

Inside

Campus Buzz
Pages 2-3
A retrospective of activities in the university



On the Wings of the Muse & Features
Pages 4-5
Spotlighting cultural values and the arts



Earth Matters
Page 6
Problems and Solutions



Humanscape
Page 7
Looking at society and trends in development



Potpourri
Page 8
A mixed bag of opinions and observations



In the driving seat of change!

Women take to novel occupations in Puducherry

Many changes are sweeping over the lives of women in general. Rising educational levels and economic necessities promote a willingness to try what has not been attempted before due to family and social restrictions. Though it still remains a man's world, women are getting to play larger parts in it undoubtedly.

While we may be tempted to think that women achievers come from the upper echelons of our society, there is reason to believe that women from all social and economic classes are courting changes readily in one way or another, giving them a greater sense of self worth and independence. The increasing presence of women in the commercial sector – from shops and restaurants to cinema houses and petrol stations – is evidence of a coming of age in the general populace who can now take kindly to their social visibility in new areas of work and livelihood. Needless to say, many employers also began to see the economic merits of employing women over men in many sectors as they exhibited a greater sense of focus and commitment to work.

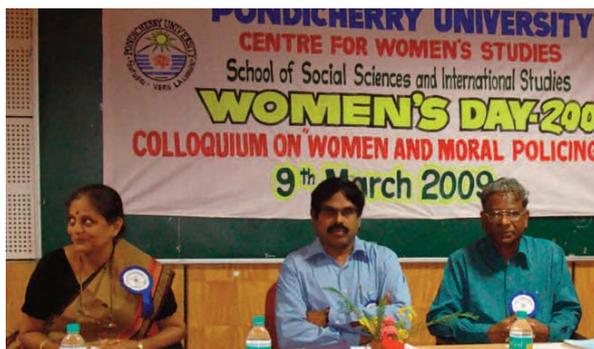
The spectacle of women drivers – of autorickshaws, taxis or vans – is a fairly recent one in India. Indian society, until recently, offered no male encouragement to women who may have wanted to enter such exclusive



Jeyanthi- an auto driver in Puducherry (above) Photo: Arivoucany
Sumathi- a van driver in Puducherry (below) Photo: Radhika
male preserves as driving public transportation vehicles - of people or goods.

Continued on page 7

PU Celebrates Women's Day



Celebrating Women's Day in the University Photo: Sandosh

Puducherry: The International Women's Day is an occasion when one can take stock of and reflect upon the changes that are happening in the world of women at large. The empowerment of women is something that is crucial for a healthy global society. Taking this actuality into consideration, women staff at various work places are enjoying the benefits of extra leave and crèche for their toddlers. Institutions of learning are also paying a great deal of attention towards making higher education more accessible to women students. Pondicherry University provides incentives such as free hostel accommodation and free transport from the town to the campus which has encouraged a good percentage of

girl students, particularly from economically weaker sections, to seek admission here.

Our university celebrated International Women's Day on March 9 by conducting a Colloquium on 'Women and Moral Policing.' Dr. Usha V. T., Reader and Co-ordinator, Centre for Women's Studies, during the welcome speech, commented upon the commercialization of Women's Day. A presentation on the 'Context of Women's Day' by Divya K., a research scholar of the centre, dealt with the history and origin of Women's Day. The pub incident that happened in Karnataka was cited upon by Mr. S. Loganathan, Registrar of the university, in his inaugural address. He pointed out that freedom

is one's birth right and it is not something that is to be given to a woman by her husband.

According to Dr. D. Sambandan, Dean, School Of Social Sciences and International Studies, reverence for women should not be confined to a particular day of a year but practiced, ideally, every moment. However, the sad reality is that our social and judicial systems along with our religions and religious texts do not do much to support women. Dr. K. Pan-chagam, a feminist theoretician, and Malathi Maithri, poet and social activist, spoke at the technical session held.

The panel discussion on 'Women and Moral Policing' held in the afternoon had panelists from various departments. It was felt that moral policing is based on one's own sense of what is right but not on legal rights and duties. It follows the standard of behaviour considered acceptable by society. The subtle details of the complex subject of moral policing were discussed and thought provoking ideas and opinions were offered by the participants.

We hope that in future this special day is celebrated with the participation of more students and faculty. Long Live Women Power!

Arivoucany
Monalisha
Suja



This second issue of THE INQUIRER is another labour of love from the students of the Department of Mass Communication.

Long hours of brainstorming, research, writing, editing and fun – sometimes leading to late evenings with tea, laughter and snacks – characterized its production. Diversity is this issue's magic word. It brings you an eclectic and heady mix of content to inspire, reflect upon, provoke and enjoy. The recently concluded International Women's Day provides the central motif of this issue and in their honour we dedicate our lead feature celebrating the power of the feminine.

Like the addition of an exciting new melody to an old song, we have outsider contributions this time as well, from PU students of other departments to faculty from other colleges and organizations. We were fortunate to have two remarkable artists – a painter and a musician – grace our Arts page with a face-to-face and a concert review respectively. A just started Green page brings you some eye openers on the state of the environment while our Wellbeing column offers you some very inspiring thoughts on how greater awareness can add to the quality of one's inner life. Our Tamil pages brim with poems, musings and observations and the Campus page brings you a roundup of key happenings in the past month including workshops, seminars and other significant events conducted by various departments and bodies of the University.

We hope you enjoy this issue too. Please continue to write in to us at puiquirer@gmail.com with your contributions and comments.

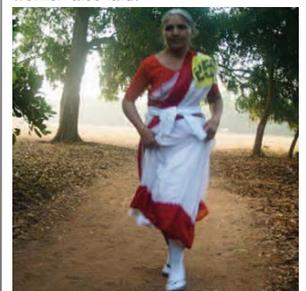
Radhika Khanna
Editor

Snapshots



Exclusive gym for women students and faculty in the University. Inaugurated on March 9.

Foundation stone of mega mess for women also laid.



A senior citizen running the Auroville Marathon (page 8)

Painting exhibition

Puducherry: A painting exhibition, "Vivarta" by Prof. S. Murali, Department of English, at Alliance Française's Maison Columbani, was inaugurated by Padmashri Prof. J. A. K. Tareen, Vice Chancellor, Pondicherry University on March 18. The exhibition is on till March 28.

Suja

Transport green and clean



Puducherry: On March 9, Pondicherry University inaugurated two shuttles to facilitate intra-campus transport. These are non-polluting electric vehicles that are silent and efficient, making rides a pleasure. The shuttles originate from both university gates (1 & 2) every 20 minutes and will stop at all important points on the campus for pick-ups and drops.

Arathi

A Stepping Stone for Innovative Minds

Puducherry: Recursion '09 was an All India Computer Science Meet for the student community. It was hosted by the Department of Computer Science of the Pondicherry University on Feb. 14-15. Prof. A. Balasubramanian, Director, Culture and Cultural Relations of the University inaugurated the meet. In his opening speech he called attention to the rapidly growing developments in the field of computer science. These applications, he felt, should fulfill social needs and demands.

Papers were presented on many related topics. There was a quiz and other variety programmes that offered a light air. Students who participated presented a web concept for e-learning in 2009.

Mr. K. Vijayanand, Faculty Advisor for the event, commented that the aim of Recursion was to expose young minds to trends in the industry and tap latent talent.

Rinoy

Akanksha '09



Discussing tourism management

Puducherry: The Department of Tourism Studies of Pondicherry University organised Akanksha '09, an Industry-Institute Interface, from March 6-7, at the University's Convention Hall. Prof. O.P. Kandari, Pro Vice Chancellor of Bundelkhand University was the Chief Guest of the occasion. He reflected upon the part played by the railway system in tourism. The event comprised panel discussions, a theme skit, paper presentations, quiz, lectures and cultural programmes.

Prof. A. Balasubramanian, Director, Culture and Cultural Relations, commented on the role of media in the tourism sector. As the objective of the department is to understand and practice tourism management through research and outreach, the interface served as a step towards this aim.

Monalisha

Primitive tribes and their problems highlighted

Puducherry: The Centre for Study of Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policy organised a National Seminar on "Adoptive Difficulties and Problems of Future Survival of the Primitive Tribes" from Feb. 26-27. Prof. N. Ningaiah, Professor of Anthropology, Mysore University inaugurated the seminar.

Prof. T. S. Naidu, Director of the centre commented that many tribal populations are facing the threat of

extinction and proper adoptive strategies are necessary to safeguard them. Prof. N. Viswanathan Nair highlighted the problems related to the future survival of the various primitive tribes of Kerala, in particular, and of India in general.

Many delegates from the southern states of India attended the seminar. Students and faculty from the Department of Anthropology and various other departments also



Seminar on tribal society

participated in the seminar.

This seminar has given us insights into the various problems faced by tribes in our country - regarding their health, education and economic survival - and the various developmental programmes that are being adopted to address these problems.

Rinoy
Prabakaran

Intellectual exchanges in a global age



Journée France: Educational and job opportunities in France

Puducherry: 'Journée France' was organised by the French Department of Pondicherry University in collaboration with Campus France, French Embassy, New Delhi at J.N. auditorium on Feb. 21. The theme of the seminar was about the various aspects of higher education in France. The talk centred on various possibilities and opportunities available for students to pursue their higher studies in various universities and colleges in France.

Padmashri Prof. J.A.K. Tareen, Vice Chancellor, Pondicherry University highlighted the fact that the access to educational opportunities in France has become easier these days and that pursuing higher studies

in France is being facilitated by many French organizations who are prompting the cause of Asian students to study in France. Mme Joelle Rayet, Consul General of France in Pondicherry invited the students to consider higher studies in France and did not fail to mention that visa procedures for students have been simplified to aid this.

The students were given information about various institutions where they could learn French in India. There was also a session to highlight numerous job opportunities available with French MNCs in India.

Rinoy

Spirituality and Ethics in Business and Enterprise

Puducherry: The Faculty of Management Studies, University of Delhi and the Department of Management Studies, Pondicherry University, along with School of Global Leadership and Entrepreneurship, Regent University and Infinity Foundation, USA, jointly hosted a unique International Research Workshop and Conference at the Annamalai Hotel in Puducherry. The 2nd International Conference on "Integrating Spirituality and Organisational Leadership" was held from Feb. 9-12. Preceding this was the workshop from Feb. 5-7 on "Spiritual and Ethical Foundations of Organisational Development." It attempted to focus upon the spiritual and ethical underpinnings that ought to guide the

current world of business. Education ought to encompass more than just career building and serve to go beyond serving the economy alone. It should promote the spiritual and ethical dimensions of one's life as well, said Mr. C. S. Dwivedi, VP, HCL Info Systems, at the valedictory function of the workshop.

Swami Tattwajnanananda, Principal, Ramakrishna Mission Shilpamandira said that applied spiritual and ethics in the workplace can accelerate social and organizational growth. It will unfold new dimensions and perspectives in the world of scientific research, business practices and managerial etiquette.

Jitendriya

Environmental crisis management



Prof. A. Balasubramanian at the seminar

Puducherry: The Centre for Adult and Continuing Education and Department of Ecology and Environmental Sciences of Pondicherry University organised a workshop on "Disaster Management and Environmental Protection" from Feb. 20-21,

at the University's Earth Sciences Seminar Hall. More than hundred students from various departments of Pondicherry University and affiliated Colleges participated.

Prof. A. Balasubramanian, Director, Culture and Cultural Relations, Pondicherry University, inaugurated the workshop and spoke on the need for forming core groups in every college to manage any situation.

For V. Senthilnathan, an M. Ed. student of Pondicherry University, the seminar taught him how to tackle hard situation and he also got awareness on disaster management.

Jitendriya

Dealing with economic recession

Puducherry: The Department of Management Studies conducted SYNAPSE 2009, its annual Industry-Institute Interface from Feb. 23-24. The objective of the interface was to connect students with the contemporary business environment through live interactions with industry personalities in order to understand and appreciate the happenings in the world of management.

The theme of SYNAPSE '09 was 'Outsmarting the Economic Downturn for Emerging India Inc.' The event was held at the Convention cum

Cultural Centre, Pondicherry University and inaugurated by Mr. Shankar, Vice President, and Edelweiss Capital. It consisted of four panel discussions that together represented the theme of the meet. These panel subjects were:

- 1) Outsmarting the Economic Downturn for Emerging India Inc.
- 2) David Vs Goliaths: Who Will Prevail and Thrive?
- 3) Widening the Radius of Trust for Corporate Restructuring
- 4) Actualising Entrepreneurial Spirit amidst Turbulence.

Sandosh

Trends in Bioinformatics

Puducherry: The 26th National Seminar on "Current Trends in Bioinformatics Teaching and Research" was organised by the Centre for Bioinformatics of the Pondicherry University, from Feb. 16-18, at the Earth Sciences Seminar Hall. Prof. A. Gnanam, former Vice Chancellor, Pondicherry University and former Chairman, NAAC, Bangalore, gave the inaugural address and highlighted the growing role of bioinformatics in the fields of pharmacy and biotechnology. The participants were made familiar with various bioinformatics tools, guided by accomplished experts. The central purpose of this seminar was to popularise current techniques and processes in this field among students and researchers from related fields, and also to discuss the issues that lay at the intersection of various fields of



The crucial role of Bioinformatics in the modern world

bioinformatics and chemical sciences. 15 eminent speakers elaborated upon topics in 6 sessions during the seminar.

According to Nishant Singh, a student of Bioinformatics, the basic agenda of the seminar was to communicate the latest trends in Bioinformatics. Students and participants had a great opportunity to become aware of, raise and clarify many a question in this rapidly emerging field of study.

Rinoy

Conference on Health, Equity and Human Rights

Puducherry: The School of Social Sciences and International Studies of Pondicherry University and Indian Association for Social Sciences and Health jointly organised the 6th International Conference on Health, Equity and Human Rights from March 7-8 at J. N. Auditorium of the university. Padmashri Prof. J.A.K. Tareen, Vice Chancellor of Pondicherry University inaugurated the event. Delegates from UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO, ICMR also participated in the conference.

A technical session, 'Symposium' was also held. Impact of social and cultural factors on health, poverty, equity and vulnerability, the human rights issues, gender inequalities in health status and health care were some of the topics discussed in the session.

The Young Researcher Award was presented to two research scholars, Somnath Bhattacharjee and Ranvir Singh. 15 scholars had presented their papers and the winners were selected on the basis of clarity of presentation and knowledge on the subject.

Rinoy

Bancquest and Workshop on Intellectual Property Rights

Puducherry: The Department of Banking Technology, Pondicherry University organised 'Bancquest', an industry-interface on March 12 at university's Earth Science Seminar Hall. It also organised a workshop on "Awareness Programme on Intellectual Property Rights" on March 13 at the J. N. Auditorium of the university. Many industrialists, bankers and students participated in the events.

Suja

PU students win tournament

Puducherry: A tournament was organized by Annamalai University from Feb. 27 to March 1. Pondicherry University performed well at this meet with students carrying away gold, silver and bronze medals for various events, which included shotput, javelin, triple jump, 100 mts., long jump, shotput, 4x400 mts relay, kho-kho and table tennis.

Jitendriya

Check out THE INQUIRER in FULL COLOUR at www.pondiuni.edu.in

e-Access will increase Research Output in Institutions



Puducherry: Caliber 2009, the 7th International Conference organised by Pondicherry University and UGC INFLIBNET, Ahmedabad was held from Feb. 25-27 at the Convention Hall of the University. It was inaugurated by Dr. Gulshan Rai, Director General, CERT-In.

Free access to e-resources in universities across the country has increased research output by 42% as compared to the last 10 years. Several new programmes will be introduced by UGC to enhance access to new tools, technologies and e-resources.

The importance of inculcating love for books in children was emphasized by Padmashri Prof. J. A. K. Tareen, Vice chancellor, Pondicherry University. The library would have a children's section in future. Priority is to be given to creating a user friendly

atmosphere in the library. Dr. Gulshan Rai, in his inaugural address, said that we are an electronic generation who also ought to be aware of cyber security issues.

Prof. G. Sivakumar from Dept. of Computer Science & Engg. IIT, Bombay, discussed the concept of Web 2.0 and Library 2.0, pointing out that on-line resources enable one to access and publish.

While speaking at the valedictory function Prof. Balasubramanian, Director, Culture and Cultural Relations, urged that every library should have online assistance. The UGC is also expected to take the initiative to make e-learning a smooth process through library e-access, said Dr. M. Koteswara Rao, the librarian, University of Hyderabad.

Jitendriya Suja

Micro Finance - Scope and Potential

Puducherry: An International Conference on Micro Finance was organised by the Department of Commerce from Jan. 21-23, at the Convention Hall of Pondicherry University. Dr. K.G. Karmakar, managing director, NABARD, Mumbai gave the inaugural address.

More than 150 institutions participated in the conference, which had technical sessions and panel

discussions. Delegates from various institutions spoke on the topics concerned. The topics for panel discussion included were: 'Status of micro finance in Asian and African continents, corporate and self help group linkage as part of corporate social responsibility, 'Sustain Micro Finance through Scientific and Technology Intervention.'

Monalisha

பக்தி இலக்கியம் குறித்த பன்னாட்டுக் கருத்தரங்கம்



பக்தி இலக்கிய பன்னாட்டுக் கருத்தரங்கத்தில் பல முனைவர்கள் கலந்து கொண்டனர்.

புதுச்சேரி: புதுவைப் பல்கலைக்கழகக் கப்பிரமணிய பாரதியார் தமிழறிஞர்புலமும், பதிப்புப் பணியில் பெண்விழாக் கண்ட கலைஞன் பதிப்பகமும் இணைந்து நடத்திய பக்தி இலக்கியம் குறித்த பன்னாட்டுக் கருத்தரங்கம் நமது புதுவைப் பல்கலைக்கழக வளாகத்தில் 2009 பிப்ரவரி 20 மற்றும் 21 ஆகிய இரு நாட்கள் நடைபெற்றது. இக்கருத்தரங்கை முழுமுனைவர் ம.சா. அறிவுடைநம்பி அவர்கள் தொகுத்து வழங்கினார். முனைவர் அ. அறிவு நம்பி (புல முன்னையர்) வரவேற்புரை ஆற்றினார். புதுவைப் பல்கலைக்கழக துணைவேந்தர் முனைவர் J.A.K. தரீன் அவர்கள் தலைமை உரை ஆற்றினார். திருவிடைமலை ஆசிரியர் குன்றக்குடி அண்ணாமலை ஆசிரியர் தொடக்க உரை ஆற்றினார்.

இக்கருத்தரங்கம் சைவம், வைணவம், கிறித்தவம், இசுலாம், சமணம், பௌத்தம், சீக்கியம், போன்ற சமயங்களில் ஏறத்தாழ 300 கட்டுரைகள் தொகுக்கப் பெற்று 6 தொகுதிகளாக வடிவமைக்கப் பெற்று வெளியிடப்பட்டன. அவை பக்தித் தென்றல், பக்தி மலர்கள், பக்தி மணி-மாலை, பக்திச் சோலை, பக்திக் களஞ்சியம், பக்தி அலங்காரம் ஆகிய நூல்களை தஞ்சாவூர் தமிழ்ப் பல்கலைக் கழக துணைவேந்தர் முனைவர் ம. இராசேந்திரன் வெளியிட அழைப்பு சென்னை தினமணி நாளிதழின் ஆசிரியர் திருமுகே. வைத்திய நாதன் பெற்றுக்கொண்டார். வெவ்வேறு ஊர்களிலிருந்து வந்திருந்த முனைவர்கள் கருத்துரை வழங்கினார்கள். மதுரைகைச் சேர்ந்த முனைவர் சீனி.செளமிய நாராயணன் சான்றிதழ் வழங்கினார். திரு. நீராழகன் அவர்கள் வாழ்த்துரை வழங்கினார். இறுதியில் முழுமுனைவர் ம.சா. அறிவுடைநம்பி நன்றிப்புரை ஆற்றி, விழாவினை செம்மையாக முடித்து வைத்தார்.

க. சுந்தரன்

Demystifying Psychology

Puducherry: MindsPACE (Society for Psychological Assistance, Care and Empowerment), Students Association of the Department of Applied Psychology, Pondicherry University, was inaugurated on Jan 28 by Dr. Jayachandran, a scientist and Professor of the department. The event focused on developing psychological assistance and support to the people who are in need of it through counselling and awareness camps in

schools, colleges and surrounding communities. Mind SPACE also organised various departmental activities for students that included quizzes, debates, seminars and screening of documentary films.

MindsPACE also organized a three-day film festival from Feb. 18- 20 at the University's J.N. Auditorium. Before each screening, students gave a brief presentation on the psychological phenomena portrayed in the movie

which was followed by question and answer sessions with Mrs. Shilpa Ashok Pandit and Mr. Barani Kanth, faculty of the department. The aim of the film festival was to demystify psychology through the medium of entertainment and information. The movies screened were: The Sixth Sense, 15th Park Avenue and Thanmathra.

Jitendriya Rinoy

தமிழர் திருநாள் கொண்டாட்டம்

புதுச்சேரி: புதுவைப் பல்கலைக் கழகத்தில் தமிழர் திருநாள் விழா 2009 பிப்ரவரி 12ஆம் தேதி கொண்டாடப்பட்டது. இவ்விழாவில் A. பாலசுப்ரமணியன் (இயக்குனர்) S. லோகநாதன் (புதிவாளர்), பேராசிரியர் A. அறிவுநம்பி மற்றும் பேராசிரியர் பாரதி பக்திரன் ஆகியோர் கலந்து கொண்டு உரையாற்றினர்.

புதுவைப் பல்கலைக் கழகத்தில் தமிழாணவர்கள் சார்பில் ஒவ்வொரு ஆண்டும் தமிழர் திருநாள் நிகழ்ச்சி நடைபெறுவது வழக்கம். இந்நிகழ்ச்சி இவ்வாண்டும் புதுவை பல்கலைக் கழகத்தில் உள்ள ஜவகர்லால் நேரு கலையரங்கத்தில் கோலாகலமாக நடைபெற்றது. மாலை 5 மணியளவில் நடைபெற்ற இவ்விழாவில் பேராசிரியர் A. பாலசுப்ரமணியன் (இயக்குனர்) அவர்கள் தலைமை உரையாற்றினார். S. லோகநாதன் (புதிவாளர்) மற்றும் பேராசிரியர் A. அறிவுநம்பி ஆகியோர் வாழ்த்துரை வழங்கினர். பேராசிரியர் பாரதி பக்திரன் அவர்கள் இவ்விழாவில் கலந்து கொண்டு சிறப்புரையாற்றினார். இவ்விழாவில் தமிழாணவர்கள் மட்டும் அல்லாது மற்ற மாணவர்களும் ஆர்வத்துடன் கலந்து கொண்டனர். இசை, நடனம், நாடகம் போன்ற கலைநிகழ்ச்சிகளும் இவ்விழாவில் இடம்பெற்றன.

V.உசந்த்

புதுவை பல்கலைக் கழகத்தில்

அறிவியல் தின விழா

புதுச்சேரி: புதுவை பல்கலைக் கழகத்தின் புதுவை வான் 107.8 சமூகதாய வானொலி சார்பில் தேசிய அறிவியல் தின விழா பிப்ரவரி 28 அன்று கொண்டாடப்பட்டது. புதுவை பல்கலைக்கழகத்தின் பண்பாடு மற்றும் பண்பாட்டு தொடர்பில் இயக்குநர் பேராசிரியர் A. பாலசுப்ரமணியன் அவர்கள் விழாவினைத் தொடங்கி வைத்து உரையாற்றினார்.

அறிவியல் தினத்தை முன்னிட்டு 21-ம் தேதி பல்வேறு பள்ளியை சேர்ந்த மாணவ மாணவிகளுக்கு அறிவியல் சார்ந்த போட்டிகள் நடத்தப்பட்டது. இப்போட்டிகளில் வெற்றிபெற்றவர்களுக்கு பதிவாளர் திரு. S. லோகநாதன் அவர்கள் பரிசுகளும் சான்றிதழ்களும் வழங்கி சிறப்புரை ஆற்றினார். அப்பொழுது அவர் பேசுகையில் "அறிவியலைக் கற்றுக் கொள்வதோடு மட்டுமல்லாது உங்களுக்குள்ளே ஒரு தேடலை நீங்கள் உணர வேண்டும் நாம் செய்யும் ஒவ்வொரு செயலையும் ஆராய வேண்டும். தேடலில் தான் புதிய தேவை கிடைக்கும்" என அழகாக உணர்த்தி உரையாற்றினார். விழாவில் பல்கலைக்கழகத்தின் நிதி அதிகாரி



S. லோகநாதன் பரிசுகளை வழங்குகிறார். S. ராகவன் அவர்கள் பரிசு பெற்ற மாணவ மாணவிகளை வாழ்த்தி பேசினார். பேராசிரியர் திரு. A. பாலசுப்ரமணியன் அவர்கள் அறிவியலைப் பற்றி கூறுகையில் அறிவியல் கண்டெடுப்புகள் புதுவையில் யார் நோபல் பரிசு பெற்றாலும் புதுவைப் பல்கலைக் கழகம் பெருமதம் கொள்ளும்" என்று தெரிவித்தார். கல்வியோடு சேர்ந்து அறிவியல் அறிவையும் வளர்த்துக் கொள்ள வேண்டும், கால நேரத்தை சரியாக பயன்படுத்தி கொள்ள வேண்டும்" என்று மாணவர்களுக்கு அறிவுறுத்தினார். இவ்விழாவில் புதுவை பல்கலைக் கழகத்தைச் சார்ந்த மாணவ மாணவிகள் மற்றும் பலரும் கலந்து கொண்டு விழாவினை சிறப்பித்தனர். **அ. முன்னடியாள்**

PONDICHERRY UNIVERSITY

EXPANSION EXCELLENCE EQUITY

Important details for admission 2009-10 for the benefit of our readers

PONDICHERRY UNIVERSITY is a central university with an eminent faculty and cutting edge facilities. It invites students from across the globe to study and research in a highly stimulating and tranquil environment. Sprawled over nearly 800 acres of lush nature, it is nestled on the shores of Bay of Bengal. The University is located at R. V. Nagar, Kalapet, 10 km from Puducherry town, a bustling tourist centre known for its history and spiritual heritage.

POST GRADUATE, M.PHIL & DOCTORAL PROGRAMMES

Our postgraduate programmes on offer are especially designed for students who seek academic excellence and cherish dreams of dynamic and productive careers in areas of contemporary relevance. Our Choice Based Credit and Semester System offers sufficient flexibility and options for enterprising students. It also offers various scholarships. For detailed information about courses and scholarships, visit the University's website: www.pondiuni.edu.in

QUALITY LIVING

- + Tranquil, pleasant and spacious green campus
- + Hostels - rent free for women
- + Exclusive hostel for international students
- + Sports stadiums and fitness gymnasiums for women and men
- + Free transport facilities for students from Puducherry town to University

HOW TO APPLY

ONLINE
Application form can be submitted online through the University Website www.pondiuni.edu.in
Send the hard copy (in A4 size) along with the original bank challan for the prescribed fee.

BY POST
For Application Form and Information Brochure, write to
The Deputy Registrar (Academic II) Pondicherry University, R. V. Nagar, Kalapet, Puducherry 605 014.
along with a self addressed envelope of size 32cm x 25cm, stamped for Rs.65/-
Request for application must be super-scribed on the envelope "Request for application form for admission".

APPLICATION FEE

For all courses Rs.200/-
(Rs. 50/- for SC/ST, FREE of cost for physically and visually challenged candidates - along with submission of relevant certificates)
Use separate applications for each programme. The application forms can also be obtained from Indian Bank and the Pondicherry University Staff Co-operative Credit Society at the University campus.

IMPORTANT DATES

Issue of application forms from March 20
Submission of filled forms till April 30
Dates of Entrance Examination: June 6 -7

www.pondiuni.edu.in

Painting on the palette of life!

Exploring the mind and art of Ongkie Tan

The first thing that strikes one about Ongkie's paintings is their indefinability. They don't fit into artistic categories, apart from what the viewer is predisposed to giving them. They are mystical to some, purposeless to a few and deeply moving to many. This mutable character of Ongkie's paintings reflects his own fluid and dynamic view of life, which does not rest upon a fixed point. It is contemplative one season, aggressive in another, chaotic and tranquil respectively at other times. His art runs alongside his life and his experiences, some uplifting, some depressing but all worthy of consideration as they issue forth from the same source, he observes with a disarming lightness.

Ongkie is a natural painter as some would say. He began drawing at a very early age in his native village near Borneo in Indonesia and has had no formal training in art. Born into a relatively affluent middle class agricultural family of Chinese origin, his tendency towards art was frowned upon. Painting was not recognized in these social circles as a vocation that guaranteed either respectability or prosperity.

He is a consummate travel bug, by his own description. He left Indonesia at the age of 26 for America. On arrival he began to paint for a living, selling his pictures on the streets of Los Angeles. Luck smiled upon him from the very start. People were attracted to an inherent appeal in his paintings and he began to sell well. He was noticed and approached by a gallery in Hollywood that soon began to represent him. Over the years he exhibited his work across America and



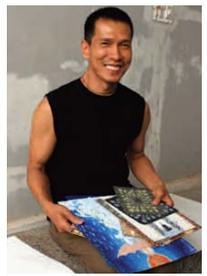
Siesta



Monsoon



Mother Earth



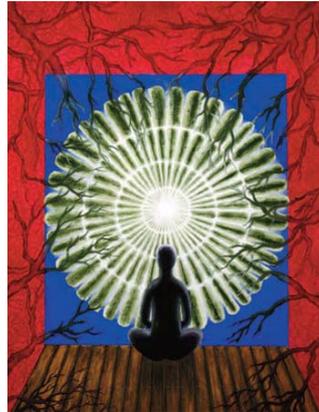
Ongkie Tan in Puducherry

would just sketch or doodle a painting into life, letting the unconscious processes guide him. We were surprised to learn that he viewed painting as just one aspect of his life, albeit an important one.

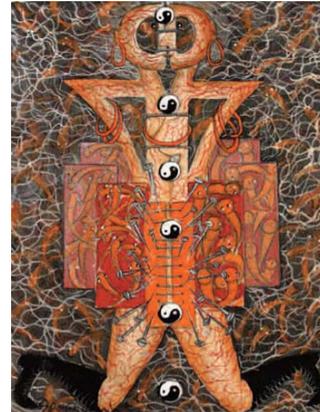
Ongkie is a man of many parts. On different occasions he has variously been a hairdresser, a movie set attendant and a farmer. He divides his time presently between travel and living in a Zen monastery. India, he confessed to us, exerted a strong pull on him. "As I get older, my Asian blood gets thicker" is how he charmingly put it. He is drawn to Auroville with its founding vision of shared communal life and



Towards the Light



Alone



Yin Yang

many cities in Europe. But he travels not just to exhibit his paintings. The experience of travelling opens the doors of creation for him. Nature and people – ordinary people – are his chief

inspirers and subjects of study. Both of these turn up in his work in one form or another, some times plainly evident, many times in metaphoric guise.

We asked Ongkie to tell us a little about the famed "process of artistic creation". He told us, in his characteristic light hearted way, that there was no mystery to it. Many times he

shared communal life and human diversity and is keen to explore living here in the years to come.

Radhika Khanna (Faculty)
Tejas Joseph (Guest faculty)

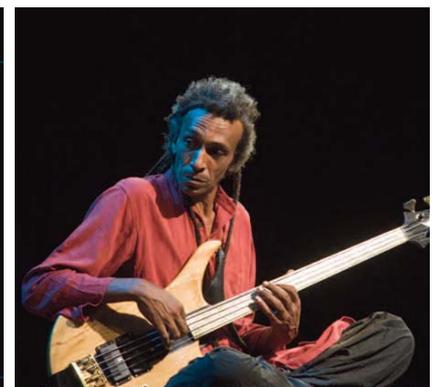
Sensing the infinite! The moving spirit of music without boundaries

The concert by fusion experimentalist musician Nadaka and his group at the Sri Aurobindo auditorium on Feb. 28, to mark Auroville's 41st founding day, was a truly moving experience. Appropriately named "A Sense of the Infinite," it generated a palpable sense of harmony. 'Global-spiritual' would be the word closest to describing this music, which stands for a genre that looks beyond definable forms and types. It embraces a great variety of elements, from classical Indian music and chants to free jazz and folk improvisations, to endorse its diverse and free ranging spirit.

Cascading melodies, perfect percussion, resonating vocals and precise instrumental interplay were all present in large measure for the enjoyment of novice and aficionado alike. The ethereal strains of Nadaka's "veena-guitar" complemented Gopika's emotive voice, the soothing sibilance of Balasai's flute, the rhythmic refrains of Mishko's bass and the punctuated nuances of Suresh's percussion and Ganesh's tabla. Together it served up a sound feast that was singular and stirring at the same time.

For more information about Nadaka and contemporary Indian fusion music visit www.nadaka.org and www.shantakaram.com

Tejas Joseph (Guest faculty)



Clockwise: Gopika and Nadaka, Suresh Bascara, Mishko M'ba, Balasai Basavaraj, Ganesh Basavaraj. Photos courtesy: Nadaka

A sinking tradition: the fading art of hand made boat building



Miniature boat souvenirs. Photo: Arathi



Crafting a souvenir



'Uru' under construction

Situated at the mouth of the Chaliyar river in the Kozhikode district of northern Kerala, Bepore is a busy port and fishing centre. However, few know that Bepore was an ancient maritime centre that traded

with Chinese, Arabs and later Europeans. Fewer still know that Bepore also flourished as a centre for ship building for many centuries up until Indian independence. The boatyard at Bepore is known for the construction

of the 'Uru' a traditional sailing vessel used by Arabian merchants in the halcyon days of its trade with India.

The tradition of ship construction in Bepore is nearly 1500 years old. The Uru had a large market as

recently as a century ago when many people, including foreign traders, relied largely upon large hand-made boats. The craftsmanship of the ship builders of Bepore was impeccable, which gave the place a unique status in the ship building world.

Bepore's geography has played no small role in making it famous for ship building. Its location at the mouth of the Chaliyar river as it entered the Arabian sea was perfect. The large teak logs (the principal building material of the Urus) could be floated down from the forests of Nilambur upstream to Bepore. Here they would undergo seasoning before being worked upon to metamorphose into a stately Uru that would soon embrace the waiting waters of the Arabian Sea nearby.

As the ship building industry of Bepore began to gain renown, it started attracting a large number and variety of talent intrinsic to ship building - from carpenters and wood carvers to ironsmiths and stevedores. Many families of ship builders also began to earn a reputation for themselves. They were identified by their specializations, handed down in hereditary fashion. The chief builder went by the epithet of "maistry", who was in complete charge of construction. He conceived the design and plans, gave the orders and supervised the project from building to launch. He took credit for success and responsibility for failure in equal measure.

Aandikutty and his brother Narayanan are two "maistris" I happened to meet and talk to. They hailed from an illustrious line of boat builders in Bepore going back to a few centuries. Both recall a time - albeit a few decades ago - when they were engaged in actively building majestic Urus for a variety of clients. Narayanan has found a place in the Guinness Book of Records for having designed and overseen the building of

the largest Uru in recent times.

Today they own and run a small shop that makes and sells miniatures of these famous boats, now sold to tourists as souvenirs and collectors items.

Two things signalled the death of the boat building industry in Bepore. It was hard for this industry, dependent heavily on labour and abundant supplies of natural materials like wood, to compete effectively with modern sea going vessels in terms of cost and efficiency.

The commissioning of Urus still depended largely on rich patronage, particularly from that of Arab millionaires. This handicap was reinforced by another more critical one when the Government of Kerala enforced a ban in the 1960's on tropical forest tree felling in an attempt to protect its rapidly dwindling forest cover. It may be of historical interest to note here that the plunder of the Nilambur rain forests was considerably accelerated in the two centuries of the British Raj in India who shipped large numbers of tropical trees to England to lay tracks for the British Railway system.

A few Urus still get commissioned by rich oil sheiks who tend to use them as luxury sailing vessels. At the time of this survey, a 115 ft. long Uru, commissioned by a sheikh from Qatar, was undergoing construction. However, these orders are few and far between and the time is not far off when the demand for these hand made vessels will completely cease. All that remains now is a vestige of what once used to be - a memento industry that makes miniatures of the once proud and great Urus that proudly roamed the oceans of the world, fostering ties and adding to the coffers of many nations.

Arathi

The veena - queen of instruments

Music is a part of all human beings. Human beings need music for peace and entertainment. There are different forms of music like classical, jazz, film and folk music. All these different forms of music can be expressed through instrumental and vocal mediums. The veena is one of the most ancient string instruments of India.

is made from the wood of the jack fruit tree. Its design consists of a large resonator (kudam) carved and hollowed tapering hollow neck (dandi) is topped with 24 brass or bell-metal frets. The end of the veena's neck is carved like the head of a dragon (yali). A small resonator is attached to the

board (palakai) of the resonator. A piece of music is produced on four metal strings that run above the frets. These are stretched over a wide bridge that sits on the body of the veena.



It is considered by many to be the "queen of instruments." Its origin can be traced back to the ancient yazh, a stringed instrument similar to harp from ancient Greece. The design of the veena has evolved over the years, probably from the form seen in South Indian Medieval paintings and temple sculpture: a string instrument with two gourd resonators connected by a central shaft, possibly of bamboo.

The veena then went through several innovations and modifications. Presently, the veena is 1.5m long and

underside of the neck. A little table-like wooden bridge (kudurai)—about 2 x 2½ x 2 inches—is topped by a convex brass plate glued in place with resin. Two rosettes, formerly of ivory, now of plastic or horn, are on the top

Three other strings run alongside the neck of the instrument. These are called the sympathetic or vibrating strings used for maintaining time and for playing the drone. All the seven strings are made of steel and two among the four strings are coiled with copper wire.

The South Indian veena has adapted itself to changing times and trends. Its singular and unique sound can be heard in numerous present day hit tamil film scores and in various fusion experiments. It is likely to be one instrument that will defy time and retain its status as the queen of Indian instruments.

Iyappan

Pondicherry University
Presents



PUDUVAI VAANI
107.8 MHz
Dinamthorum Kelungal
(COMMUNITY RADIO STATION)



Pondicherry University launched community FM Puduvai Vaani 107.8 MHz. The new Community Radio Service (CRS), initiated and implemented by Pondicherry University is now on air with its transmission from 6 - 10 a.m., 1 - 2 p.m., 5 - 9 p.m., on weekdays (Programmes in Tamil) and 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays (Programmes in Tamil, English and other languages). The FM reaches a distance of about 20 km radius from the university campus. Besides the faculty and students of the university, programmes are also presented by the people of the community. The language of broadcasting primarily includes Tamil and English.

IF TREES STOP BREATHING, I STOP BREATHING

On Oct. 29, 2008 the World Wide Fund for Nature, along with Global Footprint Network and the Zoological Society of London came out with the "Living Planet Report 2008". (See illustration)

The report highlighted the fact that if we continue with our consumption



based business as usual models of working and living, we would need one more planet by 2030. Currently, our consumption exceeds the biocapacity of the planet by approximately 25%.

I remember reading an article in *The Hindu Business Line* that stated that if India and China meet the consumption standards of the United States, then these two countries (India and China) themselves would require the resources of the entire planet. While this problem is by no means an easy one to address and definitely in need of a multi-pronged approach, there is scope here for individual citizen intervention to lessen the burden of the problem.

Here are some "green" ways that I've been exploring, and which I believe if taken up by many others can cumulatively lead to the survival of more trees on the planet, for starters.

1. Avail of online options for financial transactions if you are computer literate. Pay your insurance premiums and other bills through the internet. Opt for e-statements and receipts whenever possible.

2. Don't take receipts at ATMs. Notice the amount of paper receipts lying in waste bins at ATM kiosks? Now, think about the amount of waste created on a daily basis across the globe as these receipts get discarded. The only reason you will need these receipts is to tally your transactions at the end of the month. But since electronic transfers are for the most part safe and error proof, there is no longer any need to have to painstakingly keep receipts to cross check bank statements at the end of the month. That much paper and time saved!

3. Support green initiatives and

incorporate green features into their products services.

Visit www.karmayog.org/csr to get a list of socially responsible companies in India and www.global100.org for a list of companies worldwide that include sustainability in their corporate vision and philosophy.

4. Prefer public transport over private vehicles whenever possible. Unlike in the west, however, where public transport systems like trains, trams and buses, are dependable and comfortable, here in India using public transport with its high levels of pollution and crowding is likely to be more of a forced choice than a voluntary one. Still, the gains for the planet will be considerable if we can bring ourselves to do it despite the inconvenience.

5. Use technology fearlessly but

machines conserve both water and power to the benefit of your bottom-line and the planet's resource pool. Choose state of the art appliances with green features even if they are a little more costly. There are gains of an intangible kind when we do so. Reduced carbon emissions and net energy savings are two such. Also prefer staircases over elevators if you are young and fit. It saves energy and could add to your lifeline.

6. Use the electronic revolution to ecological and economic advantage. Prefer e-mails and soft copies to print outs, unless essential to your work. Recycle paper for your daily use (newspapers etc.) and use recycled paper whenever available.

7. Going vegetarian can help the planet to a great extent by reducing use of fossil fuels and emissions

into energy savings. It can also help the local economy and add value to your nutritional intake.

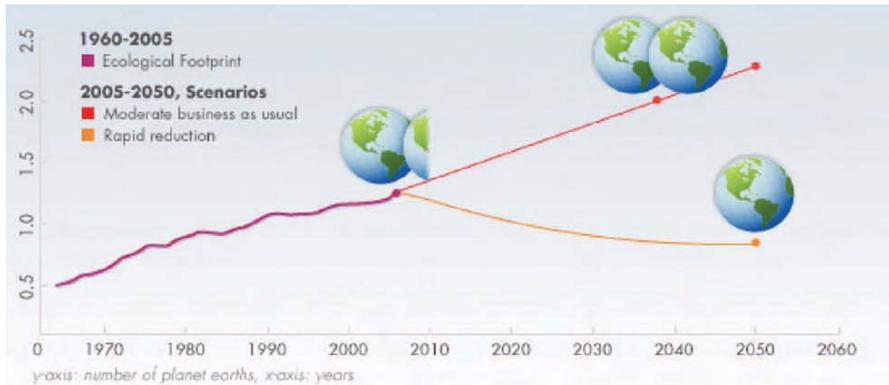
8. Eschew plastic for packaging, shopping and storage as much as possible. Use a cotton shopping bag (or one made of other biodegradable materials) for your daily needs.

9. Unsubscribe from all the public/group e-mailing lists if you are not reading those mails. Data and Server Farms are heavy consumers of electric power.

10. Reuse and recycle products, from ball point pens to paper and computers, in whatever way possible to extend their lifelines and reduce planetary waste.

11. Gift text books/ journals/ study materials to libraries, educational trusts for the poor and night schools.

12. Pay heed to the message of eco-documentaries that tell us honestly the status of the planet and what can be done to redeem its falling state. Many of these films, like Al Gore's "An Inconvenient Truth," combine a plea for lifestyle changes with hard scientific evidence to move skeptics.



Source: http://www.footprintnetwork.org/en/index.php/GFN/page/world_footprint/

policies whenever they manifest, even if the predominant colour of the current economic and political landscape of India is not green. Vote for candidates/parties that have green agendas and support companies that

wisely. Technology can be a part of the solution, not always the problem. Climate control in cooling systems like air conditioners and refrigerators can result in considerable power savings. Similarly, most of today's washing

resulting from mass scale agro production and transportation. It is also good for your health. Support organic farming and produce to the extent possible! Opting for food items that are locally produced can translate



Ajith Sankar R N,
Faculty, PSG Institute of
Management, Coimbatore

Men who will stop the water

We skirt Paikdev's temple for 'Paikdev Zor,' where this tribal snake deity bathes. The story goes that the village of Maina in Quepem Taluka, in the foothills of the Western Ghats that border Goa to the south-east, once received all the water from the zor or spring, and people from adjoining Kawrem, none. Then after a terrible tragedy, an angry father from Maina, grieving for his inconsolable daughter whom he had given into marriage at Kawrem, forced Paikdev to send water, through the hill, to that village too.

I glance back. Seeing how the mining company 'renovated' Paikdev's temple, I feel a chill of sadness, only heightened by the fine spray of a dying drizzle. Some years back, Paikdev's temporal abode was a labour of love crafted in laterite, mud-plaster and whitewash, nestling in a small clearing, surrounded by hundreds of trees. Now, as if in a mockery of archaeological surveys, contempt for 'tribal' beliefs, it seems manufactured in a factory. Paikdev in concrete; garishly painted into dissonance; in return for this paucity, the absence of his hills, trees and water.

After an hour and a half, unlike my motley colleagues, I am tempted to sit. Aki, all of eight, eagerly bunking school, skips ahead like a sprite; Zaeen, fifteen, playing truant to identify birds, looks like he would rather not go back to school; and to Pauto, in his mid sixties, and Shantaram, in his

thirties, this is home. It's July, the traditional paths covered with thick grass and shrubs well over Aki's head; creepers and vines form a thick web, through which we stumble and pick our way.

I mutter a loud prayer to Paikdev and ask him to ensure I do not put my foot on a snake's head.

"Not all snakes are poisonous," Zaeen says. "Yeah...sure...I just don't want to find out which is which"

Shantaram points to an old mine, abandoned in Portuguese times. It takes thirty years for the earth to recover from mining, so, apart from a sudden incline and overhang in the distance, and a deep bowl, the forest has returned in vengeance, the mud road all but disappeared, although one can spot recent wheel tracks. The earth regenerating could have made a nice story.

"This is where they intend mining," I say.

"What will happen then?" Aki asks me.

"This hill will disappear," I tell her. Her frown says she can't comprehend the scale of destruction, or maybe she's trying to figure out how anyone could be stupid enough to make a hill just disappear.

We climb clumps of grass wedged between ancient laterite burnt a deep brown. At the summit we look out at a morning clear enough to plot the rain. In the distance, cloud-misted

hills stretch towards Sulcorna to join the taller ghats, home to the Kushawati; directly below, sprawling to our right, the four hills we have trudged over.

To our left, across the Maina-Kawrem road, barely 500 metres from the Government High School at Maina, is the rogue mining operation that dug out two hills in barely six months, leaving behind a bottomless cavern. "This is what will happen here?" Aki asks. "They're stupid people."

No, I want to say, just very greedy and very, very dangerous, the kind who will murder for ore. Zaeen's just read the Goa Foundation's Goa, Sweet Land of Mine. "How do they get environment clearances?" he asks.

"There's a laboratory in Hyderabad that fabricates reports saying there's nothing on these hills except ore."

"That's it?"

"It's worse."

I tell him what Joao, a lawyer from Quepem, says: that the mining operations have already begun without 'environment clearances.' Zaeen snorts in disgust. He's figured out that back in school, they'll tell him he must respect the law!

We pass full grown cashew trees, bhendi, teak, and mango, planted some twenty years back by the Forest Department, who will watch silently as they are hacked down. I see pots to distil feni, and as we skirt the last hill, plantations of areca, tiny terraced

fields of rice, and lean-tos of thatch left over from the summer months when shepherds watch over cattle grazing.

The shrine leaves Zaeen, usually on constant alert, in repose. Pauto says Paikdev takes the form of a snake. To me, his face is a giant rock darkened with age, buried in the hill, and festooned with bright-green ferns and lichens, tiny sprigs of wild flower, grasses, creepers and vines; his eyes glow rich with the blackness of ore. Around his forehead are entwined the thick roots of an ancient kustum, its trunk a pillar to the sky, its canopy of leaves welcoming the clouds. From Paikdev's mouth, along the furrow of his pursed tongue, water courses out.

Before his great-great grandfather's time Pauto tells us, the water only flowed to Maina, where lived a man who gave his daughter in marriage to Kawrem. Blessed with beautiful child, one day she came to fill her pots at the spring only returning to find her infant lifeless, his tiny body covered with tiny black ants. The father grieved a full year, then, carrying a big stick, walked to the zor with nine men, berating Paikdev for not giving water to Kawrem and hitting the rock. From that day three-quarters of the water flowed to Kawrem...

Returning, we descend 45 degrees from Paikdev Zor. Zaeen trekked the Himalayas this summer, so he looks at me witheringly, Aki readily following suit. Naturally stepped by water, the path down twines between plants

growing high on either side, as if planted by a divine farmer and we get the hang of going down, grabbing a handful of the plants as if they were ropes. "You're way too slow," Zaeen tells me, pushing past with Aki.

We are touched by the succour of Paikdev Zor, the legend resonating as we cross a mountain stream four times, awed by the magnificence of flowing water. With innumerable brooks, this stream joins the Curca, a tributary of the Kushawati. It is difficult not to believe, as Pauto does, that these waters are not part of a divine force.

We come back full circle, to the canal built at a cost of Rs. 4 Crore to carry water from Paikdev Zor downstream. Villagers here know contractors and politicians made money from the canal, but, they add cynically, at least they gave us Paikdev's water. On the other side, Kawrem is still blessed with its abundance, both villages touched by the munificence of a tribal deity towards a grieving father.

"That's dumb," Zaeen tells me as we trudge the last hundred yards to a hot shower and change of clothes. His teeth are chattering. "Her father hit a rock to give water, now these swine will hit that rock to stop the water... that's dumb!"

Hartman de Souza
Lecturer in Theatre Arts
Mahindra United World
College of India
Paud, Maharashtra

படியில் பயணம் நொடியில் மரணம்

மக்கள் ஓரிடத்தில் இருந்து மற்றொரு இடத்திற்கு செல்வதற்கு போக்குவரத்து வசதிகள் இன்றியமையாதது ஆகும். போக்குவரத்து மக்களின் வாழ்வில் பிரிக்க முடியாத ஒன்றாக உள்ளது. இன்று உலகம் நவீனமயமாவதற்கு ஏற்ப போக்குவரத்து துறை வளர்ந்து இருந்தாலும், போக்குவரத்து நெரிசல்கள் குறையவில்லை. குறிப்பாக இன்று புதுவைமில் சுமார் 8 லட்சத்திற்கும் மேற்பட்ட வாகனங்கள் இயங்குகின்றன. எனினும் இதில் பேருந்துகளின் எண்ணிக்கை மிகவும் குறைவு. அன்றைய காலத்தில் இருந்து இன்றுவரை குறைவான பேருந்துகளை இயங்கி வருகின்றன. ஆனால் மக்கள் தொகை பெருகிக் கொண்டே வருகிறது. மக்கள் குறித்த நேரத்தில் குறித்த இடத்திற்கு சென்றதையும் பொருட்டு பேருந்துகளில் எவ்வளவு நெரிசல்கள் இருந்தாலும் அவற்றில் படகுகளிலும், நேற்கூரைகளிலும் பயணம் செய்யும் நிலைக்கு தள்ளப்படுகின்றனர்.



மக்கள் அனைவரும் பேருந்தில் இடமில்லாமல் படகுகள் பயணம் செய்வதையும், பேருந்தின் உள்ளே ஏற முடியாமல் அவதப்பிப்புவதையும் படத்தில் காணலாம்.



மக்கள் அனைவரும் பேருந்தில் இடமில்லாமல் படகுகள் பயணம் செய்வதையும், பேருந்தின் உள்ளே ஏற முடியாமல் அவதப்பிப்புவதையும் படத்தில் காணலாம்.

இவ்வகை பயணம் அவர்களுடைய உயிருக்கு பெரும் ஆபத்தை விளைவிக்கின்றது. புதுவைமில் மட்டும் கடந்த ஆண்டில் சுமார் 150-க்கும் மேற்பட்டவர்கள் சாலை விபத்துக்களில் உயிரிழந்துள்ளனர். இவை நாளடைவில் அதிகரித்துக்

செல்கின்றதே தவிர குறையவில்லை. இத்தகைய பேருந்து பயணங்களால் உயிரிழந்தவர்கள் எத்தனை எத்தனை பேர்? இதனால் அவர்கள் தங்களுடைய உயிரை இழப்பதோடு மட்டும் அல்லாது

கிராமங்களில் இருந்து படிப்பதற்கு மற்ற அலுவலக வேலைகளுக்கு செல்பவர்கள் இடையூறு இன்றி பாதுகாப்புடன் சென்று வர அரசு மற்றும் தனியார் பேருந்துகளின் எண்ணிக்கையை உயர்த்துவதுடன் அவை குறித்த நேரத்தில் இயங்க வேண்டும். மேலும் பேருந்துகளில் போதுமான அளவு நாட்கள் மட்டுமே பயணம் செய்ய வேண்டும் என்ற விதிமுறையை செயல்படுத்தினால் மட்டுமே பயனத்தின் போது ஏற்படும் சாலை விபத்துகளை குறைக்க முடியும்.

சாலை விபத்துக்களை தவிரக் வேண்டுமாயின் நாம் ஒவ்வொருவரும் சாலை விதிகளை மதித்து நடக்க வேண்டும். இத்தகைய சூழல்கள் உருவாவது எப்போது?

**முன்னடியான்,
கந்தன்
ஆனந்தராசு**

Reaching the Unreached: A technical institute with a difference



The Inquirer team with Principal of Auroville Industrial School. Photo: Radhika

A considerable number of the country's population works in the unorganised sector, mainly because they are not educated and trained in any particular discipline. The deprived population of villages can be trained in vocational skills through offering qualitative general and technical education, which can help provide valuable employment opportunities. The Auroville Industrial School (AIS), located on the outskirts of the international township of Auroville near the legendary temple of Irumbai, is such a vocational training institute servicing students from economically backward families of South India. AIS provides high quality technical education at affordable costs to rural youth. Over 450 students from economically backward families were enrolled since classes commenced in 2005.

For more information visit www.ais.org or e-mail office.ais@auroville.org.in

The institution works on a non-profit basis and charges nominal fees in order to foster responsibility and accountability amongst its students. According to its executive and principal, Lavkamad Chandra, the school's primary objective is to enhance the employability of rural youth through offering value based technical training that is relevant and effective. The courses offered in AIS include Computer Hardware Maintenance, Software Development, Renewable Energy Applications, Secretarial Skills, Industrial Training, Electronics, Civil Draughtsmanship and short term certification courses in MS Office and Accountancy. The Auroville Industrial School has qualified faculty and is well equipped

with small classes in pleasant surroundings. In addition to professional skills, students are also taught communication skills, meditation and conflict management to improve personal and social skills. On completion of their courses students find successful placement in companies like General Electric, WIPRO, LENOVO, GT-Electronics and various Computer Centres in uducherry and Auroville. In the near future, AIS plans to reach out to its audiences through community TV.

We spoke to some of the students at AIS for their impressions about the school and its courses and how they felt it could benefit them. They were all unanimous in claiming that the courses at the institute helped to widen their awareness at large and taught them vocational skills that added value to their futures. Many of them had difficulties with English in the beginning and found it hard to follow classes owing to this handicap. But with time they overcame this difficulty with dedicated inputs from their teachers. The institute places importance upon extracurricular activities like sport and yoga apart from the regular courses of study. This helps its students achieve a fuller perspective of life.

The staff and faculty of the institute are supportive and dedicated to their students and their needs. This, according to them, is what sets the Auroville Industrial School apart from others of its kind. This unique feature is what will continue to attract students.

Arathi Anbarasi Jitendriya

In the driving seat of change!

(Continued...)

The liberalization of the Indian market resulted in a large variety of unconventional job profiles coming the way of women. Those who were ready took advantage of these opportunities. While women taxi and autorickshaw drivers gained quicker assimilation into the social and economic fabric of the large cities, enthusiasm was harder to come by in the smaller cities and towns of the country. The Women's Welfare Society of Puducherry started offering drivers training in the late 1990s to women from the poorer sections of society. Those interested in testing these new occupational waters were welcome to take the training to drive autorickshaws and mini transport vans. As a result of this initiative



Photo: Radhika

Puducherry has quite a few women drivers today, though their numbers ought to increase more substantially. I took the opportunity to talk to a few of these 'pioneers.' Selvi was the first one I met. She is married and has two sons. Her husband is an autorickshaw driver who found it hard to make ends meet with his meagre earnings. Though she wanted to augment the family's income in some way, her options were limited she realized, not having more than a high school certificate and no working experience what so ever. This is when she decided to take the driving course offered by the Puducherry Women's Welfare Society. On completion of the course she applied for a bank loan, only to be turned down. There was no precedent of women auto drivers in Puducherry and the bank manager was not sure if Selvi would be able to repay her loan. Selvi refused to give up and convinced him with her zeal and

commitment. This was ten years ago. She looks back at all that happened since with a sense of pride and achievement.

Over this period she has been able to repay her loan with earnings from her autorickshaw, which is her own today. She remembered that there were about 15 women who trained along with her, only five of whom continued earning a living as autorickshaw drivers. Over time, however, more women came in and there are some 15 women autorickshaw drivers in Puducherry today, in addition to another 8 women small van drivers.

Jayanthi was the second one I met. Again, economic insufficiency was the main reason she took the autorickshaw drivers training for women under the aegis of the Women's Welfare Society. Today, she is happy with this decision, which has helped supplement her family's income considerably besides giving her a renewed sense of achievement and independence.

Sumathy, who is a small van driver unlike the others, used to be the head of a Self Help

Group (SHG) in Oulgaret municipality who had approached their SHG head office for job openings. Instead they were offered drivers' training, which was not so popular then. Many declined. Sumathy, however, wanted to train as a driver but faced some resistance from her husband initially. Her mother-in-law supported her desire and soon convinced her son of the benefits of this new initiative that his wife wanted to avail of. Soon thereafter

she took her license and has been driving a van for three years now. Initially there were difficulties of a social nature, coming from that posed by male drivers who sensed competition of a sort that did not exist before. But before long they accepted their female colleagues and began to work harmoniously with them. Sumathy is a happy lady van driver today who earns enough money and respect to make her recommend driving to more women.

Marie was the last woman driver I met. She was very short and this handicap seemed to be a difficult one for her to overcome. She was delayed her license on this ground even after completion of training. Being a fiery woman, she insisted that though short, she was as good as anyone else. Today she is a successful woman driver too. All these instances show that there are seismic changes happening in the world of women, across the spectrum of nationality, class, caste and economic grouping. While we hear of more women CEOs and research scientists who make our news headlines and blur the gender divide with their achievements, let us not forget, on the occasion of the International Women's Day this year, those simple and ordinary women who



Photo: Arivouancy

brave social and economic odds to win a much needed sense of self and economic freedom. THE INQUIRER salutes their enthusiasm and determination to forge new paths for themselves and for many others like them. May their tribe increase!

V. Arivouancy

