Chapter Three

Difficulties of the Physical Nature

The Real Difficulty

It is no doubt quite true that if you could settle the true relation with the Mother in the psychic centre — the inner heart — and all the rest could be under its influence and take part in it, the fundamental difficulty would disappear; and that is what must happen. But the real difficulty is in the physical and external being — and it is this that the physical being is a creature of habit, of formed character, that is to say of a mass of accustomed movements. As your nature has been full of rajasic egoism, not only in this but in many past lives, it is the habit of this rajas and of the accustomed movements connected with it that the physical knows and to them it almost automatically responds; it is these movements that always easily took hold of you, mixed in the sadhana, even in the higher experience sometimes and cherished the revolt against the Mother because always her force was pressing for their removal; it was this pressure that they resented and felt as an absence of love. The mind in you is able to separate itself from these things and recognise (when not too much clouded) their true character, the higher vital also has another aim and aspiration; but the physical, especially the more material parts of it are still responding mechanically to the old movements which are wearing out indeed under the pressure, but are still strong enough to possess a great part of the consciousness when they come. One feels the power, the compulsory force of this mechanical physical response and gets the impression of their inevitability and the impossibility of ever getting free. This automatic compulsory character of the obstruction is the whole power of the difficulty in the material nature.

(1) The first thing is to reject the idea of helplessness, of impossibility of a successful reaction. The central will must
assert itself, not violently in a constant struggle, for that brings reaction, fatigue and inertia, but with a quiet pressure and insistence.

(2) The mind must learn (even the physical external mind) never to say yes to the suggestions and impulsions of the old movement or admit any justification for them however plausible or seemingly “true”. However violently they return and insist, they must feel that they will never get any essential assent or sanction. You have almost reached that point, but it must be made more entire.

(3) There must be something in the vital itself that insists on its true aspiration and refuses even the vital consent or any vital pleasure in the wrong movements. If they come, they must feel their own fallen, ignorant, merely material brute character. This point you seem to be reaching, but it must be absolute.

(4) Lastly the physical, the material itself — to insist on the Light, the true will there also. For that, do not indulge the desires, the wrong impulses, the wrong brute feelings that come. Do not admit the idea that you cannot refuse. Throw them out each time they come, out of the body into the environmental consciousness till they can finally be pushed away from there also. For it is these that now separate you in the physical consciousness from the Mother.

Obstruction and Obscuration

The difficulty of the physical nature comes inevitably in the course of the development of the sadhana. Its obstruction, its inertia, its absence of aspiration or movement have to show themselves before they can be got rid of — otherwise it will always remain undetected, hampering even the best sadhana and preventing its completeness. This coming up of the physical nature lasts longer or less according to the circumstances, but there is none who does not go through it. What is necessary is not to get troubled or anxious or impatient, for that only makes it last more, but to put entire confidence in the Mother and quietly persist in faith, patience and steady will for the complete
change. It is so that the Mother’s force can best work in the being.

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The sense of helplessness, of impossibility of removal [of obscurity] is like the obscurity itself a characteristic of the physical consciousness which is inert and mechanical and accustomed to be moved inertly by whatever forces take hold of it. But this sense of helplessness or impossibility is unreal and not to yield to it, not to accept it, to remove it is quite possible and very necessary for overcoming this physical obstacle which would otherwise greatly delay the progress.

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It [the nature of the obstruction of the physical consciousness] depends on the weak points of the individual and the stage of his progress. In a general way, the obstruction creates an inertia which impedes the working of the higher Powers. In the early stage it can obstruct progress altogether. Afterwards it works to slow it down or else impede it by intervals of stationary inertia. The main difficulty of the physical consciousness is that it is incapable, before it is transformed, of maintaining any tension of tapasya — it wants periods of assimilation, sinking back into the ordinary consciousness to rest, — also there is a constant forgetfulness of what has been done etc.

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What you felt in your chest was the attempt of the old ignorance to bring back the vital restlessness, depression, confusion, through the physical attack — for it is on the obscurcation of the physical that they now depend for stopping the Light and Force from coming and for obscuring their working and creating disturbance and destroying the quietude. Reject it as you did this time — whenever it tries to come.

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What you say — especially the idea of being only body — proves
that it is now really in the physical obscurity and obstruction that the difficulty lies and the vital resistance even if it recurs is no longer the central obstacle. Do not be discouraged by this physical unconsciousness — keep the quietude and it will be worked out of the system.

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Do not be discouraged. To go on calling is always the right thing. The struggle to surmount the physical obscurity and inertia is sometimes very tedious and baffling, but if one persists the liberation from it comes — and it will surely come.

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The physical obstruction is less boisterous [than the vital resistance], but I have not found it less obstinate or less troublesome.

Inertia

Inertia is a tremendous force — one of the biggest world-forces.

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Inertia is the very character of the physical consciousness left to itself — it is accustomed to be passive to forces and to be their instrument or give a mechanical response to them.

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Inertia is mental, vital, physical, subconscious. Physical inertia can produce mental inertia, mental inertia can produce physical inertia, vital inertia almost always makes the physical lifeless and lustreless and dull, and that is inertia. Vital inertia can also infect the mind, unless the mind is very strong and clear. I have always said that the physical consciousness is the main seat and source of inertia.

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The hold of inertia always increases when the working comes down into the physical and subconscious. Before that the inertia is overpowered though not eradicated by the action in mind and
vital — afterwards it comes up in its natural force and has to be met in its own field.

* The physical’s tendency to inertia is very great; even after the habit of living in the higher consciousness is there, some part may feel the pressure of the inertia — generally the outermost or most material parts. The inertia usually rises up from the subconscient. It does not abolish the higher consciousness in the physical, but dulls its action or else brings it down from a higher to a lower level, e.g. from the intuition to the higher mind or from the higher to the lower ranges of overmind. For some time it resists the completeness of the siddhi. It is only when the most material and the subconscient and the environmental consciousness are quite liberated that this retarding or lowering effect of the primal Inertia is entirely overcome.

* What you describe — dullness, uneasiness, weakness, feeling old and worn out or ill, are the reactions that come when the inertia of the physical Nature is resisting the Light — the others about sense of feeling, dignity, self-respect (of the ego) are the reactions of the vital. Both must be refused acceptance. There is only one aim to be followed, the increase of the Peace, Light, Power and the growth of a new consciousness in the being. With that new consciousness the true knowledge, understanding, strength, feeling will come, creating harmony instead of revolt and struggle and union with the Divine consciousness and will.

* Dullness and dispersion are the two sides of the physical’s resistance to the peace and concentrated power. They correspond to the inertia and the chaotic activity of physical Nature, that aspect of it which makes some scientists now say that all is brought about by chance and there is no certitude of things but only probability.
It [weakness of will] is a first result of coming down into the physical consciousness or of the physical consciousness coming up prominently — formerly you were much in the mind and vital. The physical consciousness is full of inertia — it wants not to move but to be moved by whatever forces and that is its habit. This inertia has to be cured by putting it into contact with the right forces from above. That is why I asked you to aspire for the higher wideness, purity and peace, so that that may occupy the physical and the true Force work instead of these invading ideas and impulses.

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It [weakness of will] is due to the influence of the physical consciousness. The physical consciousness or at least the more material parts of it are, as I have told you, in their nature inert — obeying whatever force they are habituated to obey, but not acting on their own initiative. When there is a strong influence of the physical inertia or when one is down in this part of the consciousness the mind feels like the material Nature that action of will is impossible. Mind and vital nature are on the contrary all for will and initiative and so when one is in mind or vital or acting under their influence will feels itself always ready to be active.

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When the mental will acquiesces in the inertia, becomes passive to it, as we say — then one remains in the passive condition and there is no push against it until it of itself passes away. If the mental will or even the vital will or some dynamic part of the nature remains untouched and can react, then there is the effort to throw it off which may shorten the interim period.

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Passivity must not lead to inactivity — otherwise it will encourage inertia in the being. It is only an inner passivity to what comes from above that is needed — inert passivity is the wrong kind of passivity.
If it is an inert tamasic passivity subject to any influence and unable to react, then it is subjection to Nature. If it is a sat-tvic passivity of the Witness observing and understanding the movements of Nature, then it is an intermediate condition, often necessary for knowledge. If it is a luminous passivity open to the Divine, shut to all other influences, then it is not subjection to Nature but surrender to the Divine.

* It is the neutrality of the physical consciousness which says, “I move only when I am moved. Move me who can.”

* The period of no-effort is usually when the physical consciousness is uppermost — for the nature of that is inertia, to be moved by the higher forces or to be moved by the lower forces or any forces, but not to move itself. One must still use one’s effort if one can, but the great thing is to be able to call down the Force from above into the physical — otherwise to remain perfectly quiet and, undisturbed, expect its coming.

* Silence need not bring lassitude; there is all possible strength in silence. But it is possible that in your trend towards silence there is a tendency to draw back the energy from the body consciousness. That would bring physical inertia.

* If the calm and silence are perfectly established in the physical, then if inertia comes it is itself something quiet and unaggressive, not bringing such disturbances. But to get rid of inertia altogether a strong dynamic calm is needed.

* If the physical being has felt and assimilated the silence and peace, then inertia ought not to rise up.
There is always more chance of inertia at night because of the large part taken by the subconscious in sleep — but, apart from that, there should be a reaction (internal) against the rising of inertia. A quietness in the cells of the body, even a sense of immobility (so that the body seems to be moved rather than to move) is a different thing and easily distinguishable from the inertia. The downflow of peace usually brings much of the static Brahman into the consciousness down to the physical, so that one feels the Upanishadic “unmoving it moves”.

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The inertia itself is not a dynamic principle. The nature of inertia is apravṛtti — the action of the mechanical mind is a pravṛtti, though a tamasic obscure pravṛtti.

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The rain has the effect of stressing the tamas of the vital physical consciousness and bringing out its greyer notes. Physical tamas by its laxity gives more opportunities for the play of sex etc.

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Everything [in the surrounding atmosphere] can be responded to. Inertia also can spread waves of itself like other things.

Dealing with Inertia and Tamas

From what you describe it looks as if you had come down into the physical consciousness and were feeling the inertia that belongs to it. When that happens, the one way out is to open there so that the light and force may come down into the physical and replace the inertia. We shall try to get that done.

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When one is covered by the physical inertia one may often feel as if the former experiences had never existed or were not real. But certainly your aspirations and experiences were real enough.
You have to fight out this difficulty until you have got through to the Light.

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It is, I suppose, the full Inertia that has come upon you. Now you have to get the true Energy down into it.

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It must be the tamas of the physical that has enveloped the inner consciousness. The one way to get out of it is to remain very quiet inwardly and call down persistently the Force from above.

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It [a condition of great inertia] means that you are in full grips with the subconscient physical. However heavy and tedious the resistance you have to persevere till you have got the Peace, Knowledge, Force down there in place of the inertia.

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I do not know that I can add anything more to what I have already written. It is only by a more constant dynamic force descending into an unalterable equality and peace that the physical nature’s normal tendency can be eradicated.

The normal tendency of the physical nature is to be inert and in its inertia to respond only to the ordinary vital forces, not to the higher forces. If one has a perfect equality and peace then one can be unaffected by the spreading of the inertia and bring down into it gradually or quickly the same peace with a force of the higher consciousness which can alter it. When that is there there can be no longer the difficulty and fluctuations with a preponderance of inertia such as you are now having.

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The first means [of changing inertia into peace] is not to get upset when it comes or when it stays. The second is to detach yourself, not only yourself above but yourself below and not identify. The third is to reject everything that is raised by the
inertia and not regard it as your own or accept it at all.

If you can do these things then there will be something in you that remains perfectly quiet even in the pits of inertia. Through that quiet part you can bring down peace, force, even light and knowledge into the inertia itself.

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When the mind and the vital take hold of the physical and make it an instrument, then there is no inertia. But here the physical consciousness has been dealt with. If it could have received the peace of the self into itself without covering it over with inertia, then it would have been all right. But the vital has intervened somehow with its demand and dissatisfaction, so there has been this obstruction and inability to progress. This thing often happens in the sadhana and one must have the power either to reject it dynamically or else to remain detached until it has exhausted itself. Then the true movement begins again.

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Inertia or anything else must be felt as separate, not part of one’s real self which is one with the Divine.

The Difficulty of Eliminating Inertia and Tamas

You cannot expect a persistent inertia like that to disappear in three days because you make some kind of a beginning of effort to resist it.

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The inertia of the physical consciousness is always a difficult thing to eliminate — it is that, more even than any vital resistance, which keeps all the movements of the ignorance recurring even when the knowledge is there and the will to change. But this difficulty has to be faced and overcome by an equal perseverance in the will of the sadhak. It is a steady flame that must burn, as steady as the obstruction is obstinate. Do not therefore be discouraged by the persistence of the obstruction of the ignorance.
The persistence of your own will to conquer with the Mother’s force supporting it will come to the end of the resistance.

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I don’t know of any effective outward means of getting rid of it [inertia]. Some, in hours when they cannot do sadhana, spend the time in other occupations — reading, writing or working — and do not try at all to concentrate. But I suspect what you need is more strength in the body.

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It is quite true that physical exercise is very necessary to keep off the tamas. I am glad you have begun it and I trust you will keep it up.

Physical tamas in its roots can be removed only by the descent and the transformation, but physical exercise and a regular activity of the body can always prevent a tamasic condition from prevailing in the body.

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There should be no yielding to the tamas. In spite of it one should always go on quietly and persistently with the sadhana — otherwise one may be overweighed by the inertia of the physical consciousness from which the tamas comes.

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The physical always is more tamasic than the rest of the being and does not respond easily. Moreover this is a time of struggle between the higher forces and the resisting forces on the material plane, it is therefore a time when intense attacks on that plane are possible. One has to be on one’s guard and keep the true Force always round one as a protecting Power.

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The adverse forces feel that there is something in you that is discountenanced and restive because of the continuance of the inertia and they hope that by pressing more and more they will
create a revolt. What is important for you in these circumstances is to make your faith, surrender and samata absolute. That is as great and essential a progress as to have high experiences, etc.

**Physical Fatigue**

Fatigue like this in the course of the sadhana may come from various reasons.

1. It may come from receiving more than the physical is ready to assimilate. The cure is then a quiet rest in conscious immobility receiving the forces but not for any other purpose than the recuperation of the strength and energy.

2. It may be due to the passivity taking the form of inertia — inertia brings the consciousness down towards the ordinary physical level which is soon fatigued and prone to tamas. The cure here is to get back into the true consciousness and rest there, not in inertia.

3. It may be due to mere overstrain of the body — not giving it enough sleep or repose. The body is the support of the Yoga, but its energy is not inexhaustible and needs to be husbanded; it can be kept up by drawing on the universal vital Force but that reinforcement too has its limits. A certain moderation is needed even in the eagerness for progress — moderation, not indifference or indolence.

*Exactly. “The body felt fatigue” — that is what I mean by the habit of tamas. The body cannot bear the continuous experience, it feels it as a strain. That is the case with most sadhaks. But in your case the obstacle seems to develop a great intensity when it comes. I have already told you the means of getting rid of it,¹ but it cannot be done in a day because it is a fixed habit of the nature and a fixed habit takes time to remove. But it can be done in not too long a time provided you don’t get disturbed when it comes and deal with it firmly and steadily.*

¹*See the letter beginning “The first means” on page 396.—* Ed.
Giddiness

For the giddiness, it may be that in concentration you go partly out of your body; then, if you get up and move before the whole consciousness has come back, there is just such a giddiness as you describe. You can observe in future and see whether it is not this that happens. One has to be careful not to move after deep concentration or trance, till there is the full consciousness in the body.

Restlessness

Yes, this is the time when you have to persist till you are quite settled in the inner consciousness and the persistence of the silence and peace is a sign that it is now possible. When one feels this kind of silence, peace and wideness, one may be sure that it is that of the true being, the real self, penetrating into the mind and vital and perhaps also the physical consciousness (if it is complete). The restlessness of the physical is probably due to the peace and silence having touched the physical but not yet penetrated the material or body consciousness. The old restlessness is there in the body struggling to remain, although it cannot invade either mind or vital or even in a general way the physical consciousness as a whole. If the peace descends there, this restlessness will disappear.

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This is a form that the resistance in the physical easily and often takes — a restlessness of discomfort in the nervous system. When it is in the legs, it means that it is the most material part of the consciousness that is the seat of the trouble. Since it has come up, it ought to be thrown out for good. Probably this part has become sufficiently conscious to feel the greater pressure when Mother comes down, but not enough to be able to receive and assimilate it, hence the uneasiness and resistance. If so, it should go of itself with a little more opening there.

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Insist always on the quietude, the peace, the consciousness of the force. Persistently reject the restlessness; it comes always because the physical has the habit of receiving it, accepting it as its own real nature. Always deny it, always reject the unrest; gradually if not immediately, the physical will follow your will and change its habit and its notions.

**Habitual Movements and Old Habits**

It is obviously because of the past impressions and the habitual movement of consciousness connected with them [*that the old reactions continue*]. In the physical being the power of past impressions is very great, because it is by the process of repeated impressions that consciousness was made to manifest in matter — and also by the habitual reactions of consciousness to these impressions, what the psychologists, I suppose, would call behaviour. According to one school consciousness consists only of these things — but that is the usual habit of stretching one detail of Nature to explain the whole of her.

*It is really, I think, the physical consciousness that is responsible [*for the return of old movements*]. It is forgetful and obscure and repeats always the old habitual movements even when the mind has abandoned them and the vital is quite willing to abandon them. But when the physical receives the old vibration, the lower vital is affected and responds — otherwise it would be merely a vibration and there would be no danger of its being accepted or affecting the conduct.*

*There is nobody who is free from difficulties, even those who seem the most advanced have them, and all have this obstinacy of the habitual movements in the physical consciousness which recur always in spite of the mind’s knowledge and do not want to cease or change. It is only by perseverance in aspiration or will that this difficulty can disappear.*
The opening of the physical and subconscious always takes a long time as it is a thing of habits and constant repetitions of the old movements, obscure and stiff and not plastic, yielding only little by little. The physical mind can be more easily opened and converted than the rest, but the vital physical and material physical are obstinate. The old things are always recurring there without reason and by force of habit. Much of the vital physical and most of the material are in the subconscious or dependent on it. It needs a strong and sustained action to progress there.

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It [getting out of the physical rut] can only be done by being very quiet and opening oneself continually to the force. The physical needs a very quiet, persistent and patient action, because it is a thing of inertia and habits. The vehemence of force and struggle which suits the vital, does not act so successfully here. It is a steady opening to the Force, a quiet but unwavering insistence on Faith and the Truth that is to be that is in the end effective.

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It is not that something is always “wrong” within you but that there is still in the subconscious physical being a part that was accustomed to respond very strongly to the vibrations of these thoughts and feelings and can still respond. Usually you would not allow them to come up at all in thought or feeling form, — it would only manifest as a depression of the body or fatigue — or, if it came, you would get over it at once and the vibrations would sink down and disappear. But in the atmosphere heavily surcharged with this invasion of the ordinary consciousness there is a lessened elasticity in the physical consciousness and they were able to rise. This is an exceedingly common experience. One has to detach oneself from these still weak parts and regard them as if a detail in the machinery that has to be set right. In your case also your nervous (vital physical) being is exceedingly conscious and sensitive and anything wrong in the atmosphere affects it more than it would most of the others.

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It was certainly not because the Mother was different to you from other days or pushed you to a distance, but because you came rather shut up in that part of your physical being which is still shrinking from the Light. It is this part which was always fundamentally responsible for all your bad passages and painful moments even when the direct difficulty was higher up. Its nature is to cling to the old habitual preyogic consciousness and to shut up doors and windows against the help that is offered and lament in the darkness when it has felt itself hurt. This is a thing that everybody must get rid of who wants to progress. Do not go on identifying yourself with this part and calling it yourself. Get back into your inner being and look at this only as a small though obstinate part of the nature that has to change. For apart from its insistence there is no reason why your way should enter into a desert. It should enter into a wideness of liberation — open to the calm and peace and power and light of a consciousness that is wider than the personal and into which the ego can happily disappear.

* The physical changes slowly always — its nature is habit — so it is only by constant descents [of calmness, purity, light and strength] that gradually its substance gets changed and it becomes accustomed to the higher condition.

* The obstacle or wall of bondage which you feel is simply that of the habits of the ordinary physical consciousness. It is so with all,—the ordinary vital nature with its ego, desire, passions, disturbances, and the ordinary physical nature with its strong habits and outwardness are the chief obstacles that have to be overcome in the nature. When they fall quiet, then it is easier to enter into the true consciousness and unite with the Mother. But they are not accustomed to quietness and as soon as it is felt they want to come out of it and resume their ordinary movements. But this will go when the inner has sufficiently gained on the outer to dominate it. The inner things will grow and come out
more and more as you feel the inner faith growing until they are strong enough to rule the outer conduct. The obstacles you feel, the surging up of old things and repetition of restlessness etc. are due to this strength of habit of the physical nature — it lives by repeating always the same things and the same movements to which it has been accustomed in the past. The inner influence as it comes out will more and more create for it new habits of thought and feeling and action and it will then dwell firmly in these and not in the things of the old nature.

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The habit in the physical is obstinate and seems unchangeable because it always recurs — even when one thinks it is gone. But it is not really unchangeable; if the physical mind detaches itself, stands separate, refuses to accept it, then the habit in the physical begins to lose its force of repetition. Sometimes it goes slowly, sometimes (but this is less frequent) it stops suddenly and recurs no more.

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Yes; that [the idea that things cannot change] also is the fault of the physical consciousness. It is obsessed by the idea that “what is” must be, — that the habit of things cannot be altered. This inevitability it extends not only to what is but to what it merely thinks of as a fact — it lays itself open inertly to every suggestion or possibility that seems to be justified by the habit of things. It is the main obstacle to the material change.

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As I have said, the response of the physical mind or vital to these forces is a habit. You get upset as soon as they touch either and lose control over yourself. The concentration in the heart is the way to get rid of them, but there must also be a detachment of the consciousness so that it can stand back from the attack and feel separate from it.
The response-giving mechanism is like that \textit{fixed in its ways} in everybody. It is not by something shocking but by something enlarging and uplifting that it can get out of its rut of habit.

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Habits are difficult to overcome. If any have to be got rid of, one must be very persistent and vigilant and not yield or let them have their way. It is only when one does that for a very long time that they go.

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The physical always finds it difficult to take up a new attitude. It is only by training and discipline that it can be made to do so.

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I meant \textit{by “training and discipline” of the physical} that instead of forgetting it must be trained to remember and fix the right movements of consciousness and right states — by repetition, by enforcing again and again, by teaching it to reject persistently and at once the wrong states and wrong movements.

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In the purification of the physical nature, more even than in the rest, it is not safe to assume that there will be no more attacks of old forces or habits of the nature — till the thing is actually and unmistakably done. One must remain vigilant till there is the full siddhi. For in the physical, habit, memory, mechanical response have an immense power of survival — therefore a return of old vibrations or formations is always possible. Only when there is the full purification and transformation is there the perfect security.

\textbf{Mechanical Movements}

As for the feeling of being driven, compelled, that is quite usual when it is the physical nature that is being dealt with; there is no need to be upset or think it cannot be got over. The physical
is the slave of certain forces which create a habit and drive it through the mechanical force of the habit. So long as the mind gives consent, you do not notice the slavery; but if the mind withdraws its consent, then you feel the servitude, you feel a force pushing you in spite of the mind's will. It is very obstinate and repeats itself till the habit — the inner habit revealing itself in the outward act — is broken. It is like a machine which once set in motion repeats the same movement. You need not be alarmed or distressed; a quiet persistent aspiration will bring you to the point where the habit breaks and you are free.

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What you describe is what the Gita means by the realisation that all action is done by the Prakriti. You feel it mechanical because you are in the physical consciousness where all is mechanism. On the mental and vital plane one can have the same experience, but of the actions as a play of forces. What is lacking at present to you is the other side of the experience, viz. that of the silent Atman or else of the witness Purusha calm, tranquil, free, pure and undisturbed by the play of the Prakriti. It tries to come and you are on the point of going into it, but the tendency of externalisation is still too strong. This tendency took you when you came down into the physical — for it is the nature of the ordinary physical consciousness to precipitate itself into the action of the external personality. You have to get back the power of the internal consciousness, above as Atman, below as Purusha first witness and then master of the nature.

Externalisation

It is inevitable that in the course of the sadhana all sorts of conditions should come through which one is led towards the fullness of the true consciousness. You are now, as are most, in the physical consciousness and its principal difficulty is externalisation and this covering up of the active experience so that one does not know what is going on inside or feels as if nothing were going on. When that happens, it means that
something has come up, some part or layer of the physical, which needs to be worked on and, when that has been done, — it may take longer or shorter, — the conscious active inner experience recommences. The muteness in the mind is not a bad thing in itself, it is a favourable condition for the working. Also what you describe as taking place in the head, must be the working of the Force there, — it sometimes gives the impression of a headache. There must be a working in the physical mind to get rid of some difficulty or else to prepare it better for the admission of what comes from above.

It is necessary to have a great patience — so as to go through these conditions and not get apprehensive or restless — and a confidence that all difficulties will be overcome.

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The push to externalisation must be rejected always — it is a way the physical consciousness has of slipping out of the condition of concentrated sadhana. To keep in the inner consciousness and work from it on the external being till that also is ready is very necessary when the work of change is being specially directed towards the physical consciousness.

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As for the going within, the pull of the physical consciousness is always outward and even when experiences are going on and the sadhana in full activity, it is the physical resistance that prevents the sadhak from being all the time in the inner consciousness. This resistance disappears altogether only when one reaches an advanced stage of the sadhana. This resistance is now specially active in the Asram because the force is working on the physical and all that is contrary there has to be met and eliminated. But you have before this several times gone inside and felt the touch of the psychic, so that is bound to resume as soon as the physical difficulty is sufficiently cleared away from the consciousness.
Feelings of Incapacity and Discouragement

The thoughts and feelings expressed in your letter are born of the depression and have no truth in themselves apart from it. Your being here does not in the least take up space that could be occupied by “better” sadhaks. For a good sadhak there will always be a place in one way or another. The incapacity which you discover in yourself is simply the resistance of the habitual external and physical nature, which everyone has and which none, however good a sadhak, has yet been able to transform radically, because it is the last thing to change, and its resistance is acute just now because it is against this that the power of the sadhana is now pressing so that the change may come. When this part presents itself it always tries to appear as something unalterable, incapable of change, impervious to the sadhana. But it is not really so and one must not be deceived by this appearance. As for the fear of madness, it is only a nervous impression which you should throw away. It is not vital weakness that leads to such upsettings — it is an obscurity and weakness in the physical mind accompanied by movements of an exaggerated vital nature (e.g. exaggerated spiritual ambition) which are too strong for the mind to bear. That is not your case. You have had long experience of inner peace, wideness, Ananda, an inner life turned towards the Divine and one who has had that ought not to speak of general incapacity, whatever the difficulties of the external nature, — difficulties common in one form or another to all.

I have not the slightest doubt that you can do the sadhana if you cleave to it — not certainly on your own unaided strength, for nobody can do that, but by the will of the psychic being in you aided by the Divine Grace. There is a part in the physical and vital consciousness of every human being that has not the will for it, does not feel the capacity for it, distrusts any hope or promise of a spiritual future and is inert and indifferent to any such thing. At one period in the course of the sadhana this rises up and one feels identified with it. That has happened in you now,
but along with an attack of ill health and nervous indisposition which has turned this passage through the obscure physical into a dark and intense trouble. With enough sleep and a quieting of the nerves and return of physical energy that ought to disappear and it would be possible to bring the Light and Consciousness down into this obscure part. An intense concentration bringing struggle is not what is needed, but a very quiet attitude of self-opening. Not any effort of sadhana just now, but the recovery of tranquillity and ease is what is wanted at present to restore the opening of the nature.

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The feeling of inability is just the thing you have to reject. It is true only of the physical material consciousness and it is true of everybody in the physical consciousness, because that is something very inert and all that it can do is open itself, remain quiet and receive the Influence. But there is no inability in the rest of the being: it can will and reject. If confusion and obscurity come, it is not bound to accept them,—it can open to the true Force and throw them away; it can keep itself open even when the forces of confusion throw themselves upon it. Only the concentration also must be quiet and steady,—not struggling and restless.

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It is not because you cannot recover the true attitude, but because you admit in part of your mind the false suggestion of your inability that this mixed condition lasts longer than it should. It is part of your physical consciousness that keeps the memory of the old movements and has the habit of admitting them and thinking them inevitable. You must insist with the clearer part of your consciousness on the true Truth, rejecting always these suggestions and feelings, till this obscure part also is open and admits the Light.

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As to what has happened in your sadhana, it is that you have allowed yourself to fall into a groove of the physical mind and
of the external vital nature and got fixed in a persistent or constantly recurrent repetition of the ideas and feelings which they present to you — feelings of settled disappointment and discouragement and pessimism about yourself and your spiritual future, and ideas — or, if you will allow me to call them so, notions — which come to the support of these feelings and sustain them. The result of this is to shut you up against the contact and spiritual influence and help you were once feeling or beginning to feel from us. It also shuts you up against your own deeper self and sterilises your personal effort. An accident of this kind is common enough in the path of spiritual effort, and the first thing to be done to get rid of its effects is to throw away resolutely the persistent ideas and feelings which keep you in the groove. I do not know whether you can return to the former condition, for it is seldom that one can go back to a point in the past; but it is always possible for you to go forward, recovering the force for propulsion of what you then gained and have certainly still within you assimilated in your inner being. If you want to carry on some part of the Yoga by your active efforts and aspiration, there is no reason why you should not find back that capacity; but the first effort to be made is to reject persistently, fully and tenaciously — not for two or three days, but always, so long as they insist or return — these disabling thoughts and feelings which hamstring all hope and faith in you, not to accept them, not to justify them, not to give them by your acquiescence the right to go on harping on the same note always of discouragement, incapacity and failure. The ideas by which you justify them are, I repeat, notions only of the physical mind, not true things — e.g. the notion that you cannot understand a given idea (intellectually accepting or not accepting is another matter); for it is perfectly certain that your thinking intelligence is quite trained enough to understand anything that is put before it. It is only the physical mind that is limited even in the most intelligent and opens up pits of stupidity or at least larger or smaller spaces of blank non-understanding in the face of unaccustomed ideas or a new line of possible experience or anything else either alien to the mind’s habits or unwelcome to
something in the vital parts. I suppose we have all had experience of this incapable element in our nature, and if one fixes oneself in it, it can make even things that would ordinarily be easy for us seem difficult things and things difficult seem impossible. But why should a mind trained to think allow this poorer part of itself to dominate it? So with the other notions. There is nothing anyone else can do in the way of Yoga that you cannot do if you have the fixed will to do it; some things may take a longer time because of past training, habits, mental associations but there is nothing impossible, too difficult, no inherently insuperable obstacle.

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It [the thought of leaving the Ashram] is one of the suggestions of the external physical consciousness that are filling the atmosphere just now. I explain that to you in the answers below. You used to have dreams on the vital plane also long ago in which you passed through dangerous forests and wildernesses amid perils of land and water and wild beasts etc., but you reached safely under the Mother’s protection where you were going. I remember your writing some to me. Also there have been dreams of difficult passages ending in the arrival on the true open way. Only these dreams you are having now indicate the difficulty of the passage through the physical (and no longer through the vital) consciousness — but the common element is that you are under the Mother’s protection and reach the way at the end. This is quite natural because what everybody is passing through now are the difficulties of the physical and subconscient nature; but the Mother’s protection is the same here as in the past stages of the sadhana.

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It is the doubt that most or many are raising now in the Asram. “Where am I? Where am I going? Am I really doing the Yoga? It seems to me I am getting nothing. There is no progress anywhere. All is dry and mechanical. What is the use of being here?” These are the thoughts that have been moving about in the atmosphere
of the Asram and when you get such thoughts, it means that they are coming to you as suggestions from the atmosphere. If they are in the minds of any of those you move with, it is natural they should try to enter you, but even otherwise they can come to you, just as people catch cold because the germs are in the atmosphere.

Your attitude is all right, but evidently you have allowed your mind to be clouded by the suggestions of which I have spoken above. The feeling of having lost all one had is one of them; the feeling that all is mechanical and uninteresting and it is no use being here is another. Of course they are all false. When one listens to the suggestions, then things begin to appear like that. These suggestions are natural to the ignorant physical or body consciousness in human nature, just as suggestions of vital passion and disturbance are natural to the ignorant vital consciousness in human nature. You had vital reactions but you did not allow them to overcome you or make you think yourself unfit for the Yoga, because you relied upon the Mother and did not yield to the contrary vital Force. Here also you will have to have constant reliance on the Mother and reject the suggestions of the physical consciousness in the atmosphere when they come.

**Stupidity and Ignorance**

Your suggestion that I am telling you things that are untrue in order to encourage you is the usual stupidity of the physical mind — if it were so, it is not you who would be unfit for the Yoga, but myself who would be unfit to be in the search for the Divine Truth anybody’s guide. For one can lead through lesser to greater Truth, but not through falsehood to Truth. As for your fitness or unfitness for the Yoga, it is not a question on which your physical mind can be an unerring judge — it judges by the immediate appearance of things and has no knowledge of the laws that govern consciousness or the powers that act in Yoga. In fact the question is not of fitness or unfitness but of the acceptance of Grace. There is no human being whose physical
Difficulties of the Physical Nature

outer consciousness — the part of yourself in which you are now living — is fit for the Yoga. It is by grace and enlightenment from above that it can become capable and for that the necessity is to be persevering and open it to the Light. Everybody when he enters the physical consciousness has the same difficulty and feels as if he were unfit, obscure and nothing done, nothing changed in him since he began the Yoga; he is apt to forget then all that has happened before or to feel as if he had lost it or as if it had all been unreal or untrue.

I suppose that is why you object to my phrase about your having gone so far. I meant that you had had openings in your thinking mind and heart and higher vital and experiences also and had seen very lucidly the condition of your own being and nature and had by that got so far that these parts were ready for the spiritual change — what remains is the physical and outer consciousness which has to be compelled to accept the necessity of change. That is no doubt the most difficult part of the work to be done, but it is also the part which, if once done, makes possible the total change of the being and nature. I therefore said that having gone so far it would be absurd to turn back now and give up because this resists — it always resists in everybody and very obstinately too. That is no reason for giving up the endeavour.

It is this consciousness that has expressed itself in your letter — or the obscure part of it which clings to its old attitude. It does not want to fulfil the sadhana unless it can get by it the things it wanted. It wants the satisfaction of the ego, “self-fulfilment”, appreciation, the granting of its desires. It measures the Divine Love by the outward favours showered upon it and looks jealously to see who gets more of these favours than itself, then says that the Divine has no love for it and assigns reasons which are either derogatory to the Divine or, as in your letter, self-depreciatory and a cause for despair. It is not in you alone that this part feels and acts like that, it is in almost everybody. If that were the only thing in you or the others, then indeed there would be no possibility of Yoga. But though it is strong, it is not the whole — there is a psychic being and a mind and
heart influenced and enlightened by it which has other feelings and another vision of things and aim in sadhana. These are now covered in you by the upsurge of this part which has to change. It is tamasic and does not want to change, does not want to believe unless it can be done by reassuring the vital ego. But there is nothing new in all that — it is part of human nature and has always been there, hampering and limiting the sadhana. Its existence is no reason for despair — everyone has it and the sadhana has to be done in spite of it, in spite of the mixture it brings till the time comes when it has to be definitely converted or rejected. It is difficult to do it, but perfectly possible. These things I know and realise and it is therefore that I insist on your persevering and encourage you to go on; it is not my statement of the position that is untrue, it is the view of it taken by this obscure part of your being that is unsound and an error.

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It is the instinctive (not mental) will in the outer being that is blind — the inner mind knows and understands and when it comes out it enlightens the rest so that all is clear. But the outer being readmits the darkness and confusion through a wrong movement of the vital or through an inert acceptance of the obscurity of the ignorant physical consciousness and the knowledge gets darkened over. But it is there and has only to come out again. The physical consciousness is constitutionally ignorant — it may be made to understand, but it goes on forgetting and feeling as if it had never known — till the Force and Light finally get hold of it and then it forgets no more.

**Agnosticism**

These feelings are the usual attitude of the physical consciousness left to itself towards the Divine — a complete Agnosticism and inability to experience.²

² The correspondent complained about the difficulty of knowing the Divine and said that he was on the verge of Agnosticism. His letter ends: “But even if I were to know Him, how would it affect the solid material facts of earth?” — Ed.
The knowledge of the impersonal Divine by itself does not affect the material facts of earth or at least need not. It only produces a subjective change in the being itself and, if it is complete, a new vision and attitude towards all things immaterial or material. But the complete knowledge of the Divine can produce a change in material things, for it sets a Force working which ends by acting even upon these material things that seem to the physical consciousness so absolute, invincible and unchangeable.

Fear of Death

In a certain part of the physical consciousness and in the subconscious there is always the human and animal fear of death and of anything that has to do with death. It is from there that these dreams are rising along with the fear felt by those parts of the nature. These things rise up in order to be rejected and the mind is rejecting them; for all fear must go and there must be in the physical the full confidence in the Divine.