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All for the love of public speaking

Dr. Ulaganayaki was honoured with the Rashtriya Gaurav Award.

LALITHASAI

Public speaking is an art. Some are natural speakers and carry the listeners with them. One such veteran is Dr. Ulaganayaki Palani, Associate professor, Stella Maris College. She was recently honoured with 'Rashtriya Gaurav Award' by the India International Friendship Society (IIFS), at a function organised in New Delhi. The society honoured her for having addressed huge literary audiences for more than 1000 occasions.

Says Dr. Ulaganayaki: "I have heard that people are more afraid of speaking in public than dying. This is ridiculous because the ability to express oneself, be it in public or private, is an important skill which every human should possess." As far as giving a speech in front of an audience is concerned, she connects it with a high dosage of confidence. She has so far delivered speeches in all the 47 *Kamban Kazhagams* throughout Tamil Nadu. She has also spoken in all the Tamil *Sangams* in Delhi, Kolkata, Thiruvananthapuram, Bangalore, Hyderabad and Mysore.

TV channels

She has been featured in many TV channels such as Jaya, Podhigai, Makkal, Vijay, Kalaignar and many more. She is a regular speaker for All India Radio. She has also given speeches at the Dubai Tamil San-



ORATORICAL SKILLS: Dr. Ulaganayaki Palani, Associate professor-Tamil Department, Stella Maris College. PHOTO: K.V. SRINIVASAN

gam, Kuwait Tamil Sangam, Andaman & Nicobar Radio, Mauritius Broadcasting and Phillipines Radio. After listening to her interview in Mauritius Broadcasting and impressed with her presentation on *Thirumurugaatrupadai*, Mauritius vice president A.C. Chettiar invited her for lunch.

Born to Tamil professors Dr. V. Srinivasan and Dr. Kothai Srinivasan, Ulaganayaki's love for the stage began when she was hardly three. Thilakavathi, as she was named by her parents, could recite more than 30 *Tirukural* couplets even then. Looking at her talent she used to be given an opportunity to recite it on stage. With the number of stage performances grew the number of *Tirukural* s. By 12 she could explain all

the couplets. She went on to win the prize given by Ulaga *Tirukural* Peravai for children. Amazed at her talent, renowned poet Mu. Varadarasnar rechristened her as Ulaganayaki.

She went on to win many prizes in oratorical competitions during her under graduation, post graduation and M. Phil at Queen Mary's College. Kamban was always her preferred topic.

Inspiring teacher

She started to teach Tamil at Stella Maris in 1987. Her teaching inspired students of other languages also to attend her classes. "Tamil literature is one which dates back centuries. If a teacher can relate the subject with past, present and future, students

will automatically be attracted. They will learn to connect literature with practical life. I am proud to say that I have not only inspired my students to learn Tamil but have also instilled public speaking skills in them," says Ulaganayaki.

When Stella Maris became an autonomous institution, Ms. Ulaganayaki suggested introduction of public speaking in Tamil as part of the curriculum. She went on to author the book *Vaarungal Paechalaragal Aagalam* which has been studied by more than 6,000 students in 15 years.

While many of her students have taken up teaching as their profession there are others who have become bureaucrats. "Give me an average student, I will sharpen her skills and

turn her into an outstanding one," says Ms. Ulaganayaki.

She has won about 16 awards so far. To name a few, Tamil Pani Chemmal, Thirukkural Aaivu Chelvar, Kavi Maamani, Best Teacher Award, Muthamizh Vithaki, Bharathiar Award, etc.

At present, she holds a number of posts such as president- All India Women's Writers Association; president-Ulaga Magalir Ilakkiya Iyakam, Chennai; vice-president-All India Writers Association, T.Nagar branch, Chennai; deputy secretary-Kamban Kazhagam, Chennai; deputy secretary-Bharathiyar Sangam, Chennai; executive member-Thamizh Mozhi Academy, Chennai; and associate secretary, International Tamil Centre, Chennai.