Chapter Two
Attacks by the Hostile Forces

Attacks Not Uncommon

I do not see how I could say that you were not fit for this Yoga when you had and still get the experiences that are characteristic of the Yoga. The obstacles in the consciousness and the attacks are no proof that a man is not fit for Yoga. There is no one practising Yoga who does not get them. Even those who have become great siddha Yogis had them during their time of sadhana.

There is not only yourself or X who have been touched, but others have been violently affected. The attack has been extremely serious this time — as these attacks always are at the moment when something is about to be effected in the individual or the general consciousness.

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There are always hostile forces that try to stop or break the experience. If they come in, it is a sign that there is something in the being, vital or physical, that either responds or is too inert to oppose.

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The hostile forces do not need a cause for attacking — they attack whenever and whoever they can. What one has to see is that nothing responds or admits them.

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There is always this critical hostile voice in everybody’s nature, questioning, reasoning, denying the experience itself, suggesting doubt of oneself and doubt of the Divine. One has to recognise it as the voice of the Adversary trying to prevent the progress and refuse credence to it altogether.

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It is not a fact that the Rajayogin or others are not attacked by environmental forces. Whether moksha or transformation be the aim, all are attacked — because the vital forces want neither liberation nor transformation. Only the Yogins speak of it in general terms as Rakshasi Maya or the attacks of kāma, krodha, lobha, — they don’t trace these things to their sources or watch how they come in — but the thing itself is known to all.

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Naturally, the hostile forces are always on the watch to rob what they can of the things received by the sadhak — not that they profit by them, but they prevent them from being used to build up the divine in life.

**Attacks Often Follow a Progress**

It often happens like that. When a progress has been made (here it is the opening of the inner vision) the hostiles attack in a fury. You must be especially on your guard when you are making a progress — so as to check the attack before it can get in.

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It is a fact that the lower forces always attack when they see that a sadhak is making too much progress for their taste. But they can do nothing against a clear and steady will and a faithful perseverance.

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A progress made often stirs the adverse forces to activity, they want to diminish its effect as much as possible. When you get a decisive experience of this kind, you should remain concentrated and assimilate it — avoiding self-dispersion and all externalising of the consciousness.

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It is very often after a good experience or a decisive progress that the beings of the vital world try to attack and threaten.
The being who took the form of X was one of these. They have always the hope that they can turn back the sadhak from his path by attacks and menaces.

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About the attacks and the action of the cosmic forces — these attacks very ordinarily become violent when the progress is becoming rapid and on the way to be definite — especially if they find they cannot carry out an effective aggression into the inner being, they try to shake by outside assaults. One must take it as a trial of strength, a call for gathering all one’s capacities of calm and openness to the Light and Power so as to make oneself an instrument for the victory of the Divine over the undivine, of the Light over the darkness in the world tangle. It is in this spirit that you must face these difficulties till the higher things are so confirmed in you that these forces can attack no longer.

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There is always a struggle going on between the forces of Light and the opposing forces — when there is a true movement and progress the latter try to throw a wrong movement across to stop or delay the progress. Sometimes they do this by raising up old movements in yourself that have still the power to recur; sometimes they use movements or thoughts in the atmosphere, things said by others to disturb the consciousness. When a settled peace and working of the Power and self-giving of the being can be fixed in the physical, then there comes a secure basis — there are no more fluctuations of this kind, though superficial difficulties may continue.

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That is right [to remain confident, cheerful and hopeful]. The rest is the remnant of the attack — such an attack, sudden and violent, as sometimes, indeed often comes when one is making full progress to the straight and open way. It cannot permanently deflect the progress and, when it disappears, there is usually a chance of going on more firmly and swiftly towards the goal.
That is what we must do now.

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Krishnaprem's letter is admirable from start to finish and every sentence hits the truth with great point and force. He has evidently an accurate knowledge both of the psychological and the occult forces that act in Yoga; all he says is in agreement with my own experience and I concur. His account of the rationale of your present difficulties is quite correct and no other explanation is needed — except what I was writing in my unfinished letter about the descent of the sadhana into the plane of the physical consciousness and that does not disaccord with but only completes what he says. He is quite right in saying that the heaviness of these attacks was due to the fact that you had taken up the sadhana in earnest and were approaching, as one might say, the gates of the Kingdom of Light. That always makes these forces rage and they strain every nerve and use or create every opportunity to turn the sadhak back or, if possible, drive him out of the path altogether by their suggestions, their violent influences and their exploitation of all kinds of incidents that always crop up more and more when these conditions prevail, so that he may not reach the gates. I have written to you more than once alluding to these forces, but I did not press the point because I saw that like most people whose minds have been rationalised by a modern European education you were not inclined to believe in or at least to attach any importance to this knowledge. People nowadays seek the explanation for everything in their ignorant reason, their surface experience and in outside happenings. They do not see the hidden forces and inner causes which were well-known and visualised in the traditional Indian and Yogic knowledge. Of course, these forces find their point d’appui in the sadhak himself, in the ignorant parts of his consciousness and its assent to their suggestions and influences; otherwise they could not act or at least could not act with any success. In your case the chief points d’appui have been the extreme sensitiveness of the lower vital ego and now also the physical consciousness with all its fixed or standing opinions, prejudices, prejudgments, habitual
reactions, personal preferences, clinging to old ideas and associations, its obstinate doubts and its maintaining these things as a wall of obstruction and opposition to the larger light. This activity of the physical mind is what people call intellect and reason, although it is only the turning of a machine in a circle of mental habits and is very different from the true and free reason, the higher Buddhi which is capable of enlightenment and still more from the higher spiritual light or that insight and tact of the psychic consciousness which sees at once what is true and right and distinguishes it from what is wrong and false. This insight you had very constantly whenever you were in a good condition and especially whenever Bhakti became strong in you. When the sadhak comes down into the physical consciousness, leaving the mental and higher vital ranges on which he had first turned towards the Divine, these opposite things become very strong and sticky and, as one's more helpful states and experiences draw back behind the veil and one can hardly realise that one ever had them, it becomes difficult to get out of this condition. The only thing then, as Krishnaprem has told you and I also have insisted, is to stick it out. If once one can get and keep the resolution to refuse to accept the suggestions of these forces, however plausible they may seem, then either quickly or gradually this condition can diminish and will be overpassed and cease. To give up Yoga is no solution; you could not successfully do it as both Krishnaprem and I have told you and as your own mind tells you when it is clear. A temporary absence from the Asram for relief from the struggle is a different matter. I do not think, however, that residence in the Ramana Asram would be eventually helpful except for bringing back some peace of mind; Ramana Maharshi is a great Yogi and his realisation very high on its own line; but it does not seem to me that it is a line which you could successfully follow as you certainly can follow the path of Bhakti if you stick to it, and there might then be the danger of your falling between two stools, losing your own path and not being able to follow the path of another nature.
The main obstacle in your sadhana has been a weak part in the vital which does not know how to bear suffering or disappointment or delay or temporary failure. When these things come, it winces away from them, revolts, cries out, makes a scene within, calls in despondency, despair, unbelief, darkness of the mind, denial — begins to think of abandonment of the effort or death as the only way out of its trouble. It is the very opposite of that equanimity, fortitude, self-mastery which is always recommended as the proper attitude of the Yogi. This has been seized upon by the forces adverse to the sadhana with their usual cleverness to prevent you from making the steady and finally decisive progress which would put all the trouble behind you. Their method is very simple. You make the effort and get perhaps some of these experiences which are not decisive but which if continued and followed up may lead to something decisive or at least you begin to have that peace, poise and hopefulness which are the favourable condition for progress — provided they can be kept steady. Immediately they give a blow to that part of the vital — or arrange things so that it shall get a blow or what it thinks to be a blow and sets it in motion with its round of sadness, suffering, outcry and despair. It clouds the mind with its sorrow and then gets that clouded mind to find justifications for its attitude — it has established a fixed formation, a certain round of ideas, arguments, feelings which it always repeats like a mechanism that once set in motion goes its round till it stops or something intervenes to stop it. This justification by the mind gives it strength to assert itself and remain or, when thrown back, to recur. For if these reasonings were not there, you would at once see the situation and disengage yourself from it or at any rate would perceive that such a course of feeling and conduct is not worthy of you and draw back from it at its very inception. But as it is you have to spend days getting out of the phase and getting back into your normal self. Then when you are back to your right walk and stature they wait a little and strike again and the whole thing repeats itself with a mechanical regularity. It takes time, steadfast endeavour, long continued aspiration and a calm perseverance to get anywhere in Yoga; that time you do
not give yourself because of these recurrent swingings away from the right attitude. It is not vanity or intellectual questioning that is the real obstacle — they are only impedimenta, — but they could well be overcome or one could pass beyond in spite of them if this part of the vital were not there or were not so strong to intervene. If I have many times urged upon you equanimity, steadfast patience, cheerfulness or whatever is contrary to this spirit, it is because I wanted you to recover your true inner vital self and get rid of this intruder. If you give it rein, it is extremely difficult to get on to anywhere. It must go, — its going is much more urgently required than the going of the intellectual doubt.

How you got to this condition is another matter. When you came it was not apparent and for a long time did not manifest itself. When Mother first saw you in the verandah of the old house she said, “That is a man with a large and strong vital” and it was true, nor do I think it has at all gone, but you have pushed it to the back and it turns up only when you are in good condition. The other, this small vital which is taking so much space now, must have been there but latent, perhaps because you had had a strong and successful life and it had no occasion to be active. But at a certain moment here it began to be impatient for immediate results, to fret at the amount of tapasya or effort to control its habits and indulgences and the absence of immediate return for the trouble. At a later stage it has tried to justify and prolong itself by appealing to your penchant for the Vaishnava attitude. But the emotional outbreaks of the Vaishnava — or such impulses as Vivekananda’s *prāyopaveśana* — spring from a tremendous one-minded, one-hearted passion for the Divine or for the goal which tries to throw itself headlong forward at any cost. It was another part of your vital that would have liked to take that attitude, but this smaller part prevented it and brought in a confusion and a mixture which was rather used by the adverse forces to turn you away from belief in or hope of the goal. This confusion of mind and vital you must get rid of — you must call in the true reason and the higher vital to cast out these movements. A higher reason must refuse to listen to its self-justifications and tell it that nothing, however plausible, can
justify these motives in a sadhak; your higher vital must refuse to accept them, telling it, “I do not want these alien things; I do not recognise them as part of myself or my nature.”

Positive and Negative Means of Attack

The hostiles when they cannot break the Yoga by positive means, by positive temptations or vital outbreaks, are quite willing to do it negatively; first by depression, then by refusal at once of ordinary life and of sadhana.

Attacks through Suggestions

Indirect attacks are not of this kind, a violent rush and covering by hostile forces — they are done through covert suggestions, half-truth, half-falsehood, attempts to represent the falsehood in the garb of the Divine Truth or to mix the lower consciousness cleverly with the higher. Their attempt is to mislead by guile rather than to conquer by force.

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When the vital forces or beings throw an influence, they give it certain forms of thought-action and put them in the minds and vital of people so that they feel, think, act, speak in a particular way. Whoever opens to the influence acts according to this formation, perhaps with variations due to his own vital temperament.

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Always refuse your assent to these forces and their suggestions and movements — that is the one imperative rule. It is not that you cannot understand the Truth, you understand the Truth perfectly well — but once you begin listening they confuse your mind, cover up the understanding and then torment you with their false suggestions. Always remain quiet, always open to the help of the Force, always call for the peace.

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Attacks by the Hostile Forces

Do not allow these suggestions to prevail. Each time these powers attack, if you hold them at bay, you gain an added force for progress. They attack and suggest to you a wrong understanding in the hope that, if you accept, their power to return on you will last a little longer. Do not allow them to prevail for however short a time.

* I do not see what reasons can be so subtle as to justify or even appear to justify something that opposes and tries to destroy the sadhana. Whatever stands in the way of spiritual progress, must be a falsehood whatever reasons it gives in its own favour. The best thing is not to listen to its reasons.

* There is no issue out in such persistence in a wrong mood and a false attitude. It is the old foolish idea that the ignorance is the truth for you because you are still ignorant in your external consciousness and that if the divine Light and Truth are not perfectly established in the ignorance, then the Light and Truth are false and the ignorance is the only truth and that to believe in the Truth and the Divine is a pretence. Nothing can be more irrational than these arguments of the dark Forces to which your external vital so foolishly lends its adherence. The Truth remains the Truth in spite of all denial and it is to that you will have to give your assent and allegiance, not to confusion and darkness.

* But when the suggestions come, surely it is possible to know from their very character what they are and that itself shows that they must come from wrong vital Forces. The only thing is that they must be at once rejected and the entry into your own mind and vital refused to them—i.e. they must not be accepted or allowed to influence. Very few have the direct occult perception of the Forces behind the suggestion—at least until the cosmic consciousness fully opens, for then direct perception
becomes more easily possible, — but the mental understanding can be used with good effect.

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Vital forces can attack the mind and do. Many receive suggestions from them through the brain, so it is quite possible that it may be felt as coming in through the head from above. That does not mean that it came from regions above the mind (higher Mind, intuition or Overmind). Correct reasoning means no more than coherent argument from a certain standpoint and does not validate a fit of anger or indicate for it a non-adverse source.

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It [a vibration of anger which entered the body from behind the shoulder blades] must have been an indication of the source and location of the suggestion or influence. Either thoughts or vibrations or some pressure of wrong force can be felt being thrown or sent in a very concrete way when the consciousness is open. When it is not, they come in without being noticed, only the result is felt.

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There has been progress in all these parts [of the being], but they seem to be subject still to a response to the suggestions of the hostile forces. Everybody gets these suggestions, but they ought not to be allowed to enter inside, especially in the heart, or to be accepted by the vital. Evidently, they enter through the physical mind (from the throat upwards means that) and affect the surface vital and emotional being. You must get the power to reject them from there by a constant and steady denial and refusal of their suggestions. So long as anything in you says “yes” or accepts, there is always the possibility of a return.

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These [thoughts of unfitness for Yoga] are the usual suggestions that come when there is the attack of the hostile forces. You should know that they have no value and reject. The spiritual
perfection, the full transformation of the nature is not a thing that can come without long and steady endeavour. Movements like these have many refuges in different parts of the being and it is not till they are driven out of all and out of the environmental consciousness that one can be free from their recurrence. One must learn to be inflexible, fixed in one’s aim and not discouraged by the recurring difficulties of the nature, for they have been long ingrained in the vital and physical of the human being and they are also in the play of the universal forces — so if it takes long to get them out, as it does even with the best sadhaks, that is no proof that one is not fit for the sadhana. Reject all that and go on steadily — aim always at getting more of the higher consciousness down, that is the cure for all these things.

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What is there in you is the capacity for response to these suggestions [of unfitness for Yoga] that still remains owing to the stamp of the past habit on the physical, especially the subconscient physical. I have explained to you what happens — that these things when rejected by the mind and vital descend into the subconscient or else go out into the environmental consciousness and from there they can return when pushed by the hostile forces. It is in these two ways that the hostiles try to recover their hold. But the rising from the subconscient is not so important except for its long persistence — it comes up in dream or it is, in the waking consciousness, fragmentary. But when it comes from the environmental consciousness then it can be a strong attack and it is evidently that which is taking place now.

I think what lends force to these attacks and tends to upset you, is a feeling of impatience somewhere that things are not going forward, progress of a definite kind is not being made and that these things are not done with already for ever. A period of apparent halt is not necessarily an adverse thing, it can be a preparation for a fresh progress of a more decisive character — that often happens in the sadhana — but you have to keep vigilantly the advance gained in spite of attacks. The next progress ought to be the descent of the full spiritual calm.
and peace from above — an opening of the consciousness into
wideness. Till it comes, keep yourself firm and do not allow these
attacks to shake your basis.

* They [hostile attacks on the outer being] are felt as suggestions,
or a touch on the surface mind, vital, physical or as movements
in the atmosphere (the personal or the general environmental
consciousness) — but for the inner being it is like gusts or storms
outside. If they penetrate by chance into the house, they are im-
mediately ejected and the doors and windows banged on them
— there is nothing that accepts or tolerates them inside.

Attacks through Others

All these difficulties [in dealing with others] should be faced in
a more quiet and less egoistic spirit.

This Yoga is a spiritual battle; its very attempt raises all
sorts of adverse forces and one must be ready to face difficulties,
sufferings, reverses of all sorts in a calm unflinching spirit.

The difficulties that come are ordeals and tests and if one
meets them in the right spirit, one comes out stronger and
spiritually purer and greater.

No misfortune can come, the adverse forces cannot touch
or be victorious unless there is some defect in oneself, some
impurity, weakness or at the very least ignorance. One should
then seek out this weakness in oneself and correct it.

When there is an attack from the human instruments of
adverse forces, one should try to overcome it not in a spirit of
personal hatred or anger or wounded egoism, but with a calm
spirit of strength and equanimity and a call to the Divine Force
to act. Success or failure lies with the Divine.

In dealing with others there is a way of speaking and doing
which gives most offence and opens one most to misunder-
standing and there is also a way which is quiet and firm but
conciliatory to those who can be conciliated — all who are not
absolutely of bad will. It is better to use the latter than the
former. No weakness, no arrogance or violence, this should be the spirit.

* The attack of illness after seeing the woman is very evidently the result of an adverse Force leaping upon you. There are men and women who are the vehicles of these adverse Forces and if you come in contact with them when you are off your guard and have a movement (in this case a sexual movement) which gives them an opportunity for a grip, then some adverse Force can leap upon you and hold, and the attack takes either the form of a mental unsettling, a moral disturbance (loss of character etc.), a vital upheaval or nervous breakdown or, as in this case, a physical illness. These things are well known to all who are acquainted with the working of occult forces and the details in the letter are quite unmistakable signs; such attacks are always happening to people, but most are unconscious and feel only the results but not the movements that attended the attack or their causes. When the consciousness has opened by Yoga one becomes aware and it is easy to fix the source of the attack and its nature. The illness can only be cured for good by the throwing out or the departure of the force that causes it; a certain quiet will has to be exercised or else a calling in of the Yoga-force or the Divine Sanction for the removal; there should be no struggle but a very tranquil pressure. The greater the faith, the easier it is for the action to be successful.

* Yes, it was an attack — the hostile forces often take the form of this or that person so as to get through the physical associations a more concrete grip on the physical consciousness.