In our Part 2 of AV babies and the midwives who accompany and assist the parents, we focus on
the work of Paula, who is co-leading the Morning Star birthing project with Krishna. Paula is an
American midwife who has been associated with Auroville for decades. Since 2015, as an
Aurovillian, she has been doing natural deliveries, at home and in Santé. Here we share Paula's
ideals and dreams, and the work of the Morning Star team.

My first independent delivery as a newly-trained midwife from the USA was in Auroville in 1976
in Kottakari! Then, back in America, I was a home-birth midwife for many years followed by 20
years in a U.S. hospital. Since 2015, I've been doing home births and births at Santé, the Auroville
Institute for Integral Health. Together with my co-project-holder Krishna, we have started a new
initiative called “Morning Star” to widen the opportunities for natural birthing in Auroville.

Birth is eternal and I strongly believe that physiological and natural birth is a doorway to the
soul. Our mission and dream at Morning Star is to provide a true natural birth center in Auroville –
one that offers a spiritual atmosphere and manifests the highest spiritual qualities of care
during pregnancy, birth and the first year of life. It will have a water birth option, a labor garden,
space for family members and with safe, rapid access to emergency services. We also envision
space for educational programs and a Well-Child Clinic for children from birth to age 1.

The Morning Star team includes myself, Krishna, Shanti, Magesh and Monique. There are young
women here in Auroville who really want to be midwives. Krishna studied midwifery in the UK
and is also a doula (a woman who gives support to another woman during pregnancy and after
birth) and a lactation counsellor. She helps with prenatal care, deliveries, all aspects of
breastfeeding and home visits throughout AV. Shanti is interested in breast feeding and midwifery. Magesh is a Tamil Aurovillian who is a TN Registered Nurse and Midwife. She works
with me and is gaining experience in natural deliveries. Monique is a Canadian midwife and
Newcomer. She provides midwifery care, educating of childbearing women and training for
midwifery students. Monique is uniquely prepared for this because she is educated as a certified
midwife with a postgraduate degree in education. She has years of academic and experiential
midwifery knowledge.
We wish to respond to the women who desire a less medicalized birth. However, if a woman chooses to give birth in a local Indian hospital, one of the team will attend her and provide doula services. In addition, we provide women’s health care, pap tests, breast exams birth control, and counselling and educational opportunities including pregnancy awareness, childbirth preparation and infant care. It was when I helped Sindhuja and Michael to have their baby that I started to imagine a dedicated space in Auroville for this work.

My focus is to be safe, careful, and attentive to the moment by moment details of the work that needs to be done and then consecrate that work in the spirit of Auroville. I try to be a touchstone of reality, a touchstone of reassurance and of knowledge, for what can otherwise be a very tumultuous, emotionally-charged and fearful time for the woman giving birth and her partner. There is the emotional component which is to have sympathy, empathy and compassion for your patients and for their families.

Even for women who feel the most prepared, the actual intensity of the birthing process can be unnerving. The reality of the situation is so profound that it doesn’t require any embellishment.

Midwifery is considered a science and an art. The science has certainly been highly developed in the West, and I value that. It’s incredibly important when you have an opportunity to learn the hands-on skills and then use this knowledge. But what I also love is the art. The art is in witnessing, supporting, confirming and reassuring the woman that the process is on track, while allowing her to be at the centre. It’s her birth, her creation. It’s a beautiful work. It’s everything – it involves your head, heart and hands all at once.

I feel that the mistreatment of women during childbirth is a basic violation of human rights. It is, of course, a violation of the mother’s rights. But it’s more than that! What about the baby’s? And what about fathers? How did fathers get so removed from the birthing experience?!

The name “Morning Star” is from a passage in Sri Aurobindo’s Savitri. I had read Savitri even before I became a midwife. This particular passage means so much to me because it’s so hopeful for mothers and for humanity:
I saw the Omnipotent’s flaming pioneers
Over the heavenly verge which turns towards life
Come crowding down the amber stairs of birth;
Forerunners of a divine multitude,
Out of the paths of the morning star they came
Into the little room of mortal life

So I’m happy to create a place in Auroville where I can manifest that highest aspiration of being a midwife in an ambience worthy of the beings that wish to descend!