

Matrimandir

May 2022



A young spectator watches from a temporary construction bridge as the water proofing liner is laid in the Open Water Channel which encircles the Matrimandir gardens.

The Open Water Channel is built

There are milestones along the long pathway of the construction of the Matrimandir, – special moments which stand out like lamp posts along the way, marking significant strides forward in the journey of developing the Matrimandir and its gardens.

There was, for example, the very special moment on May 29th in 1976 when the four giant concrete ribs of the structure were concreted together in the Ring of Unity at the top of Matrimandir. Twelve years later, on 8 August 1988 another milestone was reached when the spherical space frame of the building was completed with the concreting of the top cap of Matrimandir. A few years later there was the magical moment in 1991, on April 27th, when the crystal globe was first lifted up to the Inner Chamber. Then there was the completion of the Matrimandir in 2008.

On the night of April 19th - 20th 2022 another very special milestone was reached with the completion

of the installation of the waterproofing liner in the 7.5 meter wide Water Channel, one kilometer long, which now surrounds the Matrimandir gardens. This channel has a double significance: – of forming a first sketch of a water body which the Mother wished to have surrounding the Matrimandir gardens, to act as an “isolating zone”, separating the quiet gardens from the activity of the outer shore. This band, now 7.5 meters wide, can be enlarged in future as work on the main Lake construction continues. The second function of the channel is to act as a rainwater harvesting pathway, catching all the rainwater runoff from the 22 acre gardens oval and then directing it into the test Lake section which is now being constructed on the southeast side of the gardens. Three good years of rainwater harvesting (or one year if like the exceptionally rainy monsoon in 2021) would be enough time to fill the 10 meter deep, 12,000 square meter test Lake now being built.

As with all the other milestone moments, an atmosphere of joy and accomplishment suffused the air as the task was done. There were smiles all around.... A step forward had been achieved. Many steps have yet to follow in the months to come, of course, – to complete the protective gravel layer of the water channel, then to beautify its borders, and finally to bring the water body alive, introducing many flowering plants and then fish, to keep it mosquito free. But the major step is done, and can now be built upon.

There were months of preparation to come to this point. First, the entire set of old Matrimandir workshops on the eastern edge of the gardens had to be modified and moved back by 20 meters to make room for the channel. Then followed a massive earthwork, shaping the red earth to create the V shaped profile of the channel, to smoothen it and make it ready for the laying of the liner. There were ground level differences to be dealt with, as the eastern side of Matrimandir is 3 meters higher than the west, so a massive granite block wall had to be built to protect the foundations of the workshops on the east (see photos), while earth infilling had to be made on the western edge of the gardens oval.

Then there was the ground reality of existing trees



The V shaped water channel follows the newly built granite stone wall close to the Matrimandir workshops.



The V shaped channel was covered with a waterproofing layer.



A particularly beautiful tree is now protected by its own granite wall.



The joint welding team discusses the job.



The laying of the liner took place at night, taking advantage of the cooler air to get the highest quality of welding on the joints.

to be negotiated.... Many trees had grown up on their own over the decades of the construction of the Matrimandir, and others had been planted during different stages of the outer gardens development. All available techniques were used to find ways to lead the Water Channel around the rim of the gardens. Some very special trees were transplanted. Other larger trees which had grown to some statuesque beauty were preserved by winding the channel between them, or narrowing the channel to slide by. One tree was distinguished by having a granite wall built half around it to separate it from the path of the channel (see photo). And, finally, several trees, being judged to be simply too much in the way, or too difficult to protect, were



A self-propelled heat welding machine produced a double weld at the liner joints.

cut down, to be used as timber wood or firewood. Sorting all this out was perhaps one of the most difficult parts of the Water Channel exercise, but in the end, a harmonious way forward was found.

A specialist in liner installation came from Germany for this phase, and for seven nights, from April 13th to April 20th, the Matrimandir team supported the visiting welder in the intensive process of laying the liner and then sealing its 147 doubly welded joints. The welding of the 2 mm thick HDPE sheets had to be done when the material was cool, so the work proceeded at night under illumination provided by several spot lights. Many present remarked that the energetic atmosphere of those nights brought to their mind the similarly special feeling of the night time concretings held while building Matrimandir decades earlier. It was a wonderful, intense week, and the completion of the job was celebrated by all.

Elsewhere on the site

While this intensive activity was under way on the water channel, work is also underway to bring to completion the construction of the gardens of Life



As a final step in the process, the HDPE line is covered with a 20 cm layer of granite chips to protect it from chances of puncturing and from the effects of UV radiation.

and Power near the Banyan tree and two large sections of the garden of the Unexpected. The goal is to have all these four areas completed by August 15th this year.

The all-important Heliostat on the roof, which tracks the sun and directs the Ray into the Inner Chamber is being maintained and upgraded.

Modifications are underway in the garden of Existence, where large quartz crystals are being placed, and new design elements introduced in the central part of the garden of Bliss. (More about this in a next Newsletter.)

And, as always, the many-sided upkeep of the Matrimandir complex goes on, including everything from cleaning the golden discs on the outer skin of Matrimandir, to all the aspects of maintenance of the gardens.

Each day is special for the 160 people working here at Matrimandir, filled with multitudinous tasks, challenges, and, most importantly, with the joy of simply being present here, participating in the growth of the living center of Auroville.

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REGARDING OFFERINGS TO MATRIMANDIR

Please note that all cheques/DD offered to Matrimandir should be payable to **AUROVILLE UNITY FUND** hence forth. The cheque/DD should be accompanied by a letter from the donor specifying the offering for MATRIMANDIR. This letter should contain donor full address, phone and email details and PAN DETAILS.

You may also send your offerings for Matrimandir by BANK TRANSFER to **Auroville Unity Fund**. Write to matrimandir.donations@auroville.org.in requesting **bank transfer** details.

REGARDING BOOKING FOR MEDITATION :

Now, Matrimandir Inner Chamber is open to visitors on Saturday morning. Please send your request to [mmconcentration @auroville.org.in](mailto:mmconcentration@auroville.org.in) at least 3 days prior to your visit.

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