



*A young man carrying adobes on a wooden backpack for restoration of Shey Palace, Ladakh.
Welcoming 2026 with unity, resilience and purpose!*

AVEI NEWSLETTER

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The past six months of 2025 at the Earth Institute have been a vibrant journey of learning, creation, and sharing. One of our landmark projects is now in its final stage, soon to be crowned with the installation of a cloister dome that will complete the space.

In parallel, our active participation in conferences and webinars has opened rich dialogues, with Satprem's latest major achievement, the 33m CSEB dome, sparking wide interest and discussion.

Our engagements in eco-conscious festivals, training programs, and ongoing collaborations have kept the team deeply immersed and inspired. Looking ahead, we are eager to contribute to the many meaningful conferences planned for the coming year.

We warmly invite you to share this newsletter and help spread the vision of earth architecture to a wider community.

Earthly yours,
The AVEI Team



Dhamma Arunachala Meditation Hall: Construction Progress

The Dhammamalai Vipassana Dhyana Maiyam (DVDM) project in Tiruvannamalai is taking its final shape before the dome work begins. Keeping in mind the monsoons, which typically arrive around November, all finishing touches and clean-up work were undertaken over the last six months. Satprem is scheduled to come to India this year, and the dome construction will begin under his close supervision.

In the first week of July, the slab was cast and given a full month to cure. Following this, cupboards were built in the corridor for storage, and stone slabs will soon be laid as flooring. Pointing for the CSEB walls was done with SEM 1: 6: 6 (soil and sand sieved with 1mm). For the columns, pointing was done with CSM 1: 3 (sand sieved with 1mm). The PEC walls and the corridor slab were thoroughly cleaned, with a few minor touch-ups.

Above the slab, screed slopes were created for waterproofing using CSM 1:12. A ferrocement plaster was then applied up to the top edge



Hall ready to be crowned with a cloister dome

of the springer beam, and ceramic tile work is underway. With this, only the dome and its corresponding screed, waterproofing, and tile layers remain. With the screed now complete, the only remaining work in the inner hall is the final flooring.

For the dome construction, a team of 8 masons and 16 workers is expected to begin work. From the following week until the dome is completed, the number of masons will be doubled and 24 workers will be on site to ensure the work is finished on time. Meanwhile, all the doors and windows for the main hall are being prepared and will be installed only after the dome construction and the main hall flooring are completed.

The scaffolding has been prepared, and the dome template is ready, and it will be assembled immediately before the construction of the dome. The construction of the dome is expected to take ~2 months. Once the dome is complete, a minimum of two weeks will be allowed for it to settle before beginning the ferrocement plaster. A stupa will then be cast using a mould. The installation of windows, doors, and the audio-visual system will be done later.

The hall is planned to be inaugurated on 1st May, 2026. ■



Corridor with PEC walls & composite columns in view



Sun & Earth Festival 2025 - CSEB Block-Making Demonstration



CSEB Block production station led by Radhika



Participants engaging in the block-making process



Understanding the compression ratio adjustment on Auram Press 3000



Radhika being felicitated by the founders of HIAL during the festival's conclusion

The Sun & Earth Festival is an annual event that celebrates best practices in solar energy and earthen materials, highlighting their role in shaping low-carbon, eco-responsive, and regenerative architecture. Its core aim is to unite traditional wisdom with modern innovations to promote sustainable building solutions that address the urgent challenges of climate change.

The 6th Edition, held at the Himalayan Institute of Alternatives Ladakh (HIAL) in July 2025, focused on two main themes: Solar Energy for Buildings and Earth Construction. The Earth Construction section featured eight demonstration stations showcasing techniques such as Adobe, Cob, CSEB, Earth Bags, Earth Plasters, and Rat Trap Bonds. Among these, Radhika, our senior architect,

led the Compressed Stabilised Earth Blocks (CSEB) demonstration, guiding participants through the principles and production process of the blocks.

Participants were free to select a station to work at while also exploring others each day, gaining hands-on experience across diverse earthen techniques and ultimately developing a holistic understanding of Earth as a sustainable building material.

The festival concluded with a deep sense of learning and fulfillment among participants. As HIAL and Sonam Wangchuck, one of its founders, continue to face challenges in sustainable development advocacy, we extend our heartfelt support and resilience to them in carrying forward this inspiring journey. ■



Conference at ENAU & ENIT, Tunisia



In September, Satprem visited a friend and member of the earth network in Tunisia, Mr. Taieb Ben Miled from the [GDA Sidi Amor](#).

During this visit, he was invited to present at the National School of Architecture and Urbanism of Tunis (ENAU) and the National School of Engineers of Tunis (ENIT) his latest major work: the construction of the world's largest dome built with CSEB, the 33 m diameter dome of the [Shree Krishnaganga Meditation Hall](#). These presentations were very well received by around 120 students and teachers at ENAU and about 40 students and teachers at ENIT. ■

INHAF Webinar

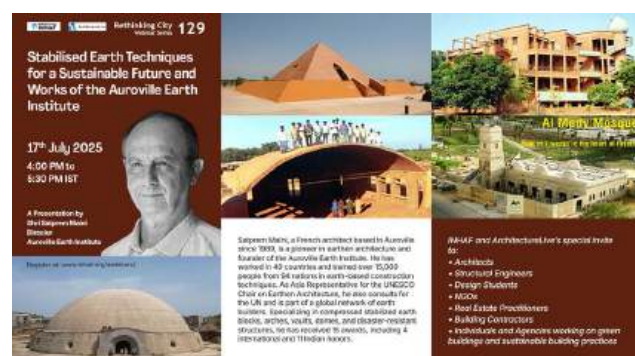
Satprem was invited by Kirtee Shah of INHAF, the [Indian Habitat Forum](#), to present his work as part of their webinar series "*India's Urban Challenge: Rethinking City*".

INHAF has organised more than 125 webinars on various subjects related to urban challenges in India, and Kirtee Shah proposed that Satprem share his experience, as his work offers alternative approaches for building a sustainable India.

Satprem gave a presentation entitled "*Stabilised Earth Techniques for a Sustainable*



Future and Works of the Auroville Earth Institute". It was very well received by ~90 professionals, who engaged actively and asked numerous questions. ■





3rd International Forum on Earth at CAA, Hangzhou, China



Satprem presenting his work

Satprem was invited as the keynote speaker at the 3rd Forum on Earthen Architecture, held at the School of Architecture of the China Academy of Art in Hangzhou, China.

Planned by architect Wang Shu and convened by architect Chen Lichao, this third edition of the forum focused on *"Teaching, Research, and Sustainable Construction"* and took place on 15-16 November.

The first day consisted of visits to the School of Architecture and the Xiangshan campus of the China Academy of Art, the Wencun Village – a traditional village built with mixed techniques of stone and rammed earth, and the National Archives of Publication and Culture in Hangzhou. In the evening, four teams of students presented their research on various case studies of earthen architecture in China.

The second day was dedicated to presentations by professionals from 10 countries. Satprem opened the day as the keynote speaker with his talk, *"36 Years of Training, R&D and Realizations of the Auroville Earth Institute"*. The presentation was well received by ~50 students and professors from 10 countries. This visit also provided an opportunity to discuss with the vice-dean the development of a six-week workshop on earthen architecture, which Satprem would conduct at the school in May-June 2026.

Continuing Collaboration with URVEE Trust, Pune

Our collaboration with URVEE took a special step forward in empowering architecture students within the university curriculum. The initiative reached younger semesters: first-year students were introduced to earthen architecture and materials as part of their Building Materials subject.

Through online sessions, students from BNCA, Pune, and Vidya Pratishthan School of Architecture, Baramati participated, gaining early exposure to sustainable practices. URVEE also selected second-year students engaged in rural design projects to join these lectures, who will incorporate earthen materials into their work.

Looking ahead, we are preparing sessions for faculty training. By equipping educators with knowledge of climate-responsive solutions, they will guide students throughout their academic journey, ensuring sustainable practices remain central to architectural education.




Building with Earth



Organized by URVEE in collaboration with Auroville Earth Institute under Gram Abhiyan

An online Theory Workshop specially curated for architecture students. In sync with the updated university syllabus on earth-based construction, this workshop offers the opportunity to learn directly from experts at the Auroville Earth Institute, renowned for over 35 years of pioneering work, research excellence, and practical innovation.



WORKSHOP HIGHLIGHTS

- NATURAL BUILDING MATERIALS
- ALTERNATE CONSTRUCTION TECHNIQUES FOR WALL
- ARCHES, VAULTS, DOMES
- FLOORING USING MUD AND VARIOUS NATURAL ADDITIVES
- SELECTION OF APPROPRIATE BUILDING MATERIALS
- CASE STUDIES OF AVEI PROJECTS

OPEN FOR F.Y.B.Arch students
Dr. Bhanuben Naravati college of architecture

RESOURCE PERSON



Ar. Radhika Soni
Senior Architect
Auroville Earth Institute
A graduate of Sir J.J. College of Architecture, Mumbai, she has been working with the Earth Institute for close to a decade, leading the architecture team for construction projects, and actively engaging in training and technology transfers.

Date and Time:

4th Dec 2025 - 9:00am to 12:00pm
5th Dec 2025 - 2:00pm to 5:00pm
6th Dec 2025 - 9:00am to 12:00pm

Venue:

BNCA Auditorium
Ar. Devshri: 7745086544 | www.urvee.org



Satprem Maïni, or the scope of a spiritual architecture

topophile



The story of Auroville Earth Institute was showcased on the platform of Topophile, through a blog post published in November, featuring an interview that Satprem gave last year to architect friend Alizée Cugney.

Topophile is a French digital magazine, founded in 2019, free and open to the public, and dedicated to sharing blogs about "happy spaces". The term *topophilia*, refers to a strong affective connection people have with a place or environment. Topophile seeks to bring forward such places by exploring how we build, inhabit, and think of our environments, bridging theory and practice in order to cultivate a more responsible relationship with the Earth.

The feature presents an insightful interview with Satprem, tracing his journey from France to Auroville and highlighting his lifelong commitment to earthen architecture. It explores his background and life in Auroville, his mastery of CSEB, and the extensive use of arches, vaults, and domes in the structures he has designed.

It also emphasizes Satprem's humanitarian work, from post-disaster construction to empowering local people to build with Earth, and AVEI's strong educational aim of training thousands in earthen construction.

Furthermore, it touches on his technical research on stabilisers, waterproofing, and structural optimization, as well his deeply rooted spiritual approach to architecture, informed by the principles of *karma yoga*: selfless work offered in service to the Divine. Concluding with a reflection on the current challenges in his long-time abode, Auroville, and his continued resolve to uphold the values that first drew him here.

[Here](#) is the article in English. You can also view the original French version [here](#).



Training Courses Overview for July–December 2025

In the latter half of 2025, Auroville Earth Institute continued its commitment to sharing knowledge on earth-based building practices by offering two sets of on-campus training courses, one in September and another in December. Alongside these, our cycle of online courses ran continuously, allowing participants from around the world to engage in our programs remotely.

Across seven weeks of on-campus training, we conducted two sessions each of CSEB Design & Intensive, one session of AVD Intensive, one of AVD Masonry, and a Ferrocement session in October, covering the structural principles of arches, vaults, and domes, and the design principles and production of Compressed Stabilised Earth Blocks (CSEB), providing participants with comprehensive theoretical and hands-on experience in both areas.



Participants working on a segmental dome with CSEBs

There were a total of 84 enrolments for the online and on-campus sessions, predominantly from India, along with a few international participants from Australia, Belgium, France, Italy, Kenya, Trinidad and Tobago, and the United States.



Learning by doing, two adobe blocks at a time!



Elementerre demonstration for Last School students

An awareness program was held for 30 students from JD School of Design, Bangalore, where they explored a range of earth construction techniques over two days. They worked with different hydric states of earth, making CSEB with a humid mix and adobe blocks with a plastic mix, gaining hands-on insight into the versatility of earthen architecture.

Another Elementerre demonstration (developed by CRATerre) was held for Last School students in Auroville, where they learned about the composition and properties of earth through simple, interactive experiments that introduced them to its potential as a construction material.

The schedule for 2026 is in the colophon. ■



AVEI on-campus training course schedule for 2026

March

2nd to 7th: CSEB Design
9th to 14th: CSEB Intensive
16th to 21st: AVD Intensive
23rd to 26th: Ferrocement

May

4th to 9th: CSEB Design
11th to 16th: CSEB Intensive
18th to 23rd: AVD Intensive

September

31st Aug. to 5th: CSEB Production
7th to 12th: CSEB Masonry
14th to 19th: AVD Theory
21st to 26th: AVD Masonry

October

5th to 8th: Ferrocement

December

7th to 12th: CSEB Design
14th to 19th: CSEB Intensive
21st to 26th: AVD Intensive



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Editorial Team:
Shweta Tiwadi

Auroville Earth Institute
Auroshilpam
Auroville 605 101 T.N.
India

Tel.: +91 (0) 413 - 262 3330
/ 262 3064

www.earth-auroville.com

info@earth-auroville.com
training@earth-auroville.com

Colophon

AVEI online training course schedule for 2026

First Session

5th to 31st January: AVD Theory
9th February to 7th March: CSEB Design
16th to 28th March: CSEB Theory

Second Session

1st to 27th June: AVD Theory
6th July to 1st August: CSEB Design
10th to 22nd August: CSEB Theory

Third Session

5th to 31st October: AVD Theory
9th November to 5th December: CSEB Design
14th to 26th December: CSEB Theory

Register at: registration.earth-auroville.com