

The Laying of the Foundation: 15th August, 1996

The 15th of August: the birth of Free India and the auspicious birthday of Sri Aurobindo - we could not have found a more fitting date to mark the spot where His future work would begin.....

It was 6am on a misty monsoon morning, and we (Ameeta, Anuradha, Ritika and Seema) were gathered together at the proposed site where the Centre would be built. A small brick path had been laid in the slushy mud, to reach the banyan tree, under which the foundation stone was to be laid. Ameeta carried the engraved marble on her left shoulder and head, and the other three followed behind. Ritika first laid the blessing packets kept in a plastic folder and then the four of us held the foundation stone from four corners and placed it quietly above them. We were rooted by an overwhelming experience of sublime concentration and thanksgiving. We felt like the 'labourers in the quarries of the Gods'.

Seema wrote describing the experience:

"We were not sure about the site or even our own requirements which became clear only after a series of discussions and perhaps some drawing exercise on my part. Then the search began for the right architect and finally Sanjay Prakash was appointed as the architect. With only 10 days left, the foundation stone had to be bought and engraved. With the Grace and Sanction of the Lord, everything was managed on time though with great difficulty. Due to time constraints, the base for the foundation stone had to be prepared on the 14th only - and it was pouring that day! The land was soft and muddy. The mason was unwilling to work - but, after an umbrella was arranged and a tarpaulin hung from the tree to form a canopy over the stone, he got inspired looking at our effort and did the job."