



## **Dr (Smt.) Rajammal P. Devadas**

**Recipient of Jamnalal Bajaj Award for Uplift and Welfare of Women and Children-1998**

Date of Birth: July 15, 1919

Educational Qualification: B.Sc. (Home Science); M.Sc. (Food and Nutrition); M.A. (Home Science Education); D.Sc. (Home Science-Nutrition)

Dr Rajammal P. Devadas, who was the first Home Science graduate from the Madras University and who was one of the earliest Indians to receive Ph.D. from USA (Ohio State University) got associated with the Founder Dr. T.S. Avinashilingam right from the conceptualization of this educational edifice and dedicated her entire life to the cause of education of women both in the formal and non-formal sectors.

The trust runs three ideal pre-schools to cater to urban children. Three crèches also have been organized in remote rural areas (Kathirnaickenpalayam, Vivekanadapuram and Pappanickenpalayam) and one in the urban slum of Coimbatore which provide a safe and conducive environment for children (below five years) of working/sick and ailing women along with nutritious meal in the afternoon. About 1050 children had so far enjoyed psychosocial, cognitive and play stimulation in the crèches.

In order to make School Lunch Programme most cost-effective and sustainable, based on local resources, the institute established a model school lunch programme as early as in 1963. The data on effectiveness and experiences of this programme provided the background for strengthening the state wide Nutritious Noon Meal Programme by the Tamil Nadu State Government on 1982 with Dr Devadas as Advisor. Today, this programme feeds 9 million children in the age range of 2 to 14 years living below the poverty line, providing them one-third of their nutritional requirements through a nutritious, one pot hot meal.

Dr. Devadas also made her mark as a world renowned nutritionist through her pioneering work to integrate and health education in primary school curriculum all over Tamil Nadu which has helped children and their parents to improve their nutritional knowledge, change their attitudes and practices and led to adoption of desirable nutrition habits.

Dr Devadas has immense faith in integrated education for the disabled and introduced the same in her own premises. Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) programme is being established from the year 1996 in Thudiyalur Town Panchayat. The major objective of the programme is to guarantee that all disabled children from 0 to 14 years of age get equal opportunities through the locally available rehabilitational, medical, educational, vocational and social resources.

Community and social service as a curricular component is the brainchild of Dr Devadas. During the last three years, the focal thrust of this experience has been centres around improving ICD's Anganwadis adopted in Coimbatore Corporation towards better services for total development of young children. This particular outreach activity has been channelised drawing the help of undergraduate and post-graduate students from Avinashilingam Deemed University for Women.

In order to disseminate research findings and to transfer science and technology to children, teachers, parents and the community, a Tamil monthly magazine titled 'Vignana Chudar' is published by the Trust with Dr Devadas as the Chief Editor. In addition, 17 other publications have been brought forth in the arena of child welfare.

In collaboration with the Population Education Resource Centre (PERC) of the University of Madras, population education programmes were undertaken both in the university and in the

community, related to gender issues incorporation of components such as reproductive health and reproductive rights in the curriculum and population awareness campaigns for students and the community.

The establishment of Avinashiligam Rural Centre at a place called Vivekanadapuram encompassing about 200 acres of land stands testimony to the involvement in Rural Development. Rural development programmes concentrated convergence of services like noon meal, Tamil Nadu Integrated Nutrition, Social Welfare Board, CAPART, Rashtriya Mahila Kosh, Mahila Samridhi Yojana and all other NGOs at that level. Her co-ordinating and collaborating skill was well received by all the agencies – Governmental and Non-governmental and today the feathers to her cap are 1020 training programmes for women in Home Science covering 30,000 women and about 2100 agriculture and allied training programmes reaching 55,000 farmers and farm women.

About 40 women are adopted under Indira Mahila Yojana covering 8000 women. The women have been helped to participate in political scenario and voter awareness campaign, political empowerment meeting have been organized in which about 2060 women in municipalities and town panchayats were trained.

Integration of teaching, research and extension is the hallmark of the innovative contribution of Dr. Devadas. She thus fulfills the mandate of the National Educational Policy in letter and spirit. She has been pioneer and pace setter for preparing a band of young ambassadors who would not be hesitant to undertake community related endeavours.

