

Matrimandir

May 2024



Sitting under the wide, massive branches of the Banyan Tree, one is at the very physical heart of Auroville, at the centre of the township. Matrimandir is the Soul, said the Mother, and the Banyan Tree is the physical centre. It was there even before the inauguration of Auroville in 1968. Crows and green parakeets are busy high in the tree, making a shower of sounds. Fruiting time for the Banyan is just ending, but there are still some berries for the birds to enjoy. Squirrels also scamper around under the shade of the branches.

It is a deep centre of peace, very much needed in the world of today, in the Auroville of today. In fact, the Mother had named this area Peace. The nearby fountain in the Pond of Unity, with its pyramid shaped multiple water jets reaches high into the air and the tips of the jets are caught playfully by the wind.

Seated here, one can see all the massive activity going on at Matrimandir today. Just to the right there is the triangle formed by the inaugural Urn, by the trunks of the Banyan Tree and by the Matrimandir itself. In this triangle, the construction of a new garden has started, the Garden of Wealth.

This is one of the four smaller gardens which are close to the Banyan Tree and the Urn. (Life and Power gardens were completed here two years ago, Wealth and Utility remain to be built) Its main features will be

seven pools holding lilies, to which Mother has given the significance of Wealth, and a winding water body linking it to the Garden of Utility beyond.

That's on one side. On the opposite side of the Banyan Tree, the construction of the Garden of Light is coming to completion. The long central ray, clad with white marble, is complete. This will soon carry a flowing stream. The stone pathways of the garden are just being finished now. Soon, all the features of this garden will be in place.

And beyond that, we see the Garden of Bliss, with its five bowl fountains now mounted in the central circular plaza of the garden. The bowls are to be filled with water brimming over their rims. The tinkling droplet curtains created will catch the sun and reflect sparkling rainbows creating quite a sweet, magical atmosphere. Currently, we are testing the design of the fluted brass rim of one bowl. In the photo here, we show you one of the fountains with the water splashing over its rim. It looks quite marvellous.

Behind these gardens, one sees an amazing new feature. A huge long mound of earth stands beyond the water channel which surrounds the gardens. It is perhaps 10, 12 meters high now, and temporarily blocks the view of the Town Hall beyond. This earth is being excavated from Lake Section 2, which has already reached its full depth of 10 meters and length of up to 170 meters.

For those who have seen the early years of Matrimandir, this long mound of earth on the North reminds one of the smaller hill of earth that was excavated from the original deep crater made to cast the foundation slab of the Matrimandir building. That hill of earth stood silently, just forty meters from the Matrimandir crater, while the Matrimandir was being constructed over its first twenty years. That old hill then disappeared as its earth



The first bowl fountain in the Garden of Bliss

was used to create the wave shapes of the Matrimandir gardens and petals. This new hill will disappear much more rapidly.

We are busy these days with two aspects of the Lake. One is the building up of the two temporary end walls of Lake Section 1. We will bring them up to the full height of 10.6 meters using concrete blocks. We just have to add three rows of blocks on top of the existing walls. (see photo here of one of the walls at its full height) First we have to reinforce the backs of the two walls, making them thicker and stronger because when they are filled with 10 meters of water the pressure will be quite enormous, pressing outwards on the walls. This has to be securely done. This work is ongoing now, so that we will be ready to have them waterproofed later in the summer, and then be ready to catch the water from the upcoming winter monsoon. If the monsoon is a good one, we will have a full ten meters of harvested rain water in Lake section 1 by the end of this year.

Besides that, the wide, long excavation for Lake Section 2 is well advanced. - 10 meters deep, 100 meters wide. A first stretch of Lake Section 2, 170 meters long, will be created by building a third retaining wall at this point. But the excavation extends beyond that point up to 250 meters or so.

In that second part of the second section there is a bundle of cables running from the Solar Plant and generator room over to the Amphitheatre where the main electrical panels are located. This old set of cables, 26 cables at least, are going to be replaced by a new set, just half a dozen cables, which will be buried under the Lake Section 2 and bring the power to the Amphitheatre where it can be redistributed to the whole site. That work is also ongoing.

Running around the border of the gardens, between the gardens themselves and the rainwater harvesting channel, is the cobblestone Oval Road. We have just completed a long section from the North to the West



Excavation underway for Lake section 2

pathway. So now half of the cobblestone Oval Road running all the way around the Park of Unity is complete. The next section facing Lake Sections 1 and 2 is being left rough and unfinished because heavy traffic is moving there and would damage final layer of cobblestones.

Behind the work on the site there is a lot of planning going on to remove the old workshops and other support buildings from the Lake area on the eastern side of Matrimandir. It is planned that all the workshops including the laundry, the metal workshop, the carpentry, the tea room, the catering section, will move to a new building called the Service Facility which will be positioned outside the Lake on the north east side. A site has been designated and two architects are now busy drawing up the plans. A series of planning sessions is going on as we try to understand the future needs and how to accommodate them for Matrimandir's support and operation over the many decades to come.

Coming back to the Peace of the Banyan Tree with its aerial roots one remembers that when Auroville was inaugurated, there were no aerial roots which had managed to make it to the ground. The cows and the goats had eaten them all.

There was the single massive trunk. That central trunk is still there, encircled by a ring, as indicated by the Mother in a handwritten message, to be put around the Banyan: "Auroville, the City at the Service of Truth", written in French and in Tamil.

We continue to reach towards that goal, to be at the Service of Truth, to apply that in all the areas of our life. It is a massive goal, a challenging and high reaching adventure to which the Mother has invited all of us:

"There are people who love adventure. It is these I call, and I tell them this "I invite you to the great adventure."

It is not a question of repeating spiritually what others have done before us, for our adventure begins beyond that. It is a question of a new creation, entirely new, with all the unforeseen events, the risks, the hazards it entails – a real adventure, whose goal is certain victory, but the road to which is unknown and must be traced out step by step in the unexplored. Something that has never been in this present universe and that will never be again. If that interests you... well, let us embark"

10 July 1957 from Questions and answers, volume 9 pp 151- 152.

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Offering to Matrimandir

Please note that all offerings must be A/c Payee to Auroville Unity Fund. Cheques and Demand Drafts need to be accompanied by a letter / email from the donor specifying the offering is for Matrimandir along with PAN, full address, phone and email.

Offerings can also be made through direct Bank Transfer to Auroville Unity Fund. Please feel free to reach out to the Matrimandir Offerings Desk over email and phone for bank transfer details.

matrimandir.donations@auroville.org.in | 0413 - 2622051

Booking for Concentration in the Inner Chamber

Matrimandir Inner Chamber is open to visitors every morning except Tuesday and Sunday.

Link for booking <https://mmaccess.auroville.org.in/visitors/new>

Matrimandir Access Group mmconcentration@auroville.org.in