Having been a niche publisher for many years, PRISMA, like other production units in Auvrole, faced a crisis which threatened its future as a result of the lockdown in 2020. PRISMA responded by reinventing itself. But how did this happen? And what does the new reincarnation look like?

Auvrole Today: Actually, this is not the first time that PRISMA has had to reinvent itself.

Franz: No, it already happened a number of times. But the story begins before that. Many years ago Tim Weiy and I were working on a unit called Spectrum, which was the adulsion and marketing for Aurelec computers. Tim had language skills and, among other things, was editing the Aurelec magazine. He was the one who came up with the idea so we made a complete team. After the Aurelec Foundation was formed, the idea fell through and our unit was dissolved. However, Tim and I wanted to continue the work together. We had a few close contacts, including our mailman, a leaflet and brochure manager and this team managed to keep us going for some time.

It had been used to offset presses for our print jobs. But then the whole printing business changed as a result of the internet, and suddenly our contacts no longer needed our ‘old man’ ‘hard copy’ leaflets and brochures, because now everything could be online. So we had to reinvent ourselves.

At that time, not many people in Auvrole were working with this new technology to do graphic and design work, so we started PRISMA to do this. To begin with, we got a lot of work, mainly from inside Auvrole, but then more and more people started offering services and not just people who were interested. That is when we started to design and print books ourselves.

We started with the Auvrole architecture book which was very successful, it was our main source of income for a long time. We specialized in small editions and have always been most interested in printing books about Auvrole and Sri Aurobindo as we are so close to them. And people have also been coming with their own texts to get them typeset and printed.

This time, it was before the first lockdown.

We had been selling our books in Auvrole and Pondicherry, but suddenly all the outlets closed and no tourists and visitors were coming to Auvrole; we had been very dependent on these visitors for our books sales. So, suddenly, there was no income. I had to start working in a project like this. PRISMA could not go on in the old way. The market for physical books was changing because the new generation had completely different reading habits. I knew that we needed to reinvent ourselves again, but I didn’t know how. That’s when I met these people who offered to help.

Loretta: A friend had introduced me to the works of Medhaananda. We visited PRISMA because we heard they were making his works and that we could get Medhaananda’s Eternity Game here, but I arrived at the right time. I was there in the last days before the lockdown and the people there had been very dependent on these visitors for their book sales. So, suddenly, there was no income. I had to start working in a project like this. PRISMA could not go on in the old way. The market for physical books was changing because the new generation had completely different reading habits. I knew that we needed to reinvent ourselves again, but I didn’t know how. That’s when I met these people who offered to help.

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