

# 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.

## THE PEACOCK LETTER

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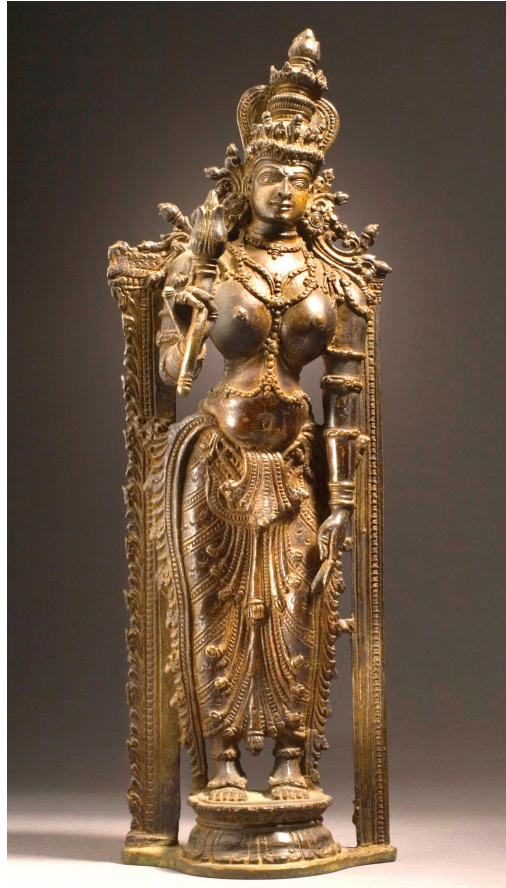
## FROM THE BODY TO THE BEYOND

### Rand Hicks

The cosmos is a living symbol of the Divine Mother. Materially majestic, the universe maps, conceals, and reveals layers and layers of her still larger consciousness and power. Evolution reveals her hidden secrets. We practice yoga and in doing so accelerate the pace of both personal and cosmic evolution. Plane after plane of what we discover and experience first in states of absorbed trance can manifest and radiate through the physical form. Sri Aurobindo notes how She invests herself in a stairway of ascent and descent<sup>1</sup>, carving passages to involve or densify consciousness in the launch, implying upward routes of ascent after. This is the great play of the supreme Power, the only Existent, whose conscious nature is delight.

If all is symbolic, then tantric insights regarding the nature of *yantra* and *mantra* have alignment with Sri Aurobindo's vision. For in both tantric practice and Shakta *sādhana* — and there is a distinction — the body contains *all* of reality's potential. It is not just a sign; it is a vibrant engine. More, the body is fashioned from the Supreme's matrix through vision and design and the utterance of the shaping word. The form, *rūpa*, is a carving from the divine potency of a vehicle that in limited form expresses the Infinite in its play. The word, *mantra*, enforces the manifestation — bringing into clear view what is potential — of the form. From either perspective, it is the Conscious-Power, the *cit-sakti*, that installs the body's manifestation. And that body contains all the worlds at once. If we want to awaken quickly to these hidden potentialities within the body, then an effective method must carefully move them into action. Our *sādhana* — the practice that leads to the result we seek — must be sedulously worked out. No detail can be eschewed in the practice; in the enactment of the *sādhana*, what seems to be overtly ritualistic

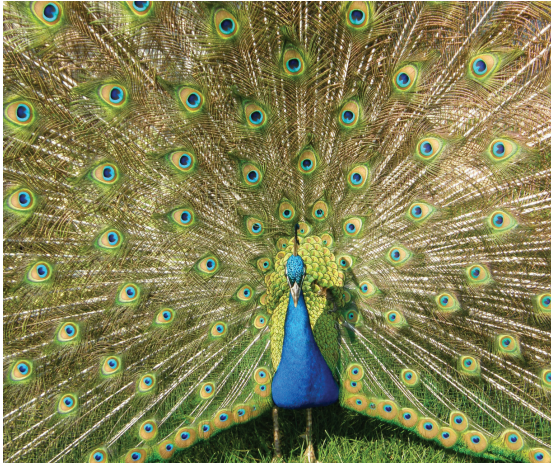
<sup>1</sup>"The Mother as the Mahashakti of this triple world of the Ignorance stands in an intermediate plane between the supramental Light, the Truth life, the Truth creation which has to be brought down here and this mounting and descending hierarchy of planes of consciousness that like a double ladder lapse into the nescience of Matter and climb back again through the flowering of life and soul and mind into the infinity of the Spirit." (*The Mother*, CWSA, Vol. 32, page 16.)



Sri Lakshmi, 16th century, Kerala Los Angeles County Museum of Art

if performed correctly coordinates a deep-founded union among all the orders of the being, aligns the personal cosmos with the larger cosmos around, ensures the world-order while enlarging our consciousness at the same time. We surely become aware of her potency deep within ourselves, but more largely we live in active communion with all around. And by accepting the body as basis, we bring the power of the awakened individual, now grown into universal connectedness, to bear on the whole being and world. The personal change has its impact on society around, reaching from one's own group (the *kula* in the tantric tradition, the spiritual family or the intentional community in western parlance) into the whole of human life and into life feelingly around. Awakening to the indwelling Goddess, one moves harmoniously, not hurtfully, through the world, so far as She wills it. Vast, powerful, beatifying, perfect is She. Sri Aurobindo affords a deep view into her many-sided nature in mellifluous prose in *The Mother*.





## PEACOCK'S FAN

New Year's Eve in the Center brought a number of us together for our customary meditation at midnight. We first rang in 1980 together, and the arrival of each new year is now accompanied with the distribution of the Ashram calendar, message, and blessings of several kinds at several levels.

Our study on Sunday evenings in *The Life Divine* has reached Chapter III in Book Two, "The Eternal and the Individual." Friends from around the world continue to work with us through Zoom, the conference app, and our website.

The Center recently hosted a dozen young aspirants who are working towards their certification in the field of hatha yoga under the auspices of Uru Yoga and Beyond. It was a wide-ranging discussion which looked at the vast yogic achievement of Sri Aurobindo and then turned to the Upanishadic tradition to elucidate core ideals which have guided India for milleniums. Uru is a Vedic word, by the way, that conveys the wideness of the infinite Truth plane. Another gathering at our center is planned soon when the roots of the tantric tradition will be traced and discussed in summary.

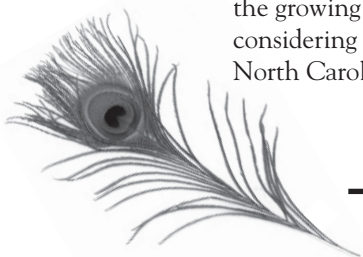
The Center in the coming months may host periodic sessions in lovely locales to offer our friends and fellow aspirants inspiration and pause. Since we are not retreating from anything, let's call them recharging points in consonance with the growing environmental awareness. We are considering sites ranging from northern Florida to North Carolina and Virginia.

Good friends from the Tampa area visited us in late December and we had a lovely session together. They were about twenty in number: Isha Modha, Riya Patel, Mansi Thaker, Priya Kavia, Divya Desai (with her infant child), Priya Kavia, Srinika Bekken, Sweta Modha, Sonia Panjabi, Falguni Kavia, Shilpa Modha, Jay Kavia, Mahika Bekken, Smitha Bekken, Dr. Rupal Desai, Jigish Desai, Viren Kavia, and Mahesh Modha. Mahesh was their general host and tour guide.

## THE DESCENT OF DIVINE FORCE *Sri Aurobindo*

When the Peace is established, this higher or Divine Force from above can descend and work in us. It descends usually first into the head and liberates the inner mind centres, then into the heart centre and liberates fully the psychic and emotional being, then into the navel and other vital centres and liberates the inner vital, then into the Muladhara and below and liberates the inner physical being. It works at the same time for perfection as well as liberation; it takes up the whole nature part by part and deals with it, rejecting what has to be rejected, sublimating what has to be sublimated, creating what has to be created. It integrates, harmonises, establishes a new rhythm in the nature. It can bring down too a higher and yet higher force and range of the higher Nature until, if that be the aim of the sadhana, it becomes possible to bring down the supramental force and existence. All this is prepared, assisted, farthered by the work of the psychic being in the heart centre; the more it is open, in front, active, the quicker, safer, easier the working of the Force can be. The more love and bhakti and surrender grow in the heart, the more rapid and perfect becomes the evolution of the sadhana. For the descent and transformation imply at the same time an increasing contact and union with the Divine.

That is the fundamental rationale of the Sadhana. It will be evident that the two most important things here are the opening of the heart centre and the opening of the mind centres to all that is behind and above them. For the heart opens to the psychic being and the mind centres open to the higher consciousness and the nexus between the psychic being and the higher



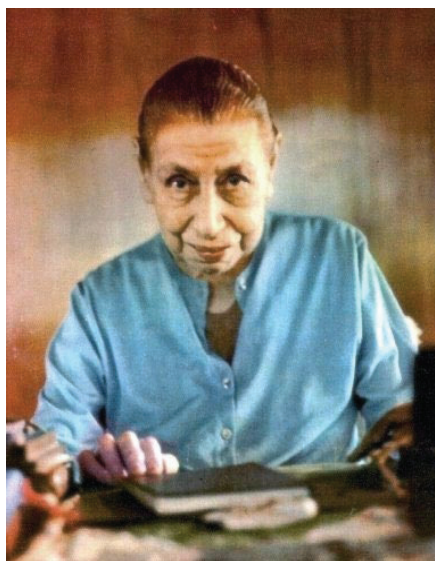
consciousness is the principal means of the Siddhi. The first opening is effected by a concentration in the heart, a call to the Divine to manifest within us and through the psychic to take up and lead the whole nature. Aspiration, prayer, bhakti, love, surrender are the main supports of this part of the Sadhana — accompanied by a rejection of all that stands in the way of what we aspire for. The second opening is effected by a concentration of the consciousness in the head (afterwards, above it) and an aspiration and call and a sustained will for the descent of the divine Peace, Power, Light, Knowledge, Ananda into the being — the Peace first or the Peace and Force together. Some indeed receive Light first or Ananda first or some sudden pouring down of Knowledge. With some there is first an opening which reveals to them a vast infinite Silence, Force, Light or Bliss above them and afterwards either they ascend to that or these things begin to descend into the lower nature. With others there is either the descent, first into the head, then down to the heart level, then to the navel and below and through the whole body, or else an inexplicable opening — without any sense of descent — of peace, light, wideness or power or else a horizontal opening into the cosmic consciousness or, in a suddenly widened mind, an outburst of knowledge. Whatever comes has to be welcomed — for there is no absolute rule for all, — but if the peace has not come first, care must be taken not to swell oneself in exultation or lose the balance. The capital movement however is when the Divine Force or Shakti, the Power of the Mother comes down and takes hold, for then the organisation of the consciousness begins and the larger foundation of the Yoga.

11 September 1934

(From *The Mother*, CWSA, Vol. 32, pages 204-206.)

## RECEIVING THE MOTHER'S FORCE Sri Aurobindo

It is certain that one's own effort is necessary, though one cannot do the sadhana by one's own effort alone. The Mother's Force is needed, but the sadhak must open himself to it, reject what opposes the Force, put his full sincerity, aspiration, will power into the sadhana. It is only when all



is open and there is the full surrender that the Divine Power takes up the sadhana so entirely that personal effort is no longer necessary. But that cannot happen at an early stage — one must go on opening oneself, consecrating oneself, making the surrender till that later stage comes. This has been explained in the book *The Mother*.

17 March 1937

\*

Open what is closed. The Mother does not withhold her force from anyone — it is there for all in abundance. Her pleasure is in giving her force, not in withholding it. But if you keep your mind filled with thoughts of this kind, about X and others, and your needs and grievances, you shut yourself up in that and there is no room for the higher consciousness and its force to come in.

\*

*I am depressed that the Divine has made me meditate the wrong way for three and a half years without letting me know it was wrong. Why did I feel that I must stimulate my aspiration through great concentration in meditation in order to expedite my progress? Why only now has the Mother told me that I have been meditating in the wrong way, with too much strain and stiffness and tension? This makes me sad beyond words.*



*The more I think about it, the sadder I become. I am so bewildered and confused.*

*What am I to do? It seems to me that before I was trying to fit the wrong key into the lock of the faery palace, but now I have been left with no key at all.*

What is needed is to profit by the discovery and get rid of the impediment. The Mother did not merely point out the impediment; she showed you very expressly how to do it and at that time you understood her, though now (at the time of writing your letter to me) the light which you saw seems to have been clouded by your indulging your vital more and more in the bitter pastime of sadness. That was quite natural, for that is the result sadness always does bring. It is the reason why I object to the gospel of sorrow and to any sadhana which makes sorrow one of its main planks (*abhimāna*, revolt, *viraha*). For sorrow is not, as Spinoza pointed out, a passage to a greater perfection, a way to Siddhi; it cannot be, for it confuses and weakens and distracts the mind, depresses the vital force, darkens the spirit. A relapse from joy and vital elasticity and Ananda to sorrow, self-distrust, despondency and weakness is a recoil from a greater to a lesser consciousness, — the habit of these moods shows a clinging of something in the vital to the smaller, obscurer, dark and distressed movement out of which it is the very aim of Yoga to rise.

It is therefore quite incorrect to say that the Mother took away the wrong key with which you were trying to open the faery palace and left you with none at all. For she not only showed you the true key but gave it to you. It was not a mere vague exhortation to cheerfulness she gave you, but she described exactly the condition felt in the right kind of meditation — a state of inner rest, not of straining, of quiet opening, not of eager or desperate pulling, a harmonious giving of oneself to the Divine Force for its working, and in that quietude a sense of the Force working and a restful confidence allowing it to act without any unquiet interference. And she asked you if you had not experienced that condition and you said that you had and knew it very well. Now that condition

is the beginning of psychic opening and, if you have had it, you know what the psychic opening is; there is of course much more that afterwards comes to complete it but this is the fundamental condition into which all the rest can most easily come. What you should have done was to keep the key the Mother gave you present in your consciousness and apply it — not to go back and allow sadness and a repining view of the past to grow upon you. In this condition which we term the right or psychic attitude, there may and will be call, prayer, aspiration. Intensity, concentration will come of themselves, not by a hard effort or tense strain on the nature. Rejection of wrong movements, frank confession of defects are not only not incompatible, but helpful to it; but this attitude makes the rejection, the confession easy, spontaneous, entirely complete and sincere and effective. That is the experience of all who have consented to take this attitude.

I may say in passing that consciousness and receptivity are not the same thing; one may be receptive, yet externally unaware of how things are being done and of what is being done. The Force works, as I have repeatedly written, behind the veil; the results remain packed behind and come out afterwards, often slowly, little by little, until there is so much pressure that it breaks through somehow and forces itself upon the external nature. There lies the difference between a mental and vital straining and pulling and a spontaneous psychic openness, and it is not at all the first time that we have spoken of the difference. The Mother and myself have written and spoken of it times without number and we have deprecated pulling<sup>1</sup> and straining and advocated the attitude of psychic openness. It is not really a question of the right or the wrong key, but of putting the key in the lock in the right or the wrong way, — either, because of some difficulty, you try to force the lock turning the key this way and that with violence or confidently and quietly give it the right turn and the door opens.

5 May 1932

(From *The Mother*, CWSA, Vol. 32, pp. 220-223.)

<sup>1</sup>There is a steady drawing of the Force possible which is not what I mean by pulling — drawing of the Force is quite common and helpful.



## Contrasts

What opposites are here! A trivial life  
Specks the huge dream of Death called Matter; intense  
In its struggle of weakness towards omnipotence,  
A thinking mind starts from the unthinking strife

In the order of the electric elements.  
Immortal life breathed in that monstrous death,  
A mystery of Knowledge wore as sheath  
Matter's mute nescience. Its enveloped sense

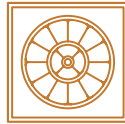
Or dumb somnambulist will obscurely reigns  
Driving the atoms in their cosmic course  
Whose huge unhearing movement serves perforce  
The works of a strange blind omniscience.

The world's deep contrasts are but figures spun  
Draping the unanimity of the One.

*Arichand*



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



*Soar very high  
and you will discover  
the great depths.  
with my blessings*

