

**AMMA, Dr. RAJAMMAL P. DEVADAS**

# **A Beacon of Light**

**A compilation of Articles - In Appreciation**

**VOLUME- II**



**Published by**  
**Daughters of Saradalaya**

AMMA, Dr. RAJAMMAL P. DEVADAS  
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- In Appreciation

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# HOME SCIENTISTS



# **Dr. RAJAMMAL P. DEVADAS**

## **FORERUNNER OF WOMEN'S EDUCATION**

S. ANANDALAKSHMY

It is a privilege to be associated with the documentation of the achievements of Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas. Dr. Devadas has put Home Science on the map of several universities and thus ensured the continuing contribution of Home Scientists to the improvement of the quality of life of several thousand people in India. Dr. Devadas has also spearheaded the movement of women's education (higher and non-formal), thus empowering women to have control of their own life and to make a substantial contribution to the lives of others. Today, when the subject Home Science is mentioned, the name of Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas is automatically evoked. If one person in India has to be singled out for upholding the importance of the subjects taught under Home Science and advocating the case for their wider outreach, it would be Dr. Devadas.

“Amma” as she is affectionately referred to, not only in Tamil Nadu but all over India, has brought a special energy to all her academic assignments. She has been the Chairperson of several important committees in the UGC and the ICAR - too many for the ordinary person to keep count - and has been a model for committee procedures. I can recall a Syllabus and Curriculum update Committee set up by the UGC with Dr. Devadas as the Chairperson. Some of these meetings were held at the Lady Irwin College in the late seventies. Dr. Devadas would set the tone for a disciplined completion of the schedule, while at the same time joking that she was a hard task master and working and

staying back late with everyone else. Assiduous hardwork and meticulous attention to details are traits one associates with Dr. Devadas. By example and precept she communicated these values to those who worked with her.

There were many occasions when I met Dr. Devadas informally, when she relaxed and mingled easily with people of all ages. When I was Director, Lady Irwin College and invited Dr. Devadas to stay with me in Delhi - she acknowledged my hospitality with great warmth, saying it was for her like coming to “Amma Veedu” (one's mother's house!). She would always arrive with some fruits from her garden or some snacks made in her kitchen as one would when visiting family. She demonstrated effectively how to be a good guest and a good host. Whenever I was at her Institute for any work, I was looked after extremely well.

Many others writing in this volume will be giving details of Dr. Devadas' several contributions to the field of Home Science and to the building up of an outstanding educational institution. I shall not cover the same ground here.

I am very happy to be one of her friends adding to the tribute paid to her long years of service in the cause of women's education. I wish her a very happy 80th birthday celebration and many more years of a happy and productive life.

\*

# **Dr. RAJAMMAL P. DEVADAS THE CHIEF ARCHITECT OF HOME SCIENCE EXTENSION IN THE COUNTRY**

**T. PADMASINI ASURI**

**B**efore I relate the marvellous work of this architect, it would be of interest to every one as to my role and part in the whole story!. One fine morning, I received a letter with the Government stamp. The envelope itself surprised me as it was from the Government of Madras. It was an appointment letter appointing me as a staff of the Gramsevak Training Centre, located at T. Kallupatti. I never applied for any posts at T. Kallupatti, and how did the Government send this letter to me? First, where was this Kallupatti? Specially to me who was totally brought up in Madras! What am I to teach and whom? Amidst the sad story of leaving Madras, I had all these questions. Who was there to answer me? I called on the senior administrator who had signed my order to get some of the clarifications. He, a gentle and kind person, confessed that he did not know anything, but it would be safe to carry along some of the embroidery designs. He said that this was the design of the Chief Home Economist, Government of India. My question deepened, as to how this person knew my name and address to make the Government of Madras to send the order. Anyway I joined the post at T. Kallupatti a village and the campus of the training centre. The best part of this story was while I was wondering what to do, the people in Kallupatti, on their part wondered as to how a city bred girl like me can teach the rural development programme. All these wonderful doubts ended when I joined the Trainers Training Programme, organised for us who were sailing in the same boat. That was the time the Chief

Home Economist appeared on the scene. That was Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas. It was a single person's vision, fight for right, and ability that the Home Science Extension came into a reality. Dr. Devadas did these as the Chief Home Economist of Government of India.

She explained as to how our knowledge should be of use to others, and how the rural women in Japan were being helped by the Extension personnel in that country. Dr. Devadas's whole concern was “how to ease the life's drudgery in the rural women”? Honestly even at the college level we studied “topics and subjects”, and never had the concern for the life of others as a topic. This was entirely a new thought. She said that we had to start with the study on the rural woman's present life style and work towards the improvement of her living condition. She had not only the vision of what it should be but also the call of the Mission, which she transferred to us. That is the time I had realised that Dr. Devadas, had fought with authorities as to how they had left out the requirement of rural women and focused on men alone. After all it was a “man's world”. The credit goes to Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas for making these men to think of the plight of women in the rural areas that triggered of National Scheme of Training the workers exclusively dedicated to work with the women, all at the same time in all the states. It was not an ordinary task that could be achieved, and only Dr. Devadas could achieve this in the country. In this process of initiating the Extension activities she was given the task of finding the staff, to man the Training Centre. She had come to know of my name through the Government of India and she also had many names who were students in Baroda. This was the reason for the appointment letter. May be the Government thought that she may not be able to find the candidates to teach and they can slowly postpone the

programme!. Actually no one knew the metal with which Dr. Devadas was made. She had **the courage, the will, and best of all the ability. Yes she was the architect from the task of finding the staff to execution of the design of Extension.** She gave us the reason as to why programme should be implemented. She also unfolded the pattern and approach to the rural life. The entire credit of creating the posts of Gramsevikas in the Rural Development Programme goes to Dr. Devadas. Persons who were part of the programme alone could realise the tasks involved towards the coverage in the country. Her conviction was that rural woman's tasks of running the family with limited facilities, could improve with help and guidance. Is it the lot of these women born with limitations around also continue to live the same way? The curriculum of training the Gramsevikas before they were posted in the blocks, was also designed by Dr. Devadas. Being a scientist, as well as an academician, she had guided the training centre staff to study the situation in the villages. Though she was a Government of India official, she had the grip of the rural areas and problems in all the states. Our life even at the microlevel of Training Centre was not easy. We were all the time reminded by the men authorities, that we were too urban in our approach and we do not know the real rural life. It was very funny! Their concept of rural work was entirely different from helping the women who needed the guidance and help. "Their drudgery should be reduced" was the slogan Dr. Devadas always detailed in all the speeches. She was in touch with the reality in life. We often looked upto her to express our views and feelings whenever we were discouraged by men around. Her deep understanding of the problems and situations including the dietary pattern, the clothing for the work, making the ovens fuel efficient, tools and implements to lighten the activities, was the main foundation in making the Graduate course in Home Science in the College she had developed, fruitful,

meaningful, and different from the normal studies in other colleges. Many batches of Gramsevikas came out of these Training centres and worked at the block level. The women themselves were surprised that the Government had appointed the officials to help them. Many of the girls went walking miles to various villages, because of the motivation spreadout by the **Architect** of this design. There was no sophistication in her relationship with Gramsevikas. She had visited the villages along with us and explained what was required in the approach to women in the Block Development activities. I was talking of the days when the men officials were dazed with the activities connected to human improvement. They were concentrating on roads and wells, while Dr. Devadas was for human development focus.

When the Gramsevikas' work was fairly successful, they gained respect from the villagers and many women became their support also. The Government at that time instituted the office of the Mukhya Sevikas who were originally known as Social Education Organisers. Though these were women officers, they had nothing to do with the rural women or families!. Yet they were asked to organise 'mahila mandals' so that the women could learn an art or craft for economic return. This was not need based as the women did not find time to be together amidst their chores nor did they find it useful. Whereas Home Science Extension met the women at their houses, and helped them on their need, there was no money involved in Gramsevikas' activities then except meeting the women as important human beings who needed the help and guidance. At that time Balwadis were organised by the Gramsevikas, as an entry point to reach the women and also a path to teach good hygiene and food habits. Dr. Devadas was the forerunner for the programmes of current period like Anganwadi, Mahalir

Mandram and small savings. She used to tell us that the work with woman was all embracing as her responsibilities in the life of rural family was varied and touched all spheres. The institution like Mukhya Sevikas never found a root in the arena of Rural Development activities. Though the officials who worked as Mukhya Sevikas were good and had the attitude, their job chart was not specific. This made their presence fluid amongst various other officials. Even though Dr. Devadas left the post to design the course and take the reign in building up Sri Avinahilingam College of Home Science, she did not forget the needs of the Mukhya Sevikas. Consequently many specific courses were organised for the Mukhya Sevikas of the country. In order to expose the staff to know the activities of other countries, of similar Mission, she had arranged under Technical Cooperative Mission, visits to other countries.

Amongst varied strong points, Dr. Devadas had a firm and strong public relationship. Because of this vision to develop linkages with American Extension system, many of the experts were in India and were working with various states. She did not leave the politicians as well. She very well wanted them to know what was happening in the sphere of Extension. I vividly remember that she had invited Ms. Lakshmi Menon who was then the Union Minister for External Affairs. She had mentioned to us about the visit but wanted us to work and welcome with discrete arrangements. We were so scared with protocol and the questions the police had on the arrangements. Our tension eased out when Dr. Devadas and the Union Minister arrived on the scene. We were thrilled that we were talking with the Minister and explaining our experiences in the villages. All the while the police were standing in attention outside! This exposure was entirely due to Dr. Devadas.

When Extension subject was an unknown path, many colleges who were asked to have extension practical, had running of canteen in the campus as the practical in extension. She not only introduced the course on M.Sc. Extension, she made the students to discuss with the Gramsevikas at the field level to select appropriate topics to pursue as thesis. This I would like to emphatically say that because of the concern for rural areas that she had given the guidance while in the Home Science Academic field, the Extension is not a coveted subject and they also look down on persons in the field of Extension. Dr. Devadas has brought the status to the subject along with meaning and approach. The Home Science Extension owes its existence to Dr. Devadas. She was the forerunner for the rural work with women and children. The University for which she is the Chancellor is the symbol of multifaceted lives of rural people she was working for. I am really proud of the fact that I was associated with her from the beginning, and learnt many aspects of designing programme to meet the core problem, from Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas who is now the universal 'Amma'.

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# AMMA : AN ENIGMA

BASANTI BAROOVA

**1**974 a hot humid day in August. Entry to an exclusive education curriculum meant only for women i.e. Home Science and thereby getting an opportunity to be in touch with the Bible of Home Science Education; the “Text Book of Home Science” by Dr. R.P. Devadas.

Yes, that was the beginning of being acquainted with a name without much realization about the magnanimity of it. Every Home Scientist of subsequent time will agree without controversy about the usefulness of the book in acquiring the degree with comprehensive knowledge of this unique education. Throughout the degree programme the book remained with us and so the name. With the passage of time the name was no longer a mere name - it represented a titan personality, an institution of education and service to mankind. Wonder of wonders : gradually the name became a phrase to be used synonymously with women's liberation in the truest sense. The sun of Indian women's education started to shine at national and international forum. Qualities of Gargi and Maitreyee of ancient time started to sparkle in Amma - a pioneering figure who took the reign of women's liberation through women's education. Going at par with the age old saying : “Example is better than advice”, Amma had a clear vision of the goal of women's liberation and ventured to set an example by establishing the exclusive educational institute for women “The Avinashilingam Institute of Home Science and Higher Education for Women, Coimbatore”. This is probably the only institute in Indian soil where a girl child can enter into a nursery school and emerge out as an accomplished lady with a degree : Graduate,

Post-Graduate (Masters) or Ph.D. Apparently it may sound impossible, but Amma, adorned with many qualities like dedication, love, knowledge, belongingness, sincerity and systematic nature convinced everybody that such an establishment is possible provided there is motivation, realization and an urge to march forward. Amma's commitment to Women's Liberation knew no bounds or bondage of limitation. The seedling of the institution laid by Amma is now growing like a Banyan tree with a huge canopy to shade almost the entire women population. For her, women's liberation neither means few reservations nor few relaxations in the male chauvinistic societal behaviour. It is the liberation through education with self realization and recognition as an individual with her own entity and value. Her systematic approaches to dispel darkness of illiteracy through the scheme "each one teach one" was met with overwhelmed success and crowned her with the prestigious, "Tagore Literacy Award". With the grace of God, her rare qualities and undaunted support from her contemporaries and successors, Amma is becoming a "Legend" in her own life time. Isn't it surprising that it is possible to set everything right by Amma? Isn't she an 'enigma' of success? I feel she is. I think she is and all others also who had the fortune of coming across her in any time of life.

I had the good luck of seeing this magnificent personality in one of the NSI's general body meeting she was presiding over. The lady who could turn stone into gold! An urge was lurking in my mind to meet her personally sometime. God fulfilled the wish. In 1988 the most auspicious as well as the frightful moment came to my life. Amma came for the viva-voce examination of my Ph.D. degree. The duration of the examination was for an hour and half. I was answering, discussion and lo! I didn't even feel the trauma. She put me into an ease and I enjoyed every moment of it, ever ready to utilize time to learn something from

her. Then came the declaration - the examination is over. I looked at her face but couldn't read the result. Suddenly fear engulfed me - was I proper in meeting the queries? I was not sure.

I came out and so were my guide Late Dr. Anwar Saikia and Amma. As soon as she came out she hugged me and congratulated heartily for taking a grass-root venture of studying the nutritional behaviour of my own people (Assamese people). My eyes were filled with tears of joy to be touched, advised and congratulated by a Legend. I was surprised immensely to see unique blending of professionalism and friendliness. And I learnt a new behaviour. Second time I met Amma was in Kualalampur, Malyasia in 1991 during the 6th Asian Congress. She saw me and remembered not only my face but also the name. Isn't it a wonder? A lady who is so busy, who heads an enormous educational empire, who keeps in touch with many popular personalities can also remember a student whom she met just for few hours? I thought deeply and found the answer. It is possible only for 'Amma', an idol of many qualities hard to believe could be possessed by a single woman. Readers, are you agreeing with me when I call Amma an 'Enigma' of success?

Once I read Dr. Borlaugh's message "Study well aim high. Always reach for stars. Even if you can't reach the stars, at least you will get stardust on your raised hands". I solemnly pray you, Amma, to sprinkle some stardust on our raised hands so that we can unite our illuminated hands for the thrift of mankind. May God bless you with Many Happy Returns of this 'Big Day! May God give you all strength, peace of mind and sound health so that you can be the crusader for us for all times to come.



# RAJAMMAL P. DEVADAS, AS I KNOW HER

ARVINDA CHANDRA

**I**t was 1954 or the later part of 1953, when I first came to know Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas, as one of my teachers, in the Faculty of Home Science, Baroda. Dr. Devadas, was an effective teacher who always concluded her class, assigning a load of homework to us. She explained the lessons thoroughly and interestingly. I admired her as one of my best teachers. She reflected her excellence in teaching by recognizing the able and motivated students, whom she inspired and guided to work harder and longer and deeper! I proudly recall that such an excellent teacher gave me 'A' grade in the two subjects she taught me.

Then, came the time, when as one of the three top students, I was selected to assist Dr. Devadas, the Dean of the Faculty of Home Science, as a Demonstrator, the term meaning a Teaching Assistant, in the present vocabulary.

I soon discovered that Dr. Devadas was a hard working administrator and nothing can escape her scrutiny. Her own commitment to work and her persuasion to initiate and complete a task was so purposeful that it developed the same qualities in me (I trust). Many years afterwards, when as a professor, I taught a Ph.D. course entitled, Management of Home Science Institutions, in Extension and Education Department of the Faculty of Home Science, I recalled several ideas I learnt from Dr. Devadas. I quoted her example in my class, as an able administrator. Today also, I am proud to have been her student.

The third context of my association with Dr. Devadas was the biennial conferences of the Home Science Association of India that I attended at various colleges and cities in India. I admired her inaugural speeches, which reflected her profound knowledge and far-sightedness for the development of Home Science. I feel that Dr. Devadas is a born leader with an immense capacity to work for a cause of her choice. So, recalling her leadership in Home Science, I wish Dr. Devadas a very blessed 80th birthday. ☆

# **A DYNAMIC PERSONALITY**

**P. SELVIE DAS**

**I**t is a matter of great satisfaction, happiness and pride that a woman of calibre, enormous potentials, brilliance and scholarship, Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas has completed her 80 years of fruitful life. Her talents and potentials were recognised by (Late) Sri Avinashilingam Chettiar and as a result we are able to witness a big Institution that is Avinashilingam Deemed University which is doing yeomen service to the people of Coimbatore and the State of Tamil Nadu. I am immensely happy that Sri Avinashilingm Deemed University has planned to celebrate the unique occasion in many great ways with several programmes and activities and one among them is to bring out a commemorative volume on the Dynamic Personality.

Dr. Devadas is endearingly known as “Amma” not only in her institutions but also in the wide circle of her friends and associates who have come close to her. Many have experienced with her, the affection and the concern either of a mother or an elder sister. I am one of the persons who have deep love for her and hold her with reverence. I could only experience and enjoy the love and the feelings for her as a younger sister but difficult to pen down about her. Since I have been honoured by the concerned authorities by the University to write an article about my dear sister, I am venturing to make an attempt to express myself in words.

There is a great deal of similarity between the families of Dr. Devadas and mine. She being born to Pakyanathans, a very noble family but unfortunately they lived in a rural area and belonged to economically and socially backward

group. The rural set-up and the backwardness of the family did not hinder the education of the children, since they were all very enthusiastic to get themselves educated with all their intelligence and industriousness. All the children in the family were 1st class and 1st rank students throughout their academic life. All of them obtained rank, scholarships and fellowships. Rajammal as the first and eldest child in the family stood as a model for her brothers and sisters.

I had the privilege of studying in the same school - North Wick Girls' High School run by the Scotch Mission at Madras where Dr. Rajammal Devadas studied. All the names of the sisters from the Pakyanathans' family adored the SSLC rank board of the school. Dr. Rajammal's name was written as Rajammal Devadas on the Board instead of Rajammal Pakyanathan. My curiosity prompted me to find out that she was married before she completed her schooling to Mr. Devadas who was her maternal uncle. In spite of her early marriage she had the courage to take up higher education with a great zeal, of course with the encouragement of her husband.

I have known not only Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas but the whole family for nearly half a century. All the members of the family expressed their good will towards me in their own way and made me feel one among their family. One of Dr. Devadas' sisters Dr. Chandra Pakyanathan was my class-mate in the school. Though she was my class-mate I attached myself more with Dr. Devadas irrespective of the difference in age. In the middle sixties her mother Mrs. Pakyanathan used to visit my brother Shri Seetharam Das IAS (Retd.) who was then the sub-collector of Tirupattur. Her mother living in Tirupattur "thottam" which is little away from the township did not have a road and in spite of it she used to walk to and fro from the thottam to Sub-Collector's bungalow to visit my brother who used to feel very hurt seeing the old lady walking to visit them

particularly where there was no road. It is the love and regard for her which prompted him to use his office to lay a good road from the thottam to the township. Many times he used to send his car to bring her and send her back. Whenever I visited my brother I visited her mother known as 'Paatty' in the thottam. She always had home made pickles and eatables ready for us. Dr. Devadas has the capability to establish a good relationship with any age group whether young or old. She developed a good relationship with all the members of my family specially with my mother. My mother reciprocated her love and whenever she comes to Bangalore mostly she used to stay in our house. I always used to leave my bed which was next to my mother's to her, since both would be talking till they fell asleep. My mother always said she is my first daughter. My sisters-in-law and my sisters would take great deal of care to prepare simple and nutritious meal for her and she always appreciated it. They also expected a word of appreciation from her which made them happy. One of the youngest sisters of Pakyanathans was my youngest sister's class mate. As a result all of us used to mix and mingle with one another on many occasions. That is how the relationship between Dr. Rajammal's family and my family developed and both the families cherished relationships.

From my college days, I was drawn closer and closer to Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas and used to observe her devotion and dedication for her profession and especially to her subject Home Science. She is the **“Mother of Home Science”** in India and developed the Home Science Education at School and College level. Perusing her bio-data would reveal the extent to which she worked and still works for Home Science Education. Me being a Home Scientist I had more opportunities to work with her which had been a big learning experience to me.

In 1954 when I completed my B.Sc. Home Science Dr. Devadas was the Dean of the Home Science Faculty, Baroda. She offered me a seat for M.Sc. Home Science in Food Science and Nutrition to work under her guidance. My parents hesitated to send me a long distance. Therefore, I missed the opportunity to work with her. Later when she was to relinquish her office as Assistant Director General of ICAR (Indian Council for Agricultural Research) at Delhi, she was very particular in me taking up the position after her. This time also I was not convinced to leave my family at Bangalore. I had a big responsibility in building up Home Science Education at Karnataka and to look after my family. When she moved on from Delhi to Coimbatore to start the Avinashilingam Home Science College she invited me to join her faculty. Here again I missed the chance to join her. However we had lot of opportunities to work together for the development of Home Science Education in India.

Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas was not only a good leader but a very good worker. She gave opportunities for younger generation to replace the seniors when the latter ones retired. She always believed in building up second line of defence. Through Home Science Education she emphasized value based education which was very commendable.

I would like to conclude with one of my very valuable experiences with Dr. Devadas. In 1960 when she once made a visit to Bangalore she left my house in a taxi to the railway station to catch the island express to Coimbatore. After a while the taxi came back and the taxi driver gave me a rolled up photograph and said this was left by the lady who just left your house to the station. When I opened the rolled up packet it was the photograph of Bhagwan Shri Sathya Sai Baba. Since I know that she was not the devotee of Baba I told the taxi driver "I don't think that this picture belonged to that lady". But the driver insisted she

only left it and asked me to take it. My mother took it from my hand and kept it safe in a table drawer. When Dr. Devadas came next, my mother did not forget to narrate the story of the taxi driver coming with the picture and handed it over to her. Ofcourse Dr. Devadas said, "I never had the picture of Baba with me and no chance of leaving it in the car". After quite a bit of discussion between Dr. Devadas and my mother, Dr. Devadas decided to take the photograph with her and she kept it between two books in her office library at Coimbatore. One day when she was cleaning up her bookshelf she saw the photograph being spoilt by white ants. She did not like a great man's picture being spoilt. She seems to have cleaned and framed it and hung it on one of the walls in her office. When I returned from abroad after completing my Ph.D. in 1972, I went to Coimbatore to pay my regards to the Mother of Home Science. By this time I became a great devotee of Bhagwan Shri Sathya Sai Baba. I was thrilled to see Baba's photograph in the Principal's office. Madam Principal reminded me of the incident and narrated me the back story. I had an urge to ask her to give back the photograph to me. However I didn't have the courage. After a month or so Baba appeared in my dream and said "I only came as a taxi driver about 12 years back and gave my photograph to you, but you have thrusted it to the lady Principal. I am happy that she preserved it for you. Would you like to have the photograph atleast now". With a big shock I got up from bed and I realised that the time was 5.30 a.m. and immediately I jumped towards the phone and called Dr. Devadas and pleaded with her to return the photograph to me explaining the dream and requested her to send the photograph through my sister who was at Coimbatore. Dr. Devadas was so gracious and sent the picture to me and said "Selvie! if it had been any other person I would not have given the picture. Since I love you so much it did not matter much whether it is with you or with me. It is one and the same". That particular picture of Bhagwan Sri Sathya Sai Baba adorns my

puja room in a Muntap. For her act of kindness and the sacrifice she made for me, I always pray for her welfare. Since then I had a strong desire to go along with her to take the blessing of Baba in person. I was thrilled and got over my guilt when it materialised.

Though lately I don't have much physical proximity with my beloved sister "Rajammakka" and my opportunity to work with her are rather limited, yet I think of her very warmly and endearingly and I do and will definitely cherish my relationship with her till the end of my life. I pray to the Almighty and to Bhagwan Shri Sathya Sai Baba to give her the strength, good health and long life to continue to serve the society with all her dynamism.

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# OUR REVERED AMMA

ANNA GEORGE

**“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard,  
neither entered into the hearts of man,  
the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him”**

(1 Corinthians 2:9)

**T**his is true of Dr. (Mrs.) Rajammal P. Devadas, our Revered Amma avargal.

When I heard all addressing Dr. (Mrs.) Rajammal P. Devadas as ‘Amma’, I thought it was part of the usual custom in Tamil Nadu of calling senior ladies respectfully as ‘Amma’. But very soon I learned that this is not a customary epithet. I realised that Dr. Devadas is Amma avargal a real and revered ‘Amma’ to all.

I was introduced to Amma avargal through letters early in 1958, while I was a student of Home Science in U.S.A. As I was about to graduate in June 1958, I started exploring the various job opportunities in India. I wrote and enquired with the Government of India and State Government Education Departments. All my letters were directed to Dr. (Mrs.) Rajammal P. Devadas, the Chief Home Economist of Govt of India (Ministry of Agriculture and Extension Education). She in turn introduced me to Sri Avinashilingam Home Science College, Coimbatore, where I took my first job in India after studies in U.S.A.

As the Chief Home Economist of Govt. of India, Dr. Devadas had the responsibility of visiting Home Science Extension Training Centres in the various

States, where the Gram Sevikas were trained. Dr. Devadas asked me to meet her at Kottarakara Gram Sevika Training Centre in Kerala, when she was visiting the centre in July, 1958. This was my first meeting with Amma avargal - the beginning of decades of useful professional and personal contacts. In my imagination the picture of the Chief Home Economist of Govt. of India was a stout, tall and serious lady. I was surprised to see a short person who received me with a warm smile. Her diamond ear rings were shining with a radiance matched by her sparkling, pearl-like teeth. Her eyes were bright and penetrating. I felt that she was seeing me through and through. However her motherly approach made me feel thoroughly at home.

During our conversation Dr. Devadas asked me to visit the Home Science College at Coimbatore and see whether I could join the staff of the college, especially to be in charge of the in-service training programmes conducted by the college for the staff of the Home Science Extension Training Centres. I joined the college and worked there till May 1959 when I joined the post of Regional Home Economist, Govt. of India and Dr. Devadas as the Chief Home Economist, was my boss.

The founding of Sri Avinashilingam Home Science College is a unique event in the annals of higher education in South India. The growth of the College is a record of dedication and determination on the part of the founders. Naturally I was interested to find out how the Chief Home Economist of Govt. of India stationed in New Delhi was interested in this college in Coimbatore and I frankly asked her about it. With the warmth and affection of an Amma narrating proud stories of her earlier years, Dr. Devadas described to me how the college was born.

The story goes like this. Smt. Rajammal P. Devadas was selected for higher education in U.S.A. from Madras, when Sri. Avinashilingam Chettiar avargal was the Education Minister of Tamil Nadu. On returning to India after taking her Ph.D. in Home Science Education Dr. Devadas went to meet the Minister to pay her respects. The Education Minister asked her as to how she was going to put her training in USA to be of use to the rural masses in India. Her immediate reply was, "Give me an institution and I will show how my education can be put to use".

The Minister responded to this challenge by founding the Home Science College in Coimbatore as part of the Ramakrishna Mission Education Society and directed Dr. Devadas to build it up.

Another account of the unique and inspiring story of Amma avargal's personality development and professional growth is available in the words of her husband, Mr. Devadas. In 1958 when we were celebrating the Deepavali festival at the College, both Dr. (Mrs.) Devadas and Mr. Devadas were present. Mr. Devadas in his greetings to the students said, "I married Rajammal as a young girl who just passed out of the high school. Seeing her great potentialities, I felt it would be cruel to confine her in the home as a wife and mother. So I put her to education again. She started going up and up in the ladder of success and I encouraged her to become an academician, a scholar and an administrator". "Behind every successful man there is a woman". Here is the converse of this common saying - an unselfish and self-effasive man behind this successful and dynamic woman.

She nurtured the College with maternal care and it steadily grew from strength to strength. Along with her official career as the Chief Home Economist

of Govt. of India, she used to visit the institution enroute her duty itinerary in the various States. For every minute of her stay in Coimbatore, she would have made plans to meet the staff of the college (both teaching and non-teaching); members of the management, members of the construction team; giving sound counsel, advice and directions to each for further development. I used to watch her working with the librarian very late in the night, handing over volumes of books she had brought with her. Though she sleeps very late in the night, she would be at the shrine at 6 a.m. for the morning worship, all dressed up for the day's work. She would also have made plans to visit some projects in the rural areas where work by the Extension Department of the college is in progress.

As the growth of the college demanded more of her time and attention, she resigned her post in Delhi as the Chief Home Economist with the Government of India and joined the College as the Principal.

Her fast strides in developing the institution and powerful leadership gained for her a vast team of disciples to work with her. But there were also people with jealousy, giving pricks and pains. With firm determination and deep faith in the Almighty, Amma avargal could easily tide over everything. She has proved, "With God nothing is impossible". "Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee". (Psalm 84 : 5-7). The secret of her wisdom and prudence which adds to her dynamic personality is her deep faith in the Almighty. The shrine facing the entrance of the institution is the altar of sacrificial service, worship and dedication to the cause of society. The day starts for the community at the campus with worship in the shrine.

She was very fast in catching ideas and plans relating to developmental activities from other countries and to adapt them in ways most suitable to Indian

conditions. She was very particular that our rural population should be trained and geared to the modern and scientific ways of living so that they may improve their condition. Sri Avinashilingam Home Science College and the many facets of its development were planned with the emphasis to cater to the rural population. I remember asking Amma avargal, why seats were provided on the floor for the meals even after her education in USA. She explained that it will take time to educate the rural people to change their habits. This institution's emphasis is to serve the mass of rural people and only slowly we can move to the modern ways. After some years low tables and later proper dining tables were provided for meals.

Her wide contacts and alert mind could identify the many available grants at the national and international fields. This had helped Amma avargal to add on to the development of the many facets of the institution. The many buildings and projects on the campus are donated or sponsored by such agencies. Amma avargal also used to bring to the college very many outstanding and distinguished persons and give exposure both to the students and to the invitees. All these have led the Govt. of India to recognise the Avinashilingam Home Science College for hosting several short courses and in-service training programmes for the different categories of personnel.

Her concern for her colleagues is remarkable. She encourages their leadership qualities. With rare insight she discovers their latent talents and abilities. This is evident from the fact that Amma avargal has encouraged and succeeded in having all senior members of the teaching staff to take Ph.D. Degrees in their respective specialisations.

During her international visits she had organised a chapter of Alumni of Sri Avinashilingam Home Science Graduates in USA, Canada and England. This shows how marvelously Amma avargal keeps track of alumni or staff who had left the college.

Her contributions in the field of Home Science is stupendous. As a pioneer and an authority in the subject Dr. (Mrs.) Rajammal P. Devadas has served on the Board of Studies and other decision making bodies of many universities. She has also started Home Science faculties all over the country and designed various streams starting from High School to Ph.D. She has guided many research students for Ph.D. degrees of many universities. She was also the Chief Advisor to the Govt. of India for Home Science.

Her leadership and contribution in the field is well recognised in India and abroad. This is demonstrated through the list of her memberships in the various associations - national and international. The founding of the All India Dietetic Association and the All India Home Science Association and affiliating them to similar organisations in USA and England are all Amma avargal's achievements.

As the charter member and President of the All India Home Science Association Amma avargal has designed a pattern and set up a tone for its biennial conferences. Perfection was her watch word and efficiency was her stamp and seal. Her speed and pace of work are marvellous. She is very meticulous in all her plans and she practised the principles of management and division of labour. This was very evident at the biennial conference of the All India Home Science Association held at Nagpur which I also attended. Amma avargal was the President and Chairperson of this conference.

She attended to every minutest detail like seating arrangements for the invitee and V.I.Ps, stay and food arrangement for the delegates, their return journey etc. At the end of the conference, the rapporteurs will be ready with the proceedings for publication. On the last but one day I saw her sleeping fast on the ground, relaxed and satisfied that her work was over and that it was a fruitful conference.

In this context I also recall how she encouraged and helped me to organise the 8th biennial conference of the All India Home Science Association in Trivandrum (Kerala). At this conference we were able to bring all the founder members of the American Home Economics Association and other international guests from USA, England and Pakistan as State guests.

Her capacity to communicate and convince is marvellous. She is a good orator and a convincing writer. Her speeches are well thought out, logically outlined and full of thought provoking ideas. Her extemporary speeches are equally effective. She has written many books and hundreds of articles.

She is a Gandhian in ways, dress, and in thinking.


She is also an ardent believer in Sri Ramakrishna Mission and ideology.

Her annual christmas greeting cards are unique, in the form of a circular letter full of inspiring quotations from the holy books. It gives vivid news of events relating to the Institution and achievements and contributions in the field of Home Science during the preceding year.

Sri Avinashilingam Home Science College at Coimbatore has grown into a township with all amenities. The beautiful Nursery School, High School, convenient and good hostels for school and college students, staff quarters, post

office, bank, canteen and co-operative store are land marks of this township. Academic excellence of the college attracts students from all over India as well as exchange students from abroad. Amma avargal is the architect, engineer, designer, advisor, mother and founder member of the college. Every stone and pillar of the institution has her stamp and sweat of hard labour. The college has been recognised as a Deemed University and Amma avargal was its first Vice-Chancellor and now its Chancellor.

Her beloved husband's generosity in not confining her to the narrow walls of the home, by encouraging her to study further has enabled Amma to rise to meteoric heights, far above the hopes and dreams of Mr. Devadas. Sri Avinashilingam Chettiar avargal and Mr. Devadas are no longer alive. But they are keenly watching with celestial eyes the glorious fulfilment of their faith and hope about this frail lady. I am sure they are showering their blessings on her and the Institute. My pranams to Dr. (Mrs.) Rajammal P. Devadas, our Amma avargal, as she celebrates her 80th birthday. I pray that God may bestow upon her long life, good health, peace of mind and every celestial blessing, enabling her to give more glorious service to the society.



# **A GRITTY, RESOURCEFUL AND MOST YOUTHFUL EIGHTY-YEAR-OLD**

TARA GOPALDAS

**D**r. Rajammal P. Devadas will turn eighty soon. It gives me great pleasure to wish this great lady a very happy birthday on this most auspicious day and to congratulate her on her numerous, numerous achievements. My short article however, will not elaborate on her achievements, but will talk about some anecdotal encounters that we have had that bring out her child-like qualities, her perseverance and grit, her humour, her disciplined way of life and her spirit of adventure.

Starting with our most recent encounter, Rajammal and I met at the World Bank meeting in Delhi in July, 1998. Rajammal sailed in, dressed in a beautiful Kanjeevaram sari, glittering diamond ear rings, and jasmine adorning her 'kondai'. Eversince I have known Rajammal her traditional style of South Indian attire have been the same and her hallmark whichever part of the globe she may be in. On this occasion she came bearing a long string of jasmine which she instructed us to cut up into smaller pieces and put in our 'kondais'. To me this showed her qualities of giving and sharing.

On many other occasions over the decades we have bumped into each other at Asian and International Conferences of Nutrition. She always came with a team of senior colleagues. On many an occasion she would stay in modest hotels and share her allowances with them. What was very important to her was that their institution should be recognized and be at the forefront.

I have visited Sri Avinashilingam College of Home Science in the eighties. I was most impressed with its campus, its clean environment, its dedicated teachers and students. The earliest to come into her office was Rajammal. Also the last to leave. She was such an inveterate traveller that the local Coimbatore airport was practically hers for the asking. Her normal workday was about twenty hours!

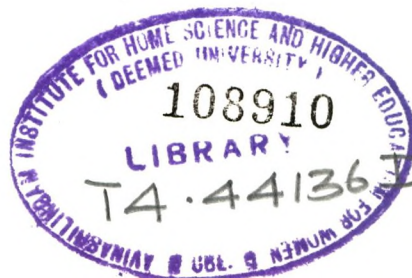
Rajammal's name is synonymous with the Mid-Day-Meals Programme (MDMP) of Tamil Nadu. While I was at Coimbatore, we drove to quite a number of schools. What impressed me greatly was the legion of Master Trainers her institution had trained over the years. The quality of efficiency of Tamil Nadu's MDMP is known the world over. I have not seen such clean kitchens anywhere, where huge quantities of cereal, pulse and vegetables were being slowly cooked in huge vessels embedded in huge hay-boxes (her idea). Not only were heat and fuel conserved, but the lucky primary schoolers had a piping hot, nutritious and delicious composite meal. Her running commentary and true joy in seeing the kids get a proper meal was infectious. In the same vein she, her colleagues and her students speak and communicate nutrition in every nook and corner of Coimbatore. Coimbatore is definitely one of the lucky 'Nutrition Cities' of India like Hyderabad, Baroda, Delhi and Mumbai.

Rajammal's name is likewise synonymous with Home Science, Functional Literacy, Higher Education and Development of Women. In 1992, the Faculty of Home Science, M.S. University, Baroda hosted an International Conference on Appropriate Home Science for Asia. The opening function consisted of a line-up of the lineage of Deans at the Faculty of Home Science since its inception in the early fifties. I was very touched by the presence of Rajammal at this function

despite the fact that she had just flown in from some country and was flying out to some other country the very next day. Her commitment and dedication to Home Science and Women's Higher Education is total and immense.

I took over as Convenor of the Home Science Panel of the UGC from Rajammal. She, like me, firmly believes that if Home Science is to get its rightful status and not the step-sisterly one it now enjoys, only students from the Science stream should be admitted to the Bachelor degree programme. Further, Home Science should not be permitted to be just a major or minor subject in an Arts degree programme - as is the case in many parts of India. Rajammal is a much sought-after guest lecturer and speaker. Since this great lady stands less than five feet tall - one could hardly see anything of her when she stood behind the podium! But her clear ringing and articulate speeches more than made up for the short stature!

To end, Rajammal had once come to Baroda to attend some national level meeting which the Faculty of Home Science had organized. We had to make arrangements for her to stay in the Alembic Guest House. Unfortunately she was put in a room on the third floor. When I went to fetch her the next morning and enquired whether she'd had a comfortable night, the prompt and cheerful answer was "How can one not when one is put up at Vaikunt?" She has certainly made a Vaikunt of her life. All my respectful good wishes go to this great lady on this memorable day.



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# MY LOVED AND LOVABLE AMMA

KAMALAMMA, N.

**I**t was in 1963 that I met Amma, the great Home Scientist in St. Teresa's College, Ernakulam as an examiner for my Nutrition and Biochemistry practicals. Every one in the college was on their toes on the previous day setting up the lab taking special care to receive Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas then renowned as an authority on Home Science. The preparation of teachers and their apparent fear frightened and filtered into all of us. We were all practically dead when we entered the laboratory. In a minute Amma, you with your tender smile brought us back to normalcy. Your welcoming tone still echoes in my ears as a model never to be forgotten.

My next meeting with Amma was in 1964, in the presence of Late Dr. Soundaram Ramachandaran, the then Deputy Education Minister and our Founder, at GD Naidu Guest house, Coimbatore. How gladly you agreed to train this puny young girl and arranged my programme as if it was for a big shot. That exposure at the right time helped me to visualise the work ahead of me and to establish the department.

Years passed. Every day you climbed the academic ladder as teacher, administrator, policy maker and a writer, and above all a typical Indian woman with all laudable qualities but more than these achievements it is the nearness that you established with every associate of yours that has endeared you and made us accept you as our 'Amma'.

You have brought laurels to the discipline and not to yourself and your brain child - Avinashilingam University. Your authority, concern and contributions for the development of this uncared feminine branch into a strong discipline has made you our 'Kulaguru'. None of us is fit to stand near you in remembering all old students, associates, friends and even people in the outer circle by name, place and position.

Action first and words next - What other qualities does a good teacher need? Your life is an example for the teaching faculty to emulate. I place at your feet myself and pray God to bless the beacon that ever guides us in the darkness.



# **MY REMINISCENCES OF CHANCELLOR Dr. RAJAMMAL P. DEVADAS**

**N. SHAKUNTALA MANAY**

**A**s early as, in the year 1959, at Lady Willington Teachers Training College in Madras, I met Ms. Kamala Anandam. She was very bright and energetic young lady and mother of two smart girls. We both were students at this college. Kamala would commute between her home in Madras and at times she would stay at the hostel in the college campus, when the assignment of practical teaching would fall on her shoulders. At the hostel, each of us would be trying our hand in teaching aids and practise teaching with the inmates of the hostel. My subjects were Science and Home Science; hers were Mathematics and English. I recall that she had constructed a beautiful church, the highest point of the church, the horizontal plane and the angle at which the inclined line met. She took this to prove a particular geometrical theorem. Her creativity lay in getting solution from the problems of real life. I would admire her practical skill in teaching with my friend Regi. (Ms. Regina Sundarraj who is the Chief Dietitian at Royal Perth Hospital, Perth, West Australia). Regi would say “You must meet her elder sister ‘Amma’ who is very dynamic and a powerful lady, who has started a college of Home Science in Coimbatore and she has taken a challenge that it will be one of the pioneer institutions for the education of women in Home Science”.

It is much later that I met this dynamic lady in person at V.H.D. Central Institute of Home Science, Bangalore. Her ‘smile’ spoke of the exact resemblance to Kamala. Her short stature, with a jari saree, jasmine flower on her kondai

with a good set of diamond earrings, she wore simple three band slippers - were a rare mixture of simplicity with traditional royalty. She carried in every pores of her body this sparkling enthusiasm that was full of life - which contained a living “force”.

K.R. Damle, Secretary, Agricultural Department of Ministry of Food and Agriculture writes a foreword for the text book brought out on Home Science, by Dr. (Mrs.) Rajammal P. Devadas thus “It was felt that our students should be provided with text books which are Indian in approach and content and are based on actual studies and research findings in the country” dated January 5th, 1959. This was the first text book which received much appreciation by J.V.A. Nehemiah, Commissioner, Directorate of Extension, Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Government of India, who said that “the purpose of Home Science, that is, the creation of an environment and outlook which will enable people to live richer and purposeful lives, has been propounded with clarity by Dr. (Mrs.) Rajammal P. Devadas. Achievement of family happiness is the goal towards which all activities in Home Science - cooking and taking food, looking after the health of the family, child care, etc - are directed. If knowledge of these functions is not found towards this attainment, there is no use acquiring such knowledge” - this first text book indeed gave the foundation to the courses of all the areas of Home Science. From this period of 1959 to the present, there are many Gramasevikas, Home Scientists, whose life has been touched by this renowned lady and many have been able to carve out a life of their own keeping her dynamism before them as a guiding principle.

Having given the foundation to the course of Home Science, she entered areas of research. Her genius in research seems to sprout as much from indigenous

rural ladoos for supplementary food to Hay-box technology and to the present days most sophisticated solar technology. The synthesis of her technical 'know-how' seem to be fitting with the spirit of the Father of Nation, namely, Gandhian Principles of Basic Education to the Basic food groups. Her multi personality seem somehow to serve the multifacets of Home Science, from Home, Community, Nation and the World.

Every area of Home Science research finds a study carried out by her. Hence review of literature often is incomplete unless she is quoted. Her studies have set trends for fundamental research, as well have lent variety that at present on the map of Home Science Education - she has created Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women as University where versatile work is being carried out. Her challenge that I had heard in 1959 is a true story of achievement. She has lived her principles and the 'Force' that she carries has brought this as a 'Reality' in her own life time. Her positive outlook of life has given enough proof of such a pudding that life has enough and more opportunity for improving the quality of life. Her life is a living illustration.

I had two such living illustrations that I experienced about her daunting, daring spirit. In 1984 November, I was holidaying with my family at Kashmir. All of us were heavily clothed, with coats, overcoats, shoes and what not, yet all of us were shivering. When we were collecting our baggage at the airport, I saw Dr. Devadas with a very light coat and in slippers. She showed no sign of shiver or cold. Somehow her spirit seems to keep her warm!. The next time I saw her in 1995 October at Beijing Airport!. I had attended and presented a paper at 5th World Conference on Clinical Nutrition at Hongzu and she had attended World Convention on Nutrition at Beijing. Her bright Jari Saree attracted every Chinese's

attention. But she was busy finding a cord to tie a box containing all the literature she had gathered at the conference! Such was her zeal and dedication to keep herself abreast with latest findings and keen to know towards which direction the world was moving. In the year 1985 - 86, the Silver Jubilee year of Smt. V.H.D. Central Institute of Home Science, Bangalore, was celebrated. We invited Dr. Devadas and she readily accepted. I went to receive her at the airport. She handed over corrected copy of her paper titled, "Social, Economical and Cultural Changes and Home Science Education"! and asked me to incorporate the correction to her paper that she had sent earlier. Her dedication to bring quality into small things as much as into big things, took me back to the remote past where she worked for Gramasevikas. Now she has been working towards the Global improvement.

To participate in celebrating such a special, unique distinguished lady's 80th Birthday, I deem it a privilege, her speciality being her belief and faith in principles are translated into life style, which very few can realise. She has reformed lives of others, transformed the life upon this planet earth, proved that it can be realised and shared with others - to share this event, I consider myself very fortunate. I pray Almighty God to give her long healthy life so that many more are touched by her living dynamic force.

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# MEMORABLE MOMENTS

YASMIN MORENAS

There came a person originally from the South, via the North, in our lives in Gujarat. She was Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas. But, we till today call her “Rajamma”. She had energy, sparkling eyes and a dazzling smile. Even today we have for her a special corner in our hearts and admiration.

We were teenage students and she was a woman Dean at the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda. I was also fortunate to have woman Vice-Chancellor, Ms. Hansaben Mehta who influenced my family to allow me become a career - woman in those conservative times.

Rajamma's goal was to mould us into enlightened women of Independent India. Her impact on my life was like an ocean - wave that made me realize my full potentials. She inspired me to concentrate on my studies, develop writing skills, dramatics, sports and how to handle organizational and management responsibilities. Her method was to trust us to put in our best. She also introduced us to speakers and personalities from various fields of excellence to widen mental horizons. A very subtle influence on me enabled to develop a philosophy of life that has guided me till today.

Rajamma also reflected sparks of sensitivity. When I completed the B.Sc. degree, entered the employment arena and was training abroad, she invited my mother to accept on my behalf a presentation. She saw through a mother's heart and this gesture was forever lovingly remembered by my mother.

Rajamma has opened the portals of wider education and specifically planted Home Science Education on a high pedestal. Till today the spirit soars.

I wish our Rajamma on her 80th Birthday a quality of life with contentment, peace of mind and inner harmony. ■

## **RAJAMMAL P. DEVADAS, A HOME SCIENTIST TO EMULATE**

MEERA RAO

I met Dr. Devadas for the first time in a workshop in 1976 at PAU Ludhiana on restructuring the under-graduate Home Science Curriculum. She was the guiding star throughout the deliberations. Although I was a young staff member, she took care to listen to every person's views in the group. As she was the prestigious winner of the AHEA Omicron Nu Fellowship, I had seen her photograph in the Journal of Home Economics as a student long before I met her. After reading about her, I was inspired to pursue higher education in the United States.

She is an avid research worker and her interests cover a wide span of subjects, on basic nutrition as well as applied nutrition. During the scientific sessions of any nutrition meet, it is certain that she will have a fully researched presentation on the related topic. Her work on socio-economic aspects of malnutrition, maternal and child nutrition, empowerment of women, nutrition programmes in the community and nutrition education provide the guiding principles to many a young nutritionist. There is no topic, on which she has not done research. In a developing country like India with a many faceted cultural diversity and social mores, it is more important to study the implications of environmental factors on nutrition rather than restrict one's vision to laboratory studies alone. Her expertise in many fields is amazing. She is a warm-hearted person who will remember each and every person who has met her. You can be sure to get a reply from her for any letter you write to her. Her creative energy

and capacity for work seem unlimited. These are rare human qualities which deserve emulation in the hurly burly of today's pace of living.

She has organized the Silver Jubilee Celebrations of Home Science Association of India at Sri Avinashilingam Home Science College which is now a deemed University. The arrangements were excellent. Delegates were made comfortable with every little need being taken care of. The sessions were unique with opportunity being given for a wide range of speakers and spontaneous discussions. Celebrities and pioneers like Dr. Flemmie P. Kittrell had come all the way from USA remembering their association with Indian Universities at the stage of inception of Home Science as a discipline.

Dr. Devadas well deserves the honours and awards, the list of which keeps growing in accordance with her ever developing zeal for work and path-breaking achievements. From a single College of Home Science, it has grown into a multi-institution campus which is now a University.

By recording the life and works of Dr. Devadas on the threshold of her 80th birthday, the organizing committee has planned a befitting tribute to our revered and beloved Chancellor. Not only is it a tribute to her, it will serve as a beacon for any aspiring Home Scientist to emulate her excellent human and professional qualities.



# **AN APPRECIATION OF PROFESSOR Dr. RAJAMMAL P. DEVADAS**

PHILOMENA R. REDDY

**A**ttempting to write about Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas is like struggling to make a mole hill out of a mountain. During a period of eighty years she has grown from strength to strength like a banyan tree with deep roots in education, culture and spirituality and aerial roots of relationships forged with people and organisations in India and across the globe. The spectrum of people she knows range from simple rural folk to highly accomplished urban elite. She is equally at ease with all groups, young and old, men and women, the illiterate and educated alike have appreciation of her personality and services. Her unique ability to communicate with public and political figures as well as with those akin to her profession has established links and brought rich dividends to the field of education and development in Tamil Nadu. The experiences she gains through these numerous contacts sustain her and keep her moving ahead on the road of progress of development.

Dr. Rajammal's life is a celebration of opportunities never missed and well used. Ideas and action spring at every opportunity. The tireless work she turns out each day is a beacon light to her students and teacher colleagues.

**The Bhagavad Gita (III.19) says -**

**“Perform always the work that  
has to be done for man attains  
to the highest by doing work  
without attachment”,**

Dedication to work is Dr. Rajammal's forte. Participation in development planning and in action groups is the natural outcome of her years of experiential learning in work. As I write this appreciation I read about Dr. Rajammal's participation in a UNICEF organised technical consultation forum on 'The Malnutrition Challenge' at Chennai on 2nd September 1998. In other words where there is action there we find Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas. She has chaired scientific sessions and participated in numerous workshops, training programmes, panel discussions, seminars and conferences held at the regional, national and international levels in the fields of Education, Home Science and Nutrition.

As an Educationist Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas wins a singular admiration in building up the Sri Avinashilingam Educational Institution for Women at Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu under the watchful eyes and guidance of Sri Avinashilingam avargal. The institution has grown steadily in various disciplines at various levels and it now has the status of a Deemed University. The University has international exchange programmes for scholars and teachers. Through extension programmes, non formal education has made significant strides. All this speaks for Dr. Rajammal's success in a highly competitive area of educational leadership. She is an educational administrator par excellence. She is presently the Chancellor of the Deemed University.

As a Home Scientist and Nutritionist she has contributed significantly to the development of the subjects through research, teaching and extension programmes apart from curricular development based on the needs of the society. Her researched and written contributions are voluminous. Focus in all extension programmes has been on the development of children, women and families applying relevant, indigenous technologies. Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas has graced the prestigious positions of the President, Home Science Association of India

for several years and the President, Nutrition Society of India. She has worked tirelessly to motivate Home Scientists and Nutritionists alike to maintain professional standards and to participate in community development work. She continued to interact with colleagues in the profession whenever and wherever there is an opportunity to meet and discuss.

Her meteoric rise in the profession and in the society is the result of her intellectual capacity, all consuming energy, steadfastness and consistent action towards progress. She has won laurels many and friends a plenty. She will continue to inspire all those who happen to meet and know her no matter at what stage they are in life. Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas is a remarkable citizen of India and of a world without borders.



# **A TRIBUTE TO Dr. RAJAMMAL P. DEVADAS**

**YOLANDA SATUR**

**I** remember very clearly the day. It was four decades ago and I was brimming with confidence as a final year student, cheerfully thus commencing the B.Sc. Home Science, Nutrition Practical Examination of the Madras University, being conducted for us Queen Marians in the laboratories of Women's Christian College, Madras, such an exchange of centres was insisted upon by the University authorities in those days. Imagine my sense of alertness when I recognised the External Examiner as the young Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas. This was my first opportunity to meet the Professor face to face - the lady whose books by that time I had 'collected' for studies in Home Science - a course which then encompassed all branches of the Degree as it is known today. The happy ending to this first meeting with Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas was my excellent results obviously handed down by such an esteemed Examiner!.

During the passage of the next 40 years, there was no way a person with my ambitions in higher education and research was going to be detached from the source of subject information, Dr. Rajammal, all the while giving her greatness to the Avinashilingam Home Science College at Coimbatore. To list the achievements of Chancellor, Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas is to have to repeat what is already world-wide information. Suffice it is to state that one had to really struggle academically to achieve or research a topic not already covered by Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas. Fortunately, her assistance to us to further the cause of University education in our subject specialisation helped us achieve our own professional pinnacles.

It was with much the same cheery expectation 40 years later, that is, on October 12th and 13th 1998 that I had the pleasure of being hostess to Chancellor Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas, the Chief Guest at our State - level Seminar - 'Spotlight on Women', at Cauvery College for Women, Trichy where I continue as Principal. She was in a way external examiner again of my efforts in all the years she has known me, in that I received from the VIP / Chief Guest of the Seminar, Chancellor Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas, my excellent results in the form of her expert evaluation of my services to Tamil Nadu. Such praise is acceptable only from such a praiseworthy person.

I take this opportunity to express my humble views of Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas, an outstanding educationist of exemplary poise, dynamism and motivational spirit. Perhaps I could add something of my own, "Respected Dr. Rajammal is not just one who cares to 'know' but who makes us 'know she cares'!".

May God Bless her with many, many more years of happiness and continued success.

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## **Dr. RAJAMMAL P. DEVADAS, THE PARASMANI**

JAYALAKSHMI SHAH

**D**r. Devadas has reigned in my heart and has acquired a special place in my life. Without her I would not have been able to complete my studies and get training for village upliftment. Due to her special attention I could mould my life and could accomplish all that I have written in my bio-data. Just imagine how a girl with almost no experience would be able to organise and serve the education field for girls and village women? She is real Parasmani to my iron like life.

When I got admission in the Faculty of Home Science in MS University of Baroda I was very nervous for being very much away from my parents and my native place. In my hostel life I daily felt like leaving the place and leave the studies and go back home. It was due to her care and inspiration I could continue my studies and complete it.

When ever I felt home sick she used to, at once, find it from my face as a mother finds her child's expression and acts as well. She used to call me at her home and tell me to help her in kitchen, cook her our diet. While working I used to get rid of my home-sickness and feel homely in her presence. She used to entrust me her extra activities which she used to organise for nutrition education which was her favourite field and arrange different demonstration for village ladies to help their living. I used to love to do that work. This sort of work inspired me and prepared me for my future village work. She always thought and gave me special place close to

her more than a student through which I benefited a lot. When she was Director and Adviser at Delhi, her health was not keeping well. Luckily I was under training as an intern in New Delhi. Due to closeness, she invited me to stay at her home during training instead of staying in hostel and help her in her great work which was to come up as Deemed University at Coimbatore. I used to take care of her so that she could attend different meetings and discussions. If she can improve soon she can contribute to organise the institution. After finishing my training hour when ever I reached at her place I used to ask her (Epdi, Erkinga), How do you feel? and (Ennavendum) what do you want? I used to ask her in her mother tongue that she may feel good and over come bad feeling of illness. I still remember her smile. She used to get on her face then I still remember her vigorous walk through the corridor of faculty of Home Science and greeting and inspiring us by asking lovingly about our progress and well being. She is really a fountain of zeal. She with her work, extended her vast field as far as Gujarat. My girl students all owe her because, if I was not inspired and trained, girls' education would not have increased in my area. Thus you can imagine how far her work has effected and has covered a vast field, via students like me. I and my area people owe her for that. Thus she has contributed a lot in various fields and should be given a grand tribute.

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# **LIFE'S DEDICATION TO HOME SCIENCE ADVANCEMENT**

**NIRMALA THYAGARAJAN**

**T**he request letter received from Dr. Usha Chandrasekar, convenor of the publication committee on Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas's contributions, made me immensely happy. It meant that I would be contributing in a small way in the biographic volume of her monumental contribution in varied fields of Science and Technology, more particularly in the field of Home Science and Higher Education of women.

My association with Dr. Devadas is in some way unique in the sense I have neither been enrolled in Sri Avinashilingam group of institutions nor I have worked in any of them. Still the bond developed as early as 1960, when I was one of the participants selected to undergo training in Home Science under TCM/India contract from the portals of Queen Mary's college. As one of the staff from Sri Avinashilingam Home Science also was selected in the same batch, (this was none other than the present Vice - Chancellor) there was some interaction and chances of getting to know Dr. Devadas, as Head of the institution and a pioneer in Home Science Education. As I recall now, it was her work in the field of Extension Education so early (in the fifties) that impressed me. Later, there were more and more chances of knowing her, made possible, mostly since I continued teaching in Queen Mary's College and her friends and colleagues were our seniors in the same department. There were several occasions of working with her, in meetings of Board of Studies, Workshops, Conferences.

Dr. Devadas's deep gratitude to her own Almamater, Queen Mary's College, where she did her B.Sc. Home Science is something wonderful. You should watch her, with her eyes shining whenever she talks about good old Queen Mary's College. She is always proud to recall that she was one of the five students of the first batch of B.Sc. Home Science in the year 1942. She quotes amusingly how she loved mathematics and how she secured a seat in M.C.C. with financial assistance of scholarship and came to pay her courtesy to Miss Myers, the then Principal of Queen Mary's College, to inform her about the same. What transpired between herself and the Principal and how she was coaxed to join the new Home Science course are to be heard straight from her. But, what a good decision and coaxing it proved to be!! She blossomed and so did the subject. Her contribution to the nation through the subject has been tremendous, the field of activity being endless.

Dr. Devadas always recalls with pride the influence of Principals especially, Miss Myers, Mrs. Nallamuthu Ramamurthy and other professors who taught her. Not only that, whenever she introduced me to someone, whether inside or outside the campus, she adds affectionately that I also come from the same college, as she did, and had the privilege of teaching and heading the institution.

There are several occasions when we have had her in Queen Mary's college, and one such occasion, was when she delivered the convocation address as Vice-Chancellor of the Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education, Coimbatore. In the address, she described vividly her student days in Queen Mary's College and the soil on which she tread, the airy rooms occupied in the hostel, the meals consumed and the tennis played. It also included her

memories as student chairman, the dramatics staged and last but not the least, the Tamil Sangham she led, and how they staged their Tamil play on Kannagi.

The Tamil play was staged in a public hall for the first time at Rasika Ranjani Sabha with costumes from film director Sri K. Subramanyam. Musician Papanasam Sivan set up the songs in Silappadhikaram to music. Tamil was given an equal status to English in those days itself. Imagine a Tamil Sangham as early as 1942-44 and that too under an English Principal!

Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas was in Queen Mary's college as a student at a historical time during the final phase of the country's freedom struggle. When the Quit India movement had gathered momentum she was involved in the nation's struggle. She was an ardent follower of the Mahatma - on whose dictum she spun khadi yarn and made a saree. To this day I understand that she wears only that saree during the Independence Day celebrations on August fifteenth.

Dr. Devadas always categorically asserts that her years of study in Queen Mary's college laid the permanent foundation for national service and leadership. We, the Queen Marians are always proud of our first outgoing Home Science graduate turning into one for whom honours and awards - national and international have been many. As I am writing this, I have just heard an announcement that she has been awarded the Shrimati Janakidevi Bajaj Award for upliftment and welfare of women and children. Her pioneering work in nutrition and health education in primary school has been recognised in this award. This is only one more feather in her cap!

Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas firmly believed that women can be awakened only through relevant education. She further added that when women are awakened, the community gets awakened and a nation is built. It is this that led

to the sowing of the small seed - as a college for women - sown by Ayya avargal, nurtured and tended by a far sighted personality - Dr. R. P. Devadas, and dedicated staff. This has grown into a Deemed University with an engineering college exclusively for women and now spreading its wings into the concept of Community College. She is dedicated to education and development of culture through expression of human values.

There were several opportunities for me to work with her and get involved with the development of Home Science, particularly in the various southern universities. I recall the time I worked with her as Member of Board of Studies in Home Science of several Universities. She was always ahead and foreseeing revision, modification and inclusion of modules in the syllabus. It was when she was the Chairman of B.O.S of University of Madras that we introduced various specialisations in undergraduate courses and subsequently in post graduate courses. No other faculty - neither in science nor in arts were even thinking about specialisation and when the much talked about introduction to job oriented courses came, Home Science was years ahead - thanks to the Chairman, B.O.S. and Syndicate member Dr. R.P.Devadas. Similar are other innovations - be it Question Bank, or introduction of semester and continuous assessment, the B.O.S in Home Science already had the framework worked. Similarly, when C.S.S. was introduced, the objective, evaluation and how to incorporate it in the curriculum, the Board already had the outline and Dr. R.P.Devadas was ready with a monograph. I recall now with pleasure my association with her as Member of Board of Studies with all these innovations. We were much ahead of other departments. Such was her dedication to Home Science development and women's empowerment. My education came by just sitting by her side and writing the minutes of the meeting!.

The tenacity and will power of Dr. R.P.Devadas are qualities that surpass limits of admiration. Once she decides to bring in some changes / additions / scheme of papers in the curriculum, she will use all tools of persuasion and we will all be convinced. Such a foresighted planner she was that to many, she was years ahead in planning and seeing it through. Her dedication to the task is such that she eats, sleeps and walks with Home Science in mind. Her vision, zeal, acts of persuasion were actually responsible for making the outside world know and realise the potential of young Home Science graduates, their fulfilment of various jobs, be it the social welfare department or the human resource development or education department. She was solely responsible for putting Home Science curriculum into a recognised field in serving the nation in all capacities.

In life, there are many people who are great and some who are good. There are very few who are both great and good. She is one of them. Often I think about the secret that lies behind her phenomenal success. Is it her total devotion to the task? Or is it her preparedness for every opportunity to move ahead? Or is it her motivation and determination and belief that you can achieve anything if you ask others also to support and work with you? Or is it her ability to handle well wishers as well as critics simultaneously and proceed? All these above are contributory to her success - yes. But the secret is very simple and basic. It is only with the HEART that one can see rightly - and she has it!.



# **Dr. RAJAMMAL P. DEVADAS-THE LEADER OF WOMEN'S EDUCATION IN INDIA**

V. THULASAMMA

I am glad to know that you are going to celebrate the 80th birth day of Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas who is the Chancellor of Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women - Deemed University in early 1999 and on this occasion, you will be bringing out biographic volumes of her life and work in various fields.

I deem it a privilege to be asked by you to write about Dr. Rajammal's contribution to the development of Home Science in the Directorate of Extension.

Pardon me, if I go back 50 years. At the dawn of Independence in the year 1947, rural India was just waking up from her deep slumber. The cries of "Gandhiji ki Jai", "Vande Mataram", "Freedom is our birth right" were still fresh in the ears of people. Having enthusiastically participated in the freedom struggle, the people were active and were itching to do some work.

It was at this opportune moment, the first Five Year Plan was launched and various developmental programmes were introduced. Credit goes to the planners who had taken up all round development of the country. India being mainly an agricultural country, importance was given to that subject. As a result India achieved Green Revolution.

The women in the rural areas of the country always worked hand in hand with men and hence keeping their role in view, several programmes were specially chalked out for their development.

It is at this juncture that a Directorate of Extension was established at the Centre and the post of Chief Home Economist was created in the Extension Directorate to look after the women's programmes.

In the year 1955, Home Science Wings attached to the Extension Training Centres were established in all the States of Indian Union. After the completion of intense training in India and abroad, Chief Instructresses were appointed for each Home Science Wing. A band of workers called "Grama Sevikas" were selected and were given training in the Home Science Wings for a period of one year. These girls studied not only Home Science subjects and other allied subjects but also worked in the villages interacting with the women to bring about a social change.

To shoulder the responsibility of working as Chief Home Economist and establishing Home Science Wings in all the States is not a small job. The post required the services of a woman with great intellectual capacity, vision, hard work, keen observation, diplomacy and above all administrative skill.

Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas who adorned the Chair of Chief Home Economist possessed all the above mentioned qualities and many more.

Though small in stature she was out for achieving bigger things. Her occupying the Chair of Chief Home Economist is providential. With her amiable nature, she endeared herself to one and all. More than anything else, her winning point is her bewitching smile. Nobody can escape that. In spite of her high degrees she is not a sophisticated woman. Any other city brand woman would have been a misfit in that post. She is very practical. Her sense of judgement is amazing. She is sharp, possesses good memory and abundant sense of humour. She maintains robust health, which is the result of not only preaching nutrition but

also practising nutrition. Or is it, the result of great will power to achieve many things in her life?

It is to the credit of Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas that starting with one or two Home Science Wings in each State, she has increased the numbers to five or six in a span of 5 years. She formulated the syllabus and gave weight to village work. She toured all the States mingled with the Grama Sevikas staying with them, visited the villages and enthused the women to participate in building New India.

Attired in simple Khadi saree, without any inhibitions, she can easily pass on to be a simple village woman. Such is her unassuming nature. She is a good example of work is worship. Her workoholic nature is contagious.

Dr. Rajammal maintained good relations with all State Governments which was important to push through new schemes. There is not a single seminar in which she did not participate. She strengthened the Home Science Wings on one side and worked hard for the introduction of Home Science subjects in the High Schools also. A new Scheme called ICDS (Integrated Child Development Scheme) was started in the country. The Home Science Wings came handy for training the Anganwadi workers who will be working in the ICDS blocks.

Added to this Applied Nutrition Programme was introduced in all the States. The focus of Government was on Nutrition and the availability of trained workers to implement the Nutrition Programme.

The foundation for this gigantic work was laid solidly by Dr. Rajammal. Perhaps when she was drawing up the curriculum for the Grama Sevikas, she

must have been dreaming that one day the importance of woman power would be recognised. Is not the move for the introduction of Women's Bill in the Parliament today the result of hard work done by eminent women like Dr. Rajammal 50 years ago?

It is no exaggeration to say that for Dr. Rajammal, sky is the limit. Her name will be remembered as long as there are Home Science Colleges in India.

On this occasion I wish and pray God to give good health to Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas so that she can continue to work for the betterment of women in India and give inspiration to many to emulate her example.

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# **Dr. RAJAMMAL P. DEVADAS WHOM I KNOW**

**M.P. VAIDEHI**

I was in Pre-University, when I first saw Dr. Devadas at the All India Home Science Association Conference in the Viharilal College of Home Science, Calcutta in 1960's. I was rather surprised at the way in which both young and old staff and students were all the time around her. I don't remember what was the key note address given by her but there was such a thunderous applause by thousands of audience and almost everybody was next to touching her feet.

Next time I saw her at the Howrah Railway Station with students hurriedly seeking suggestions for their thesis work, future studies and career opportunities etc. We, the students from Bangalore were also pleasantly advised for doing further studies and affectionately shook hands with all of us.

Then after several years, I met her after my Ph.D., from United States of America. She was very happy about it. She was very particular to appreciate the research work on soya idlis that hit the headlines in Science Congress Reports of the daily news papers when it was held at Waltaire, A.P. She encouraged research in Home Science so much that almost everybody gets surcharged with enthusiasm towards it. She worked on the subject so much that she had no hesitation to be the guide, philosopher and friend towards almost all of us in any area of the Home Science subject.

If it were not for Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas it would not have been possible to maintain Home Science Association in various adverse conditions for its survival nor Nutrition Society of India would have had honoured with a place of significance for Home Scientists and recognition to the Food Scientists and Nutritionists from the Faculty of Home Science subjects, to be frank! Super

dedication to the career never ever to be found in any of us compared with this great lady. Single handed she has fought many adverse conditions, while building the University for Women's Education which is certainly her outstanding contribution to her state of Tamil Nadu and further to the Nation, at large.

Even though, I have not studied in her Institute, I look up for her as Role Model to boost my strength in my belief that I should achieve something in my life and contribute something worthwhile to the society.

She is a great administrator who builds personalities from mere human clay if given in her hands. Her lectures in Banasthali Vidyapith at Rajasthan for Women's upliftment and careers was an outstanding example of how thoroughly she handles the subject matter and dandles poetry and philosophy.

. She always had told if science meets culture, it is in Home Science and civilization is built around individuals who grow and mature at home, whether it is in rural or urban areas.

No one can hesitate to accept that this Petite lady in her physical form could be so powerful in her mind and spirit and ever so energetic and BIG in achieving her objectives.

Women have to learn a lot from her life and career. I found her sometimes aggressive and possessive but perhaps if it were not to be so, many things might not have been achieved by her. Therefore, even in this character, she makes us wonder about this as negative or positive point in her. However, no one can say that given power it would go wasted in her hands! Such an achiever for whom the fluency in English and Tamil is noteworthy, Home Science means her "Life". I wish and pray God that "May Her Tribe Increase" and show light and dignity to humanism and ethical guidance for scientific progress and development of Home Science in the years to come.



# **Dr. RAJAMMAL P. DEVADAS - A LEGEND FOR WOMEN'S EDUCATION**

MARIAMMA A. VARGHESE

**D**r. Rajammal P. Devadas is a legend of her times for women's education and particularly for Home Science education in the country. She has worked relentlessly to professionalize the field of Home Science not only for the benefit of the academic in higher education, but also for the community development programmes. Her leadership in curriculum development, research and extension activities with reference to Home Science is commendable. The ultimate fruit of all her efforts is the Avinashilingam Deemed University, which today caters to higher education for women in Home Science, Education, Science, Management and Technology.

Dr. Devadas - affectionately called Amma - who is known for her contribution to higher education and community development was recently being conferred Padma Shri and also the Jamnalal Puraskar of the year 1998.

Today nutrition, health education and environmental sanitation are taught to Primary School children in the form of integrated curriculum through their school subjects. This is the outcome of a very big pilot project launched by Dr. Devadas under the sponsorship of UNICEF/NCERT. Through this project a total of 5,800 teachers drawn from 905 primary schools were trained in a phased manner, they in turn integrated the concepts in various curricular subjects. The effects of this education in health, nutrition and environmental sanitation in primary schools had a carry home, multiplier and feed back results, stimulating the parents and others in the community towards nutrition education.

Department of Education in many states have made provision for teaching Home Science at the secondary level either as an examination subject or optional subject. Tamil Nadu was the first state to introduce Home Science as a bifurcated course in 1948 under the efforts of Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas.

She has served on innumerable Committees as an expert at state and central level to introduce Home Science courses at various levels in various forms. The University Grants Commission constituted a Committee of Experts in June 1977 to advise the Commission on matters relating to the development of teaching and research in Home Science in Universities and Colleges. This panel under the leadership of Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas worked out strategies to improve the teaching, research and extension activities in Home Science. Sub Committees were constituted to work on the curricula for different areas of Home Science for the undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. The finalised guidelines were printed and distributed to all the Universities. Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas was also instrumental for changing the nomenclature of Home Science subjects in tune with the current developments and trends in India and abroad.

University Grants Commission has funded production of audio-video lesson in Home Science with Avinashilingam Deemed University as the nodal production centre under the leadership of Dr. Devadas. Accordingly, 220 lessons in various fields of Home Science each of 30 to 35 minutes duration for use in the countrywide class room programme has been produced. These are being telecasted for the benefit of students all over the country.

In the year 1950, the senior Home Science experts of the country thought of starting the Home Science Association of India. They were responsible for forming the constitution for the Association which was adopted at the first conference of the Association held at Madras in 1952. Dr. Devadas was one of the charter members. She was the elected President of the Association for three consecutive terms. During her tenure she worked commendably towards the growth and recognition of Home Science in the country.

Dr. Devadas has always encouraged the Home Science faculties to produce books, manuals, teaching aids and instructional materials in the different areas of specialization and suitable for Indian conditions. Her publications numbering more than 600 research articles and 50 books / pamphlets are useful to Home Scientists throughout the country.

The areas of her special contributions include

1. Planning, monitoring and evaluating nutrition intervention programmes.
2. Training the grass - root level and middle level developmental functionaries at the request of Central / State Governments and voluntary bodies.
3. Development of education materials for use in the community.
4. Conducting application oriented research and spread the results of Home Science research to the community.
5. Strengthen the industry - institution linkages and make University education more job-oriented.

Thus her contributions in the areas as a Nutritionist cum Home Scientist has transcended among others to specific fields like Nutritional improvement of the communities in India and abroad, Child Welfare, Women's Welfare and Development, Science and Technology for the common masses to that of total community upliftment.

It could be concluded that Dr. Devadas is tirelessly extending her services and expertise in Home Science through formal and non-formal education in different facets of Home Science. Her contributions are always leading towards meeting the challenges of the nation through Home Science inputs.



# **A MESSAGE TO HER GLORY**

**AMITA VERMA**

**I**t gives me great pleasure to greet and felicitate Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas on this occasion. Dr. Devadas's contribution to the field of Home Science has indeed been immense. She has worked hard for four decades to strengthen the field of Home Science, not only in India but in other countries of the world as well. Though her training was in Nutrition she took interest in all the other areas of Home Science - particularly Extension and Community development. Dr. Devadas has been on numerous Committees and Commissions and her work has been recognized and appreciated. She has won many prestigious awards for her work. The Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women - Deemed University will always stand as a monument to mark the dedicated and devoted services of Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas to the cause of Home Science.

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**KITH AND KIN**



# THE BEST IS YET TO BE - FOR MY ELDER SISTER

LEILA DIRAVIAM

Childhood is a memorable period of eternal joy, filled with play and fun, laughter and merriment and the excitement of learning new things. Above all, it is a happy time of being loved, caressed and cared for by our dear parents. In my mind there are a myriad memories of my own childhood which I treasure and often recall with fondness and pleasure.

We were a large family composed of five sisters and four brothers. The more, the merrier, surely. We had lots and lots of fun when we were small children. There was not a moment of boredom ever; we could always find some one or two among ourselves to play with. We used to invent many new games like train journey, bus ride, circus ring etc. Among these the train, the bus, the circus, appeared to be novel and fantastic, to us children, six, seven decades ago.

Michael Pakyanathan, our father was in government forest service and was most often posted in remote villages in forest areas. Thus we had abundant exposure to the beauties of nature in all its pristine glory. The forest bungalows were usually located in the midst of acres and acres of woodland or hilly terrain with dense vegetation and tall shady trees. Nature was spread before us, wherever we looked. We could hear the music of the mountain streams running nearby, 'going on for ever'. We could watch the pranks of monkeys, with faces of different complexion, black, pink, brown and grey - hopping from tree to tree in mischievous abandon. We have observed herds of antelopes in fleet and parades of peacocks dancing gracefully in all their majesty, announcing the coming of the rains. Our lives, then, was a Wordsworthian experience. We grew up as children taught by nature. "Nature then to us, was all in all".

Our father himself was a wonderful teacher. A graduate of the first decade of the 20th century (1908) and later a trainee in forest service at Dehra Dun, he was a very learned person - scholarly and knowledgeable about many matters. What was most admirable about him was the fact that he could stoop down to our level of comprehension and interest, take infinite pains to patiently explain things and answer our questions to our satisfaction. When camping with him in hill areas, the nature walks we had with him - vying with each other to hold his hands - were something very special and very entertaining, which we looked forward to with great anticipation. But they were few and far between! He would beautifully explain in a scientific way the special characteristics of trees, plants, medicinal herbs, birds, insects and animals we happened to come across on those occasions. Botany was his forte. We could identify rare trees like Rosewood, Sandalwood, Teak, Deodar and Cedar in the forests. We could understand from live illustrations botanical terms which we later read in text books - terms like camouflage, mimicry, parasite, dehiscence etc., though we were then just six or seven years old. Akka must have imbibed this scientific temper and spirit of enquiry from our father at quite an early age.

Our mother, Sornammal, was always busy in the kitchen or minding a toddler or an infant sibling of ours who were steady in arriving every other year. I have three younger brothers and three younger sisters. Mother was a master story teller, specially of folk tales and fairy tales which she would ingeniously embellish with humorous remarks of her own to amuse us. For example, she would end a fairy tale thus: - "The Prince finally married the fish in the well who was suddenly transformed into a beautiful princess and this sari I am wearing was presented to me by them at their wedding!" How we roared with laughter! Some of her folk tales were based on real events that had taken place in her

village, perhaps even before she was born. We were enthralled by the exploits of a Robinhood like character called 'Jambulingam' whom we grow to admire for his courage and valour, his generosity to the poor and kindness shown to women and children. Mother was only a semi literate at that time, it seems when she was five or six years old, she had attended a small school (Thinnai Pallikoodam) in her village for about two years. Being a quick and eager learner, she learned to read and write along with us and was soon able to read by herself, the Bible in Tamil and some popular Tamil Stories in verse form, like நல்ல தங்காளர் (Nalla Thangal) அரிச்சந்திர நாடகம் (Harischandra) தேசிங்கு ராஜா (Raja Desingh), Panchathantra Stories, Tenali Raman Stories etc., Vai-Mu Kothainayaki ammal's novels were her favourites. Mother was an avid non formal learner all her life. She was very intelligent and equally diligent. Very progressive in out look and receptive of new ideas she must have learnt a great deal from my well educated father. And later, just by being a keen and silent listener to his conversations and instructions to us, his children, mother must have vastly improved her knowledge. Her love of learning was phenomenal. That should explain how, after the sudden demise of my father when she was in her mid forties, she as a widow invested her all in the education of her nine children. Her devotion to my father must have been a great motivating force. She was determined to fulfil his desire of giving higher education to everyone of his children. Growing in such a happy and healthy atmosphere, our childhood was a golden period of our lives.

Besides my adorable parents, my childhood was dominated and influenced greatly by my elder sister Rajammal (akka for me) and my elder brother, annan Rajadurai. I was much fascinated by them, as a child. To me both of them appeared to be strong persons - sure of themselves, sure of what they wanted to do and more than that, sure of what they wanted us, the younger siblings, to do. My

other sisters and brothers, were younger to me. I considered them as one group - who needed to be “looked after” - whereas, akka and annan were the two whom I could “look up to”. To this day my esteem and feelings towards them have not changed a bit.

Looking back, my earliest memories of Rajammaka (when I was 3 or 4 years old) was that of a round plump girl, with chubby cheeks and cherubic smiles. She had thick locks of hair well oiled and plaited tight and knotted with colourful ribbon at the end. Very energetic with a brisk walk, she would be darting from place to place doing something or other, perhaps helping mother with her chores, or baby - sitting - or learning cooking, sewing, kolams, crochet etc. Though yet a child, she was very keen on learning and mastering many things at the same time, Habits die hard! To this day, I have never seen her idling a single minute. She is always, active and busy, doing something useful, dutiful, helpful every minute of her waking hours. By the time akka was eight or ten, she had learnt many household arts from my mother. My mother herself had learnt all these from an accomplished, lady tutor - a Kanchipuram Mudaliar amma whom my father had engaged to ‘modernise’ his rural wife. Akka could sew, embroider, crochet, knit, stitch simple clothes on the sewing machine by the time she was ten. She could crochet so fast, even without looking at the thread, that I used to be nervous watching her, lest her fore finger gets poked by the tip of the crochet ‘needle’. My mother concentrated on teaching akka all these arts and crafts, not out of favouritism but because she reposed great faith in her eldest daughter to pass on all these arts to her younger sisters. My mother often repeated the familiar, Tamil proverb, “முன் ஏர் போகும் வழிதான் பின் ஏர் போகும்” “The plough behind always follows the plough before it”. Actually, Rajamakka was not the elderest child of my parents. She was the third. The eldest was a girl,

Chengamalam and the second was a son Rajarathinam. Both died because of small pox. My mother herself miraculously survived a virulent attack of the disease during a violent epidemic.

Akka's leadership qualities must have been taking roots even when she was a young girl. One favourite past time for us, as a team, was 'play cooking' a meal under the shade of a tree. Akka was invariably the leader of the team, being the master - cook. The boys would gather three large round granite stone and put up an improvised oven. They would gather the fuel wood from around and also fetch water from the well and get the provisions from the kitchen, from mother. Akka would order us about to do the sundry lesser jobs like cleaning the rice washing and cutting the vegetables, grinding or crushing onions, garlic and ginger etc. She herself would be seated on a low stool in front of the oven and start cooking very confidently, tasty mixed vegetable rice with dhal and greens. Kootan Choru, (கூட்டாஞ்சேரம்) was our favourite choice. We would finish even before the regular meal was got ready in the kitchen by the cook. Our parents relished this 'mixed rice' very much and complimented akka for her excellent cooking at that young age of 12. I admired greatly this particular ability of hers at that stage. Till I became an adult I was afraid to go anywhere near the open fire of the oven; the spluttering of mustard seeds in heated oil would bring on the goose flesh out of fright!

Akka is now called, 'Amma' by every one. There was something of the 'mother' in her even when young. She would take care of her younger siblings with fond attention and great affection. She would help us with our lessons, make us eat well; stitch and mend our clothes, comb and plait our hair, get us ready to go to school. She herself set us a good example by being a very orderly person. Her handwriting was neat and she would keep her things tidy and in place and persuade us to be neat and tidy too.

She has been hailed a 'pioneer' in many fields. But the very first pioneering event in her life which I recollect very well was her going to a Boarding School in Trichy about thirty miles from Thuraiyur where we were living at that time - all alone! I stood watching her readily and happily jumping into a horse drawn jutka to the busstand without a tear or any sign of the pangs of parting from the family but only excitement writ large on her face. It was very brave of her to have consented to go to a boarding school far away from home not knowing what sort of life awaited her there but only determined to study in a good school run by English Missionaries (Vellaikara ammas - White Ladies!). I followed the 'first plough' - in a couple of years, I joined the same school, (All Saints Girls' School; Puthur, Trichy) as a boarder. Having earned two double promotions earlier in a village school in Perambalur, I was just two grades below akka's class in school.

Later we joined Northwick Girls High School, Royapuram, Madras and much later we were together in Queen Mary's College as under graduates. Akka took good care of me throughout in every way and was very proud of me when I performed well, more than her own performances which were equally good. I am the person who has most enjoyed that special and amiable characteristic of hers - her motherliness. She would see that I made good use of all my talents. She would literally force me into taking part in many competitions - all extra curricular activities - like essays, elocution, drama, recitation, general knowledge quiz, extempore, play acting etc. I owe a lot to akka's encouragement (and compulsion!) in shaping me in my school years from a timid girl into a self confident person.

When akka was studying in the 6th Form (10th std) - 'school final year' as it was then termed - her marriage to Devadas Mama, our only maternal uncle

was arranged all of a sudden. My parents took a trip to Madras just to announce this to the Principal and take us home for the event, even before the September holidays. I was excited on hearing the news since it meant a lot of feasts and festivities. I could not understand, therefore, the serious and grave expression on our favourite Principal, Miss Helen F. Greenfield's face on hearing this happy news. She must have been upset that the studies of a bright student, the top ranker of her school was about to come to an abrupt stop because of this early marriage. My father convincingly told the Principal that Rajamma would come back to the hostel after the Michaelmas (September) holidays and finish the S.S.L.C. Public Exam. He kept his promise up and Rajamma finished the S.S.L.C. Public exam in flying colours, winning the much coveted Elizabeth Miller Gold Medal, weighing about 20 grams of pure gold and crafted by goldsmiths of Edinburgh, Scotland, with the Burning Bush of Moses embossed on one side, and the emblem of Northwick - the Burden Bearer (சுமை தாங்கி) on the reverse side with the school motto "Not to be served but to serve" all around it. The founder of Northwick Girls' High School, Elizabeth Miller, was the sister of Dr. Miller, the famous founder of Madras Christian College.

My parents with akka and mama had come down to Madras for the Medal awarding ceremony, which was the grandest of the school functions during the academic year, followed by a variety entertainment by the present students. My father was a happy and proud man that day. I took part in the English play a short episode from Louisa M. Alcott's 'Little Women' acting as the youngest sister, Amy. While on the stage itself I was glancing at the beaming face of my father and was hoping that in another two years he will be there again in the same school hall, to witness my receiving that Medal. It happened that way, but alas! my father was not there to witness it!

This School Medal award for akka as the best outgoing student, was surely an auspicious augury for many many awards to follow, in her life - in college, in U.S., in her profession as academician, educationist, nutritionist, home scientist, administrator, women's development promoter and so on and on; the list seems to be endless and continuous still. This detailed account of akka's childhood and schooling would go to show that a good and sound foundation in education in primary, middle and high school stages is sure to yield unimaginably great results later on in life. When I now visit the many Avinashilingam Institutions nurtured by akka, I see much of the Northwickan traits and traditions, rules and regulations, activities and celebrations, having been incorporated into the routine regime of these institutions. The atmosphere of learning and exploring the spirit of service (not to be served but to serve) and the living and working together as one family are commendable features of Avinashilingam Institutions. After akka finished S.S.L.C. there was a break in her studies for about three or four years. She donned the role of wife and homemaker with equal zest and efficiency as in her studies. She was an excellent homemaker and effortlessly so, being well versed in the various household arts. She decorated the interior of her home with her own crocheting, embroidery and sewing. We spent most part of school vacations in her home. She made it very enjoyable for us. Though married, she was still one of us. Her husband was 'mama' to all of us. We treated their home as our own home.

Mama was a very special person to us, his nieces and nephews. After the sudden death of our father it was Devadas mama who filled the place of the head of the family. He saw to it that every need, every comfort of ours was met and that we lacked no good thing. He was very affectionate to each one of us. He encouraged us, supported us (financially too), applauded us when we did well in

our studies and was proud of our achievements. He was generous to a fault and would pamper us with presents and buy for us any thing we asked for. "My sister's children are pure gems" he used to boast. Such was his devotion to his elder sister, our mother. He translated it by showing great affection and taking tender care of us.

The arrival of akka's son, kutti Mohan the eldest of the next generation, in 1939, was a great and happy family event. As a baby, Mohan had many aunts and uncles to cradle him in their arms and fondle him lovingly. That special bond of affection between him and us, his aunts and uncles, still exists, unbroken and undiminished through all these long years.

Though happy and fulfilled as a mother, the aspiration for higher education never left akka. So, when Mohan was two years old she joined Queen Mary's College, in the Intermediate class taking the 1st group - Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry as optional subjects. She was fortunate in having her grand mother as her mother - in law and her own mother as her sister - in law! Mohan was safely left in their custody, was looked after very affectionately by both of them - their precious first grand son.

By then, I had finished Intermediate in Women's Christian College and joined Queen Mary's College (QMC) - in Physics B.Sc. Class. Because of the break in her studies, akka was my junior in class but very much my senior boss, otherwise!. Those two years in Queen Mary's College for us were very happy years. Except that we had to attend different classes, we did every thing else together. We were seen together all the time-going to the mess, playing tennis or going for a swim, (Q.M.C. then had an excellent small swim pool) walking on the marina beach, going together for shopping or cinema, matinee shows etc.

Friends teased us as “the two inseparables”. Later, both of us were elected President of the College Students Union (Senior Student) in successive years. After finishing the Intermediate class, akka easily got admission in Mathematics (Hons.) class in Madras Christian College (MCC), Tambaram. That was her desire and ambition - to specialise in Mathematics. But fate ordained otherwise, Miss Kathileen Myers, the British Principal of Q.M.C. with great foresight had succeeded in getting Madras University start the B.Sc Home Science Course in her college that year, the first ever Home Science University Degree course in the country. She wanted the first batch to consist of the brightest students. Somehow, she persuaded akka to give up the prestigious Mathematics Honours Seat in M.C.C. and join the Home Science B.Sc forfeiting all the fees paid for Maths course. (Miss Myers on learning about this loss of money, replenished it from her own pocket later on). Though I was unhappy that akka should have to give up a Honours seat for a mere B.Sc seat, I was happy she would be studying in Q.M.C. with me. Thus, the inseparables could not be separated.

It was a small step that Rajammakka took in giving up Mathematics Honours seat and landing herself in the hitherto unknown territory of Home Science, but it proved to be a giant step in her glorious academic career. That is very typical of Rajammakka! She would face any challenge that comes her way and fully succeed in establishing to herself and others, convincingly, that she was right in her decision. All that she has achieved in the realm of Home Science in its international dimension is all a matter of history now. As one who had been with her in school and college, it is not a surprise to me that she has reached to such heights of eminence. All the qualities of head and heart which make for such eminence were very much in evidence even when she was a school girl.

Whatever opportunity came her way, she would seize it and prove her mettle in right earnest. She showed keen interest in the Girl Guide Movement. She was a first class Guide, which meant lots of work and hours of training, to pass those difficult qualifying tests. She did it and won the Girl Guide First class Badge.

She passed the many examinations of Madurai Tamil Saṅgam with merit. She passed the Tamil Vidwan Preliminary Exam. too. She could not do the final Vidwan exam because she had to leave for U.S. for higher studies. In Home Science B.Sc. she was awarded the University first prize Aleyamma Chacko prize. Soon after B.Sc she was appointed as Assistant Lecturer in Household-arts - (for Intermediate classes - a sequel to the starting of B.Sc. Home Science). She won the Government of India Overseas scholarship for Higher studies by appearing for an interview at New Delhi, in January 1947. She sailed to America from Bombay on 16th August 1947, a day after our Independence day - 15th August, 1947, to do Post graduate studies in Home Science, in the State University of Ohio. She returned to India in 1950 with M.S. in Nutrition, M.A., in Education and Ph.D. in Nutrition - all with high honours.

My relationship with her is three faceted - as a sister, as a school and college mate and now as a friend and equal. My assessment of her personality will be naturally very personal and subjective. Yet, objectively speaking, I greatly admire her, starting from humble beginnings she has reached to the pinnacle of academic glory. Her keen intellect, leadership qualities, her pioneering spirit, aiming excellence in everything she attempted, facing challenges with confidence, surmounting obstacles by her indomitable will - all these qualities were there from her school years - like the characteristics of a plant are manifested in a germinating seed.

She is very simple in her life style. She can make herself comfortable sleeping just on a mat on the floor in a hut when in a village, as in a five star hotel, when in a foreign city.

Akka is an achiever par excellence. But what is to be appreciated more is her unique large heartedness and generous sharing of her experience and expertise with many of her colleagues and students, and motivating them to be achievers too. The staff and students of Avinashilingam Institutions are indeed very fortunate to have passed through the portals of these temples of learning. They are the privileged inheritors of a great legacy. They sure have the blessings of the Founder, respected and beloved Ayya Avinashilingam. And also, they would be surely carrying with them, in some measure, the impression of the dynamic personality of their Amma, Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas.

The words of Robert Browning come to my mind when I think of akka

*Grown old along with me!*

*The best is yet to be*

*The last of life for which the first was made;*

*Our times are in His hand*

*Who saith "A whole I planned,*

*Youth shows but half; trust God; see all, nor be afraid".*

May God bless akka richly, in the coming years.



# OUR ELDEST SISTER RAJAMMAL-RAJAM AKKA

P.C. ROBERT

Rajam akka was born in 1919. Before her birth our parents lost two children. The first born a girl named Chengamalam, aged 2 years and the second child, a boy a few days old. They died during an epidemic of small pox which was in those days an annual fatal feature. Our mother too was suffering from small pox and was, by the grace of God, saved from the clutches of death. Our mother told us that our father was heart broken over the loss of the two children. Hence the birth of Rajam akka must have been a very happy occasion. According to tradition in Tamil Nadu the birth of girl as the eldest child is considered a good augury. The girl as she grew up was supposed to help her mother in house keeping and looking after her younger brothers and sisters.

Rajam akka was as our mother has told us, a bright and vivacious child. She learnt the art of cooking, housekeeping, sewing and child rearing happily and enthusiastically from our mother. Our father was keen that his children should be given the best education possible. Therefore when Rajam akka was of the school going age, father took her to Trichy and put her in a Missionary boarding school called "All Saints". She learnt her lessons well and was outstanding in her performance. Our father was very proud of her and would tell all friends and visitors how proud and happy he was about Rajam akka's performance in school. At home she was never idle. She used to set everything in order. She taught my mother the latest methods of cooking and housekeeping that she would have observed and learnt from school.

Since the All Saints Boarding School had class only upto class VII, our father took Rajam akka to Madras and admitted her in a well known Missionary Boarding High School, Northwick, Madras. It was selected because our paternal uncle C.P. Michael (father's younger brother) was working there as a Police Officer and two of our elder cousins (girls) were also working there. Rajam akka was brilliant there also. She was always first in the class. The Principal Miss. Helen F. Greenfield, Headmistress Margaret Ponnurangam and teachers loved her for her academic achievements, devotion and sincerity in carrying out the duties entrusted to her. Her schoolmates admired her for her accomplishments. Our parents were proud of her.

When she was in the final year of her school in 1935, our father decided to get her married to our maternal uncle Mr. Edward Devadas. Our maternal uncle was brought up by my father. Under my father's guardianship he was educated. Devadas mama while he was in college joined the police force. My father was anxious that our uncle should have a good family life. Therefore in consultation with my mother he decided that Rajam akka should be persuaded to marry our maternal uncle. When our parents went to the school and told the Principal Miss H.F. Greenfield about the proposal, she was disappointed that the educational career of a brilliant girl like Rajam akka should be cut short like this. She pleaded with my father that Rajam akka should be allowed to appear for the school final examination in April 1936 atleast. Our father and Devadas mama agreed to this suggestion.

The wedding in 1935 was a turning point in the life of Rajam akka and our entire family - for us, the younger brothers and sisters, it was a very happy and enjoyable occasion. All our relatives from our native villages of Kallikulam, Mudavankulam and Parkaneri in the deep south Tirunelveli District had gathered.

The wedding festivities lasted for a week. Rajam akka joined school soon after to prepare for the school final exam. As expected she did very well in that public examination and came first in her class and won the Elizabeth Miller Gold Medal. Her marriage put an end to the further studies for the time being. For us, her younger brothers and sisters it was a happy time. Rajam akka's house became our second home. Those of us who were studying in boarding schools spent our holidays in her house. She and our uncle/brother in law made our stay most enjoyable. Rajam akka specially took care to teach us good conduct and manners and skills needed in everyday life. She taught her younger sisters, housekeeping and arts and crafts required for maintaining a good house. She was a good cook, good tailor and expert in embroidery and knitting and she taught these skills to her younger sisters. Whenever, the holidays were over, before we left for our boarding schools, she stitched and equipped us with under wears, shirts, frocks and shorts.

Our father expired in an accident within 1½ years of the marriage of Rajam akka. Our family was engulfed in gloom. Although we had three paternal uncles, and one paternal aunt, they did not come to our help. It was Rajam akka and her husband, our uncle Devadas, who immediately came to our help. Of the nine of us children of our parents, only Rajam akka near settled, that is, she was married and had a home. The rest eight of us had not even finished school. Our mother must have been very much worried. But the help and anchor which Rajam akka and her husband gave us, made us feel quite secure and normal. Our mother, as per the wishes of our father decided to settle in Tirupathur where he had purchased some land just a month before his passing away. It was his desire that the family should settle there, live independently and undertake some community service. Our paternal uncles and mother's relatives all urged that our mother should dispose

of the land and other properties and go to our native village and settle there. But our mother decided that she would carry out the wishes of her husband and settle in Tirupattur. Her abundant faith in Lord Jesus Christ gave her undiminished courage.

Thereafter, for our mother it was a saga of struggle against adversity, endurance, and survival, till the eight of us younger children completed our education and got employed. During this period our mother relied on Rajam akka for support and advice. Rajam akka was always ready and eager to help with money, advice and help. This continued not only during the education of us, her brothers and sisters, but also for the education and upliftment of our children.

Our mother passed away in 1994. We, her nine surviving children decided to form a Charitable Trust in her and our father's name to perpetuate their sacred memory by charitable deeds. Rajam akka was chosen as the Chairman and along with two brothers as managing Trustees of the Trust. Under her leadership, we are through our Trust undertaking upon charitable services.

May God bless her with health and long life to carry on her good work.



# ABOUT MY AKKA

KAMALA ANANDAM

I cannot bring myself to think of my Akka as completing 80 years of life on this earth. Her enviable physical condition, her boundless energy, her unstoppable mind, her marvelous memory, her unbelievable travel schedule, her limitless list of projects, her endless flare for fun, all of which, belie her age. When I recall and reflect on her numerous accomplishments, however, I have to accept the reality that she has been around for that many years and pray that she will live for that many more. In all these years, she has been my sister, my mother, my boss and my mentor. It is not easy to put into words my feelings and sentiments about a person who is my own sister, on the one hand, and an internationally acclaimed educational leader, on the other. Fortunately, this section with its focus on the “Family and Childhood” has narrowed my task.

As I try to recall our childhood years, my memory goes as far back as my Akka's wedding in 1935 with all its pomp and glory. That was the only wedding in our family when our father was alive. I remember the gorgeous sarees (skirts and blouses for the little ones, of course), glittering jewellery, flower garlands, elaborate meals, grand music and lots and lots of people. It was a fabulous wedding. Our father passed away soon after my Akka's wedding, and her husband, my maternal uncle, Devadas Mama, assumed the role of our father. Including my Akka, we are nine surviving children, five girls and four boys. My first two siblings died soon after they were born. My Akka, the oldest among the surviving siblings, was only sixteen years old and had just graduated from high school and

our youngest sister was a year old. Yet, **My Akka had to take on the role of our mother because our own mother leaned on her heavily to help bring up the eight younger siblings.** It was a mighty burden and a huge responsibility for a girl who had just turned sixteen. My Akka took it in stride and managed to juggle between her personal interests and caring for her siblings.

By our father's desire and design, my brothers went to Bishop Heber High School in Tiruchirappalli and we, the girls, went to Northwick Girls' High School in Madras. Our mother continued that tradition after our father passed away. My Akka, the first to go to Northwick School, achieved such excellent standards of performance that we, the younger ones, had our challenge cut out for us. This wasn't the only time I had faced such a challenge; it happened again when I went to college. I must say that at times I rebelled inwardly and occasionally rebelled against having to measure up to her all the time. **Little did I know then the benefits of measuring up to her for my own development.**

School holidays were welcome no matter what, but they were special whenever we spent them with my Akka and Mama. As the Inspector of Police, the power of his office awed me. We had so much fun with free movies and free transportation. We had special seats for us in the movie theatres and free drinks too. I remember Villipuram, Tindivanam, Gingi as the cities of our joyous vacations. When in Villipuram, Mohan was born to my Akka and Mama in 1939. While in Gingi, Mohan developed a breathing problem, and Mama sent for a doctor from Tindivanam, Dr. Anandam who was able to cure the problem in no time at all. The very tense moments when Mohan was struggling to breath and the accompanying commotion left an indelible impression on me, a ten - year old.

A memorable activity of my Akka was her preparing the meals for us. She was a great cook and prepared varied and delicious meals. Her specialties were sweet preparations - kesari, bhadam halva, mysore paku and gulabjamun. I remember so well my task of having to stir the milk as it boiled and boiled until it became semi-solid when my Akka took over and gave the final touches to make gulabjamun. Even though I detested the boring task of stirring the milk, I thoroughly enjoyed eating the gulabjamun. Ever since, whenever I eat gulabjamun, I recall quite vividly my Akka's gulabjamun.

I also remember all the hand embroidery work she did-table cloths, cushion covers, handkerchiefs. Some of the patterns were so elaborate that it took days to finish. **Patience and persistence she had to complete whatever she started, a quality that I have imbibed from her.** There was quite a bit of entertaining going on during this period. Our Mama was proud to show off my Akka's varied talents in cooking, decorating and entertaining to his numerous friends and sometimes his bosses. We did her "bid and call" on those occasions. Although entertaining guests entailed a lot of work, I enjoyed the hustle and bustle of it all. The only drawback I saw about having guests was that sometimes there was no gulabjamun left for us. My Akka and Mama enjoyed bridge and played the game with their guests into the wee hours of the morning.

There were some summer vacations, which we spent at my mother's farm, Brindavanam, in Tirupathur. My Akka was not always there, and consequently, she became the last one to learn to swim. The younger siblings including me were delighted to show off our skills in swimming and we even teased her a bit. To my recollection, that was the one of two episodes when she was not the first one to do it in our family. The other occasion was when my next older sister, Leila Akka, went to college first.

I remember those years (the 40's) while I was still at the high school for simple as well as complex activities. Recollections of simple events include my Akka and Leila Akka wearing sarees that had the same pattern but in different colors, using the hand sewing machine to sew their own blouses, our skirts and blouses, and thousands of little bags that could be tied around the guava fruits so that birds couldn't eat them before they were ready to be plucked. Rotating the sewing machine wheel fell on us the younger ones, another boring task, indeed. However, when beautiful skirts and blouses were sewn for us, particularly silk ones for Christmas, we were thrilled to death. We all used to pile ourselves into a bullock drawn cart to go to church, two miles away, for Christmas and New Year services. As we got older and bigger in size, we walked to the church by the short cut. Our mother preferred us to sit on the front pews, and for reasons unknown to me, those pews remained reserved for us even when we were late. As custom dictated, the boys sat on one side and the girls on the other side of the isle. Occasionally, one sister began giggling and before we knew, the giggle got passed on from one to another in an endless chain. Needless to say, our mother reprimanded us all the way back to our home.

On the complex side was how the happenings of the outside world were brought into our lives, happenings that covered literature, movies, Gandhian movement for India's freedom and Indian politics. Both my Akkas and my oldest brother, Rajadurai Arnan, became ardent followers of Gandhi, switched to wearing khadi (hand spun and hand woven fabric), and began spinning yarn using a charka. The next older brother, Chinnadurai Annan, believed in communism which gave cause to some heated debates at home between the philosophies and agendas of the Congress (Gandhi's party) and Communist parties.

At a very personal level, my akka helped me go to college. In those days, 1945 to be precise, girls were not expected to leave home after they attained puberty. My maternal aunts, quite upset that my older sisters defied that custom, were keen on stopping me from following their footsteps. My Akka came to my rescue, persuaded my mother not to yield to her sisters' wishes, and agreed to bear the cost of my college tuition. I'll never forget this event in my life and forever is grateful to my Akka for what she did. Had it not been for her forceful intervention, God knows what my life might have been. I hate to think about it.

While I was at Queen Mary's College, my Akka ventured on to another first, which was going to the United States of America for her higher studies. What a first that was! After a long trip by ship, she entered the Ohio State University and stayed there for three years and earned her M.A., M.Sc., and Ph.D. degrees. During those years, we received very many gifts from her, a message from her on a gramophone record (I wonder where it is now!), and an overseas telephone call, all of which were firsts for us. Mohan grew up with us during those years and later. As a result, we consider him our brother rather than a nephew, and this is true even today. Her stay in the US coincided with a period in my life of growing independence that comes with age. The unconditional adoration for my Akka faded away and was replaced in the later years by resistance, respect, and admiration, and in that order.

The years following my graduation from college were not the most pleasant years in my life. I discovered the freedom of running my own life but paid the price for misusing that freedom now and then. I perceived my Akka coming into my life during this period as interfering with my freedom. Nevertheless, I spent time with her in New Delhi when she worked in the College of Nursing and in

Baroda where she headed the College of Home Science. In New Delhi, she had offered to arrange for some special treatment for our niece Kasturi who was affected by polio. **Her generosity to help her siblings knows no limits.** This was my first opportunity to observe her in her professional role, and it did make a long lasting impression on me about professionalism. **My Akka was a super role model for dedicated professional service and relentless pursuit of goals to serve the public.** Baroda was not a pleasant experience for me at all. She tried to get me to marry a relative of ours, sort of an arranged marriage, which I refused. I am grateful for this not-so-pleasant an event because I later married my lover, Ernest Anandam. Remember the doctor who saved my Akka's son Mohan? Ernest was the son of that doctor. Had I not refused my Akka's wish, I wouldn't have had my two lovely daughters and the three adorable grand children I have today.

As far as my Akka was concerned, there was less contact between us after my marriage in 1953 until I came to work for her in 1960. During this period, my older daughter, Nimmie, was born in 1954 and the younger one, Shanthi, in 1956. My daughters remember my Akka's occasional visits during this period and all the gifts she brought for them from her trips abroad, the music box, the dolls, the dresses, the jewellery, and, of course, the candies. **My Akka remembered each and every one of her siblings' children. This is my Akka's marvelous signature behaviour to this day.**

Tragedy struck my husband's family in 1957 when his oldest brother died suddenly of heart attack leaving his wife and three girls. I had a wake-up call then to realize that such fate might fall on our own family, which led me to go for teacher training so that I'll be employable if such calamity should befall us.

Thus began my professional career after marriage. I began my work for my Akka as a science teacher in the high school attached to her college, moved on to the Mukhya Sevika training program in the college, and later headed the Child Development department. Looking back to how things were then with Sri Avinashilingam Trust Institutions and how things are today, **I become overwhelmed with her capacity to dream the impossible and make her dreams come true.** She was responsible for acquiring a scholarship for me to go to the University of Tennessee in US for my Master's degree in Child Development in 1962. What a privilege that was! It wasn't a privilege enjoyed only by me but by many who worked for her. **It is my Akka's unique quality to create opportunities for personal and professional enhancement of her colleagues.** Many a time, she has moved mountains to make such opportunities materialize.

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# **A GREAT SPIRIT IN A TINY BODY**

**PACKIANATHAN CHELLADURAI**

**A**fter all my brothers and sisters have said so much about my Akka, I cannot have anything more to add in praise of her. But I do have some complaints and grievances against Mother Nature and against my Akka for going against and defying Nature.

It is said that intelligence and talent are widely distributed among people. Then how is it that my sister got disproportionately more of it in our family of nine members? Mother nature has not been fair to the rest of the family!

It has been natural in Indian Society (particularly in the early 1900's) for a woman to be shy, timid, submissive, subdued, and void of ambitions. Then, how is it that my sister could go against the grain and rise to be one of the leading educationists in the world? How can Mother Nature let her defy the natural processes while keeping the rest of us subject to those processes?

It was not common in those days for girls to go to school beyond a certain age. But my parents defied that custom and sent their first daughter to school in a far away place. But she could have been just an ordinary student, spent a few years in the school, got married and faded into oblivion. But no! my sister could not abide by these natural expectations. She had to defy them and be the best student in the school, breaking all previous records! Thus, she became the trailblazer for the other children to follow. Where did she get all the intellect, perseverance, and determination? Mother Nature has not been fair to us at all!

It was also customary for a **married** woman to stay married to bear children. But no! my sister could not do it. She had to challenge these customs and social norms and go back for higher education that eventually made her a great icon as she is today. Where did she get the audacity and bravery to go against nature and win? Mother Nature has not been fair at all!

When people are limited in their capacity to remember people, things and events, how is it Mother Nature has given my sister so much power of memory? She can remember all little details from the past. Mother Nature has not been fair at all!

Scientists claim that for anyone to be healthy and productive, they should have eight hours (atleast seven hours) of sleep. Apparently, that is the way nature operates. But that does not apply to my Akka. Apparently, my sister can absorb all the energy from the “midnight oil”. Mother Nature has not been fair to us!

Fifty years ago, renowned scholars once said that an effective leader is aggressive, competitive and just. The leader is not feminine, not soft or yielding or dependent or intuitive in the womanly sense. They had not known my sister! She is feminine, soft and intuitive but at the same time aggressive and competitive. Interestingly, modern day scholars suggest that a good leader needs to be all of the above. May be, they have come to learn of my sister and her effectiveness as a leader.

Well, enough of my grievances and complaints. All my complaints serve only to highlight how unique and excellent my sister is. It would be remiss of me if I do not say what my Akka means to me. In one sentence, my Akka has been and is my friend, philosopher and guide.

I recall the days when she will come home from school (i.e., the boarding school from Madras). The younger kids in the family would all be excited. I would wait my turn to be hugged and consoled. Lying on a bamboo cot, she would tell me stories including her experiences at school till I went to sleep. In later years, when I had to go to the boarding school all by myself, she would make gulabjamun, murukku and such other goodies for me to take to the hostel. It was not only her culinary expertise but also her kindness and forethought that made those goodies so enjoyable. More importantly, she impressed on me how blessed we were in having the opportunity to go to school and how we must take full advantage of the opportunity.

My decision to enter the physical education profession was not warmly welcomed by family members. It was thought to be simply “bouncing the ball and blowing the whistle”. But my Akka had a different perspective. She actually encouraged me and paid the entrance and first term fees to the YMCA College in Madras. The support for my professional aspirations went even further. She actually got me a seat and scholarship at The Ohio State University to continue with my Master's and doctoral work in physical education. The lack of funds for travel and my own lethargy prevented me from joining The Ohio State University at that time. Akka, you must be happy and proud that I am presently at The Ohio State University, your alma mater.

One other curious thing about my Akka and me! She would be invited to visit the institution where I was a student or lecturer. When I was a student at the Islamiah College in Vaniambadi, she was invited to speak to the faculty and students at the college. When I was at the YMCA College, she was invited there too! When I became a physical director at the Sacred Heart College in Tiruppathur,

she came to present the annual address. When I left India and joined the University of Western Ontario in London, Canada, guess what happened. She was invited there too. Then when I moved to The Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio, U.S.A., the University decided to confer an honorary degree on her. While these occurrences of her being invited wherever I moved are extraordinary, every such occurrence elevated my status and prestige in the focal institution. While I am thankful for this elevated status, I also have a complaint. After her every visit, I will not be known as Chelladurai but only as Rajammal's brother.

What more can I say? Akka! you have been like a spring in the well. As our dear, departed Amma used to say, one needs to drain the water so the spring will become active and yield more water. I have followed that advice all these years and tried to drain you of all your kindness and guidance. But your well always filled up quickly. Thank you for everything you did for me, for everything you stand for, being the tower of strength and for being the role model. God bless you and keep you for many more years to come.



# **"AMMA", MY SISTER**

P. GNANADURAI MICHAEL

**C**hristmas... A day looked forward to with great enthusiasm and expectations by a Christian family - a loving and enlightened father, a hospitable and kind mother and six cheerful children - 3 girls and 3 boys. Every year, Christmas will be a grand festival .... relatives and friends will throng to this home to participate joyfully in the Christmas celebrations. Father will organise the festivities inviting a number of guests, mother with the assistance of helpers will cook enormous tasty dishes... and the children will, after prolonged practice and rehearsals, put up the Nativity Play.

But, Christmas 1930 was different ... Mother was expecting her 9th child just before Christmas (the first two had died in infancy). But it did not come. The delivery was delayed causing anxiety to all. Residing in a forest bungalow in a remote village of Tamil Nadu on the Karnataka border, there were proposals to shift mother to a distant city hospital for a caesarean operation to extract the reluctant child out in to the world. The eldest of six children was Rajam Akka, now to the world Padma Sri Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas. She gathered her brothers and sisters and all of them spent hours in prayer. Two appeals to God .. "God save our mother and please God, save the little child too"... Christmas eve was over.. No baby.. Christmas morning came and went .. No baby yet. There was no celebrations during the day.. and then, in the late evening of Christmas Day, mother delivered the baby boy into the world. Instead of a caesarean delivery, it was a 'sisterian' delivery by prayer! and that was me, Gnanadurai Michael.. (Since I was born on Christmas day, my middle name is Yesudasan). The entire

family burst into songs and dances : There was much rejoicing and for the delayed Nativity Scene, there a real 'Jesus Baby' for the crib in the manger! My sisters and brothers showered me with love and affection. I was everyone's pet brother.. Babu they called me.. Rajam Akka and Leila Akka, when they became overly fond of me called me 'Bubbon'.

My first recollection is Amma Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas, my Rajam Akka was her deep concern for her younger sisters and brothers and her alertness in responding to their needs. She was only eleven years old when I was born. I had a congenital heart. Even on a slight provocation I will start crying ceaselessly, not even breathing. I will become blue all over the body, making everybody around me fear that I will choke to death. But, every time there was this breathless crying, Rajam Akka will drop whatever she was doing and rushed to pick me up, to fondle me and soothe me back to normalcy.

There are so many nostalgic memories. Rajam Akka was married to our own Devadas Mama, our maternal uncle. He was a guardian angel to the entire family. We lost our beloved father at our very young age itself. But, Rajam Akka and Devadas Mama spontaneously came forward to fill the vacuum. Christmas was the same as before and all our vacations, by Akka and Mama. I remember the many gifts we received, delicious food that Akka always personally cooked for us and the various entertainment programmes they arranged for us. Those were wonderful, love-filled, fun-filled days.

Then came the Freedom struggle... The three seniors in our family Rajam Akka, Rajadurai Anna and Leila Akka were much involved in this. Rajadurai Anna went out into the field to participate in the Freedom movement. He was, for most of the time, underground evading the police hunting for him or in the British prison.

The two sisters, whenever they were home, enthused us - youngsters - with the national spirit, helping us to understand and admire Gandhiji and the ideals of the Independence struggle. I remember those many early mornings and evenings in those exciting 'forties' when Rajam Akka will take out her Charka, spinning the yarn for her sarees and telling us - the wide eyed children - in her very effective way about Gandhiji, about the Swadeshi concept and about the economics of Khadi. What I learnt and imbibed in those early days has influenced my life and my values all through these long years.

In 'mid forties' Akka was a pioneering Home Economics student and then a Lecturer in Queen Mary's College, Madras - now Chennai. My two younger sisters Chandra, Vimala and I were in boarding schools in Chennai, The Northwick in Royapuram and St. Paul's in Vepery. Akka will have me with her in her nice College quarters on the Marina for almost all weekends. On Sunday afternoons, she will make delicious "*Athirasams*", wrap them up into three packets for us three. I had to deliver the two packets to my sisters before I returned to my boarding home. And now, I have to make a confession to Akka. The two packets for Chandra and Vimala never reached them intact. Taking a two hours long tram journey from Mylapore to Royapuram, I had to keep myself occupied. Pinching a sizeable number of "*Athirasams*" justly and equally from the two packets was a pleasure atleast at that time!

Akka was selected to study in The Ohio State University, USA from among several hundred applicants. We had a festive get together in Chennai before her departure. Ayya Avinashilingam avargal, the Education Minister for the then Madras Presidency came to the College campus to bid farewell to Akka. This was the first time I saw him. The visionary gleam in his eyes, his countenance

radiating love, his crystal clear thinking and words and his abundant affection for children at once made me one of his ardent disciples.

From America, for three years, Rajam Akka will write us regularly long, long letters. I wish all of us had preserved those letters. A compilation would have made a meaningful travelogue and a nice portrait of America, an in depth comparative study of India and America. Akka was given a three year scholarship to do her Masters degree in Ohio State. She returned home in 2 years and 8 months with a M.A., a M.Sc., and a Ph.D. Degrees! Because of her exemplary studies and personality and the goodwill she created for the new Independent India in Ohio State, she was invited to address the Ohio State Legislature - rare honour for a foreign student.

The 'early fifties' .... I had wanted to be a Doctor but because of changes in admission rules, the First Group I had taken in my Intermediate Examination made me ineligible to apply to the Medical College. Disappointed, I became wayward. No amount of goading by our mother (she was determined to make all her nine children graduates) did not make me take to my B.A. studies seriously. I was withheld from writing the examination - of all reasons - for loss of attendance!. Akka was then in Baroda as Dean of the Faculty of Home Science in the prestigious MS University of Baroda. She took me to Baroda with the sole purpose of making me prepare for the final examinations, enrol me for a year's study to make up attendance and help me pass the examination.

Baroda... what a beautiful period that was. Akka was residing in a Bungalow in the University campus. I often found myself in the midst of many intellectuals gathering in her house. I felt myself being elevated to a higher plane...

when we fly up, we do feel the difference. In Baroda, I got another blessing also. Akka was commissioned by the Tamil Academy to translate Gandhiji's writings into Tamil. She had very full work during the day. In late evenings and many a time till past midnight, she will take up the translation work with me at her side helping. Akka's pursuit for excellence and her determination for details however small they are, made me learn so much - besides a large number of words in English and in Tamil. She was not a Chancellor then, but I feel that I had earned my doctorate in those few months in Baroda - in the Rajammal University. Looking back, I realise how grateful I am for that opportunity, though at that time it appeared tortuous. In addition to the benefit of a vast improvement in my English and Tamil vocabulary, I came to know Gandhiji more intimately, came to understand him fully and started looking at my beloved India in particular and the world in general through the eyes of Mahatma.

“சம்பவாமி யுடே யுடே”. As far as our family is concerned, Rajam Akka will be there whenever there is need for her involvement and inputs for our welfare and of our children. Some years ago, our son Rajadurai who dreamed of becoming an Engineer, did not qualify for a seat on merit. We are reconciled to his joining a Computer Science Programme in a local College. But Akka was aware of his and our dreams : Even without our asking, she took it upon herself to repeatedly approach the Management of a reputed Engineering College. Her request was strongly backed by Ayya Avinashilingam avargal. Today Rajadurai is an Engineer managing his own Computer business. What he is today is because of the love of Revered Ayya Avinashilingam avargal and my sister Rajam Akka and their showing this love in action.

So far, as the youngest brother of Rajam Akka, I had reminisced about the personal aspects in my relationship with Amma. While this is very fulfilling, my interaction with her for social service - especially service to disabled persons has given me and is giving me a greater and a loftier fulfilment.

In early eighties, I approached Revered Ayya Avinashilingam avargal and Rajam Akka to solicit their blessings and support for promotion of integrated education for blind children in Tamil Nadu. Usually there is much sympathy for such a cause, but, for great leaders involved in many great services, it does not merit priority. But Ayya and Amma were totally different. To them the least amongst us were the most important. To this day I am amazed at the way in which both of them came forward to help my Mission and me in this promotional work.

This amazement was experience even at the way in which they approached the issue. They ask for much background information, a variety of details to become fully knowledgeable about the why and how of the integrated approach. They placed two persons to head the programme in their respective institutions, encouraged everyone in their campuses to give their whole hearted co-operation for the success of the programme. A new Post Graduate Programme in the Faculty of Education (M.Ed., in IEVH) was instituted. Today there are nearly 200 Resource Teachers serving in over 150 schools assisting nearly 2000 blind and deaf children in the integrated set up.

Very soon, these numbers will multiply because of the advocacy of Rajam Akka who is persuading the Govt. of Tamil Nadu to make the integrated programme an integral part of the education system of Tamil Nadu. The time

and energy that she had given for this cause makes her a Patron of the disabled in Tamil Nadu.

Much to my surprise (and to be honest much to my reluctance) Ayya Avinashilingam Avargal nominated me as a Trustee on the Trust established in his name. As a Trustee, I am having repeated opportunities to see my beloved Akka in action promoting the ideals of the Trust and relentlessly pursuing its objectives. It is said of great that for them “no task is too big and no detail is too small”. Measured by this yardstick, Rajam Akka, the mini size Chancellor, towers above all with vision, vitality and perseverance.

Service, service and service ... Also service to the neediest and such service without delay ... today itself... are the motivations that drive this human dynamo ... I write these on the 1st Sep. '98. Just 4 days back, on 28 August '98, I was with Akka in New Delhi just for a day. She had that day allotted to me to take me to a Government Office and help me secure a much needed and inordinately delayed permit for our work. With her contacts and organisational skills, we went in to the office at 10.30 A.M. and 15 minutes later were told to come back the same evening to collect the order which we did. In those 15 minutes the people she met sensed her stature, her mission and her genuine concerns. I could see the respect that naturally developed in them. On that day, I followed Akka whenever she went to the University Grants Commission, to the All India Council for Technical Education, to the home of a very, very senior Govt. of India official. Wherever she went I saw those persons receiving her with great respect and warmth, listening to her with attention and responding to her needs with promptness. People of standing when they saw her passing by, rushed to greet her and pay their respects to her and this was done with a show of genuine admiration and affection.

What impressed me most was Akka's incessant effort to secure the recognitions and support for the Avinashilingam University. No task was too small for her. No task was beneath her status. She paid rich compliments to those who readily responded and helped and in unfamiliar places and with unknown persons, she did not take any offence at waiting or at the usually unfriendly, unconcerned attitudes. These never even bothered her.

In Delhi, we had stayed in Akka's friend's house an enormously rich but extremely humble family. When I was taking leave of them, the lady of the house looked at me and said “Bhaiya! you are fortunate to have such a sister”. Yes - akka it is a blessings to me to have you as my sister and to us.

**Akka, I want you to know that I am always touched by your love for us. I esteem all the good things that I have learnt from you and through you. I recognise the influence that you have exerted in my life from early years enhancing the quality of my life and my values. Your faith in me and hope in me are giving me much strength. I cherish with pride and joy that you are my sister and that I am your youngest brother Babu.**

**Thank you for being my sister.**

\*

## **RAJAMMAL P. DEVADAS - MY COUSIN**

**R. W. MICHAEL**

**D**r. Rajammal P. Devadas, M.A., M.Sc., D.Sc., Chancellor of Avinashilingam Deemed University is closely related to me as paternal cousin sister of first degree and maternal cousin sister of second step. My relationship with her was almost tripled by her marriage with her maternal uncle who was my maternal uncle of second degree.

For her good quality of education for meritorious pass in the S.S.L.C. examination, credit may go to high standard of teaching in All Saints Middle School for girls, Tiruchirapalli under the principalship of Ms. Schubert and Northwick Girls High School in Madras under the Principalship of Ms. Greenfield. In the course of her studies in the latter institution she was observed by the Principal as both diligent and intelligent. She passed her S.S.L.C. examination ranking first and winning gold medal from her high school. During summer holidays that followed S.S.L.C. examination, upon my advice, she purchased and read books for general knowledge and liberal pursuits including Encyclopedia Britannica. In the course of her study for intermediate examination in Annamalai University she had the benefit of hearing class lecture on English language and literature from the Vice-Chancellor, Right honourable V. Srinivasa Shastri. She graduated herself by studying in Queen Mary's College, Madras and got herself employed as a demonstrator in the same college on grounds of merit and distinction.

In view of her merits and distinctions in science she had a call from universities in United States of America with offer of scholarship for post graduate study.

To those who are curious, inquisitive and interested to know how Dr. Rajammal Devadas rose to eminence as a famous scientist of nutrition, educationist, philanthropist and gifted speaker apart from good quality of education received by her upto S.S.L.C. class, I answer thus.

Some are born great, some achieve greatness by dint of diligence, some by both intelligence and diligence. According to Carlyle, "Genius is a transcendent capacity to undertake pains". According to a poet, "Heights by greatmen reached and kept were not attained by sudden flight. But, they, while their companions slept, were toiling upward in the night". All the foresaid sayings are aptly applicable to Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas.

Leaving her intelligence as a quality of her head, the nobility of her mind and heart may be attributable to her ancestry, heredity and clan. நீர் அளவே ஆகுமாம் நீர் ஆம்பள், தவத்தளவே ஆகுமாம், தான் பெற்ற செல்வம், குலத்தளவே ஆகுமாம் குணம். She has descended from a feudal chief Chella Kongayam of ex-Kongayam Idayankulam, now called Srirangarajapuram of Tirunelveli district and a rich landlord called Anavarada Kongayam of Parkeneri who endowed an extensive estate to his ancestral shrine called Karudayar temple at Karikoil. Her father's eldest brother was a Police Officer of commanding and controlling personality who effectively enforced law and order and prevented rowdism and crimes in Palayamkotai and Tirunelveli towns from 1913 to 1920. Her father meritoriously passed every class upto B.A. degree examination, completed forest training course and rendered valuable service as forest range officer winning meritorious service medal. Her mother who after her marriage picked up reading, writing and numbering in Tamil with the help of her female friend was capable of mentally solving arithmetical equations, however hard. She was prudent in home management and culinary practice and social with neighbours and visitors. To the writer she was no less than a mother and her male partner, no less than a father.



Above all she was a heroic lady who at times of some troubles and tribulations faced all things, braved all things, suffered all things and endured all things for achieving her laudable aims. Dr. Johnson once observed 'Uncommon paths require uncommon opportunities for exertion and lamented that some of the talented young ladies known to him for want of opportunities had to spend the formative parts of their lives in suckling fools and chronoliling small beer. But in the case of Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas her outstanding talent evoked support from the United States of America for post graduate study there upto doctoral degree and her patriotic spirit for liberal service to her native country was specially contracted by late Revered Thiru Avinashilingam Chettiar, an ardent adherent of Ramakrishna cult and Gandhian tenets for educational, cultural and spiritual welfare of female students in and around Coimbatore. The collaboration between the founder of Sri Avinashilingam Home Science Educational Institutions in Coimbatore and Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas was more or less akin to those between Engels and Marx and between Dr. Paton and Dr. Savarirayan of Christian Ashram Tirupathur.

The founder afforded adequate fund, facilities and amenities and a free hand to his collaborator. The latter's, research work and publication, attracted liberal gift and donation from native and foreign countries to the insitution. Her own contribution of extra service and donations in cash to the institution are considerable. The administration is admirable for transparency and accountability. A platonic spirit of fraternity pervades among staff and students.

Sri Avinashilingam Home Science Deemed University and its distinguished Chancellor. Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas have attained their present status from the previous status as college and Principal respectively. May the Deemed University grow further to the status of a full fledged university like the Tagore's Shanthi Nikethan University in Calcutta.

In his lecture of 19.08.98 in Tiruvananthapuram reported on Indian Express, His Excellency P.C. Alexander, Governor of Maharashtra, observed to the effect that for Indian Christians, the Hindu heritage is as important as Christian faith and they follow both. In our family our great grand father who was the first convert to Christianity from Yadhava Kutta Idaya Community by baptism through Rev. Rhenius and our grand father who was christian by birth and baptism followed christian faith, ethics, marriage, baptism and funeral. In all other social and economic affairs they followed the ways of their Hindu ancestors.

Though joint family estate is not contemplated under Indian Christian law, our grand fathers estate was under defacts management of my father after whom it was under the management of my youngest paternal uncle. It has now been orally and roughly partitioned among the families of my grand father's four sons after gifting away a part as posthumous dowry for his only daughter. Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas family has come under this set up.

Happy is he who a few paternal acres own, as is observed by a poet. Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas' ownership of lands from forefathers in Thiruvambalapuram Parkeneri of Tirunelveli district and from her father in Vaniambadi, Thirupattur in North Arcot district are considerably vast in acres. The antiquity and sanctity of the former are matters of sentiment bearing expression in my words of English and Tamil. It has been well and good that Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas after acquisition of knowledge of science and culture from United States of America upto Doctoral degrees, far from draining her brain power in foreign strand chose to rainfeed female students in Coimbatore, the Manchestor of South India. The patriotic spirit with which she turned her steps homeward back to her native clan, evinces happy trends towards interests of native village. The native village that had been blessed with rain thrice in every month (மாதம் மூடமாரி) is now under the grip of drought for about three

continuous years without care by government or philanthropic organisations, we are considering ways and means how far we can save the situation.

Besides contribution of extra service and donation in cash to Sri Avinashilingam Home Science College and Deemed University trust fund she has led her father's family to create a charitable trust fund in the names of her parents and established under it medical and educational centres at Chengam and Tirupattur in North Arcot Dist. Now the history of our family is under her contemplation of writing and it may contain autobiographical matters. Her younger brother Thiru Rajadurai Michael is gathering material from oral traditions and recorded documents for writing the History of Yadavas from the time of their ancient glory to the present time of their backwardness.

Fear for imputation of self interest need not to deter us from writing History of Yadava Families and Community on grounds of truths extracted by FE.Parigiter from pranas. Even patriotism lauded by poets and politicians has been discredited by an international humanist as enlarged selfishness.

Besides writing history of our family and community, it is advisable for us to creat a Trust at Parkeneri in the name of our Great Grand Father Late Thiru Pallavesa Packiyantha Kangeya Ubathesiar endow it with R.S. 285 (4) 2.58 and its north adjunct 1.08 for opening of a park on a suitable part in the near future and for allotment of other parts for agricultural farms, memorial buildings, grave yard and burial ground in course of time.

Under our defacts joint family system in the past, under the general management of my father and local management of my first paternal uncle the relationship between patronising seniors and the dependent juniors under study was as observed by John Milton thus :

**A grateful mind by ouring owes not;  
but still paying and still to owe**

In the same manner I had warm receptions, hospitalities and gifts from Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas's father who was my paternal uncle of beneficial disposition. He instilled in his children's minds respect to me as a senior.

On the occasion of Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas's teenage marriage with her maternal uncle, my then unmarried eldest sister participated as bride's maid and I participated as the best man.

Sometime after her marriage when I was under difficulties to get a distantly related bride for me due to my then humble clerkship in the revenue department Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas was affectionate and interested enough to pick up penfriendship with the bride and bring about her marriage with me.

It is gratifying that I have lived upto the age of 89 years to bless my paternal cousin sister Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas on reaching her 80th birthday and wish for her longevity for helping our family, backward community and the public.

☆

# RAJAMMAKKA

R. A.G. MICHAEL CHELLIAH

**D**r. Rajammal P. Devadas is the eldest daughter of my father late Robert Michael's younger brother, late Packianathan Michael and my mother Late Lekshmi Ponnammal's first Cousin-sister late Sornam Packianathan. I am younger to Rajammakka by about 6 years. Though we are so closely knit, we are not able to mix up in our younger days as my father was serving the Police Department in Tirunelveli District and got settled down in Mudavankulam of the same district after retirement, whereas my uncle, late Packianathan, was working in the Forest Department in South and North Arcot District and his family got settled down in Tirupathur of North Arcot District.

I have first seen Rajammakka when I was about 20 years of age. I was working as clerk in the C.P.W. Department. During the period of my completing Intermediate Examinations and was staying in Wisely Hostel at Royapettah, Madras, I was sent out of the hostel, as I had to slap the chief cook for misbehaving with my guest at the dinner table. Then I approached Rajammakka with my bag and baggage who was running a mess of her own along with her sisters and brothers. In spite of the crowd there, she received me with a smiling face and allowed me to stay with them for many months till I joined Madras Christian College for further studies. Mrs. Sornam Packianathan (Ranger Chithi) was also there. She used to kiss me often, fed me well and treated me better than her own sons. Then on, I was in touch with them. After completing my B.Sc I joined them at their village abode "Brindavanam" in Tirupathur. There, I assisted them

in their cultivation, deepening of the wells and in their transport of their produce and cowdung manure in bullock carts. I remember in one of these trips through various fields, one middle aged man came shouting at me and Chelladurai Michael and without explaining, simply untied the bullocks from the yolks. I just jumped out of the cart and gave him a robust punch on his face. He fell down. Before he could stand up, we tied the bullocks to the cart and escaped from his field. Same night many villagers were seen in my aunt's Brindavanam Bungalow seeking justice. I did not appear on the scene. But my Ranger Chithi's Manager - cum - Agent late Thambu Naidu pacified them and explained that untying the bullocks from the yolk is considered as the most indecent insult heaped on a person in Thirunelveli District and hence the incident happened. Later my cousins used to narrate me that this punched person regularly enquire about my well being and was satisfied that I had joined a fitting Department like Customs and Central Excise with Kaki uniforms. During these few months of my stay at Tirupathur, Rajammakka was visiting us frequently and there also she showed lot of affection and care for me. Regularly all of us join for the open air dinner during moonlit nights supervised by Rajammakka. All the members of my uncle's family will be there viz. my cousins, Rajadurai Michael, Leila (now Mrs. Leila Diraviam), Chinna Durai (P.C. Robert), Chelladurai Michael (now in Canada), Gnanadurai Michael (Babu), Chandra (now Dr. Chandra), Kamala (now Mrs. Kamala Anandam in USA) and Vimala (now Mrs. Vimala Manoharan) and my nephew Mohan (now Dr. M. Devadas in Australia - Rajammakka's only son). Mohan used to be naughty in his younger days. He will spoil some one's served food or do something else to spoil the dinner party and will get beatings from elders. Eventhough I liked him and petted him, I will also contribute my mite occasionally in this kind of shock treatment. Rajammakka will patiently watch these activities

with motherly affection unperturbed. At this point I have to mention what I heard and learnt those days from my elder sisters and brothers (4 each in number) about my Ranger Uncle, father of Rajammakka. When my eldest brother Rajamoni Michael, my eldest sister late Ponnu Chakaravarthy and the next sister late Mrs. Chella Richards, visited Brindavanam of Tirupathur after taking their Madras University Masters' degrees and attending the Convocation, it was a celebration there for a fortnight. Our Ranger uncle alerted all his friends and colleagues about their visit. It was celebrated in such a way that it was a towns-talk and his own children were astonished and looked at their cousins with awe and respect. Little they knew then, that they were destined to become more qualified and internationally known people.

Later, I worked in Nellikuppam Sugar Cane Farm of Parry and Co. as Assistant Cane Inspector which job I got on the recommendation of Rajammakka's husband late Edward Devadas who was working in the Police Department in that area then. Soon I left it as I was selected as Inspector of Customs and Central Excise by a Committee comprised of three impartial European Officers of the Department in 1949 and joined at Dhanushkodi Customs. After four years of service there I opted for Trivandrum where my wife P. Muthammal (Rajam) (married in 1950) was working in the Secretariat. During this period I had no chance of meeting Rajammakka, as she was in the States for higher studies, later worked in Delhi Secretariat and at Baroda University. Only later when she joined Sri Avinashilingam Home Science College as Principal, we had the chance of meeting regularly at Trivandrum. She used to visit Trivandrum for Senate meetings and to preside over many seminars along with late Mrs. Lakshmi Menon, Ex-Central Minister. It was a great opportunity for me to watch Akka meeting

great people like Governors, Scientists, etc. and the way she becomes a very important person of the situation. During the visits, I used to escort her to our villages in Tamil Nadu where I have seen her sitting on the floor and chatting with our village relations with great interest and care. Due to my sincerity to the purpose and ability to manage, I was retained in Trivandrum area for more than 25 years by our Department. All these years and even after my retirement in 1982, I became the unofficial honorary Liaison Officer of Rajammakka for Kerala Region. All her itinerary and programmes of this area will be intimated to me in advance by her office. In turn I will contact all concerned people in advance and alert them. I will meet her at the Airport or Railway Station on her arrival, escort her and extend all assistance to make her trip a successful one. It was a great opportunity to watch her closely. She was simple, preferring and relishing vegetarian food, working all day tirelessly and sleeping only few hours at nights. She has the peace - of - mind and contentment so as to have a sound brief nap at any time she is free especially while travelling in the car or in between assignments. In the midst of all activities she visits my house with benevolent smile, enquires all details of the family welfare. She feels very homely in company of my wife and children. She remembers to bring gifts to my wife from her ward-robe. I remember one occasion in 1969 or so, when I was in-charge of Trivandrum Air Customs, I escorted Rajammakka for her early morning trips to various places and brought her to Airport to catch her flight to Madras. On entering the Customs area, my assistants told me, that a dozen foreign scientists after attending to senior level conference at the Space Centre in Thumba Rocket Station are waiting to be cleared for the International Exit flight. Then I thought of introducing Rajammakka to them as she had enough time to leave. On entering the hall, most of the Scientists stood up and greeted her as "Oh Dr. Rajammal P.

Devadas, when did you arrive here etc”. Then only I knew how much she was internationally known.

Let me cite finally an example of her sincerity and attachment to her friends also. Whenever Akka visits Trivandrum she never fails to visit Mrs. Lakshmi Menon, Ex-Central Cabinet Minister in her house at Cantonment area of Trivandrum city. She always takes imported cheese and other items for her. I cannot express fully the affection flowing between them throughout their meeting. I will be compelled to join them for the dinner or supper as the case may be. Then while taking leave, Akka never used to miss touching Mrs. Lakshmi Menon's feet and get her blessings. This was happening till Mrs. Menon expired in 1994 or so, at a time when Mrs. Menon had no good position and later when she was too old. I could watch and understand the quality of Rajammakka and her 'Akka' Mrs. Lakshmi Menon, both of them determined to do service to society.

About Akka's academic qualifications and achievements, I am not qualified enough to narrate. Many great people will contribute to reveal this side of great Akka.



# MY MOTHER - DR. RAJAMMAL P. DEVADAS

MOHAN DEVADAS

**“No one thinks of the pen while reading the letter. They only want to know the mind of the person writing the letter. That is exactly what I am in God’s hand - a little pencil”**

- Mother Teresa.

I am happy to write the following lines with the same spirit as the divine Mother Teresa.

My mother Rajammal is a great example of strength and perseverance under fire. As a little boy, my memories of my mother is that she was very loving and sacrificing. She is a perfect example of a Godly woman, content to be what she is and serve God with an uncompromising passion for God with the God given talents. From the time I knew her as a little toddler, to the present day, I have been seeing her with her little “Daily Light” carrying the words of God. No matter what the day could be, she is consistent with her Bible reading and devotions. If I learnt anything from my mother, it is her faith in God and hard work. My childhood was spent among farm animals and ordinary village folks. There were no role models for me at that stage. But my mother is my role model. This stage of my childhood can be summed up by this song by ‘Yanni’ who was introduced to me by my mother. Recently my mother told me about ‘Yanni’ who performed at the Taj Mahal. Months after she told me, I watched his performance on the television. More than admiring ‘Yanni’, I admired my mother who had this excellent sense of performing arts.

*“Was raining in my heart  
Falling deep inside of me  
Drowning in my soul  
This silence rushes over me  
I am breath against this fire  
And will not turn away  
I am waiting for time to carry me  
Like a tempest to the sea  
Standing strong  
Watching over  
Love will keep me believing  
Thru the dark ... can you hear  
me calling?  
Holding on when I'm dreaming  
Love is all ... Love is all.*

When I was seven years old, my mother asked me to speak about anything in a public meeting at Nagapattinam, where my father was working as a police officer at that time. My uncle Diraviam had just finished an excellent extempore speech which was loudly applauded. In the midst of many government officers and other learned people, I could only think of my two dogs at our farm. Both were called ‘Karuna’ (named so for expediency). I still love the name ‘Karuna’ because of my love for them. “I love dogs. They are man's best friends. If you love them they will be nice to you and loyal to you. If you are nasty to them they may chew your leg”. I received as much applause as my great uncle Diraviam did.

Many years later, when I attended the World Tamil Conference at Madurai, there was a special meeting arranged for the Honourable Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi to meet the overseas visitors like me. For several minutes no one came forward to say anything. My uncle Diraviam was present at this meeting as Chief Secretary of the Tamil Nadu Government. Courageously I went forward and said that I came from Australia representing Indian families. I just turned towards Mrs. Gandhi and said, “Madam we in Australia love you and admire you. You make us proud in the world” and wished her Godspeed. In this ‘speech’ I was an instant success. His Excellency, Mr. R. Venkatraman who was then the Defence Minister of India, later became the President of India, shook my hands in appreciation. This is what a mother can do for her son and am proud it is me.

My mother is the best mother that any human being would long to have. When I was a little boy, I knew more about her through her sisters. My father used to tell me that he was only my father for namesake but the real father and mother was my mother. Over the years my father had advised me on many things. Mostly, “If you want to be a success in life, honour your mother and get every blessing from your mother”. As a boy I watched always her praying. She used to shed lots of tears while praying. After I became fifty years old, I realised that those tears are precious joys of meeting the heavenly father through prayer. I realised that they were the ‘Holy Spirit’ initiated tears which I am getting now. Thank you mother!.

While my mother was far away in the United States of America, I developed a negative state of mind, always thinking that I was poor and weak and I cannot do or win anything in life. This attitude took a right about turn, when I came close to my mother after her return from the U.S.A. The changed

attitude or the state of mind that I can do all things through God's blessing, is responsible for my success in my life.

When I was a day old infant, I fell down from a high bed and nothing happened to me. When I was nearly a year old, I developed febrile seizures. My parents thought that they nearly lost me. The next time when I travelled through the valley of the shadow of death, was when I was a toddler. One day during lunch, I went out to answer the call of nature. Since I was a toddler who went out in a hurry but did not return to complete the lunch, the worried relatives came out to see why I was delayed. To their horror and shock they found me happily weeing on a deadly cobra. They somehow redeemed me before a fatal attack by the cobra. The next time when I faced death was when I was bitten by a huge red scorpion. The red scorpion was killed and I survived. The fun loving relatives nick named me "FAIR SCORPICN" which stayed with me most of my life. While I was living in the farm, many a time I stepped on different types of snakes and yet no harm was done to me. I sincerely believe that I am alive because of the power of prayer of my mother for me.

Recently I heard a story from a lady patient who was visiting Australia from Canada. There was a young man from Sri Lanka who had settled in Toronto, Canada. He successfully obtained a visa for his parents from Kilinochi near Jaffna to be with him in Canada. After a couple of weeks' journey, passing through customs and security checks and electronic checks, they reached Toronto. When the son opened their suitcase, a cobra jumped out and bit him in the neck. He died instantly. I rest my case.

My mother often reminded me of the verse from the Bible, psalm 91. "Surely He shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome

pestilence. He shall cover thee with His feathers and under His wings shall thou trust. His truth shall be thy shield and buckler. Thou shall tread upon the lion and the adder, the young lion and the serpent shall though trample under feet”.

How true are the words of God and how pertinent that my mother delivered them to me.

My mother is the role model for me for my educational development. Ayya Avinashilingam used to say that education would reshape even the dull and the backward. I was not doing well in my high school. My mother shrewdly enrolled me at the Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya at Perianaickenpalayam under Ayya Avargals guidance, while she was working with the Government of India at New Delhi. The Vidyalaya had moulded me as a well rounded personality. Not only I developed a motivation for education, thanks to my mother, and Ayya Avargal that I developed patriotism and the fear of God. My mother helped me to write a book in Tamil and another one English. “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things which are not seen”. My mother's advice to me has been always to have faith in God and His commandments. Following this advice has kept me unshakable in faith from my youth.

As I faced storms of life, my faith increased. My trust in God increased. When I was in the USA, I faced many a storm. Thanks to my mother's advice I came out of them victoriously. I am writing these not only to honour my mother who is turning 80 years, but also advise any reader to be a role model to his / her children. A total commitment of faith brings rich dividends.

It is great honour to mention some of the names of my mother's great friends whom I loved dearly. Foremost among them would be Mrs. Lakshmi N.

Menon. She was the External Affairs Minister under Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. She was a great leader and a great role model. I admired her greatly. Dr. Flemmie Kitrell was from the USA. She was a great friend and a great Professor. I was very fortunate to meet her in Baroda and kept in touch with her till she passed away. She visited Australia in 1976 and we enjoyed meeting her.

The following friends are in the USA. Dr. Gertrude Esteros a Professor at the University of Minnesota. Throughout my stay at the USA she looked after me very well. Dr. Margaret Doyle another Professor at the University of Minnesota also was my guardian. Dr. Moira Breen from India, a classmate of my mother now lives in Chicago deserves a mention for her love. I am grateful to all of these friends.

Ayya Avinashilingam was my spiritual father. (The very title Ayya would mean father!) He was a great teacher, educationist, spiritual and moral crusader and a great statesman. Over the years I came across so many politicians and community leaders like Perarignar Anna Avargal. But Ayya was the best of them all. It is a pity that the so called current leaders do not follow the footsteps of Ayya Avargal. As a result, the level of politics in India has sunk to the lowest. The redemption is to follow the footsteps of Ayya Avargal and appreciate his contributions to India's political scene.



# **MY MOTHER IN-LAW**

## **Dr. RAJAMMAL P. DEVADAS**

MARY DEVADAS

**W**hile I was working as a nurse in Sydney, Australia, my husband Dr. Mohan was introduced to me by a friend who knew that I had gone to Australia from India for work, but did not have my address. After a great deal of effort she reached me through a letter which indicated that Dr. Mohan would like to come to Australia for work and it would be appreciated if I could pass on some information about the Indian doctors practising in Australia. After a series of correspondence, it turned out that this doctor not only wanted to come to Australia, but also marry me! I was determined not to marry while in Australia but return to India after learning and earning enough to live among our community so that I could care for the sick and the suffering. The persistence manifested in continued correspondence (sometimes phone calls) on Dr. Mohan's part had drawn me closer to this great friend. The friendship began to blossom forth as love. My dreams changed, with the advent of the reality of life that it was a commitment in my heart without even seeing each other. Our friendship grew over the months into an unique relationship and we were married during the first month he arrived in Australia in June 1975.

Dr. Mohan was extremely reverential towards his mother. He was very careful that I will not displease her in anyway. I had not met this great mother, till our son Michael was born in June 1976. Only when Michael was born, Dr. Mohan had informed his mother about our marriage and the arrival of the child. I must here state one incident. When I was working at Royal South Sydney

Hospital for a brief season, (I was already pregnant with Michael) a phone call came from India from Dr. Devadas to Dr. Devadas. The receptionist answered, 'Dr. Devadas' is unable to answer the call and would she like to speak to Mrs. Devadas (me). The answer was 'no'.

After that incident Mohan had to introduce me to his mother. Gradually, he succeeded in getting the message across. On one fine day I received a letter from Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas from Coimbatore. This letter is one of the treasures in my life. The contents were full. I remember one sentence. "**Love never fails**". This was a very positive, friendly and encouraging letter. It gave me the first contact with Amma. Amma arrived in Australia in June 1976 in time for Michael's baptism/dedication along with Sharada who was 5 years old (Sharada is the eldest and the only daughter through Mohan's previous marriage with Raji). We lived at that time, in the official quarters of a country hospital at Lithgow, New South Wales, which is about three and a half hours travel by car from Sydney airport. Lithgow, being on the Blue mountains is a cold isolated place.

Amma's presence with us was enjoyable and delightful. I remember that the days she spent with us were hectic. Either visitors were pouring in or contacts were being made through telephone calls. She received the visitors with a friendly smile and gesture.

After observing her during those few days of her stay with us my opinion of Amma was not certainly the same, as I was made to believe. My own mother is illiterate. In this Amma I found my mother-in-love. I am now blessed with great worth both in wisdom and knowledge. Academically who can match her? Had I known the ties with this grand person - the mother - before I fell in love with my husband, would I be writing these pages?

The mother I know in Amma certainly reminds me of the saying that great things come in small packages. Amma has an unusual talent and enormous energy to press on till her goal is reached. Can I confess something? During each visit of Amma to us we are so hectic. It takes more than two months to revive! After I recognised the exhaustive nature of her visits, I began to prepare myself mentally and physically for Amma's ensuing visits.

In Australia we have no one (servants) to help us in household work, except one's own family, that too if they are willing. In this regard there have been some stubborn arguments with the children and me. Amma helped me to learn how useless it is to argue, instead of being productive to solve the problems dealing with the issues that can be agreed upon.

From time to time a few colleagues of Amma have visited our home with her. We have had wonderful times with them. It is marvelous to see and experience first hand, through those visitors, the motivation behind this great woman of India. She is not a mother just for her son but mother to all. In my observations, the highest qualities I admire in Amma are :

1. Her faith in God and prayerfulness
2. Her dedication to the Avinashilingam Institutions and the University
3. Her love for the family and ever thoughtful discharge of her duties to every member of the large family - attending ceremonies, functions and special events showering gifts
4. Service mindedness
5. Carrying out many tasks at the same time and travelling often-the only sleep that she gets appears to be while travelling.
6. Personal discipline - waking up in the early hours, meditation with Bible reading and prayers before starting the day's activities. (because of the very heavy schedule she sleeps only for few hours in the early mornings)

Whenever I visited Amma in Coimbatore I had tried to sit up with her in the nights thinking that it was the precious time available for us to be together. But soon I would fall asleep but Amma would be up till 2 a.m. most days and get up again before 5 a.m.

With such a loving mother, my fears of a 'mother in law' disappeared and I am very glad Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas is my 'mother in love'. I am the most blessed woman who has had the privilege of knowing her so closely. Her values and innovative ideas are priceless. We as a family are blessed immensely.

Amma would arrive in the airport in Sydney. Michael and Sorna (grandsons) would hug her and say, 'Paatti can we play scrabble?' Paatti would have no hesitation to play scrabble with them. Now that Michael is 22 and Sorna is 20 years old, their desire to play scrabble with Paatti is not diminished.

Amma will soon turn 80. We are more bonded together although living far away. We thank God for His grace that leads Amma and guides her steps. My greatest happiness is to know Amma and to be able to receive her love and affection. Amma has generously blessed me with many valuable gifts, the best of all being her only son who is the love of my life. Amma, you are the woman that the Bible states in proverbs 31:29 "Many daughters have done virtuously, nobly and well (with the strength of character that is steadfast in goodness) but you excel them all". Praise the Lord!



## அன்பான அத்தை

கஸ்தூரி கணபதி

‘பெரிய அத்தை’ எனக்குள் எப்போதும் ஒரு கிளர்ச்சியை ஏற்படுத்தும் வார்த்தை அது. எப்போதும் புன்சிரிப்பு, உள்ளத்துக்குள் ஆயிரம் கவலைப் பிரச்சனைகள் இருப்பினும் எதையும் வெளிக்காட்டாது எதிரே இருப்பவர் நலனிலேயே அக்கறை காட்டும் அத்தை, இவர்தான் டாக்டர் இராசம்மாள் பா. தேவதாஸ். இன்றுவரை எனக்கு இன்னொரு தாயாக விளங்கி என் நலனில் ஆர்வம் காட்டுபவர்கள். எந்த நிலையிலும் என்னை முழுமையாகப் புரிந்து கொண்டவர்கள். இப் புரிந்து கொள்ளுதல் அவர்களின் மகத்தான எந்த கால கட்டத்திலும் மாறாத இயல்பு. எந்த வயதினரையும் எந்த சூழ்நிலையிலும் இயல்புடன் ஒத்து நோக்கும் மனப்பாங்கு உடையவர். எவருடனும் எளிதாக ஒரு நெருக்கத்தையும் அணுகக்கத்தையும் ஏற்படுத்திக் கொள்பவர்கள். அதுதான் ஒரு தாய்மையின் ஸ்பரிசம்.

கடந்த காலத்தைத் திருப்பிப் பார்க்கும் போது இந்த ஸ்பரிஸத்தின் பரிமாணத்தை கண்டறியும் வாய்ப்புக்களை காலத்தின் கட்டாயம் மிக அதிகமாகவே எனக்கு அளித்துள்ளது. சில ஆண்டுகளுக்கு முன் மிகவும் நெருக்கடியான சூழ்நிலையில் மருத்துவமனையில் இருக்கும் பொழுது ‘இப்போது மட்டும் பெரிய அத்தை மடியில் ஒரு நிமிடம் தலை சாய்த்தால் எனக்கு நிம்மதி கிடைக்கும்’ என்று என் மகளிடம் ஏங்கும் அளவிற்கு அந்த தாயின் அரவணைப்பு என்னைத் தாலாட்டியுள்ளது.

சிறுவயதில் அவர்கள் ஊருக்குப் போகும் பொழுது அவர்களது கைக்குட்டையொன்றை வாங்கி வைத்துக் கொள்வேன். காரணம் அவர்கள் நினைவு வரும்போதெல்லாம் அதனை எடுத்து முகத்திற்கருகில் வைத்துக்

கொண்டால் அதிலிருந்து வரும் நறுமணம் அவர்கள் பக்கமிருப்பது போல் ஏக்கத்தை நீக்கும். அதுபோல், இப்பொழுதும் நினைவு ஏடுகளைத் திருப்பும் பொழுது அத்தையின் ஸ்பரிசத்தை உணர்கின்றேன்.

அவர்களின் அடுத்த சகோதரி எனது அத்தை திருமதி லீலா திரவியம். என்னோடு பழைய நினைவுகளைப் பகிர்ந்து கொள்ளும் போதெல்லாம், 'நீ' எங்கள் சகோதரனுக்கு பிறந்ததில் எனக்கும் அக்காவிற்கும் பெருமகிழ்ச்சி. மோகனுக்கு அடுத்தாற்போல் பெண்ணாய் நீ பிறக்கவும் ஆனந்தத்திற்கு அளவே இல்லை. உன்னை விதவிதமாக அலங்கரிக்கவும் உடைகள் தயாரிக்கவுமே எங்கள் விடுமுறை நாட்களை நானும் அக்காவும் பயன்படுத்துவோம். துணி இல்லாவிட்டால் பாட்டியின் புதுப்புடைவைகளைச் சிறிது வெட்டி எடுத்தாவது தைத்து விடுவோம். உனக்கு போலியோ நோய் தாக்கியபோது அவர்கள் வெளிநாட்டில் இருந்தார்கள். கடிதம் மூலம் கேள்விப்பட்டு சாப்பிடாமல் தூங்காமல் அழுது அழுது மயங்கி விழுந்து குடல் அழற்சி நோயே அவர்களுக்கு வந்து விட்டது. அவ்வளவு பிரியம் உன்மேல் என்பார்கள். பெரிய அத்தையும் அப்படித்தான் ஒரு பிள்ளை போல வளர்த்தார்கள். எனது சிகிச்சையில், வளர்ச்சியில், கல்வியில், திருமண வாழ்வில், குழந்தைப் பேற்றில் எல்லாவற்றிலும் இன்று உடல் நலிந்துள்ள கால கட்டம் வரை தாயாகத் தான் என்னைக் கவனிக்கிறார்கள். இத்தகு பாசம் இயல்பாகவே அவர்களுக்கு தன்னுடன் பிறந்தவர், அவர்கள் பிள்ளைகள் மீது உண்டு. தன் மகனும் நாங்களும் ஒன்று தான். டாக்டர் மோகன்தாஸுக்கு இளமையில் தாயிடம் இருந்த குறைபாடே இதுதான். வருகின்ற சில நாட்களும் இவர்களது கவனிப்பிலே போய்விடுகிறது. எனக்கு நேரம் ஒதுக்குவதுமில்லை. என்னை மகன் என்றே மறந்து விடுகிறீர்கள் என்று பெரிதும் குறைப்படுவார். இளவயதில் தந்தையை இழந்த தன் உடன்பிறப்புக்களைத் தனது சொந்தப் பிள்ளைகளைப் போல் கவனித்த அந்த தாயன்பு இன்று அவர்கள் பிள்ளைகளின் பிள்ளைகளிடமும் தொடர்வது ஒரு சிறப்பாகும்.

பெண்கல்வியும் அவர்கள் இளமையிலிருந்தே ஆர்வங்கொண்டிருந்த ஒரு துறையாகும். என் இளம் பிராயத்தில் உடல் நலக் குறைவால் பள்ளிப் படிப்பு தடைபட்டிருந்த போது அந்தந்த வயதிற்குரிய பாடத்திட்டங்களோடு புத்தகங்கள் கூட கூடையாக நானிருக்கும் இடந்தேடி அனுப்புவதோடு தங்கள் படிப்பு முடிந்து வீட்டில் இருக்கும் அதை, சித்தப்பாவுக்குக் கற்றுக் கொடுக்கும் பொறுப்பும் ஒப்படைப்பார்கள். அதோடு ஒரு நாள் வந்து தங்கினால் கூட அவைகளைப் பற்றி விவாதிப்பதோடு பொறுமையாக எவ்வளவு பெரிய மனிதர்களுடன் எவ்வளவு முக்கியமானதைப் பற்றிப் பேசினாலும் எங்கள் சந்தேகங்களை உடனுக்குடன் தீர்த்து வைப்பார்கள். எத்துணை சிக்கலான செய்தியாயினும் அறிவியல், நாட்டு உலக நடப்பு, சமையல் எதுவாயினும் எளிதாக எங்கள் வயதிற்கேற்ப புரியும் படியாக விளக்குவதில் வல்லவர்கள். மற்றவர்கள் கற்றுக் கொள்ள வேண்டும் என்பதில் அவர்கள் நிலை, நேரம் எல்லாம் மறந்து அவர்களுக்கு இயல்பான ஊடகத்தில் தொடர்பு கொள்வார்கள்.

சிறு வயதில் எங்களைப் பொறுத்தவரை அவர்கள் ஒரு அத்தைதான். மற்ற அருமை பெருமைகளைப் புரிந்து கொள்ளும் பக்குவம் கிடையாது. பிரிந்து போகிறார்களே என்ற ஏக்கத்தில் ஏன் வேலை பார்க்க வேண்டும்? எங்கள் அம்மா மாதிரி வீட்டிலேயே இருந்து விடுங்களேன் என்று கேட்பதுண்டு. அதுவும் டாக்டர் மோகன்தாஸ் அவர்கள் தனது அம்மா பிரிவைத் தாங்காது தவிக்கும் போது எல்லா அம்மாவையும் போல் நீங்களும் வீட்டிலிருந்தால் என்ன என்று பலமுறைத் தாக்கலாக வரும்போதும் கூட 'என்ன செய்வது இத்தனை பேருக்கும் காசு வேண்டுமே' என்று பதில் வருமே தவிர தன்னைப் பற்றித் தன் திறமைகளைப் பற்றி எப்போதுமே பேசியதில்லை.

அதோடு எத்தனை பெரிய பதவி அந்தஸ்து இருந்தாலும் வீட்டைப் பொறுத்தவரை அவையையெல்லாம் மறந்து போன இல்லத்தரசிதான்.

தில்லியில் அவர்களுடன் சில மாதங்கள் வைத்திய சிகிச்சைக்காகத் தங்கியிருந்தேன். வெளி நாட்டிலிருந்து இந்தியா வந்து மத்திய அரசில் துணைச் செயலராக சமூக மேம்பாட்டுத்துறையில் பணியேற்ற காலம். லேடி இர்வின் மனையியல் கல்லூரியில் உதவி முதல்வர் என்ற பதவியிலும் உபரியாக இருந்தார்கள். சில நேரங்களில் காலை ஏழுமணிக்கே அந்த டில்லிக் குளிரில் வெளியே போக வேண்டியிருக்கும். மாலையும் இரவு நேரங்கழித்தே வீடு திரும்புவார்கள். ஆனாலும் புறப்படும் முன் என் உணவை சிகிச்சையினை மேற்பார்வையிடுவது பகலில் மருத்துவமனைக்கு அழைத்துச் செல்வது என்று எதனையும் புறக்கணித்ததில்லை. இதைவிட அவர்கள் அன்பைக் காட்டும் இன்னொரு செயல் மாலையில் வீட்டுக்கு நேரத்தோடு திரும்பினால், சௌத் பிளாக்கிலிருந்து இர்வின் கல்லூரி வரை நடைபாதையில் கொட்டியிருக்கும் மலர்களை நடந்தே சேகரித்துக் கொண்டு தருவார்கள். (சிறு வயதில் மலர்கள் என்றால் எனக்கு அப்படியொரு ஆசை. என்னைப் பார்க்கும் போதெல்லாம் வழியில் விலைக்கு வாங்கும் மலர்கள் போதாது என்று தனக்குப் போடும் மலர்மாலைகளை மிகவும் பாதுகாப்புடன் வாடாது கொண்டு சேர்ப்பார்கள். நான் கோணல் மாணலாக தொடுக்கும் வண்ண மலர்ச் சரங்களையும் ஆசையோடு தலை நிறைய வைத்துக் கொள்வார்கள்) அதே போல் காலையிருட்டிலும் எனக்காக விடுதி வாசலருகே பூக்கும் பாரிஜாத மலர்களையும் சேகரிப்பார்கள்.

இப்படி இளவயதின் நினைவு ஏடுகளைப் புரட்டும் போது எத்தனையோ அத்தையின் அருமைகளைப் பெருமைகளை வெளிப்படுத்தும். இவை எல்லாவற்றிலும் மேலானது அவர்களது சுயநலக் கலப்பற்ற தியாகங்கள்; சேவைகள்.

தந்தையை இளம்வயதிலே இழந்தும் கல்வியறிவில்லாத் தாய்க்கு உற்ற தலைமகளாய் இருந்தும் அந்த குடும்பத்தின் முழுபொறுப்பேற்ற தனக்குக் கீழுள்ள தம்பி தங்கையரின் நலன் பேணுதலே முதற்

குறிக்கோளாய் அமைந்தது. சொந்த மகனை நினைத்திருந்தால் பெரும் கல்வி நிலையங்களில் சேர்த்தோ இல்லை தில்லியிலோ தன்னுடன் தங்கி கல்வி பயிலவோ வைத்திருக்கலாம். மேல் தட்டு வாழ்க்கை முறையில் இருவரும் வாழ்ந்திருக்கக் கூடும். ஆனால் கூட்டுக் குடும்பத்தில் அவர்களுக்கிருந்த நம்பிக்கையிலும் தம் தம்பி தங்கையரும் தன் பிள்ளைகளே என்ற எண்ண உணர்விலும் தன் தாயிடமே பிள்ளையை வளர்க்கும் பொறுப்பை ஒப்படைத்து தன் வருமானத்தையும் அவர்களிடமே கொடுத்தார்கள். கடைசித் தங்கையின் திருமணம் வரை இந்நிலையில் அவர்கள் மாறவும் இல்லை.

அதேபோல் வெளிநாட்டில் தன் தகுதிக்கேற்ப வேலை, வருமானம் கிடைத்தாலும் அவைகளைப் பொருட்படுத்தாது, தனது திறமையும் கல்வியும் தனது சொந்த தேசத்திற்கே பயன்பட வேண்டும் என்றே நினைத்து மேற்படிப்பு முடிந்ததும் இந்தியாவிற்குத் திரும்பி விட்டார்கள். இன்றைக்கு இந்திய நாட்டில் எத்தனையோ வாய்ப்புகள் காத்திருந்தாலும் மேல் நாட்டு மோகம் காரணமாக வெளி நாடுகளுக்குப் போய்க் குடியேறும் அறிவியல் விற்பன்னர்கள் நடுவில் அன்றைக்கு பணத் தேவை இருந்தும் அமெரிக்கப் பல்கலைக் கழகங்கள் விரும்பி அழைத்தும் பொருளும் புகழும் பெரிதல்ல என நாட்டுக்கே தன்னை அர்ப்பணித்தார்கள்.

பின்னர் ஐயாவின் மூலம் நமது கல்வி ஸ்தாபன பொறுப்பை ஏற்கும் அழைப்பு வந்தபோதும், இதேபோல் அரசில் பல உயர் பதவிகள் காத்திருந்தும் எல்லாவற்றையும் ஒதுக்கிவிட்டு இந்நிறுவனத்தை உருவாக்கும் பொறுப்பை ஏற்றுக் கொண்டார்கள். கிட்டத்தட்ட நாற்பது வருடங்கள் வேறு எந்த சிந்தனையும் இல்லாது மற்ற எல்லா நோக்கங்களையும் முடக்கிக் கொண்டு முழு அர்ப்பணிப்பால் இந்த ஆலமரத்தை உருவாக்கியுள்ளார்கள். துவக்க காலங்களில் ஒரே அறையில் தங்கி, தன் வசதிகளைக் குறைத்து ஊதியம் வாங்காமல் உழைத்ததோடு வெளிநாட்டுப் பல்கலைக் கழகங்களில் உரையாற்ற கிடைக்கும்

வெகுமானங்களைக் கூட புத்தகங்களாகவும் அறிவியற் கருவிகளாகவும் கொண்டு வந்தார்கள். நமது நிறுவனத்தில் பயிலும் போதுதான் என்னைப் போன்றவர்கள் அவர்கள் முழுப் பரிமாணத்தையும் ஓரளவாவது புரிந்து கொண்டோம் என்றால் மிகையாகாது. கல்லூரியில் அவர்களைப் பார்க்கும் போது எனக்குள் இது நமது அத்தைதானா? என்றே பிரமிப்பு ஏற்படும். எப்படி இவர்களால் எல்லாப் பெருமைகளையும் ஒதுக்கிவிட்டு எளிமையான நமக்கு ஏற்ற அத்தையாக மாற முடிகிறது என்ற வியப்பு என்னை சூழ்ந்துக் கொள்ளும், கல்லூரியில் நான் இருந்த மூன்று ஆண்டுகளிலும் வகுப்பறையில் நான் கற்றதை விட அத்தையிடம் முறை சாராக் கல்வியாகக் கற்றதுதான் அதிகம். விடுதியில் இருந்தாலும் வார விடுமுறையில் தன்னுடன் அழைத்து வைத்துக் கொள்வதாகட்டும், அன்றைக்கு எப்படியாவது வெளியே தன்னுடன் அழைத்து செல்வதிலாகட்டும் ஒருபோதும் மறந்ததும் இல்லை, மாறியதும் இல்லை. அந்நேரங்களில் நான் அவர்களிடம் கற்றதே அதிகம். அவர்கள் கற்றுத்தரும் கல்வி வாழ்வியலோடு இயைந்தே இருக்கும். இன்றைக்கும் அவை என் வாழ்க்கையில் கைகொடுக்கிறது என்பதே அதற்குச் சான்று. வெறும் யந்திரத்தனமான கல்வியையோ வாழ்வையோ என்றும் அவர்கள் ஆதரித்ததில்லை. விடுதியில் இருந்தாலும், தினமும் சந்தித்தாலும் உணவுமுறைச் சந்திப்புக்காகவே இந்த வார விடுமுறைகளைப் பயன்படுத்தி விட்டு ஏக்கம் வராமல் பார்த்ததோடு தனிப்பட்ட செய்திகளையும் பரிமாறி அத்தை மருமகள் உறவின் நெருக்கம் கலையாது பார்த்துக் கொண்டார்கள். அந்த விடுமுறை நாட்களில் தான் ஊரில் இருக்க இயலாது என்று திட்டமிருந்தால் உடனே நம் கல்லூரியில் பணிபுரிந்த எனது சகோதரியிடமே அருகாமையிலிருந்த சகோதரனையோ அழைத்துச் செல்ல ஏற்பாடு செய்து விடுவார்கள். இது அவர்களின் எளிமையான கூட்டுக் குடும்ப சூழலுமான இயல்பையே எடுத்துக் காட்டுகிறது. எத்தனை மேன்மைகளைப் பெற்றாலும் பொறுப்புக்களின் அமையும் நிர்வாகச்

சுமையும் இருந்தபோதும் தனது கடமை மறக்காது, தட்டிப் போடாது நடக்கும் ஒரு எளிய பெண்ணாகவே இருக்கிறார்கள் இருந்து வருகிறார்கள் என்பதே இதன் வெளிப்பாடாகும்.

இங்கு, அவர்கள் தெய்வப் பக்தியைப் பற்றியும் கூற வேண்டும். அவர்கள் தாயும் தகப்பனும் ஊட்டி வளர்த்த மாண்பு இது. கிறிஸ்தவ பாரம்பரியத்தில் வந்தாலும் மற்ற மதங்களை மதித்து நடப்பவர்கள். ஆனால் ஒரு நல்ல கிறிஸ்தவராக வாழ்ந்து வருவதோடு அதன் முறைமைகளில் ஆழ்ந்த நம்பிக்கையுடையவர்கள். அவர்கள் எங்களுக்குள் எழுப்பிய அடிப்படைத் தெய்வ பக்திதான் இன்னும் திட நம்பிக்கையை எங்களுக்குள் வளர்த்துள்ளது. 'உன்னைப் போல் பிறரை நேசி' என்ற கோட்பாட்டை மிக உறுதியாகப் பின்பற்றுவதே அவர்களை மற்றவர் முன் பலவீனப் படுத்துகிறதோ என்ற அச்சம் எனக்குள் பலமுறை எழும். அந்த அளவிற்குத் தன்னைப் போல் பிறரை நேசித்து அவர்கள் துயரை உள் வாங்கி உடனடி உதவுவார்கள். இதே போல் மாறாத நேசமும் மற்றவர்கள் மேல் காட்டுவார்கள். தனது இடது கை செய்வது வலது கைக்கு தெரியக் கூடாது என்ற உயரிய நோக்கம் உடையவர்கள். இதற்கு எடுத்துக்காட்டாக ஒன்றைச் சொல்ல விரும்புகிறேன். நான் நமது கல்லூரியில் படிக்கும் போது (Merit Scholarship) ஒன்று எனக்குக் கிடைத்தது. கிடைப்பதை வேண்டாம் என்று சொல்லாது வாங்கச் சொன்னார்கள். ஆனால் அதே சமயம் அதை எனக்குப் பயன்படுத்தவும் அவர்கள் மனம் இடம் தரவில்லை. நமக்குப் போதுமானதை இறைவன் தந்திருக்கிறார். அதை இன்னொரு ஏழை மாணவிக்குக் கொடுத்தால் உதவியாகும் என்று சொல்லி ஒரு வசதியற்ற பெண்ணுக்குக் கொடுக்கும்படிச் சொல்லி ஏற்பாடு செய்துவிட்டார்கள். கல்லூரியில் நான் வாங்கியது என் சக மாணவிகளுக்குத் தெரியும். ஆனால் கொடுப்பது வேறொருவருக்கும் தெரியாது. காரணம்

வெளியில் சொன்னால் அந்தப் பெண்ணுக்கு வெட்கமாக இருக்கும்; சொல்லக் கூடாது என்றும் உறுதி வாங்கிக் கொண்டார்கள். இதனால் சுக மாணவிகள் அவர்கள் மருமகளுக்கே உதவித் தொகையா? என்று கிண்டல் செய்வார்கள். மேலும் நான் வாங்கியதற்கு அத்தாட்சி கல்லூரி அலுவலகத்தில் உள்ளது. கொடுத்ததற்கு எந்த சாட்சியும் கிடையாது. பின்னர் வெகு நாட்கள் கழித்து கிட்டத்தட்ட முப்பது வருடங்களுக்குப் பின்னர் பேச்சு வாக்கில் நீ கூட நம் கல்லூரிக்கு கடன் பட்டிருக்கிறாய். உதவித் தொகை வாங்கியுள்ளாய் என்று கூறினார்கள். நான் அதற்கு விளக்கம் சொன்னதும் அவர்கள் திகைப்படைந்தார்கள். கொடுப்பதை மறந்து 'தினைத் துணையாயினும் பனைத்துணையாய் நன்றி செலுத்தும் மாண்பு அவர்களுடையது'. 'மதர்திரேஸா' வைப்போல் கொடுப்பதற்காக கேட்பதில் அவர்கள் வெட்கம் பாராட்டுவதில்லை.

எண்பதாண்டு நிறைவு விழா நேரத்தில் அவர்களின் செயல்களை சிந்திக்கும் போது இன்னும் வியப்பைத் தான் தருகிறது. சின்னச்சின்ன அறிவியல் கண்டுபிடிப்புகள் கூட பெருமளவில் பேசப்படும் இக்கால கட்டங்களில் இந்நாட்டுப் பெண்களின் நலத் திட்டங்கள், மழலையர் மேம்பாட்டுத் திட்டங்களுக்காக இவர்கள் தன் பெயர் வராது அர்ப்பணித் திருக்கும் அர்ப்பணிப்புகளை இறைவன் சந்நிதியில் படைத்து இன்னும் பல்லாண்டுகள் திடமும் பலனும் உயிர்ப்பும் ஜீவனுமாய் வாழ்ந்து எங்கள் குடும்பத்திற்கும் நமது தேசப் பெண்ணியத்திற்கும் அவர்கள் அர்ப்பணிப்புகள் தொடர இறைவனை வேண்டுகின்றேன். அதோடு நமது பல்கலைக் கழகத்திற்கும், இந்தியப் பெண்ணினத்திற்கும் அர்ப்பணிக்கப்பட்ட தன் வாழ்க்கையில் அவர்கள் துறந்த மேன்மைகள் விருதுகள் பலப் பல. எனவே வருங்காலத்திலாவது இத்தேசம் முக்கியமாக தமிழகம் அவர்களை முழுமையாக கௌரவித்து பெருமையுடன் போற்ற வேண்டும் என்றும் இறைவனை வேண்டுகின்றேன்.

# MY BELOVED AUNT

VIJAYALAKSHMI D. DURAISWAMY

To others, Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas may be a highly educated scholar, a recipient of many awards and honors, an eminent educator recognized throughout the world as a Home Science and nutrition expert, a leader in the field of education of Indian women, a mentor for many Indian Home Science and Nutrition scholars, an achiever who has excelled in areas she has entered, a person who has many accomplishments to her credit and a record of excellence which she has built over the years with tireless dedication, boundless energy and single - minded devotion.

To me, however, she is “Periamma”. As my mother's only older sister, she is my only “Periamma”, that is, Great Aunt. My earliest childhood recollections of her is as someone who was well-known, very busy, very energetic, travelled all over the world, participated in many ‘adventures’ and knew a lot of famous people. We lived in Madras and Periamma would often visit us when she returned from one of her trips abroad. She had interesting stories to tell, experiences to share and interesting purchases and gifts to distribute. Of all the interesting purchases, for some reason, a “two piece swimsuit” from the U.S. comes to mind now. I think it must have been in the early sixties. Periamma told us she had bought a daring two piece swimsuit in the U.S. and, of course, I had visions of her attired in something close to a bikini. Well, the two piece swimsuit turned out to be more like short pants and a sleeveless shirt. By any one's standard (except Periamma's) it would have been considered definitely conservative. In

retrospect, it sheds some light on Periamma's personality and values. In her academic endeavors, she is definitely daring and thinks nothing of breaking down conventional barriers in her way. In her personal life, however, she is pretty conservative and cherishes traditional values.

I recently travelled by ship on a cruise to Alaska. I had a greater appreciation of how it must have felt when Periamma had to spend weeks on board a ship when she travelled by ship to the U.S.A. in the late 40s (or may be it was the early fifties). I greatly admire the courage of Periamma who came alone to the U.S.A. at a time when there were very few Indians living in the U.S. and at a time when it must have been very unusual for an Indian woman to be considering higher education and pursuit of a career. She was, is and will continue to be a true "pioneer". Periamma's 'ship' has sailed with honor throughout her illustrious career and has weathered many storms as it continues to sail towards new horizons.

Many years have passed since I was a child. My childhood impressions have now been supplemented by a greater appreciation of not only her achievements but also her love of family, friends and family values, strength and perseverance in overcoming challenges, boundless energy and continuing pursuit of excellence. In spite of her busy schedule, she takes time to remember her friends, professors and relatives. She was one of our first visitors in the U.S. I had come to the U.S. as a new bride in 1972. We were living in Salt Lake City, Utah and my husband and I were graduate students at the University of Utah. Periamma made a 'detour' and visited us. She spent a little time with us in our little married students' housing apartment and taught me to prepare some Indian sweets. My husband really appreciated that and still fondly remembers this as the highlight of her visit.

Periamma has visited us **many times** in the U.S. Usually she will locate one of her former professors living in the area and will make it a point to visit them even if it means driving a long distance to visit them briefly. The professors (whom I have met with her) were usually in their nineties and were thrilled to be remembered and visited by her. They shared recollections with us of Rajammal as a brilliant student. They knew that Periamma was a student they could be very proud of. The Professors were older than Periamma and lived alone, but were still very active, energetic and involved in community activities of various kinds. Meeting people, like Periamma's Professors, who are making such positive use of their sunset years and touching people's lives without waiting for others to help them, is most inspiring. It is hard to think of Periamma as an eighty year old. She has so much more energy than I do and I am usually acutely aware of that fact each time another one of her whirlwind visits draws to a close.

Every year, right before Christmas, we get a long letter from Periamma detailing all of the year's happenings, including the people she met during the year, the places she visited, family happenings and the development of her beloved University. A collection of all of those letters will evidence a remarkable life. A long list of recipients get the yearly letter and the list grows longer each year. The long address lists tells the story of how Periamma has touched the lives of so many people. In the final analysis, this may prove to be her most memorable achievements - the lives she has touched.

\*

## MY PERIA ATHAI (MY AUNT)

R.A. MUTHIAH

Who so ever could imagine Peria Athai calling the shots in the nations most dreaded Black cats, the super Elite commandos.

Somewhere amidst the green canopy of the Himalayan under growth a pair of discerning eyes spotted the men, clad in Black head to toe perched atop a house in the foot hill, through a infra red light fitted on the shipper rifle. Two more men hanging on to the abseiling rope above the glass paned windows, another pair was crouched astride the portico under the cover of potted plants. Yet another in the adjoining living room and few more strewn around the building on control and reserve tasks were raring to go on the orders of the young commando squadron commander. He was waiting for the contact on his radio for the helicopter napping the earth in the defiladed valley just a couple of kilometres away.

Red on ..... Green on ..... Go! A crisp and loud explosion rips open the main door simultaneously. A special grenade is lobbed in. A deafening explosion accompanied by a blinding flash reports. Sufficient to freeze the hard core terrorist for a couple of seconds and stun them out of action, against the hostages in their custody. The figures in Black storm the house, two rush through the doors just blasted two abseil down and crash through the glass windows. The commander is diving through the door to the adjoining room just banged open, firing from his pistol while still in the air at the masked terrorist holding the hostage at gun point. By now the commandos slithered on the roof top and rushed down stairs.

All gun fire ceased the surviving terrorist and hostages separated and escorted out after a through frisk. The mock battle is declared successful.

Commanders pager biceps just then he checks the message “Report to Delhi. Aircraft awaiting at airfield”. He rushes to his cabin. Packs a few clothes in nap sack and other essentials besides notes on living by J. Krishnamurti reached the air field. The beach craft files him to Palam. A jeep approaches the aircraft before it rolls to a stop with the pilot lamp blinking red. As he steps out of the aircraft his faithful hands over a message, aunt Dr. R.P. Devadas waiting at Tamil Nadu house, Two days casual leave sanctioned. Now he knows just a phone call from the aunt to his unit has dragged him away from the blooming Himalayan forest.

Next day Athai is accompanied by him to Vignan Bhavan. One of the proud recipients of the National fellowship award instituted by NCERT among 25 other eminent scientists and educationalists. She receives it from the President. Then they drive down to Chanakyapuri to Mr. Menon's Bungalow. He quizzes the young Major how come he joined Army inspite of being educated at Ramakrishna Vidhyalaya. Father's valour and glory in the freedom struggle naturally induced one to be an Adventurer. Aunt has instilled enough scientific temper to evolve him into a thinking soldier.

But Vidyalaya has instituted equanimity to remain confident in the humanity. The cumulative effect was to join Army. He also declares the borrowed words of Jiddy Krishnamurti “Truth is a pathless land. You can't approach it through any religion, dogma or sect. My mission is to make everyone unconditionally free”.

Peria Athai proud enough to stand surity for the JK on education borrowed from Mr. Menon. Later that day, Athai was seen off at Palam and he reported

back on duty on VIP security. His words induced the Home Minister. He drove to the North Block, met his personal secretary Mr. Sivaraman who could pull out articles from the constitution as also slokas from vedas alike from his memory. After the routine validation of the minister he asked Mr. Sivaraman if he knows Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas. The reply was in affirmative. He asked why can't she be rewarded with a gubernatorial assignment for her rich qualification and great achievement in the field of education, science and eradication of malnutrition in the state of Tamil Nadu and the country and a strict administrator. The reply was candid. She is a deserving candidate. But in our system one needs the political backing for such appointment. The young major hoped some day the political back up materialises and he be posted as her Aide the camp. That will be a nice way of showing his gratitude for all that his Athai is to him.

Almost thirty six years ago a letter was returned undelivered to Mr. P.R. Michael at his Chindadiripet residence, only next to Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas in the hierarchy of Progenion of Ranger Packianathan and Sornammal. It was addressed to Peria Athai in an used envelope. (with still Mr. Michael's address printed on it) by his second son. It moved that nephew close enough to Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas to be termed a favourite that even her only son had to be chided for his jealousy towards his young cousin once or twice. It also took this young boy of about seven to Avinashilingam educational institutions in that summer under the special care of Lalitha Akka, educated by Vasantha Akka, his favourite was Shantha Akka who carried him around piggy back. So it all started and continued through her frequent visits to his home at Chindadiripet, Trichy, during the Christmas holidays at thoppu (Brindavan at Tirupathur the abode of Ranger Packianathan chose for his retired life) or Karaikal where circle mama lived. (Late Mr. P.E. Devadas retired Circle Inspector of Police). The privilege

to share the side flap of her holdall or the authority to roll and buckle up the straps belonged to him. On one of his birthdays she presented a swiss watch and continued to replace it one after another as he had a knock of over winding the key to dysfunction. But through all these days he learnt clean living, balanced diet, interior economy both from Appa and Peria Athai. But from one the civilised in the manners military and the other from the militarised in the manners civil. When Athai visited Bhavanisagar in the late sixties she even played hop with them slowly her influence on his life grew big and bigger. Second only to his father his first Guru 'Bhavanisagar' for reasons one too many become the Golden age for him.

Wheels of time rolled ahead to take him to Sri Avinashilingam Colony, Coimbatore. Father's work tying him to Bombay and mother's blind affection tying her down to vigours of the household chores saw Peria Athai substituting both physical absence of his father and the psychological nuances of the mother. Much water could have flown under the bridge in those crucial years of his adolescent life. The flow can't stop. But it can be conserved to a great extent by magnificent care. He still can't hazard a guess how did she manage so much time for him. Waking up in the morning around 4.30 a.m. Ablutions and prayers over, went played tennis, returned home for bath and breakfast.

The steady stream of visitors begins to flow. Concepts and policies emanate punctuated by courtesy and inquiries of health. Telephone ring sounds many intermissions. Remark aside to the ward being groomed. Appreciation depreciation of the attendant in waiting. Later in his life during the thick of the war game; he relised the generals command post was a notch less busy. Around eight, she walks to the office. Enroute fires an instruction to the electrician, the driver, enquired the watchman, advises the builder on the modification to the

library, returns the compliment of numerous students and staff. He is proud to walk by her side. After she briefs Indira Akka and Mr. Ravi, Godavari, Athai's holds forth her attention. Then she settles into her chair, dispose of the files, attends to telephone, buzzer the various staff and students, receives many visitors and dignitaries, returns for meals into the afternoon. Brief nap and evening session is almost a repetition of the morning session except the prayer and interaction with the students are longer to be concluded by the chorus of good children, golden children, diamond children by Ayya and conferring with trustees and correspondent including the ever smiling Aaye Gowder and the spinx like Mr. Shanmugan. Mostly he has seen her signing the files late into night. Some time even the wee hours past midnight until her signature becomes crooked when she starts dozing off. The secret of her energy as Athai told him was the fame.

Later he learnt Swamy Vivekananda's maxim "When your body is tired exercise your mind. When your mind is tired exercise your body". She personifies it to this date.

Athai sure knows how to channelise the excess energy. His mother and chithi complained he beats his younger sisters and scares his cousin. She bid him to cut all the thorny undergrowth in the Avinashilingam colony entrance instead. Through this, learnt the dignity of labour. His father was worried about him "you are too intelligent to study" Athai made him sit in her office rest room, First she broke down the English lesson (unbelievable now how she stole time for this from her hectic routine) into simple questions to answer which not only roused adequate interest for him but also when compiled together formed original and eloquent essay for the lesson which he could not forget even if he tried. He is not a sychopent to praise her because every one who know her whom he heard only has a word of admiration for her. But he has experienced her style of teaching

personally to know. She is the kind of educationalist the country and probably the world needs today. Athai worried about his tempers flying high sometime even leave him weeping uncontrollably. She employed / enrolled him in the summer camp. Paying a hundred rupees out of her pocket probably. She employed him as an attender, personal assistant, academic assistant and enrolled him as a delegate amongst other teachers to attend lectures and demonstrations. Athai encouraged him to paint greeting cards himself rather than buy it and he composed a few lines of poetry in her praise (which later unravelled him as a self styled poet).

During this time, Athai one day took him with her to a dinner hosted by Industrialist, Philanthropist N. Mahalingam when he was left to explain to a host of western teenies the significance of Indian culture in the little English he could speak then. He not only realised the dimensions of his culture outside but also inside him. She will always encourage him to develop the scientific temper. Around this time the end of 1971 brought in the news of victory in the war to liberate Bangladesh. The theme play for Christmas that year was about your war hero (enacted in the Principal's residence by his troupe of cousins and sisters) it was appreciated by many. He had such occasions to realise the creativity in him. It was then he decided to give vent to his long cherished dream to become a soldier in the Armed forces. All her coaching enabled him to fetch a distinction in chemistry and A grade in physics in PUC, tiding over his earlier directions but could not fetch him a seat in medical college. He continued with degree in Vidyalaya. He approached his aunt to get him admission in the Coimbatore flying club. She asked why would he want to learn flying. When he will have to spare many precious hours from his studies. After all it will be an advantage to join services he replied. All hell broke loose then. Till date he couldn't understand

the reasons for her antagonism. She said even all these years of study is a waste of time, if you have to join Army But she never stopped him. His father, of course encouraged. The 'C' certificate he gathered in NCC with the good wishes of Amuthavalli Bhagwan Doss, Athai gained him entry into the Army for the precommission training.

All the way from Bombay where his father was stationed at that time to Indian Military Academy at Dehra Dun; the brief stop over at Kasturi Bhai Apartment at New Delhi where Athai has shifted was a deserving reprieve, Sharada his little niece was growing in her care. The three would stroll around the lawns. Later he visited her regularly, whenever he could in Coimbatore, Madras, Trichy, Thoppu and even at Mudavankulam. He could engage her attention once. But for some reasons never felt the favourite nephew feelings again. After all if you concentrate at a flower in the garden you ignore others. Be at Coimbatore intently whatever her busy routine will permit encourage many of his views. The time when his matrimony was shattered to pieces she offered to mediate. He dared question the traditions. But when she invited him in the folds of religious prayers for the sake of resueing his marriage he politely declined. He still believes in prayers but not for any self serving motive. You can't approach the truth through any religion, sect or dogma. In this pathless land where even a human treads he claims to be his own path. The experience of life has elucidated that courage is the ladder on which mount, all other virtues. The prerequisite he has inherited from his ancestors in abundance, the physical and moral courage from his father and the psychological courage from his aunt. The scientific temper has been inducted by Peria Athai.

She has not only been a beloved aunt but more than that a surrogate mother.



# **RAJAMMAL ATHAI - MY BELOVED AUNT**

KAMALA UTHAMAN

**M**y Aunt Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas is the eldest of the nine children of my grandparents - Sornammal and Mr. Pakyanathan - she is certainly the diamond among those nine gems.

She has played manifold roles in her life, as a patriot, as a mother not only to her son but to us and to the institution she has built up, to the thousands of its students and staff and as the head of our family. Her dedication to our nation, to the Avinashilingam Trust Institutions, to the development of women and children is exemplary. She has spent her entire life to her chosen cause and to the growth of the Avinashilingam University. She did this at the cost of her personal life, and never once has she regretted it.

She is an extremely hard working lady. During the years that I have lived with her in Coimbatore, I have rarely seen her take any rest. She used to work late in to the night beyond midnight and get up very early next morning, never later than 5 a.m. Her only relaxing time was the time when she travelled. There too, she did not rest. She attended to pending work and writing scores of personal letters to her relatives and friends. Now, when I recollect, I doubt whether she would have hardly had four hours of sleep for a night, and inspite of this never once did I find her tired or restless. She was always alert and attentive. She worked with a determination and enthusiasm that has always amazed me.

She had only a very meagre time to spend with members of her family. Despite this, and her tight schedule, she had an abiding interest in every member of our large family. She was always eager to know about everybody. She was always there to offer help when anyone of us was in trouble, to comfort, to

counsel and to support. She will never miss any of our family functions - birthdays, weddings etc., She used to delight us by remembering us and sending wishes for our birthdays and other functions. She was always very kind and thoughtful.

As an Aunt she has guided me and taught me a lot. Right from when I was a child to this day, she has given me the right counsel at every stage of my life. When I was a child, she taught me the basics of language like grammar, when I was an adolescent, she taught me as to how a young girl should dress, speak and behave, and in my college days she taught me how a girl should become mature in mind and soul before getting married. It was she who taught me about the importance of prayer in one's life. She had always emphasised about God and used to say that one can find inner strength and peace only by prayer. Even today if I have some misgivings or doubts, I can turn to her for her wise counsel. Today, as I look back, I can see how she has moulded me and what a decisive role she has played in my life. As a mother I am able to guide and bring up my children in the right way only because the grooming I have had from her.

As a student of Sri Avinashilingam Institution, I have always been treated just like all other students, no preference or favouritism shown to me by anybody because I was her niece. She was very strict about this. Once, just by taking a glance at my class notes and preparation of classes, she had assessed that the staff member concerned had taught us well, and appreciated her personally. This I came to know only later on when others informed me about it. She was always there to congratulate a sincere staff member. This always encouraged and inspired all the other staff.

Not very many people are blessed with such an Aunt. She is indeed a versatile genius. I am very fortunate to be able to write a few words about her in her 80th year commemoration volume. □

# PERIYA ATHAI - A BELOVED AUNT

CHANDRA GANAPATHY

**M**y childhood had many dreams - seeing myself as many people famous and great - the greatest of such dreams was to be like Periya Athai. Each waking moment, I imagined myself as Periyathai trying to emulate her in my thinking and action. I revered her and I adored her. She was what I wanted to be. Close is our relationship then and now - but closer was and more intense was our relationship and interaction during the brief period I stayed in her house under her guardianship. Brief though it was, it was a period of growing and learning. I did not realise fully then, but the impact of those two years I spent with her, I still feel in my life today.

The earliest of memories that I can recall of her is when we (my family) were at Tambaram (1966-68). During the short but frequent visits she made to our house, I used to cling to her saree. She talked as she worked - as she ate - as we travelled. The subject of her talk would be generally on what she was doing but it generally varied from her father - our grandf'r - to the uses of referring to a dictionary. If it was her dinner time and she was eating, she would generally talk to us the children around her, about nutrition the beneficial effects of greens and the table manners to be observed while eating. Her plate, I still **remember** as a good example of healthy and balanced and artful eating. She was **resourceful**; she mended immediately even a little tear in her silk saree. She removed a thread from the edge of the same saree and quickly and artfully darned up the gap. All the time she did this, she talked to me the steps involved in darning, and how a stitch in time saves nine. **The art** of darning was imprinted in my little heart.

Besides these, my memories of Periyathai in this period are smell of Jasmine, well starched and simple khadi sarees, long and envious hair so patiently plaited, some rare and tasty candies and biscuits.

From Madras we moved to Coimbatore in early 1969, opening our score with the grand gala event of my Raji akka's marriage with Mohan Athan. The memories are so colourful - my beautiful sister so carefully decorated looking like an angel, all of us, little girls in new red silk skirts promoted as flower girls, proudly holding the cute yellow flower baskets. In brief flowers, music and joy were experienced everywhere. This was the time I first saw (or remember) the glorious Saradalaya. The shrine so high, majestic caught my eye and mind. The shrine and the entire campus, I can only relate to my athai and both were matched in their silent power.

I continued my primary education in Saradalaya and was a proud student. I valued greatly the newfound role of my athai as “Amma Avargal”. We were taught by athai and the family to be just as any other student. She encouraged us as a caring guardian to take part in all activities of the school. The school taught me many values, moulded us as responsible, knowledgeable citizens. We were developed in patriotism, civil responsibilities, fine arts, crafts, home making and ofcourse systematic education. It is needless to say that when I mention school, it means ‘Athai’ and dynamic leadership guiding the school. She was proud of me, and appreciated my performance appropriately, whenever I excelled in studies or extra curricular activities. Her encouragement motivated me to participate in all school programmes. My short period in Saradalaya exposed me to music, dance, literature, cooking, sports and gardening. You name it we were aware of it. I am proud that my athai has been the reason to make all this accessible to a few generations of women who passed through Saradalaya.

If through school, athai led me into the broader arena of life, personally and very directly she guided me into the finer aspects of life. My cousin Subha and I started to live with my aunt under her direct guardianship. I am sure whatever I say on this part of my life will be shared in sentiments, and facts agreed to by my dear departed cousin Subha A Ramesh (niece) Gnanadurai Michael. We both lived with Athai. Athai taught us to start the day with prayer and Bible reading. She helped me to understand that Bible was not only the lode star leading us in the divine path, but also taught us to live our daily life. Bible refined and cultured our English. Athai patiently explained what should be the prayer. Prayer was a moment to recall each one of our relatives and friends and wish for their well being. It helps you to assess your self and the past and plan for the future. Prayer cultivates love and kindness in us and gives us clarity in life. Athai initiated me into the daily prayer in its full meaning. To this day I continue with Bible reading and daily prayer, and I hope my children will take this from me. My Blue Bible gift from Athai reminds me of Athai reading her Gold edged black Bible, with her long hair let loose to dry after bath.

It was English - the new wide world - which I entered holding my athais hand. She was patient and persevering to drive into our stubborn brains the art of writing and speaking English. Her knuckles pressed over my head, when after days of learning I could not remember that 'if' was a conditional clause. English to our meagre brains was not an easy path to pass through - and I thought this was one area where Athai failed. But years later, now, I feel that Athai was successful in this task too. Whenever there is rare spark in my English writing and somebody appreciates it, I gratefully remember athai's tireless efforts. The dictionary she gave me still guides me into English writing. Athai was so loving and affectionate and she showed that she cared. Whenever she left Coimbatore on a short or long trip a contingent of colleagues and relatives went to the airport or railway station to see her off. On most such occasions she would still be

reading and signing papers, listening to people and yet the corner of her eye would look at me acknowledge my presence. Often the station master would remind her that it was time for the train to depart only after which we will alight from the compartment. She would wave her hand as long as it was possible for us to see her. I remember her waving with Jasmine flowers through oval glasses of the aircraft window. It seemed as though she carried a bit of everyone with her wherever she went, and those near to her felt a part of them was lost until she returned.

Even a tiny effort and achievement from us found her appreciation. She made us proud (I am sure she was too!) by showing our theme albums, essays, poems or dance to everyone who came by. This recognition from her was the best of awards for us. Whenever we participated in dance programmes she took care to supply us with the jewellery and costumes. On my attempt at making a herbarium she took great pains to collect leaves and brought them from the many places she visited with their names, location and other information.

The teacher in Athai is alive always. Her great qualities are love and teaching. In spite of her great heights any one can reach to her with love. She is a great inspiration in my life. Memories are so rich and reviving, words are not handy to bring all in paper. The best of Athai as I remember her is still left unsaid. I am forever grateful to all the love and care she has shown to me. Tides of time has kept us apart, but the warmth of the person and strength of relationship bridges the gap. I cherish the memories of my days with her and my adoration and reverence for her will never diminish. I love you athai, and thank you for all that you have been. May God bless you with many more healthy and happy years to reach out to many more needy people. Books on you will tell the children of future on being an excellent woman, mother, daughter, sister, wife, teacher and aunt - successful in all roles. ◆

# MY BELOVED AUNT

RAJADURAI G. MICHAEL

**I**t was the last week of February 1997. I had been married for a little more than a year and my wife, Pramila was away at her parents home in Chennai for her confinement. The child was due anytime and I was thrilled that I was to become a father soon. All relatives and friends invariably enquired about the sex of the child and most of them were surprised that we had not done a scan. They wished me good luck and opined that a boy was a better choice. There were a few who approved our not doing a scan. They felt that it was only right, since according to them a boy and girl were the same. From among all these people, my father Mr. P. Gnanadurai Michael stood apart. He was all the while praying and hoping that it should be a girl. He was of very strong opinion that the first born in every family should be a girl. He was convinced that this girl would be the one who would ensure that the family stayed united. He believed that this first-born girl would help all her siblings and their future families to succeed in life. Then on March 1st 1997, my daughter, Lavanya, was born. My father was happy that his first born and his three children's first borns were all girls. I asked my father the reasons for his convictions. He explained that the first born in his family was a girl, and it was this girl who had kept their family united, educated all her siblings and had ensured that all of them succeeded in life. This girl is none other than Dr. (Mrs.) RAJAMMAL P. DEVADAS. If a person still remembers the sacrifices made by his sister after half a century, one can imagine the extent of these sacrifices. These having been told to my sisters, and me we have always looked up to our athai in awe and respect.

Her love for us has only increased in these thirty years I have known her. There is not a single year in which her concern for us has not touched and changed our life for the better. What makes her extra special, what makes her the leader of our large united family is not just the help she has rendered, but also the fact that she has been a role model for us (especially to me as a God Mother). We all know that a “Leader is the one who knows the way, shows the way and leads the way”. My athai has been a true leader, telling us what to do and also doing it herself. If she exhorts me to write letters often (I am quite a lazy one at that), I very frequently receive letters from her - despite the fact that I keep seeing her at least once a month. Her writing letters to me has made me realise that if a person so busy as herself could write so often to me, then I have no excuse for my being a poor correspondent.

I would also like to reminisce the great feeling of importance, pride and elation she has given me - whenever I meet some great personality who tells me that I ought to be proud of my Aunt. Wherever I am, whoever I meet, I am always recognised as her nephew. This fact has inspired me to become someone like her. In my young days I had always wanted to become someone better than her. Later I realised that becoming better might not be possible, but I could become someone equal to her. Now I realise that even if I could be a fraction of what she is, I would consider having achieved something in life. Until now I have been proud to be called her nephew, and I hope that a day will come when she may be proud to call me her nephew. I consider that if this is achieved, that would be the best tribute I could pay to her and an apt expression of my gratitude of what she has done for me.

☆

# **Dr. RAJAMMAL P. DEVADAS - MY ATHAI, MY GOD MOTHER AND MY MENTOR**

SANDHYA SEKAR

**I**t is with lot of pride and joy that I greet her a very Happy Birthday and say that Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas is not only my athai and my Godmother, but also my mentor.

I have known her as my Athai since I was a child....

I have known her as my mentor since I was a student at Avinashilingam University....

I recognize her as a great role model in life, now that I am a wife and a mother...

As my Athai, her affection for me and my family has seen no limits. She has always been a very caring person not only to me and my family but also to all those people who have counted on her. She has never let any one down and has never let her personal feelings interfere with the unlimited love she has for people around her.

The most admirable quality that I have seen in her is her ability to be a true mentor never stop teaching and even when difference of opinions exist, never let those differences stop her from coming to people's rescue when needed. A trait only great people possess and hope some of us can follow in her foot steps.

Her extremely busy life at the University never, ever prevented her from making time for her friends and relatives and she always takes part in family functions and celebrations. It brings tears in my eyes, to know how lucky I am, to have an Athai like her.

As my teacher, I have always admired her for her dedication and determination. Her dedication to education in general and to Avinashilingam University in particular is extremely remarkable. She has built the university to what it is today with hard work and great vision. Because of that, thousands and thousands of students have received their education and are well settled all over the world. Her continuous effort has transformed Avinashilingam University from a mere local college in Coimbatore to an internationally acclaimed University... all in a lifetime - a remarkable achievement.

During my school days, I have always found her as a very strict and the most revered person in the campus and as a student it was not easy to understand ... just like so many things in life. But I always believed in whatever she did, thinking that it was all for the welfare and the growth of the students. And today, after all these years, I can tell everyone with confidence that my trust in her was never in vain.

She is one of the handful of people that I have known who constantly perseveres to achieve excellence in both professional and private life. Not only does she want to excel herself, but also encourages, facilitates and motivates everyone around her including colleagues, teachers, professors, students and family members to excel in whatever they do, so it brings the best in each one of them. Some of us appreciate her efforts immediately and some of us recognize her efforts in due course.

She may be 80 years today, but her stamina, determination and strength are of a 25 year old! She travels tens and thousands of miles to promote Avinashilingam University and I have never seen her hesitate or slow down even for a moment to proudly spread the word about Sri Avinashilingam and the University, not to mention, how well she seizes every opportunity that could help and expand the Avinashilingam University.

Her 80th birthday has given me an opportunity to express the love and pride that all of us have for her.

Let me conclude by saying that she is one of the greatest persons that India has produced and I am certainly very proud to be her niece.

Once again, on behalf of my husband Mr. Richard Sekar, my daughters Rebecca Ramya Sekar and Jennifer Nithya Sekar, I wish her a very Happy Birthday and a long life.

With Lots of love and prayers.

✱

# **A GREAT MOTHER TO ALL**

**P. MUTHIAH MANOHARAN**

**A**mma as affectionately called by everyone is a great personality and is the best example for all, especially for the women folk in the country and worldwide. She has risen in her career to the status of being the Chancellor of Avinashilingam Deemed University by her untiring efforts and incessant hardwork.

She always has unwavering confidence, commitment, clarity of objective, focused efforts, boldness in facing problems and strategic managerial efficiency, and this combination of virtues has been the secret for her success in achieving her goals in building the institutions and her contributions at the National and International levels.

Some perceive her as an Educationist, some as a Scientist, some as an International Personality but I personally perceive her as an “All-round” expert, who is capable of managing all matters in an excellent manner.

My close association with her started during early seventies when I entered my professional course at the College of Agriculture in Coimbatore. In those days, I used to meet her at the Avinashilingam Institute in the evenings after 7.30 p.m., and had the opportunity to have first hand experience of her hard work. In the midst of her work she used to talk to me about my studies and career plan. Now and then she would also give me little tasks like drafting reply letters. This experience had helped me to develop my communication skills, especially in discharging my duties as an administrator.

After completing my post-graduation in Agriculture, I had the opportunity to work under her as Assistant Professor of Agriculture. Then I joined the Krishi Vigyan Kendra which is a centre for the development of farm men and women by conducting demonstrations and training programmes and providing in-service training to field level extension functionaries. The opportunity to “Serve God through Humanity” is a rare one, hence, when I was invited to take-up rural work by Rev. Ayya and Respected Amma Avl., I volunteered myself and wholeheartedly accepted the proposal. The K.V.K. founded by them is functioning at Vivekanandapuram (Karamadai Block) since 1979 under the auspices of ICAR (Indian Council of Agricultural Research) and is being implemented under Amma's dynamic leadership as its Chairman.

Thus my association with her for nearly three decades has given me the courage and strength to work towards service to mankind. I am happy to share some of my thoughts on the 80th birthday commemoration of Respected Amma.

“What my country needs” as pointed out by Late Ayya Avl., is “The country is beckoning us. May the strong and noble, dedicated and heroic, from among old and the young, men and women come forward to answer the Mother's call, and in that process of building a new India, cover themselves with blessedness and glory”.

Amma has been the prime force towards fulfilling the vision and mission of Late Rev. Ayya Avl., and she has to be our guiding force for ever with same strength, spirit and love by the grace of the Almighty.

# MY PAATTI

SHARADA DEVADAS

From the day I was born into this world till now, she has been 'my everything', I have never been so emotionally bonded to any other person. Everybody told me of her happiness and excitement on the day of my birth and how jubilantly it was celebrated in the campus. She was always very particular that my cradle, my clothes, my food were clean so that I would not be exposed to infection.

She always provided me with the best clothes and toys from all the countries she visited.

Every stage of my life was photographed by her.

For my baptism she had invited all her friends of every religion to the All Souls Church.

As a small child I always admired the way she worked, I have never seen any other person so dedicated to their work, sacrificing all other worldly pleasures, wanting the best for the university and for the people. She is a living example to mankind of dedication.

As my grandmother she always showered so much love and affection on me, always wanted the best for me and always encouraged me to strive towards the best.

When I was 5 years old my father wanted me to live with him in Australia and it was a great shock for my patti to leave me behind in Australia. She wanted me to grow up and study in India and imbibe Indian culture and spirituality. So, whenever possible I have lived in Coimbatore, studied in Coimbatore and have spent a major part of my life in Coimbatore.

I am very grateful to my grandmother for securing me a seat in PSG medical college and for all the help given abundantly. I have developed great passion for India and to work for community health in India because of the values given by my grandmother.

I am very proud of all her achievements, awards and love for humanity, inspite of having reached the highest position she is still very human and accessible to all. I have seen the way she has touched many lives, the way she helps people - I have never seen anyone with such a kindred spirit, she goes out of her way to help people.

I am indeed very blessed to be the only granddaughter of such a great person.



# MY BELOVED PAATTI

MICHAEL DEVADAS

With the wisdom gained through decades of hard work, my Paatti relentlessly works for improvements in child and women's rights. Although renowned for her many achievements, I only know her as a kind and giving grandmother who is the pillar of our family. Undoubtedly she has touched many with her deeds and still continues her efforts for the lesser advantaged. My perception of my grandmother is a confident, brilliant woman, who encourages people to excel despite any hardships or difficulties they may be suffering. She is always willing to assist people in attaining their goals and often selflessly shares her well established skills and knowledge.

The many accolades Paatti has received cannot optimally describe how unique, gifted and special she is. Commonly, after learning of her many achievements, degrees and recognitions you may imagine her as being seven feet tall but as all those who have met her know, she comes in a small powerful package. It is with great joy we will celebrate her 80th birthday and I am certain there will be many more to come. I am proud to be Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas' grandson and wish her all the best in all her efforts.

★

## PAATTI'S NOTES - AN INTIMATE ROLE MODEL

SORNA PAUL DEVADAS

Being a youngster, I guess around six or seven years old, which is when the first vivid memories of Paatti visiting come to mind, I remember very eagerly looking forward to being in Paatti's company. It wasn't just because she consistently brought really good gifts but more her radiant warmth and affection. Every Christmas celebration with Paatti was always a happy one. Very loving and lovable, Paatti's presence brought and continues to bring a feeling of togetherness to the family.

With each visit to India every year or two, time spent with paatti was always looked back on with a smile. When the family is together, we laugh about little things like when patti accuses me or Anna of cheating in Scrabble. There are a lot of good times in the back of my mind that won't surface though.

Writing about patti and the impact that she has made in my life points in a direction of integrity, character and morality. Needless to say, paatti has always been a consistently hard worker and risen to the respected position of Chancellor. Only one person has the honour of being her only child which is my father, Dr. Mohan Devadas. Paatti has three grandchildren, of which I am the youngest, the baby of the family and at 19 years, nothing's changed. When I was 14 yrs, I was going into year 9 of High School at a very good selective school but wanted to head in a different direction. I wanted, after having enjoyed holidays with patti, to go and stay with her in Coimbatore. I had a goal of studying medicine in India and returning happily to Australia as a doctor. Not only that as incentive,

but my sister was also living with patti. Despite advice from friends and parents I made the move and Appa arranged for my living with patti.

Having her youngest grandchild living and spending time with her must have been good for patti as we also hadn't really spent much time together one to one. She was probably the best person to have spent very vital years of development under. With her rock solid values and proven qualities of leadership it was interesting to see how my comfort zone clashed with a new way of life in Avinashilingam. In retrospect; with a clearer understanding of how it must have been for patti. I realise that the culture shock was not only for me but also for patti. With her grandson as her responsibility, she went out of her way to make living comfortable for me despite all of her travelling. I was chatting to a friend the other day who was telling me about her grandma who had come to visit the rest of the family in Sydney. Trying not to boast, I described my patti who was 80 years old and still working full time as a Chancellor. A few days later, my friend told me that she had used my patti as an example when encouraging her grandma to be more active.

Being so successful, paatti is obviously very disciplined and even on her holidays to Australia, patti continues to work doing things mainly for the University. Helping out patti with her work sometimes gets very tiring and wonder why bother but seeing her motivation and the benefits from this work make helping seem at the very least worthwhile.

Patti is a great role model for me even though she was raised in a totally different culture where the expectations of her were different. I hope to attain the motivation that drives her to achieve more and more even today.

☆

# REMINISCENCES OF UTHAMY

K. SELVARAJA UTHAMY

**E**ducation for values is an unending but thrilling quest for the best to come for emancipation of man. It paves avenues divergent as well as convergent for fluorescence of the learner to the fullest possible extent. It enables him to synchronize all the essence and excellence desirable for advancement of learning and march of man towards Truth, Goodness and Beauty” says Mohit Chakrabarthi in his book “Value Education”. Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas, the Chancellor of Avinashilingam Deemed University, Coimbatore is striving through her institute to give such value oriented education to thousands of women thereby working for the upliftment of women. I am happy that the institute is planning for celebrating the 80th birthday of that great woman.

I fondly grasp this opportunity to put forward a few of my experiences and reminiscences through this article. I consider it a very great privilege for me to write on the world renowned Home Scientist (RPD) who happens to be my aunt also.

I heard of this aunt at the age of 8 when I was having my education in the Gurukula system. That system provided me with many opportunities to visit Brindhavanam, a farm house at Thirupattur.

My paternal aunt Mrs. Subbammal and Uncle Rajadurai used to take me there. I spent many happy days there enjoying the scenic beauty of the lovely and deep woods. Mohan Devadas, who was 2 years elder to me was my companion during my visits. Patty (Mrs. Sornammal Packianathan) and Mohan anna were

at the farm house with many servants. At that time aunt Rajammal had been to the USA for her higher studies. Since I happen to go there occasionally, I could hear much about aunt Rajammal and her achievements. All of us felt very proud of having such a wonderful person among us. Aunt was so affectionate and so duty conscious that even when she was in USA, she used to send all her wishes and pieces of advice to Mohan anna through gramophone records. It was such a thrilling experience for us at that time to hear her voice through that. I would feel so proud of her that I would try to emulate her. She was a role model for me. All her achievements in the fields of Home Science, technology and social service inspired me a lot.

I heard a lot about aunt Rajammal, when she attended the wedding at Thiruppathur. The wedding was between my last paternal aunt Ms. Pushpam and Mr. Gnanadurai Michael (Brother of aunt Rajammal). At that time I worked as a teacher in our own school after completing my 10th standard and teacher's training. I was no different from other person in those days. I did not have any higher aspiration. I was contented with the job of a teacher. But my meeting with aunt Rajammal at that wedding was a turning point in my life. Her educational qualifications, her positions as Chief Home Economist and Assistant Director General of Nutrition, New Delhi and her perseverance made me realise that one could still aspire for higher things in life.


She is such a devoted educationalist that she sacrificed such high positions in the Ministry of Government of India to serve as a Principal and Post Graduate Professor in Sri Avinashilingam Home Science College for Women. Her devotion to education and her thirst for service made her accept the call as a mission in her life. It was quite amazing that when the world is full of materialists and opportunists, there are such devoted people as my aunt. She led such an exemplary

life that I was proud to have her as model before me. Mohan anna's entry into medical college was another motivating force for me to enter into the field of medicine. Even though I got married and had many difficulties to pursue my higher studies I was not dissuaded. I was able to overcome all the difficulties because I had a precedent aunt Rajammal before me who had overcome many more difficulties as a married woman. Whenever I became frustrated and desperate, I used to ponder on her advice and example. Her policy has always been, "To strive, to seek, to find and not to yield". That gave me all the strength and confidence I needed and I successfully completed my course in medicine. When I met her along with Mohan anna in 1974 at my Uncle's (Devadas Michael) residence in Madras, I could not but feel thankful to her for all the encouragement and words of appreciation.

I met this great aunt again at my brother Uthaman's wedding at Thiruchendur. My sister Saroja also came with her. Then Saroja was one of the faculty members of the esteemed Avinashilingam Home Science college. My aunt Rajammal was solely responsible for the growth of my sister. Whenever I came to Coimbatore to see my sister, I used to meet aunt Rajammal and hear about her enriching experiences and achievements.

I got my appointment as Assistant Professor, in the Department of Anatomy, Medical College, Trivandrum in 1975. Once I met Jyothi Venkatachalam, the then Governor of Kerala, in the course of her conversation, Madam Governor praised aunt Rajammal for all her achievements. She fondly remembered some happy occasions and said that they were like sisters. I felt so proud and happy at that time. On another occasion when I met Dr. Saradha Devi an eminent scientist and principal of Medical College, Trichur, who was my

guide and Professor, I was much moved by her admiration for aunt Rajammal. She was full of praise for aunts contribution to the field of science, technology and education. My aunt's single minded devotion and service touched so many hearts.

I am grateful to aunt Rajammal for letting my last two daughters study in Saradalaya. The life of prayer, discipline and the moral values taught in Saradalaya make every one lead a contented and happy life. When Mrs. Lakshmi Menon came to bless my eldest daughter at her wedding, I came to know about the love and affection she had for aunt Rajammal. It was so astonishing to see my busy aunt Rajammal spending a few hours with Lakshmi Menon consoling and comforting her in her sickness. My aunt never misses any opportunity to help or give moral support to people who needed it most. It is no wonder that the Oregon State University, the Ohio State University and the University of Ulster, Northern Ireland found her deserving to confer their honorary degree of Doctor of Humane letters, Honorary Doctor of Humane letter and Honorary degree of D.Sc. respectively. By conferring such titles on her they brought credit to themselves. Her knowledge, skill, capacities and her abilities are such that they cannot be bounded by one nation, they spread far wide crossing land and ocean bringing laurels to her country as well as to herself. When the Saradalaya a place for honesty, sincerity and dedicated service is planning to celebrate such a great lady's 80th birthday, I feel that this is the most fitting time to honour such an eminent personality whose life is filled with many activities of devoted service. I humbly offer my sincere prayers and wishes for her to have a long happy and a healthy life. 

# AMMA MY AUNT - A MANY FACETED PERSON

RAMANI DEVAIRAKKAM

**D**r. Rajammal Devadas - “The person”, I have known Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas from my early childhood both as a close relative and as a great educationist whom we all looked upto. It is really a befitting contribution that this Biographic volume of her life is being brought out.

I am sure there are many who would be writing about her countless contributions in various fields but I would like to write about the “Simple Amma”, that day, today, and always. I first came to know her as Rajamma Chithi, my Aunt and my mother's cousin. My mother Mrs. Poonu Chakravarthy who was Vice Principal and Head of the Department of Zoology of Ethiraj College, Madras, just adored this sister of hers for her smartness, swiftness and cleverness. Her adoration was passed on to me and I watched in silence as she climbed her way to the Chancellorship of Avinashilingam Deemed University. Yet she was the same loving sister, aunt, always casual, always wanting to help and of course the strict disciplinarian whom we approached with revisions.

Now as she is nearing her eightieth birthday her speed has not slowed down, her spirit is till undaunted and she has an everpowering will to make many more achievements and accomplishments to the university. But in spite of all the Laurels' she holds, she is the same simple ever endearing Rajamma Chithi to me and Amma to one and all I wish God to give her the strength to complete all that she wishes for in the year's to come.

□

# MY AUNT AMMA Dr. RAJAMMAL P. DEVADAS

M. SUKUMAR

What I knew during my childhood days about my aunt, Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas was that she was a high ranking official in the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, Delhi as told by my father. My first meeting with my aunt, which comes to my memory, took place in Trichy where my father was employed. One Saturday night my father told us “Your Rajammal aunt will be coming to visit us tomorrow”. Next morning we awaited her arrival nervously and apprehensively for this was our first meeting with her and even at that time she had built up a reputation as an eminent Nutrition Scientist well known in the academic and research circles all over the world. When she arrived very punctually, what struck me about her at first sight was her diminutive size, simplicity of her dress, and her endearing smile. I was actually expecting to meet a huge, stylishly attired and stern looking lady who will talk all the time about nutrition and research. She surprised everyone of us, her nephews and nieces, by her simplicity and warmth. Throughout her stay with us on that day, she enthralled us with anecdotes pertaining to her childhood days and the wonderful times she had with her brothers and sisters and with her cousins - particularly with my father to whom she always has special attachment.

Even at that point of time, she was an extremely busy person shuttling between Delhi (where she was based) and various national and international for a having discussions or presenting scientific papers on the various aspects of nutrition, particularly the problems faced by the developing countries. Looking back across the four decades that have gone by, I now realize that she must have

strived very hard to extricate herself from her various engagements in Trichy to find time to visit her cousin brother's family. This trait she manages to maintain even now unlike many of us who complain incessantly about our busy schedules and give lack of time as an excuse for our inability to spare time for our relatives and friends. She somehow manages to find time to spare for her relatives, friends and colleagues, never failing to visit them on special occasions like marriages, birth of a child etc.

My aunt, Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas, is one of the most charismatic personalities I ever met. She is a perfectionist who would spend hours or even days thrashing out a particular problem and coming to a particular conclusion. She taught everyone of us the importance of seeking and achieving perfection in whatever field we may have chosen as an avocation. The amazing energy she possesses used to make us, even today, envious. The enormous impact she had on the student community, teachers and educationists cannot be described in a few pages.

During the later half of the nineteen fifties, she made frequent visits to Coimbatore to assist revered Ayya Avargal in starting the Sri Avinashilingam Home Science College for Women. Later she became the Principal of this institution and with her meticulous planning and dedication, groomed it into a world renowned multi-disciplinary Deemed University.

During this period, when my aunt was involved in the task of building up the first Home Science College in Tamil Nadu, I was doing my undergraduate study in Pharmacy in Madras Medical College, Madras and her son and my cousin Dr. Mohan Devadas was undergoing his undergraduate programme in medicine in the same institution and he was my hostel mate. Rajammal athai visited our

hostel whenever she came to Madras. Even though these were flash visits and time constraint was very much there, not even once she failed to send word to me to enquire about my health and studies.

Her indomitable spirit against any and all adverse conditions and her fighting qualities are the real inspiration to us of the younger generation. Like any other human being, many a times she also had to face difficult times in her life when everything appeared to go against her. Lesser women might have given up and yielded to the pressures from within and without. But with astounding physical and mental stamina, she managed to counteract the adverse conditions and came out of these crises without any vestige of rancour against anybody.

Eventhough she is a devout Christian, she has profound respect for all the other religions and faiths. Saradalaya is a monumental testimony to her catholicity. What makes her unique is the absolute belief she has in herself and her conviction that hard work will always fetch its rewards. Whenever she had time enough to talk to us, her relatives from the next generation, she would urge us to stand by our beliefs and principles and most of all to believe in ourselves. As one who is always interested in the future than in the past, and as a person who has evinced great prescience in academic, scientific and social matters, she demanded us to develop our skills to the highest level of excellence in our chosen fields. To the staff members of her university, this was made mandatory and as a dividend, majority of the staff members hold doctoral and post doctoral degrees and taken up a foreign assignment at least once in their career.

What sets her apart from most academicians and scientists of repute is her genuine concern for the down - trodden and the destitute. The humane approach she made in this matter makes her an exemplary personality among

her contemporaries. To my knowledge, she has given employment to a number of destitutes, orphans, and widows and provided them opportunities to improve their qualifications. She made them to become self supporting and get elevated to good positions in life.

Her phenomenal rise in her chosen field and the meticulous way in which she planned and developed her beloved Home Science College into Deemed University of repute cannot be attributed to anything but her single minded devotion to the cause. The energy she has even now at the age of 80 and the amount of hard work she puts in a single day is quite unbelievable. How many of us can come back from a 20 hour trip from U.S.A. do some paper work, attend a few staff meetings, make a 100 k.m. trip to participate in a seminar, come home at 9.30 p.m. and write a few letters till 12 midnight or so? I have seen her putting in such relentless routine day after day without any break. Once I had the temerity to ask her, "Aunt, how do you manage to do so much of work at this age when we, decades younger than you, are unable to do even one tenth of what you do"? For this her reply was "I am dedicated to my institution and I have fixed certain targets to be achieved. These and my faith in the Almighty gives me the strength and will power to put in sustained hard work". She is workoholic in the real sense of the word.

At present the raging debate which is going on in India is whether this country, in the present social, political and scientific milieu, can move into the 21st century as a developed country or not. If we are fortunate to have a few dozen social workers, educationists and scientists of Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas' calibre, we can be confident that we will march into the next millennium side by side and on equal status, with the most developed countries in the world. ✦

## மங்கையர் திலகம் அம்மா அவர்கள்

மு. தேவதாஸ்

### முன்னுரை

“அரிது அரிது மானிடராய்ப் பிறத்தல் அரிது” என மனிதப் பிறவி போற்றப்படுகின்றது. இதற்கு பெருமை பொருந்திய மனிதப் பிறவியில், “தோன்றின் புகழொடு தோன்றுக” என்ற தெய்வப் புலவரின் வாக்கிற்கேற்ப புகழ்பெற்று வாழ்வாங்கு வாழ்பவர்கள் ஒரு சிலரே. அந்த ஒரு சிலருள் உலகமெல்லாம் சென்று, தன் அயராத உழைப்பாலும், தனது அபார அறிவாற்றலாலும் “சத்துணவுத் துறையில்” பாருக்கே நல்லதொரு வழிகாட்டியாக, நம் பாரத அன்னையின் தவப் புதல்வியாக, இக்கலியுகத்தில் கருணையின் வடிவமாக வாழ்ந்து வரும் ‘அம்மா’ அவர்களைப் பற்றி அறிந்து கொண்டு அவர்கள் காட்டும் பாதையில் சென்று உயர்வடைவோமாக.

### கல்வி எனும் கடலிலே

அம்மா அவர்கள் ஓர் எளிய குடும்பத்திலே பிறந்தவர்கள். இன்று உலகுக்கே அவர்கள் சத்துணவுத் துறையில் வழிகாட்டியாக, ஓர் ஒப்பற்ற ஒளிவிளக்காகத் திகழ்வதற்கு முழுக்க முழுக்க காரணம் அவர்களது கடின உழைப்பே என்பதில் எட்டுணையும் ஐயமில்லை.

“எண்ணிய எண்ணியாங்கு எய்துப எண்ணியார்  
திண்ணிய ராகப் பெறின்”

என்ற வள்ளுவரின் தெய்வ வாக்கு அம்மா அவர்களின் வாழ்க்கையில் உண்மை வடிவமாகியது. “விளையும் பயிர் முளையிலே தெரியும்”

என்ற பழமொழிக்கு ஏற்ப அம்மா அவர்கள் பள்ளிப் படிப்பிலே எப்பொழுதும் முதல் மாணவியாகவே திகழ்ந்தார்கள். அவருக்கு ஈடு அவரேயன்றி வேறு யாரும் இல்லை. அவருக்குக் கற்றுக் கொடுத்த ஆசிரியர்களே வியக்கும் அளவு மிக்க அறிவாற்றலும், ஆழ்ந்த சிந்தனையும், உயர்ந்த ஆளுமைப் பண்பும் நிறைந்த முதல் மாணவியாகவே எப்பொழுதும் விளங்கினார்கள் அம்மா அவர்கள்.

படிக்கும்போதே நாட்டுப்பற்று உள்ள மாணவியாகவே திகழ்ந்தார்கள். எளிமையாக உடை அணிந்து, தேசிய சேவையில் ஈடுபட்டார்கள். அவர்கள் மாணவியாக இருந்தபோது சுதேசி இயக்கம் இந்தியா முழுவதும் கொழுந்து விட்டு எரிந்தது. அங்கங்கு வெளிநாட்டுப் பொருட்களை வாங்கக்கூடாது. உள்நாட்டுப் பொருட்களை மட்டுமே நாம் வாங்க வேண்டும் என்று தேசியத் தலைவர்கள் முழங்கினார்கள். அம்மா அவர்கள் காந்தியடிகளின் அடிச்சுவட்டைப் பின்பற்றி நடந்தார்கள். அவர்கள் மாணவியாக இருந்தபோது தானே கைராட்டையால் நூல் நூற்று, அந்த நூலினால் நெய்த கதர் ஆடையையே அணிந்து வந்தார்கள். இத்தகைய தேசிய உணர்வு இன்றும் உள்ளளவும் மாறாது அம்மா அவர்கள் உள்ளத்தில் இன்றும் பசுமையாக, வளமையாக இருக்கின்றது.

கல்லூரிப் படிப்பில் எப்பொழுதும் அம்மா அவர்கள் முதல் மாணவியாகவே திகழ்ந்தார்கள். மனையியல் பாடத்தில் மிக அதிக மதிப்பெண்கள் பெற்று மாநிலத்திலேயே முதல் மாணவியாகத் தேர்ந்து தங்கப் பதக்கத்தை வென்றார்கள். அதனால் அம்மா அவர்களை மத்திய அரசாங்கம் மனையியல் படிப்பில் உயர் ஆராய்ச்சிப் படிப்பிற்காக அமெரிக்காவிலுள்ள ஓஹியோ பல்கலைக் கழகத்துக்கு அனுப்பி வைத்தது. அங்கு சென்று உணவியல் துறையில் ஆராய்ச்சிப் படிப்பை மிகவும் வெற்றிகரமாக செய்து, Ph.D., பட்டம் பெற்றார்கள்.

## சேவை எனும் கடலில்

“அன்பர் பணி செய்ய என்னை ஆளாக்கி விட்டுவிட்டால் இன்பநிலைதானே வந்து எய்தும் பராபரமே”

அம்மா அவர்கள் தனக்குக் கல்வி அறிவினைக் கொடுத்த தன் தாய் நாட்டில்தான் பணி செய்ய வேண்டும் என்ற உறுதியை உள்ளத்தில் பூண்டிருந்தார்கள். எத்தனையோ அரிய, பெரிய வாய்ப்புகள் வெளிநாடுகளிலிருந்து வந்தபோதும், அம்மா அவர்கள் அவற்றை ஏற்றுக் கொள்ளவில்லை. அவர்கள் புதுடில்லியில் மத்திய அரசின் சார்பில் சத்துணவுத் துறையில் பெரிய பதவியை ஏற்று, பாரத நலத்துக்காக உழைத்து வந்தார்கள். வேலை பார்த்துக் கொண்டிருக்கும் போதே, மேலும் மேலும் படித்துக் கொண்டும், சத்துணவுத் துறையில் புதுப் புது ஆராய்ச்சிகள் நடத்திக் கொண்டு அயராது உழைத்து வந்தார்கள். சென்னைப் பல்கலைக் கழகத்தில் Doctor of Science என்ற மிக உயர்ந்த பட்டத்தைப் பெற்றார்கள். அம்மா அவர்கள் பெற்ற பட்டங்களுக்கும், விருதுகளுக்கும் அளவே இல்லை எனலாம். அவர்கள் பெற்ற பட்டங்களை ஒன்று விடாமல் எழுதி வந்தால், அதுவே ஒரு நூலாக வடிவெடுக்கும். மற்றவர்கள் பட்டங்களால் பெருமை அடைவார்கள். ஆனால் அம்மா அவர்களால் பட்டங்கள் பெருமை அடைந்தன. அந்த அளவுக்கு அம்மா அவர்கள் அறிவாலும், ஆற்றலாலும், கடின உழைப்பாலும் உயர்ந்து விளங்கினார்கள். நிமிர்ந்த நடை, கூர்மதி, நேரிய பார்வை, அவனியில் யார்க்கும் அஞ்சா நெறி போன்ற பண்பாளுமைகளை ஒருங்கே கொண்டிருந்தார்கள். ‘உழைப்பே செல்வம்’ என உழைப்பு ஒன்றையே தன் உயிர்மூச்செனக் கொண்டிருந்தார்கள். ‘உழைப்பின் வாரா உறுதிகள் உளவோ’ என்பதை முழுக்க முழுக்க அனுபவித்து மகிழ்ந்தார்கள். வெற்றி மாலைகள் குவிந்தன. “There is no substitute for her” ‘அவருக்கு இணை யாரும் இல்லை’ என மத்திய அரசே வியந்து

பாராட்டியது. மனிதனின் அடிப்படைத் தேவைகள் உணவு, உடை, உறையுள் என்ற மூன்றே. அடிப்படைத் தேவைகளில் முதன்மையாக இருக்கும் உணவுத் துறையில் தனது முழு கவனத்தையும் செலுத்தி, பல்வேறு ஆராய்ச்சிகள் செய்து, மனித சமுதாயம் நோயின்றி நல்ல ஆரோக்கியத்துடனும் மிக்க ஆனந்தத்துடனும் வாழ வழி கண்டார்கள்.

**“நோய் நாடி நோய் முதல்நாடி அது தணிக்கும்  
வாய்நாடி வாய்ப்பச் செயல்”**

என்ற வள்ளுவர் வாக்கிற்கேற்ப, நோய் நீக்கி சேய் காக்கும் நல்ல சத்துணவுத் திட்டத்தை தரணிக்குத் தந்தார்கள். உலக நாடுகள் அனைத்தும் அவரது அறிவாற்றலை, ஆழ்ந்த நல்ல பல கருத்துக்களை, சத்துணவுத் துறையில் அவரது வழிகாட்டுதலை ஏற்றுக் கொண்டன. அவரையே தங்கள் நாட்டிற்கும் ‘வழிகாட்டியாக’ அழைத்தன. அதனால் அம்மா அவர்கள் எப்பொழுதும் வெளி நாடுகளுக்குப் பயணம் செய்து கொண்டு இருக்கின்றார்கள். உலக மக்கள் அனைவருக்கும் சேவை செய்து வருகிறார்கள். ஓயாது உழைத்து வருகின்றார்கள். அவர்கள் செல்லாத நாடே இல்லை எனலாம். இப்பொழுதும் இந்த 80 வயதிலும் சிறிதளவும் மனச்சோர்வோ, உடல் சோர்வோ இன்றி நீண்ட நெடிய பயணம் மேற்கொண்டு பாரெங்கும் சென்று பணியாற்றி வருகின்றார். ‘கற்றோர்க்குச் செல்லும் இடமெல்லாம் சிறப்பு’ அதனோடு அவரைப் பெற்ற நாட்டுக்கும் பெருமை என்பது உண்மையாயிற்று. நம் பாரத அன்னையும் தன் புதல்வி உலக நாடுகள் அனைத்துக்கும் ஓர் வழிகாட்டியாக இருப்பதை எண்ணி அகம் குளிர்ந்து, நெஞ்சார வாழ்த்துகின்றாள்.

பெண்கள், குழந்தைகளின் நலவாழ்விற்கும் முன்னேற்றத்திற்கும் ஓயாது பணியாற்றி வரும் அம்மா அவர்களின் சேவையைப் பாராட்டி

அண்மையில் மத்திய அரசு மிக உயர்ந்த விருதான 'ஜம்னாலால் பஜாஜ் விருதினை' இந்தியப் பிரதமர் கையாலே வழங்கி, பாராட்டி மகிழ்ந்தது.

இன்று உலகிலேயே சத்துணவுத் துறையில் பல ஆராய்ச்சிகள் மேற்கொண்டு பல்வேறு புதிய கண்டுபிடிப்புகளைக் கண்டுபிடித்து சாதனைகள் செய்த சிறந்த முதல் பெண் விஞ்ஞானி டாக்டர் ராசம்மாள் பா. தேவதாஸ் ஒருவரே என்பதை அறிகையில் ஒவ்வொரு இந்தியன் உள்ளத்திலும் பெருமையும், பெருமகிழ்ச்சியும் ஏற்படுகிறது. இன்றும் அம்மா அவர்கள் சிறிதளவும் மனம் தளராது, உடல் சோர்வடையாது, 80 வயதிலும் சுறுசுறுப்பாக மிக்க ஆர்வமுடனும், நல்ல ஆற்றலுடனும், பாரத நாட்டுக்கும், பாருக்கும் ஓயாது உழைத்து வருகின்றார்கள். அவர்தம் அரிய சேவைக்கு 'நோபல்பரிசே' கொடுக்கலாம். அதற்காக நாம் ஒவ்வொருவரும் இறைவனை வேண்டுவோமாக.

## கொங்கு சீமையாம் கோவையில் சேவை

அம்மா அவர்கள் தேசபக்தி நிறைந்த அறிவியல் அறிஞர். அவர்கள் எப்போதும் தன் தாய் நாட்டுப் பற்றை உள்ளத்தில் அணையா விளக்காகப் பாதுகாத்து வருகின்றார்கள். எனவேதான் அவர்கள் பெரிய பெரிய பதவிகள் வெளிநாடுகளிலிருந்து தன்னை நோக்கி வந்தபோதும் அவற்றை ஏற்றுக் கொள்ளாது, இந்திய நாட்டுக்கே உழைக்க வேண்டும் என்ற உயர்ந்த நோக்கத்தில் இன்றுவரை உறுதியாக இருக்கின்றார்கள். கோவையின் கல்வித் தந்தையும், தமிழ்நாட்டின் முதல் கல்வியமைச்சரும் ஆன நமது அய்யா அவர்கள் டில்லியில் அம்மா அவர்களைக் கண்டு, கோவையில் பெண்களுக்கென ஒரு மனையியல் கல்லூரி அமைக்க வேண்டும், அதற்கு தாங்கள்தான் முதல்வராகப் பணியாற்ற வேண்டும். வருகின்றீர்களா? எனக் கேட்டவுடன், அம்மா அவர்கள் உளமார ஏற்றுக் கொண்டு, தான் வகித்த பெரிய பதவியைத் துறந்து, கோவைக்குப்

பணியாற்ற வந்தார்கள். இது தமிழ்நாட்டின் மீதும், தமிழ் மக்களின் மீதும் அவர்கள் கொண்ட அளவற்ற பாசத்தை, நேசத்தை நமக்கு எடுத்துக்காட்டுகிறது.

“பெற்ற தாயும், பிறந்த பொன்னாடும்  
நற்றவ வானினும் நனி சிறந்தனவே”

என்ற வாக்கினை அம்மா அவர்கள் உள்ளத்தில் வைத்ததோடு அன்றி அதன்படி நடந்தும், வாழ்ந்தும் வருகின்றார்கள்.

முதலில் சிறிய மனையியல் கல்லூரிதான் ஆரம்பிக்கப்பட்டு, அதன் முதல்வராகப் பணியாற்றி வந்தார்கள். அம்மா அவர்களின் வழிகாட்டுதலில், இந்நிறுவனம் நாளொரு மேனியும் பொழுதொரு வண்ணமும் ஆக வளர்ந்து வந்தது. அம்மா அவர்களே நடமாடும் ஒரு பல்கலைக்கழகம். அவர்களுக்குத் தெரியாத கலையே இல்லை எனலாம். உண்ணாமல், உறங்காமல் உழைத்தார்கள். இந்நிறுவனத்தை ஒரு மாபெரும் பல்கலைக்கழகமாக உருவாக்க வேண்டும் என்ற உயர்ந்த நோக்கத்தில் அயராது உழைத்தார்கள். ‘முயற்சி உடையார் இகழ்ச்சி அடையார்’, ‘முயற்சி திருவினை ஆக்கும்’ என்ற பழமொழிகள் உண்மை ஆயின. அவர்தம் கடின உழைப்பால் ஸ்ரீ அவினாசிலிங்கம் மனையியல் கல்லூரியும், முப்பரிமாண வளர்ச்சி அடைந்து இன்று பாரே வியக்கும் அளவுக்கு, பெரியதோர் பல்கலைக்கழகமாக உருவாகியது. அம்மா அவர்களின் ஆசையும் நிறைவாகியது. அய்யா அவர்களின் கனவும் நனவாகியது.

மனையியல் கல்லூரியின் முதல்வராக, இயக்குனராக பல ஆண்டுகள் பணியாற்றினார்கள். பல்கலைக்கழகமாக வடிவெடுத்தபின் பல ஆண்டுகள் அதன் துணைவேந்தராகப் பணியாற்றினார்கள். அய்யா அவர்களின் மறைவுக்குப் பின் அம்மா அவர்களே வேந்தராகப் பதவியேற்று, இன்றுவரை சீரியமுறையில் சிறந்த வழியில், முன்னேற்றப் பாதையில் நடத்தி

வருகின்றார்கள். இன்று கோவை நகரமே மனையியல் துறையில் பாருக்கே ஓர் வழிகாட்டியாக விளங்குகிறது. கொங்கு நாடோ, இந்தத் தங்கத் தமிழ் மகளை எண்ணி எண்ணி போற்றி மகிழ்கின்றது.

**‘மனதில் உறுதி வேண்டும்  
வாக்கினில் இனிமை வேண்டும்  
நினைவு நல்லது வேண்டும்  
நெருங்கின பொருள் கைப்பட வேண்டும்’**

என்ற பைந்தமிழ் பாரதியின் வாக்கும், “ஞாலம் கருதினும் கைகூடும் காலம் கருதி இடத்தாற் செயின்” என்ற தெய்வப் புலவரின் தெய்வீக வாக்கும் அம்மா அவர்களின் வாழ்க்கையில் உண்மையாயின. பல்வேறு எதிர்ப்புகளைச் சமாளித்து, வந்த பல இடையூறுகளைத் தகர்த்து எறிந்து, இறுதியில் கோவையில் “ஸ்ரீ அவினாசிலிங்கம் மனையியல் பல்கலைக் கழகத்தை” உருவாக்கி பெரிய சாதனை செய்தார்கள்.

## **ஆளுமைப் பண்பில் அம்மா அவர்கள்**

உருவத்தில் சிறியவராக இருந்தாலும் கீர்த்தியில், சிந்தனையில், அறிவாற்றலில், ஓயாது உழைப்பதில் சிறந்து விளங்கி வருகின்றார். எப்பொழுதும் எளிமையாகவே உடை அணிந்திருப்பார்கள். இனிமையாகவே பேசுவார்கள். சிரித்த முகத்தினராகவே இருப்பார்கள். எதையும் சிந்தித்துப் பார்த்து அறிவியல் அடிப்படையில் ஆராய்ந்து உண்மையின் அடிப்படையில் தான் ஏற்றுக் கொள்வார்கள்.

**“எப்பொருள் யார்யார் வாய்க்கேட்பினும் அப்பொருள்  
மெய்ப்பொருள் காண்ப தறிவு”**

என்ற வள்ளுவர் வழி நடப்பார்கள். அம்மா அவர்கள் ஆங்கிலத்திலும், தமிழிலும் சிறந்த புலமை பெற்றவர்கள். பல்வேறு நூல்கள் எழுதியுள்ளார்கள். சிறந்த எழுத்தாளர். சிறந்த பேச்சாற்றல் மிக்கவர்.

எதையும் எளிய முறையில் மக்களுக்குப் புரியும் வண்ணம் எடுத்துரைக்கும் ஆற்றல் கொண்டவர்கள் அம்மா அவர்கள்.

கண்ணுக்கு இனியவர் - நம்  
காட்சிக்கு எளியவர் - இவரிடத்தில்  
பொன்னகையே இல்லை - ஆனால்  
புன்னகையோ நிறைய உள்ளது - இவர்  
பணம் பாரார் - நல்ல  
குணம் பார்ப்பார் - இவர்  
சிரித்தால் அக்கணமே  
சிதறுவதோ முத்துக்கள் - செவ்விதழ்  
விரித்தால் அப்பொழுதே  
சிந்துவதோ செந்தமிழே - இவர்  
அறிவின் உறைவிடம் - மிகு  
ஆற்றலின் பிறப்பிடம் - நல்ல  
ஆராய்ச்சியின் இருப்பிடம் - உலகில்  
சத்துணவுத் துறையிலோ - இவரே  
அத்துணை நாட்டுக்கும் வழிகாட்டி

இவ்வாறு அம்மா அவர்களின் ஆளுமைப் பண்மைப் புகழ்ந்து கொண்டே போகலாம். Amma achieves much higher goals by making her people to follow her. She possesses three great qualities such as courage, self - confidence and decisiveness. She speaks and writes simply, clearly and persuasively. She possesses six more qualities such as thoroughness, fairness, initiative, tact, enthusiasm and emotional control. She also possesses four more virtues like mental ability, communication skill, maturity and administrative acumen. She possess a great dynamic personality. Above all the love she shows to all is to be remembered for ever in our mind.

## பெண்ணின் திலகமாய் அம்மா

“மங்கையராய்ப் பிறப்பதற்கே நல்ல  
மாதவம் செய்திட வேண்டுமம்மா”

என்றார் கவிமணி. அதன்படி பெண்ணாக வடிவெடுத்து அரிய பல செயல்கள் செய்து, வியத்தகு சாதனைகள் பல நிகழ்த்தி, இன்று மங்கையர் திலகமாக விளங்கி வருகின்றார்கள் அம்மா அவர்கள்.

“அடுப்பூதும் பெண்களுக்குப் படிப்பெதற்கு”

என்ற மூடத்தனத்தில் மூலையில் ஒதுங்கி கிடந்த பெண்களுக்கெல்லாம் ஒரு வழி காட்டியாகத் திகழ்ந்து பெண்கல்வி கூடாது என்ற மூடத்தனத்திற்கு முற்றுப் புள்ளி வைத்தார்கள். “விலகி வீட்டிலோர் பொந்தில் வாழ்வதை வீரப்பெண்கள் விரைவில் ஒழிப்பாராம்” என்ற பாரதியின் கனவினை மெய்ப்பித்து அம்மா அவர்கள் பெண்களின் திலகமாய் விளங்கி வருகின்றார்கள்.

## பாரதி கண்ட புதுமைப் பெண்ணாக அம்மா

“மாதர் தம்மை இழிவு செய்யும்  
மடமையைக் கொளுத்துவோம்”

என்று சாடினார் மகாகவி.

அவரது சாடலுக்கு ஏற்ப, பெரும் சாதனை நாயகியாக, அவர்கண்ட புதுமைப் பெண்ணாக இன்று பாரில் பொன்னொளி வீசித் திகழ்கின்றார்கள். பெண்களே நம் நாட்டின் கண்கள். அவர்களுக்கு விடுதலை கொடுத்தால் அவர்கள் நாட்டின் பெருமையை நிலை நாட்டுவார்கள். அதன் புகழை பாரெங்கும் பரப்புவார்கள் என்பதைத் தன் வாழ்வில் மெய்ப்பித்தார்கள்.

“பட்டங்கள் ஆள்வதும் சட்டங்கள் செய்வதும்  
பாரினில் பெண்கள் நடத்த வந்தோம்  
எட்டும் அறிவினில் ஆணுக்கு இங்கேபெண்  
இளைப்பில்லை காணென்று கும்மியடி”

என்ற பாரதியின் பெண் விடுதலைக் கனவு அம்மாவின் வாழ்வில்  
நனவாயிற்று. அவர்கண்ட புதுமைப் பெண்ணாக இன்று அரிய பல  
சாதனைகள் நடத்தி வருகின்றார்கள்.

“நிமிர்ந்த நன்னடையும், நேர்கொண்ட பார்வையும்  
நிலத்தில் யார்க்கும் அஞ்சாத நெறிகளும்  
திமிர்ந்த ஞானச் செருக்கும் இருப்பதால்  
செம்மை மாதர் திறம்புவதில்லையாம்”

என்ற தேசிய கவியின் வாக்கிற்கேற்ப அம்மா அவர்கள் புதுமைப்  
பெண்ணாக விளங்குகின்றார்கள். பெண் உடலாலும், மனத்தாலும்  
ஆசைக்கு இளைத்தவள் இல்லை. பெண்ணால் மட்டுமே மனித இன  
உற்பத்தியிலும், சமூக உற்பத்தியிலும் ஈடுபட முடியும். இதனால் பெண்,  
ஆணினத்திலும் உயர்ந்தவள் என்பதை அம்மா அவர்கள் தன் சொல்,  
செயல், சிந்தனை மூன்றிலும் மெய்ப்பித்துக் காட்டி இன்று பாரே  
போற்றும், பாரதப் பெண்ணாக, பாரதி கண்ட புதுமைப் பெண்ணாகத்  
திகழ்கின்றார்கள்.

## முடிவுரை : Her life is a message to us

அம்மா அவர்களது வாழ்க்கையே நமக்குச் செய்தியாக, வழிகாட்டியாக  
அமைகிறது. வீடு வீடு என பலபேர்கள் சுயநலத்தில் சுருண்டு விழும்  
இந்த நாளில் நாடு நாடு என தேச நலம் வேண்டி ஓடும் அம்மா  
அவர்களின் பொதுநல சேவையை எப்படிப் புகழ்வதென்றே தெரியவில்லை.

“ஒன்றையே நினைத்து ஊருக்காய் வாழ்ந்திருக்கும் உத்தமர் ஓர் ஆலயம்” என்பதற்கு ஏற்ப அம்மா அவர்கள் இன்று நம்மிடையே வாழும் மனித தெய்வமாக விளங்குகின்றார்கள். “ஊருக்கு உழைத்தல் யோகம்” என்ற பாரதியின் சொல்படி நாட்டுக்காக உழைத்து வருகின்றார்கள் அம்மா அவர்கள்.

கற்கண்டுச் சுவைதனை கன்னத்தில் தேக்கி  
கற்பக விருந்ததைக் கனிமொழியில் தந்து  
பொன்னின் ஒளியினை முகந்தாங்கி சுடர்விடும்  
பெண்ணின் திலகமாய் விளங்குபவர் அம்மா

அம்மா அவர்களின் சேவை பல்லாண்டு பலகோடி நூறாண்டு தொடர இறைவனை வேண்டி அவர் காட்டிய வழியில் நாளும் சென்று,

கன்னலெனும் சோலைதனில்  
கனிந்துலவும் பூங்குயில்போல்  
இன்னலின்றி நாடு வாழ  
இன்பமெனும் ஒளிபெறுவோம்  
பொல்லாத தீமையெலாம்  
புது ஒளியில் மறைய வேண்டும்.  
நில்லாத காற்றே போன்று - நம்  
தொல்லை எலாம் தொலைய வேண்டும் - அம்மாவின்  
நல்லதோர் கருத்தை ஏற்று - இந்த  
நானிலத்தில் வாழ்வோம் நாம்.



# HOW I SEE AMMA

SHERLY JOSEPH

The first time I met Amma was in 1995; just before she was proceeding to China for a UN Conference on 'Women's Development'. The first impression I got was that she was very hardworking with a joyful heart. I met her in the night 11.30p.m; even then she was doing her final paper work before leaving for China.

Amma is a person who keeps her word. She never says, 'I can't do'. She is always willing to try to do even the hardest tasks. Over the past three year period I have learned many principles from her. Most of them are very helpful to me for my daily life. Amma's example has helped me to be something from nothing.

My first trip abroad towards Australia to my Aunt Mrs. Mary Devadas was together with Amma. It took away my fear of Amma; the fear became loving respect towards her.

Amma is always busy. She never wastes any time. I admire her disciplined lifestyle - a very simple and effective style.

Over the last three years, I have learned her taste and choice of foods (she is a total vegetarian), try my best to prepare the food items she likes to eat in Australia.

As I mentioned before my first visit to Australia was with Amma, I had much difficulty in clearing the immigration at the Madras airport and I couldn't

speak the local language (Tamil). At that time my English was also poor (I think still it is !) but Amma managed well, speaking to me half in Malayalam and half in English to give me some understanding of what the officers were saying.

Every time Amma visits Australia, she brings us many presents for her son Dr. Mohan Devadas and his family including several friends and myself.

The best time we all have together with Amma is the Prayer time in the mornings and evenings. She reads for all of us from Tamil daily reading (Anranthulla Appam) and translates it to English. She explains the messages very well like a good story teller and her talks keep us to be regular in daily prayer.

This fellowship at the prayer time makes me feel that I am in my home with my own family and Grandmother.

I am thankful to God for introducing me to this wonderful woman of God, Amma. I pray that God may continue to bless her and keep her with Divine strength and love which is found in Jesus Christ.



**AVINASHILINGAM  
INSTITUTIONS'  
FAMILY**



# AMMA MY MENTOR

GODAVARI KAMALANATHAN

**A**mma has been guide in my career. At a time when there was acute rice shortage, Amma as a new graduate of B.Sc. Home Science had been advocating use of wheat and sweet potatoes in Madras city. In one such demonstration, my Engineer father was much impressed by Amma's advocacy for better nutrition. Hence he advised me to take home science instead of engineering which I was keen on. That has been the turning point in my education and the cementing of life long guru - sishya bhava with Amma. Half a century has elapsed and the unity is still vibrant, dynamic and sustaining. Amma's sense of service, urgency to mitigate problem was such she enthused me even as a student to work with her in her mission to promote better nutrition. At the time of rice shortage (1946) the anti British feeling was such that our teachers - an American and a Canadian could not talk of wheat in forums, lest people will say "The white women want to kill us with strange foods". They guided us to come forward to put forth the importance of cereals other than rice. Varieties of recipes were tested, demonstrated and popularized.

Amma as a first home science research scholar of Indian Research Food Association (now Indian Council for Medical Research), was testing on poor Madrasi diet on albino rats at Women's Christian College under the guidance of Dr. Eleanor D. Mason. She used to meticulously look after the animals and had to feed them daily at 8.00 a.m. all days all through the year sunshine or raining. We used to admire her quick efficiency. At the same time she also looked after her young son (Dr. Mohan) while at work on sundays.

Amma has had association with great scientist for her young Dr. W.R. Aykroyd first Director of Nutrition in Coonoor. Later Director Nutrition Division of FAO took personal interest in training Amma in Animal work.

Amma's teacher late Dr. Branagan Chakley had once said "No one dies of hard work" Meeting Amma she revised her statement "Every one thrives on hard work"! Another Teacher of Amma used to extol that she had TLC (Tender Loving Care) to help others.

Late Dr. C.G. King (eminent Vitamin C Scientist) had deep appreciation for extraordinary scientific out look and clarity of thinking.

The views of such departed teacher, are reflected in the expressions of Amma Associates.

Dr. John Yudkin Nutritionist of UK deeply appreciated Amma's work in Community Nutrition. Dr. David Morley, scientist of UK sought collaboration work with Amma regarding weighing of children.

Dr. W.H. Sebrell Institute of Nutrition Science, Columbus University deeply appreciated Amma's pioneering work in Nutrition.

HAP Ooman of Holland had sent his students to carry out Community Nutrition programme at Sri Avinashilingam Education Trust.

Late Mr. N.W. Pirie FRS Biochemist who isolated leaf protein was deeply impressed by Amma's Scientific Temper that he offered grants and made Sri Avinashilingam Education Trust Institutions Centre for advanced research in leaf protein.

At Queen Mary's College as the first lecturer in household arts (Intermediate class), she established the household arts cottage in 1948. Our path separated briefly when Amma went abroad and I became a home maker. I heard about the wonderful

innovative work of Amma in the post of Chief Home Economist - the first of its kind - to promote extension work. In 1955 when I was a student at Cornell University, we Indian students were thrilled when we saw in the New York Herald Tribune the photograph of the young Indian woman Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas and a whole column about her speech. I would say with pride "Oh! I know her. She was my senior in college".

In 1956 - when the T.C.M. (Technical Co-operation Mission of USA) team came to Women's Christian College, Amma was one of the consultants. She warmly greeted me and said "Godavari we have much to do - together" and mentioned about the college she is planning exclusively for Home Science with Indian culture and outlook at Coimbatore, under the guidance of our Ayya avargal, Dr. T.S. Avinashilingam.

God's guidance was evident that I joined the newly started Sri Avinashilingam Home Science College in 1958, which was part of the Sri Avinashilingam Education Trust, established with the vision of Ayya avargal. to serve the cause of women at all levels - and education imparted at informal as well as formal level.

### **Setting up ideals**

Amma is a born leader and at the same time, she followed Ayya's guidance and ideals of spirituality, simplicity, sympathetic approach to the downtrodden. The ideals were clearly woven in our teaching - learning process - Amma's warm welcome, open hearted hospitality, cheerful service, earned a good name for the Institution. Her high quality of education and strict discipline earned popularity for the young institution.

Our institute's emblem is the result of deep thought and synthesis of the ideals, aims and aspirations of founder and Amma. The staff and the 'pioneer' students enrolled during the first year of our great institute, imbibed the ideals that have been depicted in our emblem. The lighted kuthuvilakku stands for education which wipes

out darkness and helps to enlighten an individual and the surroundings. The virtues of beauty, simplicity and prosperity are symbolised by the lotus. Knowledge is depicted by the book.

The veena represents the fine arts which help to achieve harmony and creativity in our lives. The hut signifies the home which is the cradle of culture and in which the personality of individuals blossom. The circle represents the world. The motto, 'Seek and Ye shall Find' is the essence of all education. Amma put in all her efficient efforts to enthuse the first group of student "pioneers" and their teachers that the institute became well known in India.

The first institute to be set under Sri Avinashilingam Education Trust was the high school. Under the guidance of Amma the headmistress, teachers and pupils made the wilderness of 6½ acres of the forest college into a delightful garden. The first building to come up was the shrine and the tradition of worship was established morning and evening. So much so our Amma calls the high school children, "Ammamar" (Mothers) as path finders.

Spirituality is the fulcrum of the institute One of the finest experiences was at the time of Swami Vivekananda Centenary Celebrations when all the members were associated with conducting 101 hours Akanda Bhajans. Through a series of meeting with the students, staff and wellwishers of the institute, the programme was planned minute to minute. Every member was given opportunity to give her time, energy and talent to make the function meaningful. For 101 hours, bhajan's were chanted by batches of students. Even at mid night the chanting went on. Discourses were held and every one associated with the function felt elevated.

Amma is a firm believer of (ஒன்றே குலம் ஒருவனே தேவன்) 'only one community and only one God'.

Establishment of Sri Avinashilingam Home Science College was an epoch. Amma with her missionary zeal, planned and developed the college true to the saying of Bharathiar - She brought the knowledge of the eight directions - collected information of various institutions and set up the courses - In 1957 with 45 students of pre-university, it expanded to 1058 students and 71 teachers in 1967 as a first grade college. In the formative years, wherever Amma went she will purchase the best equipment, books, art objects and artifacts for the college. After every trip to other cities and abroad Amma will come loaded with luggage for the college, and ideas for progress.

From the inception of the institute, teaching, research, extension service have been the tripod of activities. Research activities were commenced in 1961 and made phenomenal stride with establishment of M.Sc. course. Amma as member of boards of studies in home science at various universities including Madras University introduced research and thesis as built in component. Today the institute has found a place in the world map as a centre for research in nutrition, resource management, human development, biochemistry, economics, extension and textiles and clothing. The aspects of research are varied and many. Every research project was geared towards human progress.

### **Academic Break through - Autonomous Status**

Amma took the faculty members along with her in planning the syllabus, method of evaluation and this was most evident while the college was conferred autonomous status. The entire staff body and students were given opportunity to voice their opinion.

Amma and faculty of 1979, Sri Avinashilingam Home Science College set ideals for its autonomous status. to :

- Promote national integration, citizenship - democratic living, formation of character and personality, scholarship, knowledge, academic excellence in terms of national and international standards of productivity, self reliance and skills of living together and social purpose in education and
- Bring about the necessary attitudes in students to enable them serve the people and be friends, helpers and coworkers of the poorest of the poor and the lowest in the community.

Inculcation of values and faith is the prime mover in man. The college aims at realising these ideals, through the inculcation of the following values :

- Discipline, integrity and service mindedness.
- Creative and independent thinking and ability to make wise choices and decisions.
- Innovation and spirit of inquiry and invention.

Towards these goals, programmes were planned ably by Amma and the faculty undertook the responsibilities enthusiastically. One of the changes was introduction of the triple major system. It was envisaged to offer opportunities to help students have a wider scope for horizontal or upward mobility. This system has been successful in Karnataka and several universities. Somehow a few teachers showed apprehension and students were restive and a very innovative scheme had to be given up. As a real educationist Amma accepted the result and modified the system. The ten years of autonomy paved way to the establishment of the university.

### **Extension Service**

Amma's first thrust is extension. Through her service as Chief Home Economist in the Ministry of Community Development, she got insight into the

nature of the need of the community. Home Science Extension was introduced as an elective in the B.Sc. Home Science course in 1961-62. At Post Graduate level a paper on Community Nutrition was introduced in every M.Sc. course. At the Under Graduate level, all the students are required to give two hours per week for relevant community action work (CSS) in a selected village or slum. This is a curricular requirement in the autonomous setting. The teaching of, and practical work in extension, have been further strengthened by the many training programmes, seminars and workshops which the college has undertaken, commissioned by the central and state governments and voluntary bodies. Contacts made were many.

### **Action projects of National Importance**

The Ministries of Community Development, Food and Agriculture, Social Welfare, Planning Commission, National Council of Education Research and Training (NCERT), Department of Social Welfare, Directorate of Extension, National Institute of Public Co-operation and Child Development (NIPCCD), commissioned various programmes for our institute to execute. The state governments through directorates of social welfare, rural development availed of Amma's expertise. non-governmental organisation such as Bharathiya Grammeen Mahila Sangh, Rotary Club, Central Social Welfare Board, World Vision of India sought advice of Amma for various activities.

Amma's guidance was sought for many programmes launched by the Government. Notable were the Applied Nutrition Programme under the State Government; Integrating education in nutrition, health and environmental sanitation in the Primary Schools in Tamil Nadu; Training rural women in Post Harvest Technology under the Department of Food, Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India; The Tamil Nadu Integrated Nutrition Project under the Department of Social

Welfare, Government of Tamil Nadu; taking Science to Rural Families and Communities, sponsored by the Department of Science and Technology; and Popularization of wheat products in rural / semi urban areas of Tamil Nadu based on consumer preference, sponsored by US Wheat Associates, New Delhi.

These projects were well planned, carefully organized and continuously monitored. For each one, Amma took special efforts to make it a success. These outreach programmes had been useful to the community and projects proved a link between government and the institution.

### **Avid Research Worker**

Amma is a true teacher. It is a privilege to work with Amma on research projects. Amma has guided hundreds of students in M.Sc., M.Phil. and Ph.D. She has been guiding research work assigned to the institute. My privilege has been associated with Amma in Leaf Protein project and being guided for my Ph.D. Dissertation. Amma's scientific achievements, innovative ingenuity, imagination were of extremely high standard. It involved indepth scientific analysis in the product of leaf protein and extensive extension approach to promote it. In this endeavour, our institute gained acclaim in scientific field led by NW Pirie FRS as a leading unit in Leaf Protein because high quality product was produced, incorporated in acceptable form and use promoted among a variety of population. Amma is critical, in solving problems.

When Amma guided me for my Ph.D. dissertation, she held the torch to light the path at every step - the choice of topic, the methodology, process, discussion and title. It was an exciting experience of sharing ideas, discovering new methods and application and expression. My draft submitted, travelled with her in air, train and car! Amma will critically go through the write up and always gave positive suggestion.

A torturous stanza, a confused thought or phrase will be chiselled, reworded, and polished into a fine sentence. One will wonder why it did not occur to the writer earlier! I used to call it 'Amma's Magic Touch'.

## **The Globe Trotter**

Travelling with Amma is a unique experience. Amma undertook travels with purpose - for survey, for lectures, for sharing ideas and dissemination of scientific information. When in a new country, she saw it from many angles - Indian needs, the students' interest, the teachers' outlook, the researchers' aspiration and brought all the experiences home and shared with groups.

She could cement friendship with people of any country be it in Africa, Europe or Far Eastern countries. Travelling with Amma is great education and elevated experience. Be it one from Delhi to a village in Saharanpur, Coimbatore to Kottamangalam, or Chennai or London or Tokyo. She evinced same enthusiasm. She can be at home in a hut in a remote village in Indonesia or a scientific session in USDA, Bethesda, Washington D.C. She would have the inner strength to go round the place and collect as much information as possible.

## **Friend, Philosopher and Guide**

Amma is deeply religious and everyday she starts her day with meditation and prayers. When in the campus she always attends the morning and evening prayers. Her religion has been universal and is manifested in her compassion and undertaking. Every member of saradalaya has received her help, advice or support.

Her service to humanity is vast, deep and wide and we look upon her guidance for several decades to come. ●

# AN ANATOMY OF SUCCESS AND ACHIEVEMENT

K. KULANDAIVEL

**O**ur Founder Revered Ayya Dr. T.S. Avinashilingam avargal used to say “There is no limit to achievement. Sky is the limit”. He proved by his life and work that one can continuously move forward achieving great things one after another provided one has a vision of what to achieve and work hard continuously. He used to repeat the Thirukkural

ஆக்கம் அதர்வினாய்ச் செல்லும் அசைவிலா  
ஊக்கம் உடையான் உழை.

All people desire to become great and achieve many things. But many people do not succeed in their effort as they do not have clear vision of what to achieve and do not work hard. Some people work hard for some time and achieve some things. Then they became complacent and take things easy and stop progressing or they get tired and stop working. Only very few people have a clear vision of their goal and work hard continuously, tirelessly to achieve them. Once they achieve a goal they set higher goals and work still hard to achieve them. A nation's progress depends upon such people. Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas, the Managing Trustee of the Avinashilingam Education Trust and the Chancellor of the Avinashilingam Deemed University, is one such rare person. Her achievements in the past 50 years are stupendous and amazing.

She started life with some handicaps. She was married at a young age when she was in school and soon became a mother. But this did not deter her determination to pursue higher education. She had a clear vision of what she should become in life and worked hard to achieve it.

She was highly intelligent and secured highest marks in the S.S.L.C. examination and was awarded the Elizabeth Miller Gold Medal. She studied B.Sc. Home Science in Queen Mary's College, Madras in 1944. She worked as Research Assistant in nutrition from 1944 to 46 at Women's Christian College. She served as Assistant Lecturer in Household Arts and Head of the Department in Queen Mary's College from 1946 to 1947. She was selected and deputed for advance studies in Nutrition and Home Science Education with the Govt. of India overseas scholarship. She completed M.Sc. (Foods and Nutrition) in 1948, M.A. (Home Science Education) in 1949 and Ph.D. (Nutrition and Biochemistry) in 1950 at the Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio in the United States. Her academic record has been superior with first classes and first ranks throughout. She had the signal honour of an invitation to address the Ohio State Legislature (House of Representatives) in 1950.

On return to India, Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas served as Dietitian and Professor of Nutrition in the College of Nursing from 1951 to 53. Then she joined the Faculty of Home Science, University of Baroda as Dean and Professor of Nutrition and served there from 1953 to 55. From 1955 to 1961 she worked as Chief Home Economist and Joint Director (Home Science) in the Directorate of Extension, Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Government of India. From 1975 to 1976 she served as Assistant Director General (Nutrition) in the Indian Council for Agricultural Research, Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, Govt. of India, New Delhi.

When she was working in Queen Mary's College she came into contact with Dr. T.S. Avinashilingam avargal who was then the Minister for Education in the composite Madras State. When she went to United States for Higher studies Dr. Avinashilingam asked her whether she will be willing to help him to start a women's college in Coimbatore and serve in it. She gave word that she will be prepared to join his institution when it is started. In 1955 Dr. Avinashilingam avargal founded the Avinashilingam Education Trust Institutions with a High School and in

1957 the Avinashilingam Home Science College. Dr. Devadas associated herself very closely with these institutions and was the Assistant Managing Trustee of the Avinashilingam Education Trust Institutions.

When the college grew she joined the college as post graduate professor and the Principal in 1961 and developed it as one of the leading institutions in Home Science in the country. She served as Principal from 1961 to 1975 and from 1976 to 1980. After retirement she served the college (which then got autonomous status) from 1980 to 1988 as Honorary Director, Professor and Dean of Postgraduate Studies. In 1988 when the college became a Deemed University she became the first Vice Chancellor and made it a unique institution. After retirement from the Vice Chancellor's post she is now the Chancellor of the university and Managing Trustee of the Avinashilingam Education Trust. The university has grown steadily under her able and devoted guidance and direction.

Besides developing the institution on the academic lines, she has developed the research and extension activities of the then college and now university. Several research projects were taken up with the assistance of many national and international agencies. A large number of extension programmes were also organised with the assistance of UNICEF, NCERT, ICAR, WHO, Govt. of India and Tamil Nadu Govt. The Integrated Nutrition Education Project, the training of thousands of personnel for the same and the CARE Nutrition project. DANIDA Primary Health Care Project and the Nutritional Noon Meal Programme for Children are her unique contributions.

She has published over 530 research papers, 350 popular articles and 57 books (38 in English and 19 in Tamil) and editor of popular scientific monthly in Tamil and monthly Journal of Nutrition and Dietetics. She has represented India in over 60 International conferences in about 50 countries in 5 continents.

She has won several awards such as the National Rafi Ahmed Kidwai Prize, the Best Teacher Award, the National Award for child welfare, Award for the Promotion of Science and Technology Literature in Tamil, the Tagore Literacy Award, ISBE R & D Linkar Award, Padmashri Award, The International Award from Human Ecology Alumni Society, Mahila Shiromani Award, Hari OM Ashram Trust Award, Dr. B.C. Guha Memorial Award, Sri Kantiah Oratian Award, Award for Tamil Arignar, Vignana Saraswathi Award, Sree Ratna Award, Mahaveer Jain Award, G.D. Birla Award and Smt. Janakidevi Bajaj Award.

This in short, is the list of achievements and successful academic adventure of Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas. It is really amazing and hard to believe that in a period of nearly 50 years she was able to achieve so much. She is now considered one of the leading successful women in India. What is the secret behind all these achievements and success? It is worth analysing and listing them so that others also may emulate her and become great.

## **1. Faith in God**

“Those who have faith have all, and those who lack faith lack all” said Sri Ramakrishna. Dr. Devadas has unshakable faith in God and considers all her success are due to God's blessings. She believes in prayer and says her prayers regularly every day “More things are wrought by prayer than the world dreams of” said Poet Tennyson. So her faith in God and prayers are the foundation of all her success and achievement.

## **2. Faith in Self (Self Confidence)**

Swami Vivekananda said “The old religions say that he is an athiest who does not believe in God. But the new religion says that he is an athiest who does not have faith in himself”. Swamiji insisted that one must have faith in oneself and in his capacity to do things. Dr. Devadas has immense faith in herself and self confidence

to do the job she has undertaken efficiently and successfully. This self confidence makes it possible for her to take up several things at the same time and complete them successfully.

### **3. High intelligence**

Dr. Devadas is very intelligent and has the capacity to understand ideas quickly. From her childhood she has always scored very high marks and got all her degrees with high distinction. She got her D.Sc. Degree from the university of Madras.

### **4. Having a clear goal in life**

Many people do not know what their goal in life is. They drift this way and that way and waste their life. But Dr. Devadas had a clear goal from the very start. She wanted to be a top most person in the field of Nutrition and Home Science and make the new science benefit our people. With this goal in mind she got the highest degree in this field, instituted several courses in Nutrition, Dietetics and Home Science, trained several young scientists, conducted several research studies and organised several extension programmes. Today she is a Doyen in the world of Nutrition and Home Science and is known all over the world.

### **5. Continuous Hard Work**

Dr. Devadas is a very very hard working person. Her day is very long and her resting hours are very short. On most of the days she works very late at night and the days on which she works throughout night are many. She works not only as an individual person, but has the capacity to make her group also work hard. She travels tirelessly long distances to attend her committee meetings even for a short period. All people admire her capacity to travel night and day to fulfil her commitments even at this age.

## **6. Courage**

She is not a person who is afraid of power or position. She is courageous and speaks boldly and with conviction what she considers right. She makes a mark wherever she is, and in whatever national or international seminar or conferences she attends.

## **7. Leadership**

She has always been a leader in her field in whichever group she works. She was a member of the syndicate of the University of Madras continuously for five terms and has been in syndicates and executive councils of several universities. She is able to analyse the problems clearly and give solutions. She gives clear directions to her coworkers and leads them towards the goal.

## **8. Team spirit**

No one who does great things does all the work himself or herself. It is necessary to have a good team, motivate the team members, give them enthusiasm and do the work successfully. Dr. Devadas has the capacity to attract an able team around her and involve them with devotion and sincerity in the work she entrusts them. In the Avinashilingam Trust Institutions, all the staff members work like a team, live as a family with her as the centre figure. She has concern for all the staff and is deeply interested in their progress and welfare. Many staff who joined as demonstrators have progressed steadily in their field and are now Readers, Professors and Deans.

These are some of the outstanding qualities that are the basis for the success and achievement of Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas. She is a model for all youngsters and they should try to emulate her and come up in life. May we all wish and pray that she be endowed with a long life and excellent health to serve the Avinashilingam Education Trust Institution and the country for many many years. ●

# ஆற்றலின் மறு உருவம் 'அம்மா'

டி.கே. சண்முகானந்தம்

“கற்க கசடற கற்பவை கற்றபின்  
நிற்க அதற்குத் தக”

என்ற தெய்வப்புலவரின் வாக்கின்வழி நின்று, இன்று வெற்றியின் நாயகியாய்த் திகழும் அம்மா அவர்களைப் பற்றி அறியாதோர் இத்தரணியில் யாரும் இல்லை எனலாம். அன்பின் திருவுருவாய், ஆற்றலின் மறுவுருவாய், இன்சொல் கூறும் இனிய நங்கையாய், ஈகைக் குணம் மிகுந்தவராய், உண்மையின் உறைவிடமாய், ஊக்கத்தின் இருப்பிடமாய், எண்ணிலடங்கா சாதனைகள் படைத்தவராய், ஏற்றமிகு சாரதாலயத்தின் தலைவியாய், 'ஐயா' அவர்கள் வழி வந்த அன்புத்தாயாய், ஒற்றுமையின் சிறப்பை உணர்த்துபவராய், ஒளவையின் பக்தியைத் தன்னகத்தே கொண்டவராய் விளங்கும் 'அம்மா' அவர்கள் எல்லோராலும் புகழப்படும் பெருமைக்குரியவர்.

அன்று, ஐயா அவர்கள் அவினாசிலிங்கம் பெண்கள் மனையியல் கல்லூரியை ஆரம்பித்தபோது, என் தகப்பனார் மிகவும் உறுதுணையாக இருந்தார்கள். பெண்கல்விக்கு 'ஐயா' அவர்கள் முக்கியத்துவம் அளித்தார்கள்.

'ஐயா' அவர்கள் உருவாக்கிய 'அம்மா' அவர்கள் அதன் அழகுக்கு மெருகூட்டும் ஒரு சிறந்த சிற்பி என்பது விரைவிலேயே தெள்ளத்தெரிந்தது. 'ஐயா' அவர்கள் உருவாக்கிய கல்லூரி இன்று ஒரு சிறந்த பல்கலைக் கழகமாகத் திகழ்கிறது என்றால், அது முற்றிலும் 'அம்மா' அவர்களின் அயராத உழைப்பால்தான். அம்மா அவர்களை நான் முதன் முதலாக சந்தித்தது டெல்லி வெஸ்டன் கோர்ட்டில்.

அம்மா அவர்களுடன் கடந்த நாற்பது வருடங்களாக நெருங்கிப் பழகும் வாய்ப்பு எனக்குக் கிடைத்துள்ளது. அவர்களிடம், என்னைக் கவர்ந்த மிக முக்கியமான குணங்கள்

**என்றும் மாறா அன்பு :** அம்மா அவர்கள் எப்போதும் எங்கள் குடும்பத்தில் ஒருவர். என்றும் மாறா, ஆழமான அன்பு உள்ளம் கொண்டவர்.

**அயராது உழைப்பு :** “என் கடன் பணி செய்து கிடப்பதே” என்பதற்கிணங்க, சோர்வின்றி அயராது உழைக்கும் அவரது ஈடில்லா உழைப்பைக் காணும்போது நான் அடையும் ஆச்சரியத்திற்கு அளவே இல்லை.

**விடாமுயற்சியுடன் பாடுபட்டு எடுத்த காரியத்தில் வெற்றி காண்பது** என்பது அம்மா அவர்களின் அழிக்க முடியாத சொத்து.

**இறையுணர்வு :** இறைவனிடம் அசைக்க முடியாத ஆழ்ந்த பக்தியும், நம்பிக்கையும் உடையவர் அம்மா.

**நேரம் தவறாமை :** அம்மா அவர்களுக்கு எத்தனையோ வேலைகள் இருந்தாலும், அதைக் குறித்த நேரத்தில், குறித்தபடி முடிக்க வேண்டும் என்பதில் மிகக் கண்டிப்பானவர். அவரால் உயர்ந்தவர்களும், அவரைச் சுற்றி இருப்பவர்களும் அவரது குணங்களில் மிகவும் போற்றுவது அவரது காலம் தவறாத பழக்கம்தான்.

அம்மா அவர்கள் உயர்ந்தவர்கள்.



# AMMA - THE GUIDE

LAKSHMI SANTA RAJAGOPAL

**1954** I had joined the B.Sc. Course in Botany in the Union Christian College, Alwaye, one of the prestigious colleges in Kerala. It was home ground for me, having just completed my intermediate course in the same institution, choosing the second group - Biology, Chemistry, Physics. When I was two weeks in the undergraduate course, my grand parents and parents received a letter from my uncle, Mr. M.G.G. Nair, a senior officer in ESSO, Baroda. He waxed eloquent about a new programme started in the M.S. University of Baroda - Home Science. I did not realise that that letter was a harbinger of a new phase in my life. He heard from Mr. Unni, an acquaintance of Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas, the then Dean of the Faculty of Home Science, M.S. University, Baroda, that it was an excellent course for girls. My uncle was keen that I should join the B.Sc. Home Science programme at once. This put me in a dilemma. My future and my prospects seemed hazy. Though reluctant, I accepted the proposal without any argument.

Collecting the necessary certificates from the College, I left Kerala for Baroda with my brother. Mr. Unni, whom we affectionately called Unni Mama, lost no time in coming to my uncle's house and late in the evening we proceeded to the Dean's bungalow.

In the Dean's house a warm, cheerful young person met us. This was my first meeting with Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas, who began to guide my career from that moment. She was enthusiastic, confident, purposeful and possessed unshakeable

faith and conviction in the prospects of Home Science as an academic programme for girls. I knew instinctively that she was not just an ordinary academician. My confidence was restored and I felt that my decision to change the course was not a foolhardy one. The Dean appeared to be very affectionate and hospitable. That meeting became etched in my heart.

Classes began and I enjoyed each session with Miss Malhan, Miss Savithri Pandit, Mrs. Renuka Mukherjee and several others. Every Tuesday, one session was allotted for “current events” and the person who appeared before us was the Dean herself. It was a session for updating knowledge and we used to pore over the newspapers to absorb the latest information. This session instilled in many of us the habit of reading newspapers daily.

Later, there was a change in leadership but the seeds sown in the first year were wholesome and healthy. Three years later, I had the first opportunity to come to our institution - Sri Avinashilingam Home Science College, as a participant in a summer programme for teachers when I had the good fortune of meeting our revered Founder Ayya avargál also. The month long programme, which was directed by Amma, enabled the participants to learn more about Ayya and Amma, the background and objectives of this institution and how the top-level people, with their value network, could cast a beneficial spell over the young minds.

The following year, destiny brought me here to the campus to be nurtured and developed by “Amma of the campus”. Needless to say, it was one of the innumerable blessings, renewed hopes and varied opportunities to imbibe lasting values to study, assess and modify one's own practices and to develop professionally. It has been a thrilling experience under the guidance of Amma.

During the early years, Amma guided the Principal-in-charge, Mrs. Unni, the teachers and the students, mostly from her seat in the Directorate of Extension, New Delhi, but visited Coimbatore and this institution whenever possible, at least once in two months. Air travel was not common during those days, therefore, she always journeyed by train, spending two and a half days in the train each way. When she was in the campus, she worked for almost 21 hours a day. Amma has not relinquished this practice even today.

I always look at Amma with awe, admiration and appreciation. Many qualities in Amma distinguish her from all the other women - be they students, teachers, administrators, academicians, research workers, social workers, community organisers or homemakers. Amma harbours in her the capacity to take upon herself these multifarious roles simultaneously and discharges them with utmost care and efficiency.

Everyone wonders how this individual stands out as a unique personality. Amma's abundant faith in God, as she always expresses, is the basic strength for all her greatness and achievements. Her self-confidence, her tireless capacity for hardwork, regularity, systematic organisation, thirst for knowledge, research orientation and curiosity to explore the untrodden ways, her acumen for problem solving, power to assess situations and individuals, photographic memory, boundless energy, ability to establish connections with people at all levels, competence to make bold decisions and remarkable ability to inspire people to work together are just a few of the commendable distinctions I have observed in Amma. She has endeared herself to innumerable people as an efficient teacher, an erudite scholar, a crusader for the oppressed and underprivileged, a friend in need and above all, a lovable

human being. Teaching is a passion for Amma even now. As a teacher she is a strict taskmaster. She believes that a teacher is a lover of learning who could inspire here students, arouse their imagination and stimulate their curiosity to understand the hidden facts around humanity.

Amma has been our peerless leader with remarkable distinctiveness, has been racing against time to bring about value added life to people around. My humble pranams to the distinguished individual - the great teacher of ours. On behalf of her innumerable daughters, on the occasion of the 80th birthday celebrations of the worthy Mother of ours, may I, with a heart filled with gratitude, pray to the supreme power to bless Amma with a long healthy life to continue serving the humanity and also to bless all of us to be worthy of her association. ●



# என்னை ஆளாக்கிய என் அம்மா

சரோஜா பிரபாகரன்

தோன்றின் புகழொடு தோன்றுக அஃதிலார்  
தோன்றலின் தோன்றாமை நன்று.

என்ற திருக்குறளுக்கு இலக்கணமாய்த் தோன்றி, புகழொடு வாழ்ந்து பல்லோரும் வாழ வழிகாட்டியாய் விளங்கி, பிறர் வாழத் தாம் வாழ்ந்து, பிறர் மகிழ்ச்சியே தன் மகிழ்ச்சியாகக் கொண்டு, பல்லாயிரக்கணக்கான மாணவியரை வழி நடத்தும் நல்ல தாயாய், ஆயிரக்கணக்கான ஆசிரியர்களை அரவணைக்கும் நல்லாசிரியையாய், ஆயிரக்கணக்கான ஊழியர்களுக்கு ஆலோசனை வழங்கும் நல்ல ஆலோசகராய், பல்லாயிரக்கணக்கான ஆராய்ச்சியாளர்களுக்கு வழிகாட்டும் சிறந்த வழிகாட்டுநராய் விளங்கும் அம்மா அவர்கள் என்னை ஆளாக்கிய விதத்தைக் கூறும் பெரும் பேற்றை அளித்த இறைவனுக்கு நன்றி கூறி தொடர்கின்றேன்.

1964ம் ஆண்டு புகழ் பெற்று விளங்கும் சாரதாலயா வளாகத்திற்கு நான் வந்தேன். அப்பொழுது அம்மா அவர்களை நேரில் சந்திக்கும் வாய்ப்பு எனக்கு கிட்டியது. அன்று நான் சந்தித்த அச்சந்தர்ப்பம் என்னைச் சிந்திக்க வைத்தது. ஆம். அன்று அவர்கள் என்னிடம் நீ வேலை செய்ய விரும்புகின்றாயா? என்று கேட்டார்கள். எனக்கும் இப்புனித பூமியைப் பார்த்தவுடன், நடுவில் அமைந்திருக்கும் கோயிலைக் கண்டவுடன், அய்யா அவர்களின் சீரிய தலைமையில் அம்மா அவர்களின் வழிநடத்துதலில் இயங்கிக் கொண்டிருக்கும் அவினாசிலிங்கம் மனையியல் கல்லூரியில் படிக்கும் வாய்ப்பினை இழந்த நான், பணிபுரியும் வாய்ப்பினைப் பெற்றதை எண்ணி மிகவும் மகிழ்ச்சி அடைந்தேன். உடனே ஏற்றுக் கொண்டேன்.

முதலில் என் பணி மழலைக் குழந்தைகளைக் கவனிக்கும்படியாக இருந்தது. குழந்தைகள் என்றால் அய்யா அவர்களுக்கு மிகவும் விருப்பம். எனவே அப்பணியை எனக்குக் கொடுத்ததில் மகிழ்ச்சியே. அதில் ஆரம்பித்த நான் தமிழ்த்துறைக்குச் சென்றேன். அம்மா அவர்கள் நான் பணியாற்ற ஆரம்பித்த உடனேயே என்னை அழைத்து, விடுதிக் காப்பாளராகப் பணியாற்றிய விஜயாவிடம் சென்று அவர்களுக்கு உதவி செய் என்று கூறினார்கள். நானும், விஜயா அவர்களோடு சேர்ந்து அவர்கள் ஏற்ற பொறுப்பினைக் கண்டு ஆச்சரியம் கொண்டு அவர்களோடு இருந்தேன்.

ஒராண்டு முடிந்திருக்குமென நினைக்கிறேன். கோடை விடுமுறைக்குச் சென்ற விஜயா, நோய்வாய்ப்பட்ட காரணத்தினால் குறிப்பிட்ட நாளில் கல்லூரிக்கு வர முடியவில்லை. எனவே அம்மா அவர்கள் என்னை அழைத்து, விஜயா வரவில்லை. நீ விடுதிப் பொறுப்புகளைக் கவனிக்க வேண்டுமெனக் கூறினார்கள். எனக்கு ஒரே பயம். பெரிய பொறுப்பு வயதில் சிறியவள். அம்மா அவர்களிடம் முதுகலை வகுப்பு படிக்கின்றவர்கள், ஆசிரியர்கள், என்னை விட வயதில் பெரியவர்கள், அவர்களை என்னால் எப்படி கவனிக்க முடியும், எனக்கு பயமாக இருக்கிறதெனக் கூறினேன். அப்பொழுது அம்மா அவர்கள் என்னிடம் “நீயா கவனிக்கப் போகின்றாய்? நானல்லவா கவனிக்கின்றேன். நீ உதவி தானே செய்கின்றாய்? இதில் என்ன சிரமம்?” என்று கூறினார்கள். அப்பொழுது தான் நான் நன்கு புரிந்து கொண்டேன். நாம் தனியாக ஒன்றும் செய்வதில்லை. அம்மா அவர்கள் கூறுவதைத் தானே செய்ய வேண்டும் என்று நினைத்து அம்மா அவர்களின் ஆசியோடு, பொறுப்புக்களை அம்மா அவர்களின் அறிவுரைப்படி செய்ய ஆரம்பித்தேன்.

பணி தொடர்ந்து நடந்தது. 1968ம் ஆண்டு செப்டம்பர் மாதம் எனக்குத் திருமணமாகியது. நடுவில் செல்ல வேண்டாமெனக் கருதி

அந்த ஆண்டின் இறுதியில் வேலையை ராஜினாமா செய்ய எண்ணினேன். அப்பொழுது அம்மா அவர்களிடம் ஊருக்குச் செல்ல வேண்டுமெனக் கூறினேன். நீ ஊருக்குச் சென்று என்ன செய்யப் போகிறாய் என்றார்கள். நான் சும்மா தான் இருக்கப் போகிறேன் என்றேன். அவர்கள் தொடர்ந்து இப்பணியில் இரு. ஆண்டவன் உனக்கு எல்லையற்ற சக்தியையும், பலத்தையும் கொடுப்பான் என்று சொல்லி, இந்த சாரதாலயத்தில் தொடர்ந்து பணி செய்யப் பணித்தார்கள்.

அப்பொழுது தான், பணி செய்தால் சாரதாலயத்தில் செய்வேன், இல்லை யெனில் வேறெங்கும் செய்ய மாட்டேன் என்று எண்ணினேன், தீர்மானித்தேன், செயல்பட்டேன். 1977ம் ஆண்டு அம்மா அவர்கள் என்னை அழைத்து நீ வெறும் பட்டப் படிப்போடு இருக்கக் கூடாது. முதுகலைப் பட்டம் வாங்க வேண்டுமென அன்புக் கட்டளையிட்டார்கள். அம்மா அவர்களிடம் என்னால் படிக்க முடியாது என்று முதலில் கூறினேன். அம்மா அவர்களோ நினைத்ததை முடிக்கும் செயல் வீரர் அல்லவா? இல்லை உன்னால் முடியும். நான் சொல்கிறேன், நீ படி என்றார்கள். நானும் படித்தேன். முதுகலைப் பட்டதாரி ஆனேன். என்னைக் காட்டிலும் அம்மா அவர்களுக்கு மிகுந்த மகிழ்ச்சி.

தமிழ்த் துறையில் துணைப் பேராசிரியை ஆனேன். தொடர்ந்து ஆசிரியப் பணியையும், விடுதிப் பொறுப்பையும் செய்து வந்தேன். அம்மா அவர்கள் விடுதியில் நடைபெறும் பிரார்த்தனைகளில் கலந்து கொண்டு வாழ்த்தியது எங்களுக்கு ஊக்கத்தைக் கொடுத்தது. சிறப்பாகச் செய்ய வேண்டுமென்ற ஆர்வத்தைத் தூண்டியது.

முதுகலைப் பட்டம் பெற்றால் மட்டும் போதாது என எண்ணிய அம்மா அவர்கள், 1987ம் ஆண்டு Ph.D. ஆராய்ச்சி செய்ய வேண்டுமென அன்புக் கட்டளையிட்டார்கள். அன்னை தெரசா மகளிர் பல்கலைக்கழகத்தில்,

ஆராய்ச்சி மாணவியாகச் சேர்ந்தேன். என் ஆராய்ச்சிக்கு அம்மா அவர்களே வழிகாட்டி. எனக்கு இருந்த மகிழ்ச்சி அளவிடற்கரியது. அன்னை தெரசா பல்கலைக்கழக மாணவியர் மூன்று மாதங்கள் அங்கு தங்கியிருக்க வேண்டும் எனக்கோ ஒரே கவலை. அம்மா அவர்கள் நீ கொடைக்கானலுக்குச் செல். அவர்கள் விதிமுறைகளை நீ பின்பற்ற வேண்டும் என்று சொன்னார்கள். நானும் கொடைக்கானலுக்குச் சென்று நூலகத்தில் படித்துக் கொண்டிருந்தேன். அம்மா அவர்கள் அங்கு வந்த போது என்னைப் பார்த்தார்கள். அவர்களிடம் நான் இங்கு வந்த வேலை முடிந்து விட்டது, திரும்பி கோவைக்கு வந்து விடுகிறேன் என்றேன். அம்மா அவர்களோ, இல்லை நீ எத்தனை நாட்கள் இங்கு தங்க வேண்டுமென நினைத்தாயோ? அத்தனை நாட்களும் தங்கிவிட்டு வா என்று கூறினார்கள்.

என் ஆராய்ச்சிப் பணி முடிந்து கட்டுரை எழுதிக் கொண்டிருக்கும் பொழுது அம்மா அவர்கள் மூன்று நான்கு முறைகள் என் ஆராய்ச்சிக் கட்டுரையைத் திருத்திக் கொடுத்தார்கள். அவர்களின் சிறந்த ஆலோசனையோடும், வழி காட்டுதலோடும், வெற்றிகரமாக முனைவர் பட்டமும் பெற்றேன்.

நம் பல்கலைக்கழகத்தில், துணைப்பதிவாளர் பதவிக்கான விளம்பரத்தைச் செய்தித்தாளில் பார்த்து விண்ணப்பம் அனுப்பித் தேர்வுக் குழு வினால் தேர்வு செய்யப்பட்டு பணியில் சேர்ந்தேன்.

துணைப்பதிவாளராகப் பணியாற்றி இரண்டு ஆண்டுகள் கழிந்த பின், பதிவாளர் பதவிக்கு விண்ணப்பம் செய்து தேர்வு பெற்று கடந்த ஐந்து ஆண்டுகளாகப் பதிவாளராகப் பணிபுரிந்து வருகிறேன். எத்துணை பெரிய பொறுப்புகள் கிட்டினாலும் எனக்கு முதன் முதலில் அளிக்கப்பட்ட விடுதிக் காப்பாளர் பணியை இன்று வரை மகிழ்ச்சியாக ஆற்றி

வருகிறேன். இவை அனைத்திற்கும் காரணம் அம்மா அவர்கள் தான். அவர்கள் என்னை ஊக்கப் படுத்தாவிட்டால் எங்கோ ஒரு மூலையில் குக்கிராமத்தில் குடும்பம் நடத்திக் கொண்டிருந்திருப்பேன். ஆனால் அம்மா அவர்கள் கொடுத்த ஆக்கப்பூர்வமான அறிவுரைகள், ஆலோசனைகள், என்னை இந்நிலைக்கு ஆளாக்கின. அம்மா அவர்கள் தான் எனக்கு எல்லாமே. அவர்களுக்கு என் நன்றிக்கடனை எவ்வாறு தீர்ப்பேன். அவர்கள் இடும் அன்புக் கட்டளைகளைச் செவ்வனே செய்வதன் மூலமே முடியும். ஏதாவது தவறு செய்யும் பொழுதெல்லாம் அம்மா அவர்கள் என்னைத் தட்டிக் கொடுத்து, பரவாயில்லை, இனிமேல் இவ்வாறு செய்யாதே என்று கூறி அனுப்புவார்கள். இங்ஙனம் ஊக்கப்படுத்தி அம்மா அவர்கள் என்னை வேலை செய்யப் பணித்தார்கள்.

அதோடு மட்டுமல்லாமல் தினமும் ஏதாவது பிரச்சனைகள் வரும். எனக்கோ அதனை நிவர்த்தி செய்யத் தெரியாது. உடனே அம்மா அவர்களிடம் ஓடுவேன். இதற்காகவா வந்தாய்? என மிக எளிதாக எடுத்துக் கொண்டு, எப்படிச் செய்ய வேண்டும் என்று அறிவுரை கூறி அனுப்புவார்கள். படிப்படியாக அவர்கள் கொடுத்து வந்த ஊக்கம், உற்சாகம் என்னைப் பணி செய்வதற்கு இப்பொழுதெல்லாம் தூண்டியது.

பிறவா வரம் வேண்டும் மீண்டும்

பிறக்கில் அம்மாவை மறவாத மனம் வேண்டும்.

என்றே இறைவனிடம் நான் வேண்டுகின்றேன்.

# **AMMA - AMIABLE, MODEST, MODEL TO ASPIRE**

USHA CHANDRASEKHAR

**A**s a disappointed aspirant of Medical education, I entered the portals of Saradalaya in the B.Sc. Home Science class without much aspirations but certainly not realising that it is to be my career abode. Echo of the campus was only one word “When Amma comes..... when Amma comes.....” and soon. They told me that Amma was in Delhi, (from where I finished my higher secondary) and that she comes once in a month or so and “when she comes, when she comes.....”. So, I eagerly awaited to see this Amma who was in the same glamorous Delhi, a place where I was brought up and hence had much affinity for. From what I gathered I was imagining to see a very strict administrator who would give instructions even to sit and stand - a cold disciplinarian - the presiding deity. When Amma really arrived I was looking for the above personality. Alas! I had to really search to find a petit, young, “binaca advertisement” bubbling with energy and transmitting rays of inspiration like sunshine to all round. I just could not believe my eyes and from that moment to me she became that “Amiable, Modest, Model to Aspire for” - my beloved teacher and mentor “AMMA”.

Those were days when Amma was busy with the Directorate of Extension work and toured all over the country to spread the message of Home Science Extension establishing the fact that grass root level work in rural areas, involving the upliftment of women by women (Home Scientists) alone has future for India for its total development - the foundation laid by amma, I would say which is the story behind the success and current position of the nation's developmental activities. But we her little

daughters at Saradalaya in least realizing the great myth of this architect often wondered why should this be so? and eagerly awaited her home coming each time!! I am sure it was home coming to Amma also as Amma was dreaming and working to build her dream Home Science institution - both in the physical sense and in the sense of shaping the destinies of batteries of home scientists in particular and women graduates in general to take the light from the mother lamp at Saradalaya to lit their homes and communities around in whichever part of the world they may be. Our student days at Saradalaya without the physical presence of our Amma would however daily echo Amma avargal's inspiring thoughts which always had a message for us the youth. It is needless for me to emphasize here that Ayya avargal would meet us almost daily to give us the basic values in life which to this date echoes in my ears and mind - a lesson for life of service and determination to serve the community and country, as if inscribed on stone. Those were really happy, carefree days at Saradalaya rejoicing, praying together, eating together and studying together to work for the community around. When Amma comes we would recharge our aspirations and go about studying. Those were days of decision making. What next? Well M.Sc. was a dream and goal as we saw the first batch of M.Sc. Foods and Nutrition and senior batches of M.Sc. Home Management sisters receiving all the special treatment and guidance from Amma and all other staff and they served as real role models. They described to us the great challenges ahead. Amma would come and take classes, they were update about the current programmes, national needs and what we could do as home scientists and nutritionists!

Well I must confess that the great desire in me wanted me to study Home Management and the wee bit of artistic ability in me always cherished flower arrangement, interior decors and so on. Then came the verdict - "You should study

only Foods and Nutrition I want you to take after me". I literally had no choice except to accept as I to this date believe that Amma always tells me things for my growth and so it was!! No looking back!!! We were thrilled in that by the time we were in the senior M.Sc. class we had Amma on campus taking classes for us and were always there to guide us. Oh! what a wonderful teacher she was and is today too!! We would eagerly await for Amma's classes - Community nutrition, Nutrition education etc., etc. I must say I never used to go home and study them again as there was no need to do so - such was the power of transmission of the message that we could answer any question. I still vividly remember our examinations - particularly practicals. Amma and Dr. Stella Soundararajan were the examiners and in Foods practicals, I had seasoned greens with green chillies. Amma who is the best examiner in the whole world was rather disappointed and asked me several questions to bring out the fault from me. But this dunse head never realized the mistake! Finally amma told after the valuation that Usha you should never forget the aesthetic principle in serving food. Never add green coloured chillies to greens! To this day I do not do it even at home! Such is the beautiful words of wisdom that emanates from this great teacher.

It was both a pleasure and challenge to be Amma's direct student. Though all the five of us in the M.Sc. class possessed Amma, such was Amma's love that each of one of us thought she loved us most. It is indeed very difficult to portray those special talents, those special qualities, those special vibrant charismatic contagious smile in Amma, for to this date now about four decades, I am yet to see an adorable personality like her. That smile wherever she is, is so powerful that the whole world bows in front of her as it is so catchy and powerful and has innumerable messages to convey for people like me who has been under her nose althrough the best part of our lives.

It was a challenge to be Amma's student in that Amma is the limit for perfection. Though Amma always had an encouraging word for the work well done especially with her students, the magic in her words would kindle one to face the untold challenge laid in front. The hypnotism rained in her beautiful smiling eyes would make us do more reading, study more references, gain more insight and knowledge to get that "excellent" which was the comment and 98 per cent which was the mark Amma would give to her students unstintingly. Such was the encouragement and still is the encouragement Amma gives even to the less capable, less fortunate ones of her students and colleagues.

Another fondly remembered trait is that Amma was always approachable - to big or small all alike. Amma was always available to us. To be Amma's direct advisee was a privilege. She would give the directives for research and would chistle the written words of the thesis for crystal clear clarity. There would not be any ambiguity in any of the expressions either in the dissertation or any paper. As Amma's career points out, she is second to none in all aspects and so was and is all her directives. I vividly recall how unhappy she was when she saw the growth charts in my M.Sc. thesis which was drawn to perfection on graph sheets. Even at the last minute when we were about to send the thesis for binding, on the last forenoon before the lighting ceremony, Amma said, "No, Usha this cannot go as it is. We have to get the graphs and figures drawn artistically and spare no effort to get it done". Here I was all ready clad in white for the lighting ceremony with a satisfied mind having completed the thesis and yet it was not to be so! Such is Amma's commitment to perfection even to the smallest work undertaken. These were great lessons for a young mind to emulate and I feel grateful that these characteristics have greatly influenced my work habits and in a large measure have come to stay with me.

Who else but Amma would be the great visionary to choose even simpletons like me and train them in her ways to reign over the destinies of a great institution like ours? It is one thing to dream and another to see that even the minutest of the details are taken care of for the dream to materialize in ones own way! Amma had dreamt to be the architect of a unique Home Science institution in service to the community and nation and towards this she trained milieu of workers to echo her spirit and values to visualise the dream of Ayya avargal - our revered and beloved founder. Having made me a gold medalist of the Madras University in M.Sc. Foods and Nutrition, she did not stop there! Even before I completed the last written paper she wanted me to assist in the Regional Centre for Applied Nutrition Programme in our college where many senior men and women officers from the four southern States were undergoing training to implement the Applied Nutrition Programme (ANP) - the Governmental scheme for the upliftment of the community. God behold! what awaited me there was the next training ground for me under her very able sister Mrs. Kamala Anandam. Here I was a young graduate to be taking classes to well seasoned administrators and managing their training activities including field trips and field work at Bhavanisagar - the then nearest ANP block. It was a real experience in teaching, learning, organising and handling even the difficult situations including study tours. It also taught me the basics of administration especially maintaining files, drafting replies, caring for the needs and sentiments of others, a discipline in work habits - a lesson which has stood the testimony of time till date. Amma who always thinks and lives for each one of us around her never lost track of me but continuously visualized and paved the path for my future. "Awake, arise and stop not till the goal is reached" said Swami Vivekananda and to Amma this is the motto of her life. At that point of time one fine day Amma told me that I have to go abroad and get my Ph.D. Much to the displeasure of some of my own teachers, Amma made me also to be interviewed and her whole hearted effort helped me secure the

prestigious Rockefeller Foundation Scholarship to do my Ph.D. at Purdue University, USA; where her own classmate Dr. Mary Fuqua was the Dean of the school of Home Economics. Meeting and getting Amma's blessings at Madras Airport as Amma returned from Australia the day I was to leave, sustained me from all hurdles of flights not coming into Delhi due to Indo - China War and so on. All the three years spent at USA, I was guided from India and the day I landed back here at Madras airport to my surprise Amma came in from Coimbatore with a team of Madras University Commission members for sanctioning M.Sc. Biochemistry to our College. An inexperienced person like me did not understand her words when she told the members of the commission at the airport "Well here is my colleague who has returned with Ph.D. from USA, now you can sanction M.Sc. Biochemistry for our College".

When I got back to Coimbatore I realized the great improvements that had happened within the short time I was away. The motherly affection and guidance of Amma greatly helped me pick up the job in my department and in good faith bestowed on me the stewardship of the Indian Journal of Nutrition and Dietetics. The tireless guidance and courage given to shoulder the responsibilities has made me what I am today. She is truly my mentor and as some of my very close colleagues sometimes humourously point out, I have imbibed many a work habits from Amma.

Yet another quality in Amma to be admired especially with a person of her stature is her indomitable faith in God and implicit submission to His will. Wherever Amma is one can feel the presence of God - angels going before, after and around her. Such is the faith that many of us who travel with her blindly follow her for we know God is with her. There are innumerable anecdotes where we have personally felt the power of her prayers and however worn out or however long the day has been nothing can stop her from praying - for Prayer and faith in God is the secret

behind her hardwork and institution building. All her journeys would start with Prayer in our shrine and as an ardent devotee Amma would carry the flowers and fruits and use it and share it with joy and prayers as long as they last. There is nothing equal to this great faith of Amma as it touches anybody's heart and directs one to have such faith and goal in life.

The great patriot in Amma is something the whole world knows about. Her devotion to Gandhian movement and principles of Mahatma's teachings are habits she practises, for wherever she is she wears only Khadi sarees and feels proud about it. Even in those early 40's and 50's when it was rare for a woman to go to USA and be educated Amma went and brought laurels to her country and stayed Indian in spirit and values. We students of hers have heard her narrate many soul touching instances of freedom struggle and proud narrations of our country and its culture to alien countries.

It is indeed impossible to enumerate the innumerable qualities in Amma that every one could and should emulate for there is no topic on earth with which she is not conversent. The simple child in Amma is ever ready to accept and explore the environs; the great scientist in her is ever throbbing for knowledge, the great Home Scientist in her is ever aspiring to bring out perfection in all walks of life; the great traveller in her is ever waiting for opportunities to share the joy of travelling and exploring details of all aspects in all countries and cultures for all of us; the great administrator in her is ever shaping the destinies of millions around her; the great social worker in her is all the time planning for the welfare of the community; the great leader in her is always striving to share the knowledge acquired; the lovable disciplinarian in her is always guiding us to be disciplined; the loving mother in her is ever caring, extending her tender arms protecting all, around her; the great

“Parivallal” in her is ever looking for opportunities to give, give and give; the special carer in her is ever looking around and remembering every one (including family members of colleagues and friends) so that wherever else she goes she knows exactly what is to bring back for whom! piety, faith in God - the interwoven spirituality in her is ever praying for the welfare of others around; the perfectionist in her is ever leading others to attain better heights in all walks of life; the great institution builder in her is ever dreaming for higher growth of the institutions; the great enthusiast in her is ever bubbling with ideas to make the best better and so on and on ..... I stop here by just saying that there is no vocabulary in the Oxford dictionary to give Amma an apt adjective nor there is a record in the Guinness book to aptly record her achievements. May the God Almighty bless Amma with greater Volumes of Health and Enthusiasm for she is the beacon light for many of her daughters across the universe to admire, adore and aspire and better the humanity particularly India our motherland.



# AMMA AVARGAL - THE FOUNTAIN - HEAD OF INSPIRATION FOR ME

S. SITHALAKSHMI

**I**t was in early 1960, when the spark in my life was ignited through my first association with our Amma avargal. As the Secretary of the Students' Union of my High School, Mahajana High School, Mettupalayam, I wrote to her inviting her to be the chief guest for the Annual day celebration. Amma avargal could not comply with our request owing to her prior commitments. The function was managed with an alternative guest and the name of Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas remained in the list of dignitaries. I never dreamt at that time that from the subsequent year, I would be Amma avargal's student and later work under her guidance for the rest of my life as a daughter of the Saradalaya campus. Amma avargal has been inspiring me with all her virtues such as :

*Amma's virtues*

Abiding faith in God, Accuracy, Administrative abilities and Adventurous spirit;

Brilliance, Balance and Benevolence;

Courage, Conviction, Commitment, Compassion, Conceptual Clarity and Communication skills;

Dedication, Devotion to duty, Decision Making, Discipline Discrimination and Determination;

Enthusiasm, Expertise, Eloquence and Explicitness;

Fearlessness, Fidelity, Fervour, Forebearance, Forethought, and Forgiveness;

Gaiety, Generosity and Goodwill;  
Hardwork, Humility, Helpfulness and Hospitality;  
Initiative, Intelligence, Industry, Imagination and Integrity;  
Judgement and Justice;  
Knowledge, Kindness and Keeness;  
Leadership, Love, Loyalty to the cause and Largesse;  
Mission, Memory and Magnanimity;  
National spirit and Nicety;  
Optimism, Observation, Open mindedness and Organisation  
Patriotism, Promptness, Perseverance, Perfection, Power of  
Concentration and Precision  
Quickness, Quest for Information and Quintessence;  
Responsibility, Rationalisation, Receptivity and Resiliency;  
Steadfastness, Sharpness, Service Mindedness; Sustenance, Strength  
and Sportiveness;  
Tenacity, Tolerance and Timeliness;  
Uprightness, Unbeaten faith and Untiring efforts;  
Vitality, Vigour, Versatility, Vision and Valour;  
Wisdom and Willpower  
eXuberance and eXcellence  
Youthfulness, Yearning for achievements and Yeomen service;  
Zeal and Zest

Eightieth Year in a person's life is supremely special. I pray God Almighty to give Amma avargal long life and strength to continue to inspire millions of daughters like me.

# THE EXTRAORDINARY CHILD IN AMMA

N. JAYA

**T**he child is the father of the Man in the words of Wordsworth. A child is the nectar of life adding richness, beauty and interest. Needless to mention what a privilege it is to be child like, for you are in the Kingdom of God. The happiest moments we ever know are when we entirely forget ourselves and become one with children. In to-day's world, it is very difficult to find personalities who possess child like qualities. But I am happy I have found the divinely child like qualities in a world renowned scientist - Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas, our affectionate Amma to innumerable daughters of Saradalaya.

A child makes life interesting at home, school and in the community leading us towards light, removing darkness in the mind and spirit. Likewise to Amma, everyday has newer dimensions of life. In the modern day's car to carpet way of sedentary living, Amma initiates healthy way of thinking, living, eating and working. A towering hallmark in her life is adherence to good habits - habit of praying, reading and research work. True to the quotation, "character is the repeated habits and repeated habits alone can reform character", Amma charts her activities on dart of time and never fails. The concentrated attachment to right type of habits indeed is a lamp that shows every corner of the soul.

It is a great joy to observe how children enjoy possessing dolls and how they manifest different forms of play through them. An interesting trait is the inherent attraction towards dolls. Amma's visits abroad have made it possible for her to bring beautiful dolls from different parts of the globe and enhance richly the galaxy of

collections. I am sure no other nursery school and the university would have the legend of dolls created by its leader in order to educate the students on the people, culture, tradition, technology and beauty of the world.

Children easily get socialized making friends and being cheerful with them. Amma is no exception in this regard. With her benign smile she takes into her fold even persons difficult to cope and tackle with. Her cheery laughter is especially hearty for jokes.

Children are fascinated to travel and visit places. So does Amma tirelessly. Even when the youngster who go with her feel hectic about the travel, from the minute she lands in a place, Amma becomes busy about finding out the highlights and specialities in the place, fixes the visits and sees that the information and experiences are wholesome. Like a child, Amma has always been curious wanting to know more and more information sporting experimentation and exploration. She is never fatigued by her efforts to gather information and communicate to others.

Innovation is not only an exercise in the case of energetic children, but a never ending exercise in Amma's life. When approached with problems, her mind at once traces solution practically unique and specific. Never she looks back upon what has been done but marches ahead. Truly only those who become involved with an idea see its light.

All 'firsts' are aspired by some children. This child in Amma aspires and wins all the firsts without any feeling of tiredness be it any competition. Conviction! Conviction! the backbone of great mission is no less important in Amma's life. The great sin is to think oneself very weak. That's why perhaps even a small child thinks and shows that he/she is very strong. Amma not only believed in this doctrine but

demonstrated in being and becoming. Swami Vivekananda aptly said only those individuals who have believed in themselves have become great and strong.

A child is forever on the move actively participating in his tasks, work and play. There is no comparison to this child who works for more than 18-20 hours actively.

Who can surpass Amma in emulating teachers in great personalities in work, principles and values? Amma cherishes dearly thoughts about her teachers, national and international, always. Whenever possible she visits them to get inspired. The way they are remembered gratefully by her is a soul touching process and moves everybody's heart.

In this world of selfishness, when people want to achieve everything for themselves and only for their benefit and welfare, Amma is different finding joy in sharing with colleagues and others whatever she has, be it information, experience, souvenir, dolls and toys, basket boxes, calenders, diaries, sweets, fruits etc.

Experience is the best teacher. Amma takes endless pains to facilitate others, have the joy of doing / experiencing and achieving great recognition as children enjoy pathfinding for the peers and those who are with them. The sense of belongingness and togetherness in Amma is too remarkably strong that the amount of work she undertakes for others is unaccountable. Amma has plans to each one of her colleagues/ associates around her. She aspires for them, dreams for them and sees to its realisation. What a great quality to possess! The best work that you ever did for yourselves was when you worked for others.

It is a gift to be sensitive with an overflow of emotions when some one suffers. I have seen Amma in such situations and it is breath taking to know how swifly she

plans to help, resolve and bridge the gap whether the issue is personal, familial or educational or social.

It is fear that is the great cause of many woes. Nevertheless, Amma is fearless and free of anxiety on any score and rightly this is due to her immense faith in spirituality and being aware and awake to the divine grace. Like a child who has totally surrendered to God, Amma keeps a firm hold on spirituality, that inestimable gift handed down to us by our elders, ancient forefathers. India has such rich literature and culture because our forefathers spent substantial time in expressing themselves. According to them meditation helps the mind unwind itself, relaxes tension and makes one fresh and move with redoubled vigour. Like small child who reveres the words of Guru, Amma accepts suggestions for healthy way of life through meditation and prayer.

Every child loves water play. There is little doubt that it is a big thrill and excitement all over. It is just the same with Amma who makes it a point to pack all the members to river side and enable them to relax. Who can resist the temptation of jumping into water after seeing the overwhelming joy of swimming expressed by Amma? What a rare joyful relaxation Amma offered every year!

Swami Sahajananda who passed away a couple of years ago, points out you can not play your own tune in discord with nature and when you try that, you are out of the orchestra. Amma's life signifies this truth as it is set towards realisation of beauty in nature - flowers, plants, trees, orderliness and cleanliness. Isn't it true that life becomes creative, artistic, poetic, meaningful and progressive of such persons?

Fashions change from time to time. Amma keeps a close track of changing trends, collects a wide range of objects from exhibitions of novel products. Finding

it difficult to maintain, the tendency is to shut oneself away from them. But in Amma, we find a mixture of new and old poised to keep aesthetic sense and art resounding!

The present structure of the society pressurises one into competition and greeds. Like a child who is positive, spontaneous and unmindful of external evils, she is unshaken, balanced, straight forward and sportive. Perhaps Amma believes “winner surrenders and loser fights”. However it is just wonderful, Amma has always been a winner. There is no doubt that it is because she has the heart to feel, brain to conceive and the hands to work!

As for the food, it is astonishing to note that the amount of food consumed by Amma is very less. Eat little and live long goes a saying in Tamil. Amma is personification of saints and children who eat just what their body needs even though there may be plenty around them.

Children let their hearts open with abundant love and affection. Amma's love for others and affectionate gestures towards others are something remarkably appreciated and enjoyed by all. Isn't she the fountain of all bliss? Yes, good results can be produced only through love-an indomitable power.

Swami Vivekananda exhorted ‘We want infinite energy, infinite zeal, infinite courage and infinite patience to achieve great things’. Amma perennially busy and pre occupied loves to be radiant and purposeful and in doing so loves to see others vivacious and bountiful with actions whether or not one had the urge within. So potent and powerful is Amma making life flow to the rhythm of tomorrow? Isn't this a realisation that when you give life, you will have life? I would like to conclude praying God who has been merciful to trigger me search the unending charm of finding the ‘extraordinary child in Amma’.

# **ABOUT THE DEAR AMMA WHOM I KNOW**

**VIJAYALAKSHMI PURUSHOTHAMAN**

**W**e are very proud of our Amma, who is familiar throughout the world to all those who are associated with international nutrition research, women's development and concern for human welfare.

In a career spanning over fifty years, Amma has made an indelible mark as an outstanding manager of human resources. Amma has passionately pursued the path of mobilizing the benefits of science and technology for sustainable development, education and cultural heritage of mankind.

Thousands and thousands of students have gone out of Amma's hands and have spread their wings far and wide. I remember the thoughts, words and deeds that Amma has given to me right from the day I entered into the college as a pre-university student till today. The courage I have developed, the education I have had, the knowledge I have gained, the status I have in the society and the places I have visited, every bit of it happened because of Amma. When it comes to work every minute and every second mattered to Amma and will just not accept any delay from anyone. But that was absolutely essential to run such a great institution and making it still greater.

One trait which I have admired among many others in Amma is that she is impartial, when someone does something good that was immediately recognised with generous words and if some one falters, no matter who it was, she had it. Amma thinks of everyone's welfare in the university and spares no effort to bring newer opportunities to the teachers. Amma is like a bird, travelling all the time and collecting everything that is useful to the youngones in the nest of Avinashilingam University.

As Chancellor of the University, Amma pursues with vigour various programmes in the field of education - bringing in the autonomous status, the university status, starting of new courses in the form of vocational courses at graduate level, management courses, engineering college and community college and many more in the pipe line. It looks like a story in the Arabian Nights. Amma had waved her wand and a university complete in every respect sprung up.

Amma has distinguished herself as an energetic and sagacious leader and leaves an imprint in all the responsible positions she has held. In whatever Amma did, there was dignity and a personal touch. Amma has always been in the centres of great events and has always been in the thick of things relating to the university. If Avinashilingam University, situated in a small city in the South of India has become one of the most exciting academic centres in India it is entirely due to Amma.

The sense of being always surrounded by the Divine presence and angels leading, gives Amma an untroubled feeling and ability to achieve great things, which all of us would like to imbibe. Amma travels far to spend even just an hour with someone, to achieve something for the students and staff of the university. Amma treats every person she meets, as having some significance and particularly generous to broken and sick people. Amma's uncompromising nature and tenacity to fight back under most arduous circumstances is something all of us should learn.

Amma has been our guiding light, showing us the way. She has helped us to reach the heights, she has been a teacher, a friend, a pillar of support and back us up with her untiring efforts. Words can not express adequately how grateful I feel for all that Amma has done to me.

Amma is purposeful, precise and practical in executing the responsibilities. I admire indomitable courage backed by conviction, commitment and strength of character exhibited in Amma's personal and professional life.

Amma's ability to plan every task big or small, meticulously, involving everyone concerned, deligating responsibilities and power, with her magic human touch, is something every one should aim at learning. Amma has taught us to 'love', 'care' and 'share'. Amma's ambitions are higher than the skies and deeper than the oceans. From the turbines of her mind Amma could generate the engines of a dozen organisations, a powerful and questioning intelligence, atonce proud and humble, authoritative and soft. Nature has indeed been specially alert in bringing this rare personality into the earth.

I would like to sum up this little write up with the following Tamil verse.

நாளும் நினைக்கின்றேன்  
நன்றியோடு இருக்கின்றேன்  
காலத்தினால் செய்த உதவி  
கடுகளவும் மறந்ததில்லை  
ஞாலத்தில் நான் கண்ட நல்லவரே  
ஞானத்தின் நாயகன் துணையிருப்பான்  
கானகத்து மூலிகை போன்ற உன்னை  
கடவுள் நின்று காத்திருப்பான்  
ஆண்டாண்டு வாழ்ந்திருந்து  
நூற்றாண்டும் கண்டிருக்க  
ஆண்டவனை வேண்டுகின்றேன்  
வேண்டுகை பலிக்க வேண்டும்  
வேதமென நீ நிலைக்க வேண்டும்.

## மனையியல் மாட்சியர்

து. லலிதா

**கோ**வைக்கு பல்வேறு சிறப்புக்கள் உண்டு. நெசவாலைகள், சிறுவாணிக் குடிநீர், சிறு-குறு தொழில் மையம், சீரான தட்ப வெப்பம் பற்றியனவான சிறப்புக்களோடு பிறிதொரு சிறப்பையும் பெற்று விளங்குவது இந்நகரம். அதுதான் மனைக்கு விளக்காகும் பெண்கள் பெறவேண்டிய மனையியலுக்கென தனிப் பல்கலைக்கழகத்தைப் பெற்று விளங்கும் மாநகர் என்னும் சிறப்பு. சிறப்புக்களுள் இதுவும் ஒன்றென்பதை எண்ணும் போது பெருமைக்குரிய பல்கலைக்கழகத்தை இவ்வளவுக்கு உயர்த்திய ஒருவரைப் பற்றி எண்ணாதிருக்கவியலாது. அவர் வேறு யாருமன்று. மனையியல் துறை பெண் அறிவியலறிஞர் என்னும் முறையில் எல்லோராலும் இனங்காணப்பட்ட முனைவர். இராசம்மாள் பா. தேவதாஸ் அவர்களே இப்பெருமைக்குரியார்.

உருவுகண்டு எள்ளாமை வேண்டும் உருள் பெருந்தேர்க்கு  
அச்சாணி அன்னார் உடைத்து

என்று கூறுவார் வள்ளுவர். உருவத்துக்கு மட்டும் முதன்மை தராமல் உள்ளார்ந்த ஆற்றலின் மதிப்பைக் கருத்தில் கொண்டே இவ்வாறு கூறினார். அம்மா அவர்களைக் காண்பவர்கள் இவ்வளவு பெரிய கல்வி நிறுவனத்தின் தூணாக நின்று அதை அனைவரும் அறியும் வண்ணம் குறிப்பாக மனையியல் துறையில் உலகமே போற்றும் வகையில் நிறுவனப் பெருமையை உயர்த்தியுள்ளவரெனில் அதை நம்ப மறுப்பர் பலர். ஆனால் உண்மையில் அதன் பல்துறை வளர்ச்சிக்கும் காரணர் அம்மா அவர்களேயாவர். மனையியல் துறையிலும் ஏனையவற்றிலும் அவர்கள் நிகழ்த்திக் காட்டிய சாதனைகள் பலவாம்.

இன்று சர்வதேசப் புகழ் வாய்ந்த சத்துணவு விஞ்ஞானியாக விளங்கும் முனைவர் இராசம்மாள் பா. தேவதாஸ் அவர்கள் தம்முடைய முனைவர் பட்டத்திற்கான ஆய்வை 1950ல் அமெரிக்காவிலுள்ள ஓகியோ மாநிலப் பல்கலைக் கழகத்திலும் முனைவர் பட்டத்திற்கு மேலான படிப்பை 1978ல் சென்னைப் பல்கலைக் கழகத்திலும் பெற்றார்கள். விடுதலைப் போராட்ட வீரராகவும் உரிமை பெற்ற இந்தியாவில் தமிழக முதல் கல்வியமைச்சராகவும் திகழ்ந்து 'அய்யா' என்று அனைவராலும் அன்புடனும், பாசத்துடனும் அழைக்கப்படும் திரு. தி.சு. அவினாசிலிங்கம் செட்டியார் அவர்கள் பெண்களின் முன்னேற்றத்துக்காக தொலை நோக்குடன் தொடங்கிய அவினாசிலிங்கம் மனையியல் கல்லூரியின் முதல் முதல்வராகவும், புதுதில்லி இந்திய வேளாண்துறை ஆராய்ச்சிக் கழகத்தின் சத்துணவுக்கான இணை இயக்குநராகவும், பல்வேறு தொழில் அமைப்புகளின் உறுப்பினராகவும், இந்திய அரசு உணவு, வேளாண் துறையின் இணை இயக்குநராகவும், முதன்மைப் பொருளியல் வல்லுநராகவும், பரோடா எம்எஸ் பல்கலைக்கழகத்தின் மனையியல் முதன்மையராகவும், பேராசிரியராகவும் இந்திய மனையியல் சத்துணவுக் கழகங்களின் தலைவராகவும் திகழ்ந்தவர். மேலும் மத்திய, மாநில அரசின் சமூகநலம் மற்றும் திட்டக்குழு, தமிழக சத்துணவுத்திட்டம் ஆகிய அமைப்புகளின் ஆலோசகராகவும் பணியாற்றியுள்ளார். உலகவங்கி உதவியுடனான சத்துணவுத் திட்டத்தில் பத்தாயிரத்துக்கு மேற்பட்ட பயிற்சியாளர்களை உருவாக்கிய பெருமை இவருக்குண்டு. 350 ஆய்வுக் கட்டுரைகள், நாற்பதுக்கும் மேற்பட்ட நூல்களின் படைப்பாளியுமாக விளங்குவதோடன்றி பத்மஸ்ரீ, விஞ்ஞான சரஸ்வதி, தாகூர் கல்விப் பரிசு, ஸ்ரீரத்னா விருது, ஜம்னாலால் பஜாஜ் விருது, பிரீலா விருது ஆகிய பெருமைக்குரிய விருதுகளைப் பெற்றவராகவும் விளங்குகிறார் இவர்.

உலகம் யாவையும் உருவாக்கி, நிலைநிறுத்தி, நீக்கி விளையாடும் அலகில் பேரிறையால் மட்டுமே அனைத்து நன்மைகளும் கூடும் என்பதில்

அசைக்க முடியாத நம்பிக்கை கொண்டு ஏனையோரும் இறை பற்றிய அக்கருத்தைப் பின்பற்ற விழைபவர் அவர். விழைபவர் என்பது மட்டுமன்று; அதற்கேற்றவாறு தம் வாழ்க்கையை அமைத்துக் கொண்டவரும் கூட. பிரார்த்தனை இல்லாமல் அன்றாடக் கடமைகளைச் செய்யப் புகுவதில்லை; எவ்வித ஆக்கச் செயல்களையும் தொடங்குவதோ, மேற்கொள்வதோ அறவே இல்லை. இறை உணர்வின் முதன்மையை முற்ற உணர்ந்த காந்திய நெறியாளர் அமரர் அவினாசிலிங்கம் அய்யா அவர்களின் சீரிய-நேரிய வழிகாட்டுதலே இதற்கெல்லாம் காரணம் எனலாம்.

மனிதனாகப் பிறந்த ஒருவனை மாண்புடையவனாகச் செய்வது இறைப்பற்று என்பதை உள்ளவாறு உணர்ந்தே ஏனைய பற்றுக்களை நீக்குவதற்கு 'பற்றற்றான் பற்றினைப் பற்றுக்' என்றுரைப்பர் ஆன்றோர். இறை பற்றிய தூய உள்ளம் பெறுவதற்கு வாயிலாக அமைவது தான் பிரார்த்தனை எனப்படும் வழிபாடாகும். அதுவும் பலரும் பங்கு பெறும் கூட்டு வழிபாடாக விளங்குமானால் அதன் பயன் பற்றிச் சொல்ல வேண்டுவதில்லை. அவினாசிலிங்கம் கல்லூரியை அய்யா அவர்கள் தொடங்கிய காலத்திலேயே கல்லூரி வளாக நடுவில் ஸ்ரீ இராமகிருஷ்ண பரமஹம்சர் கோயிலை அமைத்த பின்னரும் அவரது மறைவுக்குப் பின்னர் அவர் விரும்பியவாறே பல்கலைக்கழக மாணவியர் பயனூறும் வண்ணம் தியான மண்டபத்தை உருவாக்கி, தியானத்தில் ஈடுபட்டு இறையுணர்வில் தோயும் மாணவியருக்கு ஆசி வழங்கும் முறையில் அதன் நடுவண் அய்யா அவர்களின் மாட்பளவுச் சிலையை அமைத்திட்ட வேந்தர் அம்மா அவர்களை எப்படிப் பாராட்டினாலும் ஏற்கும்.

கல்வியைப் பெற்றோரே கண்ணுடையவர்கள். கற்காத மற்றவர்கள் முகத்திலிருப்பவை கண்களில்லை, புண்களே என்று கல்விச் சிறப்பையும் அதன் தேவையையும் புலப்படுத்துவார் வள்ளுவர். உற்றுழி உதவியும் மிக்க பொருளைக் கொடுத்தும் கல்வியைப் பெறும் முயற்சியில் ஏற்படும்

இழிவைப் பொருட்படுத்தாமல் பெறுதற்கரிய கல்வியைப் பெற்றாக வேண்டும் என்று வற்புறுத்துவர் சங்கச் சான்றோர். உண்மையான செல்வம் கல்வியே, அதுவே கொடுக்கக் குறைவுபடாத, திருட முடியாத சிறப்புடையது; நாட்டை ஆள்வோராலும் பறிக்கவொண்ணா தனிச் சிறப்புடையது; செல்வம் என்று தம் மக்களுக்குச் சேர்த்து வைக்கும் பெருமைக்குரிய செல்வம் கல்விதான் என்றெல்லாம் அதன் சிறப்பைப் பாரித்துரைப்பர். அத்தகைய உண்மையான செல்வமாகிய கல்வியை அனைவரும் பெறுமாறு கல்வி நிறுவனங்கள் பலவற்றை உண்டாக்கிய பெருந்தகை அமரர் அய்யா அவர்களென்றால் அவற்றைக் கட்டிக் காத்துப் பேணி வளர்த்து வருபவர் அம்மா அவர்கள். கல்வி நிறுவனங்களை மேம்படுத்தும் வழி முறைகளை முற்ற அறிந்தவர் என்பது மட்டுமல்லாமல், முறையாக கல்வியை எவ்வாறு மாணவியருக்குக் கற்பிப்பது என்பதையும் நன்கறிந்தவர் அவர். மாணவியர் ஐயந்திரிபறக் கற்றுத் தரும் அவருடைய போதனா முறை பொதுவாக, கல்வியாளர்களும் சிறப்பாக கற்றுத் தரும் நல்லாசிரியர்கள் அனைவரும் பின்பற்றுவதற்குரியதாகும்.

எண்பொருள வாகச்செலச் சொல்லிதான் பிறர்வாய்  
நுண்பொருள் காண்ப தறிவு

என்று அறிவுக்கு அடையாளம் கூறிய வள்ளுவர் வழியில் கற்றுத் தரவேண்டிய பாடங்கள் அரிதாயினும் அவற்றை எல்லோரும் எளிதில் புரிந்து கொள்ளுமாறு சொல்வதும் அறிந்து கொள்ள வேண்டியது எவ்வளவு அரிதாயினும் எளிதில் புரிந்து கொள்ளும் வல்லமையும் வாய்த்தவர் அம்மா அவர்கள். 'கற்றோர்க்குச் சென்ற இடமெல்லாம் சிறப்பு' என்னும் முதுமொழிக்கு இன்றும் நல்ல எடுத்துக் காட்டாகத் திகழ்பவர்கள் அவர்கள். பல பல்கலைக் கழகங்களில் ஆட்சிக்குழு உறுப்பினராகவும், உயர்கல்விக்குழு உறுப்பினராகவும், பல்வேறு கால கட்டங்களில் விளங்கி புதியன காணும் நோக்கில் பாடத்திட்டங்களை

மாற்றியமைத்த பாங்கு கண்ணெனப் போற்றப் படும் கல்வி மேம்பாட்டில் இவர் காட்டிவரும் ஆர்வத்தை என்றும் அறிவித்து நிற்பதாகும்.

கல்விப் பணியில் ஈடுபடுவோர் சமுதாயத் தொண்டாற்றுவதும் சமுதாயத் தொண்டில் ஆர்வங் கொண்டோர் கல்வியில் நாட்டம் காட்டுவதும் அவ்வளவாக நாம் காண்பதில்லை. மாறாக அம்மா அவர்களோ கல்வியைப் போன்றே சமுதாயத் தொண்டிலும் அளவிறந்த அக்கறை காட்டி வருகிறார். ஏழை, நடுத்தர வகுப்பைச் சேர்ந்த பொது மக்கள் பயனடையுமாறு அத்தகையோர் வாழும் கிராமங்களைத் தத்தெடுத்தும் வேளாண் அறிவியல் மையம், சமூக நலக்கூடங்கள், குழந்தைகள் காப்பகம் மற்றும் உணவு நிலையங்களை நிறுவியும் அவ்வேழை, நடுத்தர மக்களே போற்றுமாறு நடத்தி வருகிறார். 'நாம் அன்றாடம் செய்யும் செயலின் பயன் ஓரளவுக் காவது ஏழைகளைச் சென்றடைய வேண்டும்' என்று அய்யா அவர்கள் அடிக்கடி கூறி வந்ததற்கேற்ப இவற்றை நடத்துவதில் தனிக் கவனம் செலுத்தி வருகிறார் என்பது அனைவரும் அறிந்த ஒன்றே.

துன்புறுவோருக்கு இரங்கி, அவர்களுக்கு உதவும் எண்ணத்தில் நேசக்கரம் நீட்டும் போது அதனால் நமக்கு ஏற்படும் துன்பத்தை ஒரு பொருட்டாகக் கருதாத உள்ளம் எவருடையதோ அவரே கடவுளை அறிந்தவராவார் என்னும் கருத்தமைந்த

அவரே கடவுளை அறிந்தவ ராவார்  
 அனைவரும் மதித்திடத் தகுந்தவ ராவார்  
 துன்பப் படுவோர் துயரம் சகியார்  
 துடிதுடித் தோடித் துணைசெயப் புகுவார்  
 இன்பம் தனக்கென எதையும் வேண்டார்  
 யாவரும் சுகப்படச் சேவைகள் பூண்டார்  
 அவரே கடவுளை அறிந்தவ ராவார்

(நாமக்கல் கவிஞர்)

என்ற பாடலுக்குப் பொருந்தும் வகையில் வாழ்ந்து அடுத்தவருக்கு உதவும்போது அவர்கள் மகிழ்ச்சியையே கருத்திலிருத்தி அதன் காரணமாக தமக்கு ஏதேனும் இழப்பு ஏற்படுவதாக இருந்தாலும் அதைச் சிறிதும் சிந்தை செய்யாதவர்கள் அவர்கள்.

தென் தமிழ்நாட்டின் நெல்லை மாவட்டத்தைச் சேர்ந்த கிராமமொன்றில் நடுத்தரக் குடும்பப் பெற்றோர்களுக்கு முதல் மகளாகப் பிறந்த அவர் தூங்காமை, கல்வி, துணிவுடைமை மூன்றும் நீங்காது தம்முடைய அயராத உழைப்பால் அரசு உயர் அதிகாரியாக, கல்லூரி முதல்வராக, பல்கலைக் கழகத் துணை வேந்தராக, வேந்தராக, அறிவியல் அறிஞராக உயர்ந்து உழைப்பின் வாராத உறுதிகள் எதுவுமில்லை என்பதை ஏனையோருக்கு எடுத்துக் காட்டும் வகையில் பல்வேறு சாதனைகள் படைத்து அச்சாதனையாளர் வரிசையில் முன்னிற்கிறார். அவருடைய சாதனை விரிப்பின் அகலும்; தொகுப்பின் எஞ்சும்.

அன்பின் விளக்கமாய், அறிவுச் சுடராய், சேவையின் சிகரமாய், பெண்மையின் இலக்கணமாய், கல்விக்குக் கண்ணாய், மனையியல் மாட்சியை மத்திய, மாநில அரசுகளுக்கு மட்டுமல்லாமல் உலகுக்கே எடுத்துரைக்கும் ஒப்பற்ற திறமையாளராய் விளங்கும் அம்மா அவர்கள் நற்குண, நற்செயல்களின் மொத்த வடிவாகவே திகழ்வவரென்றால் அது உண்மை; வெறும் புகழ்ச்சியில்லை.

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# **Dr. RAJAMMAL P. DEVADAS - A DYNAMIC LEADER , AN INSPIRING TEACHER AND A REFORMER**

**M. CHANDRAMANI**

**A** successful teacher is a successful leader. Amma - Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas is a model teacher and a highly successful leader to every one of us. I admire Amma avargal as an inspiring leader and a model teacher because :

- She is loyal to her ideas and ideals
- She realises the rights and dignity of others
- She has very strong feelings of self-confidence
- Her ability to identify easily with co-workers and others
- She is sensitive to the feelings of others that is being considerate, helpful, responsive and friendly
- She is energetic and enthusiastic
- She is consistant and honest
- Her genuine interest and ambition to build up the institute to reach excellence
- Her ability to get the job done quickly in the most efficient and correct way
- She is firm with her judgements and decisions
- She is straight forward, inspiring and dynamic in every way

- Her high degree of general ability
- Her broad outlook
- Her steady sense of balance and perspective
- Capacity to deal with a great variety of men and women engaged in different capacities in the service of education.
- Her unquenchable thirst for knowledge
- She has no compromise for hard work
- She is a personality with high academic distinction.

Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas - an inspiring teacher, excellent administrator and a passionate reformer of any educational institution can rightly boast of. The following statement of our Rev. Founder Dr. Thiru T.S. Avinashilingam Ayya avargal. is very apt in the case of Amma -

*“Hard and sustained work with faith in God and courage in the cause always succeeds”.*

# HIGHER EDUCATION FOR WOMEN IN THE NEXT MILLENNIUM

G. RAMATHILAGAM

“No great man ever complains of want of opportunity”, said Emerson, the great philosopher. When we think of the lives of great men and women these words of Emerson take on added meaning and import. Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas, under whose hovering guidance and care, we in Saradalaya were fortunate to launch our career and grew up together with the institution, is an outstanding example of this statement.

Dr. Devadas, whom everyone in the campus and outside affectionately address as Amma avargal, is a living example of the best and the finest in the Indian womanhood. She converted every challenge into a rewarding opportunity by sheer hardwork, preaseverance and sincerity of purpose. Placed in her circumstances, any other married woman would have reconciled herself to her family life, bogged down by its responsibilities. In her tender adolescent years in 1940's, Ms. Devadas stood as a rock in her determination to pursue higher education. After an outstanding performance in secondary school level examination, she convinced her husband and family members to continue her studies towards B.Sc. degree in Home Science in the front ranking and prestigious Queen Mary's College, Madras. She was employed for a while and later went to the Ohio State University, U.S.A. for higher studies on a Government of India scholarship. She completed there her course work in record time and earned her M.Sc. and Ph.D. degrees with distinction. Again when she could have settled for a cosy government job as the Chief Home Economist of the Government of India, she was beckoned by the call of Ayya Dr. T.S. Avinashilingam to assume responsibility for his educational institutions, particularly

Sri Avinashilingam Home Science College for Women in Coimbatore. She readily gave up her prestigious Government service in favour of her new responsibilities. Very few in her position would have settled down for such an option. Thereafter, the partnership that developed between Dr. Devadas and Dr. Avinashilingam was an enduring partnership to promote the cause of higher education in general and women's education in particular.

As the leader of the various institutions which were initiated by the Avinashilingam Education Trust, Dr. Devadas has nurtured each one of them with tender care towards great heights. She specialised in Home Science and Foods and Nutrition. Yet she did not restrict her concern to the growth of these disciplines only; she extended her benign care to the development of all the disciplines, be they social sciences, basic sciences or the emerging areas for women like management sciences and engineering. The growth of these departments in the University stands as monuments of her vision and mission, as proof of the fact that she thought much ahead of her times and converted her dreams into reality, which has benefitted thousands and thousands of women who have gone through its portals. As a tribute to her achievements in higher education, I am happy to place before the readers a few thoughts on the right dimensions of higher education for women in the twenty first Century.

Education or human capital is now recognised as an additional factor of production critical for economic growth and social development. Theodore Schultz, who pioneered the human investment revolution in economic thought, characterised human capital “as the most distinctive feature of our economic system, without which it would only be hard manual work and poverty except for those who have income and property”. Higher education is critical in the sense that advanced knowledge that addresses the country's economic and social problems is generated only at this level.

Unlike the women of the past who commanded respect and obedience as mother, today's woman is a highly self-directed person, alive to the sense of her dignity and the importance of her functions in the private domestic domain and the public domain of the world of work. Her access to higher education becomes critical to help wrest her fair share in both the domains. However, the data on the enrolment indicate that women's access to university education was only half as much as that of men. Women students were over-represented in arts faculties : equally represented in science faculties; under - represented in commerce faculties by about half and the engineering / technology faculties had absorbed only 1.2 per cent of women as against 7.4 per cent of men students (NIEPA, 1990, Education for All by 2000 A.D., Indian Perspective, p.7).

Hence we should consider giving to man more than equal access in science and technology education, management education, legal studies - the areas which are normally considered as hard core subjects and therefore the preserve of men. Vocational education must be an integral part of all education, with training in skills.

In view of limited job openings in the government sector, women need to be encouraged to take up self- employment / entrepreneurial activities. The innate qualities of women make them eminently suitable to foster entrepreneurship among them. They have an inherent capacity to calculate and shoulder risks, a problem solving approach, a high degree of achievement motivation, an ability to think independently, imagination and creative ability, easy adaptability to any change / transition and the ability to cope with setbacks. To nurture and nourish the entrepreneurial talent among women, EDP package should form part of all the courses at the university level.

The fields of engineering and technology offer vast scope for women. There are many openings suitable for women in civil, mechanical, electrical, electronic,

nuclear and systems engineering, as also fuel, fibre and other technologies. The engineering universities should identify the areas where women can fit in and throw open training opportunities in those areas to them.

In the field of management / business administration women should be promoted in large numbers as they have the necessary abilities to succeed. If women could manage the household successfully, will they not be able to serve the profession of management creditably?

The field of science is also fast developing. Physical sciences, life sciences, mathematics, computer science and social sciences are expanding fast and they require services of different categories of persons ranging from specialist scientists, researchers to technicians and skilled workers. Precision and scientific approach are the hall marks of all sciences. Women are rational in approach, careful in handling and want to do things as correctly as possible. They do not lack in any of the abilities needed for success in the profession of sciences. Hence the portals of science education with a strong base in mathematics should be thrown open to a larger percentage of women.

What are the modes and structure that we need to develop in the 21st Century for making higher education more efficient and more responsive to the needs of women? Universities may consider the introduction of choice based credit system so that women could supplement the regular academic components of their courses with strong inputs from vocational / management / entrepreneurial development programmes. While a few who are academically inclined could go higher in the ladder of research and university teaching, others could march on fully equipped into the world of work as leaders in business and industry. The rigid compartmentalisation which one finds now in the universities should give way for flexible choice based programmes.

The University system should shift from the current culture of procedure oriented administration to a managerial culture where it is accountable by results.

The mission of the system should be to ensure that the poorest of the poor who have the intellectual capabilities get access to the highest form of higher education. The current pattern where only the urban rich get into higher education should be replaced by a better one where anybody with potentials could undergo higher education.

In sum, the university system has to restructure its mission with respect to all students, particularly women students; shift towards a managerial culture; a more flexible curricula; introduce new components in its programmes; and introduce choice based credit system. The growth of the Avinashilingam University has been precisely on these lines under the stewardship of Dr. Devadas.

Among the many endearing qualities of our Chancellor, Amma avargal, the one that strikes me most, besides her erudition, indomitable will, concern for humanity, and implicit faith in God, is her abiding interest in the wellbeing of each one of her workers and associates. She always looks at the brighter side of each one's personality and motivates them to improve their performance. She never tires to praise each little accomplishment of theirs. Like an affectionate mother, she downplays the negative traits of a person; is ever ready to forgive them for their lapses. She firmly believes that they will correct themselves and do well given an opportunity to prove their worth. Rarely do we find such virtues except in the greatest of the great leaders. On the occasion when we are celebrating her 80th birthday our earnest prayers are to the Almighty to bless her with many more years of fruitful and active life. Let us resolve to stand ahead of others by doing as best as we can, just as she has done throughout.



# AMMA THE GREAT EDUCATIONIST

JANABAI GIRI

One fine morning in March 1969 I had a pleasant surprise. I was then working as a post doctoral research fellow in Vallabhai Patel Chest Institute, Delhi. On reaching the institute I found a letter from Amma, Dr. Devadas, offering me the post of PG Professor of Biochemistry. The letter was followed by a visit from Amma to the Delhi University staff quarters where I was staying with my brother. We liked each other and I accepted her offer and came to Coimbatore with my family for the first time in May 1969 and took charge as Professor of Biochemistry in Sri Avinashilingam Home Science College for Women.

In those days M.Sc. Biochemistry was offered only in the Biochemistry department of the University of Madras in the entire Tamil Nadu and only a few students were admitted each year. Amma with her far sighted vision realised that starting M.Sc. Biochemistry and thereby laying the foundation for a Biochemistry department would greatly strengthen the post graduate courses in Food Science and Nutrition, an important branch of Home Science. So inspite of the fact that Biochemistry department was a white elephant it was started in 1969-70 with ten students in M.Sc. Biochemistry. Thus Sri Avinashilingam Home Science College achieved the distinction of being the first college to offer M.Sc. in Biochemistry in Tamil Nadu and I had the honour of being its first Professor.

Ayya and Amma were kind and encouraging and with their blessings the Biochemistry department developed fast. Ayya was very happy that our Biochemistry students did remarkably well in the University examinations, all getting first class, many distinction and some university rank which was difficult in those days.

Biochemistry was considered a highly specialised subject and experts in Biochemistry were of the opinion that it should be taught only at the post graduate level to the students who had studied chemistry as major at the degree level.

But in 1976 Amma took a bold decision to start Bachelor's degree course in Biochemistry. Thus Avinashilingam Home Science College once again made history by starting B.Sc. Biochemistry. It was the first college to offer this course in South India.

In Madras University to which Sri Avinashilingam Home Science College was affiliated, thesis was not part of the curriculum except in the case of Home Science subjects. But Amma, with her ardour for research and conviction that doing thesis work helped the student develop her faculties of planning, organising, observation, analysis, evaluation and interpretation, persuaded the Madras University to make thesis a curricular component of M.Sc. Biochemistry. The University Biochemistry department stiffly opposed this. But, because of Amma's tenacity and perseverance the Madras University restructured the courses providing room for thesis in the curriculum of M.Sc. Biochemistry and permitted our college to offer the restructured course, while the Biochemistry department of the Madras University continued with the old syllabus without thesis. The new restructured syllabus came into effect from 1976-77 for our students, giving them the benefit of research experience.

In recognition of its academic achievements Sri Avinashilingam Home Science College was conferred the autonomous status in 1978 giving us lot of scope to update the syllabus, restructure the courses, introduce innovative methods of teaching and evaluation.

To make education broad based and integrated at undergraduate level, under the guidance of Amma, the Triple Major System was introduced. This pattern had

three core (major) courses, two supporting courses and two foundation courses besides English and Tamil.

The three majors were so combined that they strengthened and reinforced each other. For instance, Biochemistry major was highly strengthened by the other two majors Nutrition and Dietetics and Chemistry. The supporting course Mathematics further enhanced its value.

Following the policy of our Ayya avargal, Community and Social Service (CSS) was made compulsory such that the benefits of education could reach the community.

Amma's concern for the welfare of our students is boundless. In the early part of the seventies the M.Sc. Biochemistry students were considered not eligible to teach Chemistry in higher secondary schools though they were graduates in Chemistry and studied quite a bit of Chemistry in M.Sc. Biochemistry. When it was brought to the attention of Amma that this rule adversely affected our students she took up the matter with the Government and saw to it that M.Sc. Biochemistry candidates were also made eligible to be appointed as chemistry teachers in higher secondary schools.

By God's grace and Ayya and Amma's diligence, Sri Avinashilingam Home Science College for Women attained the Deemed University status in 1988. We were fortunate to have our founder Ayya avargal the great educationist as its first Chancellor and our dynamic Amma, the internationally reputed scientist as its first Vice Chancellor.

For smooth functioning and academic improvement the faculty system was introduced and the departments were grouped under four faculties with four senior most professors elevated as their Deans. Though myself and Dr. (Mrs.) Saraswathi Bhatji had retired as PG Professors in May 1988, Ayya and Amma in their abundant

love and faith in us made us Deans of Science and Humanities respectively. Dr. (Mrs.) Lakshmi Santa Rajagopal the present Vice chancellor was appointed the Dean of Home Science and Dr. (Mrs.) Chandramani the Dean of Education.

To achieve academic excellence, several steps were taken by Amma in consultation with the teachers.

There was rethinking about the Triple Major System and the University decided on offering double major with two ancillaries and two foundation courses at undergraduate level. For instance Biochemistry major was offered with Food Science and Nutrition as another major and Chemistry as compulsory first ancillary.

Amma as a wise leader held several meetings with the entire teaching staff and discussed the examination reforms to be introduced. Finally a consensus was arrived at and the following reforms were implemented :

1. The Semester pattern was to be continued
2. Adoption of 100 per cent internal assessment at undergraduate and post graduate levels with several safeguards for credibility and acceptability. This made learning an enjoyable experience to students.
3. Giving marks for attendance which motivated students to attend classes regularly and improved their learning capacity.
4. Preparation of exhaustive question banks for all papers and their computerisation.and
5. Making NSS for undergraduates and CSS for post graduates a curricular requirement.

After two years of Deanship (1988 - 90) I had to retire having completed 60 years of age. But Amma was so confident that I could effectively serve the University

for some more years, appointed me as the Controller of Examinations in 1990. I served in that capacity till 1995 to the best of my ability. I am happy that I could be associated with the genesis and development of this young but unique University.

This is an era of computers. A working knowledge of computer is absolutely necessary for every one to function effectively. Realising this our Amma who had become Chancellor by then and who always wishes to give our students the best of education and opportunities decided with the concurrence of the staff to make computer science the compulsory second ancillary for all students admitted from 1994 to the undergraduate courses, though it meant enormous expenditure.

In 1995 after due consideration and orientation of staff to grade-credit system through seminars and special lectures by experts, the credit-based curriculum and grade system was implemented for all courses.

Under the dynamic leadership of Amma, first as Vice Chancellor and then as Chancellor the Avinashilingam University has made spectacular strides in the field of higher education for women in these eleven years. It started four need-based engineering courses exclusively for women in 1996 -97. B. Arch and B.E. Environmental Engineering and B.L. are to be started next year.

The University offers 35 majors including four engineering courses at degree level and 19 majors at post graduate level. Research leading to M.Phil. is undertaken in 16 departments and Ph.D. in 15 departments. A number of research projects sponsored by Tamil Nadu, Government of India and foreign agencies are undertaken by the various departments. This is indeed stupendous and all the credit goes to Amma.

My link with this institution continues because I have been made after 1995, the Advisor to the Examination Reform Unit and the Deputy Director of the Sri Avinashilingam Education Trust Institutions.

As Deputy Director of the Avinashilingam Education Trust I have come to realise that Amma's function does not end with that of a Chancellor. She has several roles and responsibilities as Chairman and Managing Trustee of the Avinashilingam Education Trust.

There are many institutions run by the Trust. They are :

1. Sri Avinashilingam Nursery School
2. Sri Annai Sarada Nursery School
3. Sri Annai Kasthurba Nursery School
4. Sri Avinashilingam Primary School
5. Sri Annai Sarada Primary School
6. Sri Avinashilingam Higher Secondary School for Girls
7. Avinashilingam Deemed University
8. Sri Avinashilingam Shramik Vidyapeeth
9. Sri Avinashilingam Krishi Vigyan Kendra
10. Trainers Training Centre
11. Sri Dandapani Industrial Institute and
12. Sri Avinashilingam Industrial Institute (Avinashilingam Deemed University)

Besides the above institutions a number of projects and courses are undertaken by the Trust. In addition a Canteen at the Coimbatore Collectorate and Saradalaya Press are also run by the Trust. It is simply amazing how Amma manages all these and that too superbly. I think her motive power comes from a blend of matchless energy, superior intelligence, strong memory and unquenchable ambition. I conclude with prayers to the Almighty to bless Amma with sound health, many more years of dynamic career and distinguished service to the community. ●

# AMMA - THE BRIGHT STAR OF THE CENTURY

S. PREMAKUMARI

I have two mothers to adore, one who gave me the physical existence and brought me up with love and affection; and the other who shaped me as a woman of knowledge and brought me out from the cocoon of traditional family life in the society of that time. The second mother is none other than the world renowned nutritionist, Chancellor of Avinashilingam University, Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas affectionately called as 'Amma'.

I entered Saradalaya as a small school girl of 13 years age in the year 1960. On the very day of my admission, there was a meeting in the school when our revered Ayya avargal and beloved Amma avargal addressed the students. For me, who had the previous education in a very small elementary school, every thing looked greater simplicity in look and her impressive speech. Her intellectual vision coupled with patriotism was impatient to bring about the changes in the society which was needed most at that time.

Her utterances went deep into my heart and my inner feeling said that the Almighty has selected me to a right place for my future development. Over the past 37 years of my life in Saradalaya, I have had experienced several blessed and rare opportunities to be with Amma avargal and learned many a lesson about the panorama of life as a whole. I am happy to share a few of my unforgettable memories in this small resume.

After the predegree class I had a lot of oscilating desires about my higher studies. When I got my marksheets, I happened to meet Amma on the grounds. She

said that Home Science has got a great future and I should take up Home Science for higher studies. Those were the words of gospel from Amma avargal which had paved my future course of action.

In whatever angle, our Amma avargal ponders over, her concern had been always over the community upliftment and helping the downtrodden. Even today her great passion is to go to slums and rural areas and mingle with the people over there and understanding their problems and prepare a blue print for their development.

As a result of her conviction, she always stressed the necessity of the student community to deeply involve in service oriented activities. At times I wonder how Amma is able to participate in such noble activities in the remote areas. When I was associated with DANIDA Project in South Arcot District, Amma travelled with me in the night bus several times to those remote villages without an iota of hesitation. Once she was running high temperature still she was determined to travel in the night bus to Virudhachalam to attend the programme. It is very rare to come across a person with such a strong will power.

When Amma was my guide for Ph.D. she gave tremendous encouragement to me to complete the work on time. Whenever I expressed my desire for FIP leave in those difficult times she used to fillip my enthusiasm by saying that I could complete my work before the leave is sanctioned. I completed the work, true to her statement, without taking any study leave. Bundles of papers submitted to Amma for correction would come back promptly the next morning with the corrections made line by line. It is true whether it is a thesis work, scientific reports or correspondence.

Several aspects of administrative capacity of Amma has impressed me tremendously. If Amma sees capacity in an individual, whether young or old; junior or senior she never fails to utilise the qualities of those people for the good of the

institution. I was one of those lucky lot and I got trained under the direct guidance from Amma in carrying out several important assignments during my career in Saradalaya.

The quality of motherliness in Amma has touched my heart on several occasions. She has honoured my humble invitations many a time and blessed me and my family members. They are all the unforgettable moments in my life.

I was a recipient of rare opportunities to attend a few Asian and International Congresses of Nutrition with Amma. But for Amma's help and her desire to take me with her as a daughter, it would not have been possible even to dream of such opportunities. During each visit, she had been instrumental in making that experience a reality.

Anything offered with love is precious to Amma. Whenever she undertakes foreign travel, the members of Saradalaya used to wish her with flowers. I was spell bound to observe how Amma very carefully preserved those flowers and 'Marugu' till she returned. Every day during her sojourn in the far off lands she would wear those flowers and affectionately remember those who offered them.

Amma's thinking, seeing and talking would be always about Saradalaya wherever she travels. She is never tired of collecting books, bundles of literature, art pieces etc. without minding their weight and everything becomes ultimately a treasure of Saradalaya. Time may not be adequate to write all that I have experienced and observed in Amma. It is only appropriate to place our Amma avargal as the great star of the century. ●

## எங்களின் புரட்சித் தலைவி

தங்கமணி சுவாமிநாதன்

**பு**ரட்சி என்ற சொல்லுக்குப் பலரும் பல திறமாகப் பொருள் கூறலாம். பொருள் எவ்வாறாயினும் ஆகு. புதுமையானவை எல்லாம் புரட்சியே. புதுமைகள் பெருமை தருவனவாக இருத்தல் வேண்டும். காண்போர் பலரும் ஏற்றுப் போற்றக் கூடியனவாக இருத்தல் வேண்டும். இப்படி பலரும் போற்றும் புதுமைப் பெண்ணாய், புதுமைகள் பலகண்ட தலைவியாய் இருப்பதால் தான் நான் அம்மா அவர்களை 'எங்களின் புரட்சித் தலைவியாக' வர்ணிக்க விரும்புகிறேன்.

அம்மா ... அன்பிற்குரியவர்; உயர்ந்த எண்ணமுடையவர்; பரந்த மனப்பான்மையுடையவர்; நல்ல சிந்தனையாளர்; உயர்ந்த ஆராய்ச்சி நோக்குடையவர். எங்கள் தலைவி இரக்கமுடையவர். அவர்கள் கரங்கள் உதவத் துடிப்பவை. அம்மாவின் ஞாபகசக்தி அற்புதமானது. அவர்களின் தன்னம்பிக்கையும் மனோதேரியமும் எனக்கு பாடமாக அமைந்தது. அவருடைய அயராத உழைப்பும், உடன் பணிபுரிவோரை அரவணைக்கும் திறமும் பாராட்டுக்குரியது. அவர்களின் எண்ணத் தெளிவு, பல புதுமைகளைக் கண்டறிய உறுதுணையாக அமைந்துள்ளது. அம்மா கண்ட புதுமைகள் ஆயிரமாயிரம்; அதில் சிலவற்றைப் பார்ப்போம்.

பெண்கல்வி, அதிலும் மனையியல் கல்வியில் அம்மா அவர்கள் புகுத்தியுள்ள புதுமைகள் அனைவராலும் பாராட்டப்படுபவை. மனையியல், அதிலும் விரிவியல் கல்விக்கு விளக்கேற்றி வைத்த பெருமை அம்மா

அவர்களுையே சாரும். பெண்கல்வி, பல சாதனைகளை நடத்தும் பெண்களை உருவாக்குவதாக இருக்க வேண்டுமென்பதே அம்மா புகுத்திய புதுமை. 'ஆணுக்குப் பெண் நிகரென்ற' முரசைக் கொட்டுவதில் முதலிடம் வகிப்பவர் அம்மா அவர்கள்.

உயர்கல்வி என்பது சமூக சேவையோடு ஒன்றியிருக்க வேண்டும் என்பதே அம்மா கண்ட புரட்சி. சென்னைப் பல்கலைக்கழகம், பாரதியார் பல்கலைக்கழகம் மற்றும் எமது அவினாசிலிங்கம் பல்கலைக்கழகம் என்ற எல்லா நிலைகளிலும் 'பாடத்திட்டத்தில் சமுதாய சேவை' முக்கியபாடமாக அமைய வழிவகுத்த பெருமை அம்மாவுக்கே. இந்த அனுபவம் மாணவிகளின் மனதில் ஒரு பசுமைப் புரட்சியையே ஏற்படுத்தியுள்ளது என்பதை ஆசிரியர்களாகிய நாங்கள் அறிகிறோம்.

மாணவிகள் பணிபுரியும் கிராமங்களுக்கு ஒரு வேந்தர் செல்வது பெரிய அதிசயமே. மக்களும், மாணவிகளும் அதிசயிக்கும் வண்ணம் வேந்தர் அம்மா அவர்கள் குக்கிராமங்களுக்குச் சென்று, மாணவிகளையும், கிராமமக்களையும் பாராட்டுவது ஒரு பெரிய புரட்சியாக நான் நினைக்கிறேன்.

எம் அம்மா, பாரதி கண்ட புதுமைப் பெண்; ஒரு சமுதாயப் புரட்சியாளர்; சமுதாய சிந்தனையாளர். பெண்ணுலகத்தில் மண்டிக் கிடந்த அறியாமை மற்றும் கல்வியறிவின்மையைப் போக்க பல வழிகளில் புரட்சி செய்யும் அம்மா அவர்கள் ஒரு புதுமைப் பெண். பல அயல்நாடுகளுக்குச் சென்று, பல அரிய நுணுக்கங்களை அறிந்து, அந்தப் புதுமைகளை நம் நாட்டு மக்களுக்குப் புகுத்தி, புரட்சி செய்து கொண்டிருக்கிறார்கள்.

அம்மாவுக்கு ஓர் அரிய, புரட்சிகரமான சக்தி உள்ளது. தங்களுடன் பணிபுரியும் ஒவ்வொரு நபரின் அரிய சக்தியை உணர்ந்து, அவர்களுக்குரிய

பணியைப் பணித்து, செயல்பட வைப்பவர்கள். அதில் எந்த சுயநலமும் இருக்காது. தம்மைச் சார்ந்த ஒவ்வொருவரையும் அவரவர் சக்திக்கேற்ப வளரவைத்து, அனைவர் பணியும் சமுதாய மக்கள், அதிலும் பெண்களின் மேன்மைக்குப் பயன்பட வேண்டும் என்று அறிவுறுத்தும் புதுமை அம்மாவுக்கே உண்டு.

“ஈன்ற பொழுதின் பெரிதுவக்கும் தன்மகனைச் சான்றோன் எனக்கேட்ட தாய்” என்றபடி தம் மக்களாகிய எம்மைப் பார்த்து பெருமைப் படுபவர்கள்தான் அம்மா. எங்களுக்கு அம்மா அவர்கள் கொடுத்துள்ள ‘புரட்சி’கரமான சத்துணவு, வாழ வழிகாட்டுகிறது.

அம்மாவின் புரட்சிக் கருத்துக்கள் எல்லோருக்கும் வேண்டியது. நம் வாழ்விற்கும் நாட்டின் மேன்மைக்கும் வேண்டியது புரட்சிகரமான சிந்தனை, புதுமையான சிந்தனை, வேகமான உறுதியான செயல்பாடு. “நாளை செய்யும் காரியத்தை இன்றே நலமாக முடிப்பாயே” என்பது அம்மா அவர்களின் புரட்சி வேண்டுகோள். என் வாழ்க்கையின் ஒவ்வொரு படியிலும் அம்மாவின் கருத்துக்கள் அடிப்படையாக அமைகின்றன. அம்மா அவர்களின் ‘புரட்சிக் கருத்துக்கள்’ பெண்களின் முன்னேற்றமான பொற்காலத்திற்கு பெரிதும் உதவுமென நம்புகிறேன்; அம்மாவின் வெற்றிக்கு அதுதான் சின்னம். எங்கள் அம்மா, ‘பல்லாண்டு, பல்லாண்டு, பலகோடி நூற்றாண்டு’ வாழ இறைஞ்சுகிறோம். ●

## அவ்வைக்கோர் அந்தாதி

சி. வேல்மயில்

வழிக்கோர் எல்லை உண்டு  
வாழ்வுக்கோர் எல்லை உண்டு  
உறவுக்கும் எல்லை உண்டு, இவர்  
உழைப்பிற்கோ வானமே எல்லை!

எல்லை இல்லையே, இவர்  
தொல்லையில்லாது உயிரோம்ப,  
அருவிருந்தும், ஒரு மருந்தும், ஆய்ந்து  
வரும் பொருள் தேர்ந்த உணவுப்பண்டுவர்!

பண்டுவராம், பாரதியாம், இவர்  
உண்டு, உறங்கி, ஓய்ந்திராது,  
பாரதத்தின் பெருந்தனமாய்ச்  
சாரதாலயம் வடித்த கலைச்சிற்பி!

சிற்பியிவர், சிந்தைத்தெளி வாளர்  
நற்புகழார், நானிலமும் சுற்றிச்  
சொற்பொழிவில், சுகம் சேர்க்க, நன்கு  
கற்றறிந்த தமிழ்க்குல விளக்கு!

விளக்காய், வியக்க வைக்கும் திறமாய்  
விளங்கும் செறிவுயர்வால், இவர்  
நாட்டுணர்வும், நட்புணர்வும்  
நலமுடனே காத்திருக்கும் தேசாபிமானி!

அபிமானி, அறிவியல் விஞ்ஞானி  
ஆண்டவன் அருளடைந்த பெருஞ்ஞானி  
அகிலப் பொதுநோக்கும், அரவணைப்டும்

- நினைவில்

அயராது போற்றும் உலகப்பார்வையாளர்!

பார்வையாளராய்ப், பாலமாய்ப்,  
பாவையர்க்குப் பக்கபலமாய்ப்,  
பாரச்சமையிறக்கிப் பரிந்து, தக்க  
நேரம் பார்த்துக்குட்டும், இவர்தம்  
மோதிரக்கை!

கையாய்க், கனிந்திரங்கும் செயலாய், இவர்  
கலையாத கனவோடு, அண்டும்  
ஆயிரமாயிரம் பேருக்கு, ஆதரவாய்  
அடைக்கலமளிக்கும் ஆலமரம்!

ஆலமரமே, அகண்ட தருவே  
காலத்தால் நிலைபெற்ற நிலையே  
கோலம் சிறுத்தாலும், கோலோச்சம் திருவே  
ஞாலத்தில் நனி சிறந்தாரிவர் ஓர்  
அவ்வை!

அவ்வையே இவர்தம் அகவையில்  
அவ்வையே இவர்தம் ஆற்றலில்  
அவ்வைக்கோர் அந்தாதி பாடுகேன்  
அவ்வையே! வாழ்வாங்கு வாழ்கவே!

# **AMMA AVARGAL'S CONTRIBUTION TO HELP THE URBAN POOR THROUGH SRI AVINASHILINGAM SHRAMIK VIDYAPEETH, COIMBATORE**

**V. BALASUBRAMANIAN**

**I**t is a privilege and happiness for the Director and staff of Sri Avinashilingam Shramik Vidyapeeth to work under the able leadership and guidance of Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas, Amma avargal., since the inception of Sri Avinashilingam Shramik Vidyapeeth on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1984.

## **Shramik Vidyapeeth under the Presidentship of Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas**

The population explosion, industrial development and migration of people from rural to urban areas have resulted in very fast urban growth in the country. This rapid urbanisation created many socio-economic problems making the life miserable, particularly for the migrants and the deprived community who normally live in human conditions in the slums or pavements or in settlement colonies, labour colonies, etc. Many were being the first generation migrants exposed to the complex urban life of industrial milieu for the first time.

The Shramik Vidyapeeth represents an institutional frame work for offering non-formal, adult and continuing education programmes for urban poor. The Shramik Vidyapeeth or Polyvalent Adult Education Centre is an innovative educational scheme introduced by the Government of India. The distinct features of the Shramik

Vidyapeeth are : (a) the flexibility characteristics of non-formal education; (b) the special target groups of the socially, economically and educationally deprived sections of the urban society, and (c) the objective of offering polyvalent education that is meant to provide the individual not only the skills to enhance his/her productive potentiality but also the knowledge necessary for him/her to improve the quality of life. These features distinguish the Shramik Vidyapeeth from other educational programmes for adults.

Sri Avinashilingam Shramik Vidyapeeth was inaugurated on Gandhi Jayanthi Day in 1984 i.e 02.10.1984. by the Founder-President of Sri Avinashilingam Shramik Vidyapeeth, Shri T.S. Avinashilingam, and the then Vice-President Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas. It was a time when the Govt. of India had requested Sri. T.S. Avinashilingam and Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas to take the SVP in Coimbatore. Amma avargal in consultation with Ayya avargal wanted to begin such a programme to help the poor, deprived sections of the society. With the inauguration of Shramik Vidyapeeth, one more institution was added to the number of institutions already run by Sri Avinashilingam Education Trust. Thus Sri Avinashilingam Shramik Vidyapeeth is one of the few institutions sponsored by Ministry of Human Resource Development, Department of Education, Government of India for imparting skill training for unemployed youths. Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas shared the burden of building Sri Avinashilingam Educational Trust Institution with Rev. Ayya. It was through her untiring efforts and dedicated service that these institutions have grown into a prestigious status. Sri Avinashilingam Shramik Vidyapeeth is fortunate to have Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas as the President of the Managing Committee who has been guiding and leading the SVP to a coveted position among the many Shramik Vidyapeeths in the country.

## **Industrial and Economic Scenario in Coimbatore**

Coimbatore district is economically important in terms of its production, trade in cotton, coconut, textile mills, hosiery products, light engineering units, and foundries; manufacturing pump sets, electric motors, steel furniture, textile machinery, automobile components and numerous other items. The farmers of this district are progressive and hard working. Given the water, the productivity of the soil is phenomenal. There are more than 60,000 industrial units supporting the major industries in Coimbatore and other parts of the country. Coimbatore is called the Manchester of South India having 120 major textile mills and 900 small units.

### **Role of Sri Avinashilingam Shramik Vidyapeeth in conducting employment generation programmes**

Since 1984, Sri Avinashilingam Shramik Vidyapeeth has been concentrating on generating employment potentials for youth through a variety of employment oriented training programmes. Over the decade more than 10,000 boys and girls have been trained through 625 training programmes. The courses offered are varied in nature and based upon the man power requirements in Coimbatore. All the courses are need oriented, tailor made and non-formal in nature to suit the target groups.

Sri Avinashilingam Shramik Vidyapeeth programmes are designed to impart technical and vocational skills for productive activity and knowledge for improving the quality of life speaks for the concern of the economically and educationally deprived section of the urban society. It is the degree of the economic and educational deprivation of the target groups that determine the nature of programmes or the package of the vocational cum general educational contents of the programmes. The target group of the SVP are mainly the illiterates, school drop outs, poor, down

trodden, economically backward, orphans, widows, unemployed youths, SC, ST, physically handicapped, etc.

## **Courses offered**

For men, skills in turner, fitter, machinist, welder, tool and die making, computer numerical control, lathe operators, motor winding, electrician, two wheeler motor vehicles repairing, four wheeler motor vehicles repairing, auto electrician, refrigeration and air conditioners repairing, carpentry, plumbing, moulder, plastic processing machine operator, radio and television repairing, cutting and tailoring etc. are offered for a period of six months to one year.

To girls, training is offered in maternity and child health, operation theatre assistants, ophthalmic technicians, intensive care unit assistants, lab technician, hospital administration, industrial electronics, turner, two wheeler motor vehicles repairing, motor winding, jewels making, synthetic diamond cutting, textile technology, composing and book binding, tailoring, embroidery, dress designing, beauty culture, cosmetology, etc. for a period of six months to one year. Besides these a few short term courses conducted for women are : soft toys making, gift articles making, oil painting, fabric painting, bakery, flower making, soups and snacks preparation etc.

## **Training for Industrial workers**

Amma avargal was not content with the conduct of training programmes within the SVP campus. Amma avargal wanted to cater to the development of the workers in the industries in the city.

Training needs of workers in industries are assessed periodically. Courses in automatic press tool operation, general machinist, foundry technology, computer numerical control lathe operators, turner, fitter and motor-winding were offered to 416 workers in seven Industries. Along with the skill, polyvalent components such as role of a person, with personal relations, communication skills, personal health, safety, empowerment, human resource development, etc., were imparted to the workers to make them as better workers, better family members and better citizens.

### **Training for workers family members**

Training on cutting and tailoring, home management etc., were offered to the workers' wives of an industry regularly. 80 women were trained under this programme. For these women the management of the industry supplied sewing machines and also job order to stitch worker's uniforms.

In the same, industrial worker's children were given training in creativity development. For this, training in oil painting, pot painting, greeting cards making, drawing and fabric painting were taught to 30 children in the month of May 1997.

### **Extension Centres in Industries**

Two large scale Industries in suburban areas have provided class room facilities and industrial support for conducting training in turner, fitter, welder and motor-winding. 800 unemployed youth got training and employment through these programmes.

### **Training system of SASVP**

The courses are identified and developed in consultation with the employers and the experts in the fields. For this, periodical assessment for man power

requirement is conducted in Coimbatore to know the employment opportunities in various fields. Then the youth are identified through announcements in All India Radio, personal contacts, information through other voluntary agencies, industries, ex-trainees, etc.

Skills are identified and offered to these youth based upon their family background, their aptitude, etc. Family is considered as an important unit for their development. Hence family background is collected from every youth to help his/her family members also.

### **Conduct of training**

Under the able guidance of Amma avargal, excellent rapport has been developed with collaborators of various kinds in Coimbatore, such as industries, motor vehicles service stations, refrigeration and air conditioners repairing service stations, nursing homes, educational and technical institutions, printing press, etc. More than 600 organizations of these kinds are providing practical training to the youth. The selected boys and girls of various courses are placed in such organizations for 6 - 8 hours a day to work on the job and learn the practical skills. This sort of practical training is more useful for the youth as it is being given in the actual field situation instead of a model laboratory established for this. This will help them to gain deeper practical knowledge.

Theory and other polyvalent knowledge are given in the Shramik Vidyapeeth and in the extension centres located in industries and in slums for 1½ hours to 2 hours a day. The polyvalent components include : Personality development, communication skills, interpersonal relationship, empowerment, safety, environment,

work culture, knowledge about their day living, etc. To impart theory and polyvalent education, the services of guest faculties are obtained from other educational and technical institutions, nursing homes, industries, etc.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

In addition to concurrent and terminal examination for theory and practical, the performance of the youth is monitored everyday by adopting a diary system written by the youth and monitored by the works in charge in the collaborating agencies and the guest faculties and programme staff in the Shramik Vidyapeeth.

### **Staff**

Under the Presidentship of Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas, the Shramik Vidyapeeth has a set of qualified and experienced full time staff. Apart from Director, two Programme officers, one artist cum projectionist and the administrative staff (10 in number) are there.

### **Placement for trainees**

Soon after the training mostly the trainees are absorbed by the collaborating organizations themselves; otherwise the Shramik Vidyapeeth gives them placement in other organizations. This kind of post training placement is also monitored further by periodical evaluation meetings and personal contacts. Each and every trainee who completes training in most of the courses is expected to start his/her own enterprise in a three year period.

### **Continuing education and training**

Amma avargal was not contented with the skill development provided to the trainees of SVP. She wanted the youth to be educationally uplifted also.

The youth are encouraged to complete their academic studies, secondary education through special coaching classes, private study, to appear for the examinations. Further many of them preferred to learn additional skills, related to their first training or go for higher education according to their occupation.

### **Entrepreneurship Training**

30 batches of training was conducted to 1500 beneficiaries in entrepreneurial development skills under Prime Minister's Rozgar Yojana scheme, a self employment programme.

### **Women Entrepreneur Development Training Programme**

Women development and women upliftment was of great interest to Amma avargal.

Every year the District Industries Centre Coimbatore conducts Entrepreneur training for women for a duration of 90 days. Three such training programmes have been conducted at this Syramik Vidyapeeth. This is a special EDP training programme for women. One month theoretical training and 2 months practical training are given to the women in various skills of their choice. After the training, each woman becomes an eligible candidate for availing loans from banks.

### **Post evaluation meetings and self employment opportunities**

The ex-trainees are called periodically to know their employment status, educational and training needs. This facilitates for continuous contact with the ex-trainees to help them grow vertically. In the year 1997-98, 250 ex-trainees were helped to acquire loan to the tune of Rs.1 lakh each under the Prime Minister Rozgar Yojana Scheme, a self employment programme of Government of India.

## **Polyvalent Education**

Amma avargal wanted an all - round development in the trainees. She felt that value oriented education, discipline and character building were the major social benefits. Wider social contacts, respect for human values and acquisition of helping tendency were the other social outcomes of SVP training which impressed the candidates, particularly the women.

## **Conclusion**

This name and fame could not have been easily achieved by Sri Avinashilingam Shramik Vidyapeeth if not for the guidance and support of Amma avargal. Now this Shramik Vidyapeeth has risen to the prestigious status of a Model Shramik Vidyapeeth in the country. We pray to the Almighty to give Amma avargal more strength and courage, joy and happiness for ever to get the fruit of success in all walks of life. ●

# **AMMA AVARGAL - THE PERSONALITY I ADMIRE MOST**

**S. KOWSALYA**

**W**e, the children of this great Saradalaya are immensely grateful to God Almighty for the wonderful gift, He has given in our Chancellor Amma avargal.

As a student of this esteemed University founded by the great citizen of India, I have known Amma as the Director of our institutions, received prizes from her and amazed at the contributions of her to the development of our institutions. Then came the turning point in my life to join the Foods and Nutrition Department as a research associate. While I was in this career, one day I met Amma in the ground (when Amma was attending a function in our school and returning) and I wished Amma. Amma stopped and asked me, "Kowsalya, you are leaving tonight to Madras for project work, Do learn well". I was amazed as to how Amma knew my name and it was a thrilling experience for me because Amma called me by my name. Later Amma gave me a golden opportunity of serving our institutions in the capacity of a teacher. As a lecturer, I came to know more about Amma and I always admire her unshaking faith in God Almighty, love for all members of Saradalaya, intelligence, shrewdness, strength to do extraordinary tasks, dedication for the cause of education, untiring enthusiasm, quench for travel, love for nature, goal to put our Institution into great heights and above all the way Amma shares her thoughts and experiences with us in the assembly or in the meetings. When it is a rare opportunity for the students and teachers to meet the Chancellor in any university often (perhaps only during Convocations), we are so blessed to have her guidance always!

In my teaching career, when I accompanied PG students for NSI meetings in 1993 to NIN, there came Dr. Gopalan, the Founder President of NSI and asked me, “Are you Rajammal's student?” I replied yes. In his own smiling gesture, he mentioned that the group I took was small and told me, “Rajammal used to bring a battalion of budding nutritionists” and appreciated Amma's interest in students' welfare and exposition to such national meetings and her contributions to Nutrition Society of India.

As a doyen of the Home Science education in India, I salute her contributions to the field of Home Science and making it a full-fledged field equivalent to all other sciences in India and abroad.

Once when Amma addressed the students in our auditorium, she said, “You are little Saraswathi's, why do you go near the gate before 4.30 p.m.. and argue with the watchman? Think it is your university and walk straight and proudly leave the gate at 4.30”. The students applauded and I admired the way she could advise the students and rule their hearts by whole hearted affection.

I had one of the rare opprotunities of travelling with Amma to attend conference. It was a marvellous experience and such instances, I always recall with great pleasure. During the tour, Amma prepared coffee for us, and shared the eatables Amma brought for us. All these made us feel very comfortable and Amma took immense care of us. Whenever we visited stalls in conferences, Amma (as a voracious reader) would look out for journals and other publications for our library. Once Amma asked me to pick out a publication for our Institution and by the time I could finish the work, when I turned back; Amma was in the 6th stall in her own posture enjoying reading another book. My God, I was really surprised how she could do things so fast?

I should also mention that in her official address in scientific meetings, Amma addresses in a clear, commanding voice with much coherence, crisp and with clear-cut messages along with recommendations. When we had to compile the recommendations, we found finally the recommendations that emerge would mostly be Amma's since Amma would have listed them and we try to get one or two points from other speeches.

I wish to mention that I had missed the opportunity to have been a direct student of Amma - my teacher's teacher, Dr. Usha has always mentioned that how Amma was a great teacher, used to instill good qualities in students and also encouraged deserving students to attain great heights - qualities to be imbibed by us, the younger generation of teachers.

I can go on and on with many such memorable instances to share about our most beloved Chancellor Amma avargal whom we adore and admire as an embodiment of love. At this juncture, I pray to God Almighty to shower his blessings on Amma avargal for good health and happiness always. ●

## மாதர்குல மாணிக்கம்

யூ. ஜெரினாபீ

அம்மா

எத்தனை முறை சொன்னாலும்

திகட்டாத வார்த்தை

உள்ளம் மறக்காத வார்த்தை

எல்லா உயிர்களும் சொல்லும் வார்த்தை

அன்பின் வார்த்தை, அறிவின் வார்த்தை

அடக்கத்தின் வார்த்தை

பொறுமையின் வார்த்தை

நம் அன்பு அம்மாவைக் குறிக்கும் வார்த்தை

உலகில் பெண்கள் முன்னேற்றத்திற்காகப்

பாடுபட்ட பெருந்தகை

எண்ணற்ற மாணவ நட்சத்திரங்களுக்கு

ஒளி கூட்டிய தேவதை

ஆற்றலையும் அறிவையும் சேர்த்து

ஆண்டவன் அனுப்பிய படைப்பு

அம்மாவை நினைக்க, நினைக்க

எங்களுக்கு ஏற்படுவதோ மெய்சிலிர்ப்பு!

தோன்றிற் புகழொடு தோன்றுக

என்று வள்ளுவன் பாடிய வரிகளோ அருமை

அன்றே சொல்லிவிட்டார், இவர்தம் பெருமை

எத்தனை மகுடங்கள், எத்தனை சிகரங்கள்

எத்தனை பட்டங்கள், எத்தனை விருதுகள்  
அத்தனையும் எங்கள் இதய தேவதையின்  
அன்புச் சிகரங்களில் ஏற்றி வைக்கப்பட்ட  
ஒளி தீபங்கள்!

எத்தனை வேகம், எத்தனை துடிப்பு,  
எத்தனை ஆர்வம் இவரிடம்  
சாதனையாளர்களின் பிறப்பிடம்  
சாதித்தவர்களின் வாழ்விடம்  
சாதிக்க நினைப்பவர்கள் வருமிடம்  
அத்தனையும் நம் சாரதாலயம்!

ஒவ்வொரு துறையிலும்  
எந்தவொரு நாட்டிலும்  
எங்கும், எதிலும் நம் மாணவியர்  
அத்தனை சிறப்பும், அத்தனை பெருமையும்  
ஒன்று சேர்ந்த இடம் நம் சாரதாலயம்!

பட்டங்கள் ஆள்வதும், சட்டங்கள் செய்வதும்  
பாரினில் பெண்கள் நடத்த வந்தோம்  
என்ற பாரதியின் கனவினை உண்மையாக்கிப்  
பல பெண்களைப்  
பட்டம் பெறச் செய்த இடம் சாரதாலயம்!

ஒரு பெண்ணுக்குக் கல்வி  
ஒரு குடும்பத்துக்கே கல்வி  
என்ற வார்த்தைகளை மெய்யாக்கி  
வீடுதோறும் குடும்ப விளக்குகளை

குல விளக்குகளை,  
அருமை அய்யாவின் அறிவுரையுடன்  
ஏற்றி வைத்தவர் அம்மா  
நாம் வாழும் சமுதாயம் நமது  
என்ற எண்ணத்தை மாணவியர்  
உள்ளத்தில் அழகாகப் பதித்துப்  
பல சமுதாய நலப்பணிகளில் ஈடுபட  
வைத்தவர் அம்மா!

ஆலமரம் போல் அவர்  
அதன் விழுதுகளே நாங்கள்  
அம்மாவே மனித நேயத்தின் பிறப்பிடம்  
அவர்தம் நிழல் தானே எங்கள் இருப்பிடம்  
வரலாறுகளைப் படித்ததன்றி  
வரலாறுகளையும் படைத்தார் அவர்  
வரலாற்றில் வார்த்தைகள்  
அவர்தம் புகழ்பாடும்  
அம்மாவின் சிறப்பு நீடித்து நிலைக்கும்  
அதைக் கண்டு இவ்வுலகமே களிக்கும்

மாதர் குல மாணிக்கமே வாழ்க! வெல்க!!

# AMMA - AN EMINENT SCIENTIST

R. RAJI

We affectionately call Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas as “Amma avargal”. The term “Amma” denotes the mother, meaning the angel of love and affection, attachment, tolerance and forbearance, selfless service, devotion to duty, sacrificing nature, and above all maintaining good human relations. The word Amma is a precious term. Mother denotes the large family led by her so efficiently. She has found careers for many deserving needy young women.

It was in early Nineteen fifty, Home Science was not so popular then. Many possessed biased conceptions about the subject and felt that Home Science meant simply cooking. Amma gave life and meaning to Home Science. Home Science, according to her, paved the way for sound family living with good nutrition, child care, management of the home, and clothing the family. Home is the place where values are developed and Home Science is education for family living and it helps to serve the community.

She asked me to take up Home Science for my degree course. Having come up creditably in the entrance examinations I was considered eligible for scholarship in tuition fees at Lady Irwin, New Delhi. The four year course was challenging and on completion she advised me to go over to Coimbatore where Ayya avargal had founded an Institute for Home Science. Dr. Kamalanathan was then the Principal in charge who gave me an idea about the ideals of the college. I joined as a Demonstrator in Home Science and I was put in charge of the Clothing and Textiles Department.

In the early stages Amma gave me many tips and precautions to be taken in record keeping. I learnt about the stock and contingency records and how to maintain them efficiently. Within six months after my joining, I was promoted as lecturer. The job was exciting and challenging but time consuming. A couple of years passed by and when I was about to do my post-graduation somewhere in India the USAID offer came for pursuing higher studies. The two candidates were myself and Smt. Kamala Anandam. I had the background of Home Science but Kamala was in every way a desirable candidate. Dr. Badenhop who was the Group Leader came to India and interviewed us and Kamala impressed him much. But Amma persuaded him to accept me as the first one to go to USA and then Kamala, for the two scholarships offered by the USAID.

The above gave me the opportunity to go over to US for my post-graduation. Before I left for the States, she prepared me and helped me in many ways and also suggested certain research topics which would be useful to India. I selected one of them and collected quite a lot of literature and took them with me.

At USA in the Tennessee University, I had a good faculty adviser who chalked out my courses and programmes. My Adviser Dr. Claire Gilbert had been to India and had the knowledge of Home Science Extension in India. She guided me in framing a comprehensive questionnaire based on my literature survey. I despatched the questionnaires to India to Amma avargal, who had then retired from a key position in Govt. of India. I requested her to get them circulated to the different Home Science Wings for data collection and send them back to me. I learnt after a long time that the Government had banned the questionnaires and I would not receive the data for processing. Amma went up to the Ministerial level, got the ban lifted, got the questionnaires circulated and I received sixty percent of the filled in forms, though

late. As a result I could complete my research and return to India intact for serving the Institute.

After my return I was eligible to guide master's thesis. For the candidate allotted to me Amma was the guide and I was the co-guide. This gave me an opportunity to learn not only the intricacies of research guidance but also how to correct students' research work efficiently.

I was placed as the senior instructress in the Extension Wing. I conducted one mukhyasevika's training programme for nine months duration. I found the work very challenging and rewarding but it was taxing for me. It so happened once that I did not know how to market around thousand eggs, the products from our poultry as there was no campus consumption of eggs due to holidays. Amma came to my rescue and arranged for the despatch of eggs. In no time the eggs vanished and I was saved from the worries of marketing eggs. When I found myself unable to adjust to the demands of the Extension Wing, she stated "if you cannot adjust to us we shall adjust to you" and gave me an alternate job.

Thus I became the academic assistant (AA) to Amma who was the Principal then. In this post under her direct guidance I learnt a lot about drafting letters and administration. I had some classes also in Home Science Extension for undergraduates. Some of these classes would be taken by Amma and I would sit in her classes taking down notes. The classes would be full of current information and we used to benefit a lot out of her lectures.

The AA's post gave me the opportunity to work closely with Amma forming a liaison between her and the staff body. I got lessons about the filing system, classifying and preserving important letters and papers. When a particular item was

called for, I was in a position to pick up the file and produce the same to her. Moreover I had the chance of framing rules and regulations for different requirements along with Amma's personal assistant and this stimulated my thinking to a considerable extent.

The Clothing and Textiles Department then had the undergraduate programme only. At the time of starting the Master's programme it had a strong clothing construction laboratory but it was devoid of any textile testing equipment. Amma used to say that the Master's programme would be started for upgrading my post but at one instance I expressed to Amma that the Master's programme should be started only if it was needed by the Institute and not for benefitting any individuals. However, the postgraduate course in Clothing and Textiles was started finally in 1968 as Clothing and Textiles was one of the subjects of Home Science. I was sent by Amma for a job orientation training in textile testing at A.C. College of Technology, Guindy, Madras. As incharge of the undergraduate and post-graduate programmes I had the opportunity to work under her as a colleague.

Years passed by and the time came when many started doing Ph.D. I came across the last chance of registering myself directly for Ph.D. without doing M.Phil in the Madras University. When I approached Amma she said she would be my guide if I took up a Home Science topic with extension base. She suggested me to organise a garment unit in a rural area and evaluate the same. This was accepted and I organised a Garment Unit at Vivekanandapuram and trained rural young girls in garment making for production purposes. After hard perseverance a suitable market could be tapped for our products through the National Textile Corporation. The evaluation of the unit at Vivekanandapuram enabled me to make suggestions and to come up with certain concrete conclusions.

Based on the results, Amma asked me to organise one in the campus itself. This was an area which consumed lot of my time after my class hours and research guidance. Amma helped me to obtain the grant from Central Social Welfare Board for setting up the garment unit. Funds were available for capital investment for the purchase of sewing machines and accessories and raw materials. In this enterprise, based on my previous experience I had to work out the programme and solve the problems as they arise. Both in the department work and in the garment unit I learnt many things by doing. Amma had trust and confidence in me and the feeling that I would be sincere in the tasks entrusted. I was granted utmost freedom in every venture of mine and this helped me to grow and develop further. At times she would ask me to produce a picture of the financial position of the unit which I would work out and place before her. This paved the way for future plans.

Personal interest was taken by Amma in canvassing orders for the unit and she arranged for collaborating with the High School for making uniforms for the newly admitted candidates. She wanted to make the unit thrive and come up and so helped me in many ways for canvassing orders from the campus for various requirements either clothing or furnishing items. Because of her goodwill, the enthusiasm shown by her and the encouragement given, the garment unit started becoming self sufficient and in course of time a profitable enterprise too.

Amma was serving the Govt. of India. She gave up her prominent post and undertook the Principalship of Sri Avinashilingam Home Science College. Then she was the Director, the Vice Chancellor and today she happens to be the Chancellor of the Avinashilingam Deemed University. She respects her colleagues. Not a single year she has ever remained without giving the individual Christmas greeting cards with her handwritten script of special greetings to her colleagues. Unlike many VIPs

she is approachable at any time by her colleagues and does not stand on any formalities and they are treated as family members. Also she has a gang of devoted staff members in each branch of Home Science to work with many research projects. The results of researches done in the Institute under her able guidance have enabled her to gain high recognitions at national and international levels. A distinguished personality she is, who has sacrificed her whole life for the cause of women's education, development and upliftment. She happens to be a member / consultant or chief of many professional organisations in India and abroad. Also she is the recipient of many national and international awards, for her noteworthy and creditable achievements. She has written many books in the field of Home Science and published a number of research papers on the work accomplished by her.

When I dream towards the past, and think of the knowledge acquired by her, the capacity within her, the service contributed by her to the Institution and to the society, I feel she is a great eminent scientist of whom I do not feel confident to write about. However, may I invoke God Almighty's blessings on her for preserving her for many more years to come for serving the University, the Community and Humanity in General? ●

# எங்கள் அம்மா

இந்திராணி அருணாசலம்

பாரெல்லாம் புகழ்பரப்ப பாசமிகு நல்லம்மாவாய்  
பலகல்வி பயின்றாலும் பண்பொன்றை மூச்சாக்கி  
பூமித்தாய் பூரிக்கப் புயலெனவே பணிசெய்து  
பாராட்டுப் பலபெற்றுப் பாங்குடனே செயல்பட்டு  
'பல்கலை'கள் வியந்துநிற்க பலகலையும் கற்றுவந்து  
அவினாசி அய்யாவின் அருளாசித் துணையுடனே  
பணிசெய்யும் பாங்குதனைப் பகர்வதிலே பெருமையுற்றேன்  
பிணியகற்றி நீடுவாழ உளங்கனிந்து வாழ்த்துகின்றேன்  
கல்வியும் கடமையும் கண்களெனக் கொண்டதனால்  
வெளிநாடு தினம்சென்று வெற்றிக்கொடி நாட்டுகின்றீர்!  
முயல்வேக சுறுசுறுப்பு முதுமைக்குப் புறம்காட்ட  
முனைப்புடனே செயலாற்றி முதல்மகளாய்த் திகழ்கின்றீர்  
'மனையியலை' உலகிற்கு முதன்முதலாய்த் தந்ததனால்  
மங்காத புகழ்பெற்றுக் குன்றிலிட்ட விளக்கானீர்!  
ஆக்கமான பணிசெய்து அனைவரையும் கவர்ந்ததனால்  
'விஞ்ஞான சரஸ்வதியாய்' வியனூலகில் வியாபித்தீர்!  
பட்டம்பெற்ற பல்லோர்கள் பகட்டுக்காய் வாழும்போது  
'பத்மஜீ' பட்டம்பெற்று அனைவருக்கும் சான்றானீர்!  
கதராடை தினமணிந்து காந்தியத்தை வலியுறுத்தும்  
மற்றுமொரு தெரசாவாய் மாநிலத்தில் வந்துதித்தீர்!  
அவினாசிப் பல்கலையில் அரசாட்சி புரிந்திடவே  
அன்புடனே போற்றுகின்றோம்! அகமகிழ்ந்து ஏற்றிடுவீர்!  
இந்நாளே நன்னாளாய் எந்நாளும் பொன்னாளாய்  
இசைந்திடவே இயம்புகின்றேன்! உவப்புடனே ஏற்றிடுவீர்!!

**THE WORD  
"AMMA AVARGAL"  
THE MAGIC WAND OF SARADALAYA**

VIJAYALAKSHMI RAJAGOPAL

**O**ur Indian soil always attaches a lot of significance to the word "Amma" – with what a great forethought our beloved Ayya avargal has woven the web of Saradalaya with family related terms - yes, our Saradalaya is a rich banyan tree, thatching millions of birds scattered in different corners of the world. These birds are indebted to our revered Chancellor Amma avargal - but for whose efforts Avinashilingam Deemed University would not have become a reality in Coimbatore.

Pages would not permit me to write of the stalwart support lent by our dear Ayya avargal to our dear Amma to realise her dream of serving the humanity. With nostalgic feelings I remember those days - how they both used to come round the campus with real parental care - meeting children, giving instructions for safeguarding the campus, sparing time for the hostelites after the evening prayer which always used to end with the words -

எங்க பிள்ளைங்க, தங்கமான பிள்ளைங்க

such abiding relationship is absent in any other institution. Amma and Ayya always spread warmth and affection towards the daughters of Saradalaya.

Amma has done so much for the cause of education and to the upliftment of the villages around Coimbatore (in the various fields of Home Science). It will not be a flattery - definitely if I say that her name will be readily reckoned with Coimbatore

in the future years to come. Indeed, she has devoted so much of her time and effort to shape our University. Our splendid University is a living example of our Amma's untiring work and her supreme sacrifice of her sweet family life - I underline the word supreme sacrifice - because it is an irreparable loss - "Home Sweet Home".

In the ladder of association, Holy Annai Saradamani Devi is always associated with Ramakrishna Mission, Mother Teresa is associated with Calcutta, Pondicherry is associated with Aravind Ashram, Annai and Amma avargal will flash in the memory of people at hearing the word Coimbatore.

I am proud to say that I was a former member of our college faculty from 1967 - 1974. I met our Amma avargal in May 1967 in "Appan Arul" building when I came for the interview. The interview was very brief and she asked me to bring my father, to make certain of our willingness to accept the job. From that day onwards, my father Thiru. R.A.M. Perumal Chettiar remained a good friend of our Amma avargal until his recent demise on August 24th 1998. She is such a global personality with world wide connections - yet her heart is simple and humane - a loving trait to be admired. She always made it a point to visit my ailing father on her way to Gandhigram. I cherish her loving visits and homage to my parents in my memory.

As a new member of the staff in the institution, I had seen people running in panic at the sight of Amma avargal. I used to feel funny because I had never seen the like of it anywhere. Gradually, I understood that Amma is an awe inspiring personality. She is a disciplinarian with a motherly heart. She had forgiven some of her daughters of Saradalaya and had reinstated them in their original places, forgetting their wrongs.

I had always seen the magical effect of the word "Amma". The very mention of that word used to charm the noisy auditorium and bring a spell-binding effect.

மூர்த்தி சிறிதாகினும் கீர்த்தி பெரிது என சொல்வார்கள்

Undoubtedly, the small statured Amma avargal has a magnetic personality.

My husband, Mr. R. Rajagopal had the opportunity to serve under her as University Engineer and always used to admire her bee-like life and iron-will, by which she gets things done for the institution easily. Behind this iron-heart there lurks kindness and consideration for her fellow workers. In 1967 there were only seven members in the English Department and we had to correct thousands of papers each at very short notice. Amma avargal was always considerate at such times to give us more time when approached by our esteemed Prof. Sumathi Menon along with Mrs. Vilasini and Mrs. Francis. In the future years, the English papers were reduced to two. I must not digress at this juncture. But I must say that omission of Shakespeare and Milton from the syllabus, I feel, has done a lot of harm to the student body.

Amma avargal has a remarkable memory power for “names and dates”. To whichever corner of the world she goes, she visits the Saradalaya members, if it chances. She made it a point to come and see me in Dar-es-Salam (Tanzania) in 1978. Such sort of motherly like affection is a trait to be commended. At this age of 80, she is still an affectionate mother to her only son, and an earnest grand mother to her three grand children and was a kind daughter to her aged mother.

Having been born in an ardent christian family, she loves her family prayers. Yet, she is generous enough to take part in the bhajans in the shrine - the pulse of Saradalaya. The secret of Amma's success lies in her faith in God and in the way she chooses people for work - more than mere talents, she apts for dependancy and devotion.

To quote Wordsworth's words aptly,

*“Thy soul was like a star and dwelt apart  
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea,  
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free”.*

Great things are achieved only on the edifice of sacrifice. This is the law of nature. Our Amma avargal has struggled so much to bring up this monumental institution and is a chosen gift of God to the society. With ceaseless zeal she is marching on and on - seeing so many celebrations - let God Almighty give her more fruitful years.

Children of Saradalaya will successfully manage everywhere - yes, our soil gives such training by the grace of Amma avargal. I thank all the members of the publication committee, for giving me this opportunity to write about our great Chancellor Amma avargal. ●

# SECRET BEHIND AMMA'S GREATNESS

R. KRISHNAKUMARI PADMANABAN

**A**mma is the embodiment of achievements which has been the main bricks which have heightened the glory of the University. There is not a single moment when Amma has not thought about the welfare of the Institution. The greatest glories were due to her continuous progressive attempts to guide the members in their work, in her own way. All were influenced and motivated to do great work. All were made to participate in the discussions and efforts were put forth to take up any work and much care was taken in the allotment of work to the efficient and talented persons. Her mind is full of many creative activities. She is not able to spare time for her personal work.

Amma is very simple and straight forward. Eventhough she is busy always she never fails to greet everyone who works around her during Christmas and New Year. All of us would be very eager to get her greetings which will contain one or two very personal lines. We can never forget Amma for the love she has for the staff. We enjoyed the staff excursions arranged by Amma along with all our children. Amma would also enjoy the staff entertainments to the students given during the end of every year.

In the college there are always many extra curricular meetings for which many eminent personalities were invited and we had so many opportunities to hear them all. There were scientific, religious and Tamil meetings which were all very interesting and touched our mind and many times elevated us.

We were very happy to meet different groups of students in the groups and we can never forget the counselling activities especially - Kalaivizha which had many educational values.

Amma's mother Swarnammal was the personification of love and affection. Her thoughts were always with the poorest of the poor and she always wanted to help them. Born to such an affectionate mother, our Amma avargal was brought up as the eldest daughter of the family with number of family members. She had an enriched environment with brothers and sisters. With all the environmental opportunities, she grew up to be a great personality. There is no doubt that her continuous hard work accompanied by God's blessings had made her what she is today. ●

# **AMMA - VOICE OF A CENTURY IN WOMEN'S EDUCATION**

**N. KRISHNAMOORTHY AND C. JAYA**

**I**n speaking “Amma” as the voice of a century in women's education, we are making great claims for her as a high level administrator, great academician, a fascinating writer, a person who has given address to thousands of women in and around Coimbatore and a scientist who had found ways to express in her own person and her work, density, texture and aspirations of her period. More than any one else Amma is the representative of women's development. What helps to make Amma the voice of a century in women's education is the recognition and awards which Amma had received not only in the home town, the State and the Country and also from universities of high standard all over the world.

Amma had created an enlightened environment for women. Those women who pursue higher studies and research in the University are capable of deciding about their career and even influence the international relations. Amma avargal considered soft power, the ability to set the agenda and come up with new ideas and initiatives as important for the progress of the institution and society. Hence the size, funds and other resources were not the obstacles to the development of a college rise to the level of a University of international reputation.

We had the privilege of travelling with Amma avargal in her long journey of life. I (Krishnamoorthy) joined the University as a Professor for heading the department of Computer Science which offered a degree course in computer science. I had an opportunity to work with Amma avargal which I enjoyed most in my career. Amma had a great vision about the computer science discipline. Within a short period of two years, I could establish the department with two master's degree programme

in addition to the Under Graduate course and Post Graduate diploma program. Amma avargal was very unique in deciding about innovative programs of the department.

Five years ago, Amma wanted every student of the University to acquire skill in computer applications which was materialized by offering ancillary courses to all Under Graduate students. This is still in the planning stage in many educational institutions. Amma is a great genius with strong application mind who always plans for the long period ahead. She was keen in collaborative research and interaction with the industries to offer practical orientation to the students.

People at various levels do not differentiate Amma avargal from the University. I would like to mention an incident happened at Delhi. When I attended a technical meeting for presenting the project proposals under the modernization scheme of the AICTE, more than two hundred proposals have been presented. The experts had evaluated them. The team leader announced the approval for Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas. This shows that Amma had identified herself with the University.

I and Amma avargal were discussing about the information highway in which Amma wanted our University to be one of the important information stations of the world. The government of Tamil Nadu is now involved in such programs. Amma avargal has a vision of inter connecting all faculties, departments and administration to a higher speed network and the University to be the warehouse of data and information.

Amma wanted to start an engineering faculty to offer courses which are more required at this stage and offered only in few institutions. I had an opportunity to prepare the proposal and submit it to the All India Council for Technical Education, for approval. During the prolonged discussion on the preparation of the proposal, I could observe her clear objective, consistency and continuity of thought and commitment to succeed in all her attempts. Her dream has become a reality now.

I, Jaya, personally gained many things from Amma. Generally, people in higher position used to close the doors when they cross. Amma avargal is different and wants every one in the University to excel in their field of specialization. For example, Amma insists firmly that all the staff must get their doctorate. Amma avargal's advice, encouragement and support helped me to complete my research work under the guidance of Dr. G. Ramathilagam within the stipulated period of three years. I am as what I am today is because of Amma. She has arranged many exchange programs with the foreign universities to send the staff to gain overseas experience and enrich their knowledge.

We had the opportunity of hosting Amma avargal at Singapore during her transit to Australia. During the stay, we could observe many things - simplicity, adjustability, time consciousness, regular prayer and above all every small act of Amma has a concern for the University. She always thinks, speaks and acts for the University. We could enjoy the affection of Amma during the visits.

Amma avargal had discussed about the emergence of the third culture for which she wanted to prepare the women power. Third culture consists of scientists and other thinkers in the empirical world who through their work and taking the place of the traditional intellectual in rendering visible the deeper meanings of our lives redefined who and what we are.

We conclude by giving the statement of Confucius 'Women and uneducated people are most difficult to deal with. When you are familiar with them, they become cheeky and when you ignore them they resent it'. Amma avargal dealt both education and women and created a history in women's education and become a great humanist with scientific ideas in this century. We could say that no one else in this period had made such magisterial contribution to women's education.

# **AMMA - A VERSATILE AND DYNAMIC PERSONALITY**

**SOUNDARA AND SOUNDARA RAJAN**

I have known 'Amma' Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas for the last 18 years since I have joined Sri Avinashilingam Home Science College as a staff in the Department of Chemistry. Although I worked there only for a few months (about 10 months) I had an opportunity to know quite a lot about Amma who has devoted her life to the growth of the Avinashilingam Institutions. She is always thinking about the University's growth and development. Her steadfast faith in God and hard work make her a dynamic personality.

She is a great scholar, administrator and academician. We are very proud that she is an alumni of The Ohio State University and we are also alumni of The Ohio State University. She is a born genius with high thinking and innovative approaches. Every year we have received her long letter along with the Christmas greetings. We are thrilled to read her excellent letters which carry a lot of news and information. We are collecting her letters and preserving them after showing them to our children. They serve as a great example of love and preserving cherished bonds for our future generation.

One should learn many things from Amma : simplicity, effective communication, adjustability, easy approachability conducive behaviour sincerity, perfection in all her undertakings etc. She is not only one of the most popular women in Coimbatore but also well known throughout the country for her dedication to

women's education particularly for the upliftment of rural women. In addition she is an internationally renowned Nutritionist. On going through her curriculum vitae we are deeply impressed and also pleasantly surprised to see her numerous achievements and contributions. We are very happy that she is the recipient of the DHL from our Ohio State University and also Oregon State University. These are the very prestigious awards in USA.

We had a chance to get to know her better personally when she visited our family at New Jersey. She is busy as bee, programming her time effectively and constantly striving to achieve her clear and determined goals. We are extremely proud of her. She is the only link between the daughters of Saradalaya abroad and the Avinashilingam Institutions.

As per Amma avargal's instructions we have started the North America Avinashilingam Alumni Association. It is a registered organisation. We have many more plans to achieve our goals through the Association.

Thanks for the wonderful opportunity given to us to express our feelings about the great administrator and educationist, Amma, who has sacrificed her life for the noble cause of the welfare, humanity particularly women. We Dr. Soundararajan, myself, Prabu and Pavai wish her a very long healthy and happy years ahead.

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## நானறிந்த அம்மா

எம். ராஜலட்சுமி

**நா**ன் இக்கல்வி நிறுவனத்தில் ஆறாம் வகுப்பு மாணவியாக நுழைந்து பள்ளி இறுதி வகுப்பு வரை படித்து வெளியேறி மீண்டும், ஆசிரியையாக ஆரம்பப்பள்ளியில் பணியில் சேர்ந்தேன். நாற்பது ஆண்டுகளாக அம்மா அவர்களை நான் காணவும், பேசவும், பழகவும் வாய்ப்பினைப் பெற்ற பெரும் பேற்றினை அடைந்துள்ளேன். சிறிய அளவில் துவங்கிய இக்கல்வி நிறுவனம் ஆலமரம் போல் நாள்தோறும் வளர்ந்து பல கிளைகளோடு இன்று பெண்கள் முன்னேற்றத்திற்கு வழிகாட்டி வருகின்றது. இதற்குக் காரணம் நான் கூறவும் வேண்டுமோ? ஐயா அவர்களின் அழைப்பினை ஏற்று கோவை வந்து தன் அளப்பரிய தொண்டினால், தியாகத்தினால், அறிவுக் கூர்மையால், ஓயாத உழைப்பினால், சீரான திட்டத்தினால், தன் சிறந்த மேலாண்மையால் இன்று நம் பாரதமென்ன? பாரே வியக்கும் வகையில் முதல் நிலைக் கல்வி நிறுவனமாகத் திகழச் செய்து வருகின்றவர் நம் அம்மா அவர்கள் என்று உறுதியாகக் கூறமுடியும்.

அவர்களிடம் நான் தலைமை ஆசிரியை என்ற முறையில் நெருங்கி அறிவுரை கேட்கும் வாய்ப்பினைப் பெற்றவள். ஒவ்வொரு முறையும் நான் ஏதேனும் ஒன்றினைக் கற்றுக் கொள்வேன். சிறிய தாளினைக் கூட வீணாக்க விரும்பாதவர். கால நேரம் பார்க்காமல் உழைப்பவர். அதுபோல நேர்மையாக உழைப்பவரை விரும்புவவர். எடுத்த காரியத்தை முடிப்பவர். எந்நேரமும் மாறாத புன்னகையுடன்

இருப்பவர். அவர்களை அறிந்தவர் எண்ணிக்கையை அளவிடமுடியாது. பெண்கள் முன்னேற்றம் கிராமங்களையெல்லாம் சென்று அடைந்துவிட திட்டங்கள் தீட்டி உதவியவர். அதனால் இன்று பல கிராமப்புறப் பெண்களும் முன்னேறியுள்ளனர். காந்தியடிகள் பாதையில் வாழ்ந்து காட்டியவர் நம் ஐயா அவர்கள். அவர்களது கனவுகளையெல்லாம் ஆட்சி செய்து வரும் மத்திய மாநில அரசுகளே நனவாக்கத் திண்டாடும் இந்நிலையில் மிகவும் ஆணித்தரமாக என்னால் முடியும் என்று இன்று செயல்முலம் காட்டி வருபவர் நம் அம்மா அவர்கள். இதனால் விருதுகள் பலவும் அவர்களிடம் வந்து வந்து பெருமை அடைகின்றன. அம்மா அவர்களின் குணநலன்களையும், செயல் திட்டங்களையும் எடுத்துக் கூறப் போனால் நேரமே போதாது. எண்பது வயதை அடையும் அம்மா அவர்கள் மேலும், மேலும் பல்லாண்டு வாழவும், திடமான உடல் வலுவுடன் இருக்கவும், சீரோடும் சிறப்போடும் வாழவும் நாளும் இறைவனை வேண்டுகின்றேன்.

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# AMMA - A SOURCE OF ETERNAL ENERGY

LEELA SRINIVAS

**I**t's indeed a proud moment for me to be invited to contribute to the biographic volume of Dr. Rajammal Devadas, Chancellor of Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for women.

I belong to the first batch (should I say Guinea pigs or more fittingly albino rats?) of M.Sc. Nutrition students to come out of the beloved College. This unique positioning had both its difficulties and good things. Let me tell you the good things first. We had no Biochemistry professors for a fairly long time and being B.Sc. Nutrition students, Chemistry was a bug bear to most of us. So we were all worried how are we going to study and write exams in Biochemistry. Lo and behold Amma stepped in after four months to teach us Biochemistry. I distinctly remember her teaching us classification of carbohydrates like xylose, xylitol, mannose, mannitol so on and so forth which I remember even today after 34 years especially the chemical derivation. She also taught us advanced nutrition in her inimitable style. Even today I have not found a better teacher than her. If some of us have turned out to be good at what we are doing today it is definitely her teaching and her influence as a teacher par excellence.

It was considered a privilege and a task to be Amma's students for the M.Sc. project work. She used to put us through (what we referred in those days as “dryer”) as she was a task master, disciplinarian with rigorous standards. As young uninitiated students, many of us would come out of her room with wet and dreary eyes, too

ashamed to show that at an M.Sc. level we are crying. I am sure a lot of us didn't like what was happening, but now in retrospect I see the wind fall of the disciplined rigourness.

In a more lighter vein let me recount few odds about college life. Those days we had to wear thick bed sheet like Khadi sarees with a lot of difficulty which Amma used to carry with so much elegance. At all times of the day even after travelling by train (those days it took 3 days to reach Delhi) long distance she used to be immaculate and very clean compared to the dishvelled and grumpy appearances of many of us. I still don't know her secret of that tidiness and dignified appearance.

Amma is and has been a source of eternal energy, ability to do many things at a time and highly capable of managing many difficult tasks. She used to accompany us to villages where we went for dietary surveys and the women and children used to surround her with a lot of affection, as that was the rapport she established with them with her concern and affection. Many a time Amma has echoed Ayya avargal's favourite phrase “தங்கமான குழந்தைகள் அருமையான குழந்தைகள்”, these were the terms that was so endearing and evoked fillial affection towards Amma and Ayya, from most students.

I cannot but recollect the lighting the lamp ceremony of the College which we initiated. This indeed was a very solemn occasion where lighting a small lamp from the mother lamp (symbolising Amma) and bidding adieu to the College. Many of us unashamedly wept as we have to leave our almamater which was probably our first home. As the first batch of students we had a lot of work to do some of which was back breaking. We never went home at the appointed time. But all was done without cribbing and with a lot of enthusiasm all because of the dynamic

leadership of Amma and professors like Dr. Kamalanathan, Dr. Lakshmi Santa and Dr. Bhatji and of course the late Mr. Chandrashekar.

Coming closer down the memory lane I recollect with what affection Amma invited me for the opening of revered Ayya avargal's statue and "dhyanamantapam" for honouring me as the most outstanding alumni of the college. This indeed was one of the proudest moments of my academic life to be recognised by my own Saradalaya and at Saradalaya and by Amma avargal.

Today as a Director of Adichunchanagiri Cancer Research Centre I feel the values (both spiritual and academic, discipline, stress on academic excellence) that I have acquired through the College which stand me in goodstead. I am proud to be associated with this commemorative biographical volume that the publication committee is bringing out and take the opportunity to wish our dear Amma many many more productive years so that she will be a beacon to many of us who want to follow her enlightened path. Besides this, her service to the society especially that of women is so laudable that any awards that has been conferred on her do not do justice to her capacity and dedication to a noble cause. I wish you, dear Amma, many many happy returns and more productivity (pardon me you have no retirement, Amma) and also express my sense of reverence and gratitude. ●

# **WOMEN EDUCATIONIST OF THE MILLENNIUM**

**VIMALA RAMAMURTHY**

**SHE BROUGHT EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE TO COIMBATORE  
SHE PUT A WORLD FAMOUS INSTITUTION ON ITS FEET  
ALL BY HERSELF**

**S**ome girls bow with respect, some women yearn to have a word with her. For the woman is none other than Mrs. Rajammal P. Devadas avargal, affectionately called 'AMMA AVARGAL'. She is one of the finest Educationists who visualised the blueprint of the most effective Educational Institution in India in the heart of the Coimbatore city way back in 1960's and who proudly wears the educational tradition in herself.


Her resourcefulness is revealed in her regular quote "USE ALL AVAILABLE RESOURCES when you get down on a job". This quote has been my guiding light throughout my life. And the entire credit of what I am today goes to her - Most ABLE and PERFECT MENTOR OUR DEAR AMMA AVARGAL.

Amma has taught us when we were young students of second set of B.Sc. Home Science. When I was in III year B.Sc. she came to give instructions for practical exams. She told us how not to leave even a single point. And the next day during the practical exam we were able to perform perfectly and scored full marks in practicals.

When Amma takes classes to us there was no necessity to revise it even for the exam, as the points would be fresh in our mind. When we had to do B.T. in Home Science (first set) she taught us all the methods to teach lessons.

Dramatisation was done best with high school girls to teach us. Still I wonder how she found time to train the students of high school amidst her tight schedule of college work. For B.T., practicals exam we had to prepare a Model and I chose “Hay Box” Model. There were three examiners and one of them was Mrs. Soundararajan from Stella Mary's. The Examiners refused to believe that cooking rice can be done in a box of hay, covered with a hay pillow. Without knowing what to do, I went straight to Amma avargal and told the problem. Amma asked to go and see in the hostel whether they had kept the rice for cooking in the hay box system and asked them to wait to take the cooked rice out. Amma personally took the three examiners and came to the hostel. Now she told the cook to remove the hay pillow and show the rice. The examiners agreed that the haybox can be really used in the houses. Without Amma's quick thinking and planning mind, I would not have solved the problem. Though 36 years have passed, still Amma's support is fresh in my memory.

She taught us how to plan and execute things. Also to plan and do things PERFECTLY with the AVAILABLE Resources. Even today many of the times I remember Amma avargal now and then whenever I came across important events, “Amma used to tell like this, Amma will do like this in this situation”.

Before I conclude, I must emphasise the fact that however confusing the matter or situation be Amma knew how to handle it in the nicest way. She knew the art of getting things done, the way she wanted, from us students. Thus she built up self confidence in us that we are capable of doing things. She also thus brought out the best in us. All this direct at one thing that she was an - Oasis of knowledge and perfection. I am very proud to be her student and more so because my daughter is also our college student. I PRAY to GOD for her GOOD HEALTH AND LONG LIFE. 

# **THE GREAT GURU, GUIDE AND PHILOSOPHER OUR AMMA WITH THE AURA**

**KANNAN DEVI SHANMUGAVEL**

**K**udos and gratitude to our Great Ayya for having discovered the genius and eminence in a light house, shedding light in an institution at Madras Merina Queen Mary's College. Such a feat of serendipity is possible only by Ayya Thiru. T.S. Avinashilingam Chettiar.

From being one of the light houses at Merina to being the only light house at Coimbatore for this part of the South at the campus of 'Saradalaya' Sri Avinashilingam Home Science College for Women, the marval i.e., our Amma Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas is in the midst of a heaven prospered mission. It is as the principal of Sri Avinashilingam Home Science College ever since its inception in the year 1957 at 'Saradalaya' subsequently and until now as the Chancellor of the Avinashilingam Deemed University, Amma is working. From now on....?, May the Almighty and our Ayya above inspire the student community and all in the service of the university with many more years of service and contribution by Amma to the cause of knowledge with particular emphasis on the welfare of the infants and women.

## **Amma a Guru**

Teachers and students form a family. Amma has enlightened the students with her teachings, nay nutritious teachings. Her lectures were and is still an inspiration to the students. She was an encouraging teacher and is an encouraging teacher inspiring confidence in every student. Her patience in forbearing the mistakes of the students and her sympathy towards their weakness claims appreciation.

Amma's commitment of selfless service, hard work and disciplined effort for the growth of student population is what, which no one can equal.

Amma is a world renowned nutrition scientist. Her contribution of nutrition knowledge to the welfare of humanity is far beyond words of praise. She has published many articles, papers and books regarding Home Science, Nutrition, Diets for children and adults, Diets for all ages, impact of the Applied Nutrition Programme on the vulnerable groups, food preparation containing leaf protein and many more. It is a pride of every student to have a Guru like Amma with always innovative ideas, zeal and incessant service.

### **Amma a Guide**

Amma's life is a guide to each and every person. I would like to say that she is a mobile University spreading spiritual and scientific knowledge for the upliftment of human society. She has initiated many reforms and action packed programmes for the welfare of children and women and these programmes are working at its full swing.

Love, service and high hopes for prosperity in life with faith in God are the mottos depicted by Amma. Her diligence in activity, in taking up decisions and putting them into work deliberately should be a must in our day-to-day life. If we want to reach the goal in life, let us follow her ways of life and make our endeavours a success. Her life is a guide to each and every staff and student of the college.

### **Amma a Philosopher**

The goal of human existence is realization of God and to serve God you serve humanity. Amma's deep faith in God and her spiritual discipline has given her

a world renowned fame and she by her dedicated service to the College has brought it to the present stage of a Deemed University. Avinashilingam Deemed University is one among the best in India and has attained an international fame. All because of the strenuous efforts of Amma under the leadership of Ayya avargal.

*“A willing mind makes a light foot*

*Nothing is impossible to a willing mind”*

The word ‘Sakthi’ in Sanskrit means energy or ability and this ‘Sakthi’ keeps moving in all operations associated with the Universe. ‘Sakthi’ is cosmic energy and the cause of all life and living. Our Amma is also an aspect of the ‘Sakthi’ moving all around the world serving the cause of spreading of the knowledge in the fields of Home Science, nutrition and eradication of illiteracy and ignorance through study programmes, projects, workshops and seminars in the rural and urban areas of the nation.

The strong willpower, the strong faith in God, the strong willing mind to serve the humanity, the excellence in her has made everything possible for her. Having realised that man's primary duty is to render service in any form to another being, Amma has been rendering a motherly service to the whole world by her scientific and spiritual knowledge. Amma has made use of the opportunity bestowed on her to make the best out of it. As said by a great leader she has nurtured the institution as her own child with love and affection. Today this big enormous family has its children spread all over the world, cherishing the fame of the institution. Even at this age of the starting eighties she is very brisk and active. Amma stands a bridge interlinking the East and the West and serving as a cultural intermediary between India and rest of the world.

*“The world is my country,  
All mankind are my brethren,  
To do good is my religion  
I believe in one God and no more”*

— *Thomas Paine*

I would like to mention here my words in praise of her, when felicitating her on receiving the ‘Padmashri’ award in the year 1992 as follows -

“Awards and honours are matters of almost every day happening in the learned life of Amma. It all started with ‘Vignana Saraswathi’ followed by accolade galore, ‘Padmashri’ now addition of the latest feather to her cap, nay the latest jewel to her crown. I have reliable information that the Great Guinness Book of Records is getting ready to record that our Amma has the record for maximum number of Awards and honours as on this date, which she richly deserves”. Now she is a recipient of more awards and honours and it has become a daily affair in her day to day life. Glory be to her. The services of Amma for this institution and humanity is far beyond praise. We alumni were fortunate enough to have Amma as our Guru, Guide and Philosopher. It is certain and my best wishes for her prolonged service.

# **AMMA , ALMIGHTY'S AWARD TO ACADEMICIANS**

**R.K. THARACHANDRIKA**

**D**r. (Mrs) Rajammal P. Devadas who is an internationally renowned personality is an affectionate Amma (mother) to us. Words are inadequate to express my heartfelt impressions about our revered Amma who is reaching her eighty by the great grace of Almighty. Right way to celebrate her successful years of service to humanity is to pray the Divine to shower His blessings on her, for enjoying many many more fruitful years of healthy life. The apt way to wish her is with flowers, the most beautiful and wonderful creations of God. The bouquets designed with flowers named from A to Z are here offered to appreciate Amma's admirable qualities and amazing achievements.

Amma has abundant affection towards all. Her outstanding personality attracts everyone. She is ambitious, an approachable administrator, amiable academician, accommodative, always alert, active and achieves all the set goals by allocating ample time. She adheres to strict principles, anticipates good results at all levels, acts as an ambassador of culture within and outside India, always anxious to see only progress, admires heartily aesthetic beauty in art and culture, analyses perfectly the needs of people, approves and appreciates all types of abilities in others, aspires positive attitude and good aptitude towards work and awakens one's latent energy to be used for the upliftment of education. Her abundant air travels within and outside India have aimed towards raising the status of Home Science education.

**B**rilliant ideas and briskness of Amma are mainly responsible for the massive growth of Avinashilingam Deemed University. Being a best all rounder, brought up an overall development of the University, bossing beautifully all departments, and

bothering about even a minute detail, she solely takes the credit of being a brave woman in bringing up great changes in women's education.

Compassionate companionship of Amma draws every one towards her only to share one another's love and affection. Her consideration towards the welfare of the large Avinashilingam family heralds to the world the success in the spirit of co-operation and considerable achievements. As a courageous woman she nurtured the sampling of Home Science education from the inception of the institute, only to see it grow like a banyan tree. Calmly did Amma face all the difficulties and tackled the situations cautiously, using all her capabilities and capacity. As a chief Home Economist her contribution to the society at the national level is incomparable.

**D**ignity of ideal Indian womanhood is symbolised and preached by Amma. As a living example, she preaches dignity of labour, dignity of duty, dignity of dressing and dignity in all walks of life. As a director she has guided her large team of staff members to achieve doctoral degrees. The depth in her decision making factors reveal only success in reaching highest goals. Her services as Dean, Director, Dietitian and many dignified positions have contributed to the welfare of women and children.

**E**loquent speeches of Amma enlighten every listener and reverberate in their minds. Her magnetic voice is clear, impressive, attractive and audible. Clarity in her speeches make the audience anchor to their seats, and listen attentively. In class rooms, college auditoria and conference halls, her messages are meaningful and contentful. Aiming for empowerment of women is her important endeavour. Efficiency in work has made her travel extensively and encourage everyone to aim for the highest. She elaborately plans for carrying out various tasks and energises the team to work for the success of all programmes. Evaluating every task is emphasised by her for improvement.

**F**arsighted planning of Amma in the past has brought out fruits of success we enjoy in the present. Fast in action, she makes numerous result oriented successful projects. She is firm and consistent in demanding discipline in work. Family-oriented developmental programmes in rural areas are framed and implemented successfully. By keeping faith in God, forgiving the mistakes, fulfilling the needs of the folk and showing friendliness towards others her efforts always met with fantastic results.

**G**enerously extending her genuine love and affection, Amma embraces her large family with warmth. Guidance given by Amma in all walks of life should be thanked with immense gratitude. Guidance especially given in research work cannot be forgotten by her students and staff members. God has given her stamina to direct all research work in all the disciplines. She never slept for days and months when her guidance was anxiously awaited by all her students and research guides.

**H**arvesting happiness by honouring hardwork and extending hospitality and establishing homely atmosphere around her show only Amma's humane character. Her humour at times arouse hearty laughter and applause. Heavy loads of work are handled with care. Habitual practice of prayer has harmoniously integrated all religions in the campus. By heading the large family of Saradalaya and maintaining the highest standard, she has become a historian. Above all she has a Hari Om Ashram Award of UGC to her credit.

**I**ntelligently throughout, effective projects were launched by Amma. Eradication of illiteracy and ignorance among the people is one among them which illuminates the dark lives of millions. She extends impartial service to humanity, ventures into the impossible tasks, ignities all the members with energy for action, injects enthusiasm, identifies mistakes, influences effectively, integrates all educationists and with incomparable characteristics impels the institution to greater heights. She has immense imaginative power, inquisitive in knowing facts, has insight

in reading the minds of people, insists orderliness, inspects all plans in action, inspires workers at all levels, instructs appropriately, intensifies spirit of knowledge and intervenes to wipe off unevenness and misunderstanding among groups. She is a core instrument in bringing out positive charges and interested in the total welfare of women. Internationally famous Amma is an illustrious woman of incredible achievements.

**Jewel** in the crown of Goddess of Education, Amma is jubilant in all occasions. She expresses joy by sweet smiles, offers abundant gifts and greetings. She is justful, respects rights, rules and regulations. She has the joy of giving dedicated services to the poor.

**Keeping fit to think and act** is kept by Amma as an important value. Healthy mind in a healthy body alone can work wonders. Play and good nutrition are responsible for Amma's active life. Knowledge of Amma in all spheres of Home Science is deep like an ocean. She is a mobile library with a computer brain. Books and experience in life have equipped her with facts and figures, kind in heart. Amma has taken keen interest in designing poverty alleviation projects and keeps upto date in world events. Kindness is her key to success.

**Loving all and loved by all**, a motherly love is lavishly given by Amma to people of all ages. Her love sows joy, hope, faith and peace in everybody's mind and fills their hearts. She has lighted the lamp of literacy. She is crowned with laurels by the national and international organisations. Leadership of Amma has led the institute to climb up the ladder of progress. Lively and light hearted, she enjoys with children. She is a lyric of truth.

**Modest** in her requirements, she is a model for modern woman, an effective moralist, has modern thoughts and a magnet who attracts millions. Her magnitude

of knowledge is immeasurable, management of institution is marvellous, mastery over Home Science is a miracle, memory power surprises every one, and methodical steps solve problems. The myriad of her academic achievements always will be in the memory of Indians.

National development is given priority in her projects. Nutrition education and extension service have reached nook and corners of the country. Research in Home Science has brought her national and international awards and recognition. In-depth research in noon meal scheme in helping children all over India to have good health and concentration in education. Working for this noble cause has brought her name and fame.

Optimistic Amma had her Ph.D. from Ohio State University, USA. From her observation nobody's inner talents have escaped. Utilising human resources and keeping them active, alert, ambitious and orderly shows her organising capacity. Her outstanding character of over working inspires her followers. She is an ornament beautifying the throne of educationists.

Padmashri award is an honour bestowed upon Amma for her patriotism and dedication of her whole self for education. Adhering to strong perseverance, patience and philosophy of life she persuades everyone to march towards success. She feels proud about her children, the institute and its growth. Strength of prayer is preached by her to the young and old. Morning and evening prayers in the shrine, daily assembly prayer in the auditorium, special bajans on Guru Pooja and Annai Vizha are conducted by her for everyone to enjoy peace and happiness. Paramount power of Amma is her clarity in thinking and planning. She draws practical programmes, penetrates new ideas in the educational system, expects perfection in work and promptly promotes progressive plans. She has published countless number of research papers, articles

and more than 40 books. Her positions at national and international levels in FAO, UNICEF, WHO, ICAR, ICMR, UGC, NIPCCD and NCERT, are her greater achievements.

Qualified in all branches of Life Sciences and Home Science, Amma is equipping all qualified women with quality education and quenches their thirst for knowledge. Taking a quick action in implementing quality programme is her speciality.

Recipient of several national and international awards, Amma holds a respectful position in the society. She is resourceful, easily reachable and has radiant energy. Good relationship is aimed by her among the management, teaching staff, students, non-teaching staff and the society. She is a possessor of astonishing reading ability.

Smiles of Amma signify her deep love and happiness. Sacrificing her own personal life in her youth, Amma strongly took up the task of service to the society. With able guidance of our revered Ayya, Dr. T.S. Avinashilingam, she entered into the saga of dedicated life and service. While starting her journey as an academician, she aimed to provide spiritual education and secularism. Her only son Dr. Mohan Devadas very generously allowed his mother to concentrate in carrying out her Himalayan task. Sincere support and sacrifice of her husband Sri Devadas, enabled her to become a successful woman Dr. (Smt.) Rajammal P. Devadas.

Tamil Nadu feels proud of this daughter, for her tower of strength shown in the development of women's education. She is highly tolerant and thoughtful. As a good teacher, she made her classes enjoyable by conducting extraordinarily well



prepared lectures supported with audio visual aids. Her powerful teaching is always enriched with facts, figures, references, and quotations. As a dynamic teacher she is creative, imaginative, resourceful, firm, prompt, encouraging and efficient.

Uncomparable, untiring and unselfish devotion towards duty shown by Amma helps her to live an ambitious life. By understanding the needs of people at all levels, she works for their upliftment. Upgrowing trend in education in the university enables girls to get degrees in engineering, computer and business administration, in addition to arts, science and humanities, ushering community college very recently is an additional treat to the university.

Vivid writings of Amma have emerged in the publications of varied books and articles filled with vast knowledge useful for the students, teachers, scientists, research workers, politicians, social workers and the public. Most valuable value-based education is given to students. Importance in living a virtuous life, visualising the future goals at present, showing vitality and vibrant energy in work, aiming for victory, having vigilance at all times are the virtues taught by Amma. Verdicts of Amma leads only to success and she is a vital force remained behind everybody's achievements.

Winning the hearts of all her students and staff may be attributed to the worshipful values strongly adhered by Amma. She is an outstanding person with highest wisdom, thinking good and doing good to others. Welfare of all is the only aim in her life. Wonderful wardenship in Saradalaya brings 'ammamar' (High School students) and 'akkamar' (College students) close to her heart. They are her dearest pets for whom she allots special time every day in the early morning and evening prayers in the shrine. God within her guides her in doing wise-deeds.

**X**-ray vision of Amma makes her understand the feelings of all abilities around her and explore their hidden talents. Hindus and Muslims are treated as one in the campus. X-mas is one of her favourite festivals celebrated by sharing her good collection of marvellous gifts, purchased from various countries.

**Y**ester years of Amma are worth remembering because they were youthful yielded only fruits of success. Her yeoman services have helped to achieve secularism in India. Her yearning desires to do the best are the outcome of yogic practice.

**Z**eal of Amma which remains fresh is the reason for her active life. She is gifted with zest to keep interest in service. She aims for zero defect and hundred per cent excellence in all her endeavours.

Any amount of words will not suffice to completely express Amma's love towards her children. I am one among the thousands of alumni, very fortunate to cherish her best teaching, enjoy working under her admirable administration and feel very much at home during my frequent visits to my alma mater. I, along with rest of the alumni pray for her health and happiness. By God's grace she should continue inspiring her beloved children to work for the upliftment of education.

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# **AMMA AVARGAL - THE EMBODIMENT OF ENERGY, PERSEVERENCE AND ACHIEVEMENTS**

**NIRMALA RAMASUBRAMANIAN**

**I**t is almost impossible to imagine that our dear Amma avargal is turning 80 years of age this year. It is also a true privilege to be writing about her, although quite unworthy of the task. Amma is no ordinary person, but a true visionary in propagating education to thousands of women in South India. She is a “chosen” individual by the Almighty God to bring knowledge and enlightenment into thousands of households. In my eyes, she is an embodiment of inspiration, inexhaustible mental strength, perseverance and dedication. It is no wonder that she has achieved her dreams and yet continues and dream of new ventures..... God bless her! She is forever young in spirit!

Growing up as a teenager in the early 1960's on the great campus grounds of Sri Avinashilingam Home Science College, Coimbatore, I had the opportunity of being under Amma's tutelage and direct observation. I had the utmost respect for her because she constantly demonstrated self confidence, knowledge and will power. She constantly instilled in us a great sense of self-discipline and hard work, accepting no mediocrity from anyone. Discipline in her students meant everything to her, simply because she knew that it was the means to greater achievements in life. Though not always able to measure upto her lofty standards, we followed her footsteps to the best of our ability. Looking back, I am completely able to understand and appreciate her approach. Taking on the role of a “Mother” to hundreds of students was not an easy task, and she was certainly very good at and never once complained about her responsibilities.

It was beautiful sunny day, late October in 1961. A very happy day for me personally because it happened to be my birthday. Coming down the shrine steps after the morning prayers, I was stopped by Amma, asking me to report to her office before going to the classroom. My heart stopped beating for a few soconds... this could be the end of my college life... I must have committed some big mistake. I entered her room which was always clean and simply decorated with pictures of Jesus Christ, Swami Ramakrishna and Sharada Devi. Amma looked at me from head to foot and expressed her displeasure at my nylon sari. "I have great expectations from you, Nirmala. As a class representative you do have the responsibility of reflecting the principles that the institution upholds. Please go and change into a cotton or a khadi sari at once". It certainly felt like a punishment at that moment; little did I know that Amma later confided in my mother-in-law on the day of my wedding that I was a priceless "catch" whom any family would like to own! Such was her pride!

Through the years, Amma has never ceased to amaze me. I have often wondered to where does this enormous energy flow from?" Having hosted her in our humble home and watching her function at close quarters, I do realize that the secret of her success lies in her child-like enthusiasm for life and learning along with unshakeable faith in her inner self and the Supreme Being showing her the path. The beautiful smile is an ornament on her face and the will power is her crown. She is a free spirit, born to conquer. As Thiruvalluvar says so eloquently.

“வினைத்திட்டம் என்பது ஒருவன் மனத்திட்டம் ;  
மற்றைய எல்லாம் பிற”

Greatness of achievement is nothing but the greatness of the willpower of the one striving. Therefore, all other things cannot come near the mark.

May Amma avargal live to be a hundred and beyond....

**The name Rajammal P. Devadas stands for...**

R ..... Resolutions (to the cause of women)

A ..... Aspiration

J ..... Judgement (in the choice of projects)

A ..... Ambition

M ..... Motivation

M ..... Memory (for facts, names and other)

A ..... Achievement

L ..... Loyalty to the institution and the Founder, Ayya avargal

P ..... Purpose in life

D ..... Decisiveness

E ..... Energy ever flowing

V ..... Vigour in action

A ..... Alertness

D ..... Devotion to the Supreme

A ..... Abundant knowledge

S ..... Sacrifice / Strive

S ..... **Success**

At this great juncture, myself, my husband Mr. M.K. Ramasubramanian, my two children, Mahesh and Shobana and their respective spouses Sunita and Sandeep send our humble “pranams” to you, Amma and seek your blessings! We love you!

## அம்மா - ஒரு நடமாடும் பல்கலைக்கழகம்

ப. கௌமுதி

உலகின் எந்த மூலைக்கும் சென்று சேர விதவிதமான விமானங்கள் உள்ளன. விண்வெளியில் சுற்றி வரும் செயற்கைக் கோள்களும் நிறைய உள்ளன. ஒரு செயற்கைக்கோள் வெற்றிகரமாக விண்வெளியை அடைய தேவை ஒரு நல்ல ஏவுகணை. ஏவுகணை செயற்கைக்கோளைப் பத்திரமாக கூட்டிச்சென்று, குறித்த நேரத்தில் குறிப்பிட்ட திசையில் சென்று சரியான இடத்தில் அதைச் சேர்ப்பிக்கிறது. அதன் பின்னர் செயற்கைக்கோள் வெற்றிகரமாக விண்வெளியில் வலம் வந்து தனது வேலைகளை அற்புதமாக செய்து உலகிற்கு நன்மை செய்கிறது. என்னைப் பொறுத்த வரை நம் அம்மா ஒரு மிகச் சிறந்த மனித ஏவுகணை. கல்லூரியிலும் (நமது) ஹாஸ்டலிலும் படித்த மாணவியருக்கு நமது அம்மாவின் பெருமை மிக நன்கு புரியும்.

நானும் 1959 - P.U.C. வகுப்பில் சேர்ந்து விடுதியில் தங்கி நான்கு வருடங்கள் B.Sc. (Home Science) முடித்து வெளி வந்த ஒரு மாணவி. அதன் பின்னரும் கடந்த 39 ஆண்டுகளாக எப்படியோ அம்மாவை நேரில் சந்தித்தோ, கடிதம் மூலமாகவோ மற்றவர்கள் மூலமாகவோ விவரங்கள் அறிந்து வந்துள்ளேன்.

அம்மா அவர்கள் ஒரு நடமாடும் பல்கலைக்கழகம். உலகின் பல பகுதிகளுக்கும் சென்று, மக்களுடன் கலந்து நிறைய விஷயங்கள் தெரிந்தவர். அவற்றில் எவை நமது கலாச்சாரத்திற்கும், பொருளாதாரத்திற்கும், சரிப்படுமோ அவை நமது நாட்டில் பரவ ஆர்வம் கொண்டவர். அமெரிக்காவில் படித்து பட்டம் பெற்றவர். ஆனால் நமது கல்வித் துறையில் இந்திய

கலாச்சாரத்திற்கு பொருந்திய முறைகளையே ஊக்குவிப்பார். உதாரணம் ex-room arrangement (Home Science) - simplicity, comfort, meaning or theme in arrangement. உணவு முறையும் அப்படியே தான். புதிய சத்துணவு ஆராய்ச்சி செய்து ஏழை எளிய மக்களும் உபயோகிக்கும் படி செய்து வருகிறார். உதாரணம் ex-soya புரட்சி, Children's Milk formula etc. இன்னும் நிறைய உள்ளன.

**அம்மா அவர்கள் symbol of self-confidence:** திருமணம், குழந்தை என்ற பொறுப்புகள் வந்தபோதும் விடாமுயற்சியுடன் படித்து, வாழ்க்கையில் முன்னேறியதோடு மட்டுமன்றி, ஒரு கல்லூரியைத் துவக்கி, பல department அமைத்து ஒரு பல்கலைக்கழகமாக விரிவாக்கிய திறமை அவர்களைச் சேரும். She is a model of Self-confidence. அவர்களைப் பார்க்கும் போது மற்றவர்களுக்கும் அவர்களைப் போல் வாழ்க்கையை உபயோகமாக செய்ய வேண்டும் என தோன்றும். அவர்கள் ஒரு மனித ஏவுகணை. மாணவியர் பலர் புத்திசாலிகளாக இருக்கலாம். அவர்கள் பலர் விமானங்களை போல பறந்து கொண்டிருப்பார்கள். பல மாணவியரை ஊக்குவித்து, திசைகாட்டி, பாதுகாப்பளித்து உலகின் மூலை முடுக்குகளில் பிரகாசிக்கச் செய்த திறமை அம்மாவைச் சேரும். இப்போது New York (N.V.) நிர்மலா ராம் ஓர் உதாரணம். லட்சுமி சாந்தா அவர்கள், விஜி, பார்வதி இவர்கள் கல்லூரியின் முன்னேற்றத்தில் ஈடுபட்டுள்ள மற்றோர் உதாரணம். இவர்கள் அம்மா என்ற ஏவுகணையில் விடப்பட்ட செயற்கைக் கோள்கள்.

Chemistry labல் சில ஆராய்ச்சிகளுக்கு Catalyst உபயோகிப்பார்கள். நம் அம்மாவும் ஒரு Catalyst மாணவியர்கள் பலருக்கு Catalyst ஆக இருந்து அவர்கள் ஒழுக்கம், கல்வி, பல நற்பண்புகள் அமைய வழிகாட்டியவர்.

**High thinking and simple living :** அம்மா அவர்களது நடை, உடை, பேச்சு எல்லாம் சாதாரணமாக இருக்கும். ஆனால் thought - thinking - highly positive, உயர்ந்த எண்ணங்கள் எல்லாமே முன்னேற்றம் பற்றி தான். இந்த

குணத்தினால் தான் நமது கல்லூரி ஆலமரம் போன்று விரிவடைந்து பல்கலைக்கழகமாக மாறியுள்ளது.

நமது கல்லூரியிலும் சரி, Hostelலிலும் சரி ஒருவிதமான அன்பு தழ்நிலை – Homely atmosphere இருந்து வருகிறது. கல்லூரி ஒரு குடும்பமாக திகழ்ந்தது. புதியதாக சேர்ந்த மாணவியர் Hostelல் தங்க தேம்பி தேம்பி அழுதவண்ணம் இருப்பார்கள். அம்மா அவர்கள் ஆதரவுடன் பேசி, மற்ற ஆசிரிய சகோதரிகள் அன்புடன் பழக, மாணவியர் தைரியம் பெற்று படிப்பைத் தொடர்ந்துள்ளனர். உதாரணமாக Dr. Lakshmi Santa - சகோதரி (பெயர் நினைவில்லை –லீலா) Hostel –அப்படி அழுவார். இப்போ K. Shanthi அவர்கள் அமெரிக்காவில். பின்னர் அவரும் (தங்கை) மனம் தேறி படிப்பைத் தொடர்ந்தார். Fees கட்டமுடியாமல் சிலருக்குத் தொல்லை. அம்மா அவர்கள் பலருக்கு Scholarship - ஏற்பாடு செய்துள்ளார். பெயர் நினைவில்லை. அம்மா அவர்கள் அன்பும் காட்டுவார். கண்டிப்பும் உண்டு. Hostel கட்டுப்பாடுகள் இருந்தன. இதை அனைவரும் கடைப்பிடித்து வந்தோம். ஒழுக்கத்திற்கு முதலிடம் நம் கல்லூரியில் இருந்து வருகிறது.

ஆரம்ப காலத்தில் நம் கல்லூரியில் Hostelல் 80 மாணவியர்கள். துறைகளுள், Home Science, B.Sc., Economics B.A., Music B.A. மட்டும்தான். ஆனால் நான் படித்த 4 வருடங்களுக்குள் M.Sc. Nutrition, Home Management, T&C, Child Development - etc. மடமடவென வந்துவிட்டது. கண்முடிக் கண்திறப்பதற்குள் பல கட்டிடங்கள் அமைந்துவிட்டன. அனைத்தும் நமது ஐயா அவர்களின் ஆசியாலும், அம்மாவின் திறமையாலும், ஏற்பட்டது. அதற்கும் மேல் ஆண்டவனின் ஆசீர்வாதமும். ராதாருக்மணி, மீரா, லலிதா இவர்கள் முதன் முதலில் M.Sc. செய்தவர்கள். அவர்கள் Thesis paper - தயார் செய்வார்கள். அம்மா அவர்கள் அவைகளை முழுமையாகப் படித்து திருத்தி – மறுபடியும் மறுபடியும் புது points சேர்த்து தயாரிக்க செய்வார்கள். Hostelல் இருந்த நாங்கள் இவைகளைப் பார்த்து அதிசயித்தது உண்மை.

நம் அம்மா பயணம் செய்யாத அயல் நாடுகளே உலக மேப்பில் இருக்காது என நினைக்கிறேன். தனது வயது பற்றி (biological) நினைவே இருக்காது. உழைப்பு, உழைப்பு, உழைப்பு தான். பல முன்னேற்றங்கள் பல துறையில். அத்துடன் அனைத்து சக உழியர்களையும் ஒரு குடும்பமாக நினைத்து அன்பும் ஆதரவும் காட்டி பொறுப்புகளையும் நிறைவேற்றச் செய்வார்.

இன்னும் நிறைய உள்ளன. ஆனால் நாங்கள் தற்போது வீடு மாற்றும் நிலையில் இருப்பதால் நேரம் குறைவு. அத்துடன் நானும் Classical Yoga of Patanjali பற்றி course செய்து Yoga classes நடத்தி வருகிறேன். இது மற்ற Yoga classes போல இல்லாமல் Householder க்கு தேவையானவற்றைக் கற்றுத்தருவது. Yoga and health - cardiac, asthma, diabetes, arthitis pregnancy மற்றும் பல வகையானவற்றிற்கு Yoga பயிற்சி கற்று தரப்படுகிறது. நமது கல்லூரியிலும் இந்த Yoga பயிற்சி தந்தால் மிக உபயோகமாக இருக்கும். Home Science and Classical Yoga - இணைத்தால் மிக நன்றாக இருக்கும்.

மற்றொரு பண்பு மறக்க முடியாது நம் அம்மாவிடம் எத்தனை வருடங்கள் ஆயினும் எந்த ஊருக்குச் சென்றாலும் அங்குள்ள பழைய மாணவியரைத் தனது சொந்த குழந்தைகளாகப் பாவித்து - போன் மூலம் பேசியோ, நேரில் சந்தித்தோ அன்பைப் பொழிபவர். சமீபத்தில் நம் அம்மா எங்கள் வீட்டிற்கு வந்து சில நேரம் தங்கி சென்றார். வந்தவுடன் பழம் - பூ இவைகளை மிகவும் பரிவோடு கொடுத்தார். என் கணவர் இதைப் பார்த்து அப்படியே அயர்ந்து விட்டார். எவ்வளவு உயர்ந்த பண்பாடு. இறைவன் அருளால் அம்மா நீண்ட ஆயுளுடன் ஆரோக்கியமாக வாழ்ந்து அனைவருக்கும் பல துறையில் வழிகாட்டியாக இருக்க எல்லாம் வல்ல இறைவனை பிரார்த்திக்கிறேன்.

With lots of love & Best wishes.

# MY VISIT TO JAPAN WITH DEAR AMMA AVARGAL

ASHA PATWARDHAN

I was doing my M.Sc. in Family Resource Management during 1960 - 62 at Sri Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women, Coimbatore. Ours was the first batch of M.Sc. My batch was the most lucky to have blessings and continuous guidance from Shri Ayya avargal (Sri Avinashilingam Chettiyar) and dear Amma avargal (Dr. Mrs. Rajammal P. Devadas). This M.Sc. course was inaugurated by the auspicious hands of the then President of India late Hon. Shri Rajendraprasadjee.

During the two years when I was studying for my M.Sc., I had an opportunity to be associated with Amma avargal and could watch her very closely when I had gone with her on Japan tour. In 1962 after the final examination 19 students from our college proceeded on Japan tour along with dear Amma avargal. I was the only person from senior M.Sc. class going to the foreign tour along with so many students. Amma had planned and organised so well that we never had any problem throughout our tour. It was a pleasure-cum-study tour.

We had visited almost all the far eastern countries such as Burma, Thailand, Hongkong, Japan, Phillipines, Vietnam and Cambodia. At every place we were guests of the various universities and Home Science Colleges. Sometimes we had to stay in youth hostels. Only in Hongkong we had to stay in a star hotel. Wherever we stayed we were performing all the rituals which we used to perform in the college premises at Coimbatore, for example morning and evening prayers.

Amma avargal had chalked out the programme in such a fashion that in every country we visited, we could interact with Women's Universities and Home Science Association of that country. This must have taken away lot of her precious time in corresponding, contacting them, so that we (her own students) benefit every where we went. This really shows her concern about her own students.

I remember that as a senior most student, I had to share room with her many times, and that is the time when I could observe her very closely. Till I slept off, she was doing some writing work and when I got up she was fresh and doing her work again. I was wondering whether she sleeps at night or she is working the whole night. Though I was sleeping next to her, she used to wake me up only when she had finished her bath, prayers and ready for her work. Whole day she was visiting various places with all of us and in the night when we all were sleeping she was alone working tirelessly in her room.

When we were in Tokyo (Japan), Amma had arranged a programme on Japanese Television. That was the first time when I had visited any T.V. Centre. I had really wonderful feeling to see my own self on the other close circuit T.V arranged in the studio. I was thrilled. We had performed one Indian folk dance on Tokyo T.V. When we came back to our youth hostel in the evening everybody started telling us that they had watched us on the T.V. and it was a wonderful feeling among all of us that the whole of Japan was watching us on T.V. It was a novel experience for us. Dear Amma avargal saw to it that this trip of us will be memorable throughout our life.

She was so caring throughout our tour that we did not feel homesick at all. I remember when we were in Singapore I had a very painful boil on my hip. I was feeling bad to even show it to a doctor. So dear Amma called a doctor where we were staying and she herself was standing beside me when the doctor came. Then

the doctor said the boil had to be opened and for that I had to be taken to the hospital. Here in Singapore we were guests of Shri. Ramkrishna Mission Math. So Amma called the Senior Swamiji from the Ashram and along with him we three of us, that is, Swamiji, Amma avargal and myself went to the general hospital for a small operation. Since Amma avargal was there with me throughout I had moral support and care of a mother. After that she sent me to the Ashram for rest and the whole day I had complete bed rest. This shows her affection, motherly affection towards her students.

When we were in Hongkong Amma was more careful and worried about us, as we were staying in a hotel and Hongkong is a known place for kidnapping and all types of crimes. She had warned all of us in advance accordingly. We students were really enjoying our stay in Hongkong but Amma avargal was in tension throughout our stay there. Being a freeport all of us wanted to do most of the purchasing. Amma did allow us to do most of the shopping in Hongkong but she was always with us on our shopping spree. One of our own students from Shri Avinashilingam Home Science College was in Hongkong. Her father had some business there and she was a great help to us.

Throughout the tour of six weeks, only once I saw Amma avargal totally upset and perturbed. That was in Hongkong itself. It was on the last day of our stay in Hongkong. She has permitted us to divide ourselves in small groups and do our shopping for two hours and then come back to the Air-India office which was situated in that market area. During this time she had some work with Air India people about our tour only. We were all very happy that she allowed us to do our shopping on our own. After two hours all the girls came back to the destination point but when counted two of us were missing. We all waited for them for one more hour but they did not

come. Then Amma called myself and one more senior person and told us the problem. That time her face had become dark with worry as though she is not keeping well for last so many days. She told us to take one round of the complete market and try to find out those girls. Air India officers were very cooperative and they also helped us in search. Amma avargal was totally in bad shape worrying about those girls. Myself and one more senior student started searching for those girls and assured Amma that she should not worry and we will bring those girls.

We went out of Air India Office and after crossing two lanes we could see, those girls were almost in tears as they had lost their way to the destination. They did not know what to do when we saw them they started crying. Then we took them to Amma. As Amma saw those girls first reaction was that she started scolding those students. But her face became bright and charming as she saw those students, ultimately all of us were very happy to be united.

This trip had brought me very close to Amma avargal. Though I may not be meeting her so often but, I become highly emotional when I meet her. I had imbibed so many good things from her administration. But one thing I could not imbibe is her hard work and intelligence. ●

# WOMAN OF WILL AND WISDOM

MARAGATHAM MARUTHACHALAM

*Millions we may contact  
Most make no impact  
Farther I live across oceans and lands  
Furthermore I see 'Amma' in my dreams  
Wonder indeed she is in my inner mind  
Warmer it is to have her as friend  
Prudent and powerful is 'Amma'  
Perseverance and persuasion as potency  
Perfect model for 'Stop not till the goal is reached'  
Precise memory bank of people, past and present  
Willpower is her victorious virtue  
Willing is she for pioneering pursuit  
Strong is Amma's positive approach  
Success is the outcome of each  
Greedy may she appear to achieve  
Greater are her efforts to accomplish  
Respects all cultures bonded to Indian pride  
Rejoices honours bound by humble prestige  
Guinness book should have 'Amma' as 'The mostly flown'  
'Guide map' is her endeavour around the globe  
Immaculate is her faith in prayers  
Inspiring is her vigour at eighty years  
Prophecy is 'Amma' lives over hundred years  
Praises I send from planet or praradise.*



## WITH RESPECTS AND REGARDS TO AMMA

ASHA NIMKAR

**I**n 1962 my husband, parents and myself felt strongly that I should do postgraduation at some renowned institute of Home Science. At this time I was employed as a lecturer in Home Science Rural Institute, Amravati since the year 1959. I was only B.Sc. in Home Science from Jabalpur University. Instinctively, our choice went to Sri Avinashilingam Home Science College, Coimbatore. My joy knew no bounds when I received the letter of admission from the college authorities. The second factor that added to my joy was the grant of lien of service by the Director of Rural Institute, Amravati to whom I am greatly indebted.

I consider myself one of those lucky students who have had the fortune to be a student of Sri Avinashilingam Home Science College and Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas affectionately called Amma by one and all. While as my teacher and guide for Ph.D. work, I had abundant opportunity to watch her life style closely. It had a life long impact on my career and future life. I was a student of Sri Avinashilingam Home Science College, Coimbatore for M.Sc. in Home Management from 1962-64. Though a national and international figure in home science, she used to take classes for us in community nutrition, used to attend seminars of M.Sc. students and guide M.Sc. dissertations. Her mere presence at the seminar used to give us courage and high spirit. Each of her sentence was heard in rapt attention. Those sessions were immensely precious to us. She used to see that each one attending the seminar participated in the discussion. This gave each student a chance to think, to express and pin point the problem or solution.

Once Amma called all M.Sc. part - II students after we submitted M.Sc. dissertations. There were some mistakes in the dissertations. She scolded us and made us sit there to make corrections. After three days again we were called by Amma. We all were very much afraid to go to her, thinking that there must be more corrections to be made in the dissertations. But to our surprise, she entertained us with lots of ice cream! Thus, she was very kind at heart matched with strict discipline.

Students were encouraged by Amma and her efficient staff to participate in curricular and co-curricular activities. Certificates and prizes were given in the annual function of the college for cent percent attendance, participation in activities and all round proficiency of the student. Postgraduate students were taken out for community work in the villages for field training. This also proved very useful in future career of students.

I used to stay in the hostel during my M.Sc. studies in Sri Avinashilingam Home Science College. We were not allowed to go out of the hostel. Indeed, we scarcely felt the need to go out. However, she, as the Principal of the college, used to take us to Tamil dramas along with her. During Xmas, we used to accompany her to the Church too. We never felt homesick for that matter. Such was her devotion towards the students. Amma has been a strict disciplinarian. In hostel, the life was very strict; yet, I liked it. I feel that the hostel life trained us to adjust in any situation. Timings of meals, prayers, studies, library work were all fixed. Students were supposed to follow them strictly. Post graduate students were supposed to look after the cleanliness of the hostel and help the hostel staff in keeping the hostels, toilets, dining hall, hostel rooms neat and tidy. In one room four students used to stay. One from M.Sc. - I, one from M.Sc. - II and two from undergraduate classes. Thus, there was more interaction.

I had a five month old son when I joined M.Sc. studies at Coimbatore. My son was with my parents. Usually post graduate students used to get holidays only in summer for about a month. But, in my case Amma used to allow me to go and see my son as a special case before the examinations. So considerate was she!. It was natural for me in the beginning to feel homesick. I was planning to discontinue my studies and I wrote a letter to that effect to my husband. He was worried. He immediately wrote to Amma that she should not allow me to leave my studies and that I should be retained at Coimbatore only to complete my M.Sc. Amma promptly wrote to my husband not to worry and that she would take care of the matter. All this I came to know only when I came back after completing my M.Sc. Course. All the credit goes to Amma undoubtedly. Not only this, but Amma wrote to my husband that she was eager to offer teaching jobs to both of us in her institute. That precious offer remained a treasure in our memory!

Amma was very eager to see that her students were well placed in jobs and life. She could foresee the future of the student and advised accordingly. I still regret in a way that in spite of her hints, I did not take up another job. She felt that I had no scope in the then existing job which was proved true unfortunately for me. She used to write to me about the vacancies available and other details. While working as a lecturer in Home Science in the P.G. Department of Home Science, Nagpur University, I registered myself for Ph.D. work in Nagpur University. That was in the year 1971. Amma was my guide for Ph.D. work. Those days there was no guide in Home Science in Nagpur University. Hence, authorities in Nagpur University allowed me to take outside guide. Who else could have been a better guide than Amma! I approached her, requested her to guide me and she very kindly gave her consent. As ever she was a very busy

person. But still she could spare time for me and went through each page of the thesis. Such was her devotion for work, for the subject and for the student. She used to make arrangements for my lodging and boarding in the college campus without charging me for the same.

With pride I feel, what I learnt during two years of M.Sc. studies was more than what I learnt in the rest of my life. I deem it a proud privilege to have been given an opportunity as an alumni of the Saradalaya family to write a few words on the occasion of celebration of the 80th birthday of most revered Amma, Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas. Words would fall short to highlight Amma's contributions as a friend, philosopher and guide. Her towering personality stands as an enviable role model for people with vision and devotion. I join the Avinashilingam University family and the Saradalaya alumni in extending the most revered Amma my best wishes and deep regards on her 80th birthday.

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## **“AMMA AS I KNEW HER”**

SANTHAM (CHINNIAH) ARULAMPALAM

**I**t is quite a surprise to me last year when I received a telephone call from Amma in Sydney. As soon as I heard her voice, memories of Avinashilingam College in Coimbatore and Amma came crowding in. I remembered then the time I spent in the College and was able to recall the pleasant time that some of us from Sri Lanka, as foreign students, were able to enjoy in that college. The period I am referring to is the 1960s, when the College was relatively small in terms of buildings and other facilities.

I remember quite vividly the evenings after the regular college prayers, when Ayya avargal and Amma would gather near the shrine and talk to us. We would address our principal as ‘Amma’, which is a term of respect for a lady in high position in India. But as time passed by and as we got to know Amma better, that term became for us not only a term of respect but also one of endearment. For Amma had turned out to be our foster mother on a foreign soil. She was particularly interested in us from Sri Lanka, encouraging us in our studies and in the extra-curricular activities that some of us were involved in.

Amma was not only a lady of compassion, but also one with a strong sense of determination - determined to improve her college. She was not prepared to let Avinashilingam College be just another academic institution in India. For she had set her eyes on bigger things for the college. And it was this vision of Amma that has made Avinashilingam the institution that it is today - an institution of high academic excellence. She raised the academic standard of the college

and also its facilities with many new buildings on the campus. The credit for all this belongs to Amma.

Amma hailed from a Christian family. And yet she was chosen to the high position as principal of this Hindu college. She must have commanded such great respect in the Hindu community as a person of high integrity to deserve such an appointment. And even in the academic world she held her own at most international gatherings, both in India and in the west, that she was often invited to lecture in very prestigious universities.

It was our great privilege to know her and to be influenced by her in our lives. The contribution that many of the alumni of that College have made to the society at large stems largely from the impact that Amma has had on our lives. And now, as she looks forward to celebrating her 80th birthday, my prayer is that she should be granted health and many more years of fruitful service to the community.

☆

# EVER WITH AMMA - CERTAIN REMINISCENCES - IN SARADALAYA

MONONMANI JAYAGOPAL

**E**arly in 1950, respected Sri Avinashilingam Ayya who had just completed his term as Education Minister of Madras province thought that the best platform to achieve women's right is the society itself, and that too the best way to achieve the end is her education. So he started war for women's rights. Then Ayya started an educational institution slowly to educate her in the realm of household activities. Having his goal he was searching a right general for the noble purpose.

Much is said about women's liberation presently. Even today southern Tamil Nadu remains backward in women's rightful needs, like basic education. Think of that society some seventy years back. A lady with a mission born in Kallikulam named Miss. Rajammal had taken a vow to change this situation. She thought the best way to achieve this goal is education. So she studied hard and distinguished herself in Home Science. When the society seemed school education itself was too much for girls, our Amma went to Ohio State University to take a doctoral degree.

If, she might have been in U.S. she might have earned quite a good fortune. But Amma never wavered in her sole aim that her education should be for the betterment of her sisters and daughters in India. Having a goal set for her, she needed an institution which has similar aim. So the first shots of the wars have been fired. Sri Avinashilingam Home Science College was started. "Have I said this a war? Yes it is a war". Many eyebrow's were raised. Many shook their heads - "Home Science" education, on household duties who needs it? It is quiet

ridiculous, hardly very few shared Ayya's ideas. But one person agreed with Ayya's thought totally - Our Amma Dr. (Mrs.) Rajammal P. Devadas, she became the first general, sorry, the first Principal of the great institution.

After pre-university education I entered the college with a look of hesitation. My father accompanied me. Like most of the girls who enter the college for the first time I had my own misgivings about college. Further Ayya who was my father's old friend convinced me why I should join Home Science. But I was not totally convinced. I was waiting to see the principal with the admission card. I have been told that principal had been educated abroad and had occupied very high post before coming over here. I was expecting a tough lady with routine welcome, with this fear mixed with expectation I entered principal's room. "Welcome" a soft voice welcomed me. A smiling Amma welcomed me as though she knew me for years. I frankly told her that I was afraid to face her. She asked "are you afraid of your mother", She added that I could take the same liberty as I took from my mother. More than thirty five years rolled, since then I myself have become grand-ma. Time had brought many changes. But two things have not changed, whenever I enter the campus Amma's same smile and soft voice welcomed "Manonmani" and her assurance that I could take the motherly liberty.

In 1960 when I joined B.Sc., (Home Science) many students, why even educators were not convinced about the course. When my education unfolded through lectures and practicals, my misgivings vanished. It was a pleasure to listen Amma's lectures on nutrition. Many simple facts about nutritive values of Indian foods were brought forth in a lucid manner. Many US returned professors even today continue to teach their western experience, rather than coming to our country's present reality.

Amma's teaching and her research were usually in the areas of the Indian habits and culture. Her research on nutritious food for economically weaker sections and poor children changed the convictions of many that Home Science education has no utility for the society.

Having born in a religious family Faith in God and religion had been inculcated in my mind from childhood onwards. But the moment the verse

**“Allah Parama Pitha Harihara Brahmam  
Arul Bhuddhane Saranam”**

welcomed me to the great Saradalaya my first day prayer in the college. My entire concept of religion underwent metamorphosis, as all faiths are the same and have got the same aim. Even today what I learnt at Saradalaya clearly rings in my mind. Many things are said more about religious harmony. As early as in 1960 Amma clearly thought the best way to promote religious harmony is to teach the relevance to young minds. Prayers and celebrations during all religious festivals and Amma's advices on the occasions is still fresh in my mind. Such may be the feelings of every student who passed through Saradalaya.

Ayya's concept of education is the total personality development along with academic excellence. Rarely a dignitary missed visiting Saradalaya. Amma, a symbol of perfection, made these occasions, be it the opening of Academic Block of the College - the dignitary being Dr. Rajendra Prasad, and as a student we looked after the arrangements. Very rarely would Amma miss the finer point. Such will be the perfection with which Amma expects things to be done. Amma's perfection has not changed over the years. So, as my participation in functions organised at Saradalaya totally thrilled when Amma gave me the honour of presenting memento to Ayya at a function presided by the then President of India, Honourable Zail Singh.

Amma had utmost confidence in her students. As a part of our educational programme, a group of students have to spend a week in a model home where they have to cook their food, maintain the regular domestic activities. When myself and my friends were maintaining “the house” we had a unique situation. Amma called us one morning and said that she, Ayya and chief guest Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer would be having lunch in the house. We took the challenge and lived upto the expectation of Amma.

Rarely a popular magazine has missed conveying the uniqueness of the college and our Amma. In this context let me narrate the situation. When “Savi” the editor was in our campus we were then in final year. Amma clearly told Mr. Savi not to take individual photo of any student, since that photo might cause some problem for the girl later. Such is the responsibility as a Principal, Amma had undertaken for her students.

Amma had a conviction that as an individual or as a group nobody had any right to wound the feelings of others, directly or indirectly. When we were in the first year we enacted a drama which contained few scenes from “Ramayana”. The scences depicted the great aspects so faithfully and Ayya and Amma appreciated the scenes so much. When we were in the second year, we modified the same scenes on “carry on” series style. Having heard the change, Amma witnessed the rehearsal and told in clear terms how we were belittling our “Ithihas” we were disappointed a bit. Soon we realised how valuable her advice was.

Discipline is the basic requirement at Home Science College campus. No compromise had been made in this aspect, let it be entry time in the campus, dress regulation or behaviour in the hostel. Amma had framed the rules clearly,

perhaps, as students they may not agree, but when they have their own daughter admitted to Saradalaya they appreciate Amma's action. Appreciation or otherwise Amma knows what is right for generations. When we were students we proposed a drama to be staged in a host institution. Based on objection from a parent Amma promptly stopped the move. Don't you agree this move is apt for today's situation?

It is true that Amma treats Saradalaya as her own home and her students as her daughters. But Amma's affection to her own family is remarkable. She always tells that she owes all her education and well being to her husband Mr. Devadas. She is happy to be called as Mrs. Devadas and when Mr. Devadas passed away how much she felt lonely, she told me when I tried to console her. Similarly when her mother passed away at an elderly age any word of consolation could not bring comfort to her. Such was the deep love she had for her mother.

For the past thirty four years I have seen Amma as my teacher, as my guardian, as a serious disciplinarian as a divine family member, as a member to promote religious harmony. Just like that, I can add on and on, what have written is only a few facts. I conclude with these words of prayer :

உயர்ந்த சிந்தனையும் சீரிய நோக்கும்  
சிறந்த செயலாற்றலும் கொண்ட  
ஆயிரம் பிறைகண்ட எமதன்பு அன்னையே (அம்மா)  
சீரோடும் சிறப்போடும் இப்பூவுலகில் பல்லாண்டு  
வாழ்ந்து தனது அன்பாலும் ஆசியாலும்  
இன்றுபோல் என்றும் சாரதாலயத்தை  
வழி நடத்த வேணுமாய் வேண்டுகிறோம்.



# **Dr. RAJAMMAL P. DEVADAS'S MISSION OF GLOBAL LINKAGES**

REVATHI BALAKRISHNAN

**“Two Roads Diverged in a Wood. And I - Took the One Less Travelled By.  
And That Had Made All the Difference”**

- Robert Frost

**A**t the time India became an independent nation, the road that Amma avargal had chosen to travel was indeed a different one with a mission to build global academic linkages and to internationalise Indian higher education. The global mission made all the difference in creating an Indian educational institution with world recognition. In the city of Coimbatore, a town in Tamil Nadu known around the world for manufacturing fine cotton and but most importantly for Avinashilingam Institute committed to women's education, research and community service. The Institution had its beginning as Sri Avinashilingam Home Science College for Women, but had become an internationally recognised centre for women's learning and research. During the mid-sixties, I had the opportunity to be a graduate student in this esteemed institution that gave me the privilege of receiving guidance from Amma avargal. The campus life was marked by visits of international scholars and development professionals. The international interaction and exchange of ideas from near and far ushered an era of international education in the northern corner of Tamil Nadu and became an integral part of student learning experience. Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas's vision for global academic linkage made all this possible. With a vision of placing the Institution on global academic and research map, with a steadfast commitment to a mission

of excellence in women's education and with untiring efforts, she lead the task of internationalising the institution and thus the Indian Higher Education.

Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas's life-long contribution to women's education is illustrative of her commitment to excellence in women's education locally as well as to foster research and development programmes that are on par with world standards. Hence, it is no surprise that led by Dr. Devadas, Sri Avinashilingam Deemed Women's University is globally recognised as an outstanding educational institution and much sought after for international academic linkages. The institution has excellent record of achievement from the modern kindergarten for next generation Indians living in Coimbatore to next generation Indian Scientists pursuing research in diverse fields of studies. Dr. Devadas's vision also included taking science to villages of India where the country's soul and spirit are housed. But these villages are also the home to many Indians who live in poverty and put up with poor living environment, poor health and educational facilities. She guided her students and staff to develop as a cadre of professionals who were trained to link learning with service to rural communities. It was my privilege to be one of such cadre of students trained by Dr. Devadas. It is such a training process that prepared me go from Coimbatore, to various assignments, to apply higher learning and science to serve the global rural communities. I am very thankful that such professional values, to build a career to make a difference were given to me by an extraordinary person as Dr. Devadas who had a vision and mission to make a difference. Dr. Devadas's unique international vision and community oriented educational approach are widely and rightfully recognised around the world. Such a recognition is illustrated in the various past and current international institutional linkages and memorandum of understanding, which are part of Institute's daily activities. Most faculty

members in this institute had either been abroad or had worked with an international visiting faculty on campus. Such close working linkages have fostered mutually beneficial international linkages. Such international interactions were made possible only because Dr. Devadas's strong belief in creating an international awareness among the teachers and the taught.

The Oregon State University - Sri Avinashilingam Deemed University Academic linkage programme sponsored by United States Information Agency was made possible because of Dr. Devadas's commitment to international education. The programme awards are based on a very highly competitive process and complex approval procedures. I am glad that Dr. Devadas was our partner on the other side of the world, who with her usual commitment and persistent purpose cleared all the barriers to obtain the approval. The academic linkage programme embodied the spirit of co-operation between India and United States at people to people level, which was embodied in the philosophy of international relationship that Mr. Fulbright, an U.S. Senator, promoted as "Public Diplomacy". The principles of international friendship and academic sharing were fulfilled by the institutional scholarly exchange between scientists of Avinashilingam Institute for Women's Higher Education and Oregon State University. The faculty members who were visiting scholars in Oregon State enriched the academic programmes in various departments in the College of Home Economics and College of Arts and Sciences. It should be noted that this was the first of such programme in Oregon State that had substantial faculty exchange and with only women as participants. Among the scholars who came to India from Oregon State for many, it was the first visit to a developing country on an academic assignment. Hence Dr. Devadas's commitment to global education had bestowed

benefits to those in US as well as in India. In Oregon, those of us who were part of the programme in Oregon State University owe Dr. Devadas a great debt of gratitude for making the programme a success in making a difference in international education component of US higher education. It was also a great privilege for Oregon State University to confer an Honorary Doctoral Degree on Dr. Devadas recognising her service to Home Economics and Human Nutrition.

Yet another pleasant additional impact of the programme was that some of the faculty members from Oregon State took their families with them to India and they enjoyed the hospitality and wealth of affection from Dr. Devadas and her faculty members. The children of the faculty members returned to US with an expanded perception of the world outside US. For us in the US it is an important gain. In addition, the academic linkages initiated in the programme had developed into long term academic exchanges fulfilling the purpose of the USIA programme. The library computer equipment exchange is an interesting example of academic linkage fostered programme assistance. We are proud that we chose to work with Dr. Devadas and are honoured to share in a small way her global mission to follow a less travelled path that made a difference in higher education in the State of Oregon.

I wish Dr. Devadas, many more years of good health and dynamic leadership fostering many more academic linkages. My sincere thanks for giving me this opportunity to join you all in celebrating accomplishments of Dr. Devadas, as an architect of women's educational agenda with global dimension in independent India.

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## DEAR AMMA - A PROFILE

K.C. SALOMY

I spent 14½ years at Sri Avinashilingam Home Science College, 5 years as a student, and the rest as a teacher in the Department of Child Development. In a flash the happy and memorable days come to my mind. The unforgettable personality of Amma impressed me deeply right from the first day of my stay at Saradalaya.

As a student at B.Sc. level I had the good fortune to attend the excellent classes in the gallery in Foods and Nutrition. The way in which Amma taught us Community Nutrition classes in Final year M.Sc. cannot be excelled by any one. The classes were perfect in all respects. The corrections were superb. We used to listen with all earnestness. Many of the sentences still reverberate in my ears. As a coguide for P.G. students with Amma I got a chance to learn so many things. She was very understanding and considerate to me and she considered me as her own daughter. During those days I was really impressed by Amma's profundity in the subject.

As a colleague I know Amma as a strict disciplinarian. She had an unusual skill in controlling her staff and she knew each and every member individually. She used to encourage her colleagues to become more qualified in their respective branches of subjects. What I am today is because of Amma avargal.

After passing B.Sc. I thought of joining for M.Sc. Child Development at Baroda, but Amma wanted me to work as a Demonstrator in Home Science Department and sent me the appointment order to my home address, even before

my B.Sc. results was announced. It was a pleasure to work with Amma at Saradaġaya. When I was a U.G.C. research scholar also Amma gave me classes for U.G. and P.G. students. When Mrs. Jayalakshmy left the job at Nursery School, Amma called me back from home and gave me the charge of the Nursery School. Amma wanted me to finish my Ph.D. and still I feel very sad for not completing it. Amma considered me as a member of her own family and invited for all the functions like marriage, baptism, death anniversary etc. We always send X'mas greetings to each other.

To illustrate Amma's great concern for me I can give an example. Hearing that my father was in the sinking stage myself and my sister Kunjamma Varghese had left Coimbatore. Soon after our leaving Coimbatore, the news about my father's death reached there and Amma immediately sent two of the staff members Miss. Gladys Paul and Miss Mary to accompany us in our journey.

Amma came to Trivandrum seven years ago to attend an International Conference and she stayed at Muscat Hotel. Hearing about her presence there, I rushed to the hotel to see Amma. When I reached there she was eating breakfast. Amma was very much excited when she saw me and spilled the coffee on her saree and she remarked that it had happened in her excitement. Amma consumed the 'Appam' which I took for her. At the time of her departure I met Amma at Trivandrum Central Railway Station with my children. My children were also excited so much after seeing Amma. Later I came to know that Amma had commented about this in the assembly. `Amma took keen interest in sports and games and she captained the team to which I belonged. We won a number of first prizes especially for Ball Badminton.

Amma's ability as a speaker is another remarkable aspect of her personality. She can impress any gathering with her oratory. She is a well known figure and her books are superb. Amma is very religious and many times Amma took me to 'All Souls Church' for prayer. She has abundant religious tolerance. She has a universal outlook and is very broadminded and kind. I always cherish the sweet memories of Christian prayer in the shrine with Amma.

Amma is a good actor. For hostel day and staff day, she used to perform very well. Once I got an opportunity to act as 'Kaikeyi' and Amma was acting the role of 'Dasaradhan' - the king of Ramarajya. Amma used to accompany the excursion parties to various places. I had the opportunity to join these trips as a student and staff. The ice cream with fruit salad given by Amma just before the M.Sc. final examinations was really relishing. On the occasion of the housewarming of her newly built residence, I had the opportunity to transfer the things from the old house and arrange the things in the proper manner. She had great trust in me. I remember the days of 'Kalaivizha' at Saradalaya and 'Annadhan' at Vidhyalaya. Those experiences are unforgettable in my life. I have learned a lot of values from all these experiences. For all the V.I.P. parties, conferences and seminars I had the opportunity to serve the nutritious food, to greet Presidents, Scientists and Scholars. I had the opportunity to attend 5 National Conferences in Home Science, 6 U.G.C. Refresher Courses and International Conference on Solar energy.

The X'mas prayers and X'mas Celebrations at Saradalaya were very very unforgettable. Personally I learned the importance of values such as faith, religious tolerance, dignity of labour, truth, non-violence, cooperation, sympathy and empathy. I owe all these to Amma avargal.

I had so many chances to travel with Amma of which I remember the trip to Calicut to attend the meeting of the Board of Studies at Calicut University. After a few hours of journey Amma slept in my lap. We visited my sister - Mrs. Annakutty John's house in the Medical College Campus. Amma had 'Puttu and Kadala curry' and Amma wanted me to prepare the same in Amma's kitchen. One day after the X'an prayer I cooked the same in Amma's kitchen. In all aspects Amma is really great, kind and considerate to me.

During the year 1976, on February 13th, I met Amma and told her that I had to join duty at Trivandrum, Govt. Women's College. She was angry at first, but next moment she said "I know you as a child, how can you leave me and go?" I was almost in tears. At that time I was 5 months pregnant. Sometimes I had to go to Amma's house to give Saradha medicines. She was a little stubborn and wanted my presence. Physically I had to take Saradha from Amma's shoulders and take her to the Nursery school. My nieces Sindhu, Bindhu and Saradha were together in the nursery school. These are some of my memories about Amma. Amma is really 'Amma' to me. I wish Amma sound health and long life on her 80th Birthday. May God Bless her.

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# MY COLLEGE DAYS AT AVINASHILINGAM UNIVERSITY

SUGUNA LAKSHMINARAYANAN

**A**vinashilingam University means “Amma” (Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas) and “Amma” means Avinashilingam University. These two phrases are intertwined and that is because of her tireless efforts and sincere devotion to make this university to be one of the leading educational institutes not only in India but also throughout the world. Amma is a great educationalist and spends all her time to make sure that the institution provides the best education and imparts high moral and cultural values to all those students who have the opportunity to spend their college period. She is very successful in this effort by having the very best staff in the college, by bringing leading and well known educators from all over the world to provide teaching to her college students and by her constant visits and lectures to various universities and international meetings throughout the world which help update her university with the latest educational and technological breakthrough.

Amma is by nature a God fearing, hard working and well disciplined person. She expects and demands the same from her students. One has to get to know her well before one can appreciate her sincerity, her devotion and her mission. To illustrate this point let me describe my own experience. After obtaining a bachelor's degree in Home Science, I stayed home for a year. My parents were a bit apprehensive about me continuing my further education because I may not be able to get a right partner with a higher qualification than me. It is

Amma who encouraged my parents (saying her students would be always in demand for lucky boys) to allow me to continue my studies. After securing a Government Scholarship (I.C.A.R. Indian Council of Agriculture) I approached Amma to give me admission in Foods and Nutrition (Master's degree program). Initially Amma did not give me admission in that program (due to limited seats), and asked me to take up another subject. I was very sad and disappointed. I kept praying God, pleading over and over, hoping that Amma would change her mind and give me admission in the field of my first and my only choice. By God's grace and my persistence Amma decided to give me admission in Foods and Nutrition program. To look back I feel that Amma wanted to test my sincerity, passion and persuasion power to make sure that is the field I wanted to study and excel. Thanks to God and Amma and her wonderful staff, I received my master's degree in the subject of my choice and continued my education in USA to become an ADA (American Dietetic Association) member and a Registered Dietitian (RD). Amma has helped me a lot in achieving this through her recommendation letters to ADA organization.

Amma and her Staff are excellent teachers. With my Foods and Nutrition education in Avinashilingam College I had very little difficulty in adjusting to the American System of education to advance myself. Today I am a Staff Clinical Dietitian at a Hospital [Veterans Hospital] in New Jersey. My patients and my supervisors compliment me for the depth of my nutritional knowledge and understanding. It is all due to the best education that I received at Avinashilingam College under the great guidance and blessings of Amma and other staff members and of course my beloved parents also. I will always cherish this all through my life.

I am very happy to say that Amma was able to visit my family in my home during one of her many trips to USA and I had the pleasure of serving her lunch in my home. My daughter Vasanthi admired Amma very much when she played cards with her in my home and gave her valuable advice on her education and career goals. My daughter had a pleasant time when she visited Amma at Avinashilingam College during her visit to India for her spring intern (Rockerfeller Foundation Award) program as a part of her undergraduate degree in Dartmouth College. Amma and her staff helped Vasanthi in many ways for her internship training in Madras with Dr. Salomon. (AIDS Educational and Research Center).

I would like to conclude that Amma is the best for what happened to Avinashilingam University. Our family wishes all the best to her on her 80th Birthday. We pray God to give her a very long and healthy life so that many current and future students benefit from her valuable service and guidance and to serve community as a whole.

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# MEMORABLE IMPRESSIONS ABOUT AMMA

ANNAMMA JOSEPH

**D**r. Rajammal P. Devadas - "Amma" to all her students, teachers and colleagues - is completing her 80th birthday in April 1999 - an occasion for us to celebrate. Amma is well known nationally and internationally for her ability and achievements especially in the field of Home Science, Child Development and Nutrition. Amma has a dream - not only in building up educational institutions but also in developing human potential to the full. She has never missed an opportunity to serve others in her varying capacities and now as the Chancellor.

Dr. Devadas provides continuous guidance and motivation to ensure that all her students at various levels go out of Avinashilingam with right attitude to work and life. She has been successful in developing strict discipline, good values and principles in her students. Amma invited several philosophers and educationist, thus providing an opportunity for us to meet and listen to their great ideals. Amma made it compulsory for us to stay in the villages to make us more sensitive to their real needs especially poor women and children.

In Avinashilingam College, we are in a totally different world - a second Home - where we have Amma, Akkas, Thankachies - to take care of each other and demonstrate love and concern for others. Prayer is very much part of our life and it is a pleasure to see everyone attending prayers everyday in the morning and evening. Even the college starts with a prayer everyday during the assembly.

Dr. Devadas is a good teacher. A good teacher has to be a role model to her students and other teachers - and these qualities, we see in Amma. Amma's leadership and encouragement for excellence in studies is seen in her students who are well placed in India and abroad. Amma is hardworking and she expects everyone to work very hard to achieve great things. Amma takes special interest in her M.Sc. students and is patient enough to meticulously go through all the documents while finalising the thesis. If she goes through the document, the final product will be excellent. As a teacher, she is well read, highly knowledgeable and her memory is fantastic. When she gives a lecture, she would tell us everything that had happened in the different parts of the world. Amma prepares her students well for many scholarships and competitive exams. She builds confidence in us.

We have enjoyed educational tours and picnics with Amma. Amma gives equal importance to studies, jobs, sports, and cultural activities. We see her playing lawn tennis and she expects all her students and teachers to be in playground everyday in the evening.

After I completed M.Sc. Nutrition, Amma wanted me to do Ph.D. which unfortunately I could not. While I was applying for job, I got letters from some agencies saying that “your name has been recommended by Dr. Devadas and send us your bio-data if you are interested”. I was really touched - very rarely we come across a teacher who takes interest in her students even after they leave the college. When I went for an interview, one of the panel members asked me “Oh! you are Dr. Devadas' student!! I was so proud to say ‘Yes’. Yes!! It is an added qualification. Even after leaving the college, we continued to be part of

the family. During the last 26 years, Amma has shown great interest in my job and my welfare. Amma enjoys meeting her old students. I too look forward to meeting her when she visits my town. Amma feels proud of her students. Amma cannot forget her students, teachers and college, even when she is travelling and visiting institutions. I have seen her collecting latest publications, relevant materials for her teachers and library. We are proud of Amma. We do admire and appreciate her enthusiasm, commitment and dedication. Just two years in the Institute and the contacts we kept thereafter has made such a strong impression in me which I can never forget. Amma is a great teacher, a friend, philosopher and guide to us. May God continue to bless her with good health and strength in the coming years. Her guidance would inspire many more youngsters to be better citizens.



# WHO COULD IT BE?

PUSHPA L. RAMA

**T**urning the pages of history of Avinashilingam Home Science College to a Deemed University is indeed a remarkable milestone in the history of Women's Education.

Its fame in Home Economics, especially in the field of nutrition, has put the name of Avinashilingam Home Science College on the global chart.

Besides the contribution of students and staff, lets trace out who has been the great backbone for all the achievements.

**R : Reformer**  
**A : Amiable**  
**J : Jovial**  
**A : Assertive**  
**M : Motivating**  
**M : Mysterious**  
**A : Ambitious**  
**L : Learned**  
**D : Demonstrative**  
**E : Envable**  
**V : Volatile**  
**A : Admirable**  
**D : Demanding**  
**A : Adventurous**  
**S : Simple**

When these letters are put together it is none other than RAJAMMAL DEVADAS who has been the stalwart of Research and Women's Education.



# **Dr. RAJAMMAL P. DEVADAS'S CONTRIBUTIONS**

**A. ANDAL BASKARAN**

I had a golden opportunity to meet Amma avargal in the year 1970 during my B.Sc. admission in Zoology. Amma avargal advised me to join B.Sc. Home Science and explained to me about the importance and scope of Home Science. She told me that I have a good opportunity to shine in the future. As per Amma avargal's blessings and by God's grace I have successfully completed my Ph.D degree programme and presently placed in a professional university. I am deeply indebted to our dear loving Amma avargal for her excellent encouragement, continuous guidance, able direction, immense love and for being the guiding star in my life.

Amma avargal has great love for God and it is manifested by her service to humanity which is service to Lord. In the whole world, the only single, powerful, directing force is love which is expressed by all creation of God. It is through the urge of such love, Lord Jesus Christ gave his life for the human race. Amma avargal is an embodiment of such love, selflessness and always sacrificing her comforts for the sake of others. She never forgets her long years of travel and this retrospection adds glamour to her qualities. Further she imparted the same truth to us amicably.

Devotion, knowledge and duty in association with divine grace, will enable a person to gain the Lord's blessings. Amma avargal is one such person who had received so much appreciation and praise till today and has now earned a special

place in our hearts. Amma avargal is like a lamp which burns itself to shed light and guide others. Amma avargal gave her education, thoughts, labour and action for others and particularly for the upliftment of women.

Amma avargal jots down carefully the tasks to be carried out every day, assigns time for every activity and follows the schedule meticulously. She used to set aside definite timings for those who worked in her institutions and meet them at fixed time regularly to enthuse them for their activity. Amma avargal who is an epitome of sacrifice, regards hard work as her life and achieved success. Her untiring, incessant hard work brought her success in her career. Amma avargal has an abundant measure of clarity in thinking, determination and affection for all. Amma avargal easily understands the complexities of any problem and gives clear advice to resolve it. She could do so because of her wide experience. She envisages and analyses a problem from different perspectives. She also consults the persons associated with it, to identify the cause of problem and resolves it.

Education of women occupies top priority amongst various measures taken to improve the status of women in India. Keeping this in view Amma avargal started Avinashilingam Deemed University and it shifted from equipping women, for their traditional roles as of housewives and mothers to recognising their worth as producers, making a major contribution to family and national income. Amma avargal often utters that women must have the same opportunities as men for taking all kinds of work and this presupposes that they get equal facilities so that their entry into the professions and public service is in no way prejudiced.

Amma avargal has received hundreds of awards. Amma avargal is the regional Vice-President of International Federation for Women in Agriculture,

Indian Council of Agricultural Research and member of the Association of Women in Development, U.S.A. and British Dietetic Association. Amma avargal has published over 530 research papers in renowned scientific and technological journals in India and abroad. She has published over 57 books.

In whatever position one may be, those who are deeply interested in their work will have joy in their hearts, attains fruition and their life progresses successfully. Only such people will be able to achieve great things. Others will also have faith in them. All these qualities are blended together beautifully and portrayed in the form of Amma avargal. In order to succeed in all our endeavours we need to acquire and cultivate these fine qualities.

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# AMMA - I KNEW

S. JAYASREE

**I**mpression of Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas at the first sight itself is enormous and astonishment grows further with every meeting. She is a great source of inspiration for me and is a living model for thousands to imitate. Sincerity, punctuality, voracious appetite for knowledge and work, activeness, shrewdness, intelligence, managerial capacity - all these are making up one personality great Amma avargal.

Her efforts, skill and untiring perseverance has built up Avinashilingam Institute stone by stone and made it stronger also. Under her supervision the institution has grown vertically from kindergarten to doctoral degree and horizontally with various disciplines and diplomas. Autonomous status was accorded by the University to add another feather to the cap of Amma avargal. Considering the environmental and social changes, has started innovative technical courses in the field of Home Science for increased opportunities of employment. Of course it may pave the way for self-employment also.

Students are her first concern, whether present or past and will render services for their higher education, research qualification and career opportunities. All round development of thousands of students she plans, executes and achieves every year and she surely can feel proud of herself.

Similarly the welfare and development of her team of members of staff are foremost in her mind. She recognises the skills latent in them, creates opportunities for them to explore, encourages them to qualify academically and

to participate actively in the curricular, co-curricular and extra - curricular activities in land and abroad. In turn, members of staff reflect their gratitude by dedicating whole hearted support and service for the growth and development of the institution.

Her awareness of the pitiable status of poor and downtrodden especially in villages has made her to adopt villages and work for the upliftment of society. She is a genius with humanitarian consideration, which is a rare combination to come across. Her thought, speech and actions are beneficial for students, staff, institution and society at large. She is an orator, writer, debater and researcher. She has penned number of books and countless research articles. Future generation can benefit out of her subject specialized literature. Leading a simple living based on Gandhian philosophy, she has attained a high quality of life. On this occasion of her reaching 80th birthday, with my heartfelt felicitations, I pray to God Almighty for several more years of fruitful healthy living for her, for the development of the society.

★

## என் பார்வையில் அம்மா

மகாலக்ஷ்மி சுப்ரமணியம்

அம்மா அவர்களுக்கு 80 வயது ஆகப் போகிறதா? “Around the world in 48 hours” என்று இரண்டே இரண்டு நாட்களில் உலக அளவில் உணவு, சத்துணவு நிபுணர்களின் கூட்டத்தில் சிறப்புரை ஆற்றி விட்டு, நமது தலைநகர் டில்லியில், ‘இந்திய நாட்டுக்கான முன்னேற்ற கல்வி’ பற்றி High Level குழுவில் பேசிவிட்டு சிங்கார சென்னையாக மாறப் போகும் நமது சென்னையில், திட்டக்குழு கமிஷனுக்கான தனது உயரிய கருத்துக்களை சமர்ப்பித்து விட்டு அன்றே அவினாசிலிங்கம் கல்வி ஸ்தாபனத்தில் நடைபெறும் விழாவுக்காக சொற்பொழிவு ஆற்றும் ‘தேனீ’ போன்ற தேவதையான ராசம்மாள் பா. தேவதாஸ் அவர்களுக்கா சதாபிஷேக வயது? ‘நம்ப முடியவில்லை, இல்லை இல்லை’ என்று உரக்கப் பாட வேண்டும் போல் தோன்றுகிறது.

சற்று, அதாவது ஒரு 65 வருடம் பின்னோக்கிச் செல்லலாமா? தனது திருமணத்தின் போது பள்ளிப்படிப்பு மட்டுமே முடித்திருந்த சிறுமி ராசம்மாள், சொந்த மாமாவான தனது கணவரிடம் முதன் முதலில் என்ன பேசியிருப்பார்? சிம்லாவுக்கு ஹனிமூன் போக வேண்டும் என்றா? பனாரஸ் சேலை வேண்டும் என்றா? புதுமாதிரி நகைசெட் வேண்டுமென்றா? இல்லை. இல்லவே இல்லை.

“எனக்கு மேலே படிக்க வேண்டும்  
பாலோடு பழம்யாவும் படிப்பாக வேண்டும்  
பாவைக்கு நின் வழிகாட்டுதல் வேண்டும்”

என்று கணவரிடம் இறைஞ்சி, மேற்படிப்புக்கான அவரது சம்மதத்தைக் கேட்டு இருப்பார் என்பது உறுதி. பட்டப்படிப்பு படித்து, முதுகலைப்

பட்டம் வாங்கிய பிறகு, ஒரு திருப்புமுனை இவரது வாழ்வில். அன்பே உருவான, அவினாசிலிங்கம் செட்டியார் அவர்களது உருவில், 'ஐயா' என்று அருமையாக எல்லோராலும் அழைக்கப்படும், நமது கல்லூரி ஸ்தாபகர் அவர்களது உருவில் வந்தது. நமது தாய்நாடு சுதந்திரம் பெற்ற பிறகு தமிழ்நாட்டின் கல்வி அமைச்சராக பொறுப்பேற்றவர் திரு. அவினாசிலிங்கம் செட்டியார் அவர்கள். பெண்களுக்காக ஒரு கல்விக்கூடம் அமைக்க எண்ணிய அவருக்கு, அப்பொழுது சென்னையில் பணிபுரிந்து கொண்டு இருந்த ஆசிரியை ராசம்மாள் பா. தேவதாஸ் அதற்கு உறுதுணையாக இருப்பார் என்று தோன்றியது. அம்மாவின் ஆற்றலை அன்றே கண்டு கொண்டு கோவையில் ஒரு அதிசயமான இந்த அவினாசிலிங்கம் கல்வி ஸ்தாபனத்தை ஆரம்பித்து, அதற்கு ராசம்மாள் பா. தேவதாஸ் என்ற 'மனித தேனீ'க்கு பெரும் பொறுப்பைக் கொடுத்தார்.

அந்த நாள் கோவைக்கு ஒரு கோலாகலமான நாள். 'உருவம் சிறிது கீர்த்தி பெரிது' என்பது உண்மை. ஆள் அமைப்பு என்பதைக் கொண்ட 'பர்சனாலிட்டி' அல்ல அது. 'Mental Personality' என்ற இடைவிடாத உழைப்பைக் கொண்ட 'Personality' தான் அம்மாவுடையது.

அன்று P.U.C. வகுப்பு மாணவர்களுக்கு 'Extension' வகுப்பு எடுப்பார் அம்மா. கல்லூரியின் முதல்வர் பாடம் எடுக்கிறார் என்றால் மாணவிகள் மனதில் எவ்வளவு பயம், எதிர்பார்ப்பு இருக்கும். ஆனால் எந்தவித பந்தாவும் இல்லாமல், ஒவ்வொரு மாணவிக்கும் புரியுமாறு எளிதாக வகுப்பு எடுத்துவிட்டு அம்மா செல்லும் போது மாணவிகளிடையே எவ்வளவு மகிழ்ச்சி எழும் தெரியுமா?

மனிதன் எதையும் சாதிக்க இடைவிடாத முயற்சி செய்தால் மட்டும் போதாது. பிரார்த்தனை என்பது மிகவும் அவசியம் என்று

உணர்ந்த அம்மா, 'Shrine' என்ற கோவிலை கல்லூரி வாசலுக்கு எதிராக மண்டபமாகக் கட்ட ஆலோசனை சொன்னபோது, அம்மா ஒரு Architect என்று பெருமைப்படுகிறேன்.

பலவித உயர்மட்டக் குழுவில் இடம்பெற ஆரம்பித்ததும், அந்தப் பேற்றினை நமது கல்வி ஸ்தாபன வளர்ச்சிக்காக உபயோகப்படுத்திக் கொண்டார். முதன் முதலில் டாக்டர். சர். ராதாகிருஷ்ணன் ஜனாதிபதியாக நமது அவினாசிலிங்கம் கல்லூரிக்கு வந்தபோது கோவைக்கே பெருமை சேர்த்தது. அன்றிலிருந்து இன்று வரை, ஜனாதிபதி நாராயணன் வரை எத்தனை பிரமுகர்களை, மாணவிகள் சந்திக்கும் பேறு பெற்றிருப்பர்? எத்தனை உலக நிபுணர்கள்? எத்தனை சர்வதேச வல்லுநர்களின் காலடி இந்த கல்விக்கூடத்தில் பட்டுள்ளது. அதற்குப் பின்னால் உள்ள உழைப்பு, தியாகம், விடாமுயற்சி என்பதுதான் அம்மாவின் குணநலன்கள்.

எதிலும் ஈடுபாடு. எப்பொழுதும் தூய உடையோடு புத்துணர்ச்சியை பரப்பும் அம்மா. 'ஹிந்தி எதிர்ப்பு' என்று ஹிந்திக்கு நமது அரசாங்கமே எதிர்ப்பு பேசிய காலம் அது. ஹிந்தி ஒரு நல்ல மொழி, அதனை கற்பது நமது முன்னேற்றத்துக்கு அடிக்கல் என்று உணர்ந்த அம்மா, தான் எடுத்துக்காட்டாக விளங்க ஹிந்தி கற்று, 'ஹிந்தி அசோசியேஷன்' இங்கு ஆரம்பித்து ஒரு நம்பிக்கை நட்சத்திரமாக, ஒரு வழிகாட்டியாக விளங்குகிறார் என்று எழுதுவதில் கர்வப்படுகிறேன்.

'கடமை, கண்ணியம், கட்டுப்பாடு' என்பது அறிஞர் அண்ணாத்துரையின் கோட்பாடு. கடமையைச் செய்துவிட்டு உரிமைகளைப் பற்றி பேசுவது என்பதுதான் இந்த கல்வி ஸ்தாபனத்தில் கடைப்பிடிக்கப்படுகிறது. மாணவிகளிடம் கண்டிப்பாக இருப்பதன் மூலம் இங்கு ஒழுக்கம், கண்ணியம் காப்பாற்றப்படுகிறது. உடை அணிவதில் கண்ணியம் இருக்க வேண்டும் என்று இடைவிடாது போதித்தார்.

ஆபாசத்துக்கும், கவர்ச்சிக்கும் இடையே இருப்பது சிறு இடைவெளி தான். அது மாணவியர் பருவத்தில் மிக மோசமான விளைவை ஏற்படுத்தும் என்று உணர்ந்து, அந்த கசப்பு கனியான கட்டுப்பாட்டை அமுல்படுத்த சிறிதும் தயங்குவதில்லை. உலக அளவில் அவினாசிலிங்கம் கல்வி ஸ்தாபனம் உயர்ந்ததற்குக் காரணம், அம்மா அமுல்படுத்திய 'கடமை, கண்ணியம், கட்டுப்பாடு'. இதையே நமது அரசியல் தலைவர்கள் பின்பற்றி இருந்தால் உலக அரங்கில் நமது நாடு முதலில் வந்து இராதா?

ராசம்மாள் பா. தேவதாஸ் அவர்கள் பிறப்பில் கிறிஸ்தவரே. ஆனால் எந்த மதத்தையும் இழிவுபடுத்தாது, குறைத்துப் பேசாது, எல்லா மதத்து மாணவியர்களையும், ஆசிரியப் பெருமக்களையும் பெருமைப்பட வைத்தவர்.

**'அல்லா பரமபிதா ஹரிஹர்ப்ரும்மம் அருள்புத்தனே சரணம்'**

என்ற பிரார்த்தனை கீதம் தான் இந்த சாரதாலயாவில் காற்றில் வரும் கீதமாக ஒலிக்கிறது. எம்மதமும் சம்மதம் என்று மேடையில் மட்டும் பேசாது, ஆசிரியைகள் தினத்தில், மாணவிகளுக்கு மகிழ்ச்சி ஊட்டும் வண்ணம் ராமாயணத்தில் தசரதனாக அம்மா நடித்தார். நான் பெற்ற இன்பம் பெறுக இவ்வையகம் என்று என்னுடைய ஆல்பத்திலிருந்து, விலைமதிக்க முடியாத இந்த போட்டோவை இளையதலைமுறையினர் பார்க்க இணைத்து உள்ளேன். இது தவிர, ஜாதி மதம் கடந்த அன்னை சாரதாம் பாளின் பெயரை தனது பேத்திக்கு சூட்டியுள்ளார்.

**'உலக வானிலே மிளிர்ந்திடச் செய்ய - நாம்  
மனம் கொண்டால் முடியாதோ'**

என்று எழுதிய கல்கியின் பேத்தி திருமதி சீதாரவியின் பாடலுக்கு உறைவிடமாக விளங்குகிறார் நமது அம்மா.

கல்வி உயர, மாணவியர்களின் அறிவுக்கண் பளிச்சிட, இன்று நாளொரு கூட்டமும், பொழுதொரு சொற்பொழிவுமாக, முழங்கி வரும் இந்த அவினாசிலிங்கம் கல்வி ஸ்தாபனம் இந்த நிலையை அடைய அம்மாவின் தியாகங்கள், இடைவிடாத முயற்சி, பொறுமையான உழைப்பு இவைகளே காரணம் என்பது வெள்ளிடைமலை.

அம்மா வாங்கியுள்ள விருதுகள் எண்ணற்றவை. அவரது தொழில் பக்தியைக் கண்டு இந்தப் பிறவியிலேயே அம்மாவே அவரது மேன்மையை உணரத்தான் இந்த விருதுகள். அவர் வாழும் காலத்தில் நாம் வாழ்ந்து, அவினாசிலிங்கம் கல்வி ஸ்தாபனத்தில் படித்தது நாம் பெற்ற பேறு!.



# MY ADMIRATION FOR THE GREAT TEACHER

JANAKI NARAYANASWAMI SENGUPTA

I have often wondered about what qualities make a leader? Is it a person's single minded devotion? Is it the capacity to envision what others do not even comprehend? Or is it perhaps the ability one has to withstand and weather adversity? I am sure that there is no one answer but in my association with Amma avargal, I have had many wonderful opportunities to observe the many faceted qualities of a great leader.

My association with Dr. Devadas spans over four decades - my first memory of Amma is when as a delegate to a convention for Home Economists, my parents had the honor of hosting a luncheon for Amma and her staff in our Calcutta home in the 60s. A gawky school kid I was impressed that a woman could lead a delegation let alone wield such absolute authority on the podium (I confess! I did not have an inkling of what was being said - but had just accepted the invitation to attend the conference at Amma's urging). Her energetic pace and quiet confidence that day made an indelible impression in my young mind forever, nurturing a 'can do' attitude in my person.

Years later in the 70s when I had decided I would pursue my post graduate studies in Nutrition at Sri Avinashilingam Home Science College in Coimbatore under Dr. Devadas my parents were skeptical. "Dr. Devadas is very strict and has many rules" they said "and you will find it difficult", they warned. My parents were amazed at how enthusiastically I adapted to the discipline and order that Amma demanded of every student. I realize now that having high expectations

for her students and living by them she did wonders for our self-esteem and built dignified confidence.

Fast forward to another decade it is the 80s, one beautiful spring day in New York, Amma is a guest in our home. Amma and my husband Supreo have taken to each other having met several times. Supreo with his customary “take charge” attitude is Amma's itinerary planner and local guardian, cautioning her on the dos and don'ts or keeping safe in New York (never mind she has been to the US even before we could crawl!). He makes sure she has the correct change for taxis, the phone and cautions her not to use the bus. With riotous magnolia and dogwood blossoms New York hid the dangers that lurk for the unwary well because, as the day unfolded, Amma had time on her hands and she decided to change her itinerary, took a bus and got “pick pocketed” by a criminal two some. The pick pockets were skilful preying upon Amma's kind nature (the girl appeared to fall, and Amma tried to help her up - while the girl's male accomplice deftly picked Amma's wallet). After the incident and much retrospective thought we were thankful that Amma was not harmed in person. Amma herself, flustered a bit initially felt very distraught at having to picture of “little Sharada” her beloved grand daughter. Talking about it she said, I am sure those kids (the pickpockets) will take heart and return the wallet. When I protested that these were hardened New York criminals, Amma said, “have faith”. It occurred to me then and many times later a leader looks for the inherent good in every person and like a skilled gem sorter selects and polishes to brilliant the qualities which would otherwise be hidden forever in his or her followers.

I have been most fortunate in being inspired by a dynamic person like our Amma avargal who has provided me with strength to deal with the pragmatic and the spiritual in a land far from my culture. Many happy returns, Amma and thank you.

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# **A WOMAN OF VISION**

**N. BALAMANI ARJUNAN**

**“There was no power in the world that could set any limitation to women's achievements except woman herself. There was no salic law which would hold good in the world, when women were determined, that they would rise to the full height and status of their capacity”**

- Sarojini Naidu

**I**n the middle of the century, when women's education was the rare and precious possession of the fortunate few, the elite and the upper middle class, prior to 1947, the great foundation for Sri Avinashilingam Trust was laid on 10th October.

**“Education of women must be based on our culture and needs;  
Worship and meditation must be part of our lives,  
Innovations and hard work must be part of our training”.**

With these noble objectives coupled with Gandhian ideals, nourished by the ideals of Swami Vivekananda and the blessings of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, started the institution in the jewel city of India.

From then onwards, things have started taking a different picture for the betterment of women, the under privileged and the so called voiceless. Our Amma avargal was chosen and was entrusted with the great task of educating women, in and around Coimbatore, by our great Ayya avargal, Sri T.S. Avinashilingam Chettiar. Our Amma avargal took over the charge as a Principal. It was a moment of blessing for women.

Everyone in this world is bound by certain law of nature, which the Philosophers call the law of Karma, which suits our Amma avargal fine. Pioneered in the field of Home Science, with determination, she started her work. One will find that our Amma avargal is committed to the subject. Acquainting herself with the latest trends in the developmental programmes, she became the member of a number of professional bodies of high calibre, wrote countless articles on various themes. The areas she has touched upon is very vast and we can say that sky is the limit for the subjects she has mastered. She became a regular contributor of professional journals, restructured several courses to suit the felt needs of the society and to prepare the younger generation for life. Our Amma avargal simultaneously made all the faculty members, scholars by making adequate provision with in the campus. Her life style is characterised by simple living and high thinking.

Any one who meets Amma avargal is struck by her determination and will power; the driving desire and vision; the untiring efforts coupled with hard work; the integrated approach and effective co-ordination; and the forceful action, co-ordination and the latest knowledge. All these made the conditions favourable for her and paved the way to success.

One cannot forget the innumerable trips abroad she made, to develop the college and the courses. She travelled extensively in other countries, studying the working of the welfare institutions for women and children. The knowledge gained from these trips, coupled with enthusiasm and hard work, resulted in all round expansion of educational opportunities for women at all levels. The institution started growing in size and strength. Here is a story of sacrifice spanning over half a century. Anyone who visits this institution, will be struck

by the spectacular and rapid growth of this great institution. Any one who meets Amma avargal is struck by the radiance on her determined face and is amazed by the dynamism of this messenger of women's education, culture and service. The college offers an excellent climate for girls to come out successfully in every area of education and development.

I am extremely glad to say that I am an old student of this great institution, which has earned great distinction and built an excellent record of programmes over nearly five decades. I had the privilege of learning under our Amma avargal for a period of six long years. When our Amma avargal is completing her 80th birthday in the beginning of 1999, I am extremely happy and privileged to say a few words about our Amma and the institutions.

One cannot count the number of orientation courses, refresher courses, syllabus revisions and workshops she has been organising. She has published a number of books on countless themes. Sky is the limit for the numerous research areas, she has explored. People from all walks of life - the national leaders, the scientists, the academicians, the educationalists, the artists, the industrialists, the social reformers, the politicians, the officials and religious leaders, every one has visited the institution and gave their blessings. The list is very long and the pages are limited and words are not adequate to express the magnitude of work done in the campus.

People from abroad as students and teachers were seen around the campus, students from others states and guests from abroad, everything was a regular phenomena in the campus. It was not only the temple of learning but a place of integration. The type of education we had received, was so purposeful and

meaningful. One cannot forget the regular features like the devotional songs and the daily prayers, the discipline and the punctuality, the teaching and the training given to students, the seminars and the symposia, the exhibitions and the displays, the study tours and the field trips, the extension work and the planning forum camps, the research work and the innovations, the guru pooja and the Kolu, the national festivals and the Founder's Birthday, the vanamahothsava and the counselling, the Gandhi Jayanthi, bajans, and the spinning, the buildings and the strictness, the huge library and the seminar halls filled with academic air, the UNO Celebrations and the people from all over the world on the stage, one can witness and the devoted teachers and their commitment to their duty.

The healthy food and the healthy atmosphere, everything, every incidence and every bit of my experience is still fresh in my mind even though I left the institution thirty years back, I am quite sure, every aspect in this institution has tremendous impact on the minds of every student, who pass out from this noble institution. I am quite sure that no student will ever get this type of education - a rare combination of formal education in an informal atmosphere.

As the education is aimed at channelising the student community in a positive manner, it was a life orientation given to students stressing the dignity of labour. Every year hundreds of students pass out of this institution with pride, will carry the message, the ideals and policies learnt here. Whatever they have learnt here, will have a definite impact on their career as well as personal life. To prove the fact, many old students of Home Science are holding rare and highest positions and ranks in and out of our country. All over the world, we can find the fruits of the services and devotion of our Amma avargal, holding leading positions.

It will not be an exaggeration to say that Amma avargal has achieved the purpose. From the fact that, she has won numerous awards and titles in recognition of her selfless services, for nearly half a century, one can understand the magnitude of her efforts ... so any account of growth and development of Home Science will be meaningless without the contribution of our Amma avargal. Once we the students were thrilled when we saw the photograph where our Amma avargal was sitting next to the then president of United States of America, late John F. Kennedy in a meeting, namely World Food Congress organised by FAO. That was the highest honour given to our Amma avargal.

Any narration of my experience in Sri Avinashilingam Home Science College will not be complete without a word about my teachers, a band of affectionate, untiring and devoted teachers of high calibre, involved in the noble task of preparing home scientists for future challenges in life. Words are inadequate to express my gratitude towards my teachers.

After five decades of unbroken service in the area of Home Science in the upliftment of women, our Amma is completing her 80th year. Even at this age she has an inexhaustible fund of energy, which will put to shame those much younger. Our Amma is a precious gift to Home Science and women. At this juncture, I wish and pray to Goddess Akilandeswari to shower her blessings on our Amma avargal. We wish that she continues her service to the society in the coming years. I have every confidence that our Amma avargal will attain greater heights of glory in future.

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# **GLORY TO OUR DEAR AMMA AVARGAL ON HER 80TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION**

**GEETHA GOPALAKRISHNAN**

**M**ay God Almighty shower His blessings on our Dear and Beloved Amma avargal on her 80th Birthday and ever after. Our hearts are filled with great joy during this occasion when our beloved Amma avargal would be celebrating her special birthday. It is certain that her students all over the world would be thinking about her and her valuable contributions to the mankind. Words would not be adequate to express her enthusiasm, deep interest in everything, sincerity, steadfastness in achieving the goals, and above all passion in the human beings. As an alumni, I am happy to write my impressions about her contributions towards my growth during the fourteen-year period of my life in the Avinashilingam Deemed University.

To see an object, it is not only sufficient that the object is in line with a healthy pair of eyes but the object must be bathed in a medium of light. As a teacher, Amma avargal brought the light of wisdom in understanding the importance of Home Economics in our own life and in our community. Through her teachings, she enthused many students to join the Home Science degree program. Her valuable contributions and significant efforts led the path for recognizing Home Science at the National level. Any time Amma avargal delivered lectures to us, we as students, were looking forward to many more such occasions as she would give us the collective findings from the community surveys and kindle our interest to come up with our own ideas to follow up for the future projects. She is a most remarkable teacher who gave many insights into the conduct of the community nutrition projects.

Needless to say how Amma avargal guided every one of us who sought her advice in our activities, with a great interest. She made each one of us in the department to develop good skills in teaching, tackling the problems of students, guiding the senior students and conducting the research. After I joined the Faculty of Foods and Nutrition as a staff member, I gained many such fruitful experiences working under her. She has worked very hard in getting sanctioned the fund from the Central government, the State departments, and the voluntary agencies for many developmental programs including nutritional feeding programs for the welfare of the community people, especially women and children. Many of us got involved in these programs, which gave us good training experiences and opportunities to work with Amma avargal. I should say that through this wonderful institution, Amma avargal has provided a conducive environment for all the students and staff members to acquire an integrated life of stable mind and steadfastness in reaching the set goals.

During the period of my career in the institution, I had the very best opportunities to work with her in preparing the manuscripts / articles for journals/ reports for presentation and so on. I was amazed by our Amma avargal's vast knowledge in the subject, systematic approach to the topic and coordination of thoughts in organizing the reports. This training which I received from her has guided me throughout my career period in the Institution and also during my study program in the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN, USA.

She provided me with ample privileges to enhance my professional skills through participation in the seminars / conferences / symposia within the campus as well as various other places. I felt very fortunate when Amma avargal accepted to be my guide for my M.Phil dissertation. She rendered many valuable and appropriate suggestions during the data collection, analysis as well as in the thesis writing.

Without adequate enthusiasm to our activities, it is rather difficult to remember constantly the goal of our endeavor. Amma avargal has always been the key person in motivating every one of us in achieving our goals. Amma avargal stood as an adorable teacher and a role model for the entire generation of students who completed their studies in the Avinashilingam Deemed University. I was very much inspired by the talents of hers in managing the daily activities starting from the morning prayer in the hostel till the end of the day which would go up around 11 p.m. and / or many times past midnight. Her continuous, untiring involvement in all the activities of both the hostel and the University has nothing to compare with. When I was staying in the hostel during the years of 1977-1990, I always wondered about the enormous strength and enthusiasm our beloved Amma avargal had even at that age. She stood as an embodiment of selfless efforts in any kind of activities. By looking at her continuous involvement in the growth and development of this very famous institution, I was motivated to follow the principles of righteousness and sincerity.

As we all know, external discipline provides positive dynamism which is the core of all moral living. As a true model, Amma avargal inculcated greater values of life through her discipline and devotion to duties. Through her values, I gained a strong inspiration to do my duties sincerely.

I am immensely grateful to our dear and respected Amma avargal for the very best opportunity she gave me in 1987 to undergo a training program for eight weeks in Women's Development in the Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, USA, along with one of our professors Dr. Sathyavathi Muthu. This privilege provided me a vast and memorable experience of meeting different people including Professors, colleagues and friends of Amma avargal. The

experience I gained through visiting various departments in the Ohio State University, understanding their community programs and life style of the people would never be forgotten by me. This endeavor wouldn't have been successful but for Amma avargal's enormous efforts and motivation.

I always remember the Christmas Greetings with New Year messages from both our Beloved Ayya avargal and dear Amma avargal, every year. With the warm feeling of affection for all, Amma avargal would arrange for a rendezvous in front of her house. The delicious refreshments and a memorable gift for every one would describe her manifested affection for all of us. Above all, her New Year message for each one of us would express her appreciation for what we did during the current year and specify the future goals to be achieved with the new perspective. There is no doubt that these memorable days of my life in the Institution are always cherished by me and bring me more pleasant feelings.

On the whole, our beloved Amma avargal has brought sun shine in all our lives. She has illumined the 'Light of Consciousness' in all our lives by which she has made us to become aware of various experiences. These experiences are sure to lead us in the right path of Humanity. The Glory she has brought to this Institution is Supreme and will be always remembered by all the people around the world.

**'May God Almighty Bless Our Beloved and Dear Amma avargal as Always'**



# **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH ON REVERED AMMA AVARGAL**

**T. BANOOMATHI**

**D**r. Rajammal P. Devadas is a simple and dynamic personality possessing admirable qualities required of a mother, teacher, educationist, administrator, philosopher, guide and philanthropist. She has brought glorious laurels to her family, College, University, State, Nation and at large to the world community.

She is an eminent Home Scientist and living Florence Nightingale radiating knowledge and inestimable service to older, young and new generations. She is a pioneer in the field of Home Science. All the Home Scientists will always remember her with gratitude who raised the status of Home Science to the National and International level on par with other subjects.

One of the most appreciable qualities of our beloved Amma avargal is remembering and recognising her old students and sending New Year Greetings with fond memories and blessings. She will also readily extend her helping hand to one and all without any discrimination. She exhaustively works for the benefit of people at the grass root level. The awards received by her from the National to International level reflects her supremacy in the field of education and research.

May God shower her with long, healthy life and much more glorious achievements in future!



## THE HUMANE 'TOUCH'

SHEELA RAMACHANDRAN

The train chugs along from Coimbatore to Madras, taking the sleeping train load of people into the still darkness of the night. All are asleep in the first class compartment, except one small form, who is poring over books and files she has brought along. From the opposite berth, I opened my eyes now and again, only to find this towering personality still burning the midnight candle. Yes! this was my first encounter with this young lady and even then as a fresh Zoology graduate, I was in awe of her. That night, I took it upon myself to simulate at least one fifth of her perseverance to progress in life.

Fate brought us together, only to pave my future pathway, for it was through her guidance, that I, a Zoology graduate, am a nutritionist today. Thereafter, my association with her has always revealed that she is a 'memory bank', not forgetting people, or things associated with them. I remember the proud day, when I received a photo with a note from the desk of Amma. Well, it was my first week after I took up a job at the institute, and had stayed back in the hostel for Diwali. This eminent lady had helped me enjoy my Diwali away from my biological home, and had taken a photo with me and her niece, Shuba. Promptly, within 5 days, she sent me that photo. This personal touch has been etched into my heart forever.

Anyone with any favours, problems, sufferings, misgivings, or what have you, could and can always approach her with an open mind, unhesitantly, when

she was a Principal, a Director, a Vice-Chancellor or even when she is a Chancellor. Which other official's doors are open to all and sundry?

It is this humane nature of this energetic lady which has facilitated her to be well-known national and international figure. And it is because of this that she is more fondly called 'Amma', for Amma stands for

**Authenticity of her words / deeds**

**Meticulous in her actions**

**Master-mind of national/international projects**

**Achiever with the 'Midas Touch'.**

A visit to her is a home-coming for all who know her!!!

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# **AMMA - MY MANTRA, AMMA - MY TANTRA**

SHEELA SIDHARAM

**M**oorty Chikkadadaru Keerti Doddadu the saying in Kannada means smaller the stature magnanimous the personality. I am trying to write about Amma - Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas - my Guru. In the works of Kabirdas

**Sub dharti Kagaj Karu,  
Lekhni san bana rai,  
Sapth samundh ki masi karu,  
Guru guna likha na jaya ||**

**(Meaning - Shall I take paper broad as earth,  
Shall I make all the trees of forest my pen,  
Shall I take the water of seven seas as my ink.**

Even then it is difficult to write about my Guru - Teacher - Amma.

## **Varadayini - A wish fulfilled**

It is the luckiest day of my life, when I had the first “darshan” of ‘Amma’ on 27th Dec. 1972 at Trivandrum during Home Science Association of India's biennial conference. My teacher Smt. Kamala Raman was an alumni of Saradalaya the Karmabhoomi of Amma - the apt name for the campus of Sri Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women, Deemed University, Coimbatore. Saradalaya, for past 5-6 decades, has been spring board for empowerment of women. The students are made great warriors equipping with weapon of knowledge from nursery class to Ph.D., to fight out discrimination in our society. Numerous ladies of various background - strong and weak, urban

and rural are given equal opportunity of employment to make a strong base to stand aloft in the stormy world, besides earning their bread. Kamala madam has told me a great lot about Amma and her noble life. She had sufficiently enthused me to take up PG in Nutrition at Saradalaya, the only right place for a student of such a calibre.

I made a self introduction to Amma, expressed my intense and sincere desire to take up higher studies in Nutrition at her esteemed institution. Very cordially Amma shook hands, tapped on my back an 'ashirwad' and said "surely". In 1974 I secured highest marks in entrance exam. I was taken aback at the interview, when Amma recognised and remembered me by name, after a lapse of more than a year. What a wonderful memory! My long cherished dream was fulfilled, when admission was granted to me and successfully completed my studies passing in I Class.

Amma, like a magical word, has greatly influenced me. Today I am humbly proud of being most successful, popular and able student, teacher, worker and consultant, striving to spread optimum Nutrition alongwith rich values of Humanism, Basavaism and Womanism, in my community or wherever I go. Every tiny praise of me is credited to Amma's account. Many precious noteworthy, followworthy qualities, thoughts and actions of her, have deeply impressed me. I am practising them even 22 years after I left Saradalaya. That is the open secret of my success. I wish and pray, every individual and institution make a note of these practices. For this is the only Technology for successful entry into 21st century. We have to preserve and practise the rich cultural and scientific heritage of our land, the only way to preserve and deliver it to our next generation.

**Punctuality** - Amma an untiringly inspiring teacher, used to engage Community Nutrition Class on every Thursday 3-4 p.m. during our M.Sc. course. We would be eagerly looking forward for her class. Amma, a versatile educational traveller, would be out of campus, most often out of India. But she would be in the class, right on the dot of 3.00 p.m. with radiating smile, freshness and fund of knowledge. The **technique of teaching** of Amma was unique. Whatever be the topic of the day, first she would enlist all the points that each student in the class would tell out. Then she would scrutinise, rearrange them systematically putting forth her points of view.

An able administrator, Amma would always get **solutions to students' unrest by students themselves**. One day in the morning prayer assembly, there was some disturbance. Amma called all CRS immediately after the prayer and asked them to list down on a paper and give her the cause of their untimely and indisciplined behaviour. She advised them to take more care to see that such things are not repeated. The practices and traditions in Saradalaya are nothing but indoctrination of Amma, a social reformer, considerate guardian, committed community nutrition worker, research scholar, in short, beacon light to students, teachers, women folk and mankind at large.

**Prayer** is made core of every individual as well as institutions, all activities in Saradalaya - the beginning and closing of the day, thesis submission, scientific sessions, deliberations, celebrations, Kalaivizha or study tour. Offering sweets (Kalkandu) to the students just before entering the examination hall was not only a multi powered 'prasad', giving them short nourishment too!

Students are engraved with taste for **hard and sincere work**. Though initially resisted, they would proudly enjoy it throughout their professional and personal life.

**Teachers** are strict, highly disciplined and hard task masters. At the same time they give lot of affection, care, guidance and appreciative encouragement to students. Students are individually introduced to VIPs. It boosted their morale. Once during our Nutrition Society of India's annual conference (1975), she introduced us (II M.Sc. Students) to Dr. C. Gopalan - the father of nutrition in India. He made an encouraging and indelible remark - "Future Rajammal Devadassess". No footwears are allowed in the library, the residence of Saraswati - the Goddess of knowledge - the penance place of every student. **Barefoot walking** not only helped to maintain silence and cleanliness but also evoked a spirit of sanctity of walking in temple. The footwears outside library or Shrine are always arranged in a neat line - good to look, easy to find.

**Dignity of labour** - The students in Saradalaya take up activities like filling drinking water drums, rearrange the books in open access library etc. They are paid in cash for their services - earn while you learn.

The **Students Union** body for the ensuring year would be elected and assume charge before the end of previous year. This facilitates them to take up students union activities right from the reopening day. What normally we find in other institutions is that students union election take almost couple of months after reopening of college. They have quite a short span between the inauguration and valedictory function. The office bearers of students union compulsorily be regular, outstanding, meritorious and talented students, not only to be an ideal and real representative of the students of institution, but also should be able to make up the study portions, which they may lose, on account of students union activities. No entry for illmerited, politicised student leaders.

**Cultural and entertainment programmes** are presented by students and staff members as well. The themes are time honoured, rich teachings, culture and scientific heritage of great people. Modern / Western meaningless misguiding movie activity, dance etc. are almost banned. **Indian culture** is practised, appreciated and encouraged even in costume and food. A balanced nutritious, cultural, vegetarian, economic, and hygienic cyclic **menu** with adlibitum feeding for hostelites. Similar menu for all the events that take place in the Saradalaya campus.

Compulsorily lights are put off by main switch at 10.00 p.m. in hostel, no candles, ensuring physical rest for healthy mental growth in students. Sound mind in a sound body. Amma and Ayya sent Deepavali sweets and crackers for **hostelites**, took us to midnight prayer on the eve of New Year and Christmas. This specially ensured parental care and sentiments. Saradalaya is a lamp given by amma to the human race. It is saga of human laboratory of successful experiments. It has set example how an educational institution should be brought up. Principal, a dynamic devoted leader, staff members relation is so transparent understanding and harmonious.

### **Thus Spoketh Amma**

“You have no right to fall sick. Students and teachers of nutrition should preach it through practice. Take care of Nutrition. Nutrition will take care of you”.

“Human sound pollution is sign of mal-nutrition. Fight it out”. “It is easy to be lazy. Laziness is your enemy. Students should be always studious”. “Create and leave the mark of your presence in the institution by your laudable meritorious

achievement”. Amma told this addressing the student gathering, appealing them not to sit and lean by the wall and creating an oil stain from their heads. “Boost your Biodata”.

We should keep in mind what Amma told on the closing day function of refresher course (1990) at Saradalaya. “This is the age of presentation and exhibition. We the people of Home Science (in General - Nutrition and Saradalaya product in particular) are master piece workoholics in various capacities and ultimately turning out to be great achievers. All your work and credentials be systematically presented to the world”.

### **My identity established**

My association with Amma is kept evergreen. I meet Amma almost every year at NSI meeting, the Teerth - Sangam (Holy Meet) for Nutrition Scientists. I feel her gestures and words are loaded with multiplied love, affection and enthusiasm year by year. I take students to Saradalaya as an essential part of study tour. I did one of my refresher courses here. Amma is the sole / soul source of aspirations to start students training and production centre (1980), Nutrition Society of India-Gulbarga chapter (1990), Clinical Nutrition and Dietetics course under UGC Scheme of Vocationalising B.Sc. degree (1995) and P.G. in Food Science and Nutrition in very near future. The training imparted to us at Saradalaya in community nutrition, service and welfare, the techniques mass / multi media approach, to identify the felt need, the vulnerables and commitment to work culture has been our great strength in all these ventures. More than dozens of times, I find myself in Saradalaya in my dreams too, probably my subconscious presence as student with routine and special activities and elegant experiences.

Gulbarga city was selected for UBSP (Urban Basic Services for the Poor) by UNICEF. I was incharge of nutrition component. UNICEF expert was highly impressed and greatly satisfied with my planning, execution and workdone. During her visit to the city, she specially invited me to see her in person. It was Anna Joseph. She asked me "Are you from Avinashilingam?". I humbly but with great pleasure said "Yes - 1976 batch". She gave me a hand and continued, "My doubt is confirmed". It is only Amma's products from whom we can expect such work. I am also from Avinashilingam, very senior to you. Her face beamed with co-feeling. It was Amma's link who converted, we the two strangers, into old relative of great stream of sisters from Saradalaya.

### **Amma my Mantra**

As a teacher, I keep on introducing and reintroducing Amma to my students, as a mother to my daughter, as social worker to all women to follow her foot steps, as Nutritionist to all scientist - to be a high achiever.

Whenever you face any trouble or depression, think of Amma. Your spiritual, educational, social and never the less physical strength and stamina gets multiplied to lead kindly light and deliver from the evil. Amma is Aadi Para Shakthi. Awake, arise, stop not till you reach the goal.

I earnestly pray Lord Basava to give her maximum, meaningful health, happiness and longevity. The world is brighter and more contented with her. We are eagerly awaiting to celebrate Amma's Shatamanotsava (100th Birth Day).

I bow to her feet. Hats off to Amma!.



# AMMA AS I KNEW HER

JAYASHREE ARCOT

I am delighted to have been given this opportunity on the 80th birthday of Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas, to share my thoughts about her.

My memories of her date back to 1981-1983, when I was doing my Master of Science course in Foods and Nutrition, at the then Avinashilingam Home Science College. Although she was not directly involved in our course, she supervised a number of students (in spite of her busy schedules) for their Master's thesis. Being an inmate of one of the hostels on campus for the two years, I had other opportunities to see her.

She was seen at the *Crack of dawn* in the shrine offering prayer everyday along with the inmates of the hostel. She was seen as a very busy individual who was travelling widely to many parts of the world. She carried many photographs and slides of the activities conducted abroad and were proud to show them to the students on her return. It often amazed me, whenever I looked at those slides, as she would have some with herself and past students living in various parts of the world. She made it a point on her trips to keep in touch with her past students and also be proud of their achievements! I can say here confidently that she is one of the few (all from Coimbatore) that is in touch with me even today, although I only spent two years of my entire 9 years of post-school study at various places!

I will not be doing justice here, if I ignored her professionally. She is one of the pioneers of Nutrition in India. When I was a student, doing my M.Sc in

Foods and Nutrition, she made me realise that Nutrition study is not complete without Public Health or Community Nutrition by making us students participate in community nutrition programs around Coimbatore. We were often asked to plan, execute and evaluate village level programs through Community Social Service conducted weekly. Whilst I often thought that it was too much to ask of us then, I now realise teaching and doing research in the same field, that I was taught well indeed! Students in the West do not certainly know how much they are missing out by, not studying Nutrition in India!

Her dedication to the community has been very well recognized not only in India but also in several parts of the world. Her achievements in the field of Nutrition have been made possible with the help of dedicated staff who have always been behind her.

**I take this opportunity to convey my respects and best wishes to her on this occasion.**

I hope and pray that she have many more years ahead of her to do all that she wishes to do for the ever growing institution which started small and is proud of being a Deemed University today.

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# MY TRIBUTE TO AMMA AVARGAL

RANI GEORGE

**M**y impressions about Amma avargal traces back to last 18 years in the capacity of a Post Graduate student of Foods and Nutrition (1980-82) and later on as a research scholar. Right now I am working as a lecturer in Nutrition in St. Ann's Degree College for Women, Hyderabad for the last 8 years.

As a proud alumni of Saradalaya, when I analyse my association with Dr. (Mrs.) Rajammal P. Devadas I have to admit that she had been the source of inspiration for me in all my endeavours for the last 18 years. I have studied and worked in different institutions. But I don't think any head of the institution has left behind such an impact on my life like Dr. (Mrs.) Rajammal P. Devadas. Her vibrant personality, ever smiling face, optimistic attitude, quest for knowledge, workoholism, eagerness for perfection, etc., (I guess there is no end to her traits) has influenced me a lot.

Though she has not taught me, I had the opportunity to listen to her lectures. Her clarity of thought, command over the subject used to make the audience spell bound. Her dynamic personality is enthralling.

One of the striking nature of her character that has attracted me is her simplicity. With all her international fame and acclaim and being a world renowned personality she is the simplest person I have ever seen. She is so humble, down to earth, absolutely unegoistic. This is also reflected in her simple life style. She is the most unassuming person, I have ever come across without any display of pomp and glory which she rightfully deserves.

Another fascinating aspect of her personality is her unbelievable memory power. I am thoroughly amazed at her ability to remember her student by name and their background. I always wonder how she is able to remember thousands and thousands of students. I myself am a lecturer now and I find it hard to remember the faces and names of all my students. But taking Amma as a role model I am making a lot of effort to keep a track of my students.

Every year at Christmas time I will be eagerly waiting for Amma's greeting card which comes very promptly with her own handwritten greetings and enquiring about my personal welfare. It amazes me how she gets time to attend to all this work. I have no words to express my feelings when I think of her love and affection. She is indeed a unique personality.

I also have the experience wherever I went, the very mention of me as a student of Amma avargal has immediately given me an edge over the other person and much recognition. Everytime I thank God that He gave me an opportunity to be the student of Avinashilingam Deemed University. This truly reveals the charisma her name carries which is a “bonus grade” (more than ‘O’ grade) which all her students receive and cherish.

At this juncture I cannot but mention the encouragement and impetus given by Amma to me to do my research. Everytime she comes to Hyderabad she makes it a point to remind me about pursuing my research. Thus I am highly indebted to her for my M.Phil degree which I did as a summer sequential programme. I am always surprised about her concern and personal interest she shows about each of her students even long after they have left the college. This is a rare quality which you can find in any academician.

Another vivid memory I have about her is when she visited our college in Hyderabad as a resource person and as an advisor for the introduction of Autonomy in our college in 1991. She was the main source of guidance to our Principal and her talks enlightened all the staff members in the college which led to the implementation of Autonomy in our college. I was proud to witness Amma being a source of inspiration and strength to our college authorities.

Now I have the privilege of seeing my students being trained in Avinashilingam Deemed University. They come up with reports about Amma and her multi faceted personality. I am sure she will continue to influence many generations.

Truly our Amma avargal is “Amma” to the very core. Her love and affection, her caring nature, individual attention she gives to each one of us makes us feel one as a family of Saradalaya and especially for me even after a span of 18 years. Indeed she is worthy of her title Amma avargal. I want to wish all the choicest blessings of God on her 80th birthday. My prayer to Lord Jesus is that He will continue to guide and strengthen and lead her in the days to come and bless with long life and good health. God willing she will celebrate even her 100th birthday. Her life is an epic, a saga which will impact and influence generations to come.

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# MY DEEPROOTED IMPRESSIONS ABOUT AMMA

VICTY MITHYLA

**A**s an alumni of Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women, I feel proud and happy to express my deep rooted impressions about revered Amma - Padma Shree (Dr.) Rajammal P. Devadas during this happy occasion of the celebration of her 80th birthday.

Amma avargal is unquestionably an eminent personality of modern times. She is a sort of rare creation with pleasing combination of many virtues and talents which have moulded her as a great Philosopher, a leading educationist, a true devotee of God and a perfect model to woman kind.

After the freedom of our mother land, Amma has brought about a silent revolution in the field of education by highlighting Home Science as a faculty to radiate its beams of light from many a home and to wipe the darkness around. She found it as a relevant subject suitable for women students to emancipate their body and soul from the bonds of age-old traditions. The educational thoughts of Mahatma, the father of our nation, matched with what the leading educationalist had chosen for her students, namely relevancy and applicability of Home Science in day to day life.

In the words of Gandhiji 'True education is that which trains not merely the heads but also the heart and hard. The Home Science curriculum she framed was a practical oriented subject with many lectures, seminars, debates, discussions, field trips, pleasure trips, and project works. Her philosophy was to

develop freedom, creative self expression and effective communication with one another. The scheme of education aimed at, was to develop a democratic society, by eradicating the artificial distinction of caste, creed, colour and race. Admission was granted to students from all parts of India and abroad which created an atmosphere of a well knit society of students. It paved way for communal harmony and international understanding. In her system of education, effective participation of students was anticipated and the personality of the student was respected. The pupil-teacher relationship was cordial and friendly. The curriculum promoted positive thinking, promptness in action and discipline, which prepared the students for a meaningful life.

The qualities which made her an efficient teacher were many. The value of punctuality, the educational morality and personal integrity, the spread of cheer, the exhilaration of love and the thrill of forgiving were echoed in her words and deeds. Her lectures were interesting as they were weighed with facts and many new ideas. Democratic atmosphere prevailed in her classes and discipline was maintained throughout. Thoroughness in subject matter and fluency in language were the prime qualities that discriminated her as a distinguished teacher. She discussed the subject in a complete, fruitful, genuine and rational way.

She called every student by her name. She has a remarkable memory power. As the Warden of the College Hostel, she always kept personal touch with the resident students. She participated in the daily devotional prayers and encouraged the students also to participate regularly. Sarvodaya prayer is a special occasion recalled with reverence. There were week ends when she sat amidst hostelites projecting the photographs taken in different countries she

visited and took pains to explain them in detail. Besides, she taught her students many things like “Life is what you make it”, “Make the best of every good opportunity that comes your way”. “Strive your best and keep on doing your duty”.

Preparedness to make effort, readiness to try new methods and promptness in execution of work were the vital qualities that contributed greatly towards her success. Time and money were never the barriers in accomplishing the work she undertook. One could see the lights of her office burning throughout nights and at times, early in the mornings too. Optimism, coupled with hard work rewarded her rosy dreams and ambitious schemes with success.

As a true devotee of God, she had been doing the multi varied roles thrust upon her in a perfect way. In this contest I recall the parable that Jesus said to His disciples. It was about a servant to whom a gold coin was given by his master and who went to a distant country. The wise man invested it in business and brought out as ten gold coins, when the master enquired about it, after a lapse of time. The master said “Well done, you were faithful in small matters, Be in charge of ten cities.” Dr. P. Devadas is one among these sparkling gems who gives account of her time and talents constantly and has elevated herself to dizzy heights by sheer hard work and tireless effort.

Besides, she is a strong believer of God. Prayer and meditation are her life's breath. Acknowledging God in day to day life and seeking His help in every step are the ways by which she has attained spiritual perfection.

Finally, she is a perfect model to women possessing all good qualities required. King Solomon, the wisest, says “How hard it is to find a virtuous woman? She is worth for more than jewels”.

**“She layeth her hands to spindle and her hands hold the distaff”.**

**“She openeth her mouth with wisdom and her tongue is the Law of Kindness”.**

**“She stretcheth out her hand to the poor and the needy”.**

**“Her candle goeth not by night”.**

**“She girdeth her loins with strength”.**

**“Strength and honour are her clothing”.**

**“She shall rejoice in time to come”.**

**“Her children arise up and call her blessed”.**

**“Give her of the fruit of her hands and let her own works praise her”.**

All these versus are applicable to Amma.

One can never repay her for all that she has done for the benefit of us. Considering her only as a gift from God and a blessing from above, we pray that God Almighty will bless her more and more and keep her safe and sound for many more years.



# **AMMA - A UNIQUE PERSONALITY**

**KALAVATHY RAMASAMY**

**A**mma has turned 80 and to think of all that Amma has done for us during 80 years of her life as an individual, a fire person, an academician, an entrepreneur and above all, a lady of vision who came to make a strong impact in this world. Amma believed that everyone born on this earth had a special vision and mission and in their own way they should contribute to make this mother earth a better place to live. Amma was born into a family of educated individuals, was traditionally rich and her siblings were placed in very high responsibilities as doctors, engineers and bureaucrats. Amma never wanted to get married and settle down as a house wife serving just her home consisting of her children and husband, her vision was much more. There was untapped passion in her which wanted to give and give to the society that had moulded her and she knew that the only way to do it was through education and that too through education for the girl child. It was a difficult challenge especially in the south of India which believed that a girl child's place was at home as the lady of the house tending to the needs of her family. Higher education was not in the plan of things for the girl child. It was a difficult task and Amma took it as a challenge and true to her vision she built the Avinashilingam Institute which stands as a fine testimony of her passion as one of the finest institutions of her time. Amma practised what she preached, being doctorate herself with specialization in her field of nutrition and with various degrees from every institute abroad she has kept herself abreast in her field by learning the latest and passing it on to her students.

student joins her educational institute, she becomes Amma's child and Amma closely monitors her moulding process as an individual and helps her establish her career for herself, she is actively involved in placing them in India and abroad by personally liaising with different institutions on their behalf. I once remember that when I was working with Aravind Eye Hospital in Madurai and had decided to open a NSI branch of Madurai, I wanted Amma to come and inaugurate the institute. I had finished my college and I knew that Amma had a schedule around the clock and was extremely busy, I thought Amma would not come and would send a deputy instead but to my surprise Amma personally came and did the inauguration, praised the effort and talked about it to whoever she knew. Such was her dedication and loyalty to her students. Everything they did was her own project and she did everything from her side to see that it did well. Today when I am in Dubai, a mother of two children with a job of my own and a home to look after, I realize that Amma has helped me complete my higher education, She had been a friend, philosopher and guide helping us at every stage of life.

Amma as a human being is the embodiment of all good things, she has a kind word and smile for everyone her doors are always open for advice. Anyone could walk in unannounced and she still would have time for everyone. She is a busy active lady who lives for others. Her days were always spent planning for the betterment of her institute and her students and today Amma's institute has education right from basic schooling upto post graduation and doctorate in the same compound. A girl child can start her schooling from basics and graduate as a Ph.D within the same facility, her education center is equipped with the best facilities of learning and the most dedicated staff who are specialists in their profession. All of them are highly trained and are exemplary individuals. Being

a student of that great college, I know how my years spent as a student in the college bettered my outlook towards life and moulded me as a responsible individual. That was Amma's unique characteristic. She moulded her students as valuable citizens responsible to the environment they lived in and that training today has stood me goodstead when I combine my roles as a career woman, a working wife and a loving mother.

Amma has ambitious plans for her institute; she is travelling all around the globe meeting people, exchanging ideas about her subjects and theories. She is also writing books on her subject for the benefit of her people. In fact she has become such a famous personality that not only the students in the great city of Coimbatore but also students from all over India are coming to her institute waiting to get enrolled in that great temple of learning. Her students are all over the globe doing extremely well, they are in India, the US, Far East, Middle East, Asia and every part of the globe bearing her torch and standing testimony of her ideas and ideals.

We, her student community, her own children as she calls us pray to the Almighty to give her many more prosperous years of life where she continues to inspire young minds with her ideas and thinking. Many more generations should continue to benefit from her ideals and thoughts. I once read a saying that "Some people make this world a special place to live in by just being in it" and Amma is one of them. She is one of the most beautiful persons I have ever known and will ever know because she has created such a strong impact in me in such a short time. Amma, in nature the unusual is always beautiful and that is true of you too because you are unique and different and nobody can ever replace you.

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# **AMMA - A RARE COMBINATION OF HEAD AND HEART**

**BEULAH SAMPATH**

**D**r. Rajammal P. Devadas, the Chancellor and Chairman of Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women is belovedly called as Amma avargal.

As the name indicates she is a mother, a friend, a philosopher and a guide and played a major role in building up this college, not only in size and structure but also academically in various fields.

Amma avargal believed that one can practise right principles even when pursuing material welfare. As an educationist she stressed the idea that every human-being would be fulfilling his or her obligations to the Almighty by educating one individual by removing the darkness of ignorance from the mind of the person.

Amma avargal is the builder and moulder of the future generation and had rendered praiseworthy service. She considered it as a duty and responsibility to guide and train the younger generation with a sense of selfless dedication and spirit of service.

She played a major role in mobilising and utilising the energy and enthusiasm of youth in the task of eradication of poverty and suffering through community services. She puts every moment to the best use. Amma avargal played a dominant and constructive part in introducing many projects or research schemes

to benefit the students. She gave importance to moral education which helps in the full development of the human personality.

This university aims to improve the status of women. Amma avargal took more and more efforts to make women themselves realise that they must work for their own development, and self - reliance is the quality that they must cultivate. This incredible woman stood shoulder to shoulder with men on a footing of equality and still retained the traditional ideals of Indian womanhood of modesty, virtue, peace, fortitude and sacrifice.

Amma avargal is a woman of intellect and intelligence. She is the storehouse of knowledge and wisdom. Her study of Home Science and Nutrition is so deep and vast that she is held in high esteem by the students and the staff. She is an industrious and admirable teacher of the institution. Her speeches on special occasions are really inspiring and thought provoking.

Amma avargal has published many books of her own and every book she has written and published, she had added a millimetre to mental stature of the readers. As a proud student of Avinashilingam I deem it lucky to have been with her, worked with her and also read her books and taken the best from her books like a bee from flowers. Her books not only teach the techniques but also add to the general knowledge of the students and enhance their self-confidence.

R.G. Ingersoll said, "One good master is worth a thousand priests", I have always felt that she was a true text book for her pupil.

**“Little deeds of kindness,  
Little words of Love,  
Make this earth a paradise,  
Like the heaven above”.**

As it is truly said, “Hands that help are holier than lips that pray”. Amma avargal upholds the ideal of “Help ever, hurt never” as her motto and never failing service of inspiration makes this University a unique one.

She outshines others by thinking honestly in terms of others and vows to fight for a noble cause. She is like a candle which burns itself and gives light to others. She is honest, sincere dedicated, firm, polite and well experienced. In short she possesses many great qualities of head and heart which go in making of a successful institution. This incredible person will be my model and yours too, to be remembered and followed.

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# **MY BELOVED AMMA -A PRICELESS PEARL**

S. UDAYAKUMARI

I am pleased to know that we are at the threshold of celebrating the 80th Birthday of our most revered Chancellor Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas, fondly known as Amma. I feel highly honoured to write a few words about her impressive contributions to Home Science Education and other fields, since I received a gracious gesture from my beloved Professor Dr. Usha Chandrasekar.

I think I am not worthy enough to speak about the great achievements made by this eminent personality, in the field of education. However, I decide to take up this challenge with a view to help posterity, which should cherish memories of all her laurels and accomplishments.

Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas, as we all know, had risen to great heights of glory by her sheer hard work and spirit of perseverance. In this context it is the duty of every one of us concerned with Saradalaya to thank Ayya, Dr. T.S. Avinashilingam, who had been a great source of inspiration to Amma. I thank God Almighty for the situations, Ayya permitted in my life that helped me to move in close quarters with this noble lady of high mental calibre. Hailing from an orthodox family, she respects traditions and conventions, but she is quite modern in her approach to problems. She had been an ideal teacher, all along in her career producing numerous ideal students. Many of these young stalwarts have occupied very high positions in society. The credit goes to her earnest effort; tirelessly moulding every young individual. She has been a source of inspiration to many research

scholars. She is a lady known for her patience, perseverance, steadfast mind, will power and determination.

One would really marvel at the way she makes a collection of books for our library. Her knowledge on any subject, during conversations and lectures would draw the attention of any type of listener. God hath lavished her with knowledge and wisdom that she is often seen thronging with crowds of people around her. She prefers to travel and lecture. Her erudite scholarship has won many admirers. She has travelled widely and encourages others to go abroad for higher studies.

Her charming and gracious looks are an added glow to her personality. She knows all the means and ways to tap the sources for financial aid. If this University has earned a name of reputation today, it is all due to our beloved mother's sacrificial love she has for this soil of Coimbatore. Her time, talent and energy are all contributed to the upliftment of this society.

She has her own set goals before her. About every project she has a clear vision and she moves towards that vision with courage and confidence. She has a keen analytical mind to see things entirely with a different perspective. Her actions are governed by the highest governing principles. Her ample learning, wide and varied experiences and gift of imagination give her a quite unusual power of comprehending and analysing difficult situations. She has the real creative ability in her that she achieves success after success in all her endeavours. Her vision for the upliftment of society not only inspired many voluntary agencies but also motivated the government to involve in rural reconstruction programmes. Her courteous behaviour and helping tendency have drawn many scholars towards

her. She is affable and hence she goes out of the way to develop friendship with people in various walks of life like bureaucrats, politicians and common people.

Out of her storehouse of knowledge she amasses people with her right information at the right moment. Her head is a channel for a perennial flow of fresh ideas. She has fear for none; therefore she takes bold decisions while she is at work.

She is influenced by great men and women like Ramakrishna Pramahamsar, Sharada Devi, Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi. She propagates “simplicity” as one of her ideals and puts it into practice in her day to day life, in her choice of food and dress material. Amma believes strongly in Swami Vivekananda's statement that “the cultivation of the heart makes one go to the highest plane, which intellect can never reach”. She is particular that Sarvodayam, the need of the hour, is preached and observed to train the students to appreciate the rights and privileges of others. Every hostelite is made into an early bird, like Amma. I am proud to say that this is regularly followed in my Alma-mater. So every student entering the portals of this holy temple, really benefits a lot.

Avinashilingam University hostel is a second home to the boarders. Every hostelite whether she is in abroad or in India will definitely cherish the golden memories of her stay in the hostel. A well balanced diet provided in the hostel maintains the sound health of the students. Disciplinary measures observed in the hostel would mould the students for their future life.

National celebrations headed by Ayya, a freedom fighter and Amma in her Khadhi sarees woven by herself and with the participation of all students of

our University is unique in its nature. It definitely helps them to develop a sense of patriotism, understand the cultural and spiritual heritage of this country, paves a way for national integration and to realise the importance of unity in diversity. Amma has the gift of foresight. Our University is a pioneer institute in the field of higher education - a women's college risen to a status of deemed University; an institute exclusively for higher studies for women; allotting marks to students' attendance; giving weightage in terms of marks to N.C.C., N.S.S., and C.S.S., computerised question banks and evaluation; continuous internal evaluation; question papers with objective type and multiple choice questions; imparting life oriented foundation and supporting courses; computer oriented courses to non-computer students; women entrepreneur courses, vocationalisation of first degree programmes, earn while you learn programmes; extension programmes; celebrating national and international days like breast feeding week, World Health Day in a most befitting manner and so on. All these innovative approaches have been possible because of the untiring and dauntless efforts of Amma. She is always young in her spirits and she is as young as her faith.

It is no exaggeration if I say that Amma is the main architect of our University which has become a resource centre for many international and national scientists for their higher studies and researches. It is the venue for international and national conferences and seminars and consequently staff and students of our University are fortunate enough to equip themselves with each and every recent trend in the field of Home Science. Every scientist is longing to be a participant of the refresher courses conducted in our University.

Amma is a good seller of Home Science. In 1988 she, an international scientist, readily consented to inaugurate the COSSIP activities of our department

at V. V. Vanniaperumal College for Women, Virudhunagar, where she motivated the gathering to opt for Home Science courses. Crores of children of Tamil Nadu are benefiting out of nutritious noon meal programme. Studies show that provision of noon meal influenced overall development among beneficiaries. The credit goes to Amma, the master mind, behind the blue print of this programme. Apart from planning, she also helps in execution and evaluation of the on-going feeding programmes.

“As iron sharpenth iron, so a man sharpenth the countenance of his friends”. It is because of Amma's ceaseless care that Home Scientists in India are able to walk with their heads raised high and occupy creditable positions in the society. Amma is a blessed woman with “Midas golden touch”. I don't hesitate, rather proud to say that she has great love and consideration for me. Saradalaya is my ‘Amma Veedu’. I am always happy and feel secured there. I take this opportunity to thank the board of elders at Saradalaya whose love for me and for each other has been a thing of beauty.

A lady of noble virtues is rare to be seen today. But a lady who puts her principle into practice is rarer still. Who will find such a noble person? She is far precious than rubies. She is a priceless pearl of our university. I wish my beloved mother to have a happy, healthy and prosperous long life. What else can I wish her? Seeking and soliciting with prayers to God Almighty to shower His choicest blessings upon my beloved Amma avargal.

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# AMMA -A WONDERFUL TEACHER

VILASINI UDAYBHASKAR NAIR

**A**s an alumni of this Deemed University, I feel it my privilege and honour to associate myself in the celebrations in my own modest way.

The present age has produced many men and women equal in virtue to Buddha and Socrates. They, however, did not win for themselves a position in the history of India. Many intellectuals of imaginative visions, who would otherwise be leaders of men, have been denied and deprived by their circumstances, of opportunities of distinguishing themselves. However, many of us have been inspired and influenced by Amma's good example which is just as powerful. "Example is better than precept". However excellent the moral sentiments we enunciate may be, they are not likely to produce the same effect as when we see them carried out in practice. It is this power of example that makes the choice of benefactors of mankind.

Amma is an earnest social reformer. She has devoted her life to alleviating the lot of the poor, miserable, down-trodden and illiterates and turned a benefactor of humanity. This University speaks of her unselfish devotion to public good. No sacrifice is too great for her in the cause of this University.

She is a wonderful teacher who has touched our life as few can. I wish her very many happy returns of the day.



# TRIBUTE TO MY EXCELLENT TEACHER

RAMAH RAVICHANDRAN

**“The highest reward for a man's toil is not what he gets for it, but what he becomes by it”.**

— John Ruskin

**T**his world from the time of its origin has been producing trillions and trillions of people. Some are remembered for all their contribution but the majority are best forgotten by the society. Even among those who contribute only some are rated as pioneers in their chosen fields. Here, as a proud alumni of Saradalaya, I am very happy to share some wonderful thoughts that occur to me about one such pioneer who is our beloved Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas fondly addressed as “Amma” by everyone.

## **A true Leader**

She is a true leader and exhibits the qualities of a successful leader in her thought, words and actions. The word she would often use in her morning prayer (both Hostel and College) was **“Excel”**.

With so much of force and conviction she would use the word **“EXCEL”** and her famous lines were **“We should excel in whatever we do”**. She meant every letter of that word, excelled in whatever she did, has been doing and will do, and in the process constantly motivates others to excel in all that they do!.

That one single word “EXCEL” lingers in my mind even after all these 20 years and I am able to understand and appreciate the whole impact of that line and how much it can take a person to a higher order of thinking and action.

## **Contribution to the World of Education and Women**

Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas started a college for women under the able leadership of revered Ayya avargal and at that time Women's education was very reluctant to open its door to subject like Home Science. Home Science meant only cooking to a large majority of population. But with her education and experience abroad, Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas could convince people that Home Science consisting of varied subjects like, Foods, Nutrition, Dietetics, Child Development, Textile and Extension could offer a very wholesome knowledge to women.

Gandhiji said “When we educate a man we educate only one person but when a woman is educated, the family is educated”.

Now imagine from the time of inception of this great institution how many families have been educated!. It is not at all an exaggeration if I mention that she is a pioneer in her field!.

## **Education and Extension**

Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas always believed that education was not for the sake of education and should never be confined to a college or a laboratory. But the knowledge and essence should be extended to those in the society and an awareness should be created specially in the villages about nutrition, child-care etc., the terms till then unheard of.

Through the tireless work she involved students in NSS, adoption of villages, camps and other extension activities and proved that social awareness and changes can be brought out by learning. Students were achievers in the sense that as they were studying they could impart knowledge and implement programmes and in return the villages around Coimbatore were the beneficiaries. This concept of using the Youth Power is more relevant today than any other day when the Youth energy needs to be channelised in doing constructive activities rather than getting involved with anti-social elements.

### **Scientist and a Philosopher**

She is a scientific minded philosopher. Universities around the World have conferred lot of degrees and doctorates on her and if she decides to print them all in her letter head, there will be hardly any place left to write. As a recognition of her pioneering work in her field of nutrition, international organisations like World Bank were ever ready to conduct projects in India under her guidance.

The very concepts of giving extra nutrition as supplement to pregnant women and pre-school children were formulated and promoted by her through various programmes like **TNIP**. This has brought down as well as prevented mortality rate among infants, pre-schoolers as well as death during delivery. She believes in bringing advanced technology and science to the end user. In all her Science Projects there is an undertone of Gandhian thinking and Ayya's ideals of extension activities.

## **An Enthusiast**

As a hostelite (1975-1979) I had the opportunity to watch and observe Amma during her various activities. We would observe her office room light glowing till mid-night or even later. But for the morning hostel prayer, she would be promptly present at 6.00 a.m. with that radiant smile that used to be infectious. I don't remember a single day when she looked tired, indifferent or disinterested in her work. Such was her total dedication in whatever she did. She showed others that hard work and dedication can bring success in whatever one did. Today we talk so much about HRM (Human Resource Management), in even those times she had been an embodiment of HRM. She would inspite of her work load would play with the students her favourite games like Lawn Tennis and Shuttle Badminton with the enthusiasm of a 20 year old and expertise of a professional. I often tell my children when we watch her on TV or in books that here is a person who showed the others what it is to excel in what one does.

## **A Guide**

She was my guide in the true sense that she guided my thesis work in my M.Sc. course. With just a glance she would absorb the whole matter and would give necessary corrections. She is a genius and undoubtedly an authority in her subject. I am very proud to mention that I as a student had the good fortune to have a leader, a philosopher and a guide for a teacher.

I am sure everyone of the students who have studied in Saradalaya have the same nostalgic memories I have today. Let us all pray that God should give Amma avargal the strength and good health to continue her service to the society with the same zeal and enthusiasm for years and years to come!.

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# AMMA - THE NOBLE WOMAN

R. KANCHANADEVI

**A**mma, the noble woman with great loving care made the institution very popular and famous in the country and the whole world. If students are proud to call themselves as graduates of Avinashilingam Home Science College, it is mainly because of Amma. The good quality of training not only in education but also valuable morale and the way to handle the challenges in life is possible only in this institution.

Hard working, meritorious students are appreciated and given opportunities on to succeed in their life. Amma has made achievements through hard work. Amma has set very good example for all of us. We are proud of her. Today Avinashilingam Home Science College has become world famous mainly because of her efforts. Amma is very active in all efforts undertaken by her and she is a very good decision maker.

Her speeches to students are full of valuable ideas delivered with loving care. It is a lesson for achieving good things in life. When I happened to stay in hostel, I admired Amma for her simplicity and presence with loving smile and approach towards people. She has given me positive approach towards life even in difficult situations and also greater strength. Usually there are lot of restrictions in the society for women to come up in life. But Amma has given strength for countless women, to achieve the things they wanted in their life and be successful in their life. Amma has proved to the society that the birth of girl baby is more precious and we need not shed tears.

The institution with its various branches and fields has very good infrastructure with efficient staff members and an excellent management by Amma. Here I would like to thank God for giving us Amma. We all wish and pray God to bless Amma with good health, great strength and happiness. I thank you all who helped me to share my experience. ★

## **A RESPECTFUL TRIBUTE TO Dr. R.P. DEVADAS ON HER 80TH BIRTHDAY**

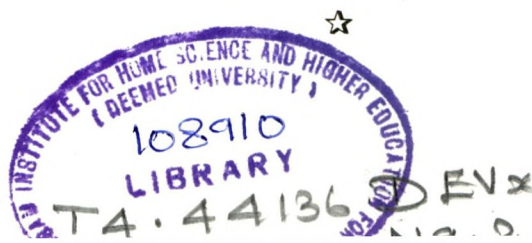
RUMA KHAUND BHATTACHARYYA

**W**hen I wander in my memory lane, I wait and think and ponder about my post graduate studies at Coimbatore, the person whom I remember most and is going to be glued in my memory is my most revered Amma, Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas. Though Amma did not require any introduction yet I would like to pen her as a scientist of international eminence, who has been spearheading the cause of home science and women's education for over many decades. Amma, with her incomparable missionary zeal, has aptly provided dynamic leadership in the state of Tamil Nadu, in the Nation as a whole and also in international arena. For me Dr. R.P. Devadas is the lady behind the most prestigious and unique educational institute of India for women - Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women (ADU), Coimbatore. Way back in 1980 I met Amma for the first time, the day I walked into Saradalaya for my post graduate studies. After a brief orientation on the Institute and course, Amma enquired about my home state and appreciated us for coming from Assam and choosing the institute for higher studies. From that day onwards, though we were very homesick at the beginning, yet we had a very cozy atmosphere there during our stay. My days at Avinashilingam was full of memories, where if I recall any incident I view Amma as a radiant source of inspiration for every single deed. Saradalaya was the place where I learnt not only the ABC's of Nutrition Science but learnt to inculcate the good human values, like discipline, punctuality, hard work, simple living, high moral value and religious harmony. The manyfoldedness of the institute, to aptly call it as an institute - "From Nursery

to Ph.D.” is really a centre of academic excellence for women of the country. All these had a meaning to all of us who had the proud privilege to be a student of Saradalaya.

All these could have been because of the untiring and selfless dedication of the entire family members of Saradalaya, under the dynamic leadership of Amma. Amma is always a person with heavy workload, yet had found time to regularly attend the morning and evening prayers. That taught me, the real meaning of life where “Work is worship”. I had the opportunity to do my Ph.D. studies at the same institute, where from the beginning till the end of my course of studies, Amma always guided me wherever it was necessary in a befitting manner and encouraged me a lot with positive attitudes and generous suggestions. Another aspect of Amma's life that inspired me a lot, was her simple way of grooming and untiring nature of work. Her days always started early in the morning and she can work like a youth till the late hours of the night. Whenever she is inside Saradalaya, I feel, she never retires, as Amma is a real workoholic - a person addicted to work only. It is quite natural that when a person is heading the deemed university, she may not be easily available or some protocol has to be made to meet her, but for meeting Amma, seeking her blessings or sharing and exchanging academic matter, for me it was always a beautiful experience. Amma always gave us patient hearing, whenever we are in need for it. Amma's action plans for the institute always worked like electricity, the moment you switch it on, would work in no time. I had the rare opportunity to view entertainment programmes by teachers, where Amma took part in a skit and groomed like a bridegroom, and the scene is still fresh in my memory. I am trying to pen here a few of my personal feeling about Amma; because of Amma's

untiring effort the family of Avinashilingam University is day by day growing with noble addition in the academic sphere. My experience at ADU taught me that love and respect each one whether rich or poor, help the needy, work hard and be pure in mind and body. What ultimately we have learnt from Saradalaya is - "If you seek, you shall really find". Amma's love and caring for her students as daughters gave me a life long experience. Amma wants that women should be empowered, they should never be neglected, and for the cause of women, amma always works at the right time, right forum and achieved whatever she wanted for the benefit of the women. Amma, who is great institution builder, can do wonder to the institution. With an unmatched missionary zeal, Amma has provided dynamic leadership, thus paving the way for planning and implementing several educational institution and health upliftment programmes not only for the state (Tamil Nadu) but for the country as well. Her ceaseless exercises for amelioration of poverty, malnutrition, unemployment, empowerment of women, etc. were always her priority areas to act upon. With all her dedication for the cause for women's education, she bagged numerous laurels, prizes, awards etc. At the ripe age of eighty, Amma is still working with full of vigour and strength. I as a student of Amma pray to almighty for her good health; May God shower His blessings on Amma to make her a living legend with much vigour and strength, so that the country will be more benefited in the days to come. With warm personal regards and tons of well wishes, I pen off here with a prayer - "Dear Lord! hear me a little, bear me a little, give my Amma your choichest blessing, keep my Amma in peace and happiness. Give her strength and health to serve the mankind for ever and ever".



## ABOUT AMMA

K.V. PADMAVATHI

The rare Gem of universe “Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas” has been elevated to the position of Chancellor of the esteemed Institution “Avinashilingam Deemed University”. Her intellectual contribution at the various sectors of national and international levels had brought her this prestigious position. I am very proud to say that she is the first woman Chancellor of our country.

Amma with a brilliant academic background is a leading Nutrition Scientist of international repute. Her untiring and unending efforts in the field of Home Science in India and elsewhere are highly recognised, appreciated, awarded and honoured. As a proud alumni of ‘Saradalaya’ I had the opportunity to listen to the awards won by Amma through these decades of her untiring service since the inception of this institution as a high school and its growth to the level of Ph.D. Hope a day is much nearer where she can provide the opportunity of offering the students to continue their studies until D.Sc. in the same campus.

Her membership in the various associations and organisations of world-wide recognition and the researches undertaken by Amma are a real source of inspiration to the younger generations. She has been the guiding force and the guiding torch for many, helping them to scale newer heights in the field of education for attaining Ph.D. and for the participation in exchange programmes at international level.

Wherever Amma is, her day always starts with prayer to God Almighty. Her source of inspiration is the belief in Divine power and her inspirer over all these years had been Late T.S. Avinashilingam Ayya avargal, the freedom fighter and a very close associate of Mahatma Gandhi, Ex-Education Minister of Madras Province and above all the founder of Avinashilingam Education Trust Institutions, Coimbatore.

A person with zeal, commitment and dedication for the cause of women's education is Dr. Devadas. Every member of the Avinashilingam campus, irrespective of age, designation and gender call Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas as “Amma” and she rightly does 100 per cent justice for that call by catering to the educational and other needs from K.G. to Ph.D. The secret of her health and strength lies in the balanced diet that she maintains (being a nutritionist) according to her age. She is a model woman for any one who wants to scale higher positions in life. Everywhere throughout India those colleges offering Home Science discipline have atleast two or more faculty members than others, but the fruits of Avinashilingam Institutions, because this is the only university that caters higher education in all branches of Home Science and nowhere else it is found in India. So credit goes to Amma avargal.

Catering to the educational needs of the inservice faculty members of the Avinashilingam University and other colleges through summer sequential programmes in both M.Phil. and Ph.D., conducting U.G.C. sponsored refresher courses, doing projects sponsored by national and international organisations, community service, 100 per cent internal assessment are the highlights of the Avinashilingam Deemed University, under the able guidance and leadership of Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas.

Hence, I take this pleasant opportunity as the alumni of Saradalaya to whole heartedly congratulate our most beloved Amma avargal, Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas, Chancellor of the Avinashilingam Deemed University, Coimbatore, for all her golden achievements over all these decades and especially this remarkable year as we are at the threshold of celebrating her 80th birthday. May God Almighty bestow her with many more graces and blessings also in the **coming** days, years and decades ahead of her precious life.



# THE RADICAL REFORMER

Sr. MARIAKAMALAM

The elite are all alike in their promises. It is only in their ideals and deeds that they differ. If I were to name those chosen few who had inspired the task of national reconstruction, my thoughts would quickly turn to Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas who is addressed as 'Amma' by all those who recognise her. The Deemed University 'Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education For Women' stands a testimony to the reputation of this acknowledged personality.

From 1977, I have known her to be a renowned Nutritionist and Home Scientist who had committed herself to this institute in all three eras of her leadership as a Principal, Vice-Chancellor and Chancellor. It is perhaps the institute's fortune to have crossed a milestone under the stewardship of such an educational philanthropist. Her relentless struggle had been undoubtedly the spade-work in obtaining the honourable status of a 'Deemed University' for the college.

Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas was a lady of undaunted courage and striking wisdom which were her instruments in actualizing the vision of her dreams. She aspired to popularise the idea of voluntary work among the students. She unceasingly emphasized on education based upon ethical, social and religious background in view of the serious lacks in our existing life values.

Amma's life is a glorious chapter of accomplishments all through the path she strode for the cause of the less privileged majority in India, the rural

சிந்தனைகளை எந்நேரமும் பேசிக் கொண்டிருக்கும் அவரது கண்களில் அறிவுச்சுடர் பறக்கிறது. அவரது எண்பதாவது வயதிலும் இனிய தோள்களின் தினவும் கண்களின் கனவும் ஒரு மாபெரும் கிரகத்தை உருவாக்கும் வலிமை படைத்தவை அல்லவா? இதயம் உருக இமைகள் கருக ஏறத்தாழ எண்பதாண்டுகள் காற்றுக் குதிரையாய் இந்தியக் களத்தை வென்று வருகிறார். நாங்கள் எறிகின்ற எந்த கல்லும் வானத்திற்கு வெளியே போகாது. எனினும் அவரது உழைப்பின் உயர்வு குவலயம் தாண்டி குதிபோடுகிறதே எப்படி?

**உழைப்பின் அசதியில் எங்களுக்கு வீடே**

**உலகமாக மாறுகிறது**

**அம்மாவுக்கு உழைப்பின் மகிழ்ச்சி**

**உலகமே வீடாக மாறிவிட்டது**

தீயை வெளிச்சம் என்று கருதி சிறகு கருகும் விட்டிலாய் வாழ்ந்த மானுடத்தை மாற்றி – சிருங்காரச் சிந்தனையை சீச்சீ என்று விரட்டி – அழுக்குக் கிடங்கில் விழாத ஆயிரம் ஆயிரம் தலைமுறையை உருவாக்கி உறவுப்பாலம் கட்டி நடமாடும் நம்பிக்கையாக – நல்லதோர் வழிகாட்டியாக நாடு போற்ற வாழ்ந்து வருகிறார் அம்மா அவர்கள்.

பெற்றவர்களே அந்நியமாகும் இந்த இயந்திரகாலத்தில் “அம்மா” என்ற தமிழ்ச்சொல்லுக்கு ஆழமும் அழகும் சேர்த்து வருகிறார், அன்பான வழிகாட்டியாக! இந்தப் பெண்கள் குலத்திற்கு வாய்க்காலும் வரப்புமாய் அம்மா திகழ்கிறார்கள். அம்மாவிடம் அமைந்த உள்நோக்குத் திறனும், உள்ள உறுதியும் ஊரே வியக்கும் உத்தம குணம் ஆகும்.

அம்மா அவர்கள் நிலவைப் போல இரவல் வெளிச்சத்தை விரும்புவவர் அல்லர். சூரியனைப் போலச் சுயமாய்ச் சுடர்தரும் ஆதர்ஷண ஜோதி ஆவார்.

வருகின்றவர்களை இன்முகத்துடன் வரவேற்று – விருந்து உபசரிக்கும் அவரது பண்பும், பெரியவர், சிறியவர் என்றில்லாமல் அனைவரிடத்திலும்

# **“AMMA” - THE VERSATILE PERSONALITY**

**N. SABITHA**

**T**he word AMMA has a magical power. It is the attractive word that is uttered by all children as soon as they peep into this world. The same word has a very under and versatile meaning among the women folk not only in Tamil Nadu but the whole of India as well as outside our country. The word refers to no one else than the versatile and multifaceted personality of Mrs. Rajammal P. Devadas, the Chancellor of Avinashilingam Deemed University, Coimbatore. She is popular not because she is the Chancellor of a Deemed University, but because she has become a part of every woman in Coimbatore. How can a woman become a part of the other women in a town? It is because of her varied roles as a teacher, educationalist, scientist, philosopher, guide and as a senior citizen. Her life has been a role model not only for women but also for men in society especially in Triple ‘E’ i.e., Education, Environment and Extension.

Any girl who joins her degree course in Avinashilingam Home Science College (as it was then known) will be immediately attracted by the smiling face of Amma as a bee is attracted towards a flower. The smile in her face is like the great perennial Ganges. Her enthusiastic and encouraging words will make any person feel at home. She will feel that she is only in her own home, when she is under the loving care of Amma. As a teacher and Principal of the Home Science College she has wielded such an influence over the students that they have felt they were always under the tender care of their own mothers. She would look even to the minute problems of the student in the institution and has made all the

students feel that the institution was not a home away from home but their home itself.

Today our beloved Amma has completed eighty years of age. Her life span has many chapters. In spite of her age she is always young, energetic and active. A voracious reader, she has mastered all the great writings of our national leaders and savants like Gandhiji, Vivekananda, Paramahansa, Dr. Radhakrishnan and others. She has authored many books on various fields. Most of them are on Nutrition and Dietetics. She has an insatiable appetite and an unending love for Home Science. If Home Science is one of the most popular subjects today it is purely because of the untiring efforts that Amma has undertaken all along her life. The importance of the field has become so relevant today that Sri Avinashilingam Home Science College has been upgraded as a Deemed University. This majestic University owes its origin and existence only to Amma. It is not only in this University that she has worked for popularising this subject, but also in other institutions. Today we find many institutions coming forward to offer Home Science and allied subjects as the main field of study in science and professional courses.

She has always evinced keen interest in the health and welfare of women, particularly the alumni of Saradalaya. As a Head of the department of Nutrition and Dietetics, Velalar College for Women, Erode, I had to shoulder the responsibility of establishing the laboratories of Nutrition and Dietetics course. I took a lot of advice and guidance from her in establishing the laboratories. In spite of her busy schedule in India and abroad, she readily accepted our invitation to come and inaugurate the Nutrition and Dietetics Association and address the staff and student gathering. She spent the whole day in the College with me and my students. This is an unforgettable moment in my life.

Her simplicity at all levels will simply astonish every one. Her high position in Society has never prevented her from coming down to any level to please and satisfy her alumni. I myself had all the opportunity of enjoying Amma's hospitality when I happened to attend one of the refresher courses organised by Avinahilingam Deemed University. In another occasion, Amma avargal was one of the chief guests at the Nutrition Society of India (NSI) meeting at Baroda. I was also one of the student participants who attended the meeting. Amma took all the trouble to be with us. She also saw to it that we got all facilities. This action of Amma reveals her concern for fellow human beings.

She will equally evince keen interest to help women. She would always see that all the facilities are provided to the participants in any of the programmes organised in her institution. Such is the care, love and affection that she would bestow on the participants, that even pregnant women have attended the programmes organised by her without fail.

Amma has travelled extensively nationally and internationally. The number of students who come every year from abroad to study at Avinashilingam Deemed University, is a testimony to the popularity of Amma abroad. She is a recipient of many national and international awards. She has played a vital role as a member of the Planning Commission. She took efforts in effectively organising the Noon Meal Scheme. Her efforts to popularise Soya food in Tamil Nadu have been great.

She has dedicated herself for the cause of education, environment and extension. While our politicians are talking of uplifting women only today, Amma thought and worked for the same long ago. Education to women has been in her

blood since her birth. This idea was given shape by our late Ayya avargal. But the dreams of Ayya have been translated and transferred into realities only by Amma by her hard, untiring, relentless and never ending dedication and hard work for the cause of society especially women.

Volumes can be written about the great qualities of Amma. She has completed eighty years of age. Her influence on this society particularly on women has been immense and everlasting. History gives the five examples of great women like Mrs. Indira Gandhi, Annie Beasant, Annai Sharada Devi, Mother Teresa and Tmt. M.S. Subbulakshmi who have attained great heights in their own fields. Like **these people** Amma has totally dedicated herself for the development of women in society and is relentlessly working for the same.

At this juncture, I am proud to say that the influence of Amma only has helped me to attain the present level today. If a person could earn the confidence of others so much, it could be no one else than our beloved Amma. May her service continue for many more years for the cause of women.

✽

## பாசத்திற்கு ஒரு பல்லவி

டி. கற்பகம்

அந்தியில் சிரிக்கும் செவ்வானத்திற்கு மெருகூட்டுகிறது செங்கதிர்கள். இதழ் பிரித்து இதயத்தில் சுவரம் படிக்கும் தேன் மலர்களுக்கு முடிசூட்டுவது நற் சுகந்தம். கருத்தடர்ந்த கார் கூந்தல் எனினும் அவற்றிற்கு அழகு சேர்ப்பது நறுமலர்கள். ஆம். பொன்னால் மண்ணுக்குப் பெருமை. கருவால் கவிதைக்குப் பெருமை. ஆனால் நம் மாதரசி அம்மாவால் அன்றோ பற்பல விருதுகள் கௌரவிக்கப்பட்டது. பட்டங்கள் பலர் போற்ற நின்றுது. பெருமைக்கே பெருமை சேர்த்தவர் நம் அம்மா அவர்கள்.

‘அம்மா’ இந்த வார்த்தையில் தான் எத்தனை சக்தி. தாய்மையின் முதல் சந்தம் தன் வசந்த ராகத்தில் சிந்து படிக்கும் முதல் வார்த்தை. அவள் மனதில் கோடி கோடி மின்னல்களைக் கொட்டிச் சிரிக்கும் கும்மாளம். அந்த உணர்வுகள் அத்தனையும் உருவெடுத்து வருவதுதான் அம்மா என்ற உறவு. நம் மேல் பொழியும் கருணை, அன்பு, காதல், பாசம் அனைத்தும் அடங்கிய தெய்வீக குணங்களின் நடமாடும் மொத்த வடிவம் தான் நம் அம்மா.

ஒரு பெண் சமூகத்தில் பெறும் வெற்றி அவள் குடும்பத்தில் பெறக்கூடிய வெற்றி. அவள் குடும்பத்தில் வெற்றி பெற்றால் தான் சமூக அந்தஸ்து பெறுகிறாள். சாரதாலயம் என்ற கூட்டுக் குடும்பத்தின் தனிப்பெரும் தலைவியே அம்மா தான் என்கிற போது அவர்கள் பெற்ற வெற்றியினை விளக்கவும் வேண்டுமோ?

“வாழ்ந்தாலும் இறந்தாலும் பேர் சொல்ல வேண்டும்  
இவர்போல் யார் என்று ஊர் சொல்ல வேண்டும்”

இந்த வைர வரிகள் நம் அம்மாவாலே புனிதப்பட்டது அல்லவா? சாரதாலயக் குடும்பத்தின் மிகச் சிறந்த நிர்வாகி அம்மா. ஒவ்வொரு மாணவியின் தனிப்பட்ட முன்னேற்றத்திலும் அக்கறை கொண்டவர் நம் அம்மா. திறம் மிக்க இந்த நிர்வாகத்தால் தான் மாநிலத்திலேயே மிகச் சிறந்த பல்கலைக் கழகமாயிற்று நம் பல்கலைக் கழகம். மாநிலத்தில் ஏன் இந்தியாவில், உலகத்தரம் வாய்ந்தது நம் அமைப்பு.

எனக்கு நன்றாக ஞாபகம் உள்ளது என் இனிமையான நாட்கள். என்னுடன் ஸ்ரீலங்காவில் இருந்தும் கனடா, மலேசியா, சிங்கப்பூர், மணிட்பூர் போன்ற பல நாடுகளில் இருந்தும் மாணவிகள் தங்கிப் படித்தனர். பன்னாட்டு நல்லுறவை வளர்க்கும் ஒரு சிறந்த கல்விக் கூடத்தை அமைத்து நல்ல பண்பாட்டையும் சகோதரத்துவத்தையும் உணர்த்தியுள்ளார் நம் அம்மா என்றால் அது மிகையாகாது. இதன் மூலம் எங்களுக்கு உலகளவில் நண்பர்கள் உண்டு. ஆயினும் இதன் மொத்தப் பெருமை அம்மா அவர்களையே சேரும்.

அதுமட்டுமல்ல அந்த வேற்று நாட்டு மாணவர்கள் (மாணவிகள்) தமிழ் கலாச்சாரத்தாலும் பண்பாட்டாலும் கவரப்பட்டு, நம் பாரம்பரிய உடைகளை அணிந்து மகிழ்வார்கள்.

அம்மா கல்வியை மட்டும் பெண் சமூகத்திற்கு அளிக்கவில்லை. அதன்மூலம் அற்புதமானதொரு நல்உறவை ஏற்படுத்தி தமிழக கலாச்சாரத்தை வளர்த்தார் என்பதை இந்த மகிழ்ச்சியான வைபவத்தில் நினைவு கூற நான் கடமைப்பட்டுள்ளேன். பெண்கள் ஆணிவேரைப் போன்றவர்கள் என்றார் ஒரு கவிஞர். ஆமாம் உண்மைதான். ஆலமரம் வேறானறி நிற்க ஆணிவேர் அவசியம் தான். ஆனால் அது ஒருவர் கண்களுக்கும் புலப்படுவதில்லை. சமுதாயத்தைப் படைக்கின்ற சிற்பிகளாக பெண்கள் இரத்தம் இறைத்தாலும் அடுப்படிக்குள்ளே அடகு வைக்கப்படுகிறார்கள். பூத்த நாள் கொண்டே புதைக்கப்படுகிறார்கள்.

கல்வி என்பது அவள் களைப்பாக கண்ணயர்ந்த வேளையில் கண்ட ஒரு பகற்கனவு. இப்படி விடியல் கனவுகளை மட்டுமே தங்கள் விழிகளில் சுமந்து கொண்டு நடுநிசி வானத்தின் நட்சத்திரங்களை தன் ஏக்கப் பெருமூச்சால் வெம்மைப்படுத்திக் கொண்டிருந்த பெண் சமூகமே உயர ஒரு வழிகாட்டியாய், வாழ்க்கையின் ஏணிப்படியாய், நகலாய்ப் போனவற்றை நிஜமாக்கி நித்யையானவர் நம் அம்மா அவர்களே.

கல்விக் கூடங்கள் காய்கறி வியாபார விற்பனைக் கூடங்களாய் இருந்த பொழுது ஓர் வித்தியாசமான வெளிச்சத்தைக் கொடுத்து தலைதூக்கி விட்டவர் நம் அம்மா.

இப்படிப்பட்ட பாறைகளும் பள்ளங்களும் நிறைந்த நிலத்தை பண்படுத்த அம்மா சிந்திய வியர்வைத் துளிகள் தான் அவருக்கு வெற்றி மகுடங்களைச் சூட்டிப் பார்த்தது. வாகைக் கனிகளை வகை வகையாய் வாரித் தந்தது.

அம்மாவின் பணி மகத்தானது. ஏனெனில் குதிரையை ஓடக் கற்று கொடுப்பதைவிட, கழுதையைக் குதிரையாக்குவது தான் மகத்தான சாதனை அதைத்தான் செய்தார். பாறையாய்க் கிடந்த பலவற்றை அம்மா லிங்கமாய்ச் செதுக்கினார். இன்று பரிசுக்கும் பாராட்டுக்கும் சொந்தமான பல உள்ளங்கள் அம்மாவால் பண்பட்டவை. இன்று பற்பல குடும்பத்தலைவிகளின் வியக்கத்தக்க நிர்வாகம் அம்மா அளித்தது. சமூகத் துறையில் நாம் நாட்டிய வெற்றிக் கொடி அம்மா தந்தது.

ஏட்டிலும் எழுத்திலும் காட்டலாம். எடுத்துக்காட்டு “அவரைப் போல் சுவரைப் போல்” என்று, ஆனால் எங்களுக்கு ஒரு நடமாடும் பெண் சிங்கம் அம்மா. அம்மாவின் கருணையிலும் வெளிப்படும் கம்பீரம். அவர் பொழியும் அன்பிலும் தெரியும் ஓர் அதட்டல். ஏன் கட்டுப்பாடுகளிலும் கண்டிப்பிலும் கூட மிளிரும் காதல்.

இந்த தள்ளாத வயதிலும் துள்ளல் நடையில் தெரியும் ஒரு மின்னல் வேகம். புன்னகை மறையாமல் பூரித்து நிற்கும் முகம். அந்த விழிகளில் நாங்கள் கண்டது பாசமா பரவசமா என்பது இன்னும் பலருக்கு விளங்காத கேள்வி.

என்னதான் அவர்கள் நம் அம்மா என்ற உணர்வு ஊன்றினாலும் யாரும் நேர் நின்று பேச அஞ்சும் அந்த வீரம். மொத்தத்தில் அம்மா எங்களுக்கு ஓர் அற்புத புத்தகம். நாங்கள் பார்த்து புரிந்ததிலேயே பூரித்து விட்டோம். ஆனால் புரட்டாமல் போன பக்கங்களே பல நூறு. புரட்டினால் போடலாம் புதியதொரு புறநானூறு.

தன் சொந்த வாழ்க்கையை தியாகம் செய்து நமக்கென வாழ்கிறார் அம்மா. ஒரு மெழுகைப் போல் தன் தேகம் உருக உலகத்திற்கு ஒளி வழங்குகிறார் நம் அம்மா. நாம் அந்த ஒளியின் பாதையில் புதியொரு பாதை அமைப்போம்.

இவ்வளவு பேராற்றல் படைத்த அம்மா வாங்கிக் குவித்த பட்டங்களும் பரிசுகளும் விருதுகளும் வெற்றிகளும் பட்டியலுக்கு அடங்காதவை. அம்மாவின் 80 ஆண்டுக்கால வாழ்க்கை எனும் வானத்தின் வெற்றி நட்சத்திரங்கள் வியப்பூட்டும் ஒளி படைத்தவை.

கோவை ரோட்டரி சங்கம் 1961 ஆம் ஆண்டு கௌரவ விருது வழங்கியது. ரஃபி அகமது கித்வாய் விருது ICAF ஆல் 1976 ஆம் ஆண்டு வழங்கப்பட்டது. 1978ம் ஆண்டு மாதரசிக்கு விஞ்ஞான சரஸ்வதி என்ற பெரும் விருது டெல்லி சாகித்திய சம்மேளனத்தால் வழங்கப்பட்டது. குழந்தை நலனுக்கான விருது 1987ஆம் ஆண்டில் அம்மா பெற்றார்.

அறிவியல் தொழில்துறைக்கான விருதை அண்ணா பல்கலைக் கழகம் 1989 ஆம் ஆண்டு வழங்கி கௌரவித்தது. கொலம்பஸில்

உள்ள ஓகியோ பல்கலைக் கழகம் 1992-ஆம் ஆண்டு அம்மாவிற்கு இன்டர்நேஷனல் விருது வழங்கியது. மஹிலா சிரோன்மணி விருது 1992ஆம் ஆண்டில் பெற்றார். மேலும் 1993ம் ஆண்டு Dr. B.C. குகா நினைவு விருது பெற்றார். 1994 ஆம் ஆண்டு USA வைச் சார்ந்த ஓஹியோ பல்கலைக் கழகத்தால் டாக்டர் ஆப் ஹியூமன் லெட்டர் என்ற விருதால் கௌரவிக்கப்பட்டார். (Doctor of Human letters).

1997-ல் WEC - IIEE - IAEWP சுற்றுச் சூழல் விருதைப் பெற்றார். அவை அனைத்திற்கும் மேலாக மஹாவீர் ஜெயின் விருதை 9.4.1998-ல் பெற்றார். மணிமகுடத்தில் வைரம் பதித்தாற் போன்று G.D. Birla விருதை மே மாதம் 1998-ல் பெற்றார்.

இவ்வளவு பெருமைக்குரியவர் நம் அம்மா என்ற நினைவே நமக்கு மட்டில்லா மகிழ்வைக் கொடுக்கிறது. அம்மா மென்மேலும் பல விருதுகள் பெற்று இமயமென உயர மனதார இறைவனை வேண்டுவோம். அம்மா அவர்கள் எல்லா வளமும் பெற்று அவர் கல்விக்கெனவும் சமூகத்திற்கும் உலக மக்களுக்கும் செய்யக்கூடிய இத்தொண்டு மென்மேலும் பெருகி சீர்பெற்று வையம் வாயார வாழ்த்த, வானம் பூமாரி பொழிய நம் அன்பு உள்ளங்கள் நெகிழ்ந்து நிற்க வாழ்வாங்க வாழ எல்லாம் வல்ல இறைவனைப் பிரார்த்திப்போம்.

அம்மாவால் நமக்குப் பெருமை கிடைத்தால் மட்டும் போதாது. அவர் வாரிசுகள் வழிவந்தவர்கள் என சரித்திரச் சுவட்டில் நம் கையெழுத்துக்களை இடுவதே நாம் அவருக்குக் காட்டும் அன்பு. அம்மாவின் பாசத்திற்கு நாம் கொடுக்கும் காணிக்கை.

**வாழ்க அம்மாவின் புகழ்.**

**வாழ்க வையகம் வளம் கோடி பெற்று.**



# உறுதி கொண்ட நெஞ்சினள்

நாகவேணி

‘கண்துஞ்சார், பசினோக்கார், கருமமே கண்ணாயினார்’ என்கிற வாக்கியத்திற்கு உயிர் கொடுத்து கல்விச் சேவையை கருமமாய் கொண்டு சத்துள்ள உணவுப்புரட்சி செய்து பணி தொடங்கிய நாள் முதற்கொண்டு இன்றுவரை சோர்வைப் புறம் தள்ளிவிட்டு, ஓய்வுக்கு ஓய்வு கொடுத்து ஒப்பற்ற சேவைதனை செயல் ஆற்றி வந்து கொண்டிருக்கிறவர், அன்புக்கும் வணக்கத்துக்கும் உரியவர் அம்மா அவர்கள்.

கல்லூரியாய் (1982-ல்) இருந்தபோது கால்வைத்து, பல்கலைக் கழகமாய் (1990-ல்) பரிணமித்த பின்பு வெளியே வந்தவள் நான். என் பார்வையில், என் எண்ணத்தில் ‘அம்மா’ எப்படித் தெரிந்தார்; எப்படி அறியப்பட்டார் என்பதைச் சொல்ல எனக்குக் கிடைத்த இவ்வரிய வாய்ப்பிலே சொல்ல என் பேனாவை ஆயத்தமாக்கி தொடங்குகிறேன்.

‘எட்டுத்திக்கும் செல்வீர், கலைச் செல்வங்கள் கொணர்ந்திங்கு சேர்ப்பீர்’ என்ற மகாகவியின் வார்த்தைகளுக்கு செயல்வடிவம் கொடுக்கும் உன்னதப் பணியினை ஆற்றி வருபவர் ‘அம்மா’ என்று சொல்லலாம்.

அம்மாவின் புன்னகை ததும்பும் முகம் எப்போதும் பூரிப்புடன் ‘இளமை என்பது’ இந்த வயதிலும் கூடத்தான். அதாவது எண்ணங்களைச் செயலாற்ற எண்பதிலும் எண்ணிரண்டு வயதினைப் போல் மிகமிக சுறுசுறுப்புடன் உற்சாகத்துடன் ஏன் உறுதிமாறா உள்ளத்துடன் செயலாற்றும் விதம் நம்மை அதிசயிக்க வைக்கிறது. இதிலிருந்து இயலாமையை இல்லாமையாக்கும் அவர் பாணி நம்மை ஆச்சரியப்பட வைக்கிறது.

கல்லூரி (கல்வி நிறுவனத்தின்) அம்மாவைப் பற்றி நினைக்கையில் குடும்பப் பல்கலைக்கழகத்தின் பாசமிகு அன்புடன் கூடிய அந்த அம்மாவின் முகத்திற்கு முன்னதாக நேசமிகு பண்புடன் கூடிய இந்த அம்மாவின் முகமே நினைவுக் கண்முன் வந்து நிற்கிறது.

தேசப்பற்று மிக்க இவர் கல்விப் பணியுடன், சமூகப் பணியுடன், ஆன்மீக நாட்டத்தையும் அதுவும் சமதர்ம பேதமற்ற ஆன்மீக எண்ணத்தையும் கல்வி பயில வரும் ஒவ்வொரு மாணவியிடத்திலும், பயிற்றுவிக்கும், இதர பணிபுரிபவரிடத்திலும் புகுத்துவதன் மூலம் இச் சமுதாயத்தை அது சென்றடைய வகை செய்து நேரடியாய் கல்வி அறிவையும் உடன் சமதர்ம ஆன்மீக நாட்டத்தையும் மறைமுகமாய் தேசப்பற்றையும் பரப்பி வருகிறார்.

“பாவையாய் இருந்தால்  
பதுமையாகிவிட வேண்டுமா என்ன?  
பார் இங்கு பலப்பல  
புதுமைகளை கொணர்ந்தே  
பாரதத்தின் பெருமைகளை  
பாருக்குள் பரப்பிட நானென  
பாராட்டுக்கள் அம்மாவுக்கு  
குவிந்த வண்ணம் அனுதினமும்”

‘அம்மா’ மாணவியர் எமக்கு அறிமுகப்படுத்தப்பட்டார். 1982-ல் நான் பட்டப் படிப்பை தொடங்கிய அன்று எல்லா கல்வி நிறுவனங்களுக்கும் இருக்கும் நிறுவனர் போல் இவரும் ஒருவர் என வித்தியாசமின்றி எண்ணத்தில் இருத்தினோம் நாங்கள். படித்துக் கொண்டிருந்த வேளையில் பறந்தார் பல நாடுகளுக்கும். சகஜம் தானே என்று சாதாரணமாய் எடுத்தோம். ஆனால், பாரதத்தின் பிரதிநிதியாய் பிரதிபலித்தார் என்று பின்புதான் அறிந்தோம். அற்புதமாய் அயல் நாடுகளில் ஆற்றும் பணிகேட்டு விக்ரித்துப் போனோம். அய்யா அவினாசிலிங்கம் அவர்கள் நினைவுகளை நிதர்சனமாக்க நித்தமும் தன் யுத்தியினைக் கையாண்டு கல்லூரியாய் இருந்ததைப் பல்கலைக்கழகமாய் பரிணமிக்க வைத்தார்.

சமூகக் கல்லூரியை நிறுவி சுயவேலைவாய்ப்பையும் தருவதோடு, தன்னம்பிக்கை என்ற தாரக மந்திரமாய்க் கொண்டு, தரணியெங்கும் வெற்றிக்கு அதுவே பெருந்துணை என்று பறைசாற்றிய சுவாமி விவேகானந்தரின் கொள்கைகளை இந்த விஞ்ஞான நூற்றாண்டின் கணிப்பொறி, கணமொரு மாற்றம் தருகின்ற இந்த கலியுகத்தில் இன்றும் தன்னம்பிக்கை கொண்டு தன் உயர்வையும், தன்னால் கல்வி நிறுவன உயர்வையும் தன்னுடனிருந்து உயர்வடைந்திருக்கும் ஆசிரியப் பெருமக்களையும் அவர் வழி உயர்வடைந்து இச்சமுதாயத்திலே தனி இடம் பெற்று சமுதாயத்தையே வித்தியாசமான நடைபாதையில் வெற்றி நடைபோட தன்னம்பிக்கையே சிறந்ததென்று தத்துவ எடுத்துக் காட்டாய்த் திகழுகிறார் நம் அம்மா.

“அக்கினிக் குஞ்சொன்று கண்டேன் அதை ஆங்கோர் பொந்திலிட்டேன் .... வெந்து தணிந்தது காடு” என்று பாடினாரே புரட்சிக்கவி பாரதிதாசன். அவர் சொன்ன அந்த “அக்கினிக் குஞ்சு” நமது அம்மாவே என ஐயமின்றித் தெரிகிறது.

கல்லூரியிலே நான் பயின்ற காலத்திலே நடந்த சுதந்திர தின நிகழ்ச்சி. குடியரசு தின நிகழ்ச்சி, சர்வோதய நாள் நிகழ்ச்சி, காந்தி ஜெயந்தி நாள் நிகழ்ச்சி என இத்யாதி, இத்யாதி நிகழ்ச்சிகளிலெல்லாம் ‘அம்மா’ அவர்கள் இருந்து நடந்த நிகழ்ச்சிகளில் தேசப்பிதா மகாத்மா காந்தியடிகளின் பால் தான் கொண்டிருந்த பக்தியை வார்த்தைகளில் வெளிப்படுத்தி தன் சுதந்திர வேட்கையை முகத்திலே தெளிவுபடுத்தி தேசத்தின் மீது கொண்டிருந்த நேசத்தை நிதர்சனப்படுத்தி அஹிம்சைக்கும் ஆன்மீகத்துக்கும் தன் மனம் எப்படி ஈர்க்கப்பட்டது என்பதை அறிவித்து இணையற்ற இந்தியப் பெண்ணாய் இம்மண்ணிலே ‘தன் கடன் பணி செய்து கிடப்பதே’ என நிச்சயப்படுத்திய அம்மாவின் உரைகளை மறக்கவும் கூடுமோ.

நான் கல்லூரி மேடையிலே பேசிய காலங்களில் என்னை ஊக்குவித்த அம்மாவைப் பற்றிச் சொல்ல என் நா படும்பாட்டை என் பே'னா'வும் எழுத மறுக்கிறது. அதுவும் ஒருமுறை அம்மாவே நடுவராய் இருந்து, மகளிருக்காக வெளிவரும் பத்திரிக்கை நடத்திய 'இது ஆண்கள் உலகமா' எனும் தலைப்பில் நடந்த பட்டிமன்றத்திலே 'இல்லை' எனும் அணியில் வாதிட வாய்ப்புக்கிட்டிய போது அவர் அளித்த தீர்ப்பைக் கேட்டு திறமையாய் வெளியிட்ட கருத்துக்களைக் கேட்டு அந்த சிந்தனை மழையில் நனைந்து "ஆணுக்கு பெண்ணிங்கு இளைப்பில்லை காண்" என்ற பாரதியின் வரிகளை உறுதிப்படுத்திய வார்த்தைகள் அவரை பாரதியின் புதுமைப் பெண்ணாய் என் பார்வையில் கொணர்ந்து நிறுத்தியது.

உழைப்பையும், உறுதியையும் ஊக்குவிப்பையும் கண்டு பாராட்டாதவர்கள் உண்டோ? அவர் அயரா உழைப்பிலே, அரிய சேவையிலே, உயர்ந்த அக் கல்லூரியின் மாணவி என என்னைச் சொல்லிக் கொள்வதிலே நான் பெருமைப்பட்டுக் கொண்டிருக்கிறேன்.

ஆன்மீகத்தை அதுவும் பேதமற்ற சமதர்மம் கொண்ட பரமஹம்சரின் பக்தியை சாரதாதேவியின் சத்திய மகளாய் விவேகானந்தரின் தத்துவப் புயலாய் கல்வியைப் பரப்பும் கலைப்பணியில், சமுதாயத்தை சீர்படுத்தும் சேவைக் களஞ்சியமாய் "முயற்சி திருவினையாக்கும்" என்பதை உறுதிப்படுத்தி "மாதராய்ப் பிறப்பதற்கு மாதவம் செய்திட வேண்டுமம்மா" என இம்மாதாவைப் பார்த்து அவரின் உறுதியைக் கண்டு அனைவரும் அதிசயிக்க வைக்கும் சுயநலம் கருதாத 'அம்மா' நமக்கு தத்துவ மேதையாய் தேச பக்தையாய் நல் எடுத்துக்காட்டாய் விளங்குகிறார் எனச் சொன்னால் அது ஐயமில்லை.

**வாழ்க; வளர்க அம்மா! தொடர்க அவர் பணி!**

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# MORNING STAR OF WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND ENLIGHTENMENT

TARA THOMAS

**“No one lights a lamp and then hides it or puts it under a bowl: instead, he puts it on the lampstand, where it gives light for everyone in the house”**

- Bible

**W**e see a lamp kept on the stand spreading light of knowledge and enlightenment - chasing out ignorance and freeing Indian women from the bondage of illiteracy and emancipation. This light was lighted as a tiny lamp in a small village “Kallikulam” of Tirunelveli, in Tamil Nadu from the members of our great cultural heritage. Today, it is shining like a morning star to guide innumerable girl children born in India and Indian women - rural as well as urban - throughout the length and breadth of our great country.

During my student days, at Women's Christian College, Madras, I had heard a lot about the dynamism and leadership qualities of Amma avargal, who was the spokes woman for the cause of students as well as Home Scientists. I joined Directorate of Extension during 1972, after my studies. Amma had left the Directorate by then to make her dream and vision of a great educational institution for women come true. I was told by many in the Directorate about the dedication, sincerity and foresight of Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas, who had held the post of Joint Director (Women's programme) of Directorate of Extension. Under her able leadership and guidance, women's programmes of Directorate blossomed, reaching out to the farm women of our country. Even today she is remembered as the force behind getting several projects and programmes

sanctioned for farm women. It is unfortunate for the Directorate that she had to leave it but it was a great boon for the field of education especially for Indian women.

Though I had heard a lot about Amma. I met her for the first time at our office at Bangalore in 1975 only. At that time, I was hesitant even to go near her and converse with her. But to my pleasant surprise, I found her very simple, unassuming and cordial. Thereafter, I met her on many occasions at various meetings, conferences and seminars. Her simple but forceful speeches, were full of practical aspects on education, health and rural development based on her vast and varied experience. Emphasis was invariably on the necessity of exposing our younger generation to the hard facts of life especially that of those living in our villages. She guides and helps staff and students of Avinashilingam University about this philosophy of life by getting first hand information through adult literacy classes, rural extension work undertaken by the departments of the University.

Though a scientist of international repute, she is first a human being to all her students, friends and acquaintances. She goes out of her way to make them feel at home in the company of dignitaries and other important officials. On one such occasion, we were invited for dinner by the second Secretary of Netherlands Embassy. Dr. Devadas made it a point to introduce me to the dignitaries and made me feel at home with them.

I have great appreciation for her memory power. Once she meets a person, she invariably remembers the person with name on the very next occasion. It is very rare to find someone as busy and involved in so many activities as Amma and yet prompt in replying letters and keeping contact. One can be sure to

get a reply from her atleast within a fortnight. While I was at the campus of the University I observed that Amma was able to draw the best out of her staff as well as students. I feel that her principle “Work is Workship” is totally imbibed by every member of the University. It is a common sight to see Amma, engrossed in three to four items of work at the same time.

Her untiring efforts and dedication towards the cause of women's education started bearing fruits when the small Home Science College that was started in 1957 expanded to a full fledged Deemed University. I was one of the lucky few working women, who had the opportunity to register for Ph.D. during 1989 as a part time scholar at the University in different disciplines of Home Science. I considered this a very rare opportunity for all of us, who had obtained our Post Graduate degree more than 15-20 years back. I was full of anxieties and apprehensions about completing my research and getting a doctorate degree. As a middle aged, married working woman with three school going children, I faced several adversities before I was able to complete my research work. The enormous support and encouragement of Amma, as well as the objective, extensive and excellent guidance of my guide, Dr. Usha Chandrasekhar, enabled me to complete my research work.

Thus Amma avargal is the personification of everything of an Indian woman that modern India has ever seen. She is the Indian woman that the great poet, Bharathiar has dreamt about. Her innumerable contribution towards the cause of Indian woman need to be written in golden letters. Present day women in politics and social work, who clamour for money, position and power with selfish motives should take lead from Amma's simple way of life with high thinking. For her “Work is Workship” and her creed and deed are one hundred per cent genuine.

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# **AMMA - "THE HAILED WONDER WOMAN - NEXT TO NONE"**

**N. KALPANA**

I felt elated when I was asked to pen down my impressions about the great personality; at the same time, I also felt whether I have the acumen to write about Amma, an adept person. But I would like to grasp this opportunity to bring out the best of her according to me from the deep waves of my mind.

When I entered Saradalaya as a young student in 1986, I was really worried about my future, as I had to quit my professional course at P.S.G. College of Technology on personal grounds. I chose to study B.Sc. Nutrition, Food Service Service Management and Dietetics as per my mother's wish. I am proud to say that she is an alumni of our University. I felt ashamed to tell my friends that I have joined Home Science course, as we all had a wrong impression that, "Home Science is just cooking". In a totally addled state I went for the orientation course on the first day, June 29th, 1986. Amma's speech made me realise exactly what is Home Science and what are we expected to do in the coming years. From then on, the positive scale scored very high. That was the first time I saw her. Her speech was so inspiring. I wondered how come a hardly five feet figure can mesmerise thousands of students.

Subsequently I had the chance to listen to her atleast once a week during the students' assembly. Most of the time, it would be a felicitation for her countless achievements. I feel proud to have met many celebrities who were invited to our University. My friends from other colleges really envied, when I told them about their visits. I strongly feel that no other person than her would have made it possible to bring our University to limelight.

As a student I did not have close acquaintances with her, but used to admire her with a fearful respect at an eye's distance. After completion of my Master's degree in Philosophy in 1992, I was lucky enough to get the opportunity to teach in the same campus. This granted me the privilege to listen to her more closely a couple of times each week in the staff assembly and each time I could grasp a piece of information which had helped to groom myself. Among many of her adorable qualities I admire, I keep wondering till date how come she is able to send New Year greetings to all the members of the Saradalaya every year, while writing letters to a handful of friends is a Himalayan task for me. I still treasure the first greeting card received from her.

I am able to vividly revive from memory, my stay at Calcutta to attend the Indian Science Congress in December 1994 - January 1995. Amma personally had arranged for our accommodation and conveyance outside the Congress grounds. We had a commodious stay at Balikunj, a posh residential area. We felt very lucky when we heard the other members say that they had to wait in long queues to have a wash in the rest room. This made me understand her yet another quality, "the personal care and affection." she provides to each individual known to her. Amma joined us during the local sight-seeing trip. This led me to know how amiable she is. Amma, in her seventies, was so energetic and cheerful all through the day as compared to myself, in my twenties felt tired by the end of the day. This proves that she is a real nutritionist with a great mental strength. My ardent desire in life was to meet Mother Teresa, which was fulfilled by Amma's effort. With great difficulty, she got permission to meet Mother Teresa though visitors were restricted due to her ill health. She blessed each one of us and I was fortunate to stand beside two internationally renowned people and take a photograph of it to cherish my memories in the times to come. I consider this incident as a perpetuity forever.

In 1996, I had to quit my job to join my husband in Singapore. When I met Amma to seek her blessings, she said, "Please leave your address with my personal assistant". To my surprise I had the chance to meet Amma in June 1997, when she was on transit in Singapore on her way to Australia. When I invited her for dinner, she immediately agreed. As I prepared the dinner, I was very jittery and felt like an entrant in the cookery contest. Amma spent nearly two hours of her priceless time with us at our home. Though an abstemious eater, Amma is a great connoisseur of good food. I was enraptured when she relished the preparations. She browsed through the calorie reckoner of Singapore foods released by the Ministry of Health, Singapore, lying along with other magazines. She immediately made a note of it in her diary and said, "Why not we prepare one for our State Tamil Nadu?" I was amazed at her acumen. All her thoughts and deeds are time and again inclined towards the upliftment of our University. When she took my year old son and cuddled him, I could see my biological mother in her. My son has the proud privilege of being blessed by the international doyen of Nutrition. In spite of her busy schedule, she did not forget to send me copies of the photographs taken at our home during her visit.

Recently, on September 6th 1998, I met her and she has kindly consented to come home in October during her trip back to India. I am looking forward for her arrival. To be honest, to write about Amma, I had to dig deep for superlatives which had not been used so far. To my despair, I couldn't find one. Amma is like an ever-bright star in a large galaxy and I wish that she would shine more brightly and be blessed with fine fettle at present and in the fast approaching millennium.

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## **“AMMA” - A PHENOMENON**

**BRAHASHITA GUPTA**

**“If only God gave us a Boon, we would ask for our College Days back”**

**T**he very first word, uttered by every human being is ‘ma’. The word ‘ma’ holds a lot of meaning in it. ‘Ma’ means ‘love’, ‘Ma’ means ‘care’, ‘Ma’ means ‘teacher’, ‘Ma’ means ‘wise’, ‘Ma’ means ‘everything’. Like a little baby surrendering to its mother, like a child loves the mother wholeheartedly, we the students of Avinashilingam University love, obey and follow the footsteps of our Amma avargal.

It's only 2 years since I left the university, but my memories and experiences are still fresh in my heart. “There is one thing constant in this world, and it is ‘change’. Things change, but we do not change!”. We may live in new far-off lands, we may live thousands and thousands of miles away, we may breathe in these scent of new air, we may come across hundreds of people every day, we may change our lifestyles, but, it doesn't mean we have left our values and thrown away our teachings. We're still Indians. We're still a product of Avinashilingam!!

We had a great time at Avinashilingam in all aspects. We improvised our own self, learnt a lot of new things, sharpened our brains and enjoyed the youth in us. Avinashilingam is a great university! Though we do not realise the importance of studying in well renowned institution until we are out of it, the values and the teachings of life that are taught to us are put into practice more now than before. We may have felt the discipline strict while we were there, but now I feel, there is a meaning to it. Avinashilingam has trained us so well in so many fields that it has given us the maturity in the ways we live. Ayya avargal

was first in planting the seed of foundation, Amma avargal then grew it into a plant and now it has grown into a tree sheltering thousands and thousands of lives every year. A university known to maintain the culture, tradition and discipline is Avinashilingam. And the credit of success belongs to Amma avargal, and all our teachers for supporting it and all our students for accepting it. One must not forget about the administration officers, for it is they who oversee the school on daily basis to keep it running at peak efficiency.

“Some people strengthen the society just by being the kind of people they are!”. Amma is one. There are crores and crores of people living in this universe, but the beauty is every individual has his / her own unique characters. Amma has her own highlighting characters to quote. In the first two years of my stay at the university, my impression of Amma was the same as others, which is to say business - like. But the third year, working with her as University Chairman has inspired in a great new things! The magical power drew me even more closer to her and I came to know her even more better.

## **Amma - A Navarathna! My vision in nine dimensions!!**

### **Amma as a Mother**

As I said earlier, the distinguished qualities of a mother are in Amma. Everytime we call her ‘Amma’, it only brings us closer and closer. She is not only a mother to her own kids, but a mother to thousands of students at Avinashilingam. A kind mother, a loving mother is she who takes care and nourishes everyone with healthy qualities and values in life. A well renowned nutritionist is she, who looks after the nutrition being maintained in the hostel! She is a quiet, powerful and a true mother who shall take care of all.

## Amma as a Career Woman

The world is fast moving and preparing for the 21st Century. We women, are training ourselves to compete and win within the new world. But I strongly believe, Amma is a full fledged trainer and an experienced woman who can still be a winner! She is someone, who has dedicated every second of her life in the building up of ADU. For her, "Duty is more important than pleasure". Her sincerity, love to her work, untiring acceptance of duties and responsibilities with a smile, are to be greatly appreciated. She is always a model example to others. As union members we performed our duty with full responsibility. All union members of 95-96 contributed their own part, to success. It was all possible, because of the strength and the love Amma provided, to complete the task. There were moments of dejection, but still we rebound with energy, thinking of our Amma avargal, thinking of her active participation in the work she undertook. The career she took to educate millions is not easy! Above all, to succeed in the field she chose, means it is a real dream that has been accomplished!

## Amma as a Care - Taker

Tiny little care is shown to us, when we meet Amma. Every time I met Amma, these are the said words "shall I do something for you?". This question is enough to make me think she is great. She is an unbelievable mother, never hesitating to 'care' for others. She took a lot of interest in the students' activities, she presided over the functions to the best of her schedule, she spoke with teachers, with employees and hostel staff with fullest care and concern. Amma, you are a great person, a person who shall be recognised throughout the years to come! Amma loved to visit hostel prayers, loved to greet us whenever she came back from any country. It was her home, a home built of hearts!!

## Amma as an Administrator

Amma is well known worldwide nutritionist and also an excellent administrator. Avinashilingam boasts itself for its effective administration, teaching students the administrative qualities. The class representatives, the students incharge of their duties during the meetings, the union members, are all examples of individuals practising these qualities, imbibed by Amma avargal. Amma administers right from Pre K.G. to Ph.D., all in a single campus. It is hard for us to remember what we did last week! But Amma, she not only administers, but also remembers what has to be done, what she has done for the betterment of Avinashilingam at all times. This is a unique quality of an administrator and she will be remembered for it.

## Amma as a Communicator

Not everybody in this world are good communicators, but Amma is special in this matter. People loved to speak to her, to hear her sweet voice, to hear her flow of thoughts! She is a powerful public speaker attracting all ages. Her communication skills are not confined to only Tamil Nadu, but all over India and to other nations, as well. She has actively participated in many world conferences, national conferences and meetings and has voiced her thoughts and actions in every field. She travels worldwide and 'Amma' has communicated with different kinds of people, knowing their culture, tradition, and lifestyle and at the same time, not ignoring our culture. She propagates the need to communicate with all different types of people. Her communication skills are updated and she always keeps abreast of what is happening. Amma is a perfect, full time communicator! Her presence itself communicates... her greatness.

## Amma as a Scholar

Efficiency Discipline Unity Character Ability Tactfulness Intelligence  
Obedience Nobility.

This is what Amma means by “EDUCATION”. She is a proven scholar and that is what she is praised for! Anybody can become a scholar. Full time concentration, paving the way to observation skills and intelligent choices are signs of becoming one. She is a scholar everyone knows, but very few know the urgency she places on education. This is the speciality of Amma. She is on her way to celebrate her 80th birthday. Even now, I bet, she is learning something. Her numerous awards, medals, degrees, doctorates are enough to prove she is a great scholar!

Some people see things as they are, and ask Why?

Some people see things as they never were, and ask Why not?

Amma belongs to the second category. Wherever she goes, whatever she does, whomever she meets, she makes one thing clear - to learn something new everyday!! She believes in knowledge, she believes “Knowledge leads to Unity and Ignorance to Segregation”.

An apple a day, keeps the doctor away!

To Amma,

A new lesson a day, keeps the ignorance away!!!

## Amma as a Philosopher

Years and years of experience and knowledge in all fields makes a person wise and ripe! To get hold of a matured person is difficult now-a-days! But Amma, is someone special. Not only does she gain knowledge and wisdom, not

only intelligence and maturity, she is also a good philosopher. Ask Amma about any subject at any time, your questions shall be answered. And that's our Amma.

## Amma as a Guide

An alliance of mastermind. She is a good philosopher, above all a real guide. She knows what's right, what's wrong and she also advises and guides us towards the right path. I can recall many incidents to prove this. When guiding us, she was always a sweet person, never not seen to have a smile on her face. Her smiling face brings synergy to others.

For information on tours and vacations, we have guides!

For information on our own self, we have guides - our Parents!

For information on life, we have a successful guide - Our Amma avargal!

## Amma as a Spiritual

Millions of lives on this earth, all created by the 'Omnipotent'. But how many of us believe in God? Only some. We, the some, rejoice and enjoy Him in every moment of life. A person may have Health, Wealth, Character, Good living, Good family, but, if he does not have the sense of spirituality, he is considered as 'Nothing'. When he is spiritual, he has 'Everything'. Amma has 'Everything'.

India, America or Australia, Amma has the tendency to pray everyday sincerely. Her devotion to Sarada Devi, Ayya avargal and Mahatma Gandhi are to be noted.

### **Amma is a Gem - A Phenomenon!!**

These may be her distinguished qualities, but there is one thing to be kept in mind, When we need someone, "Amma" our mother is always there.

I have not seen Ayya avargal, but I see him in our 'Amma'. I am still grateful to Amma for gracing us with her presence on the most important day of my life - **my wedding day!** Thank you Amma!!

நவரத்தினங்கள் - 9, திக்குகள் - 8,  
ஸ்வரங்கள் - 7, சுவைகள் - 6, உணர்வுகள் - 5,  
திசைகள் - 4, பால்கள் - 3, துருவங்கள் - 2  
உயிர்மூச்சாம் - ஒன்று!

மனத்தில் நான் மதிக்கும்  
என் அம்மாவிற்கு உயிர் மூச்சு ஒன்றாம்  
- தொண்டு! தொண்டு!! தொண்டு!!!

பிறப்பினால் சிறந்தவர்கள் உண்டு.  
பிறப்பினையே சிறந்தவளாக்கிய உமக்கு  
என் சிரம் தாழ்ந்த வணக்கங்கள் கோடி!!!



# **“AMMA” - THE ARCHITECT OF A GLORIOUS EDIFICE**

N. CHANDRAKALA

**Great nations write their autobiographies in three manuscripts - the book of their deeds, the book of their words and the book of their art.**

- John Ruskin

**W**e are at the threshold of celebrating the 80th birthday of our distinguished scholar and eminent Chancellor Amma Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas. It is appropriate that we recall the outstanding contribution which Amma made to transform the Avinashilingam Deemed University into premier educational Institution which is well known not only in India but also throughout the world, during five decades or more, of an intensely active service committed to high moral, social and educational purpose. A brief survey of Amma's remarkable career can by no stretch of imagination do full justice to the magnitude and quality of hers to the varied aspects of education and social upliftment.

## **Contribution to the Avinashilingam Deemed University and for the allied faculties**

She is a great builder of this modern and premier educational institution. From a humble beginning, this institution flourished to the present stage of Deemed University making rapid progress in many spheres of faculties of Home Science, Arts, Science, Computer Science including M.Phil, and Ph.D. courses.

The architect of this glorious edifice is the outstanding personality of our Amma. Guided by the spirit of preparing the younger generation of women to

face the challenges of the much complicated modern life, her aim of the education in this institution is to discover and develop the innate abilities and acquired knowledge of the students. She worked hard to develop rich possibilities of life academically, physically and psychologically so that they may attain excellence being a balanced and successful personality with good character, team spirit, dedication to purpose, patriotic outlook, analytical mind with a desire to serve the country with zeal and efficiency and to arm with enough materials to lead a fuller and richer life.

I wonder and admire at her pure smile which makes our heart happy and pure. Every word she speaks raises our mind to as high as a peak. She used to advise that the secret of happiness lies in the cultivation of the spirit of renunciation, self sacrifice, contentment, simplicity in life, carrying out our responsibilities at home and for our country. There is a kind of joy in serving others with virtuous motives, in sacrificing what one has for the good of others; the act of goodness itself is an act of happiness; the sting of misfortune spares none; but they will not low down such a person. Her words of wisdom are appropriate for ever. Her writings are practically an anthology of several Ph.D. thesis. She is an outstanding extraordinary phenomenon who strode over the educational firmament of Tamil Nadu like a colossus during this century.

### **An appreciation of the Avinashilingam Deemed University by a former student**

It is a great blessing, indeed and a pride too, to be a student of Avinashilingam Deemed University, an university of excellence in the textile city of Coimbatore. Anybody studying in the university would look at it, as I do,

with great admiration because of its massive buildings, spacious and well furnished classrooms, well equipped laboratories, excellent library and good hostel facilities including a beautiful play ground. The university has a serene surrounding and commands a panoramic view of the Marudamalai Hills and has a peaceful atmosphere which every parent wants his child to be in.

The University has been a source of inspiration for the taught and gives distinct care and concern to every individual with the sole aim of building love and discipline. Infrastructure alone cannot make an educational institution great; it is the teachers with talent and education, who tirelessly work to bring name and fame. The teachers not only equip the students with proper education, but also inculcate moral behaviour in them. The University has programmes on personality development, value education, career guidance, inculcating patriotism, counselling and gives encouragement to students to compete in state, national and international level competitions.

The ideas of universal brotherhood and ideas of internationalism has been deeply rooted in the minds of the students. She left an indelible impression on those who met her. She is toiling with unbroken zeal and unabated passion for the upliftment of women, the poor people, young widows, health of the mother and child, illiterate villagers, etc.

### **Her writings / Talks / Tours**

One is really thrilled at the beauty, lucidity, grandeur, elegance, precision, dignity, clarity, crispness and nobility of language in her speeches and writings. Her talks are literary gems. Her scientific articles are known for their beauty of expression.

She goes around the world lecturing on many subjects. She is a learned and celebrated scholar and has mastered many subjects. Therefore thousands of teachers, students and other members of the public from all over the country and abroad used to attend her lectures. The family happiness and the Indian integrity are the matrix of her writings. They constitute a rare moral continuum. What strikes us is true extensive development of the creative mind and the total human parabola.

### **Her administrative abilities**

Her excellent administrative capabilities made the university progress rapidly in many spheres of education. She solved many bitter controversies with an untiring effort, tact and spirit of conciliation. She displayed great debating skills and negotiating capabilities. Her services is immeasurable. She took over its management and runs it successfully. She is also ably guiding the staff, students, teaching staff, etc. Because of her excellence and brilliance she is elevated to the coveted post of Chancellor of the Avinashilingam Deemed University. It is reflected in the skill with which she handled issues and the problems during her tenure of office. With all her outstanding qualities, she is a woman of intellectual humility.

### **Her planning capabilities**

For constructing anything important one needs a plan. You are the architect of your life. From her success, we may learn three basic principles essential for success - determining the objectives, analysing and assessing obstacles and being alert to fight all obstacles.

## **Harnessing the talents of adolescents**

The period of adolescent is a time of turbulence due to physical, emotional and psychological changes in one's life. She took enormous interest to harness their capabilities and to channel them to productive, innovative and useful purposes. For quotable good things, for pregnant aphorisms, for touch stones of ready applications, the opinions of beloved Amma are a mine of instruction and a treasury of joy.

## **Conclusion**

We recall today, as we move towards a new era in our long history, the life and achievements of our Amma, partly to draw sustenance and self-confidence from our proximate part, but partly, also to stimulate those creative capacities and resources of courage which we need to invoke as we face new challenges and novel crises in the closing years of the 20th century, and the opening decade of a new millennium in world history.

She is a trend setter in many spheres of academic excellence. She initiated many reforms for the improvement of curricula. Martin Luther's goal was the liberty of conscience, Washington's goal was liberty of America, Gandhiji's goal was freedom for India, Lincoln's goal was abolition of slavery, our Amma's goal is progress of women's education and upliftment. She set the mission for herself and is dedicating her life in pursuit of this goal. In the annals of women's education, her name is pre-eminent. The trail blazed by this incomparable master continues to inspire thousands of people not only in India, but all over the world. We may feel proud that we are the contemporaries of this versatile genius.

★

## அம்மாவுக்கு வாழ்த்தும் பிள்ளை

ஜி. ஜெய்ப்ரியா

பொருளழகும்	பொலிவழகும்	இணைந்து
மாரியம்மனின்	அருளும்	கலந்து
வெள்ளமென	ஆழியாறு	நீரோடும்
பரம்பிகுளம்	பாய்ந்	தோடும்
வெள்ளித்	தேரோடும்	சந்தைக்கு
பொதியேற்றி	வருகிற	பொள்ளாச்சியிலிருந்து
அம்மாவுக்கு	வாழ்த்தும்	பிள்ளையாக
கவியேற்றி	வந்தேன்	கல்லூரிக்கு

அம்மாவை	வணங்கும்	பிள்ளையுண்டு
அம்மாவை	வையும்	பிள்ளையுண்டு
அம்மாவை	வாழ்த்தும்	பிள்ளையுண்டா - ஏன்
அப்பாவுக்கு	கல்யாணம்	செய்யபிள்ளையிருக்க
அம்மாவுக்கு	வாழ்த்தும்	பிள்ளையிருக்காதா?

பொய்யை	பொய்யாக்கி	பொய்யான
பொய்யை	கவியாக்கி	கவிதைக்கு
பொய்யாதே	கெனும் பொய்	கவிதையல்ல - இது
மெய்யை	மெய்யாக்கி	மெய்யான
மெய்க்கு	மெருகேற்றிய	மெய்யான
மெய்க்	கவிதை	யிது.

இக்கவிதை	எச்சீர்	பெறுமென
எக்கவியும்	கேட்கலாம்	பேசலாம்
அவர்களுக்கு	சொல்லக்	கேள்

எவன்	ஆசியிருந்தென்ன	இல்லாதுபோயென்ன
அவன்	ஆசியிருந்தாலே	போதுமென

அவினாசிலிங்கம்	பல்கலைக்கழக	வேந்தராம்
அம்மாவுக்கு	பிறந்தநாள்	விழாசீராக
சீர்கள்	பலயிருக்	கையில்
அம்மாவுக்கு	பிறந்தநாள்	பரிசாக
கவியையும்	சீராகத்	தருகிறேன்.
கவியிலே	சீர்காணும்	கவிகளே - இங்கு
கவியே	சீராகும்போது	கவிக்கேதுசீர்.

செல்வத்தால்	செல்வாக்குச்	சேராது
சொல்வாக்கால்	செல்வாக்குச்	சேர்த்து
கற்போருக்கும்	கல்வி	கற்பிப்போருக்கும்
அன்பையும்	அறிவையும்	அள்ளித்தரும்
அம்மாவுக்கு	வாழ்த்தும்	பிள்ளை.

கல்வியை	கல்லூரிக்	கல்வியாக்கி
கல்லூரி	வாசலிலே	கலைமகளை
விலைபேசங்	கல்லூரிகள்	காணுங்கோவையில்

படிப்பை	படிப்பாக்கி	படிப்பான
படிப்பை	பள்ளி	முதல்
பல்கலைக்	கழகம்	முடிய
படிப்படியாய்	பதிய	வைத்து
படிக்க	வைத்து	பட்டமும்
பாராட்டும்	தரராஜா	போலொரு
அம்மாள்	உண்டென்றால்	அதுநம்ம
ராஜம்மாளுக்	கீடேது	இல்லை
அம்மாவுக்	கிணைதா	னுண்டோ.

அம்மாவின்	பேர்சொல்லும்	வயதில்லை - இருந்தாலும்
பேர்சொல்லத்தானே	பிள்ளை	அந்த உரிமையில்
அம்மாவின்	பேர்சொல்லி	வாழ்த்துகிறேன்.

நூலிலேபூத்	தொடுப்பதுண்டு	மாறாக
பூவோடு	நூலைத் தொடுத்த	பூவையர்
கோவை	கோவையாய்	காட்சிதரும்
கோவைபெரிய	கடைவீதியில்	கோனியம்மாள்
அவினாசி	ரோடித்தண்டு	மாரியம்மாள்
ஆரெஸ்	புரத்தில்	காமாட்சியம்மாள்
பந்தயச்	சாலையிலே	சாரதாம்பாள்
பட்டியலில்	உள்ளவர்கள்	பக்தி, அறவழிகாக்க
அறிவொளி	காக்கும்திருமதி	ராஜம்மாளை

வாழ்த்த	வந்தவர்கள்	நூறாண்டு
வாழ்கவென	வாழ்த்தினார்கள்	அவர்களின்
சின்னச்	சின்ன	ஆசை
எனக்கோ	கொஞ்சம்	பேராசை

அம்மாவின்	சேவை	இந்தப்
பிள்ளைகளுக்குத்	தேவை -	இந்தப்
பிள்ளைகளின்	பிள்ளைகளுக்கும்	தேவையென்றால்
அம்மா	நூறாண்டு	வாழ்க-ஆமாம்
இனியும்	நூறாண்டு	வாழ்க

சென்ற	எண்பதுக்கு	நன்றிசெலுத்தி
வரும்	நூறே	வருகவருக
வளம்	யாவும்	தருகவென
அம்மாவுக்கு	வாழ்த்தும்	பிள்ளை.



# **“AMMA”**

DEEPTHI MOHAN

I saw HER - just a woman like  
Any other at first glance.  
I looked again - what is that aura around her?  
She is small - her feats stand tall!  
What is that makes her go?  
Energy, charisma - a veritable tornado  
Not many can equal her fame  
One can only try or be put to shame.  
Simplicity and success do go hand in hand  
We have a living example first hand.  
Eighty years of toil must have taken their toll  
But never does that proud spirit recoil from a long stroll.  
Jet setter that she is, the world is at her feet -  
but her children always, understanding in her meet.  
A splendid mix of the ancient and contemporary  
She's what every woman aspires to be!!

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# A HEART FELT THANKS TO AMMA

VINEETHA THOMAS

**A**mma avargal is a truly unique individual, one who combines Indian values, with the vision and knowledge of world. She instills in the students the values of prayer, the importance of a solid educational foundation, the importance of child development, and the essence of a simple life. At the same time, she has travelled the world round and brings the finer points of higher education to Avinashilingam Deemed University (ADU). I have been privileged to know her in my five years at ADU for my BSc in Family and Community Science and Chemistry and M.Sc. in Food Science and Nutrition. In this time, I have observed her daily regiments and her attention to details, which has developed her into the person she is.

In my first and second years at ADU, I was the Secretary of Home Science Association and had the opportunity to work closely with Amma avargal. I attended many meetings and events with her and started to notice her attention to detail. She implemented her vision of ADU through the students in the form of the student leaders. I know that everyone who has had the opportunity to work with her has gained an immense amount of knowledge. She always emphasized the values of Indian woman. First, no matter your religion, she was insistent on daily morning prayers. She believed that an early start is essential to get ahead in life and moreover, it is important for a young Indian woman to be pious and become the religious lamp of her family.

I vividly remember the moments when she shared her insights with us. I particularly recall the time when she explained to us the importance of breast

feeding one's child. She shared her personal experience and communicated to us the essential nurturing bond that is developed through breast-feeding. Now that I am in preparation to start my family, I realize how relevant and significant those moments are to my life. Another issue that she emphasized was the pursuit of a simple life. She portrayed this to us everyday in her own lifestyle. In the way she dressed, her actions, her speech, her interaction with others, she demonstrated to us that no matter your state or stature in life, simplicity of life will always show your true self. In her busy schedule, she had but a few moments like these to share with us. I hope every young lady takes the opportunity to draw from her wealth of experience.

Amma avargal has made ADU one of the best universities in India by giving it a solid foundation that is based on her experiences. This all women's university provides a safe and serene haven for parents to entrust their daughters for higher education. She has instituted a much more disciplined environment on campus, than any other university, to assure that every student is given the same opportunity and no one student is able to take advantage over the other. The campus is free of strikes and student political activities that have plagued and marred the education at other universities. At the same time, she encourages the young ladies to participate in extra-curricular activities and clubs, which let them compete and interact with students of other universities. On the educational side, she has instituted a system that is equivalent to U.S. universities. This lends, graduates like me, who have come to the U.S. to continue to pursue our goals with complete accreditation of our work in ADU. For those who have not come abroad, it provides an education, which is well above the standards of other universities in India. She has expanded the number of options of different degrees available at the university every year. She has also added as many

high-tech equipment as possible to the laboratories, to give a more handsome environment for the students. All of this has been possible because of her vision and experience of the world.

Amma avargal provided the hostelites a home away from home. She tried to be available to everyone as much as possible. In the instances that I sought her advice, she would try to provide the motherly care and attention that was not immediately available to me. The rooms at ADU hostel provided enough amenities for a comfortable accommodation, so as to concentrate the student's efforts on studies and not be distracted by other things. I fondly remember the times I spent there and the friendships and bonds that I developed. I am still in touch with all of the friends that I met there and will stay in touch forever. I hope each and every young lady at ADU appreciates the value and enrichment in life provided for her.

In Amma avargal, I see a role model to all women. She has marched through life in a parade of success. She has been awarded many honors and accolades and yet she continues with the same fervor in life as she did when she began. Her determination and her vision have helped pave the way for so many like me. I hope I am able to contribute to society as she has done for the people that have been fortunate enough to know her. In the short time I've known her, I have seen her compassion, her generosity, her leadership, her knowledge, and her never tiring drive for excellence. I hope we will be rewarded with her presence for years to come. So I wish Amma avargal a very Happy Birthday on my behalf and all the others who will not be present in person to wish her the same on the day.



# MY TRIBUTE TO AMMA

SUNDARI RAMAMURTHY

**A**mma, the versatile personality is a true Gandhian in thought, word and deed. She is a source of inspiration to the students, teachers and the community.

One is usually surprised to see this learned lady as a symbol of simplicity. Dressed in very simple attire she would attract any one - young or old by her bewitching smile. This makes her easily approachable and bring us close to her without any fear. Amma is a perfectionist. She expects nothing but the best from her students. Her tasks are innumerable and as for her targets the sky is the limit.

Amma is diligent and hard working. She used to put in long hours of hard work and expected us to do the same. She would never go to sleep without completing her day's work. She was very conscious of time and would never waste a single minute. Even while travelling she would use that time to go through her papers and also correct our dissertation work. For Amma it is today only and she never keeps anything pending for the next day.

Amma is an ideal teacher. Her teaching was excellent. She would convey her message in the simplest manner possible. I had the privilege of being Amma's student in the Home Science Extension class in my I B.Sc. and Community Nutrition class when I did my M.Sc. I have really enjoyed her classes because her teaching was not long hours of lectures but an interesting interaction between the teacher and the students. She encouraged us when we asked questions and was only too happy to clear all our doubts. As an examiner she was very generous. Her appreciation for even the small task undertaken by us did encourage us to try to do the best.

Amma had a great concern for our upliftment. She imparted the best of education to us. The library was kept open till late in the night to encourage us to refer to many books and journals. She organised evening study for us to enable us to be up-to-date in our studies at the same time she expected us to sleep by 10.00 p.m. so that we would get good nights rest and will be fresh for the next day's work.

Amma's memory power was remarkable. She would get to know each one of us and remember our names. I met Amma for the first time when I was in the first year of my degree course in 1963 when I had to get permission from her to go home for the week end. The second time I met her after a week she called me by my name and I felt elated. It is more than thirty five years since I first met Amma and I feel very proud to say that she still remembers me and recognises me. I also used to be stunned when Amma used to tell us the names of the authors, the articles, the journals, volume of the journal and even the page numbers regarding references.

Amma was an affectionate mother to us. At the same time she was a strict disciplinarian and that has helped us to lead disciplined lives. I personally feel that Amma has given me "life education". She taught me the importance of prayers and I did realise that "more things are wrought by prayers than the world dreams of". The little pieces of advice she would give us after prayers in the mornings and evenings has taken me a long way in my life. She taught me the importance of water and how to conserve it. She repeatedly told us

“ஒரு நல்ல உடம்புக்கு ஒரு சொம்பு தண்ணீர் போதும்”

Amma taught me not to waste food. She would tell us that millions of children did not receive even single square meal. This also shows her concern for humanity. Amma was concerned about our health as well. She was very particular about a balanced menu for the hostel and insisted that we check our weights every month to make sure that we are on a positive nitrogen balance.

Amma has taught us to have tolerance for all religions. She has given us the knowledge about the sacrifices made by the freedom fighters for the National cause. Probably the present generation is lacking this knowledge and that may be the reason for the present problems India is facing. Amma is a true optimist. She has made us all optimistic in our thoughts so that we could all strive hard and improve our lives. Amma has helped us to get the best of education but her help did not stop there. She has gone out of the way to help us all in our careers as well.

Personally, I am indebted to Amma. She has not only educated me and helped me in my career she has helped my daughter to get her M.C.A. Degree from our College. My family and I are grateful to the Almighty for giving us our “Amma” and we are indebted to Amma for all that she has done for me and my family. I would also like to mention that Amma attended my daughter's marriage and blessed her and I feel very proud.

On Amma's 80th birthday, I wish and pray to God to give Amma many more years of good health and peace. May God give Amma the strength to continue her innumerable tasks for many hundreds of years.



## **Dr. RAJAMMAL P. DEVADAS, MY PHILOSOPHER AND GUIDE**

**MINNIE MATHEW**

**M**y first exposure to the Avinashilingam Institute dates back to 1964 when some of you today in the institute were not even born. I wonder if I am bringing up an outdated set of values, which I cherished in that Institute, or am I talking about those values which never die. I believe that the latter assumption is true because I feel that those values I had imbibed in my student life have given me immense satisfaction in life. It is only quality of work and dedication that can give results and that was the path shown by our revered Amma who is a follower of our Mahatma and Swami Vivekananda. Let me confess, I used to be a bit shy to address this unassuming great lady as Amma publicly when I joined the pre-university. After completing school from one of the posh convent schools, I joined college with a totally different value system. To me, the university ambience provided a bit of a cultural shock because I was taught to think English, speak English and pray in English. The culture too was English since the nuns were all English. Amma could deflate my westernised values within weeks and this she achieved not by condemning those which I came with but by creating appreciation of our rich Indian culture and values.

She has always set high professional standards for her students. The large university library was always kept open with unending reference materials. I have developed the habit of keeping myself updated with information due to this

environment created by her. The laboratories boasted of all the latest equipment. She exposed us to the most eminent scientists of today, for example, Dr. C. Gopalan and Dr. M.S. Swaminathan and even provided opportunities to discuss research with them. Behind these investments, was her vision for building student's capacity to meet the challenges of the future. When I found a job in another university after my post-graduation, once again I was faced with a cultural shock. I could not believe that post-graduate students did not consider library reading a prerequisite to education. Only if I had the zeal of Amma, I could have changed the attitude of my students. Let me admit that she is quite unique, one in a million! Honestly this is not an exaggeration.

She valued only genuineness whether it is music, dance or any art form and most of all genuineness of oneself. The exposures provided by her have made a great impact on me. I do not know if I can call myself successful. Today I am one of the Senior National Officers in the United Nations System. I am writing this few lines article on the eve of my departure to Rome where I will be the pride recipient of the 'International Women's Day Award'. I owe it all to her.





**FORMER PRE AND  
PRIMARY SCHOOLERS**



# THE DYNAMIC PERSONALITY

R. THIRUNAVUKKARASU

**R**eferred Amma avargal is a virtual cornucopia of affection, benevolence and munificence. The uncompromising and strict adherence to moral principles is too well known. Amma avargal is an inexhaustible source of faith, coverage and hope to those who are around her.

At this juncture, recollections of the past are worth mentioning because they help to illustrate Amma avargal's multifaceted personality.

Our revered Amma avargal's wealth of intellectual thoughts are such that she is able to give new and refreshing dimensions to educate and educational philosophy. Listen to Amma avargal's words, every time a new and innovative idea is given.

Amma avargal is a scientist and able administrator. The way she plans meetings, programmes and seminars shows the systematic working of the mind. She always puts down the ideas and decision in the form of notes, records and never fails to follow up.

Our Amma avargal has given us many advices, counsel and directions and those which inspired me are simplicity, purity and service to the mankind. There is no end to higher achievements. Hence, one should continuously strive towards selfless devotion to our duties and higher excellence in our performance.

Amma avargal insists that along with academic competence, it is necessary that one grows deep in devotion, and in the capacity of mutual adjustment with service. It is the development of these qualities that will equip us for greater

achievement in future. Cultivation of proper attitudes towards our people and country and healthy habits of hard and continuous working is more essential while cultivating the depth of knowledge of Higher Education. Amma avargal always insists that the knowledge we have should be shared with those who are less fortunate than ourselves.

Amma avargal often reminds that the challenge before us is to revive our country and all sections of our society by inculcating the ethical, moral, social and spiritual values. Hence the young men and women will have to bear greater responsibilities for developing a grand future for our country and people.

Our Amma avargal always expects regularity in habits of prayer, food, sleep, exercise, relaxation and devoted work culture.

Hence it is my privilege and pleasure to state that I started my education in the early 1960s along with the children of the nursery class with our prestigious and renowned educational institution of Avinashilingam University.

It is our Amma avargal who initiated my educational career which lasted until I qualified for Doctoral Degree in Psychology. I had the pleasant and proud opportunity to serve our esteemed institution as Research Scientist in Indian Council of Medical Research Project between January 1989 and August 1990 under the auspices of our revered Amma avargal, who not only lit a bright light in my life, but to my wife Mrs. Thirumanidevi, Lecturer in Family and Community Sciences Department of our Institution. Throughout the world there are a number of people like me who have benefitted from our esteemed institution and many have the chances to serve our institution.

I pray for the continuous enlightened and encouraging guidance of our Amma avargal to the mankind and make our country compete with the other countries in all respects. \*

## அம்மா : பல பரிமாணங்களில் (நெஞ்சிலிருந்து) சில

இரா. வேங்கடபதி

அந்த சிட்டுக் குருவிகளுக்கு இறக்கை முளைத்த ஆண்டு 1965. ஐந்தாம் வகுப்பிலிருந்து முதல் முறையாக தேர்ச்சி பெற்றுச் சென்ற நாற்பதுக்கும் அதிகமானோரின் நினைவுகளில் இருந்து மறையாமல் இருக்கும் ஆறாண்டுகளின் கடைசி ஆண்டு.

1963

சின்னக் குடும்பம். அக்கா, அண்ணா, அம்மா, அய்யா என்ற அந்தக் குடும்பத்தில் குழந்தைகளின் குதூகல ஊர்வலம். பழைய உயர்நிலைப் பள்ளி மாணவியர் விடுதிக்கு எதிராக சுண்ணாம்பு ஆட்டும் இடமும் நீர்த் தொட்டியும் வாழ்க்கையாக அந்தக் குருவிகள் சுற்றி வரும் இடங்கள். ஐயோ அக்கா அவர்கள்!. ஐயோ அம்மா அவர்கள்! என்று அலறிக் கொண்டு தரையில் கால் பரவாமல் ஓடியதில் ஒருவனுக்கு மட்டும் முழங்கையிலும் வலது முழங்காலிலும் இரத்தக் காயம். திருதிருவென விழித்து எழுந்து பார்க்கும் பொழுது, காலாற ஒருமுறை அந்தப் பக்கம் வந்த அம்மா அவர்களின் பேச்சுக்குரல். (பெயர்) இப்படியா ஓடி வந்து அடிபட்டுக் கொள்வது. பார்த்துச் செல்ல வேண்டாமா? பார் இரத்தம் வழிகிறது (சகுந்தலா) இவனைக் கூட்டிச் சென்று மருந்து போட்டு வா. அந்தப் பதைபதைப்பு, அந்தப் பாசம் அன்று இருந்த அந்தச் சிறிய குடும்பத்தாருக்கு மட்டுமே சொந்தம். அவர்களுக்கு மட்டுமே தெரியும். புரியும். மூன்றாம் வகுப்பு மாணவனுக்கும் கல்லூரி முதல்வருக்கும் என்ன சம்பந்தம். அதுதான் அம்மா.

1964

நுழைந்தவுடன் இடதுபுறத்தில் உள்ள 3 மாடிக் கட்டிடம். மாடிப்படிகள் சென்று முடியும் இடத்தில் வகுப்பறை. ஆங்கில இலக்கிய வகுப்பு நடைபெறும். நான்காம் வகுப்பு மாணவிகள் (அப்போது இருந்தார்கள்) சிலர் மதிய உணவு எடை பார்க்கும் நிகழ்ச்சிகளை முடித்துக் கொண்டு யாருக்கும் தெரியாமல் மேலே ஏறி சிறிது நேரத்தில் கையும் களவுமாகப் பிடிபட்டு அர்ச்சனைகளை வாங்கிக் கொண்டு இருந்தார்கள். கீழே நொறுங்கிய மனத்தோடு வந்தவர்களை ஓர் உருவம் தடுத்து நிறுத்தியது. மற்றவர்கள் மரியாதையோடு குற்றப்பத்திரிக்கை தாக்கல் செய்தனர். அதற்கு தம்பிகளா நீங்கள் படிக்கும் இடம் எதிரில் இருக்கிறது. நீங்களும் மேலே ஏறிச் செல்லலாம். அதற்கு உடலில் தெம்பு வேண்டும் அல்லவா? நீங்கள் வளர்ந்து பெரியவர்கள் ஆன பிறகு பெரிய வகுப்பு படிக்கலாம். நீங்கள் நன்கு படித்து இங்கு வர வேண்டும். ஒவ்வொரு மாடியும் ஏன் தனித்தனியாக இருக்கிறது?. விளையாட நல்ல இடம் பார்த்து விளையாடுங்கள். நன்கு படித்து இங்கு வந்து சேருங்கள். உங்களால் படித்து மேல் மாடிக்குப் போக முடியும் என்ற நம்பிக்கையை விதைத்தது யாராக இருக்கும்?. ஆம்!. அம்மா அவர்கள் தான் தப்பு செய்த நான்காம் வகுப்பு மாணவர்களைக் குத்திக் காட்டாமல் குதறிப் போடாமல் நாமும் படித்து அந்த வகுப்பறைக்குச் செல்ல வேண்டும் என்று தீர்மானம் அன்றே நிறைவேறுவதற்கு யார் காரணம்?

அதே ஆண்டு பெருந்தலைவர் காமராசர் கல்விக் கூடங்களுக்கு வருகை தந்தார். ஒரு சிட்டுக்குருவியை மேடை ஏற்றி முழங்க தைரியம் கொடுத்தது யார்? “சின்னப்பசங்க எப்படிப் பேசறாங்க பாரு” என்று ஜனத்திரளில் வியப்பு வழிந்தோடியது. சிட்டுக்குருவியும் எங்கள் குடும்பத்து அங்கம் என்று அனைவருக்கும் வாய்ப்புக் கொடுத்து தன்னம்பிக்கை துளிர்விட வைக்க காரணம் யார்? அவர்கள் அழைத்து மேடையில் ஏறச் சொல்லவில்லை. ஆனால் மேடையில் ஏறுவதற்கு வாய்ப்பு ஏற்படுத்தி விளக்கப்படுத்தியது யார்?

ஒவ்வொரு குழந்தையும் நல்ல குழந்தை. தங்கமான குழந்தை என்ற சங்கீதப் பேச்சில் நல்ல நினைவுகளைத் தந்தது யார்? அய்யா அவர்கள் ஒவ்வொரு முறை கூறும் போதும், ஏதோ அத்தனை பேரும் நல்ல குழந்தைகள் தங்கமான குழந்தைகள் என்று குதூகலித்து கைதட்டி அங்கீகரித்து குழந்தைகளின் மனதில் நாம் நல்ல குழந்தைகள், தங்கமான குழந்தைகள் என்று ஒவ்வொரு கூட்டத்திலும், கலைவிழா நிகழ்ச்சிகளிலும் எண்ண வைத்தது யார்?

**1978**

பாலமலை கிராம ஏற்புத்திட்டத்திலும் C.S.S. கூட்டத்திலும் பேசி முடித்த பின் ஒரு வளர்ந்த குருவி 'அம்மா' என்றது. ஒரு நிமிடம் தயங்கி பின் சுதாரித்து பெயர் சொன்னதும் அடையாளம் தெரிந்து, அனைத்து மாணவியர் மற்றும் ஆசிரியை முன்னர் நம் எலிமெண்டரி ஸ்கூலில் படித்த பையன். இன்று M.A. என்று உள்ளார்ந்த மலர்ச்சியுடன் சொல்ல வேண்டிய கட்டாயம் ஏதும் இல்லாவிட்டாலும் அப்படிச் சொல்லி வளர்ந்த குருவி தரையில் தடுமாறும் படி செய்தது யார்?

**1991**

பறந்த பறவைகளை கூட்டுக்கு அழைத்து வளர்ச்சியைப் பார்த்து மகிழ்ந்த அந்த ஒருதினம் எல்லாப் பறவைகளும் பறந்து களித்த இடங்களையும் உடன் பறந்தவர்களையும், சுற்றிய இடங்களையும் உணர்ச்சி பொங்கச் சொல்லிக் கொண்டிருந்த போது ஒரு நொடி கூட ஓய்வில்லாமல் ஏதோ அத்தனை குழந்தைகளும் ஒன்று என உன்னிப்பாகக் கவனித்து, முடிவில் முக்கியமான அந்தக் கால தருணங்களைச் சுட்டிக் காட்டி மகிழ்ந்தது யார்?

வளர்ந்த குழந்தைகள் தோழர்கள் என்ற பொதுக் கருத்துக்கேற்ப மரியாதையின் ஒரு நுனி கூட தவறாமல் மரியாதையின் விளிம்பில் ஒவ்வொரு குழந்தையையும் பெயர் சொல்லி மகிழ்ந்தது யார்?. வேந்தரே ஆனாலும், வெற்றியைத் தவிர வேறு எதையுமே சந்திக்காத, சிந்திக்காத, மற்றவர்களையும் அவ்வாறே அரவணைத்துச் சென்றவர் யார்?

## 1994

கோவாவில் அனைத்திந்திய விஞ்ஞானக் கழகத்தின் ஆண்டுக் கூட்டம். கடற்கரைக்கு அருகே அமைந்த பரந்த கூடத்தில் முனைப்போடு சத்துணவு, மற்றும் சத்துமாவு ஆகியவற்றை உண்ட குழந்தைகளின் வளர்ச்சி பற்றிய ஆராய்ச்சி முடிவுகளை முடித்து விட்டு, பன்னாட்டு விஞ்ஞானிகளின் பாராட்டை ஏற்றுக் கொண்டு படியிறங்கி வந்தவுடன் நல்லா இருக்கீங்களா? நீங்க எல்லாம் நம்ப பல்கலைக்கழகத்துக்கு வந்து அங்கு இருக்கவங்க கூட சேர்ந்து ஆராய்ச்சி பண்ணலாம். இல்லைன்னா மாணவிகளுக்கு உங்க கருத்தை எல்லாம் சொல்லலாம். கோவாவில் இருந்தாலும் கோவை குடும்பத்தின் நினைப்புத்தானா?

## 1995

ஜெய்ப்பூர் அகில இந்திய விஞ்ஞானக் கழக ஆண்டுக் கருத்தரங்கு தலைமை ஏற்று கருத்தரங்கை நடத்திக் கொண்டிருந்தவர்கள், கருத்தரங்கில் கருத்துச் சொன்னவரை அத்தனை கூட்டத்திலும் அடையாளம் கண்டு புகைப்படம் எடுக்கச் சொல்லி, கோவை வந்தவுடன் அத்தனை வேலைகளுக்கும் நடுவில் பாராட்டுக் கடிதத்துடன் புகைப்படத்தை வேறு யார்தான் அனுப்ப முடியும்?

## 1996

கல்கத்தா விஞ்ஞானக் கழகத்தின் ஆண்டு கருத்தரங்கில் அலுவலகம் முதல் மாடியில் இயங்கி வந்தது. வேந்தர், எல்லாவற்றுக்கும் மேலாக இலட்சக்கணக்கான குழந்தைகள் உலகம் முழுவதும், கண்ணசைவிற்கு காத்து நிற்கும் கூட்டம். இவை அனைத்தும் இருந்தும் வரிசையில் சென்று பதிவு செய்து கொண்டு, கையைப் பிடித்து முதல் மாடியில் இருந்து இறங்கும் போது காணாத ஒன்று அன்று காணப்பட்டது. தளர்ச்சி, அடுத்த நிமிடம் வழக்கமான வேகநடை, அடையாளம் தெரியாது என நினைத்து “அம்மா நான் யார், தெரியுமா? பெயர்”.

அப்போது ஒரு கேள்வி, நீங்கள் ஏன் வரிசை வரை வரவேண்டும். நாங்கள் எத்தனை பேர் இருக்கிறோம். அப்போது அந்த விளக்கம் வேறு யார் தர முடியும்? சொல்வதை மட்டுமே செய்து கொண்டிருக்கும் அவர்களைத் தவிர.

அந்தச் சிட்டுக் குருவிகளுக்கு இன்னும் ஒரு பொறுமை. 65ல் கூட்டை விட்டு சிறகடித்து பறந்து ஓய்ந்து விட்டோமே. இன்னும் பல்கலைக்கழகத்தைத் தவிர ஆராய்ச்சி சிந்தனையைத் தவிர வேறு ஏதும் இல்லாமல் இவர்களால் மட்டும் இருக்க முடிகிறது என்று. தளர்ச்சி உடலில் மற்றவர்க்குத் தெரியாமல், மலர்ச்சி முகம் முழுதும், கேள்வி எப்போதும் வளர்ச்சி பற்றி, ஊக்கம் அளிப்பது முயற்சிக்கு, உந்திச் செல்லும் உணர்ச்சி, யாரையும் மறக்காத நிகழ்ச்சி, எதற்கும் நிதானம் இழக்காத பயிற்சி, இவை அனைத்திற்கும் சொந்தம் வேறு யார்? “அம்மா அவர்களைத் தவிர”.

அம்மா உங்களிடம் நாங்கள் வேண்டுவது உங்களின் இலட்சத்தில் ஓர் அணுவை எங்கள் ஒவ்வொருவருக்கும் தயவு செய்து தாருங்கள்.

நாற்பது வயதில் நூறு வயதிற்குச் சென்று வரும் மகிழ்ச்சி எல்லோருக்கும் எப்போதும் கிடைப்பது கிடையாது. அப்படியே கிடைத்தாலும் அமிர்தமாக இருக்க உத்திரவாதம் கிடையாது. கல்வி நிறுவனங்களில் நாங்கள் கற்ற கல்வி நூல், மீதி முக்காலும் வாழ்க்கையைத்தான் கற்றோம். எங்களுக்கு வாழ்க்கையைக் கற்றுத் தந்த அம்மா உங்களுக்கு நன்றி நன்றி நன்றி

உங்கள் நூற்றாண்டில் மீண்டும் உங்களிடம் ஆசி வாங்க குடும்பத்தோடு வருகிறோம். ❖

# AMMA - MY GOD MOTHER

KALA GOPI

**A**mma was the first to bless me when I entered this world on a cool Monday morning. From then onwards she has been my God mother. She blessed me on my first and second birth days and paid my fees when I entered Nursery School.

When Smt. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister visited our Nursery School, Amma nudged me to stand near her. But I preferred to nestle near Amma because I felt more secure near her.

At Avinashilingam Primary School, her visits were always received with great joy. Her warm smile always encouraged me, be it, in the class room, sports field or the dais for dramatics.

At Sri Avinashilingam Insitution, all days were filled with activities - each item approved and appreciated by Amma. I used to love to participate in dramatics, decoration, kolu and flower arrangement in Kalai Vizha (Art festival). While decorating the hall, she will go around encouraging us and advising. While we dance or act I always felt Amma looked at each one of us with appreciation. She is ever alert to students' development be it Kalaivizha, Thanks giving day, Independence day, Republic Day or Gandhi Jayanthi. Even as young students we were aware of the vibrant force of Amma. I feel we learnt much from participation in various national and religious festivals.

Most thrilling of my experience in school / college was getting the blessings at Lighting Ceremony. The beautiful atmosphere, white saree, jasmine,

the lighted lamp, blessing of Ayya, Amma and chief guest, the solemn pledge are all indelible in my heart.

My mother used to stay back late in college with her duties very often. In my High School days Headmistress Miss. Hemaprabha will invite me to stay back to finish my home work and play with hostel children. Hence I had opportunity to attend evening prayers when Ayya and Amma will bless the children “Thangamana Pillaigal”. It used to touch my heart that I was really a “Gold Child”.

In College I chose Home Science because of my love for Saradalaya, chose Home Management because of my appreciation for Art and opportunity offered for all the developmental activities-designing, management and home improvement. All these inspired me.

For all students of M.Sc. Home Science Amma taught Community Nutrition - rather she brought the community to our mind's eye. She stood for what she taught. Our stay in the village for Community Nutrition opened up our eyes to the needs of the rural people. Amma did not just mark our answer papers - she corrected our answers and was most generous in giving marks!

Selection of topic for thesis was a big event. Amma guided us to choose the topics which will be of relevance and useful to the society.

I had the privilege of working in projects under Amma. She gave clear direction and was quick in decision making; when we faced problems, she always commended warmly our good work and critical if mistakes were made.

Amma's christmas parties for the members of Saradalaya were wonderful. All were invited - junior most staff to the seniors. In her own hand she gave us the Greeting cards which should be opened on the Christmas day. It carried beautiful picture, wise saying and small present usually from abroad.

Amma blessed me at my marriage. She had come for a meeting to Madras and from there came straight to Kanchipuram with her friend in time to bless me and my husband. Her continued touch with me has given me great support.

Amma to me is Great Indian Woman - a great teacher because a great teacher inspires. ■

# AMMA - A GLORIOUS LIFE

R. JAYASHANKAR

I was a student of the nursery school of the Avinashilingam Trust Institution, Coimbatore, a fact which I now recall with great pride and pleasure. Notwithstanding the fact that my studenthood in the nursery school survives only in fleeting memories of certain episodes which occurred then, I distinctly remember certain moments from that remote period of my life. I do, for sure, remember the layout and architecture of the school, its various rooms and the space in front for outdoor games and activities. I remember the afternoon siestarecess, a near ceremony during which all of us young ones would be ushered into a large hall for a brief nap. Another episode which clearly comes to mind was the visit of Amma avargal. She left an impression on me even at that tender age : Amma struck me as being a “special” person. It is only now, with the passing of years, that I realise the entire significance of that childhood impression. I now realise that she is one of those who come into this world not very often, indeed very rarely.

Now, years later after that early memory of Amma avargal, I have ventured into that very same field of life which she has so eminently served for the past numerous years. She has truly been one of the greatest inspirations for me to dare to walk into what arguably the noblest of professions - the teaching profession. Since those early nursery school years I have indirectly partaken in her own life and the life of the institution which she has painstakingly built up

(the Avinashilingam Deemed University) through my own mother, Lakshmi Santa Rajagopal, who has, till now, served the institution in various capacities. Through my mother I have seen the institution grow from an affiliated college to an autonomous college to university, all under the extraordinary stewardship of Amma avargal.

The institution which Amma avargal has nurtured and raised is a unique one. It is one of the pioneer institutions for women's education in the entire country, offering almost all imaginable courses of study at various levels. It is an institution which has left a mark on the Indian academic scene and continues to grow both in standard as well as scope and magnitude.

Among Amma avargal's qualities that have inspired young mind like me are her capacity to interact with numerous people at an intimate level all at the same time, her superhuman academic achievements, and the tremendous energy which she brings to her work (even at this age). If there is a general feeling that youth in India suffer from a lack of role-models, I would instantly and passionately argue : can there be a better role-model than Amma? Our young minds need to learn from Amma's life as to what real greatness is.

Amma avargal's contribution to the life of our nation - as an educationist, as a pioneer of women's causes, as a community leader - will truly be remembered for generations to come. On the occasion of her eightieth year, I, along with all those who know her, am praying for her health and long life. May she continue, with all her wisdom and energy, to serve the noblest causes of humanity. May her GLORIOUS LIFE continue to inspire and guide us eternally!

☆

# MY EARLY DAYS AT AVINASHILINGAM PRIMARY SCHOOL

P. RAJESH MICHAEL

**W**hen I was 2½ years old my parents put me in Avinashilingam Nursery School. Before going to the school I received the blessings from Amma and with great happiness and enthusiasm I went to the school. In the school they taught music and allowed us to play in the ground and in the afternoon I was asked to sleep. During my nursery education I learnt the good habits of eating, combing, washing my plates and tumblers and also to mingle with other children.

After three years of my play and study, I was mentally prepared and physically developed to join the Avinashilingam Primary School. After summer holidays, my parents bought new uniform dresses and I was very happy to go to school. On the first day I got the blessings from Amma avargal and went to school.

In the school, all of us were treated equally. The medium of instruction was Tamil. Like many other children I too wanted to study in the English medium school. But Amma impressed upon me to study in the Tamil medium. She quoted herself as an example that medium is not the concern but the way in which you understand the lesson, is very very important. This thought provoked me and I simply decided to study in the Avinashilingam Primary School which was the foundation for my present status.

As all of us know Amma is the well known personality and world renowned nutritionist, an excellent educationist and an able administrator, introduced mid-

day meal in the school lunch even before the Government introduced in many schools in Tamil Nadu.

Amma, a pure vegetarian, who practised what she preached, was again an example to consume more vegetables in daily diet. Though my house was inside the campus, impressed by Amma's food habits, I too joined the school mid-day meal happily. In the school every day we get green leafy vegetables which I practise even now.

Near our school, we have Vivekananda auditorium. The name of the auditorium remind me that we should aspire to become like Swami Vivekananda by following his principles of immense faith in God, strong mind and body, immense will power and service to the fellow friends. Everyday there will be one or other meeting conducted in Swami Vivekananda auditorium and I eagerly waited for Amma to cross my school. I was the first person to run and greet her and get her blessings. Even now, I respect elders, greet them and get their blessings, which help me to mould myself as a true citizen of our motherland.

In the school, I was taught all the good qualities of a student which cherish even now. In the school, myself and one of my friends, Anbarasu studied with an active and healthy competition. We never wanted to quarrel with each other or envy each other, instead we were very good friends. Till now, our friendship continues. Our school is one of the best schools in Tamil Nadu. The teachers not only taught me lessons but also encouraged us to participate in extra-curricular and co-curricular activities and we brought laurels to our school.

Everyday at 4'O clock, our Ayya avargal used to visit the campus. Our school also gets over at the same time. Bythat time Ayya gets down from his car,

we the children of our primary school run to see Ayya and get his blessings. Ayya used to bless us with a smiling face.

Functions like Annai Vizha, Sri Ramakrishna Jayanthi, Christmas, Pongal, Deepavali were celebrated in the school. We all used to go to the shrine for Annai Vizha and join the Bhajans. We were so excited to wear the new dresses on Deepavali day and shared our happiness with one another.

I had the privilege of studying upto V standard, since the school does not have Higher Secondary education for boys. All the five years, I got I rank in my class. Every year during the annual day I received the proficiency prizes from our beloved Amma avargal and she blessed me with a smiling face and encouraging words. I could not forget the day when I received the special prize from Amma avargal for getting the proficiency prize consecutively for all the five years.

“இளமையில் கல்வி; பசுமரத்தாணி” is the proverb in Tamil with which Amma avargal enthused me to learn whatever is available and possible to learn. The good qualities that I acquired in my primary school, is the best education I received in my early childhood days, and the good deeds cultivated by Amma avargal have made me a gentleman, a true citizen and a beloved alumnus.

Amma is the role model and guiding star to me. Her immense faith in God, hardwork, simple living and high thinking, boundless enthusiasm, selfless service and ever smiling face always remain in me and guide me wherever I go, whatever I do. I am thankful to Amma for what I am today. I pray to God for her long prosperous life.

★

# அன்பின் சின்னம் அருளின் சின்னம் அம்மா அவர்கள்

அ. அன்பரசு, அ. அறிவரசு

**தொ**டக்க கல்விப் பருவத்தில் ஒன்றும் அறியாத எங்களை அரவணைத்து எடுத்து உச்சிமுகந்து ஊட்டிய உணர்வுதான் எங்களைப் போன்ற எண்ணற்றோரை ஏற்றம் பெற வைத்திருக்கிறது என்பது வெள்ளிடை மலை.

பால் நினைந்து ஊட்டும் தாயினும் சாலப்பரிந்து வாழும் அவர்தம் உயர்வாழ்வு உலகிற்கு ஓர் எடுத்துக்காட்டு. பல்லாயிரக்கணக்கில் கற்போரின் அறிவுப்பசி தீர்க்கும் அட்சய பாத்திரமாக, அவினாசிலிங்கம் பல்கலைக் கழகத்தில் அம்மா அவர்கள் மிளிர்கிறார் என்பது உள்ளூர்தொறும் பெருமைக்குரிய ஒன்று.

**‘மங்கைய ராகப் பிறப்பதற்கே - நல்ல  
மாதவம் செய்திட வேண்டாமமா’**

என்ற கவிமணியின் வரிகளுக்கு மகுடம் சூட்டியவர் அம்மா. உலக அரங்கில் உலாவரும் அம்மாவால் உலகப் பெண்ணினம் தலைநிமிர்ந்து வாழும் என்ற நம்பிக்கை ஒளிர்கிறது.

அம்மா ஒரு பல்கலைக்கழகத்தின் வேந்தர் மட்டும் அல்லர். அவர்களே ஒரு பல்கலைக்கழகம். ஏனென்றால் உலகம் அவர்களிடமிருந்து கற்றுக் கொண்டது ஏராளம். இன்னும் கற்க வேண்டியதும் ஏராளம்.

**‘பெண்களால் முன்னேறக் கூடும் - நம்  
வண்டமிழ் நாடும் எந்நாளும்’**

என்பதன் இலக்கணம் அம்மா. அவர் நடமாடும் அன்னை.

**அம்மாவின் பணி வெல்க! வாழ்க பல்லாண்டு!!**

## என்னை வளர்த்த அம்மா

எஸ். வைஜயந்திமாலா

**நா**ன் நடுத்தர குடும்பத்தைச் சார்ந்த பெற்றோரின் மகள். என் பெயர் வைஜயந்தி. நான் அவினாசிலிங்கம் துவக்கப்பள்ளியில் படிக்கத் துவங்கினேன். எப்பள்ளியிலும் இல்லாத ஒரு சிறப்பை நம் பள்ளியில் உருவாக்கியவர் நம் அம்மா அவர்கள். அதுவே சத்துணவுப் பாடத்திட்டம் ஆகும். தினமும் பள்ளியிலே மதியம் சத்துள்ள கீரை, தக்காளி, பப்பாளி, கோதுமை போன்ற உணவு வகைகளை எங்களுக்கு அளிப்பார்கள். 'செவிக்கு உணவில்லாத பொழுது சிறிது வயிற்றுக்கும் ஈயப்படும்' என்ற திருவள்ளுவர் வாக்கின்படி நமது அம்மா அவர்கள் செவிக்கு உணவாகிய கல்வியை அளித்து, வயிற்றுக்கும் நல்ல சத்துணவிட்டார். கல்லூரிக்கு வருகை தரும் அயல் நாட்டினரை அம்மா அவர்கள் அழைத்து வந்து சத்துணவு பற்றிய படத்தை நாங்கள் சாப்பிடும் பொழுது காண்பிப்பார். அவர்களைப் பார்த்து வணக்கம் சொல்ல நாங்கள் ஓடி வருவோம். அந்த மகிழ்ச்சியை வார்த்தையால் வர்ணிக்க இயலாது.

என் மேல்நிலைப் படிப்பையும் அங்கேயே தொடர்ந்தேன். நான் சிறிய வயது முதலே நடனம் பயின்றவள். அம்மா அவர்கள் எனக்கு ஆட நிறைய வாய்ப்புகள் ஏற்படுத்திக் கொடுத்தார். தொடர்ந்து 15 ஆண்டுகள் கலைவிழாவில் ஆடியுள்ளேன்.

பின் என் கல்லூரிப் படிப்பையும் அங்கேயே தொடர்ந்தேன். B.A., (Music, Sociology, Homescience) படித்தேன். கல்லூரியில் அம்மாவின் கைகளினால் சிறந்த மாணவிக்கான விருதைப் பெற்றேன். என்

படிப்பு முழுவதையும் அவர்கள் அன்பாலும் ஆதரவாலும் 1-ம் வகுப்பு முதல் B.A. வரை நம் நிறுவனத்திலேயே படித்து முடித்தேன் என்பதைக் கூறிக்கொள்ள பெருமைப்படுகிறேன். அதன்பின் தொடர்ந்து 10 வருடங்களாக நான் படித்த அவினாசிலிங்கம் நிறுவனத்திலேயே நடன ஆசிரியராக பணியாற்றி வருகிறேன். இதுவும் அம்மா அவர்கள் எனக்குக் கொடுத்த வரப்பிரசாதம்.

என்னைப் போல் இன்னும் எத்தனையோ பெண்கள் உருவாக அம்மா அவர்கள் தான் மூலகாரணமாக உள்ளார். எத்தனையோ பெண்கள் இன்று தன்னம்பிக்கையுடன் 'ஆண்களோடு பெண்களும் சரிநிகர் சமானமாக வாழ்வோம் இந்த நாட்டிலே' என்ற பாரதியின் கவிதைப்படி வாழ வைத்துக் கொண்டிருப்பவர் நம் அம்மா அவர்கள்.

'என் பிறப்பிற்குக் காரணம் என்தாய் என்றால் என் வளர்ச்சிக்குக் காரணம் நமது அம்மா அவர்கள்'. என்றும் அவர்களது உருவம் என் மனதில் 'பசுமரத்தாணி' போல் பதிந்துள்ளது. என்னை வளர்த்து ஆளாககிய நம் அம்மா அவர்களுக்கு என் வாழ்நாள் முழுவதும் நான் கடமைப்பட்டுள்ளேன்' என்பதை இத் தருணத்தில் கூறிக்கொள்ள ஆசைப்படுகிறேன். சிறந்த காந்தியவாதியும், தேசபக்தரும் ஆகிய திரு. அவினாசிலிங்கம் ஐயா அவர்களின் கொள்கையின் வழி நின்று நிறுவனங்களை நடத்திச் செல்கின்ற நமது அம்மா அவர்கள், பகவான் ராமகிருஷ்ணர், சாரதாமணி தேவியார், சுவாமி விவேகானந்தர் இவர்களின் வழியில் எளிமையின் உருவாய், நேர்மையின் வடிவமாய், அன்பின் விளக்கமாய் திகழ்பவர். நமது அம்மா அவர்கள் நீண்ட ஆயுளுடனும், ஆரோக்கியத்துடனும் வாழ எல்லாம் வல்ல கலியுகக் கடவுளாகிய ஸ்ரீ சத்ய சாயி மாதாவை மனமார வேண்டிக் கொள்கிறேன்.



# **AMMA - THE GREAT ACHIEVER**

**S. SRIRAM**

**M**y “Best Wishes” to our Amma avargal on her 80th Birthday. She has gone a long way in serving the society by imparting education. She has been the major force behind the establishment and improvement of the college. It is unimaginable at present for me to achieve even ten per cent of what she has been able to accomplish. Following her footsteps, I will try my best to serve the society.  
With Love.



# AMMA - SOME THOUGHTS AS A GRANDSON

C. SIVARAM

I was taken aback when my mother called me to say that Godamma (Dr. Godavari Kamalanathan) felt that it would be nice if I can write my thoughts about the life of my dear college Paatti. My mother fully knows I am too lazy when it comes to writing and yet something in me prompted that I should do this, for I love my College Paatti. I have heard my mother and grandmother say that Paatti was very concerned even before I came into this world. As a tiny tot, I entered Saradalaya in the nursery school and I must say though I do not remember much, I distinctly remember the discipline, the tasty food and all the fun and play. When we little ones got down from the school bus inside the college campus and walked to the nursery school many a time, Paatti would see us and greet us and I was very fond of seeing her glooming face as she saw the children the tiny ones in that large campus.

I must confess that I had not had opportunity, being a boy, to continue my studies in Avinashilingam Institutions. But, all my admiration and love for Paatti is through my parents and grandparents especially in the early years. My mother would always tell me that college Paatti enquired about you, Sivu, she gave this to you Sivu, she wants you to join the birthday party of Sarada and so on. All these made us feel I had a 'God Paatti' in the Avinashilingam College. Also I used to look forward to going to Paatti's house and be with the rest of the grandchildren. I very well remember the Christmas celebrations we used to have and the joy of meeting and being with Paatti and also the love and affection she

showed on me. There are several pictures in our album of my childhood and the get-together with Paatti is always cherished amongst them. Whenever I went to College to see Paatti, she would always take pictures. The yearly picnic which Paatti used to arrange for the staff and their children is another unique feature which probably cannot be seen elsewhere. I used to go with my mother and we children had a good time. Paatti always had special treats for us children and to me. I always felt her warmth and that lovely penetrating looks that went deep into my memory and to this date I feel proud that I am one of her pets. When I was a little boy, I was always sceptical about anything new and would never wear any dress that had an element of polyester, for it was a discomfort. But I loved Khadi and still do for it is the best cotton, most comfortable for the climatic conditions in our country. Where do you think I learned this from - at the portals of Avinashilingam Institutions. Later when I was ready to complete school and higher secondary classes, I was adamant that I wanted to study computer science and I gratefully acknowledge the interest Paatti took in me that I got what I was interested in. Such is her benevolence that she wanted to satisfy the wants of all her grandchildren.

Proudest was the moment when Paatti agreed to be the chief guest at the inauguration of the MCA association on its inception at my College - Kumaraguru College of Technology. When all my teachers and fellow students were looking for a proper VIP, I suggested bringing the greatest teacher of our times in town. All were apprehensive as to whether she would find time. But I knew that Paatti is there for me and for students and so it was. She graciously agreed to come and I should say I was very happy because it was the first for all the years to come and what was well begun with her sacred hands is catering to the needs of many youngsters of our time.

She is a versatile personality in that she is a very rare combination of head and heart. She may be a big VIP of our times but she is the most humane person I have come across. Her ever encouraging words, her ever smiling welcome, her positive words of appreciation, conversation and above all her loving heart has attracted me always. I never fail to take the opportunity of meeting her even if it is for a minute. Even today when I am out of the country working, whenever I come home I make it a point to seek her blessings for I know how much it means to me. My mother says that in her last Christmas greetings she has wished that one of my travels takes me to Australia where Mohan uncle lives. Yes it is my hope too and I am sure her blessings will certainly take me there and have the joy and thrill of being with her for I know what a wonderful wealth of culture she is and if she comes around what a pleasure it is to travel!.

I take pleasure in praying God Almighty that He may shower His Blessings abundantly on our very lovable 'Paatti' so that she serves as a continuous inspiration for us the next generation to work for the growth of our country. 🙏

# அம்மா - தமிழகம் பெற்ற தவப்புதல்வி

எஸ். ராஜேஷ்

**ம**கத்தான காரியங்களைச் சாதிக்கப் பிறந்தவர்கள் நீங்கள். அதற்கு சலியாத உழைப்பு வேண்டும். உங்கள் லட்சியங்கள் உயர்ந்தவைகளாக இருக்கட்டும் என்ற அய்யா திரு. தி.சு. அவினாசிலிங்கம் அவர்களின் வாக்கிற்கு ஏற்ப வாழ்பவர் நமது அம்மா அவர்கள்.

தமிழகத்தில் ஏன் இந்தியாவிலேயே சத்துணவு, சுகாதாரம், பெண்கள் விழிப்புணர்ச்சி, பெண்கள் நலன், குழந்தைகள் நலன், பெண்களின் பொருளாதார முன்னேற்றம், பெண் கல்வி போன்றவற்றின் ஆரம்ப கர்தாவாக இச்சகாப்தத்தை உருவாக்கியவர் மற்றும் தொடர்ந்து அதற்காகவே உழைத்து வருபவர்.

மிகச் சிறந்த நிர்வாகியும், கல்வியாளரும் உணவியல் விஞ்ஞானியும், உழைப்பாளியும், மக்கள் சேவகியும், தேச பக்தையும், மனிதாபிமானியுமாக விளங்குவதோடு தெய்வபக்தியும் நிறைந்த அம்மா அவர்கள் தமிழகம் பெற்ற தவப்புதல்வியாவார்கள். அவர்களின் தலைமையின் கீழ் இயங்கும் கல்வி ஸ்தாபனத்தில் நான் படித்ததைப் பெருமையோடும் பெரிய பேறாகவும் கருதுகிறேன்.

★

## அம்மா என்றால் அன்பு

ச. சரவணன்

இன்று தமிழகத்தின் தலைசிறந்த கல்விக் கூடமாய், புகழ் பூத்து நிற்கும் அவினாசிலிங்கம் நிறுவனத்தில் ஒரு கூறாக விளங்கும் பள்ளியில் பயிலும் பெருவாய்ப்பு எனக்கு இளம் வயதிலேயே கிடைத்தது. ஆம். எனக்கு அப்போது வயது மூன்று. 1977ஆம் ஆண்டு அவினாசிலிங்கம் பாலர் பள்ளியில் சேர்ந்தேன். பின்னர் தொடக்கநிலைப் படிப்பை முடித்தேன். மொத்தம் ஏழு ஆண்டுகள் அங்கு பயின்றவன் நான். அப்போது கல்வி வளாகத்தைப் பற்றி நன்கு அறிந்து கொள்ள அந்த ஏழு ஆண்டுகளே போதுமானதாக இருந்தது. பயின்றபோது அங்குள்ள மாணவர்கள், ஆசிரியர்கள் மற்றும் ஊழியர்கள் 'அம்மா' என்று அடிக்கடி பேசிக்கொள்வார்கள். அவ்வாறு அழைப்பதற்குரிய அந்த மனிதர் யார் என்பதைத் தெரிந்து கொள்ள வேண்டும் என்ற அவா எனக்குள் ஏற்பட்டது. ஏழு ஆண்டுகளில் சத்துணவு பற்றிய நன்மைகளை எங்களுக்கு எடுத்துச் சொன்னவரும் பேத்தியின் பிறந்த நாளன்று எங்களைத் தம் வீட்டுக்கு அழைத்துச் சென்று விருந்து கொடுத்து, சின்னஞ்சிறிய ஆனால் பெருமைக்குரிய பரிசுகள் பலவற்றைத் தந்தவரும், நிறுவனத்தில் பணிபுரியும் ஆசிரியர்களோடு அவர்கள் குழந்தைகளையும் ஒருநாள் இன்பச் சுற்றுலா கூட்டிச் சென்று அனைவரிடமும் அன்பு, பாசம் ஆகியவற்றைக் குழைத்து, கொட்டி வந்தவரும் தாம் அவர் என்பதைப் பின்னாளில் தெரிந்து அக மகிழ்ந்தேன். அம்மா என்றால் அன்பு என்பதன் பொருள் புரிந்து விட்டது.

கற்றுத் தரும் நல்லாசிரியர்களைத் தேர்ந்தெடுத்து அவர்கள் மூலமாக என் போன்றோர்க்கு சிறு வயதில் கல்வி அமுதூட்டிய அம்மா அவர்களை இப்போதும் எண்ணி உளம் பூரிக்கிறேன். நாலு பேருக்கு நல்லவராய் வாழ்வதே அரிதாக விளங்கும் காலத்தில் பழகும் அனைவரிடமும் எவ்வித வேறுபாடும் காட்டாது அன்பு காட்டி, பாசத்துடன் அரவணைத்துக் கொள்ளும் உயர்ந்த உள்ளம் பெற்ற ஒருவரை எப்படிப் பாராட்டுவது? புகழ்வது? அன்புக்கு அடைக்கும் தாழில்லை; அன்புதான் இன்ப ஊற்று; ஆற்றல் வாய்ந்தது என்று கற்று, அதற்குத் தக நிற்கும் அன்பு அம்மா அவர்கள் வாழிய நீடுழி என்று வாழ்த்த வயது போதாத காரணத்தால் வணங்கி மகிழ்கின்றேன். அவர் அனைத்து நன்மைகளையும் பெற்றுச் சிறக்க எல்லாம் வல்ல இறைவனைப் பிரார்த்திக்கின்றேன்.

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## நான் அறிந்த அம்மா

எஸ். காயத்ரி தேவி

“தோன்றிற் புகழொடு தோன்றுக” - எனப் பாடிய வள்ளுவரின் குறளுக்கு ஏற்ப தோன்றியவர்,

“மங்கையராகப் பிறப்பதற்கே நல்ல மாதவம் செய்திட வேண்டும்”

எனப் பாடிய கவிமணியின் பாடலுக்கே உரியவர்.

பாரதிதாசனாரின் “குடும்ப விளக்கு”க்கு எடுத்துக்காட்டாக வாழ்பவர், எல்லாவற்றிற்கும் மேலாக பாரதியாரின் புதுமைப் பெண்ணாக

“பட்டங்கள் ஆள்வதும் சட்டங்கள் செய்வதும்,  
பாரினில் பெண்கள் நடத்த வந்தோம்”

என பெண் விடுதலைக்காக முழங்கிய பாரதியின் கனவை, நனவாக்குவது மட்டுமல்லாமல் பெண்களுக்கே உரிய ஒரு பெரிய கல்லூரியை தமிழகத்தில் நிறுவி அதில் தமிழ்த் தொண்டு புரிந்து வரும் மாபெரும் தலைவி தான்

நானறிந்த அம்மா, அன்பின் சின்னம்  
அறிவின் திலகம், ஆற்றலின் சிகரம்  
கருணையின் கடல், ஈகையின் பிறப்பிடம்  
பொறுமையில் பூமி, தோற்றத்தில் எளிமை  
கனிந்த இதயம், மாந்தரில் மாணிக்கம்  
மலையிடு விளக்கின் வயங்கிய கீர்த்தி  
பாரதி படைத்த புதுமைப் பெண்ணே  
நானிலம் போற்றும் நானறிந்த அம்மா.

பெண்கள் ஏட்டுக் கல்வி கற்பதோடு மட்டும் அல்லாமல் செய் தொழில் - வீட்டை அலங்காரப்படுத்துதல் - குழந்தை வளர்ப்பு - நாட்டின் முன்னேற்றம் - சமுதாய மேம்பாடு - பொருளாதாரம் - சத்துள்ள உணவு - சகிப்புத் தன்மை - பெருந்தன்மை - பிறர் துன்பம் கண்டு மனம் இரங்கி உதவும் பண்பு - அயல்நாடு சென்று நம் பழக்கவழக்கங்களைப் பரப்பி, அவர்களது நாகரீகம் பண்பாட்டில் தேவையானவைகளை நமது தமிழக மக்களுக்குக் கொண்டு வந்து சேர்ப்பது, வெளிநாட்டவரையும் அழைத்து வந்து, நமது கலாச்சாரம், பண்பாடுகளைப் பரப்புவது, நன்கொடை என்ற பெயரில் பணம் பறிக்கும் பல நிறுவனங்களைப் போலல்லாமல், பிறர் துன்பம் கண்டு கசிந்துருகி அவர்களுக்கு உதவி, மேலான கல்விச் செல்வத்தை குறைவில்லாமல் வழங்குவதில் நானறிந்த அம்மா அவர்களுக்கு நிகர் அவர்களே தான்.

அம்மா என்பதில் ஆயிரம் கோடி அன்பைக் காண்கிறேன். உயர்ந்த கருத்துக்கள், சிறந்த சிந்தனை, தவறுகள் காணின் மன்னிக்கும் மாண்பு, அயராது உழைப்பதில் பெண்களின் உயர்வுக்காக பாடுபடுவதில் அம்மா அவர்கள் ஈடு இணையில்லாத தாயுள்ளம் படைத்தவர்கள்.

அம்மா அவர்களை நினைத்தாலே நெஞ்சமெல்லாம் இனிக்கிறது. அவர்கள் பல்லாயிரம் ஆண்டுகள் வாழ வேண்டும் என இறைவனை உளமார வேண்டுகிறேன்.

☆

# அம்மா அவர்களுக்கு அர்ப்பணிக்கப்படுகிறது

அ. ரமேஷ் பாபு

தரணியில் மலர்ந்த அபூர்வ மலரே

தாங்கள் பெற்ற விருதுகள் தங்களால் பெருமை கொள்ள  
தங்களிடம் வந்து சேர விருதுகள் போட்டிபோட

தாயாகி நீவிர் அறிவும், அன்பும் எங்களுக்கு ஊட்ட  
தியாகச் செம்மலாய் நீவிர் நாட்டுக்கு உழைப்பதை

தாயகமே கண்டு பெருமை கொள்ள  
தாங்கள் மட்டும் என்றுமே எளிமையாய்,

இனிமையாய், இளமையாய்  
தன்னம்பிக்கையுடன் தளராமல் உழைக்கிறீர்

தாயே நீவிர் பல்லாண்டு வாழ்க!

\*

# AMMA - WHOM I ADMIRE

A. HEMAGOKILA

**M**y days in the Avinashilingam school from nursery days and later for few months at this university were very pleasant and memorable. I am proud of being an alumnus of our Institutions and much more proud of being under the motherly care of Amma avargal. I still remember the thoughtful words of advice rendered by Amma avargal during our Plus two lighting ceremony 'to work hard, to learn more since there is no end to learning, to do service to humanity and above all to pray to God always'.

Though my contact with her directly is limited, I know her as an embodiment of hard and sincere work. She showed concern, for each and everything and cared for everybody. Her dedicated work fetched name and fame wherever she went. I used to admire when she speaks to us about her visits abroad, her experiences and how we should aspire for the same. She is a person of great qualities which have to be emulated by everybody. I always regard Amma avargal as one among the great personalities and wish to follow her footsteps always.

✱

# கல்வித் தாயே ! நின்புகழ் வாழ்க !!

ரா. சுஜிதா, ரா. சுகந்தா, ரா. லலிதா, ரா. ராதா

ஆம் எந்த தலைப்பை  
கொடுத்தாலும் கவிதையாக்க  
கற்றுக் கொடுத்தீர், ஆனால்  
எங்கள் கல்வித் தாயான  
உங்களை தலைப்பாக  
மாற்றி கவிதையாக்க  
எங்களால் முடியவில்லை

ஊமை இருளுக்குள்  
இருந்து எங்களை  
கல்வி என்னும் ஒளியேற்றி  
வெளிச்சத்திற்கு கொண்டு  
வந்த எங்கள் கல்வித்தாயே  
நின் புகழ் வாழ்க!

ஒரு முறை வந்து போகும்  
பெளர்ணமியை விட  
நாளும் தோன்றும்  
சூரியனின் ஒளிபோல்  
நின் புகழ் வாழ்க!

தென்றல் வரும் போதுதான்  
இளவேனிற் காலம் அழகு  
வீண்மீன் தோன்றும்  
போது தான்  
இரவுக்கு அழகு  
நீங்கள் வரும் போது  
தான் இந்த கல்விக்  
கூடத்திற்கு அழகு

எண்ணற்ற குழந்தைகளின்  
அறிவுக் கண்களைத்  
திறந்து வைத்த  
எங்கள் கல்வித் தாயே  
உங்களை வாழ்த்த  
எங்களுக்கு வயதும் இல்லை  
போற்றிப் பாட எங்களிடம்  
வார்த்தையும் இல்லை.

## நான் அறிந்த அம்மா

எஸ். ரஞ்சனி

“தோன்றிற் புகழொடு தோன்றுக அஃதிலார்  
தோன்றலின் தோன்றாமை நன்று”

என்ற வள்ளுவர் வாக்கிற்கிணங்க வாழ்ந்து கொண்டிருக்கும் அம்மாவைப் பற்றி என்னுடைய கருத்துக்கள் இதோ.

“வாழ்க்கை போர்க்களம்  
வாழ்ந்துதான் பார்க்கணும்  
போர்க்களம் மாறலாம்  
போர்கள் தான் மாறுமா?”

என்ற வாழ்க்கையின் தத்துவத்தை அறிந்து, முயற்சி செய்து, வெற்றியும் கண்டு, இன்று ஆலமர விருட்சமாக அனைவருக்கும் கல்வி எனும் நிழலைத் தந்து கொண்டிருக்கும் அம்மாவைப் பற்றி அந்த நிழலில் நின்று கொண்டிருக்கும் நான் எடுத்துரைப்பதில் பெருமை கொள்கிறேன்.

“பட்டங்கள் ஆள்வதும் சட்டங்கள் செய்வதும்,  
பாரினில் பெண்கள் நடத்த வந்தோம்”

என்ற பாரதியின் புதுமைப் பெண்ணாக விளங்கும் அம்மா, கற்ற கல்விகளோ ஏராளம். பெற்ற பட்டங்களோ தாராளம்.

பெண்கல்வியை உயிர் மூச்சாகக் கொண்டு,  
பெண்களுக்காகப் பாடுபட்டு,

“அடுப்பூதும் பெண்களுக்கு படிப்பெதற்கு?”

என்ற வாக்கியத்தைத் தகர்த்தெறிந்து, பெண்கல்வி என்பது அவளுக்கு கல்வியை மட்டும் அளிக்காமல்,

“வாழ்க்கையை உணர்ந்து கொள்ளவும்  
நாட்டைத் தெரிந்து கொள்ளவும்  
உலகை அறிந்து கொள்ளவும்  
புதுமைகளைப் புரிந்து கொள்ளவும்  
உதவ வேண்டும்”

என்பதை வேதவாக்காகக் கொண்டு உழைத்துக் கொண்டிருக்கிறார்.

“நல்லதோர் குடும்பம் பல்கலைக்கழகம்”

என்ற தொடருக்கிணங்க இந்த பல்கலைக்கழகமே நல்ல குடும்பமாக விளங்குகிறது. பெற்ற தாயைப்போல் கருணையோடும் ஓர் ஆசிரியையைப் போல் கட்டுப்பாட்டோடும் அனைவரையும் சம அளவில் நிர்வகிக்கும் திறமையான பெண்மணி என்பதை யாராலும் மறுக்க இயலாது.

“அறிவிலே தெளிவு,  
நெஞ்சிலே உறுதி  
அகத்திலே அன்பிலோர் வெள்ளம்  
பொறிகளின் மீது தனியரசாணை  
பொழுதெல்லாம் பேரருளின் நெறியிலே  
நாட்டம்”

என விளங்கும் அம்மா அன்னைதெரஸாவின் மறுஉருவம் என்பதில் ஐயமில்லை. உழைப்பை தன் தாரகமந்திரமாகக் கொண்டு, இரவு பகல் பாராமல் உழைத்து, அதில் வெற்றியும் கண்டுள்ளார்.

“மங்கையராய் பிறப்பதற்கே நல்ல மாதவம் செய்திடவேண்டும்மா”

என்று தன் எண்பதாவது வயதிலும் தன்னை சமூகசேவையில் அர்ப்பணித்துக் கொண்டு வாழ்ந்து கொண்டிருக்கும் அம்மா வாழ்வாங்கு வாழ வாழ்த்தி வணங்குகிறேன்.

★

# அம்மா ஓர் ஒளிர்விடும் சுடர்

அ. தங்க அருணா

சாரதாலயத்தில் ஒளிர் விடும் சுடரே

உமது ஒளி எங்களுக்கு வழிகாட்டியாயிருக்க

என் தாயையும் அரவணைத்த தாயே

உம்மால் இன்று யாம் யாவரும் உயர்ந்திருக்க

நீவிர் புரியும் தியாகங்கள் இப்படியே என்றென்றும் தொடர

லட்சக்கணக்கில் உம்மிடமிருந்து ஒளிபெற்று

உலகமெல்லாம் சுடர்விடும் மாணவியர் எங்களின்

பிறந்தநாள் வாழ்த்துக்கள்.

\*

# **DR. RAJAMMAL P. DEVADAS MY MEMORIES AND ASSOCIATIONS**

KISSAN JOSEPH

I am delighted to hear about the preparations in progress for the 80th Birthday celebrations of Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas. It is a privilege and honor to recall my memories and associations with this great human being.

First and foremost, Dr. Devadas, or Amma as she is affectionately known to all her friends and admirers, is a person of great empathy. She has been driven in all her endeavors by a zeal to improve humanity. And what better way to improve humanity than to dedicate oneself to the noble task of education. All of us owe a deep debt to her for the many programs she has founded to further this mission. Indeed, it is my belief that her lifetime of dedication to this cause has made India and the world a better place.

Her influence on my life began when I had the opportunity to enroll in the Home Science Nursery School. I recall the many happy days that I spent there. Now, as a father of two children, I know the experience was priceless. I only hope that many more children in India will benefit from such a nurturing, fertile, and progressive environment.

Later on in my life, her zeal for scholarship influenced me to pursue higher education in the United States. Thus, after studying at IIT Delhi, I obtained a Ph.D. degree from Purdue University, Indiana, USA. I now teach at the Business School of the University of Kansas in Lawrence, Kansas, USA. The University

enrolls nearly 30,000 students and is regarded as the premier University in the region. As I mature in my scholarship and teaching, I am taking greater care to carefully sculpt the many students in my charge. People like Amma have clearly demonstrated the importance and excitement of this role.

Amma always demonstrated high energy and determination to press on. Adversity only seemed to bring out greater determination. Her energy and enthusiasm is a constant source of encouragement to me. For her, 24 hours a day is just not enough!

Finally, her actions teach us about how we might wish to organize our own lives. As we go through life, all of us have different objectives. Some strive to be tall oaks. Others wish to be beautiful roses. Yet others aspire to be graceful shrubs. Whatever your calling, give it a 100 per cent as Amma has shown by example.

Let me close by wishing this tall oak a very Happy Birthday. Amma, your shady leaves have comforted many a soul. Your height has been a beacon to many a striving spirit. And your grace has soothed many a troubled life.

God bless you on this special day. Your life has been a blessing to thousands. My best wishes to the staff and students at your institutions.

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# MY ASSOCIATION WITH AMMA

NISSAN JOSEPH

**I**t is very exciting to hear of Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas' 80th Birthday. Her life has touched so many people in so many ways that it is a true celebration of her spirit that has kindled so many others to rise to new levels.

I will always remember my days in Avinashilingam Home Science Nursery School with great fondness. Though the details are not clear due to my young age, the excitement, spirit and enthusiasm has stayed with me and helped me throughout my life. It taught me that schooling is more than academics, it is enjoying people around you, it is enjoying the energy of life.

Amma's force behind the foundation of the nursery was not evident to me till my later years when I did have a chance to see her again. Her distinguished persona coupled with her boundless energy and enthusiasm was spell bounding. It is with great fondness that I recall each of her visits to New Delhi.

So on this very special day, it gives me great pleasure and honor to not only say Happy 80th Birthday Amma but also and very heartfelt Thank You for adding so much to my life.

Best wishes and I'm holding back some more great comments for your 90th Birthday, so make sure I'm around for it.

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# **VOLUME II**

## **I. HOME SCIENTISTS**

### **Dr. S. ANANDALAKSHMY**

Dr. Anandalakshmy was the Head of the Child Development Department at Lady Irwin College, New Delhi and later became its Director. She is currently a consultant in Child Development and Education at Chennai.

### **Ms.T. PADMASINI ASURI**

Ms. T. Padmasini Asuri, was earlier the Regional Home Economist, Government of India later the Project Consultant to Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), Bangalore; incharge of various developmental programmes for women and youth at the national level and is presently serving in extension projects for women at Karnataka.

### **Dr. BASANTI BAROOVA**



She is currently the Associate Professor of the Department of Foods and Nutrition, Faculty of Home Science at Assam Agricultural University and the President of Debrugarh (Assam) chapter of Nutrition Society of India.

### **Dr. ARVINDA CHANDRA**



Dr. Chandra was the Professor and Head, Dept. of Extension Education and Dean, Faculty of Home Science, M.S. University, Baroda. She has to her credit many presentations and publications.

### **Dr. P. SELVIE DAS**

Dr. P. Selvie Das is a Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha) and her family had close relation with Devadas family.

### **Prof. (Mrs.) ANNA GEORGE**



Prof. Anna George was the First Regional Home Economist, Government of India and the First Professor of Home Science of Kerala University. She has held various prestigious positions - Chairperson Vice-President and the like in various organisations. Currently she is incharge of an old age home in Thiruvalla, Kerala.

### **Dr. TARA GOPALDAS**



Dr. Tara Gopaldas is an eminent Nutrition Scientist from M.S. University, Baroda and has held various positions both at the National and International levels, - she has published many articles, booklets and books; is a member of various international organizations; and is a recipient of many awards. She is currently the Director of Tara Consultancy Services, Bangalore.

### **Dr. N. KAMALAMMA**

Presently is the Professor in Home Science, Gandhigram Rural Institute, Gandhigram.

### **Dr. N. SHAKUNTALA MANAY**



Dr. Shakuntala is an eminent Home Scientist having a rich teaching experience of over 35 years at Smt. V.H.D. Central Institute of Home Science, Bangalore and retired as the Head of the Department of Foods and Nutrition. She has published many articles; held various positions in the Home Science Association and other organisations in Karnataka.

**Dr. YASMIN MORENAS**



From the position of Senior Officer (Women in Development), FAO/UN, Dr. Morenas took early retirement. She is active in programmes related to UN Women's International Federations, Communication Council and Senior citizens.

**Dr. (Mrs.) MEERA RAO**



Dr. Meera Rao is currently the Director of Instruction, College of Home Science, University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad. She is an eminent Home Scientist who has to her credit various honours and published many papers and books.

**Dr. PHILOMENA R. REDDY**



Dr. Reddy is an eminent Scientist, Nutritionist and Chemist. She has served three long decades at Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati as a Reader and Dean of Sciences and later as Vice-Chancellor of Sri Padmavathi Mahila Vishvavidyalayam, Tirupati. She has also served in various academic committees of 27 Indian Universities; as Chairman Home Science Panel, Convenor Curriculum Development Committee of UGC.

**Dr. (Mrs.) YOLANDA SATUR**



Dr. Yolanda Satur is presently the Principal, Cauvery College for Women, Tiruchirapalli. She has served for the past 38 years in various Colleges under various capacities and retired as a principal from Tamil Nadu Government Service.

### **Ms. JAYALAKSHMI SHAH**



Ms. Jayalakshmi Shah is the Founder of the Extension Training of Gramsevikas - Junagadh District, Gujarat; Founder of Education Committee of Mundra Town; was Principal of Girls School at Mundra for three decades and currently the member of District Mahila Suraksha Cell of Kutch District.

### **Dr. (Tmt.) NIRMALA THYAGARAJAN**



Dr. Nirmala Thyagarajan served as Joint Director of Collegiate Education and was former Principal of Government Arts and Science Colleges, Government of Tamil Nadu; has a total of 38 years of professional experience in the field of Education; and was awarded "The Best Principal Award" by Government of Tamil Nadu in 1992-93.

### **Kumari V. THULASAMMA**



Held various posts right from a Teacher and Headmistress in High School to Director of Women's Programmes in Applied Nutrition Programme. After retirement served as Urban Project Officer in Indo-Dutch Project for child welfare at Hyderabad.

### **Dr. (Mrs.) M.P. VAIDEHI**



Dr. M.P. Vaidehi, is now working as Director of Instruction (Agri.), Agricultural College, University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore. Earlier she served as Lecturer in Smt. V.H.D. Central Institute of Home Science for about 6 years and later worked as Associate Professor and Head of the Department of Rural Home Science at UAS and has published many research papers and books and is a member of various organizations.

### **Dr. MARIAMMA A. VARGHESE**



Dr. Varghese is currently the Vice-Chancellor of Shreemathi Nathibai Damodar Thackersey Women's University (SNDT), Mumbai. She has had a brilliant educational career and was the recipient of many awards in academic and extra curricular achievements. She has published many books and research articles and manned several projects. She is also a member of various committees working in the area of Women's Issues and Development.

### **Mrs. AMITA VERMA**

Ms. Amita Verma was formerly Head, Department of Child Development and Family Relations, Dean Faculty of Home Science, Acting Vice-Chancellor, M.S. University, Baroda and Former (Hon) Director, Women's Studies Research Centre, M.S. University of Baroda; Currently she is the advisor to the Ford Foundation project on strengthening Social Science Research on Women's Health, WSRC, Baroda.

## **II. KITH AND KIN**

### **Mrs. LEILA DIRAVIAM**

Mrs. Leila Diraviam, wife of late Mr. K. Diraviam, I.A.S. who was the Chief Secretary to the Government of Tamil Nadu is an efficient home maker interested in a wide range of activities - literature, arts, science and social work. Her development oriented work for the upliftment of the under privileged women and children is commendable. She is a member of the Society of Avinashilingam Institute.

### **Mr. P.C. ROBERT**

Mr.P.C. Robert is a retired Accounts Officer of the Government of India, now settled in the family gardens in Tirupattur, North Arcot. An ardent follower of Lenin, Robert has many interests such as low cost housing construction, smokeless chulahs, productive agriculture and reading.

**Dr. KAMALA ANANDAM**



Dr. Anandam is currently the Associate Dean of Educational Technologies, Miami-Dade Community College, who was responsible for the design, development and implementation of computer based system to enhance teaching and learning. She has a wide range of teaching experience both in India and US for the undergraduate and postgraduate students. She has served on many national and Tamil Nadu boards and was a recipient of many honours for her works.

**Dr. PACKIANATHAN CHELLADURAI**



Dr. Chelladurai is a recognised scholar of management science, specialising in organisational theory and behavior in context of the sports. He has published many papers relating to sports and sports management. He is at present a Professor of Sports Management in the Ohio State University, Columbus, U.S.A.

**Mr. P. GNANADURAI MICHAEL**



Mr. P.G. Michael is currently the consultant for Christoffel Blinden Mission (CBM) International for the Asian region. He started his carrier as Khadi Extension Officer and became the Tourism Promotion Manager. Under his leadership the CBM International has sponsored over 260 projects in South Asia to benefit millions of eye patients. He was appointed a Trustee of the Avinashilingam Educational Trust in 1986. He resides in Tiruchirapalli.

**Mr. ROBERT WINFRED MICHAEL**



Mr. R.W. Michael, retired as Taluk Tahsildar and later was the Administrative Officer of the Avinashilingam Home Science College. He is presently at Gobi with an estate of his own.

**Mr. R.A.G. MICHAEL**



Mr. R.A.G. Michael was a retired superintendent of Customs and Central Exercise Department. After retirement he has settled down in Mudavankulam, Tirunelveli District, with farming as an occupation. He runs a Printing Press in Trivandrum.

**Dr. MOHAN DEVADAS**



Dr. Mohan Devadas is a medical practitioner residing in Baulkham Hills, Sydney, Australia for the past two and a half decades. As a student, he had association with Sri Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya. He has published two books and several papers. He takes keen interest in the activities of Sri Avinashilingam Education Trust Institutions, particularly in the newly started Biomedical Instrumentation Engineering.

**Mrs. MARY DEVADAS**



Mrs. Mary Devadas started her carrier in the field of Nursing with a intention of serving the people. She is a loving home maker with interest in gardening, socialising, entertaining guests. She is presently the nurse in the prestigious West Meal Hospital in Sydney. She is also co-manager of Mohan Devadas Pvt. Ltd.

**Mrs. KASTURI GANAPATHY**

Mrs. Ganapathy is the eldest daughter of Mr. Rajadurai Michael. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Home Science from Avinashilingam Institute. Although crippled by polio when she was a child, she has faced many challenges valiently. She is a prolific writer and orator.

### **Dr. VIJAYALAKSHMI D. DURAISWAMY**



Dr. Duraiswamy, daughter of Mr. K. Diraviam started her career as Assistant Professor at Queen Mary's College, Chennai. She is presently the Senior Patent Council, Corporate Patents and Licensing, California. She has held various distinguished positions in India and USA. Dr. Duraiswamy is a Mining Engineer. Their son Kumaran Vamsi is a medical doctor.

### **Lt. Col. R.A. MUTHIAH**

Lt. Col. Muthiah was a student of Sri Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya with a passion for the National Cadet Corps in which he excelled. His NCC performance won him a place in the National Defence Academy.

### **Mrs. KAMALA UTHAMAN**

Mrs. Kamala Uthaman is a graduate in Home Science from Avinashilingam College. She is working in bank in Tiruchirapalli. She applies her knowledge of Home Science in performing satisfactorily her dual role as mother of two adolescent girls and wife of an ever busy architect.

### **Mrs. CHANDRA GANAPATHY**

Mrs. Chandra Ganapathy is the youngest daughter of Mr. Rajadurai Michael. She is a graduate, now working for Water Aid. She is versatile in many aspects - dramatics, dancing, writing and cooking.

### **Mr. RAJADURAI G. MICHAEL**

Mr. R.G. Michael is the young Computer Engineer cum businessman. He is creative, bubbling with ideas to modernise offices and laboratories. Residing in Trichy he travels all over Tamil Nadu for his business.

### **Mrs. SANDHYA SEKAR**

Mrs. Sandhya Sekar is residing in San Francisco since her husband, Mr. Richard Sekar is a Computer Engineer there. She is a graduate in Psychology from Women's Christian College, Chennai. Sandhya is an able home maker, mother, wife, niece all combined in one.

### **Dr. P. MUTHIAH MANOHARAN**

Dr. P. Muthiah Manoharan is a graduate in Agriculture, now working as Training Organiser in Avinashilingam Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Vivekanandapuram Post, Coimbatore District. He writes on practical issues in Agriculture.

### **Dr. SHARADA DEVADAS**



Dr. Sharada is the only grand daughter of Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas. She is currently in Australia. She loves all that is India and desires to practise medicine in India.

**Mr. MICHAEL DEVADAS**



Mr. Michael Devadas is eldest grandson of Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas who is currently residing in Australia and he has finished his Bachelor's degree in Nuclear Medicine. He is interested in sports.

**Mr. SORNA PAUL DEVADAS**

Mr. Sorna is the second grandson of Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas. He is enrolled in University of Western Sydney, Australia for Computer Engineering. He is interested in sports and reading.

**Dr. K. SELVARAJA UTHAMY**



Dr. Uthamy is a Professor of Anatomy at Perundurai Medical College, Perundurai with more than three decades of teaching experience (from Trivandrum) to the future medical professionals.

**Dr. RAMANI DEVAIRAKKAM**



Dr. Devairakkam is a Medical Professor with the Tamil Nadu Medical Service for the last two and half decades. She has a wide experience as a Gynaecologist and in her own way is helping the women in Tamil Nadu.

**Mr. M. SUKUMAR**

Mr. M. Sukumar is presently the Professor in the Pharmaceutical Science Department of Coimbatore Medical College, Coimbatore. He has a wide experience as a pharmaceutical teacher and had been a Inspector of Pharmacy Council of India, New Delhi.

**Mr. M. DEVADAS**

Mr.M. Devadas is Lecturer in Mathematics in the Polytechnic College of Sri Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya, Coimbatore. He is a writer and orator.

**Mrs. SHERLY JOSEPH**

Mr. Sherly Joseph is the niece of Mrs. Mary Devadas and she is a student of Bible College in Baulkhan Hills, Sydney, Australia.

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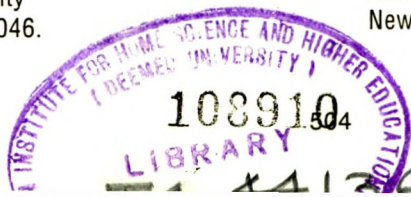
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