

Matrimandir

February 2025

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The Matrimandir lake, section 1, completely filled by the rains of cyclone Fengal on 30 November 2024, just before the left end wall slid open.

A setback, a challenge, — but not a disaster

Over the last three decades, the construction team of Matrimandir has faced three major material setbacks. There have been many larger and smaller challenges over the period of 54 years of construction, among them, three in particular.

The first was the technical failure of the Inner skin of Matrimandir. In 1994 work began on fabricating the three-meter triangular panels needed to create the inner skin of Matrimandir: 850 of these triangles were needed in total. An operation was initiated on site by an experienced team. The triangles, once made, were installed inside the Matrimandir. The outer skin triangles, made of ferrocement, had been fabricated and installed during 1992 to 1994, so Matrimandir had already become a closed sphere. After about one third of these inner skin triangles had been installed, we noticed that the large panels were beginning to warp, to lose their flat shape. On top of that, they had

begun to fade because they were exposed to direct sunlight entering through the porthole windows of the outer skin. There was also a concern that the polyester panels were a fire risk. We were thus obliged to stop the whole process in 1997. We had to remove several hundred of the installed panels and rethink the whole approach to the inner skin.

By 1998 a second proposal had been put forward to fabricate these large triangles from glass. The challenge with this proposal was that the glass would have to have the salmon pink color specified by the Mother for the inner skin (She had even given a piece of sari cloth to indicate the color tone.) We again set to work and created a large gas fired oven, with a movable flatbed trolley to shift the glass triangles, each of which had to be cut to a slightly different shape because each of the triangles that form the space frame of Matrimandir has a slightly different shape. In the gas fired oven, colored glass



Replacing the discs in 2005, after renewing the waterproofing

powder was fused into the triangles of glass to give the required hue. Many trials were made under the direction of someone experienced in this field. The oven was a giant, fired by 100 gas bottles. Finally, this too was a “no go” as a consistent production of triangles with the correct evenly spread color could not be achieved. So, back to square one!

Finally, one of the Matrimandir pioneer workers brought forward the idea to use fabric made of non-flammable glass fiber cloth, a material which he had previously used to fabricate micro-light gliders. This idea worked. After figuring out all the needed details, a production process was set up on site to make the 850 triangles with aluminum support frames. This is the origin of the inner skin that can be seen today.

The second major material set back was with regard to the waterproofing of the outer skin ferrocement triangles of Matrimandir. Under the intense heat of the sun on the outer surface of Matrimandir, the entire surface naturally expands and contracts slightly as

the skin temperature swings between the heat of the day and the cooler air of the night. The waterproofing of the outer skin had to be applied in a way that would withstand this slight daily movement. The first expert advice was to apply a particular kind of flexible waterproof paint. This was done. But after a season or two it failed and the skin began to leak. The decision was taken to sandblast the entire outer skin and to remove this paint layer. Then, in 1998, an imported waterproofing layer, Kemperol, was applied over the whole of the building's outer surface. This was a complex operation. Again, after a few seasons, it was noticed that this waterproofing layer had not adhered properly to the ferrocement surface of Matrimandir. By this time the installation of the golden discs on the outer surface had begun in earnest. When the decision was taken to redo the waterproofing layer (the supplying company having agreed to replace it with a different primer layer under their guarantee scheme) we had to remove not only this Kemperol layer but also the hundreds of golden discs that had

already been installed in place. Although this was a huge task, the work was done. Matrimandir received its second sandblasting and finally with the new Kemperol layer having been applied in 2005, all of the discs were carefully re-mounted in place.

The third and latest setback has been the sliding open of the 2nd lego block wall of the Matrimandir lake during the night 30 November under the driving rains of cyclone Fengal. This was entirely unexpected and, in that moment, quite a shock. But with the full construction history of Matrimandir in mind, this setback has been quickly put into perspective. Followed up, as had been done in the previous two cases, by looking again at how best to achieve our goal; in this case how best to finish the Lake by 2028. We are in a different situation now and do not need the high lego block walls. Perhaps the lake itself, in a most material way, has indicated the way forward and the work will go on in a radically different way. The spirit of the Matrimandir team is high and we accept this new challenge with enthusiasm, even with joy, as we engage ourselves in this unexpected turn of the adventure.

The Mother had invited us all to a great adventure. She has said* that the way forward was not known, that it would have to be worked out along the way, but that the end was certain!

*“.... we are in a very special situation, extremely special, without precedent. We are now witnessing the birth of a new world; it is very young, very weak — not in its essence but in its outer manifestation — not yet recognized, not even felt, denied by the majority. But it is here. It is here, making an effort to grow, absolutely sure of the result. But the road to it is a completely new road which has never before been traced out — nobody has gone there, nobody has done that! It is a beginning, a universal beginning. So, it is an absolutely unexpected and unpredictable adventure.

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,

The Matrimandir lake on 13 January 2025



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 in the same way. If that interests you... well, let us embark. What will happen to you tomorrow — I have no idea. One must put aside all that has been foreseen, all that has been devised, all that has been constructed, and then... set off walking into the unknown. And — come what may! There.”

The Mother, 10th July 1957

The Goal

The Goal remains to complete Matrimandir including the Park of Unity and the Lake by Mother's 150th

birth anniversary on 21 February 2028. The work at Matrimandir is forging ahead on all fronts.

We are reaching out to all The Mother's children. We all need to join hands to achieve this great endeavour. Each rupee is a drop of gold for Matrimandir and the sky's the limit.

Any individual, group or Centre who feels moved to make an offering towards this endeavor can do so by making a onetime offering or by sponsoring a whole project or by making regular donations or by making offerings in kind. Donations in kind are always welcome; cement, steel, granite, cables and other electrical fittings are all going to be needed in large quantities.

Project Cost	Cost INR	Status
4 Golden Doors to close the Sphere	40 lakhs	26 lakhs received
Heliostat	20 lakhs	6.5 lakhs received
Garden of Light	55 lakhs	
Garden of Bliss, restructuring	25 lakhs	
Garden of Wealth	35 lakhs	sponsored
Garden of Utility	35 lakhs	sponsored
Remaining 3 Gardens of Youth, Harmony, Perfection	155 lakhs	
Remaining 520 meters of the Oval Road	81 lakhs	7 lakhs per 100 meters
Next phase of the Lake, about 25% more	25 Crores	
Total cost of the Lake	100 Crores	
Service Compound	9 Crores	very urgent
Reception Pavilion	5 Crores	
Modernization of Electrical infrastructure	90 lakhs	very urgent
West Bridge crossing over 100 meters of the Lake	20 Crores	

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Offerings 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