

MATRIMANDIR



I

In the Sweet Year of 1971, the year of man's hoped for "leap towards the Future", as if divinely insuring that Future, the foundation stone of Matrimandir was laid at Auroville by Nolini Kanta Gupta. It was the Mother's ninety-third birthday, and her message for the day was: "A life consecrated to union with the Divine is the only life worth living." In 1970, the Mother had said that "Auroville aspires for union",¹ and in August she had made another significant statement about Auroville:

"The Matrimandir wants to be the symbol of the Divine's answer to man's aspiration for perfection.

Union with the Divine manifesting in a progressive human unity".

Yet another had come in November 1970:

"The Matrimandir will be the soul of Auroville.

The sooner the soul is there, the better it will be for everybody and especially for the Aurovilians".²

Auroville was to be a prominent part of the world's future — the living and transformed Next Future — and Matrimandir was to be the soul of Auroville. In the place of the agelong tragic divorce between body and soul, earth and heaven, there must now occur a meeting, a union and a transfiguration fulfilling the prophecy in *Savitri*:

A divine harmony shall be earth's law,
 Beauty and joy remould her way to live:
 Even the body shall remember God,...
 The supermind shall claim the world for Light
 And thrill with love of God the enamoured heart
 And place Light's crown on Nature's lifted head
 And found Light's reign on her unshaking base.³

The Matrimandir foundation ceremony was a poem of consecration and all present were touched at the deeper levels of the spirit. "It was the hour before the Gods awake." As the Mother's children proceeded towards the chosen spot, it was still dark except for the light burning on the top of Ganesa's temple at the entrance of Auroville, and for the stars 'shining bright as diamonds'. As one of the eye-witnesses, Anu, recalls the event:

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

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

Over us the moon had become pale and in the east were waves of light. As the flames died down the music too ended. The chief architect Mr. Anger came to Nolini and escorted him to the site. As I turned I saw that a similar fire was burning near the banyan tree and the lotus-shaped jar [Kumbha] where the foundation of Auroville was laid. Mr. Anger brought us to the site which was a deeply-dug-up square. Nolini, Navajata, Mr. Anger and Auroville's first citizen Aurofilio, a child of about 5, went down the square. We saw another deeper square inside this square. This was the place for laying the foundation-stone...

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

The presence of the three fires can be explained, according to Nolini, in two ways: in the Vedic times they represented Heaven, Self and Earth; in our times they may be taken to represent the mind, the vital being and the body.⁴

II

Thus was the divine seed cast on Auroville's sacred soil on the Mother's birthday. As conveyed to Mr. Anger, Matrimandir was ultimately to dominate the prospect as a golden globe suspended in space, the light filtering from top to bottom, — an architectural lyric, a materialised meditation, a brazier of Aspiration from below being met by the downpour of Grace from Above. When Matrimandir took final shape, it was expected to suggest symbolically the emergence of "the golden sphere of consciousness out of the earth crater", the whole epic climb of life in its dynamic versatility being reflected in the dance of the movement on the golden discs exposed to the sun's rays. But Matrimandir was to be no architectural marvel merely, something to gaze at and admire and indite poems about; it was to be verily a theatre of inner psychological exploration, self-discovery and self-realisation. Following one of the four pathways, the pilgrim would pass above the crater and make for the sun-world, reach the central dodecagon, and go beyond it to a large meditation chamber illumined by a descending ray of sunlight. This would be the transforming chamber, the spiritual cyclotron; the Mind of Night hot-linked with the Mind of Light: one complete spectrum from the inconscient to the superconscient: the way up also being the way down, the whole *mysterium tremendum* of the cosmic dance-drama. The pilgrim, when he had charged and changed himself enough, enough for the time being, could now go out to the Garden of Unity, the Banyan Tree and the mythic Lotus or Lotus-shaped 'solid mandala'.

Matrimandir, — Auroville's Power-house of the Spirit, — was planned to be taken up in twelve stages spread over three or more years, and when completed, it would be a symbol-dream in architecture, a marvel of beauty and harmony, the ensouled image of a mighty aspiration and its theatre of progressive realisation. The whole complex of Matrimandir and its environs — even when one merely looked at the plans and at the model — might seem a three-dimensional translation of the nectarean insights of Sri Aurobindo's *The Life Divine*, *The Synthesis of Yoga* and above all *Savitri*:

O Sun-Word, thou shall raise the earth-soul to Light
 And bring down God into the lives of men;
 Earth shall be my work-chamber and my house,
 My garden of life to plant a seed divine.

Was it Savitri on whom the divine command was laid, — or was the “blissful cry” addressed rather to the Savitri in the Mother?

When all thy work in human time is done
 The mind of earth shall be a home of light,
 The life of earth a tree growing towards heaven,
 The body of earth a tabernacle of God.⁵

After the laying of the foundation stone of Matrimandir, for many months the work was hard and obscure. Aurovilians, Ashramites, local villagers started digging, digging, digging with crow-bars, picks and shovels...it was like wrestling with the infinitudes of the Inconscient, such packed density, such fierce resistance, such a desert of defiance. But there was the certainty of waters gushing forth one day, and life sprouting, and gardens growing...

References

1. *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Vol. 16, p. 229
2. *Savitri*, Sri Aurobindo, revised edition, 1993, p. 707
3. *Mother India*, May-71, pp. 264-65
4. *Savitri*, Sri Aurobindo, revised edition, 1993, p. 699
5. *Collected Works of the Mother*, cent. ed., Vol. 11, p. 248



The Inner Chamber : Matrimandir