

5th Chapter
Construction Work
Masonry of the Amphitheatre
Shoring Towers & Hoist Towers
1st level & tips of the Pillars
5th Nov. 1972 – 17th Nov. 1973

1972, November 5th: *Excerpt from Shyam Sunder's notes published in his "Down Memory Lane":*

DML p. 243
English

*Last evening the four pillars of Matrimandir have been completed.
Mother gave a box of toffees for the Matrimandir Camp.*

* * *

1972, November 9th: *Excerpt from Shyam Sunder's notes published in his "Down Memory Lane":*

DML, p. 244
English

*I have received from Huta what Mother wrote to her about Matrimandir and her house.¹ I will speak to Roger about it when he comes.
Mother nodded.*

* * *

1972, November 14th: *Excerpt from a letter from Huta – and Mother's answer:*

MMTL, p. 31; SA, p. 148; facsimile at AV Archives
English

*Some time some beings throw their falsehood at me. But I am not in favour with their falsehood.
I request You to protect me constantly.*

Also I wish You to dispel all the obstacles which are in my way and prevent me from realising my soul. And, truly I feel strongly that now my soul must take an entire lead of my whole being.

Mother, didn't I pray to You in 1965 when You appointed me guardian of the Matri Mandir that I would not step into the Sacred Temple until and unless I became perfectly pure and worthy?

And with a smile, You said: "You will be..." and I was relieved.

Now this is high time that my whole being must be purified thoroughly and must be influenced by my soul and its aspiration. Then and then only I shall deserve to serve the Truth integrally.

Please fulfil my aspiration. And I know that nothing is impossible for Your Grace... And You know very well what I aspire for...

[Mother answers in Her hand:]

Yes, have faith.

Love and blessings.

* * *

1972, November 24th: *Mother signs with Blessings this notice for the commencement of the Matrimandir gardens work:*

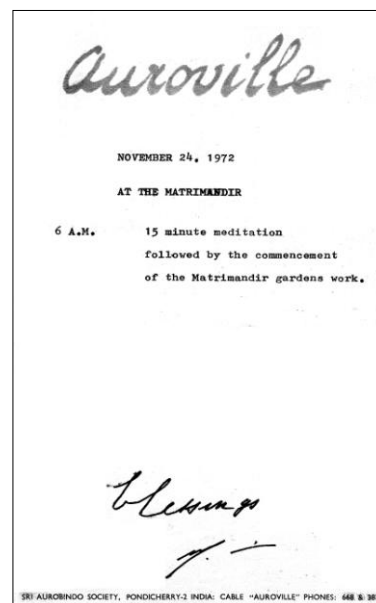
Original at AV Archives
English

November 24, 1972

At the Matrimandir

**6 A.M. 15 minute meditation
followed by the commencement
of the Matrimandir gardens work**

Blessings



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¹ Unfortunately, scans of these documents were never made public.

Excerpt from of a report published in the Gazette Aurovilienne:

Gazette Aurovilienne, Gaz, Vol. II, 1973, No. 3, p. 35
French & English

The work on the gardens began at dawn on November 24th 1972. There was first a meditation followed by the clearing of the road which will encircle the Matrimandir area. The levelling of the ground will be started on arrival of a bulldozer, recently donated from America. Meanwhile engineers are studying the water system for the decorative canals and for the drainage of rainwater.

* * *

1972, Nov. 26th: *Letter from Huta to Mother:*

Scan of typed letter signed available.
English

My dearest Mother,

Last year on 25th December, You gave this message:

*“The time has come for the rule of falsehood to end,
In the Truth alone is salvation”*

But at present the falsehood is in full swing. While observing and seeing things around, one feels that nothing is happening because everything goes wrong all the time and falsehood always wins!

No doubt the Lord's Action is very powerful and it compels everybody to change their consciousness. At least I feel it myself and it is a great help to know each time what is wrong and what is right. Some people must be feeling the same as I do. But the majority of people here believe that the Lord's Action is an imagination. They think that life in the Ashram is very easy and they take liberty for licence. As a matter of fact, they find everything natural and passable. They also think that the Mother does not bother about what is going on in the Ashram, because She cannot hear, cannot speak, cannot write, She is old and invalid, She does not know anything and cannot do anything. And your messages are disregarded.

Mother, it is very strange that these people live very happily without any struggle and they enjoy themselves without fear and care. Also, it is really amazing that not a single blow falls on them – on the contrary, the favourable situations are created for them by the falsehood in order to encourage them to do all sorts of things which are not allowed in the Ashram.

I truly wonder what will be the situation of the true aspirant who have come here only for the Divine? At the moment they are really crushed by the falsehood of all these people.

Mother, there is nothing unknown to You. And I feel that the Ashram is the foundation of the future World – Auroville. I am sure that You and the Lord will certainly make the Truth win.

Finally I pray to you on behalf of true people:”Let Your Victory come soon and let Your Truth and Love reign in this world for ever...”

With love and kisses.

* * *

1972, Nov. 29th: *Excerpt from Shyam Sunder's notes published in his “Down Memory Lane”:*

DML, p.249
English

*For Matrimandir 1.25 lakhs has come. We need 5 lakhs more to properly resume the work.
Changes in the architectural plans causing more costliness were mentioned.²*

Mother said:

Naturally the cost increases.”

* * *

² The major changes, which were decided upon on 20.9.72, simplified the structure and made it less expensive but some of the structural calculations needed to be redone – at a cost.

1972, December

1972, December 3rd: *Excerpt from Ruud's "Matrimandir Diary":*

Copy kept at AV Archives
English

Matrimandir construction consists of three projects which together form the one soul of Auroville, the Golden Sphere, the meditation rooms in the twelve petals surrounding it, and the gardens. The meditation rooms for which Mother has already given the names, are the latest addition to the scheme, but in the meeting we had last Thursday, Roger, the chief architect of Auroville, seemed not to be very sure whether they will be built at all, for practical and financial reasons. Preparations for the third aspect of Matrimandir, the gardens, started several years ago with flowers and trees to discover what will grow best in Auroville and how growth and blossoming can be yogically influenced. The historical date marking the beginning of the work on the actual gardens was last Darshan, 24th November 1972, at 6:15 a.m., a time given by the Mother. After a fifteen-minute meditation inside the excavation, about a hundred people followed Shyam Sunder, Auroville's contact man with the Mother, through the steel yard, along the ravine to the tea shop where, on the north side of Matrimandir, the outlines of the road surrounding the Matrimandir area were visible. The group walked on, passing behind the Matrimandir's Workers' Camp, towards the Government road at the south side of the area and started removing weeds from the projected road. At 4 a.m. that morning, in the light of an almost full moon, seven Aurovilians had drawn a magic circle in white chalk all around the confines of the temple area. Rather, almost all around; for several parts of the projected centre of Auroville are still agricultural lands owned by villagers. Twenty-five new workers had been invited for the next day to continue the road-clearing and then start the levelling work. In the meantime it was discovered that a hired bulldozer could do the same work for one-twentieth of the cost, and since we are expecting our own small bulldozer at the end of this month, it was decided to wait a little with the gardens.

Suddenly the idea came up to concentrate our energies on the place where the official inauguration of Auroville took place on February 28th, 1968, and where the white marble urn containing soil from 124 countries stands. (Or so it was said: in fact, it seems that only 50 countries sent soil – anyhow, sufficient earth to be a symbol of Human Unity.) About a year ago, some initial drawings were made to study how the place could be developed into an open-air theatre. These plans were dug out last week, discussed and are now being worked on. The 25 workers were transferred to the Amphitheatre where they first dug a channel for the rainwater disposal pipes and are now removing the earth which has accumulated through four monsoons on the lowest levels where the stage will be.

After a month of relative inactivity on the site and a search for work of any kind whatsoever in order to continue the projects, the Amphitheatre suggested itself with force and it seems to be the destined work for the next few months, until the scaffolding and shuttering for the first slab are ready. In the excavation itself, the four pillars massively and impatiently stretch out their many steel arms to receive what they are designed to carry; and for the rest it is quiet down there, nobody is working inside. The centre of activity is in the workshop, one of the bamboo-and-keet-covered buildings on the construction site. The weigh-batch has been taken apart, cleaned, painted and put together again; now it is the cement mixer's turn to be transformed into an approximation of golden yellow beauty. A new building for the storage of wood is in progress by the carpenters, the small group of whom remain out of the forty we used to have, when the pillars were under construction.

Each thing at Matrimandir seems to have its own time. Some would like to speed things up, others to take it easy, but as many influences and forces, calculable and incalculable, are at play that things happen when they are suppose to and we cannot do much about it. The four or five months' delay in the main project, the sphere, has some meaning, maybe to teach us patience, maybe to get the amphitheatre done, maybe for a reason we will find out only much later – or maybe never.

* * *

1972, December 5th: *Excerpt from Ruud's "Matrimandir Diary":*

Nature celebrates the Mahasamadhi of Sri Aurobindo today with heavy storms and much rain. Not a single worker has shown up and it looks as if it will be a quiet day around here. The cyclone which it was predicted would pass over Pondicherry at midnight has not touched upon Matrimandir.

The Centenary Year is drawing to a close. For Matrimandir it was the year of the pillars: on the first Darshan day of this year, February 21st, we had an official function with a symbolic commencement of the concreting; on the last Darshan day we meditated at 6:00 a.m. between the completed pillars.

Very broadly we may say that the three chapters indicated above [conception, excavation, pillars] each covered a year. The Conception and Preparation started at the end of the 60's and set the tone for 1970. The excavation was executed in 1971; the pillars with their footings in 1972. 1973 will be the year of the lower half of the sphere, beginning maybe with February Darshan or, more likely, with April Darshan. By then the Amphitheatre may be completed.

Most people around here expect the whole project to be ready by the end of 1977, just before Mother's Centenary on February 21st, 1978.³

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Excerpt from Roger Toll's diary:

Mahasamadhi Day, 22nd anniversary of Sri Aurobindo's death. Mother had said the day should be dedicated to contemplate the meaning of death.

Group meditation at 10 in the meditation room of the Camp. Beautiful atmosphere, togetherness. The rain and wind are increasing, and we learn of coming cyclone with 150 kph winds. All day it builds, winds very strong with much rain. Everything gets damp and uncomfortable. No food arrives, no transportation, can't go out in the storm. Then the electricity goes. I sleep early, then awake at 11:30 to enormous wind and driving rain. Trees being uprooted, tremendous air pressure. The bamboo structure of my new hut is shaking wildly, and I retreat to Seyril's room.

* * *

1972, December 5th: *Excerpt from Roger Toll's diary:*

Awake to much damage, but nothing serious, only minor hardship, everything damp, little food and still no electricity to run the pump for water. During the bad part of the storm after midnight, everyone seemed to be awake, praying and concentrating. We make repairs to the Matrimandir sheds. I repair my roof, have good talks with friends. We hear there will be no electricity for at least a week, which means problems for bathing, cooking meals, flushing toilets.

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1972, December 8th: *Excerpt from Ruud's "Matrimandir Diary":*

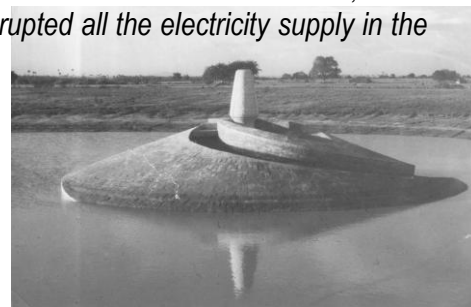
The cyclone, which did not make it for Sri Aurobindo's Mahasamadhi day, arrived the next day. The whole night after the 5th it blew, at a velocity approximating 150 km/h. Pondy, being right on the coast, suffered quite a lot: many trees were uprooted and even the big Service tree at Sri Aurobindo's Samadhi lost one of its biggest branches. Mother never liked our constructing dwellings in keet and bamboo in Auroville; the monsoon did not like it either and blew down a lot of them. Forecomers was almost wiped out; we lost the community kitchen in Aspiration, the temporary Heath Centre and the Gymnasium. Matrimandir was one of the places that suffered least. The structure of the Workers' Camp, temporary though it is, made it right through; it only grumbled and trembled. At the construction site the carpentry workshop which was only half completed came down, that's about all. Of course, there was some damage to the roofs of all other buildings, but that is in the nature of things. The Matrimandir Gardens' Nursery was hit quite hard. Some huge mango trees fell right down and cannot be saved. All around Pondy and Auroville, and also right in our own Workers' Camp garden, all the Transformation trees were lost. Madhav Pandit asked Narad yesterday to look for whatever

³ Matrimandir and its twelve "petals" were completed on 21.2.2008. The gardens are still very far from completion.

'Transformation' flowers he could find around here and send them daily to Mother, who seems to give out many of them each day. We heard that Mother had told Satprem that the cyclone was able to come because the level of consciousness has gone down so much.

The pillars look beautiful these days, since they stand with their feet in the reddish water, more water than we have ever seen inside. Of course, the cyclone disrupted all the electricity supply in the surrounding area, so we cannot pump it out.

The urn has become an island floating in the projected amphitheatre; in order to measure circles and segments we have to wade into the muddy water almost up to our waists. The excavation on the stage area had already started before the monsoon, but now we cannot even think of working there.



The Urn surrounded with water

So this morning when the workers came, we had to start something new again. Nowadays almost every day we have a new beginning of something. Vikas is working full-time on the drawings for the amphitheatre and complained, "We need three teams of international architects to keep up with Alain's excavation impetus". Anyhow, recently it was decided that at the rear of the amphitheatre an underground control room and many toilets would be built. This morning we started the excavation for it after roughly measuring the site yesterday. At 6:52 a.m. Alain, Tom and I drove in unison the first three shovels into the soft red earth. It really looks out of time and place to stand there with lots of muddy earth clinging to your bare feet in the wide stretch of land where not a trace of civilisation is visible, much less the City of the Future, and talk about plugs for video recording, control panels and loud speaker systems.

The twelve petals surrounding the sphere of Matrimandir seem to create technical problems. Amusing that very often in discussions between technical-minded people, cost is mentioned and the need to find the cheapest solution. As if in this whole strange, divine, irrational, supramental venture called Auroville a few millions of Rupees or Dollars played any role. We don't have a paise now but still we go on constructing. To speak in terms of holding down the cost of the Soul of Auroville is as odd as talking about the golden discs, all the marble which will be needed and, after all, the whole project.

This morning an engineer came who was invited to take charge of the construction of the petals with meditation rooms, one Mr. Nagarshet, who retired from Government service and joined the Ashram. In a meeting with Piero, Ramanathan, Vikas, Alain and myself, the three possible solutions for the petals were discussed once again. First, the petals could be hollow, but this creates huge problems, regarding scaffolding. Roger, in last week's meeting, said he does not like this solution very much because it is not 'true', not a real symbol of the earth breaking open to give birth, etc. Piero prefers this solution for technical reasons because it does not pose the problem of the tremendous pressure of earth against the 17-metre high sidewalls. To have the meditation rooms inside and leave the remainder of the space open and unused seems, however, artificial. Then it might be better to use the whole area inside the petals as meditation rooms.

Second solution: to build the rooms, fill up the whole thing with earth, and then construct the shell of the petals against the earth. This seems to be the easier and more-natural solution. A third solution is not really a solution at all but rather an attempt to avoid a lot of trouble and expense: to fill up the petals without having meditation rooms at all.

The procedure for coming to a decision will be as follow: three groups will make a preliminary study of each of the alternatives to come to the best and 'most economic' solution. One group, to whom the scheme has already been proposed, is the Structural Engineering Research Centre in Madras (SERC), which has been working for about a year on the sphere of Matrimandir. A second group would be Mr. Nagarshet and his engineering friends in Bombay. Names were mentioned for a third group of individuals. A time limit would be fixed, after which the three parties would sit together with us here to discuss and take a final decision. The one whose suggestions appeal best will be asked to work out the details.

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1972, December 9th: *Excerpt from Ruud's "Matrimandir Diary":*

Mother has given two strong messages which were made known today. The first relates to Auroville, the second to the destructive cyclone and Auroville.

"Auroville has been created for a progressive super-humanity, not for an infrahumanity governed by its instincts and dominated by its desires. Those who belong to the infrahumanity, the animal humanity, have no place here. Auroville is for those who aspire for the supramental and make an effort to reach there."

(1.12.1972)

"It is a warning that the Nature is giving that those who do not have the true spirit of Auroville will have to change or to go if they do not want to change."

(7.12.1972)

The golden discs on the outer skin of Matrimandir are what really make it the symbol of the sun of a new day. They are supposed to sway gently with the wind – and not too violently during heavy storms. Piero has in this quiet time between the chapters, been playing a bit with methods of attaching the discs to a wall to discover the play of wind and steel. The first two attempts did not move much with normal air currents, and with strong winds they moved too much. The method suggested by Roger, to fix the trial wooden disc on the end of just one rod to be attached perpendicular to the wall, succeeded better; the movement was beautiful, but even before the cyclone the rod broke.

A more urgent and serious problem is the skin of Matrimandir. When we start constructing the four ribs of the main structure we must know of what material the shell will be made. We always thought it would be of concrete and the engineering research team in Madras has calculated everything, down to the foundations, on that supposition.⁴ About two months ago Roger was studying Matrimandir again⁵ and he came to the conclusion that there are other ways of making skins for Matrimandir. One way would be to attach a steel frame to the ribs, in triangles or any other form, and to cover it over with some translucent, opaque or other material. He had in mind a solution which, he told us, had been used for storing war materials, the so-called cocoon, some sort of polyester that can be sprayed onto any object to make it waterproof and totally sealed.⁶ On his latest trip to France he gathered some more information on the cocoon and came back with a few pieces and advertisements.⁷ Before he left again, the team in Madras was informed of possible changes in the structure, which could upset all their previous calculations on which they have spent the greater part of this year. Concrete or cocoon was the issue for several weeks.⁸ Yesterday, Roger and Piero met and, it seems, they came to a whole new solution about which we'll be hearing more soon. It is something like concrete rings with open spaces in between which will filter the light into the sphere. Attached to the rings there will be a sort of concrete channel which will conduct the rainwater to a central canal so that it does not pour down in streams as it does from an umbrella. The golden discs will then be attached to the concrete rings. It is a kind of in-between solution: the strength and solemnity of concrete coupled with the translucency of other materials Roger has had in mind for some time.⁹ We may have to go through many more solutions and suggestions, however, before futuristic beauty is obtained.

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⁴ As said, Dr. Chamanlal Gupta had suggested asking S.E.R.C.'s scientists to come up with the structural design of Matrimandir's structure precisely because one of its directors was an expert in thin RCC shells.

⁵ This is most probably after it was agreed (on 20.9.72) to do away with the dodeca wall below the Chamber and have only one pair of spiral ramps – instead of two. These major changes made the skin far more visible from inside. (Previously, it wasn't visible from the 2nd level and while walking up to the rooms; it was only visible while coming down via the "exterior" pair of spiral ramps.

⁶ This process is known as "mothballing"

⁷ Chamanlal-jii remembers tearing some of these samples with his bare hands to try and prove to Roger the inadequacy of this material.

⁸ Very soon, the inadequacy of "cocoon" for Matrimandir became so obvious that it was discarded.

⁹ Interestingly, the solution that was eventually adopted combines the solidity of a concrete space-frame structure with the translucency of the inner skin.

1972, December 13th: *Excerpt from Ruud's "Matrimandir Diary":*

The amphitheatre surrounding the urn seems more and more to be the destined work for these months. On the main structure of Matrimandir nothing can happen before the steel arrives for the scaffolding between the pillars, to support the first slab, the bottom layer of Matrimandir. Eight kilometres of pipes have been ordered and it will be ten to twelve days before they arrive. An initial dent has been made in the construction with the arrival this week of two lorries of wood for the concrete forms on top of the scaffolding, and the carpenters have started planning the wood, while Piero is working on the designs for the forms.

Yesterday we heard in Pondicherry that an idea has recently come up to hold a youth conference in the amphitheatre on February 26th to 28th, the last day being Auroville's fifth birthday [28.2.73]. The question was whether we could have it ready by then. It came to us quite forcefully because several people involved in organising it talked to us about it, and it only seems to depend on our ability to bring the right people and sufficient materials together. It would, furthermore, mean continuous work, day and night. But several of us would be only too happy to step back into that flow of energy which we experienced in the construction of the pillars and which, almost suddenly, has stopped flowing since last Darshan and is only now coming back, little by little.

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1972, December 14th: *Excerpt from Ruud's "Matrimandir Diary":*

There will be lots of water flowing up and down and to and fro in the Matrimandir area. Firstly, arrangements have to be made for the rainwater disposal, and during this monsoon we have once again experienced what a lot of water that means. Next, the whole area will be full of canals and ponds with so-called decoration water, flowing gently down gradual slopes. Roger seems determined to get that whole big water-machine going, but last week some water experts in town calculated in a preliminary study that for the whole water system, 36 pumps will be needed. In four of the petals there will be water storage tanks into which the water has to be pumped back all the way from the far ends of the gardens. From there it will flow by itself into the gardens, and down again into the crater, etc. The rainwater, however, has to be disposed of somewhere outside the Matrimandir area, into a canyon for instance. For the amphitheatre this is urgent. We have started digging a trench for water disposal but do not yet know where the water has to go, nor do we know how wide the drainage pipes have to be. The best way to find this out, however, and to get people calculating around here, is to start digging and then wait and see what happens. Anyhow, last Sunday we started in two teams, one with a theodolite, the other with a dumpy level, to measure the depth of the various canyon systems in the surrounding area. The results were known this morning. The best canyon for our purpose seems to be the one which runs along the Nursery towards Kottakarai.¹⁰ Some 600 metres from the centre of Matrimandir area it reaches a depth of 10.5 metres. A bigger system lies in the direction of Alangkuppam; it too drops more than 10 metres over a stretch of 700 metres from the banyan tree. The first one might be the right disposal channel for the amphitheatre. The second one could handle a large part of the rainwater disposal for the whole Matrimandir system.

The data will go to Sri Chamanlal Gupta of ACES in Pondy, who takes care of the hydrological problems of Matrimandir.

Who builds Matrimandir? The Divine and the Mother, sure, but through whom? It's not easy to find any authoritative structure in this place. Who takes the major decisions, who determines new steps to be initiated? Another question: who should? Is it Roger, who is the chief architect of Auroville and who designed Matrimandir? Is it Piero, who is the executive engineer of Matrimandir, certainly the sphere but also the meditation rooms, the gardens, the amphitheatre? Is it Shyam Sunder, who quite often gets inspirations about Matrimandir and not seldom suggests starting something new to speed-up things? Or is it up to all of us who build the Matrimandir and have the

¹⁰ This is indeed how the rainwater evacuates by gravity from the Amphitheatre. Note that, as the bottom of the Amphitheatre is much lower than the surface of water in the future Lake, rainwater falling over the Amphitheatre will need to be pumped up into the Lake (together with the rainwater that gets pumped out from the underground tank below Matrimandir) so that they keep replenish the Lake.

responsibility to keep things going, to express ideas and initiatives, to be suitable instruments for the Force? Is not he who has the pushing power and a feeling for what should happen next as much responsible as anybody else? It is not clear and quite often there is some clash between formal and informal structures.

About two months ago we had a beautiful example of this. Not so much two persons, but two interpretations of Auroville were involved. It started with an intuition of Shyam Sunder to let the energy flow into three directions, that means to consider and work upon three projects of Matrimandir at the same time: the sphere, the meditation rooms and the gardens. At the time we completed the pillars we were not really ready for any of these projects, but some felt we should move anyway. Mother was asked about the three projects and She fully agreed. Piero wanted to keep all the money, energy and attention reserved for the sphere, even though neither money nor materials were available. Channelling money into the excavation for the meditation rooms, some felt, would divert it from the main structure. Moreover, because the sphere is a huge and touchy project we should take all precautions for safety and not cut open the soil around, thus removing the possibility of anchoring scaffoldings and structures to safe ground. Many technical reasons stood against a few spiritual and occult ones, among which the experience of some people that at Matrimandir the work has to start, even if the design and the money are not available. By the very act of opening the soil, digging a hole, one invites the forces to start working towards filling the holes with plans, designs, money.

So it began, one morning in November. One of the professional digging teams which had worked last year on the main crater came again to ask for work and was accepted. On a '9' day, at 6:30 a.m., with three or four Aurovilians in attendance, Seyril pitched the first shovel for the meditation room in the soil. At that exact moment, it started to rain, pour. Usually this is an auspicious sign, but it poured so hard and so long that, on the contrary, the work could not proceed. Moreover, Piero put a halt to it when he arrived later. The whole rest of the day was spent in discussions and arguments and meetings. There were the two types of authority clashing, two different interpretations of Auroville's growth, different frames of mind and, of course, different personalities. Anyhow, the excavation for the meditation rooms did not make it then. The clash did, however, get planning for the rooms moving.

Now, we have, in a milder and smoother form, the question of the amphitheatre. Vikas is working full time on the drawings. He shows them to Piero and Roger and then starts redesigning. The day before yesterday, there were 26 steps in the amphitheatre; yesterday there were only 20, reduced by Roger. The excavation is going on full swing: the original two teams of about twelve each are being helped by the same group who started unsuccessfully to excavate the meditation rooms. It is mainly Alain who keeps the teams going, like he did last year with 23 teams in the crater of Matrimandir. Some of the decisions regarding water are to be taken by Chamanlal in Pondy; computer-Paul from Pondy has worked out a scheme for the audio-visual set-up and spent the whole day yesterday with Vikas on it, finalising many points into details. But now the question is, – Who is going to execute it? To whom does the answer to this question rightfully belong?

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1972, December 16th: *Excerpt from Ruud's "Matrimandir Diary":*

The meetings between the people out on the site and the team of engineers from Madras always give things a new push and clear up confusion and uncertainty. Yesterday we had one of these get-togethers which take place once every three to four months. From the side of the Structural Engineering Research Centre (SERC), Madras, were Mr. Santhanam, who works full time on Matrimandir, and his part-time colleague, Mr. Natarajan. They sat together with Piero, Vikas, Alain and me.

First we discussed the propping towers. In building an unusual structure like a sphere, the problem of balance is prominent; not so much when the whole thing is ready but especially as long as the slabs on the upper levels have not brought cohesion to the total play of forces. This concerns particularly the lower half of the sphere. Even for the pillars we had the question of balance and support for a long time, and only when the first layer was completed was it calculated that the

suggested supports at the centre side, where the pillars would be leaning over for quite a distance, were not necessary.

For the ribs, however, we are surely going to need supports. The engineers suggested inserting steel plates in the topmost layers of the pillars, at the rear where they slope down, in order to be able to build steel towers on top of them to catch and support the ribs of the sphere, until such time as these would be held together by the central slab, or even until the total frame of the sphere is complete. These towers should consist of steel angles, measuring eight metres high at the outside, where the pillars slopes down most and the ribs rise most steeply, and four metres at the inside. We would be ready to put up these four towers now if we had the steel. To get that is a big problem, more so because the sizes proscribed by the engineers are not available in the market.

During the long meeting, Piero suddenly got the idea that the towers, which will each have to carry 150 tons of support for the ribs, could be built out of reinforced concrete instead of steel. He put it as a suggestion and a question, and the engineers started calculating right away. One problem is that those towers have finally to be removed so that the concrete would be mere waste; whereas the steel could be used again. However, four concrete towers would cost only Rs. 10,000; while in steel their cost will easily go up to Rs. 25,000-30,000. Still, if we could get the steel, we would prefer this solution. So we will continue the investigations. If no result is obtained, Piero will inform the SERC and they will give exact details as to how to build the towers in concrete.

Then the question of the petals and the meditation rooms was raised. Though the petals are not part of the contract with SERC and the meditation rooms had not even been thought of at that time, Mr. Santhanam appeared to be quite interested in the project. He explained that the Institute would only take it up if the structure is uncommon and special. If any engineer could do the calculations and designs, then his Institute would not accept it. As a private person he thought it would be acceptable, but of course it would have to be put before the Board. Piero stressed the need for economising, that is to say, of finding a sound solution to the many problems involved, because the structure has to be repeated twelve times: each inconvenience means twelve inconveniences. First, however, we have to decide between the three alternative solutions for which the SERC will make preliminary studies. If they agree to work out the scheme, they would not make the same mistake, they said, as with Matrimandir, on which they began work without any timeframe. It certainly would have advantages if the sphere and the petals were worked out by the same institute, enabling a better integration of the two projects. The problem of last month's aborted excavation touched precisely on this question of timing the two projects in such a way that cutting the earth open does not prevent work on the sphere. At that time, it was certainly not clear how the two projects would influence one another.

Piero presented the engineers with the latest ideas on the skin for Matrimandir. He showed the advantages and disadvantages of the cocoon, a vinyl product very much like rubber which can be sprayed onto any rigid material. For our climate here it does not seem to be ideal: it would just about melt where it touches the steel when exposed to a full day's sun. The skin, it is now clear, will be made out of concrete, probably in rinds with windows in between and provision for catching and conducting the rainwater to the basin at the bottom. It is for the engineers to work out the detail of attaching rings to ribs and calculating the additional supports needed somewhere in between, for the distance between the four pairs of ribs is too large to manage without extra beams.

In the afternoon Piero discussed with the engineers the procedure for the first slab. The results we have not yet heard, for the rest of us went to Madras for purchasing and to look into an earth rammer which will be needed for the gardens and the amphitheatre. We also went to learn something about tiles.

* * *

1972, December 18th: *Excerpt from Roger Toll's diary:*

Work progressing very slowly now. Some 20 villagers are excavating the amphitheatre, for which Vikas is making the drawings. Gérard is rebuilding the fallen shed for the arriving wood, Alain and his corporal, Ruud, are busy with many endeavours... very industrious and effective, seeing people, searching for steel, drainage pipes and whatnot for the amphitheatre. Michael [Tait] is doing things for

the workshop, training some people in Vishwanath's office [at the Ashram], chasing after steel. I am bouncing about from one job to another: printing photos, surveying for the drainage system, helping Gérard, some garden work. Generally, I am feeling a little aimless as persistence is not my best quality.

Udar came to Centre last night and talked about his U.S. trip. He is heading back there shortly. Everyone was struck by his honesty, forthrightness. Remarkable, not the usual Ashram way. I will help him with names and contacts. America has not yet really opened to Sri Aurobindo. Maybe he can help do that.

*

Excerpt from Ruud's "Matrimandir Diary":

The whole Matrimandir area, consisting of the petals around the sphere, the artificial hills, in concentric waves all over the area and the amphitheatre will be covered with a layer of concrete overlaid with tiles. For the amphitheatre, and that is becoming urgent, we need no less than two hundred thousand tiles. They will be the red colour of the earth of Matrimandir. Together with a friend in Paris, Roger is making designs for a mosaic of tiles in different shades of red.¹¹ Where will all these tiles come from? We visited a factory in Madras where they manufacture red earthen tiles. They are beautiful and seem to have the right colour, but the problem with baked tiles is that a fungus forms on them within a year or two and they slowly become black and dirty. So we would have to apply some protective layer or invent a solution. Most of the tiles around here come from Kerala and Mangalore. A representative of the factories has been invited to Auroville with samples of the tiles.

While looking for pipes for the amphitheatre, we visited Coco Gardens, the Ashram Cement workshop. Here they produce, among other things, cement tiles. With red oxide they manage to get an approximation of earth colour. At first glance it seems that cement tiles would be more appropriate, since they are smooth and impenetrable. The manager suggested to us that we could make experiments in their workshop with mixtures of Auroville earth, oxides, cement and marble chips. If we succeed we could produce the tiles ourselves, which would of course be ideal. They have an electric pressing machine but, due to the shortage of power in Pondy, they are unable to use it. If we have enough power here, they said we could have the machine.

It looks like the right thing for us to produce the tiles ourselves. Many of the workshops in the Ashram were started because of the construction of Golconde, that beautiful and modern guest house which after more than thirty years still looks like new and perfect in detail. We heard that Mother herself built it, with the Ashramites, and that She gave attention to each and every part of it. Many of the materials were produced in workshops set up for the purpose. Some of these have grown up into real factories. The same thing could, and maybe should, happen in Auroville. Matrimandir is the soul of Auroville so it would be only logical and appropriate for the body of Auroville to grow in close relation to the soul.

We will have an industrial sector in Auroville and it might well be that some of the industries will be an outgrowth of Matrimandir's construction needs. We should therefore start producing tiles right away, as well as prepare a unit for pre-casting concrete, since it seems now that we will need quite a lot of it. An experiment is being made on stainless steel discs for Matrimandir; if it succeeds we could start a stainless steel workshop to produce the thousands of discs the Matrimandir will need and, as a sideline, many other stainless steel items which would be useful in Auroville. In this way, Auroville would grow as an organic whole, a body around a soul; rather than projecting factories out of the blue, without any link to the main aim and central project of Auroville.

In this way, the Ashram and its construction of Golconde may be our example. We have to be careful, however, not to take Golconde too much as our example. We had an interesting experience in this regard. It was widely rumoured that Mother had said Matrimandir should be built in the same way as Golconde, – by the people themselves, perfect into details, producing many things on the spot, etc. So three or four months ago we invited Udar to the Study Circle in the Workers' Camp. Udar was involved in the construction of Golconde right from the beginning and started several of the workshops

¹¹ This friend is most probably Charles Gianferrari.

with his own hands. He gave us an interesting account of the way Golconde was built. The next morning he went to see Mother and he told her about his talk at Matrimandir. He asked her whether she had really said something about the parallel between Golconde and Matrimandir. Mother assured him that she had never said anything like that, and that it was not true.

Chapter III, the pillars, commenced on February 21, 1972. Mother's birthday, with the symbolic first casting of concrete, as related above. Vikas wrote a poem for the occasion, which was published in the April issue of Mother India:

Ah, child

Ah, child, did you glide
Past the big tree, rustling?
Did each leaf dance with joy there
For Her, for Her?
Ah, was the light too intense, child?
Did the very earth glow
Of that silent timeless crater?
Saw you not your sisters
Laying garlands in the dusk?
Saw you not your brothers
In their night-vigil of love?
Ah, child, trance-lost in the moonlight,
Pleading with the flowers
For the cause of all this magic,
Asking of the plants the reason why,
Ah, child did the spirits whisper
In the fragrance of the roses?
Hummed the breeze amid the branches
The secret of its motion?
Heard you then the fairies
And a million subtle players
In the orchestra of nature
Making music in their gladness?
Knew, you then the answer,
Wept you then with rapture
At discovery sublime?
Ah, child, did they tell you
Of the birthday of the Mother?
Ah, child, were you with Her children
In the twilight of the morning?
Placed you not a stone then
As the sun played in the heavens
Its symphony of gold?
Saw you not the fire
In its mystical pulsations?
Saw you not the concrete
Of the first divine foundations?
Shared you not the moment
As the light spoke from the Heavens,
As the light embraced the Earth,
On the birth day of the Mother
For us, for us?

* * *

In November 1972, the four pillars had just been completed up to the level necessary to support the ground-floor slab. But we could not proceed further since some studies had to be finalised before starting. At that time, everybody had in mind to complete Matrimandir + Meditation rooms and gardens by the end of 1977.

The layout of the gardens were finalised and we had decided to start. Ruud and myself had carefully outlined and marked the contours of the gardens. Mother had given: 24th November at 6.15 a.m. for the date marking the beginning of the work: more than hundred of us, led by Shyam Sunder, walked on the contour, as far as the land was acquired.

The design was very simple: the whole oval "will be covered with a layer of concrete overlaid with tiles"¹² (entry on 18.12.1972 in Ruud's diary). In other words, the shape will be like the rosewood Matrimandir model. Detailed drawings had been prepared by "Papa Richardet". Under Piero's guidance I had built an experimental canal "for determining the best method of making the decorative water channels and monsoons drain" (1.11.1972) and to determine the minimum slope also. With Ruud I had gone to Madras to some factory which could manufacture these tiles (18.12.1972). We had also studied with Coco Garden how we could manufacture them ourselves.

"Twenty-five new workers had been invited to come the next day to continue the road-clearing and then start the levelling work" (3.12.1972). But we just discovered that a hired bulldozer could do the same work for 1/20th of the cost. Since we were expecting our own small bulldozer at the end of this month, it was decided to wait a little for the gardens.

But I remember, which is not in Ruud's diary, that since we became idle, Ruud and myself, one afternoon, went to see Shyam Sunder in his house with Richardet's drawing and asked him if we could not start immediately that Unity Garden, without waiting for the bulldozer, which may also be delayed. Shyam Sunder looked at the map and suddenly put his index on the urn: it was the invitation to start the amphitheatre, which we did and were so much involved that there was no longer time to think of the gardens.

Later on, I remember to have met some Madras guy who was proposing some binding, with a tar-like but biological material, which would be mixed with the Auroville red soil and would replace the layer of concrete to be overlaid with tiles which would disappear. The process had been approved by Roger: it was much less costly, easier for maintenance (no risk of fungus) and the look was quite similar to our red earth.

And then, what about the 12th/13th gardens? They were located inside predefined geographical areas. To have Japanese gardens:

- Sand could be brought (and removed or displaced one year later),
- Stones could be brought and removed and displaced,
- Trees and bamboos idem. No permanent trees: "nothing which can distract from far the view of the Matrimandir with its golden discs" (my memory again). Only trees which would arrive in pots/beds and would leave later,
- Grass and lawn? Maybe they could be brought on square patches (and removed): less water would be needed.
- Flowers? They were inside beds of pottery/wooden beds, which were assembled like puzzles. They would change every quarter/year "according to the consciousness of Aurovilians" (these words from Roger are engraved into my memory). These flowers beds (in pottery or wood or plastic or...) would not be laid only on the ground but could be laid on a temporary scaffolding in wood.

Interesting, is it not? I am sure, although we do not have presently any record, that the Mother had been informed about these plans and had given her approval. Roger remembers quite well the concrete overlaid with tiles, thinks that he had designed two gardens and may be has shown them to

¹² As explained earlier, originally, whatever was in rosewood in the 1971 model of the Matrimandir Island was to concreted and then tiled with the same tiles or stones as the twelve large and small "petals".

the Mother (I was not aware myself). So many people have told to Roger that we would have to cross an oven before reaching the Matrimandir structure that Roger does not dare to talk again about it?

In this context, the last statement by the Mother on 12.2.1973 is gaining some more strength:

"February 12, 1973, commenting on a letter from Narad about the planting of trees around Matrimandir, and his feelings of emptiness and request for guidance to find a new way, Mother tells Shyam Sunder that the execution of the Matrimandir Gardens has already been told in detail to Roger, and that is what is to be done."

Alain

In 1972, Ruud and Alain (two Aurovilians) were given the responsibility to build the amphitheatre and Vikas (another Aurovilian) had the responsibility of the architecture (under Roger's supervision) and of the design and detailed drawings. Together with Ruud and Alain, they thought of what could be the activities to be performed in this amphitheatre. The basic idea was that the amphitheatre would have for Auroville the role that the playground has for the Ashram, in other words a place for lecture (the Mother gave biweekly talks), a place for collective meditation (which could be triggered off by music or readings – these were taking place twice a week also), a place for movies (every Saturday evening, there were films which exclude detrimental exposure such as: violence, sex, promotion of bad characters...), theatre. We did not imagine sport activities nor march past (which take place in the playground).

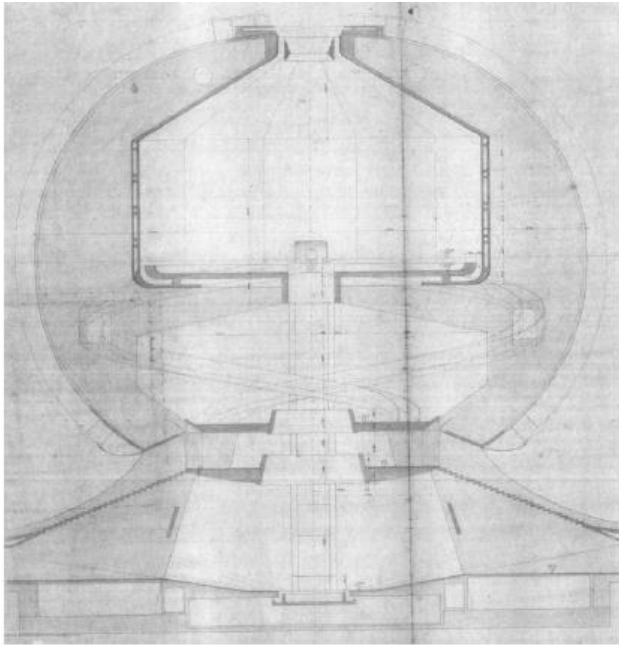
Vikas, on behalf of the three of us, wrote to the Mother to express our understanding of the future activities to be performed in the amphitheatre and asked for her comments since the drawings had to be prepared. The full letter was read by Shyamsunder to the Mother who said "C'est bien". This letter and the Mother's answer are quoted in a Matrimandir diary by Ruud (which is unpublished).

That is why, on the East side, Vikas had provided two green rooms, one for men, one for women (these are now occupied by the air-cooling system of the Inner Room). On the West side, there was provision for a cinema room (with two windows inside the last step of the amphitheatre to provide for camera projection) and on the stage, there were two holes so that two big poles could be planted and hold the screen for movies.

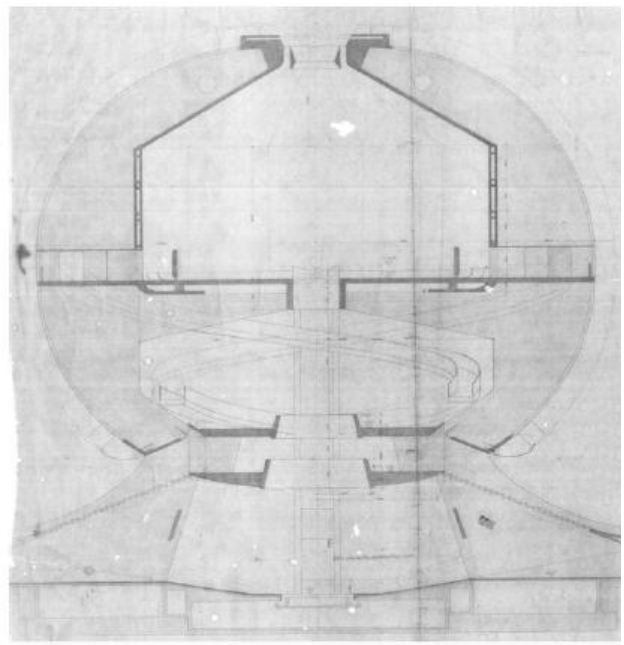
From this description, it is quite clear that the amphitheatre is meant to be a living centre. All these activities are supposed to be performed in the evenings, at a time when the Matrimandir will be closed and would not disturb the main use of the inner room.

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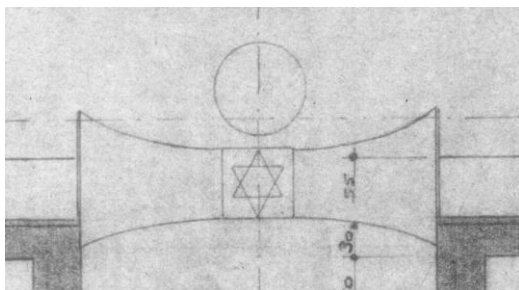
1972, December 20th: Set of two updated vertical sections drafted by Gabriel Richardet after major changes had been agreed to on 20th September 1972:



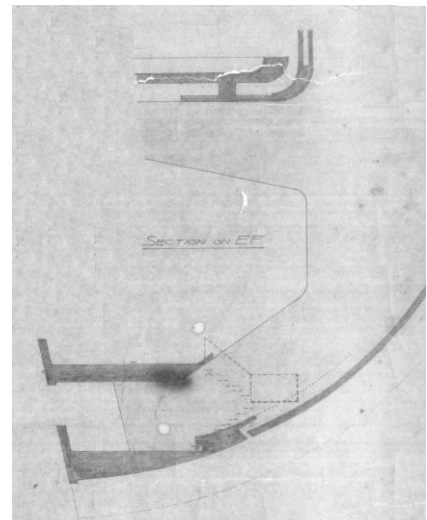
Section AB



Section CD



Sri Aurobindo and Mother's symbols are combined in a 3D object above which the globe is floating



Editor's Note: The Chamber is as it will be completed – except for:

- The object of concentration (which is as shown above).
- The 12 columns are not there.
- The central holes in the Chamber's ceiling & floor are much larger than they are now.
- The central holes in the floor slabs at levels 1 & 2 are wide open as the staircases linking these two levels is as shown in the drawing on the right.

* * *

1972, December: Excerpt from a report published in the Gazette Aurovilienne:

Gaz, Vol. II, 1973, No. 3, p. 35
French and English

At present (end of December), the work is proceeding in four fields:

- a) Preparation for the construction of the sphere.
- b) Preliminary studies of the petals and meditation rooms.
- c) Planning of the gardens and water canals.

d) Designing and excavation of the amphitheatre around the Urn.

Work on the amphitheatre is progressing rapidly. The designs are being completed, excavations have started and the materials have been ordered. The circular stage at the base of the Urn will be concreted in early 1973.

...

The Structural Engineering Research Centre [SERC] in Madras is studying the various possibilities for the construction of the twelve petals. Each petal will be seventeen metres high and contain a meditation chamber.

Preparations are underway for the construction of the central sphere. First the four eight metres-high concrete towers will be constructed to serve as temporary supports between the pillars and the ribs of the sphere. Second, a total eight kilometres of steel pipes will be erected into a complex scaffolding, 10 metres high, which will support the full weight of the Sphere's frames now being shaped by carpenters will be put in position and then estimated 40 hours of concreting will follow.

Meanwhile, experiments are being carried out on materials to be used for the surface discs of the sphere.

* * *

1972, December 22nd: Mother's answer to a letter from Mary Helen,¹³ dated Nov. 14th:

facsimile at AV Archives
English

Divine Mother,

In the Matrimandir Gardens nursery I am now working on a small area as an experiment in Japanese landscaping using mainly ferns, begonias and orchids. For the future gardens of Auroville will a careful study of Japanese garden design be useful?

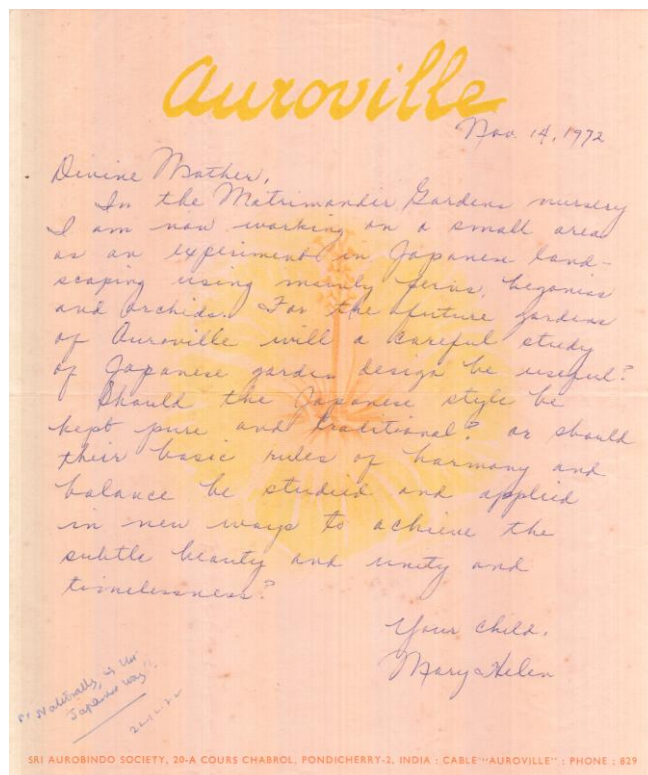
Should the Japanese style be kept pure and traditional? Or should their basic rules of harmony and balance be studied and applied in new ways to achieve the subtle beauty and unity and timelessness?

Your child

Mary Helen

Shyam Sunder wrote Mother's answer:

Naturally in the Japanese way.



* * *

1972, December 23rd: Excerpt from Ruud's "Matrimandir Diary":

We are still in the days of looking forward to the things that are going to take place during 1973: the preparations for the skin are going on; the calculations for the meditation rooms and the petals too. We are about half-way through the excavation of the amphitheatre, where about sixty villagers in four teams are now working and the amount of materials needed is being calculated. The gardens are awaiting the bulldozer and a hydraulic engineer in the Ashram by the name of Günther is working on the water system for Matrimandir area. It is interesting to observe how, since the pillars are ready,

¹³ Mary Helen was Chali's mother and Narad's second wife.

preparations have started on four fronts at the same time; it may happen that, when the materials arrive, we will find ourselves suddenly working simultaneously on all the projects.

[...]

For the next issue our team was requested to prepare the text. We wrote the following summary of our present situation which clearly shows how we are in between a past and a future chapter, but also reflects the push we are experiencing now, though it only manifests in preparatory work.

"Matrimandir, December 1972

"Concreting of the four pillars was completed on November 3, 1972. The work then branched out into four fields, preparation of the sphere, preliminary studies of the petals and meditation rooms, plans and calculations for the gardens and water canals, and design and excavation of the amphitheatre, projected around the Urn.

"Work on the amphitheatre is progressing quickly. About sixty villagers are excavating, the designs are being completed and materials ordered. The circular stage at the base of the urn will be concreted early in 1973. An underground control room will house basic audio-visual equipment, while a movable van with more sophisticated equipment is projected to be used in the amphitheatre as well as in other Auroville locations and surrounding Tamil villages.

"Development of the gardens began at dawn on November 24th, Darshan day, with a work-meditation, the clearing of the future ring road around the Matrimandir area. Levelling of the area will begin with the arrival soon of a bulldozer, recently donated from America. Engineers are studying the water system pertaining to the disposal of rain water and the decorative water canals.

"Present plans call for a meditation chamber within each of the twelve petals surrounding the Matrimandir. At present the Structural Engineering Research Centre in Madras, engineers of the sphere as well, are studying various construction possibilities for the 17-metre high petals, prior to any excavation work.

"Preparation for the next stage in the building of the sphere itself consists of three main areas. First, work is beginning on four 8-metre-high concrete towers to serve as temporary supports between the pillars and the ribs of the sphere. Second, a total of eight kilometres of steel pipes, expected soon, will be transformed into the complex scaffolding, ten metres high, which must support the full weight of the sphere's first layer. Upon completion, the third area, the wooden forms now being shaped by the carpenters, will be put into position and an estimated forty-hour concreting will follow. Meanwhile, experiments on the surface discs are being done in wood, polyester and stainless steel. During the first half of 1973 synchronous work in all four areas is expected."

So far the report. In reality, the main constructive work that is now being done is the excavation of the amphitheatre. The four teams of villagers work on contract basis. Alain is continuously busy calculating amounts of earth removed, and that is not easy, for the shape of the area does not fit into any existing formula and the segments cut out by the groups are almost impossible to calculate precisely. So he called in the help of Paul, our computer-brain from Pondicherry. Paul made several pages of calculations and handed over to Alain the following formula:

$$= \frac{1}{4} \sin^2 \theta - \frac{Dy \cos \theta}{y} \sqrt{R_2^2 - Dy^2 \sin^2 \theta} + \frac{R_2^2 - Dy^2}{2Dy} \log_e (Dy \cos \theta + \sqrt{R_2^2 - Dy^2 \sin^2 \theta}) + \frac{1}{2} (R_2^2 - R_1^2) \frac{1}{1}$$

* * *

1972, Dec. 26th: *Excerpt from Shyam Sunder's notes published in his "Down Memory Lane":*

DML p. 256

English

Roger Toll has sent a photo of the four pillars of Matrimandir.

Mother took it and asked, "Alors?"

* * *

1972, December 28th: *Letter from Piero to Mother:*

Typed and signed

English. Scan available

Douce Mère,

About at the end of October, during my meditation came before my closed eyes one white figure full of power in one splendid light. With all my being I was contemplating.

Something like a fresh wind was filling of, Joy all the places in me and in the world around; the wind was murmuring something like: Confidence and Sincerity.

These light is remaining in my heart and I hope it is a good light.

From this time I have no doubt that You will resolve all the present difficulties for the construction of Matrimandir.

There are two points about which I like to speak to You:

- *We should have as soon as possible the needed drawing from the Madras engineer and from Roger, especially for the detail of the external sphere.*
- *The second point is about my health, for which I ask Your protection.*

The conclusion of my experience of October was a wonderful sense of freedom and health, like my old amoeba was gone. But after a week everything started again. It is from June I am taking different treatment. Somebody told me to go to Vellore to the American Hospital.

Should I do that?

Your child

*

Letter from Piero to Shyam Sunder:

Typed and signed

English

Dear Shyam Sunder,

A good news: I have received from my parents a small modern electronic calculator, working terrifying fast: it will help me a lot to make the execution drawings of Matrimandir.

Saturday evening is fixed a concreting down in the Matrimandir, to prepare a "floor" for the scaffolding.

Enclosed I send you a letter for the Mother.

Truth

* * *

1972, Dec. 29th: *Excerpt from Shyam Sunder's notes published in his "Down Memory Lane":*

DML p. 257

English

Piero's letter to Mother: He mentions two points about the Matrimandir construction:

- i) *not getting drawings from Madras engineers [SERC] and Roger,*
- ii) *his ill-health.*

Mother gave a blessing packet with Sri Aurobindo's picture.

Regarding drawings Shyam Sunder said he is no more hurt as before by these delays although the work suffers.

* * *

1972, December 30th: *Excerpt from Ruud's "Matrimandir Diary":*

A great silence fell over Matrimandir at 9:15 p.m.

Now, at 9.30 a French television crew¹⁴, here on a three week tour, interviewing and filming in Auroville, is driving into shoot a concreting, set up for the occasion on the bottom of Matrimandir. They wanted a show, something spectacular; we wanted it too, in a way. But things don't seem to work that way here. At least the concrete mixer, borrowed because our own broke down some three months ago, didn't work. Somebody tightened a bolt, the thing hissed, puffed and smoked and... fell silent. "Some insincerity in the air?" somebody remarked; for at Matrimandir things are never just physical. Maybe the whole set-up – a concreting to be staged – is not sincere. "Maybe Matrimandir is not a television studio," said someone else. It promised to be a beautiful show: many huge spotlights space all over the crater, the wheelbarrows full of cement descending through a hole in the platform at the end of the west pillar, down to minus ten metres, and the group there spreading the cement on the rough floor between the feet of the pillars. The work isn't done just for show, of course, for we do need a firm platform all over the bottom of the crater to give support to the ten-metre-high scaffolding which will carry the first layer of the sphere. The presence of the French television crew with all their equipment was only the occasion to do it today. It was convenient for them and all right with us. Moreover, for two months we haven't had any nice big event at Matrimandir, bringing people from all over Auroville together to work on the Soul of Auroville. After their weekly film show, the Ashramites will come. They announced they would come with a full busload. But something really seems to be broken in the cement mixer.

Ten o'clock. The jeep has come down into the pit on the mixer level, with the welding set. The welding has just started. It's not the first time we have such trouble at Matrimandir. Our own mixer, purchased only last February, broke down several times, preferably during concretings. Always, however, it could be repaired on the spot. Until, that is, October, when some essential parts were worn down and it did not work anymore. New parts had to come all the way from Calcutta and were ordered right away but have not come yet. Everybody is hanging around, wondering about the 'why' of the trouble. The television crew seems to be having trouble regularly, with each new day, but they are working hard and in a fine spirit, so far as we experience them here. The two leaders spent one whole evening with us last week, to get the feel of the place. Last Sunday, the day before Christmas, they came out to film and, what had never happened before happened then: two types of work were going on at the same time. We concreted the place where we store the pebbles and we carried sand in a long chain, out of the crater where it had settled during the monsoon. It was a beautiful afternoon, the sun was bright again after many cloudy weeks, many Ashramites had come and the atmosphere was full of light and happiness. Two or three days ago they came again for more interviews and now they are here to see Auroville in action at Matrimandir. The action, however, looks more like a reaction.

The work is spreading out more and more. Until now all the activities were concentrated in the crater. Nobody ever came in the office; there was no workshop, nothing else. In the last months more than one focus of work has developed. Much energy is going into the Amphitheatre. We had thought of having the concreting there instead of in the crater. But the drainage under the stage, which was supposed to take two days to excavate, is going to take another few days, since we hit upon a layer of gravel and rock which has to be broken by much force, heavy hammers and long breaking irons. It doesn't look like we are going to make it before the end of February. But we haven't heard any more about the youth conference in any case.

Yesterday at exactly 3:30 p.m. the first concrete for the amphitheatre was poured. Not in the place itself, but in a newly developed workshop for precast concrete. To cover the drainage we need 80 big and 27 small slabs. Looking for a place to produce them, we discovered the lotus-pond right under the Banyan tree.¹⁵ The centre is flat and can be filled with water for curing, there are two steps around it of 1.50 m. width on which the slabs can be prepared.

¹⁴ This is the crew of Jean-Pierre Elkabash.

¹⁵ Ruud probably means the shallow pond that had been built for the Inauguration Ceremony on 28.2.68.



Shallow pond next to the Banyan Tree

Another centre of increasing activity is the workshop which hardly existed before and is now developing since Michel took it up, into a real place where things can be made and repaired. Small still, but with a promise of fast development. In the crater itself, we have been preparing the ground for tonight's concreting, cleaning out the damage done by the monsoon and doing up the staircases which carved into the earthen side walls, had crumbled down during the heavy rains. They will be reinforced with concrete now.

At 10:30 the Ashram bus came, heavily loaded. About 50 people got out, mostly young men. Because the mixer was still not working, they set to work on two other projects: putting pebbles back into the place we concreted last Sunday, and moving earth out of the crater from the mixer level. The welding on the mixer didn't work because the broken part is of cast iron and can't be welded. It was discovered, however, that even with the broken part the machine could work. "Even if it's for half an hour," said Roger, thinking of the millions of French people hungry for news of Auroville, good news! At 10:40 we tried, it worked, the concreting started and the shooting too. The real film, however, took place before 10:40.

*

Excerpt from Roger Toll's diary:

Concreting tonight on the four slabs at the base of each pillar. Has to be done for the scaffolding, but also for it to look good for the French TV crew here filming a one-hour documentary. Turned into bad experience. The film crew has a bad vibe, very speedy. Yet Mother says it is time we show the world what we are doing. At concreting, not enough people showed up, and some were behaving badly like the French/Italian jet set group visiting here. Then too many people, all frantic, unlike the calm of our usual Aurovilian concretings. Really weird mix, and even humorously ludicrous at times. I left early as it was too dangerous, too strange, like some New Year's Eve party.

*

Letter from Vikas – and Mother's answer:

Divine Mother,

We are preparing design for the surroundings of Matrimandir. Under the guidance of Roger, we have begun to make plans for the area in which the inaugural urn is situated, with the proposal to transform it into an amphitheatre capable of seating 3,000 people for a performance and up to 5,000 for other events such as assemblies and collective meditations. The intention is to enhance the Urn by a simple and beautiful setting of mosaics and steps, and to create a place which can be used for the presentation of cultural events of a suitable nature.

In order to anticipate the future uses, we wish to make it possible to install high-quality electronic equipment for the creation of sound and light environments within which drama, dance, film music, recitals and experiments with new cultural forms could be presented. Some of the installations, for example those to be used for regular events and for general illumination of the area, will be permanent. Others will belong to a mobile audio-visual van which will install the necessary equipment on particular occasions, and be capable of using it elsewhere, such as in the villages or for educational purposes.

This last proposal provides the means for realising a vision of the future environment, in which sound and light created and defined the space as much as the building themselves.

Mother, we wish to know if we are proceeding along the right lines and in accordance with your vision of Auroville, particularly with the scheme for the amphitheatre and its use.

Vikas

[Shyam Sunder reads the entire letter to Mother; She replies:]

C'est bien.

Editor's Notes:

This explains why, on the East side, Vikas had provided two green rooms, one for men, one for women (these were later occupied by the air-cooling system of the Inner Room and, more recently by green rooms). On the West side, there was provision for a cinema room (with two windows inside the last step of the amphitheatre to provide for camera projection) and on the stage, there were two holes so that two big poles could be planted and hold the screen for movies.

* * *

1973, January

1973, January 1st: *Excerpt from a letter from Huta – and Mother's answer:*

Typed & signed letter kept @ AV Archives. SA, pp. 153-154
English

It is really sad that the work of Matrimandir is going on very slowly because there is no money and harmony.

I feel that building and breaking things cannot lead to the goal. It is a sheer waste of time, energy and money, and moreover it is a waste of your Consciousness and Force.

It was decided that the gardens around the Matrimandir should be grown along with the construction of the Matrimandir so that everything can take shape together and the whole thing can be done before your Centenary which is not very far.

So far I have never said anything about having a secret chamber for you in the Shrine. Do you remember, Mother, several times you expressed your feeling about having the carved marble seats with satin and velvet cushions so that you can sit there? I feel that you must have your secret chamber in the Shrine. The Lord also will come – where will he sit?

This I am expressing from the occult and the spiritual point of view because the Supreme Truth will manifest there. The whole thing can be mysterious and occult. Mere outer appearance or a piece of art and architecture has no meaning and value. What has to be done must be done exactly according to the Lord's "Dream".

Mother, I have no right to suggest all this but since you had revealed so many things about the Matrimandir, I can dare to write knowing that you will understand me.

Mother, I am neither an Ashramite nor an Aurovilian but a child and a lover of the Divine Beauty, Divine Love, Divine Peace and the Supreme Truth.

I am here because of you, your work and your Love.

[Mother's handwritten answer:]

My love is always with you
for ever

*

Excerpt from Ruud's "Matrimandir Diary":

The new year is only two hours old and has started at Matrimandir, as is but fitting, with a concreting now in progress. Very different from yesterday's concreting, which had been planned and organised, this one was conceived only at 10:30 p.m. when two busloads of Ashramites arrived to celebrate the New Year. In the Worker's Camp several people had gone to bed but were mobilised again. Arjuna, our indispensable mason, was called from his village. The number of workers was growing and growing: at midnight all one hundred and twenty-of us sat down on the minus-three metres level. Sunil's music was played. Since Mother's comment some months ago, in answer to a letter, "I don't like so much going on in the excavation", we haven't had any music at Matrimandir. Today the idea came up half an hour before midnight and it was executed without much reflection. After the meditation half the Ashram group left for Pondy and those who remained joined in the concreting on the bottom, between the south and west pillars.

The beautiful message for 1973 was already put up in the office: "When you are conscious of the whole world at the same time, then you can become conscious of the Divine."

* * *

1973, January 2nd: *Excerpt from Shyam Sunder's notes published in his "Down Memory Lane":*

DML, p. 261
English

Narad can write an article on the Matrimandir Nursery for the Lalbagh journal, but he should not quote Mother unless it is in writing.¹⁶

* * *

1973, January 3rd: *Excerpt from Shyam Sunder's notes published in his "Down Memory Lane":*

DML, p. 262
English

Roger proposes a collective meditation for the French TV. It can be done on 6.1.73 at sunset with the first concreting at the Matrimandir area Amphitheatre.

Approved.

It is also proposed to put a fresh plate of Mother's writing 28.2.68 in place of the destroyed one in the urn.

Mother said it could be done on 28.2.73.

* * *

1973, January 8th: *Letter from Piero to Satprem:*

Typed, unsigned
French, translated by G.G.

Dear Satprem

During the month of August 1970, I had the opportunity to read three of four conversations between you and the Mother on the topic of Matrimandir. I remember very well with what strength and precision the Matrimandir had taken shape in the Mother's words at that time.

As you may know, the construction of the foundations and of the Pillars is now complete and we are preparing to continue with the same enthusiasm and the same steadiness. The work will become more difficult than it is presently, I hope that Mother will help us as in the past.

I believe that reading these conversations would be of great help to all those who take part in Matrimandir's construction.

Would it be possible to publish these conversations?

And, for now, would you allow me to read them again in their original form, as all the details would enlighten me and would guide me towards an execution that would correspond to Mother's vision?

I take opportunity of this letter to thank you for your help last year at the start of the work and to invite you to visit Matrimandir in its present state. I would be very happy to guide you in the site.

In the name of Truth.

* * *

1973, January 9th: *Letter from Satprem to Piero:*¹⁷

French

Piero,

As far as I remember these conversations with Mother were communicated personally to Roger with Mother's special permission. But these conversations were not destined to be published and I don't think they are. If Roger wishes to show them personally to some of the workers, it is his responsibility. Regarding the text that has been shared, what was given was all that may be given – the remaining belongs to Mother's personal papers.

I shall definitely come and see one day the work at Matrimandir, but I can't say when.

All my fraternal wishes are with those who work at the service of Truth.¹⁸

¹⁶ Mother told repeatedly disciples not to quote what She says without first obtaining Her confirmation.

¹⁷ Piero wanted to know what Mother had exactly told Satprem because the Inner Chamber prior to the changes which were suggested by him and approved by Roger and SERC's scientists on 20.9.70 was very different from the Chamber designed by Udar according to Mother's "vision". What did Mother say about Her vision?

Excerpt from Ruud's "Matrimandir Diary":

The French television crew wanted to shoot a collective meditation. That is a delicate business, for there is no truth in a meditation arranged for a purpose other than meditation. If there happened to be a collective meditation anyhow, then there would have been no problem. But the request originated the idea to start the first concreting at the amphitheatre, which was due one of these days, with a collective meditation. Though artificially arranged, it would be true too. It did not sound satisfactory to many, especially after we had a cultural programme in Aspiration for the television, which was a failure. Alain, the protagonist in most of these plays, did not want to carry all the blame for an eventual failure or lack of truth, so he wrote to Mother:

"Mère, Roger voudrait permettre à la télévision française de filmer une méditation collective. Ceci peut être l'occasion de célébrer le premier coulage de béton qui aura lieu dans l'amphithéâtre le samedi, 5 Janvier au coucher du soleil.

"Nous envisageons alors de marquer cet événement par la pose d'une nouvelle plaque datée 28.2.1968 pour remplacer celle qui a été détériorée. Puis, une méditation collective précédera le travail. Qu'est-ce que tu en pense?"

Alain"

After Shyam Sunder read the letter, Mother replied, "Yes". Interesting, by the way, that to Vikas' letter in English She replied in French, and to Alain's French in English. Shyam Sunder then told Mother that he was getting tired of the television shows held in Auroville, for several reasons and he asked Mother what to think of it. Mother said, "Not for the Ashram".

Saturday night at 5:30 p.m. we had to try to get a few handfuls of people together. For the Ashram no transport was provided so nobody came; from Aspiration a few came by. Govind, who comes out daily from Pondy with a group of tourists and visitors to show them around Auroville, was prepared to stay on with his group. Some of the workers made overtime, free, for Mother. So it didn't look too bad. Mother's tape was played in which she speaks about the descent of the Supramental in 1956, extending an invitation to the Great Adventure. The sun set like a brilliant Matrimandir. The French TV got what they wanted.

But the concreting was another matter. It lacked that Matrimandir atmosphere, that joy. There was something unnatural about it, something that could not or should not be. Four people fell down or hurt themselves, a sure sign of a lack of general concentration. We were supposed to cover the bottom of the water tank under the stage with 10cms. Of concrete, and then do half of the water channel. Some 30 metres long around the stage, the planks for the concrete forms had been put into position that day. But we could not think of starting it, we even had trouble to get the tank ready. Now, what is that? Has Matrimandir so much its own rhythm, its own truth, that any interference in its process immediately avenges itself? We decided to stop early and go on the next day at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday the 7th. This was one of those real and true concretings in which everything goes as it should, everybody finds his place and it is not we who do the work but rather the work being done through us. Maybe that's it: when we want to be doers, it fails; when we are just instruments, it works: IT works through us.

Sunday afternoon we could not finish either, though we skipped Shyam Sunder's study circle at 5:00. The speaker was on the cement mixer and didn't think of stopping. At sunset the Ashram bus left and were just our own people, not enough to continue. Monday morning we finally completed the first half of the channel, with our Tamil workers. The bottom of the channel consists of a layer of ten centis concrete with a 20 cm. high concrete beam at each side on which the rest of the walls will be built in brick. "Why not build the whole wall out of brick?" many assed. Vikas' reply: "The water flows mostly through the lower half of the channel, where the concrete beams are. Bricks would not stand the flow of the water for too long: within 2,000 years they will have dissolved."

¹⁸ It is late August or early September 1974, that Paolo will share his copy with Piero, who in turn will share it with the Matrimandir team. As we will see, this will launch a major controversy.

A visiting engineer, by the way, expressed his regret that we had built the pillars of Matrimandir out of concrete. Within a hundred years it will pulverise, he prophesied. Which may give us, then, a nice opportunity to try something better, more advanced and less old-fashioned than concrete; something like spiritual power rather than this as-yet dumb matter.

* * *

1973, January 14th: *Excerpt from Ruud's "Matrimandir Diary":*

The day before yesterday he [Vikas] wrote this letter:

"Divine Mother,

The work at the amphitheatre started with a concreting at which seven people had accidents, and is proceeding with great speed. It is tremendous pressure. We ask for your Blessings and Protection, that the work may be both an aspiration for and a manifestation of the right.

Today Mother sent Her blessings in reply.

The walls of the water tank under the amphitheatre stage were concreted on Thursday night. Today we wanted to do the second half of the circular canal which carries drainage water into the tank, but during our preparation of the wood frames yesterday, we discovered that the circle of the excavation for the stage was not drawn perfectly and so we had to stop the work. This morning, though it is the first day of Pongal and a holiday, one of our four teams of diggers was prepared to come and correct the mistake.

In the meantime, four masons have started to erect brick walls on the concrete beams we cast last week along-side the first half of the channel. The outside circular wall is the edge of the stage, the first piece of exposed wall in the amphitheatre, and now the need for ultimate precision comes in. The whole day we are measuring, taking levels, checking and checking again and drawing big circles. Because the middle point of each circle of the amphitheatre is different and does not coincide with the urn, we are developing ways to draw circles over the top of the urn. To get precision behind the base of the urn is difficult, and it was already suggested to take out the urn and the mount on which it sits until we have finished the stage and all the steps and then put it back into place. But this does not seem the right thing to do.

* * *

1973, January 19th: *Huta meets Mother.*

MMTL, p. 32; SA, p. 154

English

When Huta asked her again whether Matrimandir would be built according to her vision, her answer is (as always):

Yes

* * *

1973, January 21st: *Excerpt from Roger Toll's diary:*

Udar comes to Centre for an evening visit with a Time magazine senior editor and his son, Kevin. We have a good talk together about Auroville.¹⁹

* * *

1973, January 22nd: *Excerpt from Shyam Sunder's notes published in his "Down Memory Lane":*

DML, p. 267-68

English

The Madras engineers [SERC] working upon the architectural design of Matrimandir say: "What is the assurance that there will be no further change?"

¹⁹ A page-long story in Time on the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, the Ashram and Auroville, is published in Time a month later.

Mother said that Roger had not informed her of the changes. She approves that Shyam Sunder tells them through Chamanlal that there will be no further change without mutual consent.

*

Excerpt from Huta's "The Spirit of Auroville":

SA, p. 154
English

I came to know from an authentic source that on 22.1.73 some engineers and other people concerned arrived from Madras to work on the architectural design of the Matrimandir. They questioned, "What is the assurance that there will be no further changes in the plan of Matrimandir?" The Mother remarked, after knowing the situation:

"I do not know. Roger has not talked to me or informed me of the changes."

I personally think that many things might have been done without the Mother's knowledge and approval.

* * *

1973, January 24th: *Excerpt from Ruud's "Matrimandir Diary":*

Last Thursday the Dalai Lama was here. In the morning he saw Mother, in the afternoon he came to Auroville. He arrived at the amphitheatre at 4:00 p.m., looked around for a while and then was guided to Matrimandir. We had the impression he was a bit taken by surprise when he first saw the crater. Alain explained in a few sentences what the structure is meant to be. His Holiness' only comment was "What a big building". Then he was shown to the Workers' Camp for a drink. Instead of going straight to the chair set ready for him, he walked over to the kitchen, met our kitchen staff, looked into the washing place and saw there a mother cat with a kitten. He went over to them and began to play with the kitten for fully one minute. Then he joined the group around the table where he was offered milk with something in it. The whole conversation for the next ten minutes was about that something in the milk. The Dalai Lama drank with his full attention, investigating the drink and the glass, even lifting it high up to look underneath. He discovered rose petals in the milk and asked whether this was an Indian custom or a local one. (It is not.) We later heard that this glass of milk was the only drink which he finished down to the last drop during two days in Pondicherry. It was a very relaxed and happy visit which he too seemed to enjoy. What struck us most was his attention to detail and, as seems quite normal with very spiritually developed persons, his living fully in the moment. It looked like a lesson in applied zen-koan: "When you sit, just sit". So, "when you drink milk, just drink milk."

The workers too were very happy with his visit. They looked forward to it and looked back on it. Damodaran especially was happy, for the Dalai Lama, coming out of the dining room, put his arm around him. Proudly he showed the place on his back where the holy hand had touched him and said, "All electricity!"

After his visit, the concreting on the second half of the water channel went on.

The water system is getting ready. The brick walls are almost completed and now we have to prepare and cast the concrete slab for the first three steps around the stage before we can continue on the channel. Today we began work on these steps; moving in ever larger circles around the urn. Alain went to Madras and came back this morning with the first three pipes to connect the water reservoir with the first the 300 metre distant canyon. Though with just three pipes water cannot flow off yet, at least we can now complete the concreting of the first steps! Still, it is true that everything comes in its right time. In the amphitheatre we have not yet been held up for an hour by lack of means of materials.

* * *

1973, January 26th: *Excerpt from Shyam Sunder's notes published in his "Down Memory Lane":*

DML p. 269

English

Chamanlal's letter about his visit to Madras for Matrimandir work. We have said that no major change will be done in the design without mutual consultation.

* * *

1973, January 29th: *Excerpt from Shyam Sunder's notes published in his "Down Memory Lane":*

DML p. 269

English

Narad's letter about working with the plants through music, prayer, meditation and other new ways.

Mother remarks,

I do not understand... how can meditation work with the plants?

* * *

1973, February

1973, February 4th: *Excerpt from Roger Toll's diary:*

Navajata came to Centre tonight. His talk was masterful and quite beautiful, perhaps the strongest experience I have had here in the meditation room. He surprised me. He is a practical man and a practical teacher. Forces you to think and question yourself, especially the ego. His talk was on the planes and parts of the being. Advised us to question within all the time, and to become luminously aware of the Divine as the All through meditation.

* * *

1973, February 7th: *Excerpt from Ruud's "Matrimandir Diary":*



During the past two weeks quite a few things have happened. The work in the amphitheatre is steady and proceeds beautifully. We had several quite large concretings at different hours of the day and night. Because the Ashram always has a free day on the first of the month, many Ashramites like to work all through the night before. We had about sixty mostly young people on the night of February 1st to concrete the slab of the first three steps, behind the stage and a large portion on the south side, where all the steel and expansion joints were ready. The pebbles, however, were so dirty due to some rain, and the cleaning took so much time that we could not really develop speed and the concreting got boring. We decided to stop early, at 1:30 a.m. The rest of the night they took down bricks. We did a bit of concreting the next morning with our own workers and two more segments of the same huge slab under the first three steps were cast on Sunday morning between 6 and 12.

The construction of the walls of the drainage channel goes on and is now almost ready. These days we will be able to put the eighty slabs on, to cover the channel. Some 150 smaller slabs are now being precast to go on top of the big ones, cantilevering towards the outside of the stage. Under the cantilevered edge the wiring and the plugs for the lighting and audio-visual systems will be concealed. Today, after several days of hesitation – maybe because of the responsibility involved in the job; the first two pipes to carry off water from the collector under the stage were put into position.

The idea was to complete the stage and the first three steps before February 28th, Auroville's fifth birthday. The stage can only be concreted after the first steps and the walls of the drainage with their covering slabs are finished. In the meantime our diggers dig on. We dismissed already two of the four teams, but even the remaining two teams cover more ground than we can with concrete. Steps 20-19-18 are not yet fully concreted, but 17, 16 and 15 were already excavated and fully prepared. Today we started the little brick wall which serves as a demarcation and shuttering between steps 17 and 16. Yesterday we decided to send the two teams on a holiday for some weeks, to give us a chance to catch up but then it is so nice to have them around and see the project growing that we decided to excavate one or two more steps. Measuring gets to be a major hassle with so many different levels, excavation levels, concrete levels and finished levels, and with the stage full of long vertical rods showing the shifting centres of all the various circles.

There was good news, last week, about the meditation rooms. Chamanlal went to Madras to meet the head of the S.E.R.C. who agreed that his team would take up the study of the rooms as well. Mr. Santhanam, who is in charge of the study on the sphere, thought he could not do it himself, overburdened as he is already with his job. The director then asked him if he knew others in the Institute who would be willing. It appeared that two members had expressed an interest in the project. They were called to the meeting and had the meditation rooms thrown in their laps. They will start with comparative studies of the feasibility of the three solutions and will let us know something soon.

At Matrimandir itself the holiday seems to be over. The designs for the propping towers have finally come and Piero could work on them. Michel has been running around for many days to find steel plates for the connection of the towers to the pillars. He spent many more days getting the steel cut and still more having it welded onto the steel plates which were inserted into the pillars for the purpose of the towers.

The carpenters put up the scaffolding attached to the topmost layers of the west pillar and finally everything was ready to go above zero level. Two years were needed to go down and climb up again; the towers are temporary pointers towards higher up. The first steel rod, an 8-metre long vertical shooting up into the air and making Matrimandir finally visible from far away, went up on a splendid Matrimandir time: 12 minutes past 12 p.m., on a splendid Matrimandir date, 1.2, February 1st. A beautiful set of wooden panels went around the steel, with many holes to let pipes through to interconnect the four legs of the tower. Finally yesterday saw the first concreting of two-metre tower. Again an interesting time: the first concrete went down at exactly 11:22 a.m., two numbers not to be reduced according to numerology. Today the shuttering could be taken down already and... one of the legs as well. The cement had not gone down sufficiently to the very bottom, getting stuck in-between the steel. The vibrator apparently did not get it down. Immediately Piero had to decide to take the leg down and good-humouredly one began chipping the cement off, as an exercise for next year or so, when all sixteen legs have to be cut, both at the top and at the bottom. Tomorrow we'll try again.

And then we had one of those meetings today with Roger and Paul and Chamanlal and some others and with all our workers eighteen people in all. One of those meetings to look at where we stand, where we go from here and how we're going to go.

Roger began with a proposal for the staircases leading up from level 1 to level 2 within the sphere. In the present drawings they don't look natural; they are not integrated parts and seem to be added on as foreign elements. Between two sets of ribs they rest on the skin, in the direction of the radius, out from the centre. Roger's new inspiration is to turn the stairs 90° so that they follow the circular movement, starting at one set of ribs and climbing up, along the skin towards the next set of ribs. As often happens in our meetings, Piero and Roger began to discuss the technical details of this change. Paul, however, was the convenor of the meeting and also its discussion leader, a novelty in Matrimandir's history. So he cut short the discussion of details because his aim in this meeting was an inventory of the present situation and the problem areas of the near and far future. The stairs were determined to be a first-level priority, to be decided soon. Piero suggested that a model should be made to see the effect, before referring this new change to the S.E.R.C.

The subject of lighting was introduced by Piero with the question as to who would design the electrical installation, no work having been done on it so far. Paul suggested that the whole structure should be designed first before these major details are worked out. An Italian architect named Mario is working on the lighting and reflector systems to be installed at the very top, and on the crystal as well. When he comes in September he will bring with him a model of these parts. What can be done now is to make a flexible system of pipes and connections through the first slab so that any lighting proposal can be realised later; just as we have done with the pillars, through which we have put about eight different pipes for undetermined purposes of water, light, communications and whatever else may come up.

It was asked whether the structure of the beams under the main room can be altered, for some technical reason. Roger answered that the top cannot be changed, neither the height of the wall, as

these have been decided by Mother. The structure of the bottom, however, has not been fixed and can be adapted.

In the top and in the bottom of the sphere there will be holes. Should there be a possibility of closing them against insects, birds, dust, storm and rain? Roger does not think it will be necessary.²⁰ It was suggested to make provision for a temporary closing of the bottom hole, e.g. with canvas. The top, however, has to be closed in case of rain. It could be done with a sliding curtain, like the diaphragm of a camera.

Paul, likes real stock-taker, asked whether someone could make an outline of the progress of the building, so that everyone would know what comes first, what next, what materials to order for the next three phases of the work, and in what order the problems arise with what urgency. Piero gave the outline offhand, which, oversimplified, came down to the following: first we build the first slab, then the second slab, then the third slab, with all the problems involved in these steps. Then we do the top and the finishing touches. This sounds reasonable.

The materials needed for the first slab were discussed. Wood has come and more is coming; the carpenters are working on it. The fittings for the steel pipes are in Madras, awaiting delivery, which again is awaiting payment. The problem is the pipes: they are still in Calcutta, it seems, but nobody knows how or why. Investigations seem necessary.

Paul insisted on finding some place for a central lighting panel for the whole electric and electronic system. Electronics will be especially involved in the light catching system at the top, turning around with the sun and moon. His suggestion is to have an automatic adjustment for the daily variation of the elements and to manually adjust the seasonal variations.²¹

Concluding, three things are urgent: the stairs between the first two levels; the provision for the lighting system in the first two levels; and the skin, its structure and material.

The second part of the meeting, held partly in the office and partly walking around the site, was devoted to the amphitheatre. What is happening there has Roger's full approval. His concern now is with the tiles and the design of the mosaic. It is 'absolutely essential' he says, that we start our own tile factory in the industrial sector. Everything is ready for it, except the people to run the factory. It seems that even good clay is available at Lake Estate, samples of which have been analysed in Paris with good results.

The mount on which the urn has rested for five years does not fit on the stage. Vikas made his calculations on the presumption that the mount has a radius of seven metres, but in fact it is 7.50 metres. Anyhow, we have to remove the bricks which now cover the mount in order to cast a layer of concrete as the basis for the tiles. So we can as well remodel the shape of the mount so as to make it fit in the stage. For the transition of the mount onto the stage Roger suggested to have a small channel of about 10 cms. depth surrounding the mount, forming a neat and clear demarcation.

* * *

²⁰ Does this mean that the idea of air conditioning the Chamber had been dropped?

²¹ This is a possibility if the heliostat is polar (like the first heliostat was) and not azimuthal (as the present heliostat is.)

1973, February 10th: *Excerpt from a letter from Narad to Mother:*

facsimile at AV Archives
English

Dearest Mother,

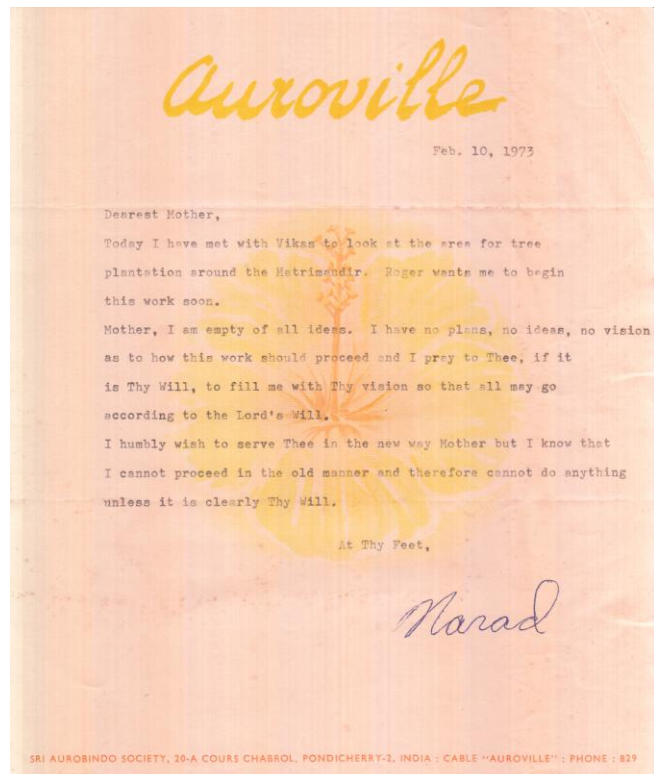
Today, I have met with Vikas to look at the area for tree plantation around Matrimandir. Roger wants me to begin this work soon.

Mother, I am empty of all ideas. I have no plans, no ideas, no vision as to how this work should proceed and I pray to Thee, if it is Thy Will, to fill me with Thy vision so that all may go according to the Lord's Will.

I humbly wish to serve in the new way Mother, but I cannot do anything unless it is clearly Thy will.

At Thy Feet,

Narad



* * *

1973, February 12th: *Excerpt from Shyam Sunder's notes published in his "Down Memory Lane":*

DML p. 273
English

Letter from Narad regarding tree plantation around Matrimandir.

"Roger wants me to begin this work soon... I am empty of all ideas... I humbly wish to serve Thee in a new way... but I cannot proceed in the old manner..."

Mother said that the execution of the Matrimandir Gardens has been already told in detail to Roger. That is what has to be done.

I [Shyam Sunder] have to remind Roger about the living place for Huta.

*

Excerpt from Roger Toll's diary:

This evening Udar came to Centre with Marjorie Spaulding²² and Bob Lawlor²³ at Seyril's invitation. It felt like some very mental strategising on how to get money out of the US. I didn't like where the conversation or the planning was going. It felt like something very old, unworthy of how we should be facing these matters in Auroville. It felt untrue to quote Sri Aurobindo to validate the ideas that were being proposed. Manipulating the guru's words to make money strikes me as the start of a religion. Not for us.

* * *

²² Marjorie Spaulding was a confidant of Swami Nikhilananda, Bach Flower Remedy practitioner; she met Robert Lawlor in 1967 and corresponded with him during early Auroville years. She hosted Udar Pinto in NYC in the fall of 1972, who went on Mother's orders to raise the funds to build Auroville. He returned again in the summer of '73. Udar insisted Marjorie meet Mother, which she did with Zena Daysh (Commonwealth Human Ecology Council) in January of 1973.

Mother gave her the name Sacheta which Nolini translated as Conscious and of One Mind with All... From this trip, Udar helped create the Foundation for World Education from the legacy of Eleanor Montgomery, which has given tens of thousands of dollars to Auroville.

²³ Bob started *Forecomers* together with his partner Deborah. After leaving in 1974, he published many books.

1973, February 13th: *Mother approves of Shyam Sunder's draft reply to Narad:*

Typed & signed @ AV-Archives; DML, p. 273; SA, p. 155
English

Narad,

I have read your letter of 10th to Mother.

Mother says that the Matrimandir gardens' execution has been already told in detail to Roger. That is what is to be done.

Shyam Sunder

* * *

1973, February 14th: *Excerpt from Roger Toll's diary:*

Gérard, Piero and I got into a long and interesting talk about architecture in Auroville after work today, and thereby missed Madhav's talk in the Camp. In our talk, Piero seemed almost frightened about the other architects and that the explosion of different styles is a bad, unregulated way of proceeding. I argued that we must stretch, reach and dare what is most fearful. No complacency. Applies to architecture, communities, everything.

Madhav's talk: I was told later, was beautiful and very interesting. He spoke about the Mother, hippies, rules, the Ashram and Auroville. He said that Mother is sad that Pranab and others in the Ashram feel that Auroville is a bad experiment and that Westerners are distorting the teachings.

At lunch, I spoke with Seyril about the meeting with Udar. She was upset as well and we both hope he doesn't go to the States. For all her mental contrivances and irritating ways, Seyril is so open and beautiful, and very perceptive in the end.

* * *

1973, February 15th: *Letter from Alain Grandcolas and Ruud Lohman to Mother:*²⁴

Typed & signed @ AV-Archives; SA, pp. 155-56
English

Divine Mother,

Roger asked us to go to Huta to discuss certain things regarding her house near Matrimandir as to how she wishes to have it built.

Huta said that everything should be done exactly according to the Mother's wish. We asked her what was The Mother's wish. So she said that the Mother wished her to be the guardian of the Matrimandir and her house is to be built between the Matrimandir and the banyan tree – in the island – very close to the Matrimandir and it would be a simple tiny house. The rest she said that everything including the copies of the Mother's letters regarding are in the file which is given to Shyam Sunder according to the Mother's wish and approval. And now Shyam Sunder has given the file to Roger to study.

In the present plans of the Matrimandir we can easily include Huta's house in one of the 12 huge petals, which are surrounding the Matrimandir over one of the meditation rooms, so that she can enter the Matrimandir whenever she wants to check one thing or another in the Shrine – and this will be exactly between Matrimandir and the banyan as You have wished. Now shall we go ahead with this plan of Huta's house? If You will approve then we shall do according to Your own ideas..

Finally, Huta spoke firmly and insisted to have two "secret chambers" inside the Matrimandir itself – one for You and the other one for The Lord. Also the carved marble seats in the room with velvet and satin cushions. Now, in the present plans these chambers are not shown because we had no idea. But now looking at the present plans of the Matrimandir, we can say with full confidence that there is definitely enough place for two rooms which can surely be built – facing each other on the upper sphere in perfect harmony. And this will look wonderful. When we spoke to Huta about this possibility, she was extremely happy and satisfied. We pray to You to guide us as how You wish us to

²⁴ The text reproduced here is that of the typed and signed letter kept at AV-Archives. Huta, as she often does, modified slightly the text of this letter while reproducing it in her "*The Spirit of Auroville*".

build the secret chambers and how you wish us to arrange the marble seats in the rooms. So that Roger and we shall do accordingly.

Also, Huta says that The Mother is very practical. Once The Mother did the sketch of the Matrimandir and She did not forget to draw a small box-room to keep dusters and things like that to clean the Matrimandir. So Huta says that the minor things are to be considered.

Now we await Your kind blessings and Force in order to materialise this project exactly according to Your Vision and Will. And we all pray for Your victory in all Truth and Love.

Your children,

Alain

Ruud

* * *

1973, February 16th: Letter from Huta to Roger:²⁵

Typed & signed letter kept @ AV-Archives; SA, p. 157
English

Dear Roger,

It is very nice of you to have asked Alain and Ruud to come to me yesterday evening to discuss my house near the Matrimandir.

I have explained to them all that The Mother wished and decided. Moreover, everything is stated in the file which Shyam Sunder has given to you.

Alain and Ruud wrote a letter to The Mother which I hope you read to her.

Frankly speaking, I have no will of my own – whatever The Mother has decided for me – whatever she wants me to be – I will be. She has appointed me the guardian of the Matrimandir and several times She spoke about my having a house very close to the Matrimandir so that I can look after the Matrimandir according to her wish and command. She told me that she had already explained the plan of my house to you in July last year. She also spoke the same thing to Shyam Sunder about three times. So on my side I have nothing more to say except I leave the whole thing to the Mother and to you to do the best.

But I am very particular and feeling strongly all that the Mother told me about Her rooms in the Matrimandir itself on the top floor, which I may call the “secret chambers”. I shall be very happy if Her rooms will be in the Matrimandir – for She will surely go there one day.²⁶

I trust you and I feel sure that you will organise and plan out everything wonderfully, exactly according to The Mother’s Will – in an occult and mysterious way. And we all pray for the Victory of the Truth.

Thank you ever so much

With kindest regards, yours sincerely

*

Shyam Sunder informs Huta that Mother had reminded him once again to tell Roger about her house at Matrimandir. So he passes on to Roger the file he had received from Huta on 6.11.72.

SA, p. 158
English

* * *

1973, February 19th: Letter from Huta to Shyam Sunder:

Handwritten & signed letter kept @ AV-Archives
English

Dear Baiji (Shyamsunder)

These two letters are for your reference in case you need them in the near future – in case Roger doesn’t read or explain the Truth to the Mother. If these letters are handy, you can state the fact to the Mother, when the time comes. That is why I asked Alain and Ruud to sign in two papers... because I felt it...

²⁵ Huta has again modified slightly the text of this letter but for no obvious purpose.

²⁶ In her book, instead of this sentence, Huta wrote: *She must have her rooms – for she will surely go there one day.*

Please keep the letters in tact. Let us watch and see what happens.

Meanwhile, whatever you have said is right – let him, Roger, explain to the Mother – let him go first – and afterwards if the Mother asks you anything, just do the needful as you feel.

Ever thankful to you

With kindest thoughts and regards.

Huta

*

1973, February 19th: *Excerpt from Ruud's "Matrimandir Diary":*

Three out of the four layers of the first [propping] tower on top of the west pillar have been cast now. After the steel and the first two-metre concrete layer on both eight-metre legs had been cut away, it took only two or three days to put in new steel, the old shuttering and new concrete. After a day the shuttering was taken down and affixed two metres higher. It was a big job to weld the steel boxes on which the legs rest onto the pillar; now it is another big job to weld the boxes which, ready-made will be put on top of the four legs into the concrete. It is especially hard because there is a power cut every morning nowadays. So the grinding and the welding have largely to be done at night. Just now, at 3:00 a.m., Michel, our special welder Chinnapan and his helper, have left the workshop for a short nap.

There are many concreting nowadays, at least three times a week inside Matrimandir, though only small bits at a time. To concrete one layer of the four legs takes about one hour and is done with some of the Aurovilians who work on the pillars, a group of ten coolies who are in general service at Matrimandir and the carpenters who fix the shutterings. The last concreting was on Saturday, from 4 to 5 p.m.

Also at the amphitheatre, we have about two quite extensive concretings per week. It is becoming a tradition to have a concreting on Sunday morning from 6 a.m. till about noon. Yesterday morning we had to stop early because we did not have enough people to wash the pebbles. The regular tempo for the whole process can be one load, that is one wheel-barrowful of cement, every four minutes. Yesterday it took about fifteen minutes per load, so the process was too slow to be efficient. Last week we got so many parts ready for concreting that we decided to have a full day concreting with the workers at the amphitheatre. On Friday we covered three major portions of the first three steps, closing the circle around the stage fully. Now the brick walls around the stage can be completed and finally we are ready today to start putting the slabs over the drainage channel. A small circular slab around the base of the mount on which the urn sits has been cast on Friday and the erection of two mini-brick walls, which will form the sides of a small channel around the mount, has started. This week we will concentrate on the stage, and hopefully it will be ready before February 28th, on which day we will inaugurate the amphitheatre with a slideshow of Savitri.

News has come about the 8 km of pipes for the scaffoldings at Matrimandir. A wire went and a wire came back from Calcutta, saying that the pipes were ready for dispatch but that, due to the railway troubles in Andhra Pradesh, they had not yet been shipped.

* * *

1973, February 22nd: *Roger Anger leaves for Paris.*

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Excerpt from Roger Toll's diary:

So long since I have written and so much shake-up has been going on. Angela left three weeks ago, then returned from Pondy and moved to Kottakarai. Ruud and Alain went off on a week-long vacation. Dutch and American groups came and went. Marti²⁷ has moved from Pondy to the Nursery and now

²⁷ Marti Olesen, from the US, had lived in Pondy for a year, then moved to Auroville. Today, she is a devotee in the States.

into the Camp. [Boris] Bosco leaves the Nursery for the Camp. Narad and Mary Helen²⁸ move into the Nursery. Patricia leaves the kitchen. And Willie [Netter] has been sent home by the Mother. Gabriel back after three weeks away. And Tim Wrey, with Susan, Camilla and Marcus,²⁹ leave next week for London after a seven-week romance with Auroville. They had arrived here by 'chance' after being on the road for six months in a Land Rover from England.³⁰ A general shaking up as we have not seen before.

* * *

1973, February 23rd: *Excerpt from Ruud's "Matrimandir Diary":*

Darshan day was celebrated with half a day off for the workers and for us. At 8 a.m. there was a short meditation inside the Matrimandir with all the workers, and at 10 a.m. some Aurovilians sat down inside to join the meditation going on at the Samadhi. At 11:30 all the Aurovilians were called, even those working at the amphitheatre, to join in the concreting of the last portion of the first propping tower. That means, of the two tallest legs of the tower; for the steel tops of the shorter legs are not yet ready.

Three days before darshan, Piero called all of us together to inform us about the sequence of the work. The propping towers will take about two more months due to the shortage of gas in Pondy which curtails the cutting the steel plates. After the propping towers are ready, four huge wooden [hoist] towers 25m high from the foot of the crater (that means 15m above zero level) will be constructed at the back of the pillars, each fitted out with a pulley-system to lift materials. In the meantime, the 9,000 connectors (clamps) for the steel pipes have to be painted. Only then will we be ready to receive the steel pipes for the scaffolding.

* * *

1973, February 24th: *Letter from Alain Grandcolas to Mother:*

Handwritten in French, Scan available

Mother,

For February 28th 1973, we are thinking of having the following program within the Amphitheatre:

- 5:30 to 6Hrs (before dawn) series of paintings by Huta illustrating Canto I, book I: "The symbol Dawn"
- After some time, setting in place on the Urn the plaque commemorating the 28.2.1968. I think that Shyam Sunder or Ruud deserve this assignment, unless you would be thinking of someone else.
- Then, of course casting some concrete.

* * *

1973, February 27th: *Excerpt from Ruud's "Matrimandir Diary":*

The first of the four propping towers is ready. It looks like a Gothic cathedral, especially at night when the big lights illuminate the strange structure, setting it off in silhouette against the sky and the banyan tree. The scaffolding was immediately removed and on Monday, re-erected on the north pillar. The steel rods are already in place and again the night sky is lit up by welding.

On Sunday the 25th morning, we concreted the first portions of the amphitheatre stage. Twelve members of one of our digging teams announced that they would come and work for free, "for Mother". So we could give it a good push and finally concreted the part right in front of the urn which long ago was called Portion No. 1. Also, the water tank under the stage was covered with a solid layer of concrete. The full circle of slabs over the water channel was finished yesterday and the laying of the small cantilevering slabs demarcating the stage's edge continues.

²⁸ Chali's mother and Narad's second wife.

²⁹ Tim's wife and their two children.

³⁰ After crossing the entire African continent and then India, their Land Rover broke down under the Banyan Tree.



***The first propping tower with
the Banyan in the background***

Last Thursday, the 22nd, Roger left again for Paris and we took the opportunity to go to Madras and visit the S.E.R.C. The question of the skin has not yet been decided, though it seems that Roger's suggestion of concrete circles with openings in between has not been fully rejected. It is only too heavy for the existing designs, which would have to be adapted. The question of the staircase connecting the first and second levels could not be decided during the meeting because neither Roger nor Piero could come to a clear picture themselves. Piero got the engineer's permission to use less steel for propping towers and especially to omit the steel boxes on top. There are so many practical problems involved in procuring, cutting and welding these boxes that, without them, the whole process of tower construction could be cut in half.

In the second part of the meeting, which Piero and Alain attended, the engineers who would work on the petals and the meditation rooms were also called. It was soon clear from the discussions that nothing has yet been studied. Promises were made to give advice on the three solutions within ten days.

Tomorrow will be Auroville's 5th birthday, to be celebrated with a function at dawn. In the monthly, 'Sri Aurobindo's Action', Ronald has written an article tilted "A collective Birthday", in which we read:

"Sri Aurobindo describes the group-soul as having the same substance as the soul of an individual; it is simply more complex. When Auroville was inaugurated on 28th February 1968, for its physical journey on earth it surely had already a soul: many of us may not have become very aware of it until the soul itself began to form its special materialisation – Matrimandir – three years later.

"In the individual being is more open, receptive, plastic, and able to progress at the time of one's birthday, probably the collective being – the being of Auroville – reaches a unique opportunity for renewal and progress on the occasion of its birthday. To go further, this is the fifth birth date of Auroville, which seems an auspicious year – for five is the exact number of petals Mother sketched as the 'power of expression, realisation' in the symbol of Auroville.

"Question: 'Is a physical contact with you indispensable?'

No, this physical contact is not indispensable, certainly for those who have the true attitude; the physical contact helps the body to follow the movement of transformation, but the body is rarely in a state to profit by it.

Generally on birthdays it is more receptive. This suggests that the body of Auroville's being – that is, the residential and school construction, road maintenance, sewage development, afforestation, industries such as Auropress, Handmade Paper and polyester factories, the agricultural experiments and productivity, the free store and Aurocreation and all the other outer

limbs Auroville is growing, is more ready, receptive and able to profit and progress now than at other times of the year.

But, one could ask, where is the physical contact of Auroville with the Mother? It is at the site of Matrimandir. For... Matrimandir as the soul of Auroville seems more and more to be, in a way, the material instrument and expression of the supramental advancing in the Mother's person."

* * *

1973, February 25th: *Excerpt from Shyam Sunder's notes published in his "Down Memory Lane":*

DML, p. 276
English

- *Alain Grandcolas has proposed a programme for 28.2.73:
5:30 to 6 a.m. Huta's painting on Savitri, Book One, Canto One;
Placing the plate "28.2.68" on the urn.
Concreting.
Mother approved of it.
No reply about his suggestion that Shyam Sunder or Ruud Lohman should place the plate on the urn, unless Mother thinks of someone else, except the remark, "One should collaborate".*
- *Matrimandir folders. The suggestion for drawing the lucky number for the Sri Aurobindo Centenary set prize, although we have not sold a lac as yet, was not approved. The financial position of the folders was put before Mother.*

* * *

1973, February 26th: *Piero writes to scientist T.K. Santhanam about the proposed twin spiral central staircases between levels 1 & 2. Hence, this must be the time when Roger decided to have them there – which means that SERC's scientists had to again modify their calculations and drawings.*

* * *

1973, March

1973, March 6th: Excerpt from Shyam Sunder's notes published in his "Down Memory Lane":

DML, p.279
English

Vikas proposes that twelve white doves be kept in the Matrimandir area and trained to make this their home. Mother remarked,

I was thinking whether they will be taken care of.

Shyam Sunder: Perhaps it is not the time for it.

Yes.

* * *

1973, March 15th: Roger writes in his hand in French at the bottom of Huta's letter dated 16.02.73, what Mother told him:

facsimile at AV Archives; SA, p. 157
English

That was long ago, at the beginning. The important thing is to plan a room for her in the gardens.³¹

Mother on 15th March 1973

c'était il y a longtemps
au début, l'important c'est de
prévoir une pièce pour elle dans les
jardins. Mère le 15 mars 1973

*

Excerpt from Roger's personal notes³²:

Roger's personal archives
French

Seen Mother on March 15th 1973

About Matrimandir.

Concerning the secret chambers, Mother said that this idea was old and there was no reason for keeping it in the actual project of Matrimandir.

Having told her that, however, this possibility was feasible if she still wished it now in the actual project, and that she that she could come there when she wants, or for.....

[Mother commented:]

I don't believe it. It is not in my intention.

Vu Mère le 15 mars 73
au sujet du Matrimandir
En ce qui concerne les chambres
secrets, Mère a dit que cette
idée était ancienne et n'avait
pas de raison d'être maintenant
dans le projet retenu du Matrimandir.
Lui ayant dit toutefois que cette
possibilité était réalisable si elle le
désirait encore maintenant dans le
projet actuel, et qu'elle
qu'elle pouvait y venir lorsqu'elle
aimerait, ou....
Ce n'est pas dans mon intention.

* * *

³¹ "C'était il y a longtemps au début. L'important c'est de prévoir une pièce pour elle dans les jardins." Mère, le 15 mars 1973

³² Vu Mère au sujet du Matrimandir.

En ce qui concerne les chambres secrètes, Mère dit que cette idée était ancienne et n'avait pas de raison d'être maintenant dans le projet retenu du Matrimandir. Lui ayant dit toutefois que cette possibilité était réalisable si elle le désirait encore maintenant dans le projet actuel et qu'elle pourrait y venir lorsqu'elle aimerait, ou....

Mère répond:

« Ce n'est pas, je ne crois pas dans mon intention. »

1973, March 17th: *Note from from Shyam Sunder to Huta:*

SA p. 158
English

Dear Huta,

The last show went alright except for the last three slides which could not be shown due to power cut.

Roger has spoken to the Mother about Matrimandir and is preparing a note. I will show it to you after it is read to the Mother by him and approved by her.

Wish you early recovery of good health.

* * *

1973, March 22nd: *Excerpt from Shyam Sunder's notes published in his "Down Memory Lane":*

DML, p.282-83
English

Due to financial difficulties I have asked Narad to confine himself to an expense of Rs. 500 per month for the gardens. Last year it was more than double of it. Even this Rs 500/- is not sure to be continued. Narad is thinking of going to America to bring money. Mother asks:

Is there someone to carry on the work here?"

Shyam Sunder: "Yes."

He can go.

* * *

1973, March 24th: *Letter from Piero to Mother:*

Typed & signed kept @ AV-Archives
French; translation by G.G.

Douce Mère,

In 1969,³³ I had the opportunity of reading three or four conversation between You and Satprem about Matrimandir. I remember very well with what force and what precision the Matrimandir took shape in Your words at that time.

I believe that reading these conversations would be of great help to all those who participate in Matrimandir's construction.

Would it be possible to publish these conversations?

And now, would You allow me to re-read them in their original form, because all the details would enlighten me and would guide me towards an execution work that would correspond to Your vision?

April 3rd is my birthday. With humility I am asking for Your "Darshan".

Your child and instrument.

* * *

³³ Piero is obviously mistaken; it cannot have been in 1969 as these talks took place on 31.12.69 and 3,10 and 17.1.70. In a letter to Satprem he wrote that it was in August 1970.

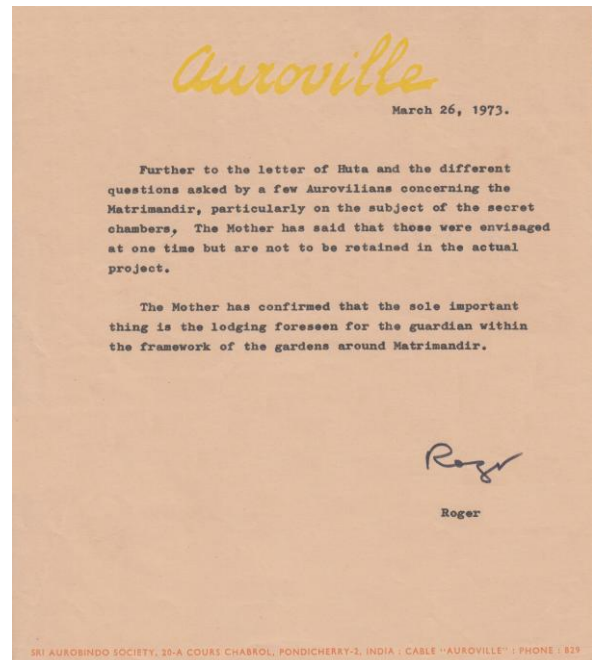
1973, March 26th: *Roger writes this statement and copies it to Huta through Shyam Sunder:*

AV Archives
English

Further to the letter of Huta and the different questions asked by a few Aurovilians concerning the Matrimandir, particularly on the subject of the secret chambers, The Mother has said that these were envisaged at one time but are not retained in the actual project.

The Mother has confirmed that the sole important thing is the lodging foreseen for the guardian within the framework of the gardens around Matrimandir.

Roger



* * *

1973, March 28th: *Excerpt from a letter from Huta to Mother in which she asks to be relieved from her guardianship of Matrimandir:*

Typed & signed kept @ AV-Archives; SA, p. 161
English

I have received this note³⁴ from Roger through Shyam Sunder. First point: Whatever You have decided for the Matrimandir is absolutely right because You know much more about the matter than anybody else does.

Second point: You had appointed me the guardian of the Matrimandir in 1965 – and I am grateful to You for that – but now I truly pray to You to release me from this appointment because I do not really deserve anything, and I do not know what work I have to do there, also there are many reasons and complications which prevent me from going there.

For some time I had been feeling to write to You all this before I received this note. I am really sorry that I shall not be able to be the guardian – I am helpless and hopeless. Please do forgive me. There are many capable people who can carry out this wonderful mission according to Your will.

Finally, I pray to You to get arranged and restored my present house by Udar or Phany. There are white ants and it needs repairs and whitewash which has not been done for quite a number of years.

I will do Your work, which is quite a lot, in my apartment, and my temple is my heart where the Divine call be realised by His Grace.

Mother, I love You and I trust You, knowing that You will surely lead me to my goal by fulfilling my soul's aspiration.

[Huta adds that Vasudha, Mother's personal attendant, read out this letter to Mother and that She remained in trance and said nothing except that She sent a blessing-packet through Vasudha.]

* * *

³⁴ Dated 26th March 1973

1973, April

1973, April 1st: *Excerpt from Ruud's "Matrimandir Diary" (written from Yercaud),*

Since I last wrote on Matrimandir much has happened to her and to me. To understand in depth anything that happens to Matrimandir, one would have to be far beyond understanding. So we'll report only a few of the things that come to the memory now, trying not to interpret too much.

Alain and I are in Yercaud, the hill station close to Salem. Several people at Matrimandir felt like taking some distance from it lately, as if the pressure got too strong. I had been in Pondy for some days, came back to Centre and then Alain asked me to come along for a week or so to a cooler place. But, as always seems to happen at Matrimandir, one cannot really get away from it. As soon as we thought of going to Yercaud, the problem of wood arose. For the next phase of the work we need about eight lorries of silver oak to construct the four 25-mt. high hoist-towers at the back of each pillar. This week the four propping towers have been completed, in steel and cement, and now we are ready for the hoist-towers. The wood, however, though expected since quite some time, has not come and it did not look as if it would come in the near future. Things fitted together as usual and so here we are, right in the woods. We saw the mills down in Salem, and it was clear that our wood was not yet on the way and also that the managers were a little embarrassed about it. The owner of the mills is also the owner of some large estates of coffee and silver oak up here on the slopes of the beautiful Sevaroy Hills, and he proudly showed us around. Many Matrimandirs could be supported with all the wood around here. Growing the wood seems easier though than cutting it, especially because here too there are power cuts. For the 'Centre of Force', the force and energy of the present world is hardly enough, and it certainly must be a strong symbol of the need for a new energy that we have to go through as many power problems.

Friday night, just after Mr. Mehta, the owner, promised us that our wood would be next on the cutting machines his fuses were removed because of some error in the mills. Saturday we had again to go down the hill to Salem to see if we could intervene with the Electricity Board. But the accountant had already left and after spending a morning in the offices he got the fuses replaced. So we could send a wire to Matrimandir asking the carpenters to come to Salem by Monday (tomorrow) to be present to select the wood. It seems it is really going to happen tomorrow and within two days the first tower (two lorry-loads) may be ready for despatch. Just now Mr. Mehta has promised to complete the job and send two lorries per week. That is about the tempo at which we can build the towers.

It is a bit difficult with Matrimandir, since people dealing with it don't want to make it too much of a business and we don't want charity, but we have to find a way somewhere in between. When we met M. Mehta first we told him we came on holiday. "For how long?" he asked. "Till we have the wood", we answered. That was clear enough. Now he is trying to get it done in between his other work, and every day he and we are growing closer to a mutual understanding about Auroville and business. We are, however, not there yet, though the wood is coming and that is the main thing.

There was something heavy about Matrimandir lately. I don't know what it was. People wanted to be out a bit, small conflicts arose. One of the funny things is that people start claiming, consciously or unconsciously, various parts of the project as 'theirs', and do not allow anyone to intrude on their portion of Matrimandir. Money has been slow to flow, but that is never really a problem at Matrimandir. More difficult was the cement situation: there is hardly any cement available in India, again due to the power cuts. That created some conflicts between the various sub-projects but again of a minor intensity. It was altogether not much of a serious thing, but just a part of a generally felt heaviness in the air. It seems to be getting over.

About three weeks ago new workshops were planned and construction was taken up right away. The small place Michael was managing got filled up, within three months of its inception, with machines and tools, especially by Jack who brought crates and crates of them along with him from

the States and then gave them all, including himself, to Matrimandir.³⁵ A nice clean big place is under construction now, with walls of hollow cement blocks and an asbestos roof. One section will be for carpentry tools and fine woodworking. Vasant, our Aurovilian carpenter, is working on a big model of Matrimandir and does everything in a little bamboo pump house where he stays. It is high time for him to move into something better. Especially urgent is the wood workshop: now he has started training some boys from Kottakarai every morning for a few hours. All over, Matrimandir is developing into a boys' town. In the workshop there are several boys; Claudine, who is in charge of the paint workshop, has a few; in general service there is from of old the ever- and all-over present handyboy, Ramalingam, usually seen in the company of Murthy. In the amphitheatre there are more and more boys of all ages and we could use still more.

This week, on Wednesday, the excavation of the amphitheatre was completed. All the steps are there now, in earth. Three weeks ago it was a race between the diggers and the masons, for the brick walls which form the edge of the steps were coming up as fast as the earth was being cut away. Then the mason work came to a halt for a while because the whole amphitheatre team – ten masons, as many helpers, the levelling staff, the transporters and the cement mixers, were transferred to the site of the new workshops. After a week, four masons returned to the amphitheatre and slowly the others will come back. So the three digging teams could move ahead freely and now the brick walls are only up to step 9, halfway, and the excavation is finished.

Due to the lack of cement we have not had any big concretings in the amphitheatre for a while, and even the stage is only half-covered. Moreover, we have removed all the bricks which covered the mount on which the lotus rests and we have cut away some of the earth, because originally the radius of the mount was 7.50 m but in the final plan it can only be 7 m. A newcomer to Matrimandir, Pierre, has as his first architectural job to redesign the paths which ascend in a spiral movement and the top portion. When Alain and I go back this week, our first job will be to transfer Pierre's design from paper to the mount itself and get the masons working on it.

The power shortage together with the cement shortage have a positive side as well. Since we need as much cement for the amphitheatre, and since cement is so difficult to obtain, we were on the lookout for alternatives and we discovered a substance which has been in use for ages, namely, lime. The pyramids, cathedrals, temples and almost everything else in Pondy have been built with lime. So we researched the availability, usage and ways to mix lime.

When we met the chief engineer of the Ashram, he happened to be in the Ashram theatre remodelling it – in lime. It is available for a reasonable price, it has many advantages over cement, not only in terms of cost but also in strength, which he said to increase with time.

There was one problem, however: all our advisers and every book on engineering we consulted gave differing information about each and every detail. So we had to find our own way. Last week we got the first truckload of lime, mixed it with an equal amount of sand and broken bricks (1:1:1) and made an experimental slab. It looks good and the final decision to use it or not for the amphitheatre will be taken this week. Then we can start lime concretings and maybe finish the amphitheatre in two months' time. Then we will be ready to lay the tiles, but our research into the availability of tiles is another story.

One of the younger workers, Krishnamurthi, knows some English and shows initiative. He was taught to use a theodolite and was put in charge of the excavation process. More recently we accepted another boy, Murugan, who had some education and knows English quite well too. He was taken on trial for a month. These two boys developed so beautifully and took so much initiative that now Alain and I are free again to research the tiles and wood or whatever, and leave the whole thing

³⁵ In a recent email, Jack Alexander wrote to this editor: "My 15 minutes of fame.... These were tools I collected and packed prior to coming. When they arrived, our tax exemption vanished and HUGE import fees were levied (Rs 18,000 back then!) and we had no idea what to do. Although we had ostensibly come to be in Auroville, we were a bit put off by the rough, "un-spiritual" bunch we found out on the land. Our finances that had been planned out prior to our coming fell through and we wrote to Mother via Shyam Sunder and she was informed of the situation, the tools, my mechanical ability, etc. and she indicated that it was time to move to Auroville (we had been living in Pondy and coming out via bicycle and bus). The quote we laugh about regarding our "bargain" (us and tools in exchange for no money as was the norm for New Comers) Mother... "at least he's not an artist".

in their hands. They can read levelling instruments, figures and drawings, keep accurate books of everything going on and are fully in charge. The days we were absent, everything went perfectly well. We hope that after this week away everything will be all right.

One of the problems of the Amphitheatre is the opposition from the Matrimandir team in general. Nobody really wants to work on it and many say that they feel it is not the right thing, etc. The strength of the project, however, is that it goes on and on without stopping, notwithstanding people not agreeing with it, materials being held up and what not. Whether or not it will be an amphitheatre and what its future purpose will be, who knows?

On 28th February, Auroville's fifth birthday, it has been put into use officially with the first of twelve Savitri slideshows, the same as were shown during the Centenary Year in the Ashram. The idea came up to have the show early in the morning, at dawn, coinciding with the subject of the first Canto, the Symbol Dawn. About 500 people were present, seated on the few concreted steps and several un-concreted ones. After the show, at 6:15 a.m. Shyam Sunder and I went to the Lotus to put the new plaque Mother had given for the purpose. The one that was put in place at the Inauguration Ceremony had been stolen. Mother was asked for a new one, to be placed on Auroville's birthday. We put it in at 6:18 a.m. Alain had written to Mother about it, proposing Shyam Sunder's and my name, Mother was silent for a moment and then said, "*Il faut collaborer*". So we did it together.

Since that day we have a slideshow on Savitri every Tuesday night at 8:00 p.m. Next Tuesday, Book II, Cantos VI-XV will be shown. Not too many people attend, maybe seventy to a hundred. The amphitheatre will be able to seat 5,000 of us.

* * *

1973, April 2nd: *Excerpt from Ruud's "Matrimandir Diary" (written from Yercaud),*

On the 5th anniversary we also wanted some function for our workers. Since Madhav Pandit was coming to the Centre anyhow for the study circle at 5 p.m., we asked him to give a little talk for the workers. At 4:30 all the Matrimandir workers had come, including those of the Nursery and the ones from Abri and other places around.

Madhav began with one or two sentences in Tamil, then went into English. He said,

"Mother has chosen this place for Auroville, not because it is attractive from the point of view of agriculture or culture in general. Many other places in India were offered to Her, among which luxurious ones as well. But it has been divinely ordained that this be the place for the City of God, even with all its inconveniences.

"In choosing this place, She has chosen all of you, sons of the soil, and instructed us to give you the first priority. The conditions for you to become Aurovilians are kept to the absolute minimum.

"Here in this new city we are not building life as in the usual commercial way as else in the world. God is sending resources here so that who live here may live in service of God and humanity. Everyone is looked after on his own level. We are here not to take but to give.

"In this spirit we may say: you are not here as our employees but as our brothers. We want you all to share the blessings of God which He has shown to us. We want you to share in the growth, without any distinction."

The four pillars of Matrimandir are often referred to as the four powers of the Mother. We knew that Mother had specified which pillar expressed which power, but there was quite some confusion about it, especially because it seems that Mother has not exactly followed the Indian tradition.³⁶ This week, however, Roger showed me in Mother's handwriting the exact position, which I copied and give here:

³⁶ Mother had given the correspondence between Pillars and Her Aspects in writing in January 1972.

	North	
	MAHAKALI	
West		East
MAHASARASWATI		MAHALAKSHMI
	South	
	MAHESWARI	

The wood for the hoist towers took quite some time to come but this week we may receive the first two lorries, i.e. one tower, at home. We heard that two carpenters were present at the mill in Salem that morning. Tomorrow we will meet them and then proceed to Auroville. But the 8 kms of steel pipe for the support of the bottom slab of the sphere seem to be coming. They were ordered from Jamshedpur months ago. Sometime in January we learned they were ready for dispatch in Calcutta. Then no more news came. Arora, our purchasing officer in Pondy, went to Calcutta to check. Nothing happened, except railway strikes in Andhra Pradesh. Then we heard in early March that the pipes, which could not be sent by train, had been sold to somebody else. At the end of March the steel mill would roll new pipes for us. Wires, letter and postcards went up and down especially between Arora and his son-in-law who is in the steel business. Nothing happened until, suddenly last Monday or Tuesday, the news came that the first part of our order was on its way and the second part would follow soon. Alain and I had already decided to go after the wood, but then we began to wonder whether we should not better go to the train station where the rail changes from broad to narrow gauge, about forty miles north of Madras. Talking and talking, until Shyam Sunder told us to go to Salem, just go and see what would happen. Somebody else could go to the train station if needed. We are learning more and more that we cannot just order things and then sit back and wait for them to come. We have to chase them, be right there, follow things up. This will require much more flexibility on our part, it seems. We are very sure now that we would not have received the wood for the hoist towers for months to come if we had not come here. We have a promise that every week two lorry loads will be sent to us. If they don't come next week, we should come straight back to Salem to see what happened. This week, then, we may have both the wood and the pipes.

Now there is only one other problem, the designs. To start the bottom slab connecting the four pillars, we should know exactly what will come higher up, even we should know the material of the skin and how to insert the necessary steel or whatever into the ribs for attaching the skin. The S.E.R.C. in Madras is doing calculations for the past one year and things keep changing. Happily so, for the Matrimandir should be a living entity up to the last moment, and after. For engineers, however, this is no easy situation, rather a very difficult one. One is frightened to approach Madras with yet another change, especially important structural changes. Roger isn't put off at all and goes on remodelling. Last week he dropped the second slab, which was supposed to come two meters or so above the bottom slab. From that second slab the ramps, leading up to the Inner Chamber, would start. It was an architectonical problem how to get from the first slab to that second one; small ramps, and various types of stairs were tried out in models. Nothing seemed to work. Now Roger had put a circular wall around the hole in the bottom slab with a circular staircase inside the circular space.³⁷ One would then enter the sphere and not see any staircase going up, until one enters the circular enclosure in the centre. The stairs lead up to the ramps on the level where formerly was the second slab. The slab has now been reduced to a system of structural beams. Piero was supposed to go to Madras last Friday and put these changes before the engineers. No news of the struggle has come yet.

For the amphitheatre, we put all our trust in the two boys, Murugan and Krishnamurthi, hoping for the best. Unasked for and unexpected, rare received two letters today, here in Yercaud, one from each of them, giving us the latest position up to Saturday. They are worth quoting:

"My dear Ruud, Alan, How, are you? Amphitheatre going very nicely. Today is Saturday. I began new, steps 9 End 8. The old lime was mixed already. We made a new platform for lime

³⁷ This is how, at the end of March 1972, the twin spiral staircase between levels 1 and 2 came into being.

mixing. Everybody working is good. Me and Krishamoorthy working very nicely. Workshop work is almost finished..." (from Murugan, 31.3.73)

"Respected Sir. How are you. We all quite good here. Our amphitheatre work go on as usual. When you and Ruud come back to Auroville. We are waiting and invite you. ... (then follows six notes on the progress of the work, in details; then) Murugam all most finish the brick wall he can starting new steps with carefull. In the same time I help to him myself and he also help with me. We think we can present to you good results."

* * *

1973, April 8th: *Excerpt from Ruud's "Matrimandir Diary":*

This morning our research of about five weeks started bearing fruit: we had the first lime concreting in the amphitheatre. Two or three months ago it was becoming a tradition to have early Sunday morning concretings in the amphitheatre, until the scarcity of cement started. This Sunday morning, from 5 to 7, Shyam Sunder and his 'group' was there again. Last week we did already a few days' lime concreting in the new workshop. It was a kind of psychological warfare: nobody knew lime, and all the data on it is so different. We don't know its strength, its durability, etc. But Vikas agreed to it for the amphitheatre and Michael for the workshop floor. The process of slaking and mixing is getting mechanised and we know now how to deal with it. The books say that the level of lime comes down 1 or 2 cms after ramming it for two days. But again, our own experience is different and it took us a full morning to get the excess of lime out again and to cut the level down to what it should be.

One lorry load of wood has come from Salem, the morning after our return from the hills, and the same day two wagonloads of steel pipes reached Pondy. The next day four lorries brought them to Matrimandir. Great things may happen soon, ... as soon as the designs are ready.

"Matrimandir is the soul of Auroville and the sooner the soul is there the better it will be for everybody, especially the Aurovilians."³⁸ This is one of the most quoted sayings of the Mother with regard to Matrimandir. For Matrimandir is the priority in Auroville; for others it is Auromodel, for which designs are nearing completion. Udar put the question before Mother, and he told her how much stress She had always put on Matrimandir and that she had even said that Matrimandir is the soul of Auroville, etc. Mother said, "Did I say that? No, I never said that. People put things in my mouth..." Udar asked her what, then is the most important thing for Auroville; to which She answered with great stress: "The most important thing for Auroville is Auroville". She said it three times and then laughed.

* * *

1973, early April: *Excerpt from a report and photo published in the Gazette Aurovilienne:*

Gazette Aurovilienne, Vol. II, 1973, No. 4, p. 27
French & English

The concreting of the four foundation-pillars was completed on November 3rd, 1972. At present, the work is proceeding in four fields:

- a) Preparation for the construction of the sphere.
- b) Preliminary studies of the petals and meditation rooms.
- c) Planning for the gardens and water canals.
- d) Designing and excavation of the amphitheatre around the Urn.

Work goes on for the erection of the temporary towers which will support the ribs of the Matrimandir sphere.

The excavation, drainage system and the stage for the amphitheatre around the foundation-urn have been completed.

The seating arrangement consists of twenty tiers moving in ever larger circles and covered with earth-red tiles. Experiments are in progress to develop high-quality lime-clay tiles of various sizes.

³⁸ As we have seen, this handwritten message was sent by Mother to Oscar for the Gazette Aurovilienne on 15.11.70.

A belt with a width of about 50 metres will surround the Matrimandir area. Studies are being made on the designs, the watercourses and the type of tress, bushes and flowers to be planted in this belt.

A youth training programme has been started in the Matrimandir Workshop. Six boys from the village come every morning to learn carpentry and the use of power tools and other carpentry equipment recently donated from America. They also learn English and are given their morning meals at the Matrimandir site.



Work progresses in the amphitheatre

* * *

1973, April 22nd: *Excerpt from Ruud's "Matrimandir Diary":*

A new shady place has been put up at Matrimandir, in bamboo and keet, to house the paint workshop and the preparation of the wood for the hoist towers. The steel pipes are being straightened, the work is going on all through the holy night of Easter, and painted black, not a colour of the new age but a good protection. Also, the beautiful silver oak is blackened for the same reason, but why can only black paint protect? Three lorries of wood have come so far and today the carpenters are supposed to go to Salem again for the selection of wood for the next two lorries. The small foundation footings for the hoist towers are ready and the whole night some of our workers have been drilling bolt holes in the 4" x 4" beams. We are going to build the towers simultaneously, the first layer of all four pillars, and so on.

The lime concretings in the amphitheatre continue, five half-circles have been cast in lime now and the result is very satisfactory. It looks as good, if not better, than concrete. We started using lime as mortar, especially for the foundation bricks of the walls that form the edges of the steps. The problem is-to prevent people from walking on those lime walls, for the lime sets only after week or so and must not be touched before then. The brick walls demarcating the steps get higher and higher, the closer we come to the top. For those walls lime mortar was quite impractical. And so it happened again, as things continually happen in the amphitheatre: even with the crisis of cement and only two bags left in the storeroom, we got one hundred bags just in time to go on with our work in the best possible way. We had already made arrangements to borrow ten bags for a special job, fitting the 45 cm cement pipes for the water disposal system; but now we can manage. About twenty of the pipes are in position, starting from the water tank under the stage, and all the other pipes leading up to the Workers' Camp garden have arrived. While putting them down and reaching up to the level of the future control room (for which the excavation is ready), we suddenly realised that water is going to come from there, that we may have to make a connection and that we should immediately stop the work. So we did, and we rushed to Vikas to ask for the drawings and specifications for the control room. Vikas has made a serious start on the designs now, and we expect to be able to start construction soon.

[Ruud then reports of his visit, together with Alain, to Huta who shared with them what Mother had told her about Matrimandir and its gardens.]

* * *

1973, April 25th: *Excerpt from Roger Toll's diary:*

Today Madhav came, began with some words on yesterday's message. After his talk, Narad asked him what he felt about the darshan. Madhav said he was very struck by Mother's condition: so much pain and so weak, and he felt such remorse. He had seen her in her glory, he said. Yesterday he felt only human emotions upon seeing her appear. Then I asked exactly what is happening right now. She is not sick, he said, but is undergoing the labour of the cells' transformation. She had seen the transformed body. A few people are seeing her, but no words except to Satprem. "Her eyes are infinite, more than ever before," he said. "She is completely at one with the Divine and often in trance." Her problem, he said, comes from terrible nerve pain.

[Roger Toll comments: "From early-April through June 11, with a small, dedicated crew, we start building the scaffolding that will support work on the Matrimandir itself. An entry from that time reads".]

We start work on the pipe scaffolding in the hole. Initially there is [Boris] Bosco and Richard helping me, but soon David Salmon joins us. And for the first time in Matrimandir, four people show up late every afternoon and work late into the night after the heat has cooled off.

* * *

1973, April 28th: *Excerpt from two versions of a letter from Huta to Mother*³⁹:

Typed & signed version signed by Huta, kept at AV Archives; SA, pp. 161-62,
English

I have been always frank with You because You are my true Mother and I know that You understand me perfectly well.

What You have said about the secret chambers in the Matrimandir, is perfectly right. I myself feel within me that the Supreme Lord and the Supreme Mother do not need any human devices. So it is all right. But I hope that the beautiful gardens, rockeries, small waterfalls and tall trees will be retained.

You have confirmed to build my house in framework of the gardens. But let me inform You and clear this matter, that 3 months back or so Alain and Ruud came to me according to Roger's instructions. They showed me the plan and spoke to me that Roger had told them that somehow Roger and these people would accommodate me in one of the rooms of the Reception Building which would be quite far from the Matrimandir – at the end of the garden. If Roger explained to You this framework of the gardens, then he means exactly that, and perhaps from his point of view I am supposed to be a receptionist and not the guardian of the Matrimandir.

You have appointed me a guardian of the Matrimandir, and You told me and wrote to me several times that my tiny house would be very close to the Matrimandir. How can I remain very far if I have to look after the Shrine? And I cannot be a receptionist because I do not know the job.

It is understood from within that it is out of the question to have my house in one of the petals of the Matrimandir, because the Truth must stand by itself – above everything and everyone. But to be reasonable, isn't it proper to have a very small house surrounded by trees and flowers somewhere near the Matrimandir? With all my heart and soul I do aspire to remain near the Shrine and serve the Truth and do the work whatever You command, but please don't send me far.

I am sure You will plan out everything regarding my life and work. And You will surely fulfil the aspiration of my soul.⁴⁰

* * *

³⁹ Note that, as yet, Mother doesn't seem to have responded as yet to Huta's request (on 28th March) to be relieved from Matrimandir's guardianship and that Huta doesn't speak about it anymore.

⁴⁰ Huta does not write anything about the outcome of this letter.

1973, May

1973, May 4th: *Excerpt from Shyam Sunder's notes published in his "Down Memory Lane":*

DML p. 287
English

Madanlal Himatsingka's letter regarding funds for Matrimandir. He feels that he should work for it.

Mother says:

Very good, I am happy over the proposal. All my force is with you.

* * *

1973, May 6th: *Excerpt from a letter from Huta to Mother (which is read to Her on 10th). She writes it after meeting with Roger and Shyam Sunder on Mother's terrace, and talking about her house near Matrimandir:*

Typed & signed letter @ AV-Archives; SA, pp. 162-63.
English

I had a talk with Roger regarding my house and the Matrimandir. Shyam Sunder also was present. Roger is willing to give a location to my residence in the Matrimandir area – nearest the Matrimandir. But Roger is anxious and would like to know clearly and precisely the work I am expected to do by the Divine Mother as the guardian of the Matrimandir. Then and then only Roger can proceed further and can plan out everything accordingly.

Roger said that there are many things which are to be done in the Matrimandir as it is a very huge thing.

1. Control of visitors – (as The Mother has said that the admission will be restricted).
2. Information of the work in the Matrimandir itself when it is ready.
3. Cleaning and maintenance.
4. Priestess of Matrimandir – That is just to watch and see!

Finally, Roger said that everything would be possible for him to arrange once my work as guardian would be decided by the Divine Mother, and he is ready to do exactly according to The Mother's Will.

Roger is going to Paris on the 12th Saturday, so it is very important that he should know as soon as possible regarding the matter so that he could do the needful by working out everything according to Your instructions.

Indeed, I too am wondering what work I shall have to do over there. Nevertheless, whatever You have willed for my soul and its aspiration, let it be done. And I will with all my heart carry out Your command in all Truth and Love.

[Huta adds:]

This letter was read by Vasudha on Thursday 10th May, to Mother.

* * *

1973, May 8th: *Excerpt from Ruud's "Matrimandir Diary":*

Since last Darshan the air has been purified a bit and things are taking a good turn, although the overall process remains slow. While Piero was on holiday, last week, the four first layers of the wooden towers were put up and the wood for the second layers, which will bring the towers above zero-level, is being prepared. This week all the steel pipes were painted black. Now they are being cut and taken down. It is not clear yet who is going to put them up, and how. Piero likes to work with the team of carpenters because they work with precision, so he feels. But there are also the barbenders, other workers, and the Aurovilians. We'll see. The carpenters are already quite busy with the wood, under the guidance of Gérard, so others may have a chance this time. Right on Darshan day, a few minutes after appeared for a very short while on the balcony, maybe fifteen seconds, Alain and I met Mr. Arora, our purchasing agent, who introduced us to a man who has a say

in cement matters. He promised us as much cement as we can store, 5,000 bags or whatever we want. Even the designs are completed. Roger is making the-last changes before he leaves again for Paris. Now there is nothing, not even material, that can hold things back any more, one would say. Blockages to the work can only settle in persons now.

The Pondy side of the amphitheatre was covered with lime slabs up to step 9, i.e., over half. The other side was still bare last week. Suddenly the workers got into it, the lime mixture happened to be ready in large quantity, and for a whole week the concretings went on full-time, and now that underdeveloped side is covered up to step 7 from the top, even further then the south side. In the meantime the masons, numbering fourteen now, completed all the brick walls on the south side up to the very top. Here there was some complication, for we had to build extra support walls for the portions where the amphitheatre rises above zero level. The soil above zero was put five years ago and is still not settled enough. So we cannot work with lime in these upper areas but must prepare for concrete slabs with special provision against cracking and sinking, etc. This week Shyam Sunder asked us to get the amphitheatre ready by 15th August, including tiles. That is too much, for neither the formula nor the design for the tile mosaic have been finalised. The structure of the amphitheatre, the walls and the slabs with the mount on which the urn sits and the stage will be ready within five or six weeks, but what will happen next cannot be said yet. Michel is working on the designs for the tiles and has been experimenting with real tiles for the past few days, but if by Saturday the designs are not ready, Roger will take everything to Paris and get it done by one of his friends.⁴¹ We still do not have the design for the mount either. Several people have worked on it, but it doesn't work yet. We cannot get those spiral paths and the niche on top back. We would like so much to complete it, but we are still held back.

After much trouble to obtain lime (though last week we finally had enough of it), we decided to start our own lime kiln. It is now under construction; just outside the future garden area behind the amphitheatre. It will be a seven-metre high structure, with a diameter of slightly more than one metre. On the top coal and rough lime are poured in, and it comes out the bottom again. It is supposed to run continuously and produce two tons of lime per day, almost as much as we are using now. Yesterday the structure reached zero level. When the bulldozer and the earth rammer and the drawings for the petals come, we can start on the first one of them and then we will need plenty of lime.

Something is happening about bricks too. Some of our workers produced 300 bricks, made from the earth of Matrimandir, and have been firing them for the past three days. Today they will open up the village-type kiln, behind the steel yard, and we will see the result. Mr. Murthi, an expert in these things determined the components of the earth and found it to be very satisfactory for making bricks.

On April 28th, we had a meeting with the two S.E.R.C. engineers who have been working on the meditation rooms. They could not give much information on the various solutions for the petals and we still do not know how things will be. It came down to two major models on which they are now, working, to be presented to us on May 18th: the petals completely filled up, without meditation rooms but with the possibility to dig them out later if we want to; or completely empty, i.e., a shell in concrete with a huge open space inside, in which we could do anything we want later on. This solution stands for plasticity, and it looks as if this one is going to make it. It will be expensive in any case, so we do not have to worry about that. But as long as we do not have the clear vision, it is good to keep things open and flexible.

* * *

⁴¹ Most probably by Charles Gianferrari.

1973, May 10th: *Vasudha came to Huta to tell her Mother's answer. Later, Huta typed her statement and Vasudha signed it at her request:*

MMTL, p. 32; SA, p. 163
English

The Mother said to Roger on the 10th May 1973, when I was with her:

"She [Huta] will keep the keys of the Matrimandir. She will open and close the Matrimandir, and she will also see whether everything is all right in the Matri Mandir."

The Mother said to Roger on the 10th May 1973, when I was with her:

"She will keep the keys of The Matri Mandir. She will open and close The Matri Mandir, and, she will also see whether everything is all right in the Matri Mandir."

Vasudha

*

*Excerpt from Roger's personal notes*⁴²:

Roger's personal archives

Seen Mother on 11th May 1973.

Concerning UTA. During Matrimandir's early days, it was foreseen to locate a house for her in the gardens around Matrimandir; but this was centuries ago. Matrimandir's conception is now entirely changed. So?⁴³

Roger: It is still possible.

Very good. What she should do?

I do not know, we shall see.

Roger: The keys of Matrimandir!

That's it. It is very good.

u Men. le 11 mai 73
au sujet UTA. Dans les premiers
temps de la Matrimandir il était
prévu de placer une maison pour elle
dans les jardins autour du Matrimandir.
Mais il y a des siècles, la conception
du Matrimandir a maintenant changé
alors
- c'est encore possible
- très possible - ce qu'elle doit faire
à son souvenir ou à son
souhait du Matrimandir! c'est ça, c'est tout.

* * *

1973, May 11th: *Excerpt from Huta's words in her "The Spirit of Auroville"*

SA, pp. 163-64
English

Roger never approached me or conveyed the Mother's message.

The next day [after the 10th] I went to Mother and expressed my profound gratitude, and prayed for her to make me worthy of the Supreme Truth, in her Light and Love. She went in a trance for a brief while, then pressed my hands. I took my leave with mixed feelings.

After reaching my apartment, I read all the Mother's letters, and the letters sent by other people. I also reviewed all my letters to the Mother and other people. Still my mind was not clear or at rest. I sat in my meditation room for quite a long time and felt strongly that what I had stated in my previous letter to the Mother, dated 28.3.73, was in tune with my soul's aspiration. I was inspired, and rushed to Vasudha in the evening with a copy of the letter and requested her to reread it to the Mother, because it was a question of life and death – I must know the Mother's final wish.

The letter was read out to the Mother early in the morning when Vasudha went to comb the Mother's hair. Later Vasudha came to my house with the Mother's blessing packet and said:

"Huta you know, the Mother cannot see properly and cannot possibly write to you, because she is too weak. She listened attentively to your letter which I read to her loudly. Then she went into a trance for a long time. After that she asked me to give you her blessing packet and convey this message to you: "I know this. Tell her that it is better like that. My love and blessings are always with her."

⁴² « Au sujet d'Huta. Dans les premiers temps du Matrimandir il était prévu de placer une maison pour elle dans les jardins autour du Matrimandir. Mais il y a des siècles, la conception du Matrimandir a maintenant changée alors... C'est encore possible.

Très bien alors. Ce qu'elle doit faire. J'en sais rien. On verra.

Les clefs du Matrimandir! C'est ça, c'est très bien. »

⁴³ Note that it is not clear whether Mother, or Roger, said these three lines.

So, Huta, the Mother has granted your prayer.”

My eyes were filled with tears of relief and gratitude. I felt that my whole being was free. The Mother had released me.

Later my apartment got repaired and renovated. Once again I plunged into the ocean of elevating work the Mother had entrusted to me for the whole of Humanity.

In fact the Mother never wanted me to be a public figure. I never uttered a word of my release to people concerned, my own people and to my friends. I kept absolutely quiet and silent. I watched and waited for the proper time to act.⁴⁴

* * *

1973, May (after the 11th): *Mother receives Roger for the last time.*

Alain Grandcolas told the editor that Roger was very keen to know what should be done about Huta's house and that he asked Mother. She wasn't speaking but made a gesture which Roger understood as meaning "forget about it". Such would indeed be the case if this last meeting took place after Mother had accepted Huta's resignation as Matrimandir's "guardian".

* * *

1973, May 13th: *Excerpt from Ruud's "Matrimandir Diary":*

These days Matrimandir is facing one of her big crises. A really huge one, though maybe quite easily solved. Now all the materials are there, the steel, the wood for the towers and the shuttering, the cement is on its way, the designs are ready. Something else had to be invented to halt the progress of Matrimandir, and it has been found: a conflict at the top. This week, Piero and Roger have discussed things which he says he never knew, which he cannot accept and which must first be changed before we can proceed. The items on which he disagrees are not as important as the disagreement itself. These items include the ramps, the discs, the staircases, the first and second levels, and the hottest topic of all, the surrounding area. In Roger's vision this consists of systematic hills in red tiles of whatever red material. Piero wants trees and benches to make the Matrimandir a part of the life of the city. When Roger stressed that this area is different and that not everyone will be allowed to enter, Piero almost fainted. I don't understand, for we have heard about Matrimandir's particularity on several occasions, but not Piero. Piero feels that this will make Matrimandir into a dead monument, a new Vatican, and those who will be allowed to enter into a new class, a Brahmin caste. Coming from an old world of monuments, he is not prepared to build yet another monument. In the meantime, nobody around here seems to care very much about these opinions and mental interpretations. We want to work, to build Matrimandir as soon as possible. Roger's vision is good enough, it is consistent and beautiful and, moreover, carries weight since Roger is the chief architect of Matrimandir and has all support from Mother who has repeatedly said that she likes Roger's design very much. And for the rest, what do we know? We can reflect for ages upon the meaning of the building and argue for centuries about who will be allowed in, but that remains within our own small circle. The thing has to be built, and quickly, and now we have come to a point of saying that if Piero does not do it, then we shall have to find somebody else. It would be a pity, because Piero is a world-class engineer and what he has realised so far is world-class engineering. But we cannot wait. The aim is Mother's Centenary, 1978, and that is only five years away. Somebody has called for a meeting today at 3 p.m. Something has to be decided then.

*

⁴⁴ Huta kept quiet for more than 20 years before informing all those concerned that her house wasn't needed any more. It is only in the nineties that she came out publicly about her resignation in an article in *Mother India*.

MATRIMANDIR – Approximate Cost

1. Excavation, foundations, piers		Rs. 800,000
2. Main structure:		
a) ribs	m ³ 640	
b) level 1	100	
c) level 2	100	
d) level 3	140	
e) level 4	80	
f) dodeca wall	<u>300</u>	
	1,360 m ³	600,000
3. Scaffold and propping material		300,000
4. Ramps in steel, 60 tonnes		300,000
5. Other materials, machines, etc.		150,000
6. Labour		300,000
7. Water tank, drainage, pumps		250,000
8. Electricity, ventilation		200,000
9. Outside covering: ⁴⁵		
a) steel structure, 150 tonnes		
b) concrete and mortar for plastering		1,000,000
10. Discs: m ² 3,500		
a) stainless steel, 40 tonnes		
b) special alloy steel supports		
c) sealing of the cover with plastic compound		1,200,000
11. Top closing, optic system		200,000
12. Marble for floors and walls:		
a) levels I, 2, 3, 750 m ²		
b) dodeca wall, 2,100 m ²		570,000
13. Finishing of ramps, with rubber floor (250 m ²)		
stainless steel covering and parapet (7 tonnes)		200,000
14. Crystal sphere, symbols, interior decoration		<u>300,000</u>
		6,370,000
15. Outside flooring, paths, staircases 10,000 m ²		500,000
16. Twelve Petals		2,000,000
17. Twelve meditation rooms		1,000,000
18. Garden, flooring, amphitheatre 90,000 m ²		4,500,000
19. Water canals drainage, fountains		500,000
20. Other miscellaneous		<u>130,000</u>
TOTAL		Rs. 15,000,000

* * *

1973, May 14th: *Note from Shyam Sunder to Piero:*

Handwritten & unsigned kept @ AV-Archives
English

Dear Piero,

In yesterday's meeting, I could feel the negative elements coming to the front, A calm contemplation in an aspiration for the Divine's Service is likely to give another light.

Yours sincerely

*

⁴⁵ Note that the idea here for the "outside covering" is a steel and concrete structure.

Letter from Piero to Roger:

Types & unsigned kept @ AV-Archives
French, translation by G.G.

Dear Roger,

After you left, I thought in a very positive and concrete way about the possibility of finding another solution for the first two levels by following the general direction given by you, in particular about the staircase at the centre within the cone.

The possibility of having the second level well pronounced in the Matrimandir appears positive for the following reasons:

- One would avoid the narrow and compulsory passage between staircase and ramp.
- One would allow going from one ramp to the other without having to go down to the first level and to circulate around the cone.
- One would allow resting at a level other than that of the shoes, and in a very beautiful hall with a view on the ramps and Matrimandir's centre.
- One can eliminate all the problems of handrails, and in the overall view would look simple. One could accentuate even more the end of the handrail, at the centre, so that it can be seen as the aspiration fire rising upwards.
- One could widen slightly the hole at the centre of the staircases and cone.
- The engineers' design would be altered only in a secondary way with regard to the design they have already given to us and hence some time would be saved.

If you agree to it, I could try and make a model and send you some photos of it, but for that we would require your permission.

I am also working at solving the problem of the ramps in the last drawings: it seems that if we would retain the same slope from the start, after going a half circle one's head would hit the rib's beam.

So it seems to be useless for the engineers to study this option. If you remember we have already encountered this difficulty in an old solution.

Yesterday we had a meeting at the Centre to study the following phases of the work.

We all feel the need to carry on with the work as fast as possible.

We would like to have some instructions about the lighting system and your opinion on the ventilation study proposed by Chamanlal.

We also hope that when you return the Matrimandir team will have more frequent exchanges with you on the progress of the construction.

With my friendship.

*

Letter from Piero to Roger Toll and Gérard Maréchal:

Hand-written & signed, kept @ AV-Archives.
English

Dear Roger and Gérard

Maybe do you think will be good to finish the hoisting towers and the scaffold already started. I am ready for it. The scaffold can be started also tomorrow morning. I will make today the small modification required from the design.

Truth

*

Note from Piero to [unspecified] friends:

Handwritten & signed @ AV Archives
French

Dear friends,

I am only able to thank you for all that you have so wonderfully given in work to Mother in the work and to me with your sincere friendship. I feel very strongly that something took place between us

in these extraordinary circumstances. I always find being here with you fraternally, with calm, love and for Truth.

Piero

*

Letter from Seyril to Piero:

Typed & signed, kept @ AV-Archives.
English

Dear Piero,

Yesterday evening and this morning while working there came very strongly the feeling of the great mission entrusted to you to accomplish the execution of the MATRIMANDIR. And that if you turn away now from this work to which you have been called, you will be losing the greatest opportunity of a lifetime.

The circumstances are part of the challenge – for all of us to change consciousness, if we are doing the Yoga. You know how strongly I have felt the beauty and precision of your work, the purity and dedication brought to it... Yet yesterday taught me a lesson – through Shyam Sunder's own purity and dedication: (a very important lesson Westerners can learn from the spiritual India, the necessity of the complete surrender to the guru through whom the Divine acts for and upon us directly.

If you can find the strength within – when you call for it, it will be given – to accept what has been given to work on, and aspire for perfection through that work – will not the Power guiding Matrimandir see to it that the present design will be altered towards perfection?

All of us want the work to go forward, with the faith that as we work, through us as instruments – and all are instruments, each in his own way the right thing will be accomplished.

“There is a purpose in each stumble and fall...

Preparing come forward step, some deep result...”

Please don't leave a work so greatly begun. You are an essential part of it ... and we love you.

Truth.

Seyril

If you feel it to correspond with Roger concerning suggestions & changes, I would do anything needful in typing the correspondence for you.

*

Letter from Seyril to Shyam Sunder handwritten on a copy of her letter to Piero:

Handwritten & signed, kept @ AV-Archives.
English

Dear Shyam Sunder,

Perhaps you too felt that something positive must now come out of Sunday meeting.

- 1) Would you like a copy of Piero's letter posted today on the Camp board he has written to all Matrimandir workers.*
- 2) The need is being felt to centralise and concentrate all Matrimandir architect's and engineering work- drawings, research in ventilation, electricity & inner-environmental problems, in ONE Architect's Office located on the Matrimandir site, such as ECC has at Bharat Nivas.*

Perhaps this is the building project which could include a guest reception, as well as a place for the model, that could be sent to the “Petit Zoizo” Group in Montreal (Robert Lorain for financing.

- 3) When would you like your Study Circle ...*

[The remaining part of the letter is too faded to be readable].

* * *

1973, May 15th: Letter from Alain G. to Piero:

Hand-written and signed, kept @ AV-Archives.
French; translation by G.G.

Piero

Roger [Toll] told me that you are coming this afternoon to speak to us about the scaffolding and to show us also a new proposal for the design of the Matrimandir.

We will be happy to speak with you of the scaffolding so that this work can be started at the earliest.

But, regarding the new drawings, it should remain a topic between you and Roger [Anger], so as not to slow down the work and avoid other discussions between the two of you. I thought this had already been made sufficiently clear.

With my entire friendship,

Alain

P.S.: Vikas was to go and see [Gabriel] Richardet today to help him in the execution design. Now he is waiting for this meeting... There is no end.

*

1973, May 15th: Letter from Alain G. to Piero:

Hand-written and signed, kept @ AV-Archives.
French; translation by G.G.

Shyam Sunder,

I have just sent this letter to Piero who would have designed "a wonderful compromise between the solutions of Roger and Piero", and who has sent the drawings to Roger.

Piero is to come and show you this solution this afternoon – So, Vikas who has agreed to help Richardet. Won't go today, because he prefers meeting Piero first, in the hope that maybe Piero will agree to work on it again.

In other words, Piero keeps slowing down the work.

Alain

* * *

1973, May 16th: Letter from Seyril to Shyam Sunder:

Typed & signed, kept @ AV-Archives.
English

Dear Shyam Sunder-ji,

As you know, yesterday at 4:30pm, Piero brought in the execution studies for the central interior of Matrimandir based upon Roger's design (the 2nd) presented before Roger left for Paris. The Matrimandir workers who saw it felt that this was a solution, the true part of the structural realisation, on which work could proceed, in the right direction.

There was a feeling of harmony, a sense of rightness of the execution studies; and when we went into Matrimandir to begin construction of the tubular scaffolding, a sense of unity and gladness. Piero was directing with precision and care the infinitely exacting details of Matrimandir construction.

We aspire to the continuation of this sense of unity and harmony – that Mother's Guidance may be increasingly felt amongst us.

Truth.

*

Letter from Paolo Tommasi to Piero:

AV Archives
Italian

Dear Piero,

I had a long conversation with Shyamsunder. He has written to Roger and insisted on his approbation to your project, I would even say, to your solution.

He is fully in agreement with this kind of “frame” which he wants to make in cement. He finds it ugly and mainly “costly”.⁴⁶

He is perfectly happy with the local team. He esteems and loves you.

Today I wanted to mention it to Mother but as she was in “transe” I couldn’t.

As soon as there will be an opportunity, I’ll try to push my little nail.

I embrace you.

Nata

* * *

1973, May 16th: *Beginning of the construction of the sphere of the Matrimandir with the cutting, painting and fitting of 8 km of steel tube pipes for heavy-duty scaffolding, capable of taking the weight of the lower region of the sphere (approx. 400 tons).*

Ruud’s “Matrimandir Diary”, entry dated 29th December 1973

Susan Wrey & Janet Fearn
painting pipes



* * *

1973, May 18th: *Mother receives Huta for the last time (a silent meditation).*

The Spirit of Auroville, p.165

English

* * *

1973, May 19th: *Note from Shyam Sunder to Piero:*

Handwritten & signed, kept @ AV-Archives.

French; translation by G.G.

Dear Piero,

Today I have informed Mother of the starting of the work above the Pillars.

*

Excerpt from Shyam Sunder’s notes published in his “Down Memory Lane”:

Down Memory Lane, p. 288

English

Informed Mother about the commencement of the construction of Matrimandir above the four pillars.

*

Excerpt from a letter from Huta to Mother:

Typed & signed, kept @ AV-Archives.

English

We shall need a lot of money to accomplish the Divine’s work – also the Matrimandir must be built before Your Centenary. I pray to You sincerely to make everything possible and done by Your Power and Grace.

Finally, I am ever grateful to You for all that You are doing for me. Also You explained to Roger about my final work as a guardian of Matrimandir – that I should open and close the Shrine. For, I would have the key, and would see whether everything is all right in there.⁴⁷

I pray to You to make me worthy and prepare me for this work and let my life be a perfect and living consecration to You alone.

*

⁴⁶ “La truva brutta e soprattutto :”cara”.

⁴⁷ This is a truly amazing letter. Didn’t Huta explain in “The Spirit of Auroville” that, on 11th May – that is 8 days earlier, she had resigned this assignment and that Mother had sent a word to her that it was better like this?

Mother receives Satprem and Sujata for the last time.

* * *

1973, May 20th: *Mother receives Shyam Sunder for the last time. From then onwards, only her son, André, and her personal attendants will visit her in her room.*

* * *

1973, May 21st: *Note from Piero to Shyam Sunder,*

Handwritten & signed, kept @ AV-Archives
English

Dear Shyam Sunder,

Is it possible that Alain will go to Madras Wednesday to give drawings (which drawings?) with your approval to the engineers? It will be much better to have the answer of Roger?⁴⁸

Truth.

* * *

1973, May 22nd: *Excerpt from a letter from Mr. Ramiah, Deputy Director SERC to Roger, copy to Piero and Dr. C.L. Gupta:*

Piero's personal archives
English

This in continuation of our letter dated 28th March to Mr. Piero with a copy to you and Dr. Gupta. We have not received any reply so far for the points mentioned in the above letter.

We note that you have made a lot of changes in the slabs at Level 2 and a few other portions. As we have already stated, we are not free to work on this job for an indefinite period.

We suggest that you finalise all the changes in the architectural details and give us the final drawings. We may have to come to a new arrangement specifying a definite time schedule and additional consultancy fees. In this respect, we would like to state that we may not be able to keep our scientists on this job for more than another 3 or 2½ months.

An early reply will be appreciated

[...]

* * *

1973, May 25th: *Letter from Roger Anger to Piero:*

Typed and signed
French; translation by G.G.

Paris, May 25th 1973

My dear Piero,

Thank you for your letter and the drawings attached to it.

I have studied with a lot of attention your proposal. It is certain that it is difficult for me to go into some details, without having the models and plans in front of my eyes, as fixed by me. In any case, I do not see anything which could, in an obvious way, make this latest solution prevail and this for the following reason: in particular as agreed between us, I still think that the slab located below the start of the ramp is very disturbing and the creation at that level of a platform floor still appears to me as unnecessary and without any real justification.

Hence, I tend to, and this after taking the advice of Mario [Heyman], who is less involved and a greater objectivity, believe that it is not convincing to consider this solution as final. However it seems that the two studies are not too far away from each other for us not to be able to find a happy synthesis in the future, after letting some aspects decant and make the ideas progress, which, I am convinced, should definitely be possible.

In order to get out of this impasse, which unfortunately blocks a lot of things, I suggest to you to leave the door open to later modifications in the limit of what you are wishing. In other words, adopt the structural solution of solution 1 after making some provisions you find useful.

⁴⁸ Piero's English was still not-so-good. He seems to mean: "Wouldn't it better to have Roger's answer?"

The main problem pertains to the hooking of the ramp to the main structure is solved as it is common to both proposals.

So, without bothering for the time being, about the inner staircase that could be modified later, we would have the possibility of adding another part of the slab or modifying the cone; this, being made easier if this possibility is taken into consideration in the engineers calculations.

This should allow, if you would agree to it, to start without delay the works, while confirming the data mentioned in the plans which have already been handed to the engineers and are with them since several weeks already. You would simply have to place some steel rods that you would find necessary to prevent ulterior developments, as mentioned above.

I hope that this solution will allow you to look at the future with serenity and to put all your strength in re-starting the works at the earliest.

In sincere friendship.

Sd/ Roger

P.S.: Regarding the modification of the landing of the ramps in the petals, this solution cannot be retained. It is contrary to the desired effect, which is at the root of the project.

C.C.: Shyam Sunder
Grandcolas

* * *

1973, May 26th: *Excerpt from a letter from Shyam Sunder to Huta:*

SA, p. 168
English

The architectural tangle about the construction of Matrimandir is not yet solved. It seems that something will happen soon. I am praying for it.

* * *

1973, May 27th: *Excerpt from Ruud's "Matrimandir Diary":*

It was a three-hour meeting on Sunday afternoon. About twelve Aurovilian workers were present, with Piero and Gloria and Shyam Sunder with Norman Dowsett. All the hot topics came under discussion, and no real results were obtained, though it was very clear that the whole construction team, without exception, wants to build, to move ahead, not to wait any longer. A question of faith is strongly involved in this whole discussion: the question whether we plan and build and foresee and provide, or whether we just go on and make ourselves into channels for the Divine Architect' who builds Matrimandir. The group clearly stands for the second alternative. At about 6 p. m. the meeting broke up. One thing was clear to some of the members, among whom Shyam Sunder, Alain and myself: we should go ahead finding more architects and engineers to form a team in order to supervise, design and execute the whole Matrimandir project – the sphere, meditation rooms, amphitheatre, water system, surrounding gardens) as one great living unit. In November already we approached a retired engineer, Mr. Nagershet, who joined the ashram a year ago, but went back for some work to his home in the North. At the instigation of Shyam Sunder we have now invited him to come soon and devote three years full-time to Matrimandir. Saturday evening Alain and I were going to see Shyam Sunder about the whole situation and just at the last minute before leaving, Alain got a letter from the 'Design-team', those young architects from Ahmedabad who entered the competition for Bharat Nivas and got the second prize. Roger and many others were delighted by the spirit of the team and their work and they too were highly interested in Auroville. Now they asked, in their letter, how things are and whether they can be of any help in the development of the project. We decided to invite one of them to Matrimandir to discuss their possible contribution. We feel more and more that for such a huge project quite a team is required, and that more and more the factor of planning and provision is required, not to prevent the workings of the Divine, but to create more flexible channels for this influence.

On Tuesday afternoon at 4 p.m., Piero came with a set of drawings, proposing a compromise solution for the second slab. Instead of the system of structural beams and the slab leading to the ramps, Piero suggested a full slab creating much more useful space, where people can sit and

meditate or wait before going up into the main chamber. A few of the group were there and liked Piero's visual drawings very much. Others felt that there is no use in compromising because it holds things up again unnecessarily, and secondly because Roger has studied this solution in all its details and rejected it. Piero wants only to stress the upper chamber and leave out any further detail. In the meantime, Mr. Richardet, Roger's draughtsman, will work out the drawing according to Roger's plan, which will be ready by the end of this week. Vikas will help him. Yesterday Piero sent the drawings to Roger in Paris, and Shyam Sunder also sent Roger a letter urging him to reply quickly, preferably by wire, yes or no.

After Piero had presented the interim solution, he went down into the Matrimandir and started with Roger, Gérard, the barbenders, carpenters and coolies, erecting the scaffolding. We are in a heat wave, for the past two weeks already, so the steel pipes which have been put next to the pillars in full sun are too hot to touch. Tuesday and yesterday the work could only start after 3 p.m. With all the discussions on the second slab, we found out that the structure of the first slab is hardly affected, so why not go ahead and build the first slab? In the meantime the problem may have been solved. There is only one minor point now, which will solve itself. It is that the group here, through all these months of hanging around, has become so diversified and in a way specialised – in workshop, painting, amphitheatre, administration, etc. – that only some of the members can be involved with the scaffolding, namely, those who have been preparing it and happen to be in close contact with Piero. When we get a bigger team of engineers and executors we may be able to accomplish what we ourselves cannot manage to do: to consider the whole Matrimandir as one being, one body and one soul, to pool materials and workers, to work wherever the centre of activity happens to be, and not to care about who works where and who does what. All that, however, is the old ego which claims parts of the work for itself. We had reached some kind of a harmony in the group while erecting the pillars. It has broken down in the holy days since November, during which the amphitheatre alone progressed. But who knows, it may have been a vital harmony, a superficial balance of forces which had to break down for a higher, truer harmony to emerge, which we expect to grow through our building the Matrimandir together.

Behind the whole thing there is one more mental discussion which remains mostly implicit but did surface in a small meeting last week. One tendency, right from the beginning, is; The Aurovilians have to build the Matrimandir, it has to be done in the right spirit with much consciousness, very concentrated and calm, no hurrying, no vibrations which cannot be controlled, not too many workers, no disturbance in the atmosphere in which Matrimandir has to grow. Another tendency is, the thing has to be built as soon as possible so we can, do as many projects as we can, or even cannot, handle. Once the Matrimandir is there, or maybe even sooner if it pleases the Divine, it will be made into a strong centre of force, as Mother told she would do. So we do not have to care too much now about who does it: it does not have to be our consciousness of this level which makes the Matrimandir into a centre of force. We just have to get the thing together. We do not even have to worry about the mole superficial types of harmony and brotherhood and the avoidance of conflicts, etc., which type of harmony is not the right and full one anyhow. We have to go ahead. Mother seems more in the line of the second type, since we know that she has repeatedly said that the whole project should be given to an outside company in order to finish it quickly. Our task now, at the time of this most recent conflict, is to get a team together that will prevent further delays of months and months, as we have just passed through. It must a priori be clear that many negative forces are trying to stop this project, so we can expect all kinds of attacks, from outside or from within, and will have to be firm.

* * *

1973, May, 28th: *Letter from Piero (who hasn't received Roger's latest letter as yet) to Roger:*

Handwritten & signed; kept @ AV-Archives
French, translation by G.G.

Dear Roger,

I have also sent to you a sketch of the last solution which you had left with us, which I did in order to better see the problems, while waiting for an answer to my letter dated 14.5.73

In friendship

*

Unsigned letter to Piero:

Typed; kept @ AV-Archives
English but the quote is also in French

Dear Piero,

You may know this quotation from Sri Aurobindo which seems especially to speak to all of us working on Matrimandir:

“In the yoga of life it is the man who persists unwearied to the last in the face of every defeat and disillusionment and of all confronting, hostile and contradicting events and powers who conquers in the end and finds justified because to the soul and Shakti in man nothing is impossible” (Sri Aurobindo –Bulletin, Aug. '65)

* * *

1973, May: *Piero and others start erecting the scaffolding to support the slab of the first level:*



* * *

1973, May 29th: *Excerpt from a letter from Piero to Paolo Tommasi:*

Typed letter.

Italian, translated into French by Dominique and then into English by Gilles. Scan available.

Very dear Paolo,

I am writing to you again to speak to you about Matrimandir. Finally, works progress rather fast; we have received and erected the tubular scaffolding, we are completing the four wooden hoist towers which face the four pillars and we completed a while ago the 4 propping towers which will support the main structure during construction. Roger left again for Paris 20 days ago leaving with us an incomplete design and an unfinished model of the sphere's lower part, which pertain to the first two levels and to the start of the spiral ramps. The main change pertains to the staircases between the first and second levels which are now at the centre within a kind of cone. The sketch he handed us has several defects (listing them would be too long): we are still far from the final design.

The fact is that the relation with Roger is rather tense. He is the kind of person who, when he doesn't find the solution to a problem, blames others for it, me in this case. It seems I have created a difficult situation for him (?) with all my concrete observations and by demanding simplicity.

A few days ago, I sent him the drawings of a more "simplistic" project, but which seems to better reflect what Matrimandir should be.

Yesterday we spoke with Dominique who flies back to Paris in a few days, after 6 months spent in Auroville and various communities.

Eventually, it seems to me that in order to explain the Matrimandir and its origin, the best is to refer to your words and your expressions at the beginning, to the conversations Mother had with Satprem, to this something pure and simple that is still floating in the air, and within reach of those who are genuinely interested. After that it became a gigantic project. For me the past few months have been rather difficult, with the cancelled meetings with Roger and on the fly discussions, hours wasted in Roger's studio waiting for designs and studies and his total lack of interest for the project etc. At times I wonder if it is worth carrying on. Like that, while speaking about you, it appeared to us obvious that you should be here, by Roger's side, looking with him for ways to improve the project. Paolo you should really make an effort. Here everybody is convinced that what is presently at stakes for the Matrimandir is fundamental and that there won't be any other, that we can't let go. Matrimandir is the tone setter in Auroville. Those who work here are exceptional people, who truly believe in a very different future. We need to avoid falling back into the old clichés which stick everywhere. If you go to Paris, go and meet Dominique, she has understood. Try and speak to Roger if you can. All those who know you feel the importance of what you may still be able to do and that a word from you weighs more than all our discourses here. I don't dare asking you to go there for this only; it could be a massacre game, but please, help us if you can. I do not know whether Roger will be here in June when you will be coming (I hope). He has gone for 3 months. But we, during that time, what do we do? The only thing we want is to build the things Roger is fully convinced of, and which are also convincing without any reserves for others. And there it is not possible. We will end up having the ultimate Memorial.

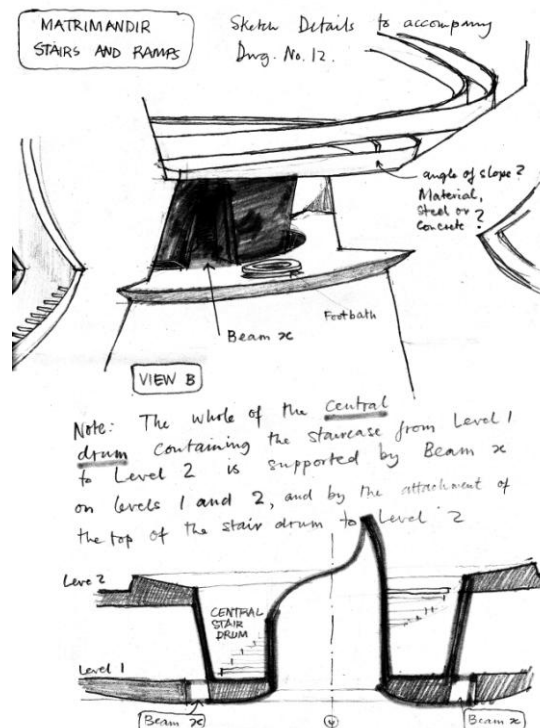
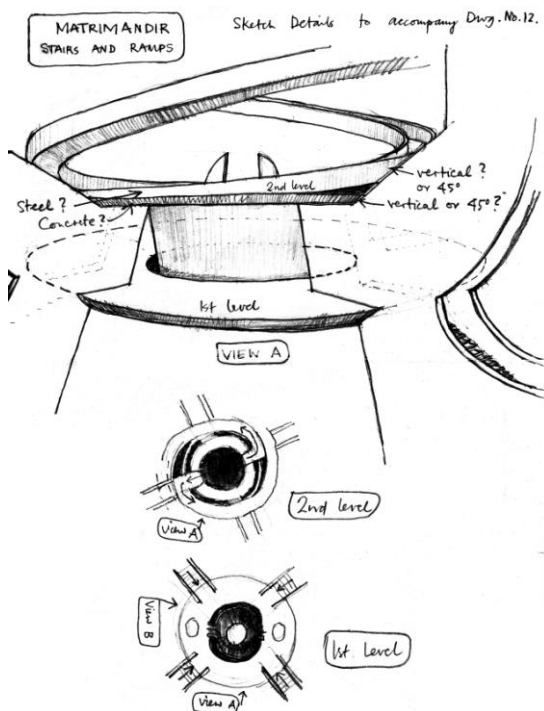
I apologise if all this seems to you as being excessive, I am only trying to be sincere with you. I absolutely don't want to throw oil on the fire, so to say.

We are fine, the girls are happy at school. On April 2nd, the day prior to my birthday, Mother stopped giving darshans in her room; she sees only 6 to 8 persons a day, in silence. Nata is one of them. Her light seems to have increased.

** * **

1973, June

1973, June 1st: Piero sends these two sketches of the twin staircase to the scientists of S.E.R.C.:



Sketches showing the twin staircases between levels 1 & 2

* * *

1973, June 2nd: Matrimandir Progress Report, No. 8:

Typed, kept @ AV-Archives
English

Matrimandir

The temporary propping towers, of reinforced concrete, but with connections of steel, were completed some months ago. These sit on the pillars, and will support the ribs until the skeletal structure is sufficiently progressed to be self-supporting by means of the 1st and 2nd slabs and structural elements which tie the four pairs of ribs together.

In order to provide scaffolding for the shuttering of the ribs, and to provide a winch with which to lift materials, hoist towers are being built next to each pair of ribs. These resemble the launching towers of the space rockets, and will rise 17 meters above ground level, and have 9 meters below ground within the excavation. They will remain until the end of the construction of the skeletal structure. As an indication of the final height of Matrimandir, it could be mentioned that these hoist towers come 3 meters above half-way up the full height of the sphere. New scaffolding frames in steel are being fabricated in the workshop, and will be used in between the pairs of the ribs.

Tubular scaffolding for the 1st level slab is nearing the end of its three-week erection period. 8 kilometers of pipes and 6,000 joint clips, all of which were coated with waterproof paint, have been used for this. There are 280 vertical props to take the calculated load of 250 tons.

160 shuttering frames for the ribs have been fabricated in the wood workshop, and will be used for the 13 levels of 2.10 meters each.

New Workshop

A new workshop of 200 m² area costing Rupees 90/m² has been erected to house new tools and machines in optimal working conditions, particularly from the point of view of fire hazard. The components developed for the ABRI workshop were utilised.

Matrimandir Area and Outer Gardens

The bulldozer donated from America has not yet been delivered, so no work on the Matrimandir Area has commenced yet. However, designs are being made for the outer gardens, a circular strip of approximately 100 meters width forming the transition between the Matrimandir Area and the urban part of Auroville. The first planting of trees will be commenced before the monsoon season, to the North of the Matrimandir Area.

Underground Meditation Chambers

The petals and underground meditation Chambers are being studied by the engineers in Madras, from the point of view both of constructional feasibility and of cost. A choice between alternative proposals will be made shortly, followed by detailed designs.

Amphitheatre

The Amphitheatre is progressing rapidly. The stage, the cone around the Inaugural Urn, and the open-air auditorium will soon be completed and ready for the laying of the tiles with which they will be finished. Work has started on the underground rooms which will contain toilets, changing rooms for performers, a control room, and storage rooms.

A lime kiln has been constructed some 200 meters from the Amphitheatre, so that under controlled conditions a better quality of lime (for concreting purposes) may be produced. Capable of an output of two tons of lime per day, the kiln is to be run on smokeless fuel, and will have a production life of six months, after which it will be demolished.

* * *

1973, June 4th: *Excerpt from a letter from Paolo Tommasi to Piero:*

Handwritten & signed kept @ AV-Archives

Italian, translation into French by Dominique and then into English by G.G.

Dear Piero,

I received your letter today and have tried immediately to connect with you. I feel very deeply your sincerity and understand your problem.

In your letter, you speak of a doubt I too have been having for a long time. The risk that Matrimandir might be built in a way that won't be manifesting its truth. This risk indeed exists and this because our problems aren't solved. In my view the solution lies in a deep union with Mother, with what she has taught us and is teaching us, it is there that we must go in order not to be mistaken. I am therefore in agreement with you: simplicity is the solution, purity, elimination of the superfluous, and a particular attention to details, otherwise here reappears the gigantic, and along with it the Memorial!

I am thinking of going soon to Paris and that I will try to meet Roger. His uncertainties and his lack of decision comes from the ongoing disharmony in our collaboration. And he is aware of it.

I shall arrive late July/early August and will be happy to be able to help you.

I take the opportunity to tell you how much I appreciate you, and your extraordinary work, which I understand very well/ The structures which I have seen this winter have exactly the vibration they should have, They emanate Mother's consciousness, they emanate the new consciousness.

Dear Piero, write to me. I will be happy if my presence can be useful to you.

* * *

1973, June 5th: *Letter from Piero to Roger:*

Typed & unsigned kept @ AV-Archives

French, translation by G.G.

Dear Roger,

Thank you for your letter dated May 23rd. It is a pity that the solution you propose for the second level isn't possible. Contrary to what you think, the supporting point for the ramps are different in the two solutions, unfortunately it is point which is structurally too critical to think of "later" variations; so, technique has limits in this kind of things.

We are going to hand you a list of details which need to be solved before we can prepare the shuttering for the execution of the second level and to produce proper execution drawings to be handed to the engineers.

In order to know exactly the geometrical design of the spiral ramps and determine where they are to be anchored on the ribs, one week of calculations is required (I did it already twice) and the same thing for other details; this is why I am very prudent in investigating the details that might impact the execution drawings. This precision is necessary if we do not want to demolish parts already built at the time of completion.

Regarding the present use of stainless steel to solve all handrail problems, I remind you that in order to obtain a good finish, the joints which are welded or bolted for surfaces which are "satin" or "gilded" for the metal's double curvature, in order to obtain smooth surfaces without waves etc. there should be a serious enquiry, with experienced technicians who are not to be found in India, (1.5mm thick stainless steel discs weigh 45 tons). I am sending you with this letter a sketch of another possible solution, which look good on a model I made.

Regarding our deep divergences, it appears to me that our respective present experiences are very different. By working in contact with matter at a height of 20 or 30mts, one discovers that people's lives are precious and that each gesture is important and that it has to be made in an essential and precise manner. The simplicity of the design is necessary to make the precision of the gestures in the action possible.

We are linked to the life of a group of people who with simplicity and courage has the opportunity to discover through this building work beauty, the love of every new day and the aspiration for a new man. There is something in the experience that is delicate and marvellous similar to the flame of a candle that guides us. Here everybody is convinced that the Matrimandir is the note, the "diapason" of Auroville. We would not like to have here a construction system like that of the US or Japan, or even in the West, externalised and pharaonic, which is contradiction with the essence and integrality of Sri Aurobindo's yoga.

Despite this impression, we are carrying on our experience in this atmosphere which is so new and so intense for everyone. Matrimandir's RCC structure is very beautiful. I am not sure to continue after its realisation: these last months, I realised that despite all our efforts, we cannot work together, with inner experiences which are in fact so different. But I hope that, in view of the present problems, we could well collaborate in a positive and enriching manner.

With my friendly sincerity.

*

Letter from Seyril to Shyam Sunder:

Typed & unsigned, kept @ AV-Archives
English

Dear Shyam Sunder-ji,

When Robert Lorain, director of C-Pti=Zoizo was here he requested a cost estimate for a Matrimandir Reception & Information office to be located at the Centre.

Consulting with Piero we sent the following info:

"A temporary structure in wood or steel for a total area of 100m² could include: space for a 2m tall model of Matrimandir; information desk & files; for Reception of Visitors – drinking water & sanitation facilities; kitchenette; small library & seating.

For central info. about AV & AV projects co-ordination: a closed-off space or room with 2 desks & chairs – to be used also for meetings regarding MM work and secretarial work.

For overnight guests to AV (such as yourself) a guest bed & screen.

Location: temporarily near Banyan Tree in conformity with plan for future Garden of Unity.

Cost estimate: Between Rs 25,000 and 30,000/-

Today a response was received as follows:

"My dear Seyril, I guess everything is still right for that reception office. I hope that all products of Ashram and of Auroville will be on display there.

The money will be sent via Auroville Association M. Venoneau (? sp. ?). Send us plan if possible. The first amount will be around \$ 500// Salut, Robert."

Since Robert's visit here the picture has changed. It seems an Auroville central Reception & Information office is to be located at Aspiration-Auromodel. Could you please clarify this.

Most important for MATRIMANDIR at this time seems to be a Central Office for Matrimandir containing a centralised working place for Piero with living facilities; (so that his present office at Promesse could be moved to Matrimandir site); central collection of all information & research, architectural-engineering drafting, interior system planning (Chamanlal's research for Matrimandir) & all environmental plans for Matrimandir Area.

After the Madras meeting Piero will take this under consideration. And we will need your views in order to send revised project to Robert.

Truth

* * *

1973, June 6th: Summary of a meeting with S.E.R.C. engineers

Typed & unsigned
English

Present: Piero, Vikas, Roger Toll, Michael Tait of Matrimandir.
Michel Sercomanens of Aurofuture
Santhanam. Natarajan of SERC, Madras

Administrative. Engineers stated that due to the difficulty in the present method of working, particularly the succession of design changes from the architects side, a new agreement should be discussed, with fresh consultancy fees negotiated, and the matter of target dates for drawings and other information clarified. Michael proposed that the object of the meeting in hand was to get a clear picture of the technical side in order that progress and targets could be evaluated, and then to discuss the consultancy agreement. Piero suggested that Chamanlal, Shyam Sunder and Ramanathan should come to discuss details of a new consultancy agreement with the Deputy Director, and the engineers offered any afternoon of next week, preferably Monday, for this meeting.

Matrimandir: Piero explained Drawing No. 12, "Matrimandir Stairs & Ramps", indicating that the design prepared in the Aurofuture office was not completely finalised.

The form of the Ramp has been changed, and was no longer the same spiral design as in previous drawings. The radius had been increased at the springing point of the ramp. Some kind of intermediate support was considered necessary at the point where the ramp passes near the ribs, halfway in its descent, and a ball joint was discussed.

The stairs entrance at level 1, at 45° to the ribs was accepted on the condition that only light weight materials be used in the staircase and staircase drum. Michel had proposed walls of steel frame covered with 6mm (Italian) marble. Piero stated that the materials for this building had to be selected with the consideration that they might last a thousand years, and for this reason advocated that the staircase drum walls should be of RCC and that at least 15cm with was required in order to have room within the shuttering for the vibrator. The engineers would calculate the maximum permissible load and advise.

Slab (level) 2. After explanation, Piero suggested that the RCC structure should be the central ring slab, 200cm wide supported by the ribs and cross slabs, with the outer portions, i.e., the beams/balustrade extension, holes/openings and the last quarter of the ramp to be left as undetermined. The ribs should be 40cm closer to the centre than in dwg. 12. Thus giving more support. The various decorative features and non-structural elements, including the proposed finishes were discussed, and the engineers insisted that any design changes should not increase the loading of the fixed element of the structure.

Detailed discussions took place concerning the 3rd level slab and the outer ring beam, which, according to the engineers, would deflect to such an extent in the present design that cracking would occur at the central portion of the slab. Two alternative solutions were proposed, the first to make the slab of precast or insitu U-shaped elements spanning from the central to the outer ring beam closer to the centre, making it deeper and stronger, and therefore visible.

The ring beam to which the shell reinforcement was to be attached was discussed. The engineers proposed a steel box section, and the difficulties of erection and welding were considered.

Petals//Underground Meditation Chambers. Piero and Michael briefly talked with the engineers concerned, and learned that the studies into the alternative solutions and cost was completed.

* * *

1973, June 8th: *Note from Piero to Shyam Sunder:*

Handwritten & signed, kept @ AV-Archives
English

Dear Shyam Sunder,

With reference to the letter to you from Seyril about the new drawing office near Matrimandir, I feel that my work will be concluded after the completion of the main structure in 1½ or 2 years.

I think not necessary to move from Promesse for these short time. But a proper drawing office there is in any case to be built.

Sincerely.

* * *

1973, June 10th: *Note from Shyam Sunder to Piero:*

Handwritten & signed, kept @ AV-Archives
English

Piero,

This morning I got the reply of SERC; he is not free tomorrow; wants to see me on 18.6.73. So I will go to Madras on 18.6.73. In the meantime other work will not suffer.

* * *

1973, June 10th: *Excerpt from Roger Toll's diary:*

Now that this castle of scaffolding is finished, I went to Pondy for the day and spent time at the Samadhi. Saw friends, long talks. Had a two-hour tea with Shanti⁴⁹ and Usha and a warm talk. Such beautiful beings. Then went to see Madhav, who told me more about Mother's physical crisis of seven days ago. Cloudy weather, gusty winds now since nearly a week. Feels like monsoon is coming.

* * *

1973, June 14th: *Excerpt from a letter from Roger Anger to Piero:*

Typed & signed, kept @ AV-Archives
French; translation by G.G.

My dear Piero,

I received your letter which answered mine and I am keeping in mind some of its aspects.

It is certain that we have to find a new way of working in order to be able to proceed usefully and remain convinced of the importance to do everything we can to allow construction to move forward by going as far as possible in the details while being fully aware that (some points which don't interfere with the structure) will obviously need to be improved because of the evolution that will take place during Matrimandir's construction.

⁴⁹ Shanti and his partner, Usha, a Sanskrit teacher in the Ashram Centre of Education, were my closest friends in the Ashram. Shanti often came to work in the Matrimandir and would sleep on the floor of my hut.

For these reasons and as far as I am concerned, I believe that there are no objections to considering that the sketches which accompanied your letter be fully acceptable. You can therefore go ahead on this basis, because once more, they do not compromise the future,

Regarding the problem of stainless steel, it is obvious that some research is required at the level of technical and technological possibilities. I will try and find in France a company able to provide us with precise elements of information. Dominique's photos show the evolution of Matrimandir's model. Again, I find the present solution very satisfying – besides some detail points. I hope that if you are still unconvinced, that one day you will, I am sure of it.

Some of the points on the list of details cannot be finalised because of the lack of information. I believe that the sketches I referred provide an answer to all the questions asked. The rest can wait for my return and be decided by common agreement.

Rest assured of my good friendship

* * *

1973, June 19th: *Excerpt from a letter from Roger Anger to Prabhat Poddar:*⁵⁰

Typed & signed, kept @ AV-Archives
French; translation by G.G.

Dear Prabhat,

I received your letter this morning on my return from Geneva.

It is difficult for me to understand the exact motivation which is pushing SHYAM SUNDER to contemplate moving his offices in the Matrimandir area. What I understand is that you are trying to be as close as possible to the site and that this reason doesn't appear as sufficient. I am still thinking that we should not disperse ourselves and that the offices should be regrouped around AUROMODEL. From every point of view, I am convinced that it is only by working together, regrouped, that we will be able to attempt a better coordination and a better efficiency. However, if I am missing some other aspects and you feel the need to decentralise, what I would personally regret, there is no way these buildings could be permanent. In which case, you simply have to select the location that is most suitable.

My objections remain always in the difficulty to make some buildings which are both acceptable as working spaces and can be dismantled. Any financial outlet in this direction, as experience has shown, is money badly utilised, in addition to consequences one cannot foresee. Hence my point of view on this problem.

Besides, to answer to Shyam Sunder's letters who is asking me for directives for Matrimandir's drawings, I have answered to this effect to Piero and to him and I believe that without being present, it is necessary that Piero follows the indications I gave him, as best. The research I have been able to do till now do not change my point of view on the solution I am presenting.

I hope everything is well despite the known difficulties.

*

Note from Shyam Sunder to Piero:

Handwritten & signed, kept @ AV-Archives
English

Piero,

- 1. SERC's fees are settled at Rs. 20,000/- instead of the old Rs. 10,000/- Their engineer had suggested Rs. 35,000/-*
- 2. They are anxious to finish the work.*
- 3. Roger is replying to your letter.*

* * *

⁵⁰ Prabhat Poddar (one of Navajata's nephews) was the secretary of Auroville' Planning Group.

1973, June 20th: *Note from Shyam Sunder to Piero:*

Handwritten & signed, kept @ AV-Archives
English

Piero,

1. SERC wants the disc's drawings soon.
2. The sketches & materials for the meditation rooms – 4 alternatives – we should expect this month – end.
3. For the meditation rooms they are prepared to have a seminar.

* * *

1973, June 21st: *Though Mother had accepted Huta's resignation as "guardian" of Matrimandir, she sends this letter to Shyam Sunder and to Navajata:*⁵¹

Typed & signed copy kept @ AV-Archives
English

Dear,⁵²

The letter which is attached to this, was read out by Vasudha to The Mother, and She finalised everything regarding my work as a guardian on Thursday morning the 10th May 1973.

She said that I should keep the keys of the Matrimandir to open and close it. She added that I should see whether everything is right in the Matrimandir.

Since I am the guardian, surely it is my duty not only to open and to close The Shrine but certainly see what is going on in and out of The Matrimandir – that is to say what is stated in the attached letter. It is essential that I must have all information regarding the Matrimandir when it is ready. Of course there will be a number of people specially chosen by The Mother, who will do the rest of the work cleaning the Shrine, giving the information, etc. The permission for visitors will be restricted as decided by The Mother and I will follow Her instructions exactly according to Her wish.

Also, it is decided by The Mother that my house will be very close to the Shrine. I request you to get the underground passage built from my house to the Shrine – the passage will lead me to the door of the Shrine. Roger said in front of you⁵³ that it was possible to do so.⁵⁴ And I feel that it is really necessary. As for the house the Mother has already planned, which I require. I shall be very happy if Roger and you will show me the plan when everything is decided. Also it is much better if I can have a separate room which can serve as an office – close to my house so that I can work there in my part time because I don't think the work of opening and closing the Shrine is sufficient for me! I like to take up more work as The Mother precisely mentioned that I must watch and see whether everything is all right over there – in the Shrine. And I am prepared to do the work accordingly.

The Mother will certainly choose the people who will work in the Shrine. But to serve the Truth is to observe perfect Tapasya, harmony, unity and peace. This is exactly the Mother's Vision is...

When the Shrine will be ready I will ask The Mother and will pray to Her for the perfect organisation, and we all shall carry out Her Will according to Her Supreme Vision in the Supreme Truth and the Supreme Love.

LET HER WILL BE DONE

Huta

* * *

⁵¹ We do not know whether Huta sent this letter.

⁵² To Shyam Sunder, Huta wrote: "Dear Shyamsunder"; to Navajata she wrote "Dear Bhajji".

⁵³ Huta simply copied to Navajata the letter she sent to Shyam Sunder, not realizing in this draft that, unlike Shyam Sunder, Navajata was probably not present during this meeting.

⁵⁴ One wonders whether Roger was really more than evasive about such a possibility.

1973, June(?): *Excerpt from a report published in the Gazette Aurovilienne:*

Gazette Aurovilienne, Vol. II, 1973, No. 5, p. 25
French and English

In order to provide scaffolding for the shuttering of the ribs of the Matrimandir Sphere and to provide a winch to lift materials, hoist towers are being built next to each pair of ribs. These will rise 17 metres above ground level and will remain until the end of the skeletal structure.

Tubular scaffolding for the first slab has been erected. The shuttering frames for the ribs have been fabricated in the Matrimandir wood workshop.

A new workshop with an area of 200 square metres has been built to house new tools and machines in optimal working conditions, particularly from the point of view of fire hazard.

Designs are being prepared for the underground meditation chambers and for the outer gardens of the Matrimandir.

The amphitheatre is progressing rapidly. The stage, the cone around the inaugural urn and the open air auditorium will soon be completed and ready for the laying of the tiles. Work has also started on the underground rooms which will contain dressing rooms for the performers, toilets, a control room and storage rooms.

A lime kiln has been constructed about 200 metres from the amphitheatre, so that under controlled conditions a better quality of lime (for concreting purposes) may be produced. The kiln is to be run on smokeless fuel and is capable of an output of two tons of lime per day. It will have a production life of six months, after which it will be dismantled.

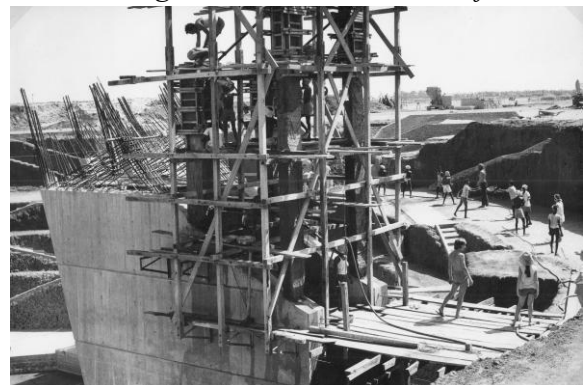
* * *

1973, June: *Excerpt from Savitra's description of this concreting in his "Auroville, the first six years – 1968-74":*

AV6, p. 85
English

Temporary propping towers of reinforced concrete emplaced on pillars for rigid supports of extending ribs until skeletal structure is self-supporting by means of 1st and 2nd level tie-slabs.

[Wooden] Hoist towers, resembling launch towers, erected beside pillars to provide scaffolding for ribs and winch to lift materials. Tower 17 m. above ground, 9 m. below ground.



Hoist tower and a propping town being cast

Tubular scaffolding support for 1st level slab under assemblage. 8 km of pipe. 6,000 joint clips used on 280 vertical props to support calculated 400-ton load, of lower region of sphere.

New workshop (200 m²) constructed for new tools and machinery.

* * *

1973, June, 24th: *Excerpt from a letter from Piero to Paolo Tommasi:*

Typed & signed, kept @ AV-Archives
Italian. Translation into French by Dominique and then into English by Gilles

Dear Paolo,

Your letter pleased us a lot; it made us feel how close you are, and mainly how close you are to Mother and that's what here one tends to forget; that only a deeper union with her will bring us closer to Truth. In the meantime I received two letters from Roger in answer to mine. Dominique (photographer) about whom I had told you she had deeply felt Matrimandir's atmosphere has also spoken to Roger. Nothing seems to have changed, because in fact we have only touched upon the problem: the entire discussion on the staircases between first and second levels has been useless because Roger, as he has written it to me, is still convinced that the present solution is the best one, and that with time, everybody will realise it. Regarding the many details which he hasn't designed, he hasn't promised anything, and leaves things vague: on the one hand it is better, but it is a disaster for the construction which has to somehow go on. I wonder what will need to be rectified when things will be completed. The main problem, which implies the entire construction, is still the discs, these huge "petals", empty concrete boxes 15 m high, (I mean also empty in the literal sense, because building them in earth is not practical, and hence at the end they will be cages of reinforced concrete partitioned by masonry walls (the cost will be in the range of 3 million rupees) and cement on 25 acres around the Matrimandir and paving in baked earth that will come on top of it; with all this green, we feel the need of a hot and dry place to go for a walk and come closer to truth barefoot.

To me, all this seems to be esthetism fanaticism. In order to survive, I have decided to focus on the structure: it will be my first contribution to Matrimandir's construction.

Regarding the finishing and other things, I hope that eventually Roger will take the responsibility by himself, and will come more in contact with things and with the extraordinary atmosphere that has created itself around this building. For the time being this atmosphere is important for Auroville and for us.

I truly hope that you will have the opportunity to meet Roger because I feel the sincerity with which you are trying to come in contact with people and infuse in them some truth.

At times I was thinking about some of your expressions, when I was trying to define better Matrimandir. I remember that you were speaking of this "unknown" object coming from another space, unknowable and tangible at the same time, symbol of a future unforeseeable realization. I was also thinking of all these colour drawings, these mysterious landscapes or lunar in which was always appearing a mysterious coloured sphere.

* * *

1973, June, 27th: *Letter from Shyam Sunder to Piero:*

Handwritten & signed, kept @ AV-Archives
English

Dear Piero,

One architect is coming tomorrow, perhaps to offer his service to Auroville in a non-commercial spirit.

One devotee engineer of Ashram is ready to work at the site in Auroville. He will come next month.

Will you like to meet them as and when they come and decide whether you would like them to work with you? When you say "no", I will think of some other work for them in Auroville. The first preference at present goes to you for the Matrimandir work.

* * *

1973, June, 27th: *Letter from Piero to Shyam Sunder:*

Typed & signed, kept @ AV-Archives
English

Dear Shyam Sunder,

Some time ago I was informed from Alain that the architect from which you have informed me was invited to make designs for the Matrimandir Petals.

Very good. I hope Roger is informed. It seems to be mainly a internal question of Roger Office.

I don't feel me involved in the Petals for the following reasons:

- 1) The construction should start necessarily after finish the structure of Matrimandir.*
- 2) I have not time.*
- 3) Like architect frankly I don't feel these like the final solution and the design interesting.*

So let work now to the main structure, for with any minute is important.

If some in-change should be given outside, I propose the name of Paolo Tommasi, tha is devote to Auroville and the Mother and personally involved in Matrimandir.

Sincerely

Sd/ Piero

* * *

1973, July

1973, July 9th: *Letter from Shyam Sunder to Roger Anger:*

Typed & signed; kept @ AV-Archives
French. Translation by G.G.

Dear Roger,

For Matrimandir's structural drawings, SERC from Madras had asked us Rs. 10,000 at the beginning. Now its demand has triple because of the changes we made from time to time. I have given my agreement for Rs. 20,000 and SERC has resumed the work. But SERC has written that the work must be over in three months. The engineers have taken some other work which starts in three months and they are not agreeing to new architectural changes if we ask them to carry on with the work now.

Fraternally

Sd/ S.S. Jhunjunwala

Copy to Piero

* * *

1973, July 11th: *Note from Shyam Sunder to Piero:*

Handwritten & signed, kept @ AV-Archives
English

Piero,

The casted materials which Kishorilal was to arrange, 60 have been delivered, I am told.

I spoke to Alain about the discs and he was willing.

You may write to SERC for the designs you are waiting for.

* * *

1973, July 13th: *Excerpt from Ruud's "Matrimandir Diary":*

A book could be written about all that has happened at and to Matrimandir during the two months since I have not written a word about it. I don't feel like reviewing the whole history of these two months for it was not a very nice time, though in a way quite enjoyable and often even amusing. We had a very long heat-wave this year, which makes one extremely tired, physically, and tends to take away one's psychological resistance. I myself felt so tired that I took a week off to Bangalore three weeks ago, just to sleep and relax. After coming back the big obstacles and things that get on your nerves appeared funny, little things again, small tests of your endurance and equanimity. One has to be very much alert and awake nowadays, not to fall into many traps. All in all, the four towers in silver oak, which unfortunately has been painted black, rise up twenty meters from zero level from – ten metres. Gérard and some of the workers sit, stand, walk and even work right on top as if they were their terrace, but I haven't dared to go higher than halfway as yet. The installation of the black pipe scaffolding took just a month. It is a complicated but clean and neat structure, which completely fills the space between the four pillars. The carpenters took over from the pipe team, last month, and laid the first layer of wood on the steel pipes. The frame of the cement forms is lying ready, waiting for the plywood to be hammered on, but the plywood is in turn waiting for some decisions about fittings for the discs or something like that. The whole thing is stopped again because, as usual, "the drawings are not ready". It seems there has been some hard writing and talking with the S.E.R.C., with the result that they will go on working until September 1973 end then will hand over all the drawings and withdraw completely. Nothing more to do with Matrimandir...just as they decided in November 1972, and in April 1973, etc.

We heard today that the drawings for the steel have arrived. Piero is checking them and then the preparations for the structure can start. Everything is heavier than expected: 25mm. instead of 20mm., etc. Writing about Matrimandir I am often obliged to say "we heard"; for I do not really know what is happening as we are in an amusing period of communications blockage, already for the past

few months. Since I happen to be working at the amphitheatre, I am 'out', as those working at Matrimandir have only vague notions about what is going on around the International Movement of Human Unity. The 'workshop' is another island in our area, somewhere in between Matrimandir and the amphitheatre, and the rest of Auroville. I have a strong feeling – and hope – that these little unfortunate power-political games will be over when we start working again seriously at Matrimandir. The casting of the bottom slab, expected sometime in September, will bring us all together again.

In the meantime we finished the amphitheatre except for the tiles and the two underground chambers. The whole structure, with the stage and water system, and all the steps is ready now and tomorrow we are going to have the first lime concreting on the slope leading down from the highest step one metre above zero level, to the zero-level of the paths. Around this slope the amphitheatre is ten metres wide and with a circumference of about 250 metres, it will keep us busy for at least one month. Our people numbering more than 140 have done a beautiful job, concretings went on week after week, step after step, lime for the majority of the steps and concrete for the uppermost three since they do not rest on the solid earth but on those layers thrown up five years ago on the occasion of the opening ceremony. It seems they are ready for another big job, starting tomorrow at 8:00 a.m.

* * *

1973, July 30th: Letter from Piero to Shyam Sunder:

Typed & signed letter kept @ AV-Archives
English

Dear Shyam Sunder,

On 25.7.73 we have received from Mr. Santhanam (S.E.R.C.) most of the details (revised) for the steel reinforcement. Some more details are expected in a few days. I am preparing the steel work drawings. Mr Nagarshet is supervising the barbending work at site and I hope to have a good feeling in these works. He is very conscious.

Gas cutting will start today.

The workshop is handling the 3 remaining hoists. The first was fitted on 22.7 and works well.

The need of cast iron plug is 2,000 Nos. Please kindly inform about these Mr. Krishulila. The actual need is around 1,200, but we will spare the balance for the following levels.

We have some problems regarding delivery of pre-stressing strands. The answer is expected in a few days. Mr. Arora is informed about the matter and can explain it to you.

We have cast on 24 & 25.7, 12 cubes for preliminary testing of concrete strength, using the new quality of cement.

We have not yet start the delivery of blue metal. Any news?

Shuttering work is almost ready.

New electric connection with larger site cable from the meter to Matrimandir are in execution, in view of the increased demand.

The last (at the moment) batch of runner and planks are expected today or tomorrow from Salem. A part is for Amphitheatre and for new offices roof.

Many are working in Matrimandir in a good atmosphere.

It is difficult to make a prevision of the concreting, given some uncertain points, (i.e. strand of pre-stressing) and the quantity of reinforcement to be prepared in very difficult manner (30 tons)

This for your information. I have no time to come to Pondy

Sincerely yours.

* * *

1973, August

1973, August 4th: *Excerpt from the correspondence with S.E.R.C.*

Matrimandir file & Ruud's "Matrimandir Diary"
English

Preliminary Design for Phase II, MATRIMANDIR

The following two schemes were chosen for working out a comprehensive comparative statement of quantities of materials:

Scheme A: With Meditation Halls and tunnel.

In this scheme, the petals are formed with reinforced concrete, in-filled portal frames and a top reinforced concrete slab laid to shape. The meditation halls are located inside at two different levels to reduce the quantity of earth work as well as the heights of the supporting portal columns on either side. The portal columns are inclined at one in six (same inclination as that of the ramp sides). At all places other than where the ramp C is located, the foundations of the portal columns are taken 1.0 metre deep below the floor level. At the places where ramp C is located, the columns are taken below the level of ramp C.

The entire tunnel length in this scheme will be taken underground (with no dummy portion as contemplated during our discussions) and is proposed to be built out of brick walls and R.C.C. covering slabs, since the surcharge due to earth pressure is only of the order of 2.5 to 3.0 metres. In case water permeability is desired, a sandwiched construction with a 7.5cm, thick concrete 'core' laid in between brick walls on either side may be adopted.

Ramps A and B will be formed directly over the excavated trenches and properly consolidated, while ramp C will be separately constructed below the level of ramp A. Ramp C will have R.C.C. walls, floor and roof. This is because the earth surcharge is about 6.0metres acting on its side walls.

Scheme B: Without Meditation Halls

In this scheme, the inner portion of the petals will be left unexcavated. However provision exists for running the underground tunnel across the petals at a later date. The meditation halls can also be formed at a later date by scooping out the earth. This scheme is basically similar to Scheme A but with the following changes:

1. In this scheme also the portals, the top covering slab, etc. are formed as in the former case, but the meditation halls and its excavation, flooring, etc. are not included. These will be constructed later if a need arises.
2. The tunnel portions are restricted only to the widths of the ramps A and B and are located just below them. They are not running across the petals. Both the tunnel portion under the petals and the meditation halls inside are to be constructed later.
3. All the ramps including ramp C are included in the present estimate.

The following are the common features for both schemes:

1. The floor of ramp A is laid with marble stones while that of ramps B and C are paved with stones.
2. The top portions of the petals and the sides of all the ramps are laid with pressed tiles.
3. The floor of the meditation halls in Scheme A is given a granolithic finish.
4. Damp-proof courses and waterproofing treatment for any part of the structure have not been included in these estimates.
5. Provisions for shafts for lighting and ventilation are not included.
6. While the quantities of materials required for erecting the four water tanks in the scheme have been included, their exact location, connection of pipes and the pumping system have not been identified.

7. The present study is based on the preliminary drawings supplied to us. However, detailed architectural drawings giving the levels and spacings of the columns and their dimensions, etc. are required for working out the final design.

Preliminary comparative estimate of quantities for Schemes A and B:

	<u>Quantities</u>	
	Scheme A	Scheme B
1. Earth work: excavation for foundations and halls	38,200m ³	17,200m ³
2. M100, concrete for foundation	1,900m ³	800m ³
3. Brickwork for side and retaining walls	2,800m ³	2,600m ³
4. M200 concrete for RCC works	2,600m ³	2,500m ³
5. HSD for concrete reinforcements (includes equivalent quantity of mild steel also)	225 tons	225 tons
6. Pressed clay tile laying on top of petals, ramp sides	14,200m ²	13,000m ²
7. Marble laying on floor of ramp A	700m ²	700m ²
8. Stone paving on the floor of all other ramps	1,000m ²	1,000m ²
9. Granolithic flooring for meditation halls and tunnel floor	6,200m ²	---

(Prepared by V. S. Parameswaran)

S.E.R.C., Madras

4.8.1973

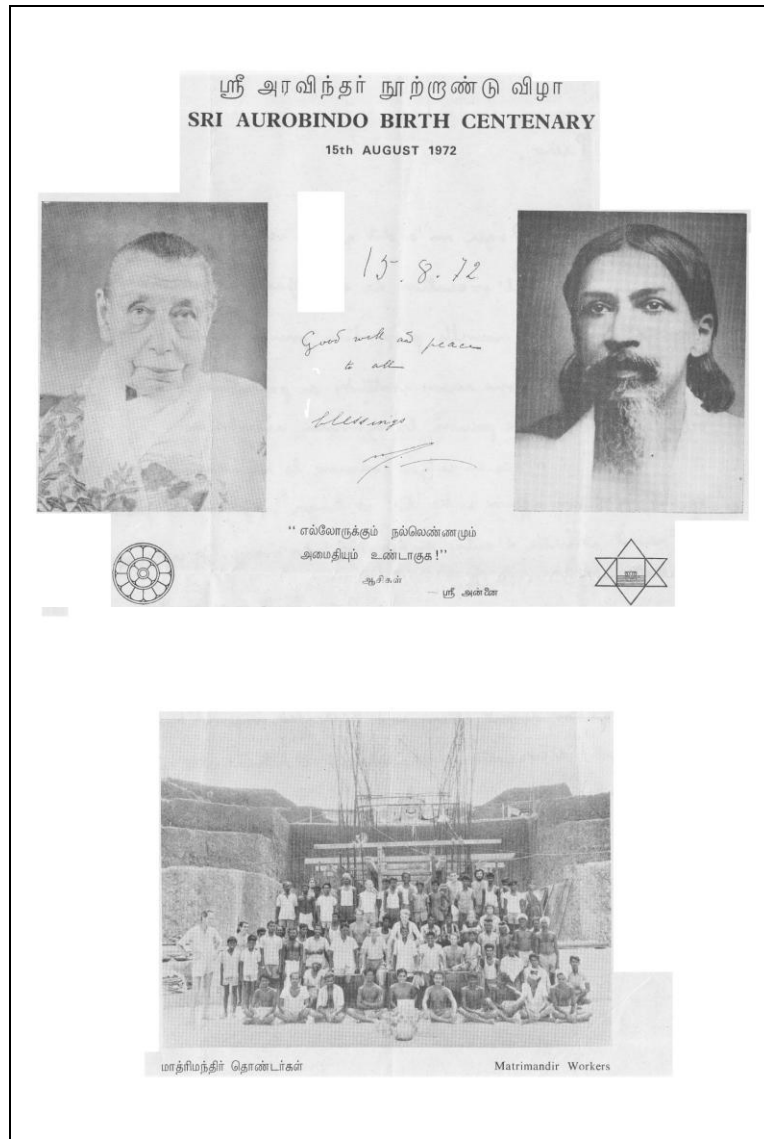
* * *

1973, August 15th: *Mother gives her last terrace Darshan⁵⁵:*

Card released for the occasion with a Darshan message from Mother:

Good will and peace to all.

Blessings



Piero is easy to recognise, last on the last

*

Excerpt from of a report published in the Gazette Aurovilienne:

Gazette Aurovilienne, Vol. II, 1973, No. 6, p. 21

French and English

The first nine trees were planted on the actual site of the Matrimandir gardens at 5.30 in the morning of August 15.

* * *

1973, August 16th: *Meeting between Roger, Piero and Gérard to find a solution for slabs level 2 and ramps. New model of solution for these.*

Matrimandir day-to-day journal

English

* * *

⁵⁵ Photos of this last Darshan do not seem to have been published.

1973, August 23rd: *Note from Shyam Sunder to Huta:*

Handwritten & signed, kept @ AV-Archives
English

Dear Huta

Thanks for the thought from the Moon.

I will ask Roger to share with me the guardian's place when he goes that side.

*

Estimate for Matrimandir's completion

Matrimandir – Estimate of Cost

	<u>Rupees</u>
A. <u>The Sphere</u>	
1) Excavation, foundations, piers	800,000
2) Main structure, in M350 concrete incl. reinforcement in steel	
a) Ribs 640m ³	
b) Level 1 100m ³	
c) Level 2 100m ³	
d) Level 3 140m ³	
e) Level 4 80m ³	
f) Dodeca Wall <u>300m³</u>	
1,360m ³	
Concrete Rs 250/-	
Steel <u>Rs 450/-</u>	
Rs 700/m ³ x 1,360m ³	900,000
3) Scaffolding and propping material	500,000
4) Ramps in steel, 60 tons	500,000
5) Other materials, machines, etc.	400,000
6) Labour	300,000
7) Water tank, drainage, pumps	250,000
8) Electricity, ventilation	400,000
9) Outside covering	
a) Steel: 150 tons	
b) Concrete & mortar for plastering	1,000,000
10) Discs, 3,500m ²	
a) Bronze: 60 tons	
b) Special alloy steel supports	
c) Sealing of cover with plastic compound	1,500,000
11) Top closing, optic system	200,000
12) Marble for floor and walls	
a) Levels 1, 2 & 3 750m ²	
b) Dodeca wall <u>2,100m²</u>	
2,850m ²	570,000
13) Finishing of ramps with rubber floor (250m ²), SS covering & parapet (7 tons)	200,000
14) Crystal sphere, symbols, interior decoration	<u>500,000</u>
<u>Total for (A) Sphere</u>	<u>Rs 80,70,000</u>

Note: the figure of Rs, 80,70,000/- doesn't include the extra cost for gold-plating, which is estimated at Rs 4,500,000

B. The Petals and Meditation Rooms

(Preliminary estimate of cost for the petals and meditation rooms is based upon the quantities for Scheme (a) given by S.E.R.(R.)C. In their technical note accompanying letter No.320(98)73-VSP dated 4.8.74 of Mr. V.S. Parameshwaran, scientist.

<u>S.N.</u>	<u>Description of work</u>	<u>Quantity</u>	<u>Rate</u> Rs. Per	<u>Amount</u> Rs.
1.	Earthwork excavation for foundations & halls as the case may be	38,200m ³	4/m ³	1,52,800
2.	M100 concrete for foundations	1,900m ³	150/m ³	2,85,000
3.	Brickwork for sides & retaining walls	2,800m ³	125m ³	3,50,000
4.	M200 concrete for RCC works	2,600m ³	200/m ³	5,20,000
5.	HDS for concrete reinforcements (incl. equivalent quantity of mild steel also)	225 tons	2,200/ton	4,95,000
6.	Scaffolding, shuttering, centring & lifting Arrangements (4 sets)			5,40,000
7.	Pressed clay tiles laying on top of petals and Sides of ramps	14,200No.	50A/m ²	7,10,000
8.	Marble laying on the floor of ramps	700m ²	200 A/m ²	1,40,000
9.	Stone paving on floors of all other ramps	1,000m ²	60A/m ²	60,000
10.	Granolithic flooring for meditation halls and tunnel floor	6,200m ²	50/m ²	3,10,000
11.	Paths incl. laying of marble on top	8,300m ²		20,00,000
12.	Drainage, electricity, ventilation, Impermeabilisation, etc.			2,00,000
<u>Total for (B) Petals & Meditation Rooms</u>				<u>Rs. 57,62,800</u>

C. Outside Works

<u>Outside Works</u>		<u>Rate</u>	<u>Rupees</u>
1) Outside flooring staircases			
X 76.5 ² - (49) ² m ²	say 10,900m ²	50	5,45,000
2) Garden			
a) Excavation	37,000m ²	4	1,48,000
b) Flooring			
Total Matrimandir area	101,200m ²		
Less area of a circle of radius 76.5m			
Already allowed for	<u>18,392m²</u>		
Net area	82,808m ²	50	41,40,400
3) Amphitheatre			4,00,000
4) Water canals, drainage, fountains			<u>5,00,000</u>
Total for (C) Outside Works			Rs. 57,33,400

ABSTRACT:

A. The Sphere (Matrimandir proper)	Rs. 80,70,000
B. The Petals & Meditation Rooms	57,62,800
C. Outside Works	<u>57,33,400</u>
Total Rs. 195,66,200	
Miscellaneous unforeseen	<u>4,33,800</u>
GRAND TOTAL	Rs. 200,00,000

* * *

1973, August 24th: *Excerpt from Ruud's "Matrimandir Diary":*

Matrimandir: Feasibility Report & Estimates for Completion of the Project by February 1978

On August 8th 1973, a meeting was held in the site office of Matrimandir when the Matrimandir workers (excepting Vikas) met Roger Anger, the chief architect, and Shyam Sunder. The up-to-date progress on the project was reviewed and the feasibility of completing the project by the Mother's Centenary in February 1978 was considered. It was agreed that it would be desirable to complete the project by the said date and hence, the problem should be examined in more detail by Piero and Nagarsheth who might prepare a report on the matter and an estimate of the project within two weeks, for consideration by the technical persons concerned. This report is a result of that meeting.

The major components of the Project which require feasibility examination are the Matrimandir itself, and the Petals and Meditation Rooms; hence these are the ones considered with regard to completion time. The work on the amphitheatre is very well advanced and with the exception of the laying of the final floor (tiles or any other material that may finally be selected) can be completed within a few months when the required funds become available.

It is obvious that if the necessary men, materials, machines and money are available at the proper periods of time, with properly organised use of the same, any properly designed work can be completed within a given reasonable period.

In the present case, designs for the work are being worked out by the S.E.R.C., Madras, and they supply the necessary drawings. Sometimes, further consultation is required on the drawings supplied, due to some special local conditions, availability of required materials and equipment, and the drawings have to be modified. This process sometimes consumes more time than normal.

Matrimandir proper

With the present stage of the work on the Matrimandir proper (slab level 1 can be concreted within a month), it is estimated that the structural portion of Matrimandir can be completed within about a year and a half, i.e., by the end of February 1975. By the end of this period, choice and procurement of the materials required for decoration etc. such as:

- i. 150 tons steel for the structure of the outside cover;
- ii. The material and equipment necessary for fixing the cover to the reinforced concrete structure;
- iii. 3,500m² stainless steel plates (40 tons) or any other material that may be selected for the outer discs;
- iv. Special alloy steel supports for the discs;
- v. Material for sealing the cover with plastic compound;
- vi. The optic system for closing on the top;
- vii. 2,850m² of marble for floors and walls (750m² for the walls of the dodecagon);
- viii. 250m² of rubber floor of the ramps;
- ix. 7 tons stainless steel for covering and parapets of the ramps, and
- x. Crystal sphere, symbols, gold finished and interior decoration, should be well underway and there would be available a period of about three years for the laying, fixing in position and final finishing of these items. The choice of the various materials and the procurement of the same will, therefore, have to be so organised as to fit with this schedule.

Petals and Meditation Rooms

As a result of discussions held and drawings prepared from time to time, we received from the S.E.R.C., Madras, on 8.8.73 a detailed technical note and a sketch incorporating the salient features and a comparative estimate of tentative quantities of various items of work involved in two alternative schemes proposed for Phase II of Matrimandir. One of these two schemes, Scheme A, the one incorporating petals formed with reinforced concrete, in-filled portal frames and a top reinforced concrete slab laid to shape with two meditation halls located inside at two different levels, and an underground tunnel, is found to be acceptable for adoption; and hence the estimate for the project is based on this scheme as far as this component is concerned. Taking into account the quantities of items of work involved in Scheme A as given in the preliminary comparative estimate mentioned in the

preceding, it has been worked out that the construction of each petal including the two meditation halls, would require about 8 months for the structural portion, excluding the laying and finishing of the tiles on top of the petals and sides of ramps, marble floor of ramps leading to low-level meditation hall, stone paving on the floor of all other ramps and granolithic for meditation halls and tunnel floor. The major part of the excavation for this scheme fouls with the existing hoist towers and guy wires, for those towers, erected mainly for the work of pouring the concrete for the structural portion of Matrimandir proper. It is mentioned in the preceding para that the work on this structural portion will continue until about February 1975 and hence the hoist towers and guy wires will have to be in their places till then. This means that the work of excavation for the foundations of the petals and meditation halls could not be properly commenced for about a year and a half. Moreover, if the position of the guy wires is changed so as to allow the excavation work on the petals to proceed, even while the hoist towers are standing, we can gain some time for working on the petals and meditation halls. By a judicious rearrangement of the positions of the guy wires the work on the petals (foundations, etc.) could proceed in full force from about November 1973, if the required design drawings are finalised by then and the time available for completing the work on the twelve petals by February 1978 will be around 51 months. As the work on the structural portion of each petal is estimated to require about eight months and as we have to allow for the time required to finish the floors, ramps, etc., of the petals, it is considered desirable to finish the structural work on the petals by February 1977 in order to allow for some unforeseen causes delaying the work.

Thus the working period available for the structural portion of the petals cannot be taken to be more than 39 months, which will mean that the structural work of little less than five petals can be completed during the working time available.

It has been roughly worked out that the cost of one set of scaffolding, centering, shuttering materials and fitting arrangements required for the structural portion of one petal will be about Rs. 1.333 lakhs. If we prepare three sets of these materials, the cost will be about Rs. 2.67 lakhs and the structural work on the petals could be completed within $(12 \times 8)/3 = 32$ months, which will give us enough margin of time to complete the project well within the target date. All these materials may have a residual value of about 30 to 40% of cost at the end of the work. With this arrangement, it will also be necessary to have a few extra qualified supervisory staff for the civil work for solidity and security of the work. The estimate is based on a provision of Rs. 4 lakhs for three sets of scaffolding, etc., materials, but we might start with two such sets in the beginning and the preparation of a third set could perhaps be deferred until about May 1974, to see the actual work speed achieved till then. But the extra number of supervisory staff would be necessary at an early date and steps for recruiting the same may be initiated at an early stage. As already mentioned, the estimate is based on the tentative quantities given by the S.E.R.C. and it would be necessary to set the final design and drawings by November 1975, when it is proposed to start the work on the petals.

For the work of fixing in position the steel structure, discs, etc. on the outside of the Matrimandir proper, some special arrangements may be necessary. A token provision is made in the estimate for this in item No 5 'Other materials, machines, etc. in the estimate of Matrimandir proper.

MATRIMANDIR COMPLEX

Outside Works

	Rs.	Rs.
1. Outside flooring, staircases x $76.5^2 - (49)^2 \text{ m}^2$, say 10,900m ²	50	5,45,000
2. Garden		
a) excavation, 37,000m ³	4	1,48,000
b) flooring: total Matrimandir area, 1,01,200m ² less area of a circle 76.5 radius already allowed for 18,392; net area, 32,808	50	41,40,400
3. Amphitheatre		4,00,000
4. Water canals, drainage, fountains		<u>5,00,000</u>
	Total	57,33,400

ABSTRACT

1. Matrimandir proper	71,72,000
2. Petals and meditation rooms	57,62,000
3. Outside works	<u>57,33,400</u>
Total:	186,68,200
Miscellaneous unforeseen	<u>3,31,800</u>
or U.S. \$ 2,650,000 at exchange rate of Rs. 7.2 per U.S. \$ 1.00	
dt. 27.8.1973	

* * *

1973, August 25th: *Excerpt from Roger Toll's diary:*

A Matrimandir meeting with Shyam Sunder regarding money. He suggested we start projects and industries in order to become self-sufficient. Many ideas came up, but they all felt unreal.

* * *

1973, August 27th: *Excerpt from Roger Toll's diary:*

A meeting of Shyam Sunder, Roger, Vikas, Piero, Nagashet⁵⁶, Alain and me concerning the coming demands of work on the Matrimandir. No real result, little solved, but Roger felt it should be open to all Aurovilians to weigh in on how we proceed. He said we should do the Matrimandir without discs for now, and without the petals.

* * *

1973, August 30th: *Excerpt from Roger Toll's diary:*

A meeting in Matrimandir office of about 40 people with Roger and Shyam Sunder on how to continue our work. Alain presented a plan he and Roger concocted for finishing the Matrimandir, but without the discs and petals. The whole discussion was absurd... I see more and more that it's a game we are playing, some theatrical presentation, and we all play our roles and it unwinds as it must. It's the cosmic dance, the lila. Nothing is important but to learn to see, to BE, which comes by being truthful, egoless and sincere. It is the only solution. Roger talked at length about the history of the Matrimandir. People were happy to see Roger and to hear him tell the story, the first time for many.

*

Meeting at Matrimandir Office for MM workers and all other Aurovilians interested in cost & time estimates for construction; best utilisation of Rs. 1 crore which might be available from devotees at the Service of the Mother.⁵⁷ Which are the works to be completed by the 1978 Centenary for that amount?

Matrimandir's day-to-day journal.
English

During this meeting, Roger spoke about the meaning of Matrimandir as he understood it from the Mother:

The Matrimandir has to be a receptacle for spiritual energy, a place where to receive the Supramental Consciousness-Force, the Truth-Consciousness. Matrimandir is the starting of the centre of the city: 10 ha. We have to build a city, not a temple; to include in the Centre the Spirit of the city."

* * *

⁵⁶ Nagashet was a civil engineer from Madras.

⁵⁷ This seems to have been the offer of Kantilal and others.

1973, September

1973, September 1st: *Excerpt from Roger Toll's diary:*

A Matrimandir workers' meeting for finding the means of overcoming the shortage of money to proceed. Several more plans were discussed, but nothing with any feet, nothing really new or feasible. It all keeps growing and developing in its own time... and we learn, we grow, we grow together, and we become more and more Mother's children.

* * *

1973, September: *Report which Narad believes to have been drafted by Roger's office. In any case, in 2002 he wrote to a friend that it is on this report that he based his work in the gardens.*

Excerpt from a report pertaining to Matrimandir

5. The First Concept⁵⁸

What the Mother has said about the gardens?

The Matrimandir Gardens comprise two distinct but interrelated areas, the central thirteen gardens of the Matrimandir Area, and the Outer Gardens which surround the Matrimandir Area, in a ring approximately 100 meters wide. These Outer Gardens, though defined and contained by the encircling urban area, extend into the urban area, penetrating it on the ground, through and over the buildings. The continuity of form and movement into the urban area, and the penetration of the urban area into the Outer Gardens, make the two interdependent. Furthermore, this interpenetration extends right through the urban area to its outside perimeter, where the city will be bounded by a green belt, thus creating the possibility of the continuity of trees and water from outside, through the city, to the centre, with opportunity to move, by boat maybe, or on foot, right through the city without leaving the shade of trees or the water.

It becomes evident that there are three related areas:

- 1. The Matrimandir Area**, with only the Banyan Tree, and the thirteen gardens which will contain a constantly changing array of flowers, set inside an oval sculpted as shown in Figure 2, like concentric waves of moulded earth around the Matrimandir. The area is formalistic (twelve radiating paths from the centre-piece, The Matrimandir; concentric paths and wave-form land shaped to give exclusive predominance to the Matrimandir).
- 2. The Outer Gardens**, containing and defining the Matrimandir Area, encircling it with water and trees so that it forms an island. This outer garden area will be informal, natural but controlled in its planting. The Water body will be a circular progression of space, now narrow like a stream or canal, now wide like a lake, with islets, and overhanging trees. The overall effect of form, created by the trees, their varying height and colours and forms, and by the shaping of the earth to form artificial hills and valleys, modest in scale but significant in effect, will be to contain the Matrimandir Area within a saucer, and thereby heighten its emphasis like a pearl in a shell.
- 3. The area adjacent to buildings**, both those of the perimeter of the Outer Gardens, and where the gardens penetrate the urban area, in which the trees, and water soften the edges of the buildings, weaving through the urban space, over it and into it. This, in effect, concerns the whole of the landscaping of the urban area, whose architectural design cannot be conceived in isolation of the landscaping.
This area is not dealt with in this report, although suggested treatment of this landscaping is discussed.

* * *

⁵⁸ As said, this page is part of a much longer report. "First concept" seems to imply that there were other concepts.

1973, Sept. 5th: *Speaking of the role of Matrimandir in the spiritual evolution, M. P. Pandit says:*
Matrimandir day-to-day journal
English

The Matrimandir being a concrete expression of The Mother's Consciousness and Force will always stand as a reservoir of inspiration, a light-house radiating continually the manifestation of the Truth that is embodied in Mother's own body. What the Mother's embodiment is for us today, the full-fledged [unreadable] will BE to the whole of humanity. In the sense of our life on earth. The Mother has established links with many levels of COSMIC existence. Each of these links helps those parts of the COSMIC Being to relate themselves to the Truth-Light. This "Spiritual Mechanism" will also be embodied in the Matrimandir. Not only Light and Consciousness will be radiating from the Matrimandir but also the means of realising them for the individuals.

* * *

1973, September 6th: *Preparatory note for a meeting called on this day:*

PREPARATORY MEETING AT THE MATRIMANDIR HELD ON THE 6TH SEPTEMBER AT 5:15 PM

"A situation has arisen wherein it has become imperative to take steps towards Auroville becoming "a: self supporting township."

"It needs a determined effort lasting over a considerable length of time to achieve this object, and a beginning is to be made now itself without any further loss of time. First of all we have to provide for the food and prosperity items.

"We can be self-supporting indeed if the responsibility is shared by the collectivity instead of putting it wholly on one or two persons. (extracts of Shyamsunder's note)

This new situation foreseeable since a few weeks supposes that Auroville should reorganize itself differently.

On the 19th August 1975, a proposition for an organisation was made on the basis of the existing units, distinguishing between those which could be productive by nature and those which are of common service.(see sketches attached).

1) One basic principle: the same amount of money for the maintenance of each Aurovilian:

The present situation suppose that everybody does his best to be self-sufficient in one of these units per month, without consideration of his function, each Aurovilian receives an amount of money of 150 rs for his maintenance; which means food and equivalent of the ancient "Prosperity".

The "non-productive units receive this sum of money for each of their members, from a common fund.

If one Aurovilian working in one unit desires to live in another unit or community, or wants to join a group of his choice, he can use his maintenance money as he likes, he is not obliged to stay and live in the unit where he works.

2) A clear central organisation and an information open to all.

At the same time it is necessary to endow ourselves with a minimum of collective organisation for manifesting concretely our solidarity.

A principal organisation where each unit would be represented so as to control a Common Fund which collects all the money available for Auroville as profits from the various units and donations.

Each month this organisation examines the financial situation and allocates the funds according to the needs and priorities.

Another essential element of a collective organisation is a central purchase for all the units for meeting the needs of the Aurovillians r

All the expenses concerning the children and the health of the Aurovillians, should be borne from the Common Fund as fundamental priority.

3) Towards a progress in the solidarity:

It is essential to understand that the independence given to the units in the present circumstances should result in a progress towards solidarity. In effect, such an organisation can function effectively only if all the units play the game.

By trying to be self-supporting as a minimum effort or to contribute to the best of its possibilities towards the financing of the Common Fund.

By avoiding all such situation of a privilege in relation to the other units.

It is proposed in this respect to arrive at a common system of accounting, permitting any Aurovilian or interested outside agency, whoever desires, to have a clear picture of the situation of each unit as well as that of the general organisation.

*

Excerpt from Roger Toll's diary:

An all-Auroville meeting in the amphitheatre re. the financial situation with about 250 people in attendance. Shyam Sunder opened the meeting, then called on me to moderate the discussion. I said we need to look beyond today and explore how we can find our way to Mother's Dream both inwardly and outwardly, and that we have to do it as a community. It got progressively worse from there, and went all the way to rock bottom... and very hard to moderate. Everything got mixed, confused and obscured by personal needs and desires. Ugly, despite springs of love and aspiration among many.

* * *

1973, September 7th: *Excerpt from a note from Shyam Sunder to Huta:*

Handwritten & signed kept @ AV-Archives. SA, p. 168
English

Yesterday evening we were at the Matrimandir but it was not possible to see your place with Roger. Sorry.

Roger is leaving on 10th for three weeks.⁵⁹

The French monk is leaving Auroville on his own accord.

* * *

1973, September 10th: *Roger Anger leaves for three weeks, which probably means that he'll be back at the end of September.*

*

Excerpt from Roger Toll's diary:

Beginning of new steel work in the Matrimandir. Working with Joseph and his team, we prepare the old steel to new correct dimensions. Gérard and Jürgen begin putting a few new rebars in position. A beautiful feeling to retouch the Matrimandir. The beginning of a new stage in the work.

* * *

1973, September 17th: *Delivery of the bulldozer gifted by Gary Plunket's father (USA).*

Matrimandir day-to-day journal

* * *

1973, September 20th: *Excerpt from Roger Toll's diary:*

The work in the Matrimandir is going harmoniously on the shuttering at the very top of the pillars. I work along with Sudalayandi, Shivam, and Shanmuygam. So beautiful to be working again in the Mother's Temple.

* * *

⁵⁹ As Huta acknowledged it, she didn't say that Mother had accepted her resignation and let people break their heads to try and find a solution for her house...

1973, September 25th: *Note from Shyam Sunder to Huta:*

Typed quote at AV Archives

English

All that you have just written is true and we will try accordingly.

With faith in Her, and at Her service.

Shyam Sunder

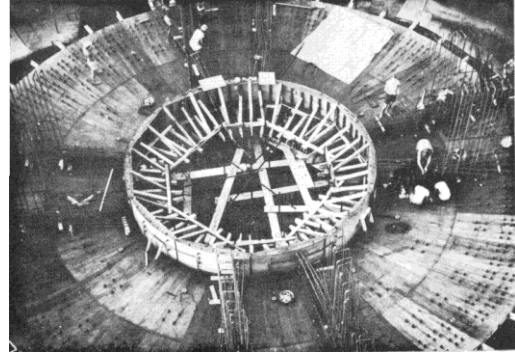
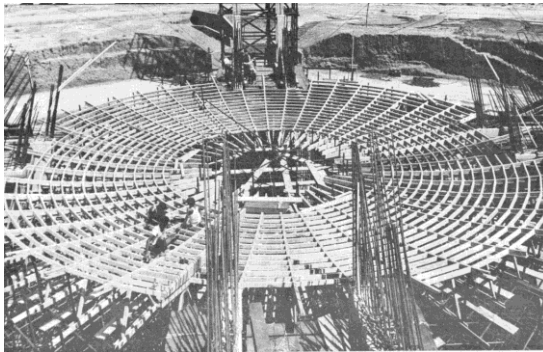
* * *

1973, October

1973, October: *Excerpt from the booklet “Matrimandir” published in 1977 by “Auropublications”:*

p. 54

Wooden beams and plywood sheets are built on top of the steel pipe scaffolding. Steel plug-fittings for the discs to be inserted in the sphere covering are fixed in a regular pattern.



* * *

1973, October 22nd: *Excerpt from a note from Shyam Sunder to Huta:*

Handwritten & signed kept @ AV-Archives; SA, p. 168

English

Today I went with Roger to Matrimandir. An architect [Vikas] is working for finding the exact spot for your construction. As soon as it is done I will see it and tell you about it. The design also is starting.

* * *

1973, October 30th: *Excerpt from Ruud’s “Matrimandir Diary”:*

Three and a half months later... Within four days we will celebrate the first anniversary of the completion of the pillars of Matrimandir. We still have not had the big concreting of the first slab of the sphere, resting on these four pillars; but it cannot be far off any more. We expect the concreting to be held sometime in November.

With all the preparations for the concreting, the third chapter is coming to a close. Since about a month the activities around and in Matrimandir have been resumed; something is happening again. It has been a long, tedious and difficult year. The beautiful feeling of unity, brotherhood and achievement among the Matrimandir workers broke down completely. Happily so, we felt, for that nice and warm feeling was still superficial: real unity lies beyond and has to be reached through crises, dark nights and little fights. We were sure something better would come back, once the work would start again, and behold, with the work on the bottom slab a new spirit is catching on.

It is impossible, and not very useful, to go into the details of all that has happened in the last six months.

Technical and personal problems alternated. It looked as if Matrimandir’s turn had not come yet. Always some reason not to continue was found, first so-called technical and financial ones, later reasons of structure and beauty. It is a major jump, from below zero to above ground. It is as if we were waiting for some breakthrough to take place somewhere on earth, in some occult realm or somewhere in Mother’s Sadhana. And we were playing around, guessing, trying, postponing, quarrelling. Suddenly it worked, now all the obstacles seem to have disappeared and we find ourselves above ground. Not yet in concrete however, but in reinforcement. The only thing holding us back now is the rains. The monsoon is serious about it. For the past two days, non-stop pouring and a sky as gray and sombre as the Inconscient itself.

For several months we were actors in a drama, or comedy, of the crore. A crore would be given to Matrimandir, if two conditions were fulfilled: if the whole plan of Matrimandir could be realised within

that amount, and provided that it would be completed for Mother's Centenary in 1978. Everybody was happy about the crore, nobody happy about the conditions. Talking, discussing, meeting... the plan was shelved, taken out again, more talking discussing meeting, calculating, and... we came to two crores for the whole project.

The sphere alone would cost more than one crore. Moreover, 1978 would be too soon, some said. The underground meditation rooms could not be built before the sphere is at least half completed. Then the room will not be ready before 1978. An engineer was attracted, especially by the meditation rooms. He calculated that even if the rooms were started late in 1974, they could still be ready before 1978. When the crore didn't materialise, the engineer disappeared too, returning to the north.

The people offering the crore, however, are among those who continue giving money for Matrimandir so that now, as always, the financial aspect of the construction cannot cause any obstruction. Even in the month of September, when the financial crisis was at its peak and Auroville made important moves towards being self-supporting, the work did not suffer for want of funds.

Then there was the question of the transition between the first and second levels of the sphere. Roger has been working on it for weeks, making model after model and rejecting all but the last one. Not much of the second slab remained, only the structural beams and a small path to the beginning of the ramps. Piero entered into discussion with Roger about the solution, 10,000 miles removed when Roger was in Paris. After rejecting some suggestions, Roger could incorporate some others into a new solution which seems satisfactory to everybody. It was not so easy to get all the changes through in Madras: the S.E.R.C. had seen too many for their taste.

In between we had the problem of the structural connection between levels one and two. We needed pre-stressed steel for that, or rather steel which could be stressed later on after the concreting. It was unavailable anywhere but could be specially manufactured in Bombay. After many ups and downs we discovered that we could make something similar ourselves. So we were kept busy for months on end, as if Matrimandir should not really happen. In the meantime one good thing was done: the steel was prepared by a group of more than thirty barbenders. Pile after pile of stirrups and circles were bent, all in 25 and 28 mm. steel, as heavy as could be.

One more problem has to be solved: the fittings for the discs. First we had to know how many there were to be, which sizes, which rhythms, and so forth, and where. Piero's new little electronic calculator must have been red hot after its workout, and the workshop got the order for 900 steel pieces shaped somewhat like a bulb, to be fitted onto the scaffolding.

Now it is almost November and, but for the rains, everything is falling into place. November 1971 was the month the excavation was seriously taken up. November 1972 the pillars were finished. Maybe November was once again the choice for the next big step. Matrimandir has its own agenda and time schedule. The picture today is like this: approaching the edge of the excavation we see the four pillars no more so clear and big and beautiful as before, partially hidden by the many other materials covering them. We see the four huge black wooden towers rising from the depths of the excavation, one behind each pillar, to somewhere high up in the sky, some 20 metres high. On the backside of the pillars we see the smaller concrete Support towers which will be removed once the sphere is spherical and self-supporting. In between the pillars, in the huge underground space we see black pipes, verticals and horizontals, fitted to the centimetre but to the eye looking nonetheless like a wild forest of steel. On top of the pipes sit wooden beams, slightly curved in the shape of the sphere's bottom. Some weeks ago the plywood sheets were put in place and suddenly the bottom of the sphere was there. In the negative, but still a real connection between the pillars and a real promise of things to come true.

Now many people are busy putting the steel into its place. There is so much steel going into it that we are going to need a small needle for the vibrator, otherwise the vibrator cannot get in between the steel. Onto the plywood, we see affixed the steel fittings for the discs in regular patterns, four for each disc. Light fittings have been installed in great numbers, about half of them for purposes as yet unknown, like the pipes we put into the pillars at the last moment. The steel is about half-fitted in, I

guess. Rods are going up into the towers, for the ribs, fitting onto the pillars, have to be strongly anchored to the bottom slab. Or rather, the bottom slab is hanging against the ribs. It does not find much support on top of the pillars, which it overlaps not more than a couple of centimetres. For the past couple of weeks we hear, from people who should know, that the concreting will be within two or three weeks. Let us be happy if it happens around Darshan.

One more thing. The stone crusher. Bernard [Borg], who was in charge of the old lorry, calculated that we could save a lot of money by crushing our own 'blue metal' blocks instead of buying them ready-cut from the quarries. A crusher has been ordered from Madras but has not yet arrived. We had quite some talk about its location. Environmentalists reacted strongly against its supposed noise, dust and other environmental hazards. It would be placed on the road to Bharat Nivas, so that it could be used there too. It would be put in one of the quarries (which didn't work out) or on the Madras road. Now it has been agreed to put it just next to Matrimandir, behind the pile of excavated earth, as was originally planned. Some earth work was done and the holes for its foundations cut last week. It was due to arrive in the first week of October. Only when some crushing has been done can the concreting take place. Moreover we do not yet have the sand. Bernard cannot fetch it now with his lorry because the dry riverbed from which he usually takes it is under water due to the rains. How we will get enough sand this month is a mystery. Can it happen now that everything is there except the materials, what never happened before? But it won't happen now.

The day before yesterday we had a distinguished visitor at Matrimandir, Dr. Karunanidhi, the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. He could not stand the sight of Matrimandir for more than two minutes, apparently, for he rushed off again with all the twenty odd cars following him. He came to lay the first stone of the Tamil Nadu Pavilion at Bharat Nivas, which he successfully laid (though very symbolically indeed) this evening.

* * *

1973, October 31st: *Excerpt from Ruud's "Matrimandir Diary":*



**The Banyan tree with the brick circles and the shallow pond
which all date from Auroville's Inauguration Ceremony**

After a year of waiting, enquiring, and more waiting, the bulldozer finally arrived. Donate last year by someone in the United States⁶⁰, it was held up at customs in Madras for about ten months. Some weeks ago it arrived. It was cleaned up, repaired and repainted in our workshop and ready to use. Last week it was working a bit on the roads, in preparation for the Chief Minister's visit, but this morning the real work around Matrimandir began. Under the banyan tree some of the brick circles built for an exhibition at the Inauguration ceremony in 1968, were still standing. They offered a kind of meeting place under the banyan, with the consequence that the air roots of the banyan never got a chance to lay down their roots. Finally, today some pits have been dug under those places where two

⁶⁰ As we have seen, it arrived on 17 September 1973.

metres high up, the roots are longing to come down, and the bulldozer started to break the circular platforms. The machine will not be used for the petals around the amphitheatre but will profit by the current rains to launch some levelling work in the outer gardens.

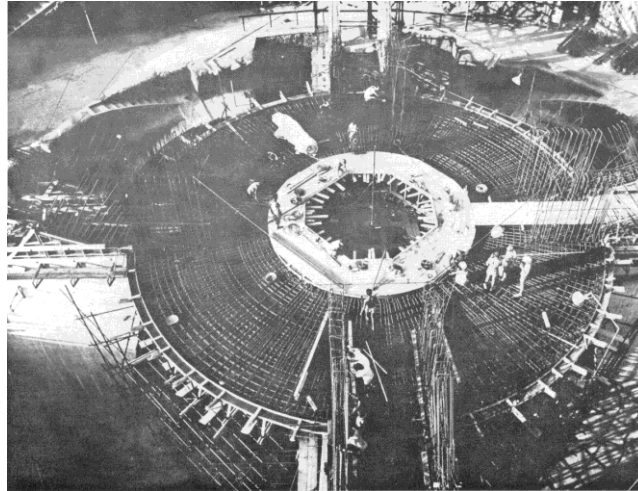
It looks like more than a compromise. It looks like a real solution to the perennial discussion on conflicting interpretations of the area around Matrimandir. Roger's idea to have red petals, movements in earth covered with tiles, was opposed by the idea of having trees, shrubs and flowers all around. It was claimed that Mother insisted on the latter, but Mother also agreed with Roger's plan of Matrimandir and its general layout. Now both are there, in a beautiful unity: the red petals with the white paths around Matrimandir, and a circle of 100 metres diameter around the inner area with tree, shrubs, flowers, lakes, hills etc. The first were planted around August Darshan. Vikas has been working with Narad on the plans for the gardens; but it is only the past few days that many of us felt we should start seriously now, taking advantage of the current monsoon.

** * **

1973, September

1973, November 1st: *“Sanctuary for the Banyan Tree”:* Work begins by the removal of the cylindrical brick platforms which were built there for the Inauguration Ceremony, 10 months ago. Pits are dug for the tree’s aerial roots. Bamboo fence with gate to protect from goats.

* * *



Steel in place the slab of the first level is ready for concreting

* * *

1973, November 11th: *Excerpt from Roger Toll’s diary:*

Engineer Santanam from [S.E.R.C.] Madras comes in the morning and finds the work excellent and impressive. We get the go-ahead and begin the concreting of the bottom⁶¹ slab of the Matrimandir itself at 3:30 pm after a short meditation. We work until 7:30 the next morning. It goes much faster than we had planned. Very harmonious.

* * *

1973, November 11-12th: *Excerpt from Ruud’s “Matrimandir Diary”:*

Ruud’s “Matrimandir Diary”, entry dated 29.12.73.

On November 11th inspection of the reinforcement in slab level I was made by Mr. Santhanam of the S.E.R.C., Madras, consulting Engineers. In the afternoon of the 11th the long continuous concreting of slab level 1 was begun. A letter had been sent to Champaklal for the Mother’s information, stating that the concreting would take place after a meditation and giving the time it would begin, indicating that the work would take an estimated 72 consecutive hours to complete; during which clear weather was necessary for its successful completion. The flowers ‘Divine Grace’, ‘Divine Presence’ and roses were brought from the Mother’s quarters and given to Piero. After a five minute meditation, the concreting operation began, at 3:15 p.m. It continued through the night with Ashramites joining Aurovilians in the work until the next morning at 10:30 a.m. The first layer of concrete was poured.

* * *

1973, November 12th: *Excerpt from Roger Toll’s diary:*

After a morning of sleeping in, we discover the mixer is full of hardened concrete. So all day we work to clean it out. Very hard work in such a small space. By evening, when we were to continue with the next concreting, we are still not ready. Postpone it until tomorrow, Tuesday. Shanti arrives on morning bus. It is very good to have him here in my hut with me.

* * *

⁶¹ Now called the “first slab” probably because it is Matrimandir’s first floor.

1973, November 13th: *Excerpt from Roger Toll's diary:*

By Tuesday morning we are ready, then wait until late afternoon to start. My leg, which got cut on the concrete while cleaning the mixer yesterday, feels like it is getting infected and sore. Another fine concreting with aspiration and harmony. Ashramites came in the evening to help. Mona proves to be a great leader and the Ashramites are good team workers. Fine speed both nights: harmony, joy, efficiency. I am vibrating most of the time, also driving the mixer occasionally. By 2 am Wednesday my leg is very sore and inflamed, so I go to camp and sleep, and miss the sunrise as the work ends. The last few days are a beautiful experience for all, and a oneness among ourselves and with the Ashramites.

* * *

1973, November 13-14th: *Excerpt from Ruud's "Matrimandir Diary":*

Ruud's "Matrimandir Diary", entry dated 29.12.73.

A day's interval was taken to clean the machines and to sleep, and the work was resumed on Tuesday, November 13. Beginning at 3:30 p.m., it continued throughout the night with more and more people collaborating in its execution. The slab was finished with a meditation at 6:20 a.m. on the 14th. At this time the workers observed a 'bow' of deep blue light in the clear morning sky, joining East and West. The weather, wonderful until the work's completion, changed and during the day a continuous heavy rain fell, providing the first needed 'curing' of the first concrete.

* * *

1973, November 15th: *Excerpt from Roger Toll's diary:*

Concreting of the top of the first pillar in the late afternoon.

* * *

1973, November 16th: *Excerpt from Roger Toll's diary:*

Concreting of the top of the second pillar. Remarkable that in the middle of the monsoon season there has been no rain, which would have been very bad for the concrete we've poured. We asked for Mother's protection from the rains, and she seems to have granted our wish. Shanti works hard and harmoniously. He is very happy in Auroville. We all feel him to be much a part of our community.

* * *

1973, November 17th: *Excerpt from Roger Toll's diary:*

Our final concreting to tie in the slab to the four pillars starts in the afternoon and ends at 7:20 in the evening.⁶²

* * *

1973, November 15, 16 & 17th: *Casting of the 8 sections of the twin pillars which are above the 1st slab and bellow the sphere. That is, completing the pillars.*

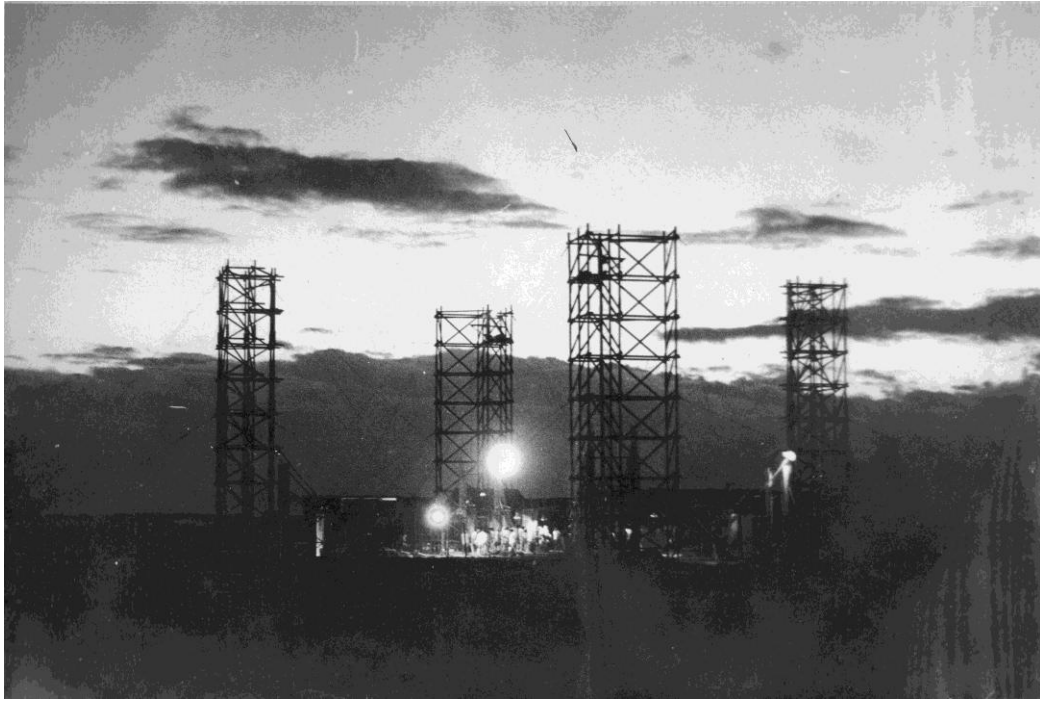
Excerpt from Ruud's "Matrimandir Diary":

Ruud's "Matrimandir Diary", entry dated 29.12.73.

On November 15, 16 and 17 concreting of the last summit portion of the pillars above slab level 1 continued. The entire work was finished on 17th November, precisely between 7:07 and 7:25 p.m.

When information came to the Matrimandir Camp that the Mother had left her body, it was seen that all the pillars of the Matrimandir had been completed by, and simultaneously with the time of her physical withdrawal.

⁶² Piero noted that it was completed at 7:25, exactly at the time Mother passed away. Symbolically, this concreting firmly wedded the first part of the sphere, the first or bottom slab, to the four pillars, after which a new phase of the work began: the construction of the structural "ribs" hidden within Matrimandir's sphere.

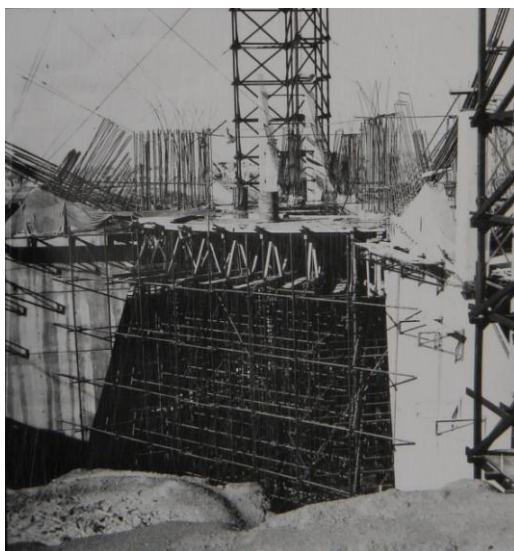


Completing the concreting of the four twin pillars



Amphitheatre almost complete and Matrimandir with its hoist towers in the background

* * *



Tip of the pillars after the removal of their shuttering

* * *

1973, November 20th: *Note from Piero to Shyam Sunder:*

Typed and signed note. AV Archives
English

Dear Shyam Sunder,

Saturday 17.11.73 we have completed the four piers of Matrimandir above Slab level 1.

After the work, I went to the office and I have shown the time for the wages of the labours to Claudine: it was 7:20 or 7:25 p.m.

The coincidence with the time Mother have left her body, is not a wonderful direct sign for us and for everybody.

Truth

* * *

1973, December 9th: *Excerpt from a letter from Piero to Paolo Tommasi:*

Typed & unsigned, kept @ AV-Archives.
Italian. Translated in French by Dominique and then in English by Gilles

Dear Paolo,

I believe you have been informed that Mother has left her body to enter into a vaster and more luminous body, which is beyond our normal perception. For us it has been a very intense period, which has upset us a lot, but has also regenerated areas where we had never been earlier.

[...]

You know that at the start of the works for the construction of Matrimandir's Pillars, the idea had floated around that they are they represent the 4 Powers of the Mother, as described by Sri Aurobindo in his small book "The Mother". I had personally written to Mother to ask her if it was true and she answered yes. On 11, 12 and 13 November we have been casting Matrimandir's first slab at the basis of the sphere. It has been a great experience to which tens of Aurovilians and Ashramites participated. The following days we have worked on the Pillars, their last part, that above the concrete slab. This work ended on 17th November at 7:25 pm. The 4 Pillars were at last complete and, unknown from us, exactly at that time, Mother wasn't in her body anymore. For me and for many other, a sign has a greater value than words.

I don't know if this letter will reach you in time, I only wanted to remind to you your promise (for me even more precious than before.) Mother's conversations with Satprem and photos of the architecture of this Mexican you spoke to me about last time...

* * *

1973, December 10th: *Note from Roger Anger to Huta,*

Handwritten and signed. AV Archives.

French

Dear friend,

Thank you for your note.

I have been very touched by your thoughts and thank you for expressing them in such a spontaneous way. Indeed, we all care about expressing our potentiality for the future to be built. We need to fight to hasten it.

In friendship

Roger

* * *

Excerpt from of a report published in the Gazette Aurovilienne:

Gazette Aurovilienne, Vol. 3, No 2 (published early 1974)

French & English

For the last five months preparations were being made for the concreting of the slab level 1 of the Matrimandir sphere. Three new machines had joined the work in the Matrimandir area: a bulldozer donated from America, a stone crushing machine to meet the increased demand for granite aggregate and an earth rammer needed to compact outside areas. Installation, checking and repair of mixers, vibrators, vehicles, winches and other machines was done by the Matrimandir Workshop. A new electricity section provided control panels and new lighting for the entire work area.

On 11th November inspection of reinforcement in slab level 1 was made by consulting engineers from Madras.

After imploring the divine grace and after a short meditation the concreting began at 3.15 p.m. on 11th November. It continued through the night with Ashramites joining Aurovilians in the work. There was a break in the middle for cleaning and repairs and the work was completed on the morning of the 14th at 6.20 a.m. The weather, wonderful until the work's completion, changed and during the day a continuous rain provided the first needed 'curing' of the fresh concrete. From November 15th to 17th the last portion of the summits of the pillars above slab level 1 were concreted. The work was completed on the 17th at 7.25 p. m.

* * *

1973, December 19th: *Excerpt from Roger Toll's diary:*

We begin the first shuttering of the ribs on the east pillar with Piero and the carpenters. An intense effort, but calm, harmonious. Piero is the crucial piece in the puzzle, as he has been all along. Personally, I have found it hard working with steel and rebars. The barbenders' work is muscular and rugged.

* * *

1973, December 23rd: *Excerpt from Ruud's "Matrimandir Diary":*

The major event of the last two months of Matrimandir construction was the completion of the foundation. In early November, around the 10th, we finally had the big 60-hour concreting of the bottom slab of the sphere, resting on the four pillars (though 'resting' is not too accurate). Rather the sphere rests on the pillars and the bottom slabs hangs beneath the sphere. We will therefore have to keep all the shuttering and the forest of piles until at least half of the sphere has been completed. On top of the bottom slab we had to cast the last portion of the pillars, small triangles as a continuation of the four ship-like structures we cast last year. It was done in three days: First East, then South if I remember well, but in any case they cast two; North and West on one day, a Saturday, November 17th. Seyril asked Piero what time it was when the vibrator stopped after working the last cement in between the heavy steel construction on the West pillar. 6:07 p.m. Then the last covers had to be put, things finished and cleaned. The concreting was ready sometime between 7:15 and 7:30 p.m. Not

only the concreting; but with that the foundation of Matrimandir. Next morning we heard that Mother had left her, that, body just at that time, 7:25 p. m. on November 17th. Welcome home, Mother!

We didn't get the amphitheatre ready for the youth conference in February this year and we won't get it ready by next February either. It has become a big project and, of course, much more expensive than was foreseen. We must have spent more than 1.5 lakhs so far. The tiles alone will cost that much, and the same again for the audio-visual equipment. Last week we had a 24-hour concreting of the 10-cm. thick control room floor. It had to be done in a single stretch, in lime.

The 'monument of unity' creates unity more and more, but surprisingly not between the Aurovilians but between the Tamils. More and more the construction is a Tamil venture. From Auroville's side, Alain and I were involved from the beginning as constant stimulators, assisted by some Aurovilians who came and went. Since Alain moved back to the Ashram in the beginning of September, I have been mostly alone, apart from Ben who supervises the carpentry. The whole thing is being built by Tamils, somewhere between 100 and 150 of them. We only help, advise and stimulate but they are doing it. There are specialised groups, each with its own leader: barbenders, carpenters, mixing team, lime-kiln team, masons, as well as a group of generalists who do measuring with the theodolite and dumpy levels, calculate the wages of the diggers and keep the thing going. It works with little problem, proving that it can be done. A concreting like the one last week is a beautiful experience. Everything was organised, they decided whether to go on through the night -or not, how to arrange for the food, etc. It was concentrated, quiet, well-done, just as solemn as any Matrimandir concreting. And the decision to carry on through the night was the right one for afterwards it rained for 36 hours.

The control room is ready now for the roof. The carpenters are putting the plywood on the wooden frames. We have to wait for more wood before erecting the shuttering for the beams in between the pillars and starting the next big job. In May and June we were looking for an engineer to take up those complicated underground constructions, full of pipes, water channels, open drains and electrical fittings. When nobody was found, we started to do it with our own manpower, and went on until it was ready. After all, with the architect designing according to the need and answering questions, some clever boys with tapes and measuring instruments and a bit of common sense, anybody can do it. At least in Auroville. The artist's room is almost ready for concreting, only we have too many other jobs on hand to concentrate on it now so it takes time, its own time, as does everything around here and you cannot do much about it.

Roger did not like the stage edge. From the lowest step it stood straight up for about 60 cms., nice and solid and with beauty and grandeur, but not fitting in the overall design and feeling of the amphitheatre. He tried to make the edge a bit more round, we tried all kinds of circular segments, but it did not improve. Then, one day the inspiration came to have the last three steps climb up instead of flowing down to the bottom of the stage. Roger immediately got enthusiastic about it and he tried it out in red sand. It was good and a long train of experiments started: a canal between the stage and the steps, or not; the top step on the same level as the stage, or not; the lowest of the three steps with a canal, or not; and how to adjust the rain water system. We built all the walls several times, with the edge 10 cms. above the stage, on the same level as the stage and lower than it; kicked off all the bricks again and started over. So we grew towards a solution: the top 5 cms. above the stage, and below, no canal. It took 3½ months of trial, repair and experiment, but last Friday we did one part of the concreting to make it final and now it looks perfect. Yesterday we did one more part and next week we may be close to finishing the inside structure of the amphitheatre before the end of 1973.

The workers get more and more involved. It seems the main idea is getting near to them, i.e., that it is their construction as much as ours. I am not supervising much and already it seems that an unsupervised group just keeps on working. They don't have to do it for me. If they go slow, they don't harm me, so they should not work because of some Aurovilian in-charge. In the beginning, somebody was on the lookout to warn the others when 'they' were coming, but that is over now. The awareness must come that they work for Auroville, for the Divine, for themselves, not for us, or some boss. It is a slow process but it seems to work. Since a week we have a new way of starting the day. At 8 o'clock, when the bell rings, we all gather on the stage, sit down quietly and listen to Damodaran, who

introduces a subject and a speaker. Someone comes forward to give a little talk or to read from some text. Mostly the topic is derived from one of the Tamil classics like the Thirukural. After a short silence, Parkannan starts the roll call. It is very peaceful, almost everybody likes it and the day starts differently. The next very big step would be if not only the amphitheatre workers but all the workers in Matrimandir area – Matrimandir, community house, outer gardens, would start the day together. It may come soon. They are ready; the Aurovilians are not yet ready.

At the instigation of some workers, with the approval of all, we started a library this week. Four people went to town with Rs. 100 and came back with 49 books. Forty books were borrowed right away. Tomorrow Damodaran will spend another Rs. 100 in Madras. The push towards culture, study and development seems to grow. I would like to organise classes and groups but I don't yet know how and on what. Maybe first on literacy.

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1973, December 26th: *Note from Vikas to Huta:*

Typed and signed. AV Archives
English

Huta,

I am sincerely sorry for the breach of courtesy committed by myself and others working at the Matrimandir, in respect of the copying of your correspondence with Mother.

Rudolph Lohman had given me a copy of this correspondence after seeing that I was preparing designs for your house. As I was working, various people came to glance over my shoulder and were curious to see the correspondence. Next thing that happened is that it had disappeared from my work-cupboard. By the time I had tracked it down, many copies had been made.

Willy has collected all the copies, save the original one given to me by Rudolph, and will hand them to you, or dispose of them according to your direction.

At a general meeting of all Matrimandir workers some months ago, it was generally agreed that all statements by the Mother about the Matrimandir should be released. Roger Anger and Shyam Sunder both approved of this resolution. This possibly explains the discourtesy.

Anyhow, please accept our apology.

Looking to the future, could you kindly give me an appointment to come and see you about the design of your house, the responsibility for which was given to me by Roger. I already have an interesting idea for this which I would like to show you.

At the Service of Truth.

Vikas

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1973, December 27th: *Excerpt from Ruud's "Matrimandir Diary":*

We still have big piles of earth around Matrimandir and amphitheatre. These have to go. Earlier we thought that soil would form the petals in earth, but then it was suggested to build huge underground tanks. This idea has been postponed for some time due to financial problems. Shyam Sunder suggested that we tidy up the area, so for the time being it looks all right and it doesn't cost much. The earth can be used in the outer gardens, to level the area and to create hills. The problem is, how to get the earth out inexpensively? Yesterday we did some brain-storming and came up with 'Why not use the bulldozer, not for pushing, but for pulling?' Good idea! It could move a huge cart filled to the brim with earth. Why not a row of such carts? Make a canal and use boats, blow it through a pipe, use a catapult, etc. At such moments you can feel there is something in the air, some good idea, and you can almost catch it. Suddenly it came: 50 or 100 donkeys! We checked with the workers. A donkey costs Rs. 60, so for Rs. 3,000, – the price of a bullock cart – we now have 50 donkeys. One can carry three bags of cement, or 10-15 baskets of earth. That's a lot in one go. One boy can handle two donkeys. Each donkey could be fitted with boxes with a button which when pressed causes the bottom to open and the earth to fall where it is wanted. So no problems of unloading. And they can go up and down and through anything. Maybe we'll start by buying two or three, just to try it out. No pollution, no noise. Only, people say donkeys give up after one trip, get tired, sit down, and

you don't get them up any more. It seems there are even elephants trained for such jobs; in Ceylon, but even in south India. Why not? An Aurolephant.

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1973, December 28th: *Excerpt from Roger Toll's diary:*

I have now been in Peace for 18 months. When we arrived, my hut was not there, nor was the laundry, the kitchen extension, the fence. Matrimandir was a deep hole, an office, a cement storage complex and a carpentry shed. Now the pillars and bottom slab soar out of the hole, complex electrical boards and wooden towers, a pump house and water tank, Ina's house, a carpentry extension, new sheds, barbenders' huts and tables, a workshop, steelyard and rock crusher. Ama⁶³ is still here, but Krishnamurti's tea shed and house is new. The banyan tree is fenced off and undergoing beautification. The outer gardens are literally being constructed, with rolling hills and canals and new trees, all engineered by Vikas and Krishna [M'Zali]. The amphitheatre is in its 13th month of construction and nearing completion. Michel's new building, whatever it's for, is underway and even has its own storeroom. The road is being built out to Ben's new woodwork shop [Takshlanaya] beyond Sincerity, to start soon. And at Sincerity, not only Michael [Tait], Claudine [Blancard] and Tom [Greer], but also now Russell [Skinner], Krishna [M'Zali], Gérard [Maréchal]. The lime kiln is going to be rebuilt. And all around Centre lies Ruud's agricultural domaine, including the casuarina trees which he also tends.

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1973, December 29th: *Excerpt from Ruud's "Matrimandir Diary":*

On the notice board in the Worker's Camp, Seyril put up a new Progress Report, the first one since many months. It is typical and revealing that the project which is progressing most – the monument of human unity, is not even mentioned, but that is a question of awareness which will no doubt be set right after a transformation or two.

Progress Report, December- 1973

Construction of the sphere of the Matrimandir was begun on the 16th May with the cutting, painting and fitting of 8 km of steel tube pipes for heavy-duty scaffolding, capable of taking the weight of the lower region of the sphere (approx. 400 tons). The scaffolding, completed by a wooden shuttering, follows the curved shape of the first level slab, whose outside diameter measures 16 metres. About 70 tons of steel had to be bent and precisely fitted to provide the reinforcement in the slab and the lower part of the ribs. During the five months needed to execute this exacting work, the main activities of the new Matrimandir workshop were: fabrication of tubular frames for scaffolding; machining of cast-iron plugs for anchorage of the sphere discs; machining and fitting of cast-iron pre-stressed anchorages; fabrication of 4 jib cranes; threading of bolts for shuttering; fabrication of clamps, etc. Recently Harpagon workshop has helped to prepare two anchorage plates for the spiral ramps. Three new machines have joined the works bulldozer, donated by an American; a stone crusher, purchased to meet the increasing demand for granite-aggregate; and an earth rammer, needed to compact outside areas. Installation, checking and repair of mixers, vibrators, vehicles, winches and other gear has also been done by the workshop.

A new electricity section has provided control panels and new lighting for the entire work area. A contribution was made to provide safe drinking water for the workers and the tank installed in the main construction building.

On November 11th inspection of the reinforcement in slab level I was made by Mr. Santhanam of the S.E.R.C., Madras, consulting Engineers. In the afternoon of the 11th the long continuous concreting of slab level 1 was begun. A letter had been sent to Champaklal for the Mother's information, stating that the concreting would take place after a meditation and giving the time it would begin, indicating that the work would take an estimated 72 consecutive hours to complete; during which clear weather

⁶³ The old Tamil woman who lived in a hut close to the Banyan Tree.

was necessary for its successful completion. The flowers 'Divine Grace', 'Divine Presence' and roses were brought from the Mother's quarters and given to Piero. After a five minute meditation, the concreting operation began, at 3:15 p.m. It continued through the night with Ashramites joining Aurovilians in the work until the next morning at 10:30 a.m. The first layer of concrete was poured. A day's interval was taken to clean the machines and to sleep, and the work was resumed on Tuesday, November 13. Beginning at 3:30 p.m., it continued throughout the night with more and more people collaborating in its execution. The slab was finished with a meditation at 6:20 a.m. on the 14th. At this time the workers observed a 'bow' of deep blue light in the clear morning sky, joining East and West. The weather, wonderful until the work's completion, changed and during the day a continuous heavy rain fell, providing the first needed 'curing' of the first concrete.

On November 15, 16 and 17 concreting of the last summit portion of the pillars above slab level 1 continued. The entire work was finished on 17th November, precisely between 7:07 and 7:25 p.m.

When information came to the Matrimandir Camp that the Mother had left her body, it was seen that all the pillars of the Matrimandir had been completed by, and simultaneously with the time of her physical withdrawal.

The present work going on in connection with the first layer of the ribs and the 2nd level slab for the sphere.

Matrimandir Area:

Work continues on the outer gardens, which were inaugurated on August 15th, 1973 with a meditation followed by planting of trees 'Joy of Vegetal Nature in Answer to the New Light', 'Realisation' and bamboo.

New Work Centre at Peace

A new work centre is being constructed at Peace to provide working space for a design and engineering construction office, an energy office, and a common room for workers, especially Tamil youth. It is hoped that concentration of such specialised workers as architects, draughtsman, designers of interior systems and engineers working on the units of the Matrimandir project, cannot only accelerate development of the Matrimandir, but also provide a source of developmental designs stimulating creation of new productive enterprises in Auroville and acting as an impetus to worker's training.

The energy office will be the Matrimandir office for collection of information, its adaptation and application, first to the Matrimandir project and later to other sectors of Auroville and anyone desiring to benefit from it. Particular reference will be paid to the conversion of solar energy into electrical energy through the discs of Matrimandir. Any successful results obtained should be of great potential value in the area of energy conversion. This work will be done in consultation with Dr. Chamanlal Gupta, co-ordinator of the Auroville Centre for Environmental Studies.

Construction of the new work centre at Peace is being made possible by the contributions of the creative group of young Canadians, O'Pt'i'Zozio, a co-operative in Montreal. Their Elan Centre for Creativity, Community and farm are non-profit organisations "trying to work along the lines shown by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother..." their energy aimed towards bringing forth a New World.

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