Chapter Three

Inner Experiences in the State of Samadhi

Samadhi or Trance

The experience you had is of course the going inside of the consciousness which is usually called trance or samādhi. The most important part of it however is the silence of the mind and vital which is fully extended to the body also. To get the capacity of this silence and peace is a most important step in the sadhana. It comes at first in meditation and may throw the consciousness inward in trance, but it has to come afterwards in the waking state and establish itself as a permanent basis for all the life and action. It is the condition for the realisation of the Self and the spiritual transformation of the nature.

* The experience you relate, the stillness, the emptiness of mind and vital and cessation of thoughts and other movements, was the coming of the state called “samadhi” in which the consciousness goes inside in a deep stillness and silence. This condition is favourable to inner experience, realisation, the vision of the unseen truth of things, though one can get these in the waking condition also. It is not sleep but the state in which one feels conscious within, no longer outside.

* It [the experience of samadhi] is not indispensable at this stage; but if it comes of itself, it can be allowed to develop. But experience in the waking state is more important for this Yoga. Samadhi is a help for reaching the inner depths of the consciousness. One is able to go more easily by it inward below the surface being, to get into direct contact with other supaphysical
planes of experience, to pass into other worlds and return, to contact happenings distant in space and time, to see what is in the supraconscient and to enter into what is supraconscient to our mental status.

* What she speaks of as losing the body consciousness is probably a tendency of the consciousness to go inside — into Samadhi of some kind. Samadhi means a state in which one is not awake and aware of outward things, but also one is not asleep, one is conscious inwardly with another than the waking consciousness. If this comes, it is not to be avoided, as Yogic realisation can take place in this condition as well as in the waking state.

* It is a state of inner immobile silence that one gets in Samadhi when the outer mind is stilled and there is only some inner or some higher consciousness which may itself be either in silent concentration or else experiencing some state of Knowledge or Ananda or Peace.

* Going inside does not bring always Ananda. There are many kinds of samadhi and many sorts of experience in each kind. What happens when one goes in is that one enters into the inner planes of consciousness, it may be the subconscient, it may be the mental, vital or subtle physical plane. From there one goes into the corresponding worlds or else one rises up into higher planes superconscious to us — to the ranges above our mind or to the spiritual mental plane in which one can unite with the Sachchidananda consciousness or to the Supramental. What you describe seems to be the subconscient, but that may be only a first step in the going inside.

* In samadhi it is the inner mental, vital, physical which are separated from the outer, no longer covered by it — therefore they
can freely have inner experiences. The outer mind is either quiescent or in some way reflects or shares the experience. As for the central consciousness being separated from all mind that would mean a complete trance without any recorded experiences.

* It is the subtle parts of the physical that go up. The external consciousness can also go up, but then there is a complete trance. There is not much utility for the complete trance in this sadhana.

* Trance in English is usually used only for the deeper kinds of samadhi; but, as there is no other word, we have to use it for all kinds.

* Samadhi is not a thing to be shunned — only it has to be made more and more conscious.

**Trance Not Essential**

It is not necessary to be in samadhi to be in contact with the Divine.

* Yes, they [*all the stages of higher realisation*] can be attained even in full activity. Trance is not essential — it can be used, but by itself it cannot lead to the change of consciousness which is our object, for it gives only an inner subjective experience which need not make any difference in the outer consciousness. There are plenty of instances of sadhaks who have fine experiences in trance but the outer being remains as it was. It is necessary to bring out what is experienced and make it a power for transformation both of the inner and the outer being. But it can be done without going into Samadhi in the waking consciousness itself. Concentration of course is indispensable.
Kinds of Samadhi

Nirvikalpa Samadhi according to tradition is simply a trance from which one cannot be awakened even by burning or branding — i.e. a trance in which one has gone completely out of the body. In more scientific parlance it is a trance in which there is no formation or movement of the consciousness and one gets lost in a state from which one can bring back no report except that one was in bliss. It is supposed to be a complete absorption in the Sushupti or the Turiya.

“Nirvikalpa samadhi” properly means a complete trance in which there is no thought or movement of consciousness or awareness of either inward or outward things — all is drawn up into a supracosmic Beyond. But here it cannot mean that — it probably means a trance in a consciousness beyond the Mind.

As to the dream, it was not a dream but an experience of the inner being in a conscious dream state, svapna-samādhi. The numbness and the feeling of being about to lose consciousness are always due to the pressure or descent of a Force to which the body is not accustomed but feels strongly. Here it was not the physical body that was being directly pressed, but the subtle body, the sukṣma śarīra in which the inner being more intimately dwells and in which it goes out in sleep or trance or in the moment of death. But the physical body in these vivid experiences feels as if it were itself that was having the experience; the numbness was the effect on it of the pressure. The pressure on the whole body would mean a pressure on the whole inner consciousness, perhaps for some modification or change which would make it more ready for knowledge or experience; the 3rd or 4th rib would indicate a region which belongs to the vital nature, the domain of the life-force, some pressure for a change there.
It [the kind of samadhi one has] depends on the nature of the physical consciousness you keep. When there is the descent of consciousness into the body one becomes aware of a subtle physical consciousness and that can remain in samadhi — one seems to be aware of the body, but it is really the subtle body and not the outward physical. But also one can go deep within and yet be aware of the physical body also and of working upon it, but not of outward things. Finally one can be absorbed in a deep concentration but strongly aware of the body and the descent of the Force in it. This last is accompanied with consciousness of outward things, though no attention may be paid to them. This last is not usually called samadhi, but it is a kind of waking samadhi. All conditions from the deep samadhi of complete trance to the working of the Force in the fully waking consciousness are used in this Yoga; one need not insist on complete trance always, for the others also are necessary and without them the complete change cannot take place.

It is good that the higher consciousness and its powers are descending into the parts below the head and heart. That is absolutely necessary for the transformation, since the lower vital and the body must also be changed into stuff of the higher consciousness.

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For this Yoga these divisions [the classifications of samadhi in Vedanta] are not so important.

**Samadhi and the Waking State**

Trance is a going inside away from the waking state. What corresponds to trance in the waking state would be a complete concentration indifferent to outward movements or else a silence of the whole being in Brahman realisation, the *samāhita* state of the Gita.

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Immersion in Sachchidananda is a state one can get in the waking
condition without Samadhi — dissolution can come only after the loss of the body on condition that one has reached the highest state and does not will to return here to help the world.

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On the contrary it is in the waking state that this realisation must come and endure in order to be a reality of the life. If experienced in trance it would be a superconscient state true for some part of the inner being, but not real to the whole consciousness. Experiences in trance have their utility for opening the being and preparing it, but it is only when the realisation is constant in the waking state that it is truly possessed. Therefore in this Yoga most value is given to the waking realisation and experience.

What you write about the work is correct; to work in this calm ever-widening consciousness is at once a sādhana and a siddhi.

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The entire oblivion of the experience means merely that there is still no sufficient bridge between the inner consciousness which has the experience in a kind of samadhi and the exterior waking consciousness. It is when the higher consciousness has made the bridge between them that the outer also begins to remember.

**Samadhi and Sleep**

It [a tendency to fall asleep while meditating] is the result of the attempt to go above. It is not sleep that comes, but a tendency to go inside under the pressure — the old Yogas did this going above precisely in this way, by going into samadhi. For us, it has to come in the waking condition — for until it does, it cannot be made the basis for a new consciousness governing the life.

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It [the tendency to fall asleep during meditation] is a common obstacle with all who practise Yoga at the beginning. The sleep disappears gradually in two ways — (1) by the intensifying of the
force of concentration, (2) by the sleep itself becoming a kind of swapna samadhi in which one is conscious of inner experiences that are not dreams (i.e. the waking consciousness is lost for the time, but it is replaced not by sleep but by an inward conscious state in which one moves in the supraphysical of the mental or vital being).

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There is no reason why one should not have a burning aspiration in sleep, provided one is conscious in sleep. In fact, the condition you describe was not sleep — it was simply that the consciousness was trying to go inside in a sort of indrawn condition (a kind of half-samadhi) while the external mind was constantly coming out of it. What you have, if you go into this indrawn condition, is not dreams but spiritual experiences or visions or experiences in other supraphysical planes of consciousness. Your burning aspiration was just such a spiritual experience.

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No, it was not sleep. You went inside into an inner consciousness; in this inner consciousness one is awake inside, but not outside, not conscious of external things but of inner things only. Your inner consciousness was busy doing what your outer mind had been trying to do, that is to work upon the thoughts and suggestions that bring restlessness and to put them right; it can be done much more easily by the inner consciousness than by the outer mind.

As for the things that are necessary to be done, they can be done much more easily by the Force and Peace descending (bringing the solid strength) than by your own mental effort.

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It was not half sleep or quarter sleep or even one-sixteenth sleep that you had; it was a going inside of the consciousness, which in that state remains conscious but shut to outer things and open only to inner experience. You must distinguish clearly between
these two quite different conditions, one is *nidrā*, the other the beginning at least of *samādhi* (not *nirvikalpa* of course!). This drawing inside is necessary because the active mind of the human being is at first too much turned to outward things; it has to go inside altogether in order to live in the inner being (inner mind, inner vital, inner physical, psychic). But with training one can arrive at a point when one remains outwardly conscious and yet lives in the inner being and has at will the indrawn or the out-poured condition; you can then have the same dense immobility and the same inpouring of a greater and purer consciousness in the waking state as in that which you erroneously call sleep.

*About your experiences:

(1) The sleep which you felt when meditating was not sleep but an inward condition of the consciousness. When this inward condition is not very deep one can be aware of various scenes, voices etc. which belong not to the physical but to some inner plane of consciousness — their value or truth depends on the plane to which one reaches. Those of the surface are of no importance and one has simply to pass through them till one gets deeper.

(2) The fear, anger, depression etc. which used to rise when making the japa of the names came from a vital resistance in the nature (this resistance exists in everyone) which threw up these things because of the pressure on the vital part to change which is implied in sadhana. These resistances rise and then, if one takes the right attitude, slowly or quickly clear away. One has to observe them and separate oneself from them, persisting in the concentration and sadhana till the vital becomes quiet and clear.

(3) The things you saw (moon, sky etc.) are due to the opening of the inner vision; this usually comes when the concentration begins to open up the inner consciousness of which this subtle vision is a part. This faculty of vision has its importance in the development of the inner being, and need not be discouraged, even though too much importance should not be attached to the
things seen in the earlier stages.

(4) There are some however that are part of the growing spiritual experience, such as the sun you saw overhead and the piece of golden light — for these are signs of an opening within and symbolic. Both are symbols of the Divine Truth and Light and of one action of their influence.

(5) The most important experience, however, is that of the peace and quiet which comes with a good concentration. It is this that must grow and fix itself in the mind and vital and body — for it is this peace and quiet that make a firm basis for the sadhana.

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The starting of the body happens very often when it is in a kind of sleep of samadhi and something touches whether from within or without.

The Trance of Mediums

The medium trance is of a different kind — they get not into touch with Sachchidananda but with the beings of the lower vital plane. To develop the power of going into this higher kind of trance, one must have done some sadhana. As to purification, entire purification is not necessary, but some part of the being must have turned to higher things.