

THE PEACOCK LETTER



THE INTEGRAL KNOWLEDGE STUDY CENTER

15 August 2013 • Volume 22, No. 3

CONTENTS

THE PROMISE OF BIRTH
Rand Hicks 3

PEACOCK'S FAN
4

MESSAGE TO AMERICA
Sri Aurobindo 5

COMMENTARY FROM THE ISHA
Sri Aurobindo 5

THE PILGRAM OF THE NIGHT
Sri Aurobindo 7

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

The Peacock Letter is an online quarterly published by the Integral Knowledge Study Center, 221 Clematis Street, Pensacola, Florida 32503, a tax-exempt, non-profit 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 other information about the yoga of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, please write to us.

All quotations from the works of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother are copyrighted by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and are reproduced with the kind permission of the Ashram. Contributions to the Center's work in America are welcome.



The Peacock Letter uses only recycled pixels.



THE PROMISE OF BIRTH

Rand Hicks

Significant birthdays call us to meditation, to self-examination. On these days of felicity, we can swoop to a chosen branch and sit in silence, we can soar towards our source. We came to birth in a spirited adventure that called us to leave the infinite, to take on a form. Great visions from ancient India offer potent illustrations for why we did it. Beloved collections of Veda and Upanishad, suggest where we are from, why we cannot get enough of this variable and slippery world. Listen to how the great Vedic seer Dirghatamas sings it in the *Rigveda*, I.164.47:

“Dark the path downward: the birds are golden-winged. Then to heaven they fly, robed in the waters. They descend from the home of harmony, and the earth is exalted with clarity.”

The mystic sees the meaning and the purpose of our coming and going. Ages later comes the idea of the Paramahansa, the great swan incarnating the divine Personality. Here the poet describes a flock of beautiful birds who come sailing out of supramental light, a world where truth is inherently ordered and powerful; they plunge into dark waters, the mysterious depths of the universe. The birds are made of light, they are golden-winged; they cannot be forever immersed in darkness, but rise with the world's offering to their home above. An unending cycle is this, the birds diving again and again into the ocean of becoming, enriching and lustrating it, linking all worlds. Just so your soul comes again and again in good company to play in and illuminate the world. We better the earth when we participate soulfully.

The cosmic play cannot be complete without our participation, without our birth into it. Never fear, the soul cannot be truly caught in darkness. It does not surrender its inherent unity, its promise of light, in the descent; rather, it brings the certainty of fulfillment with its linked chain of service. Birth and rebirth are required of the divine servants, of the heroic spirits, but the *suparṇā*, the golden birds, see it not as slavery: it is our great adventure.

So each birth in which a soul alights upon earth is truly an advent of light foretelling the eventual eclipse of darkness. Darkness is a

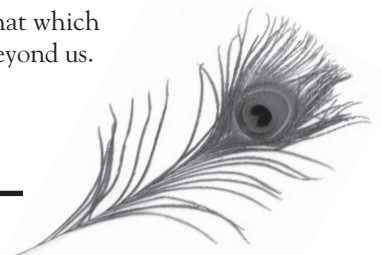


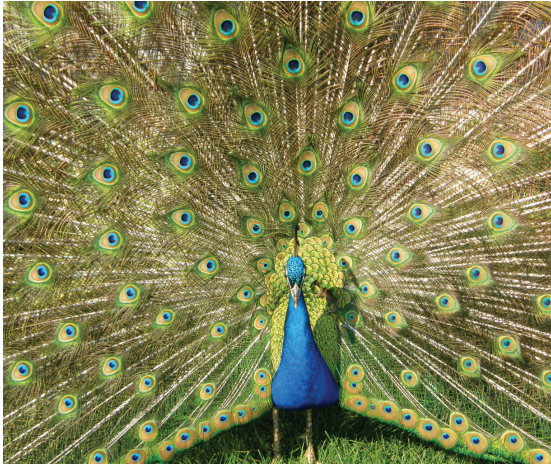
© Sri Aurobindo Ashram

A rendering in silk batik by Milli-di from a painting by Jayantilal Parekh

mysterious matrix of our evolution, of our swim to the surface, of our soaring to the summits; it is not our destiny. The earth is happy with the soul's advent. And thus the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (4.3.37, 38) speaks of how all the elements come together to shape and ready the vehicle which will serve the incarnating spirit. They hail the entering soul, saying “Here comes Brahman, here comes Brahman,” recognizing the individual soul as the Infinite itself. And just so when the hour of departure arrives, they similarly bid him farewell, saying “There goes Brahman, there goes Brahman.” The world welcomes us. Birth is a great occasion which potentially resolves the entire universal puzzle, offers a satisfying answer to the enormous cosmic question. Yes, our wakened souls are the portals through which the divine transcendence plays in the worlds. We are the conscious powers by which the world must be redeemed.

Our flock flies together. Oh, we may land and depart at different moments, but our work is shared, our coming and going is certain and rhythmically repeated, appointed by that which lives deeply in us and around us and beyond us.





PEACOCK'S FAN

This period marks the 30th anniversary of Sri Aurobindo's Relics for Pensacola. We received the Relics in Sri Aurobindo's Room in the Ashram in 1983 on the 9th of July. They were inaugurated on the 15th of August. Special programs are planned.

Visitors in May included the universally-loved Jennifer Williams, now of Charlottesville, and a new friend, Neha Satak. Neha joined work at Eglin Air Force Base after completing her Ph.D. in Aerospace Engineering at Texas A&M. In June, we were happy to have Wolfram and Sue Verlaan with us, and also Linda Whitlock from San Diego, who was in the area for several days.

We enjoyed the bright company of Karen Litfin for a few days in June. Her first visit here in some years, she was in the middle of an international lecture tour, presenting perspectives from her new book, *Ecovillages: Lessons in Sustainable Community* due in January from Polity Press. Her travels took her from New York to Pennsylvania, from Scotland to the U.K. and on to Switzerland before returning to Seattle. SkyRoot Farm is central to her work there.

Sraddhalu Ranade of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram visited in July from the 8th until the 11th, and celebrated the 30th anniversary of the Relics with us. He presented to the Center a DVD entitled *On the Mother: Video Talks by M.P. Pandit*, available through Dipti Publications. With four brilliant satsang sessions, this is the first of a series.

Happily, Wayne and Setsuko Hicks were our guests for Wayne's 60th birthday on July 21st.

David Mitchell and Kate Buffington hosted his birthday gathering. And in early August we welcomed our friend Kiron Senapati of Tampa.

In our Sunday night studies, we are well into the Mother's *Questions and Answers 1953*. Desirae Jura, who now lives in Falls Church, Virginia, and works with the U.S. Senate, participates with us on most Sunday evenings via Skype. A few others around the country listen to recordings of the discussions via Dropbox links.

We sadly note the passing of our brave and great friend, Surya, a princely cat who left his body on 15 May 2013 at the age of 14. He was the lord of the neighborhood. An orange tabby, Surya's remains now rest just behind the Shrine Room in the Center's backyard. A sun-inspired disk marks the place, gifted by Vicki Hall, with whom he shared a happy home and many an adventure over the years. He came to her and us in a wonderful way, bounding up the steps of the Center on the 15th of August, 1999. Bill Flick had just asked where the surprise cat was for that Fifteenth. And there he was! You see, on the previous 15th of August, Miwa, the Maine coon who lives with Bill and Debbie Flick in Auburn, arrived in the same manner on our door. Well, Miwa and Surya were the last of the August recruits, but the story continues.

A MESSAGE TO AMERICA *Sri Aurobindo*

I have been asked to send on this occasion of the fifteenth August a message to the West, but what I have to say might be delivered equally as a message to the East. It has been customary to dwell on the division and difference between these two sections of the human family and even oppose them to each other; but, for myself I would rather be disposed to dwell on oneness and unity than on division and difference. East and West have the same human nature, a common human destiny, the same aspiration after a greater perfection, the same seeking after something higher than itself, something towards which inwardly and even outwardly we move. There has been a tendency in some minds to dwell on the spirituality or mysticism of the



East and the materialism of the West; but the West has had no less than the East its spiritual seekings and, though not in such profusion, its saints and sages and mystics, the East has had its materialistic tendencies, its material splendours, its similar or identical dealings with life and Matter and the world in which we live. East and West have always met and mixed more or less closely, they have powerfully influenced each other and at the present day are under an increasing compulsion of Nature and Fate to do so more than ever before.

There is a common hope, a common destiny, both spiritual and material, for which both are needed as co-workers. It is no longer towards division and difference that we should turn our minds, but on unity, union, even oneness necessary for the pursuit and realisation of a common ideal, the destined goal, the fulfilment towards which Nature in her beginning obscurely set out and must in an increasing light of knowledge replacing her first ignorance constantly persevere.

But what shall be that ideal and that goal? That depends on our conception of the realities of life and the supreme Reality.

Here we have to take into account that there has been, not any absolute difference but an increasing divergence between the tendencies of the East and the West. The highest truth is truth of the Spirit; a Spirit supreme above the world and yet immanent in the world and in all that exists, sustaining and leading all towards whatever is the aim and goal and the fulfilment of Nature since her obscure inconscient beginnings through the growth of consciousness is the one aspect of existence which gives a clue to the secret of our being and a meaning to the world. The East has always and increasingly put the highest emphasis on the supreme truth of the Spirit; it has, even in its extreme philosophies, put the world away as an illusion and regarded the Spirit as the sole reality. The West has concentrated more and more increasingly on the world, on the dealings of mind and life with our material existence, on our mastery over it, on the perfection of mind and life and some fulfilment of the human being here: latterly this has gone so far as the denial of the Spirit and even the enthronement of Matter as the sole reality. Spiritual perfection as the sole ideal on one side, on the other, the perfectibility of the race, the perfect society, a perfect development



of the human mind and life and man's material existence have become the largest dream of the future. Yet both are truths and can be regarded as part of the intention of the Spirit in world-nature; they are not incompatible with each other: rather their divergence has to be healed and both have to be included and reconciled in our view of the future.

The Science of the West has discovered evolution as the secret of life and its process in this material world; but it has laid more stress on the growth of form and species than on the growth of consciousness: even, consciousness has been regarded as an incident and not the whole secret of the meaning of the evolution. An evolution has been admitted by certain minds in the East, certain philosophies and Scriptures, but there its sense has been the growth of the soul through developing or successive forms and many lives of the individual to its own highest reality. For if there is a conscious being in the form, that being can hardly be a temporary phenomenon of consciousness; it must be a soul fulfilling itself and this fulfilment can only take place if there is a return of the soul to earth in many successive lives, in many successive bodies.

The process of evolution has been the development from and in inconscient Matter of a subconscious and then a conscious Life, of conscious mind first in animal life and then fully in conscious and thinking man, the highest present achievement of evolutionary Nature. The achievement of mental being is at present her



highest and tends to be regarded as her final work; but it is possible to conceive a still further step of the evolution: Nature may have in view beyond the imperfect mind of man a consciousness that passes out of the mind's ignorance and possesses truth as its inherent right and nature. There is a truth-consciousness as it is called in the Veda, a supermind, as I have termed it, possessing Knowledge, not having to seek after it and constantly miss it. In one of the Upanishads a being of knowledge is stated to be the next step above the mental being; into that the soul has to rise and through it to attain the perfect bliss of spiritual existence. If that could be achieved as the next evolutionary step of Nature here, then she would be fulfilled and we could conceive of the perfection of life even here, its attainment of a full spiritual living even in this body or it may be in a perfected body. We could even speak of a divine life on earth; our human dream of perfectibility would be accomplished and at the same time the aspiration to a heaven on earth common to several religions and spiritual seers and thinkers.

The ascent of the human soul to the supreme Spirit is that soul's highest aim and necessity, for that is the supreme reality; but there can be too the descent of the Spirit and its powers into the world and that would justify the existence of the material world also, give a meaning, a divine purpose to the creation and solve its riddle. East and West could be reconciled in the pursuit of the highest and largest ideal, Spirit embrace Matter and Matter find its own true reality and the hidden Reality in all things in the Spirit.

11-8-49

Sri Aurobindo

(From *Autobiographical Notes*, CWSA, Vol. 36, pages 551-553.)

COMMENTARY FROM THE ISHA

Sri Aurobindo

IMMORTALITY

Immortality does not mean survival of the self or the ego after dissolution of the body. The Self always survives the dissolution of the body,

because it always pre-existed before the birth of the body. The Self is unborn and undying. The survival of the ego is only the first condition by which the individual soul is able to continue and link together its experiences in Avidya so as to pursue with an increasing self-possession and mastery that process of self-enlargement which culminates in Vidya.

By immortality is meant the consciousness which is beyond birth and death, beyond the chain of cause and effect, beyond all bondage and limitation, free, blissful, self-existent in conscious-being, the consciousness of the Lord, of the supreme Purusha, of Sachchidananda.

IMMORTALITY AND BIRTH

On this realisation man can base his free activity in the universe. But having so far attained, what further utility has the soul for birth or for works? None for itself, everything for God and the universe.

Immortality beyond the universe is not the object of manifestation in the universe, for that the Self always possessed. Man exists in order that through him the Self may enjoy Immortality in the birth as well as in the non-becoming.

Nor is individual salvation the end; for that would only be the sublime of the ego, not its self-realisation through the Lord in all.

Having realised his own immortality, the individual has yet to fulfil God's work in the universe. He has to help the life, the mind and the body in all beings to express progressively Immortality and not mortality.

This he may do by the becoming in the material body which we ordinarily call birth, or from some status in another world or even, it is possible, from beyond world. But birth in the body is the most close, divine and effective form of help which the liberated can give to those who are themselves still bound to the progression of birth in the lowest world of the Ignorance.

(From *Isha Upanishad*, CWSA, Vol. 17, pages 58 and 59.)



The Pilgrim of the Night

*I made an assignation with the Night;
In the abyss was fixed our rendezvous:
In my breast carrying God's deathless light
I came her dark and dangerous heart to woo.*

*I left the glory of the illumined Mind
And the calm rapture of the divinised soul
And travelled through a vastness dim and blind
To the grey shore where her ignorant waters roll.*

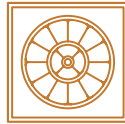
*I walk by the chill wave through the dull slime
And still that weary journeying knows no end;
Lost is the lustrous godhead beyond Time,
There comes no voice of the celestial Friend.*

*And yet I know my footprints' track shall be
A pathway towards Immortality.*

Richard



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



*We must replace
competition and strife
by collaboration and
fraternity.*

With my blessings

Y. S.

