

# THE PEACOCK LETTER



THE INTEGRAL KNOWLEDGE STUDY CENTER

24 November 2011 • Volume 20, No. 4



## CONTENTS

GODDESS DESCENDING  
*Rand Hicks* 3

PEACOCK'S FAN  
4

THE DIVINE ASCENSION  
*Sri Aurobindo* 4

THE CALL OF THE IMPOSSIBLE  
*Sri Aurobindo* 7

## THE INTEGRAL KNOWLEDGE STUDY CENTER

The Integral Knowledge Study Center was formed in 1979, when a visit from India by M. P. Pandit and Vasanti Rao brought together a number of seekers into a collective endeavour of study, meditation, and inner growth. The overarching goal of the Center, in harmony with the vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, has since been to aid in the discovery of the secret soul of delight that dwells within each person, and to promote the integral perfection of life that can flow from this discovery of authentic being.

A number of activities are sponsored that support this spiritual search, but the core of the Center's collective life is a weekly study group that meets on Sunday evenings. Appropriate books drawn from the extensive literature of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother serve as the focus of these meetings, where probing, positive discussions among the participants enhance clarity and lead into a concluding group meditation.

Among other public offerings are seminars and workshops covering a wide variety of themes relating to spiritual life, the viewing of significant films dealing with the growth of consciousness, and the occasional sponsorship of guest speakers. Private counselling and instruction in meditation are also available for individuals through the Center without charge.

On August 15, 1983, Sri Aurobindo's Relics were inaugurated at the Center. It marked the first time that the Relics had ever left India for another country. For many seekers in America the Relics offer profound significance and continuing inspiration.

## THE PEACOCK LETTER

*The Peacock Letter* is an online quarterly published by the Integral Knowledge Study Center, 221 Clematis Street, Pensacola, Florida 32503, a tax-exempt, non-profit corporation. You can find us online at [iksc.org](http://iksc.org), and email us at [randhicks@iksc.org](mailto:randhicks@iksc.org). Requests for digital subscriptions to *The Peacock Letter* should be sent to the Integral Knowledge Study Center at one of the above addresses. Contributions to defray associated expenses are appreciated. For past issues of *The Peacock Letter* and other information about the yoga of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, please write to us.

All quotations from the works of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother are copyrighted by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and are reproduced with the kind permission of the Ashram. Contributions to the Center's work in America are welcome.



*The Peacock Letter* uses only recycled pixels.



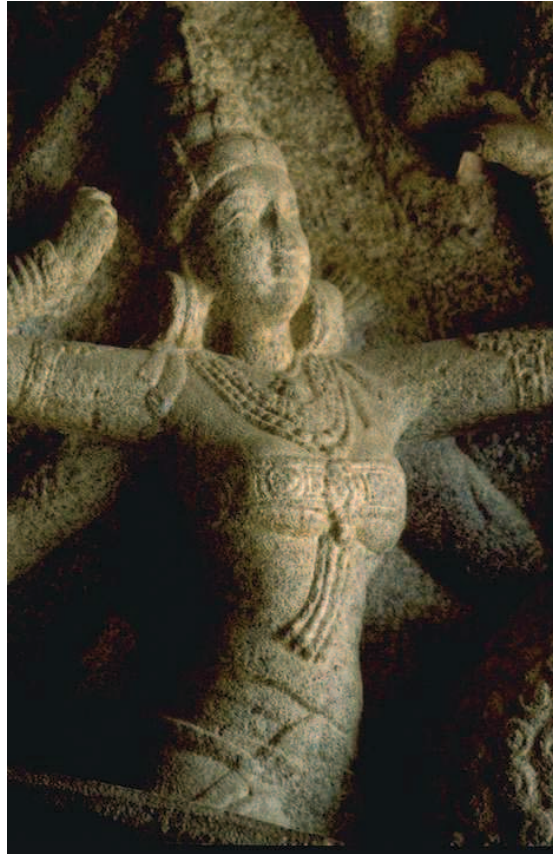
## GODDESS DESCENDING

Rand Hicks

In darkening months of the year, it helps to greet again the luminous myths at the center of the Durga Puja festival. They describe how the great Goddess descends to the earth, bringing an inner and even an outer force to light up the world and end retrogression. Three episodes are recounted in the *Devi Mahatmyam* to illustrate how she lifts us. Each opens with a meditation on a central power and personality of the Divine Mother.

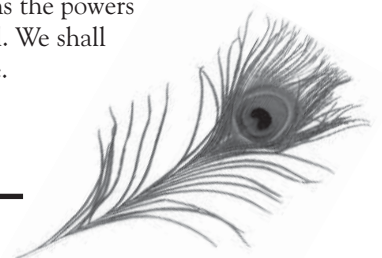
Mahakali is invoked in the first episode, where the guna is *tamas*, and the story pursues the demons Madhu and Kaitabha, whose threats end when they are mercifully slain on the lap of Vishnu. But it is the Devi who awakens Vishnu from his slumber in time to prevent calamity. The second, based on the guna of *rajas*, meditates on Mahalakshmi, and we hear the story of how Durga confronts and defeats the formidable Mahishasura in dread combat, releasing her numberless powers and forces into the fierce field of battle. And the third meditation, where the guna is *sattwa*, is on Mahasaraswati. We learn how the impenitent Shumbha and Nishumbha are destroyed along with their throngs, whereupon she restores cosmic harmony and promotes progress. The great Goddess promises that she will always return to protect her devotees, dispel darkness, and lead humanity forwards.

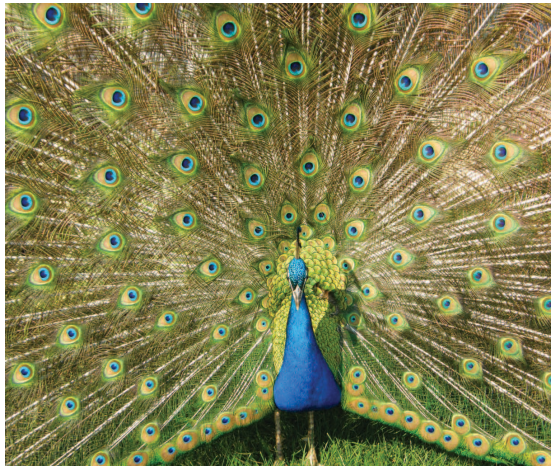
So Durga descends at the behest of the collected Gods, who evoke that Goddess seated mystically in the heart of all beings. In their various faces, in their individual aspects, the Gods can none of them roll back the gathering darkness centered in Mahishasura, singly or together, though they are sons of light, *devas*. But when they willingly call forth the unity that gave birth to their diversity, the Mahashakti emerges. And when she descends, her radiant form may seem small — as in the sculptured image at Mamallapuram — when compared to the disordering majesty of the dark ones. Yet she is invincible. The eyes of Durga are trained upwards as she draws from her own timeless transcendence, yet she moves relentlessly forward in time, the opposition falling back. She represents true being, dynamic yet essential, that lies beyond oppositions, beyond light and darkness and their



unceasing struggle in the worlds of division. She is neither simply unity nor the diversity born from it. Mahadevi is the unattainable, transcending the whole while yet engendering it through her supreme Puissance.

Thus the Mahashakti descends and defeats the Asuras, entering the portal of time without surrendering her native state of transcendence. And age after age the Goddess returns, carving an upward cosmic path from the tamasic through the rajasic and the sattwic to a destination she alone sees. She moves us to what lies beyond the realm of the gunas, the ordinary nature. Her climbing cosmic labor is unfinished. She insists to bridge the lower to the higher, and so her greatest work lies before her. And we as her children and collaborators are invited to join her. We carry her light within. Ascending first to find our own transcendence in her, she then awakens the powers in us with which to create a new world. We shall partner her descent, as we always have.





## PEACOCK'S FAN

The 3rd of September marked the 125th birth anniversary of the great Sri T.V. Kapali Sastriar (1886-1953), eminent disciple of Sri Aurobindo and author of many books elucidating the Veda, Upanishad, and Tantra. Kapali wrote mellifluously in English and Sanskrit, in Telugu and Tamil. His pioneering work in the Rigveda has drawn deep appreciation globally. Our Center observed the luminous occasion with a program and meditation.

Once a month, the Center offers a public talk on Indian spirituality to render added context to Sri Aurobindo's vision. Recent topics were "Mahadevi — The Might of the Mother" and "Shankaracharya and the Essence of Advaita." The first centered around the occasion of Durga Puja. The second is the first of a series on great spiritual figures in India's history. Future events will feature presentations on Sri Ramana Maharshi, Sri Ramakrishna, and Swami Vivekananda. Later we will approach the history, thought, and practice of the tantric tradition. The comprehensive nature of Sri Aurobindo's vision is always at the forefront in our Sunday satsangs, where currently we are in *Essays on the Gita*, focusing as always on practice.

From August onwards, a number of friends visited the Center and our guest houses, sometimes for extended periods of stay. Among these delightful souls were Vinod Chandola from the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, David Mitchell from Wisconsin (soon to be a fellow Pensacolan), John Eckre from Santa Fe on his first visit, Judy Ellis from California, and Bob Bates from Tennessee.

## THE DIVINE ASCENSION Sri Aurobindo

The progressive revelation of a great, a transcendent, a luminous Reality with the multitudinous relativities of this world that we see and those other worlds that we do not see as means and material, condition and field, this would seem then to be the meaning of the universe, — since meaning and aim it has and is neither a purposeless illusion nor a fortuitous accident. For the same reasoning which leads us to conclude that world-existence is not a deceptive trick of Mind, justifies equally the certainty that it is no blindly and helplessly self-existent mass of separate phenomenal existences clinging together and struggling together as best they can in their orbit through eternity, no tremendous self-creation and self-impulsion of an ignorant Force without any secret Intelligence within aware of its starting-point and its goal and guiding its process and its motion. An existence, wholly self-aware and therefore entirely master of itself, possesses the phenomenal being in which it is involved, realises itself in form, unfolds itself in the individual.

That luminous Emergence is the dawn which the Aryan forefathers worshipped. Its fulfilled perfection is that highest step of the world-pervading Vishnu which they beheld as if an eye of vision extended in the purest heavens of the Mind. For it exists already as an all-revealing and all-guiding Truth of things which watches over the world and attracts mortal man, first without the knowledge of his conscious mind, by the general march of Nature, but at last consciously by a progressive awakening and self-enlargement, to his divine ascension. The ascent to the divine Life is the human journey, the Work of works, the acceptable Sacrifice. This alone is man's real business in the world and the justification of his existence, without which he would be only an insect crawling among other ephemeral insects on a speck of surface mud and water which has managed to form itself amid the appalling immensities of the physical universe.

This Truth of things that has to emerge out of the phenomenal world's contradictions is declared to be an infinite Bliss and self-conscious Existence, the same everywhere, in all things, in all times





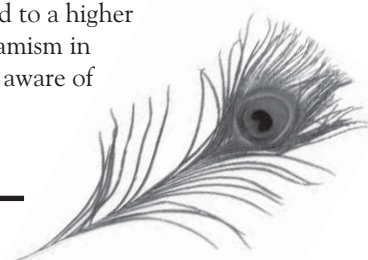
and beyond Time, and aware of itself behind all these phenomena by whose intensest vibrations of activity or by whose largest totality it can never be entirely expressed or in any way limited; for it is self-existent and does not depend for its being upon its manifestations. They represent it, but do not exhaust it; point to it, but do not reveal it. It is revealed only to itself within their forms. The conscious existence involved in the form comes, as it evolves, to know itself by intuition, by self-vision, by self-experience. It becomes itself in the world by knowing itself; it knows itself by becoming itself. Thus possessed of itself inwardly, it imparts also to its forms and modes the conscious delight of Sachchidananda. This becoming of the infinite Bliss-Existence-Consciousness in mind and life and body, — for independent of them it exists eternally, — is the transfiguration intended and the utility of individual existence. Through the individual it manifests in relation even as of itself it exists in identity.

The Unknowable knowing itself as Sachchidananda is the one supreme affirmation of Vedanta; it contains all the others or on it they depend. This is the one veritable experience that remains when all appearances have been accounted for negatively by the elimination of their shapes and coverings or positively by the reduction of their names and forms to the constant truth that they contain. For fulfilment of life or for transcendence of life, and whether purity, calm and freedom in the spirit be our aim or puissance, joy and perfection, Sachchidananda is the unknown, omnipresent, indispensable term for which the human consciousness, whether in knowledge and sentiment or in sensation and action, is eternally seeking.

The universe and the individual are the two essential appearances into which the Unknowable descends and through which it has to be approached; for other intermediate collectivities are born only of their interaction. This descent of the supreme Reality is in its nature a self-concealing; and in the descent there are successive levels, in the concealing successive veils. Necessarily, the revelation takes the form of an ascent; and necessarily also the ascent and the revelation are both progressive. For each successive level in the descent of the Divine is to man a stage



in an ascension; each veil that hides the unknown God becomes for the God-lover and God-seeker an instrument of His unveiling. Out of the rhythmic slumber of material Nature unconscious of the Soul and the Idea that maintain the ordered activities of her energy even in her dumb and mighty material trance, the world struggles into the more quick, varied and disordered rhythm of Life labouring on the verges of self-consciousness. Out of Life it struggles upward into Mind in which the unit becomes awake to itself and its world, and in that awakening the universe gains the leverage it required for its supreme work, it gains self-conscious individuality. But Mind takes up the work to continue, not to complete it. It is a labourer of acute but limited intelligence who takes the confused materials offered by Life and, having improved, adapted, varied, classified according to its power, hands them over to the supreme Artist of our divine manhood. That Artist dwells in supermind; for supermind is superman. Therefore our world has yet to climb beyond Mind to a higher principle, a higher status, a higher dynamism in which universe and individual become aware of



and possess that which they both are and therefore stand explained to each other, in harmony with each other, unified.

The disorders of life and mind cease by discerning the secret of a more perfect order than the physical. Matter below life and mind contains in itself the balance between a perfect poise of tranquillity and the action of an immeasurable energy, but does not possess that which it contains. Its peace wears the dull mask of an obscure inertia, a sleep of unconsciousness or rather of a drugged and imprisoned consciousness. Driven by a force which is its real self but whose sense it cannot yet seize nor share, it has not the awakened joy of its own harmonious energies.

Life and mind awaken to the sense of this want in the form of a striving and seeking ignorance and a troubled and baffled desire which are the first steps towards self-knowledge and self-fulfilment. But where then is the kingdom of their self-fulfilling? It comes to them by the exceeding of themselves. Beyond life and mind we recover consciously in its divine truth that which the balance of material Nature grossly represented, — a tranquillity which is neither inertia nor a sealed trance of consciousness but the concentration of an absolute force and an absolute self-awareness, and an action of immeasurable energy which is at the same time an out-thrilling of ineffable bliss because its every act is the expression, not of a want and an ignorant straining, but of an absolute peace and self-mastery. In that attainment our ignorance realises the light of which it was a darkened or a partial reflection; our desires cease in the plenitude and fulfilment towards which even in their most brute material forms they were an obscure and fallen aspiration.

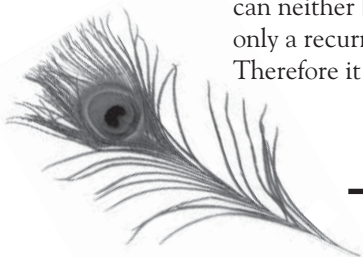
The universe and the individual are necessary to each other in their ascent. Always indeed they exist for each other and profit by each other. Universe is a diffusion of the divine All in infinite Space and Time, the individual its concentration within limits of Space and Time. Universe seeks in infinite extension the divine totality it feels itself to be but cannot entirely realise; for in extension existence drives at a pluralistic sum of itself which can neither be the primal nor the final unit, but only a recurring decimal without end or beginning. Therefore it creates in itself a self-conscious

concentration of the All through which it can aspire. In the conscious individual Prakriti turns back to perceive Purusha, World seeks after Self; God having entirely become Nature, Nature seeks to become progressively God.

On the other hand it is by means of the universe that the individual is impelled to realise himself. Not only is it his foundation, his means, his field, the stuff of the divine Work; but also, since the concentration of the universal Life which he takes place within limits and is not like the intensive unity of Brahman free from all conception of bound and term, he must necessarily universalise and impersonalise himself in order to manifest the divine All which is his reality. Yet is he called upon to preserve, even when he most extends himself in universality of consciousness, a mysterious transcendent something of which his sense of personality gives him an obscure and egoistic representation. Otherwise he has missed his goal, the problem set to him has not been solved, the divine work for which he accepted birth has not been done.

The universe comes to the individual as Life, — a dynamism the entire secret of which he has to master and a mass of colliding results, a whirl of potential energies out of which he has to disengage some supreme order and some yet unrealised harmony. This is after all the real sense of man's progress. It is not merely a restatement in slightly different terms of what physical Nature has already accomplished. Nor can the ideal of human life be simply the animal repeated on a higher scale of mentality. Otherwise, any system or order which assured a tolerable well-being and a moderate mental satisfaction would have stayed our advance. The animal is satisfied with a modicum of necessity; the gods are content with their splendours. But man cannot rest permanently until he reaches some highest good. He is the greatest of living beings because he is the most discontented, because he feels most the pressure of limitations. He alone, perhaps, is capable of being seized by the divine frenzy for a remote ideal.

(From *The Life Divine*, CWSA, Vol. 21, pages 47-51.)



## *The Call of the Impossible*

*A godhead moves us to unrealised things.  
Asleep in the wide folds of destiny,  
A world guarded by Silence' rustling wings  
Shelters their fine impossibility:*

*But parting quiver the caerulean gates;  
Strange splendours look into our dreaming eyes;  
We bear proud deities and magnificent fates;  
Faces and hands come near from Paradise.*

*What shines above, waits darkling here in us:  
Bliss unattained our future's birthright is,  
Beauty of our dim souls grows amorous,  
We are the heirs of infinite widenesses.*

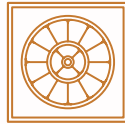
*The impossible is our mask of things to be,  
Mortal the door to immortality.*

*Richard*





THE INTEGRAL KNOWLEDGE STUDY CENTER  
SRI AUROBINDO CIRCLE  
221 CLEMATIS STREET  
PENSACOLA, FL 32503  
USA



The Force is there waiting  
to be manifested, we  
must discover the new  
forms through which  
it can manifest—  
with my blessings  
—Sri Aurobindo

