

## Chapter Nine

# The Environmental Consciousness

### The Environmental Consciousness around the Individual

Everyone carries around him an environmental consciousness or atmosphere through which he is in relation with others or with the universal forces. It is through this that these forces or the thoughts or feelings of others enter.

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The environmental is not a world — it is an individual thing.

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The individual is not limited to the physical body — it is only the external consciousness which feels like that. As soon as one gets over this feeling of limitation, one can feel first the inner consciousness which is connected with the body but does not belong to it, afterwards the planes of consciousness above the body — also a consciousness surrounding the body, but part of oneself, part of the individual being, through which one is in contact with the cosmic forces and with other beings. This last is what I have called the environmental consciousness.

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Each man has his own personal consciousness entrenched in his body and gets into touch with his surroundings only through his body and senses and the mind using the senses.

Yet all the time the universal forces are pouring into him without his knowing it. He is aware only of thoughts, feelings etc. that rise to the surface and these he takes for his own. Really they come from outside in mind waves, vital waves, waves of feeling and sensation etc. which take particular forms in him and rise to the surface after they have got inside.

But they do not get into his body at once. He carries

about with him an environmental consciousness (called by the Theosophists the aura) into which they first enter. If you can become conscious of this environmental self of yours, then you can catch the thought, passion, suggestion or force of illness, or whatever it may be, before it enters and prevent it from entering into you. If things in you are thrown out, they often do not go altogether but take refuge in this environmental atmosphere and from there try to get in again or they go to a distance outside but linger on the outskirts or even perhaps far off, waiting till they get an opportunity to attempt entrance.

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It [*the environmental consciousness*] can become silent when there is the wideness. One can become conscious of it and deal with what passes through it. A man without it would be without contact with the rest of the world.

### The Environmental Consciousness and the Movements of the Lower Nature

These things [*self-esteem, depression, etc.*] usually hide in recesses of the vital or the physical in which there is not yet the full force of the Peace and Light. When they are quite driven out from there, they may lodge in the subconscious and send up suggestions from there. Thrown out altogether they remain in the environmental consciousness and try to act from there, but then they are no longer part of one's own consciousness and are not felt as such but as something trying to come in from outside.

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One can be free [*from lower vital movements*], but one cannot say that the freedom has been made absolutely complete or secure until the complete transformation takes place. For these things always remain in the environmental consciousness or even at a distance in the universal itself and take any opportunity to come in from there.

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These [*forces of depression, dullness of mind, etc.*] are things that wander about in the atmosphere and jump upon one without notice. It is often difficult to see where precisely they come from and often there is no reason at all or any inviting cause in oneself. They have simply to be thrown off as when something falls on the body.

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There is no mystery [*about the power of lower forces to attack*]. These things were violent and obstinate in you for a long time and you were indulging them — hence they acquired a great force to return even after you began rejecting them, first because of habit, secondly because of their belief that they have acquired a right over you, thirdly because of the habit of assent and passive response to them or endurance of them that has been stamped on the physical consciousness. This physical consciousness is not as yet liberated, it has not begun to be as responsive to the higher force as the vital, so it cannot resist their invasion. So these forces when thrown out retreat into the environmental consciousness and remain there concealed and at any opportunity make an attack on the centres accustomed to receive them (external mind and the external emotional) and get in. This happens with most sadhaks. Two things are necessary — (1) to open fully the physical to the higher forces, (2) to reach the stage when even if the forces attack, they cannot come fully in, the inner being remaining calm and free. Then even if there is still a surface difficulty, there will not be these overpowerings.

### The Environmental Consciousness and the Subconscious

They [*the environmental consciousness and the subconscious*] are two quite different things. What is stored in the subconscious — impressions, memories, rise up from there into the conscious parts. In the environmental things are not stored up and fixed, although they move about there. It is full of mobility, a field of vibration or passage of forces.