

# 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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## THE DANCE OF THE MAHASHAKTI

Rand Hicks

*The goal of yoga is not found in the heavens, nor on earth, nor in the underworld, but in the union of the individual soul and the supreme Self; thus do skilled adepts define yoga. . . . Just such qualities as belong to me, the divine World Mother, those very qualities will inhere in the accomplished adept, without fail. (Devi Gita, 5.2, 5.53-54.)*

Our Yoga does not aim at an absorption into an ecstatic beyond. Our aim is the transformation of consciousness, an identification of our finite awareness with the Infinite, the importation of a divine power into soulful life, an incoming flood of creative delight. The soul is a significant spark of that Fire, a center and home in which the Mother dwells: an integration of the soul into That need not dissolve it. All methods which greaten consciousness are seizable for an integral yogin, but the goal of abstraction in the Yoga Sutras is not ours, nor is our path that of the Vedantins. We refuse to divorce or deny the world. The cosmos is a real and genuine expression of the Divine Consciousness, a rhythmic dance of the Divine Mother, and so is your being, your life. You can discover the hidden cosmic nature in yourself, bear the descent from her transcendence, and release the force of her supernature into action.

The several spiritual disciplines, *sādhana*s, charted out by the Great Goddess for her disciples in the Devi Gita are means by which we methodize *her* ways of being in ourselves. The mystery of life is translatable, identifiable, to our consciousness when we recognize that she is the essence of all.

Transcendent and beyond all Gods, without consort or companion, She is the Supreme who nevertheless consigns a portion of herself to the universe. Her presence is a pledge that the world is real, that a return of the manifestation into her originating womb of consciousness is possible.

The Mahadevi is the cause of this cosmos, this configuration of her unimaginable potencies: every one of us, each object and person and facet of reality you meet in whatever imaginable world you visit contains a priceless conscious power; every



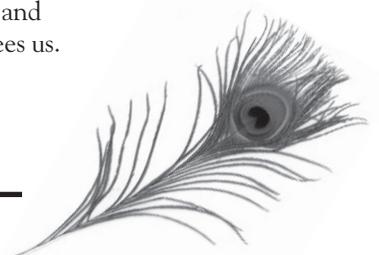
Mahadevi, dancing on a lotus Bikamer, Rajasthan c.1725

discoverable pathway can lead back to Her.

So we practice yoga, we penetrate behind appearances by sharpening discrimination and building powers of concentration, we find the Divine Mother supporting the façade, and into Her presence we merge our conscious selves. She is the groundwork upon which all stands, but we learn to distinguish and recognize her in each thread of the dynamic cosmic fabric. The devotee who finds this One validates the yoga of knowledge, but finds Her outside, inside, everywhere. For only She exists.

Just so in the field of devotion: offering the ardent heart, signified in one's gift to the Goddess, leads one through the consecration into concrete union. Who seeks only Her grace, who is open only to her force, arrives through a growing communion with her into halls of harmony and light. And to facilitate an entrance into that conscious communion, the awakening soul sounds out rhythms, creates fragrant spaces and moments that invite her into this life's atmosphere.

Knowledge, work, and love all lead to the revelation of the Divine Mother. Those powers that become active and alive in us are hers: her force liberates us from convention and imprisonment in limited being. She frees us.





## PEACOCK'S FAN

In our Sunday evening studies at the Center, we moved from Mother's *Notes on the Way*, excerpted from the *Agenda*, to spend the month of February in Sri Aurobindo's *The Mother*. In March we launch a several-month review of the Indian spiritual tradition, which will encompass the Veda, Upanishads, Gita, Tantra, Yoga Sutras, the Siddha tradition, and more. This will establish a useful context for our study of Sri Aurobindo's *The Life Divine*, beginning in August — a hundred years after the first issue of the *Arya* appeared.

2014 will be centenary-flavored. Mira Richard met Sri Aurobindo on the 29<sup>th</sup> of March in 1914. Coincident from that meeting, the first issue of the philosophical review, *Arya*, appeared on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August, Sri Aurobindo's birthday. These dates will be specially noted in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and around the world.

David Mitchell through Lotus Enterprises has produced for distribution in the United States two video presentations of talks which M.P. Pandit gave in 1989. The subjects are "The Gnostic Society—Spiritual Community" and "The Conquest of Death—Immortality." Details on distribution will be forthcoming.

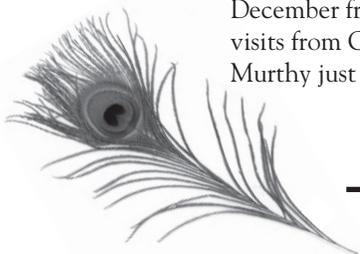
Since November, we have enjoyed visits from a number of seekers and friends. Among them were Scott Kownslar and Debra Booth from Atlanta, and Wolfram and Sue Verlaan from Huntsville. Wayne Hicks was here in late December from Houston. We had first-ever visits from Giridhar Murthy and his son Madhav Murthy just after Christmas. Giridhar has a

successful software business in Bangalore and Chennai, and his son is an undergraduate at the University of Washington. Some of you will know Giridhar. From a remarkable family, he was an outstanding student at the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, known for his intelligence and remarkable virtuosity from a young age on the sarod. April Matteis stopped in from Galveston.

Our friends Diane Thome and Herb Coats just visited a few days back. Both were professors at the University of Washington. A renowned composer of unusually beautiful pieces, Diane is a former professor and chair of the composition program at the School of Music, and Herb was a renowned professor of Slavic languages and Russian. Diane has been associated with the centers and study groups in the Seattle area for three decades.

A number of the Center's friends trekked to Washington, D.C. to see the art exhibition curated by Debra Diamond at the Sackler Gallery. "Yoga: The Art of Transformation" was on view there from last October and closed in January. It will be reborn in San Francisco at the Asian Art Museum, starting on the 21<sup>st</sup> of February and ending on the 25<sup>th</sup> May. Then it will reincarnate at the Cleveland Museum of Art, living from June 22–September 7, 2014.

Informed by scholars and historians ranging from David Gordon White to Vidya Dehejia, the exhibition filled six rooms with art relevant to the practice of yoga across many centuries. The early spiritual traditions and practices of India left us little art, but still figure in the exhibition as significant background. Large paintings discovered by Diamond in palaces of North India offer a revealing look into what the hatha yogic tradition, especially, stems from and leads towards. Diamond deserves praise for pulling together such a substantive exhibition—the first of its kind on the subject of yoga—especially when one considers the financial and logistical constraints under which she worked. Truly great pieces have been gathered in both sculpture and painting, buttressed by fine scholarship. Gratitude is the right response for this exhibition and its beautifully-printed catalog. See it if you can.



## WHAT IS THE MOTHER'S FORCE? Sri Aurobindo

*What is the Yoga shakti? What is Yogic mind-force, Yogic life-force and Yogic body-force?*

In the Yogic consciousness one is not only aware of things, but of forces, not only of forces, but of the conscious being behind the forces. One is aware of all this not only in oneself but in the universe. There is a force which accompanies the growth of this new consciousness and at once grows with it and helps it to come about and to perfect itself. This force is the Yoga shakti. It is here asleep and coiled up in all the centres of our inner being (chakras) and is at the base what is called in the Tantras the Kundalini Shakti. But it is also above us, above our head as the Divine Force — not there coiled up, involved, asleep, but awake, scient, potent, extended and wide; it is there waiting for manifestation and to this Force we have to open ourselves — to the power of the Mother. In the mind it manifests itself as a divine mind-force or a universal mind-force and it can do everything that the personal mind cannot do; it is then the Yogic mind-force. When it manifests and works in the vital or physical in the same way, it is then apparent as a Yogic life-force or a Yogic body-force. It can awake in all these forms, bursting outwards and upwards, extending itself into wideness from below; or it can descend and become there a definite power for things; it can pour downwards into the body, working, establishing its reign, extending into wideness from above, link the lowest in us with the highest above us, release the individual into a cosmic universality or into absoluteness and transcendence.

23 March 1933

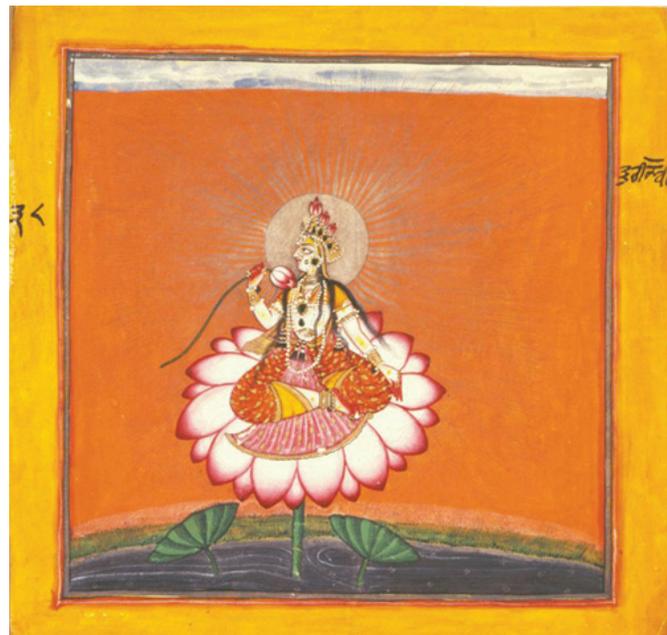
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*You often speak of the Mother's Force. What is it?*

It is the Divine Force which works to remove the ignorance and change the nature into the divine nature.

18 June 1933

(From *The Mother with Letters on the Mother*, CWSA, Vol. 32, pp. 192-193.)



Lotus-seated Devi Basohli c. 1660-1670 Polsky Collections

## DESCENT OF THE MOTHER'S FORCE Sri Aurobindo

The experiences you have are a good starting-point for realisation. They have to develop into the light of a deeper state in which there will be the descent of a higher consciousness into you. Your present consciousness in which you feel these things is only a preparatory one — in which the Mother works in you through the cosmic power according to your state of consciousness and your karma and in that working both success and failure can come — one has to remain equal-minded to both while trying always for success. A surer guidance can come even in this preparatory consciousness if you are entirely turned towards her alone in such a way that you can feel her direct guidance and follow it without any other influence or force intervening to act upon you, but that condition is not easy to get or keep — it needs a great one-pointedness and constant single-minded dedication. When the higher consciousness will descend, then a closer union, a more intimate consciousness of the Presence and a more illumined intuition will become possible.

17 November 1934

(From *The Mother with Letters on the Mother*, CWSA, Vol. 32, p. 206.)



## FROM PRAYERS & MEDITATIONS *The Mother*

**February 21, 1914**

Every day, every moment should be an occasion for a new and completer consecration, and not one of those enthusiastic and flurried consecrations, over-active, full of illusions about the work, but a deep and silent consecration which is not necessarily visible but penetrates and transfigures all action. Our mind, solitary and peaceful, should always repose in Thee and from that pure summit have the exact perception of realities, of the sole and eternal Reality behind all unstable and fleeting appearances.

O Lord, my heart is purified of all uneasiness and anguish; it is steady and calm and sees Thee in all things; and whatever our outer actions may be, whatever the circumstances the future has in store for us, I know that Thou alone livest, that Thou alone art real in Thy immutable permanence and it is in Thee that we live. . . .

May there be peace upon all the earth.

**March 30, 1914**

In the presence of those who are integrally Thy servitors, those who have attained the perfect consciousness of Thy presence, I become aware that I am still far, very far from what I yearn to realise; and I know that the highest I can conceive, the noblest and purest is still dark and ignorant beside what I should conceive. But this perception, far from being depressing, stimulates and strengthens the aspiration, the energy, the will to triumph over all obstacles so as to be at last identified with Thy law and Thy work.

Gradually the horizon becomes distinct, the path grows clear, and we move towards a greater and greater certitude.

It matters little that there are thousands of beings plunged in the densest ignorance, He whom we saw yesterday is on earth; his presence is enough to prove that a day will come when darkness shall be transformed into light, and Thy reign shall be indeed established upon earth.

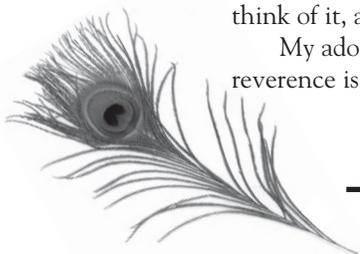
O Lord, Divine Builder of this marvel, my heart overflows with joy and gratitude when I think of it, and my hope has no bounds.

My adoration is beyond all words, my reverence is silent.

## FAITH IN THE SHAKTI *Sri Aurobindo*

A constant *śraddhā*, faith, assent of the heart and the life too are indispensable. But while we are in the lower nature the heart's assent is coloured by mental emotion and the life movements are accompanied by their trail of perturbing or straining desires, and mental emotion and desire tend to trouble, alter more or less grossly or subtly or distort the truth, and they always bring some limitation and imperfection into its realisation by the heart and life. The heart too when it is troubled in its attachments and its certitudes, perplexed by throw-backs and failures and convictions of error or involved in the wrestlings which attend a call to move forward from its assured positions, has its draggings, wearinesses, sorrowings, revolts, reluctances which hamper the progress. It must learn a larger and surer faith giving in the place of the mental reactions a calm or a moved spiritual acceptance to the ways and the steps of the Shakti which is in its nature the assent of a deepening Ananda to all necessary movements and a readiness to leave old moorings and move always forward towards the delight of a greater perfection. The life mind must give its assent to the successive motives, impulses, activities of the life imposed on it by the guiding power as aids or fields of the development of the nature and to the successions also of the inner Yoga, but it must not be attached or call a halt anywhere, but must always be prepared to abandon old urgency and accept with the same completeness of assent new higher movements and activities, and it must learn to replace desire by a wide and bright Ananda in all experience and action. The faith of the heart and the life mind, like that of the intelligence, must be capable of a constant correction, enlarging and transformation.

This faith is essentially the secret *śraddhā* of the soul, and it is brought more and more to the surface and there satisfied, sustained and increased by an increasing assurance and certainty of spiritual experience. Here too the faith in us must be unattached, a faith that





because man carries the seed of the divine life in himself, in his own spirit, the possibility of success is involved and implied in the effort and victory is assured because behind is the call and guidance of an omnipotent power. At the same time this faith in oneself must be purified from all touch of rajasic egoism and spiritual pride. The sadhaka should keep as much as possible in his mind the idea that his strength is not his own in the egoistic sense but that of the divine universal Shakti and whatever is egoistic in his use of it must be a cause of limitation and in the end an obstacle. The power of the divine universal Shakti which is behind our aspiration is illimitable, and when it is rightly called upon it cannot fail to pour itself into us and to remove whatever incapacity and obstacle, now or later; for the times and durations of our struggle while they depend at first, instrumentally and in part, on the strength of our faith and our endeavour, are yet eventually in the hands of the wisely determining secret Spirit, alone the Master of the Yoga, the Ishwara. The faith in the divine Shakti must be always at the back of our strength and when she becomes manifest, it must be or grow implicit and complete. There is nothing that is impossible to her who is the conscious Power and universal Goddess all-creative from eternity and armed with the Spirit's omnipotence. All knowledge, all strengths, all triumph and victory, all skill and works are in her hands and they are full of the treasures of the Spirit and of all perfections and siddhis. She is Maheshwari, goddess of the supreme knowledge, and brings to us her vision for all kinds and widenesses of truth, her rectitude of the spiritual will, the calm and passion of her supramental largeness, her felicity of illumination: she is Mahakali, goddess of the supreme strength, and with her are all might and spiritual force and severest austerity of tapas and swiftness to the battle and the victory and the laughter, the *aṭṭahāsyā*, that makes light of defeat and death and the powers of the ignorance: she is Mahalakshmi, the goddess of the supreme love and delight, and her gifts are the spirit's grace and the charm and beauty of the Ananda and protection and every divine and human blessing: she is Mahasaraswati, the goddess of divine skill and of the works of the Spirit, and hers is the Yoga that is skill in works, *yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam*,

and the utilities of divine knowledge and the self-application of the spirit to life and the happiness of its harmonies. And in all her powers and forms she carries with her the supreme sense of the masteries of the eternal Ishwari, a rapid and divine capacity for all kinds of action that may be demanded from the instrument, oneness, a participating sympathy, a free identity, with all energies in all beings and therefore a spontaneous and fruitful harmony with all the divine will in the universe. The intimate feeling of her presence and her powers and the satisfied assent of all our being to her workings in and around it is the last perfection of faith in the Shakti.

And behind her is the Ishwara and faith in him is the most central thing in the *śraddhā* of the integral Yoga. This faith we must have and develop to perfection that all things are the workings under the universal conditions of a supreme self-knowledge and wisdom, that nothing done in us or around us is in vain or without its appointed place and just significance, that all things are possible when the Ishwara as our supreme Self and Spirit takes up the action and that all that has been done before and all that he will do hereafter was and will be part of his infallible and foreseeing guidance and intended towards the fruition of our Yoga and our perfection and our life work. This faith will be more and more justified as the higher knowledge opens, we shall begin to see the great and small significances that escaped our limited mentality and faith will pass into knowledge. Then we shall see beyond the possibility of doubt that all happens within the working of the one Will and that that will was also wisdom because it develops always the true workings in life of the self and nature. The highest state of the assent, the *śraddhā* of the being will be when we feel the presence of the Ishwara and feel all our existence and consciousness and thought and will and action in his hand and consent in all things and with every part of our self and nature to the direct and immanent and occupying will of the Spirit. And that highest perfection of the *śraddhā* will also be the opportunity and perfect foundation of a divine strength: it will base, when complete, the development and manifestation and the works of the luminous supramental Shakti.

(From *The Synthesis of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 24, pages 777-782.)



## **Bliss of Identity**

*All Nature is taught in radiant ways to move,  
All beings are in myself embraced.  
O fiery boundless Heart of joy and love,  
How art thou beating in a mortal's breast!*

*It is Thy rapture flaming through my nerves  
And all my cells and atoms thrill with Thee;  
My body Thy vessel is and only serves  
As a living wine-cup of Thy ecstasy.*

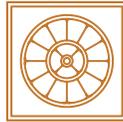
*I am a centre of Thy golden light  
And I its vast and vague circumference;  
Thou art my soul great, luminous and white  
And Thine my mind and will and glowing sense.*

*Thy spirit's infinite breath I feel in me;  
My life is a throb of Thy eternity.*

*Arichand*



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*In the integrality and  
absoluteness of bhakti  
and surrender, we find  
the essential condition  
of perfect peace leading  
to uninterrupted bliss*

*With my blessings*

