

Matrimandir

May 2014



The Pond in the Garden of Consciousness, with its re-circulating cascade, was filled on April 21st

Looking Forward at Matrimandir

Looking a bit into the future at Matrimandir one can see several projects which are getting ready to move forward:

The Gardens: Over the last five years we have been involved with the development of the first gardens of Matrimandir,- Existence, Consciousness , Bliss and Unity. We have learned a lot, - about the use of appropriate , eco-friendly materials for the “built-up elements” in the garden, about the durability of different plants under the hot Tamil Nadu sun and under its monsoon rains. We learn too more and more about the need of water conservation within the gardens. And we have learned then about the host of insects and pathogens that come to feast on the fresh greenery and compost in the gardens, and how to control them using bio-friendly techniques. These four gardens are now coming to completion, - the fountains in Unity and Consciousness gardens are being activated, the footpaths within the gardens are being finalized, (both for those strolling though and for those who may be in wheel chairs), and the last plantings are being done. Soon these four gardens will be ready, - though their details will always be evolving as the plants grow and as we try out new plant arrangements, perhaps new lighting features and new design touches in the years to come.

On the base of these five years of experience, the garden design team has begun to look forward to the design of the remaining nine garden sections that are to surround Matrimandir. To these next parts of the garden the Mother has given the significant names: Light, Life, Power, Wealth, Utility, Progress, Youth, Harmony and Perfection. Each is to hold the special atmosphere denoted by its name, and yet all are parts of the one linked garden of Matrimandir. Design proposals will come forward over the next months, to be shared with and reviewed by the community. It will be wonderful indeed if these remaining garden areas, - in

their broad lines at least, - can be all laid out on the ground around Matrimandir by the time Auroville reaches its 50th birthday in 2018!

We have mentioned too in our last newsletter, the “Park of the Unexpected”, another area within the gardens oval of Matrimandir (on the Western side) which is also under design study. This design too, once it is ready, will be shared with the community as a whole for feedback and then to obtain the “green light” to proceed.

The Test Ponds: One of the main elements of the vision of Matrimandir which the Mother shared with us is that the entire gardens oval would be surrounded by an “isolating zone” in the form of a Lake. This lake would be a buffer between the silent, concentrated space of the Matrimandir with its gardens, and the busier atmosphere of the surrounding city center. The Lake will have too another dimension of use, for it is planned to be an integral part of the water management system of the city, serving as a buffer tank for storage and redistribution of storm water collected in the city centre. To study the materials which could be used to build such a lake in the future, a set of “mini test ponds”, -ten by ten meters square each, and two meters deep- are to be built outside the gardens oval. Here, we would gain experience in the procurement and handling of several types of potential lake-sealing materials ranging from clay to imported plastic membranes. The Lake team is currently researching the market information needed to go ahead with this practical study on the ground. Such experiments will be a first step towards the creation of the future lake around Matrimandir. We do not know how wide or how deep this lake will be, or even when we will have enough water to fill it, but the Mother’s wish for a surrounding body of water was very clear indeed...so it will come one day, in one form or another!

Moving Workshops out of the Lake area: All of the workshops of Matrimandir, - the metal workshop, the carpentry, the stone cutting section, as well as other support facilities such as the workers’ parking and eating areas, storage sheds for materials and machines, even our tea making hut, - all of these are located in a narrow band just outside the eastern edge of the gardens oval, in the area that will eventually be occupied by the lake (or by a park before the lake comes). So, in time, all these temporary buildings will be shifted into locations within the city,- as the gardens get completed and as the lake project starts moving in earnest. The first of all these to be moved will be our compost production section as we are keen to set up an enlarged research station where advanced, bio-friendly methods of production can be tried out for various types of compost. Presently this activity occupies an area of about two acres on the southeastern side of the gardens oval. We have a project ready to go which would see this whole production activity shifted out to the edge of Auroville. There, the new section would produce compost, both regular and vermicompost, which could serve not just the Matrimandir gardens but eventually the other green spaces within the centre of Auroville. This project is absolutely ready to take off, and needs just the finding of the appropriate place in Auroville to let it happen. We will keep you updated as this project moves forward.

The Reception Pavilion: Another project which will also happen as we move our facilities out of the lake/park area is the construction of our permanent reception pavilion. This building has long been seen as being just beyond the lake border on the west axis of Matrimandir. It would receive all the people coming into the Oval of Matrimandir and would work in conjunction with the reception facilities at the main Visitors centre on the western edge of Auroville. This new pavilion would replace our aging offices on the northwest side of the oval which too, are also entirely within the area slated to become part of the lake surrounding the gardens. You can see, therefore, how key is the lake project in this whole movement to the future of Matrimandir, for as it comes alive it will drive forward many other developments.

Completion of the Oval Road: At the border of the gardens, surrounding the entire 20 acres (9 hectares) there is the 1.1 kilometer long oval service road. The paving of this road with granite cobble stones is another project which is almost ready to begin. The linking of the outer border of this road with the future lake will be an influential factor to be considered in the details of the road design. There will be too a system of drainage pipes installed beneath this road to help direct runoff rain water from the Matrimandir gardens into the lake, or into a water collection channel before the lake is built. The details of the construction of this ring road, and its integration with the lake border are being studied now in preparation for the construction work which is not too far off.

Completion of the space under the Amphitheater (West): As the movement of workshops and storage sheds out of the lake/park area, as described above, begins to take place, we will have to develop the large underground space which lies unused beneath the western side of the main Amphitheater for storage of light

garden tools. We will have many gardeners working within the 20 acre site once the gardens are completed and it will be necessary that light tools such as hosepipes, wheel barrows etc are close at hand. The development of this facility in the existing underground rooms under the amphitheater is one of the projects that will be a part of the next four year phase of the work at Matrimandir.

Works on the structure: On the main building of Matrimandir, there are several details of the work which remain to be completed, even though the major aspects of the building were finished by 2008. The chief of these is related to the main entrance doors. Only the north entrance is presently fitted with its vertically moving gold-shield door. This door, operating currently only in the evenings in a test mode, silently lowers itself out of sight as you approach it, sliding down between two of the granite clad steps of the main entrance, and then rises silently to close when its sensors have seen that you are no longer moving up or down the steps. In this manner, the three other entrances of Matrimandir are yet to be fitted with the drives to operate the doors which are waiting there recessed below the globe.

Lighting the gardens: Another significant part of the work that remains, common to all the garden spaces, is the aspect of lighting which is needed so that people can circulate in the gardens, or move easily to the Matrimandir, in the evening hours. Several trials have been made to see which types of path and garden lighting are most in keeping with the quiet atmosphere of the gardens. It is fascinating to watch as various types of light fittings are tried out,- some commercial varieties, some made specifically for Matrimandir,- as slowly and surely, the way forward in the gardens gets illuminated....

All these works described above lie ahead of us in the future. Some aspects, like the planning for the nine gardens, or the trying out of path lighting techniques have begun already today and will continue for some time. Other aspects, like the building of the mini test ponds, or the creation of the new composting area are waiting just at the door,

ready to begin. And still others, like the building of the remaining nine gardens, the building of the full oval road around the gardens or the completion of the spaces beneath the Amphitheater will be taken up progressively over the next four year period. The final moving of all the remaining workshops away from their positions near the gardens and the building of the Reception Pavilion are perhaps even a little further off, -Auroville does not yet own the land where this Reception pavilion has to be built,



for example. But all these projects lie surely ahead, and will occupy the Matrimandir team for some years to come.

Today at Matrimandir: Today, on the ground at Matrimandir, we are concentrating on four construction aspects:

In Consciousness garden: The first is the activation of the pond in the garden of Consciousness. The construction of the underground control room in that garden was recently completed. The required plumbing and electrification in this room were finished in March and early in April the pond was prepared to be put into operation as a living pond. We make this distinction, because the pool in Unity garden, for example, has

been kept algae free in the manner of a swimming pool, using chlorine to keep its water crystal clear. As there are hundreds of fountain jets in this pool, it was not feasible to make this a living pond, with fish and plants. There would have been too much floating plant matter which would have clogged up the fine water jet nozzles. In the garden of Consciousness, on the other hand, there are no fine water jets, simply wide cascades, so the regard for absolute clarity of the water was less and we were happily able to opt for a living pond. On April 21st, this pool, spilling over into a seven stepped cascade, was set into operation. Plants were introduced to help create the needed living balance in the pool, and near its center, a White lotus was planted. To this magnificent flower Mother has given the significance: "Aditi- the Divine Consciousness".

In Bliss garden: The second activity underway today is the final stage of the construction of the neighboring garden, the garden of Bliss. The central raised circular area, called the "moon area" has been stabilized with a layer of red soil mixed with lime. Into this layer are being set the bases for the seven small fountains that will be mounted there, laid out according to the pattern of the constellation of Ursa Major (also called Great Bear, or the Seven Rishis) Planting in this garden is well under way. Two rings of hibiscus, with the Mother's significances: "Ananda in the Physical" and "Ananda" have been planted around the central white "moon" area. This latter flower is the one chosen by Mother as the key flower for this garden. This is a small delicate single hibiscus flower with soft slightly crinkled cream petals and a pure white center. Four small trees, one named "Adoration", with bright red blossoms, and three named "Psychic Peace", with small, white, fragrant flowers already bloom on the outer edges of this garden.

In Unity garden: Over in the garden of Unity is the third focus of activity today. We have shown you in our last newsletter the first stage of development of the fountain in the pool in the garden. During March the second stage of the fountain was installed. This is comprised of a grid of low water jets which shoot up just some 15 centimeters above the water, giving, as it were, a base for the lines of high rising jets which peak at over two meters in the center of the fountain. This fountain was designed by Roger Anger, architect of Matrimandir, as one of his last contributions to the Matrimandir project. We are happy that this living focal point of the garden of Unity is now being completed.

At the Amphitheater: Finally, over behind the Amphitheater, work is underway to finalize the stone cladding of the four pathways which link the rim of the Amphitheater to the nearby oval ring road surrounding the gardens.

These are the works under way today at Matrimandir. With these jobs going on, as well as with the daily reception of hundreds of visitors, and with the maintenance of the whole compound, and also with the planning for the many works lying ahead, the days are filled with a many sided and joyous energy in action.



The Fountain in Unity garden is illuminated at night, with the lighted steps of the mini amphitheater in the background

NB: We would like to inform you that there are two printing errors in the Matrimandir Calendar 2014: in April and in May. Please accept our sincere apologies.

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