Chapter XVIII

Mind and Supermind

He discovered that Mind was the Brahman.

_Taittiriya Upanishad._ ¹

Indivisible, but as if divided in beings.

_Gita._ ²

The conception which we have so far been striving to form is that of the essence only of the supramental life which the divine soul possesses securely in the being of Sachchidananda, but which the human soul has to manifest in this body of Sachchidananda formed here into the mould of a mental and physical living. But so far as we have been able yet to envisage this supramental existence, it does not seem to have any connection or correspondence with life as we know it, life active between the two terms of our normal existence, the two firmaments of mind and body. It seems rather to be a state of being, a state of consciousness, a state of active relation and mutual enjoyment such as disembodied souls might possess and experience in a world without physical forms, a world in which differentiation of souls had been accomplished but not differentiation of bodies, a world of active and joyous infinities, not of form-imprisoned spirits. Therefore it might reasonably be doubted whether such a divine living would be possible with this limitation of bodily form and this limitation of form-imprisoned mind and form-trammelled force which is what we now know as existence.

In fact, we have striven to arrive at some conception of that supreme infinite being, conscious-force and self-delight of which our world is a creation and our mentality a perverse

¹ _III. 4._ ² _XIII. 17._
figure; we have tried to give ourselves an idea of what this
divine Maya may be, this Truth-consciousness, this Real-Idea
by which the conscious force of the transcendent and universal
Existence conceives, forms and governs the universe, the order,
the cosmos of its manifested delight of being. But we have not
studied the connections of these four great and divine terms
with the three others with which our human experience is alone
familiar,—mind, life and body. We have not scrutinised this
other and apparently undivine Maya which is the root of all
our striving and suffering or seen how precisely it develops out
of the divine reality or the divine Maya. And till we have done
this, till we have woven the missing cords of connection, our
world is still unexplained to us and the doubt of a possible
unification between that higher existence and this lower life has
still a basis. We know that our world has come forth from
Sachchidananda and subsists in His being; we conceive that He
dwells in it as the Enjoyer and Knower, Lord and Self; we have
seen that our dual terms of sensation, mind, force, being can
only be representations of His delight, His conscious force, His
divine existence. But it would seem that they are actually so
much the opposite of what He really and supernally is that we
cannot while dwelling in the cause of these opposites, cannot
while contained in the lower triple term of existence attain to
the divine living. We must either exalt this lower being into
that higher status or exchange body for that pure existence,
life for that pure condition of conscious-force, sensation and
mentality for that pure delight and knowledge which live in the
truth of the spiritual reality. And must not this mean that we
abandon all earthly or limited mental existence for something
which is its opposite,—either for some pure state of the Spirit
or else for some world of the Truth of things, if such exists, or
other worlds, if such exist, of divine Bliss, divine Energy, divine
Being? In that case the perfection of humanity is elsewhere than
in humanity itself; the summit of its earthly evolution can only
be a fine apex of dissolving mentality whence it takes the great
leap either into formless being or into worlds beyond the reach
of embodied Mind.
But in reality all that we call undivine can only be an action of the four divine principles themselves, such action of them as was necessary to create this universe of forms. Those forms have been created not outside but in the divine existence, conscious-force and bliss, not outside but in and as a part of the working of the divine Real-Idea. There is therefore no reason to suppose that there cannot be any real play of the higher divine consciousness in a world of forms or that forms and their immediate supports, mental consciousness, energy of vital force and formal substance, must necessarily distort that which they represent. It is possible, even probable that mind, body and life are to be found in their pure forms in the divine Truth itself, are there in fact as subordinate activities of its consciousness and part of the complete instrumentation by which the supreme Force always works. Mind, life and body must then be capable of divinity; their form and working in that short period out of possibly only one cycle of the terrestrial evolution which Science reveals to us, need not represent all the potential workings of these three principles in the living body. They work as they do because they are by some means separated in consciousness from the divine Truth from which they proceed. Were this separation once abrogated by the expanding energy of the Divine in humanity, their present functioning might well be converted, would indeed naturally be converted by a supreme evolution and progression into that purer working which they have in the Truth-consciousness.

In that case not only would it be possible to manifest and maintain the divine consciousness in the human mind and body but, even, that divine consciousness might in the end, increasing its conquests, remould mind, life and body themselves into a more perfect image of its eternal Truth and realise not only in soul but in substance its kingdom of heaven upon earth. The first of these victories, the internal, has certainly been achieved in a greater or less degree by some, perhaps by many, upon earth; the other, the external, even if never more or less realised in past aeons as a first type for future cycles and still held in the subconscious memory of the earth-nature, may yet be intended as a coming victorious achievement of God in humanity. This
earthly life need not be necessarily and for ever a wheel of half-
joyous half-anguished effort; attainment may also be intended
and the glory and joy of God made manifest upon earth.

What Mind, Life and Body are in their supreme sources
and what therefore they must be in the integral completeness of
the divine manifestation when informed by the Truth and not
cut off from it by the separation and the ignorance in which
presently we live,—this then is the problem that we have next
to consider. For there they must have already their perfection
towards which we here are growing,—we who are only the first
shackled movement of the Mind which is evolving in Matter, who
are not yet liberated from the conditions and effects of
that involution of spirit in form, that plunge of Light into its
own shadow by which the darkened material consciousness of
physical Nature was created. The type of all perfection towards
which we grow, the terms of our highest evolution must already
be held in the divine Real-Idea; they must be there formed and
conscious for us to grow towards and into them: for that pre-
existence in the divine knowledge is what our human mentality
names and seeks as the Ideal. The Ideal is an eternal Reality
which we have not yet realised in the conditions of our own
being, not a non-existent which the Eternal and Divine has not
yet grasped and only we imperfect beings have glimpsed and
mean to create.

Mind, first, the chained and hampered sovereign of our
human living. Mind in its essence is a consciousness which mea-
sures, limits, cuts out forms of things from the indivisible whole
and contains them as if each were a separate integer. Even with
what exists only as obvious parts and fractions, Mind estab-
lishes this fiction of its ordinary commerce that they are things
with which it can deal separately and not merely as aspects
of a whole. For, even when it knows that they are not things
in themselves, it is obliged to deal with them as if they were
things in themselves; otherwise it could not subject them to its
own characteristic activity. It is this essential characteristic of
Mind which conditions the workings of all its operative powers,
whether conception, perception, sensation or the dealings of
creative thought. It conceives, perceives, senses things as if rigidly cut out from a background or a mass and employs them as fixed units of the material given to it for creation or possession. All its action and enjoyment deal thus with wholes that form part of a greater whole, and these subordinate wholes again are broken up into parts which are also treated as wholes for the particular purposes they serve. Mind may divide, multiply, add, subtract, but it cannot get beyond the limits of this mathematics. If it goes beyond and tries to conceive a real whole, it loses itself in a foreign element; it falls from its own firm ground into the ocean of the intangible, into the abysms of the infinite where it can neither perceive, conceive, sense nor deal with its subject for creation and enjoyment. For if Mind appears sometimes to conceive, to perceive, to sense or to enjoy with possession the infinite, it is only in seeming and always in a figure of the infinite. What it does thus vaguely possess is simply a formless Vast and not the real spaceless infinite. The moment it tries to deal with that, to possess it, at once the inalienable tendency to delimitation comes in and the Mind finds itself again handling images, forms and words. Mind cannot possess the infinite, it can only suffer it or be possessed by it; it can only lie blissfully helpless under the luminous shadow of the Real cast down on it from planes of existence beyond its reach. The possession of the Infinite cannot come except by an ascent to those supramental planes, nor the knowledge of it except by an inert submission of Mind to the descending messages of the Truth-conscious Reality.

This essential faculty and the essential limitation that accompanies it are the truth of Mind and fix its real nature and action, svabhāva and svadharma; here is the mark of the divine fiat assigning it its office in the complete instrumentation of the supreme Maya, — the office determined by that which it is in its very birth from the eternal self-conception of the Self-existent. That office is to translate always infinity into the terms of the finite, to measure off, limit, depiece. Actually it does this in our consciousness to the exclusion of all true sense of the Infinite; therefore Mind is the nodus of the great Ignorance, because
it is that which originally divides and distributes, and it has even been mistaken for the cause of the universe and for the whole of the divine Maya. But the divine Maya comprehends Vidya as well as Avidya, the Knowledge as well as the Ignorance. For it is obvious that since the finite is only an appearance of the Infinite, a result of its action, a play of its conception and cannot exist except by it, in it, with it as a background, itself form of that stuff and action of that force, there must be an original consciousness which contains and views both at the same time and is intimately conscious of all the relations of the one with the other. In that consciousness there is no ignorance, because the infinite is known and the finite is not separated from it as an independent reality; but still there is a subordinate process of delimitation, — otherwise no world could exist, — a process by which the ever dividing and reuniting consciousness of Mind, the ever divergent and convergent action of Life and the infinitely divided and self-aggregating substance of Matter come, all by one principle and original act, into phenomenal being. This subordinate process of the eternal Seer and Thinker, perfectly luminous, perfectly aware of Himself and all, knowing well what He does, conscious of the infinite in the finite which He is creating, may be called the divine Mind. And it is obvious that it must be a subordinate and not really a separate working of the Real-Idea, of the Supermind, and must operate through what we have described as the apprehending movement of the Truth-consciousness.

That apprehending consciousness, the Prajnana, places, as we have seen, the working of the indivisible All, active and formative, as a process and object of creative knowledge before the consciousness of the same All, originative and cognisant as the possessor and witness of its own working, — somewhat as a poet views the creations of his own consciousness placed before him in it as if they were things other than the creator and his creative force, yet all the time they are really no more than the play of self-formation of his own being in itself and are indivisible there from their creator. Thus Prajnana makes the fundamental division which leads to all the rest, the division of the Purusha,
the conscious soul who knows and sees and by his vision creates and ordains, and the Prakriti, the Force-Soul or Nature-Soul which is his knowledge and his vision, his creation and his all-ordaining power. Both are one Being, one existence, and the forms seen and created are multiple forms of that Being which are placed by Him as knowledge before Himself as knower, by Himself as Force before Himself as Creator. The last action of this apprehending consciousness takes place when the Purusha pervading the conscious extension of his being, present at every point of himself as well as in his totality, inhabiting every form, regards the whole as if separately, from each of the standpoints he has taken; he views and governs the relations of each soul-form of himself with other soul-forms from the standpoint of will and knowledge appropriate to each particular form.

Thus the elements of division have come into being. First, the infinity of the One has translated itself into an extension in conceptual Time and Space; secondly, the omnipresence of the One in that self-conscious extension translates itself into a multiplicity of the conscious soul, the many Purushas of the Sankhya; thirdly, the multiplicity of soul-forms has translated itself into a divided habitation of the extended unity. This divided habitation is inevitable the moment these multiple Purushas do not each inhabit a separate world of its own, do not each possess a separate Prakriti building a separate universe, but rather all enjoy the same Prakriti,—as they must do, being only soul-forms of the One presiding over the multiple creations of His power,—yet have relations with each other in the one world of being created by the one Prakriti. The Purusha in each form actively identifies himself with each; he delimits himself in that and sets off his other forms against it in his consciousness as containing his other selves which are identical with him in being but different in relation, different in the various extent, various range of movement and various view of the one substance, force, consciousness, delight which each is actually deploying at any given moment of Time or in any given field of Space. Granted that in the divine Existence, perfectly aware of itself, this is not a binding limitation, not an identification to which the soul
becomes enslaved and which it cannot exceed as we are enslaved to our self-identification with the body and unable to exceed the limitation of our conscious ego, unable to escape from a particular movement of our consciousness in Time determining our particular field in Space; granted all this, still there is a free identification from moment to moment which only the inalienable self-knowledge of the divine soul prevents from fixing itself in an apparently rigid chain of separation and Time succession such as that in which our consciousness seems to be fixed and chained.

Thus the depiecing is already there; the relation of form with form as if they were separate beings, of will-of-being with will-of-being as if they were separate forces, of knowledge-of-being with knowledge-of-being as if they were separate consciousnesses has already been founded. It is as yet only “as if”; for the divine soul is not deluded, it is aware of all as phenomenon of being and keeps hold of its existence in the reality of being; it does not forfeit its unity: it uses mind as a subordinate action of the infinite knowledge, a definition of things subordinate to its awareness of infinity, a delimitation dependent on its awareness of essential totality — not that apparent and pluralistic totality of sum and collective aggregation which is only another phenomenon of Mind. Thus there is no real limitation; the soul uses its defining power for the play of well-distinguished forms and forces and is not used by that power.

A new factor, a new action of conscious force is therefore needed to create the operation of a helplessly limited as opposed to a freely limiting mind, — that is to say, of mind subject to its own play and deceived by it as opposed to mind master of its own play and viewing it in its truth, the creature mind as opposed to the divine. That new factor is Avidya, the self-ignoring faculty which separates the action of mind from the action of the supermind that originated and still governs it from behind the veil. Thus separated, Mind perceives only the particular and not the universal, or conceives only the particular in an unpossessed universal and no longer both particular and universal as phenomena of the Infinite. Thus we have the limited mind which
views every phenomenon as a thing-in-itself, separate part of a
whole which again exists separately in a greater whole and so
on, enlarging always its aggregates without getting back to the
sense of a true infinity.

Mind, being an action of the Infinite, depieces as well as
aggregates *ad infinitum*. It cuts up being into wholes, into ever
smaller wholes, into atoms and those atoms into primal atoms,
until it would, if it could, dissolve the primal atom into noth-
ingness. But it cannot, because behind this dividing action is
the saving knowledge of the supramental which knows every
whole, every atom to be only a concentration of all-force, of
all-consciousness, of all-being into phenomenal forms of itself.
The dissolution of the aggregate into an infinite nothingness at
which Mind seems to arrive, is to the Supermind only the return
of the self-concentrating conscious-being out of its phenomenon
into its infinite existence. Whichever way its consciousness pro-
ceeds, by the way of infinite division or by the way of infinite
enlargement, it arrives only at itself, at its own infinite unity and
eternal being. And when the action of the mind is consciously
subordinate to this knowledge of the supermind, the truth of the
process is known to it also and not at all ignored; there is no real
division but only an infinitely multiple concentration into forms
of being and into arrangements of the relation of those forms of
being to each other in which division is a subordinate appearance
of the whole process necessary to their spatial and temporal play.
For divide as you will, get down to the most infinitesimal atom
or form the most monstrous possible aggregate of worlds and
systems, you cannot get by either process to a thing-in-itself; all
are forms of a Force which alone is real in itself while the rest
are real only as self-imagings or manifesting self-forms of the
eternal Force-consciousness.

Whence then does the limiting Avidya, the fall of mind
from Supermind and the consequent idea of real division origi-
nally proceed? exactly from what perversion of the supramental
functioning? It proceeds from the individualised soul viewing
everything from its own standpoint and excluding all others;
it proceeds, that is to say, by an exclusive concentration of
consciousness, an exclusive self-identification of the soul with a particular temporal and spatial action which is only a part of its own play of being; it starts from the soul’s ignoring the fact that all others are also itself, all other action its own action and all other states of being and consciousness equally its own as well as the action of the one particular moment in Time and one particular standing-point in Space and the one particular form it presently occupies. It concentrates on the moment, the field, the form, the movement so as to lose the rest; it has then to recover the rest by linking together the succession of moments, the succession of points of Space, the succession of forms in Time and Space, the succession of movements in Time and Space. It has thus lost the truth of the indivisibility of Time, the indivisibility of Force and Substance. It has lost sight even of the obvious fact that all minds are one Mind taking many standpoints, all lives one Life developing many currents of activity, all body and form one substance of Force and Consciousness concentrating into many apparent stabilities of force and consciousness; but in truth all these stabilities are really only a constant whorl of movement repeating a form while it modifies it; they are nothing more. For the Mind tries to clamp everything into rigidly fixed forms and apparently unchanging or unmoving external factors, because otherwise it cannot act; it then thinks it has got what it wants: in reality all is a flux of change and renewal and there is no fixed form-in-itself and no unchanging external factor. Only the eternal Real-Idea is firm and maintains a certain ordered constancy of figures and relations in the flux of things, a constancy which the Mind vainly attempts to imitate by attributing fixity to that which is always inconstant. These truths Mind has to rediscover; it knows them all the time, but only in the hidden back of its consciousness, in the secret light of its self-being; and that light is to it a darkness because it has created the ignorance, because it has lapsed from the dividing into the divided mentality, because it has become involved in its own workings and in its own creations.

This ignorance is farther deepened for man by his self-identification with the body. To us mind seems to be determined
by the body, because it is preoccupied with that and devoted to the physical workings which it uses for its conscious superficial action in this gross material world. Employing constantly that operation of the brain and nerves which it has developed in the course of its own development in the body, it is too absorbed in observing what this physical machinery gives to it to get back from it to its own pure workings; those are to it mostly subconscious. Still we can conceive a life mind or life being which has got beyond the evolutionary necessity of this absorption and is able to see and even experience itself assuming body after body and not created separately in each body and ending with it; for it is only the physical impress of mind on matter, only the corporeal mentality that is so created, not the whole mental being. This corporeal mentality is merely our surface of mind, merely the front which it presents to physical experience. Behind, even in our terrestrial being, there is this other, subconscious or subliminal to us, which knows itself as more than the body and is capable of a less materialised action. To this we owe immediately most of the larger, deeper and more forceful dynamic action of our surface mind; this, when we become conscious of it or of its impress on us, is our first idea or our first realisation of a soul or inner being, Purusha.\(^3\)

But this life mentality also, though it may get free from the error of body, does not make us free from the whole error of mind; it is still subject to the original act of ignorance by which the individualised soul regards everything from its own standpoint and can see the truth of things only as they present themselves to it from outside or else as they rise up to its view from its separate temporal and spatial consciousness, forms and results of past and present experience. It is not conscious of its other selves except by the outward indications they give of their existence, indications of communicated thought, speech, action, result of actions, or subtler indications — not felt directly by the physical being — of vital impact and relation. Equally is it ignorant of itself; for it knows of its self only through a movement in

\(^3\) Perceived as the life being or vital being, \textit{prāṇamaya puruṣa}.
Time and a succession of lives in which it has used its variously embodied energies. As our physical instrumental mind has the illusion of the body, so this subconscious dynamic mind has the illusion of life. In that it is absorbed and concentrated, by that it is limited, with that it identifies its being. Here we do not yet get back to the meeting-place of mind and supermind and the point at which they originally separated.

But there is still another clearer reflective mentality behind the dynamic and vital which is capable of escaping from this absorption in life and views itself as assuming life and body in order to image out in active relations of energy that which it perceives in will and thought. It is the source of the pure thinker in us; it is that which knows mentality in itself and sees the world not in terms of life and body but of mind; it is that which, when we get back to it, we sometimes mistake for the pure spirit as we mistake the dynamic mind for the soul. This higher mind is able to perceive and deal with other souls as other forms of its pure self; it is capable of sensing them by pure mental impact and communication and no longer only by vital and nervous impact and physical indication; it conceives too a mental figure of unity, and in its activity and its will it can create and possess more directly — not only indirectly as in the ordinary physical life — and in other minds and lives as well as its own. But still even this pure mentality does not escape from the original error of mind. For it is still its separate mental self which it makes the judge, witness and centre of the universe and through it alone strives to arrive at its own higher self and reality; all others are “others” grouped to it around itself: when it wills to be free, it has to draw back from life and mind in order to disappear into the real unity. For there is still the veil created by Avidya between the mental and supramental action; an image of the Truth gets through, not the Truth itself.

It is only when the veil is rent and the divided mind overpowered, silent and passive to a supramental action that mind itself gets back to the Truth of things. There we find a luminous

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4 The mental being, manomaya puruṣa.
mentality reflective, obedient and instrumental to the divine Real-Idea. There we perceive what the world really is; we know in every way ourselves in others and as others, others as ourselves and all as the universal and self-multiplied One. We lose the rigidly separate individual standpoint which is the source of all limitation and error. Still, we perceive also that all that the ignorance of Mind took for the truth was in fact truth, but truth deflected, mistaken and falsely conceived. We still perceive the division, the individualising, the atomic creation, but we know them and ourselves for what they and we really are. And so we perceive that the Mind was really a subordinate action and instrumentation of the Truth-consciousness. So long as it is not separated in self-experience from the enveloping Master-consciousness and does not try to set up house for itself, so long as it serves passively as an instrumentation and does not attempt to possess for its own benefit, Mind fulfils luminously its function which is in the Truth to hold forms apart from each other by a phenomenal, a purely formal delimitation of their activity behind which the governing universality of the being remains conscious and untouched. It has to receive the truth of things and distribute it according to the unerring perception of a supreme and universal Eye and Will. It has to uphold an individualisation of active consciousness, delight, force, substance which derives all its power, reality and joy from an inalienable universality behind. It has to turn the multiplicity of the One into an apparent division by which relations are defined and held off against each other so as to meet again and join. It has to establish the delight of separation and contact in the midst of an eternal unity and intermiscence. It has to enable the One to behave as if He were an individual dealing with other individuals but always in His own unity, and this is what the world really is. The mind is the final operation of the apprehending Truth-consciousness which makes all this possible, and what we call the Ignorance does not create a new thing and absolute falsehood but only misrepresents the Truth. The Ignorance is the Mind separated in knowledge from its source of knowledge and giving a false rigidity and a mistaken appearance of opposition and conflict
to the harmonious play of the supreme Truth in its universal manifestation.

The fundamental error of the Mind is, then, this fall from self-knowledge by which the individual soul conceives of its individuality as a separate fact instead of as a form of Oneness and makes itself the centre of its own universe instead of knowing itself as one concentration of the universal. From that original error all its particular ignorances and limitations are contingent results. For, viewing the flux of things only as it flows upon and through itself, it makes a limitation of being from which proceeds a limitation of consciousness and therefore of knowledge, a limitation of conscious force and will and therefore of power, a limitation of self-enjoyment and therefore of delight. It is conscious of things and knows them only as they present themselves to its individuality and therefore it falls into an ignorance of the rest and thereby into an erroneous conception even of that which it seems to know: for since all being is interdependent, the knowledge either of the whole or of the essence is necessary for the right knowledge of the part. Hence there is an element of error in all human knowledge. Similarly our will, ignorant of the rest of the all-will, must fall into error of working and a greater or less degree of incapacity and impotence; the soul’s self-delight and delight of things, ignoring the all-bliss and by defect of will and knowledge unable to master its world, must fall into incapacity of possessive delight and therefore into suffering. Self-ignorance is therefore the root of all the perversity of our existence, and that perversity stands fortified in the self-limitation, the egoism which is the form taken by that self-ignorance.

Yet is all ignorance and all perversity only the distortion of the truth and right of things and not the play of an absolute falsehood. It is the result of Mind viewing things in the division it makes, avidyāyām antare, instead of viewing itself and its divisions as instrumentation and phenomenon of the play of the truth of Sachchidananda. If it gets back to the truth from which it fell, it becomes again the final action of the Truth-consciousness in its apprehensive operation, and the relations it helps to create in that light and power will be relations of the Truth and not
of the perversity. They will be the straight things and not the crooked, to use the expressive distinction of the Vedic Rishis,—Truths, that is to say, of divine being with its self-possessive consciousness, will and delight moving harmoniously in itself. Now we have rather the warped and zigzag movement of mind and life, the contortions created by the struggle of the soul once grown oblivious of its true being to find itself again, to resolve back all error into the truth which both our truth and our error, our right and our wrong limit or distort, all incapacity into the strength which both our power and our weakness are a struggle of force to grasp, all suffering into the delight which both our joy and our pain are a convulsive effort of sensation to realise, all death into the immortality to which both our life and our death are a constant effort of being to return.