

Selfless service to children, old people and promotion of dance



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Innovation Brief : Padmaja is the founder of Sodari Nivedita Seva Samiti, Founder Patron of Sri Rajini Raja Kala Kshetram and the Executive Trustee of Jattu Ashram. Padmaja trains rural children in classical dances. With the help of few dance experts/volunteers, she has trained scores of village children who have performed at various programs in Delhi, Hyderabad, Vijaywada and on foreign shores too. At the ashram even boys are trained in traditional martial arts and many other traditional local art forms. She has also combined an old age home for women with children's home. Children and the aged women get care and affection from each other.

Detail : At the first look, one would mistake this lady for a monk (sadhvi), for she surely resembles one. Dressed in a white sari, with a clean shaven head and fondly known as 'Amma', Padmaja's service to humanity can be an inspiration for many. Padmaja is the founder of Sodari Nivedita Seva Samiti, Founder Patron of Sri Rajini Raja Kala Kshetram and the Executive Trustee of Jattu Ashramam. She organizes homes for orphans, single women in distress. She takes care of one Ashram in Parvathipuram of Vizianagaram District and another in Addanki of Prakasam District. Now these homes have become centers for child and youth development.

She once met the founder of 'Jattu' ashram Shri Dollu Parinaidu through District Collector. She felt highly motivated by his thoughts, and decided to leave her government job and everything else behind to join the Jattu Ashram around the year 2004. Since then she has been making efforts to train the orphans in their surroundings by tapping their innate talent.

While working for the children in Jattu Ashram, Padmaja identified the dance talent in the rural children. She thought of training them in classical dances, for which teachers are not easily available in case of rural children. With the help of few dance experts/volunteers, Padmaja has trained scores of village children and arranged for their performances in Delhi, Hyderabad, Vijaywada and on foreign shores too. Even the boys at the Ashram are trained in traditional archery, Karrasamu (stick fight) and many other traditional local art forms.

There are also some elderly women staying at the Ashram. Padmaja has uniquely combined an old age home for women with the children's home. The combination has worked so well that both the children and the women find care and affection in each other.

Source of Innovation : (Idea) During her high school education, Padmaja lived at her maternal grandmother's house where she was harassed by her uncle. She could not express her grief to

her parents as she felt they may not believe her. She left to Karnataka at the first available opportunity to pursue further studies but the scars of harassment never left her. All attempts made by her parents to get her married were rejected by Padmaja. She wanted to serve the society and reduce pain for the people. At a certain stage in life she felt like becoming a mother. She found an answer by adopting a child. Padmaja was motivated by the thought that to become a mother one need not give birth to a child. She was also highly moved by the Oprah Winfrey show, as Winfrey herself a victim of sexual abuse as a child. She decided that no child should suffer like her and hence decided to work for the orphans and single distressed women.

Social / Impact / Diffusion : 72 orphans have brought up at the Ashrams managed by Padmaja. As many as 200 children have acquired some degree of proficiency in fine arts i.e mostly dance and music, though over 1100 actually attended classes from nearby villages. Until now, about 33 elderly women stayed with her and 29 of them died peacefully. In archery and traditional games, she trained over 50 girls and boys. With a volunteer group developed locally, she is value adding to the education of children in over 45 schools in three mandals especially in creativity, Science, book reading etc. In another Centre at Addanki, in Andhra Pradesh, she set up skill training Art and Craft centre for single women/semi orphan (one parent alive) from villages. So far 30 girls/women received such training and are self employed. At present there are a total of 42 inmates in the Jattu Ashram.

Awardee's background : Padmaja was born on 9th April 1971 in Raichur district, Karnataka to Shri Venigalla Bheemeshwara Rao and Smt Lalitha. She completed her primary education in Hyderabad and high school education in Prakasham district. She graduated in B.Sc from Dharwad University, Karnataka. She has done her post graduation in the subject of Entomology. After graduation, she worked in a voluntary organization as a volunteer. After completing her studies, she volunteered for physically challenged at ' Larsh International' for four years where she learnt many things about life. She then took up charge as District Employment Officer in Andhra Pradesh. All attempts made by her parents to get her married were rejected by Padmaja. She wanted to serve the society and reduce pain for the people.

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For more information pl see the video links below.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e9IQIM5p414>

<https://youtu.be/u0tLUPmfpMk>

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?tab=wm#inbox/15a38a606b7f2d69?projector=1>