Chapter One

The Transformation of the Physical

The Need to Transform the Physical

The law of the physical is inertia, dullness, obstruction to whatever is new or not yet established.

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Apart from the individual difficulty there is a general difficulty in the physical earth-nature. Physical nature is slow and inert and unwilling to change; its tendency is to be still and take long periods of time for a little progress. It is very difficult for even the strongest mental or vital or even psychic will to overcome this inertia. It is only by bringing down constantly the consciousness and force and light from above that it can be done. Therefore there must be a constant will and aspiration for that and for the change and it must be a steady and patient will not tired out even by the utmost resistance of the physical nature.

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It is because your consciousness in the course of the sadhana has come into contact with the lower physical nature and sees it as it is in itself when it is not kept down or controlled either by the mind, the psychic or the spiritual force. This nature is in itself full of low and obscure desires, it is the most animal part of the human being. One has to come into contact with it so as to know what is there and transform it. Most sadhaks of the old type are satisfied with rising into the spiritual or psychic realms and leave this part to itself — but by that it remains unchanged, even if mostly quiescent, and no complete transformation is possible. You have only to remain quiet and undisturbed and let the higher Force work to change this obscure physical nature.

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There is nothing to be discouraged about. The fact is that after being so long in the mental and vital plane you have become aware of the physical consciousness, and the physical consciousness in everybody is like that. It is inert, conservative, does not want to move, to change—it clings to its habits (what people call their character) or its habits (habitual movements) cling to it and repeat themselves like clockwork in a persistent mechanical way. When you have cleared your vital somewhat, things go down and stick there. You see, if you have become self-conscious, you put pressure, perhaps, but the physical responds very slowly, hardly at first seems to move at all. The remedy? Aspiration steady and unchanging, patient work, waking the psychic in the physical, calling down the light and force into these obscure parts. The light brings the consciousness of what is there; the force has to follow and work on them till they change or disappear.

What you have been doing is to penetrate more into the physical consciousness where the peace and light of the higher consciousness have to be brought down. This often brings at first some relaxation of the intensity of experience, dispersion or recurrence of old movements which had been pushed out from the other levels, but one must not be discouraged by that. The remedy is to be more insistent on bringing down the higher forces (peace etc.) into this field.

This negation [of deeper peace etc.] is the very nature of the physical resistance and the physical resistance is the whole base of the denial of the Divine in the world. All in the physical is persistent, obstinate, with a massive force of negation and inertia—if it were not so, sadhana would be extremely cursory. You have to face this character of the physical resistance and conquer it however often it may rise. It is the price of the transformation of the earth-consciousness.
The Transformation of the Physical

It is the nature of the physical mind to be obstinate. Physical nature exists by constant repetition of the same thing — only a constant presentation of different forms of itself. This obstinate recurrence is therefore part of its nature when it is in activity; otherwise it remains in a dull inertia. When therefore we want to get rid of the old movements of physical nature, they resist by this kind of obstinate recurrence. One has to be very persistent in rejection to get rid of it.

There are two aspects of physical Nature as of all Nature — the individual and the universal. All things come into one from the universal Nature — but the individual physical keeps some of them and rejects others, and to those it keeps it gives a personal form. So these things can be said to be both inside it and coming outside from within or created by it because it gives a special form and also outside and coming in from outside. But when one wants to get rid of them, one first throws out all that is within into the surrounding Nature — from there the universal Nature tries to bring them back or bring in new and similar things of its own to replace them. One has then constantly to reject this invasion. By constant rejection, the force of recurrence finally dwindles and the individual becomes free and able to bring the higher consciousness and its movements into the physical being.

* The difference [between the physical consciousness of those who are doing sadhana and those who are not] lies in the fact that those who are doing sadhana live on the physical plane in order to transform it — under the pressure of a Force created by the sadhana which urges towards that and must continue till it is achieved. Those who do not do sadhana live on the physical plane not to transform it but to continue it as it is — there is no such Force or pressure or necessity or urge. Those who are not sadhaks but have their minds turned to the higher consciousness are preparing for sadhana and will one day do it — whatever that sadhana may be.

The prevalence of the physical difficulties when one comes
down into the physical is the same phenomenon as the prevalence of the vital difficulties when one is on the vital plane. Transformation implies facing the difficulties and changing or overcoming what arises in each part of the being so that that part may respond to what is higher, but the full change of the whole can only come by the ascent to the Above and the descent from Above. The first step of that (usually though not always) is the realisation of the Self above and the full descent of the higher peace into all the being down to the most physical.

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For your sadhana it is necessary first to establish the entire openness of the physical being and stabilise in it the descent of calm, strength, purity and joy with the feeling of the presence and working of the Mother’s Force in you. It is only on that assured basis that one can become an entirely effective instrument for the work. Once that is done, there is still the dynamic transformation of the instrumental being to achieve and that depends on a descent of a higher and higher power of consciousness into the mind, vital and body — by “higher” being meant nearer and nearer to the supramental Light and Force. But that can only be done on the basis of which I have spoken and with the psychic being constantly in front and acting as an intermediary between the instrumental mind, vital and body and these higher planes of Being. So this basic stabilisation must first be completed.

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It [purification of the physical nature] is rather a necessity of the work itself for the supramental descent. The effect in a particular person will still depend on the person himself though there will be much greater and quicker possibilities than now.

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It is not possible to bring down the whole power or experience of a higher plane into the physical consciousness; it is only an influence that comes down to help in the transformation. When
the transformation has taken place, the physical will be more capable.

**Coming Down into the Physical**

I have said that *the sadhana* has come down into direct contact with the external physical nature which is always full of the lower movements and when that happens you see them as they are when they are not under the control of the mind and psychic. Everybody has to come into this direct contact — otherwise there can be no transformation of this part of the being.

*It is always the effect of the physical consciousness being uppermost (so long as it is not entirely changed) that one feels like this — like an ordinary man or worse, altogether in the outer consciousness, the inner consciousness veiled, the action of Yoga power apparently suspended. This happens in the earlier stages also, but it is not quite complete usually then because something of the mind and vital is active in the physical still or, even if the interruption of sadhana is complete, it does not last long and so one does not so much notice it. But when from the mental and vital stage of the Yoga one comes down into the physical, this condition which is native to the physical consciousness fully manifests and is persistent for long periods. It happens because one has to come down and deal with this part directly by entering into it, — for if that is not done, there can be no complete change of the nature. What has to be done is to understand that it is a stage and to persist in the faith that it will be overcome. If this is done, then it will be easier for the Force, working behind the veil at first, then in front to bring out the Yoga consciousness into this outer physical shell and make it luminous and responsive. If one keeps steadily the faith and quietude, then this can be more quickly done — if the faith gets eclipsed or the quietude disturbed by the long difficulty, then it takes longer but even then it will be done; for, though not felt, the Force is there at
work. It can only be prevented if one breaks away or throws up
the sadhana, because one becomes too impatient of the difficulty
to go through with it. That is the one thing that should never be
done.

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After receiving your account of your present condition which I
understand perfectly well, my advice to you remains the same,
to stick on and still stick on persistently until the dawn comes,
which it surely will if you resist the temptation to run away into
some outer darkness which it would have much more difficulty
in reaching. The details you give do not at all convince me that
X was right in thinking that your sadhana was not at all in the
line of my Yoga or that you are right in concluding that you are
not meant for this line. On the contrary, these are things which
come almost inevitably in one degree or another at a certain
critical stage through which almost everyone has to pass and
which usually lasts for an uncomfortably long time but which
need not be at all conclusive or definitive. Usually, if one persists,
it is the period of darkest night before the dawn which comes to
every or almost every spiritual aspirant. It is due to a plunge one
has to take into the sheer physical consciousness unsupported by
any true mental light or by any vital joy in life, for these usually
withdraw behind the veil, though they are not, as they seem to
be, permanently lost. It is a period when doubt, denial, dryness,
grey ness and all kindred things come up with a great force and
often reign completely for a time. It is after this stage has been
successfully crossed that the true light begins to come, the light
which is not of the mind but of the spirit. The spiritual light
no doubt comes to some to a certain extent, and to a few to a
considerable extent, in the earlier stages, though that is not the
case with all — for some have to wait till they can clear out the
obstructing stuff in the mind, vital and physical consciousness,
and until then they get only a touch now and then. But even
at the best this earlier spiritual light is never complete until
the darkness of the physical consciousness has been faced and
overcome. It is not by one’s own fault that one falls into this
state, it can come when one is trying one’s best to advance. It
does not really indicate any radical disability in the nature but
certainly it is a hard ordeal and one has to stick very firmly to
pass through it. It is difficult to explain these things because
the psychological necessity is difficult for the ordinary human
reason to understand or to accept. I will try to have a shot at
it, but it may take some days.¹ Meanwhile, as you have asked
what is my advice I send you this brief answer.

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The greater difficulty [in freeing oneself from vital desire] is
because the sadhana is now taking place directly on the physical
plane, where the force of a habit or habitual movement once
formed is very great. When the sadhana is taking place on the
mental or vital plane, it is more easy to control or change, be-
cause the mind and vital are more plastic than the physical.
But on the other hand if something is definitely gained on the
physical plane, there is a more lasting and complete fulfilment
than when it is on the mental or vital alone.

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The resistance is becoming more of a physical character. That
is to be expected, for it is the ordinary course that it is pushed
down from the vital into the physical — moreover in the general
sadhana now it is in the material and subconscious that the
struggle is mainly going on. The part above the neck, like the
neck itself, belongs to the externalising mind or physical mental.
Your difficulties are likely to cease only when you bring down
the peace and wideness into the whole body or at any rate feel its
effects there. If the whole mind admits the higher consciousness,
that will be a definite step towards this.

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In dealing with the physical and subconscious the working is
always slower than when it acts on the mind and vital because

¹ No subsequent letter of explanation has been found. — Ed.
the resistance of physical stuff is always heavier and less intelli-
gent and adaptable; but as a compensation the work done in
the being by this slower movement is in the end more complete,
solid and durable.

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You feel as you do only because you are largely identified with
the part that has to undergo change and so you feel the difficulty,
even the impossibility of changing. But although the difficulty
is there, the impossibility does not exist. Even this identification
may be helpful, for so the change can be radical by a direct action
in the part itself, instead of an indirect influence upon it through
the mind or higher vital. Rest and restore your physical forces,
open so that the Mother’s Force may fully work on you, the
trouble pass away and a new and stronger movement commence.

The Bringing of Realisation into the Physical

Yes, certainly, that is what I am insisting on — the bringing of
realisation into this inert physical part which has made itself
prominent. When any part of the being becomes prominent
like this showing all its defects and limitations — here inertia
or incapacity (apravrātī), obscurity or forgetfulness (aprakāśa),
it is in order to get set right, — it has come up for a first or
preliminary transformation. Peace and light in the mind, love
and sympathy in the heart, calm and power in the vital, a settled
receptivity and response (prakāśa, pravrātī) in the physical are
the necessary change.

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When I explained [in the preceding letter] about the physical
inertia, I meant that it was this which had been preventing the
elimination of the old movements all along and enabled them to
return when they had been pushed out — for it is in the material
half-conscious or subconscient that there is the bedrock of the
resistance. When this comes up and shows itself in its separate
existence, not sustained by the mind and vital, acting by the
power of its own inertia and not covered by the sanction of the
mind or the vital, only repeating the old movements by force of old habit — it is then possible to meet the resistance at its root instead of cutting off the flowers and fruits and branches when they appear.

It is precisely this lothness to do anything that must be got rid of — for it is simply an acquiescence in the force of the inertia. If you can do nothing else, the old methods of violence to yourself etc. will obviously be unfruitful — you should call on the Divine Peace and Force to descend and deal with it and open yourself to the action. If this obstructing physical is made to admit and respond to that, then the key of the solution will be there.

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The realisation in the mind of the One brings or ought to bring a certain freedom in the mind, but it is possible for the vital and the body under its impulse to go on having the ordinary movements — for they depend only partially on the mind for their action. They can even carry it away, haranti prasabhaṁ manah, or they can act in spite of the mind’s reasoning and disapprobation. “I see the better and approve it, I follow the worse” as the Roman poet puts it — in the language of the Gita, anicchamapi balād iva niyojitah. It is necessary therefore that the realisation with its peace and force of purity should come down concretely into the vital and physical itself so that when the vital movements try to rise they are met by it and unable to remain because of its automatic pressure.

The Physical Sadhana

The physical sadhana is to bring down the higher light and power and peace and Ananda into the body consciousness, to get rid of the inertia of the physical, the doubts, limitations, external tendency of the physical mind, the defective energies of the vital physical (nerves) and bring in instead the true consciousness there so that the physical may be a perfect instrument for the Divine Will. The food and care for the body is only to get it into
good condition, afterwards it would not be necessary to attend to such things.

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I understand that you have arrived at a prolonged lull or period of emptiness in your sadhana. This often happens especially when one is thrown out into the physical and external consciousness. The nervous and physical parts then become prominent and seem to become the standard of the being with that disappearance of the Yoga consciousness and the sensitiveness to small and outward things which you describe. A stage like this however may very well be an interval before a fresh progress. What you have to do is to insist on making time for meditation — at any time of the day when you are least likely to be disturbed — and through the meditation getting back the touch. There may be some difficulty because the physical consciousness is uppermost, but a persistent aspiration will bring it back. When once you again feel the connection reestablished between the inner being and the outer, call down the peace and light and power into the latter so as to build up a basis for a constant consciousness in the most external mind and being which will accompany you in work and action as much as in meditation and solitude.

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Don’t get disturbed. Remain quiet and let the Force work.

It is the most physical consciousness of which you have become aware; it is like that in almost everyone: when one gets fully or exclusively into it, one feels it to be like that of an animal, either obscure and restless or inert and stupid and in either condition not open to the Divine. It is only by bringing the Force and higher consciousness into it that it can fundamentally alter. When these things show themselves, do not be upset by their emergence, but understand that they are there to be changed.

Here as elsewhere, quiet is the first thing needed, to keep the consciousness quiet, not allow it to get agitated and in turmoil.
Then in the quiet to call for the Force to clear up all this obscurity and change it.

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It is of course the physical consciousness that always came in with this ignorance, and the physical consciousness is stupid and obscure — even in men whose thinking minds are wise or at least intelligent. It is only by the Light from above that it can be illumined. It is always in the Peace and Power, which bring more and more that light, that you must take refuge.

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“At the mercy of the external sounds and external bodily sensations”, “no control to drop the ordinary consciousness at will”, “the whole tendency of the being away from Yoga” — all that is unmistakably applicable to the physical mind and the physical consciousness when they isolate themselves, as it were, and take up the whole front, pushing the rest into the background. When a part of the being is brought forward to be worked upon for change, this kind of all-occupying emergence, the dominant activity of that part as if it alone existed, very usually happens — and unfortunately it is always what has to be changed, the undesirable conditions, the difficulties of that part which rise first and obstinately hold the field and recur. In the physical it is inertia, obscurity, inability that come up and the obstinacy of these things. The only thing to do in this unpleasant phase is to be more obstinate than the physical inertia and to persist in a fixed endeavour — steady persistency without any restless struggle — to get a wide and permanent opening made even in this solid rock of obstruction.

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It is just in the physical consciousness that it is difficult to keep the fire burning — the physical can easily follow a constant routine, but not easily maintain a constant living endeavour. Nevertheless it can after a time be made ready to do so. All help will be given you.
You have entirely put yourself out in the external physical consciousness which is refusing to open itself on the plea of inability and by saying that all spiritual and inner things are unreal, only what is outward is real. That is what it always does, if you listen to it. But the plea of inability is untrue — and the other is also untrue. The inner, the spiritual, is perfectly true and real to you when you open yourself to it — as real as the physical or outward.

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When you get the touch, concentrate on opening to it; do not accept the opposite suggestions of the physical consciousness. The whole difficulty comes from your identifying yourself with your external, physical consciousness which is only a small outward part of your self. You have to learn to live in the rest of your being, more real, more inward which is open to the Truth; you will then feel your physical consciousness as something external which can be worked upon through the true consciousness and changed by the Force.

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It is very good that all should have gone like that and the true consciousness affirmed its control in the physical. These things are indeed attacks intended to prevent the control being established in the physical being as it was in the inner parts. Wherever the physical consciousness opens, the Force can sweep out all that could trouble. Sometimes it takes a little time to overcome the resistance, but finally all disappears before it.

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Persevere quietly and let nothing discourage you. If the quietness and cheerfulness are not constant yet, that is to be expected; it is always like that at first when there is the working in the physical consciousness and its obstructions. If you persevere, they will become more and more frequent and last for a longer time, until you have a basis of peace and happiness and whatever disturbances come on the surface will no longer be able to penetrate
or shake this basis or even cover it over except perhaps for a moment.

The constant changing of the mood is also common enough because the physical vital is being worked upon at the same time and this changeability is a character of the physical-vital nature. Let not that discourage you, — as soon as the basis is more fixed this will diminish and the vital become more settled and even.

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The physical consciousness has to become balanced, filled with the light and force from above, conscious and responsive. That cannot be done in a day — so go on steadily and dismiss both discouragement and impatience.

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It [the use of violence to change the physical] was done by some people, but I don’t believe in its usefulness. No doubt the physical is an obstinate obstacle, but it must be enlightened, persuaded, pressed even to change, but not oppressed or violently driven. People use violence with the mind, vital, body because they are in a hurry, but my own observation has always been that it leads to more reactions and hindrances and not to a genuinely sound advance.