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50 years of laudable service

Stella Maris can be proud of its record to inculcate in its students a sound philosophy based on faith in God, respect for the individual and concern for the less privileged.

K. Ramachandran attends the institution's golden jubilee celebrations.

Independence inspired many different spheres in diverse forms. In the area of higher education of women, it signalled a momentous occasion in Chennai. It was not a mere coincidence that Stella Maris College, Chennai, was founded on that day.

"August 15, 1947 was the scheduled date for the opening of the institution and with India attaining Independence the same day, it was providential" say those in charge of running the institution which completes 50 years of laudable service to women's higher education. An education that has consistently based itself on the Christian vision of Truth, Justice and Peace.

An edifice born out of the inspiration of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, it has now grown into an autonomous institution that combines in equal measure academics with value education. Catholic doctrine and healthy personality development of young women, regardless of caste or faith.

Fifty years of Stella Marian saga was brought vividly in a stimulating multi-media presentation by the students, last Saturday on the occasion of College Day.

The presentation burst forth with a dance representing the elated sense of new found freedom, combined with the quietness and serenity of a Catholic mission. The next phase depicted the dedication of the founding Missionaries and the growth of the institution.

The enthusiasm of the post modern generation and its sense of values were brought out in a modern dance set to the tune of Subramania Bharati's soulful lyric "Manadhil Urudhi Vendum". In between came video clippings on the college's history.

Beginning in a small one-storey building with 32 students in Mylapore, the college has now grown tremendously, especially after moving into "The Cloisters" a beautiful wooded campus on Cathedral Road with over 2100 students.

At the request of the Archdiocese of Madras-Mylapore, Mother Klemens, accepted the task of building up the institution. Under the guidance of several committed missionaries, it moved into a new three-storey building on Palace Road in July, 1949.

Granted permanent recognition in 1951, the college began offering several new courses including B.A in Music. It was also the first to introduce M.A. in Indian Music, first women's College to have M.A in English, Economics, Social Work and Fine Arts.

In the late Fifties, it moved to the present premises, put at the disposal of the college by Archbishop Rev. Louis Mathias. The foundation stone for the new building was laid by the then Vice Chancellor Dr. A. L. Mudaliar, on the occasion in which the then Vice President, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan participated.

Gradually the institution grew and spread its activities to the cause of social service, NCC and NSS. August, 1972 saw the silver jubilee celebrations an occasion for profound gaiety. It marked the erection of a spacious library.

Academic improvements, development of innovative teaching-learning programmes and construction of several departments, buildings and hostels were seen in the past three decades. In 1987, the college achieved autonomy. Though affiliated to the Madras University, the college now can frame its own courses and adopt innovative methods of teaching and evaluation. It now has 11 UG departments and five PG departments, following semester pattern.

According to the Principal Dr. Sr. Annamma Philip, the autonomy has been an experiment in learning processes prodding the administrators to improve academic



The cultural programme by Stella Maris College students. — Pic. by V. Ganesan

programmes and standards. In the coming academic year, it plans to introduce credit-based system to offer broad based education and permitting students the flexibility to choose their own courses of study and earning credits within their capacities.

Stella Maris is justifiably proud of its record in academics, sport, NCC and NSS. Its students have represented the college, the University at national and State level championships. Three of the Coxless Fours of

the Indian rowing team in Asiad 1990 held in Beijing were Stella Marians. Its NCC Cadet Meghana Appa Rao was adjudged All India Best Cadet in this year's Republic Day camp.

Social awareness and Environmental awareness programmes are part of the extended UG curriculum. Vocationalisation at UG has also helped the college students establish links with hospitals, industry and undertakings through 'on-the-job-training'. It entertains Fulbright scholars and students

from other Universities abroad.

Dr. Annamma Philip says the challenge before the college is to face new technologies that drive "us to alter our teaching practices". She is convinced that while entering the Third Millennium, the college was prepared to meet the challenge of integrating the world of simulation and interactive technology with its own unique role as mentor, facilitator and teacher, Denver the right goods.