

Understanding Death & Beyond

**Part 1: Phenomena of Existence
Beyond the Gross Physical Body**

Session 3: Reports of Observers

**Related Paranormal Phenomena
Perceivable through Scientific Means**

by

Ven Kumāra Bhikkhu

for

Closer-to-Reality Conference (C2RC) 2008

An attempt to connect real life experiences
with Buddhist scriptural understanding

27-29 December, 2008

Kuala Lumpur
MALAYSIA

Seeing Paranormal Auras with Technology

To raise new questions, new possibilities, to regard old problems from a new angle requires creative imagination and marks real advances in science.

Albert Einstein

As some of you may already know, orthodox science tends to be dismissive of ideas that do not fit into its officially recognised set of knowledge. In the true spirit of scepticism—that is, the disbelief in any claims of ultimate knowledge—this tendency is to be regarded as unscientific.

To have a more accurate grasp of reality, we make our understanding go by reality, rather than trying to make reality go by our understanding. It is important for us to be mindful of any attachment that we have over our views, lest we become dismissive of anything that does not fit into our current *tentative* frame of reference. By admitting that there is much more that we do not know, we open the doors of our mind to “new questions, new possibilities”.

In preparing for this paper, I realise that what I must present must depart from the rigid, dogmatic brand of science. Yet I realise that I cannot go too far, such that many people may be unwilling to still regard it as science. So, what I shall present will be on ‘the fringe’ of science. It is a brand of science that is independent, unrestricted to officialdom, and ever willing to change its understanding in its effort to understand reality.

Paranormal phenomena of existence beyond the gross physical body are things that many people find interesting to talk about. Since time immemorial, people from vastly separated cultures in the world have traditionally accepted such phenomena as true and not needing any further proof.

However, beginning sometime in the 20th century, traditional, orthodox western science began to assert its superiority in determining what is true and real and what is not, largely based upon a 17th-century Newtonian definition of the universe, as being made up of solid objects *only*.¹ Many people who have been educated according to such Newtonian ideas have been persuaded to dismiss paranormal phenomena as unscientific, and therefore nonsense. Some others, though not inclined to be dismissive, have also been influenced to doubt them. Nonetheless, many more have not been influenced, particularly those who have direct knowledge of paranormal phenomena.

At any rate, I believe that many, if not all, of them would be interested if it is possible to make use of modern technology to allow everyone to perceive such phenomena for themselves, albeit indirectly. Certainly, having more solid, empirical evidence of any paranormal phenomenon would persuade a greater acceptance of it. This paper shall attempt to provide just that in the area of existence beyond the gross physical body.

Now, although we can regard cameras as a technological means, I am not going to make my case merely by showing you pictures of ghostly entities that are captured with analogue cameras. Nor am I doing that by showing pictures of orbs² that are captured with digital cameras. Rather, I shall show how such phenomena can be seen through two forms of technology that are able to present the “unseen” in a more controlled environment and

1 Although Albert Einstein’s Special Theory of Relativity has demolished the Newtonian world view in 1905, it has not reached mass education.

2 Orbs captured with still cameras under a controlled fashion and those captured on video show that at least some of them appear to have intelligence. However, I do not know of any means to prove or disprove that they are entities of departed human beings. So, I must leave them out.

repeatable fashion. I shall show this through Kirlian Photography and Polycontrast Interference Photography (PIP).

Before I go on, I must confess that I am not a scientist. I was not even in the science stream in school. I have never written a scientific paper and this is definitely not one. So, please forgive me for not going into technical details that I am not knowledgeable in.

Kirlian Photography

In 1939, Semyon Davidovich Kirlian, a Russian, while working as an electrician, happened to notice harmless electric discharge occurring between the electrode of a high-voltage machine and human skin, and wondered if he could photograph it.³ Over the next ten years he and his wife, Valentina, developed and improved the apparatus for what we now call “Kirlian photography”. The two spent years studying this phenomenon together; and in 1961, they published their results in a Russian academic journal^{4,5}

Aura Photography Not Kirlian Photography

Before I go further into this, I think we need to bypass a potential confusion. I understand that many people—at least in Malaysia—are mixing up Kirlian photography and aura photography. So, let me clear this up first.

Here are some examples of aura photography or, more accurately, aura *simulation* photography.⁶



3 I am being carefully general here as there are variant stories on how this began.

4 S.D. Kirlian and V. Kirlian, "Photography and Visual Observation by Means of High-Frequency Currents," *Journal of Scientific and Applied Photography*, Vol. 6 No. 6.

5 Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Semyon_Kirlian (4 April 2008)

6 Source: <http://dailyalochona.blogspot.com/2008/01/vinnomot-kirlian-aura-photography.html> (4 April 2008)

As I have learnt, this form of photography does not actually capture auras, but merely simulate how one's aura *may* look like⁷ based on galvanic skin resistance.⁸ I am showing this here to clear up a widespread confusion between this and the real Kirlian photography.

Real Kirlian Photography

Now let us look at some examples of Kirlian photography.



Hand prints with Kirlian photography⁹



Electro-photonic Kirlian glow around a human fingertip, viewed from underneath, through a semi-transparent glass electrode that provided electrical field excitation. Recorded using GDV camera¹⁰

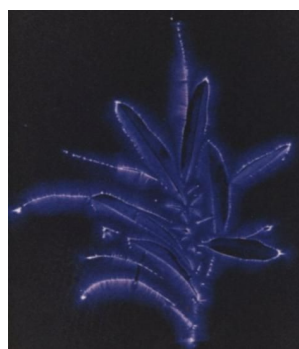
There are many ways to capture the Kirlian effect based on the original idea, and it is still being refined. Here we see images produced by a variety of ways. They can look quite different, but it should be easy to make a distinction between these and the “aura photography” shown earlier. The difference is quite great.



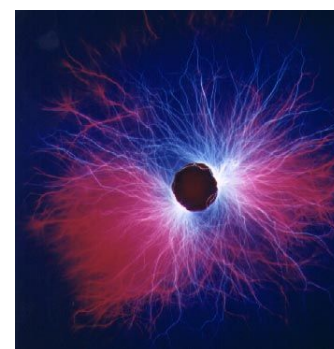
Peppers & Artichoke¹¹



Flower¹²



Plant¹³



Nutritional supplement¹⁴

Kirlian photography is variously called “electrography”, “electrophotography” and “corona discharge photography”. *Corona discharge*¹⁵ refers to what we can see in the photographs as fuzzy colours that seem to radiate from the subject. This effect, which is now popularly called “Kirlian effect”, is created by using high-voltage, high-frequency, low-current electricity. The voltage used ranges from 15,000 to 100,000 volts, depending on the size and conductivity of the subject. The applied current is only at a few micro-amperes so that it can be relatively safe to the living subject.¹⁶

7 You can find web-based companies selling “aura simulation (or emulation) cameras”. E.g., in <http://cebunet.com/kirlian/aurasim.htm>, it says, “**Aura simulation photography** is a great business opportunity. Aura cameras are set up at festivals, conventions, and other places where people gather. Operators typically charge \$15-\$30 per photo. **People wait in line** to have their aura simulation photo taken!” [Note: Boldface emphasis is original.]

8 A clear, concise explanation is found in this article: *Kirlian effect - the principle, tricks, technology and the truth* by Dr Tom J. Chalko, MSc, PhD. <http://www.thiaouba.com/kiref.htm>

9 Source: <http://www.biofieldsciences.com/biofieldsciences.com/KIRLIAN.htm> (4 April 2008)

10 Source: http://kirlianresearch.com/kirlian_principle.html (20 April 2008)

11 Source: <http://www.biofieldsciences.com/biofieldsciences.com/KIRLIAN.htm> (4 April 2008)

12 Ibid.

13 Source: <http://www.imagesco.com/articles/kirlian/kirlian-photography-device.html> (27 April 2008)

14 Source: <http://www.kirlian.org/crystals.htm> (24 April 2008)

15 An electrical discharge accompanied by ionization of surrounding atmosphere (WordWeb 5)

16 For further details on Kirlian photography, please refer to kirlianresearch.com/kirlian_principle.html or

Does Kirlian Photography Capture Auras?

All this is well with people at large, except when Semyon Kirlian asserted that this method showed proof of a human energy field (HEF) or paranormal human aura—a body of some kind beyond the gross physical body.

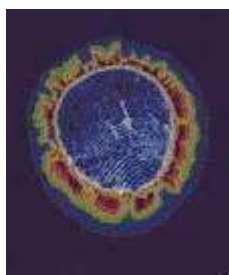
So, does Kirlian photography show HEFs or auras, or at least an indirect proof of it? There is expected disagreement on this. Those who insist that there is no such thing as an aura would insist that it is not, and ignore it or come up with explanations to dismiss it. On the other hand, those who insist that there is such thing as an aura would be more eager to take the Kirlian effect as proof, and perhaps come up with explanations to debunk the dismissive explanations of the other camp.

An objective person however may think, “Why not attempt to make a Kirlian image of a whole human being, rather than of just fingertips and palms?” Surely this would provide a more convincing piece of evidence. However, to create a coronal discharge from a whole human body, you would require the power of about 10 million volts.¹⁷ That in itself is not impossible. You just need a rather huge Tesla coil¹⁸ that can generate that kind of power. The problem is getting a volunteer who would do *anything* for you!

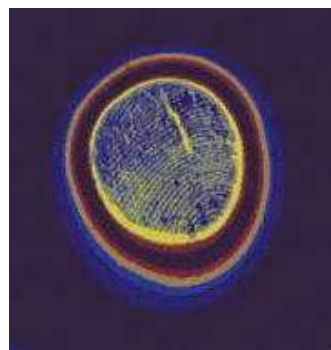
So, since it is a bit difficult to carry out this potentially electrifying and gruesome experiment, we have to rely on other means to deduce some kind of paranormal phenomena that is related to but beyond the gross physical body. Fortunately, there are.

Form Beyond the Gross Physical Form?

Some experiments with Kirlian photography do suggest that it can capture some kind of form beyond the gross physical form. Here are some examples.



Fingertip



Same fingertip after Reiki healing¹⁹

Besides energy healing, such as Reiki, similar effects have also been reported with acupuncture²⁰ and chiropractic²¹.

The Kirlian effect also changes according to the thoughts of human subjects, as these images suggest.

www.kirlian.org/kirlian.htm; or search the Internet for on-line videos on “Kirlian Photography”. You can find a short history of it here www.gdvcamera.com/kratkie-grv-novosti/kratkie-novosti/john-iovine.html

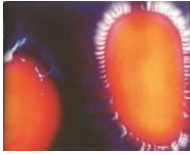
17 Source: <http://cebunet.com/kirlian/photos.htm> (4 April 2008)

18 A step-up transformer with an air core; used to produce high voltages at high frequencies (WordWeb 5)

19 Source: <http://www.kirlian.org/kirlian.htm> (20 April 2008) This is a refined form of Kirlian photography called Gas Discharge Visualisation (GDV) invented by Dr Konstatin Korotkov (www.korotkov.org), another Russian. With the help of Eastern knowledge on meridians, which ends at fingertips, this method provides a far more complete health diagnosis of the body compared to classic Kirlian.

20 Source: <http://www.kirlian.org/kirlian2.htm> (24 April 2008)

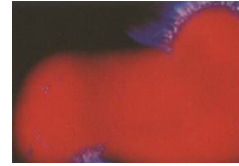
21 Michael Courtney, DC. “Chiropractic and Kirlian Photography” *Dynamic Chiropractic*, January 27, 1997, (Reproduced here: www.experiencefestival.com/a/Kirlian_Photography/id/3823)



A couple instructed to think unpleasant thoughts toward each other



The same couple thinking loving thought



The same couple kissing²²

The above experiments suggest that the colours captured indicate the existence of **some kind of subtle materiality or form (rūpa) beyond the gross physical body** and that this kind of form is **related to one's mental and physical state**. So, does this suggest that Kirlian photography can capture paranormal auras or energy fields, or at least something related to them? It would still be difficult to say so convincingly, were it not for one thing: the “phantom leaf” effect.

The “Phantom Leaf” Effect

A stronger evidence of aura with Kirlian Photography is not captured with a human subject, but that of a plant. This is by far the most dramatic and most well known of all experiments with Kirlian photography.

Let me show you here probably the most well-known set of photographs demonstrating the “phantom leaf” effect.



Kirlian photograph of leaves with corona discharge around the leaves



After the leaves were torn off the stem, another photograph was taken of only the stem.²³

Considering the usual examples of Kirlian photography, we would ordinarily expect to find in the subsequent photograph only the stem with a minor corona discharge around it. Yet the corona discharge extended to where the leaves were, producing a “ghost” image of them.

Here is another photograph demonstrating the “phantom leaf” effect.

²² Source: <http://www.kirlian.org/kirlian2.htm> (24 April 2008) It has been often observed that Kirlian photographs of fingertips of people who are in a state of heightened emotions show up as red blotches that obscures the fingerprint.

²³ Source: <http://www.positivehealth.com/article-view.php?articleid=512> (4 February 2008)



A portion of the leave on the right was cut before the photograph was taken; yet a faint image of that cut portion can still be seen.²⁴

I would like to point out that this effect is not easy to replicate, as there are various hard-to-control factors that may prevent a successful replication.²⁵ One of the conditions is that the subject must be very fresh and quickly photographed after the cutting, because the effect diminishes as time passes. Nonetheless, despite the difficulty, the “phantom leaf” effect has been demonstrated enough times by different people in different countries to prove its existence,²⁶ and it suggests that a subtle energy body exists even after the physical body is destroyed, and that body can be made visible with Kirlian photography.

For the purpose of this conference, it would be proper to ask: Does the same occur for human beings? Is it possible to observe a “phantom finger” or “phantom limb” effect using Kirlian photography? Considering the experiments mentioned above, we can speculate that it is possible. If we must be absolutely sure, we would need to get a human subject, have part of his body cut off, and then quickly subject him to an electrifying experience, that is, high-voltage electrical photography. Any volunteers? I need to add that—to qualify this as good science—we need to repeat it.

As it would be somewhat difficult to have a Kirlian photograph of a newly amputated, we can only speculate that if this can be true for plant life, why should it not be true for human beings?

Fortunately for those who must be able to see to believe, a newer technology—developed by someone who is also an expert in Kirlian photography—is able to show a “phantom limb” effect when photographing a not-so-new amputee.

²⁴ Source: <http://users.mrbean.net.au/~wlast/bioenergies.html> (29 April 2008)

²⁵ Interestingly, the “phantom leaf” effect cannot be replicated on leaves taken from plants grown on artificial chemical fertilizer. This may mean that food grown on such fertilizer is extremely low in energy, thus may be not healthful for consumption. Kirlian photographs of processed food and microwaved food also suggest highly depleted energy compared to fresh, natural food.

²⁶ James Crenshaw. *Science Proves Psychic Healing* (www.silvamethod.com/rp/docs/SPPH_crenshaw.pdf)

Polycontrast Interference Photography (PIP)

Let me introduce to you a technology invented by Dr Harry Oldfield, a British scientist who is also a renowned expert in Kirlian photography. He seems to love pushing the boundaries of science. “For Harry, ‘not possible’ generally translates as ‘let’s have a look’.”²⁷

Let me quote what is found in his website:

Harry thought that the human energy field might possibly interfere with photons - ‘energy packets’ of light - or even what might be called ‘subtle energy photons’ in some way. He decided that ambient (surrounding) light would be interfered with by the field both when the incident ray travelled towards the object and when the reflected ray bounced off the object. In the main, the ‘object’ of his interest was human beings.

He devised a computer programme which would analyse the different light intensities being reflected from the person or object being scanned. This system is at the same time deceptively simple and enormously accurate in the hands of people who know both how to operate it and what they are looking at. (See more here: www.electrocrystal.com/pip.html)

This system became known as Polycontrast Interference Photography or PIP.

The “Mannequin Effect”

Before I show you the “phantom limb” effect, let me try to convince you of this technology as an *energy field imaging system*. Let me first show you the “Mannequin Effect”, which reveals the normal play of light on a human body, and the impact of a healer’s energy field with and without a mannequin.²⁸



PIP set up



White background



Mannequin with minor light interference



Mannequin off-centre

²⁷ <http://www.electrocrystal.com/background.html> (4 February 2008)

²⁸ Source: *Polycontrast Interference Photography (PIP) Energy Field Video Imaging System Getting Started Handbook* available at <http://www.item-bioenergy.com/pip/PIPMannual.pdf> (4 April 2008)



Woman (energy healer) with major light interference

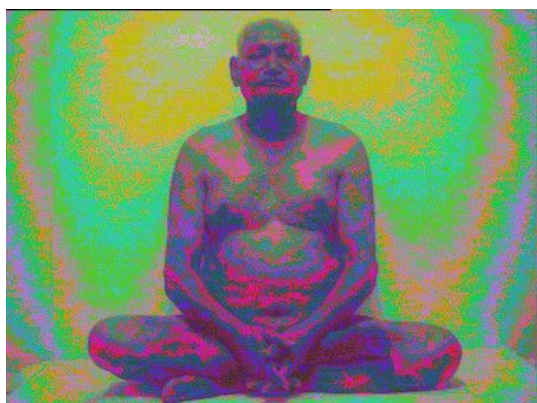


Mannequin and Woman

Notice that the woman has black hair and is wearing a black shirt, while the mannequin is fairish all over. Under normal light reflection, we would expect less light to bounce off the woman. Yet, the opposite occurs. This effect demonstrates that the light interference shown through PIP is not simply caused by the usual light we see. There is clearly something more than that. In the case of this woman, there is a kind of light around her that is not normally perceived by the naked eye. This could be related to what clairvoyants call the human energy field or aura.

More Examples of PIP Experiments

Let me show you a few more examples of PIP experiments²⁹ showing that it is capable of translating light associated with human energy fields.



Man begins yoga practice



After some time, he bends down leaving white light where his head was.



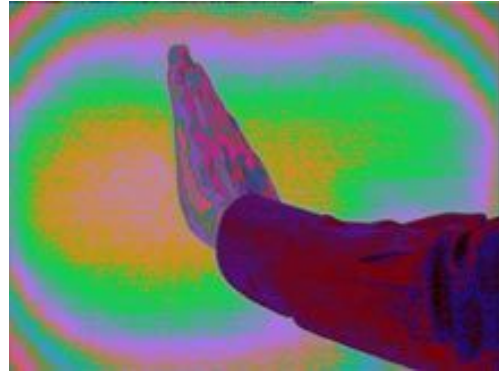
Man sitting



As he is treated by two energy healers, white colour descends from above the head and the base chakra shows definite change.³⁰

²⁹ Source: <http://www.item-bioenergy.com/pip/index.html> (4 February 2008)

³⁰ Primarily created as a gentle, non-invasive method of diagnosis, PIP provides convincing visual feedback to people seeking any form of health treatment.



Energy healer wills energy from hands

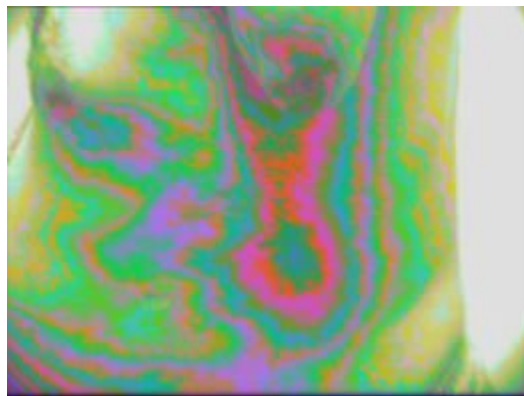
Considering that anything that can be captured by an imaging system can *only* be some kind of form (rūpa), then these examples clearly suggest that PIP is capable of making subtle form or materiality visible to the majority of us, the grossly deprived non-clairvoyants.

In the words of Dr Harry Oldfield,

We believe that we are showing up an energy interaction with light, which is giving us an insight into the energy counter-part, the etheric template on which our physical molecules are strung. On average, every atom in the human body is replaced every seven to nine years. Think of your body not as a physical structure but as a moving fountain of molecules that are constantly being replaced. So what keeps them a coherent recognisable form? We believe it to be an organising template of energy.³¹

The “Phantom Limb” Effect

As with Kirlian photography, it is more exciting to see something that “should not” be there —according to the Newtonian world view. So, enter the “phantom limb” effect.



Amputated left arm showing a reddish form where the rest of the arm used to be.³²

Since this form, which has been made visible with PIP, is not part of a gross physical body, it implies that **a human body consists of more than just the gross physical body** that is more apparent to us. It suggests **a subtle body** as what clairvoyants claim to see.

This imaging of a phantom limb also helps to explain why some amputees report feeling pain in a limb that has been removed. This “phantom pain” in turn also suggests that **the subtle body is not separate from the human body, but part of it.**

³¹ <http://www.electrocrystal.com/pip.html> (4 February 2008)

³² Source: <http://www.electrocrystal.com/PIPBrochure.pdf> (4 February 2008)

Conclusion

So there you have it: the phenomenon of existence beyond the gross physical body as perceivable through scientific means. You have been shown instances of this phenomenon through two forms of technology: Kirlian Photography and Polycontrast Interference Photography.

There are other ways to indirectly prove human existence beyond the gross physical body, such as through measuring vibrations³³, but I choose to present only visual ones here, as they are easier for me to show, besides the fact that they are more convincing to most people.

Epilogue

Taking upon the open spirit of scientific inquiry, we may wonder if there may be more to this. Since for a long time human technology had not been able to capture the image of such phenomena, and yet now it can, who knows, as such technology is further improved upon, we may be able to see much more—perhaps as much as clairvoyants can see.



*The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious.
It is the source of all true art and science.*
Albert Einstein

Note: I'd be happy to receive any new information on this subject. You can contact me at [kumara.bhikkhu@g\(REMOVETHIS\)mail.com](mailto:kumara.bhikkhu@g(REMOVETHIS)mail.com).

[Please remove the added bit (REMOVETHIS) to email successfully. This is meant for eluding spammers.]

³³ Such and many other experiments on the paranormal, including those done with Kirlian photography, were led by Dr Thelma Moss, head of the Parapsychology Department in University of California, Los Angeles, in the 1970s.