Chapter Two
Ascent to the Higher Planes
Contact with the Above

These are the ordinary normal experiences of the sadhana when there is an opening from above — the contact with the peace of the Brahman, Self or Divine and the contact with the higher Power, the Power of the Mother. He does not know what they are, quite naturally, but feels very correctly and his description is quite accurate. “How beautiful, calm and still all seems — as if in water there were not even a wave. But it is not Nothingness. I feel a Presence steeped in life but absolutely silent and quiet in meditation”, — there could hardly be a better description of this experience,— the experience of the peace and silence of the Divine or of the Divine itself in its own essential peace and silence. Also what he feels about the Force is quite correct, “something from above the manifested creation (mind-matter), a Force behind that is distinct from that which gives rise to emotions, anger, lust which are all purified and transformed gradually”, in other words, the Divine or Spiritual Force, other than the cosmic vital which supports the ordinary embodied consciousness; that is also very clear. I suppose it is only a contact yet, but a very true and vivid contact if it gives rise to so vivid and true a feeling. It looks as if he were going to make a very good beginning.

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One may get influences from above, but so long as the mind is not full of the higher calm, peace, silence, one cannot be in direct contact. These influences get diminished, mentalised, vitalised and are not the powers of the higher planes in their native character. Nor is this sufficient to get control of the hidden forces of all the planes of consciousness, which is perhaps what he means by occultism.

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Indirect connection \[\textit{with the Divine}\] is when one lives in the ordinary consciousness without being able to go up above it and receives influences from above without knowing where they come from or feeling their source.

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Sometimes one feels an ascension above the head. I think he has had that, but that is the mind going up (when it is not simply a going out of the body) into the higher mental planes. To be above the mind one must first realise the self above the mind and live there.

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Do you realise it \[\textit{the higher being}\] as wide and infinite? When you are there do you feel it spread through infinity? Do you feel all the universe within you, yourself one with the self of all beings? Do you feel the one cosmic Force acting everywhere? Do you feel your mind one with the cosmic mind? your life one with the cosmic life? your matter one with the cosmic Matter? separative ego unreal? the body no longer a limitation? What is the use of merely saying that the higher being is wide and infinite? Do these realisations come when you are in the higher being and if not, why not? The inner being easily opens to all these realisations, the outer does not. So unless your inner being becomes conscious of itself, the mere ascent gives only height or some vague sense of other planes, not these concrete realisations.

**Ascension or Rising above the Head**

This is a fundamental experience of the Yoga. It is the free ascent of the consciousness to join the Divine. When, liberated from its ordinary identification with the body, it rises upward to have experiences of the higher planes, to link itself with the psychic or the true being or to join the Divine Consciousness, then there is this experience of ascension and of speeding or expanding through space. The joy you feel is a sign of this last movement, — rising to join the Divine; the passivity and expectancy of a
descent are signs of the openness to the Divine that is its result; there is also the sense of this openness, an emptiness of the ordinary contents of the consciousness, a wideness not limited by the narrow prison of the physical personality. There is too, usually or very often, a massive immobility of the body which corresponds to the silence that comes on the mind when it is released from itself — the Silence that is the foundation of spiritual experience. What you have felt (the former experiences were probably preparatory touches) is indeed the beginning of this foundation — a consciousness free, wide, empty at will, able to rise into the supraphysical planes, open to the descent of whatever the Mother will pour into it.

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Nothing needs to be done to bring the ascension — aspiration is sufficient. The object of the ascension is for the lower nature to join the higher consciousness so that (1) the limit or lid between the higher and the lower may be broken and disappear, (2) the consciousness may have free access to higher and higher planes, (3) a free way may be made for the descent of the higher Consciousness into the lower planes.

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The lower consciousness rises to meet the higher consciousness — when it joins there is the sense of unity and the feeling of the one cosmic Self with Ananda and Peace or both as the result. This is called the ascent of the lower consciousness — it cannot remain all the time but it can become more and more frequent until the descent of the higher consciousness is ready.

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That [rising above the head] is very good. Such risings help to break down the lid between the higher and lower planes in the consciousness and prepare the consciousness.

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The rising of the energies of the consciousness to the crown of
the head and beyond is a recognised movement of the sadhana. It is the forces of the lower Prakriti rising to connect themselves with the higher spiritual consciousness above. The hearing of bells is usually a sign of an opening of the consciousness; it is mentioned in the Upanishads as one of such significant sounds and is well known to Yogis.

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(1) Freedom from cares, lightness of mind and body are very good results. They do not usually become permanent at once — it is sufficient if they are frequently or ordinarily there.

(2) Chest and head rising higher are sensations of the subtle body — it means that the mind and heart consciousness (thinking mental and emotional) are rising to meet the spiritual consciousness plane above the head.

(3) The sound is a sign of the opening of the consciousness and of the working of the inner Force. Such subtle sounds are very frequently heard by those who practise Yoga.

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Everything in the adhar in the sadhana has at one time the tendency to rise and join its source above.

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The upward movement and the silence are indispensable for the Truth to manifest.

**Ascent and Return to the Ordinary Consciousness**

I may say that the opening upwards, the ascent into the Light and the subsequent descent into the ordinary consciousness and normal human life is very common as the first decisive experience in the practice of Yoga and may very well happen even without the practice of Yoga in those who are destined for the spiritual change, especially if there is a dissatisfaction somewhere with the ordinary life and a seeking for something more, greater or better. It comes often exactly in the way that she describes
and the cessation of the experience and the descent also come in the same way. This first experience may be followed by a very long time during which there is no repetition of it or any subsequent experience. If there is a constant practice of Yoga, the interval need not be so long; but even so it is often long enough. The descent is inevitable because it is not the whole being that has risen up but only something within and all the rest of the nature is unprepared, absorbed in or attached to ordinary life and governed by movements that are not in consonance with the Light. Still the something within is something central in the being and therefore the experience is in a way definitive and decisive. For it comes as a decisive intimation of the spiritual destiny and an indication of what must be reached some time in the life. Once it has been there, something is bound to happen which will open the way, determine the right knowledge and the right attitude enabling one to proceed on the way and bring a helping influence. After that the work of clearing away the obstacles that prevent the return to the Light and the ascension of the whole being and, what is equally important, the descent of the Light into the whole being can be begun and progress towards completion. It may take long or be rapid, that depends on the inner push and also on outer circumstances but the inner aspiration and endeavour count more than the circumstances which can accommodate themselves to the inner need if that is very strong. The moment has come for her and the necessary aspiration and knowledge and the influence that can help her.

Ascent and Dissolution

Once the being or its different parts begin to ascend to the planes above, any part of the being may do it, frontal or other. The sanskara that one cannot come back must be got rid of. One can have the experience of Nirvana at the summit of the mind or anywhere in those planes that are now superconscient to the mind; the mind spiritualised by the ascent into Self has the sense of laya, dissolution of itself, its thoughts, movements, sanskaras into a superconscient Silence and Infinity which it is
unable to grasp,—the Unknowable. But this would bring or lead to some form of Nirvana only if one makes Nirvana the goal, if one is tied to the mind and accepts its dissolution into the Infinite as one’s own dissolution or if one has not the capacity to reorganise experience on a higher than the mental plane. But otherwise what was superconscient becomes conscient, one begins to possess or else be the instrument of the dynamis of the higher planes and there is a movement, not of liberation into Nirvana, but of liberation + transformation. However high one goes, one can always return, unless one has the will not to do so.

**Ascent and the Psychic Being**

Any part of the being can go upward and meet its source there. The central being is always above; the psychic is its counterpart below. If the psychic goes up it may be also to join its source in the central being.

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The psychic being and other parts can go up to join the higher consciousness there. It is part of the movement of ascent. Naturally the psychic wants a deeper union than can be had so long as it is veiled by the old ignorant nature; it wants the higher consciousness to come down and occupy and transform it so that complete union may be possible.

The Shakti going up from the Muladhara must be the Shakti of the physical nature. It wants transformation also, I suppose, but it has not the quiet and luminous but ardent aspiration of the psychic being—it’s aspiration is more troubled and tinged with unease.

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In your experience the ascent was into the regions of the calm and silent Self above; when you came down you went into the depths of the psychic being and found there the same calm and wideness. This experience is of great importance for it means that the way to both these is now open to you—and these two
are the fundamental experiences of our Yoga — the unveiling of the psychic and the self-realisation. Pursue your meditations in the same poise.

Ascent and the Body

The ordinary movement of sadhana is that of the inner being (mind, psychic, higher vital) rising towards the Divine Consciousness, — leaving the external being behind — but for this Yoga that is not enough, the physical and external being must also be able to rise into the Divine Consciousness.

* What you have written is quite correct. The body is not connected ordinarily with the higher consciousness, it only receives what it can from the mind. It is being prepared for the direct connection by the ascent of the inner or subtle body into that plane and the descent from it of the higher Light.

* No, the body itself cannot go up — how could it? The body is meant for keeping the consciousness linked to the physical world.

* If all went up, there would be no more existence in the body. There is always some consciousness and therefore some self supporting the body.

* When the consciousness is centred above, it can be said to be located above. That does not mean that there is no consciousness left in the lower parts.

Ascent and Going out of the Body

There are two different things. One is the consciousness actually going out of the body — but that brings a deep sleep or trance.
The other is the consciousness lifting itself out of the body and taking its stand outside it — above and spread round in width-
ness. That can be a condition of the Yogin in the waking state — he does not feel himself to be in the body but he feels the body to be in his wide free self, he is delivered from limitation in the body consciousness.

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There are two different experiences which from your account would seem to have happened together.

1. An exteriorisation of the consciousness out of the body. Part of the consciousness, mental, vital or subtle physical or all together rises out of the body, leaving it in a strongly internalised condition, sleep or trance and can move about above on other planes or in the room and outside on the earth plane. In such cases the body can be seen as lying below or in the room, seen clearly as one sees a separate object with the physical eyes. A fear such as you had can come in these exteriorisations and bring the consciousness back with a rush to the body.

2. An ascension of the consciousness to a position which is no longer in the body but above it. The consciousness can thus ascend and rise higher and higher with the awareness of entering regions above the ordinary mind; usually it does not go very far at first but acquires the capacity to go always higher in repetitions of this experience. At the close of the experience it returns to the body. But also there comes a definitive rise by which the consciousness permanently takes its station above. It is no longer in the body or limited by it; it feels itself not only above it but extended in space; the body is below its high station and enveloped in its extended consciousness. Sometimes indeed the extension is felt only above on the higher level and the enveloping extension below comes only afterwards as a later experience. But the nature of it is to be definitive, it is not merely an experience but a realisation, a permanent change. This brings a liberation from identification with the body which becomes only a circumstance in the largeness of the being, an instrumental part of it; or it is felt as something very small or
even non-existent, nothing seems to be left but a wide practically infinite consciousness which is oneself — or, if not at once infinite, yet what is now called a boundless finite.

This new consciousness is open to all knowledge from above, but it does not think with the brain as does the ordinary mind — it has other and larger means of awareness than thought. No methodical opening of the centres is necessary — the centres are in fact open, otherwise there could not be this ascent. In this Yoga their opening comes automatically — what we call opening is not that, but an ability of the consciousness itself on the various levels to receive the descent of the Higher Consciousness above. By the ascent one can indeed bring down knowledge from above. But the larger movement is to receive it from above and let it flow through into the lower mental and other levels. I may add that on all these levels, in mind, heart and below there comes a liberation from the physical limitation, a wideness which no longer allows an identification with the body.

In this experience there is not usually the fear you had, unless it is in the body consciousness, as it were, which is alarmed by the unfamiliarity of the movement and fears to be abandoned or cast off. But this occurs rarely and does not usually repeat itself. It is therefore likely that there was an exteriorisation at the same time. You speak of being able to leave and enter the body at will; but this capacity is needed only for the phenomenon of exteriorisation — in the ascension of consciousness the ascent and coming down become easy and ordinary actions and in the definitive realisation of a higher station above there is really no more coming down except with a part of the consciousness which may descend to work in the body or on the lower levels while the permanently high-stationed being above presides over all that is experienced and done.

* It [walking around as if in a dream] is a very usual experience. It means that for a moment you were no longer in your body, but somehow either above or outside the body consciousness.
This sometimes happens by the vital being rising up above the head or, more rarely, by its projecting itself into its own sheath (part of the subtle body) out of the physical attachment. But it also comes by a sudden even if momentary liberation from the identification with the body consciousness, and this liberation may become frequent and prolonged or permanent. The body is felt as something separate or some small circumstance in the consciousness or as something one carries about with one etc. etc.; the exact experience varies. Many sadhaks here have had it. When one is accustomed, the strangeness of it (dreamland etc.) disappears.

Fixing the Consciousness Above

It is the aim of the sadhana that the consciousness should rise out of the body and take its station above, — spreading in wideness everywhere, not limited to the body. Thus liberated one opens to all that is above this station, above the ordinary mind, receives there all that descends from the heights, observes from there all that is below. Thus it is possible to witness in all freedom and to control all that is below and to be a recipient or a channel for all that comes down and presses into the body, which it will prepare to be an instrument of a higher manifestation, remoulded into a higher consciousness and nature.

What is happening in you is that the consciousness is trying to fix itself in this liberation. When one is there in that higher station, one finds the freedom of the Self and the vast silence and immutable calm — but this calm has to be brought down also into the body, into all the lower planes and fix itself there as something standing behind and containing all the movements.

* It [a feeling of rising above the head in meditation] is not merely a sensation; it is an actual happening and a most important one. The consciousness is usually imprisoned in the body, centralised in the brain and heart and navel centres (mental, emotional, sensational); when you feel it or something of it go up and take
its station above the head, that is the liberation of the imprisoned consciousness from the body-formula. It is the mental in you that goes up there, gets into touch with something higher than the ordinary mind and from there puts the higher mental will on the rest for transformation. The trembling and the heat come from a resistance, an absence of habituation in the body and the vital to this demand and to this liberation. When the mental consciousness can take its stand permanently or at will above like this, then this first liberation becomes accomplished (siddha). From there the mental being can open freely to higher planes or to the cosmic existence and its forces and can also act with greater liberty and power on the lower nature.

* What you felt was not imagination at all, but the usual experience one has when the consciousness is lifted out of the body and takes its stand above the head. One is no longer bound then by the physical consciousness or the sense of the body — the body becomes only an instrument, a small part of the consciousness which has to be perfected. One enters into a larger free spiritual consciousness in place of the present bound and limited physical consciousness. If this lifting up above the body can be repeated always until it can be maintained, it will be a great landmark in your progress. It is the confinement in the physical consciousness that makes you (and everybody) narrow and selfish and miserable. Hitherto the higher consciousness with its peace etc. has been descending into you with great difficulty and fighting out the vital and physical resistance. If this release upward into the higher consciousness can be maintained, then there will be no longer the same difficulty. Much will still remain to be done, but the foundation will have been made.

* There are various states of experience in which the expression “taken up out of the body” would be applicable. There is one in which one goes up from the centres in the body to a centre of consciousness extending above the physical head and takes up
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a position there in which one is liberated from subjection to the body sense and its heavy hold and this is certainly accompanied by a general sense of lightening. One can then be in direct connection with the higher consciousness and its power and action. It is not altogether clear from the description whether this is what happened. Again, there are phenomena of the breathing which accompany states of release or of ascension. But the breath here perhaps stands, generally, for the Life Principle.

Ascent and Change of the Lower Nature

One can remain in the higher consciousness and yet associate oneself with the change of the lower nature. No doubt, it is the Mother’s Force that will do what is necessary, but the consent of the sadhak, the association of his will with her action or at least of his witness vision is necessary also.

* Your tendency was to go up and to leave the higher consciousness to deal with the lower nature without any personal effort for that. That could have worked all right on two conditions: (1) that the peace and force would come down and occupy all down to the physical, (2) that you succeeded in keeping the inner being unmoved by the outer nature. The physical failed to absorb the peace, inertia arose instead; force could not come down; the suggestions from the outer nature proved too strong for you and between their suggestions and the inertia they interrupted the sadhana.

* I have not said [in the preceding letter] that you made a mistake. I have simply said what happened and the causes. If you had been able to remain above and let the Force come down and act while you were detached from the outer nature, it would have been all right. You were able to go up because the Peace descended. You were not able to remain above because the Peace could not occupy sufficiently the physical and the Force did not descend
sufficiently. Meanwhile the inertia arose, you got troubled more and more because of the vital suggestions in the outer nature and the rush of inertia, so you were unable to keep detached and let the Force descend more and more or call it down more and more. Hence the coming down into the physical consciousness.

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It is simply that when you go high, or within, you enter into a higher consciousness than the ordinary one. Also then one feels the presence of the Divine, for the Divine is always there within and above in every human being. But to divinise the human consciousness entirely needs a long time — for the whole nature from top to bottom must be transformed.