\(^4\) but towards the Godhead seated in the sea of eternal light,\(^5\) in the highest ether of our being, is the original impetus which has carried upward the evolving soul to the type of our humanity.

Unless therefore the race is to fall by the wayside and leave the victory to other and new creations of the eager travailing Mother, it must aspire to this ascent, conducted indeed through love, mental illumination and the vital urge to possession and self-giving, but leading beyond to the supramental unity which transcends and fulfils them; in the founding of human life upon the supramental realisation of conscious unity with the One and with all in our being and in all its members humanity must seek its final good and salvation. And this is what we have described as the fourth status of Life in its ascent towards the Godhead.

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\(^4\) Rig Veda, X. 129. 3.

\(^5\) The Waters which are in the realm of light above the Sun and those which abide below. — Rig Veda, III. 22. 3.