

The story of the Meditation Hall and the Trees

From vision to intention to reality: the creation of the Gnostic Centre

Vision: To create an experiential research centre for the growth of consciousness. So by 1996, there was a clear idea of the Gnostic Centre, a vision if you will. And a logo!

Intention: To create a physical space with the right energy and spirit: In one of her conversations with her father about what she would do should she have enough money, Ameeta told him her aspiration: to build a university of the future, where students will be taught to lead an integral life. Those who graduate from here, with their deeper understanding and experience of a higher consciousness, will be change agents for a new consciousness and way of life.

At the time, she was working with youth (at United Nations of Youth) but had no means of earning the kind of money required to establish this lofty vision. But in time (and that's another story!) that too came to pass. The steadiness of the aspiration and the will to create it led to the creation of the Gnostic Centre.

Reality: The spirit of the Centre and the creation of the first buildings

“I have some land that I can give you to build your home but if you use it for anything else, then you will have given up your home”. When Ameeta heard her father say this, she understood it to mean that the land was hers to do what she wished.

In 1993, with her trusted colleague, Ritika, she sowed the seeds of what later became the Gnostic Centre. It was the physical expression of the Gnostic Centre in the seeds of ten trees: two for each of the five elements: Air (Neem), Water (Gular/Udambar), Fire (Amla), Earth (Pepul) and Ether (the great banyan tree). In fact the first building, The Meditation Hall, was built under the central Banyan. Each tree was planted with blessing packets and sand from the Samadhi at Sri Aurobindo Ashram (Pondicherry), and planted with strong positive intent and meditative presence.



The first step was to lay a foundation stone. On August 15 1996, through driving rain, winds and slush, Ameeta carried the stone some ½ a kilometer to lay it under the central Banyan tree. She was accompanied by Ritika, Anuradha, Seema, and a mason.

So that was the first piece of material laid down! What a triumph! But what should the first building look like? And where was the money to build to come from?

Ameeta's family opposed building an ashram-type space and the group had no money. With all of them in their 20's and not yet established, it did not seem possible to generate the finances required to build. Every weekend long discussions and meditations on how to raise donations would take place in weekly meetings after the readings of 'The Synthesis of Yoga'. And lo and behold, some people did come forth with donations, both in cash and kind. Ameeta, Ritika and Anuradha also pooled in their savings and the money for the meditation hall was more or less organized.

Ameeta realized that it would not be possible to convince her parents to support this project. And there had already been an altercation between Ameeta and her father. With discussions unlikely to yield a favorable outcome, Ameeta decided to slip away to the Ashram (Pondicherry), leaving the construction of the hall in the competent hands of Ritika and Seema. Ritika had to manage Ameeta's family, while Seema was in charge of construction.

In November 1996, everything came together: On 17 November the drawings were completed and by the 24th the construction, with the use of some very basic materials (Kota stone for the floor and thatch for the roof), was started.

Remarkably, Seema was able to inspire the labourers who worked to build the hall, to have daily meditations and she read The Mother's 'Prayers and Meditations' (in Hindi) to them before they began work. So, even the building work was consecrated.

From the very beginning, Ameeta donned the mantle of Chief Designer and Chief Aesthetic Officer (among several others). One of her first re-designs was to change the materials used for the roof (from thatch to slate) and the floor (from kota stone to marble). But slate and marble were expensive. How were they to purchase these items from the meager funds available?

With Grace, a hallmark of experiences within the Gnostic Centre, a friend came to the rescue and suggested buying left over slate and marble from a nearby tile factory. Days of manually sifting through the rejected tiles to find suitable ones, eventually yielded results. Less than 4 months later, the floor was finished. The joinery of the stone delineated the 12-pointed star that is symbolic of the 12 qualities of the Divine Mother. Count the wooden struts in the roof and you will see they too number 12.

Between November 1996 and March 1997, the meditation hall was built. Within the circle of trees, where the energy converges, with materials that blend the architecture into the surroundings, a serene meditation space was created. It was formally opened to the public on the auspicious day of March 28, 1997.





The trees planted then provide the good energy and green cover for the Centre. The central banyan spreads its sturdy branches, and stands sentinel in front of the meditation hall, guarding and protecting those within.

Looking back, every step seems guided, every event unfolding, as it should, to create the quiet serenity that is the embodiment of the spirit of the Centre.