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Ashram Church near
Tirrupatur



Questions

Look at photographs of Hindu temples and Christian churches – do they help you decide which kind of building this is? How did you decide?

Background

This church is one of just three in South India built in the style of a Hindu temple with a high entrance gate and an open sided main building. On closer inspection, however, this is clearly a church, as it has the large red cross typical of many churches in the diocese and there are no statues of Hindu gods in evidence (the tower of a temple would be covered in such carvings – you can see some examples on a powerpoint on the CD).

Inside the church are all the furnishings you would expect such as an altar and a font. Why was the church built in this style? Probably one reason was so that Hindus who became Christians would feel it was familiar and “like home”,

This church is also unusual because it is not situated in a town or village but in an ashram, a religious community. The ashram community was founded about eighty years ago and was at its peak during the last days of British rule. In the early days only men lived at the ashram but once the original members of the community died the place changed. Now there are still some families living on the site and also a boys’ hostel and small hospital. The church is used by families from the surrounding villages.

You may be interested in the dog in the foreground of the photograph. Families do not normally keep dogs as pets, but semi wild dogs roam freely throughout the villages and towns and will scavenge food wherever they can.



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