

## Chapter One

# The Planes or Worlds of Consciousness

### The System of Planes or Worlds

What we speak of are planes of consciousness — the physical is the lowest, above it the ordinary vital, above it the emotional (heart), above it the mental, above the mental are other planes. There is a psychic plane behind the emotional which influences all the others.

\*

The physical is not the only world; there are others that we become aware of through dream records, through the subtle senses, through influences and contacts, through imagination, intuition and vision. There are worlds of a larger subtler life than ours, vital worlds; worlds in which Mind builds its own forms and figures, mental worlds; psychic worlds which are the soul's home; others above with which we have little contact. In each of us there is a mental plane of consciousness, a psychic, a vital, a subtle physical as well as the gross physical and material plane. The same planes are situated in the consciousness of general Nature. It is when we enter or contact these other planes that we come into connection with the worlds above the physical. In sleep we leave the physical body, only a subconscious residue remaining, and enter all planes and all sorts of worlds. In each we see scenes, meet beings, share in happenings, come across formations, influences, suggestions which belong to these planes. Even when we are awake, part of us moves in these planes, but their activity goes on behind the veil; our waking minds are not aware of it. Dreams are often only incoherent constructions of our subconscious, but others are records (often much mixed and distorted) or transcripts of experiences in these supraphysical

planes. When we do sadhana, this kind of dream becomes very common; then subconscious dreams cease to predominate.

The forces and beings of the vital world have a great influence on human beings. The vital world is on one side a world of beauty, — the poet, artist, musician are in close contact with it; it is also a world of powers and passions, lusts and desires, — our own lusts and desires, and passions and ambitions can put us into connection with the vital worlds and their forces and beings. It is again a world of things dark, dangerous and horrible. Nightmares like X's are contacts with this side of the vital plane. Its influences are also the source of much in men that is demoniac, dirty, cruel and base.

\*

It is good that you were able to overcome the difficulty and have a good meditation. Your observation that the difficulty is only in the head and throat and mainly in the latter is very significant. These are the mental centres and it is evident therefore that the difficulty comes from the physical mind. The higher part of the mind belongs to the thinking mind proper, the buddhi, that which understands and observes and guides; the throat is the centre of the externalising mind, that which deals with outer and physical things and responds to them. Its activity is always one of the chief difficulties of the sadhana. If it is quiet it is easier, as you have seen, for the whole being to be quiet.

The last of the four experiences, that of the being within arranged in layers one under the other like the steps of a ladder, is also very significant and very true. It is so that inner consciousness is arranged. There are five main divisions of this ladder. At the top above the head are layers (or as we call them planes) of which we are not conscious and which become conscious to us only by sadhana — those above the human mind — that is the higher consciousness. Below from the crown of the head to the throat are the layers (there are many of them) of the mind, the three principal being one at the top of the head communicating with the higher consciousness, another between the eyebrows where is the thought, sight and will, a third in the throat which is

the externalising mind. A second division is from the shoulders to the navel, these are the layers of the higher vital presided over by the heart centre where is the emotional being with the psychic hidden behind it. From the navel downwards is the rest of the vital being containing several layers. From the bottom of the spine downward are the layers of the physical consciousness proper, the material, and below the feet is the subconscious which has also many levels.

The experience of the splitting of the forehead from the middle and the pouring out of light signified the opening of the centre of thought, will and vision there. When this opens, there is the opening of the inner mind consciousness through which the light of the higher can pour out—here it is the Mother's white light that was pouring out through the opening.

The lights you saw were the many lights (powers, forces full of light) of the higher consciousness, the Truth consciousness or divine consciousness. Their pouring down was preceded and made possible by the appearance of the moon, the spiritual light. It is when the spiritual light is there that the presence of the Mother is revealed and her action brings down the powers of the Truth, the Divine and she gives them to the sadhak.

\*

If we regard the gradation of worlds or planes as a whole, we see them as a great connected complex movement; the higher precipitate their influences on the lower, the lower react to the higher and develop or manifest in themselves within their own formula something that corresponds to the superior power and its action. The material world has evolved life in obedience to a pressure from the vital plane, mind in obedience to a pressure from the mental plane. It is now trying to evolve supermind in obedience to a pressure from the supramental plane. In more detail, particular forces, movements, powers, beings of a higher world can throw themselves on the lower to establish appropriate and corresponding forms which will connect them with the material domain and, as it were, reproduce or project their action here. And each thing created here has, supporting it,

subtler envelopes or forms of itself which make it subsist and connect it with forces acting from above. Man, for instance, has, besides his gross physical body, subtler sheaths or bodies by which he lives behind the veil in direct connection with supra-physical planes of consciousness and can be influenced by their powers, movements and beings. What takes place in life has always behind it preexistent movements and forms in the occult vital planes; what takes place in mind presupposes preexistent movements and forms in the occult mental planes. That is an aspect of things which becomes more and more evident, insistent and important, the more we progress in a dynamic Yoga.

But all this must not be taken in too rigid and mechanical a sense. It is an immense plastic movement full of the play of possibilities and must be seized by a flexible and subtle tact or sense in the seeing consciousness. It cannot be reduced to a too rigorous logical or mathematical formula. Two or three points must be pressed in order that this plasticity may not be lost to our view.

First, each plane, in spite of its connection with others above and below it, is yet a world in itself, with its own movements, forces, beings, types, forms existing as if for its and their own sake, under its own laws, for its own manifestation without apparent regard for other members of the great series. Thus, if we regard the vital or the subtle physical plane, we see great ranges of it (most of it) existing in themselves, without any relation with the material world and with no movement to affect or influence it, still less to precipitate a corresponding manifestation in the physical world. At most we can say that the existence of anything in the vital, subtle physical or any other plane creates a possibility for a corresponding movement of manifestation in the physical world. But something more is needed to turn that static or latent possibility into a dynamic potentiality or an actual urge towards a material creation. That something may be a call from the material plane, e.g. some force or someone in the physical existence entering into touch with a supraphysical power or world or part of it and moved to bring it down into the earth life. Or it may be an impulse in the vital or other plane itself, e.g. a vital being moved to extend his action

towards the earth and establish there a kingdom for himself or the play of the forces for which he stands in his own domain. Or it may be a pressure from above, let us say some supramental or mental power precipitating its formation from above and developing forms and movements on the vital level as a means of transit to its self-creation in the material world. Or it may be all these things acting together, in which case there is the greatest possibility of an effective creation.

Next, as a consequence, it follows that only a limited part of the action of the vital or other higher planes is concerned with the earth-existence. But even this creates a mass of possibilities which is far greater than the earth can at one time manifest or contain in its own less plastic formulas. All these possibilities do not realise themselves; some fail altogether and leave at the most an idea that comes to nothing; some try seriously and are repelled and defeated and, even if in action for a time, come to nothing. Others effectuate a half manifestation, and this is the most usual result, the more so as these vital or other supraphysical forces come into conflict and have not only to overcome the resistance of the physical consciousness and of matter, but their own internecine resistance to each other. A certain number succeed in precipitating their results in a more complete and successful creation, so that if you compare that creation with its original in the higher plane, there is something like a close resemblance or even an apparently exact reproduction or translation from the supraphysical to the physical formula. And yet even there the exactness is only apparent; the very fact of translation into another substance and another rhythm of manifestation makes a difference. It is something new that has manifested and it is that that makes the creation worth while. What for instance would be the utility of a supramental creation on earth if it were just the same thing as a supramental creation on the supramental plane? It is that, in principle, but yet something else, a triumphant new self-discovery of the Divine in conditions that are not elsewhere.

No doubt, the subtle physical is closest to the physical, and most like it. But yet the conditions are different and the thing too different. For instance, the subtle physical has a freedom,

plasticity, intensity, power, colour, wide and manifold play (there are thousands of things there that are not here) of which as yet we have no possibility on earth. And yet there is something here, a potentiality of the Divine which the other in spite of its greater liberties has not, something which makes creation more difficult, but in the last result justifies the labour.

\*

Each plane of consciousness contains the others in itself in principle. In the physical consciousness there is a physical mind, a vital force and action which we call the vital physical, and the physical proper or material.

\*

Mind has its own realms and life has its own realms just as matter has. In the mental realms life and substance are entirely subordinated to Mind and obey its dictates. Here on earth there is the evolution with matter as the starting point, life as the medium, mind emerging from it. There are many grades, realms, combinations in the cosmos — there are even many universes. Ours is only one of many.

### **The Planes and the Body**

The heavenly worlds are above the body. What the parts of the body correspond to are planes — subtle physical, higher, middle and lower vital, mental. Each plane is in communication with various worlds that belong to it.

\*

The appearance of the being in other planes is not the same necessarily as that of the physical body. Very often the form taken by the vital or psychic or mental being is very different from the physical form. Even when they resemble on the whole, there is always some difference.