

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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HARMONY BEHIND THE WORLD

Rand Hicks

For our souls there are two great departures. The first is when we leave the immense and perfect harmony of planes sublime, our original home, and dive into the developing cosmos, thrilled with the unknown and the challenge of its dark opposition. We come to colonize with consciousness the inconscient. And we embarked with a truly focused intent, aware of the profound deeps below. The second departure of course is when we begin our climb out of that very darkness, inching back through ignorance, carving out the ego's place, supplanting the ego, mastering self, struggling with nature to regain the unifying knowledge so that we might fulfill the cosmic promise. Here we are.

The first insight finds an early image in the Mundaka Upanishad.¹ True being is not only sheerest essence: it is cosmic and individual in self-expression. The fire the Upanishad figures is a conscious and potent reality, universal and dwelling in us as well: *vaiśvānara agni* is seated within us as the psychic entity and grows and grows, avid of earthly experience, using all it touches as fuel for self-development and ascension.

The Isha Upanishad carries this insight forward into a paean of fulfilment². We cannot know the name of the seer who composed this stretch of mighty poetry, but every syllable of its mantric verses is based on an exultant realization. Here the poet sings that he himself is the Self, an immeasurable reality outstripping all definition and contour, transcendent, findable in everything and everyone. This immaculate silent Person has purposefully projected itself into all the dynamic movement of the Universe, and stands as the supportive presence in each. The transcendent wills to become the immanent universal. So its

¹ "This is That, the Truth of things: as from one high-kindled fire thousands of different sparks are born and all have the same form of fire, so, O fair son, from the immutable manifold becoming are born and even into that they depart." *Mundaka Upanishad*, 2.1.1.

² But he who sees everywhere the Self in all existences and all existences in the Self, shrinks not thereafter from aught. He in whom it is the Self-Being that has become all existences that are Becomings, for he has the perfect knowledge, how shall he be deluded, whence shall he have grief who sees everywhere oneness? *Isha Upanishad*, 6, 7.



Chandravimba Ragapatra
Bundi, Rajasthan
c. 1760

verses offer another rich realization, declaring that the transcendent and universal are the same: poised beyond or within the cosmos, there is only One. With that clear vision of only the One everywhere, all division collapses, there is no suffering, and one comes to an integral knowledge. Whatever the clime, whatever the time, the awakened soul is not lost, it suffers no diminution by being poised to work in or through a single human edifice. When oneness meets the penetrating gaze wherever it is turned, then a fount of bliss can be found behind the figure's façade, a transformation from the other side of the masque begins.

Having gathered into themselves the fullness of such powerful realizations, the Mother and Sri Aurobindo reunited on 24 April 1920 in Pondicherry. The date is a signature of their mission to fully install this grand vision in human life. The rooms they occupied formed the living context through which leading souls, called from across the globe, helped to found a divine life, seeking a profound harmony with the aspiring life around. Their transcendence and universality poured into self and society and the sea of life around. The Ashram became a concordant arrangement of delight. The Isha still inspires: "He whose self has become all existences, for he has the knowledge, how shall he be deluded, whence shall he have grief, he who sees everywhere oneness?"

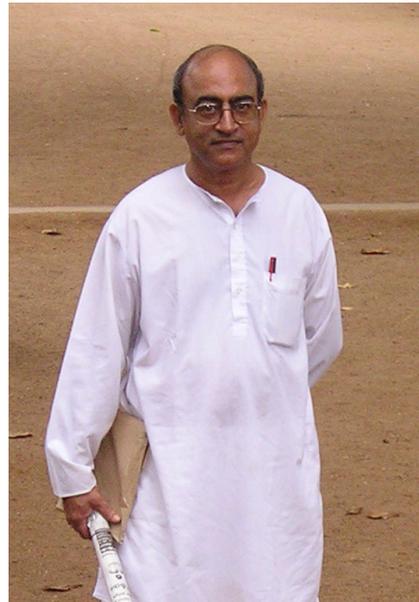




PEACOCK'S FAN

The Integral Knowledge Study Center has been enriched over the last several months by a number of visitors. First, Wolfram and Sue Verlaan were with us for the Mother's birthday in February. They are settling nicely into Huntsville, where Wolfram is a college professor. From the 26th to the 31st of March, we hosted two visitors from Plano, Texas: Shiva Rastogi and his daughter Devarati, who are from the lineage of Dilip Kumar Roy, one of Sri Aurobindo's best known disciples. Shiva is a retired nephrologist, now 85 years old. Devarati, named by Dilip-da and Indira Devi, is a civil engineer who has long been in the upper tier of management of major companies in the Dallas area. Shiva is a regular participant in the Zoom Sunday sessions. He was originally put in contact with us by Saumya Bableshwar. Just after the Rastogis visited, April Matteis and Bob Cross came into Pensacola from Galveston, Texas. April, whose birthday is on the 3rd, is an award-winning artist, and Bob is a member of the team honored by Time Magazine as Person of the Year 2015 for their scientific work on the Ebola virus.

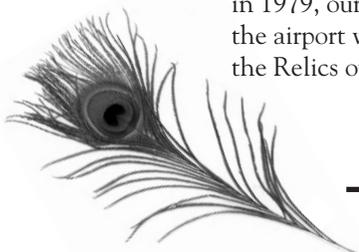
One of the Center's dearest friends, P.K. Ramchandar, suffered a significant medical event on the morning of the Mother's birthday. Thinning away all attachment to the body over the course of a month, he finally departed on 25 March 2015. A brother from the moment we met in 1979, our Ram was characteristically waiting at the airport with a small group of devotees when the Relics of Sri Aurobindo arrived at the Center



P.K. Ramchandar
1947-2015

in 1983. An ardent and deeply sincere aspirant, he traveled from Missouri at great personal expense to each darshan event in Pensacola as long as he was in America, and when in the Ashram, Ram would telephone to transmit orally the darshan messages so that we could share and broadcast them to friends across our country. Ram was a brilliant scientist, trained in many disciplines apart from his doctorate in chemical engineering. Leaving America to return to India at the top of 1986, he lived in a most modest fashion as part of the great work being done by the aspirants to an integral life. M.P. Pandit had a special regard, appreciation, and tenderness for Ram. His talents were put to good use and he directed the development of the solar pond project near Auroville for several years.

Once settled in the Ashram, his work seemed central to the business of the Dispensary. He assumed responsibility for technical medical equipment and resolved each arising difficulty. His insight was sharp. Ram was generous to a fault and sensitive to the needs of others, defending those who had no power, defending truth against the indignities of distortion. He endured quietly a seven-day work schedule, rarely glanced at his own well-being or health, rarely mentioned or addressed his own needs. Quiet, pure, true Ram, centered in sheer spirit—then and now. We love you. We cannot replace you, dear friend.



THE MEANING OF TRANSFORMATION

Sri Aurobindo

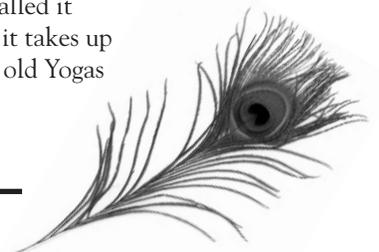
By transformation I do not mean some change of the nature — I do not mean for instance sainthood or ethical perfection or Yogic siddhis (like the Tantrik's) or a transcendental (*cinmaya*) body. I use transformation in a special sense, a change of consciousness radical and complete and of a certain specific kind which is so conceived as to bring about a strong and assured step forward in the spiritual evolution of the being, an advance of a greater and higher kind and of a larger sweep and completeness than that smaller though decisive achievement of the emerging Consciousness when a mentalised being first appeared in a vital and material animal world. If anything short of that takes place or at least if a real beginning is not made on that basis, a fundamental progress towards this fulfilment, then my object is not accomplished. A partial realisation, something mixed and inconclusive, does not meet the demand I make on life and Yoga.

Light of realisation is not the same thing as Descent. Realisation by itself does not necessarily transform the being as a whole; it may bring only an opening or heightening or widening of the consciousness at the top so as to realise something in the Purusha part without any radical change in the parts of Prakriti. One may have some light of realisation at the spiritual summit of the consciousness but the parts below remain what they were. I have seen any number of instances of that. There must be a descent of the light not merely into the mind or part of it but into all the being down to the physical and below before a real and total transformation can take place. A light in the mind may spiritualise or otherwise change the mind or part of it in one way or another, but it need not change the vital nature; a light in the vital may purify and enlarge the vital movements or else silence and immobilise the vital being, but leave the body and the physical consciousness as it was, or even leave it inert or shake its balance. And the descent of Light is not enough, it must be the descent of the whole higher consciousness, its Peace, Power, Knowledge, Love, Ananda.



Moreover, the descent may be enough to liberate, but not to perfect, or it may be enough to make a great change in the inner being, while the outer remains an imperfect instrument, clumsy, sick or unexpressive. Finally, the transformation effected by the sadhana cannot be complete unless it is a supramentalisation of the being. Psychisation is not enough, it is only a beginning; spiritualisation and the descent of the higher consciousness is not enough, it is only a middle term; the ultimate achievement needs the action of the supramental Consciousness and Force. Something less than that may very well be considered enough by the individual, but it is not enough for the earth-consciousness to take the definitive stride forward it must take at one time or another.

I have never said that my Yoga was something brand new in all its elements. I have called it the integral Yoga and that means that it takes up the essence and many processes of the old Yogas



— its newness is in its aim, standpoint and the totality of its method. In the earlier stages which is all I deal with in books like the *Riddle* or the *Lights*¹ there is nothing in it that distinguishes it from the old Yogas except the aim underlying its comprehensiveness, the spirit in its movements and the ultimate significance it keeps before it — also the scheme of its psychology and its working, but as that was not and could not be developed systematically or schematically in these letters, it has not been grasped by those who are not already acquainted with it by mental familiarity or some amount of practice. The detail or method of the later stages of the Yoga which go into little known or untrodden regions, I have not made public and I do not at present intend to do so.

I know very well also that there have been seemingly allied ideals and anticipations — the perfectibility of the race, certain Tantric sadhanas, the effort after a complete physical siddhi by certain schools of Yoga, etc. etc. I have alluded to these things myself and have put forth the view that the spiritual past of the race has been a preparation of Nature not merely for attaining to the Divine beyond this world, but also for this very step forward which the evolution of the earth-consciousness has still to make. I do not therefore care in the least, — even though these ideals were, up to some extent parallel, yet not identical with mine, — whether this Yoga and its aim and method are accepted as new or not; that is in itself a trifling matter. That it should be recognised as true in itself by those who can accept or practise it and should make itself true by achievement, is the one thing important; it does not matter if it is called new or a repetition or revival of the old which was forgotten. I laid emphasis on it as new in a letter to certain sadhaks so as to explain to them that a repetition of the aim and idea of the old Yogas was not enough in my eyes, that I was putting forward a thing to be achieved that has not yet been achieved, not yet clearly visualised, even though it is one natural but still secret destined outcome of all the past spiritual endeavour.

It is new as compared with the old Yogas:

(1) Because it aims not at a departure out of

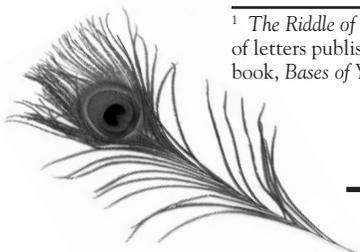
world and life into a Heaven or a Nirvana, but at a change of life and existence, not as something subordinate or incidental, but as a distinct and central object. If there is a descent in other Yogas, yet it is only an incident on the way or resulting from the ascent — the ascent is the real thing. Here the ascent is indispensable, but what is decisive, what is finally aimed at is the resulting descent. It is the descent of the new consciousness attained by the ascent that is the stamp and seal of the sadhana. Even Tantra and Vaishnavism end in the release from life; here the object is the divine fulfilment of life.

(2) Because the object sought after is not an individual achievement of divine realisation for the sole sake of the individual, but something to be gained for the earth-consciousness here, a cosmic, not solely a supra-cosmic achievement. The thing to be gained also is the bringing in of a Power of consciousness (the supramental) not yet organised or active directly in earth-nature, even in the spiritual life, but yet to be organised and made directly active.

(3) Because a method has been preconised for achieving this purpose which is as total and integral as the aim set before it, viz. the total and integral change of the consciousness and nature, taking up old methods but only as a part action and passing on to others that are distinctive. I have not found this method (as a whole) or anything like it in its totality proposed or realised in the old Yogas. If I had I should not have wasted my time in hewing out a road and in thirty years of search and inner creation when I could have hastened home safely to my goal in an easy canter over paths already blazed out, laid down, perfectly mapped, macadamised, made secure and public. Our Yoga is not a retreading of old walks, but a spiritual adventure.

(From *Letters on Yoga — II*, CWSA, Vol. 29, pp. 398-401.)

¹ *The Riddle of This World* and *Lights on Yoga*, two small books of letters published in 1933 and 1935 respectively. A third such book, *Bases of Yoga*, was published in 1936. — Ed.



The Infinite Adventure

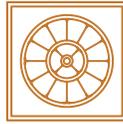
*On the waters of a nameless Infinite
My skiff is launched; I have left the human shore.
All fades behind me and I see before
The unknown abyss and one pale pointing light.
An unseen Hand controls my rudder. Night
Walls up the sea in a black corridor, —
An inconscient Hunger's lion plaint and roar
Or the ocean sleep of a dead Eremite.*

*I feel the greatness of the Power I seek
Surround me; below me are its giant deeps,
Beyond, the invisible height no soul has trod.
I shall be merged in the Lonely and Unique
And wake into a sudden blaze of God,
The marvel and rapture of the Apocalypse.*

Richard



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



*How beautiful, grand,
simple and calm
everything becomes, when
our thoughts turn to
the Divine and we
give ourselves to the
Divine!
with my blessings
A. I.*

