

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. Meditation, conversation, and classes in the theory and practice of yoga are available through the Center without charge. A library of ten thousand books is open for use.

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, nonprofit corporation. You can find us online at iksc.org, and email us at 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.

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COMMUNITY IN THE SPIRIT'S RAY

Rand Hicks

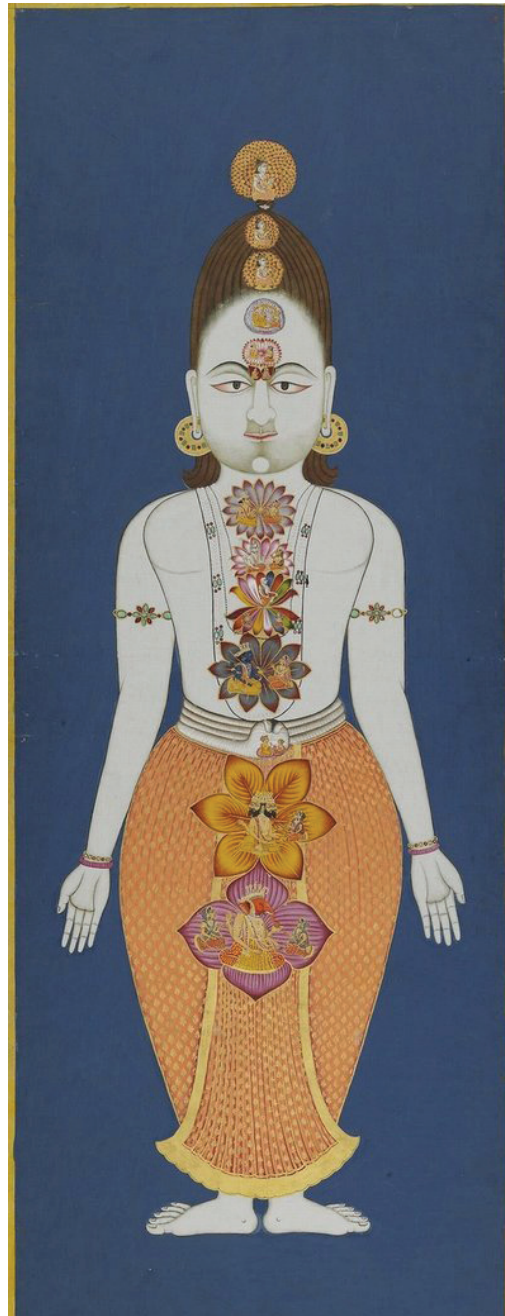
Nine decades ago on this date a spiritual community formed into the Ashram around the fulfilling realization of Sri Aurobindo. Referring to this epoch-marking fulfillment, the 24th of November is called Siddhi Day. The term *āśram* has a long history, too, and it was only after days of meditation that Sri Aurobindo agreed to use the term to describe his growing household. In the ancient brahmanical context, *āśram* referred to something *other* than a community where those weary of life took up a separate and presumably exclusively spiritual life. An *āśram* was a place for spiritual exertion of great magnitude, fully accepting life, aiming in fact at life's fulfillment.

Sri Aurobindo's fulfillment, *siddhi*, was the center of the community, and the power of his consciousness could be felt radiating through all its members. The community held the potential of manifesting that light, of extending the radiation, and indeed we see in the life of the Ashram a steady expansion for years without diminution of the originating intensity.

Our communities can take constructive note. The core of our spiritual collectivities, small or large, must be or become a guiding and powerful realization. One who has awakened extends through forceful concentration, *tapas*, the power of that consciousness into the several members of our nature. Mind, life, and body in our community life can be suffused and uplifted by that realization. It requires receptivity on the part of the aspirants, yes, but it does not require renunciation of the powers of life, it does not require the rejection of Nature.

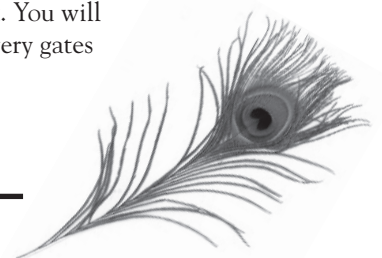
Core to the spiritual culture of India, central too to its larger culture, is this mighty *tapas*. It inspires and uplifts life personally and more widely too. While the community is engaged in life, it still is inwardly focused: we step back into an inner pause and poise without pushing the world away. The Sri Aurobindo Ashram sits directly in the presence of human life, the spiritual center of Pondicherry. We too must affirm the presence of spirit in matter. In Savitri he wrote:

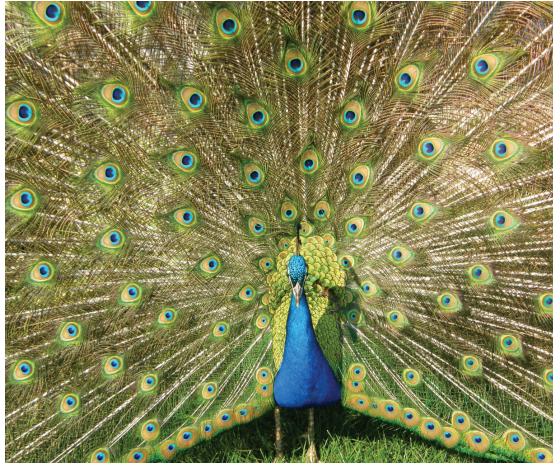
*This mortal life shall house Eternity's bliss,
The body's self taste immortality. VI.2.451*



“Chakras of the Subtle Body,” showing the shape of a Siddha. 1823, Bulaki, Jodhpur, Rajasthan

You, where you are, are the core of your own community. Success in the yoga comes down to simple things: be true, be good, be beautiful, be soulful most of all. Try, give yourself to the effort without expectation, from joy, as a gift. You will be blessed, and you will be led to the very gates of fulfillment.





PEACOCK'S FAN

We have come some distance in our Sunday sessions, reaching Book Two, Chapter XII, "The Origin of the Ignorance," in *The Life Divine*. Friends from around America and India continue to read the text with us by connecting through the Zoom conference app.

Several guests have blessed us with their presence. Wolfram and Sue Verlaan from the University of Alabama in Huntsville were here in early June, which overlapped with a visit by Karen Litfin from the University of Washington. Karen was here ahead of conferences in D.C. and Germany. We also had visits in subsequent months from Kate Walker from Columbia, Missouri, Scott Kownslar and Debra Booth from Atlanta, Philomene Verlaan from London, and Bob Bates from Tennessee.

THE BASIS FOR OUR HARMONY

Sri Aurobindo

And when we say that out of Non-Being Being appeared, we perceive that we are speaking in terms of Time about that which is beyond Time. For what was that portentous date in the history of eternal Nothing on which Being was born out of it or when will come that other date equally formidable on which an unreal all will relapse into the perpetual void? Sat and Asat, if they have both to be affirmed, must be conceived as if they obtained simultaneously. They permit each other even though they refuse to mingle. Both, since we must speak in terms of Time, are eternal. And

who shall persuade eternal Being that it does not really exist and only eternal Non-Being is? In such a negation of all experience how shall we find the solution that explains all experience?

Pure Being is the affirmation by the Unknowable of Itself as the free base of all cosmic existence. We give the name of Non-Being to a contrary affirmation of Its freedom from all cosmic existence,—freedom, that is to say, from all positive terms of actual existence which consciousness in the universe can formulate to itself, even from the most abstract, even from the most transcendent. It does not deny them as a real expression of Itself, but It denies Its limitation by all expression or any expression whatsoever. The Non-Being permits the Being, even as the Silence permits the Activity. By this simultaneous negation and affirmation, not mutually destructive, but complementary to each other like all contraries, the simultaneous awareness of conscious Self-being as a reality and the Unknowable beyond as the same Reality becomes realisable to the awakened human soul. Thus was it possible for the Buddha to attain the state of Nirvana and yet act puissantly in the world, impersonal in his inner consciousness, in his action the most powerful personality that we know of as having lived and produced results upon earth.

When we ponder on these things, we begin to perceive how feeble in their self-assertive violence and how confusing in their misleading distinctness are the words that we use. We begin also to perceive that the limitations we impose on the Brahman arise from a narrowness of experience in the individual mind which concentrates itself on one aspect of the Unknowable and proceeds forthwith to deny or disparage all the rest. We tend always to translate too rigidly what we can conceive or know of the Absolute into the terms of our own particular relativity. We affirm the One and Identical by passionately discriminating and asserting the egoism of our own opinions and partial experiences against the opinions and partial experiences of others. It is wiser to wait, to learn, to grow, and, since we are obliged for the sake of our self-perfection to speak of these things which no human speech can express, to search for the widest, the most flexible, the most catholic

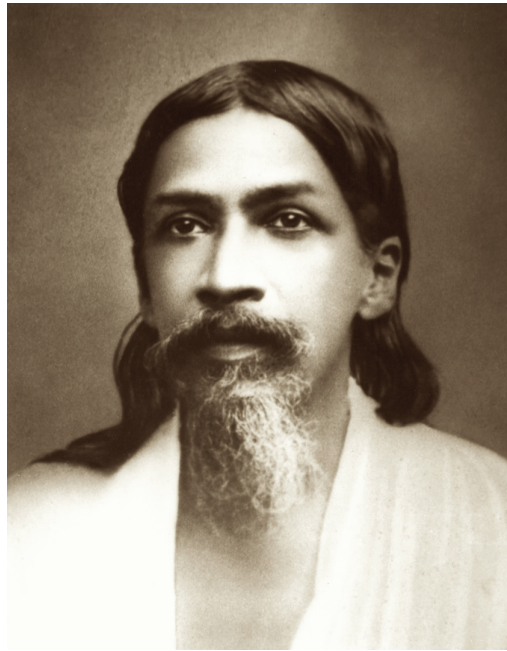


affirmation possible and found on it the largest and most comprehensive harmony.

We recognise, then, that it is possible for the consciousness in the individual to enter into a state in which relative existence appears to be dissolved and even Self seems to be an inadequate conception. It is possible to pass into a Silence beyond the Silence. But this is not the whole of our ultimate experience, nor the single and all-excluding truth. For we find that this Nirvana, this self-extinction, while it gives an absolute peace and freedom to the soul within is yet consistent in practice with a desireless but effective action without. This possibility of an entire motionless impersonality and void Calm within doing outwardly the works of the eternal verities, Love, Truth and Righteousness, was perhaps the real gist of the Buddha's teaching, — this superiority to ego and to the chain of personal workings and to the identification with mutable form and idea, not the petty ideal of an escape from the trouble and suffering of the physical birth. In any case, as the perfect man would combine in himself the silence and the activity, so also would the completely conscious soul reach back to the absolute freedom of the Non-Being without therefore losing its hold on Existence and the universe. It would thus reproduce in itself perpetually the eternal miracle of the divine Existence, in the universe, yet always beyond it and even, as it were, beyond itself. The opposite experience could only be a concentration of mentality in the individual upon Non-existence with the result of an oblivion and personal withdrawal from a cosmic activity still and always proceeding in the consciousness of the Eternal Being.

Thus, after reconciling Spirit and Matter in the cosmic consciousness, we perceive the reconciliation, in the transcendental consciousness, of the final assertion of all and its negation. We discover that all affirmations are assertions of status or activity in the Unknowable; all the corresponding negations are assertions of Its freedom both from and in that status or activity.

The Unknowable is Something to us supreme, wonderful and ineffable which continually formulates Itself to our consciousness and continually escapes from the formulation It has made. This it does not as some malicious spirit



or freakish magician leading us from falsehood to greater falsehood and so to a final negation of all things, but as even here the Wise beyond our wisdom guiding us from reality to ever profounder and vaster reality until we find the profoundest and vastest of which we are capable. An omnipresent reality is the Brahman, not an omnipresent cause of persistent illusions.

If we thus accept a positive basis for our harmony — and on what other can harmony be founded? — the various conceptual formulations of the Unknowable, each of them representing a truth beyond conception, must be understood as far as possible in their relation to each other and in their effect upon life, not separately, not exclusively, not so affirmed as to destroy or unduly diminish all other affirmations. The real Monism, the true Adwaita, is that which admits all things as the one Brahman and does not seek to bisect Its existence into two incompatible entities, an eternal Truth and an eternal Falsehood, Brahman and not-Brahman, Self and not-Self, a real Self and an unreal, yet perpetual Maya. If it be true that the Self alone exists, it must be also true that all is the Self. And if this Self, God or Brahman is no helpless state, no bounded power, no limited personality, but the self-conscious All, there must be some good and inherent reason in



it for the manifestation, to discover which we must proceed on the hypothesis of some potency, some wisdom, some truth of being in all that is manifested. The discord and apparent evil of the world must in their sphere be admitted, but not accepted as our conquerors. The deepest instinct of humanity seeks always and seeks wisely wisdom as the last word of the universal manifestation, not an eternal mockery and illusion, — a secret and finally triumphant good, not an all-creative and invincible evil, — an ultimate victory and fulfilment, not the disappointed recoil of the soul from its great adventure.

For we cannot suppose that the sole Entity is compelled by something outside or other than Itself, since no such thing exists. Nor can we suppose that It submits unwillingly to something partial within Itself which is hostile to its whole Being, denied by It and yet too strong for It; for this would be only to erect in other language the same contradiction of an All and something other than the All. Even if we say that the universe exists merely because the Self in its absolute impartiality tolerates all things alike, viewing with indifference all actualities and all possibilities, yet is there something that wills the manifestation and supports it, and this cannot be something other than the All. Brahman is indivisible in all things and whatever is willed in the world has been ultimately willed by the Brahman. It is only our relative consciousness, alarmed or baffled by the phenomena of evil, ignorance and pain in the cosmos, that seeks to deliver the Brahman from responsibility for Itself and its workings by erecting some opposite principle, Maya or Mara, conscious Devil or self-existent principle of evil. There is one Lord and Self and the many are only His representations and becomings.

If then the world is a dream or an illusion or a mistake, it is a dream originated and willed by the Self in its totality and not only originated and willed, but supported and perpetually entertained. Moreover, it is a dream existing in a Reality and the stuff of which it is made is that Reality, for Brahman must be the material of the world as well as its base and continent. If the gold of which the vessel is made is real, how shall we suppose that the vessel itself is a mirage? We see that these words, dream, illusion, are tricks of speech, habits

of our relative consciousness; they represent a certain truth, even a great truth, but they also misrepresent it. Just as Non-Being turns out to be other than mere nullity, so the cosmic Dream turns out to be other than mere phantasm and hallucination of the mind. Phenomenon is not phantasm; phenomenon is the substantial form of a Truth.

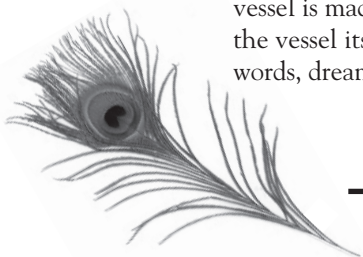
We start, then, with the conception of an omnipresent Reality of which neither the Non-Being at the one end nor the universe at the other are negations that annul; they are rather different states of the Reality, obverse and reverse affirmations. The highest experience of this Reality in the universe shows it to be not only a conscious Existence, but a supreme Intelligence and Force and a self-existent Bliss; and beyond the universe it is still some other unknowable existence, some utter and ineffable Bliss. Therefore we are justified in supposing that even the dualities of the universe, when interpreted not as now by our sensational and partial conceptions, but by our liberated intelligence and experience, will be also resolved into those highest terms. While we still labour under the stress of the dualities, this perception must no doubt constantly support itself on an act of faith, but a faith which the highest Reason, the widest and most patient reflection do not deny, but rather affirm. This creed is given, indeed, to humanity to support it on its journey, until it arrives at a stage of development when faith will be turned into knowledge and perfect experience and Wisdom will be justified of her works.

(From *The Life Divine*, CWSA, Vol. 21, 33-37.)

SIDDHI DAY MESSAGE 2016

It is not by your mind that you can hope to understand the Divine and its action, but by the growth of the true and divine consciousness within you. If the Divine were to unveil and reveal itself in all its glory, the mind might feel a Presence, but it would not understand its action or its nature. It is in the measure of your own realisation and by the birth and growth of that greater consciousness in yourself that you will see the Divine and understand its action even behind its terrestrial disguises.

Sri Aurobindo



The Inner Sovereign

*Now more and more the Epiphany within
Affirms on Nature's soil His sovereign rights.
My mind has left its prison-camp of brain;
It pours, a luminous sea from spirit heights.*

*A tranquil splendour, waits my Force of Life
Couched in my heart, to do what He shall bid,
Poising wide wings like a great hippogriff
On which the gods of the empyrean ride.*

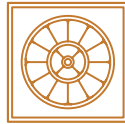
*My senses change into gold gates of bliss;
An ecstasy thrills through touch and sound and sight
Flooding the blind material sheath's dull ease:
My darkness answers to His call of light.*

*Nature in me one day like Him shall sit
Victorious, calm, immortal, infinite.*

Arichandoo



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*Not only the mind
and the vital, but
the body also in all
its cells must aspire
for the divine transformation.
With my blessings*

