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# MADRAS

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## MUSINGS

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# Slums: Is there an answer?

(By A Special Correspondent)

The ugly side of Chennai is that, out of its five million population, nearly seven lakh people live in the 1300-plus slums in the city while another 2.5 lakh dwell in 400-plus slums in the City's suburbs.

What is more, surveys in slums in the Chennai Metropolitan Area (CMA) indicate that the slum population is growing at about 4.5 per cent every year — a major reason for the 42-lakh plus slum population in Tamil Nadu.

Slums are part and parcel of a city's demographics. But the issue here is one of providing better living conditions to slum-dwellers, who provide an unhealthy face to any urban conglomerate. Governments, therefore, need to relocate slum dwellers by providing them houses or flats with mini-

mum basic facilities. Minimum infrastructure for one relocated family is estimated to cost about Rs. 26,000.

The Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board (TNSCB) took a step towards this Herculean task when it sought a special grant of Rs. 100 crore from the Tenth Finance Commission, an amount that would just be enough to relocate a little more than a fourth of the slum population of Chennai.

Improving living conditions in slums may be an alternate way of doing away with the City's ugly scars. But this may not be possible in Chennai, where many of its slums are on the banks of the Adyar and Cooum Rivers, the Buckingham Canal and Otteri Nullah, along the coastline (where about 60,000 families dwell) and on



One of the City's waterside slums — this one by the Cooum. It's only the rains that make this picture less gloomy.  
(Photograph by Rajind N Christy.)

the sides of the railway tracks, especially in north Chennai.

Whether it is slum improvement or relocation, the task before the state government is stupendous — acquiring new sites where housing units can be built, laying pucca roads, ensuring a steady supply of water, setting up electricity connections and providing sanitation and hygiene requirements. Other problems involved in relocating slums are that the 'squatters' are not prepared to be relocated, either fighting the officials who come to evict them or even getting court stay orders against their removal. With World Bank aid being sought, its stipulations have also to be complied with.

Slum clearance is also not a one-time exercise. As long as people from the rural areas of Tamil Nadu (and adjoining states as well) keep pouring into Chennai in search of a livelihood, the problem will remain. Reduction of employment opportunities is the only way to stop migration. But that means the need to improve living conditions in the state's rural areas, bring prosperity to villages and make them self-sustainable units.

Funds from the Housing and Urban Development Corporation and the World Bank hardly allow any improvements.

## The December Season

With a nip in the air and a misty dawn,  
The thrum of the *tambura*, the throb of the drum,  
Rhythmic anklets jingling, arpeggios a-scaling,  
The Music Season is on IN OUR CITY.

Early morning *bhajan* singers walking the streets,  
Hill-bound devotees carrying lamps and *iru mudis*,  
Carol singers serenading by twinkling X'mas trees,  
The lights of devotion are on IN OUR CITY.

Relatives visiting, hotels and roads teeming,  
The gloss and glitter of *sabha*-hopping,  
American twangs and Australian drawls,  
The tourist invasion is on IN OUR CITY.

Lectures and demos, dissertations on music theory,  
Exhibitions, sales and consumer durable rebates,  
Gossip and innuendo, reviews and mud-slinging,  
A media blitz is on IN OUR CITY.

Mufflers and sweaters, woollens and shawls,  
Shimmering silk sarees with diamonds a-dazzle,  
*Veshtis* and *jibbas* with flyaway *angavasthrams*,  
Our city is dressed, ALL FOR ITS SEASON,

Padmini Natarajan

## Skill-training the need of slum children

(By A Staff Reporter)

Nearly 80 per cent of the bread-winners of the families in Chennai's slums are in the age group 18-45. This suggests that the children in the slums are not engaged in child labour and are, probably, being sent to school for education, at least to high school level.

But what is shocking is that half the labour force from the slums is unskilled and untrained in any field of work. This large unskilled labour population earns little monetary benefit, with the result

that those in the slums still suffer low standards of living, health and hygiene, and increased poverty.

There is a need for schools and educational institutions with large slum-children enrolment to concentrate more on vocational education and job-oriented courses in order to create skilled labour, say NGOs working in the slums. Industry-based training and small-scale industry-oriented courses should also be incorporated in the curriculum, they urge.

## MADRAS MUSINGS

wishes all its readers and well-wishers  
A VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR



# Chennai — at the heart of things

For two years on the trot now, heart specialists have been making a beeline for Chennai that is Madras. Last December it was the big do organised by Dr. K.M. Cherian of the Madras Medical Mission and this year it was the Asian Pacific International Cardiologists' meet convened by APIC President Dr. Mathew Karaikal of Apollo Hospitals; and though the weather-gods were not too kind (the cyclone welcomed the cardiologists to the City), going by post-conference chats, it was a thumping success.

Some of the best of the world's interventionalists came

Leon, the *Sadguru* of international cardiology and creator of the world's foremost update cardiology courses, himself acknowledged that the Conference and course were splendidly done. He said he could not believe that he was in India, reports a delegate: he felt the course was on par with the best courses conducted back home in the USA.

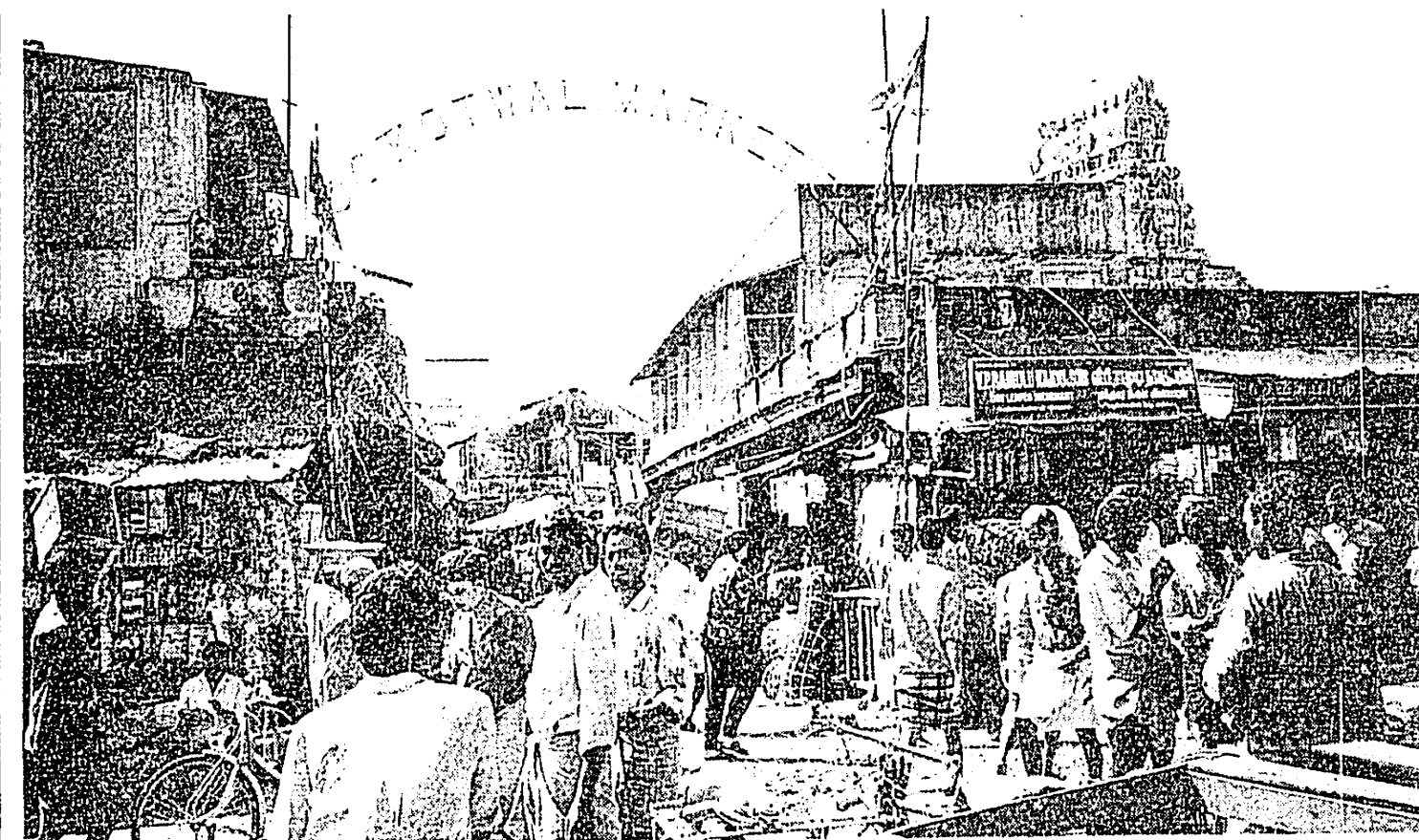
A lot of credit for that must go to Alfred Selvaraj and his boys at Picture Productions who, liaising with DD, did a fantastic job of the live video-coverage of the various interventional procedures done during the conference at

the Apollo Hospital cath-lab. The videos were shot and edited in record time and shown to the delegates at the Taj. The pictures were perfect and everything was done just right. For a maiden attempt at teleconferencing it was a runaway success. For the twenty patients who underwent interventions the Conference provided a bonus, for they got their treatments at highly subsidised rates. To the credit of the interventionalists, 19 out of the twenty procedures were successful; only one case had to be abandoned and the patient now awaits elective surgery.

Well, what news do the heart-specialists have for us? Firstly, that every patient with a coronary block does not have to go under the bypass surgeon's knife; the long arm of the cardiologist, i.e. the catheter with an angioplasty balloon may well be able to do the trick. Secondly, talking of all the ways a block may be got rid of — by blowing it up with a

successful 'confereencing'. Martin

(Continued on Page 5)



The Koyambedu Wholesale Market Complex (KWMC) has opened for business (our NEW) and the nearly 200-year-old Kothawal Chavadi (our OLD) is expected to roll down its shutters and help decongest George Town. The origin of the KWMC goes back to 1974 when the then DMK Government mooted the idea of developing an alternative market that would cater to the northwest areas of the city. After undergoing changes with successive state governments, the scheme received its final shape in 1982. The scheme envisaged three categories of shops for the traders: on rental basis, developed plots with other facilities, and full fledged shops. In 1990, the then Governor, P C Alexander, laid the foundation stone for the complex, and construction was completed in 1995. The KWMC has 456 flower shops at a cost of Rs.584 lakh, 432 fruit shops at a cost of Rs.753 lakh and 1422 vegetable shops at a cost of Rs.2416 lakh. The overview in one of our NEW shows much of the complex still unoccupied, the other view is of the entrance to the flower market.

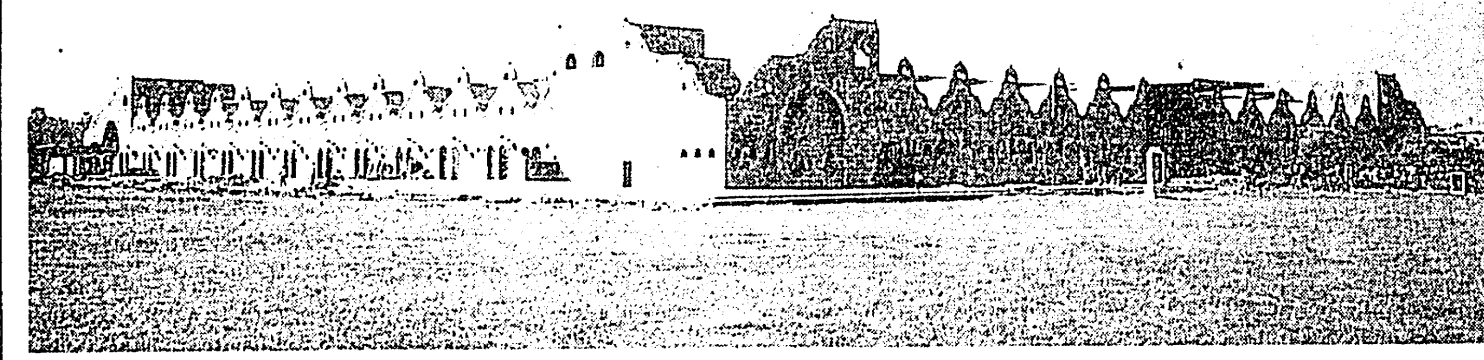
## THE OLD...

Under the new Tamil Nadu Specified Commodities Markets (Regulation and Location) Bill, 1996, the wholesale trade of perishable commodities can take place only in specified areas (not in Kothawal Chavadi and its surrounding areas). The first such area is the Koyambedu Complex. The KWMC will be a full-fledged business centre with all facilities, including cold-storage. It will accommodate around 2300 shops in an estimated area of 50 acres, besides banks, post and telegraph offices, dispensaries and a police station.

The Kothawal market till recently offered direct employment to over 15,000 people and indirect employment to as many. Will they move to Koyambedu? The shifting would help only a section of the traders, the Kothawal traders feel. But Government is confident the KWMC will be a success.

And, it hopes, the 12,000 trucks and 15,000 handcarts that serve Kothawal Chavadi every day, from dawn to dusk, will disappear from the area where the market opened its doors in 1803-4 as a part of the Kamikapararneswari Temple Trust. A hundred acres will then be decongested in the heart of the City, it is hoped.

At the time of writing, however, Kothawal Chavadi still seems to be in business after traders there went to court again. And congestion still prevails. What next? (Photographs by RAJIND N CHRISTY.)



# Interventional cardiologists, the heavyweights

What's an interventional cardiologist? Are there non-interventional ones or what? asked a wag. In cardiology, medical cardiologists are lambs; flyweights who simply prescribe pills, injections or lifestyle changes. Then there are the invasive-cardiologists; bantamweights who put in pace-makers, do angiograms and so on. Finally, you have the heavyweights; daredevils who stalk the frontiers of Cardiology taking potshots

at blocked coronaries, stenosed heart valves, holes-in-the-heart and so on with an armoury of balloons, drills, ablaters, lasers, stents etc. etc. — the 'Interventional Cardiologists'. The foundation of interventional cardiology lies in the development of high-tech, slender catheters which can be put in through a peripheral blood-vessel and, under X-Ray vision, guided to the scene of battle in a blocked coronary,

stenosed heart-valve, hole-in-the-heart etc. This catheter serves as the long arm of the interventionist and, by rail-roading necessary instruments on the catheter, s/he can, by remote control, manoeuvre the instrument and, thereby, blow up blocks, open up narrowed valves, close a congenital anomaly and so on. However, though such a wide array of interventional possibilities exist, the focus of attention is, at the moment, on coronary

blocks, for, world-over, the rise in coronary artery disease has been phenomenal in the past two decades. How to unblock a blocked coronary artery without surgery is the million dollar question. The great plus point about interventional cardiology is that nil or minimal anaesthesia is required; and, of course, there is no cutting open the chest either. So hospital stay, pain and discomfort are much less than that asso-

ciated with bypass surgery, provided the intervention is a success. On the other hand, re-stenosis, or re-blocks, are commoner after interventional procedures than with bypass surgery. These are some of the many points to be considered before deciding between angioplasty and bypass surgery.

H.S.

# The fort the Danes built...

## A heritage site in waiting

TARANGAMBADI, queen of the Coromandel Coast, in Nagapattinam Quaid-e-Milleth District, was designated a special tourism area over three years ago and Government passed orders for its development. The Danes, to whom it once belonged — they called it TRANQUEBAR — promised assistance for the restoration of some of the finest colonial buildings of the 17th Century in India. But little has come of these plans.

Today's article and last fortnight's are published as reminders to all concerned that Tranquebar is worth preserving and developing as a heritage holiday site — which it has been declared. The articles were written over a year ago by a Madraasi who was visiting from Australia. Little has changed since then.

— THE EDITOR

(Continued from last fortnight)

Just south of the *maidan* is the *Dansborg*, the little fort that Ove Gedde built in the early 17th Century. It is in fairly good shape, except for a small portion of an interior wall, but the main rooms, which are only on the seaward wall, have distressingly modern Government issue windows. The architecture is curious, the walls sprouting conical projections at regular intervals. Two rooms house a museum, and an entrance fee of Re. 1 is charged. Inside all is gloom and despair. Damp vaulted roofs and the lack of proper lighting (none at all when I visited it) give an eerie, discouraging feeling.

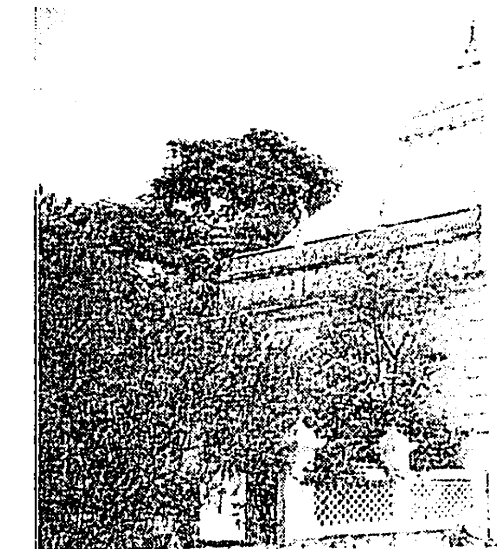
Some of the exhibits are most relevant, a significant number quite irrelevant. Of great interest is a printed document giving permission to the Danes to set up "fortresses" to carry on trade with Tanjore. The original gold leaf document granted by Thirumalai Nayak is in the museum at Copenhagen. Significantly, the document specifically mentions that the Nayak would allow only the Portuguese and the Danes the right of trade. The Dutch, the French and the English were not to be entertained. Indo-Portuguese trade was well established before any other European nation came to India and the Danes found a thriving Indo-Portuguese community engaged in trade.

A few maps are on display, as also architects' drawings of

certain important buildings, all of them still in use. A map of Tranquebar shows a fortified town with gates and residences, a thriving Tamil town nearby, and a plain lush with paddy fields and thick clumps of trees. Those were the days when Tamils managed with ease THREE crops of rice a year.

Among the few photographs displayed, is one of a large canopied grave with an unusual emblem. This exhibit is labelled "A Danish grave in Tranquebar". In fact, it is one of the many Dutch graves in the old Dutch cemetery in Nagapattinam, which was a thriving Dutch trading settlement until the Dutch moved on in the 18th Century.

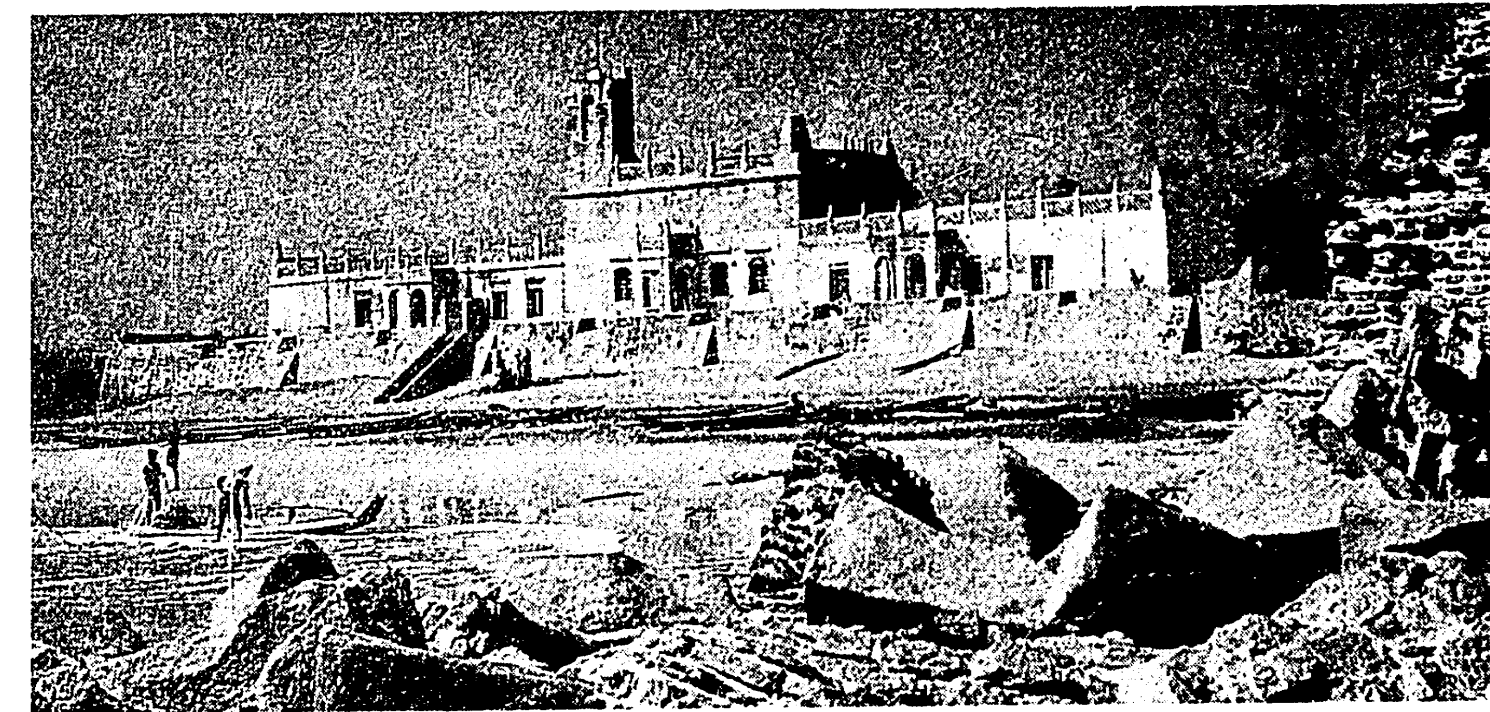
The *Dansborg* affords a commanding view of the sea and the surrounding countryside, but this point is not to be compared with the upstairs verandah of the Governor's mansion. The house itself is built in colonial style, a style borrowed from the big houses of



The Zion Church (above), built in 1701 for use by the Danish settlers, was recently renovated with Danish help. Below, the New Jerusalem Church, built by Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg for his Tamil parishioners,

the South, and then developed further: three large rooms in a row, another three behind this row, and a broad verandah in front and at the back. The upper storey usually has only one set of rooms — the front row — a lower ceiling and a tile roof. A recent cyclone had dislodged many tiles, as it had done to almost every roof in the region.

The almost endless staircase had lost the bottom stair, and the whole was propped up on bricks. Visitors were not encouraged to go to the upper floor, "it is dangerous". I, being slight of build and very curious, risked it. The house has huge doors but no windows. Eight enormous Ionic columns support the upper verandah. The main room, the drawing room, has a modern brick wall built down it, splitting it. In the smaller part lives the caretaker,

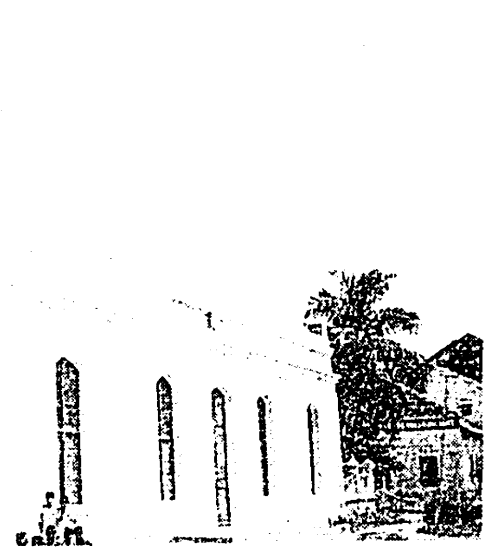


*Dansborg, the fort the Danes built... seen with its pier slowly eroding away in the foreground.* (Photograph by Shyam Tekwani.)

a pleasant local woman who shows visitors the Visitors' Book, and who cooks on a small wood fire in a corner of Ove Gedde's drawing room.

On a scruffy table lay the Visitors' Book made from cheap yellow paper. The official Government Tourism Official was "not in his seat", so the caretaker invited me to record my name, address and impressions. Most entries were by Danish nationals (yes, they actually do visit India), one of the recent entries was made by a Malaysian, and I must have been the only Indian in months to visit or, at least, record his visit.

In 1858, the Danish Government sold all its holdings and buildings, excluding church and temple property, in Tranquebar to the British for Rs. 12½ lakh. The British PROBABLY pulled



is now tended by the Tranquebar Lutheran Mission which has given it a coat of paint. The date of consecra-

tion, 1718, and the Danish Royal Crest are seen above the church's entrance. (Photographs by Rajind N Christy.)

# Chennai — at the heart of things

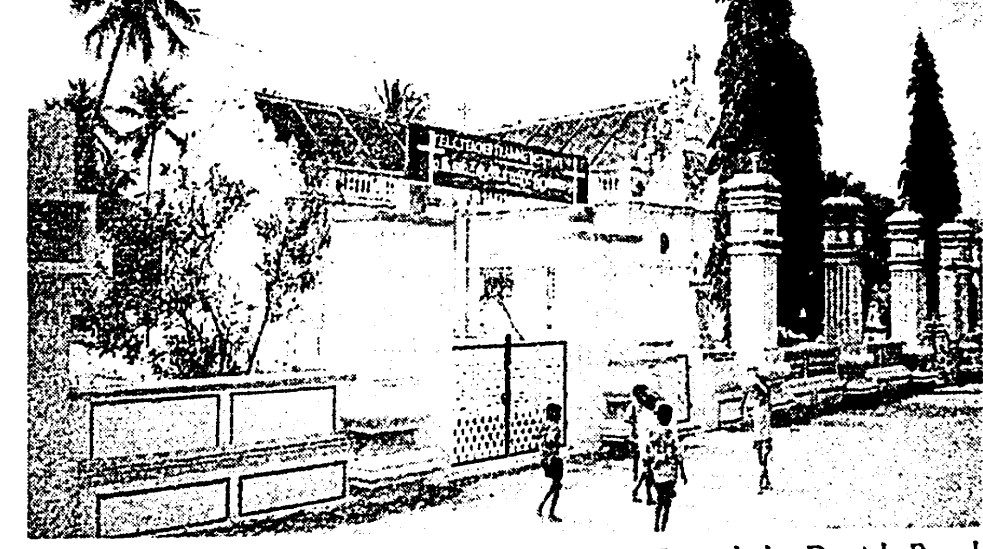
(Continued from Page 4)

balloon, by shearing it with a rotablator or vapourising it with a laser etc. etc. — the winner seems to be the balloon; and stents, i.e. the little steel-tubes put into the blood vessels after they have been de-blocked, to ensure vessel patency, have come to stay; balloon-angioplasty followed by stenting is the name of the game.

The coronary balloons are very expensive. A natural question is 'why not reuse them'. In France and certain other European countries they do. Theoretically, a used balloon is not

## by Simeon Mascarenhas

Church is very well maintained. In the course of my wanderings, I have observed that it is only in cities, where the 'educated' congregate, that fine buildings,



places of historical interest in their own country. This might help in creating an awareness of the priceless heritage that is

with great charm and immense historical value, have to be 'renovated' — i.e., ruined. I particularly remember a rather large Siva temple in Naga-

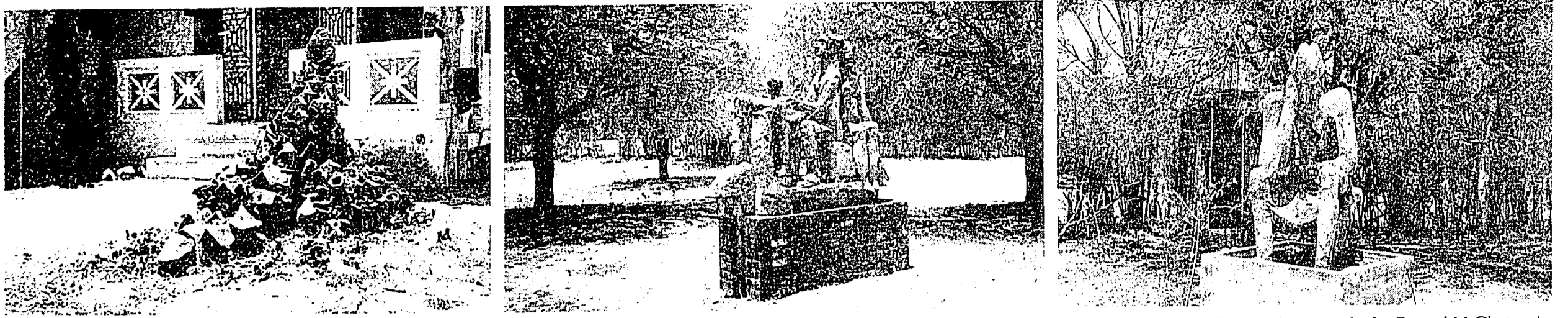
pattinam because it was so well kept, so peaceful and SPOT LESSLY CLEAN. St. Peter's Church in the same town has been restored — and looks exactly as it did in 1774 when it was built by the Dutch.

What, then, needs to be done in Tranquebar now? Restoration of all buildings to their original condition must be undertaken immediately. A history of the place must be made available in the form of tourist brochures. Since Tranquebar is not far from Pondy or Karaikal, those two

towns may remain base points, from where regular, convenient, and not-too-expensive transport is made available. Indians should be encouraged to visit

(Continued on Page 6)





Sculpture to bid you welcome to a Cholamandal house.... and sculpture to embellish the beautiful natural surroundings in the Cholamandal Artists' Village. (Photographs by Rajind N Christy.)

# Changing Cholamandal

(Continued from last fortnight)

Cholamandal started out as a movement with the ideology of allowing an artist to concentrate on his work, cut off from the world. It appears to have gone further and further away from its goal over the years. Indeed, today, this artists' village no longer presents a united front or boasts its own style but is simply a beautiful place for artists to live and work in.

"Cholamandal is no longer a big family like it used to be," agrees Nandagopal. "When it started, my father was some sort of a guiding figure to the artists. His peers continued in his role after his death, but today most of them are gone too," he says.

"The overarching ideology of the Sixties has disappeared,"

James says, adding that Cholamandal is no longer a movement but just a few brilliant individuals. "In the Sixties and Seventies there was something like the Cholamandal style, which no longer exists. In those days there was this great spirit of adventure and enthusiasm and we were furthering a certain point of view. All that is no longer there." Also, there no longer exists any real interaction between most of its members, though there are smaller groups within the village which interact with each other.

Nandagopal, however, feels that despite these changes the end result is not something his father would have been unhappy with. "One can never have a blueprint on how an experiment of this sort will shape," he says. "The artists

who set up Cholamandal did not want an institution; they had no idea how the next generation of artists in Cholamandal would feel and they never tried to perpetuate an ideology. That, I think has helped this place develop in an interesting manner."

by  
**Vaishali Honawar**

In the recent past Cholamandal has opened its doors to several new entrants from all over the country, including Calcutta, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra. From time to time artists from abroad come to live in the guesthouse donated by West Germany and work in the two studios financed by the managing director of the Transport

Corporation of India Ltd. Often the village plays host to camps of painters and sculptors and the grounds of Cholamandal are dotted with granite and metal sculptures which have been products of these visits.

In the Sixties and Seventies, workshops on art would be held in Cholamandal, but over the years these too have faded out as "all the artists here are against too much theorising and form discussions. It is just not Cholamandal's style," says James. "What we're looking for is informal interaction, not concept and ideologies."

The artists of Cholamandal often join hand to hold exhibitions in groups of two or three in galleries around the country. As part of Cholamandal's 30th anniversary celebrations, an exhibition of the works of some

of its artists will open at the Jehangir Art Gallery in Bombay on December 6th.

Some time ago, a few Cholamandal sculptors, including Nandagopal, brought out a book on *Modern Indian Sculpture in the Madras Metaphor* — the first of its kind to record a specific movement in art in the country.

The activities may be fewer and, perhaps, Cholamandal today is not what its founders visualised, but it continues to be a source of inspiration to those who choose to make it their home. James sums it up exactly when he says: "Perhaps the strength of this place is that it leaves you alone. If an artist's personality is strong enough, it simply allows it to emerge." (Courtesy: *The Telegraph*, Calcutta.)

(Concluded)

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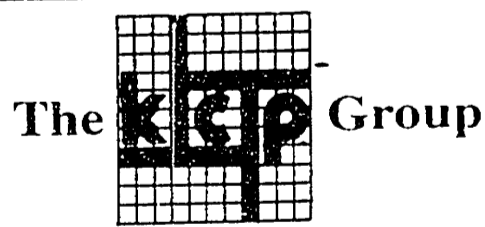
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