

Requiem to a nutrition scientist and educationist – Rajammal Devdas

The 32nd Meeting of the Nutrition Society of India (NSI) was held at Sri Avinashilingam Deemed University in Coimbatore during November 1999. It was a special occasion when nutrition scientists and students felicitated one of the founder members and past president of the Society, Rajammal Devdas – Chancellor of the university for completing 80 years of purposeful life. Speaker after speaker marvelled at her youthfulness at 80 years and hoped that this remarkable lady who had done so much for the cause of Nutrition, Home Science and Women's development in the country will live for many more years.

I had known Rajammal (lovingly called 'amma' by her colleagues and students) since 1966, when NSI was founded. Over the years she looked the same – a warm smiling, youthful, intelligent face and a tireless worker – with a missionary zeal to serve the causes she cherished. 'Amma' gave the feeling of permanence and invincibility. We all felt that despite her age we can count on her presence, support and advice for many more years to come. But, alas, that was not to be and she passed away on 18 March 2002 after a brief illness.

Born in Kallikulam in Tirunelveli District of Tamil Nadu, Rajammal had her early education in Chennai and graduated from Women's Christian College. She did her post-graduation

and doctorate at the Ohio State University, USA in 1950, with many honours. Later in 1978, she was awarded the DSc degree by the University of Madras.

Prior to joining the Sri Avinashilingam Home Science College in Coimbatore as Principal in 1960, she worked as Professor in the College of Nursing, New Delhi (1951–53), Dean and Professor in the Faculty of Home Science at the MS University, Baroda (1953–55), and Chief Home Economist and Joint Director, Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Government of India (1955–1961).

Under the stewardship of Rajammal, Sri Avinashilingam College grew from strength to strength and acquired the status of a Deemed University in 1980 with Rajammal as the Vice-Chancellor – a post she held till 1994, when she became the Chancellor of the university.

Rajammal Devdas was the architect of the Chief Minister's noon meal programme in Tamil Nadu, which many believe has contributed immensely to the relatively high literacy and social development in Tamil Nadu compared to those in other states of India, except perhaps Kerala. For Rajammal, science was of value only if it could help the weakest sections of the society. This spirit of finding solutions to the most intractable problems of society through the application of science was incul-

cated in her colleagues and students. Her approach to education was to integrate nutrition with health and environment; she had advised many states in India in formulating an integrated curriculum. To her, research had to be an important part of postgraduate education. Little surprise that year after year, papers from Sri Avinashilingam Deemed University carried away young scientist awards at the Annual Meetings of the NSI. Rajammal authored 350 research papers, 40 books and was the founder and editor of the *Indian Journal of Nutrition and Dietetics*. She was a member of the State Planning Commission and served on many decision-making national and international bodies. Rajammal received many awards, including Tagore Literacy Award, the Jammalal Bajaj Award, the G. D. Birla Award, the Malcolm Adiseshiah Award, Vignana Saraswati, Padmasri and most recently, International Nutrition Scientists' Award which was given to her in Vienna. Rajammal Devdas was a fellow of the National Academy of Agricultural Sciences.

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Sri Venkateswara Institute of Medical Sciences

Department of Endocrinology and Metabolism Requires: A Senior Research Fellow for Project (funded by Board of Research in Nuclear Sciences) Development of In-house Immunoassays. The candidate should be an M.Sc. Biochemistry/Biotechnology with a minimum of two/three years hands on experience on RIA techniques in peptides and steroids.

The post is for one year and renewable for up to three years. The remuneration will be Rs 5600/- per month.

Interested candidates may apply with their supportive documents to the address given below or walk-in for the Interview on 1 July 2002 at 10 am at the address given below.

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