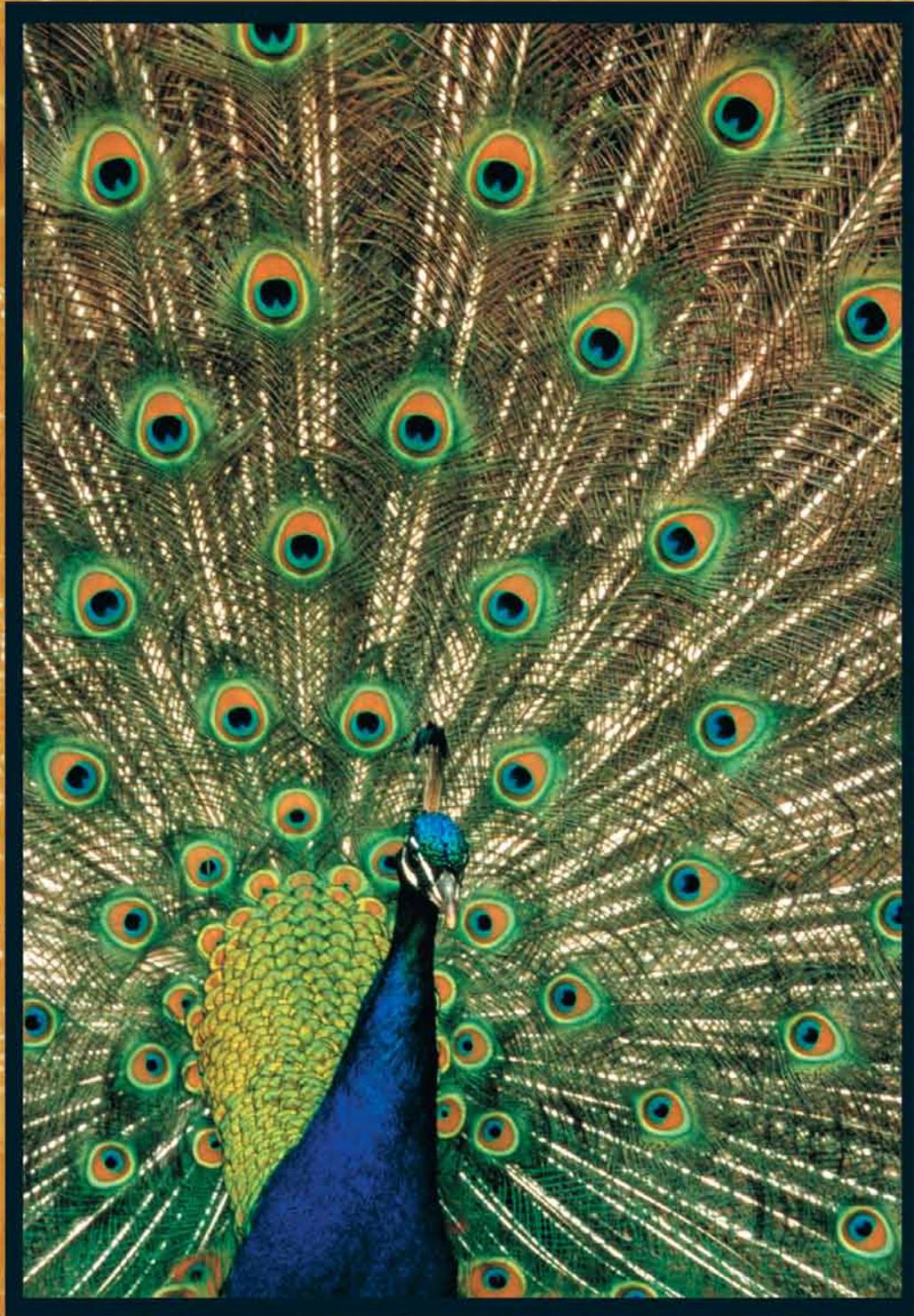


THE PEACOCK LETTER



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 had ever 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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THE GODDESS IN SONG

Rand Hicks

The great *śākta*, Sri T.V. Kapali Sastriar, whose 125th birth anniversary occurs on the 3rd of September this year, said in summation of his long spiritual life, “My one thought is: the MOTHER.” And as we are thinking of Her, too, we offer here a spray of blossoms in the form of verses chanted and sung, a *mantra mañjarī*, translated from the Sanskrit into English. When uttered with growing sincerity and knowledge, the mantras unlock and reveal the powers of awareness they symbolize.

It is conventional to view the Mahadevi, the Great Goddess, as the power of the Supreme, with emphasis placed on her dynamic character. What She is in her essence is often thrown into the background. She is not mere executive energy, nor anyone’s subordinate. These verses, taken from a number of sources, shed light on the core of what the Indian tradition recognizes — She is That.

We begin with the Devi Sukta from the Rig-veda:

“The Queen, I am the dispenser of wealth; conscious, I am the first among the Gods. Such am I and the Gods have found me established in the Many, permeating and taking possession of the Manifold. . .

“I gave birth to the Father at the summit of This. My origin is in the Waters in the Inner Ocean. Thence I extend pervading all the worlds; and yonder Heaven I closely touch and penetrate with the showering and flowing body of mine.

“Like the winds I blow vehemently, myself commencing all the worlds; far beyond the heavens, far (beneath) the Earth — so vast by my largeness I have become.” Rig Veda, X.125. 3, 7, 8.

From a late Shakta text, which aims to synthesize knowledge and action, we have the same insight.

“This Consciousness is the sole existence and spans the whole universe, seamlessly perfect. As waves cannot exist apart from the ocean, as light cannot be without the sun, so the universe is inconceivable without Consciousness. The



Devi Mahatmyam, 11th Century

Supreme embodies pure Consciousness.” Triṭpura Rahasya, XI. 31, 32.

Sampling the *Devi Bhagavata Purana*, where the Supreme is known as Bhuvaneshwari, the ruler of the cosmos, we find forceful declarations on the nature of Her sheer conscious being.

“My true Self is known as pure consciousness, the highest intelligence, the one supreme Brahman.” Devi Gita, 2.2 (this Gita or song is a selection from the larger Purana).

And in the “Ya Devi” section of the *Devi Mahatmyam* comes the same revelation.

“To that Goddess who dwells in all beings as Consciousness, to Her salutations, salutations, salutations. . .

“To that Goddess who dwells in all beings as rolling, endless motion, to Her salutations, salutations, salutations.” Devi Mahatmyam, V.17-19, 59-61.

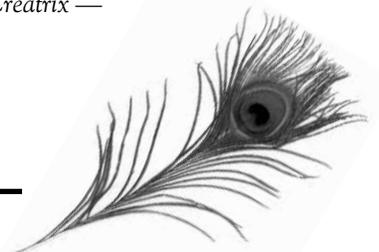
Among the thousand names of the Divine Mother, are verses clearly of cognate character:

“Salutations to Her whom the Upanishads know, whose own form is truth and bliss, who is worshiped in the Lopamudra mantra, for whom the creation of a universe is only sport. . .

“Salutations to Her who is the power of will, the power of knowledge, and the power of action. Salutations to Her on whom everything rests, the firm foundation, who takes the forms of being and nonbeing.” Sri Lalita Sahasranama, 645-648, 658-661.

And that great recitation closes the thousand with a summation of perspectives: we begin and end in Her.

“Salutations to Her who is Śivā, who is the unity of Śiva and Śakti, who is the playful Creatrix — The Mother.”



PEACOCK'S FAN

In our Sunday night studies, we have been moving through interesting material in *Essays Divine and Human*. This volume features writings from Sri Aurobindo which never saw publication during his lifetime. They are nevertheless fascinating themes and bear directly upon what has become familiar to us in *The Synthesis of Yoga* and *The Life Divine*. So over the last two months we have looked at essays on evolution, the nature of spiritual practice, the experience of oneness, reality transcendent, universal, and personal, and the future of consciousness. His insights are legion and his turn of phrase in these pieces recovered from notebooks differs from his familiar tone.

We had a delightful visit from Wayne Hicks in the middle of March. He was here from Houston to see old friends in and out of the Center. And so he was able to wish his mentor, Robert Kleinman — author of *Four Faces of the Universe* — a happy birthday two weeks early. Bob completed 85 years on the 26th of March, celebrating the occasion memorably with family and close friends. New readers of his book have offered it rich praise in recent weeks.

Our friend Karen Litfin has returned from Auroville. She has been leading students there since 2001 to study the intersection of ecology, society and spirituality. Right now, though, Karen is developing an interesting project here in America. She is seeding an intentional community on Whidbey Island, near Seattle, even as she continues her scholastic duties at the University of Washington. (See <http://faculty.washington.edu/litfin>.) Karen recently purchased twenty acres of prime farmland, along with a farmhouse and a yurt. A year-round stream with possible salmon habitat runs through the property. Wildlife abounds, yet the land is just a stone's throw from Seattle. She is seeking co-owners for a multi-generational community dedicated to conscious evolution, ecological living and organic farming. Well, if Karen is present, the crops cultivated there will include collective consciousness and brightening love.



REALISATION

Sri Aurobindo

In the state of pure consciousness and pure being we are aware of that only, simple, immutable, self-existent, without form or object, and we feel that to be alone true and real. In the other or dynamic state we feel its dynamism to be perfectly true and natural and are even capable of thinking that no such experience as that of pure consciousness is possible. Yet it is now evident that to the Infinite Consciousness both the static and the dynamic are possible; these are two of its statuses and both can be present simultaneously in the universal awareness, the one witnessing the other and supporting it or not looking at it and yet automatically supporting it; or the silence and status may be there penetrating the activity or throwing it up like an ocean immobile below throwing up a mobility of waves on its surface. This is also the reason why it is possible for us in certain conditions of our being to be aware of several different states of consciousness at the same time. There is a state of being experienced in Yoga in which we become a double consciousness, one on the surface, small, active, ignorant, swayed by thoughts and feelings, grief and joy and all kinds of reactions, the other within calm, vast, equal, observing the surface being with an immovable detachment or indulgence or, it may be, acting upon its agitation to quiet, enlarge, transform it. So too we can rise to a consciousness above and observe the various parts of our being, inner and outer, mental, vital and physical and the subconscious below all, and act upon one or other

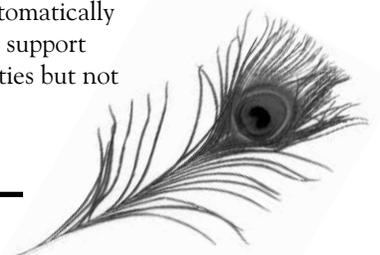


or the whole from that higher status. It is possible also to go down from that height or from any height into any of these lower states and take its limited light or its obscurity as our place of working while the rest that we are is either temporarily put away or put behind or else kept as a field of reference from which we can get support, sanction or light and influence or as a status into which we can ascend or recede and from it observe the inferior movements. Or we can plunge into trance, get within ourselves and be conscious there while all outward things are excluded; or we can go beyond even this inner awareness and lose ourselves in some deeper other consciousness or some high superconsciousness. There is also a pervading equal consciousness into which we can enter and see all ourselves with one enveloping glance or omnipresent awareness one and indivisible. All this which looks strange and abnormal or may seem fantastic to the surface reason acquainted only with our normal status of limited ignorance and its movements divided from our inner higher and total reality, becomes easily intelligible and admissible in the light of the larger reason and logic of the Infinite or by the admission of the greater illimitable powers of the Self, the Spirit in us which is of one essence with the Infinite.

Brahman the Reality is the self-existent Absolute and Maya is the Consciousness and Force of this self-existence; but with regard to the universe Brahman appears as the Self of all existence, Atman, the cosmic Self, but also as the Supreme Self transcendent of its own cosmicity and at the same time individual-universal in each being; Maya can then be seen as the self-power, Atma-Shakti, of the Atman. It is true that when we first become aware of this Aspect, it is usually in a silence of the whole being or at the least in a silence within which draws back or stands away from the surface action; this Self is then felt as a status in silence, an immobile immutable being, self-existent, pervading the whole universe, omnipresent in all, but not dynamic or active, aloof from the ever mobile energy of Maya. In the same way we can become aware of it as the Purusha, separate from Prakriti, the Conscious Being standing back from the activities of Nature. But this is an exclusive concentration which limits itself to a spiritual status and puts away from it all



activity in order to realise the freedom of Brahman the self-existent Reality from all limitation by its own action and manifestation: it is an essential realisation, but not the total realisation. For we can see that the Conscious-Power, the Shakti that acts and creates, is not other than the Maya or all-knowledge of Brahman; it is the Power of the Self; Prakriti is the working of the Purusha, Conscious Being active by its own Nature: the duality then of Soul and World-Energy, silent Self and the creative Power of the Spirit, is not really something dual and separate, it is biune. As we cannot separate Fire and the power of Fire, it has been said, so we cannot separate the Divine Reality and its Consciousness-Force, Chit-Shakti. This first realisation of Self as something intensely silent and purely static is not the whole truth of it, there can also be a realisation of Self in its power, Self as the condition of world-activity and world-existence. However, the Self is a fundamental aspect of Brahman, but with a certain stress on its impersonality; therefore the Power of the Self has the appearance of a Force that acts automatically with the Self sustaining it, witness and support and originator and enjoyer of its activities but not



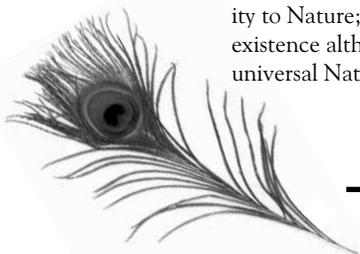
involved in them for a moment. As soon as we become aware of the Self, we are conscious of it as eternal, unborn, unembodied, uninvolved in its workings: it can be felt within the form of being, but also as enveloping it, as above it, surveying its embodiment from above, *adhyakṣa*; it is omnipresent, the same in everything, infinite and pure and intangible for ever. This Self can be experienced as the Self of the individual, the Self of the thinker, doer, enjoyer, but even so it always has this greater character; its individuality is at the same time a vast universality or very readily passes into that, and the next step to that is a sheer transcendence or a complete and ineffable passing into the Absolute. The Self is that aspect of the Brahman in which it is intimately felt as at once individual, cosmic, transcendent of the universe. The realisation of the Self is the straight and swift way towards individual liberation, a static universality, a Nature-transcendence. At the same time there is a realisation of Self in which it is felt not only sustaining and pervading and enveloping all things, but constituting everything and identified in a free identity with all its becomings in Nature. Even so, freedom and impersonality are always the character of the Self. There is no appearance of subjection to the workings of its own Power in the universe, such as the apparent subjection of the Purusha to Prakriti. To realise the Self is to realise the eternal freedom of the Spirit.

The Conscious Being, Purusha, is the Self as originator, witness, support and lord and enjoyer of the forms and works of Nature. As the aspect of Self is in its essential character transcendental even when involved and identified with its universal and individual becomings, so the Purusha aspect is characteristically universal-individual and intimately connected with Nature even when separated from her. For this conscious Spirit while retaining its impersonality and eternity, its universality, puts on at the same time a more personal aspect;¹ it is the impersonal-personal being in Nature from whom it is not

¹ The Sankhya philosophy stresses this personal aspect, makes the Purusha many, plural, and assigns universality to Nature; in this view each soul is an independent existence although all souls experience a common universal Nature.

altogether detached, for it is always coupled with her: Nature acts for the Purusha and by its sanction, for its will and pleasure; the Conscious Being imparts its consciousness to the Energy we call Nature, receives in that consciousness her workings as in a mirror, accepts the forms which she, the executive cosmic Force, creates and imposes on it, gives or withdraws its sanction from her movements. The experience of Purusha-Prakriti, the Spirit or Conscious Being in its relations to Nature, is of immense pragmatic importance; for on these relations the whole play of the consciousness depends in the embodied being. If the Purusha in us is passive and allows Nature to act, accepting all she imposes on him, giving a constant automatic sanction, then the soul in mind, life, body, the mental, vital, physical being in us, becomes subject to our nature, ruled by its formation, driven by its activities; that is the normal state of our ignorance. If the Purusha in us becomes aware of itself as the Witness and stands back from Nature, that is the first step to the soul's freedom; for it becomes detached, and it is possible then to know Nature and her processes and in all independence, since we are no longer involved in her works, to accept or not to accept, to make the sanction no longer automatic but free and effective; we can choose what she shall do or not do in us, or we can stand back altogether from her works and withdraw into the Self's spiritual silence, or we can reject her present formations and rise to a spiritual level of existence and from there re-create our existence. The Purusha can cease to be subject, *anīśa*, and become lord of its nature, *īśvara*.

(From *The Life Divine*, CWSA, Vol. 22, pages 360-363.)



The Witness Spirit

*I dwell in the spirit's calm nothing can move
And watch the actions of Thy vast world-force,
Its mighty wings that through infinity move
And the Time-galloping of the deathless Horse.*

*This mute stupendous Energy that whirls
The stars and nebulae in its long train,
Like a huge Serpent through my being curls
With its diamond hood of joy and fangs of pain.*

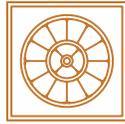
*It rises from the dim inconscient deep
Upcoiling through the minds and hearts of men,
Then touches on some height of luminous sleep
The bliss and splendour of the eternal plane.*

*All this I bear in me, untouched and still,
Assenting to Thy all-wise inscrutable will.*

Arichandros



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*Our mind must be
silent and quiet
but our heart must
be full of an ardent
aspiration.*

With my blessings

raj.

