

HUNED CONTRACTOR

TIME is running short. Another three to four decades is how far the oil reserves of the world are slated to last. Against the given scenario, renewable energy sources remain the only option. But how deep has this truth sunk in? "It is beginning to," is what Ravi Pittie, director of Agni Solar Systems, feels. This explains why Ravi chose to return to India after completing his engineering in material sciences from Michigan State University and set up a venture that seeks to harness solar energy. "Today," he adds, "there is already a growing demand for solar water heaters. Gradually, as the electrical power situation begins to worsen, more and more people will think of additional options too."

One of such innovative projects Ravi has in mind, is to install road lighting systems which can switch over to using solar power after 10 pm. "Our company has already reached the final stage of negotiation with the PMC. The financial working will be such that while we will bear the installation charges, the PMC will allow us to use the poles for selling advertising space," he reveals. With Pune and Bangalore emerging as forerunners in the use of solar energy, Ravi has a gut feeling that a very high percentage of manufacturing companies will now have to contemplate about putting the solar power option on the priority list. "The corporate influence will then rub off on bungalow owners and this will, in turn, lead builders to equip their residential projects with solar



**SOLAR
MAN:** Ravi
Pittie of
Agni Solar
Systems

Waiting For The Sun

panels," states Ravi.

Dedicated to manufacturing, marketing and servicing of solar systems such as water heaters, lanterns, cookers and distillation systems, Agni was established in the early 90s. Elaborates Ravi, "For the first few years, we dedicated ourselves to research and development, adapting technologies for the Indian market. We then tied up with Heliocol, an American company known for its solar pool heating systems." Agni has an impressive portfolio of clients, including Bajaj Auto, Venkateshwara Hatcheries, Talera Group, Clover Builders and others.

"Fortunately," opines Ravi, "the government is not keeping any stone unturned to promote solar energy. There are subsidies available for

streetlights, home kits and pumps as also the availability of soft loans at five per cent interest on solar water heating systems." Consider the installation of a 125-litre solar water heater which costs Rs 17,000. Suitable for a family of four to five persons, the payback time is only one year when compared to the conventional electricity consumption which is around five rupees per unit.

Considering the fact that the sun bombards the earth with about 75,000 trillion kwh (kilowatts per hour) of energy every day, the potential is phenomenal. As Ravi puts it, just 0.1 per cent of this source can solve all the energy needs of the human race. Now that certainly calls for some serious thinking. And of course, its application.