

Chapter Three

The Psychic Being

The Psychic and the Divine

They [*the psychic being and the Divine Presence in the heart*] are quite different things. The psychic being is one's own individual soul-being. It is not the Divine, though it has come from the Divine and develops towards the Divine.

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It [*the psychic*] is constantly in contact with the immanent Divine — the Divine secret in the individual.

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It is the psychic that is in direct relation with the transcendent Divine and leads the nature upwards towards the Supreme.

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The Divine is always in the inner heart and does not leave it.

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The psychic is not, by definition,¹ that part [*of the being*] which is in direct touch with the supramental plane, — although, once

¹ Someone had asked what the psychic being was, whether it could be defined as that part of the being which is always in direct touch with the supramental. I replied that it could not be so defined. For the psychic being in animals or in most human beings is not in direct touch with the supramental — therefore it cannot be so described, *by definition*.

But once the connection between the supramental and the human consciousness is made, it is the psychic being that gives *the readiest response* — more ready than the mind, the vital or the physical. It may be added that it is also a purer response; the mind, vital and physical can allow other things to mix with their reception of the supramental influence and spoil its truth. The psychic is pure in its response and allows no such mixture.

The supramental change can take place only if the psychic is awake and is made the chief support of the descending supramental power.

the connection with the supramental is made, it gives to it the readiest response. The psychic part of us is something that comes direct from the Divine and is in touch with the Divine. In its origin it is the nucleus pregnant with divine possibilities that supports this lower triple manifestation of mind, life and body. There is this divine element in all living beings, but it stands hidden behind the ordinary consciousness, is not at first developed and, even when developed, is not always or often in the front; it expresses itself, so far as the imperfection of the instruments allows, by their means and under their limitations. It grows in the consciousness by Godward experience, gaining strength every time there is a higher movement in us, and, finally, by the accumulation of these deeper and higher movements there is developed a psychic individuality, — that which we call usually the psychic being. It is always this psychic being that is the real, though often the secret cause of man's turning to the spiritual life and his greatest help in it. It is therefore that which we have to bring from behind to the front in the Yoga.

The word "soul", as also the word "psychic", is used very vaguely and in many different senses in the English language. More often than not in ordinary parlance no clear distinction is made between mind and soul and often there is an even more serious confusion, for the vital being of desire — the false soul or desire-soul — is intended by the words "soul" and "psychic" and not the true soul, the psychic being. The psychic being is quite different from the mind or vital; it stands behind them where they meet in the heart. Its central place is there, but behind the heart rather than in the heart; for what men call usually the heart is the seat of emotion, and human emotions are mental-vital impulses, not ordinarily psychic in their nature. This mostly secret power behind, other than the mind and the life-force, is the true soul, the psychic being in us. The power of the psychic, however, can act upon the mind and vital and body, purifying thought and perception and emotion (which then becomes psychic feeling) and sensation and action and everything else in us and preparing them to be divine movements.

The psychic being may be described in Indian language as the Purusha in the heart or the *caitya puruṣa*;² but the inner or secret heart must be understood, *hṛdaye guhāyām*, not the outer vital-emotional centre. It is the true psychic entity (distinguished from the vital desire-mind) — the psyche — spoken of on the page of the *Arya* to which you make reference.

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The psychic is the soul, the divine spark animating matter and life and mind and as it grows it takes form and expresses itself through these three touching them to beauty and fineness — it works even before humanity in the lower creation leading it up towards the human, in humanity it works more freely though still under a mass of ignorance and weakness and coarseness and hardness leading it up towards the Divine. In Yoga it becomes conscious of its aim and turns inward to the Divine. It sees behind and above it — that is the difference.

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The psychic is the spark of the Divine involved here in the individual existence. It grows and evolves in the form of the psychic being — so obviously it cannot have already the powers of the Divine. Only its presence makes it possible for the individual to open to the Divine and grow towards the Divine Consciousness and when it acts it is always in the sense of the Light and the Truth and with the push towards the Divine.

² The chitta and the psychic part are not in the least the same. Chitta is a term in a quite different category, something from which are thrown up to be combined and set in action the main movements of our external consciousness, and to know it we need not go deep behind our surface or external nature. Category means here another class of psychological factors, *tattva-vibhāga*. The psychic belongs to one class or category — supermind, mind, life, psychic, physical — which covers both the inner and the outer nature. Chitta belongs to quite another class or category — buddhi, manas, chitta, prana etc. — which is the classification made by ordinary Indian psychology; it covers only the psychology of the external being. In this category it is the main functions of our external consciousness only that are coordinated and put in their place by the Indian thinkers; chitta is one of these main functions of the external consciousness and, therefore, to know it we need not go behind the external nature.

The Self or Spirit and the Psychic or Soul

The Spirit is the consciousness above mind, the Atman or self, which is always in oneness with the Divine—a spiritual consciousness is one which is always in unity or at least in contact with the Divine.

The psychic is a spark come from the Divine which is there in all things and as the individual evolves it grows in him and manifests as the psychic being, the soul seeking always for the Divine and the Truth and answering to the Divine and the Truth whenever and wherever it meets it.

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All contact with the Divine through the essential substance of the consciousness is spiritual and it is that consciousness in the essential substance—what is called self—that is the spiritual consciousness. The soul or psychic being is a spark of the Divine that grows and evolves through successive lives and leads the rest towards the Divine. The spirit or self is the same always.

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The self feels always its unity with the Divine and is always the same. The soul is a portion of the Divine that comes down into the evolution and evolves a psychic being more and more developed through experiences of successive lives until it is ready for the divine realisation here.

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There is no distinction between the Self and the spirit. The psychic is the soul that develops in the evolution—the spirit is the Self that is not affected by the evolution, it is above it—only it is covered or concealed by the activity of mind, vital and body. The removal of this covering is the release of the spirit—and it is removed when there is a full and wide spiritual silence.

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The soul in evolution is only a power for the evolution, it

contains everything in potentiality; but that can only be worked out by the psychic being. It is quite different from the condition of the self.

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There is a difference between the psychic and the self. The self is the Atman above which is one in all, remains always wide, free, pure, untouched by the action of life in its ignorance. Its nature is peace, freedom, light, wideness, Ananda. The psychic (*antarātmā*) is the individual being which comes down into life and travels from birth to birth and feels the experiences and grows by them till it is able to join itself with the free Atman above.

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The psychic being is concealed in the depths behind the heart-centre.

The Self has no separate place — it is everywhere. Your self and the self of all beings is the same.

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Love, joy and happiness come from the psychic. The Self gives peace or a universal Ananda.

The Atman, the Jivatman and the Psychic

The Jiva is realised as the individual Self, Atman, the central being above the Nature, calm, untouched by the movements of Nature but supporting their evolution though not involved in it. Through this realisation silence, freedom, wideness, mastery, purity, a sense of universality in the individual as one centre of this divine universality become the normal experience. The psychic is realised as the Purusha behind the heart. It is not universalised like the Jivatman, but is the individual soul supporting from its place behind the heart-centre the mental, vital, physical, psychic evolution of the being in Nature. Its realisation brings Bhakti, self-giving, surrender, turning of all the movements Godward, discrimination and choice of all that belongs

to the Divine Truth, Good, Beauty, rejection of all that is false, evil, ugly, discordant, union through love and sympathy with all existence, openness to the Truth of the Self and the Divine.

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The psychic is a spark of the Divine — but I do not know that it can be called a portion of the Jivatma — it is the same put forward in a different way.

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The *bindu* of which you speak is not the psychic being, but the soul or spark of the Divine which supports each existence; the psychic being is usually seen in form as a Purusha. The psychic being is the soul or spark of the Divine developing a form of itself in the evolution which travels from life to life. The Jivatma and the soul are the same, but in two different statuses. The Jivatma is the Ansha of the Divine standing above the consciousness as the individual self and unchanged by the evolution — the soul is the same descended into the evolution and developing its consciousness from life to life until in the opening of knowledge the psychic being realises its oneness with the self above.

The ego is quite different — it is a creation of Prakriti and part of Prakriti, which centralises the thoughts, desires, passions etc. of the nature and is involved in them entirely. The ego is not a real and eternal existence, but only a formation of Nature. It has to disappear by the coming of knowledge and be replaced by the true psychic and spiritual self.

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The psychic is the soul in evolution; the Atman is the self above the evolution.

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There is always a part of the mind, of the vital, of the body which is or can be influenced by the psychic; they can be called the psychic-mental, the psychic-vital, the psychic-physical. According to the personality or the degree of evolution of each person,

this part can be small or large, weak or strong, covered up and inactive or prominent and in action. When it acts the movements of the mind, vital or physical accept the psychic motives or aims, partake of the nature of the psychic or follow its aims but with a modification in the manner which belongs to the mind, vital or physical. The psychic-vital seeks after the Divine, but it has a demand in its self-giving, desire, vital eagerness the psychic has not, for the psychic has instead pure self-giving, aspiration, intensity of psychic fire. The psychic-vital is subject to pain and suffering, which there is not in the psychic.

Atma is not the same as psychic — Atma is the self which is one in all, calm, wide, ever at peace, always free. The psychic being is the soul within that experiences life and develops with evolving mind and life and body. The psychic does not suffer like the vital or body, it has not pain or anguish or despair; but it has a psychic sorrow which is different from these things. It has a kind of quiet sweet sadness of yearning which it feels when things go against the Divine, when the obscurity and obstacles are too heavy, when the mind, vital and physical follow after other things, when evil and falsehood and darkness seem to be too strong for the Light. It does not despair, but feels that these things ought not to be and the psychic yearning for it to be otherwise becomes so intense that it is felt as if something akin to sadness.

As for the psychic not being in front, that cannot be brought about all at once; the other parts of the being must be prepared for the change and the veil between must become thinner and thinner. It is for that experiences come and there is the working on the inner mind and vital and physical as well as on the outer nature.

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What do you mean by a personal vital? What people call personality is a formation. There is no unchangeable vital personality. There is a Presence called the Purusha, something projected by the Self or Atman, which supports on each plane the formation of the personalities on that plane, but the Purusha is not a

personality and it has no name or form. But it is best for you not to speculate too much about these subtle things at present; you have not sufficient experience to grasp correctly the complexity of the truth. The one thing you are concerned with is that you have a soul, a psychic being, which stands for your centre of existence, a part of the Divine. Become aware of that and put all your mental, vital and physical nature in relation to it, in order that they may become purified, harmonised, divinised, and the supramental being and nature may descend and be manifested in you — for until this is done, this conscious linking and relation with the psychic centre, there can be no supramental descent.

The Words “Soul” and “Psychic”

The European mind, for the most part, has never been able to go beyond the formula of soul + body — usually including mind in soul and everything except body in mind. Some occultists make a distinction between spirit, soul and body. At the same time there must be some vague feeling that soul and mind are not quite the same thing, for there is the phrase “This man has no soul”, or “he is a soul” meaning he has something in him beyond a mere mind and body. But all that is very vague. There is no clear distinction between mind and soul and none between mind and vital and often the vital is taken for the soul.

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Psychic is ordinarily used in the sense of anything relating to the inner movements of the consciousness or anything phenomenal in the psychology; in this case I have made a special use of it, relating it to the Greek word *psyche* meaning soul; but ordinarily people make no distinction between the soul and the mental-vital consciousness; for them it is all the same.

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“Psychic” in the sense in which it is used commonly by people has no definite meaning — it is applied to anything non-physical or supraphysical. In the language of our Yoga it refers always to

the inner soul. Therefore the use of the words “psychic significance” is incorrect here. One can say “occult significance” or “symbolic significance” or “inner significance”. “Psychic significance” we can say only of experiences belonging to the psychic as opposed to the mental, vital and physical planes.

The Psychic or Soul and Traditional Indian Systems

It appears the Maharshi at the time supposed that by the psychic being I meant the enlightened ego! But people do not understand what I mean by the psychic being, because the word psychic has been used in English to mean anything of the inner mental, inner vital or inner physical or anything abnormal or occult or even the more subtle movements of the outer being, all in a jumble — also occult phenomena are often called psychic. The distinction between these different parts of the being is unknown. Even in India the old knowledge of the Upanishads in which they are distinguished has been lost. The Jivatman, psychic being (*puruṣo antarātmā*), the *manomaya puruṣa*, the *prāṇamaya puruṣa* are all confused together.

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The *antarātman* is the soul, the portion of the Divine that is at the inmost basis of the evolving individual and supports the mind and life and body which are the instrumental parts of nature through which it tries to grow from the material Inconscience towards the divine Light and Immortality which are its proper being. The limitations of its instruments impose upon it an acceptance of the lower movements and a compromise between soul and nature which retard this movement even while it gets its means of advance from that interchange. The psychic being is the soul-form or soul-personality developing through this evolution and passing from life to life till all is ready for the higher evolution beyond the Ignorance.

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The psychic being is the Soul, the Purusha in the secret heart

supporting by its presence the action of the mind, life and body. The vital is the Pranamaya Purusha spoken of in the Taittiriya Upanishad — the being behind the Force of Life; in its outer form in the Ignorance it generates the desire soul which governs most men and which they mistake often for the real soul.

The Atma is the Self or Spirit that remains above, pure and stainless, unaffected by the stains of life, by desire and ego and ignorance. It is realised as the true being of the individual, but also more widely as the *same being* in all and as the Self of the cosmos; it has also a self-existence above the individual and cosmos and it is then called the Paramatma, the supreme Divine Being. This distinction has nothing to do with the distinction between the psychic and the vital; the vital being is not what is known as the Atma.

The vital as the desire-soul and desire-nature controls the consciousness to a large extent in most men because men are governed by desire. But even in the surface human nature the proper ruler of the consciousness is the mental being, the *manomayah puruṣaḥ prāṇa-śarīra-netā* of the Upanishad. The psychic influences the consciousness from behind, but one has to go out of the ordinary consciousness into the inmost being to find it and make it the ruler of the consciousness as it should be. To do that is one of the principal aims of the Yoga. The vital should be an instrument of the consciousness, not its ruler.

The vital being is not the I — the ego is mental, vital, physical. Ego implies the identification of our existence with outer self, the ignorance of our true self above and our psychic being within us.

In a certain sense the various Purushas or beings in us, psychic, mental, vital, physical, are projections of the Atma, but that gets its full truth only when we get into our inner being and know the inner truth of ourselves. On the surface in the Ignorance, it is the mental, vital, physical Prakriti that acts and the Purusha is disfigured, as it were, in the action of Prakriti. It is not our true mental being, our true vital being, our true physical being even that we are aware of; these remain behind,

veiled and silent. It is the mental, vital, physical ego that we take for our being until we get knowledge.

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The psychic being in the old systems was spoken of as the Purusha in the heart (the secret heart — *hr̥daye guhāyām*) which corresponds very well to what we define as the psychic being behind the heart centre. It was also this that went out from the body at death and persisted — which again corresponds to our teaching that it is this which goes out and returns, linking new life to former life. Also we say that the psychic is the divine portion within us — so too the Purusha in the heart is described as Ishwara of the individual nature in some places.

The word soul is very vaguely used in English — as it often refers to the whole non-physical consciousness including even the vital with all its desires and passions. That is why the word psychic being has to be used so as to distinguish this divine portion from the instrumental parts of the nature.

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I do not know what is exactly meant by this phrase.³ It is too vague and limited for a description of the psychic. Antahkarana usually means the mind and vital as opposed to the body — the body being the outer instrument and *manah-prāṇa* the inner instrument of the soul. By psychic I mean something different from a purified mind and vital. A purified mind and vital are the result of the action of the awakened and liberated psychic being but it is not itself the psychic.

Again it depends on what is meant by Ahambhava. But the psychic is not a “bhava”; it is a being, a Purusha. Ahambhava is a formation of Prakriti, it is not a being or a Purusha. Ahambhava can disappear and yet the Purusha will be there.

By liberated psychic being, I mean that it is no longer obliged to express itself under the conditions of the obscure and ignorant instruments, from behind a veil, but is able to come forward,

³ The correspondent's letter is not available to identify the phrase. — Ed.

control and change the action of mind and vital and body. Purified and perfected are not epithets that can properly be applied to the psychic — the psychic is always pure and has no positive imperfection. The thing that has to be perfected is its control over the instruments. If it is perhaps sometimes spoken of as purified or perfected, what must be meant is the psychic action in the mind, vital and physical instruments. A purified inner being does not mean a purified psychic, but a purified inner mental, vital and physical. The epithets I used for the psychic were “awakened and liberated”.

Spiritual individuality is rather a vague term and might be variously interpreted. I have written about the psychic being that the psychic is the soul or spark of the Divine Fire supporting the individual evolution on the earth and the psychic being is the soul-consciousness developing itself or rather its manifestation from life to life with the mind, vital and body as its instruments until all is ready for the union with the Divine. I don't know that I can add anything to that.

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The mental being spoken of by the Upanishad is not part of the mental nervous physical composite — it is the *manomayah puruṣaḥ prāṇa-sārīra-netā*, the mental being leader of the life and body. It could not be so described if it were part of the composite. Nor can the composite or part of it be the Puruṣa, — for the composite is composed of Prakṛiti. It is described as *manomaya* by the Upanishad because the psychic being is behind the veil and man being the mental being in the life and body lives in his mind and not in his psychic, so to him the *manomaya puruṣa* is the leader of the life and body, — of the psychic behind supporting the whole he is not aware or dimly aware in his best moments. The psychic is represented in man by the Prime Minister, the *manomaya*, itself being a mild constitutional king; it is the *manomaya* to whom Prakṛiti refers for assent to her actions. But still the statement of the Upanishad gives only the apparent truth of the matter, valid for man and the human stage only — for in the animal it would be rather the

prāṇamaya puruṣa that is the *netā*, leader of mind and body.

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Purusha Prakriti is the Kshara Purusha — standing back from it is the Akshara Purusha.

Ego-sense and Purusha are two quite different things — ego-sense is a mechanism of Prakriti, Purusha is the conscious being.

The psychic being evolves, so it is not the immutable.

The psychic being is especially the soul of the individual evolving in the manifestation the individual Prakriti and taking part in the evolution. It is that spark of the Divine Fire that grows behind the mind, vital and physical as the psychic being until it is able to transform the Prakriti of Ignorance into a Prakriti of Knowledge. These things are not in the Gita, but we cannot limit our knowledge by the points in the Gita.

The Soul and the Psychic Being

A distinction⁴ has to be made between the soul in its essence and the psychic being. Behind each and all there is the soul which is the spark of the Divine — none could exist without that. But it is quite possible to have a vital and physical being supported by such a soul essence but without a clearly evolved psychic being behind it.

There is indeed an inner being composed of the inner mental, inner vital, inner physical, — but that is not the psychic being. The psychic is the inmost being of all and quite distinct from these. The word psychic is indeed used in English to indicate anything that is other or deeper than the external mind, life and body or it indicates sometimes anything occult or supraphysical; but that is a use which brings confusion and error and we have almost entirely to discard it.

⁴ *The original text of this letter was revised by Sri Aurobindo on two different occasions. As the two revised versions differ considerably at places, both of them are published here, one after the other. — Ed.*

The psychic being is veiled by the surface movements and expresses itself as best it can through the three outer instruments which are more governed by the outer forces than by the inner being or the psychic entity. But that does not mean that they are entirely isolated from the soul. The soul is in the body in the same way as the mind or vital — but the body is not this gross physical body only, but the subtle body also. When the gross body falls away, the vital and mental sheaths of the body still remain as the soul's vehicle till these too dissolve.

The soul of a plant or an animal is not dormant — only its means of expression are less developed than those of a human being. There is much that is psychic in the plant, much that is psychic in the animal. The plant has only the vital-physical elements evolved in its form; the consciousness behind the form of the plant has no developed or organised mentality capable of expressing itself, — the animal takes a step farther; it has a vital mind and some extent of self-expression, but its consciousness is limited, its mentality limited, its experiences are limited; the psychic essence too puts forward to represent it a less developed consciousness and experience than is possible in man. All the same, animals have a soul and can respond very readily to the psychic in man.

The “ghost” of a man is of course not his soul. It is either the man appearing in his vital body or it is a fragment of his vital structure that is seized on by some force or being of the vital world for its own purpose. For normally the vital being with its personality exists after the dissolution of the physical body for some time only; afterwards it passes away into the vital plane where it remains till the vital sheath dissolves. Next one passes in the mental sheath, to some mental world; but finally the soul leaves its mental sheath also and goes to its place of rest. If the mental is strongly developed, then the mental being can remain and so also can the strongly developed vital, provided they are organised by and centred around the true psychic being — they then share the immortality of the psychic. But ordinarily this does not happen; there is a dissolution of the mental and vital as well as the physical parts and the soul in rebirth assumes a

new mind, life and body and not, as is often supposed, a replica of its old nature-self. Such a repetition would be meaningless and useless and would defeat the purpose of rebirth which is a progression of the nature by experience, an evolutionary growth of the soul in nature towards its self-finding. At the same time the soul preserves the impression of what was essential in its past lives and personalities and the new birth and personality are a balance between this past and the soul's need for its future.⁵

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A distinction has to be made between the soul in its essence and the psychic being. Behind each and all there is the soul which is the spark of the Divine — none could exist without that. But it is quite possible to have a vital and physical being without a clearly evolved psychic being behind it. Still, one cannot make general statements that no aboriginal has a soul or there is no display of soul anywhere.

The inner being is composed of the inner mental, inner vital, inner physical, — but that is not the psychic being. The psychic is the inmost being and quite distinct from these. The word psychic is indeed used in English to indicate anything that is other or deeper than the external mind, life and body, anything occult or supraphysical, but that is a use which brings confusion and error and we entirely discard it when we speak or write about Yoga. In ordinary parlance we may sometimes use the word psychic in the looser popular sense or in poetry, which is not bound to intellectual accuracy, we may speak of the soul sometimes in the ordinary and more external sense or in the sense of the true psyche.

The psychic being is veiled by the surface movements and expresses itself as best it can through these outer instruments which are more governed by the outer forces than by the inner influences of the psychic. But that does not mean that they are

⁵ There are cases in which there is a rapid rebirth of the exterior being with a continuation of the old personality and even the memory of its past life, but this is exceptional and happens usually when there is a frustration by premature death and a strong will in the vital to continue its unfinished experience.

entirely isolated from the soul. The soul is in the body in the same way as the mind or vital — but the body it occupies is not this gross physical frame only, but the subtle body also. When the gross sheath falls away, the vital and mental sheaths of the body still remain as the soul's vehicle till these too dissolve.

The soul of a plant or an animal is not altogether dormant — only its means of expression are less developed than those of a human being. There is much that is psychic in the plant, much that is psychic in the animal. The plant has only the vital-physical evolved in its form, so it cannot express itself; the animal has a vital mind and can, but its consciousness is limited and its experiences are limited, so the psychic essence has a less developed consciousness and experience than is present or at least possible in man. All the same, animals have a soul and can respond very readily to the psychic in man.

The ghost is of course not the soul. It is either the man appearing in his vital body or it is a fragment of his vital that is seized on by some vital force or being. The vital part of us normally exists after the dissolution of the body for some time and passes away into the vital plane where it remains till the vital sheath dissolves. Afterwards it passes, if it is mentally evolved, in the mental sheath to some mental world and finally the psychic leaves its mental sheath also and goes to its place of rest. If the mental is strongly developed, then the mental part of us can remain; so also can the vital, provided they are organised by and centred around the true psychic being — for they then share the immortality of the psychic. Otherwise the psychic draws mind and life into itself and enters into an internal quiescence.

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There is the divine spark from the beginning, the soul, in all things, but it takes a long time and a long evolution for it to arrive at a conscious expression and form of manifested being — what we call the psychic being.

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The soul is described as a spark of the Divine Fire in life and

matter, that is an image. It has not been described as a spark of consciousness.

There is mental, vital, physical consciousness — different from the psychic. The psychic being and consciousness are not identical.

When the soul or “spark of the Divine Fire” begins to develop a psychic individuality, that psychic individuality is called the psychic being.

The soul or spark is there before the development of an organised vital and mind. The soul is something of the Divine that descends into the evolution as a divine Principle within it to support the evolution of the individual out of the Ignorance into the Light. It develops in the course of the evolution a psychic individual or soul individuality which grows from life to life, using the evolving mind, vital and body as its instruments. It is the soul that is immortal while the rest disintegrates; it passes from life to life carrying its experience in essence and the continuity of the evolution of the individual.

It is the whole consciousness, mental, vital, physical also, that has to rise and join the higher consciousness and, once the joining is made, the higher has to descend into them. The psychic is behind all that and supports it.

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The soul is always pure, but the knowledge and force in it are involved and come out only as the psychic being evolves and grows stronger.

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The psychic being is the soul evolving in the course of birth and rebirth and the soul is a portion of the Divine — but with the soul there is always the veiled Divine.

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The psychic being is the developing soul consciousness manifested for the created being as it evolves. At first, the soul is something essential behind the veil, not developed in front. In

front there is only the body, life, mind. In the evolution the soul consciousness develops more and more in the created being until it is so developed that it can come entirely in front and govern mind, life and body.

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The difference [*between one psychic being and another*] is one of evolution. The psychic being is more developed in some, but the soul-principle is the same in all.

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The soul and the psychic are the same — only as there is a vital being supported by the vital and expressing itself through it, so there is a growing psychic being supported on the psychic and expressing itself through the soul-nature.

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But, hang it all, the psychic is part of the human nature or of ordinary nature, — it has been there even before the human began.

The Form of the Psychic Being

Formed souls enter only into formed organisms — in the protoplasm etc. it is only the spark of the Divine that is there, not the formed soul.

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As there is in us a mind which one does not see in form but is aware of and as there is at the same time a mental being which one can see in form, so there is a soul and a psychic being. The soul is the same always, the psychic being is what it develops in the evolution.

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The soul is not limited by any form, but the psychic being puts out a form for its expression, just as the mental, vital and subtle physical Purushas do — that is to say, one can see or another person can see one's psychic being in such and such a form. But

this seeing is of two kinds — there is the standing characteristic form taken by this being in this life and there are symbolic forms, such as when one sees the psychic as a newborn child in the lap of the Mother. If the sadhak in question really saw his psychic in the form of a woman it can only have been a constructed appearance expressing some quality or attitude of the psychic.

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Yes, the psychic being has a form. But that does not appear from the photo [*of a person*]; for the psychic has not always or usually a form closely resembling that of the physical body, it is sometimes even quite different. When looking at the photo [*with Yogic vision*] what is seen is not a form, but something of the consciousness that either is expressed in the body or comes through somehow; one perceives or feels it there through the photo.

The Psychic Being and the Intuitive Consciousness

No, the intuitive self is quite different [*from the psychic*], or rather the intuitive consciousness — that is somewhere above the mind. The psychic stands behind the being — a simple and sincere devotion to the Divine, single-hearted, an immediate sense of what is right and helps towards the Truth and the Divine, an instinctive withdrawal from all that is the opposite are its most visible characteristics.

The Psychic Being and the External Being

What you experience is the first condition of the Yogic consciousness and self-knowledge. The ordinary mind knows itself only as an ego with all the movements of the nature in a jumble and, identifying itself with these movements, thinks “I am doing this, feeling that, thinking, in joy or in sorrow etc.” The first beginning of real self-knowledge is when you feel yourself separate from the nature in you and its movements and then you see that there are many parts of your being, many personalities each acting on its own behalf and in its own way. The two different

beings you feel are — one, the psychic being which draws you towards the Mother, the other the external being mostly vital which draws you outward and downwards towards the play of the lower nature. There is also in you behind the mind the being who observes, the witness Purusha, who can stand detached from the play of the nature, observing it and able to choose. It has to put itself always on the side of the psychic being and assent to and support its movements and to reject the downward and outward movement of the lower nature, which has to be subjected to the psychic and changed by its influence.

The Psychic or Soul and the Lower Nature

All belongs to Nature — the soul itself acts under the conditions and by the agency of Nature.

*

The moral of the condition you describe is not that Yoga should not be done but that you have to go on steadily healing the rift between the two parts of the being. The division is very usual, almost universal in human nature, and the following of the lower impulse in spite of the contrary will in the higher parts happens to almost everybody. It is the phenomenon noted by Arjuna in his question to Krishna, “Why does one do evil, even though one wishes not to do it, as if compelled to it by force?”, and expressed sententiously by Ovid, “*video meliora proboque, Deteriora sequor*”.⁶ By constant effort and aspiration one can arrive at a turning point when the psychic asserts itself and what seems a very slight psychological change or reversal alters the whole balance of the nature.

*

Every soul is not awake and active; nor is every soul turned directly to the Divine before practising Yoga. For a long time

⁶ “I see the better and approve of it, I follow the worse.” *Metamorphoses* 7.20 — *Ed.*

it seeks the Divine through men and things much more than directly.

*

In the ordinary consciousness in which the mind etc. are *not* awakened, the psychic acts as well as it can through them, but according to the laws of the Ignorance.

*

These things, love, compassion, kindness, bhakti, Ananda are the nature of the psychic being, because the psychic being is formed from the Divine Consciousness, it is the divine part within you. But the lower parts are not yet accustomed to obey or value the influence and control of the psychic for in men the vital and physical are accustomed to act for themselves and do not care for what the soul wants. When they do care and obey the psychic, that is their conversion — they begin to put on themselves the psychic or divine nature.

*

The psychic is the support of the individual evolution; it is connected with the universal both by direct contact and through the mind, vital and body.

*

It may be said of the psychic that it is that [*the luminous part of our being*], because the psychic is in touch with the Divine and a projection of the Divine into the lower nature. But the inner mind, vital and physical are a part of the universal and open to the dualities — only they are wider than the external mind, life and body and can receive more largely and easily the divine influence.

*

The psychic is deep within in the inner heart-centre behind the emotional being. From there it stretches upward to form the psychic mind and below to form the psychic vital and psychic physical, but usually one is aware of these only after the

mind, vital and physical are subjected and put under the psychic influence.

The Psychic Being or Soul and the Vital or Life

The soul and the life are two quite different powers. The soul is a spark of the Divine Spirit which supports the individual nature; mind, life, body are the instruments for the manifestation of the nature. In most men the soul is hidden and covered over by the action of the external nature; they mistake the vital being for the soul, because it is the vital which animates and moves the body. But this vital being is a thing made up of desires and executive forces good and bad; it is the desire-soul, not the true thing. It is when the true soul (psyche) comes forward and begins first to influence and then govern the actions of the instrumental nature that man begins to overcome vital desire and grow towards a greater divine nature.

*

We are concerned with the growth of the soul out of the Ignorance, not its plunge into it. The lower nature is the nature of the Ignorance, what we seek is to grow into the nature of the Truth. How do you make out that when the soul has looked towards the Truth and is moving towards it, a pull-back by the vital and the ego towards the Ignorance is a glorious action of the soul and not a revolt of the lower nature? I suppose you are floundering about in the confusion of the idea that the “desire-soul” in the vital is the true psyche of man. If you like — but that is no part of my explanation of things; I make a clear distinction between the two, so I refuse to sanctify the revolt of the lower nature by calling it the sanction of the soul. If it is the soul that wants to fail, why is there any struggle or sorrow over the business? It would be a perfectly smooth affair.

*

The psychic being is not the fulfiller of desires — it is the spark of the Divine in all things manifested here that grows into the

psychic being and supports the evolution. It is that which survives the dissolution of the vital and physical sheaths and returns to birth again.

*

The two feelings you have are that of two different personalities or parts in the being, one which has the feeling of service is in the vital, the other which has the feeling of the child and of the self-giving is psychic. In the progress of the sadhana these different parts or personalities get developed or transformed and harmonised with each other — all becoming parts of the ultimate perfection of the being in the Mother's consciousness.

The Psychic Being and the Ego

There is individuality in the psychic being but not egoism. Egoism goes when the individual unites himself with the Divine or is entirely surrendered to the Divine.

*

It is the psychic inmost being that replaces the ego. It is through love and surrender to the Divine that the psychic being becomes strong and manifest, so that it can replace the ego.

The Psychic World or Plane

There is a psychic world — a sort of Heaven of peace and beauty and harmony. It is also a place of rest for the soul between two incarnations in which it absorbs its past experiences and becomes ready for another birth.

*

What you describe [*lying calmly in a realm of peace, joy and oneness*] is what we mean by the psychic being in its own plane of existence, for the psychic plane is like that. The psychic stands behind the rest of the being supporting it with its own purity, truth and joy.