

# 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 EMPOWERMENT OF THE 24<sup>TH</sup> Rand Hicks

While the 24<sup>th</sup> of April is one of the four darshan dates on the calendar of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, it draws the smallest crowds and attracts the least attention. Ashram life records it as the date of the Mother's final arrival in Pondicherry. For the aspiring yogin her return to Sri Aurobindo on the 24<sup>th</sup> marks a decisive turn from theory to practice, from inner journeys and outer wanderings to a focus upon the body, personal and collective, as the instrument of ascent and transformation. When she was restored to his side on that afternoon in 1920 they recognized together that the hour had come for total *tapas*.

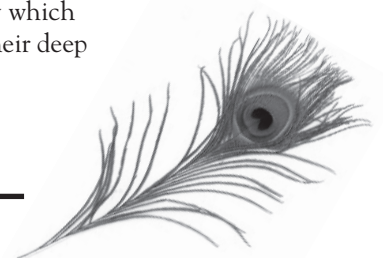
The Integral Yoga vaults forwards and upwards from that date. The practice pioneered by them and shared with those who were prepared and ready for it demands attention from every part of the being. All must be awakened and propelled forwards. An aspiration ranging from the inmost soul through a receptive mind, questing vitality, focused physique, traverses these aspects of the personal nature. The aspiration kindles and carries and furthers the force of purification, insists on thoroughgoing sincerity in each of the linked fortresses of nature, builds peace in them and poise. The self-discovered soul advances into the experience of the vast spirit and celebrates the acquisition of *samatā*, equality, as the right basis of its advance. Opening to the influence and direction of the Divine, the human vessel carries the building effort into the mind's quest for knowledge, the heart's seeking for love and communion, the body's insistence on fulfilling the purpose of its form. No part of the being is excluded from the effort, nothing in us is foreign. Ignorance and impurity burn away through sustained practice. *Sādhana* fixes the consciousness to the body; this is a central point. Ours is not a path of exalted experience outside the purview of physical life. We do not reject either the body or the world. If divinisation is possible, we insist upon it for every willing part of us. What inspires our actions might be the direction of the world-teacher, heard from within or met in the luminous pages of correspondence or philosophy. Our enactment of the mind-centered or heart-centered

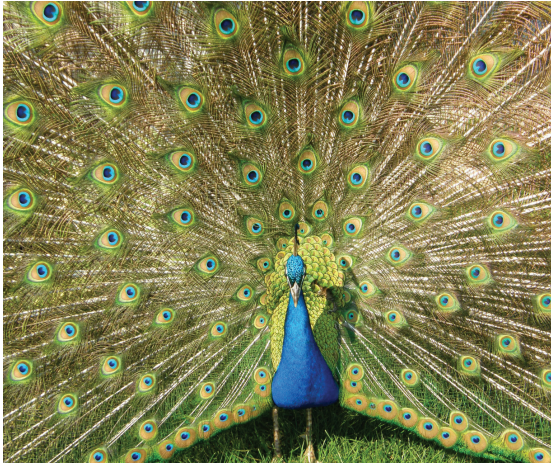


Purva Ragini, c. 1740-1780

*mantra* or guiding thought instills the power of the word into the flesh through the conscious act.

That guiding word does something even more. It flames out of the personal being and exerts its influence on the community of seekers around. Our growing inner experience improves the life of all. Still more, the powerful practice of yoga inwardly ordainates the world's processes: the person becomes an awakening center of universal awareness; cosmic harmony is felt to flow vibrantly from her or him. This connection between dynamizing inspiration and its ensoulment into the body is characteristic both of the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and tantric practices which are several centuries older. Yogic power flows from the awakened soul into the spiritual family, *kula*, and in a sense the human limitations are displaced by divine forces and forms. Goddess and human share the vehicle, suffused into a harmonious whole. The effort to inform the body with divine consciousness is evident in Sri Aurobindo's person and most visible in the Mother. Form is not a prison, but the living channel by which the timeless appoints itself to time. Their deep collaboration demonstrates it.





## PEACOCK'S FAN

The 29<sup>th</sup> of February 2016 for us is the return of The Golden Day. It coincides with Leap Day every four years and commemorates the supramental manifestation which occurred in 1956 on that date. We offered our customary morning meditations then and distributed the Day's message. The Center also sponsored a talk in the evening on the significance and symbolism of the occasion. Zoom participants were with us for the evening program on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

Wayne Hicks was with us in the Center on the 12<sup>th</sup> of March to attend the wedding of our friends Marissa Bachar and Stephen Hinnant. Wolfram and Sue Verlaan were in Pondicherry by that date and returned to the States after a fulfilling visit on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March. Rand left for the Ashram on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March, arrived there on the 25<sup>th</sup>, and returned on the 12<sup>th</sup> of April. He ironically missed the Verlaans by a couple of days. Placed during a quiet period in the Ashram calendar, Rand spent much time with Vasanti Rao, and communed with many friends. He received visits from R.L. Kashyap, R.V. Jahagirdar, Neha Satak, and Shashi Singh, all of whom traveled by train from Bangalore to meet him in the Ashram in early April.

Our study on Sunday evenings in *The Life Divine* has reached Chapter IV in Book Two, "The Divine and the Undivine." Friends from around the world continue to audit this work with us through Zoom, the conference app, and to visit our website to download audio posted there.

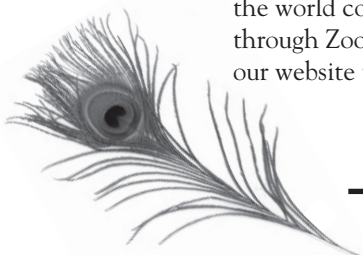
## THE INTEGRAL PERFECTION

*Sri Aurobindo*

A divine perfection of the human being is our aim. We must know then first what are the essential elements that constitute man's total perfection; secondly, what we mean by a divine as distinguished from a human perfection of our being. That man as a being is capable of self-development and of some approach at least to an ideal standard of perfection which his mind is able to conceive, fix before it and pursue, is common ground to all thinking humanity, though it may be only the minority who concern themselves with this possibility as providing the one most important aim of life. But by some the ideal is conceived as a mundane change, by others as a religious conversion.

The mundane perfection is sometimes conceived of as something outward, social, a thing of action, a more rational dealing with our fellow-men and our environment, a better and more efficient citizenship and discharge of duties, a better, richer, kindlier and happier way of living, with a more just and more harmonious associated enjoyment of the opportunities of existence. By others again a more inner and subjective ideal is cherished, a clarifying and raising of the intelligence, will and reason, a heightening and ordering of power and capacity in the nature, a nobler ethical, a richer aesthetic, a finer emotional, a much healthier and better-governed vital and physical being. Sometimes one element is stressed, almost to the exclusion of the rest; sometimes, in wider and more well-balanced minds, the whole harmony is envisaged as a total perfection. A change of education and social institutions is the outward means adopted or an inner self-training and development is preferred as the true instrumentation. Or the two aims may be clearly united, the perfection of the inner individual, the perfection of the outer living.

But the mundane aim takes for its field the present life and its opportunities; the religious aim on the contrary fixes before it the self-preparation for another existence after death, its commonest ideal is some kind of pure sainthood, its means a conversion of the imperfect or sinful human being by divine grace or through obedience to a law laid





down by a scripture or else given by a religious founder. The aim of religion may include a social change, but it is then a change brought about by the acceptance of a common religious ideal and way of consecrated living, a brotherhood of the saints, a theocracy or kingdom of God reflecting on earth the kingdom of heaven.

The object of our synthetic Yoga must, in this respect too as in its other parts, be more integral and comprehensive, embrace all these elements or these tendencies of a larger impulse of self-perfection and harmonise them or rather unify, and in order to do that successfully it must seize on a truth which is wider than the ordinary religious and higher than the mundane principle. All life is a secret Yoga, an obscure growth of Nature towards the discovery and fulfilment of the divine principle hidden in her which becomes progressively less obscure, more self-conscious and luminous, more self-possessed in the human being by the opening of all his instruments of knowledge, will, action, life to the Spirit within him and in the world. Mind, life, body, all the forms of our nature are the means of this growth, but they find their last perfection only by opening out to something beyond them, first, because they are not the whole of what man is, secondly, because that other something which he is, is the key of his completeness and brings a light which discovers to him the whole high and large reality of his being.

Mind is fulfilled by a greater knowledge of which it is only a half-light, life discovers its meaning in a greater power and will of which it is the outward and as yet obscure functioning, body finds its last use as an instrument of a power of being of which it is a physical support and material starting-point. They have all themselves first to be developed and find out their ordinary possibilities; all our normal life is a trying of these possibilities and an opportunity for this preparatory and tentative self-training. But life cannot find its perfect self-fulfilment till it opens to that greater reality of being of which by this development of a richer power and a more sensitive use and capacity it becomes a well-prepared field of working.

Intellectual, volitional, ethical, emotional, aesthetic and physical training and improvement are all so much to the good, but they are only in the end a constant movement in a circle without



any last delivering and illumining aim, unless they arrive at a point when they can open themselves to the power and presence of the Spirit and admit its direct workings. This direct working effects a conversion of the whole being which is the indispensable condition of our real perfection. To grow into the truth and power of the Spirit and by the direct action of that power to be made a fit channel of its self-expression, — a living of man in the Divine and a divine living of the Spirit in humanity, — will therefore be the principle and the whole object of an integral Yoga of self-perfection.

In the process of this change there must be by the very necessity of the effort two stages of its working. First, there will be the personal endeavour of the human being, as soon as he becomes aware by his soul, mind, heart of this divine possibility and turns towards it as the true object of life, to prepare himself for it and to get rid of all in him that belongs to a lower working, of all that stands in the way of his opening to the spiritual truth and its power, so as to possess by this liberation his spiritual being and turn all his natural movements into free means of its self-expression. It is by this turn that the self-conscious Yoga aware of its aim begins: there is a new awakening and an upward change of the life motive. So long as there is only an intellectual, ethical and other self-training for





the now normal purposes of life which does not travel beyond the ordinary circle of working of mind, life and body, we are still only in the obscure and yet unilluminated preparatory Yoga of Nature; we are still in pursuit of only an ordinary human perfection. A spiritual desire of the Divine and of the divine perfection, of a unity with him in all our being and a spiritual perfection in all our nature, is the effective sign of this change, the precursory power of a great integral conversion of our being and living.

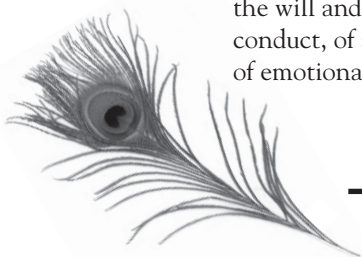
By personal effort a precursory change, a preliminary conversion can be effected; it amounts to a greater or less spiritualising of our mental motives, our character and temperament, and a mastery, stilling or changed action of the vital and physical life. This converted subjectivity can be made the base of some communion or unity of the soul in mind with the Divine and some partial reflection of the divine nature in the mentality of the human being. That is as far as man can go by his unaided or indirectly aided effort, because that is an effort of mind and mind cannot climb beyond itself permanently: at most it arises to a spiritualised and idealised mentality. If it shoots up beyond that border, it loses hold of itself, loses hold of life, and arrives either at a trance of absorption or a passivity. A greater perfection can only be arrived at by a higher power entering in and taking up the whole action of the being. The second stage of this Yoga will therefore be a persistent giving up of all the action of the nature into the hands of this greater Power, a substitution of its influence, possession and working for the personal effort, until the Divine to whom we aspire becomes the direct master of the Yoga and effects the entire spiritual and ideal conversion of the being.

This double character of our Yoga raises it beyond the mundane ideal of perfection, while at the same time it goes too beyond the loftier, intenser, but much narrower religious formula. The mundane ideal regards man always as a mental, vital and physical being and it aims at a human perfection well within these limits, a perfection of mind, life and body, an expansion and refinement of the intellect and knowledge, of the will and power, of ethical character, aim and conduct, of aesthetic sensibility and creativeness, of emotional balanced poise and enjoyment, of

vital and physical soundness, regulated action and just efficiency. It is a wide and full aim, but yet not sufficiently full and wide, because it ignores that other greater element of our being which the mind vaguely conceives as the spiritual element and leaves it either undeveloped or insufficiently satisfied as merely some high occasional or added derivatory experience, the result of the action of mind in its exceptional aspects or dependent upon mind for its presence and persistence. It can become a high aim when it seeks to develop the loftier and the larger reaches of our mentality, but yet not sufficiently high, because it does not aspire beyond mind to that of which our purest reason, our brightest mental intuition, our deepest mental sense and feeling, strongest mental will and power or ideal aim and purpose are only pale radiations. Its aim besides is limited to a terrestrial perfection of the normal human life.

A Yoga of integral perfection regards man as a divine spiritual being involved in mind, life and body; it aims therefore at a liberation and a perfection of his divine nature. It seeks to make an inner living in the perfectly developed spiritual being his constant intrinsic living and the spiritualised action of mind, life and body only its outward human expression. In order that this spiritual being may not be something vague and indefinable or else but imperfectly realised and dependent on the mental support and the mental limitations, it seeks to go beyond mind to the supramental knowledge, will, sense, feeling, intuition, dynamic initiation of vital and physical action, all that makes the native working of the spiritual being. It accepts human life, but takes account of the large supraterrrestrial action behind the earthly material living, and it joins itself to the divine Being from whom the supreme origination of all these partial and lower states proceeds so that the whole of life may become aware of its divine source and feel in each action of knowledge, of will, of feeling, sense and body the divine originating impulse. It rejects nothing that is essential in the mundane aim, but enlarges it, finds and lives in its greater and its truer meaning now hidden from it, transfigures it from a limited, earthly and mortal thing to a figure of infinite, divine and immortal values.

*(The Synthesis of Yoga, CWSA, Vol. 24, 616-620.)*





### *All here is Spirit*

*All here is Spirit self-moved eternally  
For Matter is its seeming or its form,  
A finite motion of Infinity  
Built up by energy's electric storm,*

*A flux of solid instability  
Whirled into shape by a tremendous Force  
That labours out the world's fabric endlessly,  
Creates and then destroys without remorse*

*Titan and worm, the dew-drop and the sea,  
Our fragile bodies like the aeoned star,  
But through it all remains immortally  
The secret spirit we for ever are.*

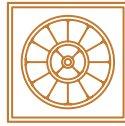
*Matter is Spirit's semblance glamorous  
Self-woven for its own field and robe and house.*

*W. H. Auden*





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



*All veils must be  
dissolved and the  
light must shine  
fully in the hearts  
of all -*

*with my blessings*  
*Sri*

