

THE PEACOCK LETTER



THE INTEGRAL KNOWLEDGE STUDY CENTER

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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 left India for another country. For many seekers in America the Relics offer profound significance and continuing inspiration.

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A CENTURY THENCE

Rand Hicks

A hundred years ago, when Sri Aurobindo celebrated his 43rd birthday, the *Arya* was beginning its second year. That August issue opened with a recapitulation of the journal's purpose with "Our Ideal," then presented a continuation of *The Life Divine* series, "The Divine Maya." Another piece was "The Fullness of Renunciation" (*The Synthesis of Yoga*). Closing it out were "Delight in Work" and "Evolution."

In "The Divine Maya," Sri Aurobindo was proceeding from a two-essay examination of the principle of delight. Bliss is the core equivalent of unitary being, which through its conscious force expresses and manifests itself. The Infinite measures itself out in a limited yet harmonious figuring of itself, a condensed expression of its self-being and self-delight through the agency of a vast supramental vision. In succeeding chapters he traces how that unity becomes translated into a world paradoxically divided to human intelligence. But his assertion of a bliss-centered universe is repeated again and again in his writing. Sri Aurobindo would not accept that the world was an indecipherable and meaningless farce. *The Life Divine* is a philosophy of realism. Saccidananda is omnipresent, the universe is genuine, and existence-consciousness-bliss are discoverable. Bliss is real. If delight is the very nature of being, then it must be fulfilled in the play of the cosmos.

His personal experience founded his philosophy. Years of practice reaffirmed its truth. To his opened vision all the world was a face of Godhead, and so too was each one of us, moving within the larger world. All we can ever meet is a figure or force of the one disguised divinity: there is no other. This realization was a melting experience for him. All divisions collapsed; each event and experience, physical or aesthetic or psychological, carried delight at its core. He not only accepted the world: Sri Aurobindo treasured it.

His wholehearted acceptance of the universal manifestation led to the growth of a new kind of Ashram. It formed around the Mother and him naturally, organically, into a collective life that works to manifest truth through beauty, through a rich-hearted and glad nobility. The inner

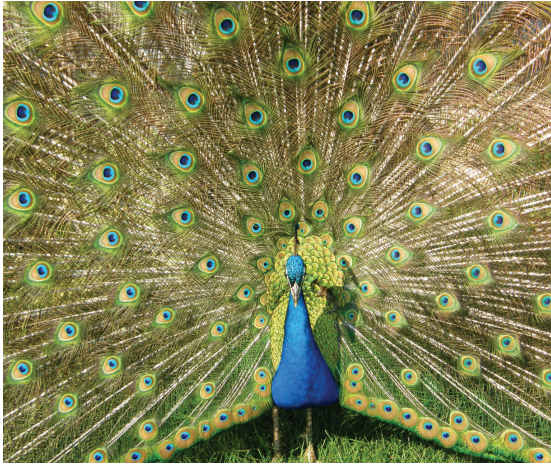


Lion at Rest c.1585

architecture of the Ashram is built upon a life-affirming oneness — the soul of Sri Aurobindo's great realization — and not upon a retreat from life into the freedom of a nirvana. Nirvana early on had liberated him from ego. A greater experience engulfed him and he embraced the world. The Ashram aspires to mirror his vast experience: from the individual to the collective soul, it must become a fortress of unchained and enlightened force, a bastion of bliss, an open society that leans into life around, shares its felicity, offers balance and harmony. This was his experience around the wheel of the hours. Enlightenment is not full unless it reaches the revelation of bliss in the here-and-now. The world has not been seen profoundly until we recognize and plumb its potential. To redeem our globe by finding in our souls the seeds of bliss — by growing into full and radiant potency — is our ever-present challenge. Self-conquest is key to the world's future. Near *Savitri's* end he wrote (p. 712):

*A greater harmony from the stillness born
Surprised with joy and sweetness yearning hearts,
An ecstasy and a laughter and a cry.
A power leaned down, a happiness found its home.
Over wide earth brooded the infinite bliss.*





PEACOCK'S FAN

Our study of *The Life Divine* on Sundays has reached the end of the twenty-fourth chapter — “Matter.” Despite significant time zone differences, a number of friends from around the country and from India attend the sessions digitally through the Zoom conference app.

In the last few months several brilliant souls shared time in the Center with us: Jennifer Williams from Virginia (twice!); Padma and Raj Venkataramani and children, Columbus, Ohio; Manu and Devendra Bhalla, south Florida; and Rhiane from Panama City Beach, Florida. And our dear friend Saumya Bableshwar from the Sri Aurobindo Ashram passed a few felicitous days with us in late June. Soon we will enjoy visits from Kate Walker, Missouri; Bob Bates, Tennessee; Nishant and Savithri Dani, Seattle.

THE DIVINE MAYA

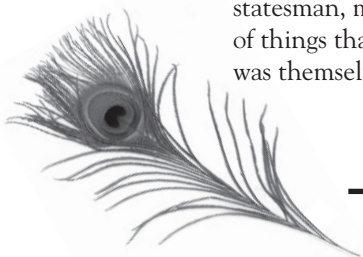
Sri Aurobindo

Existence that acts and creates by the power and from the pure delight of its conscious being is the reality that we are, the self of all our modes and moods, the cause, object and goal of all our doing, becoming and creating. As the poet, artist or musician when he creates does really nothing but develop some potentiality in his unmanifested self into a form of manifestation and as the thinker, statesman, mechanist only bring out into a shape of things that which lay hidden in themselves, was themselves, is still themselves when it is cast

into form, so is it with the world and the Eternal. All creation or becoming is nothing but this self-manifestation. Out of the seed there evolves that which is already in the seed, pre-existent in being, predestined in its will to become, prearranged in the delight of becoming. The original plasm held in itself in force of being the resultant organism. For it is always that secret, burdened, self-knowing force which labours under its own irresistible impulse to manifest the form of itself with which it is charged. Only, the individual who creates or develops out of himself, makes a distinction between himself, the force that works in him and the material in which he works. In reality the force is himself, the individualised consciousness which it instrumentalises is himself, the material which it uses is himself, the resultant form is himself. In other words it is one existence, one force, one delight of being which concentrates itself at various points, says of each “This is I” and works in it by a various play of self-force for a various play of self-formation.

What it produces is itself and can be nothing other than itself; it is working out a play, a rhythm, a development of its own existence, force of consciousness and delight of being. Therefore whatever comes into the world, seeks nothing but this, to be, to arrive at the intended form, to enlarge its self-existence in that form, to develop, manifest, increase, realise infinitely the consciousness and the power that is in it, to have the delight of coming into manifestation, the delight of the form of being, the delight of the rhythm of consciousness, the delight of the play of force and to aggrandise and perfect that delight by whatever means is possible, in whatever direction, through whatever idea of itself may be suggested to it by the Existence, the Conscious-Force, the Delight active within its deepest being.

And if there is any goal, any completeness towards which things tend, it can only be the completeness — in the individual and in the whole which the individuals constitute — of its self-existence, of its power and consciousness and of its delight of being. But such completeness is not possible in the individual consciousness concentrated within the limits of the individual formation; absolute completeness is not feasible in the finite because it is alien to the self-conception



of the finite. Therefore the only final goal possible is the emergence of the infinite consciousness in the individual; it is his recovery of the truth of himself by self-knowledge and by self-realisation, the truth of the Infinite in being, the Infinite in consciousness, the Infinite in delight repossessed as his own Self and Reality of which the finite is only a mask and an instrument for various expression.

Thus by the very nature of the world-play as it has been realised by Sachchidananda in the vastness of His existence extended as Space and Time, we have to conceive first of an involution and a self-absorption of conscious being into the density and infinite divisibility of substance, for otherwise there can be no finite variation; next, an emergence of the self-imprisoned force into formal being, living being, thinking being; and finally a release of the formed thinking being into the free realisation of itself as the One and the Infinite at play in the world and by the release its recovery of the boundless existence-consciousness-bliss that even now it is secretly, really and eternally. This triple movement is the whole key of the world-enigma.

It is so that the ancient and eternal truth of Vedanta receives into itself and illumines, justifies and shows us all the meaning of the modern and phenomenal truth of evolution in the universe. And it is so only that this modern truth of evolution which is the old truth of the Universal developing itself successively in Time, seen opaquely through the study of Force and Matter, can find its own full sense and justification, — by illuminating itself with the Light of the ancient and eternal truth still preserved for us in the Vedantic Scriptures. To this mutual self-discovery and self-illumination by the fusion of the old Eastern and the new Western knowledge the thought of the world is already turning.

Still, when we have found that all things are Sachchidananda, all has not yet been explained. We know the Reality of the universe, we do not yet know the process by which that Reality has turned itself into this phenomenon. We have the key of the riddle, we have still to find the lock in which it will turn. For this Existence, Conscious-Force, Delight does not work directly or with a sovereign irresponsibility like a magician building up worlds and universes by the mere fiat of its word. We



perceive a process, we are aware of a Law.

It is true that this Law when we analyse it, seems to resolve itself into an equilibrium of the play of forces and a determination of that play into fixed lines of working by the accident of development and the habit of past realised energy. But this apparent and secondary truth is final to us only so long as we conceive of Force solely. When we perceive that Force is a self-expression of Existence, we are bound to perceive also that this line which Force has taken, corresponds to some self-truth of that Existence which governs and determines its constant curve and destination. And since consciousness is the nature of the original Existence and the essence of its Force, this truth must be a self-perception in Conscious-Being and this determination of the line taken by Force must result from a power of self-directive knowledge inherent in Consciousness which enables it to



guide its own Force inevitably along the logical line of the original self-perception. It is then a self-determining power in universal consciousness, a capacity in self-awareness of infinite existence to perceive a certain Truth in itself and direct its force of creation along the line of that Truth, which has presided over the cosmic manifestation.

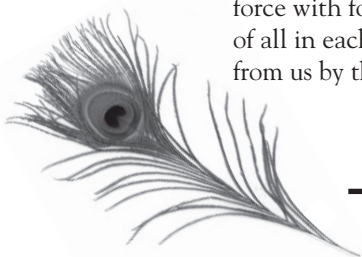
But why should we interpose any special power or faculty between the infinite Consciousness itself and the result of its workings? May not this Self-awareness of the Infinite range freely creating forms which afterwards remain in play so long as there is not the fiat that bids them cease, — even as the old Semitic Revelation tells us, “God said, Let there be Light, and there was Light”? But when we say, “God said, Let there be Light”, we assume the act of a power of consciousness which determines light out of everything else that is not light; and when we say “and there was Light” we presume a directing faculty, an active power corresponding to the original perceptive power, which brings out the phenomenon and, working out Light according to the line of the original perception, prevents it from being overpowered by all the infinite possibilities that are other than itself. Infinite consciousness in its infinite action can produce only infinite results; to settle upon a fixed Truth or order of truths and build a world in conformity with that which is fixed, demands a selective faculty of knowledge commissioned to shape finite appearance out of the infinite Reality.

This power was known to the Vedic seers by the name of Maya. Maya meant for them the power of infinite consciousness to comprehend, contain in itself and measure out, that is to say, to form — for form is delimitation — Name and Shape out of the vast illimitable Truth of infinite existence. It is by Maya that static truth of essential being becomes ordered truth of active being — or, to put it in more metaphysical language, out of the supreme being in which all is all without barrier of separative consciousness emerges the phenomenal being in which all is in each and each is in all for the play of existence with existence, consciousness with consciousness, force with force, delight with delight. This play of all in each and each in all is concealed at first from us by the mental play or the illusion of Maya

which persuades each that he is in all but not all in him and that he is in all as a separated being not as a being always inseparably one with the rest of existence. Afterwards we have to emerge from this error into the supramental play or the truth of Maya where the “each” and the “all” coexist in the inseparable unity of the one truth and the multiple symbol. The lower, present and deluding mental Maya has first to be embraced, then to be overcome; for it is God’s play with division and darkness and limitation, desire and strife and suffering in which He subjects Himself to the Force that has come out of Himself and by her obscure suffers Himself to be obscured. That other Maya concealed by this mental has to be overpassed, then embraced; for it is God’s play of the infinities of existence, the splendours of knowledge, the glories of force mastered and the ecstasies of love illimitable where He emerges out of the hold of Force, holds her instead and fulfils in her illumined that for which she went out from Him at the first.

This distinction between the lower and the higher Maya is the link in thought and in cosmic Fact which the pessimistic and illusionist philosophies miss or neglect. To them the mental Maya, or perhaps an Overmind, is the creatrix of the world, and a world created by mental Maya would indeed be an inexplicable paradox and a fixed yet floating nightmare of conscious existence which could neither be classed as an illusion nor as a reality. We have to see that the mind is only an intermediate term between the creative governing knowledge and the soul imprisoned in its works. Sachchidananda, involved by one of His lower movements in the self-oblivious absorption of Force that is lost in the form of her own workings, returns towards Himself out of the self-oblivion; Mind is only one of His instruments in the descent and the ascent. It is an instrument of the descending creation, not the secret creatrix, — a transitional stage in the ascent, not our high original source and the consummate term of cosmic existence. . . .

(From *The Life Divine*, CWSA, Vol. 21, pages 120-125.)



The Greater Plan

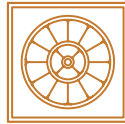
*I am held no more by life's alluring cry,
Her joy and grief, her charm, her laughter's lute.
Hushed are the magic moments of the flute,
And form and colour and brief ecstasy.
I would hear, in my spirit's wideness solitary,
The Voice that speaks when mortal lips are mute:
I seek the wonder of things absolute
Born from the silence of Eternity.*

*There is a need within the soul of man
The splendours of the surface never sate;
For life and mind and their glory and debate
Are the slow prelude of a vaster theme,
A sketch confused of a supernal plan,
A preface to the epic of the Supreme.*

Richard S. Tedlow



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*A quiet endurance
is the sure way to
success.*

With my blessings

