

# Matrimandir

February 2018

This energy around the Matrimandir site during January is definitely one of: "Let's get ready for Auroville's 50th anniversary!"

In the Gardens the push is on to bring the Garden of Progress to completion. Progress garden has been designed based on the sketch the Mother drew to explain to a child the meaning of Yoga: man is below, the Divine above; the twists and turns represent the path of ordinary life, the straight line, the path of Yoga.



*Mother's hand drawn sketch illustrating the difference between the normal progress of Life and the Path of Yoga towards the Divine.*

A lot of work has been done over the last six months in this garden, the largest of the 12 principal gardens of Matrimandir, to complete it before Auroville's 50<sup>th</sup>. The land has been shaped creating three large terraces in the central part of the garden. In the outer part, a pond 7 mts by 7 mts has been dug, waterproofed with HDPE liner, and prepared to receive its aquatic plant life. As a final step the edging of the pond is being clad with large slabs of white granite. The formality of this symbolic square

pond is set within a natural surrounding featuring flowering trees, large boulders and white granite benches.

In the central part of this garden, some 50 meters long, the three ascending terraces have been linked by an elegant central pathway made of stepping stones created from sliced granite boulders. This pathway is bordered by a field of multi-sized pebbles and has been planted with seven trees, Lagerstromia Indica, having Mother's significance "intimacy with the Divine". These trees will soon be blooming, filled with their pinkish-purple flowers. The curved outer borders of this central area are planted with hundreds of "Progress" flowers (*Cantharanthus roseus*) framing the pebbled area with their white, pink and purple flowers.

At the lowest part of the garden, closest to the Matrimandir building, a long curved pond has been built, which is to be flanked by a simple stone foot path along its full length. Many final touches remain to be done, but the significant parts of this garden are in place and its simple natural beauty is already a pleasure to behold as one moves through the garden spaces around Matrimandir.

Besides this development of the Garden of Progress, a separate design team has been very much involved with the planning and design of another large garden area on site.

This garden, not one of the principal 12 which surround the building, is adjacent to the Garden of Unity near the Banyan tree and is a fascinating and essential garden in the overall plan. Referred to by the Matrimandir's Architect Roger Anger as the "Garden of the Unexpected" it has in view not the adults who will come to visit Matrimandir, but focuses rather on children.

It is a large area dedicated to showing them the world from a different perspective, from another point of view. It will present, not only to children, but to all of us a range of features designed to draw the attention to another way of seeing.



*The Garden of Progress displays its predominant use of stones, flowers and trees.*



*Work to install the HDPE pond liner on the elongated pond was carried out from Jan 17th to 19th.*

This garden will feature, for example, a gentle water stream in an effortless natural shape, some arrangements of boulders from different parts of India, child friendly plants and shallow ponds. There will be also pebble play pits and flower mandala tables. It will be a place to discover the

wonder of nature, -an invitation to inner exploration and silence. It follows the method of the “science of garden creation” of the far East that gives respect not only to the living creatures, plants and minerals but also to the space in between. It is called “Ma” in Japanese.

In another field of activity, the Green Room located beneath the Eastern edge of the Amphitheater has just been completed. This is the room in which all performers will prepare themselves for their presentations on the Amphitheater's wide stage, close to the Urn. There will be many types of performers using this dressing space in the months and years to come, - dancers, singers, musicians of all kinds and many more. The Green Room, created after months of planning in consultation with key Auroville performers, features two large spaces beneath the outer fringe of the Amphitheater: one half holds a wide, well lit table where actors will put on their makeup,- with changing rooms and bathrooms attached. The second half of the Green Room, with one floor-to-ceiling mirrored wall, opens out to the passage leading out into the amphitheater itself. One can already imagine this mirrored space crowded with children and adults making final adjustments to their costumes, or sitting quietly in concentration before walking out to perform in front of the audience in the Amphitheater. The Amphitheater can seat 4,500 people comfortably and up to 5000 maximum.

An interesting feature of this Golden Jubilee celebration to be held on Feb 28<sup>th</sup> is the "World Water ceremony" during which water samples gathered from all over the world will be poured into a common receptacle to symbolize the unity of the waters of the world and also the unity of mankind, - just as the samples of soils from countries and states all over the world were brought together and placed in the white marble urn at the time of Auroville's inauguration on Feb 28<sup>th</sup> 1968. This event will underline the fact that water is something that is common to all of us, held in trust by all of us, and by this act of joining the waters we are honoring this fact and at the same time offering up a prayer that the waters of the world will be honored and cared for by all.

It has been fascinating to be on hand as, one by one, these water samples have arrived on site at Matrimandir, being brought by people who have traveled from the far corners of the world. Some arrive with photos of the water source, - so we have seen ponds, rivers and lakes from sources spread far and wide across the planet. Many more



*The brilliantly lit makeup table in the Green Room being inspected by young acrobats!*

samples are expected to arrive as we approach Feb 28<sup>th</sup>.

While the Green Room has been completed, work on the large room under the opposite side of the Amphitheater, - under its western side, has also been brought close to completion. This second room is referred to as the "Tools Center" and will be home in future to all the gardens' tools which will be used on site over the decades to come to maintain the many acres of the Matrimandir's gardens. Here all the hand tools like simple rakes, baskets, pruners and garden implements of all kinds will be kept as well as larger items such as lawn mowers, wheel barrows, rolls of hose pipe, sprayers for the organic mixes used in the gardens and so on. The room features a hydraulic lift for the large items so they can be easily lifted up to the surface level out of this underground space.

Looking forward, and looking beyond the gardens oval, we come to another large project lying just ahead in the growth of Matrimandir, - this is the formation of the water body, the Lake, that the Mother had very specifically requested us to build surrounding the gardens. This water body would act as an isolating zone, a quiet space, separating the silent, concentrated space of the gardens oval from the more busy activity of the inner city surrounding it. In this line we have made several experiments over the past years to develop small test ponds, principally to study how to build them and how to waterproof them. We have experimented with several different waterproofing options, and now we are ready for a larger test, - the creation of the so called "large test pond" which will be 100 meters by 100 meters and up to 10 meters deep,- the scale of a future lake,- which will allow the testing of several more features at first hand.

We will test the actual techniques of building and sealing this large pond. HDPE liner has won out over several competitors in the field of sealing materials during the last series of tests, so the

large pond will be lined with the 2 mm thick HDPE foil, - its joints double welded by special machines. The pond will be a testing ground not only for the techniques of building, but will let us study how well the water body can be made into a stable aquatic living body, with its plants and fishes living in a natural way, helping to create a pond which is self cleaning and clear. The big question of course has always been "How are we going to fill this water body?" given that water here is such a scarce and precious resource.

The plan for this is firstly to harvest the runoff rain water from the 22 acres of the Matrimandir gardens, - to see how much we can collect in a normal monsoon season. Water will also be collected from the outer bank of this large test pond. Thus simultaneously with the creation of the large test pond we have to build too the rainwater harvesting system for the entire gardens oval. It is an interesting challenge to build this dual system, the test pond and its water filling source. We will monitor the amounts of water we can collect, and watch as the hot summer sun evaporates the surface layers of the pond during the year. Important information will be gathered in this field of water collection which will help to indicate the best dimensions for a future Lake. A second source of water is being developed by a team engaged in building a desalination plant, - to take water from the sea, to remove its salts and thus produce drinkable water for use in Auroville. The Mother had advised us to move in this direction as far back as 1969 when she first spoke of the lake which is to surround Matrimandir and its gardens, for it was clear to her, even then, that the ground water supplies would not be enough for the city to come.

Thus, as always at Matrimandir, much work remains to be done, - but it is always inspiring, always a challenge and always very rewarding, - as we continue to build this very precious space here at the Centre of Auroville.

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**Important information on sending your offerings:** Contributions to Matrimandir are exempt under sec. 80G of the Indian Income Tax Act. You can send us by post your offering by DD/Cheque payable to "Matrimandir". You may also give your offering in cash/cheque/DD at the Matrimandir Office during your visit for meditation.

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