

Matrimandir

November 2022



Bird's eye view of the Test Lake with completed waterproofing lining

In this year of the 150th anniversary of Sri Aurobindo's birth, the atmosphere at Matrimandir has been surcharged with a lot of creative energy. This has been reflected in very visible advances in the work, both in the areas of gardens development and in the construction of the Lake which is to surround the Matrimandir gardens.

The activity of the Lake was tremendous, first to complete the 10,000 square meter excavation and then, during the month of September to install the waterproofing liner needed to seal the 10 meter deep Lake.

In our May newsletter we had shown the installation of the waterproofing layer in the Rainwater harvesting channel,- the 7,5 meter wide channel built all around the perimeter of the gardens to harvest the runoff of rainwater from the site and to feed it into the future Lake.

During September, this same activity of lining was carried out on a vaster scale with the installation of the Lake's HDPE liner.

Activity took place mostly at night, when the air was cool, - as this is best for the fitting of the black liner. During the days, and also at night, there was simultaneously a very active work to complete the excavation of the lake and to set up the two temporary end walls, constructed of huge concrete blocks.

It was like an intricate dance, with as many as 10 large machines, excavators, JCB's and lorries moving to dig, shape and remove the earth and with cranes and tractors moving to bring in the concrete blocks of the two end walls. More than 1000 two ton blocks were carried into the excavation to build these two walls.



Assembling the block walls at the lake ends, while completing the excavation at the same time.

The walls now stand 5 meters high, – enough to hold the collected rain waters of this monsoon. In the coming year the walls will be raised to their full height of 10 meters which is the full depth of the lake.

The scene of activity was like nothing seen on the site for decades, the scale of the work reminded one of the massive task of excavating of the crater of the Matrimandir the beginning of its construction in '71. At that time, there were no machines involved, all was done by a coordinated team of 400 workers working nonstop to dig out that starkly giant hole in the red, empty plain of Auroville.

Now, fifty years on, the machines were in full force as the lake bed was dug out by large excavators, shaped and then compacted by heavy mechanical vibrating rollers.

The coordinated dance of machines in the excavation was truly amazing to witness.

And then the installation teams got into full swing. Work often proceeded fully through the night, as long strips of a soft protecting geotextile were first laid down on the earth and then, on top of this, the 2mm thick HDPE liner was laid out in 7 meter wide strips. These strips were welded together by a self-propelled welding machine that produced a double track weld. (Two parallel welded joints about 10 centimeters apart). Each joint in the liner was then pressure tested by inflating the line between the double weld and confirming that it would maintain a proper air pressure. If there was any fault a patch or re welding was carried out. All this, carried out under the careful professional eye of a technician who had come from Germany for a month just to do this job.



Installing the HDPE liner with its upper and lower protective layers of white geotextile

This team would then retire to their homes to catch up on sleep then reassemble at 5 or 6 pm in the evening to take on the next full night of installation. The weather Gods were kind... just at the beginning of the job there were one or two days of rain which slowed things done, but then, after some serious conversation with the controllers of the clouds, and with a considerable dose of faith, we were granted more than two weeks of completely dry weather which allowed the work to proceed apace.

One constraint was that the master welder installer of the liner had come from Germany especially for this job and had booked his ticket to return to Germany on the 28th of September.... So all had to be completed in just three weeks.

But, by Sept 26th, all was done, the liner was fully installed, along with its under layer and over layer of protective white geotextile. A truly immense job, completed on time due to the highly coordinated work of the teams on site (and due to the smiling cooperation of the rain gods!).

Celebrating Completion of the Test Lake Liner

The strong movement forward in the work on the site has also been seen in the [gardens of Matrimandir](#).

By mid-August both the new gardens of Power and Life, close to the Banyan tree, had reached their finishing stages. Today, both stand complete except for the refinement of plantation that goes always quietly forward in all gardens. In the garden of Power, a circular space is still reserved for a sculptural expression of aesthetic Power... this feature is yet to come. Mother had chosen the single red hibiscus which she named "Aesthetic Power" as the central flower for this garden, giving the comment: "Beauty is a great power". We look forward to the creation of sculpture, or symbol, representing this aspect.

The bright flowers displayed in the garden of Life help very much to convey the beauty and vibrancy forming the core of the Life aesthetic. In Power garden, the lines are simpler, with a gently curved path and low walls enclosing an almost Zen-like space. Life garden is more playful, more contoured, more colorful. Mother had chosen the double red hibiscus which she named Power of Consciousness as the key flower here.



The Garden of Life close to the Banyan

With the finalization of these two smaller gardens adjacent to the banyan tree, we have now taken up the next phase of the gardens: preparation for building the garden of Light, – one of the six remaining gardens to be built. (Still to be done, after Light, are: Wealth, Utility, Youth, Harmony and Perfection)

An elegant, simple design, researched over several years and displayed in community presentations a few years ago, has now come forward for manifestation on the ground.

We look very much forward to building this “Garden of Light” over the coming months.



A graphic representation of the design for the Garden of Light

As work on the gardens proceeds and as the rain water harvesting channel and the first Lake section moves to completion we are also engaged with laying down the base of the 1.1 kilometer long road which encircles the gardens. About 1/3 of the road has been paved with its topping of grey and red granite cobble stones. Our goal now is to lay down the base lay of the remaining 800 meters so that we have a clean surface to move on during the upcoming monsoon. Till now, each rain has turned these long stretches into deep mud baths, making circulation of our tractors and other vehicles around the perimeter of the gardens unfeasible. We are now well on the way to getting the base layer in place.

Thus, when one puts together the advances on the Lake, the gardens and the Oval Road one can see the very significant energy of forward movement that has been in action here over the summer months. The atmosphere of Sri Aurobindo's 150th year has certainly given a big support to the work flow at Matrimandir!

Credit Note : *The Matrimandir Team is greatly thankful to Om, Gino and Mona for documenting the various ongoing developments, creating such wonderful memories for all of us to revisit.*

REGARDING OFFERINGS TO MATRIMANDIR

Important Note : All cheques/DD offered to Matrimandir should be payable to Auroville Unity Fund accompanied by a letter/email from the donor specifying the offering for Matrimandir. This letter/email should contain postal address, phone, email and PAN details of donor.

You may also send your offerings for Matrimandir by BANK TRANSFER to Auroville Unity Fund. Please contact matrimandir.donations@auroville.org.in | 0413-2622051 requesting bank transfer details.

REGARDING BOOKING FOR MEDITATION

Matrimandir - Inner Chamber is open to visitors every morning except Tuesday and Sunday. Please email your request to mmconcentration@auroville.org.in at least 3 days prior to visit.