Chapter Two

Levels of the Physical Being

The Physical Consciousness

A certain inertia, tendency to sleep, indolence, unwillingness or inability to be strong for work or spiritual effort for long at a time, is in the nature of the human physical consciousness. When one goes down into the physical for its change (that has been the general condition here for a long time), this tends to increase. Even sometimes when the pressure of the sadhana on the physical increases or when one has to go much inside, this temporarily increases — the body either needing more rest or turning the inward movement into a tendency to sleep or be at rest. You need not, however, be anxious about that. After a time this rights itself; the physical consciousness gets the true peace and calm in the cells and feels at rest even in full work or in the most concentrated condition and this tendency of inertia goes out of the nature.

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There are many [defects of the physical consciousness] — but mainly obscurity, inertia, tamas, a passive acceptance of the play of wrong forces, inability to change, attachment to habits, lack of plasticity, forgetfulness, loss of experiences or realisations gained, unwillingness to accept the Light or to follow it, incapacity (through tamas or through attachment or through passive reaction to accustomed forces) to do what it admits to be the Right and the Best.

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There is always some tendency to looseness, forgetfulness and inattention in the physical consciousness. One has to be very vigilant and careful to prevent this tendency having its way.

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These are the usual suggestions of the Ignorance in the physical consciousness — everybody in that condition says the same thing, “All the rest are so nicely off, I only am not progressing and there is no hope for me” etc. These things should not be listened to at all.

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It is an inertia of the physical consciousness which allows these desires to come and does not react against the suggestions; it is that also which responds to the pains and suggestion of illness. But you must not accept the suggestion that you cannot react and be free, — the physical consciousness itself cannot as yet, but the will can if it is called on to act and made accustomed to act always. Not the struggling will, but a quiet will insisting on the quietude of the mind and vital and insisting on the rejection of these adverse things. That would soon prove sufficient to hold the ground for the Peace and Force to act and they would do the rest.

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It is no doubt as you say,¹ but that is always the difficulty of the physical consciousness until it has been enlightened from within. It is the peace you feel — the peace that is taking little by little hold of the inner being — that has to deepen and strengthen itself till it can take hold of the physical also. When it can do that, the externalised physical consciousness will feel it no longer alien to itself. The Peace will enable the Force and Light to enter also into the physical and the true understanding will come there too and remove the sense of distance and difference. That is how the Yoga force always works in principle — but the more the quietude, the more rapidly and surely it will work.

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It is the last reaction of the physical consciousness [feeling dull,

¹ The correspondent wrote that although she wanted to get rid of her desires, confusions and wrong movements, the outward, physical part of her being wanted to hold on to them. — Ed.
weak, confused] that must be got rid of — in its place there must be at such times peace constant so that you do not get restless or feel troubled. It is not possible to be always in the best condition of consciousness or sadhana — there are times when the physical needs to be merely quiet, the aspiration becomes quiescent, there is no sense of the Divine, no forward movement. Properly taken, these periods become periods of rest and assimilation but for that the consciousness must learn to be quiet, not to be troubled or thrown back into a bad or uneasy condition — it must remain at repose until the movement is resumed in a quiet peace. Or at least the greater part of the consciousness must feel like that — not even in these periods dull, weak or confused. This feeling seems to be gaining on you, but the physical consciousness or at least a part of it is still uneasy during such intervals. It must go on receiving more of the light and peace till this can no longer happen.

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There comes for many a stage in the opening of the consciousness when the entrance of any wrong thought or feeling or movement brings an ache or uneasiness or other sign in the body — this is because these movements are becoming foreign to the consciousness, even the physical, and so produce a discomfort.

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Sometimes when these forces cannot have a success in attacking the vital directly because the psychic rejects the attack, they try to fall on the physical consciousness and the body (the emptiness, headache, disturbance in the chest were that) so as to weaken, if possible, the resistance to their pressure. At such times you must be as quiet as possible and call the Mother. After a time the attacks will not come or will not last.

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The legs, knees, feet — these indicate the physical consciousness — it was therefore into the obscure layers of the physical consciousness that you went down.
The Mental Physical and the Vital Physical

And how is it possible to perfect the mind and vital unless the physical is prepared? — for there is such a thing as the mental and vital physical, and mind and vital cannot be said to be perfectly prepared until these are ready.

* The small things go with difficulty because they belong to the vital physical and the things of the physical consciousness are obstinate owing to the great subjection of the physical to the force of habit. All the same the Will can act on them so as to dismiss them either rapidly or by a slow pressure.

* There is always the conflict between the consciousness that is coming into you and the ignorant consciousness that was there before. The new consciousness is gaining ground always but still against much resistance especially in the vital physical (which is indicated in the stomach attacks). But there is only one way to go and that is to insist always on the Power and Peace which are more and more felt to be always there and more and more dissociate yourself from the other condition. It is on that basis that the right understanding can come.

* It is something in the vital part of the physical consciousness which has not yet understood — it feels the pressure to change, yet it is drawn outward to people or things in the old way, but is dissatisfied because the growth of the new consciousness behind prevents it taking pleasure in them, so that it remains restless, not understanding anything. What it has got to learn is that it must fall quiet and open to a new consciousness from above and within. This part of the being is obscure, — not sufficiently mentalised to understand things, it acts from instinct, impulse and habit only. When its old instincts, impulses and habits are checked, it does not know what to do or what is demanded of
it. But after a certain amount of pressure from the mind and will it can be got to consent to a change of its ways.

The other thing, the habit of concentrating on one thing and forgetting everything else, is a turn of the vital — it is a faculty that has a value because it can give great intensity to the nature and to any endeavour made by the nature. Only it has to be turned in the right direction and used by the mind and the psychic being for a whole-hearted concentration and devotion to the Mother.

* The attack comes evidently always on the vital physical and the physical — it is these parts that have to be cleared entirely — desires and dissatisfactions in the vital physical and the pain, unconsciousness and dullness in the physical. Do not yield to the idea of being helpless to repel or ignore when they come — even the pains can be rejected — you have to get the knack of bringing down the Force at once to drive them out.

* The physical disturbance and weakness are simply the attack falling back on the physical system from the vital and producing there the corresponding movements — all of a nervous character — nervous restlessness, nervous pain and palpitation and trouble, nervous weakness of the body.

Take the lesson from what has happened, but now put away these thoughts and open yourself quietly to recover the true movement.

* It [the coming of disturbances] is not the result of any pressure from above. If there were nothing coming from above, there would be no peace and clarity and the disturbances would still come and come more often.

The cravings once belonged to the vital physical, but when there is a sufficient force of peace in the being, then they go out and the vital physical is free and under the influence of the
quietude. The forces of disturbance do not belong any longer to the personality, but although they have gone out, they wait in the atmosphere and, if they get a chance, try to come back and resume hold of the exterior being so as either to break or, if they can no longer do that, cover up the inner peace. Because the physical vital has been accustomed to respond to them for a time willingly, now unwillingly, they are still able to make it answer to their vibrations. The peace and clarity must acquire such a force that they will remain even if these forces come back—then there will be the phenomenon of the inner peace remaining undisturbed in the inner being even while the outer is superficially disturbed. This is a well-marked stage in the progress. Afterwards a force can be brought down strong enough to fill the outer being also with so strong a peace and clarity that the disturbances can no longer enter there. One may feel them still sometimes in the atmosphere but is no longer touched by them at all.

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As for the vital physical readmitting the forces of disturbance, it is not always because it wants; it may happen also because in spite of itself certain impacts or suggestions revive the old vibrations and the habit of responding has been so strong in it that it responds in spite of itself, and for a time it is unable to recover its balance. This happens in all parts of the being, but it is especially true of the physical parts—physical mind yielding to habitual thoughts, physical vital yielding to habitual desires and impulsions etc., body yielding to habitual sensations, illnesses etc. etc. Often sadhaks write, “But I don't want these things, even my vital and body feel uncomfortable and wish them away, then why do they come?” It is because of this long established habit of response which is too strong for the yet too quiescent and passive will (if it can be called will) of rejection in the part affected. It is especially true of the physical parts because a passive quiescence, a habit of being driven by forces is their very nature, unless they are controlled from above or made to share in the idea and will of the higher parts.
The Material Consciousness

I do not see why you doubt the fulfilment in your material consciousness. If there is faith, quietude, openness in the rest of the being, the material is bound to open also. Tamas, inertia, ignorance, stupidity, littleness, obstruction to the true movement are universal characteristics of the material consciousness, so long as it is not enlightened, regenerated and transformed from above, — they are not peculiar to yours. Therefore, there is here no sufficient reason or justification for the doubt you describe.

When the Supramental comes down fully into the material consciousness, it will create the right conditions there. The oneness will be created, the constant presence and sense of contact will be felt in the material and there will be all the actual physical contact that is needed. The sadness you speak of is not psychic — for “painful longing” belongs to the vital, not to the psychic. The psychic never feels a sadness from disappointed desire, because that is not in its nature; the sorrow it sometimes feels is when it sees the Divine rejected or the mental, vital, physical in man or in nature turning away from the Truth to follow perversion, darkness or ignorance. However, with the reign of the Supramental even the vital external nature is bound to change and therefore there will be no chance of any feelings of this character.

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You should not allow yourself to be discouraged by any persistence of the movements of the lower nature. There are some that tend always to persist and return until the whole physical nature is changed by the transformation of the most material consciousness; till then their pressure recurs — sometimes with a revival of their force, sometimes more dully — as a mechanical habit. Take from them all life-power by refusing any mental or vital assent; then the mechanical habit will become powerless to influence the thoughts and acts and will finally cease.
The Body Consciousness

The sense of being only the body belongs to the physical consciousness while the confusion came from the vital. The confusion must disappear because it makes a turmoil in the consciousness and stands in the way of the Force acting on the surface. The obstacle of the body consciousness is tedious, but it does not prevent the Force from growing and can be worn out by the action of the Force in time. It is a question of the Force, Peace, Light entering into the body and giving it the sense of not being only a body but the receptacle of a higher consciousness.

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It is indeed the body consciousness that is still offering difficulties — but when the restlessness and confusion come, you must immediately offer it up and call for the opening of the part that resists. In this way it is possible to establish a condition in which as soon as the difficulty is there, the counteracting Force also comes. Then no long continued difficulty will be possible.

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The flesh has a consciousness as well as the mind — all the consciousness is connected together so if the mind is freed, there is no reason why there should not be an effect on the physical also.

The Body

Man is not a body alone — the body is only a small part of his being.

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One should not attach too much importance to the life of the body. The body is only an incident in the progress of the soul. Evolution of the soul is the objective of Karmic existence. When one has realised the soul, knowledge and enlightenment come and all the problems are solved. But before that, one should try to get peace, calm and light.
The body is always the most difficult part of the being because of its obscurity much more than of any bad will in it. But it could respond more and more as the Light grows.

* The body itself must become more conscious so that it will make the right movements and avoid the wrong ones.

I mean [by “the coming of consciousness into the body”] the higher consciousness. The consciousness that is always there in the body is tamasic and obscure and the greater part of it is subconscious. If it opens then there will be an increasing union with the higher consciousness and it will be able to share the experiences and the developments in the mind and vital.

* It depends on whether it [the body] is in tune with the vital or not. The nature of the body is tamasic—it is the vital which makes it move and uses it as an instrument: If the vital is enlightened then the Divine Force can act through it on the body.

* It [how the body receives the higher dynamism] depends on the condition of the body or rather of the physical and the most material consciousness. In one condition it is tamasic, inert, unopen and cannot bear or cannot receive or cannot contain the force; in another rajas predominates and tries to seize on the dynamism, but wastes and spills and loses it; in another there is receptivity, harmony, balance and the result is a harmonious action without strain or effort.

* I suppose the heat and thirst may be due to some struggle in the body, not altogether physical. I think it must be some contrary pressure on the body which the body is trying to throw off. I do not consider your condition of dissatisfaction and difficulties as
inner but as outer. It is an outer mass of old movements pressing on the physical consciousness and trying to keep its place by memory and recurrent habit. The physical consciousness has to push it out more and more till it is no longer felt as within it, but seen for what it really is, an outer Nature of the ignorance which had usurped the consciousness and prevented the psychic being from manifesting.

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The physical troubles that belong to the constitution of the body are usually the last things to disappear. When the true consciousness fixes itself in the body as elsewhere, then they can be reduced and dispelled by the same process as that which removes the wrong habits of the mind and vital.

Care for the Body

No need to despise the physical being — it is part of the intended manifestation.

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The body is meant to be an instrument of the Divine and a means of sadhana and a temple for the Mother's presence. It has to be purified, not despised and cast away — without it there can be no manifestation here.

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To care too much for the body is bad in sadhana, but to neglect it or overstrain it is also bad — for it is a necessary instrument and must be kept in good condition.

Weakness of the Body

You must keep your body in good condition. It is the necessary instrument and channel and if it gets weak or unfit, that hampers the expression or dynamism of the mind and the spirit.

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The weakness of the body has to be cured, not disregarded. It can only be cured by bringing in strength from above, not by merely forcing the body.

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If your body is aching after the work, it may be that you are doing too much for your physical strength and straining the body. When you work, the Force comes down in you, takes the form of vital energy and supports your body so that it does not at the time feel the strain; but when you stop, the body goes back to its normal condition and feels the effects—it has not yet been sufficiently opened to keep the Force. You must see whether this effect (of pain) continues; if it passes away, it is all right; otherwise you must take care and not overstrain yourself by doing too much.

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Overstraining in work only increases the inertia—the mental and vital will may force the body, but the body feels more and more strained and finally asserts itself. It is only if the body itself feels a will and force to work that one can do that.

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The first rule for overcoming weakness of the body is—there must be sufficient sleep and rest, not in excess but not too little. The body must be trained to work, but not strained beyond its utmost capacity.

The outer means without the inner is not effective. Up to a certain point by a progressive training the body may be made more capable of work. But the important thing is to bring down the force for work and the rasa of work in the body. The body will then do what is asked of it without grudging or feeling fatigue.

Even so, even when the force and rasa are there, one must keep one’s sense of measure.

Work is a means of self-dedication to the Divine, but it must be done with the necessary inner consciousness in which
A lazy body is certainly not a proper instrument for Yoga, it must stop being lazy. But a fatigued and unwilling body also cannot receive properly or be a good instrument. The proper thing is to avoid either extreme.

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A strong mind and body and life-force are needed in the sadhana. Especially steps should be taken to throw out tamas and bring strength and force into the frame of the nature.

Forgetfulness of the Body

It [living in the mind or the vital] is more, I think, forgetting the body than non-identification with it. In an intense mentalisation or an intense vital activity the body takes a second place and becomes more outward and the same may happen to a certain extent more constantly to a man who lives in his mind or his vital and is identified more closely with that. But still it is the mental in the body, the vital in the body. There is no release, no getting entirely separate as in the spiritual liberation.

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Yes, it is not possible for the human mind to live entirely in itself to such a degree as to ignore the body altogether — a real or complete liberation or non-identification is not possible without the spiritual release. All that is possible to the mind is a constant absorption in itself and an ignoring or forgetfulness as much as possible of the body. That one finds often in people who live a retired mental life (scholars, thinkers etc.) without the need to trouble themselves about their livelihood, family etc.

The Physical and the Mind

The physical consciousness has its own reactions — separate from those of the mind.
No, it is not necessary to lose the mental control; it is best to replace it gradually by the psychic or spiritual. But it happens to many that they lose it before the other is ready or while it is still imperfect and then the Nature-forces act in the physical consciousness which is sometimes held by the descending Peace or Power from above, sometimes by the ordinary Nature-forces. This alternation happens at one stage at least to almost everybody until the higher state prevails.

This over-sensitive brooding on past blows to the vital is an unhealthy sensitiveness. What is past ought not to have a hold like that but be allowed to fade out.

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Probably in ’33 you were doing more tapasya and putting a strong control on yourself? At any rate that was the state at one time. Afterwards when you came down from the mental-vital level, you let yourself go for a time, removing much of the control, hence now you find a difficulty in reestablishing it,— due to the habit of automatic repetition which is a characteristic of the physical nature. You have now to get the control in a different way by the reestablishment of the peace and building the higher consciousness upon it, the spiritual control replacing that of mental tapasya.

The Physical and the Vital

The physical depends on the vital at every step — it could not do anything without the help of the vital — so it is quite natural that it should receive its suggestions.

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The physical world is only a last field in which not only the physical forces but those of other worlds also throw themselves for realisation. Whatever happens here has already been prepared or foreshadowed in the vital; it does not happen exactly as represented in the vital, but with a change suitable for the material world.
The Physical and the Psychic

All that is very good — it is the psychic condition that is increasing. The peace and spontaneous knowledge are in the psychic being and from there they spread to mind and vital and physical. It is in the outer physical consciousness that the difficulty still tries to persist and brings the restlessness sometimes into the physical mind, sometimes into the nerves, sometimes in the shape of bodily trouble into the body. But all these things can and must go. Even the illnesses can go entirely with the growth of peace and power in the nerves and physical cells — stomach pains, weakness of the eyes and everything else.

The narrowness etc. of which you complain are normal to the physical nature. It is the same thing acting in a different way which makes X rebellious to advice and full of irritation and bad temper when her mistakes are shown to her. The physical nature of almost everybody is like that, intolerant, easily irritated, lacking in patience when dealing with others. But this physical nature can be replaced and changed by the psychic nature and you have had the experience of what this psychic nature is and how it acts. You know therefore what change has to come in you and you know also that this new nature is already there in you preparing to come out. Have the faith therefore that it is sure to come — and when the physical comes and covers with the old movements try to remember that and remind the physical mind that it is only by this change in yourself and all that things can change. What is needed now is all should make this psychic change their main object, each for himself. If some develop it, then it will spread more rapidly among the rest. It is so only that the present state of the physical consciousness in the Asram full of ego and strife can become what it should be.

What has happened is that the psychic in you which had formerly been constantly in action in the mind and vital was for a
time clouded or covered over by the ignorance of the physical consciousness. It is the psychic that connected you with the Mother and turned all the movements of your being towards her or drew them from her or made them united with and dependent on her. It had so done with all your mental and vital being and its movements and it had guarded you against all wrong mental and vital suggestions and attacks, showing you what was true and what was false. Now it is this psychic being which has manifested again in your physical consciousness also. You have only to live in that and your whole being will be turned towards the Mother, remain in union with her and be protected from doubt and error and false suggestion — and you can once more progress as you did before towards the full realisation of the sadhana.

* The habit of return of these feelings belongs to the physical consciousness and in his physical consciousness the human being is always weak and unable to get rid of or resist its habitual movements. There are three things that help him to do so (apart from his mental will which is not always strong enough to do it). There is first the psychic being; for a few days your psychic was extremely active and pushing these movements away whenever they tried to come or throwing them out soon when they got in. This activity of the psychic will return and eventually come down into the physical consciousness itself; then there will be very little difficulty. The second is the inner consciousness always awake. At present that is difficult, because to keep the inner consciousness awake at all times can only come by a deepening of yourself so that the veil between the outer and inner which lifts only in concentration may cease to exist even when one is in the ordinary unconcentrated condition. It is for this deepening that the strong tendency to go inside comes upon you. Lastly, the Mother’s force always there and receiving also a response at once from the physical consciousness. These three things together can do anything. It takes time to make them all three constantly active together, but that is sure to come and
with them these inner difficulties will disappear.

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You cannot so long as you have a body live without the physical consciousness, but you can live more centrally in the psychic and other parts and by them transform the physical.

**The Ascent of the Being**

The being is here on the physical plane although in touch with the mental and vital. The being that is the individual consciousness has to ascend and become conscious of all the planes (vital, mental and those above the mental) until it reaches the Divine Oneness which is above all the planes and from which they emerge.