Chapter One

The Psychic and Spiritual Realisations

The Fundamental Realisations

1. The psychic change so that a complete devotion can be the main motive of the heart and the ruler of thought, life and action in constant union with the Mother and in her Presence.

2. The descent of the Peace, Power, Light etc. of the Higher Consciousness through the head and heart into the whole being, occupying the very cells of the body.

3. The perception of the One and Divine infinitely everywhere, the Mother everywhere and living in that infinite consciousness.

Four Bases of Realisation

You know the four things on which the realisation has to be based — (1) on a rising to a station above the mind, (2) on the opening out of the cosmic consciousness, (3) on the psychic opening, (4) on the descent of the higher consciousness with its peace, light, force, knowledge, Ananda etc. into all the planes of the being down to the most physical. All this has to be done by the working of the Mother’s force aided by your aspiration, devotion and surrender. That is the Path. The rest is a matter of the working out of these things for which you have to have faith in the Mother’s working.

Three Realisations for the Soul

When one speaks of the Divine spark, one is thinking of the soul

---

1 The letter under this heading is Sri Aurobindo’s reply to the question, “What are the fundamental realisations in the Yoga?” — Ed.
as a portion of the Divine which has descended from above into the manifestation rather than of something which has separated itself from the cosmos. It is the nature that has formed itself out of the cosmic forces — mind out of cosmic mind, life out of cosmic life, body out of cosmic matter.

For the soul there are three realisations — (1) the realisation of the psychic being and consciousness as the divine element in the evolution, (2) the realisation of the cosmic Self which is one in all, (3) the realisation of the supreme Divine from which both individual and cosmos have come and of the individual being (Jivatma) as an eternal portion of the Divine.

Foundations of the Sadhana

What you are experiencing is the true foundation of the spiritual life and realisation. It has three elements — first, the love which is the heart of Bhakti; then the descent of peace and equanimity which is the first necessary basis for realisation of self and the higher knowledge — what comes with it is the descent of the force which will work out in you the whole sadhana; thirdly, the feeling of a guiding presence or power which is the basis of Karma — of work and action founded in the spiritual consciousness.

* You can reply to X that the three experiences he is having are the right ones — viz. the opening of the psychic through the heart, the descent of peace and the consciousness of his true being as the witness. But these experiences must be developed, deepened, completed and made the ordinary state of the consciousness. So established they become the triple foundation of the sadhana.

* 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.

* 

To quiet the mind in such a way that no thoughts will come
is not easy and usually takes time. The most necessary thing
is to feel a quietude in the mind so that if thoughts come they
do not disturb or hold the mind or make it follow them, but
simply cross and pass away. The mind first becomes the witness
of the passage of thought and not the thinker, afterwards it is
able not to watch the thoughts but lets them pass unnoticed and
concentrates in itself or on the object it chooses without trouble.

There are two main things to be secured as the founda-
tions of sadhana — the opening of the psychic being and the
realisation of the Self above. For the opening of the psychic
being, concentration on the Mother and self-offering to her
are the direct way. The growth of Bhakti which you feel is the
first sign of the psychic development. A sense of the Mother’s
presence or force or the remembrance of her supporting and
strengthening you is the next sign. Eventually, the soul within
begins to be active in aspiration and psychic perception guiding
the mind to the right thoughts, the vital to the right movements
and feelings, showing and rejecting all that has to be put away
and turning the whole being in all its movements to the Divine
alone. For the self-realisation, peace and silence of the mind
are the first condition. Afterwards one begins to feel release,
freedom, wideness, to live in a consciousness silent, tranquil,
untouched by any or all things, existing everywhere and in all,
one with or united with the Divine. Other experiences come on
the way, or may come, such as the opening of the inner vision,
the sense of the Force working within and various movements
and phenomena of the working etc. One may also be conscious
of ascents of the consciousness and descents of Force, Peace,
Bliss or Light from above.

* 

I do not know why you doubt your experiences — you should
accept them as genuine unless we expressly say anything to the contrary. In all the experiences you have sent me up to now, I have never found any that were not perfectly genuine; moreover, your observation of them is quite sound and accurate.

Your first experience was that of the opening of the psychic; you became aware of the psychic being and its aspirations and experiences and of the external being in front, as two separate parts of your consciousness. You were not able to keep this experience because the vital was not purified and pulled you out into the ordinary external consciousness. Afterwards, you got back into the psychic and were at the same time able to see your ordinary vital nature, to become aware of its defects and to work by the power of the psychic for its purification. I wrote to you at the beginning that this was the right way; for if the psychic is awake and in front, it becomes easy to remain conscious of the things that have to be changed in the external nature and it is comparatively easy to change them. But if the psychic gets veiled and retires into the background, the outer nature left to itself finds it difficult to remain conscious of its own wrong movements and even with great effort cannot succeed in getting rid of them. You can see yourself, as in the matter of the food, that with the psychic active and awake the right attitude comes naturally and whatever difficulty there was soon diminishes or even disappears.

I told you also at that time that there was a third part of the nature, the inner being (inner mind, inner vital, inner physical) of which you were not yet aware, but which must also open in time. It is this that has happened in your last experience. What you felt as a part of you, yourself but not your physical self, rising to meet the higher consciousness above, was this inner being; it was your (inner) higher vital being which rose in that way to join the highest Self above — and it was able to do so, because the work of purifying the outer vital nature had begun in earnest. Each time there is a purification of the outer nature, it becomes more possible for the inner being to reveal itself, to become free and to open to the higher consciousness above.

When this happens, several other things can happen at the
same time. First, one becomes aware of the silent Self above — free, wide, without limits, pure, untroubled by the mental, vital and physical movements, empty of ego and limited personality, — this is what you have described in your letter. Secondly, the Divine Power descends through this silence and freedom of the Self and begins to work in the Adhara. This is what you felt as a pressure; its coming through the top of the head, the forehead and eyes and nose meant that it was working to open the mental centres — especially the two higher centres of thought and will and vision in the inner mental being. These two centres are called the thousand-petalled lotus and the ājñā-cakra between the eyebrows. Thirdly, by this working the inner parts of the being are opened and freed; you are liberated from the limitations of the ordinary personal mind, vital and physical and become aware of a wider consciousness in which you can be more capable of the needed transformation. But that is necessarily a matter of time and long working and you are only taking the first steps in this way.

When one goes into the inner being, the tendency is to go entirely inside and lose consciousness of the outside world — this is what people call Samadhi. But it is also necessary to be able to have the same experiences (of the Self, the workings in the inner consciousness etc.) in the waking state. The best rule for you will be to allow the entire going inside only when you are alone and not likely to be disturbed, and at other times to accustom yourself to have these experiences with the physical consciousness awake and participating in them or at least aware of them. You did therefore quite right in stopping the complete going inside while you were at X’s place. There was no harm in having these experiences there or anywhere, but there should be nothing to draw the attention of others — especially of those who are not in the Yoga or in the atmosphere.

The Central Process of the Yoga

I have said that the most decisive way for the Peace or the Silence to come is by a descent from above. In fact, in reality
though not always in appearance, that is how they always come; — not in appearance always, because the sadhak is not always conscious of the process; he feels the peace settling in him or at least manifesting, but he has not been conscious how and whence it came. Yet it is the truth that all that belongs to the higher consciousness comes from above, not only the spiritual peace and silence, but the Light, the Power, the Knowledge, the higher seeing and thought, the Ananda come from above. It is also possible that up to a certain point they may come from within, but this is because the psychic being is open to them directly and they come first there and then reveal themselves in the rest of the being from the psychic or by its coming into the front. A disclosure from within or a descent from above are the two sovereign ways of the Yoga-siddhi. An effort of the external surface mind or emotions, a tapasya of some kind may seem to build up something of these things, but the results are usually uncertain and fragmentary compared to the result of the two radical ways. That is why in this Yoga we insist always on an “opening” — an opening inwards of the inner mind, vital, physical to the inmost part of us, the psychic, and an opening upwards to what is above the mind — as indispensable for the fruits of the sadhana.

The underlying reason for this is that this little mind, vital and body which we call ourselves is only a surface movement and not our “self” at all. It is an external bit of personality put forward for one brief life and for the play of the Ignorance. It is equipped with an ignorant mind stumbling about in search of fragments of truth, an ignorant vital rushing about in search of fragments of pleasure, an obscure and mostly subconscious physical receiving the impacts of things and suffering rather than possessing a resultant pain or pleasure. All that is accepted until the mind gets disgusted and starts looking about for the real Truth of itself and things, the vital gets disgusted and begins wondering whether there is not such a thing as real bliss and the physical gets tired and wants liberation from itself and its pains and pleasures. Then it is possible for this little ignorant bit of surface personality to get back to its real Self and with it to these
greater things — or else to extinction of itself, Nirvana.

The real Self is not anywhere on the surface but deep within and above. Within is the soul supporting an inner mind, inner vital, inner physical in which there is a capacity for universal wideness and with it for the things now asked for, — direct contact with the Truth of self and things, taste of a universal bliss, liberation from the imprisoned smallness and sufferings of the gross physical body. Even in Europe the existence of something behind the surface is now very frequently admitted, but its nature is mistaken and it is called subconscient or subliminal, while really it is very conscious in its own way and not subliminal but only behind the veil. It is, according to our psychology, connected with the small outer personality by certain centres of consciousness of which we become aware by Yoga. Only a little of the inner being escapes through these centres into the outer life, but that little is the best part of ourselves and responsible for our art, poetry, philosophy, ideals, religious aspirations, efforts at knowledge and perfection. But the inner centres are, for the most part, closed or asleep — to open them and make them awake and active is one aim of Yoga. As they open, the powers and possibilities of the inner being also are aroused in us; we awake first to a larger consciousness and then to a cosmic consciousness; we are no longer little separate personalities with limited lives but centres of a universal action and in direct contact with cosmic forces. Moreover, instead of being unwilling playthings of the latter, as is the surface person, we can become to a certain extent conscious and masters of the play of nature — how far this goes depending on the development of the inner being and its opening upward to the higher spiritual levels. At the same time the opening of the heart centre releases the psychic being which proceeds to make us aware of the Divine within us and of the higher Truth above us.

For the highest spiritual Self is not even behind our personality and bodily existence but is above it and altogether exceeds it. The highest of the inner centres is in the head, just as the deepest is the heart; but the centre which opens directly to the Self is above the head, altogether outside the physical body,
in what is called the subtle body, sūkṣma śarīra. This Self has two aspects and the results of realising it correspond to these two aspects. One is static, a condition of wide peace, freedom, silence: the silent Self is unaffected by any action or experience; it impartially supports them but does not seem to originate them at all, rather to stand back detached or unconcerned, udāsīna. The other aspect is dynamic and that is experienced as a cosmic Self or Spirit which not only supports but originates and contains the whole cosmic action — not only that part of it which concerns our physical selves but also all that is beyond it, this world and all other worlds, the supraphysical as well as the physical ranges of the universe. Moreover, we feel the Self as one in all, but also we feel it as above all, transcendent, surpassing all individual birth or cosmic existence. To get into the universal Self — one in all — is to be liberated from ego; ego either becomes a small instrumental circumstance in the consciousness or disappears from our consciousness altogether. That is the extinction or nirvāṇa of the ego. To get into the transcendent self above all makes us capable of transcending altogether even the cosmic consciousness and action — it can be the way to that complete liberation from the world-existence which is called also extinction, laya, mokṣa, Nirvana.

It must be noted however that the opening upward does not necessarily lead to peace, silence and Nirvana only. The sadhak becomes aware not only of a great, eventually an infinite peace, silence, wideness above us, above the head as it were and extending into all physical and supraphysical space, but also he can become aware of other things — a vast Force in which is all power, a vast Light in which is all knowledge, a vast Ananda in which is all bliss and rapture. At first they appear as something essential, indeterminate, absolute, simple, kevala; a Nirvana into any of these things seems possible. But we can come to see too that this Force contains all forces, this Light all lights, this Ananda all joy and bliss possible. And all this can descend into us. Any of them and all of them can come down, not peace alone; only the safest is to bring down first an absolute calm and peace for that makes the descent of the
rest more secure; otherwise it may be difficult for the external nature to contain or bear so much Force, Light, Knowledge or Ananda. All these things together make what we call the higher, spiritual or divine consciousness. The psychic opening through the heart puts us primarily into connection with the individual Divine, the Divine in his inner relations with us; it is especially the source of love and bhakti. This upward opening puts us into direct relation with the whole Divine and can create in us the divine consciousness and a new birth or births of the spirit.

For when the Peace is established, this higher or Divine Force from above can descend and work in us. It descends usually first into the head and liberates the inner mind centres, then into the heart centre and liberates fully the psychic and emotional being, then into the navel and other vital centres and liberates the inner vital, then into the Muladhara and below and liberates the inner physical being. It works at the same time for perfection as well as liberation; it takes up the whole nature part by part and deals with it, rejecting what has to be rejected, sublimating what has to be sublimated, creating what has to be created. It integrates, harmonises, establishes a new rhythm in the nature. It can bring down too a higher and yet higher force and range of the higher Nature until, if that be the aim of the sadhana, it becomes possible to bring down the supramental force and existence. All this is prepared, assisted, farthered by the work of the psychic being in the heart centre; the more it is open, in front, active, the quicker, safer, easier the working of the Force can be. The more love and bhakti and surrender grow in the heart, the more rapid and perfect becomes the evolution of the sadhana. For the descent and transformation imply at the same time an increasing contact and union with the Divine.

That is the fundamental rationale of the sadhana. It will be evident that the two most important things here are the opening of the heart centre and the opening of the mind centres to all that is behind and above them. For the heart opens to the psychic being and the mind centres open to the higher consciousness and the nexus between the psychic being and the higher consciousness is the principal means of the siddhi. The
first opening is effected by a concentration in the heart, a call to
the Divine to manifest within us and through the psychic to take
up and lead the whole nature. Aspiration, prayer, bhakti, love,
surrender are the main supports of this part of the sadhana —
accompanied by a rejection of all that stands in the way of what
we aspire for. The second opening is effected by a concentration
of the consciousness in the head (afterwards, above it) and an
aspiration and call and a sustained will for the descent of the
divine Peace, Power, Light, Knowledge, Ananda into the being
— the Peace first or the Peace and Force together. Some indeed
receive Light first or Ananda first or some sudden pouring down
of knowledge. With some there is first an opening which reveals
to them a vast infinite Silence, Force, Light or Bliss above them
and afterwards either they ascend to that or these things begin
to descend into the lower nature. With others there is either
the descent, first into the head, then down to the heart level,
then to the navel and below and through the whole body, or
else an inexplicable opening — without any sense of descent —
of peace, light, wideness or power or else a horizontal opening
into the cosmic consciousness or, in a suddenly widened mind,
an outburst of knowledge. Whatever comes has to be welcomed
— for there is no absolute rule for all, — but if the peace has not
come first, care must be taken not to swell oneself in exultation
or lose the balance. The capital movement however is when the
Divine Force or Shakti, the power of the Mother comes down
and takes hold, for then the organisation of the consciousness
begins and the larger foundation of the Yoga.

The result of the concentration is not usually immediate —
though to some there comes a swift and sudden outflowering;
but with most there is a time longer or shorter of adaptation
or preparation, especially if the nature has not been prepared
already to some extent by aspiration and tapasya. The coming
of the result can sometimes be aided by associating with the
concentration one of the processes of the old Yogas. There is the
Adwaita process of the way of knowledge — one rejects from
oneself the identification with the mind, vital, body, saying con-
tinually “I am not the mind”, “I am not the vital”, “I am not the
body”, seeing these things as separate from one’s real self — and after a time one feels all the mental, vital, physical processes and the very sense of mind, vital, body becoming externalised, an outer action, while within and detached from them there grows the sense of a separate self-existent being which opens into the realisation of the cosmic and transcendent Spirit. There is also the method — a very powerful method — of the Sankhyas, the separation of the Purusha and the Prakriti. One enforces on the mind the position of the Witness — all action of mind, vital, physical becomes an outer play which is not myself or mine, but belongs to Nature and has been enforced on an outer me. I am the witness Purusha who am silent, detached, not bound by any of these things. There grows up in consequence a division in the being; the sadhak feels within him the growth of a calm silent separate consciousness which feels itself quite apart from the surface play of the mind and the vital and physical Nature. Usually when this takes place, it is possible very rapidly to bring down the peace of the higher consciousness and the action of the higher Force and the full march of the Yoga. But often the Force itself comes down first in response to the concentration and call and then, if these things are necessary, it does them and uses any other means or process that is helpful or indispensable.

One thing more. In this process of the descent from above and the working it is most important not to rely entirely on oneself, but to rely on the guidance of the Guru and to refer all that happens to his judgment and arbitration and decision. For it often happens that the forces of the lower nature are stimulated and excited by the descent and want to mix with it and turn it to their profit. It often happens too that some Power or Powers undivine in their nature present themselves as the Supreme Lord or as the Divine Mother and claim the being’s service and surrender. If these things are accepted, there will be an extremely disastrous consequence. If indeed there is the assent of the sadhak to the Divine working alone and the submission or surrender to that guidance, then all can go smoothly. This assent and a rejection of all egoistic forces or forces that appeal to the ego are the safeguard throughout the sadhana. But the
ways of Nature are full of snares, the disguises of the ego are innumerable, the illusions of the Powers of Darkness, Rakshasi Maya, are extraordinarily skilful; the reason is an insufficient guide and often turns traitor; vital desire is always with us tempting to follow any alluring call. This is the reason why in this Yoga we insist so much on what we call *samarpana*—rather inadequately rendered by the English word surrender. If the heart centre is fully opened and the psychic is always in control, then there is no question; all is safe. But the psychic can at any moment be veiled by a lower upsurge. It is only a few who are exempt from these dangers and it is precisely those to whom surrender is easily possible. The guidance of one who is himself by identity or represents the Divine is in this difficult endeavour imperative and indispensable.

What I have written may help you to get some clear idea of what I mean by the central process of the Yoga. I have written at some length but, naturally, could cover only the fundamental things. Whatever belongs to circumstance and detail must arise as one works out the method, or rather as it works itself out,—for the last is what usually happens when there is an effective beginning of the action of the sadhana.