Chapter Two

Steps towards Overcoming Difficulties

Ways of Dealing with Difficulties

This sadhana is a Yoga of transformation of the human consciousness into the divine consciousness. The sadhaks who come here are human beings with all the human weaknesses, but with a possibility of the transformation and an aspiration for it. For getting rid of their human weaknesses — such as lust, greed, vanity, pride, falsehood — they must become conscious of them, must always reject them, must call in the Mother’s presence, the divine Consciousness, the divine Force to help them in rejecting their defects and to transform them. If they do that, then all that is necessary for the change will be done.

* When the old movements or suggestions or voices come, —
  (1) Reject them always — do not listen, take no interest.
  (2) If they persist, do not believe what they say or allow them to influence you — know that they are voices or movements of a false, confused and inferior consciousness. You have seen what the real Truth is and how great it is.
  (3) Concentrate on something else, as firmly as possible.
  (4) Aspire steadily for contact with the Mother’s Light and Force.

* This is the right attitude, to have faith and not mind the difficulties. Difficulties — and serious ones — there cannot fail to be in the path of Yoga, because it is not easy to change all at once the ignorant human consciousness and make it a spiritual consciousness open to the Divine. But with faith one need not
mind the difficulties; the Divine Force is there and will overcome them.

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Whatever is difficult can indeed be made easy by truth in the heart and sincerity and faith in the endeavour, even what is impossible can become possible. It is often found too that after some amount of practice and faithful endeavour, there comes an intervention from within and what might have taken long is decisively and quickly done.

Your prayer will surely be answered, for it is to that you are moving.

Facing Circumstances

You should not be so dependent on outward things; it is this attitude that makes you give so excessive an importance to circumstances. I do not say that circumstances cannot help or hinder — but they are circumstances, not the fundamental thing which is in ourselves, and their help or their hindrance ought not to be of primary importance. In Yoga, as in every great or serious human effort, there is always bound to be an abundance of adverse interventions and unfavourable circumstances which have to be overcome. To give them too great an importance increases their importance and their power to multiply themselves, gives them, as it were, confidence in themselves and the habit of coming. To face them with equanimity — if one cannot manage a cheerful persistence against them of confident and resolute will — diminishes on the contrary their importance and effect and in the end, though not at once, gets rid of their persistence and recurrence. It is therefore a principle in Yoga to recognise the determining power of what is within us — for that is the deeper truth — to set that right and establish the inward strength as against the power of outward circumstances. The strength is there — even in the weakest; one has to find it, to unveil it and to keep it in front throughout the journey and the battle.

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It was inevitable that there should be difficulties once your husband has turned back from his favourable attitude. But as we told you the only way to face and overcome them is to remain firm with a confidence in the Divine that beyond all difficulties lies the realisation and to proceed either boldly or silently on your way in spite of all that people may do or say and in spite of all troubles and trials that may come in the course of the life or in the course of the sadhana. If one keeps this position the difficulties will either diminish or disappear or if for any reason they become acute for a while, will collapse after a time.

You are not at any time out of our minds. We are there with you in your difficulties and troubles — remain calm and assured and you will feel the inner help. Do not yield to depression for depression only gives the opposition and difficulties a hold upon you; call quietly and persistently for strength and the strength will come.

* That is the inconvenience of going away from a difficulty, — it runs after one, — or rather one carries it with oneself, for the difficulty is truly inside, not outside. Outside circumstances only give it the occasion to manifest itself and so long as the inner difficulty is not conquered, the circumstances will always crop up one way or another.

* As for his difficulties and troubles, there is little hope of his overcoming them if he does not realise that they come from within him and not from outside. It is the weakness of his vital nature, the inefficient helplessness of his nervous being always weeping and complaining and lamenting instead of facing life and overcoming its difficulties, it is the sentimental lachrymose attitude it takes that keeps his troubles unsolved and alive. This is a temperament which the gods will not help because they know that help is useless, for it will either not be received or will be spilled and wasted; and all that is rajasic and Asuric in the world despises and tramples upon this kind of nature. If he had
learned a calm strength and quiet courage without weakness and without fuss and violence, founded on confidence in the help he could always have received from here and on openness to the Mother's force, things would have been favourably settled by this time. But he cannot take advantage of any help given him because his vital nature cherishes its weakness and is always indulging and rhetorically expressing it instead of throwing it away with contempt as a thing unworthy of manhood and unfit for a sadhaka. It is only if he so rejects it that he can receive strength from us and stand in life or progress in the sadhana.

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It is also well that you have reconciled yourself with the place [Sylhet, Bengal] and have the feeling of strength to deal with the situation there. A certain power of adaptation and harmonisation of the surroundings is necessary — you had it very strongly and were therefore successful wherever you went. The recoil from Sylhet made you nervous and depressed and spoiled for a time the action of this power in you. Now with your new attitude I hope it will return and bring the solution of all your difficulties.

We send you our blessings. Keep yourself always open to the Power from above and to our help from here and remain firm and strong against all difficulties that may yet remain either in the outer life or the sadhana. On these conditions victory is always sure.

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When the soul is meant to go forward and there is an external weakness like that, circumstances do come like that to help the external being against itself — which means that there must be a truly sincere aspiration behind; otherwise it does not happen.

**Recognising One's Weaknesses**

To recognise, as you have done, a fault in the nature does not indeed remove it altogether at once, but it is a great step towards
It does not remove it at once because of the force of habit in the nature, but still to be conscious and have the will to remove it helps to weaken its force and assists the Mother’s working very greatly.

To recognise one’s weaknesses and false movements and draw back from them is the way towards liberation.

Not to judge anyone but oneself until one can see things from a calm mind and a calm vital is an excellent rule. Also, do not allow your mind to form hasty impressions on the strength of some outward appearance, nor your vital to act upon them.

There is a place in the inner being where one can always remain calm and from there look with poise and judgment on the perturbations of the surface consciousness and act upon it to change it. If you can learn to live in that calm of the inner being, you will have found your stable basis.

If the imperfection is there, one has to see it. The thing to be done is to live in the true self and from there see the imperfection and change it.

You must remain always aware of the self and the obscure nature must not be felt as the self but as an instrument which has to be put into tune with the self.

You have to be conscious of the wrong movements, but not preoccupied with them only.

The defects should be noticed and rejected, but the concentration should be positive — on what you are to be, i.e., on the development of the new consciousness rather than on this negative side.
It is necessary to observe and know the wrong movements in you; for they are the source of your trouble and have to be persistently rejected if you are to be free.

But do not be always thinking of your defects and wrong movements. Concentrate more upon what you are to be, on the ideal, with the faith that, since it is the goal before you, it must and will come.

To be always observing faults and wrong movements brings depression and discourages the faith. Turn your eyes more to the coming Light and less to any immediate darkness. Faith, cheerfulness, confidence in the ultimate victory are the things that help,—they make the progress easier and swifter.

Make more of the good experiences that come to you; one experience of the kind is more important than the lapses and failures. When it ceases, do not repine or allow yourself to be discouraged, but be quiet within and aspire for its renewal in a stronger form leading to still deeper and fuller experience.

Aspire always, but with more quietude, opening yourself to the Divine simply and wholly.

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While the recognition of the Divine Power and the attunement of one’s own nature to it cannot be done without the recognition of the imperfections in that nature, yet it is a wrong attitude to put too much stress either on them or on the difficulties they create, or to distrust the Divine working because of the difficulties one experiences, or to lay too continual an emphasis on the dark side of things. To do this increases the force of the difficulties, gives a greater right of continuance to the imperfections. I do not insist on a Couéistic optimism — although excessive optimism is more helpful than excessive pessimism; that (Couéism) tends to cover up difficulties and there is besides always a measure to be observed in things. But there is no danger of your covering them up and deluding yourself with too bright an outlook, quite the contrary; you always lay stress too much on the shadows and by so doing thicken them and obstruct your outlets of escape into the Light. Faith, more faith! Faith in your possibilities, faith in
the Power that is at work behind the veil, faith in the work that
is to be done and the offered guidance.

There cannot be any high endeavour, least of all in the spir-
itual field, which does not raise or encounter grave obstacles
of a very persistent character. These are both internal and ex-
ternal, and, although in the large they are fundamentally the
same for all, there may be a great difference in the distribution
of their stress or the outward form they take. But the one real
difficulty is the attunement of the nature with the working of
the Divine Light and Power. Get that solved and the others will
either disappear or take a subordinate place; and even with
those difficulties that are of a more general character, more
lasting because they are inherent in the work of transforma-
tion, they will not weigh so heavily because the sense of the
supporting Force and a greater power to follow its movement
will be there.

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Of course consciousness grows as the opening increases and
one result of consciousness is to be able to see in oneself—
but not to see the weaknesses only, to see the whole play of
forces. Only in the right consciousness one does not regard the
weaknesses even in a too personal way so as to get discouraged.
One has to see them as the play of nature, mental nature, vital
nature, physical nature, common to all human beings — to see
them so and remain calm and detached, calling in the Mother’s
force and light for transformation of this defective play into the
true nature — not getting impatient if it is not done at once,
but going on steadily and giving time for the change. The full
change indeed cannot come till all is ready for the descent of
a greater, calmer, larger consciousness from above and that is
only possible when the ordinary consciousness has been made
thoroughly ready for it.

The intense love and bhakti does not come at once. It comes
as the power of the psychic grows more and more in the being.
But to aspire for it is right and the sincere aspiration is sure to
fulfil itself. Always seek to progress in quietude, happiness and
confidence, that is the most helpful attitude. Do not listen to contrary suggestions from outside.

Stating One’s Difficulties

There is no reason why you should stop writing letters — it is only one kind of letter that is in question and that is not a very good means of contact; you yourself felt the reaction was not favourable. I asked you to write because your need of unburdening the perilous matter in you was very great at the time and, although it did not relieve you at once, it kept me exactly informed of the turns of the fight and helped me to put a certain pressure on the attacking forces at a critical moment. But I do not believe any of these necessities now exists. It is rather a discouragement from within yourself of the source of these movements that is now the need; but putting them into words would tend, as I have said, to give them more body and substance.

It is an undoubted fact proved by hundreds of instances that for many the exact statement of their difficulties to us is the best and often, though not always, an immediate, even an instantaneous means of release. This has often been seen by sadhaks not only here, but far away, and not only for inner difficulties, but for illness and outer pressure of unfavourable circumstances. But for that a certain attitude is necessary — either a strong faith in the mind and vital or a habit of reception and response in the inner being. Where this habit has been established, I have seen it to be almost unfailingly effective, even when the faith was uncertain or the outer expression in the mind vague, ignorant or in its form mistaken or inaccurate. Moreover, this method succeeds most when the writer can write as a witness of his own movements and state them with an exact and almost impartial precision as a phenomenon of his nature or the movement of a force affecting him from which he seeks release. On the other hand if in writing his vital gets seized by the thing he is writing of, and takes up the pen for him, — expressing and often supporting doubt, revolt, depression, despair, it becomes a very different
matter. Even here sometimes the expression acts as a purge; but also the statement of the condition may lend energy to the attack at least for the moment and may seem to enhance and prolong it, exhausting it by its own violence perhaps for the time and so bringing in the end a relief, but at a heavy cost of upheaval and turmoil — and at the risk of the recurring decimal movement, because the release has come by temporary exhaustion of the attacking force, not by rejection and purification through the intervention of the Divine Force with the unquestioning assent and support of the sadhak. There has been a confused fight, an intervention in a hurly-burly, not a clear alignment of forces — and the intervention of the helping force is not felt in the confusion and the whirl. This is what used to happen in your crises; the vital in you was deeply affected and began supporting and expressing the reasonings of the attacking force — in place of a clear observation and expression of the difficulty by the vigilant mind laying the state of things in the Light for the higher Light and Force to act upon it, there was a vehement statement of the case for the Opposition. Many sadhaks (even “advanced”) had made a habit of this kind of expression of their difficulties and some still do it; they cannot even yet understand that it is not the way. At one time it was a sort of gospel in the Asram that this was the thing to be done, — I don’t know on what ground, for it was never part of my teaching about the Yoga, — but experience has shown that it does not work; it lands one in the recurring decimal notation, an unending round of struggle. It is quite different from the movement of self-opening that succeeds, (here too not necessarily in a moment, but still sensibly and progressively) and of which those are thinking who insist on everything being opened to the Guru so that the help may be more effectively there.

It is inevitable that doubts and difficulties should arise in so arduous an undertaking as the transformation of the normal nature of man into the spiritual nature, the replacement of his system of externalised values and surface experience into profounder inner values and experience. But the doubts and difficulties cannot be overcome by giving them their full force;
it can be rather done by learning to stand back from them and to refuse to be carried away; then there is a chance of the still small voice from within getting itself heard and pushing out these louder clamorous voices and movements from outside. It is the light from within that you have to make room for; the light of the outer mind is quite insufficient for the discovery of the inner values or to judge the truth of spiritual experience.

Detaching Oneself from Difficulties

Not to be touched or disturbed by the difficulties, to feel separate from them is the first step towards freedom.

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If you cannot do anything else, you must at least remain detached — there is always a part of the being that can remain detached and go on persisting, calling down the Force from above.

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When vital difficulties assail a sadhak, he has not to identify his consciousness with them, but to stand back and remaining quiet in the observing part of his being call down persistently the Divine Force. The help will then come through this steady and silent part of the being.

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Knowledge in the mind is not sufficient by itself to prevent it [obscurity] so long as the whole consciousness is not liberated. What can be done is for the inner being to be always detached and separate so that it does not feel obscured by the obscenity or attacked by the attack and is able to see and deal with it as something of the surface. Your difficulty is that you are constantly identifying yourself with the outer parts and feel yourself submerged by the attacks on them.

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Do not yield to the Tamas; the more you yield, the more it will stick.

For all these things, the way is detachment, to stand back; separate yourself from the desire, observe it, refuse sanction and put a quiet and persistent will for it to cease, calling on the Mother’s force at the same time to dissolve and eliminate the greed, desire, attachment, obscurity and inertia. If sincerely, persistently and rightly done, it will succeed in the end, even though it may take time.

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These things rise because either they are there in the conscious part of the being as habits of the nature or they are there lying concealed and able to rise at any moment or they are suggestions from the general or universal Nature outside to which the personal being makes a response. In any case they rise in order that they may be met and cast out and finally rejected so that they may trouble the nature no longer. The amount of trouble they give depends on the way they are met. The first principle is to detach oneself from them, not to identify, not to admit them any longer as part of one’s real nature but to look on them as things imposed to which one says, “This is not I or mine — this is a thing I reject altogether.” One begins to feel a part of the being inside which is not identified, which remains firm and says, “This may give trouble on the surface, but it shall not touch me.” If this separate being within can be felt, then half the trouble is over — provided there is a will there not only to separate but to get rid of the imperfection from the surface nature also.

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The difficulties of the character persist so long as one yields to them in action when they rise. One has to make a strict rule not to act according to the impulses of anger, ego or whatever the weakness may be that one wants to get rid of, or if one does act in the heat of the moment, not to justify or persist in the action. If one does that, after a time the difficulty abates or is confined
purely to a subjective movement which one can observe, detach oneself from and combat.

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Do not allow yourself to be shaken or troubled by these things [demands made by others]. The one thing to do always is to remain firm in your aspiration to the Divine and to face with equanimity and detachment all difficulties and all oppositions. For those who wish to lead the spiritual life, the Divine must always come first, everything else must be secondary.

Keep yourself detached and look at these things from the calm inner vision of one who is inwardly dedicated to the Divine.

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Well, that is right. The difficulty of the difficulties is self-created, a knot of the Ignorance; when a certain inner perception loosens the knot, the worst of the difficulty is over.

Rejecting Wrong Movements

It is simply a steady and quiet rejection [of the lower forces] that is needed and a quiet and steady calling down of the true Force. All this emotional excitability must be quieted down; it is that that makes the vital open itself to these forces. If it were not so, all the defects of the nature could be quietly observed and quietly mended.

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If one part of you keeps its quietude — the inner being — then the rest can be dealt with. So not to allow the vital to be upset and the disturbance cover up the inner self, that is the most important thing. Keep up the rejection always.

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It would be easier [to get rid of wrong movements] when you bring down a settled peace and equanimity into that part of the
being. There will then be more of an automatic rejection of such movements and less need of tapasya.

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If you accept your weakness which means accepting the thing itself — some part of your nature accepts it and to that you yield — then what is the use of our telling you what to do? That part of your vital will always be able to say, “I was too weak to carry it out.” The only way out of it is for you to cease to be weak, to dismiss this sentimental and sensuous part of you, to call down strength to replace its weakness and to do it with a settled and serious purpose. If we cannot get you who have had some foundation in the sadhana to overcome this element in you, how do you expect us to get X to do it who says he has no firm foundation but is still floating?

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It is always their [the lower forces’] endeavour to rise up and get the sanction of the mind and higher vital — or if they cannot do that, to cover them up so that the lower nature may act in its ordinary way without being pressed by the higher consciousness to change. The first thing necessary for the sadhak is not to give any consent of his mind or higher vital and to keep them from being covered. If that can be done, then it becomes possible to push the lower forces out of the lower vital and body and not allow them to return. It is the Mother’s Force which you feel — for all the higher forces are hers.