

# Experts mull ways to combat autism

Staff Reporter

**CHENNAI:** From finding the right therapy for the child to understanding his behavioural changes and coping with them, life is never short of challenges for parents of children with autism. On Saturday, at a conference organised by the Association for Behavior Analysis - India, over 70 parents of such children from different parts of the country assembled to hear experts speak on autism and share their experiences of bringing up children.

The diagnosis of a child with autism affects every member of the family, said K. Nalini, a mother of a 15-year-old from Salem.

"There were just two therapists for autism in India in 2003. We had no choice but to get one from abroad," said a parent from Kochi. Parents, he added, should seek necessary therapy for children and ensure qualified experts are overseeing the intervention.

Vocalist Bombay Jayashri, who inaugurated the two-

day workshop, recalled how many years ago, an autistic boy who had accompanied his mother to her concert was the only person to tell her she 'sang the song wrong'.

"I kept thinking of the boy for several days after that. We have all stopped being straightforward or honest," said the singer. Music, she added, needed to go to these children too, for its purpose to be truly achieved.

V. K. Jeyakodi, Principal Secretary and State Commissioner for the Differently-abled, said the State through its early intervention centres was trying to address autism. Tamil Nadu recently bagged a national award for empowering disabled people. "But there is a lot more to do. We need to create an inclusive environment."

Neuropsychiatrist E.S. Krishnamurthy asked the parents to consider the possibilities of genetic or inborn errors if their child's condition was progressively worsening.