Sachchidananda

The Vedanta, that solemn affirmation of the ultimate truths beyond which no human thinking has ever proceeded or can proceed, looking deep into the last recesses where existence takes refuge from the scrutiny of the Mind, affirms there as the beginning and the end of all possible description of the infinite Knowable-Unknownable three terms, Being, Comprehension and Delight. They are the initial & final trinity of existence. From them all phenomena proceed, to them all phenomena seek to return. This personality envisaged as myself, has come out of infinite being, lives in infinite being; emmeshed in the limitations of form & idea it seeks laboriously to recover itself as the infinite being. This Awareness in me which centralised in my personality suffers and examines all impressions that reach me out of the infinite existence, is a selection from an infinite Awareness contemplating itself in its whole & its parts; localised & limited, involved at first in this form it has created, it emerges out of its creation and seeks first to comprehend that and then to comprehend itself; master in some sort of its surroundings, it seeks to become master of itself; enlarging always from the factor to the sum, from the particular to the general, from the form to the essence it seeks to recover itself as the infinite self-comprehension. This Will to be & know in myself is essentially the joy of being & the joy of comprehending — Ananda, Delight; and the particular delight in me is but a spark, a wave, a foam-crest of an infinite delight; fastened at first on partial, limited & transient pleasures, it seeks always to enlarge them, to combine, to intensify; it goes out seeking for new forms of happiness; it goes in turning from the vital joy to sense-delights, from sense-delights to pleasures of emotion, from pleasures of emotion to intellectual satisfaction, from intellectual satisfaction to the self-existent bliss of the spirit which depends on no object
or circumstance; in all these motions it is seeking to recover itself as infinite Delight. In this way the final perceptions of Vedanta explain the whole process & labour of consciousness in the world.

These three, Sat, Chit and Ananda are one Trinity, Sachchidananda. They are not three different factors making a single sum, neither are any two of them merely attributes, even inseparable & invariable attributes, of the third. No doubt, they are always coexistent. Where there is no delight, latent or developed, there can be no existence; where there is no awareness self-absorbed or manifest, there can be no existence. Follow existence into utter & blind inertia, consciousness sits secret in that night; follow consciousness into the abyss of desolation, joy sits self-stunned in the mask of that misery. But their coexistence is only an exterior sign of their essential unity. They do not exist separately, because they are not different from each other, — all three are one thing-in-itself seen diversely; seen sensationally, touching the fibres of conscious life in us it is delight; seen mentally, touching the fibres of living consciousness, it is comprehension; seen spiritually, touching the very core of this living & conscious I, it is being. But the thing-in-itself is one; it is Brahman. Go behind the Trinity and you can say nothing of it but this, Tat, anirdeshyam, the indefinable, That which transcends all words & thoughts; seek to know & define it, you come back to the universal & mysterious Trinity, Sachchidananda, being, comprehension & delight. This is all that you can know fundamentally about yourself; you are That which Is, which, being, comprehends Its own existence, which, comprehending, has in its silence of being or in its play of comprehension a self-existent delight. It is all we can know fundamentally & all we need to know, for, this once grasped & pursued in knowledge, the whole of life begins to unroll itself in its secret motion & purpose to our gaze.

Against this sublime Trinity of the Vedanta, this penetrating analysis of the reality of things, this discovery of the real existence of God in the world, the appearances of that world seem to protest and militate. That which strikes us most saliently & leaps on us fiercely at every turn, is grief & pain, not delight; that
which besieges our eyes always & everywhere is not conscious awareness, but the inertia or the brute movement of unconscious Matter. Existence we cannot deny; the voice of the mighty Life in us rejects always the systems of Nihilism & leaves them to the enjoyment of a few curious & subtle metaphysicians; nothing either in science or in experience supports the purely metaphysical idea of Nullity. But this undeniable existence stands before us rather as an inextricable confusion of pleasure & pain than as synonymous with delight; in its vast fields sown with worlds we find instead of an omnipresent consciousness rather an omnipresent non-consciousness in which tongues of consciousness flame like little points & tongues of fire on a huge inert pyre of various timber. Be not deceived, answers the Vedantin; appearances can never be trusted till the secrets behind them are fathomed. To the eye’s unvarying experience the sun is a globe of fire that voyages round its worshipped earth; generations so conceived it & would have mocked at the truth; these solid appearances are an assemblage of gases; the colour of a rose is a brilliant deceit of the vision. Interrogate consciousness to find what it is or holds & unconsciousness to discover its secrets. Interrogate not only the state of waking but the states of dream & sleep. You will find at the end of long, patient & searching experiments that the confused consciousness of dream was confused only in the receiving parts of the material waking mind and behind it was a state of awareness even more perfect & orderly than the awareness of our waking life. You will find that the consciousness in abeyance of dreamless sleep was in abeyance only in the overpowered & cessant parts of the same material waking mind and behind it was a most exalted & perfect state of awareness which stands near the threshold of the House of God in which we really dwell; for here we are only labourers or overseers in His outer farms. It is admitted that when we are in sound sleep we dream; we are conscious, when we are swooned or stunned only a part of our consciousness, the outward, the here active is withdrawn. When you have interrogated unconsciousness in yourself, interrogate it in the tree & the clod. You will find, for by that time you will have entered into the king-
doms within & learned to command a self-exceeding experience of being, that in the tree & the rock there is the same being, the same consciousness, the same principle of Will to live, of delight, in a word, that is [in] yourself. The unconsciousness of the tree & the rock is the same unconsciousness as that which occupies your body when mind is withdrawn from the observation of its working. It is the sleep, the universal trance of Matter. And that means, eventually, the trance of consciousness forgetting itself in its own symbol or form. Consciousness in this its outer shell has become to the appearance something else which seems not to have any resemblance to conscious being, as gas becoming water is to appearance something else which has no remotest gaseous semblance. The truth sits veiled behind the appearance, self-absorbed; there is in all things, without exception, “That which is conscious in these conscious & unconscious existences, that which is awake in these who sleep.”