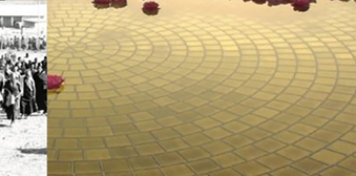


AUROVILLE

OR THE QUEST FOR A BETTER WORLD

Past • Present • Future



**AUROVILLE,
OR THE QUEST FOR A
BETTER WORLD**

Discovery Publisher

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Authors: Christine Devin & a collective of authors when not indicated



616 Corporate Way

Valley Cottage, New York, 10989

www.discoverypublisher.com

edition@discoverypublisher.com

facebook.com/discoverypublisher

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**AUROVILLE,
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BETTER WORLD**

Auroville is...

Auroville, 1968, an elderly woman who had not left her room for a long time, located in a southern Indian *ashram*, invites young people from all over the world to follow her in a great adventure: creating a city, a new kind of a city, with its charter defined as follows:

- *Auroville belongs to nobody in particular. Auroville belongs to humanity as a whole. But to live in Auroville, one must be a willing servitor of the Divine Consciousness.*
- *Auroville will be the place of an unending education, of constant progress, and a youth that never ages.*
- *Auroville wants to be the bridge between the past and the future. Taking advantage of all discoveries from without and from within, Auroville will boldly spring towards future realisations.*
- *Auroville will be a site of material and spiritual research for a living embodiment of an actual Human Unity.*

Surprisingly, people started to respond. The adventure began.

The ashram in question is the community of disciples gathered around the great revolutionary, poet and visionary, Sri Aurobindo. The elderly lady, who will be called *the Mother*, is a Frenchwoman who worked alongside Sri Aurobindo for more than thirty years. In 1968, Sri Aurobindo is no more, but the Mother is still at the head of the Ashram, and it is she who launches this rather eccentric project called *Auroville*.

The idea of bringing together in a single volume what was originally two publications almost poles apart from one another may seem strange. And yet there is in the unexpected rapprochement of these two perspectives on Auroville, a deep logic.

In *The Genesis of the Superman*, Satprem describes the different stages

in the path proposed by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother: he speaks of the progressive entry into a different mode of functioning, in a mode of understanding and perception that has nothing to do with the ordinary way; it evokes a new consciousness at work, in the world, to which everyone can connect without needing to be a great sage or a «spiritual» being, and by doing so, one can experience a different way of acting in the world—one may experience the secret harmony hidden in everything. Among what he calls «the golden rules» of this passage towards the transformation of the habits of the human being, there is one which he defines as: from the *inside* to the *outside*.

This present book, consisting of two separate stories *Turning points* and *Auroville, smart city of another kind*, could very well be the *inside out*.

The *inside* is what brought these young people from all over the world in the 60s to a land that was to be called Auroville. Some felt the call after reading a passage of Sri Aurobindo, some through a direct or indirect link with the Mother. But, beyond that, and *always*, it is the result of their own heart's whisperings and pains they too often felt deep in their soul for a better life. Indeed, as stated by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, a radical transformation *was* possible, a reversal of the whole being *was* achievable. A reversal in its literal sense, as one returns a glove. These young people answered the Mother's call, settled on the desert lands of South India and began to build a city. Or rather, shall we say, through the construction of a city, they set out to create a human being of another kind, of a better kind. That was the basis on which this great adventure unfolded.

Fast forward 50 years: welcome to Auroville! We are in 2020, the young souls have aged and are now surrounded by their children and grandchildren, and other individuals who have not stopped gathering around them over the years. About 3,000 people live here today, in almost 100 communities. Does this mean that Auroville today deserves to be called a «city»? In its strictest meaning, certainly not. The context is still rural, the habitat is scattered; in other words, we are far from a «city life». One could almost say that Auroville is an «extended village». However, there are thousands of things happening in this large village, which is bubbling with events, achievements and reflections that can only be expected in a vibrant city: art exhibitions, international marathons, experiences and training courses on alternative techniques, architectural research, health, technology experiments and innovation, crafting, education, construction, economic debates,

urban planning, cultural exhibitions, etc. *This* is not a coincidence; this is a culmination of *that*. From the seed planted in 1968, there has been intense flowering. Some projects have materialized, some have not (yet), and many have died. One could argue that this is a modest flowering, and one could be right. Nevertheless, the experiences and experiments related in the second part of this present book are a proof that the adventure which started in 1968 is still alive, full of hope, love and energy. This is the *outside*.

Has Auroville become the cradle of a radically different human being, obedient to his inner being rather than ordinary compulsions? No, and no one claims that. However the Charter of Auroville, the invisible sovereign of this city like no other, is far from having said its last word. She is present, alive, active. She continues to inspire. She continues to act, and will continue to do so—from the *inside* to the *outside*.

—Christine Devin

FIRST PART

TURNING POINTS

The following people have participated in the conception and realisation of this brochure: Alain Bernard, Serge Brelin, Luisa Meneghetti, Hervé Millet.

General Editor: Christine Devin.

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I want to deeply thank the Aurovilians whose interviews are reproduced here, for accepting to open their memories and their hearts for this work. This publication is the outcome of their collaboration. Sincere collaboration. Never have I felt from any one of them the slightest reluctance to uncover their lives, their experiences, their pain or even their inadequacies.

I loved the way in which most of them made fun of their past naïvety and recalled with humour how abysmally ignorant they were about Indian culture or the real dimension of Mother and Sri Aurobindo's work.

And it was beautiful to see how, while recounting their inner and outer journeys, at times they were seized by a deep and unexpected emotion which transported them (and the listener at the same time) into the domain of Agni, the burning aspiration.

I have tried to be as respectful and careful as possible in editing the text of the interviews. Any oversights are mine.

—Christine Devin

Krishna Tewari passed away two years ago. May his love and his need for Auroville accompany us.

Foreword

This collection of stories is not about the past.

It is about a hidden source of water which has irrigated this land for more than forty years and without which Auroville, for all the wells dug and the trees planted, would have remained a desert.

We need to acknowledge this fact.

We like to take pride in our achievements, in how creative our crafts are, green our landscape and innovative our architecture, but we forget that there is but one achievement— and it is not ours: forty years ago a Lady Diviner struck a rock and out of this rock, water sprang. It gave life to this place, it gave life to the people and sustained them.

It is still here and flowing. Its name is faith.

We have given space here mostly to “old-timers”, Aurovilians who arrived at the very beginning of the adventure. Yet we readily admit that the same exercise could have been done, including many more stories and not only of those who had the privilege to sit at Mother’s feet. But it was our wish to first go back and trace and explore the sources of the Nile.

After all, it is the same water that flows downstream.

For forty years we have been asked the embarrassing question, “But where is the city?”

Don’t look anywhere else. The city is here, enshrined in the hearts of these men and women, and it is shining softly in the pink light of dawn.

Their faces may have been burnt by the sun, their minds might be a little burdened, they may appear cynical at times, but like Hanuman tearing open his chest to uncover the image of Rama and Sita, if they unlock a certain door deep within themselves, there it lies: the wonderful city of delight, its outline glowing, untouched by human dust.

Beyond individual idiosyncrasies and personal circumstances, these stories are nothing if not a direct and tangible link to that tremendous big-bang of Auroville. You move close to that point, and everything starts vibrating and shaking. Hearing them, transcribing or translating them, I did not cease to be amazed, because each time I was made to look at an Auroville *that*

we all fell in love with—a revolutionary, spontaneous, totally unexpected and unpredictable Auroville, immense and extra-terrestrial in its design, humoristic and delightful in its details.

An Auroville that makes all our ideas, theories and expectations fly to pieces.

I asked the interviewees only one question: How did She catch you and bring you here? Each time I was astonished to see how the answer to that simple question could connect me inwardly to a vibration of a tremendous force. The same thing happened to people around me when I asked them to read the transcripts. That's when I realised that these stories should be available for anyone in Auroville.

—Christine Devin

Come to India now!

A conversation with big Jocelyn

This was April 1968. I was living in Arizona, I was a hippie, and I was having a wonderful time with all my friends, the desert, the mountains, and so on and so on. One day I went with a friend to the house of another friend, which was called the House on the Hill. There was nobody at home, but we were very good friends with the people in the house, so we felt we could go in and sit there, waiting till someone came home. So I went and I was sitting in a very deep comfortable chair, and my friend was sitting on another chair next to me, and we were just sitting there very quietly.

There was a painting on the wall opposite me; it was a very abstract painting, almost entirely green. I was just sitting there and... the painting disappeared. The wall disappeared. The house disappeared. And then I saw two very powerful eyes, and I heard a voice that said to me, "Come to India now!" This [body] had almost disappeared, but I could still feel my heart and my brain. So I replied, "I have no money, I am two days pregnant..." This voice came back like... as though what I said meant nothing (*ordering*): "Come to India now!" Then someone came to the door and I kind of came back into the room. And the friend who was sitting next to me asked, "What just happened?" — "What do you mean?" She said, "It was so strange!"

I had never heard a word about Mother or Sri Aurobindo.

I was a person a little bit ahead of my time. Now they go on what they call "vision quest". I didn't know about vision quest, but on February 20, 1968, I had gone out into the desert alone with a bag of brown rice to a little trailer that a friend of mine had on a piece of land. I had this bag of brown rice with me, and some gomasio. I had nothing else, no drugs, no tobacco or anything. I was going to be quiet. I couldn't figure out what was going on in my life (I was more confused *after* I found out what was going on in my life!) I spent eight days there alone, not seeing anybody, not talking to anybody. I didn't know anything about meditation, but basically

I was doing nothing but meditating. On the night before February 28, I had a vision. It was incredible. It was one of the most beautiful experiences of my life. I thought it was people from outer space. Completely different kinds of people coming together in a kind of amphitheatre, some kind of circular thing, doing some kind of ceremonial thing, but very different, all different colours, sizes, shapes, different clothes, just something so different, so different from anything I had seen or heard about in America. I thought it had to do with outer space, quite frankly. I had no idea what it was.

Then in April, "Come to India now!"

Of course all hippies were talking about India and gurus. So okay, I am supposed to go to India. First I go to the East Coast because my sister is getting married. I am in New York, and I am really confused and upset. I am supposed to go back west. So I look for ashrams in the New York telephone directory. And I come out with "Sri Aurobindo Ashram". So I call the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in New York.

"Hello", I said, "I need to speak to the guru."

"Well, we are sorry, it's not possible."

"No, no, this is very serious, I really need to talk to the guru!"

"Sorry, we can't help you."

That was it.

Then I did all that journey, travelling to Spain, Morocco. Binah was born in Berlin. I travelled to Greece, then to India. I came to India through the India-Pakistan border. Somebody had told me, "Come to India now", but... India is a very big country, there are lots of people there, they didn't give me any name, they didn't give me any address, "Come to India now." I thought I was really stupid and slightly crazy. So I went to Kashmir, I stayed in an ashram where there was a very interesting guru.

I went to Kathmandu, where I met somebody who called himself The Father. One day, I had to go to the bathroom for a moment, so I left the room, left Binah in the room with these people and this Father, who was supposed to be some kind of spiritual master, and when I came back (I had not gone five minutes), the baby was on the floor eating dirt. I freaked out: Look, if this is spirituality, if this is India, I don't need it, I have seen nothing spiritually that I could not have done better in America. I am out of here! I have seen enough of Asia.

As I was leaving that place, Francis N. was sitting downstairs. I said, “I am leaving!”

“Where are you going?” he asked.

“I am going to Ceylon”.

“Well, if you want to break your trip between Kathmandu and Ceylon — it is a very long trip over the land, it takes about ten days — stop in Pondicherry, there is an ashram which is like a country club.”

“Is it on the beach?”

“Yes, it is on the beach.”

“Oh, I like beaches, maybe I will stop there for a couple of days, to break the trip.”

So I travelled from Kathmandu to Madras. In Madras I couldn’t remember the name Pondicherry. The train from Patna had arrived in Madras in the morning, and the train to Colombo was not leaving until the evening. I couldn’t decide if I should buy a ticket on the train or not. There were some French girls in the waiting room, so I said, “Somebody said there is an ashram near Madras, very nice, near the beach?” They said, “Oh, Pondicherry!” I said, “I will get a train.” They said, “No, no, take a bus, it is only a few hours.” I took a bus, got to Pondicherry bus-stand and took a rickshaw to the Ashram.

Madhav Pandit had already left for lunch, so I had to go and wait. Then I came back. The whole place was... like nothing I had ever seen. I had been travelling at that point off and on for years. I travelled extensively, the Middle East and Mexico and Europe, Nepal, Morocco. I had never come across anything like that, *that had the kind of light* that the Sri Aurobindo Ashram had in 1969. The place was luminous. There were all these old sadhaks there sitting on chairs, offering you chairs, flowers everywhere. The ashrams I had visited were not at all like that. Then they put me in Castellini Guesthouse, which was where John Kelly was staying. And John Kelly*¹ told me all his miraculous experiences with the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Which I thought were fun stories. I didn’t believe a word of it, but they were great stories. And then Ananta came in, he had just escaped

1. John Kelly was an American who had been a soldier in the famous Easy Company during the second World War. During the battles of 1944-45, in the midst of terrifying explosions, he was guided at each step by a voice and by two eyes which later he would recognize as the eyes of Sri Aurobindo. Maggi Lidchi recounted that astonishing and true story in her book *Great Sir and the Heaven Lady*.



Udavi : Jocelyn is seated in the middle (with dark glasses) and Vijay is seated on the right.

from Jipmer madhouse, he was so far out, so crazy. He was an American Boston Brahmin who had lived in the Ashram since 1963 (He is Bjorn in Satprem's book, *The Sannyasi*). He took me to his island, which was so beautiful you can't imagine. Then John took me to meet Maggi Lidchi, who is an impressive person...

All the time I am stuck there in Pondy because I am waiting for money.

Then August 15, Darshan Day. I go to the Ashram by 10 o'clock in the morning, with my daughter on my arm, to sit in the meditation, and they stopped me at the gate: "No, no, no children". What! I go back to the guesthouse, sit down in front of a photo of Sri Aurobindo, and—you are not going to believe this—he smiled at me. I was...

The next day or two I got a message: "Time for you to leave the guest-house, you had permission to stay till Darshan, Darshan is over, go." So I decided to go to Ceylon and back to America. I was still waiting for a cheque. I moved into the Quality Hotel by the park. Now I didn't tell anybody where I was, I had never written to Mother, I had made no approach to her. I left the guesthouse in the morning, moved into the Quality Hotel.

4 o'clock in the afternoon, Maggi Lidchi comes to me and says, "I have a message for you from the Mother, '*Don't worry about money, you can use all the facilities of the Ashram and Auroville*, love and blessings, Mother' " ... I had made no movement from my side towards her!

I had seen her at Darshan, on August 15, I stayed in the street with I don't know many thousands of people, and she came right down to me and said, "Look after Binah", but I thought maybe it is my own thing... And now I got this note from Mother, "You may use all the facilities of the Ashram, don't worry about money, love and blessings", that's pretty weird! So I said, "It's alright, Maggi, I am going to get a cheque in a day or two and I am going off to Ceylon, it has been nice meeting you."

Two or three days later I am at the Ashram post office, and as I am walking out of the post-office, Maggi comes to me and says, "Mother just told me that she will see you when you come back from Ceylon" ... I had *no intention of coming back* from Ceylon! Okay, so instead of going from Ceylon to the US, I'll come back here and then go to the US.

So I come back from Ceylon, and somebody had told me Mother sees people on their birthday. You know, I am always the greedy one. So I thought (I was coming back towards the beginning of October) well, maybe she will see me *now and one more time* on my birthday. Again I hadn't told her anything about myself.

So I get back and go to Maggie, and I say, "I am back, and when can I see the Mother?" She said to me, "Mother said she will see you on your birthday" (*laugh*).

When I went to see her on my birthday, I am still thinking of leaving. And she looks at me and she says, "Come back with Binah on her birthday". So I decided I wasn't leaving.

Of course it was not possible to stay, because I was in India on a tourist visa, etc... I didn't worry about stuff like that. There was no reality in Mother's world, except Mother. Everything else was just circumstances which she would move around.

She was fantastic, she was super-fantastic. When I arrived in her room the first time... my mind stopped totally, I was so astonished. But when I came out of there, I couldn't walk down the stairs, I didn't want to go down the stairs, I never wanted to go down the stairs, everything I had ever wanted in my life was right there in that room. It was something totally inexpli-

cable. I had met all the big gurus, Sai Baba and Babaji and Gurumayi and Anandamayi. I had never ever seen anything like the Mother. She was...

The most wonderful vibration you can imagine! You just cannot imagine the vibration. People say, "Oh, I am doing the same yoga as the Mother!" I just... You haven't a clue! Or when people start using the Mother's words as dogma... Mother never said things like that, she never did things like that, she was *Douce Mère*¹, she was the sweetest, the most wonderful being I have ever encountered in this life. Except perhaps for Sri Aurobindo. I know Sri Aurobindo only on a subtle level, I never met him in a physical form.

And I tell you, there was one rule in Auroville when Mother was in Pondicherry: Goodwill toward all, goodwill is the basis of peace and harmony. Without peace and harmony, she said, the Divine cannot manifest.

I was always a person to whom people said, "Get out of here, you don't belong here, you go." If people really got heavy with me, she always intervened. Always. So many times. It was almost like a joke. Because I am in some ways naïve, I am not clever enough to try to figure out how... But I didn't have to worry about a thing, she was right there, like a 360-degree shield around me, but nothing heavy, something wonderful.

I went to her once for darshan. I'd had an unhappy love affair. I was feeling very bad, very sorry for myself. Some people are still crying twenty years after they have finished... I went to Mother and I am wearing a dress made out of second-hand silk and covered with ribbons, it was really outrageous. And I walked in and she started laughing, and I started laughing with her, and we laughed and laughed and laughed. It was just... And we always had the same about clothes. One time my sister came and she brought me a dress in a new fabric, very soft, very nice. I thought, I will wear this to Mother, this is very different, she will never have seen something like this, I have never seen anything like that ever. I go to Mother and... she is wearing something in the same fabric! But very nicely cut. She was always there five steps in front of me. And she knew exactly where I was going and where I needed to go.

Like this accident the other day, it was something I needed, something I needed, to become aware of certain things...

So I stayed here. My father came. He wanted to take Binah to America, he was going to find her a good home. I took him to meet Mother. He

¹ sweet mother

came out of the Ashram, he was skipping down the streets with a basket of gifts she had given him. He had taken the gifts out and he had put the basket on his head. He had fallen in love, he was always sending her gifts, and presents and what not. He just totally fell in love. That made it very easy for me to remain in Pondicherry. Then my mother came in Christmas 1972. We went to the Mother, and my mother didn't see anything; she just saw an old woman. And she said, "Why are people bothering about an old woman?" There was never a lot of understanding between us, but at that point I could see that there wasn't *any* understanding.

I had thirteen darshans with Mother, and each one was memorable. In 1972 she would see different people who were in charge of different departments regularly, so I wrote and asked her if... . At that time Aurocreation was handling all the products of Auroville. I asked her if I could be one of the people from Aurocreation she saw every month, and her attendants said, "No, no, no, you have already seen too many people", and Mother said, "You see, they make me see the useless people, but they won't let me see the useful people." And she called me for each of the Aurocreation darshans.

The last time I went to her room, I was on the balcony with Jacqueline, and at that time — this was already in 1973 — there were thousands of people who were up there for darshan every morning, and so Mother would just sit there and hand out blessing packets. Except the last one on the line: to that person she would usually say something. So I was up there with Lisa, Jacqueline and Yann, and everybody wanted to be last. Champaklal said, "Come, come!" I did not want to bother Mother and keep her waiting, so I went in. She was handing out blessing packets, so I went to take my blessing packet, and she grabbed my finger — this is a little old lady, she must have weighed about a third of what I weighed — she took two of my fingers and pushed me down on my knees (*laugh*), she was so strong, you cannot imagine, and this was in 1973, when she was 95 years old. It didn't matter whether you were the last person on the line, it was not like she didn't know who you were, she knew exactly who you were, and why you were there.

I had gone to America in October 1973 because my father had a heart attack, and he wanted me to come. I was travelling across the United States and I was in New Mexico when my father called me and told me that George Nakashima had called him to tell him that the Mother had left her body. I just turned into ice. For me that was the toughest blow I had



Inside a hut: Jocelyn is on the left and Ravinda Shukla is seated on the right (Centre Field).

in my life. Because I totally believed in the supramental transformation, and I believed she was doing this supramental transformation. Today I really believe that death is a step on the path towards supramental transformation. However at that time... I could not get warm for months, it was such a terrible shock, the most profound shock. So I stayed in America at that time for a couple of years.

Each time I would take a big blow, I would say, “Oh God, if Mother was in Pondicherry she would throw them out: ‘Send them all into the sea!’” (*roaring with laughter*)

One time I was really upset. I meditated regularly. I had no money, I was sitting in my capsule, meditating, and I said, “Mother, why don’t you help me?” And suddenly my capsule filled up with all the yogis, and she kind of laughed at me. She said, “How much help do you want?”

One time, maybe in January 1972, I had gone to America for Christmas with Binah, and I came back, I had been away for five weeks. I had built the whole community, what is now Sri Ma, which was Far Beach. I had built this community after I had left my house at Bharat Nivas, Silence—I had built the whole community, workshops, houses, kitchen, everything. Myself I lived in a tiny little hut. I come back and there are some French people staying in my hut! I go over to the big community house and I

ask... They said, "Nothing belongs to anybody in particular." So I went to Pondicherry and I sent Mother a letter, "What should I do?" She replied, "Find your psychic being! (*roaring with laughter*) Try and I will help you. Love and blessings." You know, she was not dealing with bullshit. It was not what was about with her. It was not: Oh (*sad*), if she built another hut here or there, or did this or that... No! "Do the work, I will do..."

I built then the first hut in Kottakarai community, which I never lived in, because at that point Roger had taken the Silence community for Bharat Nivas. The people there had nowhere to go, so I gave them the hut I had built in Kottakarai, and stayed in the Centre with John Kelly. He was supervising the Bharat Nivas construction.

I had a great time. It was wonderful. Now, if you lose your house in Auroville, you worry, you go to the Housing Group, you ask for money, bla-bla. Then, you didn't worry. You lose a house? It is because Mother wants you to go somewhere else. I even feel that way about my life at this point. If I lose this body, because Mother says it is enough with this one, it is time for a new one. We don't have to be attached to anything here except the Divine. As long as you cling to the Mother's feet, she will drive you on and on and on to wherever you need to go. You really don't have to worry about yourself.

When I see the way Auroville is being administered today, I think: "Man, you guys don't get it at all. Not at all! You don't see it. You don't believe in it, you don't know it's there." They think they are doing, they think they are in charge. [Some group] said to a girl... She told them, "I am a child of Mother, you are a child of Mother, why do you make trouble for me?" And they said, "It is our Mandate!" You guys are out!

What makes one strong is the truth, what makes you weak is your ego or your fear. Fear is the opposite of love. The Mother... there is no death, there is no pain, there is only love, love, love. That was all she knew. That was all she had. That was all she was. That is power, that is true love.

I am so offended by the way people are administering Auroville, the way they have treated people here, that for a long time I really have never worried about what the people do. For me, at this point, I am getting toward the end of my life, and the only thing I am interested in is my karmayoga, and my relationship with the Divine. When I see what these people are doing: they hit him, they hurt him, but what they do to themselves is so much worse. Because when they were given a mountain to stand on,

they turned it into a pile of sand. I am not worried about it. I just hope at some point in time, something else will come forward. I am very happy that Mother granted me the possibility to live in Auroville totally outside of the mainstream. I really don't understand what is going on, but I feel it is Mother's problem, not mine. Let her fix it.

I go to the Matrimandir. For me that room is like Mother's room with Mother in it, it is fantastic, it is truly amazing, it is as close to perfection and consciousness as one can hope for among the human race, and then you see the people as they come out of the room acting like idiots. I wonder: "Go back, go back!" (*laugh*) Sooner or later it's got to do something. Somebody said three hundred years.

But we don't have three hundred years, we don't have another thirty years. We are in Tamil Nadu. Do you know what the population of this area was when Auroville started? Twenty-three thousand or something villagers in the area. Probably today there are about two hundred thousand or three hundred thousand or five hundred thousand villagers in the area. And we still try to pretend they don't exist? Good luck! (*laugh*)

There are people here who know nothing at all about Auroville, or yoga, or about Sri Aurobindo and Mother, or the concept of yoga. It is all this New Age nonsense. Nonsense!

At one point Ananta's pump was broken. Ananta asked Mother for money to fix his pump. So she gave money to fix his pump. The next week he wrote, "You have to give me more money to fix my pump, I gave a party for Purna and..." She said "Bon!" And she gave him more money (*laugh*). She wanted people to love each other, she wanted people to be caring toward one another. Mother's generosity was just outrageous.

I loved the Ashram, for me it was Shangri-la, all those beautiful people, you never heard a harsh word. Lovely. People handed flowers to one another, it was just an amazing place. I said: but how does one do this yoga? Some people write books, somebody teaches at the school, somebody works in the dining-hall, it doesn't matter and, you see, *then it didn't matter*, because you were all the same. Mother was something else, and we had all met Mother and we all knew that. It was clear. So you didn't feel that you were any better or any worse than anyone else particularly, because none of us were like her, nobody. And until today I still haven't found anybody like her. But it would be nice if we could have five or ten people like that in Auroville. Then Auroville would change very fast. Not people who say

they are like her, but people who have really changed from within. We would see it.

When she did the impossible she gave you the force to do the impossible. I have a friend Ravinda who was in Auroville till maybe 1972 or 1973. He was from Bombay, his family were water supply specialists. He lived in the Centre. He came a few weeks ago and he told me, “You are living proof that there is a Divine”, (*laugh*) because I had to fend alone, with only the Divine. I can’t go along any of the games that are being played.

Sri Aurobindo says the only thing that is important is spiritual progress. They make a big thing about death. He says that is not important, the only thing that is important is spiritual progress. These people don’t get that at all...

—From a conversation with Jocelyn



“Mother forbids you to leave the army!”

A conversation with Krishna and Kamla Tewari

Krishna:

She found a unique way to catch us. That was in the midst of a crisis we were going through, while I was in uniform, in the eastern part of India in Calcutta. In East Pakistan (what is now Bangladesh), a clamp-down took place by a ruthless military ruler, called General Niazi, as a result of which lots of refugees started coming into India. Literally millions of miserable people, without food, starving, without clothes, were being thrown out of East Pakistan and poured into Assam State and West Bengal, which were already overcrowded. We were told in the army, in my Headquarters (Headquarters Eastern Command), that we had to tackle this problem. That was 1971. It is amazing how we were confronted with this very difficult problem, while in my mind, at least, the 1962 debacle against the Chinese was still rankling.¹ I used to be very, very, very concerned: Do we have to go through that again?

One day one of my own officers came to me and said, “Sir, you are very pensive these days.” And I said, “Chum (typical army language), you would be more bloody pensive if you had some of the problems I carry in my head. I can’t share them with you because I have been told the top secret plans, but we may have to take military action.” He said, “Sir, you are my old instructor, I shouldn’t be advising you, but whatever your problems, *write to the mother*.” My immediate reaction was, “Who is the mother? My own mother is no more.” And then I discovered she was a French lady. In uniform, getting ready for an operation, writing to a foreigner... I never heard of her before, although I had heard of Sri Aurobindo. He told me she was in the Ashram, in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram; but it took me two to three days to decide. And I wrote just two lines: that, “I have been advised that I should seek your blessings; I cannot talk about my problems; I am in the Army, and I would be very happy to get your blessings.”

Across my letter she signed, “Blessings, Mira”. I received it after a few days.

1. Krishna had been made a prisoner of war by the Chinese during their 1962 attack.

It's amazing how gradually things started clarifying, getting more stabilized, in the sense that we knew what we could do, what the Pakistanis could do, and we knew that the situation would not be absolutely out of control. And it is amazing how the same instrument [that young officer] had gone around to most of the top people in the army, including my commander in chief, General Jagjit Singh Arora. I didn't know—none of us knew that he had been going around.

One day, myself and another General, Narendra Singh, travelled with the Army Commander in the VIP aircraft. Narendra had got into the aircraft already, and the Commander in Chief was coming, following us, and as he came in there was this elaborate seat for him in the vip aircraft. He lay down. We used to be working about twenty hours a day. Sitting down in front of him, watching him, we greeted each other. I was very fond of him, and he liked me. I said, "You are very pensive this morning." (I used the same words). He sat up immediately and said, "Krishen, you haven't done your homework this morning!" I said, "Sir, I beg your pardon, thirty years of service in the army, I haven't been caught so far, where have I slipped up?" He opened his pocket, and gave me a message to read which had been given to him by my own staff as he was coming into the aircraft (somebody had rushed out and given him). It was an intercept message from the Russians, warning us that the Chinese had started moving towards the northern border. I am very touchy about the Chinese, and I immediately said, "Oh! no Sir, we can't cope with it now." He said, "Don't worry, whatever the thing, *get the Mother's blessings*." He opened his other pocket to take a little blessing packet.

My reaction was, "You too" like in Shakespeare! It was amazing: *all of us had received the Mother's blessings*. One by one. And it is amazing how things got clarified.

Things got delayed, in order for us to get more ready. While we were getting ready, suddenly the Pakistanis took the initiative on the Western front, so we were at liberty to do what we liked, we did not have to start the war. It is amazing how we were preparing mentally for it. With great confidence we took on the Pakistanis, and in two weeks time it was over. The war started the 3rd of December 1971, and on the 16th of December, the Commander in Chief of East Pakistan, General Niazi, formally asked for release. It was over in two weeks time.

I didn't meet him on that day of surrender, I went the next day, the 17th,



Krishna and his wife, Kamla, with their daughter Uma, at Udhampur, just before he retired.

and in his mess we were informally discussing among ourselves what had gone on and so on. After all, we knew each other before Partition, and one of our Divisional Commanders and he were Corps mates in Bangalore before Partition. While discussing with them, we asked him, “What happened to you? What kind of an officer are you? You surrender with 93 regular soldiers fully armed, and we have just been to your depot where you have got all the weaponry given to you by the Americans.” He suddenly became very serious. He said, “I don’t know, I thought it was hopeless, I thought it was hopeless.” I could see from his face that he was sincere, not a coward. He was not a coward. There is no doubt—that’s why I call it a divine intervention—that the Mother’s action had taken place, and we were given all the support, and the Pakistanis were told not to go on and on and on.

I immediately decided that I must find out more about it. That was 17th of December, and we were still trying to sort things out in East Pakistan, trying to control the situation. In the middle of January 1972, I thought I would request some leave to go to Pondicherry. It was flatly refused. In early February, a second time I asked for leave. Luckily my boss was with his Chief of Staff, General Jack Jacob, who later became the Governor of Punjab. He turned to Jacob, “Jack, what is the problem with Krishen? He is



Krishna Tewari, 1971. He then was
Chief Signal Officer (Eastern Command).

always asking for leave!" So I said, "I will tell you what the problem is, I would like to go to Pondicherry." As soon as I named Pondicherry, it was amazing—even now I can remember his face—how his face changed immediately.

"Really?"

"I would like to go and find out who this lady is," I said, "I have heard of Sri Aurobindo, but I have never heard of her before and I believe that [her intervention] did the trick."

So he said, "Jack, I think he should be allowed." And,

"When can you go?"

"Sir, as soon as possible."

But I was allowed to go only after the middle of the month, so that the things could get stable, and I thought we would go as a family. Kamla was looking after the wounded Pakistani prisoners of war in the military hospital in Calcutta. Her leave was another problem, but somehow, using the name of my boss, I got her boss to give her leave. And what strange coincidence, we arrived in Pondicherry with our three daughters (the eldest one was not with us, because she was in her medical college for commissioning into the Army Medical Corps) on the 20th. We had no idea that the Mother's birthday was on the 21st of February!

On 21st morning, Prem Malik was there, a college friend of mine. We were told that early morning at 4 o'clock, there would be the inauguration of the Matrimandir at Auroville. We never heard of Auroville before. The foundation stone of the first pillar was going to be laid. At 4 o'clock in the morning, the two of us (we left the children behind) found ourselves standing on blank red laterite soil, covered with red dust. A huge pit had been dug out for the foundation. Both of us were given a small stone to

lay down, after some music of Sunil was played. Both of us were deeply moved. Later we saw Mother on the balcony in Pondicherry, and went to the Samadhi where there was a very emotionally charged atmosphere.

On the 22nd morning we were told, "You will be given a special audience as a family". Mother's secretary, MP Pandit, was the one who was to escort us. The five of us were taken to her room, and we were told that we could sit at her feet one by one, look into her eyes, and think of all the things we wanted. These words were used by Roger Anger who met me just outside the Mother's room. Typical French pronunciation, "Generrâl, think of all the things you want, Mother will grant them." I didn't know him at that time.

I must have sat there for I don't know how long, I thought for eternity. One by one we sat. When I came out, I felt very guilty, looking at the people outside. Mother must have thought, "What a stupid man this is," because I had gone completely blank; I didn't think of anything I wanted; I was absolutely dead blank. But when I shared this with Madhav Pandit, he said, "It is very fortunate that you were blank, she will give you what you need." This is how She brought us in.

This instrument (this young officer), is not even here in the Ashram, but he fulfilled a role for me. He keeps in touch with me, he comes here sometimes.

Kamla:

In that war there were very heavy casualties. We were getting trains coming from Assam, and ambulances coming from nearby. In those few war days, there had been heavy casualties, mainly young people. We had four theatres functioning simultaneously: chest surgeon, orthopaedic surgeon, neuro-surgeon, and general surgeon. We were on twenty-four hours duty. There was no leave, no time at all. I often used to make rounds in the evening, and I even remember there was a soldier who was crying. I walked up to him. He had an injured leg, and was crying with pain. His femur had been fractured and one bone was pressing against the nerve. He was screaming. I sent him to the theatre. There were many cases like that. Then Dacca collapsed, and from its hospital mostly Biharis Musulmans were sent to us, because there was nobody to look after them there. Because I was the senior Major, they asked me to look after the boys. I was very busy at the time, so how we got this leave I don't know!

When we reached Pondicherry, we knew nothing about this place. We had some food at *Toutcu'il faut* (the children were small, Shubha my youngest was only 6). Then early in the morning when we came to Auroville, we were so impressed by the complete barrenness... All you could see was a few palmyra trees on the way, and going to Matrimandir we were all covered with red dust.

The big pit was surrounded by many people. Many people from the Ashram. Sunil's music was played. I thought I had never heard such beautiful music before. And while listening to that music itself, in my heart it came, a voice from within said: "*This is your place.*" I thought to myself, this big barren area is my place? (*laugh*) So I said, leave it; if the Divine says it is my place, I will come here at some time. I made no decisions, he [Krishna] made all the decisions of coming here.

We put the first pebbles in the East pillar, Mahalaksmi, and we came back to Pondicherry. We saw Mother on the balcony for a little while, then we had meditation at the Samadhi. I had often tried to meditate, because I had met a lot of saints (I had been fortunate from childhood to visit many ashrams and meet many saints), but I could never meditate. But here, around the Samadhi, at 10 o'clock the bell rang and... I don't know what happened, I was in complete *samadhi*. I woke up, 10.30... I thought, what happened to me? Where was I?

That was one important thing.

The other one was meeting the Mother. To me, all I remember—I don't remember her face at all—all I remember is two deep blue eyes, that's all. And they looked into you, and you went completely blank.

We were asked to give her flowers, and she picks up a rose and returns it to you. I was given a yellow rose, I think. He was given a red rose, and the children were given... I don't remember. We came out, I was deeply moved, I felt like crying and crying. I was crying, all the way back to Chennai on the bus. I was crying, something let loose.

All the children were individually affected.

When did you decide to come back?

Krishna:

Immediately. When we travelled back to Calcutta, this was discussed between us, and I knew I had to be there. I had to be here for life.



Ceremony at the start of the construction of Matrimandir, 21 February 1972.

I was coming towards the tail end of my service. So within a few months of our return to Calcutta, after meeting the Mother, I asked for retirement. I asked for premature retirement, which you can seek. After all, we had won the war, and I had got over the feeling of the 1962 debacle. I was laughed at by everybody, because I had been given an award, the second highest award for service. We had a chief at that time, Field Marshall Maneckshaw, who was very good at Punjabi abuses. He had come to visit Calcutta, and then he saw my application.

“What the bloody hell do you think?” he said, “As if you can leave the army when you like!”

“Sir, this is what I have decided,” I said.

In the meantime I had written to Madhav Pandit that I had decided to leave the army. Within a day or two of receiving my letter, he rang me up in Calcutta, and I still remember the loud words of his, “*The Mother has forbidden you to leave the army.* She said it four times. Please note: he is not to leave the army, he must not leave the army, he must *continue* in service. *We shall decide* when he is to leave the army.” I had to withdraw my application! And I was laughed at and cursed a second time: I was wasting everybody’s time.

Then I was promoted, and in 1973 I was posted to Kashmir, for another unique experience before my retirement. Then there was a possibility that

I might get another extension, a two years extension. I said no. So at the end of 1976, when the term was over, we decided (Kamla too) to leave the army. We came straight from Kashmir to Pondicherry. Permanently.

And we have been here since...

You stayed in the Ashram for three years. When and why did you decide to come to Auroville?

Krishna:

The decision to come to Auroville was taken because of the foundation ceremony of Matrimandir. At that time in 1972 we had decided on Auroville. We stayed in the Ashram because there was no place in Auroville.

Did other officers who had received the blessing packets come here?

Some of them came, but nobody else settled here. She decides who is required to do what. Others had other problems in their lives. I feel I am very lucky...

—From a conversation with Krishna and Kamla



Out of Africa

A text by Tim Wrey

As an Aurovilian one is often asked, “How did you come to Auroville?” In my case I’m tempted to reply using the title of Isak Dinesen’s famous book... “Out of Africa”.

My wife (Susan) and I had decided to take a year’s sabbatical with our two children, Camilla and Marcus, aged 6 and 3½ respectively when we set out, and travel down through Africa to Johannesburg, where Susan’s father was living; visit Cape Town; ship ourselves from Durban across the Indian Ocean to Bombay; and see parts of India and Nepal before returning home overland again to London.

For this we bought a 2-litre petrol Land-Rover fitted with heavy-duty suspension and strengthened rear axle; had it converted to sleep all four of us inside; boosted its fuel carrying capacity via a second tank and 8 jerricans to nearly 260 litres, giving us a range of 1,200 to 1,500+ kms depending on road conditions; installed an on-board water filter and carrying capac-



ity for 135 litres of water; added a second spare wheel, sand ladders and air horns; and loaded it with lots of spare parts, tools, maps, food reserves, etc. It became, quite literally, an almost self-sufficient home on wheels for us for the next year.

Travelling through Africa was fantastic. There are no words to fully capture its beauty, sense of space and magnificence, nor to adequately portray its colourful and delightful people. We took three months driving from Morocco to South Africa via the Atlas Mountains, Algeria's High Plateau, the Sahara, the Congo Jungles, East Africa's game parks, the Victoria Falls, the Zimbabwe ruins and other wonders, but finally we found ourselves on the last stretch in to Johannesburg, where we had arranged to rendezvous with my father-in-law. "Everyone I know flies to South Africa," he remarked, as we came to a halt beside him, "you certainly chose the hard way!"

After spending several weeks in South Africa, during which we crossed the Karoo desert to visit Cape Town and see the southern "Garden Route", we reached Durban, where we took an Italian ship across the Indian Ocean to Bombay. Clearing the Land-Rover in Bombay took a day and a half of nightmarish bureaucracy, but finally we were free to leave.

On board ship we had developed close friendships with several couples who were also globe-trotting with vehicles. One of them wanted us to travel with them to the north, but we had other plans. We had an introduction to a Canadian woman at Mundgod Tibetan Refugee Settlement near Goa, married to the Tibetan official in charge of the settlement. And we had been told—emphatically—by a close and perceptive Italian artist friend in London that we must visit a place he called "the new vibrating Auroville." He had never been there himself, or to India, but his sensitive nature clearly saw something. He was, in hindsight, Mother's first instrument, because his guidance had spoken directly to something within us with such strength that we readily stuck to our original plans, parted from our friends, and headed south.

It wasn't long before we began to regret our decision, because for hundreds of kilometres all the bridges were being widened, and we were constantly forced to drive through dusty, rutted riverbeds and take other tortuous detours. After seemingly dozens of such diversions, increasing tiredness, the general strain of driving safely in India, and the difficulty of negotiating the over-crowded unsigned towns en route, we felt like turning round and re-joining the friends we had made on the ship, whose itinerary we



Procession of monks, Tibetan settlement of Mundgod.

knew, but we decided first to visit the Canadian woman at Mundgod and consult with her.

She was undoubtedly Mother's second instrument. Although she had never been to Auroville, the moment we raised doubts she swept them aside: "I would advise you to go on. You should definitely see the place," she said, with inspiring enthusiasm.

And so, after a culturally fascinating week amid four thousand Tibetans, nearly one thousand of them monks — a week which coincided with celebration of the anniversary of the uprising in Tibet that led to the flight of the Dalai Lama — we headed south again via Bangalore, Kancheepuram and Mahabalipuram to reach Pondicherry on 15th March 1973.

From Pondicherry we were directed out via jipmer Hospital to look for a dirt track near Morattandi, leading into the heart of the countryside. We found it; then came kilometre after kilometre in the heat and dust — through a village (Edayanchavadi), past a single nice-looking house off to the right (Auroson's Home), and so on. But still there was no sign of a city. Worse, something had begun to make an odd noise in the engine. Finally we felt convinced that we had taken a wrong direction, as ahead lay only what looked like a lone construction site adjacent to a large tree, and nothing else. As we approached it, thinking to get directions, just seventy

metres from the site there was a terrible noise from the engine, and we were forced to make an immediate halt in the mid-day sun.

It was *the first time* in 25,000 km of travel from London that we had experienced a breakdown (which says something for the enormous strength and reliability of our vehicle). And now it had happened in a remote area of countryside, miles from anywhere.

I couldn't imagine a much worse situation in which to be in, but what happened next was extraordinary. When I went over to the nearby buildings, literally the first man I spoke to was a Westerner who turned out to be a mechanic, and introduced himself as Jack Alexander from the USA. It seemed miraculous, so I explained that we had broken down near the banyan.

"We're looking for Auroville," I said.

"This is Auroville," he replied.

"No," I went on, "I mean *the city of Auroville*."

"You're in the city," he said. "Although it's not yet built, you're at the very heart of the city area at a place called the Matrimandir."

25,000 kilometres of travel, and we had broken down *for the first and only time just seventy metres from the absolute centre of Auroville!* Not only had we broken down, with a severed fan belt jamming the alternator, but I next saw that we also had a bad leak from the petrol tank, and then our daughter announced that she was feeling sick! We had been well and truly brought to a complete halt by forces beyond our understanding.

For the next few days I worked frantically trying to get replacement fan belts and repair the petrol tank, but meanwhile we spent a lot of our time working on the Matrimandir, helping with food preparation at Centre Camp, and talking with the Aurovilians. The latter impressed us enormously, because for the first time in our lives we found ourselves with people of many nations who were not just talking about how the world should be, but were actually trying to do something about it themselves, meanwhile living together in camaraderie despite differences in their age, class, background creed or nationality. They were truly inspiring to be with.

Perhaps because by then we had travelled through some sixteen countries, making friendly contact with people from many different nations and cultures, we were also interested in the ideal of human unity in diversity that they talked about. In short, we were ripe for Auroville and all that it stood



Where one can see Tim's Land-Rover which, after 25,000 km of travel,
broke down just under the Banyan tree.

for and had to offer. The result was that we decided not to rush away as soon as we could, but stay on and learn more about the project.

We also became interested in the possibility of seeing The Mother.

Looking back, I suppose that what happened next was not unusual, but at the time we were amazed at the way things unfolded. Through an American Aurovilian named Roger Toll (Mother's third instrument) we were introduced to Madhav Pandit (Mother's fourth instrument), a senior sadhak close to Mother, who asked us to write a letter to Her and give it to him next day. This we did, enclosing our photos. The following day we were told by Madhav that Mother had expressed interest in us, and had accepted to see us, adding that we could bring the children with us. He then told us that he had arranged for us to join a group going for birthday darshan on March 25th.

What follows next is an extract from my diary:

Sunday, 25th March 1973

The BIG DAY! I had awoken at 2.30 a.m., then gone into such a deep sleep that I thought it was only half an hour later when I re-awoke at 6.00. Reading a book called *Conversations* after breakfast I came across a comment

of Mother's to the effect that some sleep can be "absolute unconsciousness, almost death." Was that where I had been, I wondered? It felt as though I had virtually died for those 3+ hours, and been reborn with the dawn.

After breakfast we collected flowers for offering to Mother, and brought them back to our room. They looked a bit tired, so we put them in water to freshen them up while we changed into our best clothes. Just before we left, a young woman we had met earlier arrived and assured us that many people took children to see Mother, and we should not worry about our two coming with us, which we had been. I suppose you could say that she was Mother's fifth instrument, albeit just a reassuring messenger in the circumstances.

We reached the Ashram sharp at 10.00, and after leaving our shoes in the courtyard mounted a flight of green-carpeted stairs in a quiet, anticipatory frame of mind. On the first floor we passed through a room with leopard skins on the chairs, then went on up a second staircase, past some sadhaks, to a man ticking off names at the top of the stairs, and finally out onto a covered roof area in company with others. As we sat down to wait, I looked around and noticed how fresh and beautiful everyone else's flowers were, and felt a bit ashamed of ours.

We had told the children they must be silent, but our son couldn't resist whispering that his flowers, like mine, were not looking good! Sitting up there in that concentrated devoted company I felt extremely peaceful and relaxed.

After maybe twenty minutes everyone was summoned, and we lined up to enter Mother's room, with us—as non-birthday people—at the end of the line.

I am not specially sensitive, but I immediately noticed a strong and beautiful atmosphere inside the room. I had a quick look around, then concentrated on Mother. She was sitting in a large armchair, with her head deeply bowed. As people came before her, they knelt, and were then given a "blessing packet" of rose petals charged with her spiritual force.

I suppose it was all the talk we had absorbed about the Mother which affected my impression of her, but I had the distinct feeling of being in the presence of someone extraordinary, someone more than just an ordinary human being. The atmosphere was really powerful, and suddenly the children, who had shown no hesitation beforehand, didn't want to go to Mother,

and hung back nervously. We knew there was nothing we could do about it, so Susan went ahead and knelt first, getting her blessing packet. Then it was my turn. I was in a daze, but I knelt with head bowed, resting my forehead on the material of Mother's garments on the left edge of her chair. As I did so, I felt Mother's hand gently touch my head, then, assuming that that was it, I took the proffered silvery blessing packet from her, stood up, and started towards the door. I had taken maybe two or three paces, when something made me look again at Mother, and I saw that she had turned her head as though to follow me with her eyes as I moved away. That is the moment when I feel my bond with Her was made, because earlier I hadn't looked into her eyes, as everyone else apparently did.

Then it was over, and with my eyes wet with emotion I was at the door and going down the stairs to the courtyard, feeling in a state of utter peace, as though walking on air, conscious of nothing but a surging aspiration to improve myself and be worthy of Mother and what she had just given me. I felt such a beginner, and so low compared to all around me, but there was now a determination to try to rise to a higher level, and be as Sri Aurobindo and The Mother would want me to be. For this, I felt that Mother had in fact given me the strength and determination to follow the path and reach the goal.

Susan had also been deeply affected. She had expected to come away with a feeling of elation and joy, but instead felt devastated. As she put it, it was as though Mother had revealed to her all the defects within her which needed to be worked on, and she suddenly felt very unworthy, and was in tears at what she had seen within herself, even thinking of running away from Pondicherry.

From the Ashram we went straight up to Centre, and sat first in silence on the brick structures near the banyan tree. We then went down into the Matrimandir pit and walked all round the structure, before going on to the Nursery, where Roger joined us.

After lunch Susan expressed the need to be left alone in complete peace and quiet for some time, and retired to a private room; but no sooner had she settled herself than the first thing she saw in front of her was the following quote from the Bhagavad Gita, set beside a picture of The Mother:

Fix your mind on Me, be devoted to Me, worship Me,
and bow to Me;

So shall you without doubt reach Me. This I truly promise you; for you are dear to Me.

Surrendering all duties to Me seek refuge in Me alone. I shall absolve you of all sins; grieve not.

That finished her off! It took her some hours before she could again compose herself and begin to relate to the outside world. In contrast, I was not in such a state, and felt instead a calmer and more peaceful inner joy, which allowed me to interact with everyone normally.

We later learned that Mother stopped seeing all ‘new’ people from the beginning of April, so it seems possible that we may have been the last ones—almost certainly the last Westerners—to come before her in her room.

We stayed seven weeks in all, to also experience Mother’s Balcony Darshan in April, then, after visiting Nepal, returned overland to Europe via Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran and Turkey.

By the time we reached our home in London we had done over 40,000 km and had our passports stamped by twenty-five countries, but more important was the stamp on our hearts and psyche made by The Mother and Auroville. As we left Auroville to begin our long journey back to the UK, I had felt that we were actually leaving ‘home’, a home to which I wanted to return.

With Mother’s help I finally did in 1977, but this time “Out of England”.

—Tim Wrey



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AUROVILLE

OR THE QUEST FOR A BETTER WORLD

Past • Present • Future

Auroville, 1968, an elderly woman who had not left her room for a long time, located in a southern Indian ashram, invites young people from all over the world to follow her in a great adventure: creating a city, a new kind of a city, with its charter defined as follows:

- *Auroville belongs to nobody in particular. Auroville belongs to humanity as a whole. But to live in Auroville, one must be a willing servitor of the Divine Consciousness.*
- *Auroville will be the place of an unending education, of constant progress, and a youth that never ages.*
- *Auroville wants to be the bridge between the past and the future. Taking advantage of all discoveries from without and from within, Auroville will boldly spring towards future realisations.*
- *Auroville will be a site of material and spiritual research for a living embodiment of an actual Human Unity.*

Surprisingly, people started to respond. The adventure began. This ashram is the community of disciples gathered around the great revolutionary, poet and visionary, Sri Aurobindo. The elderly lady, who will be called *the Mother*, is a Frenchwoman who worked alongside Sri Aurobindo for more than thirty years. In 1968, Sri Aurobindo is no more, but the Mother is still at the head of the Ashram, and it is she who launches this rather ambitious project called *Auroville*.



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