

Dr. (Smt.) Sarojini Varadappan

Recipient of Jamnalal Bajaj Award for Uplift and Welfare of Women and Children-2004

Born: September, 1921

M.A., Ph.D., Visharad in Hindi

An imposing building housing the office of the Women's Indian Association (W.I.A) and a working women's hostel, the "Even Tide Home" for senior citizens, a Smokeless Chulah Project that 20000 households adopted, an Indian Population Project, training in tailoring to poor girls given under the Jawaharlal Rozgar Yojana, a computer training centre, rehabilitation of leprosy-cured patients implemented by the W.I.A. in 10 homes run by the Government of Tamil Nadu and 27 clusters throughout the State: One may wonder how a single woman with iron in her soul could create so much and make such a big difference to the society. That blithe spirit is Dr. (Smt.) Sarojini Varadappan whose persuasive efforts and gentle manners have attracted many a social worker in Chennai and other parts of Tamil Nadu to volunteer to undertake socia-economic projects for the development of women and children.

But her path was not all roses. Her family was quite orthodox so far as girls and women folk were concerned. Sarojiniji was determined to pursue her education. She did her post- graduation at the age of 60 and got her doctorate when she was 80 and this is the steely resolve that has made itself manifest in the work that she has been able to do. She joined the W.I.A. when she was 20. One landmark of the W.I.A. is the Cancer Institute at Adayar. Under her presidentship, the Red Cross activities of the Blood Bank, vocational training for the physically handicapped, computer & typewriting training, nursing aid and psychotherapy aid training, distribution of aids and appliances for the handicapped, Day Hospital, Junior Red Cross and Youth Red Cross programmes are conducted to help deserving people.

Smt. Varadappan evinces keen interest in the eradication of illiteracy among women. The W.I.A. runs a number of Jana Shikshan Nilayams as continuing education centres. Smt. Varadappan is proud of the fact that her efforts have made more than 30000 women literate. The Sarojini Varadappan Girls' Higher Secondary School at Poonamallee is now functioning with 2000 girls in a rural area having classes upto the higher secondary stage. She is the President of the Women's Food Council in Tamil Nadu which is running an Annapurna Cafeteria and 7 Women Consumer Co-operatives. The natural calamities, the cyclones in Tamil Nadu and Orissa, have always evoked a prompt response from her. It was because of her efforts that the Chennai Branch of Red Cross constructed 7 primary school buildings in the quake-affected areas of Rajkot and Ahmedabad.

Smt. Varadappan never tires of exhorting the young women to come forward and fight for the women's cause. "I want the second line of workers to continue the service that we have started and more educated young women should join us. They must also have the spirit of service in them".

During her illustrious career, SOH. Varadappan has received a number of prestigious awards. In 1973, Smt. Varadappan was conferred the Padma Shri and, last year, the State Sree Sakthi Puraskar Award was conferred on her on International Women's Day.

