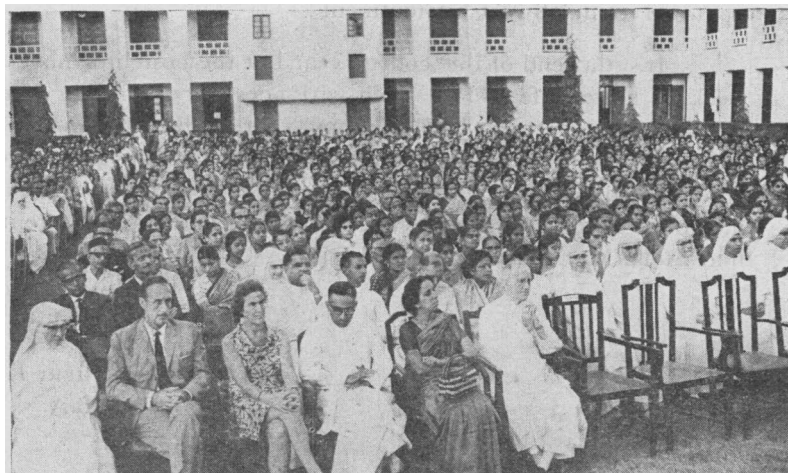


College Day 1968

The presence of the Vice-Chancellor and the production of a dance-drama, "The Hound of Heaven", were the highlights of this important event in the academic year.

A casual passer-by, walking along Cathedral Road on February 29th 1968, might have thought that Stella Maris College looked unusually quiet and still, with its windows closed and scarcely a student in sight. But behind the impassive facade of the main college buildings, the campus hummed with activity as hundreds of chairs were being arranged in the open-air theatre, technicians darted around the stage fixing lights and mikes, and a bevy of excited student danseuses busied themselves with costumes, make-up and hair-dressing. By 6 p.m. the technicians had discreetly disappeared from view, the danseuses were dressed and waiting nervously in the green-rooms, and almost every seat was filled, except the arm-chairs in the front row. As the chief guests walked towards the stage, the audience rose to greet them, and remained standing until a Sanskrit prayer-song had been rendered by a group of music students. Officers of the College Union then garlanded the president of the evening, Dr. A. Lakshmanaswamy Mudaliar, Lady Mudaliar, and His Grace, Archbishop Arulappa of Madras-Mylapore.

In her Welcome Address, the Principal declared how happy and honoured Stella Maris was to have Sir A. L. Mudaliar presiding over its College Day in the very year of his Silver Jubilee as Vice-Chancellor of Madras University. Dr. Mudaliar had done great things for the University as a whole, but Stella Maris remembered with particular gratitude and affection the fatherly care he had bestowed on this college since its tiny beginnings 20 years ago, on the day of India's Independence. A brief





review of events and achievements of the year followed, with special mention of the opening of an additional storey of the Social Welfare Centre, which had marked the twentieth anniversary of the College on August 15th 1967. Addressing the large gathering of students, their parents, and friends and well-wishers of the college the Vice-Chancellor declared that his 20-year-long association with Stella Maris had been a source of great satisfaction to him; he had seen its birth and watched over its growth, rejoicing with the authorities of the college at every fresh development. He was particularly happy that the college offered a wide variety of subjects, and subjects especially suited to women. The details he mentioned showed his intimate knowledge of the history of Stella Maris, and the deep interest he has always taken in its progress. The audience listened appreciatively to the words of the Vice-Chancellor, and applauded them roundly.

The big moment had arrived for those students who had earned prizes during the academic year 1967-68. As their names and classes were announced, they came up to the stage to receive their prizes from the hands of the smiling and gracious Lady Mudaliar. The last award to be made was that of the Dr. A. L. Mudaliar Silver Jubilee Rolling Shield for the Fine Arts, won by the Ethiraj College team in a classical dance competition held in Stella Maris earlier in the month. As the last ovations died away, Revathy Kailaspathy, the College President, stepped forward to propose a vote of thanks, thus concluding the first part of the evening's programme.

The entertainment that followed was a dance-drama based on Francis Thompson's famous poem, "The Hound of Heaven". A Tamil translation, set to Indian music, was played by an orchestra and sung by students of the college, the whole score having been pre-recorded. The theme of the poem, God's loving pursuit of the human soul, was portrayed in Indian dance of various styles, Bharatha Natyam, Kathak and Manipuri among them. An English prose commentary explained the theme, and lines from the original poem were read at appropriate intervals between the dances. A talented young dancer portrayed with great sensitivity the leading role of a representative human being, fleeing God whose love he fears, and seeking everywhere among created things for happiness, the desire of every soul. He finds satisfaction in none of these, for always he is conscious of the voice and the pursuing steps of God, the Hound of Heaven, but always he flees Him, afraid that His love is a jealous love which requires the sacrifice of every natural enjoyment.

And past those noised Feet
A Voice comes yet more fleet
'Lo! naught contents thee, who content'st not Me.'

Disappointed in human affections, man turns to nature for solace. This was the theme of one of the most attractive of the group dances; after a dazzling dance portraying its rising and course across the heavens, the golden "Sun" awoke two living "Flowers" to the light of a new day, inviting them to join in its dance, while a peacock strutted and a delightful little deer frolicked about them. The hero finds



happiness for a time here among these innocent and beautiful creatures, but again comes the awareness of the emptiness and transience of all earthly joys. Hearing again the steps of the feet that follow, follow after, he compares himself to a knight stripped of his armour, awaiting the death-blow from the uplifted arm of his pursuer.

Then, and then only, when he finds himself naked and defenceless, stripped of all created things, does he realize that the hand of God is raised over him, not in threat, but in a loving caress, and in a gesture of generosity.

All which I took from thee I did but take,
Not for thy harms,
But just that thou might'st seek it in my arms.

All that he had believed lost, all that he had dreaded losing, he finds again once he has learnt to put the love of God above all else, and find in it his greatest, truest happiness. The curtain closed slowly on the hero, kneeling in a posture of joyful surrender, bathed in the radiance of his new-found love and joy, while the Voice of God concluded :

' Ah, fondest, blindest, weakest,
I am He Whom thou seekest !
Thou dravest love from thee, who dravest Me.

For the last time the curtain lifted, to reveal the whole cast of *The Hound of Heaven* ranged on the stage with the college choir. In a happy chorus they sang the college song and the *Jana Gana Mana*, thus bringing to an end another memorable College Day at Stella Maris.

