

## Bravery is about swimming against odds: Medal winner

For Durga Devi, who received the Anna Medal for Gallantry from Tamil Nadu Chief Minister O Panneerselvam on Republic Day, bravery is more than the medal or any other recognition and best expressed during adversity.



Durga displays the Anna Medal for Gallantry  
Chennai:

Her family and friends have always known her to be courageous. Therefore, when Durga Devi (22) recounted how she had risked her life to save her close friend Nandini from drowning, ahead of a marathon taking place on Island Grounds, her parents weren't surprised.

As congratulatory messages continue to pour in from all quarters, a conscious Durga still wonders if she had achieved anything extraordinary. "When I saw my friend crying for help, struggling to come out of the water, I only wanted to save her," she says.

In June, last year, a day after she had celebrated her birthday, Durga and her nursing course classmates from Apollo College had assembled for a Pinkathon near Island Grounds. A temporary bridge near the venue entrance had collapsed, even as 300 of them were on it, suddenly. "We fell into neck deep water that was extremely dirty and had an obnoxious smell. I somehow managed to pull myself out of the water. I saw Nandini being pushed back into the water by many, as they were trying to come out. I went back and carried her to safety," she said. A stunned Nandini was unable to talk for a few minutes, even as Durga administered first aid. "I went back and completed the Pinkathon run for three kilometres," she added with a laugh. The youngest of five siblings, Durga hails from Gudiyattam in Vellore. While her father is a trader, her mother is a homemaker. She added, "When I told my mother about it, she was initially shocked, but she said that I had done the right thing."

When her college had sent her name as a nomination for the bravery award, she wasn't sure if she would bag it. "They had a slew of formalities that it took me half my vacation in September to complete the procedure. I was upset that my holidays were being spent like this. But my father told me I was getting a chance and I

should make use of it,” she said. Nandini still tells people how much she owes her life to her friend, but Durga believes she had only done her duty.