SAIER and Bajaj Auto CSR, 2017-18

Garden of Indian Culture and Heritage
at Auroville Botanical Gardens

Amount allocated: Rs. 18,03,000

Abstract:
This project involves the creation of a garden at Auroville Botanical Gardens that celebrates the knowledge and traditions associated with the native species of India, hoping to motivate Aurovilians and visitors to protect and nurture the environment of India.

We are constantly searching for ways of engaging people in environmental awareness, looking for ways to motivate people to get involved in actions which will protect the planet upon which we exist. We feel that the garden of Indian Culture and Heritage will be a point of interest for many Indian visitors who are proud and interested in their country. By creating a space that celebrates the knowledge and traditions associated with the native species of India, we hope to provide motivation for these people to protect and nurture the environment of India.

The Garden will have nine thematic areas: Perfume and Incense; Vedic and Ayurvedic traditions; Contemplative area; Astrological and Planetary connections; Lord Shiva; Kubera; Ganesh; Vishnu & Krishna; and The Goddess.

Q2 report (July – September 2017):

During this period we concentrated on three aspects of the project: research, garden layout, and preparation of the site.

Research has been going on continuously over the past three months. We have been researching plants that are connected to Indian culture, and have identified over 300 plants (for which we have the Sanskrit name and/or the botanical name) which are connected to one of our topics: the deities, the epics, Ayurveda, astrology, or cultural practices. As not all of these plants can be grown in our environment, we are narrowing down the possibilities for which plants to use, and are in process of designing the planting layouts for each garden.

We have also been working on site: mapping the existing trees and shrubs, seeing how they can fit into the different gardens' schematics, and cleaning the area. We have marked the proposed paths on the ground, so that we can actually see how the garden will be laid out. From here we will make any adjustments needed for the final design. We plan to begin planting with the onset of the monsoon, in mid-October.

Reflections:
The main challenge, and the one that is taking the most time, is correlating the Sanskrit names that we find with the correct scientific names. We have found a couple of good source documents, but there are still many names that require extra research to make sure.

Q3 report (October – December 2017):

We have purchased all the materials for the pergolas and the brick pathways, and work has started on these. All the plantation of trees has been completed, and 50% of the plantation of the shrubs has been completed. Work on the interpretation material is in full swing.

Work on this project has been continuous over the past period: cleaning, organizing, sourcing
the plants, and planting. Progress is good, and now we are implementing the hardscape – paths and other artifacts. We hope to be ready by the middle of February, for an inauguration during Auroville's birthday week.

**Q4 report (January – March 2018):**

All of the work has been completed, with respect to the pergolas, pathways, artifacts, first phase of plantation (more will follow as the garden develops), and interpretation materials.

**Outcomes:**

This garden is now focal point for many of the visitors to the botanical gardens, both with school groups and self-guided tours. The garden had begun a dialogue that will now carry on over the years as people come learn about the connection of plants to India culture and share their stories with us, so that our knowledge also increases.

It will take a number of years for the garden to mature and the atmosphere to develop, but hopefully in a few years it will be a really special place.

**Reflections:**

The amount of research that went into this project was considerable, it was work but enjoyable. This garden had been built with people who are interested in the stories and knowledge, and so on that level it has been a very fulfilling process.
Scientific names of Tree species planted

Garden of perfume and incense: Aglaia odorissima, Artabotrys hexapetalus, Cananga odorata, Cinnamomum tamala, Commiphora wighti, Gardenia jasminoides, Gardenia latifolia, Gardenia resinifera, Michelia champaca, Mimusops elengi, Pandanus odoratissima, Plumeria obtusata, Pterocarpus santalinus, Santalum album

Shiva’s Garden: Aegle marmelos, Calophyllum inophyllum, Citrus medica, Couroupita guianensis, Cressentia cujete, Limonia acidissima, Maerua apetalum, Mesua ferrea, Psilanthus wightiana, Stereospermum suaveolens

Vedic garden: Alstonia scholaris, Butea monosperma, Bauhinia purpurea, Bauhinia tomentosa, Bauhinia variegata (White), Caryota urens, Cochlospermum religiosum, Ficus religiosa, Flacourtia montana, Holarrhena antidysenterica, Phyllanthus emblica, Pterocarpus marsupium, Spondias mangifera, Terminalia arjuna, Terminalia bellirica, Terminalia chebula, Vitex altissim

Astrological Avenue: Annona muricata, Artocarpus heterophylla, Atalantia monophylla, Butea monosperma, Diospyros ebenum

Krishna’s Garden: Bauhinia sp.(Blue), Diospyros peregrina, Memecylon umbellatum, Mitragyna parvifolia, Pterocarpus indicus

The garden of Ganesh: Erythrina indica, Ficus glomerata, Mangifera indica, Syzygium cumini, Tamarindus indica, Ziziphus jujuba

The Goddess’s Garden: Citharexylum fruticosum, Kleinhovia hospita, Mallotus philippensis, Millingtonia hortensis, Punica granatum
Sitting benches

Cultural Artifacts
Central courtyard – Meditative Space

Pergolas
Interpretation materials

The three-hulled millet tree is a symbol of \textit{Pulla}, Shiva, Parvati, and the creator, Vishnu (the preserver and creator of the universe). The three-hulled millet tree represents the 3 eyes of Shiva and the 3 parts of his body. It is the ear which is offered to Lord Shiva, while the grain is still used in local medicine.

*Beeli fruit tree* 

*Aspara marathica*