Chapter XXII

The Supramental Thought and Knowledge

THE TRANSITION from mind to supermind is not only the substitution of a greater instrument of thought and knowledge, but a change and conversion of the whole consciousness. There is evolved not only a supramental thought, but a supramental will, sense, feeling, a supramental substitute for all the activities that are now accomplished by the mind. All these higher activities are first manifested in the mind itself as descents, irruptions, messages or revelations of a superior power. Mostly they are mixed up with the more ordinary action of the mind and not easily distinguishable from them in our first inexperience except by their superior light and force and joy, the more so as the mind greatened or excited by their frequent coming quickens its own action and imitates the external characteristics of the supramental activity: its own operation is made more swift, luminous, strong and positive and it arrives even at a kind of imitative and often false intuition that strives to be but is not really the luminous, direct and self-existent truth. The next step is the formation of a luminous mind of intuitive experience, thought, will, feeling, sense from which the intermixture of the lesser mind and the imitative intuition are progressively eliminated: this is a process of purification, \textit{suddhi}, necessary to the new formation and perfection, \textit{siddhi}. At the same time there is the disclosure above the mind of the source of the intuitive action and a more and more organised functioning of a true supramental consciousness acting not in the mind but on its own higher plane. This draws up into itself in the end the intuitive mentality it has created as its representative and assumes the charge of the whole activity of the consciousness. The process is progressive and for a long time chequered by admixture and
the necessity of a return upon the lower movements in order to correct and transform them. The higher and the lower power act sometimes alternately, — the consciousness descending back from the heights it had attained to its former level but always with some change, — but sometimes together and with a sort of mutual reference. The mind eventually becomes wholly intuitivised and exists only as a passive channel for the supramental action; but this condition too is not ideal and presents, besides, still a certain obstacle, because the higher action has still to pass through a retarding and diminishing conscious substance, — that of the physical consciousness. The final stage of the change will come when the supermind occupies and supramentalises the whole being and turns even the vital and physical sheaths into moulds of itself, responsive, subtle and instinct with its powers. Man then becomes wholly the superman. This is at least the natural and integral process.

It would be to go altogether outside present limits to attempt anything like an adequate presentation of the whole character of the supermind; and it would not be possible to give a complete presentation, since the supermind carries in it the unity, but also the largeness and multiplicities of the infinite. All that need now be done is to present some salient characters from the point of view of the actual process of the conversion in the Yoga, the relation to the action of mind and the principle of some of the phenomena of the change. This is the fundamental relation that all the action of the mind is a derivation from the secret supermind, although we do not know this until we come to know our higher self, and draws from that source all it has of truth and value. All our thoughts, willings, feelings, sense representations have in them or at their roots an element of truth, which originates and sustains their existence, however in the actuality they may be perverted or false, and behind them a greater ungrasped truth, which if they could grasp it, would make them soon unified, harmonious and at least relatively complete. Actually, however, such truth as they have is diminished in scope, degraded into a lower movement, divided and falsified by fragmentation, afflicted with incompleteness, marred by
perversion. Mental knowledge is not an integral but always a partial knowledge. It adds constantly detail to detail, but has a difficulty in relating them aright; its wholes too are not real but incomplete wholes which it tends to substitute for the more real and integral knowledge. And even if it arrived at a kind of integral knowledge, it would still be by a sort of putting together, a mental and intellectual arrangement, an artificial unity and not an essential and real oneness. If that were all, the mind might conceivably arrive at some kind of half reflection half translation of an integral knowledge, but the radical malady would still be that it would not be the real thing, but only at best an intellectual representation. That the mental truth must always be, an intellectual, emotional and sensational representation, not the direct truth, not truth itself in its body and essence.

The supermind can do all that the mind does, present and combine details and what might be called aspects or subordinate wholes, but it does it in a different way and on another basis. It does not like the mind bring in the element of deviation, false extension and imposed error, but even when it gives a partial knowledge, gives it in a firm and exact light, and always there is behind implied or opened to the consciousness the essential truth on which the details and subordinate wholes or aspects depend. The supermind has also a power of representation, but its representations are not of the intellectual kind, they are filled with the body and substance of light of the truth in its essence, they are its vehicles and not substituted figures. There is such an infinite power of representation of the supermind and that is the divine power of which the mental action is a sort of fallen representative. This representative supermind has a lower action in what I have called the supramental reason, nearest to the mental and into which the mental can most easily be taken up, and a higher action in the integral supermind that sees all things in the unity and infinity of the divine consciousness and self-existence. But on whatever level, it is a different thing from the corresponding mental action, direct, luminous, secure. The whole inferiority of the mind comes from its being the action of the soul after it has fallen into the nescience and the ignorance.
and is trying to get back to self-knowledge but doing it still on the basis of the nescience and the ignorance. The mind is the ignorance attempting to know or it is the ignorance receiving a derivative knowledge: it is the action of Avidya. The supermind is always the disclosure of an inherent and self-existent knowledge; it is the action of Vidya.

A second difference that we experience is a greater and a spontaneous harmony and unity. All consciousness is one, but in action it takes on many movements and each of these fundamental movements has many forms and processes. The forms and processes of the mind consciousness are marked by a disturbing and perplexing division and separateness of the mental energies and movements in which the original unity of the conscious mind does not at all or only distractedly appears. Constantly we find in our mentality a conflict or else a confusion and want of combination between different thoughts or a patched up combination and the same phenomenon applies to the various movements of our will and desire and to our emotions and feelings. Again our thought and our will and our feeling are not in a state of natural harmony and unison with each other, but act in their separate power even when they have to act together and are frequently in conflict or to some degree at variance. There is too an unequal development of one at the expense of another. The mind is a thing of discords in which some kind of practical arrangement rather than a satisfying concord is established for the purposes of life. The reason tries to arrive at a better arrangement, aims at a better control, a rational or an ideal harmony, and in this attempt it is a delegate or substitute of the supermind and is trying to do what only the supermind can do in its own right; but actually it is not able wholly to control the rest of the being and there is usually a considerable difference between the rational or ideal harmony we create in our thoughts and the movement of the life. Even at the best the arrangement made by the reason has always in it something of artificiality and imposition, for in the end there are only two spontaneous harmonic movements, that of the life, inconscient or largely subconscient, the harmony that we find in the animal creation and in lower Nature, and that of
the spirit. The human condition is a stage of transition, effort and imperfection between the one and the other, between the natural and the ideal or spiritual life and it is full of uncertain seeking and disorder. It is not that the mental being cannot find or rather construct some kind of relative harmony of its own, but that it cannot render it stable because it is under the urge of the spirit. Man is obliged by a Power within him to be the labourer of a more or less conscious self-evolution that shall lead him to self-mastery and self-knowledge.

The supermind in its action is on the contrary a thing of unity and harmony and inherent order. At first when the pressure from above falls on the mentality, this is not realised and even a contrary phenomenon may for a time appear. That is due to several causes. First, there may be a disturbance, even a derangement created by impact of the greater hardly measurable power on an inferior consciousness which is not capable of responding to it organically or even perhaps of bearing the pressure. The very fact of the simultaneous and yet uncoordinated activity of two quite different forces, especially if the mind insists on its own way, if it tries obstinately or violently to profit by the supermind instead of giving itself up to it and its purpose, if it is not sufficiently passive and obedient to the higher guidance, may lead to a great excitation of power but also an increased disorder. It is for this reason that a previous preparation and long purification, the more complete the better, and a tranquillising and ordinarily a passivity of the mind calmly and strongly open to the spirit are necessities of the Yoga.

Again the mind, accustomed to act in limits, may try to supramentalise itself on the line of any one of its energies. It may develop a considerable power of intuitive half-supramentalised thought and knowledge, but the will may remain untransformed and out of harmony with this partial half-supramental development of the thinking mind, and the rest of the being too, emotional and nervous, may continue to be equally or more unregenerate. Or there may be a very great development of intuitive or strongly inspired will, but no corresponding uplifting of the thought mind or the emotional and psychic being, or only
at most so much as is specially needed in order not wholly to obstruct the will action. The emotional or psychic mind may try to intuitivise and supramentalise itself and to a great extent succeed, and yet the thinking mind remain ordinary, poor in stuff and obscure in its light. There may be a development of intuitivity in the ethical or aesthetic being, but the rest may remain very much as it was. This is the reason of the frequent disorder or one-sidedness which we mark in the man of genius, poet, artist, thinker, saint or mystic. A partially intuitivised mentality may present an appearance of much less harmony and order outside its special activity than the largely developed intellectual mind. An integral development is needed, a wholesale conversion of the mind; otherwise the action is that of the mind using the supramental influx for its own profit and in its own mould, and that is allowed for the immediate purpose of the Divine in the being and may even be considered as a stage sufficient for the individual in this one life: but it is a state of imperfection and not the complete and successful evolution of the being. If however there is an integral development of the intuitive mind, it will be found that a great harmony has begun to lay its own foundations. This harmony will be other than that created by the intellectual mind and indeed may not be easily perceptible or, if it is felt, yet not intelligible to the logical man, because not arrived at or analysable by his mental process. It will be a harmony of the spontaneous expression of the spirit.

As soon as we arise above mind to the supermind, this initial harmony will be replaced by a greater and a more integral unity. The thoughts of the supramental reason meet together and understand each other and fall into a natural arrangement even when they have started from quite opposite quarters. The movements of will that are in conflict in the mind, come in the supermind to their right place and relation to each other. The supramental feelings also discover their own affinities and fall into a natural agreement and harmony. At a higher stage this harmony intensifies towards unity. The knowledge, will, feeling and all else become a single movement. This unity reaches its greatest completeness in the highest supermind. The harmony, the unity
are inevitable because the base in the supermind is knowledge and characteristically self-knowledge, the knowledge of the self in all its aspects. The supramental will is the dynamic expression of this self-knowledge, the supramental feeling the expression of the luminous joy of the self and all else in supermind a part of this one movement. At its highest range it becomes something greater than what we call knowledge; there it is the essential and integral self-awareness of the Divine in us, his being, consciousness, Tapas, Ananda, and all is the harmonious, unified, luminous movement of that one existence.

This supramental knowledge is not primarily or essentially a thought knowledge. The intellect does not consider that it knows a thing until it has reduced its awareness of it to the terms of thought, not, that is to say, until it has put it into a system of representative mental concepts, and this kind of knowledge gets its most decisive completeness when it can be put into clear, precise and defining speech. It is true that the mind gets its knowledge primarily by various kinds of impression beginning from the vital and the sense impressions and rising to the intuitive, but these are taken by the developed intelligence only as data and seem to it uncertain and vague in themselves until they have been forced to yield up all their content to the thought and have taken their place in some intellectual relation or in an ordered thought sequence. It is true again that there is a thought and a speech which are rather suggestive than definitive and have in their own way a greater potency and richness of content, and this kind already verges on the intuitive: but still there is a demand in the intellect to bring out in clear sequence and relation the exact intellectual content of these suggestions and until that is done it does not feel satisfied that its knowledge is complete. The thought labouring in the logical intellect is that which normally seems best to organise the mental action and gives to the mind a sense of sure definiteness, security and completeness in its knowledge and its use of knowledge. Nothing of this is at all true of the supramental knowledge.

The supermind knows most completely and securely not by thought but by identity, by a pure awareness of the self-truth
of things in the self and by the self, ātmani ātmānam ātmanā. I get the supramental knowledge best by becoming one with the truth, one with the object of knowledge; the supramental satisfaction and integral light is most there when there is no further division between the knower, knowledge and the known, jñātā, jñānam, jñeyam. I see the thing known not as an object outside myself, but as myself or a part of my universal self contained in my most direct consciousness. This leads to the highest and completest knowledge; thought and speech being representations and not this direct possession in the consciousness are to the supermind a lesser form and, if not filled with the spiritual awareness, thought becomes in fact a diminution of knowledge. For it would be, supposing it to be a supramental thought, only a partial manifestation of a greater knowledge existing in the self but not at the time present to the immediately active consciousness. In the highest ranges of the infinite there need be no thought at all because all would be experienced spiritually, in continuity, in eternal possession and with an absolute directness and completeness. Thought is only one means of partially manifesting and presenting what is hidden in this greater self-existent knowledge. This supreme kind of knowing will not indeed be possible to us in its full extent and degree until we can rise through many grades of the supermind to that infinite. But still as the supramental power emerges and enlarges its action, something of this highest way of knowledge appears and grows and even the members of the mental being, as they are intuitivised and supramentalised, develop more and more a corresponding action upon their own level. There is an increasing power of a luminous vital, psychic, emotional, dynamic and other identification with all the things and beings that are the objects of our consciousness and these transcendings of the separative consciousness bring with them many forms and means of a direct knowledge.

The supramental knowledge or experience by identity carries in it as a result or as a secondary part of itself a supramental vision that needs the support of no image, can concretise what is to the mind abstract and has the character of sight though its
object may be the invisible truth of that which has form or the truth of the formless. This vision can come before there is any identity, as a sort of previous emanation of light from it, or may act detached from it as a separate power. The truth or the thing known is then not altogether or not yet one with myself, but an object of my knowledge: but still it is an object subjectively seen in the self or at least, even if it is still farther separated and objectivised to the knower, by the self, not through any intermediate process, but by a direct inner seizing or a penetrating and enveloping luminous contact of the spiritual consciousness with its object. It is this luminous seizing and contact that is the spiritual vision, \textit{drṣṭi}, — “\textit{paśyati}”, says the Upanishad continually of the spiritual knowledge, “he sees”; and of the Self conceiving the idea of creation, where we should expect “he thought”, it says instead “he saw”. It is to the spirit what the eyes are to the physical mind and one has the sense of having passed through a subtly analogous process. As the physical sight can present to us the actual body of things of which the thought had only possessed an indication or mental description and they become to us at once real and evident, \textit{pratyakṣa}, so the spiritual sight surpasses the indications or representations of thought and can make the self and truth of all things present to us and directly evident, \textit{pratyakṣa}.

The sense can only give us the superficial image of things and it needs the aid of thought to fill and inform the image; but the spiritual sight is capable of presenting to us the thing in itself and all truth about it. The seer does not need the aid of thought in its process as a means of knowledge, but only as a means of representation and expression, — thought is to him a lesser power and used for a secondary purpose. If a further extension of knowledge is required, he can come at it by new seeing without the slower thought processes that are the staff of support of the mental search and its feeling out for truth, — even as we scrutinise with the eye to find what escaped our first observation. This experience and knowledge by spiritual vision is the second in directness and greatness of the supramental powers. It is something much more near, profound and comprehensive
than mental vision, because it derives direct from the knowledge by identity, and it has this virtue that we can proceed at once from the vision to the identity, as from the identity to the vision. Thus when the spiritual vision has seen God, Self or Brahman, the soul can next enter into and become one with the Self, God or Brahman.

This can only be done integrally on or above the supramental level, but at the same time the spiritual vision can take on mental forms of itself that can help towards this identification each in its own way. A mental intuitive vision or a spiritualised mental sight, a psychic vision, an emotional vision of the heart, a vision in the sense mind are parts of the Yogic experience. If these seeings are purely mental, then they may but need not be true, for the mind is capable of both truth and error, both of a true and of a false representation. But as the mind becomes intuitivised and supramentalised, these powers are purified and corrected by the more luminous action of the supermind and become themselves forms of a supramental and a true seeing. The supramental vision, it may be noted, brings with it a supplementary and completing experience that might be called a spiritual hearing and touch of the truth, — of its essence and through that of its significance, — that is to say, there is a seizing of its movement, vibration, rhythm and a seizing of its close presence and contact and substance. All these powers prepare us to become one with that which has thus grown near to us through knowledge.

The supramental thought is a form of the knowledge by identity and a development, in the idea, of the truth presented to the supramental vision. The identity and the vision give the truth in its essence, its body and its parts in a single view: the thought translates this direct consciousness and immediate power of the truth into idea-knowledge and will. It adds or need add otherwise nothing new, but reproduces, articulates, moves round the body of the knowledge. Where, however, the identity and the vision are still incomplete, the supramental thought has a larger office and reveals, interprets or recalls as it were to the soul’s memory what they are not yet ready to give. And where these
greater states and powers are still veiled, the thought comes in front and prepares and to a certain extent effects a partial rending or helps actively in the removal of the veil. Therefore in the development out of the mental ignorance into the supramental knowledge this illumined thought comes to us often though not always first, to open the way to the vision or else to give first supports to the growing consciousness of identity and its greater knowledge. This thought is also an effective means of communication and expression and helps to an impression or fixation of the truth whether on one’s own lower mind and being or on that of others. The supramental thought differs from the intellectual not only because it is the direct truth idea and not a representation of truth to the ignorance, — it is the truth consciousness of the spirit always presenting to itself its own right forms, the satyam and r̄tam of the Veda, — but because of its strong reality, body of light and substance.

The intellectual thought refines and sublimates to a rarefied abstractness; the supramental thought as it rises in its height increases to a greater spiritual concreteness. The thought of the intellect presents itself to us as an abstraction from something seized by the mind sense and is as if supported in a void and subtle air of mind by an intangible force of the intelligence. It has to resort to a use of the mind’s power of image if it wishes to make itself more concretely felt and seen by the soul sense and soul vision. The supramental thought on the contrary presents always the idea as a luminous substance of being, luminous stuff of consciousness taking significative thought form and it therefore creates no such sense of a gulf between the idea and the real as we are liable to feel in the mind, but is itself a reality, it is real-idea and the body of a reality. It has as a result, associated with it when it acts according to its own nature, a phenomenon of spiritual light other than the intellectual clarity, a great realising force and a luminous ecstasy. It is an intensely sensible vibration of being, consciousness and Ananda.

The supramental thought, as has already been indicated, has three elevations of its intensity, one of direct thought vision, another of interpretative vision pointing to and preparing the
greater revelatory idea-sight, a third of representative vision recalling as it were to the spirit’s knowledge the truth that is called out more directly by the higher powers. In the mind these things take the form of the three ordinary powers of the intuitive mentality, — the suggestive and discriminating intuition, the inspiration and the thought that is of the nature of revelation. Above they correspond to three elevations of the supramental being and consciousness and, as we ascend, the lower first calls down into itself and is then taken up into the higher, so that on each level all the three elevations are reproduced, but always there predominates in the thought essence the character that belongs to that level’s proper form of consciousness and spiritual substance. It is necessary to bear this in mind; for otherwise the mentality, looking up to the ranges of the supermind as they reveal themselves, may think it has got the vision of the highest heights when it is only the highest range of the lower ascent that is being presented to its experience. At each height, sānōḥ sānum ārubat, the powers of the supermind increase in intensity, range and completeness.

There is also a speech, a supramental word, in which the higher knowledge, vision or thought can clothe itself within us for expression. At first this may come down as a word, a message or an inspiration that descends to us from above or it may even seem a voice of the Self or of the Ishwara, vāṇi, ādeśa. Afterwards it loses that separate character and becomes the normal form of the thought when it expresses itself in the form of an inward speech. The thought may express itself without the aid of any suggestive or developing word and only — but still quite completely, explicitly and with its full contents — in a luminous substance of supramental perception. It may aid itself when it is not so explicit by a suggestive inward speech that attends it to bring out its whole significance. Or the thought may come not as silent perception but as speech self-born out of the truth and complete in its own right and carrying in itself its own vision and knowledge. Then it is the word revelatory, inspired or intuitive or of a yet greater kind capable of bearing the infinite intention or suggestion of the higher supermind and spirit. It may frame
itself in the language now employed to express the ideas and perceptions and impulses of the intellect and the sense mind, but it uses it in a different way and with an intense bringing out of the intuitive or revelatory significances of which speech is capable. The supramental word manifests inwardly with a light, a power, a rhythm of thought and a rhythm of inner sound that make it the natural and living body of the supramental thought and vision and it pours into the language, even though the same as that of mental speech, another than the limited intellectual, emotional or sensational significance. It is formed and heard in the intuitive mind or supermind and need not at first except in certain highly gifted souls come out easily into speech and writing, but that too can be freely done when the physical consciousness and its organs have been made ready, and this is a part of the needed fullness and power of the integral perfection.

The range of knowledge covered by the supramental thought, experience and vision will be commensurate with all that is open to the human consciousness, not only on the earthly but on all planes. It will however act increasingly in an inverse sense to that of the mental thinking and experience. The centre of mental thinking is the ego, the person of the individual thinker. The supramental man on the contrary will think more with the universal mind or even may rise above it, and his individuality will rather be a vessel of radiation and communication to which the universal thought and knowledge of the Spirit will converge than a centre. The mental man thinks and acts in a radius determined by the smallness or largeness of his mentality and of its experience. The range of the supramental man will be all the earth and all that lies behind it on other planes of existence. And finally the mental man thinks and sees on the level of the present life, though it may be with an upward aspiration, and his view is obstructed on every side. His main basis of knowledge and action is the present with a glimpse into the past and ill-grasped influence from its pressure and a blind look towards the future. He bases himself on the actualities of the earthly existence, first on the facts of the outward world, —
to which he is ordinarily in the habit of relating nine tenths if not the whole of his inner thinking and experience, — then on the changing actualities of the more superficial part of his inner being. As he increases in mind, he goes more freely beyond these to potentialities which arise out of them and pass beyond them; his mind deals with a larger field of possibilities: but these for the most part get to him a full reality only in proportion as they are related to the actual and can be made actual here, now or hereafter. The essence of things he tends to see, if at all, only as a result of his actualities, in a relation to and dependence on them, and therefore he sees them constantly in a false light or in a limited measure. In all these respects the supramental man must proceed from the opposite principle of truth vision.

The supramental being sees things from above in large spaces and at the highest from the spaces of the infinite. His view is not limited to the standpoint of the present but can see in the continuities of time or from above time in the indivisibilities of the Spirit. He sees truth in its proper order first in the essence, secondly in the potentialities that derive from it and only last in the actualities. The essential truths are to his sight self-existent, self-seen, not dependent for their proof on this or that actuality; the potential truths are truths of the power of being in itself and in things, truths of the infinity of force and real apart from their past or present realisation in this or that actuality or the habitual surface forms that we take for the whole of Nature; the actualities are only a selection from the potential truths he sees, dependent on them, limited and mutable. The tyranny of the present, of the actual, of the immediate range of facts, of the immediate urge and demand of action has no power over his thought and his will and he is therefore able to have a larger will-power founded on a larger knowledge. He sees things not as one on the levels surrounded by the jungle of present facts and phenomena but from above, not from outside and judged by their surfaces, but from within and viewed from the truth of their centre; therefore he is nearer the divine omniscience. He wills and acts from a dominating height and with a longer movement in time and a larger range of potencies, therefore
he is nearer to the divine omnipotence. His being is not shut into the succession of the moments, but has the full power of the past and ranges seeingly through the future: not shut in the limiting ego and personal mind, but lives in the freedom of the universal, in God and in all beings and all things; not in the dull density of the physical mind, but in the light of the self and the infinity of the spirit. He sees soul and mind only as a power and a movement and matter only as a resultant form of the spirit. All his thought will be of a kind that proceeds from knowledge. He perceives and enacts the things of the phenomenal life in the light of the reality of the spiritual being and the power of the dynamic spiritual essence.

At first, at the beginning of the conversion into this greater status, the thought will continue to move for a shorter or a longer time to a greater or a less extent on the lines of the mind but with a greater light and increasing flights and spaces and movements of freedom and transcendence. Afterwards the freedom and transcendence will begin to predominate; the inversion of the thought view and the conversion of the thought method will take place in different movements of the thought mind one after the other, subject to whatever difficulties and relapses, until it has gained on the whole and effected a complete transformation. Ordinarily the supramental knowledge will be organised first and with the most ease in the processes of pure thought and knowledge, ānāna, because here the human mind has already the upward tendency and is the most free. Next and with less ease it will be organised in the processes of applied thought and knowledge because there the mind of man is at once most active and most bound and wedded to its inferior methods. The last and most difficult conquest, because this is now to his mind a field of conjecture or a blank, will be the knowledge of the three times, trikālayastra. In all these there will be the same character of a spirit seeing and willing directly above and around and not only in the body it possesses and there will be the same action of the supramental knowledge by identity, the supramental vision, the supramental thought and supramental word, separately or in a united movement.
This then will be the general character of the supramental thought and knowledge and these its main powers and action. It remains to consider its particular instrumentation, the change that the supermind will make in the different elements of the present human mentality and the special activities that give to the thought its constituents, motives and data.