

## OVERCOMING HURDLES

## Dalit girl earns laurels

P. Thayammal of Isayankulam was given the Woman Exemplar Programme - 2015 Award

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**TUTICORIN:** Srivaikuntam, which has been in the news for wrong reasons, has hogged limelight for something about which it can be proud of.

Service rendered to the community by a Dalit girl has brought laurels to her and Srivaikuntam. P. Thayammal (28) of Isayankulam, a village in Srivaikuntam taluk, was presented with the Woman Exemplar Programme - 2015 Award of the Confederation of Indian Industry by Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley in New Delhi on April 6.

Ms. Thayammal, a fatherless woman who hails from a poor family, is involved in providing free coaching for rural students to ensure better academic performance.

"I am excited about the national award, which carries Rs. 3 lakh and a medal. I was working in a farm land when I was informed about the award," the jubilant woman said. Ms. Thayammal is one of the seven children of the family and the first to have earned a Master's degree in Commerce.

She developed a skill for teaching after overcoming hurdles as a slow learner. 'I failed in sixth standard and my father dissuaded me from pursuing education further. With a high level of self-confidence, I took it as a challenge and succeeded. But still I have failed to live up to the impossible dream of my father, who yearned a government job for me,' the recipient told *The Hindu* on Monday. Her



*P. Thayammal coached rural students to ensure better academic performance.* - PHOTO: N. RAJESH

father, a farm labourer, was struck dead by lightning while at work on October 21 last year.

She began coaching children at an anganwadi centre opposite her house. Now she coaches 30 students from classes six to eight in the evening. She has persuaded 35 children, identified as school dropouts in 2007-08, to continue their education. She also offers free coaching to those appearing for competitive examinations besides helping villagers fill up applications for government assistance. Her brothers are working in stone quarries in Srivaikuntam.