

# 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 BLISS OF BEING CONSCIOUS

### Rand Hicks

*Saccidānanda* is core to Sri Aurobindo's philosophy in *The Life Divine*. The term conceives of reality as an existence (*sat*) which is simultaneously consciousness (*cit*) and bliss (*ānanda*). The sonorous Sanskrit is a rendering into mental form of what is a single reality: conscious being whose nature is delight. The mind blinks and regards it as a triple oneness. The argument between *sat* and *asat* — being and non-being — has no force here: non-being for Sri Aurobindo cannot refer to an absence of existence, but to a transcendence beyond all possible determinations of positive being, however magnificent. Approaching the omnipresent but transcendent reality of *saccidānanda* confounds the mind and its instrument, philosophy. What is beyond being cannot be conceived.

Sri Aurobindo regards the concept of *saccidānanda* as fundamental to the Vedantic vision. We often think it is Upanishadic in origin and refers to an impersonal existence, a sheer, unformed, and indeterminable infinite. Yet the first usage of the term occurs not in the great Upanishads, not the Brahma Sutras or Bhagavad Gita, not in the Vedanta of Shankara, but in texts of theistic Vedanta which began to appear in written form some seven hundred years ago. The *Nṛsimha-Uttara-Tapaniya Upaniṣad* and the Muktika Upanishad refer to the idea. Sridhara quotes Vishnuswamin as speaking of *saccidānanda-īśvara*, the Lord of Saccidananda. Later the great bhakta Vallabhacharya, following Vishnuswamin, makes it a key feature of his thought. What these tell us is that *Saccidānanda* describes the nature of a great Person who transcends the world, yet becomes all this. Why? To experience the bliss of multiplicity and universality. All beings share that essence, and therefore contain the power to commune with That: this spiritual conjunction is effected through grace and effort.

The Person of *Saccidānanda* creates the cosmos, but is not necessarily a father. Roughly contemporary with these theistic Vedantic texts is the appearance of *saccidānanda* in tantric theory and practice. In *Śrī Lalitā Sahasranāma*, ("The Thousand Names of the Divine Mother") the



The Great Goddess Lalita  
with Ganesha and Kartikeya  
Pala Empire, Odisha, 11<sup>th</sup> century

700<sup>th</sup> name of the Goddess is *saccidānanda-rūpiṇī* — She whose form is existence, consciousness, and bliss. *Saccidānanda* is the nature of the transcendent Divine Mother who sports in and as the world. Playing in delight, She experiences herself as manyness. Each soul is secretly Her, and can reawaken and rejoin her supreme form through a practice, a psychological discipline, a *sādhanā*, which enjoins oneness upon the one who seeks. The seeker is the sought, the player is the ground of the drama: the self who experiences the bliss and drinks in the *rasa* is ever the great Goddess. Bhaskararaya points out that She manifests an intentional universe as a movement of her will at the very moment she conceives it: the cosmic order exists already within her vision, and its manifest evolution through space and time articulates her creative urge. Universe and self are not illusive or transient, but born from a supreme awareness whose concepts are true and substantive and eventually arc towards their intended goal. She plays in all these forms and persons, assumes myriad shapes across the aeonic march of time, for a single, all-harmonizing reason: She enjoys it. We are sparks of Her bliss. And when we discover and live from our souls and not from our egos, we too are delighted.





## PEACOCK'S FAN

The Integral Knowledge Study Center celebrated the New Year with a midnight meditation, a tradition established in 1980 during the visit to Pensacola of M.P. Pandit and Vasanti Rao. Right after the stroke of midnight, we emerge from meditation and distribute the Ashram calendar and the New Year message to our friends, share prasad and small gifts to suit the occasion. We were joined this year by our friend Devika Murthy, the noted writer who lives in Bangalore. Ever generous, Devika gave us each a volume of her splendid poetry, *from Shadow to Sunlight*. Her inspired quatrains are a deep delight.

Along with Devika, recent visitors to the Center include Neha Satak, Shashi Prakash, Shobhana Senthilkumaran, Senthilkumaran Subramanian, Samiksha Mirra Senthilkumaran, Uma Chittybabu, Chittybabu Krishnamoorthy, Scott Kownslar (a founding member of our center) and Debra Booth. Only weeks after their visit here, Scott and Debra were in Pondicherry, lodged in the felicitous atmosphere of a heritage guest house, appropriately named "Gratitude." Rand Hicks visited longtime friends Kiron and Lekha and Gitanjali Senapati in Tampa in December, and spoke to assembled friends about the Indian spirit in America and the mission of the Indian woman. And Gitanjali, now an attorney in Tampa, announced her engagement. That august occasion is set for August, following the birthday of Sri Aurobindo.

Our study on Sunday evenings in *The Life*

*Divine* has brought us to its fourteenth chapter, "The Supermind as Creator." We are going through the masterpiece one line at a time in a straightforward manner. Friends in the United States and from around the world join us for the study through a conference app called Zoom. Contact us for more information.

Dear friends lost dear companions in recent months. Wolfram and Sue Verlaan lost Bones and Ellie, both wonderful cats. Bill and Debbie Flick lost the magnificent Miwa, who appeared at our Center years ago on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August and agreed to grace the Flick home in Auburn. Miwa was the Mother's lion. And Kate Buffington and David Mitchell sadly lost Scooter, who sparked joy and directed all household projects, yet was undogmatic in her pursuit of truth and harmony.

## MESSAGE FOR 21 FEBRUARY 2015

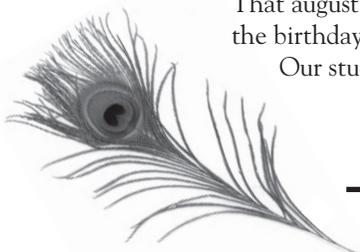
*Far-wandering seekers on the Eternal's path  
Brought to these quiet founts their spirit's thirst  
And spent the treasure of a silent hour  
Bathed in the purity of the mild gaze  
That, unisistent, ruled them from its peace,  
And by its influence found the ways of calm.*

Sri Aurobindo

(Released on the Mother's birthday by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and quoted from *Savitri*, CWSA, Vol. 34, p. 382. The passage occurs in the fourth Canto of the fourth Book of the epic, "The Quest.")

## THE WORLD'S MASKED DELIGHT *Sri Aurobindo*

The first status of Life we found to be characterised by a dumb unconscious drive or urge, a force of some involved will in the material or atomic existence, not free and possessor of itself or its works or their results, but entirely possessed by the universal movement in which it arises as the obscure unformed seed of individuality. The root of the second status is desire, eager to possess but limited in capacity; the bud of the third is Love which seeks both to possess and be possessed, to receive and to give itself; the fine flower of the fourth, its sign of perfection, we conceive as the pure and full emergence of the original will, the



illuminated fulfilment of the intermediate desire, the high and deep satisfaction of the conscious interchange of Love by the unification of the state of the possessor and possessed in the divine unity of souls which is the foundation of the supramental existence. If we scrutinise these terms carefully we shall see that they are shapes and stages of the soul's seeking for the individual and universal delight of things; the ascent of Life is in its nature the ascent of the divine Delight in things from its dumb conception in Matter through vicissitudes and opposites to its luminous consummation in Spirit.

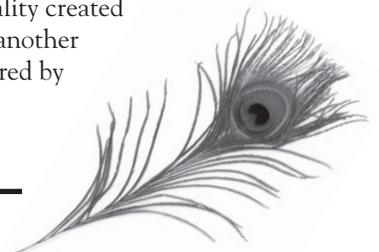
The world being what it is, it could not be otherwise. For the world is a masked form of Sachchidananda, and the nature of the consciousness of Sachchidananda and therefore the thing in which His force must always find and achieve itself is divine Bliss, an omnipresent self-delight. Since Life is an energy of His conscious-force, the secret of all its movements must be a hidden delight inherent in all things which is at once cause, motive and object of its activities; and if by reason of egoistic division that delight is missed, if it is held back behind a veil, if it is represented as its own opposite, even as being is masked in death, consciousness figures as the inconscient and force mocks itself with the guise of incapacity, then that which lives cannot be satisfied, cannot either rest from the movement or fulfil the movement except by laying hold on this universal delight which is at once the secret total delight of its own being and the original, all-encompassing, all-informing, all-upholding delight of the transcendent and immanent Sachchidananda. To seek for delight is therefore the fundamental impulse and sense of Life; to find and possess and fulfil it is its whole motive.

But where in us is this principle of Delight? through what term of our being does it manifest and fulfil itself in the action of the cosmos as the principle of Conscious-Force manifests and uses Life for its cosmic term and the principle of Supermind manifests and uses Mind? We have distinguished a fourfold principle of divine Being creative of the universe, — Existence, Conscious-Force, Bliss and Supermind. Supermind, we have seen, is omnipresent in the material cosmos, but veiled; it is behind the actual phenomenon of



things and occultly expresses itself there, but uses for effectuation its own subordinate term, Mind. The divine Conscious-Force is omnipresent in the material cosmos, but veiled, operative secretly behind the actual phenomenon of things, and it expresses itself there characteristically through its own subordinate term, Life. And, though we have not yet examined separately the principle of Matter, yet we can already see that the divine All-existence also is omnipresent in the material cosmos, but veiled, hidden behind the actual phenomenon of things, and manifests itself there initially through its own subordinate term, Substance, Form of being or Matter. Then, equally, the principle of divine Bliss must be omnipresent in the cosmos, veiled indeed and possessing itself behind the actual phenomenon of things, but still manifested in us through some subordinate principle of its own in which it is hidden and by which it must be found and achieved in the action of the universe.

That term is something in us which we sometimes call in a special sense the soul, — that is to say, the psychic principle which is not the life or the mind, much less the body, but which holds in itself the opening and flowering of the essence of all these to their own peculiar delight of self, to light, to love, to joy and beauty and to a refined purity of being. In fact, however, there is a double soul or psychic term in us, as every other cosmic principle in us is also double. For we have two minds, one the surface mind of our expressed evolutionary ego, the superficial mentality created by us in our emergence out of Matter, another a subliminal mind which is not hampered by



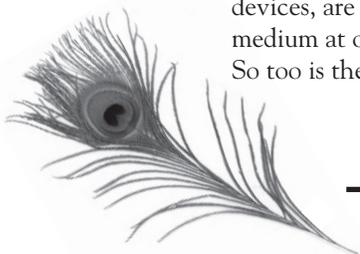
our actual mental life and its strict limitations, something large, powerful and luminous, the true mental being behind that superficial form of mental personality which we mistake for ourselves. So also we have two lives, one outer, involved in the physical body, bound by its past evolution in Matter, which lives and was born and will die, the other a subliminal force of life which is not cabined between the narrow boundaries of our physical birth and death, but is our true vital being behind the form of living which we ignorantly take for our real existence. Even in the matter of our being there is this duality; for behind our body we have a subtler material existence which provides the substance not only of our physical but of our vital and mental sheaths and is therefore our real substance supporting this physical form which we erroneously imagine to be the whole body of our spirit. So too we have a double psychic entity in us, the surface desire-soul which works in our vital cravings, our emotions, aesthetic faculty and mental seeking for power, knowledge and happiness, and a subliminal psychic entity, a pure power of light, love, joy and refined essence of being which is our true soul behind the outer form of psychic existence we so often dignify by the name. It is when some reflection of this larger and purer psychic entity comes to the surface that we say of a man, he has a soul, and when it is absent in his outward psychic life that we say of him, he has no soul.

The external forms of our being are those of our small egoistic existence; the subliminal are the formations of our larger true individuality. Therefore are these that concealed part of our being in which our individuality is close to our universality, touches it, is in constant relation and commerce with it. The subliminal mind in us is open to the universal knowledge of the cosmic Mind, the subliminal life in us to the universal force of the cosmic Life, the subliminal physicality in us to the universal force-formation of cosmic Matter; the thick walls which divide from these things our surface mind, life, body and which Nature has to pierce with so much trouble, so imperfectly and by so many skilful-clumsy physical devices, are there, in the subliminal, only a rarefied medium at once of separation and communication. So too is the subliminal soul in us open to the

universal delight which the cosmic soul takes in its own existence and in the existence of the myriad souls that represent it and in the operations of mind, life and matter by which Nature lends herself to their play and development; but from this cosmic delight the surface soul is shut off by egoistic walls of great thickness which have indeed gates of penetration, but in their entry through them the touches of the divine cosmic Delight become dwarfed, distorted or have to come in masked as their own opposites.

It follows that in this surface or desire-soul there is no true soul-life, but a psychic deformation and wrong reception of the touch of things. The malady of the world is that the individual cannot find his real soul, and the root-cause of this malady is again that he cannot meet in his embrace of things outward the real soul of the world in which he lives. He seeks to find there the essence of being, the essence of power, the essence of conscious-existence, the essence of delight, but receives instead a crowd of contradictory touches and impressions. If he could find that essence, he would find also the one universal being, power, conscious existence and delight even in this throng of touches and impressions; the contradictions of what seems would be reconciled in the unity and harmony of the Truth that reaches out to us in these contacts. At the same time he would find his own true soul and through it his self, because the true soul is his self's delegate and his self and the self of the world are one. But this he cannot do because of the egoistic ignorance in the mind of thought, the heart of emotion, the sense which responds to the touch of things not by a courageous and whole-hearted embrace of the world, but by a flux of reachings and shrinkings, cautious approaches or eager rushes and sullen or discontented or panic or angry recoils according as the touch pleases or displeases, comforts or alarms, satisfies or dissatisfies. It is the desire-soul that by its wrong reception of life becomes the cause of a triple misinterpretation of the *rasa*, the delight in things, so that, instead of figuring the pure essential joy of being, it comes rendered unequally into the three terms of pleasure, pain and indifference.

(From *The Life Divine*, CWSA, Vol. 21, pp. 231-235.)



## **Lila**

*In us is the thousandfold Spirit who is one,  
An eternal thinker calm and great and wise,  
A seer whose eye is an all-regarding sun,  
A poet of the cosmic mysteries.*

*A critic Witness pieces everything  
And binds the fragments in his brilliant sheaf;  
A World-adventurer borne on Destiny's wing  
Gambles with death and triumph, joy and grief.*

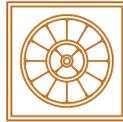
*A king of greatness and a slave of love,  
Host of the stars and guest in Nature's inn,  
A high spectator spirit throned above,  
A pawn of passion in the game divine,*

*One who has made in sport the suns and seas  
Mirrors in our being his immense caprice.*

*Richard*



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*The Day comes when all  
barriers have fallen, within  
and around us and we  
can feel like the bird  
that opens its wings for  
an unopposed soar.*

*with my blessings*

