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Women Symbolize Sacrifice

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Women Symbolize Sacrifice

*Rama's divinity blossomed under Kausalya's loving care;
 Lava and Kusa could become powerful and famous
 Due to their noble and virtuous mother Sita;
 The love and care of Jijabai made Shivaji a great warrior;
 Fostered with the love of
 his mother Putlibai, Gandhi became a Mahatma.
 Is there anyone in this world who can
 Take care of you the way your mother does?
 Amma (mother) is the first word that man picks up in life.
 The first letter of the word 'Amma' also happens to be
 The first letter of the alphabet.*

[Telugu Poem]

Embodiments of Love!

In this world, there are many types of relationships, but none equals the relationship that exists between the mother and the child. It is because of this intimate relationship with the mother that one's own country is called motherland. Similarly,

one's own language is called mother tongue, not father tongue. Among the parents, the first place is given to the mother; next comes the father. Not only in day-to-day life but also in the field of spirituality, mothers and women are given the highest regard. For example, when we mention the names of Divine couples such as Sita Rama, Radha Krishna, Lakshmi Narayana, etc., the names of the goddesses come first. What is the inner significance of this? Mother represents Nature, which is the manifest aspect of Divinity. Similarly, the body and the *Atma*, the creation and the Creator, are closely interrelated. The body cannot function without the *Atma*. The *Atma* cannot be experienced without the body.

The *Bhagavad Gita* refers to *swadharma* and *paradharma*. *Swa* refers to the *Atma* and *para* to the body. But today, people are under the mistaken notion that *swadharma* refers to the *dharma* of one's own caste and community such as *brahmin*, *kshatriya* (warrior), *vaisya* (merchant), and *sudra* (labourer). *Swadharma* is *Atmadharma*. The letter *Sa* denotes Divinity. It also signifies the four stages such as *Salokya* (contemplation on God), *Sameepya* (nearness to God), *Sarupya* (identity with God), and *Sayujya* (merger with God). Today, man performs all his activities having faith in the external world. All that is physical and external is temporary. Only the *Atma* is permanent and eternal. In fact, the *Atma* is the real mother. It is not proper on your part to forget this divine mother.

Mother is one's first God

Mother is given the utmost importance in human life. There may be a wicked son, but not a wicked mother. It is because of the noble feelings of the mothers that sons become virtuous, intelligent, attain exalted positions and earn name and

fame. The *Vedas* declare: *Mathru Devo bhava, pithru Devo bhava, acharya Devo bhava, atithi Devo bhava* (worship the mother as God, the father as God, the preceptor as God and the guest as God.) It is the mother who fosters you and nourishes you. It is she who knows your choices and preferences and fulfils all your needs. So, be grateful to your mother always.

Though you cannot see Rama, Krishna, Siva, and Vishnu, you are worshipping them because you believe in scriptures and what the elders say. But how is that you are forgetting your parents, who are responsible for your progress in life? First and foremost, you should show gratitude to your parents, love them, and respect them. Your blood, your food, your head, your money are all the gifts of your parents. You do not receive these gifts directly from God. All that is related to God is only indirect experience. It is only the parents whom you can see directly and experience their love.

So, consider your parents as God. God will be pleased and will manifest before you only when you love and respect your parents.

Children can understand the meanings of the word fox or dog only when they see their pictures. Similarly, it is only after seeing the parents that one can understand the existence of God. When you love and respect your parents, only then you can understand the love of the Divine Parents (*Jagatmatha* and *Jagatpitha*). This is what I tell you often: if you understand the 'I' principle in you, you will understand the 'I' in everybody. *Vyashti* (individual) has emerged from *samashti* (society), *samashti* from *srushti* (creation), and *srushti* from *Parameshti* (Creator). Only when you understand the principle of creation, can you understand the Creator.

It is the mother who teaches you the sacred principles like love, compassion, forbearance, tolerance, and sacrifice. Mother shows the father, father takes you to the preceptor and preceptor directs you to God. That is why among mother, father, preceptor and God, mother comes first.

Woman is embodiment of virtues

When Hanuman went to Lanka in search of Mother Sita, he found her sitting surrounded by demons under a tree in Asokavana. Hanuman felt very sad seeing Sita being harassed by the demons. He went back to Rama and told Him,

*Lord Rama, I have seen Mother Sita
being harassed and frightened by
demons pointing sharp swords at her.
She was shivering with fear like a parrot in a cage*

[Telugu Poem]

On hearing this, Rama and Lakshmana immediately set out to Lanka with the army of *Vanaras*, fought a battle with Ravana, and killed him. As per the command of Lord Rama, Hanuman went to Sita and conveyed the good news to her. Then he requested Sita to permit him to punish the demons surrounding her, who had put her to great suffering.

Sita said, “O Hanuman, it is the responsibility of the subjects to obey the commands of the king. Just as you obey the command of Lord Rama, these demons also had to obey the dictates of their king. It is not their mistake. They acted according to the instructions of the king. So, it is rather unfair to punish these demons. In fact, I suffered not because of these demons, but because of separation from Sri Rama.” So saying, she narrated the following story.

The story of the ungrateful man

Once, in a forest, a hunter, on being chased by a tiger, felt tired and climbed up a tree. There was a bear sitting on the top of the tree. The tiger was waiting under the tree, since it could not climb up. It was very hungry, so it wanted to gobble up the hunter. It asked the bear to push the hunter down, so that it could kill him and appease its hunger. The bear refused to do so, saying that the hunter was its guest and it was its moral duty to extend hospitality to guests. But the tiger continued to wait under the tree.

After some time, the bear started to doze. Noticing this, the tiger addressed the hunter, "O man, I am very hungry. It does not matter whether I eat you or the bear. I will go back once my hunger is satiated. The bear is dozing. So, push it down without delay. I will eat it and spare you."

The man did not have the morality of even the bear. He thought he could escape from the clutches of the tiger by offering the bear as bait. So, he committed the ungrateful act of pushing the bear down. As luck would have it, the bear, as it was falling, caught hold of a branch, climbed up, and saved itself from the tiger.

The tiger said, "O bear, you should never believe human beings. This hunter tried to harm you, though you were kind enough to give him shelter and protect him. So, without further delay, push the ungrateful wretch down, I shall devour him."

But the bear said, "I have done my duty. Each one has to face the consequences of his own actions. I will not harm him just because he tried to harm me."

Narrating this story, Sita said, "No doubt, these demons have put me to a lot of suffering without knowing what is truth and what is *dharma*. Being the consort of Lord Rama, I cannot

stoop down to their level and seek revenge. I do not want to cause harm to anyone.”

Hanuman said, “O Mother, it is but natural that you, being the consort of Lord Rama, are broadminded and noble hearted. You are the embodiment of *dharmā*. It is a mistake on my part to think that you would permit me to punish these helpless demons.”

Sita said, “Hanuman, not only me but all the women are endowed with the noble qualities like compassion and love.”

There is a proverb in Telugu that the house mirrors the qualities of the housewife. The women, barring a few exceptions, never stray away from the path of truth and righteousness even in the face of adversity. When the mendicant stands at the doorstep stretching his hands for alms, the husband may possibly drive him away, but the housewife always comes forward to give alms. There may be dispute over property matters between the father and the son, but the mother always tries to calm down the son with good counsel. The mother will always pray for the welfare of the son wherever he may be. At times, she may be angry or have a difference of opinion, but such differences are only passing clouds. One should not disregard one’s parents yielding to the vagaries of the mind.

Easwaramma, the Divine Mother

Easwaramma, the mother of this physical body, was first christened as Namagiriamma at the time of birth. But after her marriage, Kondama Raju, the grandfather of this physical body, being a *jnani* (one of wisdom) and blessed with a vision of the future, started calling her Easwaramma (mother of Easwara). He used to worship Venkavadhuta. His was a joint family. He had two sons. The elder son, Pedda Venkama Raju, was

the father of this physical body. His younger son was Chinna Venkama Raju. Two sons of his deceased brother, Subba Raju and Venkatrama Raju, also lived with him. One day, as there was some difference of opinion, it was decided to divide the property.

How Kondamu Raju craved Swami

At that time, this body was eight years old. Kondama Raju said he did not want any share in the property and told them to divide it among themselves. The four brothers asked Kondama Raju to spend the rest of his life staying with each one of them. But Kondama Raju said, "I do not want to stay with you, I do not expect anything from you. Whatever I have earned, distribute among yourselves. But give me one property, *Sathya*. If He is with me, I don't want anything else." He asked me, if I was willing to stay with him. I readily agreed.

Both of us were staying in a small room. I used to get up early in the morning, clean the vessels, and cook food for both of us. After making the food ready, I used to run to Bukkapatnam to attend school. The lunch bell would go at 1 o'clock. I would run back to Puttaparthi, serve him lunch, have it myself, and then rush to school for the afternoon session. I maintained punctuality both at school and at home.

Kondama Raju, being one with wisdom, always craved Me. One day, he called Pedda Venkama Raju and told him to change his wife's name to Easwamma. He told this because he felt the divine vibrations originating from within. His intention was to convey that she was the mother of *Easwara*, God Himself. But Pedda Venkama Raju was not aware of the inner meaning of this name. He implicitly obeyed the command of his father and changed the name of his wife to Easwamma.

Kondama Raju's last desire

The new *mandir* was built before Kondama Raju left his mortal coil. He lived for 116 years. But, even at that ripe old age his eyes and legs were in good condition. So, he used to walk from old *mandir* to the new *mandir* every day, without a walking stick.

I used to say, “Why do you walk the distance? There may be cows and buffaloes on the way. You can take the help of a walking stick at least?” He would say that his legs were in perfect condition and that he did not need the help of a walking stick.

He was an ardent devotee of Swami. He used to come to Me early in the morning at 5 o'clock. Seeing him coming at a distance, I used to cover Myself with a blanket, pretending to be asleep. He would come slowly, lift the blanket, touch My feet, and return. He used to come early in the morning because he did not want anyone to notice him touching My feet. He was a little apprehensive about what the villagers would think if they noticed a 116 year-old grandfather touching the feet of his grandson.

On a particular evening, I went to Puttaparthi to see him. At that time, he was sitting on a cot, deeply immersed in singing a ballad, which described Rama lamenting over the fainting of Lakshmana in the battlefield. He was very fond of this particular episode from the *Ramayana*.

Rama lamented, “In this world, I might find another mother like Kausalya, a wife like Sita, but definitely not a brother like Lakshmana.” This is what he was singing to himself when I entered his room. I said, “O grandfather, what are you doing?”

He exclaimed, "O Swami, You have come," and fell at My feet. He said, "Swami, I am fully aware that You are not an ordinary child, but *Easwara* Himself. You are born in our clan to redeem all of us. But, I pray that You fulfil a small desire of mine. Dasaratha did not have the good fortune of drinking water from Rama's divine hands at the time of his death. But Jatayu was fortunate enough to be the recipient of such an act of grace in his last moments. Swami, let me also have the good fortune of sipping water from Your divine hands when my end approaches." I promised that I would certainly fulfil his desire.

Easwaramma's motherly affection for Swami

The following week, I went to see him again after visiting Subbamma's house. Kondama Raju came to know that I was coming to his house. Immediately, he called Easwaramma and told her, "I am not going to live any longer. Having known that my end has approached, God is coming to shower His grace on me?"

She responded in an innocent way saying, "Where is God? How do you know that He is coming?"

Then Kondama Raju said, "O mad woman, still you are deluded by the feeling of a mother toward her son! Look there, God is coming." So saying, he pointed at Me as I was entering his house. She too was aware of My Divinity. But she used to get carried away by her motherly affection toward Me. Similar was the case with Yashoda. Though she had seen all the fourteen worlds in Krishna's mouth, she thought it was a dream or an illusion.

Kondama Raju told Easwaramma that Swami did not take sweets. Right from birth till today, I have not touched sweets. Why? If I were to take sweets, thousands of devotees would

start bringing sweets for Me. I do not take fruits either. I do not even touch milk or curds. I lead a very simple life. I take only *ragi* gruel and groundnut chutney. Kondama Raju also used to relish this food. He used to say, “Sathya, serve me whatever you eat.”

Early in the morning, I used to prepare tasteful *ragi* gruel, groundnut chutney and some green leaves curry. The whole street was very fond of My cooking. Sometimes, on My return from Bukkapatnam, I used to find all those afflicted with fever making a beeline in front of the house waiting for Me. Kondama Raju would tell Me that they were all waiting to take the pepper *rasam* from Me as it would give them relief. Immediately, I used to prepare pepper *rasam* and distribute a glassful to each of them. They used to feel very happy, and later on expressed their gratitude saying, “Swami, your pepper *rasam* has given us great relief.”

Swami’s culinary skills

In those days, on festival days such as *Sankranti* and *Ugadi*, the *dhobis* and barbers used to come to the house for food. In the house, there was no one else other than Kondama Raju and Myself. So, I had to prepare food for many people. Easwaramma (Swami’s mother) and Venkamma and Parvathamma (Swami’s sisters) used to prepare various delicious items including sweet *puris* in their respective homes on festival days. When they could prepare sweet *puris*, why couldn’t I also prepare them and serve grandfather? So, I also would prepare sweet *puris* and serve not only grandfather but also the washerman, the barber, and others. On one such occasion, Pedda Venkama Raju (Swami’s father) came to see us at lunch time. Kondama Raju invited him for lunch, since it was a festi-

val day. Pedda Venkama Raju had his lunch with us and felt that the food items were very delicious. He went home and chided Easwaramma and Venkamma for not being able to make the items tasteful. He said, "Look at Sathya, what a fine cook he is! Why can't you prepare the food items the way Sathya does?" From the next day onward, he started sending them to Me asking them to bring whatever food items I prepared. They would come and complain that it was because of My cooking that they were being blamed at home.

How things happened they way they were destined

When I was nine years old, Seshama Raju, the elder brother of this body, decided to take Me with him to Kamalapur for studies. He felt that I was wasting My time staying with Kondama Raju. But, grandfather objected to this, saying that I did not require any studies. But things happened the way they were destined to happen.

After the construction of Prasanthi Nilayam, one day I went to see Kondama Raju. He asked Easwaramma to get a glass of water. He told her, "God has come to take me away. He made a promise that He would pour water into my mouth with His Divine hands, before I leave this body. He has come to fulfill His promise."

Puzzled by Kondama Raju's request, Easwaramma said, "You are not suffering from any disease, you don't even have fever or a cold. What makes you think that your end has approached?"

Kondama Raju said, "Death occurs as per the Will of God. Just as birth has no reason, death too has no reason. This is the Truth of truths." Easwaramma did not want to argue with him. According to his wish, she brought a glassful of water and

gave him. He sat down on the floor and made Me sit on the cot. He kept his head on My knees and said, "Swami, please listen to My prayer." Easwaramma was watching all this. She wondered, how is that he had so much love and regard for his young grandson. Kondama Raju said, "As You know, I was doing a small business to make both ends meet. Perhaps I may still have to pay a paisa or an anna to certain people. Please bless me so that I am not indebted to anyone in my death."

I said, "So shall it be," and started pouring water into his mouth. He breathed his last as he was drinking water. His desire was fulfilled.

Before leaving his mortal coil, he told Easwaramma not to get deluded by body attachment. He said, "Bodily relationship is temporary, whereas *Atmic* relationship is permanent. So, give up body attachment and develop attachment to the *Atma*."

Three wishes of two noble mothers

From that day onward, Eswaramma never stayed at home; she started staying in Prasanthi Nilayam. Every day, in the morning and evening she used to come upstairs and talk to Swami. She also understood My Divinity very well. When I appeared in the form of Lord Siva to her, she would ask, "What Swami? Why are you adorning the snakes around your neck?"

I would act innocent, "Well, I don't have snakes on Me."

She would move away saying, "Look, there are some snakes inside." But later, on not finding any snake inside, she would ask for forgiveness. Like this on many occasions, she had the experience of My Divinity. Similar was the case with Kausalya and Yashoda. Though they knew that their sons were divine, they used to get carried away by their motherly affec-

tion toward them. Mothers are highly noble and virtuous. Their nobility cannot be described in words. It does not matter if you do not acquire worldly wealth, but try to win the wealth of your mother's grace. Only then your life will be sanctified.

Three wishes of a noble mother

Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar was a noble soul. He was born in a poor family. He was living with his aged mother. He used to feel very sad seeing his mother wearing old and torn *saris*. After he completed his studies, he took up a job and started earning some money. One day he sat by the side of his mother and said, "Mother, please tell me if you have any desires. Now that I have started earning money, I am in a position to fulfil them."

She said, "Son, I don't have any desires. It is enough for me if you lead a noble life."

After some time, he got a better job and started earning thousands of rupees. Again, he asked his mother to tell him if she had any desires. She said she had three desires and could not live in peace unless and until they were fulfilled. "Ours is a small village, and there are many children who are wasting their time without going to school. So, please construct a small school out of the money you have earned." As per the wish of his mother, Vidyasagar got a school constructed in his village.

Then he asked his mother to express her second desire. "Our villagers are suffering for lack of medical facilities. There is nobody to take care of them when they are afflicted with fever, cough or cold. So, I want you to construct a small hospital." Vidyasagar built a hospital, too.

After some time, he asked his mother, what her third wish was. She said, "The villagers are suffering due to lack of

drinking water. They are being afflicted with various diseases as they are drinking polluted water.” Immediately, he got a few wells dug and provided drinking water to the villagers.

Story of Viduasagar’s humility

As the days rolled by, Vidyasagar's name and fame spread far and wide. He was a good orator. His speeches were not based on bookish knowledge. He used to speak on matters of daily relevance. So, people in large numbers used to throng his meetings to listen to his speech. He was a very simple and humble man.

One day he was going to a neighboring village to address a gathering. He boarded the train carrying a small suitcase. An I.A.S officer, who was going to attend his meeting, was traveling by the same train. He was carrying a small handbag with him. He had not seen Vidyasagar before. As soon as he got down from the train, he started calling out for a coolie. Seeing this, Vidyasagar went up to him and asked where his luggage was. The officer showed his handbag. Vidyasagar said, “Why do you misuse your money? Do you need a coolie to carry your handbag? Let me carry it for you.” He took the bag from the officer and carried it.

After reaching the destination, the officer asked Vidyasagar how much money he wanted for carrying the bag. Vidyasagar said, “I do not want your money, I did it as an act of service.”

The officer proceeded to the meeting place where Vidyasagar was supposed to deliver his speech. He was stunned to see the same person who carried his bag giving a speech on the dais. What a humble person he was, he thought to himself and felt ashamed of his behavior. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar spent all his earnings to fulfill the desires of his mother.

Easwaramma's similar wishes

Easwaramma had similar desires. Once, she told Me, "Swami, our Puttaparthi is a small village. Since there is no school in this village, the children are forced to walk long distances to attend schools in the neighboring villages. I know that You are the ocean of compassion. Please construct a small school in this village." I asked, where she wanted the school to be built. She said she had a piece of land behind her house. She wanted the school to be constructed there. As desired by her, I got the school constructed. Though it was a small school, the inaugural function was a grand affair, attended by many devotees.

The next day, Easwaramma expressed her happiness over the inaugural function and said that she had one more desire. She wanted a hospital also to be built in the village. She said, "Swami, I don't want to put You to trouble. If You are troubled, the whole world will be in trouble, and if You are happy, the whole world will be happy. So, if it gives You happiness, please construct a small hospital." As per her wish, I got the hospital constructed. Bejawada Gopal Reddy, a highly reputed person in those days, was invited to inaugurate the hospital.

The inaugural function was a grand one, attended by thousands of people from the neighboring villages. Easwaramma did not imagine that this would be such a grand affair.

Next day, she came up to Me and said, "Swami, it does not matter even if I die now. I have no more worries, you have fulfilled my desires and mitigated the suffering of the villagers to a great extent."

I said, if you have any more desires, ask Me now.

She replied hesitantly that she had yet another small desire. "You know that the river Chithravathi is in spate during the

rainy season. But in summer it dries to a trickle and people do not have drinking water. So, please see that some wells are dug in this village.” I told her that I would not stop with these small wells and that I would provide drinking water to the entire Rayalaseema region. Easwamma said, “I don't know what Rayalaseema is. I am satisfied if our village is provided with drinking water.”

Easwamma’s sacred love for Swami

Once, on a Sivaratri day, after I had completed My discourse, and the *Lingas* were ready to emerge from My mouth. I sat on the chair and was in severe pain. Seeing Me suffering, Easwamma got up from the gathering, came up to Me and said, “Swami, why do You suffer like this? Come inside, come inside.”

I said I would not come inside.

She cried and tried to persuade Me, but I did not budge an inch. Unable to see My suffering, she went inside. As soon as she left, *Hiranyagarbha Linga* emerged. All the devotees burst into thunderous applause. Listening to this, she came back, but by then the *Linga* had already emerged and I was showing it to the devotees. All the people got up to have a glimpse of the *Linga*. As a result, Easwamma could not see it.

Next day she pleaded with Me to show the *Linga* to her. I said I had given it to somebody. But she said, “Swami, I have not seen. I want to see.” I told her that she would see in the future anyway. She said, “I do not want to put You to inconvenience,” and went away.

She never had put Me to trouble any time. Whenever she asked Me for something, she would come back and ask if she had given any trouble. To all the devotees who came, she used

to entreat not to cause any inconvenience to Swami. She used to be very much worried whenever any minister came to have My *darshan*. The situation in those days was such that even a policeman with a red cap was enough to frighten the villagers.

Easwaramma used to be very much afraid of the ministers, thinking that they might cause some problem to Me. This was only the result of her sacred love for Me. That is the greatness of mother's love. That is why she could lead a life of fulfillment and peace. In order to propagate this sacred ideal, this day is being celebrated as Easwaramma Day. This is to emphasize that each one of you should make your mother happy. If your mother is happy, Swami is happy.

Sacrifice everything for God

Everyone should love and respect their parents. But, if any relation becomes an obstacle in your path to God, there is no harm in leaving them.

Here is a small example. Mira was the wife of Maharana of Chittor. She was always seated in Krishna's temple, forgetting herself while chanting His name. One day, Emperor Akbar came to the temple and offered a gold necklace to Lord Krishna. Mira accepted it and put it around Krishna's idol. Akbar was an enemy of Maharana. When Maharana came to know that Mira had accepted a necklace for Krishna from his enemy, Akbar, he became very furious. He took it as an insult and threw her out of the temple. Mira felt very sad.

Crows start cawing at the cuckoo when it begins to sing, but that does not deter the cuckoo from its singing. The people of the world are like crows. They speak as they like. But the noble souls will not be affected by what others say.

Mira was in a dilemma, whether to give up Krishna or her husband Maharana. She resolved that she would not give up Krishna even at the cost of her life. Then she wrote a letter to Tulsidas seeking his advice in this regard.

Tulsidas sent her a reply: “From the worldly point of view, you should respect your father, mother, preceptor and husband. But when it comes to God, everything else is secondary. God alone is important. Bharata left his mother Kaikeyi for the sake of Lord Rama. Prahlada gave up his father Hiranyakasipu for the sake of Lord Narayana. Emperor Bali forsook his preceptor, Sukracharya, for the sake of God. So, there is nothing wrong in giving up your husband for the sake of Krishna.” Taking the advice of Tulsidas, Mira left her husband.

She sang,

*O mind, go to the banks of the
sacred rivers Ganga and Yamuna,
the pure water of which cools
and purifies the body.*

[Hindi Song]

These two rivers stand for the primal nerves *ida* and *pingala*, which converge at the center of two eyebrows. She started singing the praises of Krishna and proceeded toward Brindavan.

You can sacrifice anything for the sake of God

Many such great devotees sacrificed everything for the sake of God. Women symbolize sacrifice. The *Vedas* declare: *Na karmana, na prajaya, dhanena thyagenaike Amruthatwamanasu* (immortality can be attained only through sacrifice; neither wealth nor progeny nor good deeds can confer it). You

can sacrifice anything for the sake of God. But, sacrifice should not be done with a selfish motive or for self satisfaction.

Do not hurt mother's feelings

The *Bhagavad Gita* says that a woman has seven qualities, whereas a man has only three. So, never look down upon women. They are most virtuous. They are the very embodiments of nature.

Some women may think that they would have enjoyed greater freedom had they been born as men. This is a wrong notion. In fact, women are more powerful than men. With all the sacred feelings in your heart, respect women and be respected. Respect your mother, obey her commands. Mother protects her children in many ways. Even after death, she comes back and helps you in various ways. Never disrespect your mother or disappoint her. Do not hurt her feelings. Try to satisfy her in all respects. Only then will the seed of devotion sprout in you. Everyone should follow the dictum, *mathru Devo bhava* in letter and spirit and be a recipient of his mother's love.

6 May 1999
Sai Sruthi, Kodaikanal