

# 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 had ever 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 HEART OF THE MATTER

Rand Hicks

Finding one's soul in the great cave of the heart is a steady theme in India's yogic life. A lengthy and arduous discipline, *sadhana*, is required to deliver the aspirant into the zone where the heart is experienced as the very seat and source of a person's reality. The heart's essence manifests in manifold forms and forces, but is always *central* as a spark of the divine fire, a source of delight, a power that liberates and widens and elevates us, a bridge to cosmic connection.

But the heart, *hridaya*, is never the physical organ and cannot be equated with the emotional being. It is deeper still: the heart is the very center of the being, sitting secretly behind, but supporting all the features and faculties of worldly being; feeling, willing, thinking, acting — they all emanate truly from this core. It is the host of fulfilment, the seat of the *siddhi* behind the body.

There is a potential scope beyond personal enlightenment; the flaming heart may ignite the hidden divinity vested in the world and command its utter revelation in all. The true heart is our deepest conscious core; it sits behind the body, yet acts harmonically in the interconnected world. It is the living center of the *kula*, that conscious point of manifestation, *bindu*, where the timeless enters time in us, and it is also the welling heart of the vast universe. Every being—a little universe or a large—is the center of the Divine.

Dip your ladle into any branch of the Indian tradition, and you will draw out such *rasa*. Here are a few illustrations. A Vedic rishi millenniums ago sites the whole cycle of existence in the soul-fire's heart. "These streams of butter flow from the ocean of the heart, enclosed by a hundred fences so that the enemy cannot see them . . . Smiling, streams of butter rush to Agni like beautiful women to a festival . . . The whole universe is set in your essence within the ocean, within the heart, in the life-span." (RV, 4.58.5,8, 11) Life's essence, its many powers and delights, gather in the soul's gladness and a world-wideness opens.

A later Upanishadic sage declares that all reality is established on this fundamental, this core truth: "Brahman is the heart . . . the seat of all things." (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, 4.1.7)



Jaipur, Rajasthan, c. 1820  
Krishna and Radha dance

A melodious voice from the same age describes the flowering soul as a pinpoint, an all-inclusive vastness, an immaculate transcendence, and invites us beyond the paradox to a profound exploration of everything. "Now, what is here in the city of brahman is an abode, a small lotus flower. Within that is a small space. What is within that should be searched out . . . Within it, indeed, are contained both heaven and earth, both fire and wind, both sun and moon, lightning and the stars, both what one possesses here and what one does not possess; everything here is contained within it . . . That is the Soul, free from evil, ageless, deathless, sorrowless, hungerless, thirstless, whose desire is the Real, whose conception is the Real." (Chhandogya Upanishad, 8.1.1-4) Finding the inmost soul opens us to the Real and the universe that figures it.

Another mystic sees a Person in the concealed greatness, and anticipates the Gita's teaching. "That God, the All-Worker, the Great Soul ever seated in the heart of creatures, is framed by the heart, by the thought, by the mind. They who know that become immortal." (Shvetashvatara Upanishad, 4.17) And we can never forget the thrill in how the Gita records the Divine's declaration: "I am lodged in the





heart of all.” *“The Lord, O Arjuna, is seated in the heart of all beings, turning all beings mounted upon a machine by his Maya.” (Bhagavad Gita, 15.15; 18.61)*

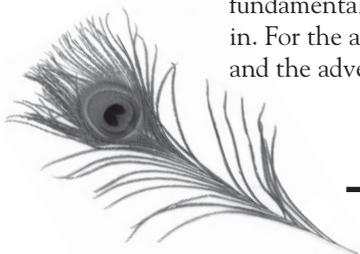
The tantric tradition discovers the same truths through different search-paths, and resonates in full harmony with the Vedantic experience. *“He beholds in the space of the heart the unmoving (self), of solar brilliance, permeated by flashing splendor, the lord, the supreme Pervader.” (Jayakhya Samhita, 10.60)* And the tantric too is richly world-affirming: *“The yogin accepts the things of the world, not by desire but for the good of the world; showering grace on all, he sports on the earth.” (Kularnava Tantra, 9.75)*

All these brilliant insights figure in the Integral Yoga. In the shared experience of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, the psyche is the heart behind the heart, a true divine soul-center where mystic communion joins the personal to the universal, the immediate to transcendent eternity. The discovered soul is key to the cosmic unfolding: the universalized person evolves into brilliance, draws down and radiates transcendent truth and bliss, casts around a laughing beneficence with every step danced, invites and builds mystic community. Our psyche can shine with that effulgence; its keen and broad light can penetrate dark corridors of matter, loosen the ego, and lift us beyond desire and pleasure into a wondrous divine experience. Fulfilment awaits this fundamental discovery. Without it, we are walled in. For the awakened soul, the world is unwalled and the adventure is endless.

## THE SECRET LIGHT WITHIN US *Sri Aurobindo*

At the beginning the soul in Nature, the psychic entity, whose unfolding is the first step towards a spiritual change, is an entirely veiled part of us, although it is that by which we exist and persist as individual beings in Nature. The other parts of our natural composition are not only mutable but perishable; but the psychic entity in us persists and is fundamentally the same always: it contains all essential possibilities of our manifestation but is not constituted by them; it is not limited by what it manifests, not contained by the incomplete forms of the manifestation, not tarnished by the imperfections and impurities, the defects and deprivations of the surface being. It is an ever-pure flame of the divinity in things and nothing that comes to it, nothing that enters into our experience can pollute its purity or extinguish the flame. This spiritual stuff is immaculate and luminous and, because it is perfectly luminous, it is immediately, intimately, directly aware of truth of being and truth of nature; it is deeply conscious of truth and good and beauty because truth and good and beauty are akin to its own native character, forms of something that is inherent in its own substance. It is aware also of all that contradicts these things, of all that deviates from its own native character, of falsehood and evil and the ugly and the unseemly; but it does not become these things nor is it touched or changed by these opposites of itself which so powerfully affect its outer instrumentation of mind, life and body. For the soul, the permanent being in us, puts forth and uses mind, life and body as its instruments, undergoes the envelopment of their conditions, but it is other and greater than its members.

If the psychic entity had been from the beginning unveiled and known to its ministers, not a secluded King in a screened chamber, the human evolution would have been a rapid soul-outflowering, not the difficult, chequered and disfigured development it now is; but the veil is thick and we know not the secret Light within us, the light in the hidden crypt of the heart's innermost sanctuary. Intimations



rise to our surface from the psyche, but our mind does not detect their source; it takes them for its own activities because, before even they come to the surface, they are clothed in mental substance: thus ignorant of their authority, it follows or does not follow them according to its bent or turn at the moment. If the mind obeys the urge of the vital ego, then there is little chance of the psyche at all controlling the nature or manifesting in us something of its secret spiritual stuff and native movement; or, if the mind is over-confident to act in its own smaller light, attached to its own judgment, will and action of knowledge, then also the soul will remain veiled and quiescent and wait for the mind's farther evolution. For the psychic part within is there to support the natural evolution, and the first natural evolution must be the development of body, life and mind, successively, and these must act each in its own kind or together in their ill-assorted partnership in order to grow and have experience and evolve. The soul gathers the essence of all our mental, vital and bodily experience and assimilates it for the farther evolution of our existence in Nature; but this action is occult and not obtruded on the surface. In the early material and vital stages of the evolution of being there is indeed no consciousness of soul; there are psychic activities, but the instrumentation, the form of these activities are vital and physical — or mental when the mind is active. For even the mind, so long as it is primitive or is developed but still too external, does not recognise their deeper character. It is easy to regard ourselves as physical beings or beings of life or mental beings using life and body and to ignore the existence of the soul altogether: for the only definite idea that we have of the soul is of something that survives the death of our bodies; but what this is we do not know because even if we are conscious sometimes of its presence, we are not normally conscious of its distinct reality nor do we feel clearly its direct action in our nature.

As the evolution proceeds, Nature begins slowly and tentatively to manifest our occult parts; she leads us to look more and more within ourselves or sets out to initiate more clearly recognisable intimations and formations of them on the surface. The soul in us, the psychic principle, has already begun to take secret form; it puts forward and develops a soul personality, a distinct psychic being



to represent it. This psychic being remains still behind the veil in our subliminal part, like the true mental, the true vital or the true or subtle physical being within us: but, like them, it acts on the surface life by the influences and intimations it throws up upon that surface; these form part of the surface aggregate which is the conglomerate effect of the inner influences and upsurgings, the visible formation and superstructure which we ordinarily experience and think of as ourselves. On this ignorant surface we become dimly aware of something that can be called a soul as distinct from mind, life or body; we feel it not only as our mental idea or vague instinct of ourselves, but as a sensible influence in our life and character and action. A certain sensitive feeling for all that is true and good and beautiful, fine and pure and noble, a response to it, a demand for it, a pressure on mind and life to accept and formulate it in our thought, feelings, conduct, character is the most usually recognised, the most general and characteristic, though not the sole sign of this influence of the psyche. Of the man who has not this element in him or does not respond at all to this urge, we say that he has no soul. For it is this influence that we can most easily recognise as a finer or even a diviner part in us and the most powerful for the slow turning towards some aim at perfection in our nature.

But this psychic influence or action does not come up to the surface quite pure or does not remain distinct in its purity; if it did, we would be able to distinguish clearly the soul element in us and follow consciously and fully its dictates. An occult mental and vital and subtle-physical

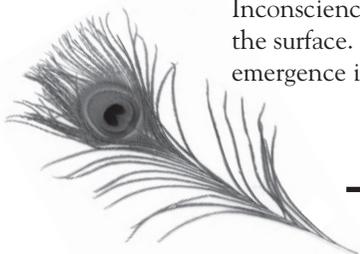


action intervenes, mixes with it, tries to use it and turn it to its own profit, dwarfs its divinity, distorts or diminishes its self-expression, even causes it to deviate and stumble or stains it with the impurity, smallness and error of mind and life and body. After it reaches the surface, thus alloyed and diminished, it is taken hold of by the surface nature in an obscure reception and ignorant formation, and there is or can be by this cause a still further deviation and mixture. A twist is given, a wrong direction is imparted, a wrong application, a wrong formation, an erroneous result of what is in itself pure stuff and action of our spiritual being; a formation of consciousness is accordingly made which is a mixture of the psychic influence and its intimations jumbled with mental ideas and opinions, vital desires and urges, habitual physical tendencies. There coalesce too with the obscured soul-influence the ignorant though well-intentioned efforts of these external parts towards a higher direction; a mental ideation of a very mixed character, often obscure even in its idealism, sometimes even disastrously mistaken, a fervour and passion of the emotional being throwing up its spray and foam of feelings, sentiments, sentimentalisms, a dynamic enthusiasm of the life-parts, eager responses of the physical, the thrills and excitements of nerve and body, — all these influences coalesce in a composite formation which is frequently taken as the soul and its mixed and confused action for the soul-stir, for a psychic development and action or a realised inner influence. The psychic entity is itself free from stain or mixture, but what comes up from it is not protected by that immunity; therefore this confusion becomes possible.

Moreover, the psychic being, the soul personality in us, does not emerge full-grown and luminous; it evolves, passes through a slow development and formation; its figure of being may be at first indistinct and may afterwards remain for a long time weak and undeveloped, not impure but imperfect: for it rests its formation, its dynamic self-building on the power of soul that has been actually and more or less successfully, against the resistance of the Ignorance and Inconscience, put forth in the evolution upon the surface. Its appearance is the sign of a soul-emergence in Nature, and if that emergence

is as yet small and defective, the psychic personality also will be stunted or feeble. It is too, by the obscurity of our consciousness, separated from its inner reality, in imperfect communication with its own source in the depths of the being; for the road is as yet ill-built, easily obstructed, the wires often cut or crowded with communications of another kind and proceeding from another origin: its power to impress what it receives upon the outer instruments is also imperfect; in its penury it has for most things to rely on these instruments and it forms its push to expression and action on their data and not solely on the unerring perceptions of the psychic entity. In these conditions it cannot prevent the true psychic light from being diminished or distorted in the mind into a mere idea or opinion, the psychic feeling in the heart into a fallible emotion or mere sentiment, the psychic will to action in the life-parts into a blind vital enthusiasm or a fervid excitement: it even accepts these mistranslations for want of something better and tries to fulfil itself through them. For it is part of the work of the soul to influence mind and heart and vital being and turn their ideas, feelings, enthusiasms, dynamisms in the direction of what is divine and luminous; but this has to be done at first imperfectly, slowly and with a mixture. As the psychic personality grows stronger, it begins to increase its communion with the psychic entity behind it and improve its communications with the surface: it can transmit its intimations to the mind and heart and life with a greater purity and force; for it is more able to exercise a strong control and react against false mixtures; now more and more it makes itself distinctly felt as a power in the nature. But even so this evolution would be slow and long if left solely to the difficult automatic action of the evolutionary Energy; it is only when man awakes to the knowledge of the soul and feels a need to bring it to the front and make it the master of his life and action that a quicker conscious method of evolution intervenes and a psychic transformation becomes possible.

(From *The Life Divine*, CWSA, Vol. 22, pp. 924-929.)



## **Evolution [2]**

*All is not finished in the unseen decree;  
A Mind beyond our mind demands our ken,  
A life of unimagined harmony  
Awaits, concealed, the grasp of unborn men.*

*The crude beginnings of the lifeless earth,  
The mindless stirrings of the plant and tree  
Prepared our thought; thought for a godlike birth  
Broadens the mould of our mortality.*

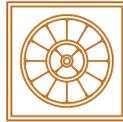
*A might no human will nor force can gain,  
A knowledge seated in eternity,  
A bliss beyond our struggle and our pain  
Are the high pinnacles of our destiny.*

*O Thou who climb'dst to mind from the dull stone,  
Face now the miracled summits still unwon.*

*Richard*



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



*The individual existence  
is a canticle perpetually  
renewed, that the universe  
offers to the inconceivable  
splendour of the Divine  
with my blessings*

