WELCOMING THE BABIES – AUROVILLE’S MIDWIVES (part 1):

Hilde – delivering 2 generations of “baby newcomers” during 42 years!

Approximately 1100 babies have been born in Auroville so far. Josette and Isabelle’s research counts 505 babies until 1995. And to that number, Auroville’s long-time midwife Hilde calculated another 580 babies born since 1996, about 25 – 30 each year.

In this two-part report, we honor Auroville’s midwives - the ladies who helped deliver these babies into the world and in the specific circumstances of the City of Dawn. This first report is from Hilde, Auroville’s beloved midwife for now over 42 years. Through her capable hands and loving care, two generations and several hundreds of babies have been born.

Hilde reports:

Soon after I arrived from Belgium in 1977, it became known that I was available as a qualified nurse/midwife. One person who was extremely grateful for my arrival was the pregnant midwife Miriam, who was desperately looking for help and a replacement. My initiation into midwifery in Auroville was first helping her out with 3 deliveries and very soon after, delivering her baby too! Before I knew it, delivering children became a full-time job. I would often find myself doing a delivery in the middle of the night by candlelight, sending the father out to fetch water!

In those years I cycled out to expectant mothers and each time when I would come back home from a delivery, I was filled with inner warmth from witnessing one more amazing gift of life. This is an experience which I still feel as miraculous very much today even after more than 42 years!
I still work pretty much with the same basic tools as I did when I started: a few pairs of scissors, clamps, a stethoscope, doppler, cotton – all each time sterilized before a new delivery - and then put them in my 40 year-old medical drum. For a house delivery, I carry my bag with the tools on my motorcycle or electrical moped, together with a small box of homeopathic medicines. For mothers who choose a natural home delivery, the small homeopathic pills do wonders, and I prefer not to use the allopathic arsenal.

For many years I worked alone, and also with midwives like Mindy and others who lived for a while in Auroville. Then, quite some years back, Auradha - one of our Auroville-born children who I’ve known since she was a small child - joined me. Auradha is a trained nurse who worked for many years with the Auroville ambulance service. She is a true support and a very caring person who, as an Auroville-born child, has the real Auroville spirit within her. It is a real treasure to be able to share those special home deliveries with an Auroville-born adult.

Here’s a happy photo of Sourya & Aurovici’s just-born baby Amely, with Auradha, mom Sourya, and me:

![Image of Sourya, Aurovici, and their new baby Amely with Auradha.](image)

Every pregnant mother is assisted during her pre- and post-natal period. The after-care for baby and mother happens daily for as long as required. If there are complications with the delivery that cannot be handled at home, I take the mother to a maternity hospital in Pondicherry.

As Auroville changed, so did the settings for deliveries. Huts became houses or apartments; open wells or hand pumps became running taps and candles became electric lights … Although a delivery in a tree house or a hut is also still very much part of the beauty and the reality, even today!
Two generations of babies - today, I find myself delivering babies to parents who I helped bring into world many years earlier - “a truly amazing experience!”

This is the beautiful cradle that’s been used for decades in Auroville …
and passed along from family to family for every new City of Dawn child that’s born ....
In 1990, I had the opportunity to attend an under-water birth workshop in Australia with waterbirth pioneer Igor Charkovsky from Russia, a technique which had fascinated me for a long time.

The workshop and resulting contacts gave me the necessary confidence to deliver our first water baby at the end of 1990 in a tub placed in the middle of a hut. Since that time, the plastic tubs were replaced several times.

A few years ago, we received a beautiful comfortable birthing pool from one of our moms and this transportable pool became part of my standard equipment. Mothers can make use of it either to relax or for delivering. The pool is filled with the exact water temperature needed for welcoming the newborn baby, and there is always a person at hand who heats the water.

Happy events are once in a while intertwined with difficult, sad, and painful moments. But then I always observe that the Grace helps out in many miraculous ways …

And in the end, it is always Mother who reminds us that she wants her new children to be born in the safest possible way!