

Matrimandir

November 2015



A final touch was put on the Garden of Consciousness with the placement on October 23rd of a long granite boulder which will provide sitting places for those who come to spend some quiet time in the garden.

Standing quietly in the Garden of Bliss at night, one can hear two streams of water in the distance. If you are facing Matrimandir, in your left ear you will hear the distant swish of the cascade in the garden of Consciousness, while in your right ear you will hear the soft splashing of the fountain off beyond the Banyan tree in the garden of Unity.

In the last days of October these two gentle sounds were joined by a third,- the tinkling of the seven fountains in the garden of Bliss,- to create a growing music of water sounds in the gardens of Matrimandir. Consciousness, Unity and Bliss...already quite a mantra of powerful names, powerful lines of meditation, these gardens are linked now by these fluid sounds of life, here under the wide sky of the Matrimandir oval.

And more such gentle sounds are to come, for all of the twelve gardens are to be linked by a flowing, living stream, a vibrating water channel, varying in width, depth and character that will circulate around the entire set of gardens, taking on the special nature of each garden it passes through: Light, Life, Power, Wealth, Utility, Progress, Youth, Harmony and Perfection. All these attributes, yet to come, will be linked by this unifying stream, which we now refer to as the "Living Link".

To realize such a stream, to make this concept a reality within the gardens is currently the study of a growing group of Aurovilians at Matrimandir. The challenges in front of the group are many. This circling rivulet of water will be about 475 meters long as the envisaged circle of its path has a diameter of about 150

meters. Differences of levels have to be created to enhance the flow, pumps are to be installed to drive the movement of the water and underground sumps will be used to catch the bulk of the water when the stream is put to rest at night. There will also be the key task of water proofing this meandering channel. A whole host of interesting challenges are thus now on the design table before us. As we begin to come to grips with the questions here, the project comes more and more into focus, showing us the details of the complex feature that this Living Link presents.

It will be an interesting adventure indeed to follow this development, to sail along this Living Link as if on a miniature raft, through garden after garden, discovering its secret bays and rapids, its calm stretches and its deep contemplative pools on the journey around the twelve gardens of Matrimandir.

This consideration of the Living Link is a key element of the gardens planning under way at the moment, but it is by no means the only element being studied. After spending the last few years steeping themselves in the meaning and symbolism of the nine garden segments yet to be done, and then presenting their proposals in the form of large models in the spring of this year, the design team is now diving deeply into the many practical aspects of garden design work.

They have studied the climatology of the Matrimandir gardens area, - how the sunshine, wind and rain affect plant growth at different times of the day and year. They have surveyed public and private gardens all around Auroville to photograph and analyze particularly interesting and successful garden features. They have looked at the ways to create different styles of plant combinations in our gardens, to introduce more verticality in the arrangement of the plants, more support from different species of plants being blended together in the gardens. One aspect which has emerged strongly through these studies is the need to somehow introduce more shade into the gardens, - to give more of a chance for the flowers and shrubs to survive our harsh summer conditions.



A conceptual painting of the Garden of Perfection

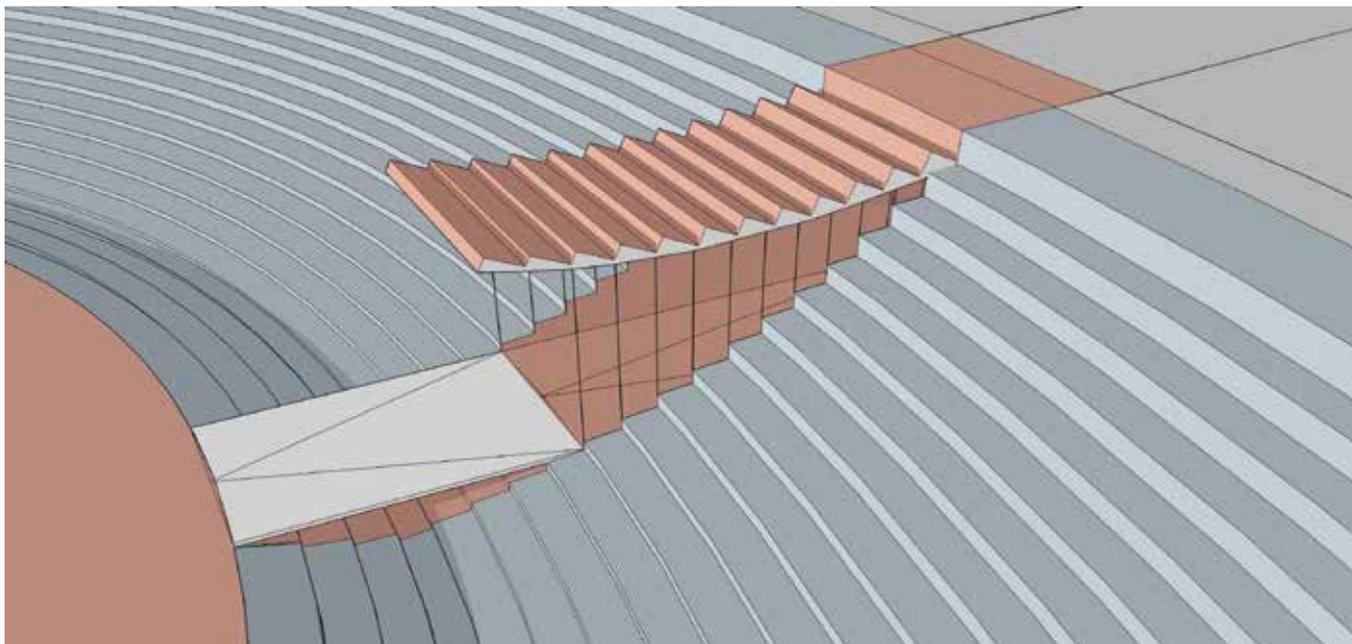


The final installation of the seven Bliss Garden fountains took place during mid October

One technique the designers propose in this regard is to lower down the level of some garden sections, - leaving the defining shapes of the curved garden crests in place and visible, but within those raised boundaries to create more sheltered spaces where tiers of plants and shrubs can be planted supporting each other, shading each other, and giving rise to a more pleasing abundance of garden life. Thus, through all these considerations, and many more, the garden design work proceeds, - it will still be some months before we are ready with all the levels of planning, and thus ready to begin digging in the unbroken ground to build the remaining nine Matrimandir gardens.

The planning of the gardens, with their living Link, is just one of the planning exercises underway at Matrimandir today.

We have referred in past newsletters to the idea of building a “Green Room” under the eastern edge of the Amphitheater, - that wide stepped circle which contains at its focus the inaugural marble Urn of Auroville. Plans for this Green Room, - the room where actors, dancers and musicians will dress and prepare themselves for performances on the stage at the foot of the Urn, - are well under way. The concept is clear now, having been through many rounds of consideration by all the people who will be involved in the use of this space. Now, our architects are making the detailed plans needed to build the Green Room. Studies are also underway regarding the techniques which we might use to construct a passage directly from this underground room out through the steps of the amphitheater to access the stage near the Urn. This will involve creating a mechanism which, when needed, will pivot up into the air an entire section of the stone clad steps of the amphitheater in order to create a free passageway for the actors to use. This is a technical feat which will be a first for us here in Auroville and will challenge our capacities of technical creation. We will keep you posted as this project moves ahead in the coming months.



An architect's image of how a section of the Amphitheater steps will be pivoted upwards to create an open passageway for people to come out of the Green Room to perform on the stage near the Urn.

Regarding the similar room under the opposite side of the Amphitheater, plans for that space are also well advanced. This room will house all the smaller garden tools which will be used daily for the upkeep of the future Matrimandir gardens. We have seen together how the rakes and shovels and trowels can best be arranged and stored, how the wheel barrows and pipe-rollers can be arranged here underground, and even how to create a vertical lift to help get heavier tools like wheel barrows up to ground level from that underground space. For this project too, final details are now being worked out, choosing the types of finishing materials to be used, considering where to place lights and ventilation fans, how to keep the use of these tools well organized over the coming years. A host of details are thus being integrated into the final construction plan. Within a few months the creation of this space will move ahead. And then, as soon as the new Tools Center is ready, we will begin to empty some of our current makeshift tools storerooms, to shift their contents to this organized underground space. We will be able, finally, to dismantle some of the old store rooms on site as a first step in the upcoming movement of shifting our entire collection of antiquated workshops out of the area where they now huddle on the east and west of the Matrimandir gardens oval.

The topic of the relocation of our tools storerooms brings us to the fourth project which is on our planning tables today: the creation of the future Service Facility for Matrimandir. This complex will house all the work centers which are presently clustered near the oval, taking up space in the zone which is seen as being, in the future, an isolating zone around the Matrimandir gardens. It is this zone which will eventually hold the Lake which the Mother envisaged as surrounding the entire gardens island.

Approaching the Auroville body known as “L’Avenir d’Auroville” (the Future of Auroville) we have found with them the appropriate location for this Service Facility. This spot is located just outside the boundary of the future lake close to the eastern axis of the Matrimandir gardens. The entrance for all Aurovilians and visitors coming to concentrate in Matrimandir will eventually be across a bridge on the West; - this service Facility that we are now planning will lie opposite to that line, 100 meters behind the gardens of Existence and Consciousness on the north eastern side of the gardens oval.

The site has been allotted for this project, and now comes the intensely creative phase of designing this space, - of creating in our imagination the plans for the buildings which will house the whole range of support activities Matrimandir needs. These include, for example, our accounting section, the laundry for the Inner Chamber socks, cushion covers and mats, the stock of materials needed daily for the maintenance of Matrimandir, and then the facilities which the 150 people involved in the daily work will need, from parking to toilets to a place to take tea.... All these activities and more, all interrelated, will be woven into a smoothly operating base of material support activity for the Matrimandir and its gardens. The creation of this facility has, like the other projects, been on the table for a year already, and now moves into a very creative phase of planning.

Put all together, these planning activities make today for a many sided, interrelated concentration of activity on the part of quite a large number of people. Indeed, everyone who has responsibility for a field of work at Matrimandir has given their input on how the upcoming projects should best be realized, which details are important from their point of view, which mistakes from the past should not be repeated, which dreams they have for the future of their work here. An intense weaving of ideas, and of dreams.... As we move forward on these various fronts of the work, we will share the progress in each field with you all.



On August 16th and 17th the newly created portable stage, placed temporarily in the very center of the pond in the garden of Unity for this occasion, was first put to use (see photo above). On these two nights we were witness to a captivating rendition of a part of Sri Aurobindo’s epic poem Savitri. Actors and actresses walked freely across bridges over the still waters of the pond to carry out their acting in the very center of the pool, surrounded by its clear, luminous waters. The action of the play moved up over the steps of the mini amphitheater too, bringing alive this space in a way which was riveting to behold. It was a fine inauguration for the use of this quiet, intimate space, and one which holds great promise for future presentations here, close to the Banyan tree at the center of Auroville.



We would like to remind everyone that this Matrimandir Newsletter is available on line. We encourage you to receive it in that way so as to save paper in future! Please send us an e-mail to this effect and we will put you on our e-mailing list. Thank you!

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