Chapter Five

Descent and Other Kinds of Experience

Descent and Experiences of the Inner Being

It is good that you felt the peace within and the movement in the heart. That shows the force is working not only from above but inside you, and this promises a farther progress. The full opening will come in time — the important thing is that you are on the right way and advancing more quickly than you realise.

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Your experiences seem to be sound. The first is that of the higher (Yogic or spiritual) consciousness coming down into the body from above the head. It is felt often like a current flowing through the head into the whole body and the first thing it brings is a descent of peace. One result of this descent is that one feels an inner being in oneself which is detached from the outer action, supports it from behind, but is not involved in it — that is the second experience. The third about the sleep is also felt when one has confidence in the Mother and goes to sleep under her protection, as if in her lap, surrounded by her presence. As for the dream the legs indicate the physical consciousness which is still under a double pull, one upward to the higher consciousness so that the physical consciousness may unite itself with the spiritual, the other downward towards the lower consciousness. The looking towards me indicates the choice of the being for the upward movement.

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The Power and Peace that come down come down from the higher consciousness above your head, from a greater self of which your mind, the human mind generally, is unaware. They
are the power and peace of the Divine. When they envelop you from outside the body (therefore you feel them external), it is as a protection and an atmosphere. But also they descend into the body, into the head (mind), heart and navel (vital) and through the whole body working in you and doing what is necessary to change the consciousness. When you do not feel it there, when you feel it only as external, it is because you are very much in the external physical consciousness — but in reality it is there in your inner being working in you. When you recover the inner consciousness, you feel it again within and it wakes in you your own true consciousness, the psychic — and it is only the psychic that gives faith and devotion. It is however a great progress if, even when in the external physical consciousness, you feel the Peace enveloping you.

Descent and Psychic Experiences

The infinite calm you felt coming down was the calm of the Divine Consciousness — the higher or spiritual consciousness above the head, which descends as the higher parts of the being open to it. The experience of faith, love or aspiration come from the psychic being. It is when the psychic being is in front and governs all the nature and the Higher Consciousness descends through an open mind, vital and physical that the transformation of the nature begins to take place. The opposite experience of dryness, despair etc. comes from the resistance of the ordinary lower nature (lower vital, physical consciousness, especially). This resistance is to be got rid of — and one condition of that is never to indulge the desires of the lower vital and the body. You must turn them on the contrary wholly to the Divine.

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The descent of the Silence is not usually associated with sadness, though it does bring a feeling of calm detachment, unconcern and wide emptiness, but in this emptiness there is a sense of ease, freedom, peace. The absorption as if something were drawing deep from within is evidently the pull of the inmost being, the
psychic. There is a psychic sadness often when this inmost soul opens and feels how far the nature and the world are from what they should be, but this is a sweet and quiet sorrow, not distressing. It must be something in the mind and vital which is not yet awake to what has happened within you and gives this colour of dissatisfied and distressed seeking.

*It is only by peace and light coming down there [into the subconscious] and by the rule of the psychic being over the physical that the subconscious parts of the being can be changed entirely. Before that only a certain control can be established.*

*Your description of the solid cool block of peace pressing on the body and making it immobile makes it certain that it is what we call in this Yoga the descent of the higher consciousness. A deep, intense or massive substance of peace and stillness is very commonly the first of its powers that descends and many experience it in that way. At first it comes and stays only during meditation or, without the sense of physical inertness or immobility, a little while longer and afterwards is lost; but if the sadhana follows its normal course, it comes more and more, lasting longer, and in the end an enduring deep peace and inner stillness and release becomes a normal character of the consciousness, the foundation indeed of a new consciousness, calm and liberated.

Your idea of the psychic is certainly a mental construction which should be avoided. The psychic has indeed the quality of peace—but that is not its main character as it is of the Self or Atman. The psychic is the Divine element in the individual being and its characteristic power is to turn everything towards the Divine, to bring a fire of purification, aspiration, devotion, true light of discernment, feeling, will, action which transforms by degrees the whole nature. Quietude, peace and silence in the heart and therefore in the vital part of the being are necessary to reach the psychic, to plunge in it, for the perturbations of the vital nature, desire, emotion turned ego-wards
or world-wards are the main part of the screen that hides the soul from the nature. It is better therefore to be free from the mental constructions when you take the plunge and have only the sense of aspiration, of devotion, of self-giving to the Divine.

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Yes, it is a very encouraging progress. If you keep the wideness and calm as you are keeping it and also the love for the Mother in the heart, then all is safe — for it means the double foundation of the Yoga — the descent of the higher consciousness with its peace, freedom and security from above and the openness of the psychic which keeps all the effort or all the spontaneous movement turned towards the true goal.

Descent and Other Experiences

The more important of the experiences you enumerate are those below.

(1) The feeling of calm and comparative absence of disturbing thoughts. This means the growth of quietude of mind which is necessary for a fully effective meditation.

(2) The pressure on the head and the movements within it. The pressure is that of the Force of the higher consciousness above the mind pressing on the mind (the mind centres are in the head and throat) and penetrating into it. Once it enters there it prepares the mind for opening to it more fully and the movements within the head are due to this working. Once the head centres and spaces are open one feels it descending freely as a current or otherwise. Afterwards it opens similarly the centres below in the body. The physical movement of the head must be due to the body not being accustomed to the pressure and penetration of the Force. When it is able to receive and assimilate, these movements no longer take place.

(3) The effect of the meditation in the heart extending itself to the head and creating movements there is normal — in whatever centre the concentration takes place the Yoga force
generated extends to the others and produces concentration or workings there.

(4) The sudden cessation of thought and all movements — this is very important, as it means the beginning of the capacity for the inner silence. It lasts only for a short while at the beginning of its manifestation but increases afterwards its hold and duration.

The direction of the sadhana is the right one and you have only to continue upon it.

We cannot say anything definitively about the outside affairs — I suppose in the circumstances you have to think about these things, but the sadhana has the greater importance.

We do not include Hathayoga practices in this sadhana. If you use only for health purposes, it must be as something separate from sadhana — on your own choice.

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The last experience carries its own meaning. The first is a dream-experience in which the figures of the dream are probably symbols, — unless the Tibetan priest is an impression from a past life. The experience itself is that of concentration in a flame of aspiration with the result of an ascension into the higher planes of consciousness where the separative self disappears into the universal. The second is an experience of the descent of the higher consciousness through the spinal cord from the mental to the vital centres with the result of a momentary experience of that higher consciousness in its wide universality. The experience once had repeated itself but always with the same momentariness. It is the permanence of this experience that is in this Yoga the foundation of the spiritual consciousness and the spiritual transformation — as distinguished from the psychic which proceeds from the inner heart.

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They are elementary experiences in the practice of Yoga and there is not much to be said about them, — still I will say this much, if it can help him.
(1) What does he mean by concentrating in the heart? I suppose not the physical heart? When we speak of concentrating in the heart in Yoga, we are speaking of the emotional centre and that like all the others is in the middle of the body in a line corresponding to the spinal cord. The places he speaks of are four centres — (1) crown of head = higher mental centre, (2) between the eyebrows = centre of will and vision, (3) throat = centre of externalising mind, (4) heart = (mental-vital) emotional centre with the psychic behind it (the soul, Purusha in the heart).

(2) The lights he sees indicate not some mere “physiological” phenomenon, but the first opening of an inner subtle vision which sees things that are not physical. At a later stage a descent of Light is one of the capital phenomena of the opening of the greater Yogic experience and of the working of the Divine Power on the adhar.

(3) What does he mean by chitta when he speaks of the force? Chitta as opposed to Chit or Vijnana etc. is only the basic mind-life consciousness out of which rises the stuff of (ordinary) thought, feelings, sensations etc. The Force which he feels is something quite different; it is the larger force exceeding the individual and when one feels it in its fullness, it is experienced as the cosmic force or something out of the cosmic force or else the Divine Force from above, according to its nature. His mind is not yet ready for the action of a greater Force, because it is full of mental notions and activities and it is for this reason that heat is generated in the friction between the two; when the other force withdraws and no longer tries to lay hold of the brain then the personal mind-action feels released (that is the reason for the sense of coolness) and goes about its ordinary motions. It is only in a silent (quiet — not necessarily empty) mind that the greater force can be received and work upon the system without too much reaction and resistance.