

AUROVILLE IS AURORE [DAWN] AND VILLE [CITY] IS DEDICATED TO SRI AUROBINDO; THE ART OF SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE

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ABSTRACT

Auroville (City of Dawn; French: Cité de l'aube) is an experimental township in Viluppuram district, mostly in the state of Tamil Nadu, India, with some parts in the Union Territory of Puducherry in India. It was founded in 1968 by **Mirra Alfassa** (known as "the Mother" or "La Mère") and designed by architect Roger Anger. Auroville's name is derived from the French language: aurore, meaning "dawn", and ville, meaning "town" or "city". Additionally, it is named after **Sri Aurobindo** (1872–1950).

KEYWORDS: dawn, ville, spiritual, matrimandir, golden disc.

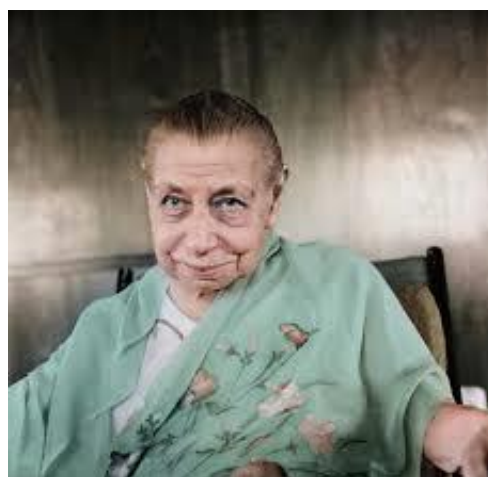


Figure-1: Mirra Alfassa and Sri Aurobindo Ghose.

Introduction: **Mirra Alfassa** (21 February 1878 – 17 November 1973), known to her followers as The Mother or La Mère, was a French-Indian spiritual guru, occultist and yoga teacher, and a collaborator of **Sri Aurobindo Ghose**, (born 15 August 1872 – 5 December 1950) was an Indian yogi, maharishi, and Indian nationalist. He also edited the newspaper Bande Mataram who considered her to be of equal yogic stature to him and called her by

the name "The Mother" or "Shri Maa". It was founded in 1968 by Mirra Alfassa (known as "the Mother" or "La Mère") and designed by architect Roger Anger. **Roger Anger** (24 March 1923 – 15 January 2008) was a French architect who worked on the Auroville project, designed by **Mirra Alfassa** and endorsed by UNESCO and the Government of India.



Figure 2: Auroville & French Architect: Roger Anger.

Today Auroville is recognised as the first and only internationally endorsed ongoing experiment in human unity and transformation of consciousness, also concerned with – and practically researching into – sustainable living and the future cultural, environmental, social and spiritual needs of mankind. The concept of Auroville – an ideal township devoted to an experiment in human unity – came to the Mother as early as the 1930s. In the mid-1960s the concept was developed and put before the Govt. of India, who gave their backing and took it to the General Assembly of UNESCO. The name

'Auroville' was given in homage to Sri Aurobindo, while also meaning 'City of Dawn'. The idea was recognised and taken up by the Government of India. A location near Pondicherry was found. The time was right, the wheel set in motion, and support started coming in. Symbol of Auroville: The dot at the centre represents Unity, the Supreme; the inner circle represents the creation, the conception of the City; the petals represent the power of expression, realisation. 16 August 1971.

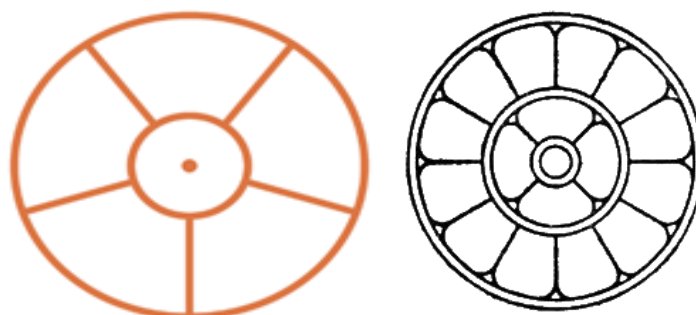


Figure 3: Auroville Symbol.

The Matrimandir is an edifice of spiritual significance for practitioners of integral yoga in the centre of Auroville, India established by Mirra Alfassa of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Auroville's spiritual co-founder, known to her followers as The Mother or La Mère. It is called Soul of the City (French: L'âme de la Ville) and situated in a large open space called "Paix" (French for Peace). The Mandir was conceived of in late 1965 as a gleaming sphere rising amid twelve gardens by, who marked a lone banyan tree as the heart of the city. Its foundation stone was laid at sunrise on her 93rd birthday, 21 February 1971, and the four supporting pillars were concreted on 17 November 1973; she died that evening. After decades of work by Aurovilians and craftsmen, the Inner Chamber opened in 1994 and the gold-clad sphere was completed in May 2008.

The Crystal Globe: The crystal for the Matrimandir arrived in Auroville on 26-4-91 at 10.15 p.m. It was

moved into the Matrimandir's Inner Chamber the very next day at 09.45 a.m. The "glass globe of Auroville" is the massive crystal globe at the center of the Matrimandir, which is illuminated by a single beam of sunlight. It symbolizes pure consciousness and serves as a focal point for silent, individual meditation in the Matrimandir's inner chamber.

The crystal globe at the Matrimandir:

- **Function:** It is the focal point for individual concentration inside the Matrimandir's meditation room.
- **Illumination:** A complex system of mirrors and lenses, including a computer-controlled heliostat, directs a single beam of sunlight from the oculus at the top of the dome to strike the crystal globe.
- **Symbolism:** The crystal globe represents pure consciousness and serves as a spiritual center for the city of Auroville.

- **Significance:** According to the official Auroville website, it is considered an architectural wonder, a space where "design meets divinity".

Experiencing the Matrimandir

Access to the inner chamber for concentration is strictly regulated.

Booking: You must book a time slot in advance, typically 3-5 days ahead.

Limitations: Same-day bookings are not available, group bookings are not allowed, and children must be aged 10 or older.

Conditions: Visits are subject to closure due to rainy weather.

Location: The Matrimandir is located in the geographical and spiritual center of Auroville.

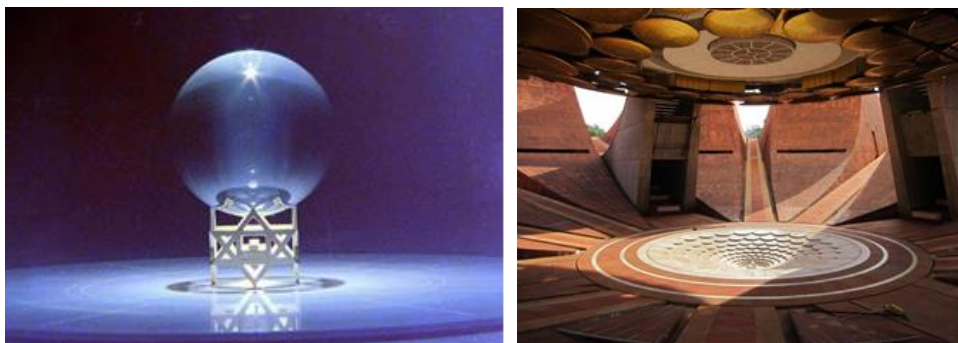


Figure 4: Crystal Globe and Auroville Meditation Centre.

The Columns: The columns arrived at Matrimandir in the beginning of January 1990. They were 24-inch diameter, galvanised, seamless steel pipes, 8.65 mtr long, weighing 830 kg each. The painting job appeared straightforward and the first two were done completely in a couple of months. A dedicated team started putting

in extra time, a few infra-red lights appeared to help the drying, and then even an electric polishing machine arrived to speed up the work. There are an average of 15 coats of paint on each column with finer and finer sanding between coats after which the final polishing was done.

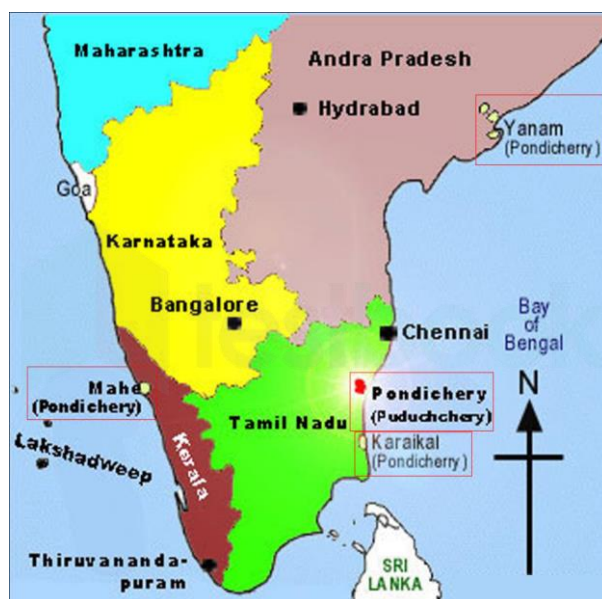


Figure 5: Auroville location in Pondicherry.

The size of 70 cm diameter was marked on the original plan that Mother had drawn for the central object in the Chamber. In July 1983, the searchlight fell on the firm of Schott in Mainz, and somewhat later on Zeiss in Oberkochen, both in Germany. These firms proposed the type of crystal - optically perfect glass - with the name of Bohr Kron 7. On the 8th of June 1984, Zeiss presented

the study, and gave the estimate: approx. 230,000 German Marks. On May 12 1987, Schott wrote to Zeiss that the cast has been done, and that the mould was being cooled. When two months later a visit to Zeiss was made, it appeared that this casting was the second one, - the first one having failed for unpublished reasons.



Figure 6: Pillars & Divine light.

The casting at Schott's in Mainz lasted 15 hours, and was done in a special form of refractory stone, held together by seven metal bands, which was placed on top of a platform built of iron and steel. During the casting process the glass in the form was kept at a constant temperature. After 15 hours the rough casting in the form of a massive dome with a diameter of 80 to 85 cm and a weight of 1100 kg was finished, after which it was

cooled down extremely slowly (to avoid tension) in an annealing furnace for a period of 5 weeks. The rough form had to be polished on two sides, in order to test the quality of the glass. Finally, at the beginning of 1991, it became clear that the process to deliver the globe could be started, and in April of the same year it reached its destination, the Chamber.

The Gold Discs



Figure 7: Gold Discs.

- **Disc frame:** - Stainless steel tubes
- **Disc material:** - stainless steel sheet
- **Gold leaf:** - 28 gm of gold per 1000 leaves
- **Leaf size:** - 85 × 85 mm
- **Total number of discs:** - 1415
- **Small convex discs:** - 954
- **Large concave discs:** - 461
- **Average diam. (large discs):** - 2.3 meter
- **Average diam. (small discs):** - 1.5 meter



Figure-8: Matrimandir [Auroville]

The Carpet: The carpet in the meditation chamber was woven in Agra using a blend of the finest Merino wool imported from New Zealand. This project was completed under the skillful guidance of Mr. Meattle of India Carpets and Furnishing Company, one of India's top carpet makers. It took 6 months to weave the twelve sections (and two spare pieces) which cover the entire floor area of the Chamber. The manufacturing was done on a specially designed handloom using the Wilton weaving system. This system gives a carpet all the good qualities of a machine-made carpet as well as the special qualities of a handmade one. The Auroville Matrimandir features a white, wall-to-wall carpet in its inner meditation chamber. This chamber is a silent, white marble space designed for individual concentration, which contains a large crystal globe at its center that is illuminated by a beam of sunlight. The carpet is described as being all white and uniform, looking as if it's suspended.

- **Location:** The carpet is in the Inner Chamber of the Matrimandir, the "Soul of Auroville".
- **Chamber appearance:** The chamber is minimalist and white, designed for silence and concentration.
- **Carpet details:** The carpet is white and uniform, covering the floor wall-to-wall.
- **Purpose:** The chamber is used for quiet, individual meditation and concentration, not for organized religious activities.
- **Key feature:** At the center of the room, a large, optical-quality glass globe sits on a pedestal and is illuminated by a beam of sunlight coming through an opening in the ceiling.

The Heliostat and Lens: The heliostat is controlled by a computer program, which moves a mirror across the sun's path every day. This mirror projects sunlight into a lens that projects the single sun ray down on the crystal. To make sure that the ray strikes the crystal exactly in the centre, a photo sensor is installed in the path of the ray itself and relays the data on the ray's position to the computer, which in turn will adjust the ray to the correct position if necessary.

Technical information about the lens

- **Focal length, first lens:** 30 m, diam, 45 cm
- **Focal length, second lens:** 5 m, diam. 25 cm
- **Diameter of sun-spot on the globe:** 180 mm

The "golden disc" refers to the Matrimandir in Auroville, a large golden sphere covered in 1,415 gold-plated stainless steel discs that represent the birth of a new consciousness. Designed to be a place for silent meditation, it is considered the "soul of Auroville" and symbolizes peace and self-discovery. Inside the Matrimandir is a white marble meditation chamber where a single beam of sunlight illuminates a large crystal globe.

Key features of the Matrimandir: The Matrimandir inner chamber is open for silent meditation for small

groups from 9:30 am to 12:30 pm and 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm, but it is closed on Sundays and Tuesdays. To visit the Matrimandir, you must first watch an introductory film and obtain a pass from the Auroville Visitors Centre. Pass bookings for the inner chamber should ideally be made at least one day in advance.

Matrimandir inner chamber: Hours: 9:30 am to 12:30 pm and 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm. Closed on: Sundays and Tuesdays. There is no strict dress code for meditation in Auroville, but modest clothing is recommended as a sign of respect for the spiritual and cultural significance of the place. This means avoiding overly revealing or casual attire and opting for loose, comfortable, and appropriate clothing. The Auroville Matrimandir is a large, golden sphere that is surrounded by twelve "petals" or gardens. Inside the central dome is a meditation chamber, which contains the world's largest optically perfect glass globe. The structure's exterior is covered in golden discs that reflect sunlight, giving it a radiant appearance.

- Overall shape: A flattened sphere.
- Exterior:
- Covered in golden discs.
- Surrounded by twelve petals or gardens.
- Interior: A central meditation hall called the inner chamber. Contains the largest optically perfect glass globe in the world.
- Symbolism: The design symbolizes the birth of a new consciousness and represents a blend of sacred geometry and spiritual evolution

CONCLUSION

- **Golden exterior:** The geodesic dome is covered with 1,415 stainless steel discs, each plated with gold leaves. This gives the structure its characteristic radiance, reflecting sunlight.
- **Architecture:** The Matrimandir stands 29 meters tall and is supported by four massive pillars symbolizing inner transformation. It is surrounded by twelve petals, each representing a different aspect of spiritual growth.
- **Inner Chamber:** The central chamber is made of pure white marble and is designed for silent meditation.
- **Crystal globe:** A large crystal globe sits in the center of the inner chamber, illuminated by a single beam of sunlight directed by an oculus and a system of mirrors.
- **Symbolism:** The structure embodies the ideals of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother (Mirra Alfassa), founders of Auroville. It symbolizes the progressive human aspiration towards spiritual evolution and unity.

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Annamalai University, Tamilnadu (Sponsored by University Grants Commission, India) & obtained Grade: A & has been placed in the first rank among all the participants throughout India and during this tenure he has opportunity to visit Auroville [Matrimandir] and Sri Aurobindo Ashram of Pondicherry, Tamilnadu. The Sri Aurobindo Ashram (French: Ashram de Sri Aurobindo) is a spiritual community (ashram) located in Pondicherry, in the Indian territory of Puducherry. It was founded by Sri Aurobindo after he settled in Pondicherry in 1910. On 24 November 1926 turned over control of the ashram to his collaborator Mirra Alfassa. It houses the samadhi of Sri Aurobindo and Mira Alfassa.

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