

# AUROVILLE TODAY

March 1994, Number Sixty-Two

## Surrender, embrace, heal

One of the main impulses behind the occasional seminars which the community organizes is to allow the Aurovilians to take breath, to evaluate where they are and, if necessary, rededicate themselves to their spiritual roots.

The most recent such seminar, which took place over two days in early February, served not only as an opportunity for collective introspection, but also as a preparation for the international seminar which took place at the end of the month. Entitled 'Auroville at the Crossroads: the Challenge of the Charter', it used the image of the crossroads, of a point of choice, as a means of focussing us upon where we stand now, both individually and collectively, in relation to one of Mother's key route-maps of the future: the Auroville Charter.

The format of the seminar, which, appropriately, was held in 'Transition' school, involved a mixture of individual sharing, small group work and plenary sessions. The first day, for example, which concentrated upon individual crossroads, began with a short dramatized dialogue between Anu and Joy—'Auroville,' 'Auro will?' 'Auro WILL!'—invoking the inevitability of Auroville's manifestation. Individual sharing in small groups and feedback to the larger group culminated in a late afternoon concentration centred upon two questions: 'What is my next step as an individual?' and 'What kind of Auroville would assist me in making that step?'. The day ended with a reading of Mother's invitation to the 'Great Adventure'.

On the morning of the second day—on which the focus moved to the collective as a whole—participants entering the Hall passed a beautiful kolam, created by Meenakshi, depicting the planets and



Photos above and below:

Some moments from the seminar

astrological conjunctions, and then poured earth from their different communities into a brass pot in the centre of the Hall. This evocation of Auroville's Inauguration in 1968 was reinforced by hearing Mother read the Charter and by a few Aurovilians, present on that day, recalling what the experience had meant for them. We then broke up into groups on the basis of which phrase of the Charter people wanted to work with—one group resisting this 'dismantling' to concentrate upon the Charter as a whole. After lunch, each group gave suggestions for the implementation of 'their' phrase of the Charter, and the last session began with a concentration upon the question, 'What can you, as an individual, offer to the collective in the coming year?' which led to simple but moving expressions of individual aspirations. The seminar concluded with us singing the Auroville mantra together—and a souvenir T-shirt distribution outside the door!

Thus, the bare bones... But the real life of the seminar sparked in spontaneous exchanges between Aurovilians who may not have sat together for many years, in the intensity of the concentrations, and in mo-

ments of deep individual honesty and openness which reverberated, like a wave of recognition and release, through everybody in the hall. One such moment occurred when a long-term Aurovilian, much involved in the struggle against the Sri Aurobindo Society in the past, while reaffirming his belief in the correctness of his stand nevertheless apologized to those Aurovilians who, not taking the majority line, had been hurt or scarred by actions which were not in the Auroville spirit.

Given the diversity of the participants, it was inevitable that the feedback sessions would throw out an equal diversity of material (even the image of the crossroads as being appropriate for our individual and collective experience was questioned). Proposals for individual and collective action to energize the Charter ranged from the most down-to-earth to the most visionary. The former included: form small ongoing groups to discuss and explore the Integral Yoga together, more seminars and opportunities for collective meeting and 'being', create housing for the old and handicapped in many Auroville communities, build a language laboratory to improve the level of inter-cultural communication, and draw up an Auroville/bioregional educational directory to indicate all the possibilities for 'unending education' in the community and surrounding area. One of the most interesting of the 'visionary' proposals involved reintroducing Mother's concept of Auroville as a 'universal city', a city which has passed beyond national identities and is in service to the world, for which the present Auroville Foundation might serve as a kind of springboard.

But much of the feedback and exchanges related more to a certain quality of being, of aspiration, and served as a kind of retuning of our receivers to the shared wavelength of our deepest hopes and ideals. 'Honour the experiences of others', 'Let's learn to unload the past', 'Constantly welcome the new', 'Include bhakti and jnana yoga as

The seminar season is upon us! In this issue of AUROVILLE TODAY we highlight moments from the internal seminar in early February when Aurovilians came together to examine where they stand—both individually and collectively—in relationship to the Charter; an occasion which was partly a preparation for the International UNESCO-sponsored seminar at the end of the month which we will be covering in our next issue.

We also provide an update on the land purchase situation, we feature a new unit and a new housing initiative for young Aurovilians, we welcome back Heidi Watts who reappraises Auroville education one year on, we look back upon a 'Peace Trees' experience with two young Aurovilians, and we present a portrait of an Aurovilian who teaches Kalaripayat. What is Kalaripayat? Read on...

other aspect of our path', 'Less karma, more karma yoga', 'More joy and laughter', 'Let's build our collective self-discipline from within', 'Express your opinion, but surrender the result', and, unanswerably, 'No alternative—higher awareness now!'

Beyond the different emphases, however, certain affirmations kept resurfacing. Surrender, embrace, heal. Surrender, become a true servitor of the Divine Consciousness, for only then can the Charter become truly operative. Embrace diversity, the seemingly different paths of different individuals, in the faith that they are an enriching of the collective body and essential components in an integral transformation. And heal the hurts, the scars and traumas of the past which have locked up so much of our individual and collective energy, by releasing our positions and acknowledging that all of us have an equal right to participate in Mother's experiment.

Highlights? Of Pierre's image of us all 'drilling' for transformation—but of us getting distracted by the different shapes and colours of our different drilling rigs!, of Meenakshi's kolam, of the unveiling of the compressed earth block—the foundation stone for the next collective building—which was pressed from the earth of different communities represented at the

(continued on next page)





# Auroville Education Revisited

About one year ago, AUROVILLE TODAY (# 51) published an interview with Heidi Watts, a teacher of teachers, connected to the Antioch New England graduate school in Keene, New Hampshire, USA. She came to share her insights and experience with the Aurovilian teachers, and gained in the process an appreciation of Auroville. This year she came back, and we took the opportunity to ask her how it was to re-visit Auroville.

**H**eidi: (laughing) Well, I came in the Christmas holiday period and that was kind of cruel to the teachers. But they responded very well and I have been received warmly.

This year I have been able to visit more schools than during my first visit to Auroville, and I have given two series of workshops: one at New Creation for up to 30 teachers from New Creation, Isaiambalam and the Kuilapalayam Trust school, the other for the teachers of Last School, Transition and the Kindergarten, where also a few other people joined. And I had numerous conferences with teachers, individually or with small groups around all different kinds of topics.

It is an advantage to come back and visit the same schools and talk again to the same teachers. There seems to be an increasing stability in the schools. For example, at the

Kindergarten and Transition a core of teachers has been formed who have been there for a while and are really dedicated and are working together. Last School too is developing in this direction. I also had the opportunity to visit Mirramukhi\* for a few hours. There is a lovely atmosphere there; a primary emphasis on the sense and the heart of things, striving for calmness and beauty and regularity. But as I don't speak French I couldn't follow the education itself. It is quite nice that in a small township like Auroville different schools can develop, sharing their experience while still retaining a separate identity. It gives people choices but at the same time the freedom to incorporate ideas that others have tried out before.

*Still, the school systems do not include all of Auroville's children. Some parents prefer to keep their children at home, and there are children who have to be asked to leave school.*

I believe that every child has a right to education, but not necessarily at a school. As long as there is a suitable holding environment or place for the child to go, a school should not be forced to have children in them that are making it difficult for other children to learn. One would like the schools to include every kind of person, but that is not realistic and some children are better for being out of school for some time. It is probably a help to a child to be told what is acceptable and what is absolutely not acceptable. Children need limits, need to know how to get along with other people and how to behave appropriately, and I don't think you do a child any service by

carrying him along when he is being highly inappropriate.

*You have been extremely active these few weeks, and have been in a position to come back after a year and see the progress.*

Yes, and I have again been loading heaps of advice on the teachers! In particular, I have stressed the need to study how close the practical teaching comes to the perfect principles expressed by Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, and the ways to bring the two more together. Apart from that, I have been urging that there should be more free play and materials for free play in the early grades in Kindergarten and the first classes. Children really learn many skills for reading and writing, language, special relations, problem solving and cooperation by playing. Perhaps people don't think that is learning, but it is.

And I have advocated that children should be made more responsible for their own learning. They should be encouraged to make choices that they have to stand by. This implies to learn to make decisions and to be responsible for them in class meetings. These decisions can be both about academic content and social issues and behaviour. This is important for learning skills like thinking and reasoning and self-discipline, but also for raising children who are going to be effective participants in a democratic community.

*You'll come back again?*

(laughing) Sure. But not again at Christmas.

*Interview by Carel*

## Internal Seminar, contd.

seminar, of 89 year old Joy from AVI U.K. reminding us of the need for 'more joy!', of 12 year old Dawn, born in a local village, asking adults not to smoke so that the children are not set a bad example, of the quality and honesty of the final sharing ('In the coming year I want to open my heart to everyone'), and of the final singing of the Auroville mantra which led one Aurovilian to subsequently remark, 'It brought back the spiritual dimension of Auroville to me which I had lost for so long.'

While the average attendance for all sessions was about 75, it was noticeable that certain elements of the community were absent or under-represented—notably the youth, those Aurovilians born in the surrounding area and Aurovilians working in productive units. Yet the success or failure of such occasions is not to be measured in numbers or even in the immediate manifestation of certain proposals. It's more to do with the quality of a collective aspiration which reconnects us with the potential, with the adventure that is Auroville. In this context, Mother's call became something of a key text for all of us during the seminar.

"There are people who love adventure. I call them and I tell them: I invite you to the great adventure, and in this adventure you are not to repeat spiritually what others have done before us, because our adventure begins from beyond that stage. We are for a new creation, entirely new, carrying in it all the unforeseen, all risks, all hazards,—a true adventure of which the goal is sure victory, but of which the way is unknown and has to be traced out step by step in the unexplored. It is something which has never been in the present universe and will never be in the same manner. If it interests you, well embark."

*Alan*

## Planting Peace Trees

Last year, BETTINA and PREMA, two young Aurovilians, went to Switzerland to participate in another Peace Trees programme. AUROVILLE TODAY spoke to them shortly after their return from Europe.

**T**he international Peace Trees Programme began in Auroville in 1988 as an exchange programme between youth from Russia, America and India. From the beginning it was facilitated by Danaan Parry and sponsored by the Earthstewards, an international organization whose members acknowledge their role as stewards of the planet. They follow two basic lines: conflict resolution and global environmental awareness, working in spite of, or parallel to, the activities of their governments. Generally, social activities and group sessions in conflict resolution, teamwork, exercises and games are all integrated into the programme. In every community where trees are planted, youth from the host country and their guests get together to learn more about each other. The next Peace Trees will be held in Auroville in December, 1994.

**AVT: Can you describe the setting for your Peace Trees Programme?**

Prema: We were one hour from Berne, more in the countryside. Beautiful. We

stayed in the mountains in this big hotel with a beautiful view. We were in the summer quarters of the hotel and there was no heating there. It was too cold. We said we were from India and it was really too cold! So finally they put us in some rooms with heaters.

*How many participants were there?*

Prema: There were 70 or 80 people. Two Africans, one Filipino, many from Europe, from Russia and America. There were four Russian girls all named Nathalia, three Stefans, two or three Irinas. Three kids were sent to Peace Trees as a sort of punishment! And one had a choice either to go to Peace Trees or to the Army.

*Did you like the way it was organized?*

Prema: It was ALL organized; very Swiss. The first tree was a present from the city of Zurich to the city of Berne—brought by the Mayor. The other trees were bought. They were 10-20 years old and big! They had to be planted straight along the road.

Bettina: The Swiss were a bit inflexible. They wanted everything to be *pucca*. And the first thing they did was give us all these rules. Maybe it would have been better to introduce people first.

*How did people get to know each other?*

Bettina: There were five groups of 11 or 12 people. We started with games. Like, in the first game we had to find the person the most different from ourselves. Then



*Bettina (l.) and Prema*

PHOTO JOHN MANDEEN

we had to choose another couple. Then all four did a skit together and they chose another four. At the end there were 12 in a group.

*Can you describe how the planting was done?*

Bettina: Each tree had to have two wooden supports to hold it up—so in fact they were also destroying trees! We only planted 70 trees. There were a few of us who really worked hard. The trees were mature, not like the saplings planted in Auroville.

*What did you do when you weren't planting trees?*

Bettina: The rest of the time we were sightseeing, trekking, and we did some street theatre. A lady from Berne came to do this with us and a man who played saxophone. We came up with the ideas for

the plays really quickly. Our play was about how people can come together in spite of their differences.

*How did the programme end?*

Bettina: We got together at the end in a group and wrote something about "What do you think you could do to change the world?" This was going to be put together and Danaan would take it with him and deliver it to the U.S. President. My group had a theme which was education, but Prema's group came up with a lot of different ideas. Then we also got together in groups to say how it had gone.

Prema: It was really hard to leave. After three weeks we were like one big family. And some people were really curious about Auroville.

Bettina: And a lot of them want to come...

*Jill*



# Discovering Discovery

**C**lose to Papyrus and the After School classroom in Fraternity there is a workshop which makes small wallets, cloth briefcases, backpacks for kids and adults and, most of all... toys. It is called Discovery. Barely one year old, Discovery has repainted and repaired two old workrooms, planting flowers and shrubs around the perimeter. The tailors and seamstresses occupy one room, the finished products are in another of-

fice/showroom. Along the walls, paper patterns for ducks, dogs, dolphins and elephants are hanging. In a metal cupboard small cloth purses, larger file cases, and soft wallets are waiting to be shipped. The rooms are clean and orderly, unpretentious, with just the right touch of playfulness. The colours of the toys are cheerful; there's a bright green dog sitting next to a yellow plaid duck on the table as I enter the office and I smile at the whimsical expression of a teddy bear, his mouth in a

perpetual "Oh", who sits patiently among this menagerie of stuffed animals, waiting for a home. Karna, an Aurovilian who lives in Aspiration, is the manager of the unit. AUROVILLE TODAY asked him to describe the beginning of Discovery.

"It began in 1993. We got together (Raju, Selvaraj and myself) to discuss the idea of a tailoring unit—making shirts, clothing, children's clothes for school, then backpacks and shopping bags, wallets. Actually, the toys came five months ago. The designs came from magazines and from what visitors brought in. The cloth is from Pondy and Madras. After sometime, Raju moved on to Papyrus (the Auroville paper unit) and Selvaraj became more involved with school and the youth camp. Aurora helped me with many ideas for a while, but she had some other work also, and a daughter to take care of. After that, I continued by myself."

**T**he idea to concentrate more on toys and bags was a practical one. Since several units in Auroville already make clothing, adding another one seemed redundant. Why not fill a gap instead? "Nobody is doing dolls now", Karna says, "so why not?" The business of starting a business proved to be a real education. "We began with some borrowed money and two tailors. Then we had to learn how to improve the quality and how to handle the export question." Karna decided it was better to start slowly, not

taking on big debts that he could not pay back. "Many people do this, borrowing heavily at the beginning. Later they have a real headache." Realizing that a small business takes time to establish itself, Karna continues his work at Altecs. This allows him to nurture the unit at a safe pace, without needing to take a maintenance from Discovery for himself. "All these things I had to figure out. But I knew I wanted to start something from the bottom. Now I am going through the same experience as Filaure, Maroma, Auromodele Atelier. Once you go through the fire, you know how difficult it is."

Discovery now employs four workers, plus two girls from New Creation school in the afternoon. Karna's idea is to grow to a point where he can provide work for the young ones. "I want to help those who are ready to do the work. When they are finished with their schooling, they can come and work." He would like the unit to encourage young people with a strong work ethic and a sense of what's possible if they use their initiative.

Currently, Discovery sends out samples to a shop in Germany. Although this German store is encouraging, they haven't bought anything yet and, for the moment, Discovery products are only sold in Pour Tous, the Auroville Boutique and the Pondy Boutique. But Karna is not worried. "I know it takes time to get things moving. But if the work is good, it will come."

Jill



Karna surrounded by Discovery dolls

## Housing for Young Aurovilians

**W**hat does a young adult, who has been born in Auroville and has no income from any source, do to create his or her own living space? Valerie, who runs 'Filaure' workshop, became aware of the problem because she has not only a teenage stepson but also three young Aurovilians working for her in her workshop. So she decided to finance the construction of accommodation for five young Aurovilians who are willing to be actively involved in working for the community.

The building, which is located in 'Samasti 2', a medium-density residential area in the Residential Zone, is designed by Suhasini and is being constructed of stabilized earth blocks. There are five individual rooms, a common living/dining room, a common kitchen and two common bathrooms. There is also a guest room, and the income from this will be used for the maintenance of the place.

So far, three young Aurovilians have been allocated apartments there: Grazie, who works in 'Filaure', Luc who is active in higher education, and Sukrit who is involved in auto mechanics. All three are actively participating in the finishing of the building, which is expected to be ready in four months.

### Guest-house information

The new contact address for all guest-house bookings and information about Auroville in general is:

Auroville Guest Programme  
Visitors Centre  
Auroville 605101, Tamil Nadu, India.

**A**fter the big steps taken in 1992 to secure the rest of the land immediately around Matrimandir for its Gardens, and the purchase of 45 acres at the Certitude entrance to Auroville, 1993 was a year of consolidation in which important pieces of land were acquired in both the city and the green belt. Altogether, 33 acres were purchased for Auroville during 1993.

The major purchases in 1992 had been made possible by two very large donations and a few smaller ones. In order to continue the momentum in 1993, we distributed as widely as possible a pamphlet describing the present land situation and future objectives, and appealed for funds for land purchase. In response to this we received the equivalent of Rs.7.5 lakhs (\$25,000) from Germany, U.S.A., U.K. and the Netherlands, but also from the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and from within Auroville. Earlier in

### AVI Meeting

**T**he yearly gathering of all the Auroville International centres and friends of Auroville will this year be held in the Netherlands, from Thursday May 12th till Sunday May 15th, 1994. The opening session will be at 5 p.m. and participants are welcome from 2 p.m. onwards. Due to unforeseen circumstances, the venue for the meeting will be different from the one announced previously. A new location has been found, called "Gasterij de Voorde" in the village of Steijl near Venlo in the south of the Netherlands. It is an old convent situated by the river Maas, and transformed into a beautiful conference hall. The price is moderate: Dfl. 325 (around \$165) all in. For further enquiries please contact AVI Nederland, Uiterweg 255ark, 1431 RA Aalsmeer, The Netherlands, tel. 02977-27883.

## Land Update

the year we had received Rs 6.5 lakhs (\$21,700) from within Auroville, and had raised Rs 8.25 lakhs (\$27,500) by selling outlying Auroville lands which were not needed for Auroville's development.

With these funds we purchased land

- in the Industrial Zone of the city (4.27 acres), making it possible for an Auroville unit to relocate to a new site and opening up possibilities for others;
- in the International Zone (3.11 acres), including a piece of land essential for the future crown road;
- in the Residential Zone (10.22 acres), some of which helped consolidate part of the area presently being developed for housing projects; and
- in the Green Belt (10.3 acres), enabling very useful consolidation in our forest areas.

Small plots of land were also purchased in the New Creation/Fraternity area as well as Auromodele.

This leaves us with about 400 acres in the City area and 1,500 acres in the immediate Green Belt area that still need to be purchased to complete the consolidation.

The outlook for 1994 is promising. The momentum built up over the past two years continues, and we are still receiving offers of land for sale from local farmers and landowners. At present, in fact, we are well on the way to concluding negotiations for a large landholding totalling 22 acres, and we will soon be completing the sale of several pieces of outlying land which will bring in further funds. However, due to a combination of factors prices are rising rapidly, and it is therefore very urgent that we purchase as much land as possible as soon as possible. For this we hope to be able to rely upon continuing support from both inside and outside the community, so allowing Auroville to cross a threshold into a larger scale of manifestation.

Land Service

### How to subscribe

The contribution for the next 12 issues of Auroville Today in India is Rs. 150, for other countries Rs. 750, Can. \$ 30, French F. 150, DM 47, It. Lira 35,500, D. Gl. 52, US \$ 25, U.K. £ 14. This includes the postage by airmail. Please send your contribution (or your supporting contribution of double the amount) either to the Auroville International centre in your country (add 10% for admin. and bank charges) or directly to Auroville Today, CSR Office, Auroville 605101. **Cheques should be made payable to Auroville Fund, specifying: 'Contribution for Auroville Today'.** You will receive the issues directly from Auroville. Personal cheques are preferred to bank cheques. Please do not send postal money orders. Subscribers will receive a reminder when their subscription is about to expire.

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AUROVILLE

In this issue (4 pages):

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PHOTO PROVIDED BY KALYANI

Kalyani practising kalaripayat

## PORTRAIT

# The Body is the Bridge

An introduction to Kalaripayat, the art of the battlefield—  
and to Kalyani, who teaches it; by Ann.

Along the Coromandel coast the Chinese silhouettes of fishing boats appear as the dawn spills its paint box of colors on a silver sea. Blonde hair blown by the wind, a woman bicycles through a village, where local women are chalking kolams—auspicious geometric designs—on the dusty ground in front of their doorways: their day's first offering. The woman on a bicycle stops in front of a sports-court, enclosed by a low wall, where several men and women are sweeping the packed earth. This enclosure is called a Kalari—which means battlefield in Malayalam, the language of Kerala—and is where Kalaripayat, the art of the battlefield, the sacred martial arts tradition of South India, is practised. Kalyani, who is originally from Toulouse in the south of France, came to Auroville seeking a new life fifteen years ago, after having worked as an airline stewardess for many years. She now teaches the demanding art of Kalaripayat which she has been practising for the last seven years.

After saluting the traditional Gods of Kalari, Kalyani slowly starts a series of warm-up exercises. One by one her muscles move, but her face remains still, fixed in feline concentration on some invisible point. Observing her students' every move, taking everything in, she occasionally utters a word of correction. I can only admire the perfect body of this woman who moves like a panther on the prowl, feet barely touching the ground, forcing her students to surpass themselves.

"Kalaripayat is the ancestor of all the martial arts," she explains after her students have left. "1,600 years ago, Boddhidharma from Kancheepuram, an Indian monk, disciple of the Buddha and Kalaripayat master, travelled to China to teach both Buddhism and Kalaripayat. There Kalaripayat evolved into Shaolin boxing and in Japan into Karate. Paintings can be found in Chinese temples depicting Boddhidharma teaching old Chinese monks. Kalari was never developed with an aggressive goal, but on the contrary, in order to counter attacks without hurting one's enemy. Each village had its Kalari where Kalaripayat was taught, but under the British the teaching and practice of Kalaripayat was banned."

The first phase of the training, "Maipayat", enables the body to relax itself more fully and gives it more flexibility and elasticity. It consists of 12 movements that are similar to the Katas of Karate. The second phase "Koltari" involves stick-fighting: first with a bamboo stick, then with a smaller S-shaped stick which is one of the most difficult weapons to master. The third phase involves practice with so-called 'white arms' such as the dagger, King's sword, sword and shield, and finally the most feared of all weapons, the 'Urumi', a flexible double-edged sword.

The final phase of the teaching, imparted only to students of whom the master is sure, involves a knowledge of the body's vital points. Kalaripayat masters are also Ayurvedic practitioners whose centuries-old knowledge is transmitted orally, and who are specialized in treating bone fractures, wounds and other ailments. A student studying arms also studies massage, and Kalari students receive particular massages that are given in yoga postures, massages that both relax the muscles and lengthen the tendons.

Intrigued, I asked Kalyani how she came to be involved in Kalaripayat. She answered with a smile: "Back problems and a disc hernia drove me towards Kalaripayat seven years ago. I was in great pain and went to have a massage from a Kalari teacher who was in Auroville. After a month of massages he realized that he couldn't do anything for me, but suggested that I start practising Kalaripayat. After training for three months the pain in my back disappeared and wasn't to come back till years later. When it did I returned to France for treatment and being unable to practise Kalari there, I took up T'ai-Chi, which was the only thing that allowed me to move physically without feeling pain. On my return to Auroville, I started Kalaripayat again and began to visit Kerala more and more frequently in order to be initiated into this traditional knowledge. At first I was a bit anxious about my physical condition, but after starting Kalari training again, the remaining pain disappeared.

"What's interesting to note is that most of my students are Western women. I think this reflects the period we're living in where woman is beginning to find her true nature, her true dynamism. Woman represents the creative force in the world and it is reassuring to see that women are waking to something else than the submission they have lived in for centuries. At first when I went to train in Kerala it was a bit difficult. For a number of years I was not allowed to practise in the Kalari along with other men, I could only watch. But now women are beginning to be allowed and it's only recently that my master authorized me to learn whatever I wanted and teach within the tradition. Somehow I don't have the feeling of teaching; I feel like the holder of a secret, of a key and have no other choice than to communicate it."

One of Sri Aurobindo's main ideas is to cease fleeing the body as if it were some a useless obstacle, and on the contrary to see it as a base, a vehicle through which one works on earth. "My life," Kalyani says, "has become a rediscovery of the body's conscious joy which I enter into when I teach and practise Kalaripayat. One no longer has the time to think, to want, or to be afraid; it is an art that develops swiftness and concentration and leads to the right action. I was lucky to be frequently ill, and to be finally forced to listen to my body, and to what it was saying, to what it wanted. The body knows very well, it is a part of nature, and nature has an infallible instinct. One never sees a bird or a cat go in the wrong direction. So if one is able to rediscover this bodily instinct, which is in total harmony with nature, one can rediscover a balance, health and perfect harmony, and living becomes a joy in the body. The body is the bridge, it is the body that reunites and realizes the unity of spirit, of matter and nature. The body becomes an extension of the spirit and not its opposite.

"When I first came to India I came specifically for Auroville and the work of Sri Aurobindo and Mother. It took me ten years before I began discovering India. India used to be a context, it wasn't in itself what was essential. But when I started studying Kalaripayat, I entered abruptly into contact with the soul of this land. That was the moment a great love story with India began. It has been growing ever since. I have ceased to be a Westerner and have become Indian in my soul." □