



INTERNATIONAL CITY was described to meeting by Prabhat Poddar.

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## AUROVILLE *City of freedom*

Operations of an international city in India were described to about 75 people Friday night at the second Kamloops Habitat meeting sponsored by the Joint Committee for World Development and Education, and the United Nations Association.

Prabhat Poddar spoke following the UN conference on human settlements in Vancouver. He said the village was thought of in 1964, and opened in 1968, as "a place where all human beings of goodwill, sincere in their aspiration, could live freely as citizens of the world, obeying one single authority, that of the supreme truth."

The village has about 2,000 residents from all countries, and will eventually house 50,000, it is hoped. The Indian government requires that people coming to that country have return tickets, and enough money to keep them in India.

The village is named for Sri Aurobindo, "the embodied synthesis of the east and the west," who died in 1950. The aim is to have a universal town where men and women of all countries live in peace.

Poddar said the area has a poor economy. The land is divided into plots of two to six acres. Efforts are being made to restore the productivity of the soil. This may take five or six years.

The village stresses education, not just in school, but "what we need to learn, we learn from life." There is one teacher for about every five children, and children do things at their own pace.

No further meetings will be held until fall.



**LOCAL AUDIENCE** hears of Auroville, a community where each man strives to find his

basic needs, and identify what is necessary to develop a perfect community where man

can fulfill to the utmost his mental, emotional and physical capabilities. **BELOW,**

Prabhat Poddar tells of life in Auroville.

—Sentinel Staff Photo

# Dream or hope of the future?

By BETTY WEDDELL

"Auroville, a bridge between the past and the future."

Those words are taken from the charter of an unique community in Southern India, home for some 450 human beings who have totally committed themselves to the concept of establishment of an international city with no formal government, no formal schooling, "a place of unending education, of constant progress and a youth that never ages," a further quote from the charter.

To some this would seem an impossible dream but the city does exist, it has been in existence since 1968, situated on the south-east coast of India, about 100 miles south of Madras.

Prabhat Poddar, a visitor in Kamloops Thursday, provided very convincing proof of the existence of this experiment in living. He is secretary to the executive committee that works for Auroville.

He was invited to Canada to participate in Habitat Forum in Vancouver and following his participation there, was being escorted around Kamloops by Dorothy and Horst Bohme of Salmon Arm who prepared the slide and sound program for Habitat which accompanied Mr. Poddar's talk in the Christian Education Centre, Thursday evening.

Mr. Bohme was in Auroville in February and March of this year to obtain the information for the presentation and both he and his wife have been associated with Auroville since its beginnings.

As Mrs. Bohme explained their function, Auroville needs "touch points" throughout the world and they work to provide one in this area.

The Bohmes lost everything in the Eden fire about two years ago. Up to that time they were puppeteers travelling throughout B.C. giving shows in 1,000 schools.

Auroville was described by Prabhat as an offshoot of an Ashram which has been in the area for 55 years and which he joined as a very young child, going there with his grandfather.

"An experiment still going on" was his explanation of what he termed a "very free" situation where nothing is very defined.

For individuals wishing to become part of Auroville it is useful to spend at least one year as a visitor observing and working in the community. This gives an individual a chance to go through the whole climatic cycle before a total commitment is made, explained Prabhat.

For stays as long as this the Indian government requires financial guarantee. But Mr. Bohme pointed out that from his experience earlier in the year this would only involve about \$40 to \$50 a month for food and lodging.

The community is two and a half kilometres in diameter built on very poor land which is being slowly reclaimed. The soil is a red, sandy clay with no humus. To prevent further erosion "thousands of trees have been planted.

To complete the basic concept of the community it must at some point become self-supporting but first "must be defined what are the basic needs and how they can best be met."

The basic idea is in direct antithesis to life in the Western world "where a man's entire life is spent in earning a livelihood and it is not possible to do as one wishes."

Prabhat proposed, "give a man his basic needs and he then can devote himself to work he wants to do and the community in turn will benefit."

"A grand adventure" he termed the experiment which involves people of 16 different nationalities. The population is

composed of 25 percent Indians, 50 percent from other countries and about 10,000 of a local population.

Nationalities represented include Swiss, Dutch, German, Canadians Italian and "many French and Americans.

When they first came to build the community did they run into any resistance from the local population?"

"They thought we were a bunch of fools, to be buying such unproductive land," answered Prabhat.

However, land which before Auroville was selling for \$70 an acre is now selling for \$700. Prabhat described the area as "backward, with a rich, cultural heritage."

"But at first the people blocked our way and we had to turn back."

Then they came back, sank a well and started to improve sanitation and "we were accepted."

When asked if he was disappointed in Habitat, trying very hard to be polite, as a visitor in the country, Prabhat admitted some disappointment that there was not more opportunity afforded participants in habitat Forum for more talk across the table.

It was "too structured" was his gentle criticism and "they should have let the ideas come from the people" but he did allow that at the Forum, participants became more involved than in the main conference.

This isn't his first trip to Canada. He was in Ottawa and travelled quite extensively in the States in April of '74 with Canada World Youth.

Funding for Auroville comes mostly from private donations. The concept has been approved by UNESCO and the Indian government has demonstrated keen interest in the project by donating over one million dollars.



PRABHAT PODDAR