meet colour

Pics. by K. Gajendran.

think? Even I asked people scattered like ricebeads war victims". An image of a hanged man who was not going to answer and a squirrel carrying building blocks for a bridge made clear the works' subject matter —war-torn Sri Lanka. The poetry interspersed the proceedings — Derek Walcott, Grace Nichols' poetry spoke about the Caribbean Diaspora. These were read by Yog Japee, Siddhi Japee and Renuka Rajarathnam.

The Sri Lankan poet Jayabalan, now residing in Norway, was present and read his famous poem "Neduntheevu aatchikku" and Prassana Ramaswamy that of Ahilan, Vikramdityan, Sukumaran and others.

The idea of putting together such an assemblage of poetry, painting, dialogue was to move away from the norms of a panel discussion and to facilitate a more open dialogue involving the audience but it remained at the level of a presentation. The various units of the programme remained by themselves. Some pauses during the presentation to allow audience participation may have been useful.

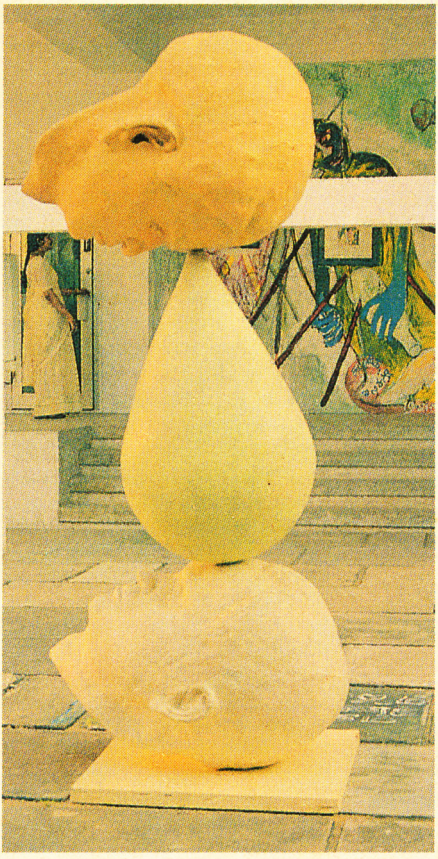
It was an experiment that can certainly be carried forward. The display of paintings will be on till the end of the month.

Ebenezer's paintings will remain intact for a while but it will go the way of all those other pictures painted on the Living Wall series. It will be white-washed and painted over by someone else. In a way, this might have produced experimentation. Designated artists may not bother to labour over their painting, but may let go and work spontaneously.

"Ephemerality", I suspect, was not part of the concept behind the Living Wall but is certainly the unintended outcome of the series as a whole. Pity, no artist has so far engaged this idea in his or her work there. ■

SHANKAR NATARAJAN

When verses



THE EVENING began with an alarming confession. Installation artist and painter Natesh in a video clip (he was present throughout the session as pure image) proclaimed in quintessential anti-art style that he did not even like art and that he has been exiled into it almost against his wishes.

The occasion was the inauguration of Ebenezer Sunder Singh's paintings on the Living Wall at the British Council library. Prassana Ramaswamy of Max Muller Bhavan had come up with a programme for the opening. "Thiraikadalodi (aham)" was conceived as a bilingual "happening" that will be "spontaneous, participatory". With Ebenezer's paintings "in and out" as background, issues concerning "identity and existence-of those displaced by war; those originating from another land yet sharing Tamil as a common linguistic territory" were to be reflected upon through poetry readings and dialogue.

Sadanand Menon, a cultural commentator, and Soudhamini, documentary film-maker, addressed the issue of exile and the predicament of the Diaspora in the dialogue session. Sadanand followed up Natesh's idea and spoke about the modern affinity between exile and literature. Pointing to the fact that many great stories are stories of migration.

Soudhamini, who opened the discussion, used the metaphor of a turtle carrying its home on its back. The image implied that a sense of belonging was to do with a person's ability to adapt. Similarly, the power to speak was understood to be a matter of will power. Sadanand Menon felt that such an abstraction did not consider the very real problem of loss of voice and the right to speak that is the lot of displaced people. Not to mention violence inflicted upon them and the prejudice.

The paintings on wall with text seemed to echo this point. On one of the two paintings, Ebenezer had written in apparent anguish, "What do you think? People ask me what do you