

Currently studying in our 6th semester, Auroville fascinated us. We were young, enthusiastic and eager to learn so we enrolled for a mud and bamboo workshop coordinated by the auroville earth and bamboo research institutes . Our group was compact and consisted of the four of us (Karen Correa, Anushka Sharma , Havana L and Devangana Jhanjhri). The accommodation, food and transport had been organised by “Auroville green practices” leaving us free to explore the experimental city.



We arrived early on a Sunday morning (a day before the workshop) which was scheduled to start on a Monday and took the opportunity to visit paradise beach. We took a boat to the island beach and spent the rest of the day making sculptures in the white sand, kayaking and embracing the waves which was a stark contrast to our non coastal Bangalore lives.



On the first day, our entire group of thirty was picked up at our guesthouse in a bus and dropped off at the earth institute , Auroville. Our group consisted of graduates, students of architecture from india and abroad. We were introduced to the exhibition room and had a lecture on “ earthen architecture tradition and modernity” where we learned of 14 different techniques of building with mud . In the afternoon session we made adobe bricks and CSEB(compressed stabilised earth bricks) after a session on the ratios of earth, water and stabiliser .



The second day tested our physical strength as we had hands on construction of four different earthen walls. We learned to dirty our feet by mixing the earth and dancing on it to get the right consistency. We then made adobe walls and CSEB walls by learning to apply plaster and check the spirit level. We also learned older techniques like cob walls . rammed earth walls demanded all the strength that we could muster as we pounded the earth inside a formwork with 15kg weights.



The third day we were taken to a new location, the bamboo institute. Here we were taken on a tour to understand the different kinds of bamboo and the root systems along with the many species and sizes. We went on to make the fish and mouth joint as we used different drills, chisels and sanding equipment . At the end of the day we proudly held our fish and mouth joints with our splintered hands and sanded nails.

On the fourth day we were split into 8 groups and given working drawings of a house under construction. We had to make door and window panels. Guided by the carpenters we managed to finish 8 panels at the end of the day and were taken to the site of the construction. Walter, our teacher explained the structural aspects of the house that was being built .



The 5th day was special because the now familiar group had become friends and there was a healthy exchange of information on varied subjects . We were taken to the site, THE SACRED GROVES with architect Manu Gopalan who opened our young eyes to the research and decentralized waste water treatment systems that he was experimenting with .In his presentation we understood the importance of sustainability and the responsibility that we owe to the environment and future generations.

The workshop had ended at noon and we wandered around the French colony tasting French food pondering on all that we had learned . We had made friends, learned to work with new people and learned many new techniques . but the one thing that will stay with us is the importance of” upcycling” and green methods as we aspire to be architects

