RITAM

A bi-annual journal of material and spiritual researches in Auroville

Our aim:

- This is a journal under SAIIER connecting the various units under its umbrella with the focus on education and other related areas of research.

- The purpose is to create a space where we express and share our work in Auroville and also invite others to share their perceptions with a view to look at where we stand with reference to the ideal.

- It will publish articles, interviews etc. which are relevant to the Charter of Auroville, both from people in Auroville as well as those from elsewhere.

- This journal is for both Aurovilians as well as others who are looking to Auroville for pioneering work in many fields.

- The goal is to understand better the spirit of Auroville and in that context what we are doing and what further we can do.
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Please email us at saiier@auroville.org.in with your views and for any other information. We hope you enjoy this issue!

Editor

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Surya Rimaux
A hidden Bliss is at the root of things

A passage from Savitri

Sri Aurobindo

A secret air of pure felicity
Deep like a sapphire heaven our spirits breathe;
Our hearts and bodies feel its obscure call,
Our senses grope for it and touch and lose.
If this withdrew, the world would sink in the Void;
If this were not, nothing could move or live.
A hidden Bliss is at the root of things.
A mute Delight regards Time's countless works:
To house God's joy in things Space gave wide room,
To house God's joy in self our souls were born.
This universe an old enchantment guards;
Its objects are carved cups of World-Delight
Whose charmed wine is some deep soul's rapture-drink:
The All-Wonderful has packed heaven with his dreams,
He has made blank ancient Space his marvel-house;
He spilled his spirit into Matter's signs:
His fires of grandeur burn in the great sun,
He glides through heaven shimmering in the moon;
He is beauty carolling in the fields of sound;
He chants the stanzas of the odes of Wind;
He is silence watching in the stars at night;
He wakes at dawn and calls from every bough,
Lies stunned in the stone and dreams in flower and tree.
Even in this labour and dolour of Ignorance,
On the hard perilous ground of difficult earth,
In spite of death and evil circumstance
A will to live persists, a joy to be.

Savitri, p. 629-30
Psychic Education

The Mother

Every human being carries hidden within him the possibility of a greater consciousness which goes beyond the bounds of his present life and enables him to share in a higher and a vaster life. Indeed, in all exceptional beings it is always this consciousness that governs their lives and organizes both the circumstances of their existence and their individual reaction to these circumstances. What the human mental consciousness does not know and cannot do, this consciousness knows and does. It is like a light that shines at the centre of the being, radiating through the thick coverings of the external consciousness. Some have a vague intimation of its presence; a good many children are under its influence, which shows itself very distinctly at times in their spontaneous actions and even in their words. Unfortunately, since parents most often do not know what it is and do not understand what is happening in their child, their reaction to these phenomena is not a good one and all their education consists in making the child as unconscious as possible in this domain and concentrating all his attention on external things, thus accustoming him to think that they are the only ones that matter. It is true that this concentration on external things is very useful, provided that it is done in the proper way. The three lines of education—physical, vital and mental—deal with that and could be defined as the means of building up the personality, raising the individual out of the amorphous subconscious mass and making him a well-defined self-conscious entity. With psychic education we come to the problem of the true motive of existence, the purpose of life on earth, the discovery to which this life must lead and the result of that discovery: the consecration of the individual to his eternal principle. (…)To sketch a general outline of psychic education, we must give some idea, however relative it may be, of what we mean by the psychic being. One could say, for example, that the creation of an individual being is the result of the projection, in time and space, of one of the countless possibilities latent in the supreme origin of all manifestation which, through the medium of the one and universal consciousness, takes concrete form in the law or the truth of an individual and so, by a progressive development, becomes his soul or psychic being.

I must emphasise that what is stated briefly here does not claim to be a complete exposition of the reality and does not exhaust the subject—far from it. It is only a very summary explanation for a practical purpose, to serve as a basis for the education which we intend to consider now.

It is through this psychic presence that the truth of an individual being comes into contact with him and the circumstances of his life. In most cases the presence acts, so to say, from behind the veil, unrecognised and unknown; but in some, it is perceptible and its action recognisable and even, in a very few, the presence becomes tangible and its action fully effective. These go forward in life with an assurance and a certitude all their own; they are masters of their destiny. It is for the purpose of obtaining this mastery and becoming conscious of the psychic presence that psychic education should be practised. But for that there is need of a special factor, the personal will. For till now, the discovery of the psychic
being and identification with it have not been
among the recognised subjects of education,
and although one can find in special treatises
useful and practical hints on the subject, and
although in exceptional cases one may have
the good fortune of meeting someone who is
capable of showing the way and giving the
help that is needed to follow it, most often the
attempt is left to one's own personal initiative.
The discovery is a personal matter and a
great determination, a strong will and an
untiring perseverance are indispensable to
reach the goal. Each one must, so to say, trace
out his own path through his own difficulties.
The goal is known to some extent, for most
of those who have reached it have described
it more or less clearly. But the supreme value
of the discovery lies in its spontaneity, its
ingenuousness, and that escapes all ordinary
mental laws. And that is why anyone wanting
to take up the adventure usually first seeks out
some person who has successfully undertaken it
and is able to sustain him and enlighten him on
his way. Yet there are some solitary travellers
and for them a few general indications may
be useful.

The starting-point is to seek in yourself that
which is independent of the body and the
circumstances of life, which is not born of
the mental formation that you have been
given, the language you speak, the habits
and customs of the environment in which
you live, the country where you are born
or the age to which you belong. You must
find, in the depths of your being, that which
carries in it a sense of universality, limitless
expansion, unbroken continuity. Then you
decentralise, extend and widen yourself; you
begin to live in all things and in all beings;
the barriers separating individuals from each
other break down. You think in their thoughts,
vibrate in their sensations, feel in their feelings,
live in the life of all. What seemed inert
suddenly becomes full of life, stones quicken,
plants feel and will and suffer, animals speak
in a language more or less inarticulate, but
clear and expressive; everything is animated
by a marvelous consciousness without
time or limit. And this is only one aspect
of the psychic realisation; there are others,
many others. All help you to go beyond
the barriers of your egoism, the walls of
your external personality, the impotence of
your reactions and the incapacity of your
will.

But, as I have already said, the path to that
realisation is long and difficult, strewn with
snares and problems to be solved, which
demand an unfailing determination. It is
like the explorer’s trek through virgin forest
in quest of an unknown land, of some great
discovery. The psychic being is also a great
discovery which requires at least as much
fortitude and endurance as the discovery of
new continents. A few simple words of advice
may be useful to one who has resolved to
undertake it.

The first and perhaps the most important
point is that the mind is incapable of judging
spiritual things. All those who have written
on this subject have said so; but very few are
those who have put it into practice. And yet,
in order to proceed on the path, it is absolutely
indispensable to abstain from all mental
opinion and reaction.

Give up all personal seeking for comfort,
satisfaction, enjoyment or happiness. Be only
a burning fire for progress, take whatever
comes to you as an aid to your progress
and immediately make whatever progress is
required.

Try to take pleasure in all you do, but never do
anything for the sake of pleasure.

Never get excited, nervous or agitated. Remain
perfectly calm in the face of all circumstances.
And yet be always alert to discover what
progress you still have to make and lose no
time in making it.
Never take physical happenings at their face value. They are always a clumsy attempt to express something else, the true thing which escapes our superficial understanding.

Never complain of the behaviour of anyone, unless you have the power to change in his nature what makes him act in this way; and if you have the power, change him instead of complaining.

Whatever you do, never forget the goal which you have set before you. There is nothing great or small once you have set out on this great discovery; all things are equally important and can either hasten or delay its success. Thus before you eat, concentrate a few seconds in the aspiration that the food you are about to eat may bring your body the substance it needs to serve as a solid basis for your effort towards the great discovery, and give it the energy for persistence and perseverance in the effort.

Before you go to sleep, concentrate a few seconds in the aspiration that the sleep may restore your fatigued nerves, bring calm and quietness to your brain so that on waking you may, with renewed vigour, begin again your journey on the path of the great discovery.

Before you act, concentrate in the will that your action may help or at least in no way hinder your march forward towards the great discovery.

When you speak, before the words come out of your mouth, concentrate just long enough to check your words and allow only those that are absolutely necessary to pass, only those that are not in any way harmful to your progress on the path of the great discovery.

To sum up, never forget the purpose and goal of your life. The will for the great discovery should be always there above you, above what you do and what you are, like a huge bird of light dominating all the movements of your being.

Before the untiring persistence of your effort, an inner door will suddenly open and you will emerge into a dazzling splendour that will bring you the certitude of immortality, the concrete experience that you have always lived and always shall live, that external forms alone perish and that these forms are, in relation to what you are in reality, like clothes that are thrown away when worn out. Then you will stand erect, freed from all chains, and instead of advancing laboriously under the weight of circumstances imposed upon you by Nature, which you had to endure and bear if you did not want to be crushed by them, you will be able to walk on, straight and firm, conscious of your destiny, master of your life.

(MCW 12:30-35)
The Psychic Being and the sudden bursting of its veil

In the light of Sri Aurobindo’s and Mother’s philosophy, and the words of some people who experienced it unexpectedly

Alain Grandcolas

The bursting of the Mother’s psychic being was related to Satprem on 30 October 1962 and 15 April 1972. It happened in 1912, when she was 34 years old. It was her “first contact”.

To have it (just to give you an idea) took me a year of exclusive concentration on finding that within myself. ... I did nothing but that, thought of nothing but that, wanted nothing but that. I was entirely concentrated on that. I was in Paris, and I did nothing else but that; when I walked down the street, I was thinking only of that. ...

One day, as I was crossing the Boulevard Saint Michel... – suddenly, for no apparent reason – I was neither more concentrated nor anything else – poof! It opened. ...

That light, that dazzling light, that light and immensity. ... That concrete reality, that intensity beyond any possible physical intensity... ALONG WITH the sense of the eternal Divine. ... It didn’t just last for hours, it lasted for months.

This sense has never left me for a minute. And always, whenever I had a decision to make, I would simply stop for a second and receive the indication from there. ... My psychic being governs me – I am afraid of nothing... I have the Divine there. (Mother touches her heart)

(Mother’s Agenda 30.11.62)

On several occasions, the Mother compared the sudden identification with the psychic being to a chicken coming out of the egg. Near the end of her talk of 26 June 1957 she said:

One is shut up in a shell, and inside it something is happening, like the chick in the egg .... And it is only when all is ready that there comes the capacity to pierce the shell and to be born into the light of day. ...

I don’t think one can go through gradually, I don’t think it is something which slowly wears and wears away until one can see through it. I haven’t had an instance of this so far. There is rather a kind of accumulation of power inside, an intensification of the need. ...

One is like an explosive that nothing can resist, and one bursts out from one’s prison in a blaze of light.

(CWM 9:136-37)

Many disciples remain under the impression that becoming aware of the psychic being is the result of a long process which has started before our birth and may need some more rebirths. In 1955 the Mother stated:

In almost most cases, a very sustained effort is needed to become aware of one’s psychic being. Usually it is considered that if one can do it in thirty years one is very lucky – thirty years of sustained efforts, I say.

(CWM 7:269)

But something has definitely changed in the world, as the Mother stated on 8th February 1973, just three months before she stopped meeting people, when she invited some teachers of the Ashram school to find their psychic being and to be united with it. She said:

1 Quotations are taken mainly from Collected Works of the Mother (CWM) and Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library (SABCL). Sri Aurobindo’s and Mother’s words are always in italics. Many thanks to A.S. Dalal for his compilation The Psychic Being which was a starter for this essay and a source for many quotations
Usually, it takes a whole life, or sometimes, for some people, it takes several lives. Here, in the present conditions, it can be done in several months.

(CWM 12:428)

An investigation into the subject has been undertaken, by interviewing 37 people, 28 of whom have been selected on account of the psychic sweetness they radiate. 15 of the interviewees were identified as having the knowledge of their psychic being. For 3 of them the knowledge had always been there, for 12 of them the knowledge came through a sudden experience. The initial awareness lasted from some hours to a few days or months. Then it disappeared and, for many, it came back several times, for a certain period, no longer in a dramatic way but in a soft and gradual manner. Then it could be easily recognised since the taste of the psychic being was already known.

One assumption is that these new conditions mentioned by the Mother have been triggered by the descent of the supramental manifestation on 29 February 1956. The Mother stated that on that evening, the supramental consciousness and force and light descended into the earth. One year later, she commemorated the first anniversary of that event by saying: “A new world has been born”. We wonder if one feature of the coming new world may perhaps be an acceleration of the blossoming of the psychic being and its bursting through the veil, even without a sustained effort in this life. The results of this very limited survey seem to illustrate this statement.

In the first section an attempt is made to describe several phases in the awareness of the psychic being. The second section describes what has happened to several interviewees at the moment they suddenly became aware of their psychic being. A third section describes what remained with them afterwards. The fourth section will give some consolidated results of the small survey which has been conducted on the sudden bursting of the veil for twelve people. A last section highlights some methods recommended for finding the psychic being.

I. HOW DO WE BECOME AWARE OF THE PSYCHIC BEING?

For the clarity of the survey, it may be stated that three levels of knowledge of the psychic being are distinguished. It may manifest through an influence, through a sudden identification, or just as a touch. Sri Aurobindo writes:

The psychic being emerges slowly in most men, even after taking up sadhana …. One has to wait till the necessary process has gone far enough before it can burst its agelong veil and come in front to control the nature [emphasis added].

(SABCL 24:1098)

I.1. Usually the psychic being is felt as a presence and an influence.

In every one, even at the very beginning, this spiritual presence... is there.

(CWM 9:339)

In most people, the psychic being manifests itself as an influence, a presence in the heart region, more or less living according to the aspiration, the concentration and the rejection of the movements which contradict its expression within oneself. Its action is felt indirectly.

Anybody concerned with spiritual life perceives, in that region, some inner indication. Those who are following Sri Aurobindo’s and the Mother’s inner discipline will learn to give more importance

Note: The survey refers to a “Visitor”, an “Ashramite” or an “Aurovilian”, a status they had at the time of the happening. An individual may be referred to as a “Visitor”, in spite of now being an “Ashramite”. The narration of most of the experiences has been approved by the people concerned.
to that presence, which will grow in their inner consciousness and which will more and more become a reference point for all their actions, all their thoughts, an indication of psychic approval or disapproval of some behaviour.

For some, the psychic presence is so living that they may wonder whether they know their psychic being or not. At this juncture, the answer from the Mother is clear:

There are people who come and ask you: “Am I conscious of my psychic being?” One can tell them: “This itself is the proof that you are not” – because if you are, you can no longer ask this.

(CWM 6:366)

I.2. To ‘know’ one’s psychic being is usually the result of a sudden and unexpected happening.

As the Mother describes it:

We do not reach it little by little; it is not through a little constant and regular effort. It is something which arrives suddenly. It establishes itself without knowing how, without knowing why, but everything is changed. It cannot be expressed because as soon as we try to explain with words, it escapes you.

The sudden experience of the psychic being is in another dimension. Some features may be ineffable because there is ‘no point of recognition’ as one sadhak puts it. It can be translated into words, but only those who have experienced it, who have ‘tasted’ it, may understand the description.

A visitor to the Ashram will compare this sudden event to the fissure of an atom, in order to express in an image that something unknown and very powerful was hidden under some surface lid. In a similar way physicists were in contact with the atom for a long time without being aware that atomic energy existed. One day there was a fission of the atom, something sudden, very powerful and emitting an energy of a different nature.

The next section will narrate what has happened to some of the twelve persons who have described that sudden experience after which they state: ‘Now I know my psychic being.’ The features of the bursting are often very different, except for two which are common: a very deep untriggered and unexpected joy, and the certitude of having come to know the psychic being.

I.3. A sudden experience may also be the result of touching some parts of the being which are under a psychic influence, but it is not yet a contact with the soul.

Some readers may wonder whether the interviewee narrates a true contact with the psychic being or whether it is an experience of the inner consciousness (inner physical, inner vital, inner mental) or an experience of the higher (spiritual) consciousness. This question is valid, and it explains why three of the interviewees who have experienced some bursting which they link with an identification with their psychic being have not been retained as a contact with the psychic being.

The Mother comments on this matter:

Very often, when one touches certain parts of the mind which are under the psychic influence and full of light and the joy of that light, or when one touches certain very pure and very high parts of the emotive being which has the most generous, most unselfish emotions, one has the impression of being in contact with one’s soul. But this is not the true soul, it is not the soul in its very essence. These are parts of the being under its influence and manifesting something of it. So very often people enter into contact with these parts and this gives them illuminations, great joy, revelations and they feel they have found their soul... and then it gets veiled and one wonders: “How is it that I touched my soul and now have fallen back into that state of ignorance and inconscience?”

But that’s because one had not touched one’s soul, one had touched those parts of the being which
are under the influence of the soul and manifest something of it.

(CWM 7:259)

It has to be noted that an identification with one’s psychic being is also usually followed by a loss of this contact:

It is quite a common phenomenon ... One may not have the power of keeping it all the time, but one can get it at will.

(CWM 6:33)

In analysing the contents of the interviews, some errors of appreciation on the quality of the contact with the psychic being may have occurred, but it is felt that they should not alter the overall observations of this essay.

II. WHAT HAPPENS AT THAT INSTANT WHEN THE PSYCHIC BEING BURSTS SUDDENLY OUT OF ITS VEIL?

Anybody who experiences a sudden contact with his psychic being has a personal, clear and living memory of that event.

This is an absolutely tangible experience, something more concrete that the most concrete object, more concrete than a blow on your head, something more real than anything whatever. When people ask me how one may know whether he is in contact with his psychic being... it makes me laugh; when it happens to you... you can no longer ask any questions.

(CWM 7:194)

II.1 One of the two common features for all these sudden events is that it triggers always a sudden great joy without external cause

An Ashramite who was going to be operated on experienced suddenly what he perceived as the opening of his psychic being; it was accompanied by ‘a joy of an intensity he had never experienced in his life’. A lady in Europe who was delivering her first child will speak of an ‘explosion’ of joy, a ‘bursting of love and joy, without cause, in spite of the pain of the delivery.’ A visitor in the Ashram who was reading a letter of Sri Aurobindo suddenly experienced an identification ‘filling the whole body with a great and pure joy’.

All these descriptions of the joy are part of a global experience which has been identified as a total or partial contact. The Mother will describe this event:

It is an experience that gives a very concrete joy; at the moment of identification one truly feels a very, very great joy.

(CWM 6:33)

Sri Aurobindo will even go further:

It is true that nothing can give so much happiness and joy.

(SABCL 24:1098)

II.2 The second common feature of this sudden identification is that it brings the certitude of ‘knowing’ one’s psychic being.

For two Ashramites and one visitor, it was immediately clear that they had contacted their psychic being and could now state that they ‘know’ their psychic being. For six other interviewees, their intellectual knowledge of the concept of the psychic being was not sufficient and they could not recognise it immediately. One visitor to the Ashram was quite surprised by the experience since it did not correspond to whatever he had read on the psychic being before, no ‘dazzling light’ (he did not see any light) nor any ‘reversal of consciousness’ (there was the awareness of a new ‘being’, but no ‘reversal’!). A European person who had just finished reading The Adventure of Consciousness by Satprem had that experience after which he ‘knew’ his heart. It was quite concrete. It was something he cannot define: “I know that I know it”. Later
on, he learned that it was his psychic being. Another lady in Europe could not recognise it since she did not know of the existence of any such thing.

Amongst the fifteen people who stated that they know their psychic being, for twelve of them the knowledge came after a sudden identification. Three of them stated they have always been conscious of their psychic being and they became aware of this fact when they read about it: One Indian visitor mentioned that when she read about the psychic being, it was clear for her that it had been always present and is always there. A foreigner who came and stayed some time in the Ashram mentioned to the Mother that for her that knowledge had always been there; the Mother confirmed to her that it is true that she had never lost the psychic knowledge that she had as a child, a rare feat. An Ashramite who came to Pondicherry with her parents and was brought up in the Ashram school at the time the Mother was closely supervising it, stated that her knowledge of the psychic being has always been there.

Several other people are well aware of their psychic as an influence but will answer negatively when asked if they ‘know’ their psychic being.

II.3 The experience often brings the awareness that the individual harbours something immortal in him.

In fact, the living awareness that our true self is immortal and cannot die, is a sign of the quality of the experience. The Mother will say on 9 April 1958:

*One has the feeling of having always been and of being for eternity. That is when one has touched the core of the soul.*

(CWM 9:310)

A guest who discovered his psychic being during that sudden happening states “the irrefutable knowledge that this psychic being has always been and precedes the birth of this body. It will always be and will not die with this body. Nobody can ever dismiss this certitude”.

The Ashramite who was preparing himself for a surgery was afraid of the coming bypass, but after the emergence he had ‘the strong feeling that his body was the robe of his eternal psychic being and he was no longer afraid of the operation’. For that future Aurovilian, ‘death was no longer a concern’. For that visitor ‘he had the feeling of having always been and of being always’.

Very simply, the Mother will say:

*The moment you are in contact with your psychic being, you have the feeling of immortality, of having always been and being always, eternally.*

(CWM 5:316)

This feeling is so well described through king Aswapati’s experience in *Savitri*.

*He feels his substance of undying self
And loses his kinship to mortality.*

(Savitri p. 23)

and also in Savitri’s own experience:

*A being stood immortal in transience
Deathless dallying with momentary things.*

(Savitri p. 526)

II.4 At the time of the bursting, some people have the experience of becoming aware of their “true being”
On July 1st 1970, the Mother will ‘see’ with open eyes, the psychic being of Rijuta, an American sadhika. She said:

*It was clearly a being which was neither man nor woman, having the combined characteristics of both.*

(CWM 11:238)

Yes, a being, which will be defined by the Mother on 11.6.1958 as:

*an organised entity, fully conscious of itself, independent and having the power of asserting itself and ruling the rest of the nature.*

(CWM 9:339)

One visitor will say, when he became aware of his psychic being, that he discovered that this being was in fact himself, his real ‘I’. He started to talk in the third person, ‘he’, instead of using ‘I’, since the one who was speaking was the envelope of what he had identified as himself, the newly discovered being. A Parisian lady, who hardly knew about Sri Aurobindo and the Mother knew with certainty that her physical body was not ‘herself’.

It is interesting to note how Sri Aurobindo describes the moment when Savitri discovers her soul, in Book Seven, Canto Five ‘The Finding of the Soul’. The first section finishes with the line:

*There suddenly she met her secret soul.*

The poem pauses with one blank line and resumes with solemnity in the next line:

*A being stood immortal in transience.*

(Savitri p.526)

**II.5 For several people, the bursting includes the appearance or even a rushing-in of a strong light.**

Light is one of the spiritual experiences which is triggered by a descent, but it is also triggered by the bursting of the psychic.

*An inner door will suddenly open and you will emerge into a dazzling splendour. ...*  
(CWM 12: p.35)

An Aurovilian describes ‘an ocean of light’, another saw a white light which was flowing everywhere, a third one describes a strong white light at the level of the heart. An Ashramite saw a red flame, as big as a thumb, within his heart, which went towards Sri Aurobindo and Mother’s photos, which were in full white light before him. But the flame did not remain with them and came back to his heart.

**II.6 There may also be a sudden awareness that one has always been guided (by the psychic or by the Mother or by something undefined.)**

One Aurovilian said that since that time, he had the feeling that he has always been guided, that everything is arranged. Another Aurovilian will feel that “there is a thread with an origin long before and that the psychic being is directing in spite of all obstacles”. A visitor will feel that “the psychic being indicates that it has always been there to overlook circumstances and nothing can happen in the future without its sanction.”

A visitor stated with conviction that the Mother and his psychic being are one. It is confirmed by these words by Sri Aurobindo:

*There is within you a psychic being which is divine, directly a part of the Mother.*

(SABCL 23:907)

Nevertheless, it is worthwhile noting that, during the time of the experience, few people made an identification between the Mother of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and their psychic being.

**II.7 There is also the feeling and certitude that our psychic being cannot be touched by hostile forces.**
A visitor who became aware of his psychic being inside himself suddenly got the strong conviction that hostile forces cannot touch this ‘being’ and cannot influence him as long as he has his psychic being as a reference. This feeling is confirmed by Sri Aurobindo who writes:

[The psychic being] is the only part that cannot be touched by the hostile forces and their suggestions.  
(SABCL 24:1098)

A person united with his psychic being is, says the Mother:

Almost if not totally free from external influences; for, being conscious, when these influences come, he sees them: those that seem to him to harmonise with his inner development and normal growth he accepts; those which are opposed he refuses.  
(CWM 6:108)

II.8 Often, it creates an increased consciousness and awareness.

A visitor will speak of ‘an increased consciousness, a feeling that the purpose of life is this consciousness.’ This acute consciousness makes everything become more concrete and living. An ashramite will speak of a truer and more vivid consciousness: he saw the world in a different way. Everything had a luminous glow in it. Everything was conscious and alive. He had a different relationship with all things: human beings, animals and even plants.

His experience reminds us of what the Mother wrote for the February 1952 Bulletin of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education:

What seemed inert suddenly becomes full of life, stones quicken, plants feel and will and suffer, animal speaks in a language more or less inarticulate, but clear and expressive; everything is animated by a marvellous consciousness without time and limit. And this is only one aspect of the psychic realisation.  
(CWM 12:33)

II.9 Some powerful sensations are also mentioned, varying from one person to the other.

While describing the bursting of their psychic being, most will put the emphasis on one or two additional strong feelings or sensations which are often still vivid in their memory.

For some it was a feeling of ‘richness’ which remained for some time, for that visitor a feeling of ‘plenitude’, for that lady delivering a child ‘a very intense emotional moment and at the same time a great stillness, it was both together’.

Several of these attributes are interestingly gathered together by the Mother in the following description she gave on 9 April 1958 while describing the soul:

Something warm, quiet, rich in substance and very still and very full, like a sweetness – that is the soul. A kind of plenitude which gives the feeling of something complete.  
(CWM 9:310)

The word ‘sweetness’ is added by the Mother and it is true that in all the people who have been met who had this contact, a definite psychic sweetness is now underlying their general behaviour.

II.10 A sudden contact with the psychic being is one of the rare intense spiritual experiences which may happen with open eyes, in the midst of some activity.

This experience occurs while alone or interacting with people, with open eyes as well as closed eyes, and will not disappear when eyes are being open. Usually, spiritual experiences are characterised by a definite spiritual change in consciousness, a specific sensation within the
body (peace, force, waves, current, electricity) and/or a vision. As soon as the experiencer moves, opens his eyes, returns outward, it vanishes quickly, which is not the case with the psychic experience.

In our survey more than half of the sudden emergences happened with open eyes, sometimes in the presence of other people quite unaware of the intense experience taking place. One mother described that she was delivering her child, an Ashramite was feeling the thumb of a respected person on his forehead, a visitor was alone but reading a letter of Sri Aurobindo, a young American visitor was receiving a fierce look from the Mother into his heart: “Her left eye appeared to begin to spin around as if it were a drill, and she bored down into my deepest heart right down to the level of my chest”; one time, two times and the third time “the obstruction ripped open. Her consciousness went right into my heart centre and opened it.” (Darshan, p.48)

III WHAT REMAINS AFTER THE SUDDEN EXPERIENCE OF THE CONTACT WITH THE PSYCHIC BEING?

Whenever somebody experiences a sudden contact, he always has the feeling, at that time, that the new state is permanent.

*But it is difficult for a human being to keep up a constant contact with his psychic. As soon as he settles down and the freshness of the new experience fades away, the old person comes back to the surface with all its habits, preferences, small manias, shortcomings and misunderstandings,*

(CWM 12:45)

Experience teaches us it is not permanent, that it may withdraw after a time which may depend on the initial intensity but also on our ability to keep it.

That is why it is very important to know the fragility of this new state of being so that, when it happens, proper steps are taken to nurture it as long as possible and get the maximum psychic nourishment. One visitor mentioned that he narrated in a diary his sensations and feelings during the time that the psychic was fully living, and the description is rich and quite evocative. It has helped, at a later stage, to relive its vibration and some of the feelings and sensations experienced during that moment. Another remembers that this state seems so ‘normal’ at that time that one does not think it anything strange to write about! He was also wondering if there is not a risk of ‘mentalising’ the experience and thus diluting it.

**III.1 How long did this experience remained living? How did it vanish?**

More specifically, how long does this experience ‘carry with it its own reality and force?’ (CWM 12:31) What is the duration of the various sensations and feelings?

In an interesting manner, the consciousness of the new psychic presence may last some minutes, some hours, some days, some months and even three years for one of the people interviewed, before getting clouded, (but it never disappeared entirely). After the experience, one usually lives with it in a permanent manner up to the time, one fine morning, we discover that it is not living any longer and we have to make a conscious concentration to become aware of it.

A visitor to the Ashram has spoken of several emergences and dispersions on the same day, feeling how his ego was mentalising and responsible for clouding it, but the original sensation came back often. On the following days, it was still a game of hide and seek, but less living, up to the time it vanished.

A man living in Europe kept the experience quite fresh during three to four days, in the midst of multiple activities, including a football match, “the best of my life, in which, instead of running...
after the ball, it was the ball which was coming to me!”

For an Ashramite, who had been prepared by some spiritual discipline, the awareness of the new state of being lasted several months. Peace emanated from him and was felt around and reported to him. He thought it would always last but it faded gradually. One day, he became unexpectedly aware that it had withdrawn. He attributed it to a flaw in his own sadhana, which may also be a subjective explanation. But for sure, he may still be able to connect with it at will. An elderly Ashramite will even tell that the contact has taken place 100 times. Considering the content of the meeting, we definitely believe him!

In all these cases, it is difficult to tell if it was the circumstances which were to be blamed for the loss of the psychic consciousness, or if the psychic consciousness was destined to fade sooner or later.

III.2 Once the psychic nature is known, one is in a better position to differentiate psychic perceptions and vital/emotional feelings.

Once a contact has been established, once the veil has been pierced, even slightly, once the taste of the psychic is known, it is always possible, at will, within some seconds, to feel again that presence, that influence, the quality of that vibration, the nature of that substance. One has gained a pretty sure way to recognise the psychic influence.

For a certain Aurovilian, the psychic has become a permanent reference point. For one ashramite, it can be recognized since it has ‘a different nature’. It can no longer be confused with anything else. This perception has been expressed by several other people.

If one among you has had the experience, he knows in this way what comes from the Divine, and necessarily... he knows perforce all that does not... It is only after this experience that one knows, not before

(CWM 6:131-132)

III.3 After the identification, some are aware of ‘a reversal of consciousness’

After a psychic contact, some people become aware of a sudden ‘reversal of consciousness’. It has to be noted that such a reversal may also be triggered by some other spiritual experiences.

Those who have experienced this reversal know what I am speaking about; but if one hasn’t, one can’t understand.

(CWM 8:172)

This is why we shall not try to describe it. Several people have acknowledged their failed attempts to share the reversal of consciousness brought about by their psychic experience. Unless it has been tasted, it cannot be recognised.

An Aurovilian stated that in 1972, he had the Mother’s darshan, and at the time of leaving, she opened her eyes and suddenly “everything turned over”. Another Aurovilian who has experienced this reversal of consciousness explains it by the fact that life is being seen with some other reference points.

III.4 The new knowledge and perception that some part of us is immortal remains permanent for most people.

Even if the living contact with the psychic being vanishes, the perception of the immortality of this ‘something else’ remains with everybody who has experienced it. The relation with death has changed. The fear of death is no longer there.

One visitor in the Ashram, some days after such a psychic experience, came down with a high unidentified fever. The Ashram doctor was alarmed and the Mother was informed. The visitor felt that his consciousness was
withdrawing from his legs and arms, starting from their extremities, as if death were invading the body, going towards the heart. With interest and even curiosity, and without the least fear, he remained concentrated in his living psychic being which, he knew, cannot die. He was wondering what would happen when the numbness/death would reach his soul, which cannot become numb. But he lost consciousness. An hour later, he awakened. This experience illustrates the vividness of this sense of immortality and its power, since he was in a position to look at Death as a witness.

There was an Ashramite who was fearful of a life-endangering heart surgery, but he was no longer worried after he got a contact with his psychic being and could then go undisturbed to the operating theatre.

### III.5 A state of happiness without cause may also remain quite long.

One sadhak comments, “During the period of awareness of one’s psychic being, when one is so full of happiness, we make very little personal effort for progress since everything is so spontaneously beautiful. We accept any adverse circumstance without fighting since such things become secondary: nothing really matters”. He considers that it is “The Mother who gives us such an effortless state of happiness to show how beautiful life could be, and then she withdraws the experience so that we can start the work of transformation consciously”.

An Aurovilian, during that living psychic period, was aware of a constant state of happiness, from the time he awoke in the morning (kissing his pillow to say thank you to the new day to come!). Every hour, he would remember how happy he was to reside in Auroville ... up to an overnight withdrawal!

### III.6 There is the feeling that whatever we experience is quite natural and must also be felt by those around us.

This is another unique feature of the psychic experience. As long as the experience is living, the one undergoing the experience feels that many people around him must have or share the same feelings, must be experiencing the same thing and be living with it. It is as if we are close to a tree with a lot of jasmine flowers and we breathe their perfume: we are convinced that others also smell the same fragrance, although they do not.

In the same manner, when we are in contact with our psychic being, whenever we meet somebody with some psychic sweetness, we think that he is also living with the inner perception of his psychic being. Such a feeling has been expressed by two visitors and one Ashramite.

### III.7 After that contact, does life become a sunlit path?

With the new awareness, the new feelings and sensations, everything seems to contribute to the transformation of our lives, so that we get a lasting state of joy. As seen from the beginning of this essay, it is partly true that life may or may not become a sunlit path, but in any case life is no longer the same.

The Mother tells us that we can know that the psychic is there:

> ... when one feels better within oneself, when one is full of light, hope, goodwill, generosity, compassion for the world, and sees life as a field of action, progress, realisation. Doesn’t it make a difference from the days when one is bored, grumbling, when everything seems ugly, unpleasant, wicked, when one loves nobody, wants to break everything, gets angry, feels ill at ease, without strength, without energy, without any joy?

(CWM 6:6)

Does this mean that life has become a sunlit path? Not quite, since another feature of this awakening must also be highlighted.
The more psychic one is, the more he is in contradiction with the present state of the world....
The development of the psychic being has a double result, which is concomitant. That is, with the development of the psychic being, the sensitivity of the being grows. And with the growth of sensitivity, there is also the growth of the capacity for suffering; but there is the counterpart, that is, to the extent to which one is in relation with the psychic being, one faces the circumstances of life in an altogether different way and with a kind of inner freedom which makes one capable of withdrawing from a circumstance and not feeling the shock in the ordinary way. You can face the difficulty of outer things with calm, peace and a sufficient inner knowledge not to be troubled.

(CWM 7:21)

III.8 After that experience, does one become a holy person?

The above talk from the Mother gives the answer! The bursting of the psychic being is a definite landmark in spiritual progress, but all the cellular residues are still quite present and living. One’s actions and reactions are still very often governed by instinct. The psychic presence is not permanent, even though there is the possibility at any moment to feel it again – sometimes too late, after we have reacted! Actions and reactions take place before the psychic being is consulted.

Even sometimes the being willingly follows the ordinary nature rather than the psychic indication. For those who do not know their psychic being, this may look like a sacrilege or a waste of the grace which has been received. But those who have tasted it, know how difficult it is to remain constantly within the psychic vibration.

III.9 How is a lost contact with the psychic being renewed: as a bursting forth, or progressively?

We have not met (yet) anybody who underwent two burstings! If we refer again to the image of an egg hatching, it seems as if the shell can be broken only once.

The psychic being may have come back in front from time to time but no longer suddenly. It has come back in a manner which was neither perceivable nor dramatic and in such a way that one discovers, one day, that the psychic is again quite present. In the same manner, we usually discover one morning that the psychic has become less living.

An Aurovilian, while concentrating on Sri Aurobindo, became aware that the psychic presence had come back. Since that time, that is a period of eight months at the time of the interview, the presence did not leave her.

A visitor who experienced a sudden bursting of his psychic being on January 2nd 1968, lost it gradually but, lacking the proper knowledge, did not identify how it went away within some months. He entered again, gradually, into the living psychic presence on 9th September 1973; it lasted eight months, up to 30th April 1974, on which date he did something which contradicted this psychic presence: the next morning it had gone. Quite a long time later, in December 2001, he discovered one morning while cycling that the contact with the psychic being was again there, but he lost it on March 25th 2002 after a violent verbal abuse which shook his whole body: next morning, the living awareness and plenitude had vanished. These dates are given to illustrate the fact that the living awareness of the psychic being is quite concrete: it exists or it does not. What is permanent is the capacity to contact it at will for reference.

IV. SOME STATISTICS ON THE SURVEY

Among thirty-seven people with whom this matter was discussed, it has been found that twelve of them came to know their psychic being after a sudden bursting of the veil – an experience which can be differentiated from a psychicised higher emotion. There was no prepared questionnaire
but an open discussion. In spite of the limited number of elements which have been produced, it is possible to start to gather some features on the bursting. According to the response to this essay, more meetings may take place and enrich the survey.

A. Features of the bursting

1. A sudden happening: all the 12 interviewees could describe with precision the circumstances, place and time when it occurred.

2. A great joy without cause: all the 12 interviewees have described this joy: maximum, intense, overwhelming, a bursting of joy, an explosion of joy.

3. A flow of light: 4 interviewees out of 15 have seen much white light, a strong white light, a red light, an ocean of light.

4. A knowledge of something immortal within oneself: 6 interviewees have mentioned the new knowledge and certitude of something immortal in them.

5. A new individual entity within oneself: 4 people have mentioned that the psychic being has been perceived as an individual entity, distinct from the body.

6. Other sensations described by more than one person were: an outstanding peace, love, richness, plenitude, an increased consciousness, a feeling of the divine in plants.

B. After-effects of the bursting

1. Disappearance: For most of the people interviewed it was difficult to explain what has happened between the bursting which brought a psychic awareness and the moment when they suddenly became aware it had gone. From those who were aware of reasons for the disappearance, details were not asked – although it is now felt that more could be shared.

2. The psychic area becomes a permanent reference point: Even if the permanent awareness of the psychic being has gone, it is always possible to connect, at will, to the psychic area which has a special vibration. Six interviewees mentioned that this area has become a permanent point of reference.

3. Discrimination between emotional and psychic feelings becomes easier: This was mentioned by 6 people who have ‘tasted’ the psychic vibration.

4. Circumstances are arranging themselves: this was mentioned by 3 people


This part of the interviews has been weak. The five above features should have been presented for appraisal and feed-back, but at that time it was not yet known what would be relevant. Some other features have been indicated here and there, one or two times. This can be done if it is decided to enrich this initial survey. For the next paragraph, information on the circumstances of the bursting was easier to gather, although these have not been collected in an organised manner.

C. Circumstances of the bursting

1. In which year?: In the sixties (3), in the seventies (2), in the eighties (2), in the nineties (1), after 2000 (1). To be noted: 5 burstings out of 8 happened between 1965 and 1973.

2. At what age? Below 20(0), below 30 (5), below 40 (3), below 50 (0), below 60 (1). It is hoped that this article will not throw people above forty into a depression!

3. Contact with Sri Aurobindo’s and Mother’s writings beforehand? Yes (10). 7 out of 15 had seen the Mother before, 2 persons knew only their names, 1 person did not know Sri Aurobindo’s
name (two weeks later he sees *The Life Divine* in a bookshop and purchases it because of the title!)

4. **Inner discipline before the bursting:** Serious inner discipline (7), some spiritual discipline (2), no discipline but a psychotherapy (1). The bursting is not limited to people who have done a concentrated sadhana. It has also happened to people who have been taken by surprise and did not know anything about it, whether they knew the Mother and Sri Aurobindo or not.

5. **Yearning for something else:** A little for one, very much for all the others. All the people who experienced the bursting were yearning for something else, were strongly aspiring for it, often without knowing what they were aspiring for.

6. **In which psychological state?** Only 2 were in a depressed mood.

7. **Being alone or in company:** Alone (5), not alone (3), with the Mother (1). Not asked (3).

8. **Where did it happen?** In their reading-room (2); just lying on the bed (1); in the Mother’s room (1); on the operation theatre (1); in an office with people (1); outside in nature while meditating (1); outside on a boulevard while walking (1). No places are privileged.

9. **While doing what?** Meditating (2); doing pranayama (1); looking into the Mother’s eyes (1); reading a letter of Sri Aurobindo (1); musing on one’s bed (1); lying almost unconscious on one’s bed (1); standing in front of a revered person (1); delivering a child (1); walking in a boulevard (1): a total kaleidoscope of situations. Although meditation may be a useful tool, only one was engaged in an organised meditation.

10. **Any signs announcing this happening, which was for everybody (one of) the most important moment(s) of their life?** Forerunner signs have not been identified, if any. In other words, any aspirant is a potential candidate for the crack of the shell which allows the psychic being to come out.

11. **More Indians or more foreigners?** Among the 12 people who spoke of their psychic bursting, 8 were foreigners and 4 were Indians. Among the 3 persons who did not lose the psychic contact since their childhood, 2 were Indians and 1 a foreigner. Among the 37 interviewees, 21 were foreigners and 16 were Indians.

V. **METHOD / PROCESS TO INITIATE THE BURSTING OF THE PSYCHIC BEING**

At the end of this study, is it possible to recommend any method / process to find one’s psychic being, to identify with it?

In *The Science of Living*, published in 1950, referring to the psychic being, the Mother defines some gradation in the knowledge of the psychic being, as four phases.

> It is... of capital importance:
> - to become conscious of its presence in us,
> - to concentrate on this presence,
> - until it becomes a living fact for us,
> - and we can identify ourselves with it.

*(CWM 12:4)*

Identification is the last phase.

*We do not reach it little by little, it is not through a little constant and regular effort. It is something which arrives suddenly.*

By which method can we experience it?

*In various times and places many methods have been prescribed for attaining this perception and ultimately achieving this identification. Some methods are psychological, some religious, some even mechanical. In reality, everyone has to find the one which suits him best, and if one has an ardent and steadfast aspiration, a persistent and dynamic will, one is sure to meet, in one way or
another – outwardly through reading and study, inwardly through concentration, meditation, revelation and experience – the help one needs to reach the goal.

(CWM 12:4).

In fact the Mother highlights two common psychological conditions, aspiration and will, and considers that the inner or outer tools are many and each one must find those tools which are the most appropriate.

V.1 Practice of concentration is a basic tool

Sri Aurobindo wrote to somebody:

The first necessity is the practice of concentration of your consciousness within yourself ... The concentration in the heart opens within and by following this inward opening and going deep one becomes aware of the soul or psychic being.

(SABCL No 23:517)

Another person received the following letter:

It is by concentration of whatever kind and the experiences it brings that one opens and becomes aware within and the new consciousness and nature begins to grow and come out.

(SABCL No 23:907)

During one of the evening gatherings with the disciples, the Mother gives one practical method:

For those who have the power of concentrating with images, they have one more facility. To sit in meditation before a closed door, as though it were a heavy door of bronze... and to pass to the other side; the whole concentration, the whole aspiration is gathered into a beam and pushes, pushes against this door, and pushes more and more with an increasing energy until all of a sudden it bursts open and one enters. It makes a very powerful impression. And so one is as though plunged into the light and then one has the full enjoyment of a sudden and radical change of consciousness, with an illumination that captures one entirely, and the feeling that one is becoming another person. This is a very concrete and very powerful way of entering into contact with one’s psychic being.

(CWM 7:268)

V.2 A strong craving for contact is a basic psychological feature

Among the prime conditions that help to discover one’s psychic, it seems that a strong yearning, a strong aspiration is a very great help. Among all the people who participated in the above survey and spoke of their sudden psychic experience, all of them had a strong aspiration, as if it sucked the psychic being out of its shell. It may also be said that it makes it grow and is a call to it which accelerates the moment when it bursts.

The Mother emphasizes this condition several times. For example, on 8 June 1955:

If one intensifies his aspiration, there is a moment when the pressure is so great and the intensity of the question so strong that something turns over in the consciousness.

(CWM No 7:193-94)

Also on 6 October, 1969:

To become conscious of the psychic being one must want to do so, make one’s mind as silent as possible, and enter deep into the heart of one’s being, beyond sensations and thoughts. One must form the habit of silent concentration and descent into the depths of one’s being.

(CWM 16:399)

V.3 Scrupulously following any psychic indication received is a basic step in that direction

According to Sri Aurobindo, in a letter to Dilip Kumar Roy:
This divine element in all living beings... grows in the consciousness by Godward experience, gaining strength every time there is a higher movement in us, and, finally, by the accumulation of these deeper and higher movements, there is developed a psychic individuality – that which we call usually the psychic being.

(SABCL 22:288).

In the same vein, an Aurovilian, speaking of the psychic being, has made the analogy with a muscle which develops with the practice. In the same manner, the psychic grows whenever there is a psychic movement.

This idea is corroborated by the Mother when she writes:

In order to strengthen the contact and aid, if possible, the development of the conscious psychic personality one should... take great care, each time one receives an indication from it, to follow it very scrupulously and sincerely

(CWM 16:22)

V.4 Any other process / method?

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have basically highlighted three methods: the practice of some concentration, a development of the aspiration, and an active obedience to indications received from the psychic.

One Ashramite has organised some one-week residential workshops, without leaving the campus. The focus on the psychic being was outstanding, the teaching included some practical exercises, the feeling of the psychic presence and the aspiration for it must have increased within each participant, as well as some knowledge to identify it. Unfortunately the return into the normal life is too abrupt, even aggressive. It may be advisable, during the second part of the workshop, to return for some hours into one’s social and working environment in order to learn how to keep the concentration on the psychic space in the midst of normal life.

EPILOGUE

A wider survey would certainly confirm but also perhaps contradict some of the remarks and statements given above. Some readers may like to share their own bursting experience, or may have reservations about certain statements, or may like to add some additional findings or comments. Whether this survey will be continued and this essay enlarged depends on the feedback received from readers. The writer of this study will be glad to answer each e-mail on the topic sent to alaing@auroville.org.in.

Alain Grandcolas spent 6 years in the Ashram and 2 years in Auroville during the early seventies. He rejoined Auroville in 2000, being now an executive of the Road Service.
The world is a great game of hide and seek in which the real hides behind the apparent, spirit behind matter. The apparent masquerades as real, the real is seen dimly as if it were an unsubstantial shadow. The grandeur of the visible universe and its laws enslaves men’s imaginations. “This is a mighty machine,” we cry, “but it moves of its own force and needs neither guide nor maker; for its motion is eternal.” Blinded by a half truth we fail to see that, instead of a machine without a maker, there is really only an existence and no machine. The Hindus have many images by which they seek to convey their knowledge of the relation between God and the world, but the idea of the machine does not figure largely among them. It is a spider and his web, a fire with many sparks, a pool of salt water in which every particle is penetrated by the salt. The world is a waking dream, an embodied vision, a mass of knowledge arranged in corporeal appearances expressing so many ideas which are each only a part of one unchanging truth. Everything becomes, nothing is made. Everything is put out from latency, nothing is brought into existence. Only that which was, can be, not that which was not. And that which is, cannot perish; it can only lose itself. All is eternal in the eternal spirit.

What was from of old? The spirit. What is alone? The spirit. What shall be for ever? The spirit. All that is in Space and Time, is He; and whatever there may be beyond Space and Time, that too is He. Why should we think so? Because of the eternal and invariable unity which gives permanence to the variability of the many. The sum of matter never changes by increase or diminution, although its component parts are continually shifting; so is it with the sum of energy in the world, so is it with the spirit. Matter is only so much mobile energy vibrating intensely into form. Energy is only so much spirit manifesting the motion that we call energy. Spirit is Force, Spirit Existence,—matter and energy are only motions in Spirit. Force and Existence made one in Bliss, Sachchidanandam, this is the eternal reality of things. But that Force is not motion, it is Knowledge or Idea. Knowledge is the source of motion, not motion of knowledge. The Spirit therefore is all, It is alone. Idea or Force, Existence, Bliss are only its trune manifestations, existence implying idea which is force, force or idea implying bliss.

The Spirit manifest as Intelligence is the basis of the world. Spirit as existence, Sat, is one; as Intelligence it multiplies itself without ceasing to be one. We see that tree and say “Here is a material thing”; but if we ask how the tree came into existence, we have to say, it grew or evolved out of the seed. But growth or evolution is only a term describing the sequence in a process. It does not explain the origin or account for the process itself. Why should the seed produce a tree and not some other form of existence? The answer is, because that is its nature. But why is that its nature? Why should it not be its nature to produce some other form of existence, or some other kind of tree? That is the law, is the answer. But why is it the law? The only answer is that it is so because it is so; that it happens, why no man can say. In reality when we speak of Law, we speak of an idea; when we speak of the nature of a thing, we speak of an idea. Nowhere can we lay our hands on an object, a visible force, a discernible momentum and say “Here is an entity called Law or Nature.” The seed evolves a tree because tree is the idea involved in the seed; it is a process of manifestation in form, not a creation.
If there were no insistent idea, we should have a world of chances and freaks, not a world of law—there would be no such idea as the nature of things, if there were not an originating and ordering intelligence manifesting a particular idea in forms. And the form varies, is born, perishes; the idea is eternal. The form is the manifestation or appearance, the idea is the truth. The form is phenomenon, the idea is reality.

Therefore in all things the Hindu thinker sees the stress of the hidden spirit. We see it as Prajna, the universal Intelligence, conscious in things unconscious, active in things inert.

The energy of Prajna is what the Europeans call Nature. The tree does not and cannot shape itself, the stress of the hidden Intelligence shapes it. He is in the seed of man and in that little particle of matter carries habit, character, types of emotion into the unborn child. Therefore heredity is true; but if Prajna were not concealed in the seed, heredity would be false, inexplicable, impossible. We see the same stress in the mind, heart, body of man. Because the hidden spirit urges himself on the body, stamps himself on it, expresses himself in it, the body expresses the individuality of the man, the developing and conscious idea or varying type which is myself; therefore no two faces, no two expressions, no two thumb impressions even are entirely alike; every part of the body in some way or other expresses the man. The stress of the spirit shows itself in the mind and heart; therefore men, families, nations have individuality, run into particular habits of thought and feeling, therefore also they are both alike and dissimilar. Therefore men act and react, not only physically but spiritually, intellectually, morally on each other, because there is one self in all creatures expressing itself in various idea and forms variously suitable to the idea. The stress of the hidden Spirit expresses itself again in events and the majestic course of the world. This is the Zeitgeist, this is the purpose that runs through the process of the centuries, the changes of the suns, this is that which makes evolution possible and provides it with a way, means and a goal. “This is He who from years sempiternal hath ordered perfectly all things.”

This is the teaching of the Vedanta as we have it in its oldest form in the Upanishads. Adwaita, Vishishtadwaita, Dwaita are merely various ways of looking at the relations of the One to the Many, and none of them has the right to monopolise the name Vedanta. Adwaita is true, because the Many are only manifestations of the One. Vishishtadwaita is true because ideas are eternal and having manifested, must have manifested before and will manifest again,—the Many are eternal in the One, only they are sometimes manifest and sometimes unmanifest. Dwaita is true, because although from one point of view the One and the Many are eternally and essentially the same, yet, from another, the idea in its manifestation is eternally different from the Intelligence in which it manifests. If Unity is eternal and unchangeable, duality is persistently recurrent. The Spirit is infinite, illimitable, eternal, and infinite, illimitable, eternal is its stress towards manifestation filling endless space with innumerable existences.

(CWSA 13:64)
During a recent seminar on Indian Psychology, held at Sri Aurobindo’s Ashram (Pondicherry, December 2004), several speakers have presented their work as an attempt to validate Indian psychology by means of Western psychology. One may wonder what would remain of it after this validating treatment, since the object as well as the methods of research are based on very different paradigms, one relying on objective measurement, the other on subjective experience, but if validation there must be, it will be more fruitful when it is mutually done and the process may as well go the other way around: Indian psychology validating the Western one. Only on the basis of a real sense of mutuality does a fruitful dialogue become possible. First of all we must examine the radical difference of paradigm between the two and have a clear awareness of it. Then we will examine Freud’s psychoanalysis as well as academic psychology and try to understand them from the point of view of Vedic psychology.

The Western mind has evolved a process of knowing that is founded on the analytical observation of what appears objectively to the mind and on processes of rational reasoning about them in order to discover their underlying laws. The Indian mind has evolved methods for going beyond appearances and touching directly the underlying Real, not by reasoning on its probable existence, but by experiencing and becoming it: ‘tat tvam asi’ (thou art That). The first implies a process of separation and objectivisation, the second a process of unifying awareness and identity. How can the first approach validate the second, which by its nature eludes so much its grasp? It is generally understood that what is subjective is not scientific because it cannot be validated objectively, quantitatively. But let’s look deeper into this claim: All the Western sciences have gradually and inexorably become more and more specialised and technical; in the process, they have developed complex protocols of research and specific concepts; as a result, only the specialists of the same field can understand each other and validate or invalidate each other’s findings. Those who are not specialists can only trust blindly or assume that the work has been done well and that they can trust its conclusions, conclusions that are never conclusive, as the Real always escapes the limiting net the mind throws on it in order to catch it. Therefore Science has become an object of belief, whose edicts are warranted by an establishment of the scientific truth, loaded with vested interests (position, influence, budgets, careers, money), as were the ancient religions, warranted by an establishment of priests with vested interests. But what would you call a system you have to believe in without any chance to know by yourself if it is true or not, whose language is incomprehensible except to the initiated and which condemns as heretic every approach which doesn’t submit to it? I would call it the establishment of ignorance, since it systematically dispossesses men of an access to knowledge they can experience by themselves: they can only become the initiated servants of a system which dominates them for the sake of an official Scientific Truth never reached for good but promising that here is the only way, and that one day, for sure, all will be known.

If we take the Indian approach to knowledge, the picture is totally different: the realities it explores can be experienced by each one who has the will to know them and, although they are subjective by nature, the same results will
always appear. If you train yourself to fix your thoughts when they come in, you will observe that they disappear; if you try to listen to the underlying silence then the mind will eventually experience a sense of quietude, silence itself will sometimes come and fill the mind. If you turn your emotions to some lovable presence of which the heart has the intuition, whatever the form – it can be Sri Krishna, Allah Jesus – the experience of something adorable, a Presence which exceeds the form and yet is perceived through the form, will be experienced in the heart. If you renounce the fruits of your works, you will experience that the will starts being liberated and becomes more quiet, deliberate in its movements and therefore more truly efficient. Each individual will have his own way and pace in arriving at some results, but the same results will tend to happen, invariably the same along these three lines. Therefore the validation is indefinitely accessible and can be repeated ad infinitum by every one who chooses to make the effort for it. The only conditions are the sincerity of the aspiration, for the result of our quest will depend on it, and perseverance. Spiritual experience does not disclose itself to a mere curiosity or intellectual enquiry, the researcher has to engage himself in it without reservation if he wants to enter it. This said, in the Indian way of knowing, there is no truth that you cannot verify by yourself. And the system is open to new experience, as well as to a combination of several lines of experience. It doesn’t ask from you blind belief but the first sign of knowledge, which is faith in the path you have chosen, sincerity in your motivations, and self-validation by experience. Then, on which side is superstition? On which side validation?

So it is with some confidence that we can turn now towards Indian psychology and its capacity to validate or invalidate Western psychology. Let’s take for instance Freud’s psychoanalysis. I leave aside for the moment the theory it has developed, to speak only on the clinical aspect, the relation between the therapist and the patient. We know that the therapist is supposed to be a silent listening presence, without any reactions or projections of his own, an attentive witness. Then it is observed that this attitude has a liberating effect: the patient finally finds the words to say some truth that was hidden in him and all that was oppressed, covered, denied is liberated through a process of spoken elucidation. Why, how does such a process take place? From the Indian point of view we recognize the enactment of the purusha/prakriti (soul and nature) relation. The silent purusha has a liberating effect on prakriti as soon as prakriti becomes aware of the presence of its silent awareness. We can therefore identify the analytical situation as a reflection of purusha/prakriti interaction, and understand how it works. The fact that the operating power is the word as carrying or revealing a covered truth will also be familiar to us: it is the word of truth vocally expressed, satyamantra, which destroys all that imprisons us, the instrument of conquest of the Vedic rishis over ignorance and suffering. So we can validate this part of Freud’s psychotherapy, because we can explain how it operates, independently of his theories on man and consciousness. Let’s note that the fact that it works within the psychoanalytical context doesn’t prove the validity of Freud’s theory, for the relation between purusha and prakriti is independent of any cultural or theoretical context, it is truly a universal reality of man’s consciousness. But it confirms and illustrates Indian knowledge about it as well as about the effective power of the word.

On the theoretical level, we will not be able to validate Freud’s interpretation of his practice, for here we observe the submission of reason to

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1 See the significant formulation of the rishis about the recovery of the radiant herds from the subconscious caves by Brihaspati: “Thou hast crushed with thy stroke the mouthless Dividers who mar our self-expression, thou hast cloven them asunder in the gated city”.  
2 I take Reason as a reflection of the Purusha’s consciousness in the operations of the mind (Prakriti).
the object of its study, of \textit{purusha to prakriti}: Freud presents himself as a scientific mind studying the Inconscient. Therefore he is Man defined as Reason, a Cartesian creature, putting the world at a distance as an object to be known. But at the end of his study, man is redefined as determined by blind impulses and desire: the object of study has therefore overcome the studying subject and redefined him in its proper terms. This overcoming of \textit{purusha by prakriti} will not be validated as knowledge by Indian psychology, because the knower has been trapped by the known. From this angle, it appears like a defeat of the knower. Borrowing the allegoric language of the Veda, we can make a suggestive parallel between Freud’s research and the legend of \textit{Sarama} and the lost cows: In some cave of the subconscient, the radiating herds of knowledge, which had risen on us with \textit{Usha}, the Dawn, have disappeared, robbed and hidden by what in us is obscure, doesn’t want to give itself, the miser, the trafficker, the robber. \textit{Sarama}, the intuition faculty, finds the cave, and presents herself as sent by \textit{Indra}. She is welcomed by the \textit{panis}, the traffickers, who propose to make a pact with \textit{Indra}. She then answers that \textit{Indra} (the illumined mind) and \textit{Bhraspati} (the soul-word) will destroy them and make them ‘vomit their own speech’. Then they propose to share with her their cows as with a sister. She answers that only \textit{Indra} knows about sister and brother (R.V., 10, 108). Then \textit{Indra}, \textit{Brihaspati} and the Rishis \textit{Angirasas}, with their words of truth, destroy the imprisoning caves and the radiant herds are recovered. Now, what happened when Freud, took the same path, some thousands of years later? I would allegorically suggest that he discovered the same cave, was welcomed by the same \textit{panis} and gave quite a different answer: “Oh my friends, I am so happy to find you! Thanks to you I now know the reality of man’s secret soul: the Inconscient is his ultimate Real, and I will go now all over the world repeating to all and each one “\textit{idam eva tvam asi}” (this ‘Id’ only you are). So did he and psychoanalysis became very successful and wealthy, teaching men that escape from impulse and desire is impossible, that one can only make it viable in one’s life.

In the field of Western applied psychology, dealing with \textit{Prakriti} rather than with the liberating power of \textit{Purusha}, we will find only the study of processes and habit of reactions to stimuli, the Self never appears. Psychological qualities such as sincerity, truthfulness, courage, aspiration, etc, which are so central in the process of self-becoming, are not even considered as worthy of being studied, for how can you measure them ‘objectively’? Man is seen not in his capacity to free himself from determinations but as defined by the sum of their interactions. This may lead to some form of enlightened manipulation, not to self-discovery. It seems even sometimes that its results are more immediately effective in the field of advertisement, propaganda and disinformation (if not of ‘special’ methods of interrogation) than in the field of education and self-becoming. This approach, when we adopt it in our search for knowledge, subtly changes our way of looking at human beings: if their psyche is only made of processes and conditioned reactions, then we will not see the person any more, but only processes and habits that a good psycho-technology can manipulate. But what do we become, in this process? Is our integrity not altered? Don’t we lose the capacity to be in relation with others in the truest possible way? The process of knowing is identified with the method it uses, and we can observe here also the absorption of \textit{purusha} by \textit{prakriti}: first we have a genuine enquiry of the mind, then the apparatus of science replacing the thinker, then mere technology replacing science, skilful manipulation replacing knowledge. Here also, Indian philosophy would find difficult to acknowledge the claim of Western psychology to be a true science, since it is unaware of the process by which it submits itself to the object of its knowing.

But the explanation using the \textit{purusha-prakriti} model is not enough, for if it states that the subject
can be absorbed by the object, it doesn’t explain how. To know better, with a more liberating knowledge, we will have to turn to the Veda, and follow Sri Aurobindo’s interpretation of it. Here, the Veda appears essentially as a book of psychological knowledge: its whole subject is about human condition and human becoming, about how we do become through work. This question is absent from Western psychology, by lack of concepts. How does the Veda present it? Being truly human requires an effort, it doesn’t come naturally as it would for lions to be lions. It has to be chosen and worked out with a conscious will. Indeed, we do practice the Vedic way of becoming every day as soon as we try to be human beings and adopt any learning process. For instance, if I want to become a pianist, I have to find a way to become what I am not (I may be potentially but not actually). The first condition is the flame of inner will, Agni, burning for it. That is why Agni comes first, in front – purohitam – of the human journey – yatra. In the fire of this will I will burn the energies of my mental, emotional, vital, physical nature and concentrate on music. Then what will invariably happen each time somebody does this? A new nature will be formed in him, he will become a musician, an emanation of music, or a musician will be part of him, or Music will be born in him. The Vedic seers would say: by sacrificing to music, we have called it down to establish its operations in our nature, a son of the god of music has been created in us. But this goes as far as the instrumental nature only is concerned, the integration of a musical capacity of expression. There is a deeper question and a deeper consequence: why do you want to become a musician? Is it because you heard the music of universal joy and you want to become an expressive instrument of it? Then you will grow more and more in this joy, and this joy will establish itself in your very being. Is it because you have the ambition of becoming a great musician, to be successful and admired and rich? Then you will become more and more a swollen ego and most probably lose your capacity of joy. In both case you will be a musician in your outward nature, but you will have invited in to you a very different being according to the path you have chosen or, in the symbolic language of the Veda, according to the god you have served. Here is the simple psychological key of all becomeings, which we practice every day without knowing it, in a diluted manner, half conscious of the process. Those who work for money sacrifice to money and they become full of it; those who work by ambition become beings of power and power possesses them. Those who work for an analytical knowledge offer their mind to it and this knowledge takes birth in them and establishes its operations in their nature.

Where could we find an alternative system which can describe as well as this one the experience of becoming, which is always valid, in all times and in all cultures, which offers at the same time a theory and a practice of conscious becoming? Because they had their two feet solidly planted in the human condition, the Vedic seers knew that there is something that opposes the ascent of man, a deep subconscient basis where our nature is also rooted, so that we have also in us the opposite of what we aspire to. That is why the human journey was described not only as a sacrifice but also as a battle. There are movements that make us vaster and greater, more luminous and free, there are others that restrain and obstruct, divide and tear; we have to put our conscious will on one side or the other, there is no escape from this freedom we are given to choose what we want to become. What we call yoga is only the concentration of this process of choice and offering by which the lower is offered to the higher, through the flame of will, the builder of all becomeings, so that the

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3 Sri Aurobindo has established his interpretation on the basis of spiritual experience, but has also double checked it: it had to be proven consistent in all contexts (the same word should keep the same meaning throughout the Veda and reveal the underlying structure of each hymn as well as the coherence of all the hymns taken together) and the meaning proposed had also to be justified on the philological level in order to be accepted. Cf. Sri Aurobindo, The Secret of the Veda.
higher can descend into the lower and raise it to a new birth.

According to Sri Aurobindo’s interpretation of the Veda (and the idea is also present in the Bhagavad Gita, showing a remarkable continuity of thought), there is no action which is not also a process of self-becoming, through yajña: in every action, karma, the doer offers his energies, through yajña, to some principle or state of consciousness or way of being, and embodies them in his nature. The scientist has no place to dwell where he can escape this law: Freud, by fixing his attention on and dedicating his life to the Inconscient, has invited it to become the dominant reality of man and has become blind to any other dimension. It is true that this was not his explicit purpose; still it is the result of his yajña. Nowadays, you have in Europe (particularly in France where the Freudian school is strong) an ideology of Desire, man perceived essentially as Desire, or as a ‘desiring machine’, with psychologists and educationists ‘listening to the child’s desire’, as a replacement for the soul⁴.

The techno-psychologist, on his side, by sacrificing to his beliefs in processes, conditionings and habits, has become a manipulator of the human instrumental nature rather than a knower of its deepest and truest reality. Therefore we see that the Vedic intimate approach of action as yajña offers not only a psychological clue, but an epistemological one about psychology. The fact that yajña cannot be measured in a quantified manner only shows the limits of what, nowadays, is called science in the field of Psychology. But this does not affect its own truth nor its validation by every one who chooses to explore it.

In this short essay I hope that I have shown that while some psychologists attempt to validate Indian knowledge of consciousness by Western criteria, Indian psychology can return the courtesy with some kind of effectivity because its knowledge of consciousness is deeper and wider, more self-aware, more solidly grounded in verified experience, thought out with more universally valid concepts. It doesn’t mean that Western psychology has no validity, it only puts it in its place as the detailed and useful study of partial aspects of the instrumental nature of man, without any capacity to formulate a unified theory and practice of man and consciousness, because it can plumb neither his deepest reality nor his highest possibilities. For this attempt, India seems to be in a better position when, after the effort of assimilating Western science, she does what she always did in the past, what Sri Aurobindo expected her to do: a creative synthesis of the elements she has received with her ancient knowledge, a new foundation for a new creation.

⁴ It is significant, from an Indian point of view, that Karl Marx has reduced man to be an expression of artha, interest, while Sigmund Freud reduced him to kama, desire. They start from different grounds but arrive at the same conclusion: dharma (one’s ideal law of becoming) and moksha (liberation in the knowledge of the Self) – the truest realities of man according to Indian culture – are but unreal and self-deceiving phenomena of consciousness. Indeed, if artha and kama are the ultimate realities of man, India has no place any more in the future of human destiny. But She alone has kept, clear in conception and living in the heart, the concept of yajña as the key to a human life made of endless progress and becoming.

Jean-Yves Lung, teacher-researcher in Auroville since 1993, he teaches French, History and Sanskrit. He is also involved in research in a new economy (see Ritam 2004, Vol.2, Issue1).
**Aurofilm - Research - Promotion of Good Cinema**

Gerard Carabin  
Surya (Catherine) Rimaux

**Introduction**

The importance Mother has given to film and the art of cinema is evident in the very fact that she has herself set up a regular film service in the Ashram. Warning about the possible negative aspects of cinema she concurrently elucidated the positive impact of films. In the book *On Education* we find insightful guidance on what to show, to whom, and how to read a film, being detached with it at the same time. As is evident from conversations from Mother’s Agenda, 1969, she encouraged the making of films based on important pieces of literature. She pointed out the difference between the purposes of the small and the big screens i.e. television and cinema respectively, and supported the project of setting up a film studio in Auroville.

The importance of what Mother said about films is more relevant in contemporary times than ever before. The sense that she made thus transcends time. As of today 80% of the films made all over the world are rather bad. This is because they are mainly aimed at a market plagued by commercialism and therefore entertainment oriented. The genre of alternative, serious, educational cinema would unfortunately be approaching an extinction of sorts. But no, thanks to a select minority of film artists who are waging a battle against the tide, our faith in good cinema still remains unshakeable.

Deriving its roots based on this spirit, Aurofilm came into existence in the early eighties under the umbrella of SAIIER, as the film department of the Auroville community. The cultural service offered by Aurofilm is thanks to the monthly budget sanctioned by the SAIIER. The emphasis is on research in to the art form that cinema is.

The work is carried out through two broad activities: film projection and the establishment of an Aurofilm Institute. We have dedicated ourselves to this service and have been doing it indomitably for more than two decades.

**Film projection**

It is our conviction that a regular exposure to good and varied cinema can help form taste, discernment, critical and analytical sense. It is a great opportunity to truly work on the four levels of consciousness – the mental, physical, vital and the spiritual – that the Integral Yoga aims at imbibing. Our film screenings have been organized on a weekly basis ever since Aurofilm came into being. The intent is always to have an eclectic mix of Indian and foreign films. Cinema has the possibility of encompassing the entire spectrum of arts (literary, performing and visual) and it is therefore a versatile and complete art form in the true sense of the word. It is a medium through which one can stimulate one’s imagination, narrate a true story or fictionalise. It is a tool through which one can bring to light issues related to society and thus make a difference. Education and information dissemination can also be promoted through this medium.

All kinds of audiographic or visual representations, any type of sound, acting and movement can be recorded and collated
through imaginative montage to create a work of cinematic value that enriches the experience of the viewer. We select films that are artistic, authentic, original, have a creative flavour, and this choice makes them worthy of watching and interpreting. Films should be uplifting, humanistic, depicting high values or at least, if not bringing solutions, the questioning that might lead to a way out of the ordinary that ‘life’ still contains and that is mostly otherwise shown in films.

They should bring knowledge about the way to live life learning from different cultures and societies. The films we program therefore range from recent, old, fiction, documentary, educational, classic, literary adaptations, mythological, musical, historical, biographic, pure fantasy, experimental and so on. The rule is to have the choicest of the films in the spirit mentioned above.

Needless to say this selection stems from the very diversity that is so much Auroville. Since we have no pressure of commercialism associated with our programme we have the freedom to choose meaningful and quality films from the world over. Education and not entertainment is the focus although educational and cultural material can be entertaining. Research on films, film directors and related personalities therefore becomes very important.

Come festival time and we are busy making a program, inviting guests and making a simple in-house brochure. Further, we have started making a series of video documentary films documenting this work. One at a time, we focus on the most celebrated Indian directors: Satyajit Ray, Shyam Benegal, Adoor Gopalakrishnan, Buddhadeb Dasgupta, Girish Kasaravalli and Shaji N. Karun. This is done in order to keep records of their work in the premises of the Auroville Film Institute, and to help promoting their great cinematic work that is so little known in India and elsewhere.

Initially 16mm was the format that we were using commonly. After the mid-eighties we have added the 35mm, the latter being the standard gauge all over the world for public film projections in movie halls. The projection room is equipped with a set of two professional cine-projectors. A huge screen is thus lit up in the Sri Aurobindo Auditorium in Bharat Nivas. We sometimes show films in video format also but this is exceptional and when the 35mm prints are not available. However we do not favour this option. As a matter of fact, being very ‘physical’: a succession of photographs in their original format and reproduced with a powerful light, the 35mm projection is still by far the best rendering for films. DVD/Video projection is virtual – a fast movement of electronic signals. The important aspect in procuring the 35 mm films from various sources is that it gives us the mandatory authorisation to project them in public.

We introduced the screenings in Auroville at communities like Aspiration and later on at Fraternity. However, since 1985 the Sri Aurobindo Auditorium at Bharat Nivas has
been the regular venue of the film screenings. The strength of the audience ranges from 200 to 400 depending on the time of the year and the curiosity that the film generates. 50 to 70 such film screenings are organised during one calendar year complemented by one or several film festivals and retrospectives. The auditorium being a multi-purpose cultural and educational venue is full of activities during the cultural seasons. We are flexible to co-ordinate with other programmes and open to change our schedule if it is inevitable. Yet this becomes very difficult as we depend on factors such as logistics and supply chain of film prints from various sources. This situation calls for the creation of an exclusive built environment for film projection in the future.

The films shown consist usually of 35 mm prints, rented out for an evening with a concessionary rate from different sources such as some Government of India film related bodies (within the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting) like the National Film Archive of India (NFAI, Pune), the National Film Development Corporation (NFDC, Mumbai), the Directorate of Film Festivals (Delhi), the Films Division and Children’s Film Society, India (Mumbai), sometimes a cultural organisation e.g. Sangeet Natak Academy or from private producers or distributors in Chennai, Mumbai and all over India. Also through an old time connection with the Embassy of France in New Delhi, we have access to their film library for French films as well as retrospectives or various film packages for festivals organised by this country. Some Aurovilian friends have contacts with the Italian Consulate and the European Commission and Auroville has sometimes been included in the circuit of the Italian and European Film Festivals in India. It is essential that we have such liaisons with institutions to bring about a rich variety in our work.

**Student training**

Aurofilm has embarked upon establishing a film institute in Auroville to provide the possibility to interested students, youth and adults to study the art of cinema as well as some of the technical jobs required for the production and making of films. As a small step in this endeavour apprenticeship is given to Aurovilians, outside students and researchers from Auroville’s bio-region, India and abroad on their school training period. Some French students have come for 5 to 6 months training under a fellowship from ARIGE, a regional funding association from France. We offer them our help and infrastructure to do their own research, project and/or study. At the same time, we appreciate their voluntary work with us which is a valuable work experience for them.

**Liaison and networking**

Having done a lot of research on Indian cinema in the recent years, we have now specialised in it. During this time we have noticed that the situation faced by some film directors of the different states of India is rather sad as they produce and direct excellent author films, in their own language, with no proper distribution in the country at large. Since these regional films do not follow the formula of a typical masala bollywood flick, they are not hailed as coming from India’s ‘film industry’. However such films are often awarded by their own state or they receive accolades at the national and international level. The best among these are selected in Indian film festivals and also have the opportunity of getting exposure around the world. It is a pity that such films are not distributed in India. Our focus is on such films and their directors and then it is a challenge to trace the English subtitled prints. We are cut out to this task and we promote such films in Auroville through regular film shows or our yearly film festivals.
Moreover the way the Indian film industry functions it requires one to be good at public relations although this is far from our modus operandi. Having said that we have seen rather good results in the way we schedule our programme whenever we could attend the yearly international festivals held in India. The annual IFFI, Goa and IFFK, Trivandrum are the most important. There, we are able to meet producers, film directors and distributors. With a regular participation of Aurofilm in these events, not only our work of promoting art films in Auroville and South India is known and acknowledged, but various artists and personalities get to be aware of the existence of such a unique project like Auroville.

**Film workshops and classes**

We have some basic film shooting and editing equipment at our disposal and organise hands-on film workshops whenever it is possible. We also produce short fiction and documentary films (non-commercial), in 16mm film and digital video (DV). The film school also wants to develop an Auroville film crew capable of handling film projects related to Auroville and its development. For the functioning of the institute’s activities, we do separate fund-raising as there is no Auroville budget for it so far. It is also not a commercial activity. However, we usually get yearly a budget from SAIIER to produce a short video film and/or organise a film workshop and festival as well as to expand or update some of our equipment. For all these activities, we still need some more equipment like a semi-professional video camera and a tripod, some studio projectors and other smaller miscellaneous items. We also try to organise some classes of introduction to cinema for the young people of the Auroville schools or the bio-region. These classes aim at presenting the artistic and technical aspects of cinema, as we have seen that the youth are usually exposed to very ordinary or even rather vulgar film productions. Through these classes, we hope they discover not only how cinema is born and functions, but also how it can be a powerful medium for the spreading of knowledge, arts, and creative expressions—when used consciously—how it can be a wonderful tool for understanding people and human relations, eventually to change for progress.

**Architectural design proposal for an Auroville Cinémathèque**

It is our vision to build in Auroville a Cinémathèque which, apart from a cinema hall for public viewing, will also include a film archive. This complex will serve as a venue for the promotion of cinematic work. It will be a tool to study and research films as it will also be an opportunity to share experiences, beauty and ideals through cinematic expressions. Cinema being a link between performing and visual arts, our idea is to place it in the vicinity of the Centre of Research in the Performing Art (CRIPA) and the future Centre of Research in Visual Arts (CRIVA).

A young Indian architect, Vishal has been working with us on project brief and concept design drawings. For approval and funding requirements we have presented it to SAIIER, the chief architect of Auroville Roger Anger, and l’Avenir d’Auroville. We are now in the process of examining the possibilities of launching such a big project, especially in terms of financing, planning and organisation.

**Latest event - ‘Roll up the reel!’ Cinema in Auroville – An exhibition**

We felt the need to make the Auroville community aware about what goes on behind the scenes of an otherwise deliberately low profile Aurofilm. The Sri Aurobindo Auditorium being under renovation prior to the 40th anniversary of Auroville, we took it as an opportunity to put up together
an exhibition on cinema in Auroville, what was originally an idea of Valentine, a young French trainee. Titled “Roll up the Reel!” it was a presentation of our work from all these years through text, photographs and some of the film material and equipment used for film shooting or projection. The venue for this three-week exhibition in the cusp of November and December 2007 was Gallery Square Circle, Kala Kendra at Bharat Nivas. Our film-making oeuvre over the years consists of about 90 short films in the genre of fiction, documentary and expression. We showed 6 such short videos over a 70 minute session constantly during the exhibition.

Malayalam film festival in February 2008

Every year, Aurofilm organises an Indian Film Festival. Last time it took place in February 2008, taking advantage of the reopening of the Sri Aurobindo Auditorium at that time and the festivities around the 40th anniversary of Auroville. We had chosen to highlight the cinema of Kerala as it stands for films that are invariably authentic and of excellent quality. It was attended by two prominent invitees from the Indian film world: Mr. P. K. Nair, former director and curator of the National Film Archive of India, and Mr. Devan Nair, an award winning Malayalam film director, both of them hailing from Kerala. Their presence greatly enriched the program and the interaction with the audience had been of the highest quality. The program was composed of six films – including a feature film and the latest documentary by renowned film director Adoor Gopalakrishnan.

Epilogue

What we do stems from a deep interest in cinema as a complete art form. This is the value for which we stand for. Our focus remains on understanding the role played by the world consciousness that inspires film artists to create the kind of films that they do and vice-versa: what role these films play on the collective consciousness of mankind. For us this is not work but consecration. With this zeal to live the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo and Mother as the fulcrum of our existence we are hopeful to make the show go on.

Gerard Carabin – in Auroville since 1973; started Aurofilm in the early 1980’s;
Surya (Catherine) Rimaux – joined Auroville in 1987 and worked at Aurofilm ever since.