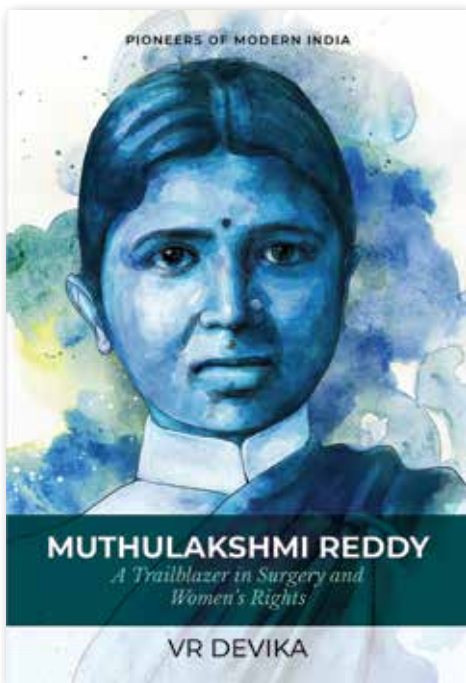

**PIONEERS
OF
MODERN INDIA**

Muthulakshmi Reddy was a reformer from the inside, as it were like Dr Ambedkar was. Which is different from being like a corrector from the outside. That was her strength.



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Muthulakshmi Reddy

A Trailblazer in Surgery and Women's Rights

VR Devika

The firebrand in medicine who changed the ball game of gender binary

Muthulakshmi Reddy—A Trailblazer in Surgery and Women's Rights is the story of a pioneer path-creator for women. She was the first girl student in Maharaja's School for Boys in Pudukkottai, the first Indian woman surgeon from Madras Medical College, the first Indian member of the Women's Indian Association, the first woman member of legislature of Madras Presidency, the first woman deputy speaker and the first alderwoman.

In this book, the author describes the indomitable spirit of a woman who campaigned to get rid of the practice of wet nurses, fought for girls' education and widow remarriage, equal property rights for women, education reform and rural healthcare for women. She took up the case of getting the practice of dedicating young girls as Devadasis abolished.

This monograph describes how Dr Reddy established Avvai Home for poor and destitute girls, from where thousands have graduated and found their feet. Thereafter, following a successful career as a specialist in gynaecology and obstetrics, she founded the Cancer Institute in Adyar, Chennai, which has grown to be an iconic hospital for cancer treatment throughout Asia.



VR Devika is a well-known storyteller, educationist and Gandhi scholar, with a PhD on MK Gandhi's communication strategies. She is known as a cultural activist, having been associated with the inception of Chennai's Dakshinachitra Heritage Museum and Tamil Nadu INTACH. Trained in Bharatanatyam, she lectures on dance and cultural heritage.

Winner of several awards, Devika contributes frequently to leading publications in India and abroad. She is the founder trustee of The Aseema Trust linking traditional performing arts and education, to bring Mahatma Gandhi's ideals of non-violence to children.

ENDORSEMENT:

But I do wish she had a vein of art in her as well, that could have enabled her to see and say that the tradition she wanted to abolish had a precious possession within it that needed salvaging, protecting and nurturing. We cannot, of course, have everything that we want our way. Muthulakshmi plus art, Balasarasvati minus seclusion, Rukmini Devi plus Sringeri, Subbulakshmi minus Sanskritisation. These are our wish-lists, based on our predispositions and prejudices. Each of these icons had guiding passions and pursued them, fulfilling their individual destinies. We cannot shape to suit our ideals. We are not their bhagyavidhata!

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