

# THE PEACOCK LETTER



THE INTEGRAL KNOWLEDGE STUDY CENTER

24 April 2014 • Volume 23, No. 2

## CONTENTS

THE CORE OF THE  
KATHA UPANISHAD  
*Rand Hicks* 3

PEACOCK'S FAN  
4

THE SELF AND NATURE  
*Sri Aurobindo* 4

THE CONCENTRIC AND VERTICAL  
SYSTEMS  
*Sri Aurobindo* 5

THE GRADATION OF PLANES  
*Sri Aurobindo* 6

THE VEDANTIN  
*Sri Aurobindo* 8

PRAYERS FROM OIWAKÉ  
AND PONDICHERRY  
*The Mother* 8

THE PILGRIM OF THE NIGHT  
*Sri Aurobindo* 9

## 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

*The Peacock Letter* is an online quarterly published by the Integral Knowledge Study Center, 221 Clematis Street, Pensacola, Florida 32503, a tax-exempt, non-profit corporation. You can find us online at [iksc.org](http://iksc.org), and email us at [randhicks@iksc.org](mailto:randhicks@iksc.org). Requests for digital subscriptions to *The Peacock Letter* should be sent to the Integral Knowledge Study Center at one of the above addresses. Contributions to defray associated expenses are appreciated. For past issues of *The Peacock Letter* and more information about the yoga of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, please write to us.

All quotations from the works of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother are copyrighted by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and are reproduced with the kind permission of the Ashram. Contributions to the Center's work in America are welcome.



*The Peacock Letter* uses only recycled pixels.



## THE CORE OF THE KATHA UPANISHAD

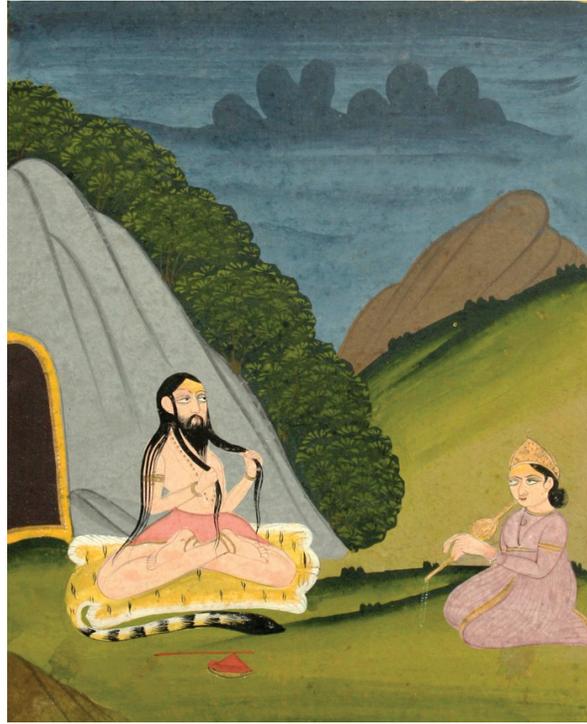
Rand Hicks

*Finer than the finest, larger than the largest, is the self (ātman) that lies here hidden in the heart of a living being. Desireless and sorrowless, a man perceives by the Ordainer's grace the grandeur of the self. . . . When a man perceives close at hand this living, honey-eating self, the lord of what was and what will be—it does not seek to hide from him. This indeed is That!*

*Katha Upanishad, 2.20, 4.5*

The great motifs of India's spiritual life may be discoverable in the mysterious depths of the Vedas, but they certainly find their first bold declaration in the Upanishads. Among those records — transmitted by illumined sages to earnest seekers in retreat centers outside bustling new cities forming then around royal and economic powers from Kuru-Pañcala to Kosala-Videha — is the Katha Upanishad. Katha means story, and it is the great story of how an innocent and one-pointed aspirant to spiritual knowledge is introduced to the central truths of existence. Nachiketas (the one who does not know) finds his way through the portals of death and compels Yama (son of the Sun, world-ordainer, Death too and a guide to and through the realms of death) to share with him these priceless truths. More interesting than the story is the revelatory teaching.

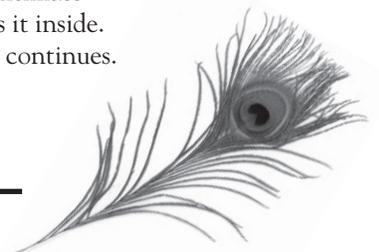
For in successive sweeps, fitted well to the clear-sighted seeker's unceasing aspiration, Yama gives three boons (for instruction opens up the actual experience in one who is really ready, for whom initiation means realization). First, he confirms the unshakable truth of the soul's immortality. Then he conducts Nachiketas through the vast ranges of being and becoming so that he becomes sovereign in world-knowledge and feels intimately that all the world is lit by the play of the Divine. And finally the boy is lifted beyond even the treasures of immortality and cosmic vastness into a spotless transcendence of world and person. He wins the full knowledge of the real soul, joins himself in oneness to the golden wheel of the cosmos, then exceeds all formulation and dwells



Kedar Ragini Jaipur c.1840

outside all categories as the timeless and spaceless Atman. From the honeyed-heart's cavern to boundless cosmos to culminating bliss indefinable.

Surely Vedic, this grand story may be seeded in a Vedic hymn sung by the Rishi Kumara Yamayana (RV.X.135), but it is a tale told straight and with interesting variants in the Taittiriya Brahmana (TB 3.11.8). This story and teaching born in the Vedic age rolls powerfully on through the Upanishadic. And when Krishna reveals his true nature to Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra at a turning point in India's and therefore the world's history, his speech echoes, evokes, restates and carries still farther the Katha's core revelation: the Divine is behind the familiar forms and failing promises of common experience, the Divine inhabits and sustains and acts in the world, the Divine is even in the dark passages behind the beckoning face of the cosmos, this world is a meaningful manifestation of the Divine, and the Divine is the truth at the core of every individual who acts and lives in our world, so do not be alarmed by contraries and apparent dips along the highway: your route to ultimate happiness is secure. You already possess it inside. And we are one in That, and our story continues.





### PEACOCK'S FAN

After spending much of February working in Sri Aurobindo's masterpiece, *The Mother*, the Center began a lengthy review of the Indian spiritual tradition in March. Our plan is to prepare ourselves for a study of *The Life Divine*, which we intend to launch on or around the centenary of the first chapter's appearance in the ARYA—the Fifteenth of August, 2014. By the time we get to August, we will have summarized a number of significant subjects along the way. We've already finished a survey of the Rigveda and several Upanishads. We recently began our work in the Bhagavad Gita, which we'll follow with a review of Sankhya, Jainism, Buddhism, and the Yoga Sutras. We need to spend some time with Shankara and Ramanuja and their schools of Vedanta. The Shakti tradition, along with the enormous field of Tantrism, deserves close attention. We will invest ample time in Kashmir Shaivism as well, and of course we will look at Sri Vidya, the Siddha tradition, and Hatha Yoga. A summary of Bhakti Yoga and Sri Chaitanya will lead us into an appreciation of Sri Ramakrishna. Each subject deserves a month of study all to itself, but August is approaching. What we complete will enable our friends to appreciate more fully the genius and sweep of Sri Aurobindo's vision when in August we enter the ocean that is *The Life Divine*.

By the way, we recently extended our Sunday evening satsangs to friends around the country with a conferencing application.

## THE SELF AND NATURE

*Sri Aurobindo*

The Self is felt as either universal, one in all, or a universalised individual the same in essence as others, extended everywhere from each being but centred here. Of course centre is a way of speaking, because no physical centre is usually felt — only all the action takes place around the individual.

\*

In the experience of Yoga the self or being is in essence one with the Divine or at the least it is a portion of the Divine and has all the divine potentialities. But in manifestation it takes two aspects, the Purusha and Prakriti, conscious being and Nature. In Nature here the Divine is veiled, and the individual being is subjected to Nature which acts here as the lower Prakriti, a force of Ignorance, Avidya. The Purusha in itself is divine, but exteriorised in the ignorance of Nature it is as the individual apparent being imperfect with her imperfection. Thus the soul or psychic essence, which is the Purusha entering into the evolution and supporting it, carries in itself all the divine potentialities, but the individual psychic being which it puts forth as its representative assumes the imperfection of Nature and evolves in it till it has recovered its full psychic essence and united itself with the Self above of which the soul is the individual projection in the evolution. This duality in the being on all its planes, for it is true in different ways not only of the Self and the psychic but of the mental, vital and physical Purushas, has to be grasped and accepted before the experiences of the Yoga can be fully understood.

The Being is one throughout, but on each plane of Nature, it is represented by a form of itself which is proper to that plane, the mental Purusha in the mental plane, the vital Purusha in the vital, the physical Purusha in the physical. The Taittiriya Upanishad speaks of two other planes of the being, the Knowledge or Truth plane and the Ananda plane, each with its Purusha, but although influences may come down from them these are superconscious to the human mind and their nature is not yet organised here.

(From *Letters on Yoga—I*, CWSA, Vol. 28, pages 31 and 33.)



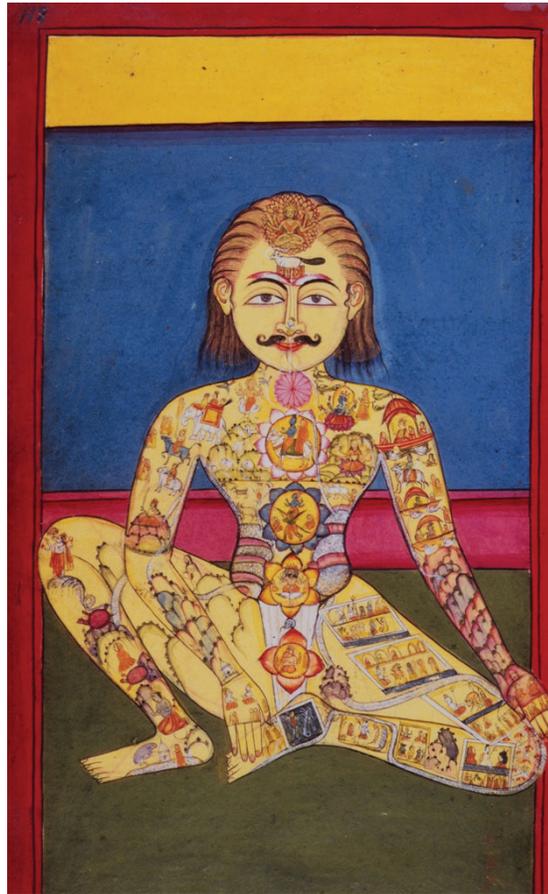
## THE CONCENTRIC AND VERTICAL SYSTEMS

*Sri Aurobindo*

I do not think exact correlations can always be traced between one system of spiritual and occult knowledge and another. All deal with the same material, but there are differences of stand-point, differences of view-range, a divergence in the mental idea of what is seen and experienced, disparate pragmatic purposes and therefore a difference in the paths surveyed, cut out or followed; the systems vary, each constructs its own schema and technique.

In the ancient Indian system there is only one triune supernal, Sachchidananda. Or if you speak of the upper hemisphere as the supernal, there are three, Sat plane, Chit plane and Ananda plane. The Supermind could be added as a fourth, as it draws upon the other three and belongs to the upper hemisphere. The Indian systems did not distinguish between two quite different powers and levels of consciousness, one which we can call Overmind and the other the true Supermind or Divine Gnosis. That is the reason why they got confused about Maya (Overmind-Force or Vidya-Avidya) and took it for the supreme creative power. In so stopping short at what was still a half-light they lost the secret of transformation — even though the Vaishnava and Tantra Yogas groped to find it again and were sometimes on the verge of success. For the rest, this, I think, has been the stumbling-block of all attempts at the discovery of the dynamic divine Truth; I know of none that has not imagined, as soon as it felt the Overmind lustres descending, that this was the true illumination, the gnosis, — with the result that they either stopped short there and could get no farther, or else concluded that this too was only Maya or Lila and that the one thing to do was to get beyond it into some immovable and inactive Silence of the Supreme.

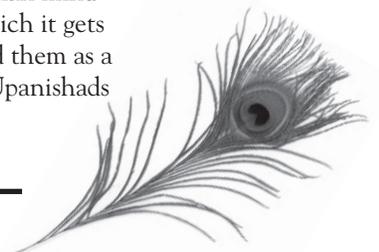
Perhaps, what may be meant by supernals [in a text submitted by the correspondent] is rather the three fundamentals of the present manifestation. In the Indian system, these are Ishwara, Shakti and Jiva, or else Sachchidananda, Maya and Jiva. But in our system which seeks to go beyond the present manifestation, these could very well be



*Yogin in kundalini practice* 19th century

taken for granted and, looked at from the point of view of the planes of consciousness, the three highest — Ananda (with Sat and Chit resting upon it), Supermind and Overmind — might be called the three Supernals. Overmind stands at the top of the lower hemisphere, and you have to pass through and beyond Overmind if you would reach Supermind, while still above and beyond Supermind are the worlds of Sachchidananda.

You speak of the gulf below the Overmind. But is there a gulf — or any other gulf than human unconsciousness? In all the series of the planes or grades of consciousness there is nowhere any real gulf, always there are connecting gradations and one can ascend from step to step. Between the Overmind and the human mind there are a number of more and more luminous gradations; but, as these are superconscious to human mind (except one or two of the lowest of which it gets some direct touches), it is apt to regard them as a superior Inconscience. So one of the Upanishads



speaks of the Ishwara consciousness as *sus.upta*, deep Sleep, because it is only in Samadhi that man usually enters into it, so long as he does not try to turn his waking consciousness into a higher state.

There are in fact two systems simultaneously active in the organisation of the being and its parts; — one is concentric, a series of rings or sheaths with the psychic at the centre; another is vertical, an ascension and descent, like a flight of steps, a series of superimposed planes with the Supermind-Overmind as the crucial nodus of the transition beyond the human into the Divine. For this transition, if it is to be at the same time a transformation, there is only one way, one path. First, there must be a conversion inwards, a going within to find the inmost psychic being and bring it out to the front, disclosing at the same time the inner mind, inner vital, inner physical parts of the nature. Next, there must be an ascension, a series of conversions upwards and a turning down to convert the lower parts. When one has made the inward conversion, one psychicises the whole lower nature so as to make it ready for the divine change. Going upwards, one passes beyond the human mind and at each stage of the ascent there is a conversion into a new consciousness and an infusion of this new consciousness into the whole of the nature. Thus rising beyond intellect through illuminated higher mind to the intuitive consciousness, we begin to look at everything not from the intellect range or through intellect as an instrument, but from a greater intuitive height and through an intuitivised will, feeling, emotion, sensation and physical contact. So, proceeding from intuition to a greater overmind height, there is a new conversion and we look at and experience everything from the overmind consciousness and through a mind, heart, vital and body surcharged with the overmind thought, sight, will, feeling, sensation, play of force and contact. But the last conversion is the supramental, for once there, once the nature is supramentalised, we are beyond the Ignorance and conversion of consciousness is no longer needed, though a farther divine progression, even an infinite development is still possible.

(From *Letters on Yoga—I*, CWSA, Vol. 28, pages 82-85.)

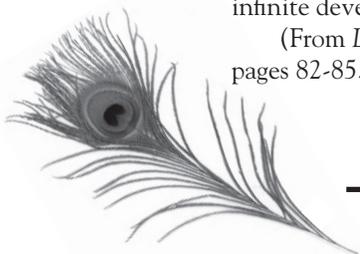
## THE GRADATION OF PLANES

*Sri Aurobindo*

If we regard the gradation of worlds or planes as a whole, we see them as a great connected complex movement; the higher precipitate their influences on the lower, the lower react to the higher and develop or manifest in themselves within their own formula something that corresponds to the superior power and its action. The material world has evolved life in obedience to a pressure from the vital plane, mind in obedience to a pressure from the mental plane. It is now trying to evolve supermind in obedience to a pressure from the supramental plane. In more detail, particular forces, movements, powers, beings of a higher world can throw themselves on the lower to establish appropriate and corresponding forms which will connect them with the material domain and, as it were, reproduce or project their action here. And each thing created here has, supporting it, subtler envelopes or forms of itself which make it subsist and connect it with forces acting from above. Man, for instance, has, besides his gross physical body, subtler sheaths or bodies by which he lives behind the veil in direct connection with supraphysical planes of consciousness and can be influenced by their powers, movements and beings. What takes place in life has always behind it preexistent movements and forms in the occult vital planes; what takes place in mind presupposes preexistent movements and forms in the occult mental planes. That is an aspect of things which becomes more and more evident, insistent and important, the more we progress in a dynamic Yoga.

But all this must not be taken in too rigid and mechanical a sense. It is an immense plastic movement full of the play of possibilities and must be seized by a flexible and subtle tact or sense in the seeing consciousness. It cannot be reduced to a too rigorous logical or mathematical formula. Two or three points must be pressed in order that this plasticity may not be lost to our view.

First, each plane, in spite of its connection with others above and below it, is yet a world in itself, with its own movements, forces, beings, types, forms existing as if for its and their own sake, under its own laws, for its own manifestation



without apparent regard for other members of the great series. Thus, if we regard the vital or the subtle physical plane, we see great ranges of it (most of it) existing in themselves, without any relation with the material world and with no movement to affect or influence it, still less to precipitate a corresponding manifestation in the physical formula. At most we can say that the existence of anything in the vital, subtle physical or any other plane creates a possibility for a corresponding movement of manifestation in the physical world. But something more is needed to turn that static or latent possibility into a dynamic potentiality or an actual urge towards a material creation. That something may be a call from the material plane, e.g. some force or someone in the physical existence entering into touch with a supraphysical power or world or part of it and moved to bring it down into the earth life. Or it may be an impulse in the vital or other plane itself, e.g. a vital being moved to extend his action towards the earth and establish there a kingdom for himself or the play of the forces for which he stands in his own domain. Or it may be a pressure from above, let us say some supramental or mental power precipitating its formation from above and developing forms and movements on the vital level as a means of transit to its self-creation in the material world. Or it may be all these things acting together, in which case there is the greatest possibility of an effective creation.

Next, as a consequence, it follows that only a limited part of the action of the vital or other higher planes is concerned with the earth-existence. But even this creates a mass of possibilities which is far greater than the earth can at one time manifest or contain in its own less plastic formulas. All these possibilities do not realise themselves; some fail altogether and leave at the most an idea that comes to nothing; some try seriously and are repelled and defeated and, even if in action for a time, come to nothing. Others effectuate a half manifestation, and this is the most usual result, the more so as these vital or other supraphysical forces come into conflict and have not only to overcome the resistance of the physical consciousness and of matter, but their own internecine resistance to each other. A certain number succeed in precipitating their results in a more complete and successful creation, so that if you compare that creation with its original in the higher



plane, there is something like a close resemblance or even an apparently exact reproduction or translation from the supraphysical to the physical formula. And yet even there the exactness is only apparent; the very fact of translation into another substance and another rhythm of manifestation makes a difference. It is something new that has manifested and it is that that makes the creation worth while. What for instance would be the utility of a supramental creation on earth if it were just the same thing as a supramental creation on the supramental plane? It is that, in principle, but yet something else, a triumphant new self-discovery of the Divine in conditions that are not elsewhere.

No doubt, the subtle physical is closest to the physical, and most like it. But yet the conditions are different and the thing too different. For instance, the subtle physical has a freedom, plasticity, intensity, power, colour, wide and manifold play (there are thousands of things there that are not here) of which as yet we have no



possibility on earth. And yet there is something here, a potentiality of the Divine which the other in spite of its greater liberties has not, something which makes creation more difficult, but in the last result justifies the labour.

(From *Letters on Yoga-I*, CWSA, Vol. 28, pages 129-132.)

## THE VEDANTIN

*Sri Aurobindo*

No, certainly I did not mean that the Vedantin who sees a greater working behind the appearances of the world is living in a different world from this material one — if I had meant that, all that I had written would be without point or sense. I meant a Vedantin who lives in this world with all its suffering and ignorance and ugliness and evil and has had a full measure of these things, betrayal and abandonment by friends, failure of outward objects and desires in life, attack and persecution, accumulated illnesses, constant difficulty, struggles, stumblings in his Yoga. It is not that he lives in a different world, but he has a different way of meeting its ordeals, blows and dangers. He takes them as the nature of this world and the result of the ego-consciousness in which it lives. He tries therefore to grow into another consciousness in which he feels what is behind the outward appearance, and as he grows into that larger consciousness he begins to feel more and more a working behind which is helping him to grow in the spirit and leading him toward mastery and freedom from ego and ignorance and he sees that all has been used for that purpose. Till he reaches this consciousness with its larger knowledge of things, he has to walk by faith and his faith may sometimes fail him, but it returns and carries him through all the difficulties. Everybody is not bound to accept this faith and this consciousness, but there is something great and true behind it for the spiritual life.

(From *Letters on Yoga-II*, CWSA, Vol. 29, pages 425-426.)

## OIWAKÉ: SEPTEMBER 3, 1919

*The Mother*

Since the man refused the meal I had prepared with so much love and care, I invoked the God to take it.

My God, Thou hast accepted my invitation, Thou hast come to sit at my table, and in exchange for my poor and humble offering Thou hast granted to me the last liberation. My heart, even this morning so heavy with anguish and care, my head surcharged with responsibility, are delivered of their burden. Now are they light and joyful as my inner being has been for a long time past. My body smiles to Thee with happiness as before my soul smiled to Thee. And surely hereafter Thou wilt withdraw no more from me this joy, O my God! for this time, I think, the lesson has been sufficient, I have mounted the Calvary of successive disillusionments high enough to attain to the Resurrection. Nothing remains of the past but a potent love which gives me the pure heart of a child and the lightness and freedom of thought of a god.

## PONDICHERY JUNE 22, 1920

*The Mother*

After granting me the joy which surpasses all expression, Thou hast sent me, O my beloved Lord, the struggle, the ordeal and on this too I have smiled as on one of Thy precious messengers. Before, I dreaded the conflict, for it hurt in me the love of harmony and peace. But now, O my God, I welcome it with gladness: it is one among the forms of Thy action, one of the best means for bringing back to light some elements of the work which might otherwise have been forgotten, and it carries with it a sense of amplitude, of complexity, of power. And even as I have seen Thee, resplendent, exciting the conflict, so also it is Thou whom I see unravelling the entanglement of events and jarring tendencies and winning in the end the victory over all that strives to veil Thy light and Thy power: for out of the struggle it is a more perfect realisation of Thyself that must arise.

(From *Prayers and Meditations*, CWM, Vol. 1, pages 372 and 373.)



## ***The Pilgrim of the Night***

*I made an assignation with the Night;  
In the abyss was fixed our rendezvous:  
In my breast carrying God's deathless light  
I came her dark and dangerous heart to woo.*

*I left the glory of the illumined Mind  
And the calm rapture of the divinised soul  
And travelled through a vastness dim and blind  
To the grey shore where her ignorant waters roll.*

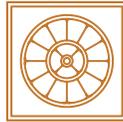
*I walk by the chill wave through the dull slime  
And still that weary journeying knows no end;  
Lost is the lustrous godhead beyond Time,  
There comes no voice of the celestial Friend.*

*And yet I know my footprints' track shall be  
A pathway towards Immortality.*

*Richard*



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



*We feel the Divine to living  
in us that we await events  
with serenity, knowing that  
His way is everywhere since  
we carry it in our being  
with blessings*

