

## Chapter Two

# Kinds of Vision

### The Inner Vision

There is an inner vision that opens when one does sadhana and all sorts of images rise before it or pass. Their coming does not depend upon your thought or will; it is real and automatic. Just as your physical eyes see things in the physical world, so the inner eye sees things and images that belong to the other worlds and subtle images of things of this physical world also.

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Everything not physical is seen by an inner vision.

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When the inner vision opens, there can come before it all that ever was or is now in the world, even it can open to things that will be hereafter — so there is nothing impossible in seeing thus the figures and the things of the past.

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The inner vision can see objects — but it can also see instead the vibration of the forces which act through the object.

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This realm (whose centre is between the eyebrows) is the realm of inner thought, will, vision — the motor-car indicates a rapid progress in this part of the consciousness. The motor-car is a symbolic image, these images do not refer to anything physical.

These things take place in the inner mind or inner vital and usually there is a truth behind them, but the form in which they come into the mind may be imperfect — i.e. the meaning may be something not perfectly revealed in the words.

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Things inside can be seen as distinctly as outward things whether in an image by the subtle vision or in their essence by a still more subtle and powerful way of seeing; but all these things have to develop in order to get their full power and intensity.

### Stages in the Development of the Inner Vision

It is the inner vision that is opened or opening in you. When that opens, the first thing that you see is colours or lights moving or small or vague shapes or objects — afterwards flowers etc., then figures of people, scenes, landscapes, things happening etc. Often by the power of this subtle vision the sadhak can see the image of the Divine he worships in his heart and so feel more concretely the presence.

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The seeing of colours is the beginning of inner vision, what is called *sūkṣmadṛṣṭi*. Afterwards this vision opens and one begins to see figures and scenes and people. It is good that the seeing began with an image of the Mother.

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When one tries to meditate, the first obstacle in the beginning is sleep. When you get over this obstacle, there comes a condition in which, with the eyes closed, you begin to see things, people, scenes of all kinds. This is not a bad thing, it is a good sign and means that you are making progress in the Yoga. There is, besides the outer physical sight which sees external objects, an inner sight in us which can see things yet unseen and unknown, things at a distance, things belonging to another place or time or to other worlds; it is the inner sight which is opening in you. It is the working of the Mother's force which is opening it in you, and you should not try to stop it. Remember the Mother always, call on her and aspire to feel her presence and her power working in you; but you do not need, for that, to reject this or other developments that may come in you by her working hereafter. It is only desire, egoism, restlessness and other wrong movements

that have to be rejected.

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The visions you describe are those which come in the earliest stages of sadhana. At this stage most of the things seen are formations of the mental plane and it is not always possible to put on them a precise significance, for they depend on the individual mind of the sadhak. At a later stage the power of vision becomes important for the sadhana, but at first one has to go on without attaching excessive importance to the details — until the consciousness develops more. The opening of the consciousness to the Divine Light and Truth and Presence is always the one important thing in the Yoga.

### **The Diverse Nature and Significance of Visions**

Your visions are not mental images but significant symbols. The white dove is the higher divine or spiritual Consciousness above the mental surrounded by the golden lightnings of the Truth. The lamb is the psychic aspiring to the Truth. When one has a thought or feeling and creates a mental form of it, that is a mental image — or when not so positively or consciously self-created forms arise either in meditation or sleep, which correspond to mental thoughts or vital feelings, one's own or those of others, those also are simply mental images or vital formations. The true significant ones are those that come of themselves and correspond to things, states of consciousness or a play of forces that are actual and not determined mainly by one's ideas, will or feelings.

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Visions are of all kinds — some are merely suggestions of what wants to be or is trying to be, some indicate some approach of the thing or movement towards it, some indicate that the thing is being done.

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Nothing has to be done to develop them [*images seen in vision*]. They develop of themselves by the growing practice of seeing, — what was faint becomes clear, what was incomplete becomes complete. One cannot say in a general way that they are real or unreal. Some are formations of the mind, some are images that come to the sight of themselves, some are images of real things that show themselves directly to the sight — others are true pictures, not merely images.

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No rule of a general character can be given. Each vision or dream has to be taken by itself; some are mental constructions, symbols or indications, some are vital possibilities truly or falsely represented, some are representations of physical facts — but this last is more rare.

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The seeing of the body (at least one's own) in its internal parts is a Yogic power developed by the Raja and Hathayogins — I suppose it could be extended to the body of others. There is also the sense of subtle smells and I have noticed that sometimes one smell persists.

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Subtle images can be images of all things in all worlds.

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There is no criterion [*for distinguishing visions from dreams of a deeper origin*], but one can easily distinguish if one is in the inward condition, not sleep, in which most visions take place by the nature of the impression made. A vision in dream is more difficult to distinguish from a vivid dream-experience, but one gets to feel the difference.

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Vision in trance is vision no less than vision in the waking state. It is only the condition of the recipient consciousness that varies

— in one the waking consciousness shares in the vision, in the other it is excluded for the sake of greater facility and range in the inner experience. But in both it is the inner vision that sees.

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The physical things<sup>1</sup> are simply an occasion or starting-point for the inner vision to work through the open eyes and bring in the significant inner things.

### Representative and Dynamic Visions

It depends on the nature of the symbolic vision whether it is merely representative, offering to the inner vision and nature (even though the outer mind has not the understanding, the inner can receive its effect) the thing symbolised in its figure or whether it is dynamic. The Sun symbol, for instance, is usually dynamic. Again among the dynamic symbols some may bring simply an influence of the thing symbolised, some indicate what is being done but not yet finished, some a formative experience that visits the consciousness, some a prophecy of something that may or will or is soon about to happen. There are others that are not merely symbols but present actualities seen by the vision in a symbolic figure.

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When the colours begin to take definite shapes [*in one's visions*], it is a sign of some dynamic work of formation in the consciousness — a square for instance means that some kind of creation is in process in some field of the being; the square indicates that the creation is to be complete in itself while the rectangle indicates something partial and preliminary. The waves of colour mean a dynamic rush of forces and the star may in such a context indicate the promise of the new being that is to be formed. The blue colour must here be the Krishna light — so it is a creation under the stress of the Krishna light. All these are symbols of what is

<sup>1</sup> *The correspondent saw the lights on a pier at night as sparkling diamonds. — Ed.*

going on in the inner being, in the consciousness behind, and the results well up from time to time in the external or surface consciousness in such feelings as the awareness of a softening and opening which you had, devotion, joy, peace, Ananda etc. When the opening is complete, there is likely to be a more direct consciousness of the working that is going on behind till it is no longer behind but in the front of the nature.

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When you see a square, that is a symbol of complete creation; when you see a buffalo rushing upon you and missing and feel you have escaped a great danger, that is a transcription. Something actually happened of which the buffalo's ineffectual rush was your mind's transcription — the rush of some hostile force represented by the buffalo.

### Seeing Forms of the Divine and Other Beings

Subjective visions can be as real as objective sight — the only difference is that one is of real things in material space, while the others are of real things belonging to other planes down to the subtle physical; even symbolic visions are real insofar as they are symbols of realities. Even dreams can have a reality in the subtle domain. Visions are unreal only when these are merely imaginative mental formations not representing anything that is true or was true or is going to be true.

In this case the thing seen [*a vision of Krishna, silvery blue in colour, standing in a dance pose playing the flute*] can be taken as true since it has been seen by many and always in the same relation and still more because it has been confirmed by what was seen by Yashodabai and Krishnaprem. It means obviously that your singing by the power of the bhakti it expresses can and does bring the presence of Krishna there. It is not that Krishna “shows himself”, but simply that he is there and some who have the power of vision catch sight of him and others who have not the power fail to do so. This power of vision is sometimes inborn and habitual even without any effort of development,

sometimes it wakes up of itself and becomes abundant or needs only a little practice to develop; it is not necessarily a sign of spiritual attainment, but usually when by practice of Yoga one begins to go inside or live within, the power of subtle vision awakes to a greater or less extent; but this does not always happen easily, especially if one has been habituated to live much in the intellect or in an outward vital consciousness.

I suppose what you are thinking of is “darshan”, the self-revelation of the Deity to the devotee; but that is different, it is an unveiling of his presence, temporary or permanent, and may come as a vision or may come as a close feeling of his presence which is more intimate than sight and a frequent or constant communication with him; that happens by deepening of the being into its inner self and growth of consciousness or by growth of the intensity of bhakti. When the crust of the external consciousness is sufficiently broken by the pressure of increasing and engrossing bhakti, the contact comes.

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It is quite usual at a certain stage of the sadhana for people who have the faculty to see or hear the Devata of their worship and to receive constant directions from him or her with regard either to action or to sadhana. Defects and difficulties may remain, but that does not prevent the direct guidance from being a fact. The necessity of the Guru in such cases is to see that it is the right experience, the right voice or vision — for it is possible for a false guidance to come as it did with X and Y.

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These things [*the seeing of Buddha, Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Shankaracharya in vision*] are the result of past thoughts and influences. They are of various kinds — sometimes merely thought-forms created by one’s own thought-force to act as a vehicle for some mental realisation — sometimes Powers of different planes that take these forms as a support for their work through the individual, — but sometimes one is actually in communion with that which had the name and form and personality

of Buddha or Ramakrishna or Vivekananda or Shankara.

It is not necessary to have an element akin to these personalities — a thought, an aspiration, a formation of the mind or vital are enough to create the connection — it is sufficient for a vibration of response anywhere to what these Powers represent.

### Cosmic, Inner and Psychic Vision

Cosmic vision is the seeing of the universal movements — it has nothing to do with the psychic necessarily. It can be in the universal mind, the universal vital, the universal physical or anywhere.

What do you mean here by psychic vision? Inner vision means the vision with the inner seeing as opposed to outer vision, the external sight with the surface mind or the surface eyes. Psychic in the language of this Yoga is confined to the soul, the psychic being — it is not as in the ordinary language in which if you see a ghost it is called a psychic “vision”: we speak of the inner vision or the subtle sight or the occult sight — not the psychic vision.

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The “sight” spoken of [*in passages of the Upanishads*] is not a sense vision but an experience in the inner consciousness which is more true and living and dynamic than the experiences given to the external consciousness by the material senses.

There is also a psychic vision by which one can see the forms of the Gods or one of the many forms in which the Ishwara reveals himself to the Bhakta.

There is too an inner or subtle sense and sight by which one can see and experience forms and happenings which are not present to the physical eye and also those which belong to other planes than that of the physical world. There are many supraphysical worlds and one can get into contact with these worlds and their beings only by an awakening or developing of this inner sense.

### Mental Visions

The mental visions are meant to bring in the mind the influence of the things they represent.

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Inner vision is vivid like actual sight, always precise and contains a truth in it. In mental vision the images are invented by the mind and are partly true, partly a play of possibilities. Or a mental vision like the vital may be only a suggestion, — that is a formation of some possibility on the mental or vital plane which presents itself to the sadhak in the hope of being accepted and helped to realise itself.

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The visions and experiences you have described are all of the mental plane and show a great openness and purity of the inner mental being free from unfavourable influences. But it is difficult to tell the precise significance of those that are in the nature of colours, lights, a star etc., because they depend on contacts which are personal to the sadhaka. The first five are of this kind and appear to indicate contact with powers, influences, personalities (godheads), etc. of the higher mental plane. E.g. the light of pink colour might be that of some influence or godhead of love or bhakti in contact with the mental being. In some cases it may be the figure of a formation of the mental being itself. The flowers, diamonds and gems etc. would seem to indicate contact with Radha, Mahalakshmi and Mahakali influences. The vision of writing is also frequent on the mental plane — it is known by us as the *lipi*, and if it organises itself so as to be legible and intelligible, it can embody many things such as intuitions, messages from one or other of the mental planes — the voice you heard was probably one of these messages. There is no necessity to explain the vision of the form of the Mother and mine — for that is clear.

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### Vital Visions

The dream was on the vital plane. Dreams or visions on the vital plane are usually either

- (1) symbolic vital visions
- (2) actual occurrences on the vital plane
- (3) formations of the vital mind, either of the dreamer or of someone else with whom he contacts in sleep or of powers or beings of that plane. No great reliance can be put on this kind of experience.

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These are visions of the vital world and the vital planes and one sees hundreds of them there.<sup>2</sup> Those of the type of the first have no significance; they are only things seen just as on earth you may see a man bathing in water. The other seems to indicate a being or else simply a Force given form entering into the consciousness. All the parts of the consciousness are like fields into which forces from the same planes of consciousness in the universal Nature are constantly entering or passing. The best thing is to observe without getting affected in either way or without attaching too much importance — for these are minor experiences and one's concentration must call the major ones.

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Most of these visions are the result of your getting into contact with a certain field of forces in the vital world which are at present creating the pressure for war and revolution and all catastrophic things in Europe. It was from here that these menacing visions were coming. There is no coherence or reality in them. Chhinnamasta is a symbol of this kind of force, feeding as it were the world with her own blood.

They have to be at once rejected. It was not meant that you should be inactive, but that there was sufficient Force gathering

<sup>2</sup> *The correspondent had two visions in dream — one of a young lad standing waist deep in water, another of a woman's face which looked at the correspondent and then entered his chest. — Ed.*

to carry on the sadhana as if by an automatic action. But the consent of the sadhak, his rejection of all that comes against is always necessary.

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It is the vital plane — probably the vital physical. It is mostly there that the beings of the vital world appear with animal heads or features. A human figure with a dog's face means a very coarse and material sexual energy. Of course, all such energies can be transformed and cease to be sexual — turned into material strength of some kind, just as the seminal force can be turned by brahmacharya into ojas.

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This gazing on a flame or a bright spot is the traditional means used by Yogis for concentration or for awakening of the inner consciousness and vision. You seem to have gone by the gazing into a kind of surface (not deep) trance, which is indeed one of its first results, and begun to see things probably on the vital plane. I do not know what were the “dreadful objects” you saw but that dreadfulness is the character of many things first seen on that plane, especially when crossing its threshold by such means. You should not employ these means, I think, for they are quite unnecessary and besides, they may lead to a passive concentration in which one is open to all sorts of things and cannot choose the right ones.

### Subtle Physical Visions

All that can be seen with closed eyes can be seen with open eyes also; it is sufficient that the inner sight should extend to the subtle physical consciousness for that to happen.

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One can see [*visions*] either with open or closed eyes or both. It is a matter of temperament or idiosyncrasy which one starts with.

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The world you see is in some subtle physical plane where men see the gods according to their own ideas and images of them.

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As you were concentrating your attention on the electric light, it may have been the god of electricity you saw, Vaidyuta Agni. There is no reason why he should have many faces — the many-headed or many-armed figures belong usually to the vital plane — and it may not have been in his vital form that he was manifesting. As for the colours, colours are symbols of forces and Agni need not be pure red — the principle of Fire can manifest all the colours and the pure white fire is that which contains in itself all the colours.

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The gods in the overmental plane have not many heads and arms — this is a vital symbolism, it is not necessary in other planes. This figure [*of Vaidyuta Agni, mentioned in the preceding letter*] may have belonged to the subtle physical plane.

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(1) It [*the vision of a flower*] was seen through the physical eyes but by the subtle physical consciousness; in other words there was an imposition of one consciousness upon another. After a certain stage of development, this capacity of living in the ordinary physical consciousness and yet having superadded to it another and more subtle sense, vision, experience becomes quite normal. A little concentration is enough to bring it; or, even, it happens automatically without any concentration.

As the flower was a subtle physical object, not entirely material in the ordinary sense of the word (though quite substantial and material in its own plane, not an illusion), a camera would not be able to detect it — except in the case of one of those abnormal interventions by which a subtle form has been thrown upon the material plate.

It could be sensed in a dark room, though not so easily, and it would not then have so vivid an appearance — unless you are

able to bring out something of the light of the subtle physical plane to surround it and give it its natural medium.

If seen with the eyes shut, it would be no longer a subtle physical form, but an object or formation of the vital, mental or other plane. Unless, indeed, the inner consciousness had progressed so far as to be able to project itself into the physical planes; but this is a rare and, in most cases, a late development.

(2) It is not, usually, the object that vanishes; it is the consciousness that changes. Owing to lack of sustained capacity or lack of training, one is not able to keep the subtle physical vision which is what was really seeing the object. This subtle physical vision comes easiest in the moment between light sleep and waking — either when one just comes out of the sleep or when one is just going into it. But one can train oneself to have it when one is quite wide awake.

At first when one begins to see, it is quite usual for the more ill-defined and imprecise figures to last longer while those which are successful, complete, precise in detail and outline are apt to be quite momentary and disappear in an instant. It is only when the subtle vision is well developed that the precise and full seeing lasts for a long time. This results from the difficulty of keeping what is still an abnormal consciousness and also, in this case, from the difficulty of keeping the two momentarily superimposed consciousnesses together.

(3) There are all kinds in the experiences of each plane — symbolic forms, figures of suggestion, thought-figures, desire-formations or will-formations, constructions of all kinds, things real and lasting in the plane to which they belong and things fictitious and misleading. The haphazardness belongs to the consciousness that sees with its limited and imperfect way of cognizing the other worlds, not to the phenomena themselves. Each plane is a world or a conglomeration or series of worlds, each organised in its own way, but organised, not haphazard; only, of course, the subtler planes are more plastic and less rigid in their organisation than the material plane.