

# Students from California struck by 'realism' of India

They are on a month-long tour of the country



Students from California attending a class on Indian Poetry at the French Institute in Puducherry.

PHOTO : T.SINGARAVELOU

Kavita Kishore

**PUDUCHERRY:** Fresh from their visit to Mamallapuram, the group of 22 students from California sit around the conference room in the French Institute of Pondicherry studying Indian mythology and poetry.

In India for a period of four weeks, the students will study a course in subjects like religion, mythology, culture and traditions of India.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, course instructor Layne Little from University of California

Berkeley said the course aims at teaching the students to appreciate South Indian literature, art and performance arts. The students would study Indian poetry and texts and visit various culturally and religiously relevant sites, he said.

Archana Venkatesan from University of California Davis, also an instructor, said the students would spend three of their four weeks in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry and the last in Delhi.

Their course includes field trips, where they would visit towns like Tanjore, Chidamba-

ram, Mamallapuram and Darasuram, she said.

The students attending this course come from varied educational backgrounds like bio-engineering, international relations, textile studies, religious studies, anthropology and psychology.

Most of the students said they had joined the course so they could learn more about India and that it had always been their dream to visit the country.

Many of the students were struck by how happy the people in India were and the "realism"

of the place, where it was possible to read the history and culture of a certain site and then go visit the site and be able to touch the sculptures and see how they had eventually become a part of modern-day India.

They were also impressed by how excited and happy the children seemed and how it was so easy to talk to strangers.

More than anything else they had seen in India, however, the unanimous opinion was that ice cream in India was much better than the ice cream they got at home.