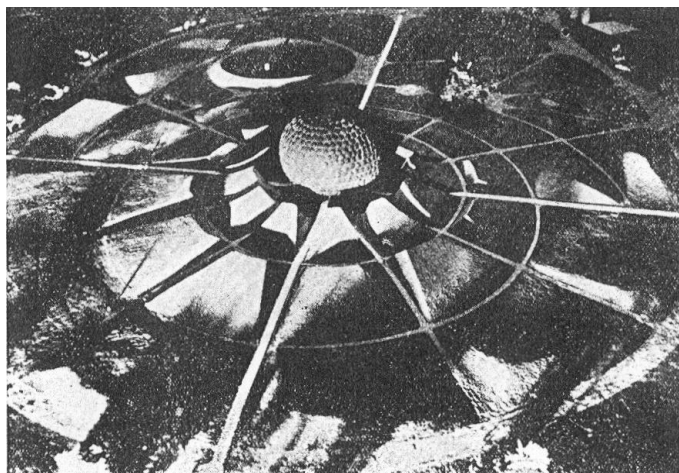


3rd Chapter
Excavation Work
21st Feb. 1971 – 20th Feb. 1972

1971, February 21st: Mother's 93rd Birthday and Matrimandir's Foundation Stone Ceremony

This photo¹ along with the text below and the messages (in English and French) are printed on a card released for the occasion:

Le 21 Février 1971
pose de la première pierre
du Matrimandir
Benedictions



21st February 1971

Laying of the foundation stone of the Matrimandir²

Blessings

Let the Matrimandir
be the living symbol of Auroville's
aspiration for the
Divine

Le Matrimandir veut être
le vivant symbole de l'aspiration
d'Auroville au Divin

Let the Matrimandir be the living symbol of
Auroville's aspiration for the Divine.

Sample of a card with photo and messages at AV Archives; messages only: CWM, XIII, pp. 229-30; MoA, p. 4

*

Description of the ceremony by Alain Grandcolas:

"At 5:30 a.m. three fires were lit, one inside the urn area where we are now building the amphitheatre; one in the basin³ under the banyan tree; and one inside the Matrimandir proper.⁴ From 5:50 to 6:10 Sunil's music was played. The people moved to where the foundation stone was to be laid. The pit for it was prepared along the present government road, which cuts right through the gardens and which will have to be shifted. The

¹ This is a photo of the thermocol model which was the first model made with this layout and was shown to Mother. The rosewood model was larger and much more elaborate. As Ved Prakash and his team just managed to complete it so that it could be exhibited on that day, its photo couldn't be on this card.

² Exactly one year later, there will be another ceremony and another stone foundation laid. Mother did not write a similar card for the 1972 event. Which date should be taken for astrological or other symbolical purpose?

³ Alain means the shallow pond built for the Inauguration Ceremony immediately south of the Banyan tree.

⁴ Alain means "on the future site of the Matrimandir" – that is on a plot of land that was still privately owned but its neighbour had allowed this function to take place on his land.

foundation stone was to be laid not in the Matrimandir itself, but on the path leading up to the west entrance, so that even during the excavation it would remain in place.

Under the banyan tree some kind of exhibition was prepared, the central focus of which was supposed to be the model of Matrimandir and the gardens. Roger was making it with Ved Prakash. The entire night before the ceremony they worked on it. At 5:50 however, the model had not yet arrived. At 6:10, when the music stopped, a deep and concentrated meditation began to be disturbed by the sound of an approaching lorry... bearing the model.

At exactly 6:30, the foundation stone was laid. It was a dark-coloured piece of granite, on which Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's symbols were engraved. Mother had asked one of the Auroville children [Aurofilio] to place it, but it seems it was too heavy for the little boy. Then Mother asked Navajata and Roger to lay the stone together but Navajata took it down into the hole and laid it before Roger had a chance to touch it.⁵ Nolini then read this text from Sri Aurobindo's book, "The Mother":

"The supramental change is a thing decreed and inevitable in the evolution of the earth-consciousness; for its upwards ascent is not ended and mind is not the last summit. Out that the change may arrive, take form and endure, there is need the call from below with a will to recognise and not deny the Light when it comes, and there is needed the sanction of the Supreme from above. The power that mediates between the sanction and the call is the presence of the Divine Mother."

The ceremony lasted from 5:30 to 6:45 A.M. 12 busloads of people came, along with private cars and bicycles. Two thousand copies of Mother's message were printed, and all of them were handed out.

The centre of the ceremony was the fire on the exact site of Matrimandir. Around it were twelve brick pillars, together forming the shape of Matrimandir. The heat of the fire had weakened the Pillars and two days after the ceremony they collapsed. So the first work on the site was clearing away the bricks. Some days after the ceremony a group of Aurovilians cemented the first stone in and covered it with a layer of cement."

Quoted by Ruud Lohman in his "Matrimandir Diary", on 12th January 197.
English.

Description of the ceremony by Anu (Purani?):

"There were twelve red pillars which formed a circle... The pillar in front of us was less than half a foot. But then gradually... [they] rose in height till the last two were about ten feet high. In the circle lay dry wood and hay... Bob put his torch to the dry wood and at once the flames shot up... creation too must have started this way – thousands of sparks coming out of the original fire. Along with the flames rose music composed by Sunil Bhattacharjee. I could hear new footsteps in this music, thousands of feet marching joyously towards a new adventure. We heard Mother's voice:

"Let the Matrimandir be the living Symbol of Auroville's aspiration for the Divine."⁶

... as I looked at the flames I felt as if Rishis from the invisible world had stood around this new sacrificial fire and chanted mantras.



⁵ The many photos taken of this function show that such hasn't been the case. Navajata did carry the heavy stone up – or rather down – to a point but the stone was laid by Aurofilio helped by Nolini-da. When he realised that such had been the case, Alain explained to this editor that [already at that time] many Aurovilians were against Navajata and that, because of that some malicious gossips circulated.

⁶ The recording of Sunil's music and of Mother saying this message, in French & English is available at AV Archives.

Over us the moon had become pale and in the east were waves of light. As the flames dies down the music too ended.

The chief architect Mr. Anger came to Nolini and escorted him to the site. As I turned I saw that a similar fire was burning near the banyan tree and the lotus-shaped jar [Kumbha] where the foundation of Auroville was laid. Mr. Anger brought us to the site which was a deeply-dug-up square. Nolini, Navajata, Mr. Anger and Auroville's first citizen Aurofilio, a child of about 5,⁷ went down the square. We saw another deeper square inside that square. This was the place for laying the foundation-stone...

... According to Mother's instructions at six-thirty Nolini and Aurofilio laid the foundation-stone in its place. The stone was black and Sri Aurobindo's symbol was engraved on it...

Quoted by K. R. Srinivasa Yyengar, p. 792 of his book *"On Mother"*.
English.

Excerpt from Oscar's description of it in the *Gazette Aurovilienne*, I, 3, p. 38.

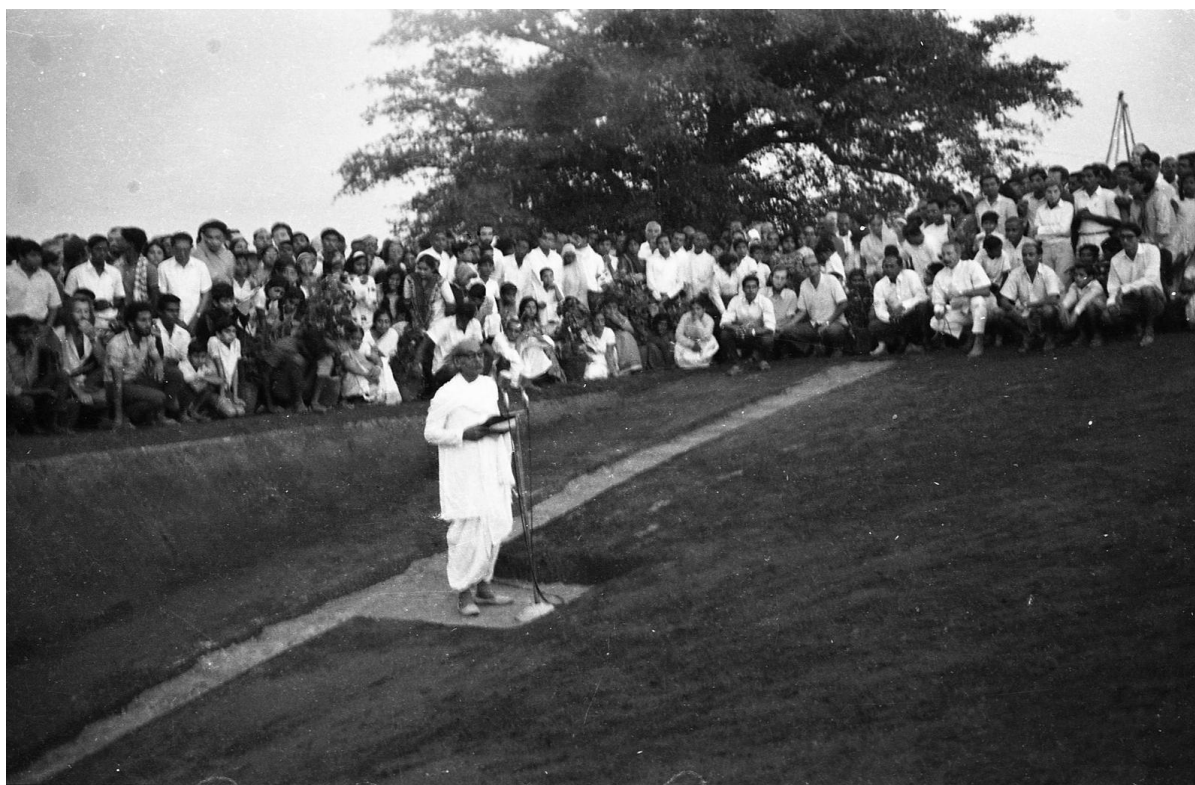
"A fire, symbol of the human aspiration, had been lit in front of a simple yet magnificent altar and the large gathering sat in a semi-circle, facing the East, while the air resounded with Mother's message and the music.

... An extract from Sri Aurobindo's book "Mother" was read out by Nolini Kanta Gupta:

"Mother's power and not any human endeavour and tapasya can alone rend the lid and tear the covering and shape the vessel and bring down into this world of obscurity and falsehood and death and suffering Truth and Light and Life Divine and the immortal's Ananda."

Excerpt from the description of the ceremony in 'Mother India', May 1971, pp. 264-65

"The presence of three fires can be explained, according to Nolini, in two ways: in Vedic times they represented Heaven, Self and Earth; in our times they may be taken to represent the mind, the vital being and the body."



Nolini-da reads from Sri Aurobindo

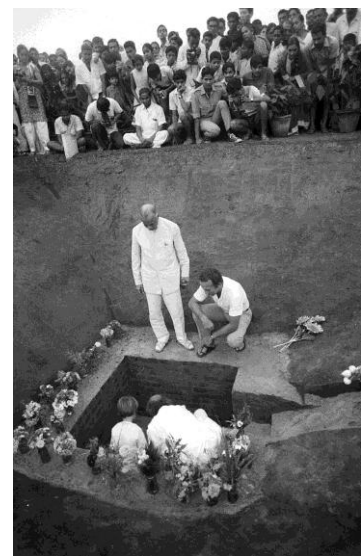
⁷ As Aurofilio was born in August 1967, he was 3½ at that time.



Navajata, Roger, Aurofilio Nolini-da and Gene Maslow



*Navajata, Roger, Aurofilo and Nolini-da
sit while people bring flowers⁸
Nava carries the foundation stone*

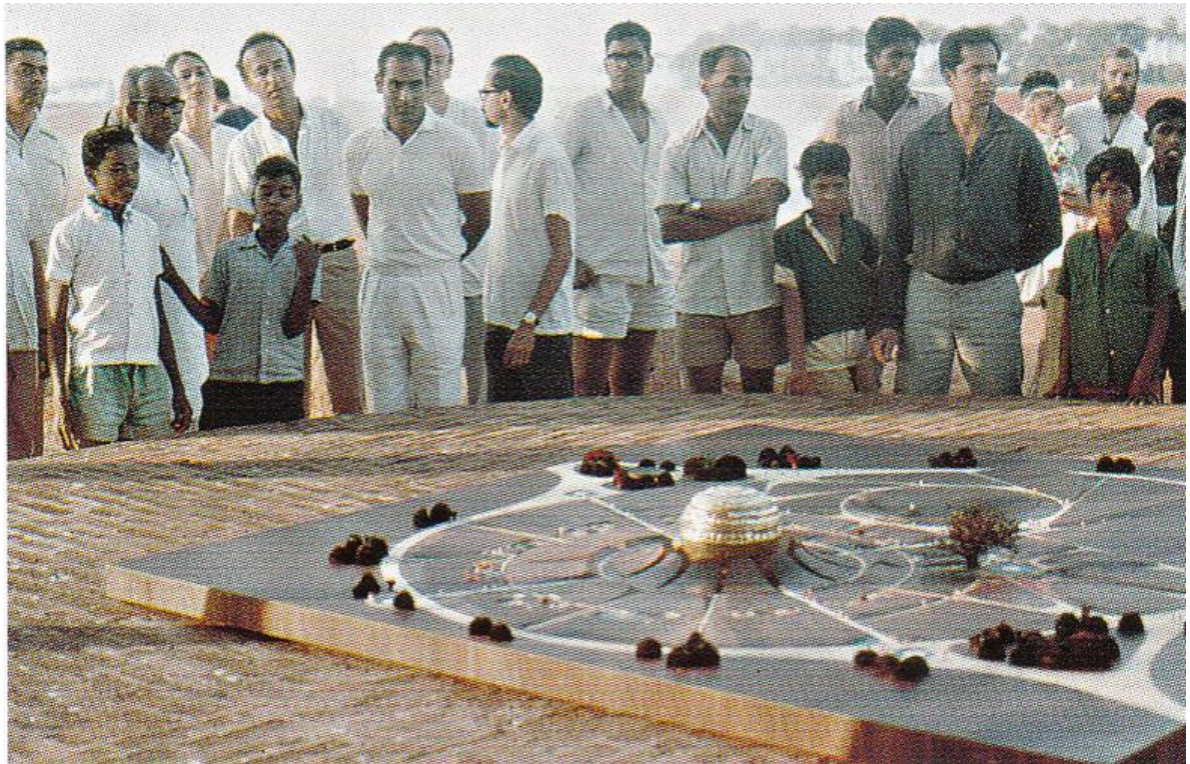


*Nava and Roger watch
Nolini-da & Aurofilio
lay the foundation stone*



Matrimandir's foundation stone held by Navajata

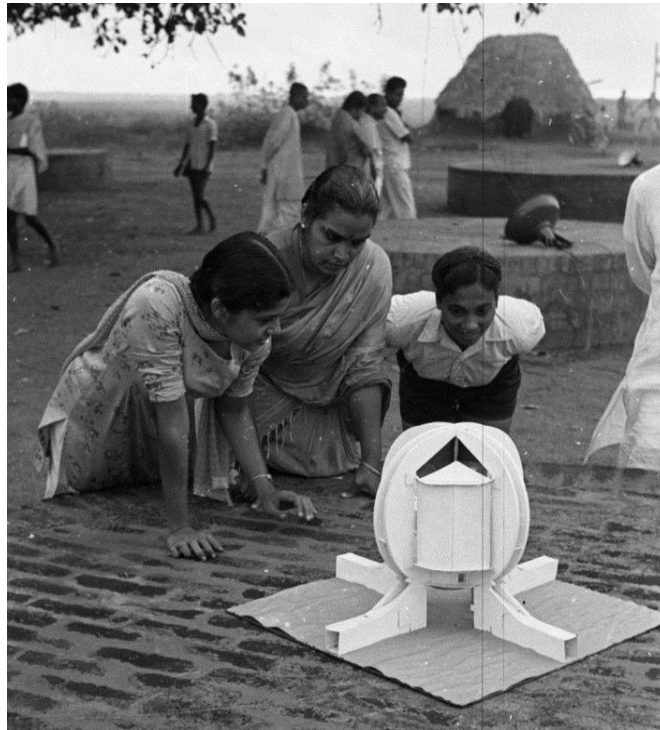
⁸ Narad can be recognised in the queue. Gene is back to the end of the pathway.



*Presentation of the model of Matrimandir and its island under the Banyan tree
On this photo, Pournapréma, Roger and Tanmaya can be recognised*



*Photos of the rosewood model of Matrimandir, its oval Island and its 12 small gardens
Charles Gianferrari is the author of Matrimandir's original disc pattern*



Kiran Poddar and others looking at a model of Matrimandir's structure⁹

*

The Aurovilians working at the Matrimandir Nursery asked Mother whether they should postpone growing flowers and plants in order to join Matrimandir's digging team. Her answer is:

No, the gardens are as important as the Matrimandir itself.

* * *

1971, February 22nd: *Letter from Satprem to Roger:*

Dear Roger,

I wanted to tell you that yesterday I had the very strong perception or sensation in front of the fire. Suddenly I felt as if an OM was springing up from the ancient times of Vedic Sacrifice and we were there to round off a whole cycle – to such an extent that when I heard Sunil's music, I was surprised as though I were hearing the hymns to Agni of the Vedas. It was extremely powerful. Something did take place yesterday. It is good for the future.

With very cordial regards.

Satprem

*Original in Roger's personal archives? Gazette Aurovilienne, 1/3 p. 38.
Manuscript in French.*

*

⁹ Note that the dodeca wall extends also to the lower part of the sphere.

1971, March

1971, March 1st:

As per the agreement signed on 29th January, the full payment for the purchase of the land where Matrimandir is to be built is to be finalised before the end of April. As excavation works needs to be started at the earliest, Shyam Sunder meets the sellers.¹⁰

Message written by Mother on this occasion:

For those who have some land to sell.

There is a Supreme Divinity witness of all our actions and the day of the consequence will come soon.



*For those who have
some land to sell*

There is a

Supreme Divinity

*witness of all our
actions and the
day of of the
consequence will come*

soon

[Signature]

*The Mother on Auroville, p. 35.
Manuscript in English. Scan available.*

* * *

1971, March 14th:

As the land for Matrimandir has now been paid in full, Mother gives this message for the starting, on that day, of the excavation of the foundation of the Matrimandir by Aurovilians, Ashramites and other friends:

The fraternity of collaboration.

The aspiration towards Unity in joy and Light.

Blessings

14.3.71

La fraternité de

la collaboration

L'aspiration vers

l'Unité

dans la joie et

la lumière

Bénédiction

[Signature]

*Words of the Mother, I, p. 230, The Mother on Auroville, p. 4;
Manuscript in French. Scan available.*

* * *

1971, early:

Savitra's account of the beginning of the excavation:

The weeks and months following [the 21st February 1971] saw a handful of Aurovilians digging into the callous clay in an area roughly marked as the excavation site for an immense crater 10.5 metres deep and 50 metres across at the rim.

They dug with their small hand shovels, picks and crowbars, removing the earth in flat pans and wheelbarrows. Joining this first core of Matrimandir workers, a van would come

¹⁰ When he didn't know that a deal had already been signed for Matrimandir land on 29th January 1971 and that the final payment had to be done within three months, Gilles G. had written that it was on 1st March 1971 that Mother had asked Shyam Sunder at one time he would meet the sellers and had instructed him to pay the price asked without trying to bargain. (Personal communication from Shyam Sunder to Gilles) Gilles now believes that this must have taken place on 29th January.

each morning between 5:30 and 7:00 with a crew of a dozen or so who had other works during the day. On Sundays work parties from the communities and Pondicherry would form rag-tag lines of men, women and children, passing pans of burnt earth from the growing matrix to swelling mounds nearby, staining hands and bodies with its indelible red.

Savitra, *Auroville, the first six years*, p. 83.
Written in English.

* * *

1971:

Mother is told that, as yet, there is no money for Matrimandir and she is asked what to do. As her response is "Start!", some Aurovilians start its excavation:



Johnny Walker can be recognised (middle)



Kenneth F. can be recognised (facing us)



Help came also from friends in Pondicherry (Ashramites, students and ex-students)

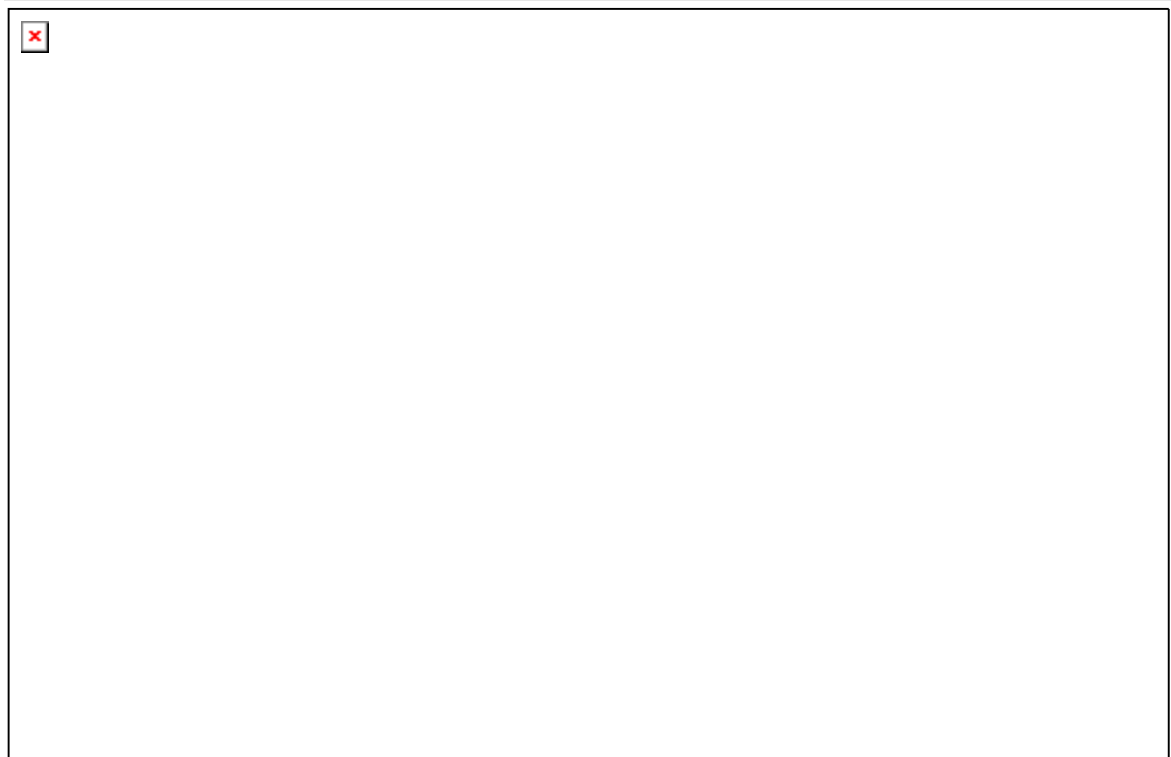
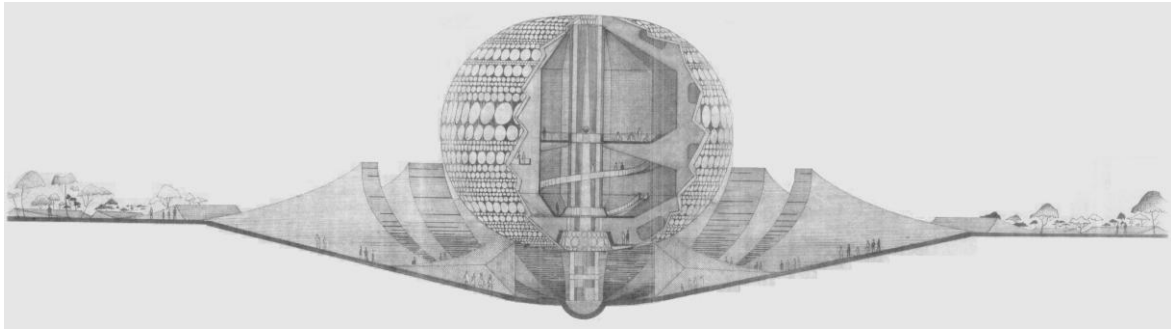


Very young kids from Auroville and the Centre of Education seem to enjoy their share of the work.

* * *

1971, early:

At Roger's request, André Hababou produces these two presentation drawings.¹¹



Editor's comments on these plans:

- A set of 4 straight staircases in the 4 pillars provides access directly from the 4 wide radials to the 2nd level.
- Another set of 4 staircases (with 3 intermediary landings) in the pillars provides access from lotus pond level to the 1st level.
- The dodeca wall which surrounds the Chamber encloses also the space below it.
- The Chamber is accessed by 4 staircases from landings below in the ribs - instead of by a single one as on Udar's drawing. This divides (up to parapet level) the Chamber in 4 distinct areas.
- One pair of spiral ramps is represented; it is fully within the dodeca wall and leads from the 2nd level to landings in the ribs. In order to provide sufficient headroom and also purposely, there is a gap between floor and dodeca wall in the Chamber.
- Another pair of spiral ramps (located between the dodeca wall and the shell but not represented here) takes people down from the Chamber to the 1st level.
- There are no columns in the Inner Chamber.

*

¹¹ Decades later André will remember that these drawings were destined to be reproduced in a first Matrimandir brochure. Though some plans seem to have been exhibited under the Banyan tree at the time of the presentation of the rosewood model on 21.2.71, André doesn't think that he had already produced these drawings. André's second drawing (above) was reproduced in the April/June 1971 issue of the Journal of the Institute of Indian Architect.



Section of the Galaxy concept with Matrimandir at its centre

*

Interview of Roger Anger

published in the April/June 1971 issue of the 'Journal of the Institute of Indian Architects'

Q.: What is the Matrimandir?

R.A.: As Mother has said: "The Matrimandir wants to be the symbol of the Divine's answer to man's aspiration for perfection the union with the Divine manifesting Himself in a progressive human unity".

Here is the model. You can see how the earth opens as if it were under the pressure of an irresistible force. And the golden sphere of consciousness comes out of the depths. The spiritual meaning is obvious. It shows how out of the evolution of earth shall come the new age promised by all traditions.

Q.: If I understand correctly, this is a religious building?

R.A.: No. If it were, I would have designed a cathedral or a temple. The meaning of the Matrimandir is above all religions. It expresses the spiritual endeavour, itself the rebirth of man into a new consciousness – "Realisation" as it is called in India.

Q.: How did you get the idea of building such a symbol?

R.A.: The idea is not mine; Mother of Sri Aurobindo Ashram gave us the assignment. She told us to build the Matrimandir before other things. She gave precise indications about the measurements and the arrangement of the main inner chamber of the Matrimandir. The measurements were precise almost to the centimetre.¹²

Q.: How could she, not being an architect, determine such exact measurements?

R.A.: This I don't know, you must find the answer for yourself. Well, with the information she had given us, we started to work and evolved a general shape which is nearly spherical.

Q.: You have just told us about the meaning of the Matrimandir and how the project was initiated. Would you now explain the architectural conception?

R.A.: Without going into all the details, I can give you a general description. We started with many models that were shown to Mother and She chose this one. As you see, the general shape is nearly spherical. Observe that I say nearly spherical: it is the exact projection into space of an old tantric symbol concerning Creation and Unity.¹³ When looked at from above, the building is circular and when viewed from the side, it is slightly oval. From whatever side, it keeps the same aspect.

Q.: What materials have been chosen?

R.A.: Inside there will be white marble and a structure in rough cast concrete. Outside, this basic structure is not covered in a final manner: we chose to leave provision for future changes so that the outer aspect of the Matrimandir may be modified according to the evolution of consciousness of Aurovilians.¹⁴

¹² As can be seen here, Roger believes and tells the readers that Mother had given all the dimensions to Udar. In this respect, read this editor's study on the dimensions mentioned on Udar's drawings.

¹³ This symbol is called a 'Shaligram', it symbolises the unity of creation.

¹⁴ Note that Roger's idea was that Matrimandir's outer face as well as its twelve gardens would evolve in time – along with the consciousness of the Aurovilians.

In order to achieve this idea, we designed a plastic “skin” that covers the inner structure. This “skin” itself will be covered by golden discs also in plastic¹⁵, fixed at the end of iron rods that will move slightly in the wind. The sunlight will be reflected on this entire moving surface and will produce a sort of vibration which seems to come from the building itself. It will give the feeling of a mass of light that is alive.

Let us now take a closer look.

First of all we come to a circular area composed of 12 gardens designed like opened lotus petals. None of these gardens is similar to the others. And yet they make up an overall design. They are separated by streams that originate at the four points of the compass.¹⁶ These streams delineate the shape of the 12 gardens. All together they reproduce the symbol of Mother. Separately now, they express each of the aspects of Mother through a floral decoration that may be changed according to the artistic will of the gardeners. The flowers are placed in removable vats.¹⁷

After passing these gardens, we continue on one of the paths leading to the building. There are 12 paths altogether going through a landscape of pyramid-like masses of dense earth, delineated by the streams that unite the ponds of the gardens.

It takes us straight to the Matrimandir. As we go on, the earth becomes higher and higher on each side. It forms a twelve-sectioned crater from which arises the Matrimandir. Now we are walking between 2 oblique walls, 30 feet high¹⁸, as impressive as a fault line. The walls become lower and lower. We are in the crater. And here is the Matrimandir. It looks as if it were suspended in the air in the middle of this strange corolla.

Before entering the structure, see a water tank under the sphere. The bottom side of the building seems to rest above the water which, though it is in the shade of the building, received daylight directly... Let us look up: the Matrimandir is open, in the vertical axis, from top to bottom. A column of light pierces the building.¹⁹

The doors to the Matrimandir are in the pillars. Walking now into the building through one of them, we climb up a staircase towards an elevated inner room. This room is a wide landing before the spiral ramp leading us further on to the main chamber.

Two spiral paths reach this chamber, 2 others lead outside; the landings of the ramps separate the area into 4 equal parts. In the centre, our eye is focused on a luminous ball – 2 feet in diameter. It receives the light coming from the top, diffuses it into the room beneath. We would like to keep this ball suspended and immobile in the air by means of a magnetic field.²⁰ It is easy to understand that this main chamber is devoted to meditation.

Here is revealed the second spiritual meaning of the Matrimandir: Until now, the consciousness was emerging from the depths of matter. But there is another force, another consciousness, which is secretly similar to the first one. Yes, remember that we spoke of the light coming from above. These are two powers: one is hidden in the sacred heart of things and is at once their reason for being, their basis and their life. It is a rising force, a power that breaks open the crust of matter. But there is also a descending power that comes from the height, from the Supreme level, a down-going force that awakens. It stimulates the emergence of an ever new creation. The conjunction, the meeting of these two forces in the heart of the Matrimandir symbolises the perfect Realisation.

Speaking of symbols, you have noticed 2 figures: 4 and 12, which come frequently in this composition. Have a look at the model. You see the shape of Mother’s symbol. It is a kind of seal which is integrated into the whole project. Finally, coming back to our visit to

¹⁵ Years later (in 1972?), Mrs. Anjani Dayanand asked Mother that they be coated in real gold. She agreed to it.

¹⁶ Initially, these streams were indeed going to flow in gutters on the side of the radial pathways towards Matrimandir. Three decades later, Roger decided that radial pathways and gutters would slope outwards and not inwards anymore.

¹⁷ Note that, as is the case in front of the main of the Ashram building, flowers were in movable pots and vats.

¹⁸ Decades later, Roger was convinced to reduce the height of these ‘petals’ – which he is said to have later regretted.

¹⁹ Note that this idea from Roger comes at an early stage.

²⁰ Note this idea from Roger which differs from Mother’s vision. Yet She seems to have accepted Roger’s idea.

the Matrimandir, we shall start on our way out of the main chamber by any of the 2 spiral ramps located between the concrete frame and the plastic “skin” which covers the Matrimandir like a cocoon.²¹ An opalescent light passes through the skin itself.²²

A last word: the road which surrounds the garden of the periphery has exactly the same shape as the Matrimandir, that is, the tantric shape we spoke about earlier. The area encircled by the road is exactly 10 times bigger than the Matrimandir’s, outline.²³ Interesting... It happened without conscious intention. Puzzled I asked Mother about the occult signification of the number 10. She answered that 10 is the figure of accomplishment!

* * *

1971, March 23rd:

Note handwritten by Roger suggesting the construction of a camp for the Aurovilians working at Matrimandir:

“An architectural study has been made to develop Peace. It aims at creating, on lands close to Matrimandir in a hidden place, a temporary communal unit, comprising kitchen, cafeteria, meditation room, showers and toilets and collective gardens, to lodge some 20 to 30 people maximum who will be the supervisors living on the spot, to organise the work, reception, food transport and storage of materials for those who would want to work for the Matrimandir.

The idea is to allow a team to live on the spot without transforming the vicinity into an out of control suburb of shacks.

Some are already living on site whose construction has already started, but others with private means would prefer to build their own hut there and have a more independent life. It has been proposed to them to give their money to hasten the construction of this unit, they do not seem to want to accept it.

Question:

- 1) For the present and the future, is the principle of communal regrouping valid for Peace and its reorganisation?*

This means that in a supple way we would facilitate this regrouping as it has been conceived by limiting it to 20 or 25 persons maximum in addition to those living there already in individual huts. The idea being always to build the Matrimandir and to develop Auromodel as a human experiment.

- 2) If so, can we nevertheless, in the case of Dennis and Ravindra, make two exceptions?”*

Auroville Archives.
Manuscript in French. Scan available.

Mother’s answer to this note is not known.

* * *

²¹ Note that Roger speaks here of an RCC structure and of a plastic skin.

²² In January 1992, in a letter addressed to the Aurovilians, Roger wrote: “The solution presented to Mother included a skin of translucent orange polyester, supported by a light aluminium structure on which the discs were fixed.” Mother specified the colour of this translucent skin by giving to Roger a swash of a saree whose golden pink-colour was that of the “Auroville” hibiscus, also named by Her: “Beauty of Supramental Love”.

²³ Plans of the future island, dated 28.9.72, mention the length of the oval area within this (oval) road as being 378m.

1971, April

1971, April 5th:

Entry in Shyam Sunder's Notes:

On the subject of Bharat Nivas, Mother had said to Roger:

I see no reason for not engaging contractors. How to build Auroville without help?

What I have said to Shyam Sunder is that for the Matrimandir it would be preferable to go without it, but for other constructions it is different...

Q.: Does Mother agree on the following points:

- *For the Matrimandir in the present situation, neither contractor, nor paid labour.*
- *For Bharat Nivas, schools, etc. until ordered otherwise, Auroville can utilise contractors under the supervision of the Architectural Office of Auroville²⁴.*

Mother's answer as noted by Shyam Sunder

Mother agrees.

For Kuljian Corporation, Mother has allowed Shyam Sunder to talk to Pradyot.

Auroville Archives, *Down Memory Lane*, p. 113.
Original in French; English in DML Scan available.

* * *

1971, April 10th:

Two questions manuscript from Roger and Mother's answers:

Q.: Does Mother agree with the following points

- 1) *At present we will develop Auromodel as Auroville's first communal life and at the centre of Auroville we will build huts for twenty to thirty persons who will participate in Matrimandir's construction and organisation.*

Yes

- 2) *In Auroville, one should not build even a temporary hut, without the definite approval of Auroville's construction service.*

Yes

The Mother on Auroville, p. 86.
Manuscript in French. Scan available.

* * *

1971, April 10th:

Notice handwritten and signed by Mother:

As we are in a period of construction, it is imperative that the Aurovilians who live at the centre²⁵ should work at the construction of Matrimandir.

Those who do not want to work at Matrimandir should not live at the centre.²⁶

²⁴ "Roger's Office" will be named by Mother: *L'Avenir d'Auroville – Auroville's Future*.

²⁵ Though in December 1968, Mother had given the name "Peace" to the "Centre", she never used this name again.

²⁶ In all likelihood this message is linked to the previous one. Roger wants people to live in Auromodel and not to develop within the future city area.

Comme nous
 sommes en
 période de
 construction, il
 est impératif que les
 personnes qui habitent
 au centre, travaillent
 dans la construction du Matrimandir
 ceux qui ne veulent

pas travailler
 au Matrimandir
 ne doivent pas habiter
 au centre.



Auroville Archives, *Words of the Mother*, I, p. 230.
 Manuscript in French. Scan available

* * *

1971, April 23rd:

Notice drafted by Roger and approved by Mother:

Auroville is in full construction phase and disciplined workers are necessary.

Those who do not want to submit to a discipline should not be here for the moment. Goodwill, sincerity and discipline are indispensable qualities for those who want to be Aurovilians.

The Mother on Auroville, p. 86.
 French

* * *

1971, April 28th:

*Mother comments to Satprem on the letter he had sent to Roger after the laying of the first stone of the Matrimandir on 21st February 1971:*²⁷

I saw your letter (I saw it in English), the letter you wrote to Roger for the "Matrimandir"... It's interesting, it's good.... They have a bulletin, a "Gazette", it will be published there.²⁸

Mother's Agenda, XII, p. 108.
 Verbal in French..

* * *

²⁷ Read the entry dated 22 February 1971.

²⁸ Footnote in *Mother's Agenda*: "Satprem's letter was misunderstood and published abridged to suit the comprehension of the editors.

1971, May

1971, May 6th:

Mother's answer to Gene Maslow who had written that he did not want to resume responsible work at the Matrimandir unless it was Mother's wish:

Until the building of Auroville is over, those who want to live on the spot must help in this building [Matrimandir]. So it is natural that you should take up some useful work there. Do with good will what is asked from you.

Blessings.

Down Memory Lane, p. 115.
Written in English.

* * *

1971, May 12th:

Excerpt from a letter from Gene Maslow and Mother's answer:

"Divine Mother,

I regret that my note to you about the Centre work could be misinterpreted. There is no question at all about my working. That I am doing. The question I posed was about – assuming responsibility.

As for the useful work; I am coordinating the construction activities of the Matrimandir's Worker's kitchen, dining room and living quarters, and the Matrimandir site excavation, and attending to the various activities required where so many people come and go. For the year previous I was intensely hard at the work of construction, among other things. Did you really think I would, under any conditions, refrain from carrying forward the work required out here? If anyone has given you to believe such a thing, they are, at the least, grossly misinformed.

The circumstances now is this. I have assumed a responsibility out here, prodded by Roger, to do what is required to keep a sense of order among primitive conditions and very lax people. In addition, to do that what is needful to forward the work. In order to do this successfully, now I must know that it is what you wish me to do. Is it Mother? If it is, then I would find it very helpful if you would says so in writing,

[...] ²⁹

With all my love

For you always."

Do the work full heartedly and with your outmost ability and my help and blessings will always be with you.

Auroville Archives.
Typed question and manuscript answer in English. Scans available

* * *

²⁹ The last part of this letter is not reproduced here because Shyam Sunder wrote in its margin: "Read upto here to Mother. Her reply is overleaf."

1971, June

1971, June 1st:

Notice typed by Shyam Sunder and signed by Mother:

Matrimandir Workers' Camp
Kitchen and Dining Room

These are meant primarily for Matrimandir workers and should be kept clean and used cleanly. One should not smoke here and should learn to eat in quietude.

Mother signs it after adding:

In this country cleanliness is indispensable to avoid typhoid.

Auroville Archives; *Words of the Mother*, I, p. 240.
Typed notice and manuscript comment in English. Scan available.

* * *

1971:

Message for the Matrimandir Workers' Kitchen:

An absolute cleanliness is indispensable in this country and climate to avoid illness. Great precautions must be taken.

*An absolute cleanliness
is indispensable in this country and climate
to avoid illness. Great precautions
must be taken.*

Auroville Archives; *Words of the Mother*, I, p. 240.
Manuscript in English. Scan available.

* * *

1971, early:

Editor's words based on a personal communication from Dr. C.L. Gupta:

The scientists of S.E.R.C. become Matrimandir's structural engineers:

"Having learned that Matrimandir's outer face will be a thin RCC shell³⁰ in the shape of a slightly flattened sphere, Dr. C. L. Gupta (Sri Aurobindo Ashram) suggest hiring the services of the scientists of the Madras branch of the Structural Engineering Research Centre (S.E.R.C.)³¹ and of thus accessing the expertise of one of its directors and most eminent specialist of thin R.C.C. shells in India, Prof. G.S. Ramaswamy.³² His suggestion is accepted and he is asked to make use of his contacts and introduce Roger and his team to SERC's director. He does that and, from then onwards, he will continue to help both parties to understand better each other.

As, till then, the existing drawings were nice-looking 'presentation drawings' drawn by André Hababou, in which many things had not yet been worked out,³³ Chamanlal-ji

³⁰ At that time, Roger wished to have a translucent skin but was not sure that a technical solution would be found.

³¹ Structural Engineering Research Centre (CSIR-SERC), Chennai, India, is one of the national laboratories, started in the late sixties, under the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (C.S.I.R.), India. C.S.I.R.-S.E.R.C. has built-up excellent facilities and expertise for the analysis, design and testing of structures and structural components. Prior to joining the Ashram in December 1967, Chamanlal-ji was a scientist at the Central Building Research Institute (C.B.R.I.) and his wife, Shipra, at S.E.R.C. – both were based in Roorkee. S.E.R.C. and C.B.R.I. are both eminent Central Government institutions working in closely related research fields but S.E.R.C. had also a branch in Madras.

³² Prof. Ramaswamy had worked at Stanford University, California, with Prof. Stepan Prokopovych Tymoshenko, who was of Russian origin and is now considered as the father of modern engineering mechanics.

³³ For example, the oval of Matrimandir's vertical section had not yet been defined mathematically by a succession of centres and radiuses.

suggests also that Piero and Ranajit Gupta³⁴ become involved in Matrimandir work, prepare proper technical drawings and gather any information required by S.E.R.C.'s scientists. His proposal is accepted and, at the end of 1971, Piero will replace Alain G. as S.E.R.C.'s main interlocutor, working out options and solutions with them. As Roger is Matrimandir's architect, he is the one who takes all major decisions."

Piero's remembrance of how he started working for Matrimandir:

"[Regarding Matrimandir] I came in the picture later, in 1971, when more Aurovilians wanted to collaborate and start to dig the ground for the future foundations. I remember that, all of a sudden, the project needed urgently one person to oversee the engineering requirements and I was called in by Dr. Chaman Lal Gupta, a professor and building physicist from the Ashram in Pondicherry. In essence, I was to follow the project of Roger and interact with the structural engineers. Eventually, I was also to mediate between the diametrically opposing demands from the side of Roger and the engineers."

Mona Doctor's book on Piero and Gloria.
Published in English

* * *

1971, June:

Noted down by Roger after meeting Mother:

About Matrimandir

In India the creation, that means basically the work of Mother-Creator, has for centuries been considered as anti-divine.

Sri Aurobindo has taught/shown that it is in Matter that the Divine must be manifested; he has insisted on the understanding of this concept of Mother as Creator.

Matrimandir is here to teach people that it is not by escaping from the world while ignoring it, that they will realise the Divine in life. Matrimandir must be the symbol of this Truth.

I don't want it to be made into a religion; with all my force I refuse. We don't want dogmas, principles, ritual, absolutely not, absolutely not.

Roger: Why do we build Matrimandir?

For the great majority of Indians there is no need for an explanation; they know from their background; it is for the Westerners and the Americans of whom one in a million is able to feel that it is necessary.

Roger: Will the Force more specially be concentrated in Matrimandir?

The new Force works everywhere, especially in this room. You feel it, don't you? There is here a density capable of performing miracles, but few are able to feel it, to perceive it.

Sri Aurobindo and I have concentrated this Force on the whole town; it is palpable, perceptible as a very concrete perfume which penetrates, but one must be able to feel it, to receive it.

But no miracles as people would like to see; for them to believe, they need material proofs without which they deny.

Build Matrimandir; put in place my symbol and Sri Aurobindo's and the suspended ball.

I take it upon myself to make it into a very powerful centre.

Only those who are capable will notice it.

Original at Roger's personal archives.
Manuscript in French. Scan available.

* * *

³⁴ In 1970, a team of Ashram students, which included Ranajit, had participated in the Bharat-Nivas design competition and though their design had not selected as being among the three best, it was found very interesting.

1971, July

1971, July 23

Money from the Government of India has come for Bharat Nivas. Its construction has to start without delay but the land earmarked for it (at what is now Darkali) has not been purchased and/or there is no lorry access to it - and there is no other site within the International Zone which is sufficiently large and has lorry access. The only site where Auroville has enough land and lorry access to it is in an area earmarked for the Residential Zone, called “Silence”,³⁵ where some Aurovilians had built their huts. To change the zoning of this particular area, the “Galaxy” has to be rotated by some 50° counter-clockwise. Mother gives her approval.

Notice signed by Mother:

The residents of Silence will go on vacating their places for Bharat Nivas without causing any delay in the work. They will help in the quicker construction of the Matrimandir Workers Camp so that some of them can shift there and some will be accommodated in the huts on the border of Silence not immediately required for Bharat Nivas. These too will be vacated as soon as needed.

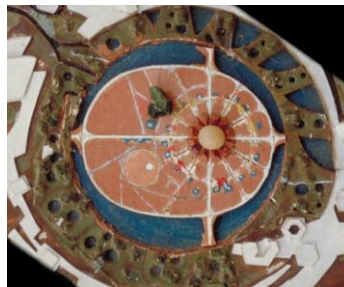
The residents of Silence wish to set up some cottage industry like ceramics and tiles and live near Kottakarai village and work for the development of this village and better relations with the people of this village. A concrete scheme will be made by them in such a way as to suit the overall Auroville program in consultation with Shyam Sunder and Roger and placed before the Mother for approval and blessings.

*Down Memory Lane, p. 118.
Written in English.*

* * *

Undated:

A new model of Auroville’s centre area is made, and the centre of the two existing models of the “Galaxy” are modified accordingly two times each

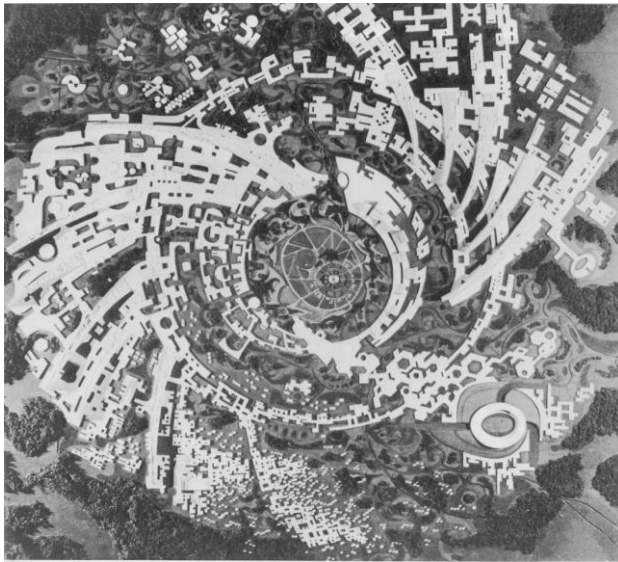


New model of the centre area



Successive modifications of the centre area of the small “Galaxy” model

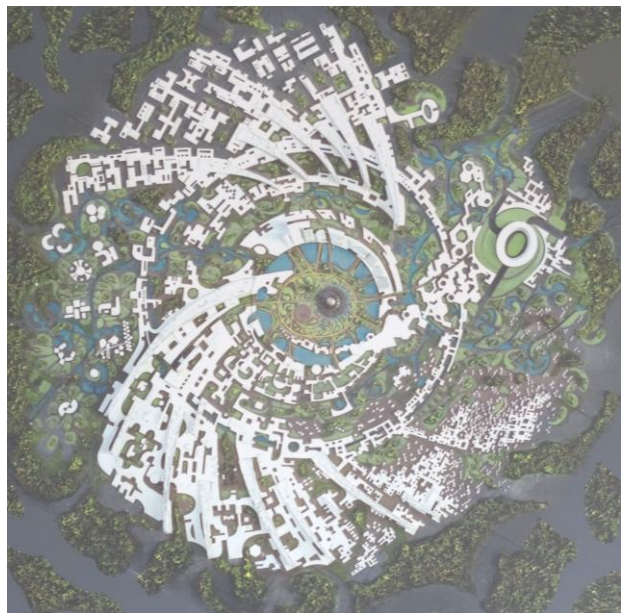
³⁵ Mother had given the name “Silence” to the place inhabited by Jocelyn S.



Successive modifications of the centre area of the big "Galaxy" model



Original large model of the Galaxy




large model of the Galaxy after its rotation and the modification of its centre area.

* * *

1971:

Message given by Mother for raising funds for Matrimandir:

*Donne ton argent à
l'œuvre divine et tu seras plus
riche que si tu le gardes.*



Give your money to the Divine work and you will be richer than you would be by keeping it.

*The Mother on Auroville, p. 53.
Manuscript in French. Scan available.*

* * *

1971, August

1971, August 28th:

Message given by Mother:

(We do not know to whom it was given and whether it was for Matrimandir)

For each problem there is a
solution that can give satisfaction
to everybody, but for finding this
ideal solution each one must want it
instead of meeting the others with
the will to enforce one's own preference.
Enlarge your consciousness and
aspire for the satisfaction of all.

For each problem there is a solution that can give satisfaction to everybody; but for finding this ideal solution each one must want it instead of meeting the others with the will to enforce one's own preference.

Enlarge your consciousness and aspire for the satisfaction of all.

Words of The Mother, I, p. 219.
Manuscript in English. Scan available.

* * *

1971, September

1971, September 17th:

Message given by Mother:

(We do not know to whom it was given and whether it was for Matrimandir)

You see only your side of the question, but if you want to widen your consciousness it would be better to look from all sides impartially, later you will discover that this attitude has great advantages.

Words of The Mother, I, p. 219.
?

* * *

1971, September 20th:

Message given by Mother:

(We do not know to whom it was given and whether it was for Matrimandir)

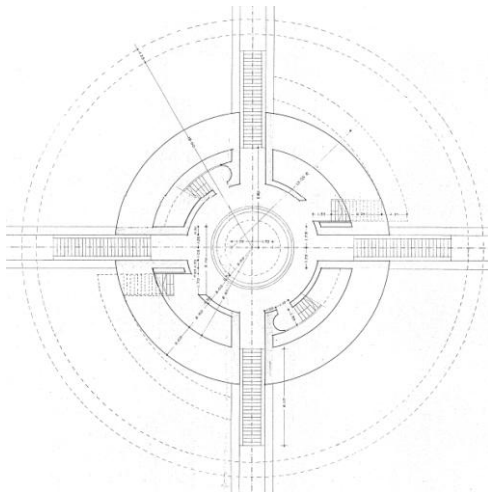
Widen your consciousness to the dimension of the earth and you will have a place for everything.

Words of The Mother, I, p. 220.
French

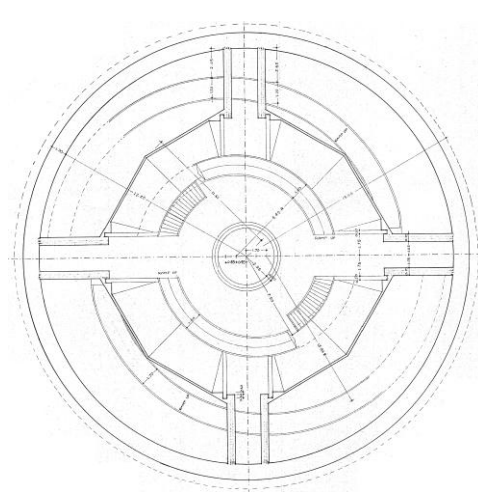
* * *

1971, September 21st:

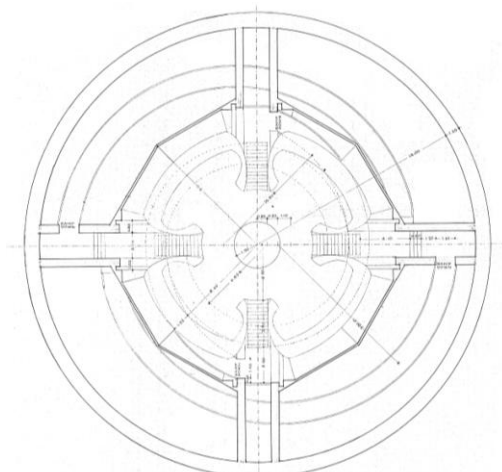
First set of 5 architectural drawings (produced by Ranajit Gupta, supervised by Piero):



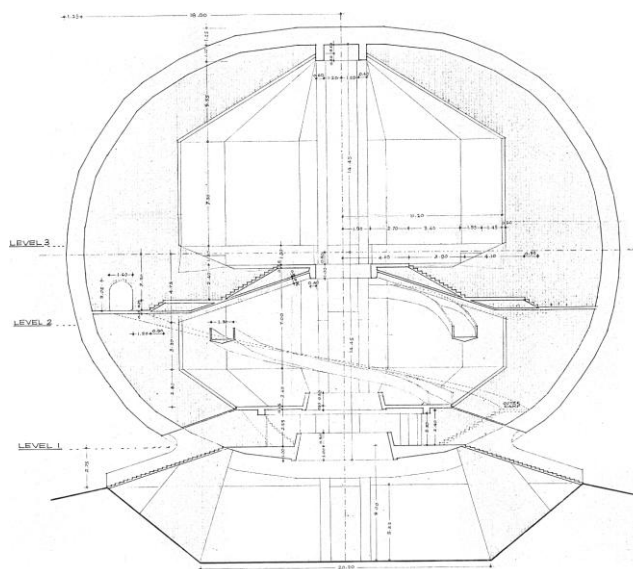
Horizontal section just above the 1st level



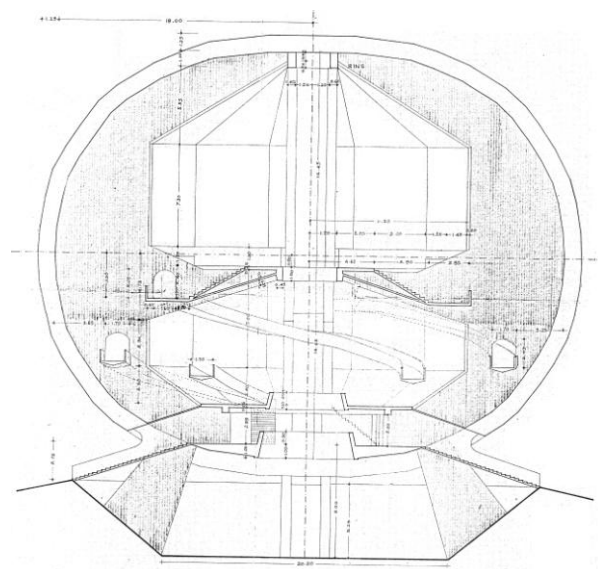
Horizontal section just above the 2nd level



Horizontal section just above the Chamber's floor



Section AB



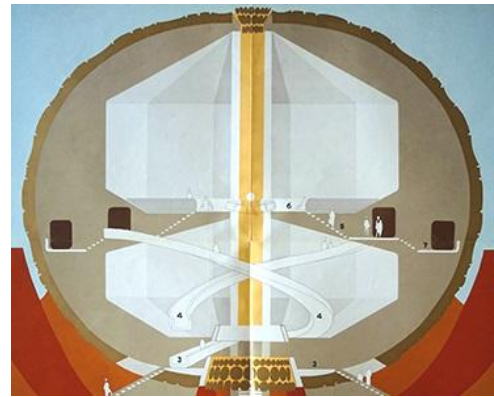
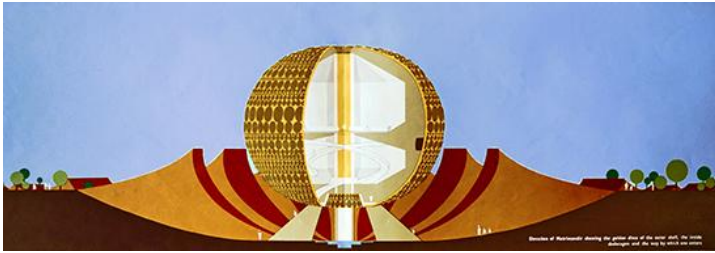
Section CD

Editor's comments on this set of drawings:

- The twelve columns are not there.
- The Chamber is divided in four areas by the four staircases emerging from them and below into the Chamber. They reduce a lot its seating capacity.
- The Chamber is wide open to the space below it because of: 1) a wide gap between its floor and the dodeca wall, 2) its 4 entrance staircases and 3) a 3m diameter hole at its centre.
- Some seating arrangement is provided at the back of each one of the Chamber's four areas.
- Access and exit from Matrimandir are now both through the 1st level and the straight staircases in the 4 pillars. The staircases with landing leading to the lotus pond are not there anymore.
- The dodeca wall which surrounds the Inner Chamber doesn't stop at its floor level (it is not even connected to it) but continues further down to enclose also the space between ribs and between 2nd and 3rd floor slabs.
- The central hole is left empty at the 3 levels.
- A pair of curved staircases takes us from 1st to 2nd level. There, in front of them, one starts climbing the pair of 'interior ramps' (which are within the dodeca wall) to a landing in the ribs, from which a radial staircase leads us to the Chamber.
- In order to leave the Chamber, one takes either of 2 of the 4 staircases and goes to their lowest landing in the ribs. There one takes an "external ramp" (which is between shell and dodeca wall) down to a landing close to the pillar and from there a staircase parallel to the ribs takes us back to 1st level.
- Unlike in André's drawings, when using the ramps to go up, one climbs counter-clockwise. As the 12 gardens (and later the twelve rooms in the 'petals') also rotate counter-clockwise, this change is likely to have come from Mother, but there is no record confirming it.

*

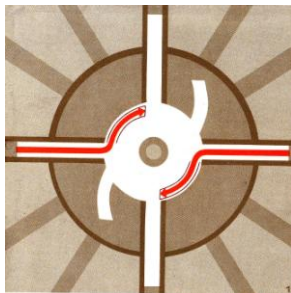
A large colour Matrimandir brochure, conceived in 1971 but released in 1972, describes almost the same concept. Mother signs with Blessings the sample that was presented to her in order to signify her approval.



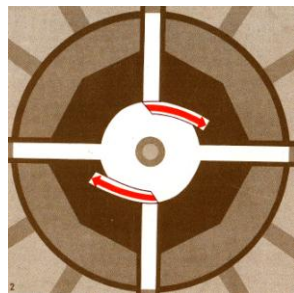
Two sections of the Matrimandir in this big brochure

In his mid 1971 interview with the 'Journal of the Indian Institute of Architects', Roger had explained: "Two spiral paths reach this chamber, two others lead outside; the landing of the ramps separate the area into four equal parts."³⁶

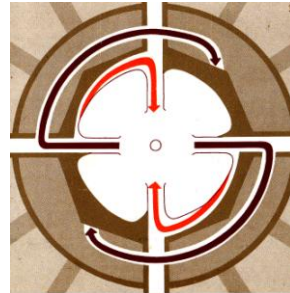
The four drawings below show clearly that access to the Chamber is via either of the two 'internal' ramps and that its exit is via either of the two 'external' ramps.



1 After walking on the marble paths leading to the sphere, one finds staircases on the way-in. They are located between 4 pillars on which the whole structure rests and lead to a first inner platform inside the sphere.



2, 3 From there, two spiral inclines symbolizing the complementary movements of energy take one to the upper meditation area where the Matrimandir's inner heart is casting light on the meditators (see red arrows).



3 One starts going down on two ramps hanging from the outside wall of the central dodecagon (see now the black arrows). Openings in this wall allow a view of the meditation area for a long time.



4 Terminal staircases lead to the lowest level, near the bottom of the crater, where the waters of the streams are collected. From there start eight ways out.

The 3rd drawing in the above series shows that the Chamber is indeed partitioned in 4 distinct areas up to eye level (because of the parapets if one sits on the floor). Here again, the floor of the Chamber does not extend up to the wall - unlike in Udar's 1970 drawing (but like in Paolo's and in Roger's drawing dated 20.2.70). It is a floating slab shaped like a 4-petaled flower and leaves a gap of about 1m with the wall. Obviously, there is a parapet all along the floor's edge.

The Chamber and the space below it are thus openly connected by this peripheral gap and a large central hole in the floor as well as by the 4 staircases. Hence, noise and light from the space below are bound to disturb the Chamber's atmosphere. This also implies that the area below the Chamber is air-conditioned. The location of the large AC plant(s) is not shown as it is yet to be decided.³⁷

Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's symbols are replaced by a 3D object made of some plastic material (acrylic?) which combines them. Speaking of its globe, Roger explained in the above-mentioned mid 1971 interview: "We would like to keep this ball suspended and immobile in the air by means of a magnetic field." Obviously, to this end, it should be light - that is, hollow.



³⁶ For some reason this drawing shows only 2 of the 4 spiral ramps but ramps, platforms & staircases remain unchanged. Note that out of the four staircases in the Chamber, two are entrances accessed by the "interior ramps" and two are exits leading to "exterior ramps".

³⁷ The AC plants are presently located at Chamber level within the North and South twin ribs. In this option, this space was not available and the plants would have had to occupy a much larger space than they do now (as the volume to AC would have been twice that of the Chamber. AC equipments were also far bulkier in the 1970's than now).

In all likelihood Roger had explained all this to Mother and had obtained her approval.

* * *

1971, September (?):

*Alain Grandcolas's explanations (noted by the editor from memory) of how the orientation of Matrimandir and its gardens was slightly modified:*³⁸

When excavation work was already underway, Alain G. suggested to Mother via Roger that the East-West axis could point to the rising sun on a specific date. According to the original drawing, it was some day in March. Five dates were proposed to Mother: February 21st or 28th, March 29th, April 4th or 24th. March 29th was the closest date to the original drawing.

Mother opted for April 4th (Sri Aurobindo arrived in Pondicherry on 4.4.10) for the sun to rise on that day exactly in line with Matrimandir's East axis/radial – that is 5° north of the real east.

Since then, the understanding is that the Chamber's main door should be the East one. Note that the 12 gardens start and end on either sides of the east radial and that, during Mother's lifetime, such was also the case of the first and last meditation rooms in the "petals" (Sincerity and Peace).

*It would seem logical to access along the same East axis/radial: the Island, Matrimandir itself and its Chamber.*³⁹ *Would they have several accesses, that East should be the main access.*

* * *

1971, September 25th:

Excerpt from Ruud Lohman's Matrimandir Diary:

Matrimandir is packed with symbols of the consciousness in its various layers; superconsciousness, consciousness, subconsciousness and the inconscient...

The trouble now is that the sphere has to emerge from the subconscient, i.e. subterranean layers. "Trouble", because that means that we have to dig a crater about ten metres deep by forty metres across. The really heavy work in Auroville is usually done by Tamil workers. They are paid, are happy to have some work, and can keep on going for hours in the heat. But for Matrimandir, Mother has said that it must be done without paid labour, which means by us, Aurovilians.

It began at the end of March this year. Day after day we walked back and forth with shallow pans filled with red sand on our heads, for hours, that is to say, a few hours every day, for it is really hot in April and May. Now that crater is not just any crater. Right from the start it had something to do with the soul of Auroville. Every crisis in the realisation of Auroville is felt first at Matrimandir. The Mother attaches a lot of importance to it. I have experienced that myself when, at the end of March, I submitted my application for membership. On the paper I had filled out my profession and qualifications and under "work of preference" I put "Matrimandir". Then something very significant and interesting occurred: the committee ("Plus de comités, plus de bavardage") which conducts an interview before sending the application on the Mother, saw, my qualifications and the number of languages which as a Dutchman one happens to speak, to which I had added Hindi and Urdu, and they thought I better join the educators. As if they looked down on digging work! I told them I had found the real joy and peace in that digging and preferred to continue with it, but that if Mother wanted me in education it would be alright with me. Next day's result: the contact person had read out the application to Mother, qualifications,

³⁸ Personal communication from Alain Grandcolas, following an article in the March 1989 issue of *Auroville Today*. Hence, the east-west radial has to point to the rising sun on 4th April while one radial still points to the Banyan tree, and another one to the Urn. So, this slight rotation produces also a slight shift of Matrimandir's centre.

³⁹ Traditionally, the main gate of a Hindu temple faces the rising sun (East) (at least such is the case in Pondicherry).

languages and work of preference, Matrimandir. At this point Mother interrupted with "Très bien", and the contact man didn't even get a chance to mention education.

Quite a number of digging group of those early days consisted in university people and students, and the spirit was good. It was in one word fantastic. I don't know why, for the work was heavy when you have never worked with your hands, and it was very hot. But it was perfectly still in an infinite and splendid land. One felt oneself tuning in and getting quiet. Those first two months live on for me in the symbol of a poem by Sri Aurobindo. Line for line I went on repeating it to the rhythm of moving back and forth with a pan of red earth on my head:

The Self's Infinity

I have become what before time I was
A secret touch has quieted thought and sense:
All things by the agent mind created pass
Into a void and mute magnificence.
My life is a silence grasped by timeless hands;
The world is drowned in an immortal gaze.
Naked my spirit from its vestures stands;
I am alone with my own self for space.
My heart is a centre of infinity,
My body a dot in the soul's vast expanse.
All being's huge abyss wakes under me
Once screened in a huge Ignorance.
A momentless immensity, pure and bare,
I stretch to an eternal everywhere.

Sometimes the whole group passed through a crisis, did not see the point of it anymore, stayed away for a few days and then came back again. Until the great blow struck, sometime towards the end of May. Mother's transformation process seems to have descended into her legs and feet. In the beginning of this year she could not walk any more for quite a while. At the moment it is better, but now it has descended on the Ashram and on us here, too. At Matrimandir the leg crisis manifested in infections on the legs. At least fifteen people caught them, me too. "Three weeks", I complained to the doctor in the Ashram, "for such a simple infection." "That's nothing for an Auroville infection," he said.

And then I made the greatest mistake I could have made at that moment: I didn't go back to Work. If indeed it is the "hostile forces", as they are called here, which undermine the work if the Spirit, then that was what prevailed in my case and in that of many other leg-sufferers. After the great crisis, only very few people resumed the work; with the consequence that even now, very few people are working. After half a year, not even one third of the digging has been completed. Some, many, had expected Matrimandir to be completed by next year. August 15th 1972, to be officially opened on His Centenary. Now one thinks rather in terms of seven years: that will be Mother's Centenary. One thinks that She will come to open the Matrimandir Herself. She has not left her room in over ten years, but it looks as if in another seven years she will be through with the transformation and will come down. She was offered an elevator, but she replied, "No: when I will be one hundred."

Other complications came in, too, at the excavation site. An example: we were going along nicely and had made some headway when one fine day a Jeepful of people from the Pondy designing office arrived. They measured a bit and what was the result? The entire crater was twenty meters off position. Nobody so much as blinked an eye and everybody went right on digging, but this time towards the new position. Even today we do not exactly know where the centre of the excavation actually lies; for now it moves seven metres to the left and then five metres to the right. Also, all the mounds of earth around it are out of position and the digging goes on. For nobody is digging anymore to dig a hole, but rather

to absorb the spiritual force at the excavation site and by digging the red earth to the rhythm of nature and the red soil, to dig into one's own subconscious. To delve into things, to organise them. Because, unbelievable, yet experience confirms it, the crater has a "force", one discovers things which might otherwise take a lifetime to discover. That must be the reason why Mother wants the Aurovilians to do the digging themselves. And also because, we feel, the foundation of Matrimandir, and thus of Auroville must be made not of concrete but of meditation. Actually the whole construction of Auroville is as slow (or fast) as the construction of Matrimandir. But we are beginning collectively to realise that we are not ready for buildings if the people, the "true Aurovilians" are not ready, the ones who know what to do with the buildings; otherwise we will have just one more model town like Brasilia or Chandigarh. Therefore the money is not flowing in yet either. We are not yet ready to use it. "After '72," the Mother said. Will we be ready then?

Auroville Archives.
Typed in English. Scan available.

* * *

1971, September 30th:

Entry in Matrimandir's day-to-day journal.

"Piero presents his report on construction plans for [Matrimandir's foundations and four] pillars (estimate of cost, work necessary, etc.).

Transition period and exchanges amongst Roger, Nata, Piero, Shyam Sunder and Alain G. about whether the Aurovilians could or could not do the work."

*

1971, September 30th:

Excerpt from a letter from Alain G. to Piero:

"Is it possible for us to build Matrimandir's foundation in time for 15th August 1972?

Here are the elements of the problem regarding the 3 main phases: levelling, excavating the hole and construction of the 4 pillars.

A. LEVELLING:

Tentatively: starting on November 15th will the bulldozer Bharat D50A-15 (70 HP) belonging to Pondicherry Government, which had given its approval for levelling works.

Pre-conditions: Being in possession of the private lands green dotted lines and being able to use government lands orange dotted lines.

Shyam Sunder: How likely are we to be able to use these plots from November 15th onwards?

Levelling works: Knowing that:

- 1. A second bulldozer can work at the same time in the excavation.*
- 2. Whenever the government road will be levelled, another road must be ready.*
- 3. Peace is 1 m below "level 100" which is the reference level; that is approximately the level of the Banyan and that of the Amphitheatre.*
- 4. Levelling shouldn't be uniform as waves are foreseen for the gardens.*

Nata, can you tell us whether you could be ready to start the levelling work on 15.11?

What are the preconditions?

- Equipment: bulldozer, + ...*
- Labour: how many persons and their qualifications.*
- Land: else that the area marked in red?*

- *Money: including the bulldozer (Rs 70/hr)*

How long would it take approximately (with a good driver)

B. Excavating the hole:

Tentatively: Starting on Monday 29th November with the bulldozer from Cuddalore.

A director and an engineer came on Matrimandir site and thought the hole could be dug with their Bharat D50A-15 equipped only with a front blade – with, it could be equipped with an “hydraulic ripper” if you find it necessary and if we would find one...

Pre-conditions: Being in possession of plots No. 413/1, 413/2, 413/3.

Shyam Sunder: How likely are we to secure these plots prior to November 29th?

Nata, can you tell us:

1. *Whether you would be ready to start on Monday November 29th (while most probably the levelling works would be going on)*

2. *What are the preconditions:*

- *Plans: structure of the retaining walls, floor treatment (except for the 4 holes), cover of the hills...*

To see urgently with Roger who leaves for Paris on October 10th.

- *Equipment: Bharat D50A-15....*
- *Pump to remove the water.*
- *Manpower: number of persons, their qualifications..*
- *Financial requirement.*

3. *Do you have an idea of the time required –if everything goes well?*

C. Construction of the 4 pillars.

Tentatively: starting mid February and completing mid July.

Piero, what are the requirements?

1. *Last date to receive the calculations for the structure's design, and the structure's details, the foundations to prepare for the works.*

2. *Required material: Steel: order date? Availability on the market?*

Plywood for the shuttering: order and availability?

Cement

3. *Ancillary structures:*

- *Main storeroom: where? Cost, when to start its construction?*
- *Shuttering workshop: where, cost, when to start its construction?*
- *Bar-bending workshop: same questions.*
- *Concrete mixer: How many? Which capacity? Cost?*

4. *Manpower for the storeroom, workshops for the shuttering, for the steel.*

Manpower having to work on the site itself: mixer: number & qualifications

Shuttering: number & qualification

Misc. Works.

5. *Financial requirements*

Can you prepare a short study mentioning the schedule of works, with durations – if everything goes well.

Last few handwritten lines:

Piero, can you tell me when you expect to be able to answer me?

*It would be good to meet before Roger's expected departure on 10th October –Thursday
or Friday?*

Alain

Auroville Archives. (Tanslation by G.G.)
Typed in French. Scan available.

* * *

1971, October

1971, October early:

Mother's answer to a question from ??:

The Matrimandir is directly under the influence of the Divine and certainly He arranges things better than we could do ourselves.

*Words of The Mother, I, p. 231.
French.*

* * *

1971, October 5th:

Having constructed a special building at their Centre⁴⁰, some devotees asked Mother to give her consent to their naming it "Matrimandir"; the following conversation ensued:

Champaklal: Mother, there is only one Matrimandir, the one you are building in Auroville. This name should not be used anywhere else.

(Champaklal later remembered that, without his asking for it, Mother wrote the following note:)

There is only one Matrimandir,
the Matrimandir of Auroville.
The others must have another name.

*There is only
one Matrimandir
the Matrimandir
of Auroville.
The others must have
another name*

*(Thereafter, to anybody who asked permission
to use this name, Mother would say this.)*

*Champaklal Speaks (2002 Edition), pp. 228 & 269; Words of the Mother, I, p. 231.
Manuscript in English. Scan available.*

* * *

1971, October 10th:

Notice, drafted by Roger and signed by Mother with Blessings:

*From Mother's room,
10th October 1971*

The building of the Matrimandir now requires the support of all men of goodwill, both inside and outside Auroville.

The help of specialised and qualified contractors, backed and supported by the enthusiasm and faith of the Aurovilians, is necessary for its rapid construction.

Blessings

*Auroville Archives; The Mother on Auroville, p. 87.
Typed in French. Scan available.*

* * *

1971, October 14th:

Letter from Alain G, to Piero:

⁴⁰ Somewhere in Orissa.

Piero,

Regarding the upcoming work phases,

- Storeroom for cement and various materials
- Storeroom for the steel and its bending
- Workshop
- ~~Likely temporary housing (E.C.C. — Bharat Nivas type to lodge all those who want to move from Aspiration or are on waiting list in Pondicherry. It is a very good trial period.)~~
- Truck movements, and earth moving and what else...

Assuming that all the lands will belong to us before the end of the year (in fact, Shyam Sunder should buy them as soon as they will be required).

Kindly mark in red on the attached map, the remarkable areas which need to be located on site.

Daryl, who lives at Peace, is a surveyor. He should start at the earliest. Kindly send me quickly this map. I will make sure it is done.

Alain

Piero,

Whereas the monsoon collapses sections of walls (at Bharat Nivas a 3m wall collapsed during the recent rainfall), a slope a slope is required.

Whereas one has to retain a section for the days when the hole is full of water.

Can you think of a work scheme for the possible bulldozer “managed, helped and supported” by whom you know.

In fact, a work scheme should be conceived.

Maybe we could have a look at Bharat Nivas Saturday morning if you find it useful.

I do not have a copy of your plan to build Matrimandir’s 4 pillars.

S.E.R.C. (Madras)

They should be contacted to know how far they got. They have modified the foundations. I will soon go and fetch the model, and then prepare a meeting with you, which seems necessary.

Mr. PARIKH, structural engineer from Bombay, is arriving in 2-3 months, and offered to come now.

It doesn’t seem to be necessary anymore as we have already done the maximum of work with the S.E.R.C.

Auroville Archives.

First two pages typed, third page manuscript, in French, translation by G.G.

* * *

1971, October 16th:

Excerpt from Ruud’s Matrimandir Diary:

This afternoon at Matrimandir we had a meeting to which all Aurovilians were invited. About sixty came. The Matrimandir had reached a very critical phase and we wanted to save her. This week it was rumoured that the work would be given to a contractor. This news got people moving, and that may have been the real intention behind it. If the work

was given to a contractor, then Matrimandir would become a monument and nothing more, or so it was felt, and we could as well erect a statue of Gandhi or something like that. It would not be our building, we would not grow into it and it would not be the centre of Auroville.

How all that came about and how Mother reacted to the idea is not very clear. That is always hard to find out, because it's very easy to say, "Mother wants..." In one of her conversations with the man who proposed the idea to her, she seems not to have answered. In any case, she is pushing us to hurry things up. Now it is said that by August 15th, Sri Aurobindo's Centenary, she wants the excavation to be ready as well as the four large pillars supporting the sphere. Even to accomplish that we will have to go at full speed. But the question is whether it could be done with the manpower and technical know-how now available. One of the architects ready to take up the project, Piero, has made some calculations. Casting the huge pillars will take half a year, and then we would have to work around the clock with gangs of 20 people each. That might be possible. The problem, however is the excavation. The foundations have to reach a depth of twelve metres and those enormous craters would have to be dug before the end of January. If we could now make it clear to the Mother and to the architects in Pondy⁴¹ that we can do it, then the idea of a contractor might be given up.

Suddenly everybody is full of good will and it looks as if the threat has mobilised everyone. A letter will be sent out to all Aurovilians asking them how much time they are willing or able to make available. Then it will be calculated whether it is feasible. And then a bulldozer will be hired. That bulldozer cannot do everything, however because the soil is very hard and the crater quite deep. In the meantime, we will keep our eyes open for some digging machine that is better suited for the job. We are in India, and these machines are not for hire in every second village. They are extremely expensive in these countries and manual labour is extremely cheap. If all this was meant to get us going, then it is a good policy; but if it is meant seriously, then I do not know anymore. If we are not ready to build Matrimandir, O.K., then we wait a while. People are still coming to Auroville, and if we cannot do it now, then we'll do it next year. But no "others", it must be down with our own hands. The Mother is always very resolute in these things, but in this case we are not able to find out what her view is. As if it purposely kept vague. She herself has said that we should never believe people when they say, "The Mother wants it", before we have seen it in her own handwriting.

* * *

1971, October 18th:

Letter from Piero to Mother:

Dear Mother,

Last Saturday, some fifty Aurovilians met at Peace and expressed their desire to participate actively in the construction of Matrimandir.

I have made a detailed study of the work to be done, and I have reached the conclusion that we [Aurovilians] can take upon ourselves the responsibility for the excavation and construction works of the four pillars. These could be completed for August 15th 1972.

Then, according to Ramanathan⁴², a contractor such as ECC would agree to take over the construction of the Matrimandir, if we requested them to do so; moreover, one could already ask for their collaboration for testing and to check the progress of the work. It therefore seems that the work of the Aurovilians is not an obstacle to the rest of the work being handled by a specialised firm.

Labour is a very important problem.

⁴¹ Unlike other architects Piero and Gloria were living in Auroville (in "Promesse") and working here. So was Poppo.

⁴² At that time, Auroville's Chief Engineer.

To ensure the regularity of the work, it will be necessary to rely on paid labour, guided by ourselves, while keeping some specific works – such as concreting – in priority for the Aurovilians.

I want to speak to you more specifically about this point.

Many of us [Aurovilians] want to open up some contact with the inhabitants of Auroville's surrounding villages. Would work at Matrimandir be the place where one could establish a more open and friendly collaboration with the Tamil villagers?

In the framework of this [construction] work, Auroville's most important and most symbolical, isn't this the best place to bring them our aspiration for perfection, our joy to work and our humility?

On a small scale, I have constantly the experience that working with Tamil labourers is useful and gives positive results. With your help may we try on a larger scale?

If we would give the responsibility of the work to a contractor [from outside], it seems to me that we would be renouncing this possibility right from the start.

This is why I request your Blessings for this program of work, and your help to establish a good atmosphere of collaboration, goodwill and discipline.

For me, it would be the opportunity to always look for your help and your encouragement.

With devotion

Piero

Auroville Archives. (Translation by G.G.).
Typed in French. Scan available.

* * *

1971, October 19th:

Letter from Piero to André Morisset:

Dear André,

I handed this letter to Shyamsunder to be read to Mother. As I know that you have already spoken to Mother about this question, I am sending you a copy of this letter for your information.

You will find herewith attached a technical study which supports my request to Mother.

In friendship.

Piero

Auroville Archives. (Translation by G.G.).
Typed in French. Scan available.

* * *

1971, October 20th:

Mother's answer to Piero's letter:

*C'est très bien, je
vous remercie
de la confiance et de la collaboration
travaux que vous avez*

*Les questions personnelles
je compte les résoudre
non pas tout de suite
harmonieusement.
Bénédiction*



That's very good, I am fully in agreement.

The safety and strength of the construction should come before personal questions.

I count upon you to see that everything is done harmoniously.

Blessings.

*Words of The Mother, I, p. 230.
Manuscript in French. Scan available.*

* * *

1971, October 21st:

Note from Nata to Piero:

My dear Piero,

Your letter and the feelings it arose in me, have made me bless thousand times the fact of being here, at the Ashram, at Pondicherry, close to Mother and of people of such high quality.

I am typing this letter because my handwriting is not as readable as yours but I would have liked to write to you by hand.

You may be right; I am even certain you are right.

You see, Piero, for me, the professional side is still a field to plough. I have explored other paths, at times climbed summits I thought to be unreachable, but in other domains I am still at the same stage, as you say yourself, at the point where I was in America.

The work I have done occasionally for Auroville, I have done feeling like a foreigner (not towards Auroville but towards the work) using methods which help me for 43 years. From high, from very high in my consciousness, I can say it was the period of the Centre, the preparation for Auroville's foundation [ceremony].

Day after tomorrow, there is a meeting at André's. I would like to meet you before.

I shall come and visit you at Promesse tomorrow afternoon at 4 o'clock.

I am entrusting this letter to a person who, I hope will know how to have it delivered to you.

I hug you affectionately

Nata

*Auroville Archives.
Manuscript in Italian. Scan available.*

* * *

1971, October 21st:

Letter from Alain G. to Piero:

Piero,

It was obvious that Nata would know how to defend himself; it was even very likely that this letter would bounce against me.

Now, for me, it is forgotten. The tone was a little vindictive because I was very tired.

So, in order to help all this to cool down, I invite you to tell one day to Nata, that, at that time Alain was very tired, and that he was seriously thinking of flying back to France to rest for 3 months. At that time I wrote to my mother to invite her in a discrete manner to pay for my trip.

This explains why Alain went out of his nature and wrote in a vindictive manner – it is true and, in other ties, I wouldn't have reacted in this way. Usually I have a different behaviour and another self-control.

For the past 3 months the homeopath Debou is taking care of me, and I feel better, thanks to his medicines – but will it last? As I told him about my intention of leaving and asked him to give me a good dose – the good one.

See you tomorrow.
Alain

Auroville Archives. (translation by G.G.)
Manuscript in French. Scan available.

* * *

1971, November

1971, November 1st:

Letter from Piero to Mother:

Mother,

In order to execute the excavation required for the 4 pillars which support the Matrimandir, we are hesitating between 4 possibilities:

- 1) Buying a small excavator which would always be useful*
 - *Time: 3 months to deliver + 3 months to excavate – that is 6 months.*
 - *Cost: Rs 70,000 for its purchase and Rs 20,000 for the excavation.*
- 2) Use some 100 coolies, helped by some Aurovilians*
 - *Time: 3-4 months*
 - *Rs. 40,000 approximately*
- 3) Hire a bulldozer, which according to an engineer in Cuddalore, would be able to excavate 4/5th; the remaining being dug by hand.*
 - *Time: 2½ months*
 - *Cost: Rs. 40,000*
- 4) Use a big excavator and 2 special trucks from Neyvelli's quarry.*
 - *The work can be completed within 10 days.*
 - *Cost Rs. 40-50,000*

Technically speaking, Neyvelli's excavator is more satisfying, but it is a big and heavy machine, and we find it difficult to evaluate the economic and human risks related to its transport and functioning during the monsoon.

Can you guide us in this choice to be made?

Auroville Archives. (translation by G.G.)
Typed letter in French. Scan available.

* * *

1971, November 3rd:

Question from Alain Grandcolas and Mother's answer to it:

Alain: Can you give some general ideas about the way in which you want the Matrimandir to be built, so that we shall have no more doubts and may build with light and confident hearts?

Strength, safety, durability, harmonious balance.

The foundations are especially important and should be done by experts.

There is room for everyone of goodwill, and for those who in all sincerity and simplicity want to offer their work, there is enough to keep them usefully occupied.

Blessings

Solidité, sécurité, durée, équilibre
harmonieux.

Les fondations sont particulièrement
importantes et doivent être faites
par les experts.

Il y a place pour toutes les
bonnes volontés et pour ceux qui
ou toute sincérité et simplicité
voulent donner leur travail, il y a
le parti les acceptera entièrement.

Benedictine

mf.

Words of the Mother, I, p. 230.
Manuscript in French. Scan available.

* * *

1971 November 6th:

Savitra's account of how it was decided to hire coolies to complete faster the
excavation:

"In the summer of '71, a meeting was held in the recently completed Workers Camp at Peace to clarify directions, approaches and methodologies. The excavation needed to be accelerated. The workings of the small group of Aurovilians was remarkable in its own way, removing 2,000 cubic metres of compact earth with primitive hand tools; but it was more a symbolic action and an initiation. Earth-moving equipment was suggested but rejected because of its incapacity to negotiate the steep incline, its expense, and the general undesirability of heavy machinery when avoidable. It was decided to employ large numbers of villagers in traditional hand methods. Beginning in November, a swarm of 400 labourers began chipping away bit by bit and in February 21st of 1972, the excavation was completed. Twenty thousand cubic metres of earth had been excavated."⁴³

Savitra, Auroville – the first 6 years, p. 83.
Published in English.

* * *

1971, November 7th:

Excerpts from Ruud's Matrimandir Diary:

Yesterday morning we had another meeting at Centre about the work at Matrimandir. We didn't understand it any more. Letters went back and forth between the Mother and the offices, and now everything has taken a new turn: the digging will be done by Tamils, to be finished by February 1972, and then a contractor will take over to build the four large pillars before August 15th 1972. The same contractor [E.C.C.] who is building the Bharat Nivas now. It looks like a serious thing: the Aurovilians who are here now are not able to do it, and even for this work, as for so many other works, we have to employ paid labour. The Tamil people come with their own groups and they have their own system of working. If we come to help, we would only be in the way. And so we have lost our most important work, building the Matrimandir. We thought it was a terrible thing and did not understand how Mother could have done it. During the meeting a little point of light emerged: the Aurovilians can already begin working on

⁴³ This means that volunteers (Aurovilians and others) excavated 10% of the volume of earth to be excavated.

the gardens around Matrimandir. Mother has planned twelve gardens and she has named each one of them to represent one aspect of Auroville - Unity, Harmony, Peace,⁴⁴ etc. About two years ago a Nursery was established to explore what can grow in Auroville. It has already been learned that anything can grow here, better than anywhere else around here, and faster than one would normally expect from nature. There is, of course, a lot of work to be done, and many more Aurovilians could be involved. When the Matrimandir excavation started, the people at the Nursery asked Mother whether they should postpone growing flowers and join in the excavation, but Mother said, "No, the gardens are as important as the Matrimandir itself."

Even so, I don't know what it means that the soul of Auroville will be built by "others". It seemed so important for us to do it ourselves. Now there will hardly be any place for us. Those gardens are some sort of consolation, yes, but still... I was really wondering how Mother could do such a thing, but yesterday night it struck me what she had once told Roger! Be flexible. Flexibility, that she sure has. And of course that is a very important thing to have in an adventure such as this one.

*

Letter from Frederick to Piero:

Dear Piero

I feel I should explain what I find right regarding the work at Matrimandir.

Your letter and Mother's written answer, in which she gave you the responsibility of an harmonious solution, is for me valid and true.

Shyam Sunder's next step in his latest notice has for only implication that the excavation will be done by hand. That later it would be decided to give the work to E.C.C. is speculation. I know and understand, that, for you, it is absolutely essential to know, whether we or E.C.C. will build the pillars, but from the time when you and Alain gave our brief to Mother, till now the fact that we want to build the pillars hasn't been stated clearly. Would Shyam Sunder be alone, his reaction would be even less clear and even less definitive and by the time of yesterday's meeting, the general feeling would have been to give it to E.C.C.

For me and Gérard it appears that the most important is to do the next phase and I believe that through work obscurity would be removed and that in one or two weeks during which we would work with the coolies, we would prepare to make the next phase, that of the pillars.

But I want to say again:

According to me, Mother has placed you in the position of the "Chief" for this work and you should take up this task.

Would you feel that for the proper execution it would be better for me to wait, till you would say so, I would wait.

Arrangements have been made for coolies to start excavating according to your plans tomorrow. I find that through work things will become clearer.

Love

Frederick

Auroville Archives. (Translation GG checked by Doris)
Manuscript in German. Scan available.

* * *

1971, November 8th:

Letter from Satprem to Piero:

Piero,

⁴⁴ "Peace" is the name of the last meditation in the "petals" and not the name of a garden.

Thank you for your letter and the confidence you have in me, but I feel it is not for me to untangle the human problems of the Aurovilians' work. They will untangle and will find a solution to the measure of how much the Aurovilians turn towards Mother. And if you submit your problems directly to Mother. She will give you not only the solution but also the strength required to do what needs to be done. One has to always go to the Source, without any intermediary screen.

Kindly believe that I am disinterested in your work, my only concern is the most effective solution – and that is Mother.

My thoughts accompany your works and my fraternal affection.

Satprem

Auroville Archives. (translation G.G.)
French,

* * *

1971, November 10th:

Excerpt from a conversation with Satprem:

Satprem: A few days ago I received a letter from a young man who is an architect [Piero] there, (I don't know him). He wrote me saying that he would like to see me.

Ah, why?

S.: Because he would like to explain to me Auroville's problems. So I replied: "Auroville's problems will be solved and cleared up only when Aurovilians turn directly to Mother, and hence I wish they would go directly to the Source instead of going to an intermediary." Then I added amicably that I could nevertheless... etc.

You did well.

He has an idea of how to make the Matrimandir, and others have another idea, but then Roger is going to arrive soon – I would like to wait for Roger to be here, and he will decide.

S.: Because he wrote me a second letter, saying, "I agree that one must turn to the Source, which is the 'stable and welcoming' reference, but unfortunately one doesn't have direct access to the Source, one has to go through intermediaries...."

(Mother nods her head)

S.: So there are some problems and he has explained one of them in his letter to me.

Tell me what it is.

S.: For example, he says he wrote you a month ago, in October, and you answered him in writing. He wrote you this: "I have made a detailed study of the work to be done, and I have reached the conclusion that we [Aurovilians] can take upon ourselves the responsibility for the excavation and construction work of the four pillars; then a commercial firm such as E.E.C. (I don't know what it is, it's in Madras, I think) would agree to take over the construction of the Matrimandir itself... etc. It therefore appears that the work of the Aurovilians is not an obstacle to the rest of the work being handled by a specialized firm...." Then you answered, "That's very good, I am fully in agreement. The safety and solidity of the work should come BEFORE PERSONAL QUESTIONS. I am counting on you to see that everything goes harmoniously."

*And then I realised... Afterwards, the others told me that he had written that without consulting them.*⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Note that, in his Matrimandir Diary (entry dated 16th October), Ruud had more than confirmed Piero's point as he wrote that 60 Aurovilians attended the meeting held on that day. Hence it seems that it was Mother's other

S.: And he tells me he did it “after consultation with about 50 Aurovilians”.

No.... Listen, those things are enough to drive anyone crazy!

S.: In a nutshell he wants the work to be handled by the Aurovilians, without barring the participation of experts.

But that’s how it is. It will be that way. That’s what I said; but when it comes to the actual execution.... I advise you not to get involved in this!

S.: Oh, but I don’t intend to at all!

Yes, they’re... It’s pretty complicated!

S.: I’ll simply tell him to wait for Roger’s return and that the decision will be made then.

Yes. But the decision has been made – I don’t know, I thought they were already working.

S.: The “official” decision is that a firm in Madras will do the work.

Not all the work. We have asked the Aurovilians to be there – exactly as he puts it.

S.: Well, because he says he is ready even to undertake the foundation work for the pillars.

Oh, no! That’s... Look, tell him that Roger will soon arrive and everything will be decided when he’s here.

S.: But I really don’t want to get involved in their problems!

Well, no!.. Did you see the sentence in my letter – there are also personal questions behind. He is not saying it, but that’s what it is. He’s hoping to find someone [Satprem] who will give him the authority, you understand?

S.: Yes, I think he is.

So just tell him what I said.

*Mother’s Agenda, XII, pp. 291-293.
Verbal in French.*

* * *

1971, November 10th:

Letter from Piero to Mother:

Dear Mother,

I have written to you a letter 20 days ago to present to you a detailed program for the construction of Matrimandir’s 4 pillars; the works is relatively simple and I think I have sufficient experience to assess that the program can be done under my direction and of some other Aurovilians experts in construction.

You approved this proposal and we received your blessings.

We have immediately started to organise the site with serenity and enthusiasm.

Shyam Sunder is now telling us that the works will be executed by a contractor such as E.C.C.

~~*I am at a loss. May I start again my work? At that time you had told me to start; I am now waiting with the same confidence for your final answer.*~~

With devotion

Piero

*Auroville Archives. (translation G.G.)
Typed in French. (The last para has been striken off). Scan available.*

* * *

informants (maybe one of those in favour of hiring a contractor and/or living in Pondicherry) who had not reported to her the attendance to this meeting correctly.

1971, November 10th:

Letter from Piero to Shyamsunder:

Dear Shyamsunder,

I kindly request you to read this letter to Mother, I hope She will give a written answer and that there is no confusion like last time, about my work experience. Believe me, I would not start a work for Mother without having the full experience to carry it out.

The thing in all this which is very difficult for me is to have to work with E.C.C. For me, in this case, Roger, even with Ramanathan or Nata would do a better job.

My regards for you

Piero

Auroville Archives. (translation G.G.)
Typed in French. Scan available.

* * *

1971, November 13th:

Excerpt from Ruud's Matrimandir Diary:

I still do not feel happy about it. The Mother wants us to build Matrimandir, and we don't do it, we let others do it. But you can't let others, however professional, play around with your soul. The "soul of Auroville" grows without us leaving us untouched. Yesterday Ronald met a man named Kenneth⁴⁶, who is one of those who has worked at Matrimandir right from the beginning. He was one of the hard, very faithful workers, who withstood all crises and always kept coming back, and when everybody else had given up he was still there. For a few months he worked almost all alone and tried to make eight hours a day. In the heat of August and September he all but broke down but still kept on going. Every twenty minutes he moistened the hanky which he wore on his head against headaches, swallowed a number of aspirins and returned to the wheelbarrow. After weeks alone, he too gave up. Ronald met him in the Ashram Dining Room where he is now working. In very, very strong language full of solid American slang, he gave his opinion of the situation at Matrimandir, which clearly conflicted with his own guilt feelings. In any case, all those "bloody bastards" have let Mother down by giving up the work, nobody gives a damn about Auroville, etc.

It got something moving for Ron and yesterday he told me the story. It made me wince too. Suddenly we both said, "Let's go", and we jumped on the motorcycle and, through the pouring rain (the monsoon made quite a comeback) we slid over the slippery red-sand roads towards Matrimandir. There wasn't a soul around and, happy and light, the two of us carried pans of wet sand. We remarked that Linus in Schultz's "Peanuts" series might have said, "There is something nice in being fanatic". Today we went again, for an hour or so, but we are determined to spend much more time there, if not full time. Today it was sunny again and there were about 12 Tamils working. Next week, when the work will be given out on contract, 200 workers are expected. We will have to find our place somewhere in between them, which won't be easy. Up till now, every Sunday a busload of Ashramites and Aurovilians still living in Pondy has been coming out to work at Matrimandir, but from this week on, even that will stop. And then all that will remain is a small group of people from Aspiration who have been coming every morning for months from six to seven-thirty. This group, plus one or two others who come once in a while to have a look and the two of us, are for the time being the only Aurovilians here, but that is better than nobody. Even though it's only a symbol.

Very significant also is that when some people wanted to organise the work – when we were still doing the digging ourselves – the interest totally disappeared. Nobody

⁴⁶ Kenneth was the father of Durgaura and Aurienne.

spontaneously got the idea to go and work. When something gets organised you are inclined to think that it is all right, that it is being taken care of, and that you are no more responsible, that "they will do it". And often, as in this case, nothing happens any more.

Auroville Archives.
Typed in English.

* * *

1971, November 13th:

Letter from Piero to Mother:

Dear Mother,

I wrote to you a letter 20 days ago to present to you a detailed program for the construction work of Matrimandir's 4 pillars. The work is relatively simple and I thought I had enough experience to assess that the work can be realised under my direction and that of other Aurovilians who are construction experts. You approved this proposal and we received your blessings. We started immediately with the site organisation with serenity and enthusiasm.

Shyam Sunder now tells us that the work will be executed by a contractor such as E.C.C.

I am very puzzled; my sentiment is still to participate in a creative work directly in contact with matter, to transform it. For me, Mother, on a concreting day, in the noise of the machinery and people, when concrete flows well mixed in the formworks and boils above the needle vibrator, there is here some poetry. And when everything is over and we feel the heat of the reacting cement that rises up through our feet, this heat goes straight to the heart! One feels physically that the miracle of its strength starts just at that time. Eternal strength one feels through one's feet! If you had seen with us the beautiful machines at work in the mines of Neyvelli, the announcement of a world in evolution, the harmonious image of a huge power which is under control and guided by small men, there won't be any obstacles big enough to make it come here and work at Matrimandir.

Mother, You much higher than us: if You decide that work will be handed over directly to the contractor and that a contractor will excavate by hand, your will shall be welcome.

I only request you to allow me to suspend my work. This is not the direction in which I am working for the past 3 years in Auroville and I feel that I cannot change now, by reverting to the old position in the relationship with a contractor, which is based on money.

You had told me at that time to start and from you I now await with the same confidence your decisive reply.

With devotion

Piero

Auroville Archives.
Typed letter in French. Scan available.

* * *

1971, November 14th:

Mother's answer to Piero's latest letter:

Each one has good reasons to support his own opinion, and I am no expert to judge between them.

But from the spiritual point of view I know that with true goodwill all opinions can be harmonised in a more comprehensive and truer solution.

This is what I expect from the workers of Auroville.

Not that some give way to others, but that on the contrary all should combine their efforts to achieve a more comprehensive and perfect result.

The ideal of Auroville demands this progress – don't you want to make it?

Dans une solution plus
 compréhensive et plus vraie.
 C'est cela que f'attends des
 habitants d'Auroville
 non pas que les uns choisissent
 la place à d'autres, mais
 au contraire que tous apportent
 leurs efforts pour arriver à une
 réalisation plus compréhensive et
 plus parfaite.
 L'édifice d'Auroville demande
 ce progrès — ne vous en faites
 rien ?
 L'ami de tous

Chacun a de bonnes raisons
 pour défendre son opinion; et
 je ne suis pas un expert pour
 juger entre elle.
 Mais au point de vue
 spirituel je suis sûr avec la
 vraie bonne volonté de toutes les
 opinions pour s'accorder

Words of The Mother, I, p. 220.
 Manuscript in French. Scan available.

* * *

1971, November 17th:

Excerpt from Ruud's Matrimandir Diary:

Sunday [14th] we had some result with our work at Matrimandir. The full digging would be given to two contractors who themselves would organize the work.⁴⁷ We have been measuring how much has been dug so far in order to see how much still remains to be dug. Now we have pleaded to divide the hole, into not two but three parts, so that those Aurovilians who want to, can do something too. It would be difficult for us to work with the gangs of Tamil diggers: their tempo may not be high, but they make many more hours than we could possibly make. And also, we would have to become paid workers so as not to upset the wage system. While discussing things with Alain, who is going to take up the organisation, we came to the solution: to reserve the inner circle for the Aurovilians. Then we may be able to keep pace with the Tamil diggers whose numbers are much larger than ours. We have now been doing this for three mornings and already a few more Aurovilians are joining in who feel the need to do something ourselves. Moreover we are ahead, for the eight-metre diameter inner circle is already three metres deep and the outer circle only one metre. So all we have to do is to dig down another five metres in two months' time. The work is also more exciting now, because you can see the hole growing around you.

⁴⁷ An entry, dated November 1971 in Matrimandir's day-to-day journal reads: "Discussions execution of foundation excavation by machine or not. Decision: to dig by hand; no mechanical excavator to be used."

Today I counted forty workers, including women and children, and although we are working with wheelbarrows and they with baskets on their heads, they get quite a bit more done in a ten-hour working day than we in our three hours.

[...]

And Matrimandir is pulling, pulling, and the rest is by far not yet relevant, not so long as we have not come to agreement and harmony and new heights of consciousness around this "Temple of Truth". One very recent message from Mother, which rationally one doesn't quite know what to do with, is this:

"The Matrimandir is directly under the influence of the Divine and certainly He arranges things better than we could do ourselves". (Oct. 71)

So let's be on the spot as much as possible, be as open as possible, knowing that it is good.

Auroville Archives.
Typed in English.

* * *

1971, November 18th:

Letter from Piero to Shyam Sunder:

Dear Shyamsunder,

Maybe I wasn't sufficiently clear yesterday. The first para of Mother's answer "Each one has good reasons to support his own opinion, and I am no expert to judge between them." Confirms that she never gave any strict indication as to how to handle the work.

I apologise for the way I presented the thing in the past weeks. I believe this to be at the origin of the misunderstanding and of my present insufficient interest in the work.

I feel that things will present themselves in a more positive way only when it will really be the continuation of the experience of these past years for me and for many Aurovilians. I wholeheartedly invite you to share this experience. I feel that only at point will a real progress become possible in the realisation of the Matrimandir and for the Aurovilians.

Fraternally

Auroville Archives.
Typed in French. Scan available.

* * *

1971, Mid-November



X, Alain G. and Olivier (Subir) survey the site before starting with the coolies.

* * *

1971, December

1971, December 3rd:

Excerpt from Ruud's Matrimandir Diary:

Things seem to be moving very fast at Matrimandir. Because of all my other work I haven't been there for almost a week, which is very bad, but after not all there is much for us to do. This week a fight broke out between workers from two villages right in the middle of the excavation. After one hour they ceased fighting, but many of them also stopped working for the day.⁴⁸ The crater seems to be getting ready in February.

We wanted to have the next meeting of the Study Circle in the excavation at Matrimandir. It is a beautiful spot as it is now: an enormous circle of red earth with myriad levels in it. We were looking at it and agreed that it would be a splendid open-air theatre. We almost wanted to propose to build the Matrimandir somewhere else. For the study circle on December 5th, Sri Aurobindo's Samadhi day, we had planned a programme of readings from Sri Aurobindo's great epic poem, Savitri, in which he describes the whole yoga inclusive of all the levels of consciousness. From Book IX, "The Book of Eternal Night", we would read the dialogue between Savitri and the Voice of Darkness. In the crater of Matrimandir, it would have been splendid. The audience would be seated at ground level, and the actors would be somewhere in the crater. We had rehearsed the whole thing on the spot. In the meantime, we had informed Mother about it, because it is Her crater. Her reply: "What a strange place..."

Auroville Archives.
Typed in English.

* * *

1971, December 11th: *Excerpt from Vikas' Diary:*

*The Matrimandir is no more than a great wide circular hole in the ground. It is emerging as a crater, a colossal theatre-in-the-round. But it has a most strange and very powerful character, an individuality, a *genus loci*. A spirit descends over the place.*



To me it's more than "the Force" that other speak of, eulogising its intensity and power; to me, it is the total atmosphere, the energy and the matter, the ether and the earth, and the instruments of

⁴⁸ Ruud added: "On the same morning, the Indo Pakistan war started."

transformation, the workers. All seem saturated with this spirit, as if here were the most heavy concentration on earth. I know of other places which have their own intense, heavy characteristic atmosphere; locally I could instance the Samadhi of Sri Aurobindo, Sri Aurobindo's room, the Mother's room. I have the same intensity, but of a totally different vintage, sitting atop a mountain in the Himalayas. It is as if they held a wine, a divine liquor, rich, fruity, heavy, strong; but each with a different flavour, bouquet and vintage. And you have to be a spiritual wine-tester to mark the difference and the subtlety of character.

But one characteristic they all seem to share is a sense of timelessness, despite the exterior forms and your knowledge that such-and-such a place has only been like this for x number of years, be it ten or a million. One feels the atmosphere, the spirit has always existed here, even if only on the-subtle plane and not materially manifest.

Anyhow, this hole, the Matrimandir in its present form, looks a bit like a scene from a Twentieth Century Fox wide screen epic, with 200 coolies, women and children, carrying huge baskets of rich red earth on their heads. It could be a scene from ancient Babylon, or the construction of the pyramids. Timeless, eternal.



Alain G. talking with Piero

But there, in the middle, as if to give the game away, like the Shakespearean actor who forgot to remove his wristwatch, is the thin, nervous, bespectacled, plastic-raincoat-clad figure of Alain, the chef-d'oeuvre, strutting around at the bottom of the pit amidst the pools of water, a band of loin-clothed Indians attending his every word. It's rich, it's beautiful, and it's funny.

Quoted in Ruud's Matrimandir Diary
English

* * *

1971, December 18th:

Excerpt from Vikas' diary:

How to describe the deep, calm, intense feeling of joy when working at Matrimandir? Rising with the first glimmer of light and being out in the pit, working by seven A.M., watching the sunrise, feeling its warmth and immersing oneself in the light.

Today there are 400 workers; whole families come and spend the day and though there is much laughter and the inevitable shouting, they work very hard. By nine o'clock they settle into a quieter rhythm, and then break off into smaller groups to eat breakfast, gathering in a circle, clustering together in families, sitting and squatting on the ground around their great pots of rice.

Today Larry helped me with levelling. It is necessary every morning to establish the true level to which the workers must dig. It's really funny to watch Larry with his magnificent crop of curly hair, which must stand fully 6" clear of the scalp all round, a great funny sort of "Afro". Anyway, there he is in the pit, this great happy smiling freak, with hundreds of Tamils all around, digging and carrying the rich rusty earth.

Having taken my reading, I call out to Larry how much he must go down or go up, and he translates this into the appropriate Tamil grunts and gestures. It must be a curious scene, with 400 natives, dressed as they have been for centuries, working with their simple hand tools, in this huge timeless pit, and two freaks working with theodolite and telescopic measuring pole. You have to convert centimetres into thumb lengths.

And Alain, like some absurd character from a French comedy inimitably combining a nervous frown with an impish smile. Today he is wearing a little white sun hat, with the brim turned up at the back like a spir. He has moved a table and chair into the Matrimandir site and sits there like some out-of-place bureaucrat, yet curiously cutting a figure of authority.

Last night, for the first time in weeks, it seems, the clouds vanished and we were treated to a magnificent sunset. That strange wonderful atmosphere of the Matrimandir, with its peculiar and highly individual spirit, was enriched by Nature's own light show.

Quoted in Ruud's Matrimandir Diary.
Typed in English.

* * *

1971, Late December



Excavation work well underway

* * *

1971, December 29th:

Excerpt from Vikas' diary:

I went for a walk to the Matrimandir at about 9.30 P.M. intending to meditate there in the moonlight. I couldn't believe that there was a whole gang of coolies working happily away. The same gang that is furthest advanced, that has already dug the deepest.

With every day I become more and more certain that there is a concentration of Mother's Force, essentially vital in nature (in order to create, to give energy and enthusiasm for the work). It's hardly possible to sit down for a minute without the Force driving you on to more work.

Needless to say when you're new to the yoga, when you have difficulty in silencing the mind and quieting the vital, the Force gets misused. So I find myself talking sometimes like an express train, or eating like a pig. The same Force and the same unfortunate results

occur at Aspiration. I don't feel bad about it because I know it will change or rather, I will change, will gradually develop an inner calmness and learn to separate Purusha from Prakriti, not spasmodically and for isolated seconds, but as a sustained and constant condition: "When the mind is still, then the Truth gets her chance to be heard in the purity of the silence." (Sri Aurobindo).

But in these few isolated delicious moments when I can witness in silence, the experience is magnificent. And particularly so in the Matrimandir pit, where the flow of energy is thick and dynamic and one can experience the Truth of what Mother has said: "The Matrimandir is under the direct influence of the Divine." Interesting footnote: the great Matrimandir fight, the battle of the tribes, occurred on the same morning the Indo-Pakistan war started.

Quoted in Ruud's Matrimandir Diary.
Typed in English.

* * *

1971 end or early 1972:

Richard Pearson's account of how Mother selected in his presence the central flowers of each one of the 12 gardens⁴⁹:

It is probably towards the end of 1971, or early 1972, that Mother called me⁵⁰ and asked me to bring all flowers of hibiscus I could gather so that She could choose a particular flower for each garden. Narad helped me with what he was already growing in the Matrimandir Nursery⁵¹ and I collected some flowers from the Ashram gardens too. When I took these flowers to Her She asked me with disarming modesty what were the names given to these flowers, for She did not remember them all!

Looking at the first of the gardens, She picked up a single pink hibiscus with separated slender petals; and asked me what it was called. I said: Psychic Power. She changed the name to Psychic Power in Existence and chose it for the garden of Existence (Sat).

Looking at the array of hibiscus flowers I had put out for Her, She picked up a double yellow hibiscus and said: "This flower is very luminous. What is it called?" I said, "Supramental Consciousness". She chose it for the second garden of Consciousness (Chit).

Then, for the next garden, I told Mother that we have the flower of Ananda. She said: "It will do to represent the garden of Bliss" (Ananda).

The next time I met Mother, I had again many kinds of hibiscus that Narad was growing at the Nursery.

She began with the garden of Light and She pointed to a pure white single hibiscus. I told Her it was Purified Power. She added the word light, so the meaning became: Light of the Purified Power.

The next garden is Life. And the flower that drew Her attention was a double red hibiscus. The flower is medium sized and the colour is what I call a "happy red". The general meaning of all double red hibiscus flowers is Power of Consciousness and Mother's comment is: "All the powers of controlling and dominating the lower movements of inconscient nature."

Then for the garden of Power, Mother significantly chose Aesthetic Power. This took me a little by surprise as I was thinking of Dynamic Power. But She rightly says in Her comment: "Beauty is a great power".

I believe Mother completed the next six gardens during one single interview. Again I had more hibiscus flowers collected from all over, including many from the Nursery.

⁴⁹ Mother had a little earlier given Auroville's name to 14 hibiscus.

⁵⁰ According to Richard, all these conversations were in French.

⁵¹ Narad, Amrit and others had started the Nursery only two years earlier.

She asked me what was the flower for Wealth and I told Her that we have Wealth for water lilies and Riches for the cacti; but in French there is only one word “Richesse” for both wealth and riches. “These flowers will do”, She said.

For the garden of Usefulness, She chose a flower named Usefulness of Auroville⁵², (Usefulness of the New Creation). And the significant comment is: “A creation which aims at teaching men to surpass themselves”. It is a deep pink single flower, strong and cup shaped with sturdy petals.

Progress was the name of the next garden; we had already Progress of Auroville (Progress of the New Creation): “Each one must find the activity favourable to one’s own progress” and Power of Progress: “Progress is the sign of the divine influence in creation”. But Mother chose the flower: Power to Progress (Le Pouvoir de Progresser) for the garden of Progress. This is a medium-sized single flower, cream white with veins and centre mauve pink and orange stigmas. I rather naively asked Mother whether Power to Progress and Power of Progress were not nearly the same. She emphatically replied that the meanings were totally different: “It is not at all the same”.

For Youth, Mother liked the flower of Supramental Beauty. She changed it to Beauty of Supramental Youth: “Exquisitely fresh and powerful with uncontested beauty”.

Harmony was the next garden. She saw a soft light yellow single hibiscus with a light red centre and She named it Power of Harmony. It is different from Mentalised Power which has a lemon-yellow colour and red centre.

Finally for the garden of Perfection She Herself suggested the flower Psychological Perfection. “All kinds”, She said. Personally I now feel that Perfect Psychological Perfection is a good choice since it blooms nearly throughout the year. This is not a hibiscus. So we have two gardens where the hibiscus is not the central flower.

Central Flower selected by Mother for each one of the 12 Gardens

1 Existence	Psychic Power in Existence
2 Consciousness	Supramental Consciousness
3 Bliss	Ananda
4 Light	Light of the Purified Power
5 Life	Power of Consciousness
6 Power	Aesthetic Power
7 Wealth	Wealth & Riches
8 Usefulness	Usefulness of Auroville
9 Progress	Power to Progress
10 Youth	Beauty of Supramental Youth
11 Harmony	Power of Harmony
12 Perfection	Psychological Perfection

Article written by Richard Pearson at the editor’s request.
TEnglish.

* * *

⁵² As per the Ashram’s records and Richard’s memory, it is only in October 1971 that Mother named “Usefulness of Auroville”; She thus cannot have made this selection before this date.

1972, January

1972, January 1

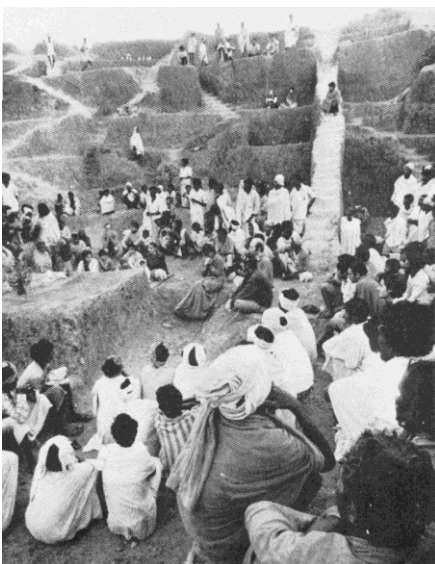
Ruud's account of New Year's Celebration in his Matrimandir Diary:



This morning at 6.30 we had a New Year's celebration at Matrimandir. On the bottom, now 9 metres deep, four large fires were lit and all the workers gathered around them and on the various ledges which run around the excavation at different heights. Many people from the Auroville communities and from Pondy came, too. The first rays of the sun emerged. Then we played the New Year's music, as an experiment, for we were not sure how the workers would react.

But they got more and more quiet and seemed to experience it intensively. Somebody gave a five minute talk in Tamil on the meaning of Matrimandir and their work and explained the idea of the Centenary Year.

When sweets were distributed they got so much into it that they started making it into a festival. They lost all idea of work and after two hours they left and we also took the day off.





This morning was a clear symbol of what has been established during the last six weeks; a good understanding between the Tamilians and the Aurovilians.

The work has gone beautifully, the first phase of Matrimandir will be completed this week; the huge crater is ready.

It is splendid, great. It reminds many visitors of the construction of the pyramids, of the Coliseum, of cathedrals, really a monument that embodies a new age.

Piero and others sit at the bottom

Auroville Archives.
Typed in English.

* * *

1972, January 12th:

Excerpt of a conversation Mother has with Satprem:

Do you happen to remember where I wrote the twelve attributes of Mother (the symbol with twelve petals)? There's one, four and twelve.

Satprem: Yes, I think it was for Auroville.

For Auroville? But I said it years ago...

S.: I saw it recently.

The twelve?

(Sujata goes out in search of the paper.)

On this one there aren't any details.

(Mother extends a note in English)⁵³

The central circle represents the Divine Consciousness.

The four petals represent the four powers of Mother.

The twelve petals represent the twelve powers of Mother manifested for Her work.

[...]

(Mother tries to remember the names of the four and the twelve of Her symbol.)

*The central circle represents the Divine Consciousness.
The four petals represent the four powers of the Mother.
The twelve petals represent the twelve powers of the Mother manifested for Her work.*

⁵³ Note that Mother gave this significance of Her symbol on 24.1.58 and that, on 2.12.55, She had given that to Huta: "The central circle represents the Supreme Mother, the MahaShakti. The four central petals are the four aspects of Mother – and the twelve petals, Her twelve attributes." (pp. 84-85 of Huta's "The Story of a Soul", Vol. 1, 1954-55.)

You read the Cosmic thing [Review], the “cosmic square”: 1, 2, 3,4 and one in the centre? It was the cosmic square conceived by Théon, and I remember that he had put Love at the centre. But the four around it... What are these four? I don’t remember anymore. I use to know all this so well; it’s all gone. I remember that there was Light, Life and Utility – utility, the fourth, but the first one? Utility was the last one. What was the first one?... All this is gone.⁵⁴

Because it would give me some indications...

(Mother then starts remembering some of the Virtues or Qualities. A few days later She will come up with a list and give it to Roger and to Satprem.)

Mother’s Agenda, XIII, pp. 27-28
Verbal in French.

* * *

1972, January 16

Note from Piero to Shyam Sunder:

Dear Shyamsunder,

I should meet for some urgent questions the engineers in Madras, (for Matrimandir’s propping towers and outside cover). I have already phoned with him for a appointment on Thursday or Friday morning (Saturday is holiday).

If possible kindly inform also Chaman [Lal] Gupta to see if he interested and free to come. Michael [Tait] is also coming for steel plates.

Please let me know if it is possible to have the car for Thursday (better) or Friday.

Truth.

Auroville Archives.
Typed in English.

* * *

1972, January, sometime between 12th and 19th:

Mother hands to Roger the names of Matrimandir’s four pillars and those of the rooms in its twelve “petals”.

Fourth part of Roger’s open letter, dated 20.04.77:

Later, when the work had advanced further, I had suggested to Mother to utilise the interior of these petals to situate rooms therein. Mother had then explained to me that these could serve as rooms of concentration on various levels of consciousness. Two days later, she gave them, in writing, an appropriate name and colour, as well as the significance of the four pillars supporting the Matrimandir.

⁵⁴ Research in Théon’s work, show that, in his ‘Cosmic square’, Amour (Love) was at the centre and was surrounded by Pouvoir, Lumiere, Vie and Utilité (Power, Light, Life and Utility).

On 23.6.65, Mother spoke of Matrimandir to Satprem as being the *Pavilion of Truth, of (Divine) Love* (or *of the Universal Mother*). Among the twelve gardens which surround it, there is Light, Life, Power and Utility – Théon’s “Cosmic Square”. But Mother replaced Might (puissance) by Power (Pouvoir). Thus rectifying a likely translation mistake by Théon’s secretary.

“Puissance” is not always “might” and “power” not always “pouvoir”. “Le tout-puissant” is indeed “the almighty” but one speaks of the “puissance d’un moteur” and of “the power of an engine”.

Names of Matrimandir's four pillars:⁵⁵

North	Mahakali	NORD	Mahakali
South	Maheshwari	SUD	Maheshwari
East	Mahalakshmi	EST	Mahalakshmi
West	Mahasaraswati	OUEST	Mahasaraswati
Blessings			

Gazette Aurovilienne, 5, July 1977.
French

Names of the twelve meditation rooms in the petals.

Sincerity, Humility, Gratitude,
Perseverance, Aspiration, Receptivity,
Progress, Courage, Kindness⁵⁶,
Generosity, Equality, Peace.

Sincérité, Humilité, Gratitude, Persévérance,
Aspiration, Réceptivité, Progrès, Courage,
Bonté, Générosité, Égalité, Paix.

Colour scheme of Mother's symbol written by Sri Aurobindo and coloured symbol she gives to Roger to illustrate His words:⁵⁷

Centre and four powers, white.

The twelve all different colours in three groups:

top group red, passing to orange towards yellow;

next group, yellow passing through green towards blue;

and third group, blue passing through violet towards red.

If white is not convenient, the centre may be gold (powder).



* * *

1972, January 19th:

*Excerpt from a conversation Mother has with Satprem referring to the conversation he had with her, on 12th.*⁵⁸

Last time I told you I was looking for the twelve attributes (Mother takes out a sheet of paper). Here they are; someone found this:

⁵⁵ The significance of the pillars may not have been made public at that time, because in April 1972 Piero had heard a rumour that they would have been named after Mother's four aspects; and on May 1st, he wrote a letter to Mother asking her indirectly if it was true.

⁵⁶ Though 'Bonté' is often translated as 'Goodness', 'Kindness' may be preferred: "Bonté = Kindness and goodwill; Bienveillance is to see the good side of everything. It is not mere optimism which closes its eyes from bad. It is rather a psychic vision which sees the Good everywhere. There are many words which cannot be translated. Sri Aurobindo's humour and irony cannot be translated into French. English humour when translated into French sounds stupid and flat; French humour when translated into English becomes cruel and meaningless. These two languages seem to be so similar and yet their genius is quite apart." (4.7.56. Concerning translation, CWM, Vol. 12, pp. 217-18)

⁵⁷ Sri Aurobindo's words are dated: 20 March 1934. This card is kept in Roger's personal archives.

⁵⁸ Mother was asking for a certain paper, saying that in 1927, she told Sri Aurobindo the meaning of the petals in Her symbol. He wrote it down, but that paper could not be found later.

Sincerity	Humility	Gratitude	Perseverance
Aspiration	Receptivity	Progress	Courage
Kindness	Generosity	Equanimity	Peace

The first eight concern the attitude towards the Divine, and the last four towards humanity.

And we also found a text from Sri Aurobindo with a coloured chart of the twelve petals.
The centre is gold.

Satprem: But what did you need these twelve attributes for?

They're going to build twelve rooms around the Matrimandir, at ground level, and Roger wanted each room to have a name: one of the twelve attributes of Mother, and the corresponding colour.

*Mother's Agenda, XIII, pp. 41-42; Names only: MoA, p. 5
Verbal in French.*

*

Editor's comments:

Naming these 12 rooms according to Mother's Attributes would thus have been Roger's idea.

It should however be noted that, p. 143 of his book: "I Remember", Pranab Kumar Bhattacharya wrote that, in 1945-46, Mother had told him that one day "She would have a house built whose walls would be transparent. Different colours would shine out from different rooms and glow through the walls. Depending on their state of being people would choose the room with the appropriate colour to stay in." Hence the idea may have been in the air...

In September 1970 Mother issued this message: "The Matrimandir wants to be the symbol of the Universal Mother according to Sri Aurobindo's teaching." Her symbol and the Matrimandir are symbolic representations of a lotus, which itself symbolises the divine consciousness and, according to Sri Aurobindo: "Mother is the Consciousness and Force of the Divine."

Hence:

- *The central circle of Her symbol and Matrimandir itself represent the Supreme Mother, the MahaShakti.*
- *The four central petals of Her symbol and Matrimandir's pillars represent Her four Aspects or Personalities.*
- *On 10th November 1954, Mother explained to Her class that the twelve outer petals of Her symbol represent different things: "It signifies anything one wants, you see. 12: that's the number of Aditi, of Mahashakti. So it applies to everything; all Her action has 12 Aspects. There are also Her 12 Virtues, Her 12 Powers, Her 12 Aspects, and then Her 12 Planes of manifestation and many other things that are 12; and the symbol, the number 12 is in itself a symbol. It is the symbol of manifestation, double perfection, in essence and in manifestation, in the creation." At Matrimandir:*
 - *The twelve meditation rooms probably represent Her twelve Virtues.⁵⁹*
 - *The twelve gardens may be representing the twelve Powers necessary for Her action⁶⁰.*

The "centre" here is Matrimandir's shell, or rather its outer and inner shells. The outside shell is gold (symbolising Divine Truth), while the Inner Chamber is fully white (symbolising the light of Mother, or the Divine Consciousness) and the (double) shell of the

⁵⁹ In a tale entitled: "The Virtues" ("Words of Long Ago" pp. 5-6) Mothers speaks of virtues and most of these have the same names as those given to these twelve meditation rooms.

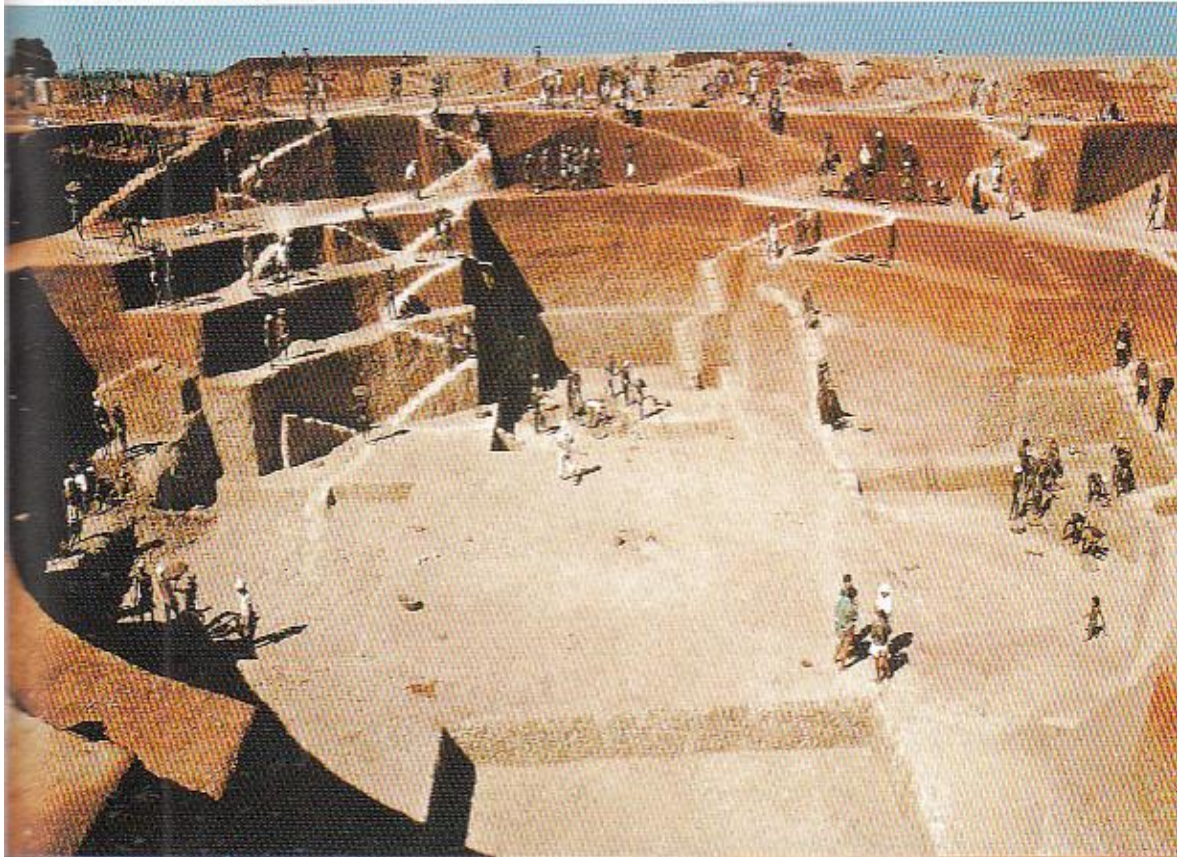
⁶⁰ Note that ten out of twelve central flowers which Mother selected for each one of the twelve gardens (one central flower per garden) are hibiscus and that the generic name she gave to most hibiscus is "Power".

sphere will let through a particular type of “Grace Light” (golden-pink). (See in this compilation the entry dated 11th July 1970).

* * *

1972, January 20th:

Completion of the excavation. 16,000 work-days; 18,000 to 20,000 m³ of earth have been removed. 10.50 metres deep, 50 metres across (at ground level).



Excavation almost complete

* * *