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ST. MARY'S TAMIL ACADEMY

WITHIN FIVE YEARS FROM NOW, the Tamil Academy will be celebrating its Golden Jubilee. For the illustrious date of its birth is 3rd September 1901. The names connected with the events are those of Bro. Swaminather and Bro. Adaikalam. St. Francis Xavier was chosen as Patron. But alas, he was made the Patron of a still-born babe! For full eight years it did not breathe.

Reborn in May 1909, the Academy was placed under the patronage of Our Lady. (Our sympathies to St. Francis Xavier.) A Tamil drama was acted for the first time in 1910. The Golden Book was introduced in

1911. Special interest in *Kathaprasangam* was a feature of this period.

Every great institution has its own dark days. Whether or not the Tamil Academy actually fell on evil days between the years 1913 and 1917 is not known. But nothing is recorded of the activities for that period.

The meetings became more frequent. Their number increases every year. 1926 records a total of 32. The present generation is likely to be scandalized at this number. There are a good many discussions round the Golden Book causing much heat. And the Golden Book gets adorned every year with new acquisitions. Certain years record the visits, addresses of extraordinary men to the Academy. Thus in 1926, Rev. Fr. Bury, S.J., gave a talk on Tamil literature. Dr. Roche, Bishop of Tuticorin, addressed a meeting held in his honour on the 17th July 1924. In 1926 the Academy met in true Kandyan spirit, with those of its ex-members who had come in connection with the blessing of the new chapel. Rev. Fr. Swaminather spoke of his good old days in the Seminary. On 3rd September 1926, the Tamil Academy was twenty-five years old. The Jubilee Celebrations were not very modest. The occasion was crowned with the staging of a drama entitled *Manoranchithan*.

The number of meetings increases. They reach the astounding total of 38 in 1929. 1931 records a meeting presided over by one Rev. Fr. Dupont, S.J. In March 1932 the Tamil Academy had the honour of greeting its most illustrious son, Rt. Rev. Peter Francis, Bishop of Kumbakonam, who had visited the Seminary. Staging a Tamil drama every alternate year has now become a regular custom. These later years have also seen a revival of *Kathaprasangam*. From 1935 a meeting, presided over by Rev. Fr. Rayanna, becomes an indispensable item.

That is a sketchy outline of the vast and multifarious activities of the St. Mary's Tamil Academy in its long career of forty-five years. Following on the illustrious tradition of its past, the Tamil Academy is advancing with increased vigour under the gracious protection of its Patroness ever young and never old.

It is proper that this report should end with an expression of our gratitude to our benefactors. We cordially thank His Lordship the Rt. Rev. Peter Francis, Bishop of Kumbakonam and His Lordship the Rt. Rev. F. T. Roche, S.J., Bishop of Tuticorin, and all those who have contributed their share to the welfare of our Tamil Academy.

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