

Matrimandir

August 2017



The Garden of Progress.

Through the burning hot days of May and June work proceeded steadily in the Garden of Progress, the largest of the 12 gardens of Matrimandir. Laying of the rammed lime and earth platform in the elongated central part of the garden has continued right through July too.

The material mix used for this platform is a development of an experiment tried in the last of the previous gardens, moving away from the use of traditional concrete to create stable, solid surfaces. It is a more eco- friendly approach, using a compacted mix of red earth, lime, sand and just a little cement. This mix is a close cousin of the mix used in Auroville to create the “compressed earth”

building blocks which are a popular alternative compared to building with bricks or concrete.

The feel of this material is more soft, more natural, more pleasing to use. This central garden platform winds upwards between the seven Lagerstroemia trees (commonly called “Pride of India”) which were planted in early March this year. The trees are growing well, and by next year will be displaying their distinctive pink blossoms, given the significance of “Intimacy with the Universal Nature” by the Mother.

The outlines of this ascending platform are curved and organic looking, rising through the three terraced levels in this central part of the garden. Along each of the borders of the platform, linear depressions are being shaped, - also in this same

rammed earth mix- to serve later as planters for masses of flowers,- named "Progress" by the Mother. Purple, white and blue, the multi colored living border will boldly outline the central area. The flat area of the central platform will be covered in a mix of natural local river pebbles. Finally, leading up the center of this garden will be a series of natural stone steps, ascending the three terraces of the garden and leading ultimately to the outer section of the garden where a quiet pool will await the garden explorer.

The symbolism of this garden is based on a sketch of the Mother showing the two routes one may follow to find the Supreme,- either a path of winding

slow ascension , as in the normal course of life , or, a more direct and forthright linear ascension which leads in the shortest possible way to the goal,- the way of Yoga.

On May 30th a team had come from the neighboring state of Andhra Pradesh to install the HDPE liner needed to water proof the seven meter by seven meter pond which has been built in the outer area of this garden. The lining work, - welding together sheets of 1.5 mm thick HDPE (High Density Polyethylene) took just a day. In the days that followed the pool was filled with water to check the sealing, tempting us all with its coolness as the summer sun beat down!



Construction of the Green room and Tool center.

Work proceeds steadily on the construction of the two large rooms beneath the east and west rims of the amphitheater.

On the east, where the Green Room for performers in the amphitheater is being built, the red sandstone

floor has been laid and carpentry work is under way to fashion all the doors needed in this space. The opening towards the Urn is complete, with the new safety handrail around the opening awaiting only a little trimming on its ends and then its final coats of paint.

The transformation of this passage space, starting with the reopening of the original passage that had been closed some 30 years ago has been fascinating. Now the construction of the entry towards the Urn is done, - appearing clean and elegant. Through this passage all the future performers will pass, - musicians, dancers and actors of various kinds, - a line of brilliant artists

who will give their best here in the decades to come.

The Green Room itself must be finished by the end of this year, as performers for next February, – Auroville’s 50th anniversary, – are already practicing their dance routines and will soon need the Green Room to make full rehearsal preparations.



The new entrance to the Green Room nears completion

A Big Cleanup!

During the Month of June Matrimandir was closed to visits as maintenance works were undertaken within the building.

The Chamber carpet, made in unbleached white wool, was given a thorough shampooing to brighten it up after a few years of constant use. The ramps too with their white carpets were cleaned in the same way. These two long spiraling ramps which lead up to the Chamber doors were given fresh coats of white paint, highlighting again the elegance of their sweeping curves through the space of the interior of Matrimandir.

A little more hidden, the superlative air-conditioning system of the inner Chamber, known for its remarkable silent efficiency was given an upgrade to improve its performance even more.

The white marble cladding of the four fountains running down the interiors of the four ribs of the structure was polished too, and their central golden channels for the streaming water were given an upgrade in their water proofing.

Marble floors on the two lower levels of the interior were polished by a team of volunteers, bringing back again the fresh whiteness of the patterned marble floor.

All in all, the feeling of June was joyful and energetic as all these cleaning, painting and polishing jobs proceeded and were brought to a successful completion just a day before the Matrimandir was reopened on July 6th. It was a fine feeling indeed to see the interior of Matrimandir being given such careful and loving care.



A team of painters at work during the June clean up

Drying out under the sun

Auroville, and Tamil Nadu in general, is passing this year through a severe drought brought on by the failure of last year's winter monsoon. Only half of the average yearly rainfall for this area was received, with the result that the levels of ground water are dropping precipitously. Matrimandir has large flower filled areas within the four completed gardens and even larger sections planted with grass on the outer borders of the gardens. One is forced to think very deeply about the future of these gardens and how the urgent need to conserve water will affect the gardens and their designs in the years to come.

Already the designers for the next nine gardens have recognized this need and incorporated measures to reduce the areas of plantation that will call for intensive watering. Areas of thick cultivated grass have been greatly reduced, replacing them with areas of natural grass that will grow with less

water. Even if this grass dries up in the summer it will then recover when the late summer rains come.

In response to the general need to conserve water we have reduced our schedule of irrigation significantly, allowing outer areas of the undeveloped gardens to become completely brown and dry. A few brief rains in early July have just now begun to bring green touches back to these arid areas,- Nature responding swiftly to the gift of water from the skies.

In the long run a deep research will have to be undertaken to find out new ways to beautify the stretches of the gardens oval,- some 22 acres in all- using a different selection of vegetation, different approaches to water use and irrigation and different types of hardy plants.

For the moment, going on with our reduced water consumption, we look up to the gathering clouds of July and pray for abundant rains!

* * *

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.

Postal address: MATRIMANDIR – AUROVILLE 605101 – TAMIL NADU – INDIA
Phone no for accounts : 0413- 262-2228, Email: matrimandir@auroville.org.in