

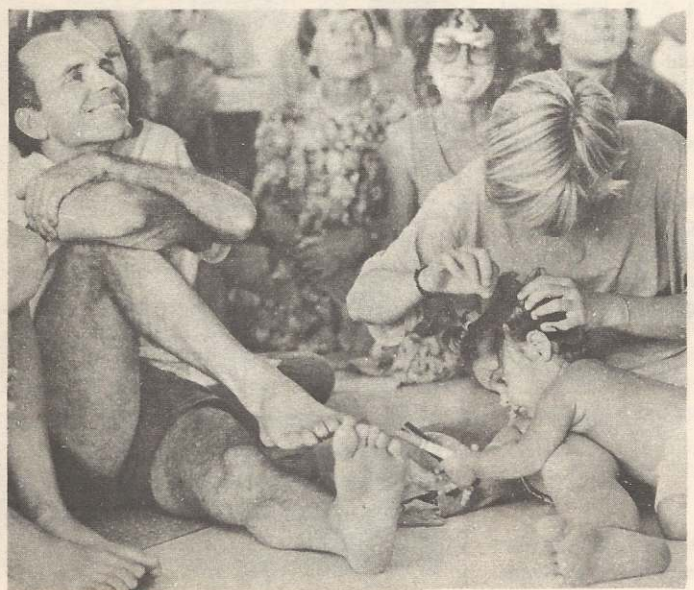
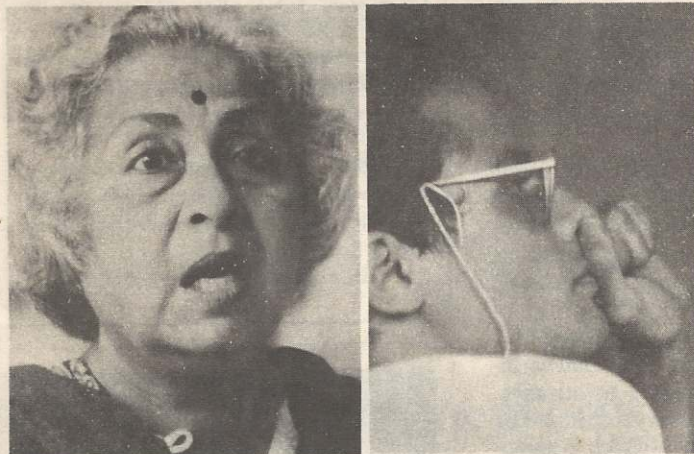
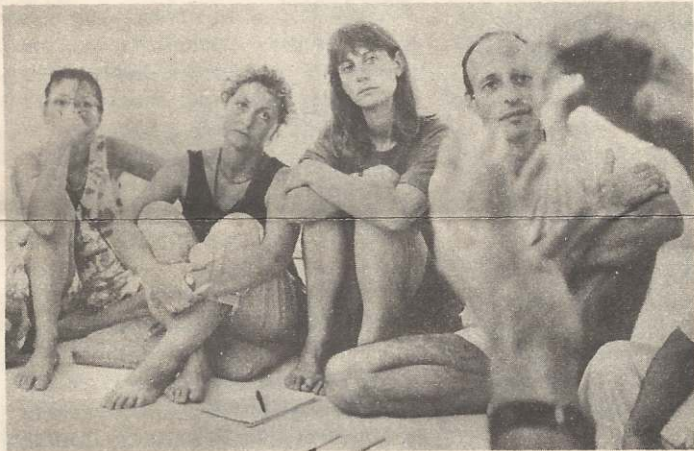
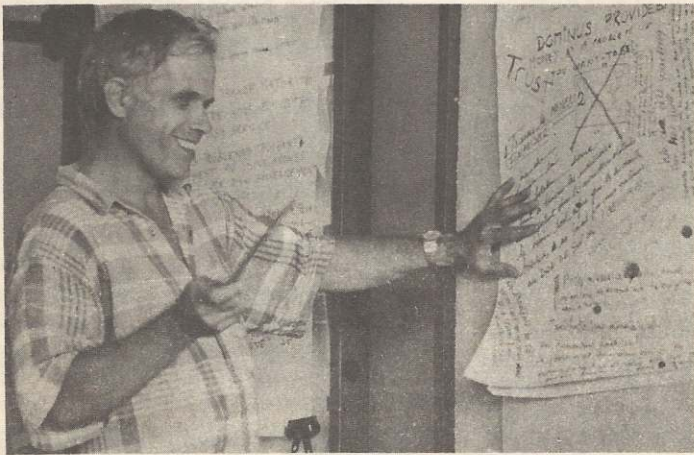
AUROVILLE TODAY

November 1990

Auroville - Kottakuppam 605104 - Tamil Nadu - India

Number Twenty-Three

FOCUS:



In 1954, the Mother had a Dream that "there should be somewhere upon earth a place that no nation could claim as its sole property, a place where all human beings of good will, sincere in their aspiration; could live freely as citizens of the world, obeying one single authority, that of the supreme Truth..."

Recently, on the 18th and 19th October, a two-day seminar was held in 'Last School' on the theme 'Recalling the Dream'. About 90 Aurovilians shared their ideas, frustrations and hopes as regards the next step towards translating more of the dream into our lives. Here is a very brief sample of what was expressed.

"The dream holds us together."

"Build blindly with *bhakti*."

"Small, beautiful community kitchens needed."

"The dream has to travel from the mind to the heart."

"We're still here. That's a success."

"Truth is the most practical way to do things."

"The Supreme is doing fine in Auroville!"

"When I'm absolutely clear what I want is right, I know I'm wrong."

"We need a community centre."

"A life without such a dream would be unbearable."

"Make the environment a suitable place for the dream."

"The future is today!"

THE DREAM

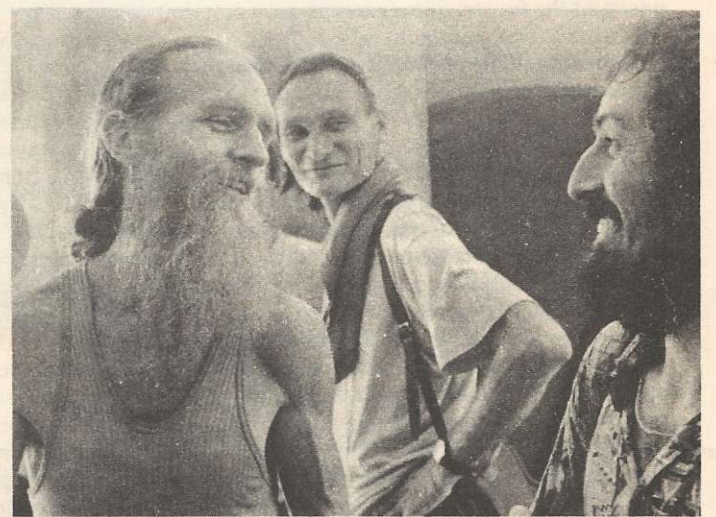


photo Sven

"Mother's dream will succeed"

An interview with Joy and Edith of Auroville International U.K.

Many Aurovillians know them, and the sylvan peace of their house, 'Boytons'. At an age when many would look for quiet retirement, they choose to become active for Auroville, and created Auroville International United Kingdom. Now, Joy being 86 and Edith 81, they have decided to take it (a little?) more easy, and have handed the management of AVI U.K. over to Thakor Mistry, Chairman, Martin Littlewood, Secretary, and John Mulray, Treasurer.

Auroville Today visited Edith and Joy at Boytons, and talked with them about the past and the future. Some excerpts:

Auroville Today: What is your earliest memory of Auroville?

Joy: That was in 1970. We went to Auroville in the van that took the vegetables, and we were sitting on the baskets. There was, at that time, not much to be seen in Auroville. It was just desert and the Aurovillians were not very friendly.

Edith: I think it was during a visit the following year that we were shown the huge hole in the ground for the Matrimandir, and we saw a little shelf made from red earth, somewhere in the walls, with a tiny vase with flowers and the pictures of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. That was really the earliest memory I have.

You founded AVI U.K. a short time after the second meeting of the (future) Auroville International centres at Boytons in 1981. Since that time AVI U.K. has helped manifest many things in Auroville. Are you satisfied?

Joy: Who can ever be satisfied with work done for the Divine? We enjoyed it, yes, but satisfied, I do not think we would like to say that. If anything was rewarding, it was the contact with Auroville on the official level and with Aurovillians individually.

Edith: I fully agree. There was always an immediate rapport with the people from Auroville we met, a sort of deep realization that we have this thing in common, no introduction being necessary. But we had some strange characters over the threshold as well.

Are you happy with the development of Auroville International in the U.K.?

Edith: Well, England is difficult. And it is remarkable that most of our members have an Indian background. Sometimes these people are also members of one of the four Sri Aurobindo Ashram centres in London. They are very keen and loyal, deeply convinced about the ideal of human unity, but the actual work of Auroville as well as the life of the Aurovillians is for the larger part foreign to them. Many of our members give very generously indeed, but nearly always earmarked for the Matrimandir. They rightly regard Matrimandir as the living symbol of The Mother, and they recognize the fact that it is of the greatest importance for Auroville, for India and for the world.

Joy: I do not know whether I can give a reason why we have so few members of English origin. Most probably it is the British temperament, insular in essence. I was born and brought up for many years in India, Edith in Germany and Switzerland. Our outlook has from the beginning been more international. But things in the U.K.

are changing a lot. More and more ethnic minorities are coming in, and old systems are breaking apart.

Both of you have always maintained that just as the Auroville International centres need Auroville, Auroville needs the centres. Can you explain this?

Edith: It would be sad if Auroville continued to regard the centres' role as primarily that of fundraising, representation and helping people to go to Auroville. That is definitely one reason for their existence, but certainly not the most important one.

I believe that there are still some people in Auroville who think that it can only happen in Auroville, just as in the past we were told in the Ashram that unless you live in the Ashram, you cannot call yourself a follower of Sri Aurobindo.

Eventually I feel that the centres will develop as points of spiritual energy. There is a world wide movement, not only spiritual, which realizes that we are all interconnected, and that what we are doing in one corner of the world necessarily affects others. In the same way, Aurovillians should become conscious that whatever happens in one corner of Auroville, necessarily affects Auroville as a whole.

Joy: It is perhaps for this reason that we feel such a deep sadness whenever we read that things are not going as they should.

Edith: Things have developed quite a lot over the last years. In a way you could say that in the integral yoga, the meaning of the word 'integral' has also changed. It was originally understood to mean the integration of various parts of the being, in the individual. I believe it has acquired a much wider meaning. It has grown into meaning an integration of the various parts of the integral yoga, for example of love, of devotion, of knowledge, of practical living. This happens in Auroville, and it will also happen in the centres. All centres have their particular part to play, each with its own stress and national characteristics. The integration of all these characteristics and tendencies will be a next step. In this regard, it is more than just a loss for Auroville when a centre ceases to exist. It is a two way traffic, where the centres could clearly not exist without Auroville, but Auroville would also be much the poorer or even could not exist without this international linkage. For the centres represent one of the ways in which the ideals of Auroville can take root in the world.

Joy: I think that it would be very good if Aurovillians could sometimes leave Auroville for 6 to 12 months to work in a centre, for it is very important for Auroville and for Aurovillians to keep contact with what is happening in the world.

Edith: Yes, for example the new discoveries in the field of new physics and the social economic dynamics of groups and communities.

What is your opinion of the Auroville Foundation Act?

Joy: We are actually quite happy with the new Auroville Foundation Act. It is absolutely amazing that something like this could have happened. I can imagine that some people in Auroville are frightened of the possible involvement of the Indian Government, but I do not share that fear

precisely because it is the Indian Government and not any other. I would be frightened if another government had made this act!

Edith: I too see the act as positive. So long as people will continue to try to exploit or take advantage of Auroville, protection will be essential, and only the Government will be able to give that.

Joy: India has been so steeped in the spiritual, for generations and generations, that there will always be people who will understand Auroville, also on those government levels. I still remember vividly when we attended the proceedings at the Indian Supreme Court of Justice the moment the judges were given copies of the 'Agenda'. I can't recollect ever having seen judges with such happy faces!

And the building of the city?

Edith: I see a direct link between the advance of the Matrimandir and the building of the city. The city will be built by the Matrimandir. I do not believe in the effectiveness of large scale funding nor in the immediate creation of large sections of the masterplan. The Matrimandir is a powerhouse of a new type of energy going out into Auroville and into the world, and I believe one of its first effects will be that it will unify.

When Mother talked about the importance of Matrimandir for Auroville and for the world, I think She also referred to the creation of the city.

I want to make clear here that I do not believe that when Mother said that the Matrimandir is there for the world, She meant that anyone could just walk in. It is an ancient knowledge that places of spiritual energy and power have to be protected in order to function. You will remember that Mother always said that on Darshan days the atmosphere in the Ashram went down, due to the crowds.

How do you see the future of Auroville?

Joy: There are certain people one meets in Auroville who are just wonderful. There are others who do not strike one in the same way. With the experience of people that 'hit' one, the realization comes that Auroville will succeed.

Edith: I agree. The last time I was in Auroville I experienced very suddenly and strongly for the first time that he or she got 'it'. Other people are keen and charming, and yet one feels that something is missing.

The difficulties, the nitty gritty of everyday life will be there in Auroville for a very long time to come, but that is inevitable and even necessary to advance. Auroville is so new that every step has to be fought for, as a collective (which is something different from individuals living together) and also in each individual. There must evolve a change of point of view that the purely individual approach abdicates in favour of the collective. The collective comes first, without necessarily meaning that the freedom of the individual would be limited.

It is obvious that the old forces are still very strong, also in Auroville, yet there are a sufficient number of dedicated people in Auroville to give the inner conviction that Mother's dream will succeed.

Interview by Carel

SHORT NEWS

□ THE BEES are back! Definitely Matrimandir wants to bee. As reported in our issue #20 the bees had unceremoniously been sucked out of Matrimandir and dumped on the Madras road. The defiant rock bee is back in full force with a huge comb hanging high in the Mahakali pillar, another dangling from the edge of the chamber and a smaller one on the first line of beams. The estimated lethal number of stings has also risen dramatically. A visiting bank manager was stung about 150 times and has apparently survived, but then bank managers are perhaps an exception. The present strategy among the various Matrimandir committees seems to be unanimous: let them bee.

□ TWO NEW Auroville boutiques, both called 'Mirra', have just opened in Europe—one in Nice, France and the other in Pamplona, Spain.

□ *Réelles Utopies*, a collection of short stories by Raymond Thépot, some of which deal with the Auroville of a few years ago, has just been published at Auro Press and is available at the Boutique d'Auroville.

□ Peter Clarence-Smith, who was held in Iraq, has arrived safely in Paris. He is in good shape.

WANTED :

One new or used laser printer (IBM compatible) for Auroville Today. Please contact us if you can help.

• To Receive Auroville Today •

The contribution for the next 12 issues of Auroville Today is for Auroville Rs. 94, for India Rs. 100*, for other countries: Rs. 350, Can.\$ 27, French F. 145, DM 45, It.Lira 31,500, D.Gl. 50, US \$ 22.50, U.K.£ 13.50. 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%) or to the Auroville Today Office, Auroville, Kottakupam 605104. Cheques should be made payable to Auroville Fund, specifying: Contribution for Auroville Today. You will receive the issues directly from Auroville.

*cash, bank draft or money order only

Auroville Today tries to appear monthly and is distributed to Aurovillians and friends of Auroville in India and abroad.

Editorial team: Yanne, Tineke, Sven, Roger, Carel, Bill, Annemarie, Alan. Desktop publishing: Annemarie. Printed at Auroville Press.

All photos in this issue have been taken by Sven.

BIRTH IN AUROVILLE

"To do the most beautiful work in the world in the best possible conditions"

HILDE decided to come and settle in Auroville after getting her diploma as a nurse and specializing in psychiatry, and then working for ten years in a clinic in Belgium.

"I worked in the Centre Kitchen for some years because help was needed there, and it was also the fastest way to get into contact with the Aurovilians."

Then Myriam, Auroville's midwife, who was pregnant herself and had some health problems, asked Hilde to help her.

"I was delighted to see an old dream come true, and at the same time I was a bit apprehensive because I had never done a delivery. The first delivery, only three months after I arrived, was a very striking experience — a shock. I had come from Belgium with its very sophisticatedly equipped hospitals, where mechanization did not prevent the anguish that surrounds deliveries — and there I was, in a small hut, in the middle of the greenbelt (for me it was the jungle), without electricity, without running water. The mother-to-be was lying upstairs on a mattress directly placed on the floor with so little space that you could hardly walk around it. On the chest stood a small kerosene lamp and candles. It was dark, everything was quiet, so quiet. She was very calm, as was Myriam. The baby came into the world in such a tranquil, harmonious atmosphere — unbelievable. It was so beautiful!... The beauty of nature. I couldn't believe it. Now there are less and less women giving birth in huts, but the atmosphere remains the same."

When Myriam, some weeks later, was about to give birth, Hilde helped her. Since then she has helped bring 103 babies into the world.

Here the special thing about childbirth is that there is no atmosphere of anxiety around the expectant mother. She is supported by her surroundings and escapes this monstrous hospital machinery, analyses, X-rays... all the things that often traumatize a birth. Most women in Auroville are conscious, from the moment of conception, that they are offering the



possibility for a new soul to enter the world. And they try to create the material and psychological conditions for an integral unfolding of the child.

The name of the baby is often chosen according to the vibration the mother has felt during pregnancy, and the name is only given a few days after the birth, when the intuition gets confirmed. Women give birth at home unless there is a foreseen complication, and the father and often a close friend are present, having prepared the room and atmosphere.

"What is definitely most important to me at the time of delivery is not only that the room is beautiful and everything is there, but that there is a real harmony between the future mother, the father and me. And in 90% of the cases the pregnancy and delivery go very well. But if suddenly there is a doubt, we take a taxi and go to Pondy where there is a very good hospital. It happens extremely seldom. Yet I prepare the women for this possibility so that they won't

be disappointed or panicky when it happens. I am more and more convinced that there is a special protection during the delivery, and if I don't feel that any more... it is time to go to Pondy.

With regard to the expectant fathers, they live very intensely through that time. They are almost all present at the birth of their child, take part in it and take their role as a father very seriously.

I've noticed less and less women in Auroville choose to be a single parent. Fortunately, because it is very difficult to take sole responsibility for a child here as the material circumstances are very difficult, and people cannot make themselves available for a long time. It's extremely important that the atmosphere of love, understanding and harmony which surround birth should continue throughout adolescence to help the young person become a complete human being. This is what bringing up a child really means."

Yanne

"Even as the state of consciousness of the last moments of life is of capital importance for the future of the one who is departing, so too the state of consciousness in which the parents are at the moment of conception gives a sort of stamp to the child, which it will reflect throughout its life."

(Collected Works of the Mother. Vol. V, Centenary Edition.)

Song of the Body

We have conquered space, plumbed the oceans, wrestled oil from rock, tampered with the atom, unravelled DNA. But the last great challenge awaits us, closer than love, stranger than death. The body. Listen, listen. Blood booms through the ventricles, whispers in veins, while bone and fibre sheer through silence; juices stream down marbled walls into subterranean churning, the dim, dark undulations of serpentine prehistory. And all the while, contrapuntal, the body flashes its descant of impulses, neurons and chemical floods, a gossamer play among lattice of bone. Sing the body electric. Sing the body that is ours and not ours. That bears our lash, swallows our poisons, shapes itself to our desires... then presents its bill. We know it not, yet it knows us — locking our past within its karmic envelope of nerve and flesh. That stiff knee? — a dusty squash court one limpid Cornish afternoon; that spasm in the chest? — a small boy lost on Victoria Station; that migraine began when she packed up her books... But deeper, deeper, than dumb recorder, than faithful processor of light and shade, lives another body. Lithe, free, vaster than fate, wiser than doctors, it slips the leash of experience, the terrible finality of fact, and dances on the margins of the known. Curing the 'incurable', challenging the stiffening sense, it quicksavors its promise through tortured knots of sinews and nerve. "Come, dance with me," it calls. "For once you taste my wine, all else is but as dust".

Alan

Letter from an Aurovilian

Igatpuri Vipassana Centre

Dear Friends,

It is so good to be here. It's like a homecoming, deep, calm, sweet. Auroville is still my base, but how wonderful now this deep long drink of concentration, concentration on the goal, rather than on the symbol of it, concentration of the mind on mind, of consciousness on consciousness, practice and exercise in 'mental fitness'. I miss this in Auroville. In our vigilance to avoid the pitfall of religiosity, have we missed the conscious cultivation of spirituality? Work on consciousness doesn't have to be religious or new-age claptrap, it can be something clean, clear, and of primary importance. I'm happy to be in an environment that encourages it as the priority.

I write the above as a personal note; it seems the *Auroville Today* team is made up of people I feel are my friends and might be interested in how I am feeling. But also, it's a sort of comment on the *Auroville Today* issue on spiritual life in Auroville, or rather an answer to a comment I heard — that somehow the articles all had a tone of 'being there' rather than of search. That somehow we seem to feel or appear to feel that living in Auroville is in itself a spiritual achievement, and that the yoga of self-perfection goes on automatically without our making any particular conscious effort. Perhaps we read Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and feel inspired — but what do we really do to develop equality, or to consecrate our every action to the Divine — how do we support each other in that work? We can refer to the subtle workings of Mother's grace — but quite frankly, speaking for myself alone, I don't find that enough. If the next step in evolution is to be a conscious one, that step has to be taken consciously. Admittedly it is difficult to avoid the ego getting involved in the taking of the step and spoiling it — but it is possible by means of practice to make the mind more subtle, less liable to stumble; we can move in the right direction, even if we are still far from any major achievement. It feels good to me to be here, with this focus, for some time.

Hoping this finds you all well, and projects prospering.

Dee

DOLPHIN DESPATCH

So there we were, swimming around the oil rig, bored out of our considerable minds, when this fishing boat appeared. Not your usual cast-and-pray fishing fanatics. No. This boat was a tangle of exhausted limbs and crazed, green faces. I guessed at once that these were those poor boat people we'd been hearing about from our eastern cousins, condemned to drift the oceans of the world while the nations debated their fate. By the look of them, they'd already been out there for months.

At that moment they saw us, and immediately began waving and leaping about. Then they began climbing into the water and swimming towards us. Now I'm as democratic as the next dolphin, and I don't mind a bit of a get-together in the briny — but I do have something of an aversion to 'Ambre Solaire'. And, believe it or not, this lot reeked of it! Time, I thought, for pastures new.

But next week, there they were again. Incredible! What stamina! I began to admire these people who could drift around in an open boat for weeks, and still cheer when we turned up. How did they manage it? So I began to make some discreet inquiries — and I think I've discovered the answer. It's all to do with how they give birth. Now for us, it's a doddle. Giving birth



r François le Diascom

in the sea — well, you hardly notice it's happening. But look at the result. We swim round for the rest of our lives with these inane grins on our faces, boring the fins off each other. We've had it too easy. We're decadent. Whereas that lot — they give birth under bright lights in harsh rooms, and then they wallop the baby to get it to breathe. Great! Because you see the result. They're tough, they're serious. They don't smile.

So next time they drift round, I'm going to stiffen up a bit and cut out these ridiculous acrobatics. I might even manage a tear. Because now I know. That lot are the future.

(Communicated telepathically to Alan by a founder member of the International Dolphin Institute of Transformation, I.D.I.O.T.)

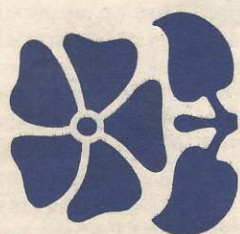
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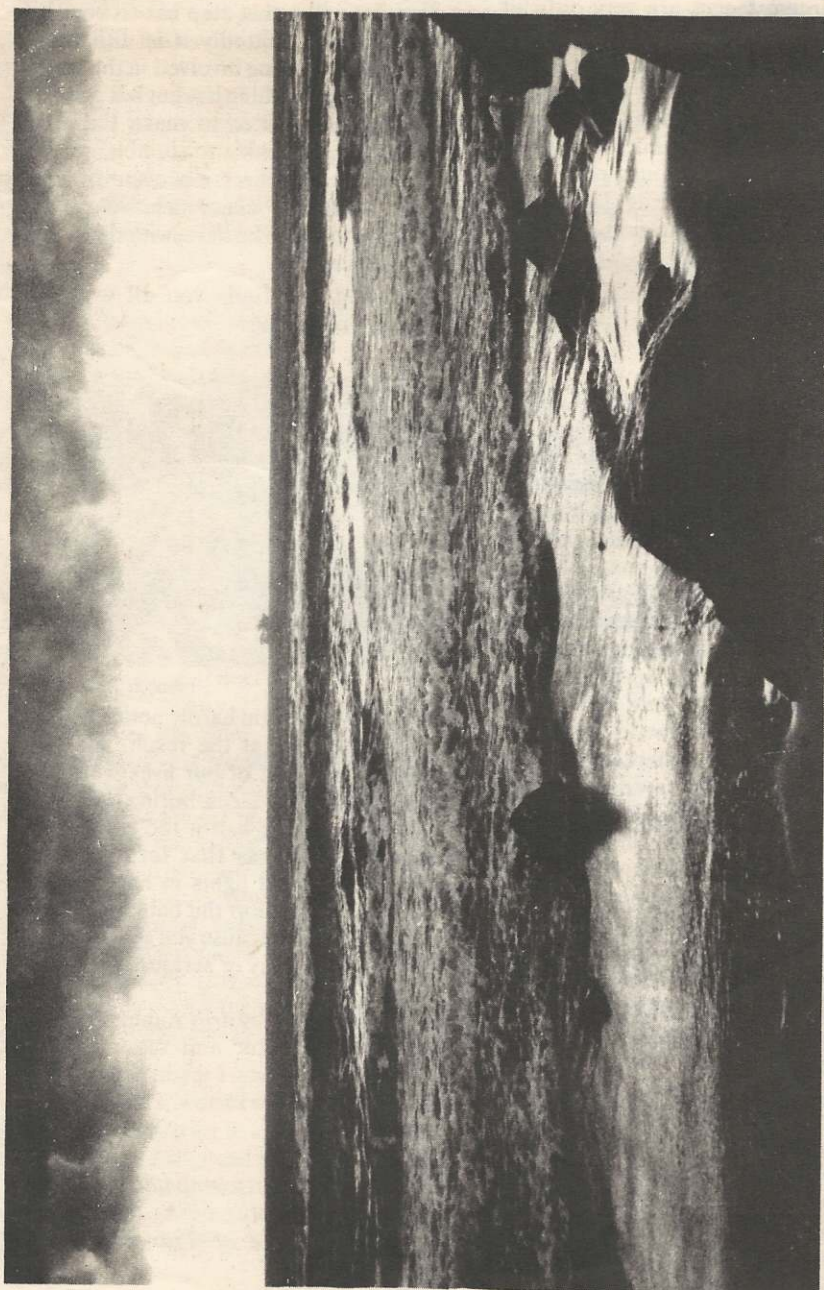
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KRISHNA TEWARI
AUROVILLE
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In this issue: Dreaming, Birth; Old age; AVI U.K.

November 1990 - Number Twenty-Three



Monsoon clouds roll in

Photo Sven

OLD AGE IN AUROVILLE: WHO CARES?

Lieske (see photo) came to Auroville from Holland in 1973 at the age of 69. She has lived in the Matrimandir Nursery for many years, helping look after the plants. In 1988, at 84 years old, she was still cycling around Auroville, but that year she had an accident which severely affected her mobility. Recently she broke her hip and is at present convalescing in a Pondicherry nursing home.

Eleanor came from America and settled in Auroville in 1980 at the age of 66. She lives in Vérité and is active in health care and other aspects of community life. And she is "feeling younger all the time!"

Auroville Today: Lieske, many people have been to see you since your accident. But what about before? Was the community giving you enough support?

Lieske: No. I always felt isolated living in the Nursery. There was nobody to talk to, nobody to help me, particularly in the last two years when I couldn't get around. Before that I would cycle, and I could visit my friends.

There were various practical problems. Nobody in the Nursery eats at Centre Kitchen, so I sometimes didn't know who would bring my food from there. My eyes are not so good, but I like books very much. Yet often there was nobody to read to me. If people had visited me more, it would have been a great help. Now, of course, everybody comes!

Then the work routine in the Nursery changed, and I found it even more difficult to participate. And when I injured my leg two and a half years ago, there was not even a physiotherapist in Auroville who could help me with massage and exercises.

Have you thought of moving to a community in Auroville where you could have more contact with people?

L: No. I have a nice house. Why should I move? Except, my house gets very hot in summer. Now I'm going to get air-conditioning installed.

Eleanor: Contact is so important. I like being in Vérité with people of all ages and nationalities. There's so much to do. The problem comes when, like Lieske, you can't move round on your own any more. I can

Old Age is not a Disease

Mindy, who recently joined the staff at the Auroville Health Centre, worked professionally as a nurse in America for 18 years. For 14 years, she specialized in Gerontology (the study of aging) and Geriatrics (the medicine of aging). Bill asked her for her views on the problems of old age.

"MOST PEOPLE have some common misunderstandings about people older than they are. For example, if somebody is 93 and has any kind of health problem, people will always say: 'Well, that's because they're old.' This is not necessarily true—one must distinguish between disease and normal aging. There is no reason why people cannot age normally and remain functional and healthy until the moment they die. People think that at a certain point you turn old and have another way of relating to the world. But old people do not usually view themselves as old, even though they are aware, with age, of the body's changes with its accompanying adaptations or alterations in functioning. The older person's sense of self remains the same as it was when they were younger. In other words, you may be 80 but maintain your sense of self as when you were 30. □



still cycle. But I've often wondered what would happen if I was immobile and imprisoned in one place.

A community van service for older people?

E: That would be a marvellous idea. You see, people in Auroville are just not aware enough of the problems encountered by old people, because there are so few older people around—perhaps no more than ten or fifteen people over 60. When I first came, some of the Auroville children would point to the skin on my face and ask: "What's wrong?" I would have to explain that that was what happened when you got old. They had no idea!

But I should say it's the children in Auroville who gave me a place in their community when I had nowhere else to go—that's not a very common Auroville attitude!

One thing I have noticed is that Indians have an immediate rapport with older people. It's because they've grown up in big families where the older people are always around. We've lost that in the West.

Do you think Aurovilians are not facing the reality of old age because they think that by doing yoga they should somehow overcome it?

L: I think that's true. Now I encourage more and more old people to come to Auroville so that Auroville can understand and learn to appreciate older people. After all, we can do so much, and we have a lot of experience. It's sometimes difficult watching people trying to reinvent the wheel—I have to bite my lip!

Does Auroville keep you young?

L: Yes!

E: I feel younger now than I did when I came 12 years ago. It's the aspiration, the ideals, the constant looking to the future in Auroville. It's a very stimulating place to live.

After this accident, do you see things differently, Lieske?

L: I see I must become much more conscious of everything. Every step I take I must concentrate upon doing the right thing so I don't fall down.

E: When you get older, the number of things you do automatically decreases. Things like balance, hearing, become more difficult. It would help if Aurovilians remembered this in meetings, for example, and spoke more clearly. And as you get older, it becomes more and more imperative to do the yoga.

But people don't think of you as old people!

E: Mother said that you can be old at 18 and young at 90. It's a question of attitude.

L: Until I was 80, I was conscious of my age. After that I didn't bother to keep count. It wasn't important any more!

Interview by Bill and Alan