There are always these resistances in sadhana; it is because the world is full of forces that don’t want men to find the Divine. Even the Rishis of old times used always to be obstructed and disturbed until they conquered desire, anger and all else and became full of the Divine.

The resistance is not always an intentional one. It is the resistance of the nature, the mind’s personal ideas and preferences, the vital’s desires, attachments, depressions, revolts, egoistic insistences on its own ways and freedom to follow its inclinations and fancies, the physical’s tamas, want of faith, inertia. These things are parts of human nature. The Force comes to change them, but if the sadhak accepts these things, justifies them, or simply allows them to hold his consciousness without reacting, then their resistance which is always there can last a long time.

Your proposed remedy would be no remedy at all. One has to go forward not backward to some old starting point. It is a wrong idea to get disgusted with doing the right thing because you cannot do it absolutely now. It has to be done by a progressive movement. In everyone there is something that resists, until the ignorant parts of the being are transformed. That is no reason for giving up. It is sufficient if there is something behind that feels and can respond even if it is very much covered by the obscure external nature. It is that in you which feels the Force above the head and the atmosphere of quietness, and it is through that that it will be done whatever the amount of the external resistance.
What you feel coming across the meditation is a resistance in the subconscient material throwing up a thing like the cold or a nervous unrest or a causeless uneasiness. They must of course be dismissed. When this part opens to the pressure from above, then these things are felt no more.

*To break and rebuild is often necessary for the change; but once the fundamental consciousness has come there is no reason why it should be done with trouble and disturbance — it can be done quietly. It is the resistance of the lower parts that brings in trouble and disturbance.*

There is no invariable rule of such suffering. It is not the soul that suffers; the Self is calm and equal to all things and the only sorrow of the psychic being is the sorrow of the resistance of Nature to the Divine Will or the resistance of things and people to the call of the True, the Good and the Beautiful. What is affected by suffering is the vital nature and the body. When the soul draws towards the Divine, there may be a resistance in the mind and the common form of that is denial and doubt — which may create mental and vital suffering. There may again be a resistance in the vital nature whose principal character is desire and the attachment to the objects of desire, and if in this field there is conflict between the soul and the vital nature, between the Divine Attraction and the pull of the Ignorance, then obviously there may be much suffering of the mind and vital parts. The physical consciousness also may offer a resistance which is usually that of a fundamental inertia, an obscurity in the very stuff of the physical, an incomprehension, an inability to respond to the higher consciousness, a habit of helplessly responding to the lower mechanically, even when it does not want to do so; both vital and physical suffering may be the consequence. There is moreover the resistance of the Universal Nature which does not want the being to escape from the Ignorance into the Light. This may take the form of a vehement insistence on the continuation of
the old movements, waves of them thrown on the mind and vital
and body so that old ideas, impulses, desires, feelings, responses
continue even after they are thrown out and rejected, and can re-
turn like an invading army from outside, until the whole nature,
given to the Divine, refuses to admit them. This is the subjective
form of the universal resistance, but it may also take an objective
form — opposition, calumny, attacks, persecution, misfortunes
of many kinds, adverse conditions and circumstances, pain, ill-
ness, assaults from men or forces. There too the possibility of
suffering is evident. There are two ways to meet all that — first
that of the Self, calm, equality, a spirit, a will, a mind, a vital,
a physical consciousness that remain resolutely turned towards
the Divine and unshaken by all suggestion of doubt, desire,
attachment, depression, sorrow, pain, inertia. This is possible
when the inner being awakens, when one becomes conscious of
the Self, of the inner mind, the inner vital, the inner physical,
for that can more easily attune itself to the divine Will, and then
there is a division in the being as if there were two beings, one
within, calm, strong, equal, unperturbed, a channel of the Divine
Consciousness and Force, one without, still encroached on by
the lower Nature; but then the disturbances of the latter become
something superficial which are no more than an outer ripple, —
until these under the inner pressure fade and sink away and the
outer being too remains calm, concentrated, unattackable. There
is also the way of the psychic, — when the psychic being comes
out in its inherent power, its consecration, adoration, love of the
Divine, self-giving, surrender and imposes these on the mind,
vital and physical consciousness and compels them to turn all
their movements Godward. If the psychic is strong and master
throughout, then there is no or little subjective suffering and the
objective cannot affect either the soul or the other parts of the
consciousness — the way is sunlit and a great joy and sweetness
are the note of the whole sadhana. As for the outer attacks and
adverse circumstances, that depends on the action of the Force
transforming the relations of the being with the outer Nature;
as the victory of the Force proceeds, they will be eliminated; but
however long they last, they cannot impede the sadhana, for
then even adverse things and happenings become a means for its advance and for the growth of the spirit.

Pain and Suffering

The sufferings and distress which come to people are part of their karma, part of the experience the being has to go through on its way through life after life till it is ready for spiritual change. In the life of the sadhak all vicissitudes are part of the path and, if he is a sadhak, he will recognise them as such though he may not understand their full meaning till afterwards — good and bad fortune, outward happiness and suffering are to be taken with an unshaken equality and trust in the Divine Wisdom till one has attained a position in which, united with the Divine Will, one can dominate them.

Suffering is not inflicted as a punishment for sin or for hostility — that is a wrong idea. Suffering comes like pleasure and good fortune as an inevitable part of life in the ignorance. The dualities of pleasure and pain, joy and grief, good fortune and ill fortune are the inevitable results of the ignorance which separates us from our true consciousness and from the Divine. Only by coming back to it can we get rid of suffering. Karma from the past lives exists, much of what happens is due to it, but not all. For we can mend our karma by our own consciousness and efforts. But the suffering is simply a natural consequence of past errors, not a punishment, just as a burn is the natural consequence of playing with fire. It is part of the experience by which the soul through its instruments learns and grows until it is ready to turn to the Divine.

Sometimes pain and suffering are means by which the soul is awakened and pushed forward to the Divine. That is the experience on which X constantly dwells as he has suffered much in his life — but all do not find it like that.
The idealist’s question is why should there be pain at all, even if it is counterweighed by the fundamental pleasure of existence. The real crux is why should inadequacy, limit and suffering come across this natural pleasure of life. It does not mean that life is initially miserable in its very nature.

* Life as it is is certainly full of mishap and suffering and looks like an inconsequence of Nature that has no eventual significance. But even if one does not find the concealed significance, yet if one can live in the higher calm, one can pass through it without being immersed in its bitternesses or its engulfing turmoils. That you have seen for yourself. I certainly hope that you will arrive at stability and security in that higher calm and with it the security of life cannot fail to come.

The divine support will always be there if you hold on to it and our direct help cannot but be yours when you ask and call for it. You have only to hold on to your effort in spite of what seeks to shake you. Then certainly you will reach the height to which you aspire. I do not see why it should not be in the end the highest height — but that we will leave for the future to decide. To have solid calmness is in itself something fundamental and sufficient.

* There is no need of suffering. Refuse it when it comes.

* There is no reason why suffering should be indispensable for making progress. You bring the suffering on yourself by the wrong ideas of the mind and by the revolts of the vital. The Mother’s grace and love are there, but the mind refuses to recognise it. If there is confidence, if the mind and vital consent to surrender and have full faith and reliance, then there may be difficulties but there is no suffering.

There are people who think that the proper way of progress is through revolt, but this is a mistake. Conditions of light
followed by darker conditions come to everyone, but to revolt because there is delay and difficulty does not help. One has to go on in the confidence that in spite of all delays and difficulties, if one is faithful, then in the end, the goal will be reached and one will attain to the Divine.

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I cannot say that I follow very well the logic of your doubts. How does a brilliant scholar being clapped into prison invalidate the hope of the Yoga? There are many dismal spectacles in the world, but that is after all the very reason why Yoga has to be done. If the world were all happy and beautiful and ideal, who would want to change it or find it necessary to bring down a higher consciousness into earthly Mind and Matter? Your other argument is that the work of the Yoga itself is difficult, not easy, not a happy canter to the goal. Of course it is, because the world and human nature are what they are. I never said it was easy or that there were not obstinate difficulties in the way of the endeavour. Again I do not understand your point about raising up a new race by writing trivial letters. Of course not — nor by writing important letters either; even if I were to spend my time writing fine poems it would not build up a new race. Each activity is important in its own place — an electron or a molecule or a grain may be small things in themselves, but in their place they are indispensable to the building up of a world, — it cannot be made up only of mountains and sunsets and streamings of the aurora borealis — though these have their place there. All depends on the force behind these things and the purpose in their action — and that is known to the Cosmic Spirit which is at work, — and it works, I may add, not by the mind or according to human standards but by a greater consciousness which, starting from an electron, can build up a world and, using a “tangle of ganglia”, can make them the base here for the works of the Mind and Spirit in Matter, produce a Ramakrishna, or a Napoleon, or a Shakespeare. Is the life of a great poet, either, made up only of magnificent and important things? How many “trivial” things had to be dealt with and done before there could
be produced a *King Lear* or a *Hamlet*! Again, according to your own reasoning, would not people be justified in mocking at your pother — so they would call it, I do not — about metre and scansion and how many ways a syllable can be read? Why, they might say, is X wasting his time in trivial prosaic things like this when he might have been spending it in producing a beautiful lyric or fine music? But the worker knows and respects the material with which he must work and he knows why he is busy with “trifles” and small details and what is their place in the fullness of his labour.

As for faith, you write as if I had never had a doubt or any difficulty. I have had worse than any human mind can think of. It is not because I have ignored difficulties, but because I have seen them more clearly, experienced them on a larger scale than anyone living now or before me that, having faced and measured them, I am sure of the results of my work. Even if I still saw the chance that it might come to nothing (which is impossible), I would go on unperturbed, because I would still have done to the best of my power the work that I had to do and what is so done always counts in the economy of the universe. But why should I feel that all this may come to nothing when I see each step and where it is leading and every week and day — once it was every year and month and hereafter it will be every day and hour — brings me so much nearer to my goal? In the way that one treads with the greater Light above, even every difficulty gives its help and has its value and the Night itself carries in it the burden of the light that has to be.

As for your own case, it comes to this that experiences come and stop, there are constant ups and downs, in times of recoil and depression no advance at all seems to have been made, there is as yet no certitude. So it was with me also, so it is with everyone, not with you alone. The way to the heights is always like that up to a certain point, but the ups and downs, the difficulties and obstacles are no proof that it is a chimera to aspire to the summits.

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What you said to X is indeed very true, especially the phrase, “However feeble the clay, the flower is in the bud and it will blossom.” That is true not only of individuals, but of the earth as a whole — Earth is a feeble clay for the spiritual planting, but all that is sown in it buds eventually and the bud once there will blossom.

La Rochefoucauld’s saying [“We are always strong enough to bear the sufferings of others”] is true in general, but not quite true. There are some who can bear their own sufferings much better than they can bear the sufferings of others, while the Yogi can bear the whole world’s suffering in himself and yet not falter.

The attitude you express in your letter is quite the right one — whatever sufferings come on the path, are not too high a price for the victory that has to be won and, if they are taken in the right spirit, they become even a means towards the victory.

Dangers, Falls and Failures

I have never said that Yoga or that this Yoga is a safe and easy path. What I say is that anyone who has the will to go through can go through. For the rest, if you aim high, there is always the danger of a steep fall if you misconduct your aeroplane. But the danger is for those who allow themselves to entertain a double being, aiming high but also indulging their lower outlook and hankerings. What else can you expect when people do that? You must become single-minded, then the difficulties of the mind and vital will be overcome. Otherwise those who oscillate between their heights and their abysses, will always be in danger till they have become single-minded. That applies to the “advanced” as well as to the beginner. These are facts of nature — I can’t pretend for anybody’s comfort that they are otherwise. But there is the fact also that nobody need keep himself in this danger. One-mindedness (ekamāññithā), surrender to the Divine, faith, true love for the Divine, complete sincerity in the will, spiritual humility (real, not formal) — there are so many things...
that can be a safeguard against any chance of eventual downfall. Slips, stumbles, difficulties, upsettings everyone has; one can’t be insured against these things, but if one has the safeguards, they are transitory, help the nature to learn and are followed by a better progress.

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Men like X and Y are not likely to pretend to have experiences they do not have. Z’s fall after his one year’s rapid progress had obvious reasons in his character which do not exist in theirs. But apart from that the fall of a sadhak from Yoga proves nothing against the truth of spiritual experience. It is well known to all Yogis that a fall is possible and the Gita speaks of it more than once. But how does the fall prove that spiritual experience is not true and genuine? The fall of a man from a great height does not prove that he never reached a great height. The experiences of Y have been those of many others before him and will be those of many others who do not yet have them; I fail to see why the fact of people having them or their intensity or the joy and confidence they give should make them suspect as untrue.

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A man who has risen high can fall low, especially if his experiences are only through the spiritual mind and the vital and physical remain as they were. But it is an absurdity to say that he is sure to fall low.

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I have not said that to reach the overmind is impossible; I have only said that it is difficult. Difficulty is not a reason why the things should not be done. It is not easy for a physical being to reach the highest truth because his consciousness is something ignorant that has emerged out of the material inconscience and is very much tied to and hampered by the obscurity of its origin — in addition to the mental and vital difficulties of ego and desire. Yoga itself is
not easy; if it were so, it would be a multitude and not only a few that would be practising it.

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There is no reason to have a vague doubt about one's own future founded upon no other ground than the failure of others. That is what X and Y are always doing, and it is a great disturber of their progress. Why not instead, if one is to go by others, gather hope from the example of those who are satisfied and progressing? It is true however that these do not show their success as the others do their failure. However, that apart, failure comes by very positive errors and not by the absence of an invariable and unflagging aspiration or effort. The effort demanded of the sadhak is that of aspiration, rejection and surrender. If these three are done, the rest is to come of itself by the grace of the Mother and the working of her force in you. But of the three the most important is surrender of which the first necessary form is trust and confidence and patience in difficulty. There is no rule that trust and confidence can only remain if aspiration is there. On the contrary when even aspiration is not there because of the pressure of inertia, trust and confidence and patience can remain. If trust and patience fail when aspiration is quiescent, that would mean that the sadhak is relying solely on his own effort — it would mean, “Oh my aspiration has failed, so there is no hope for me. My aspiration fails so what can Mother do?” On the contrary, the sadhak should feel, “Never mind, my aspiration will come back again. Meanwhile I know that the Mother is with me even when I do not feel her; she will carry me through even the darkest period.” That is the fully right attitude you must have. To those who have it depression could do nothing; even if it comes, it has to return baffled. That is not tamasic surrender. Tamasic surrender is when one says, “I won’t do anything; let Mother do everything. Aspiration, rejection, surrender even are not necessary. Let her do all that in me.” There is a great difference between the two attitudes. One is that of the shirker who won’t do anything, the other is that of the sadhak who does his best but even when he is reduced to
quiescence for a time and things seem adverse, keeps always his trust in the Mother’s force and presence behind all and by that trust baffles the opposition force and calls back the activity of the sadhana.