

# 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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## SALUTATION

Rand Hicks

In the '20s when Sri Aurobindo's birthday was celebrated, before the Ashram came into formal being, he would use the occasion to answer questions and sum up the nature of the current work, whether it was a forward movement, new regions of consciousness being explored, a depiction of obstacles, or what the group could do to prepare for the coming change of consciousness.

For Sri Aurobindo, it was less about himself — although his birth was the occasion — and more about the descent of the truth-consciousness. That was what was critically important. He was never one to put great stock in his personal estimation or to ask for attention or to seek glorification of any kind. Quite the contrary, he was averse to it. He might open with a mildly ironic comment, "Do you want me to keep the tradition?" And he would undertake it. But he would appraise not only his personal advance but of the advance of the community growing around him.

So on a day like this, it isn't simply that we remember with gratitude what he did — that would be a backward-looking appreciation — but we need to think about what our next steps are. And to prepare for a next step means to know where you are now. So it's a day for personal and collective reflection. Where do I stand in my yoga? Have I found that secret source of my being yet? Am I getting nearer to it, if I have not found it? Have I established myself in the wideness of the universal Self? Am I in deep communion with the Supreme? Are my steps guided? Am I at least open at important moments? Am I clear? Am I a good partner? Well, this is one of those times in our collective life when it isn't simply an aggregate experience that we are looking at, where we are in stasis and trying to build upon what we are doing, but it is a period of active transition. Many members in our groups across the country and across the globe are moving into new territory, leaving a former position, taking a new posture.

And, of course, although we like to celebrate change, change is difficult for the stolid physical consciousness which doesn't like to accommodate newness, so there is disruption. In a period like this, we share in what is globally true. There is a

force of disintegration, but it carries the detritus out of our way so that we can create something fresh, wholesome, in the sense of integration with the soul, something permissive of wide identity.

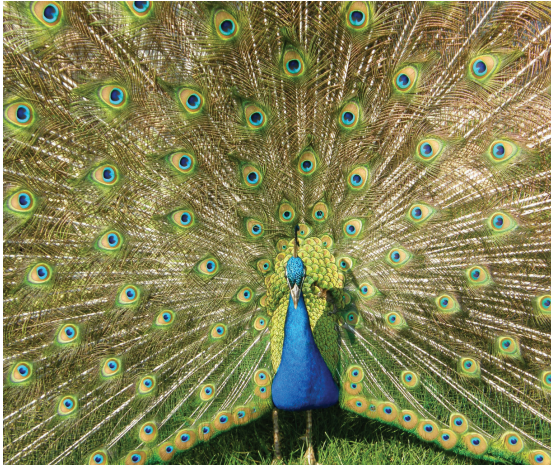
We have for some centuries now in the West voiced our appreciation of the individual's liberty. We must never give that up. But the liberated individual acts in solidarity with the whole, never against it: it leads by example. That spirit the Gita calls *lokasamgraha*, the holding together of the world from inside you. It means you feel identified with all. You see the divine will executing its energisms through you and through others.

Harmony, mutuality, association. We should in our spiritual community have harmony. We should — even in our dealing with society in just normal matters — have mutuality. But even with our enemies, we should feel capable of association, not division. We should not permit division. We acknowledge difference, we acknowledge distinctions, as part of the widest spectrum of consciousness, but seen most deeply there are no enemies. Everyone is a potential friend. We are all a part of a common reality. Oneness is the keynote of the spiritual consciousness. I can't speak for Sri Aurobindo — nobody can — but he felt that a spiritual age could come to fruition upon earth when there was a deep psychological unity among humankind, when we looked at each other through fraternal eyes. So, whatever our complexion, racially, politically, evangelistically, let's find the thing that unites us all, let's live from the psychic sensibility. If we live from that, we will fashion a beautiful community which will become a light to the world. And wherever that soul-based community is, it always exists first inside. It might or might not transplant itself into earthly soil, but let's get that first thing done. A life in the soul is our first order of business, and I feel confident that everything else will follow.

So today we celebrate Sri Aurobindo's birthday. And Sri Aurobindo's birthday came to prominent notice because of his profound collaboration and partnership with the Mother, in whom he recognized an incarnate force for progress, for manifesting felicity. In celebrating the one we celebrate also the other. Jai Ma.

(From a talk given on the morning of the 15<sup>th</sup> of August, 2012.)





## PEACOCK'S FAN

Our studies in *Essays on the Gita* continue on Sunday evenings. Entering the Gita's eighteenth chapter now, in a few weeks we will move into different material. And at summer's end, we will resume our Thursday night series on India's most luminous spiritual personalities. Our morning and evening meditations continue, as do our daily readings in *Savitri*. You may know already that on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August each year, we start reading from the first line on page one: "It was the hour before the Gods awake." And a year later, on the 14<sup>th</sup> of August, we finish that year's reading, having voiced roughly two pages each afternoon.

We've enjoyed great companionship in recent months. In April we spent an afternoon with Bill Leon, the mainstay of the Seattle center, who spent some days on our local beaches with his wife and friend.

The month of May brought Diana Skrutskie to us, and the beaches. Her week in Pensacola ended too quickly for us. Diana has been connected to the Center for nearly thirty years, and lives now in Raleigh, North Carolina, where she plays a significant role in a hospital's IT team.

Wolfram Verlaan, the Center's Vice President, visited Pensacola in May. These have been busy weeks for Wolfram and his wife Sue. Wolfram completed his doctorate, Sue's father sadly passed away, and they have moved to Huntsville, Alabama. He has a position there as a professor in the Department of Education at the University of

Alabama. Sue accepted a post overseeing a grant-writing concern in the same field. Regrettably, their prized mango trees could not relocate, but their beautiful cats sailed through the transit.

Late May brought us five remarkable visitors from Houston — Pritesh Patel, Premal Patel, Mitesh Raichada, Sneha Raichada, and Avani Patel. They are a portrait of aspiration and to see them move in collective harmony is to have hope in humanity's future. They are central figures in Pearl Hospitality and Banyan Botanicals.

Also from Houston, our dear friends Mrutyunjaya and Janaki Pani came to see us in June, and brought a dynamic couple from Baton Rouge with them, Ajoy (physicist) and Basanti (librarian) Bakri. A brilliant and lively quartet.

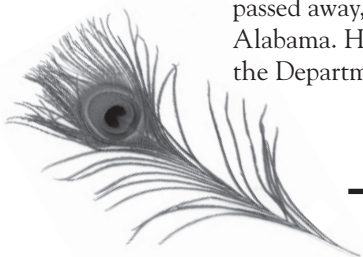
A few days later, we welcomed Mahesh and Shilpa Modha of Tampa, who came to Pensacola again with their daughters, Sweta and Isha. But this time they were accompanied by Shilpa's impressive parents. Mohanlal and Pushpa are distinguished educationists, and are visiting from India. Pushpa is a Sanskritist too of refined caliber.

At last, Sunaura Hassinger — born in Auroville and named by the Mother — and Brian Camaret came for a long-anticipated visit. Sunny is a psychotherapist and life-coach and a picture of versatility. Brian has more capacities than can be easily enumerated. They live now in Destin, Florida. Our final visitors in June were Michael and Urshi O'Grady, who arrived from Philadelphia with their two children.

June was a month of transition. Our gifted friend and teacher, Jennifer Williams moved to Charlottesville, Virginia. Dear to us all, we feel the loss of her daily company, but she will visit the Center and maintain the inner connection. And April Matteis — artist, educationist, herbalist — shifted to Galveston with her husband, Bob Cross, where he has a post-doctorate in Microbiology.

Our friend and associate, Dr. R.L. Kashyap, is in the midst of celebrating his 75<sup>th</sup> year. What he has accomplished in fostering Vedic values and knowledge from SAKSHI in Bangalore over the last few years is remarkable and worthy of our support. Learn more at [www.vedah.com](http://www.vedah.com).

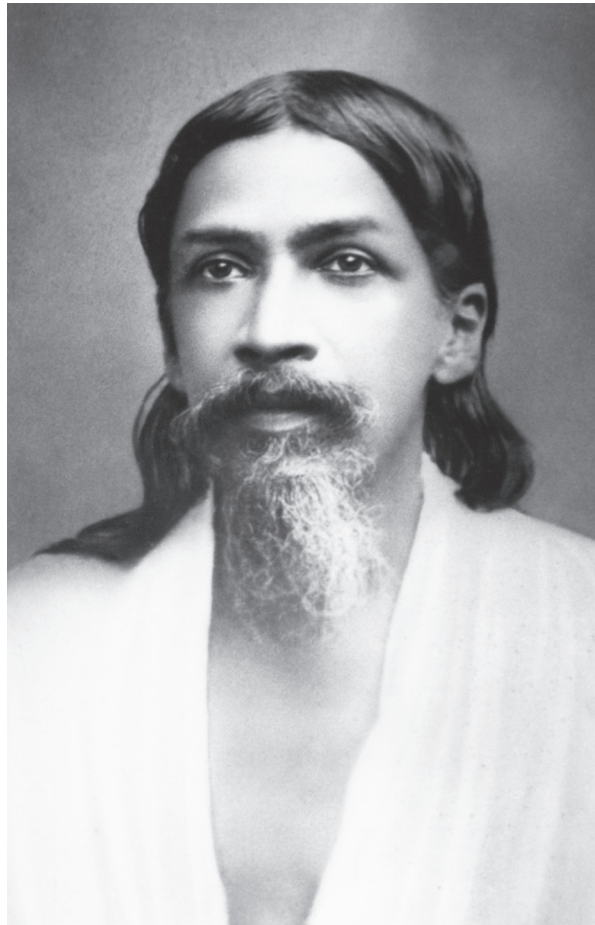
Kumud-ben Patel, our old friend and Mother's attendant, left her body on the 21<sup>st</sup> of July in the Ashram. She had completed 80 years on 14 June.



## THE YOGA OF SACRIFICE

*Sri Aurobindo*

This, in short, is the demand made on us, that we should turn our whole life into a conscious sacrifice. Every moment and every movement of our being is to be resolved into a continuous and a devoted self-giving to the Eternal. All our actions, not less the smallest and most ordinary and trifling than the greatest and most uncommon and noble, must be performed as consecrated acts. Our individualised nature must live in the single consciousness of an inner and outer movement dedicated to Something that is beyond us and greater than our ego. No matter what the gift or to whom it is presented by us, there must be a consciousness in the act that we are presenting it to the one divine Being in all beings. Our commonest or most grossly material actions must assume this sublimated character; when we eat, we should be conscious that we are giving our food to that Presence in us; it must be a sacred offering in a temple and the sense of a mere physical need or self-gratification must pass away from us. In any great labour, in any high discipline, in any difficult or noble enterprise, whether undertaken for ourselves, for others or for the race, it will no longer be possible to stop short at the idea of the race, of ourselves or of others. The thing we are doing must be consciously offered as a sacrifice of works, not to these, but either through them or directly to the One Godhead; the Divine Inhabitant who was hidden by these figures must be no longer hidden but ever present to our soul, our mind, our sense. The workings and results of our acts must be put in the hands of that One in the feeling that that Presence is the Infinite and Most High by whom alone our labour and our aspiration are possible. For in his being all takes place; for him all labour and aspiration are taken from us by Nature and offered on his altar. Even in those things in which Nature is herself very plainly the worker and we only the witnesses of her working and its containers and supporters, there should be the same constant memory and insistent consciousness of a work and of its divine Master. Our very inspiration and respiration, our very heart-beats can and must be made conscious in us as the living rhythm of the universal sacrifice.



It is clear that a conception of this kind and its effective practice must carry in them three results that are of a central importance for our spiritual ideal. It is evident, to begin with, that, even if such a discipline is begun without devotion, it leads straight and inevitably towards the highest devotion possible; for it must deepen naturally into the completest adoration imaginable, the most profound God-love. There is bound up with it a growing sense of the Divine in all things, a deepening communion with the Divine in all our thought, will and action and at every moment of our lives, a more and more moved consecration to the Divine of the totality of our being. Now these implications of the Yoga of works are also of the very essence of an integral and absolute Bhakti. The seeker who puts them into living practice makes in himself continually a constant, active and effective representation of the very spirit of



self-devotion, and it is inevitable that out of it there should emerge the most engrossing worship of the Highest to whom is given this service. An absorbing love for the Divine Presence to whom he feels an always more intimate closeness, grows upon the consecrated worker. And with it is born or in it is contained a universal love too for all these beings, living forms and creatures that are habitations of the Divine — not the brief restless grasping emotions of division, but the settled selfless love that is the deeper vibration of oneness. In all the seeker begins to meet the one Object of his adoration and service. The way of works turns by this road of sacrifice to meet the path of Devotion; it can be itself a devotion as complete, as absorbing, as integral as any the desire of the heart can ask for or the passion of the mind can imagine.

Next, the practice of this Yoga demands a constant inward remembrance of the one central liberating knowledge, and a constant active externalising of it in works comes in too to intensify the remembrance. In all is the one Self, the one Divine is all; all are in the Divine, all are the Divine and there is nothing else in the universe, — this thought or this faith is the whole background until it becomes the whole substance of the consciousness of the worker. A memory, a self-dynamising meditation of this kind, must and does in its end turn into a profound and uninterrupted vision and a vivid and all-embracing consciousness of that which we so powerfully remember or on which we so constantly meditate. For it compels a constant reference at each moment to the Origin of all being and will and action and there is at once an embracing and exceeding of all particular forms and appearances in That which is their cause and upholder. This way cannot go to its end without a seeing vivid and vital, as concrete in its way as physical sight, of the works of the universal Spirit everywhere. On its summits it rises into a constant living and thinking and willing and acting in the presence of the Supramental, the Transcendent. Whatever we see and hear, whatever we touch and sense, all of which we are conscious, has to be known and felt by us as That which we worship and serve; all has to be turned into an image of the Divinity, perceived as a dwelling-place of his Godhead,

enveloped with the eternal Omnipresence. In its close, if not long before it, this way of works turns by communion with the Divine Presence, Will and Force into a way of Knowledge more complete and integral than any the mere creature intelligence can construct or the search of the intellect can discover.

Lastly, the practice of this Yoga of sacrifice compels us to renounce all the inner supports of egoism, casting them out of our mind and will and actions, and to eliminate its seed, its presence, its influence out of our nature. All must be done for the Divine; all must be directed towards the Divine. Nothing must be attempted for ourselves as a separate existence; nothing done for others, whether neighbours, friends, family, country or mankind or other creatures merely because they are connected with our personal life and thought and sentiment or because the ego takes a preferential interest in their welfare. In this way of doing and seeing all works and all life become only a daily dynamic worship and service of the Divine in the unbounded temple of his own vast cosmic existence. Life becomes more and more the sacrifice of the eternal in the individual constantly self-offered to the eternal Transcendence. It is offered in the wide sacrificial ground of the field of the eternal cosmic Spirit; and the Force too that offers it is the eternal Force, the omnipresent Mother. Therefore is this way a way of union and communion by acts and by the spirit and knowledge in the act as complete and integral as any our Godward will can hope for or our soul's strength execute.

It has all the power of a way of works integral and absolute, but because of its law of sacrifice and self-giving to the Divine Self and Master, it is accompanied on its one side by the whole power of the path of Love and on the other by the whole power of the path of Knowledge. At its end all these three divine Powers work together, fused, united, completed, perfected by each other.

(From *The Synthesis of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 22, pages 111-114.)



### ***The Infinitesimal Infinite***

*Out of a still immensity we came.  
These million universes were to it  
The poor light-bubbles of a trivial game,  
A fragile glimmer in the Infinite.*

*It could not find its soul in all that Vast:  
It drew itself into a little speck  
Infinitesimal, ignobly cast  
Out of earth's mud and slime strangely awake, —*

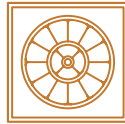
*A tiny plasm upon a casual globe  
In the small system of a dwarflike sun,  
A little life wearing the flesh for robe,  
A little mind winged through wide space to run.*

*It lived, it knew, it saw its self sublime,  
Deathless, outmeasuring Space, outlasting Time.*

*Richard*



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*The Divine's Presence  
is for us an absolute,  
immutable, invariable  
fact.*

*With my blessings*

