

Matrimandir

August 2012



Barbara

Here is a recent photo of Barbara, smiling and happy in her office as we like to remember her. We have informed you all by letter of her demise on June 15 2012. She offered decades of quiet service at the Matrimandir office. She had such a close and intimate contact with so many of Matrimandir's friends and donors all over the world. No matter who came to visit her in her office she would immediately be able to happily enquire after the members of the family and recall details of their lives that might have been shared with her months or even years before. Such a remarkable memory and talent for entering into close contact with those who came into her life! In her last weeks, working from home, she continued to guide us on details of the work, and took great care to train Srijita particularly about the ins and outs of the work carried out at the office. Barbara edited the last newsletter, of June, from her apartment too, correcting as always the first written draft, straightening its sentences, giving a pleasant sounding turn of phrase and helping to choose the most appropriate photos.

Barbara has given so much of her life to the building of Matrimandir. One can only be grateful for the intensity and depth of her quiet presence here over the years.

Flashes of lightening light up the night sky around Matrimandir. The intense heat of June has finally given way to the welcome thundershowers of July, bringing relief from the heat and bringing too their energizing rains to the Matrimandir garden.

Even though ground water may be used in adequate measure for watering the flowers and grasses, it is only the energized water of the rains that can bring this green plant world fully to life after the long dry summer. We had a full six months here without rain, after the onslaught of the cyclone at the beginning of the year. There is a freshness and a brightness in the gardens these days, - yellow and white Prayer flowers have blossomed in abundance, as they always do in response to the rains...

Work in the gardens proceeds steadily now.

In the garden of Bliss the work has begun to clad the seven concentric circular walls of the garden with slabs of variously colored slate stones. The design of the garden calls for a graduation in the color of the stone on the walls, moving from a darker red for the outer most wall through pink and tan towards the lightest colors of the central circular wall.

To obtain these colored slabs, we had to return to the quarries of Andhra Pradesh, from where we had earlier obtained stone for the cladding of the pathways in the garden of Unity.

Armed with samples of the required colors our team went there twice during the summer and spent two or three days selecting and loading the hundreds of square feet of beautiful multi colored slabs.

As the lorry finally rolled into the gate of the Matrimandir we were all present to see if indeed the required range of colors had been found. It took two trips, but finally we were satisfied that the material we needed had been collected!



The work of cladding the low walls in the garden of Bliss with slate stone slabs begins

The cladding of the seven walls will take several months. Once the set of two walls closest to the building of Matrimandir has been clad, we will fill the intervening spaces with compost and plant the greenery there that has been specified for this part of the garden. The larger outer area of this garden, which contains the central, raised, white sand filled "Moon area" will be brought to completion only in a year or so.

Next to Bliss is the garden of Consciousness, where work is proceeding steadily to establish the curved pathways that will give access to the heart of the garden. The construction of these paths had been the subject of a lot of study, for we were looking for a way to combine the appeal of a softer, gravelly path with the required hard surface which could be accessed by those in wheel chair. Finally we came across an approach to the surfacing of the path which combines lateral strips of red Agra sandstone, and having the gaps between filled with a soft crushed gravel, thus maintaining the softer surface while at the same time providing a hard enough surface for wheel chairs to move in future.



The new pathway in the garden of Consciousness

At the outer edge of the garden of Consciousness, the sample of cobble stone cladding of the outer oval road has been completed. This ten meter long stretch of road, with its combination of red and grey granite cobble stones has an appealing look and texture....we will see how its stands up to the passage of vehicles over the next months before proceeding to clad longer portions of the road in this way.

Further around to the western side of the gardens, work has now begun to complete the pool in the garden of Unity. This pool, with the mini amphitheater on the western side, is a central feature of this garden as designed by Roger, the architect of Matrimandir, and one of his final design works at Matrimandir. The pool will contain both a fountain, composed of more than 200 jets of water reaching up to different heights, as well as the support for a circular stage which can be topped with a decking on the occasion of some cultural performance.

The combination of fountain and stage support has been a subject of study for quite some time, and now that these studies have been concluded, work has begun to complete the construction of the pond. Simultaneously, masons are at work, on one hand, to build up the shape of the inner edge of the pond, while in our metal workshop, the team is busy fabricating the stainless steel grid which will help support the stage. In this work of precision one needs to pay attention to the minute details. In spite of that, the work is moving ahead steadily.

Inside Matrimandir meanwhile, a special work is being carried out, - the full cleaning of the white carpet in the Inner Chamber. Even though all who visit the Chamber wear white cotton socks, still, inevitably some dust and dirt finds its way there inside and gets slowly worked into the fabric of the carpet. Thus from the 18th of July, we closed the Chamber for a few days to have the entire carpet professionally cleaned by a team from Chennai. Our own and ever present maintenance team was around to assist and make sure that no harm would come to the delicate features such as the 12 columns, the central Mother's symbol in marble or the outer walls of the Chamber.



In the Metal Workshop the stain less steel support structure for the stage takes shape

All went well, and by July 25th we were able to reopen the Chamber now deeply cleaned and ready for use.

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The cleaning of the Chamber carpet on July 18th

wood have now been auctioned off and are waiting to be taken away to where they will be used to fire brick making kilns and for other uses.

During the last few months we have mentioned from time to time the progress on the huge job of cleaning up the site after the impact of Cyclone Thane at the beginning of the year.

Finally the work is done (99% !) ...the fences have all been rebuilt and the bulk of the fallen trees have been cut up and removed from where they had fallen all over the site. From the larger "Work" and "Neem" trees we selected some prime timber wood and have had it sliced up and stored it here on the site to meet any future needs of Matrimandir. The mountains of smaller logs, useful only as fire

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