

VISITORS CENTRE AT AUROVILLE



Visitors centre – 1992 International Award “Hassan Fathy, Architecture for the poor”

The visitors centre has been built by the former AVBC/Earth Unit in Auroville between 1989 and 1992. This centre of about 1200 m² has been granted the 1992 International Award “*Hassan Fathy, Architecture for the poor*”. It was mostly funded by HUDCO, The Housing and Urban Development Corporation – Government of India, to be a demonstration in appropriate building technologies and renewable energies. HUDCO wanted this centre to use extensively earth and ferrocement technology, wind and solar energy, and a wastewater recycling system.

The concept of the Visitors Centre had been initially designed by Suhasini Iyer, but she had absolutely no knowledge and experience about earth architecture and site management. Satprem Maini joined Auroville to design fully and build this centre, and at the same time create the former Auroville Building Centre / Earth Unit. Satprem trained Suhasini, gave a technical design to the concept and mostly managed the construction site.

This project was the opportunity to design and develop the [Auram Press 3000](#). When Satprem came to Auroville, end of August 1989, a few Agram presses from Bangalore had been purchased to produce the blocks of the Visitors Centre. Unfortunately these presses were not versatile enough and they had a low output. They were not giving blocks up to the requirement for this centre. These presses had to be modified in order to increase their productivity and quality.

Thus, the Auram Press 3000 came into existence early 1990 and it had at this time a productivity of 850 blocks per day with 6-7 people on the press. Since then, the press has been developed a lot and it can produce now 1000 blocks per day with 7 people on the press. The Auram Press 3000 proposes now 16 moulds for making about 70 different types of blocks and it is sold worldwide.

Satprem introduced in Auroville the comprehensive construction of arches and domes with compressed stabilised earth blocks, using the Nubian technique. This construction site was also the opportunity to try for the first time stabilised rammed earth foundations, for the watchman’s house. The Visitors Centre has been the starting point for the development of earth architecture in Auroville, under the influence of the former Auroville Building Centre / Earth Unit.



Building a segmental arch, 2.38m span



Building a dome on pendentives, 3.70m span



Closing a dome on pendentives



Inauguration in 1992



Inauguration in 1992



Entrance side



Side view



Gallery towards the cafeteria



Towards the information



Gallery towards the courtyard



Information desk



View to the Courtyard

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SOCIETY FOR THE REVIVAL OF ARCHITECTURAL AND PLANNING HERITAGE (SRAPH) CAIRO, EGYPT



جمعية احياء التراث التخطيطي والمعماري
القاهرة - جمهورية مصر العربية
مسجل برقم ٢٨٧

جائزة حسن فathy العالمية للعمارة الفقراء

HASSAN FATHI INTERNATIONAL AWARD FOR ARCHITECTURE FOR THE POOR.

The Society Board of Directors have decided in its meeting held in March 1992, to grant "AUROVILLE BUILDING CENTER" of India, Hassan Fathi International Award For Architecture For The Poor for the year 1992

Secretary General & Chairman of (SRAPH)

Dr. Abdelbaki Ibrahim
30/3/1992

قرر مجلس ادارة جمعية احياء التراث التخطيطي والمعماري باجتماعه المنعقد في شهر مارس ١٩٩٢ م على منح مركز ابيروفيل للبناء بالهند جائزة حسن فathy العالمية للعمارة الفقراء لعام ١٩٩٢ م

الامم العام وبنين الامم
الدكتور محمد النجاشي
عبر الهاتف يوم ١٩٩٢ م



1992 International Award "Hassan Fathy, Architecture for the poor".