Chapter XXI

The Gradations of the Supermind

The INTUITIVE mind is an immediate translation of truth into mental terms half transformed by a radiant supramental substance, a translation of some infinite self-knowledge that acts above mind in the superconscient spirit. That spirit becomes conscient to us as a greater self at once above and in and around us of which our present self, our mental, vital and physical personality and nature, is an imperfect portion or a partial derivation or an inferior and inadequate symbol, and as the intuitive mind grows in us, as our whole being grows more moulded to an intuitive substance, we feel a sort of half transformation of our members into the nature of this greater self and spirit. All our thought, will, impulse, feeling, even in the end our more outward vital and physical sensations become more and more direct transmissions from the spirit and are of another and a more and more pure, untroubled, powerful and luminous nature. This is one side of the change: the other is that whatever belongs still to the lower being, whatever still seems to us to come from outside or as a survival of the action of our old inferior personality, feels the pressure of the change and increasingly tends to modify and transform itself to the new substance and nature. The higher comes down and largely takes the place of the lower, but also the lower changes, transforms itself into material of the action and becomes part of the substance of the higher being.

The greater spirit above the mind appears at first as a presence, a light, a power, a source, an infinite, but all that is knowable to us in it is at first an infinite identity of being, consciousness, power of consciousness, Ananda. The rest comes from it, but takes no determinate shape of thought, will or feeling above us, but only in the intuitive mind and on its level. Or we feel and are manifoldly aware of a great and infinite Purusha who
is the eternally living truth of that being and presence, a great and infinite knowledge which is the potency of that light and consciousness, a great and infinite will which is the potency of that power of consciousness, a great and infinite love which is the potency of that Ananda. But all these potencies are only known to us in any definite manner, apart from the strong reality and effect of their essential presence, in so far as they are translated to our intuitive mental being and on its level and within its limits. As however we progress or as we grow into a more luminous and dynamic union with that spirit or Purusha, a greater action of knowledge and will and spiritual feeling manifests and seems to organise itself above the mind and this we recognise as the true supermind and the real native play of the infinite knowledge, will and Ananda. The intuitive mentality then becomes a secondary and inferior movement waiting upon this higher power, responding and assenting to all its illuminations and dictates, transmitting them to the lower members, and, when they do not arrive or are not in immediate evidence, often attempting to supply its place, imitate its action and do as best it can the works of the supramental nature. It takes in fact the same place and relation with regard to it as was taken with regard to itself by the ordinary intelligence at an earlier stage of the Yoga.

This double action on the two planes of our being at first strengthens the intuitive mentality as a secondary operation and assists it to expel or transform more completely the survivals or invasions or accretions of the ignorance. And more and more it intensifies the intuitive mentality itself in its light of knowledge and eventually transforms it into the image of the supermind itself, but at first, ordinarily, in the more limited action of the gnosis when it takes the form of what we might call a luminous supramental or divine reason. It is as this divine reason that the supermind itself at the beginning may manifest its action and then, when it has changed the mind into its own image, it descends and takes the place of the ordinary intelligence and reason. Meanwhile a higher supramental power of a much greater character has been revealing itself above which takes the supreme lead of the divine action in the being. The divine
reason is of a more limited character because, although not of the mental stamp and although an operation of the direct truth and knowledge, it is a delegated power for a range of purposes greater in light, but still to a certain extent analogous to those of the ordinary human will and reason; it is in the yet greater supermind that there comes the direct, altogether revealed and immediate action of the Ishwara in the human being. These distinctions between the intuitive mind, the divine reason and the greater supermind, and others within these gradations themselves, have to be made because eventually they become of great importance. At first the mind takes all that comes from beyond it without distinction as the sufficient spiritual illumination and accepts even initial states and first enlightenments as a finality, but afterwards it finds that to rest here would be to rest in a partial realisation and that one has to go on heightening and enlarging till at least there is reached a certain completeness of divine breadth and stature.

It is difficult for the intellect to grasp at all what is meant by these supramental distinctions: the mental terms in which they can be rendered are lacking or inadequate and they can only be understood after a certain sight or certain approximations in experience. A number of indications are all that at present it can be useful to give. And first it will be enough to take certain clues from the thinking mind; for it is there that some of the nearest keys to the supramental action are discoverable. The thought of the intuitive mind proceeds wholly by four powers that shape the form of the truth, an intuition that suggests its idea, an intuition that discriminates, an inspiration that brings in its word and something of its greater substance and a revelation that shapes to the sight its very face and body of reality. These things are not the same as certain movements of the ordinary mental intelligence that look analogous and are easily mistaken for the true intuition in our first inexperience. The suggestive intuition is not the same thing as the intellectual insight of a quick intelligence or the intuitive discrimination as the rapid judgment of the reasoning intellect; the intuitive inspiration is not the same as the inspired action of the imaginative intelligence, nor
the intuitive revelation as the strong light of a purely mental close seizing and experience.

It would perhaps be accurate to say that these latter activities are mental representations of the higher movements, attempts of the ordinary mind to do the same things or the best possible imitations the intellect can offer of the functionings of the higher nature. The true intuitions differ from these effective but insufficient counterfeits in their substance of light, their operation, their method of knowledge. The intellectual rapidities are dependent on awakenings of the basic mental ignorance to mental figures and representations of truth that may be quite valid in their own field and for their own purpose but are not necessarily and by their very nature reliable. They are dependent for their emergence on the suggestions given by mental and sense data or on the accumulation of past mental knowledge. They search for the truth as a thing outside, an object to be found and looked at and stored as an acquisition and, when found, scrutinise its surfaces, suggestions or aspects. This scrutiny can never give a quite complete and adequate truth idea. However positive they may seem at the time, they may at any moment have to be passed over, rejected and found inconsistent with fresh knowledge.

The intuitive knowledge on the contrary, however limited it may be in its field or application, is within that scope sure with an immediate, a durable and especially a self-existent certitude. It may take for starting-point or rather for a thing to light up and disclose in its true sense the data of mind and sense or else fire a train of past thought and knowledge to new meanings and issues, but it is dependent on nothing but itself and may leap out of its own field of lustres, independent of previous suggestion or data, and this kind of action becomes progressively more common and adds itself to the other to initiate new depths and ranges of knowledge. In either case there is always an element of self-existent truth and a sense of absoluteness of origination suggestive of its proceeding from the spirit’s knowledge by identity. It is the disclosing of a knowledge that is secret but already existent in the being: it is not an acquisition, but something that was always there and revealable. It sees the truth from
within and illumines with that inner vision the outsides and it
harmonises, too, readily — provided we keep intuitively awake
— with whatever fresh truth has yet to arrive. These character-
istics become more pronounced and intense in the higher, the
proper supramental ranges: in the intuitive mind they may not
be always recognisable in their purity and completeness, because
of the mixture of mental stuff and its accretion, but in the divine
reason and greater supramental action they become free and
absolute.

The suggestive intuition acting on the mental level suggests
a direct and illumining inner idea of the truth, an idea that is
its true image and index, not as yet the entirely present and
whole sight, but rather of the nature of a bright memory of
some truth, a recognition of a secret of the self’s knowledge. It
is a representation, but a living representation, not an ideative
symbol, a reflection, but a reflection that is lit up with some-
thing of the truth’s real substance. The intuitive discrimination
is a secondary action setting this idea of the truth in its right
place and its relation to other ideas. And so long as there is
the habit of mental interference and accretion it works also
to separate the mental from the higher seeing, to discrete the
inferior mental stuff that embarrasses with its alloy the pure
truth substance, and labours to unravel the mingled skein of
ignorance and knowledge, falsehood and error. As the intuition
is of the nature of a memory, a luminous remembering of the
self-existent truth, so the inspiration is of the nature of truth
hearing: it is an immediate reception of the very voice of the
truth, it readily brings the word that perfectly embodies it and it
carries something more than the light of its idea; there is seized
some stream of its inner reality and vivid arriving movement
of its substance. The revelation is of the nature of direct sight,
pratyakṣa-dṛṣṭi, and makes evident to a present vision the thing
in itself of which the idea is the representation. It brings out the
very spirit and being and reality of the truth and makes it part
of the consciousness and the experience.

In the actual process of the development of the supramental
nature, supposing it to follow a regular gradation, it may be seen
that the two lower powers come out first, though not necessarily void of all action of the two higher powers, and as they increase and become a normal action, they make a sort of lower intuitive gnosis. The combination of the two together is necessary for its completeness. If the intuitive discrimination works by itself, it creates a sort of critical illumination that acts on the ideas and perceptions of the intellect and turns them on themselves in such a way that the mind can separate their truth from their error. It creates in the end in place of the intellectual judgment a luminous intuitive judgment, a sort of critical gnosis: but it is likely to be deficient in fresh illuminative knowledge or to create only so much extension of truth as is the natural consequence of the separation of error. On the other hand, if the suggestive intuition works by itself without this discrimination, there is indeed a constant accession of new truths and new lights, but they are easily surrounded and embarrassed by the mental accretions and their connections and relation or harmonious development out of each other are clouded and broken by the interference. A normalised power of active intuitive perception is created, but not any complete and coherent mind of intuitive gnosis. The two together supply the deficiencies of each other’s single action and build up a mind of intuitive perception and discrimination which can do the work and more than the work of the stumbling mental intelligence and do it with the greater light, surety and power of a more direct and unfaltering ideation.

The two higher powers in the same way make a higher intuitive gnosis. Acting as separate powers in the mentality they too are not in themselves sufficient without the companion activities. The revelation may indeed present the reality, the identities of the thing in itself and add something of great power to the experience of the conscious being, but it may lack the embodying word, the out-bringing idea, the connected pursuit of its relations and consequences and may remain a possession in the self but not a thing communicated to and through the members. There may be the presence of the truth but not its full manifestation. The inspiration may give the word of the truth and the stir of its dynamis and movement, but this is not a complete thing and sure
in its effect without the full revelation of all that it bears in itself and luminously indicates and the ordering of it in its relations. The inspired intuitive mind is a mind of lightnings lighting up many things that were dark, but the light needs to be canalised and fixed into a stream of steady lustres that will be a constant power for lucidly ordered knowledge. The higher gnosia by itself in its two sole powers would be a mind of spiritual splendours living too much in its own separate domain, producing perhaps invisibly its effect on the outside world, but lacking the link of a more close and ordinary communication with its more normal movements that is provided by the lower ideative action. It is the united or else the fused and unified action of the four powers that makes the complete and fully armed and equipped intuitive gnosia.

A regular development would at first, allowing for some simultaneous manifestation of the four powers, yet create on a sufficiently extensive scale the lower suggestive and critical intuitive mind and then develop above it the inspired and the revelatory intuitive mentality. Next it would take up the two lower powers into the power and field of the inspiration and make all act as one harmony doing simultaneously the united — or, at a higher intensity, indistinguishably as one light the unified — action of the three. And last it would execute a similar movement of taking up into and fusion with the revelatory power of the intuitive gnosia. As a matter of fact in the human mind the clear process of the development is likely always to be more or less disturbed, confused and rendered irregular in its course, subjected to relapses, incomplete advances, returns upon things unaccomplished or imperfectly accomplished owing to the constant mixture and intervention of the existing movements of the mental half-knowledge and the obstruction of the stuff of the mental ignorance. In the end however a time can come when the process, so far as it is possible in the mind itself, is complete and a clear formation of a modified supramental light is possible composed of all these powers, the highest leading or absorbing into its own body the others. It is at this point, when the intuitive mind has been fully formed in the mental being and
is strong enough to dominate if not yet wholly to occupy the various mental activities, that a farther step becomes possible, the lifting of the centre and level of action above the mind and the predominance of the supramental reason.

The first character of this change is a complete reversal, a turning over, one might almost say, upside down of the whole activity. At present we live in the mind and mostly in the physical mind, but still not entirely involved like the animal in the physical, vital and sensational workings. On the contrary we have attained to a certain mental elevation from which we can look down on the action of the life, sense and body, turn the higher mental light on them, reflect, judge, use our will to modify the action of the inferior nature. On the other hand we look up too from that elevation more or less consciously to something above and receive from it either directly or through our subconscious or subliminal being some secret superconscient impulsion of our thought and will and other activities. The process of this communication is veiled and obscure and men are not ordinarily aware of it except in certain highly developed natures: but when we advance in self-knowledge, we find that all our thought and will originate from above though formed in the mind and there first overtly active. If we release the knots of the physical mind which binds us to the brain instrument and identifies us with the bodily consciousness and can move in the pure mentality, this becomes constantly clear to the perception.

The development of the intuitive mentality makes this communication direct, no longer subconscious and obscure; but we are still in the mind and the mind still looks upward and receives the supramental communication and passes it on to the other members. In doing so it no longer wholly creates its own form for the thought and will that come down to it, but still it modifies and qualifies and limits them and imposes something of its own method. It is still the receiver and the transmitter of the thought and will, — though not formative of them now except by a subtle influence, because it provides them or at least surrounds them with a mental stuff or a mental setting and framework and atmosphere. When however the supramental reason develops,
the Purusha rises above the mental elevation and now looks down on the whole action of mind, life, sense, body from quite another light and atmosphere, sees and knows it with quite a different vision and, because he is no longer involved in the mind, with a free and true knowledge. Man is at present only partly liberated from the animal involution, — for his mind is partially lifted above, partially immersed and controlled by the life, sense and body, — and he is not at all liberated from the mental forms and limits. But after he rises to the supramental elevation, he is delivered from the nether control and governor of his whole nature — essentially and initially only at first and in his highest consciousness, for the rest remains still to be transformed, — but when or in proportion as that is done, he becomes a free being and master of his mind, sense, life and body.

The second character of the change is that the formation of the thought and will can take place now wholly on the supramental level and therefore there is initiated an entirely luminous and effective will and knowledge. The light and the power are not indeed complete at the beginning because the supramental reason is only an elementary formulation of the supermind and because the mind and other members have yet to be changed into the mould of the supramental nature. The mind, it is true, no longer acts as the apparent originator, formulator or judge of the thought and will or anything else, but it still acts as the transmitting channel and therefore in that degree as a recipient and to a certain extent an obstructor and qualifier in transmission of the power and light that comes from above. There is a disparateness between the supramental consciousness in which the Purusha now stands, thinks and wills and the mental, vital and physical consciousness through which he has to effectuate its light and knowledge. He lives and sees with an ideal consciousness, but he has yet in his lower self to make it entirely practical and effective. Otherwise he can only act with a greater or less spiritual effectiveness through an internal communication with others on the spiritual level and on the higher mental level that is most easily affected by it, but the effect is diminished and is retarded by the inferiority or lack of
the integral play of the being. This can only be remedied by the supermind taking hold of and supramentalising the mental, the vital and the physical consciousness,—transforming them, that is to say, into moulds of the supramental nature. This is much more easily done if there has been that Yogic preparation of the instruments of the lower nature of which I have already spoken; otherwise there is much difficulty in getting rid of the discord or disparateness between the ideal supramentality and the mental transmitting instruments, the mind channel, the heart, the sense, the nervous and the physical being. The supramental reason can do the first and a fairly ample, though not the entire work of this transformation.

The supramental reason is of the nature of a spiritual, direct, self-luminous, self-acting will and intelligence, not mental, mānasa buddhi, but supramental, vijñāna buddhi. It acts by the same four powers as the intuitive mind, but these powers are here active in an initial fullness of body not modified by the mental stuff of the intelligence, not concerned mainly with an illumining of the mind, but at work in their own proper manner and for their own native purpose. And of these four the discrimination here is hardly recognisable as a separate power, but is constantly inherent in the three others and is their own determination of the scope and relations of their knowledge. There are three elevations in this reason, one in which the action of what we may call a supramental intuition gives the form and the predominant character, one in which a rapid supramental inspiration and one in which a large supramental revelation leads and imparts the general character, and each of these raises us to a more concentrated substance and a higher light, sufficiency and scope of the truth will and the truth knowledge.

The work of the supramental reason covers and goes beyond all that is done by the mental reason, but it starts from the other end and has a corresponding operation. The essential truths of self and the spirit and the principle of things are not to the spiritual reason abstract ideas or subtle unsubstantial experiences to which it arrives by a sort of overleaping of limits, but a constant reality and the natural background of all its ideation
and experience. It does not like the mind arrive at, but discloses directly both the general and total and the particular truths of being and consciousness, of spiritual and other sensation and Ananda and of force and action, — reality and phenomenon and symbol, actuality and possibility and eventuality, that which is determined and that which determines, and all with a self-luminous evidence. It formulates and arranges the relations of thought and thought, of force and force, of action and action and of all these with each other and throws them into a convincing and luminous harmony. It includes the data of sense, but gives to them another meaning in the light of what is behind them, and treats them only as outermost indications: the inner truth is known to a greater sense which it already possesses. And it is not dependent on them alone even in their own field of objects or limited by their range. It has a spiritual sense and sensation of its own and it takes and relates to that the data too of a sixth sense, the inner mind sense. And it takes also the illuminations and the living symbols and images familiar to the psychic experience and relates these too to the truths of the self and spirit.

The spiritual reason takes also the emotions and psychic sensations, relates them to their spiritual equivalents and imparts to them the values of the higher consciousness and Ananda from which they derive and are its modifications in an inferior nature and it corrects their deformations. It takes similarly the movements of the vital being and consciousness and relates them to the movements and imparts to them the significances of the spiritual life of the self and its power of Tapas. It takes the physical consciousness, delivers it from its darkness and tamas of inertia and makes it a responsive recipient and a sensitive instrument of the supramental light and power and Ananda. It deals with life and action and knowledge like the mental will and reason, but not starting from matter, life and sense and their data and relating to them through the idea the truth of higher things, but it starts on the contrary from truth of self and spirit and relates to that through a direct spiritual experience assuming all other experience as its forms and instruments the things of mind and soul and life and sense and matter. It commands a far vaster
range than the ordinary embodied mind shut up in the prison of
the physical senses and vaster too than the pure mentality, even
when that is free in its own ranges and operates with the aid of
the psychical mind and inner senses. And it has that power which
the mental will and reason do not possess, because they are not
truly self-determined and originally determinative of things, the
power of transforming the whole being in all its parts into a
harmonious instrument and manifestation of the spirit.

At the same time the spiritual reason acts mainly by the
representative idea and will in the spirit, though it has a greater
and more essential truth as its constant source and supporter and
reference. It is, then, a power of light of the Ishwara, but not the
very self-power of his immediate presence in the being; it is his
sūrya-śakti, not his whole ātma-śakti or parā svā prakṛti, that
works in the spiritual reason. The immediate self-power begins
its direct operation in the greater supermind, and that takes up
all that has hitherto been realised in body, life and mind and in
the intuitive being and by the spiritual reason and shapes all that
has been created, all that has been gathered, turned into stuff
of experience and made part of the consciousness, personality
and nature by the mental being, into a highest harmony with the
high infinite and universal life of the spirit. The mind can have
the touch of the infinite and the universal and can reflect and
even lose itself in them, but the supermind alone can enable the
individual to be completely one in action with the universal and
transcendent spirit.

Here the one thing that is always and constantly present,
that which one has grown to and in which one lives always, is
infinite being and all that is is seen, felt, known, existed in as
only substance of the one being; it is infinite consciousness and
all that is conscious and acts and moves is seen, felt, received,
known, lived in as self-experience and energy of the one being;
it is infinite Ananda and all that feels and is felt is seen and felt
and known, received and lived in as forms of the one Ananda.
Everything else is only manifestation and circumstance of this
one truth of our existence. This is no longer merely the seeing or
knowing, but the very condition of the self in all and all in the
self, God in all and all in God and all seen as God, and that condition is now not a thing offered to the reflecting spiritualised mind but held and lived by an integral, always present, always active realisation in the supramental nature. There is thought here and will and sensation and everything that belongs to our nature, but it is transfigured and elevated into a higher consciousness. All thought is here seen and experienced as a luminous body of substance, a luminous movement of force, a luminous wave of Ananda of the being; it is not an idea in the void air of mind, but experienced in the reality and as the light of a reality of the infinite being. The will and impulsions are similarly experienced as a real power and substance of the Sat, the Chit, the Ananda of the Ishwara. All the spiritualised sensation and emotion are experienced as pure moulds of the consciousness and Ananda. The physical being itself is experienced as a conscious form and the vital being as an outpouring of the power and possession of the life of the spirit.

The action of the supermind in the development is to manifest and organise this highest consciousness so as to exist and act no longer only in the infinite above with some limited or veiled or lower and deformed manifestations in the individual being and nature, but largely and totally in the individual as a conscious and self-knowing spiritual being and a living and acting power of the infinite and universal spirit. The character of this action, so far as it can be expressed, may be spoken of more fitly afterwards when we come to speak of the Brahmic consciousness and vision. In the succeeding chapters we shall only deal with so much of it as concerns the thought, will and psychic and other experience in the individual nature. At present all that is necessary to note is that here too there is in the field of the thought and the will a triple action. The spiritual reason is lifted and broadened into a greater representative action that formulates to us mainly the actualities of the existence of the self in and around us. There is then a higher interpretative action of the supramental knowledge, a greater scale less insistent on actualities, that opens out yet greater potentialities in time and space and beyond. And lastly there is a highest knowledge by
identity that is a gate of entrance to the essential self-awareness and the omniscience and omnipotence of the Ishwara.

It must not however be supposed that these superimposed stages are shut off in experience from each other. I have placed them in what might be a regular order of ascending development for the better possibility of understanding in an intellectual statement. But the infinite even in the normal mind breaks through its own veils and across its own dividing lines of descent and ascension and gives often intimations of itself in one manner or another. And while we are still in the intuitive mentality, the things above open and come to us in irregular visitations, then form as we grow a more frequent and regularised action above it. These anticipations are still more large and frequent the moment we enter on the supramental level. The universal and infinite consciousness can always seize on and surround the mind and it is when it does so with a certain continuity, frequency or persistence that the mind can most easily transform itself into the intuitive mentality and that again into the supramental movement. Only as we rise we grow more intimately and integrally into the infinite consciousness and it becomes more fully our own self and nature. And also, on the other, the lower side of existence which it might seem would then be not only beneath but quite alien to us, even when we live in the supramental being and even when the whole nature has been formed into its mould, that need not cut us off from the knowledge and feeling of others who live in the ordinary nature. The lower or more limited may have a difficulty in understanding and feeling the higher, but the higher and less limited can always, if it will, understand and identify itself with the lower nature. The supreme Ishwara too is not aloof from us; he knows, lives in, identifies himself with all and yet is not subjugated by the reactions or limited in his knowledge, power and Ananda by the limitations of the mind and life and physical being in the universe.