

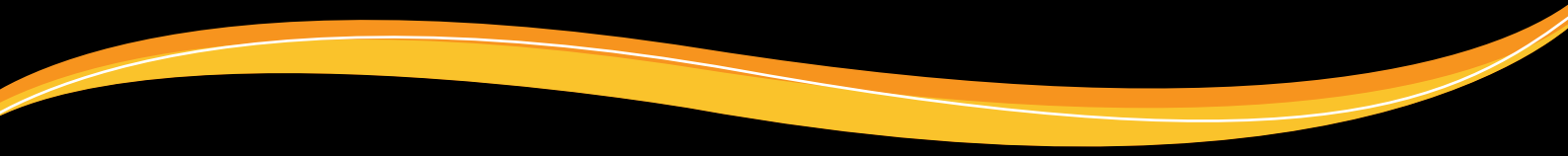


IWA DHWANI

Indian Women's Association

Sounds of IWA, Singapore

March 2017 • MCI (P) 143/05/2013



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Front Row L-R: Neeta Kapoor, Taniya Hathiramani, Padmaja Balaji, Lakshmi (Lucky) Padmanabhan, Shilpa Thapliyal, Selmé Singh
Not in picture: Anshoo Berry, Ritu Kapoor, Vinnie Mehta, Pooja Narayanan

Letter from the PRESIDENT



Dear IWA Members,

I am honored to be voted in as the next President of the Indian Women's Association. I would like to thank the previous team and Sukanya for the wonderful work done over the past two years.

Our members come from different cities, states, even countries. We speak many languages; and have varied interests. One thing we all have in common is a desire to connect with our roots and the world around us. IWA is an organization that enables us to do just that. My Vision for IWA can be summed up as IWA **WINS**.

I want IWA to stay a **W**elcoming place for new and existing members alike. When we create a welcoming space it is easy to attract new members and encourage them to get involved.

We will look for new ways to **I**ntegrate and engage with the community we live in. We will seek out and work with various organizations, both local and expat, to increase awareness and knowledge and enhance our experience of living in Singapore. Be it in social services, mental health, physical health, environmental area or the arts related fields.

We will **N**urture our existing relationships by continuing our fundraising efforts as well as plan volunteering opportunities to suit the changing needs of our partners. We hope to organize orientation workshops for our volunteers so they can connect with a cause that appeals to them.

We will work towards **S**tepping up member participation by finding new ways to engage members and plan activities and events that entice people to participate. Along these lines we have launched two new clubs- Acts of Kindness (AoK) and the Travel Club. Many of our members work during the day, making attending daytime activities difficult. We will try to engage them by organizing evening and weekend activities.

We have just celebrated Holi with Siglap South CC, and enjoyed members' lunch 'Rendezvous 2017' where members connected with each other. Coming up soon is the much-anticipated Summer Bazaar in April at the Shangri La.

Look out for and join the various activities on offer. I, along with my dedicated committee will work hard to ensure that IWA continues to grow and stay vibrant.

I hope to meet you at one of our upcoming events.

Sincerely,
Garima Lalwani

On the Cover: IWA 2015-2016 Committee bids farewell at the IWA AGM on 14th February 2017 at The Shangri-La Hotel (Photo credit: Gargi Mazumdar)

IWA Dhvani editorial team: Rathantha Therese Devanesan, Alka Joglekar, Neena Mittal, Lakshmi (Lucky) Padmanabhan, Sukanya Pushkarna, Lakshmi Raghavan, Hetal Shah

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We hope you like this issue of IWA Dhvani. If you have any feedback or suggestions regarding articles and features or if you would like to contribute articles or artwork to our magazine, please write to editor@iwasingapore.org



Lucky Padmanabhan, Lakshmi Raghavan, Sukanya Pushkarna, Alka Joglekar, Garima Lalwani and Neena Mittal (not in pic: Rashantha Devanesan and Hetal Shah)



Sukanya Pushkarna with Ms Eleanor Fong - Sales Director of Xpress Print Pte Ltd

EDITORIAL TEAM



Dear Dhvani readers,

By the time this issue is printed, I would've stepped out of both my roles as President of IWA and the editor-at-large of Dhvani. It has been an amazing experience for me in both these roles and I look forward to the future of both, with great enthusiasm and optimism. In the pages of this, the 10th edition of Dhvani, you will get a glimpse of the myriad events and activities organized by IWA in the second half of 2016 and more. The IWA festive bazaar in October was a great success, with a footfall of almost a thousand people, followed by the SONY-IWA Woman of the Year Award in November. We have an opportunity to hear the inspiring stories of the five amazing women who reached the final round in this iconic event. Readers will meet a surprise star in our midst in the article on Tejali Ghanekar and delight in the miracles of our lives. This edition also devotes a section to the budding authors of the IWA Writing Enthusiasts' Club. Check out the photo collage of our Annual General Meeting as a new team under the leadership of Garima Lalwani takes up the charge of moving IWA forward to the next level. You will get to know the whole organization through the colorful pics and essays on our clubs that tell a beautiful story of women working together, laughing and sharing, helping each other do better and be better each day. It also illustrates the many ways this sisterhood can, and is, serving the community as a group and as individuals. Enjoy looking through the pages of this issue and write in to share your thoughts and articles, poetry, art and advertising, achievements and accolades. Let us celebrate your talents and your joys and let us all stay connected to this vibrant community called IWA.

Warm wishes to all!
Sukanya

Write for DHWANI



IWA Dhvani is your magazine and we want to showcase what excites and interests you. Please send in your contributions to editor@iwasingapore.org.

Dhvani is always looking for articles, poems, personal narratives, artwork and photographs from our members. We welcome first-time writers and we will provide all editorial support.

IWA is not only about women but also about our families. In IWA Dhvani we welcome husbands, parents & children to send in their contributions.

Did you know we have a special kid's corner just for showcasing our children? They can contribute a 400 word essay on any aspect of life in Singapore which excites or interests them. It might be about people they have met, places they have visited, new food they have tasted or a skill they have developed.

The artwork or photograph should be horizontal, 210mm x 166.7mm and at least 300dpi. No camera phone photos please!

We try to accommodate as many contributions as possible. Sometimes, if an article, poem or artwork does not make it in this edition, we hold it for another issue.

Dhvani is a magazine for you & by you so start sending in your contributions!

SONY-IWA WOMAN OF THE YEAR AWARD 2016

SONY and IWA launched the Woman of the Year Award (WOTYA) in 2014 to celebrate women who not only work hard to excel in their personal lives but also passionately serve their community, especially those who are less fortunate than themselves. The aim was to find a woman amongst us, who would inspire others to step out of their comfort zones, to embrace and serve the needy in spite of any personal hardships or setbacks.

The SONY-IWA WOTYA team received about two dozen nominations and 12 names were shortlisted and presented to our panel of judges.



We were fortunate to have the support of three exceptional women who came together to form our panel of judges. Dr. Uma Rajan, Ruchira Gupta and Daisy Irani are all well known in Singapore for the work they do professionally as well as in the community. We are inspired by the dedication and conscientiousness with which they carried out their responsibilities as judges.

After two rounds of deliberations, the judges shortlisted the top five contenders. This was followed by face to face interviews with four of the five finalists and a phone interview with the fifth who was traveling and more deliberations to determine the winner.

The venue for the Woman of the Year Award ceremony was provided by IWA strategic partner for 2016, GEMS World Academy.

Professional emcee and event manager Mahak Ankar hosted the ceremony pro-bono in a show of solidarity.



Deputy High Commissioner of India to Singapore, Mrs. Paramita Tripathi graced the ceremony as Guest-of Honour. Mrs Tripathi addressed the audience, felicitated the top five contestants and also presented the award to Dipa Swaminathan, the winner of WOTY 2016.

Team IWA takes this opportunity to thank Sathya and Anjana of SONY and all the women and men who supported and encouraged our efforts. We congratulate all the nominees for their selfless contributions towards making this world a better and more humane place. We look forward to finding and celebrating many more talented, passionate and caring women in our community. May we always be inspired by these role models to serve others even as we strive for self-growth.





ALPANA AHUJA

Contributed by: Taruna Aggarwal

An accomplished artist and an ardent animal lover, Alpana believes that she has truly found meaning in her talent through her work with animal rescue organization ACRES Singapore and Wildlife SOS India.

Alpana has always been compassionate towards animals; She was first introduced to ACRES in 2005 and since then she has volunteered for roadshows, been a member of the education team creating content for schools, and the animal rescue team and fund-raising. She has been an ACRES board member since 2015. ACRES is the only organization in Singapore that operates a 24-hour rescue hotline and tries to ensure the safety of the animals and the citizens.

Along the way, Alpana has found ways to integrate her other passion, art, into wildlife conservation. She has painted murals and artwork for the newly made ACRES rescue center in Sungei Tengah and raised funds, by auctioning her art at the annual ACRES Anniversary Gala.

In 2014, while designing a calendar for Wildlife SOS, India, she felt a deep

connection with an elephant she was painting and has been painting elephants ever since. She has been taking elephant footprints for Wildlife SOS, India for some time now and 100% of the proceeds from her "Padchin" or elephant footprint series of paintings go to Wildlife SOS. She has created many products like cards, t-shirts, books and notebooks for the NGO. Her 'Elefacts' about elephants and 'Bear with Me' an activity book about sloth bears and moon bears for Wildlife SOS India are popular merchandise. She sells this merchandise during events in Singapore but is working towards setting up a group of volunteers who will help to move the merchandise without middlemen.

Alpana believes that compassion towards nature and animals will grow only with more and more interaction. She wants the young generation to be involved in preserving nature. She does 'Art in the Park' with The Nature Society of Singapore and wishes that more schools would work towards bringing children closer to nature. "This earth has survived for billions of years and over the last 50 years or so, humanity has destroyed it and brought it to the brink

of extinction" she despairs. She appeals to our readers to support this organization which organizes activities like Kayaking, Trekking, Bird watching, Nature-walks and Forest cleanups.

Alpana's family is very supportive of her work and she believes that without their support she could not have reached this far. Her work has given meaning to her art and her life "I think the cause has given me much more than what I have given back. When you follow your passion and your intention is pure, no hurdles are insurmountable and doors open up for you."



UMA BALJI

Contributed by: Iru Barman

Uma Balji is the founder and Chairperson of the Project Smile. Started in 2010, Project Smile received charity status in Singapore in September 2014.

A great wife, mother and a grandmother, Uma has been a solid support to her husband in his career. She has also raised 2 brilliant daughters who are successful in their own right.

Uma Balji is a woman with a loving and giving heart. Uma is the force behind Project Smile. She believes deeply in reaching out to women in need, not only of financial aid but also of community support and friends. She has been a pillar of strength for women who bring their family problems to her. She always listens with her heart, and is ever ready to source for funds to meet the needs of the women who approach her.

Uma's work is such that through Project Smile, she reaches out to low income, divorced or separated or widowed, single mothers who cannot get the help they are looking from Government agencies or other private agencies due to various reasons.

By giving them financial and emotional support as well as helping them grow the right skill set, she helps these women start to earn often for the first time in their life. Uma helps them feel and be independent. This does wonders for their self image and confidence.

Uma is a woman with a heart that is larger than her petite frame. Her smile reveals a kind soul who can immediately experience the pain of the women who come to her. The beneficiaries of PS have been greatly impacted by Uma's personal outreach, companionship and communication. Uma's

mission is to empower as many women as possible to reach their fullest potential and be a useful member of our community.

Uma is a very down to earth and a spiritual person and believes in giving back to society. Extremely fun loving and sensitive, she remains a very humble and approachable person and stays connected with those whom she has helped along the way.





MEERA NAIR

Contributed by: Sudeepta Dasgupta

Meera was born in Malaysia and brought up on an estate surrounded by nature. She moved into the hustle bustle of Mumbai and started her life of adjustment and learning. Trapped in a bad marriage, Meera found her worth in physical training and made it her career when she decided to walk out of her marriage with a young child to support. Though her training as a fitness expert gave her the ability to support herself financially, emotionally she felt the need to give and that is when she reached out to the hospice in Bangalore. Working with the patients there she realized that the caregivers at the hospice (some who were in their teens) were working under a lot of stress of facing death, often of a loved one, on a daily basis. This led her to establish a program called the "Smiling Angels" which provided a platform where the care givers

could try theatre for a much needed release and reprieve. This gave them a break from the reality of death. The program also involved bringing in college volunteers to help the care givers get a feel of normal life. Meera has been actively involved in raising funds and providing mentorship for the girls at Sneh Inlay in Bangalore. Her most recent passion has been the orphanage in Siem Reap, where a group of people raise funds by adopting a child and provide direct mentorship.

Nominated for Everyday Star Of the Neighbourhood and My Neighbour My Friend Caring for the Neighbourhood, Meera was bestowed the title of Jane Fonda of the Neighbourhood. Meera believes in a holistic approach to life and uses her training as a fitness expert to help

children deal with stress in their life and also to provide tools to the elderly to be aware of potential pitfalls and how to keep themselves mentally engaged through her program called brain train.



Having been in a bad relationship, Meera is aware of the impact the love and support of strangers at the time of need can have and feels compelled to give the same to someone in need. Meera is vivacious, loving and full of life. She embraces and gives of her positive energy to everyone she meets.

SANGEETA NAMBIAR

Contributed By: Taruna Aggarwal

The inspiring and dynamic Sangeeta Nambiar has devoted herself to fighting for women's rights.

She has recently been making waves in Singapore theater circles with her bold and unconventional theater. Having spent 20 years directing for TV in India, she has chosen theater as her medium to raise awareness as well as to break the silence surrounding issues such as rape, domestic violence and gender inequality including the victims' own acceptance of these restrictions.

The Nirbhaya case of 2014 prompted Sangeeta to direct plays like Monologues from Memory and Silent Shadow which focus on women. When she spoke for the first time at the Women's Economic Forum, New Delhi, several women approached her to share their stories - and that's how her play 'Finally She Spoke' was born. The play was staged locally in late 2016 and then in the Hague Women's Economic Forum in January 2017, where she was conferred the Iconic Leadership Award.

Sangeeta's dream is to involve the youth in her cause. Rhea, her fourteen-year-old daughter shares her dream and is involved in the cause at her school. The school has adopted the movement around Finally She Spoke and has also just started a youth wing. Its first conference focusing on

creating a gender-equal world is scheduled to be held on 19th March 2017.

Although it has not been long since her movement was conceived, Sangeeta has managed to find a firm footing for it. She works with an NGO that rescues child brides in Tanzania. In Singapore, she has a great synergy with the NGO Daughters of Tomorrow due to their focus on rehabilitating and empowering women from underprivileged families.

Sangeeta is also actively involved with Sinar Sofia; a Johor Bahru based NGO, which works towards acclimatizing rescued sex workers. From its early humble desire to feed some young rescued sex workers and start a conversation with them, Sinar Sofia today is not only working hard to rescue women and bring them off the streets but in the long-term, it aspires to provide a 'Halfway Home' - a place of rest, respite and respect for the girls it rescues. The vision is of a place where these women will learn vocational skills that will enable them to earn their own money. Education of their children is high on the agenda to avoid a vicious circle that spans generations of sex workers. Sangeeta is putting her efforts into raising funds towards this cause but as she puts it: "More than finding sponsorship it's about taking my dream and vision out there and seeing how many people believe in it." Through social media, she has gained

both individual and corporate sponsors, particularly Raffles Relocation Singapore. She hopes for a larger, sustained societal involvement.

Sangeeta fails to understand why women marginalize other women, "Unless we have a strong sisterhood and women support and protect each other, we will never find a gender-equal world." Her involvement in the cause is obviously emotionally draining for Sangeeta and at times she finds it hard to be objective - but the end goal is so big that it motivates her everyday. "My vision drives me and I am happy doing what I do."

Sangeeta says "It is important that as a society we stand together to eradicate stereotypes and inequalities, and do our part in raising awareness regarding women's issues and opening a dialogue around them."





Dipa Swaminathan



Congratulations on winning the SONY-IWA Woman of the Year Award!

Tell us something about your childhood and growing years. Who were your role models?

I grew up in Bangalore. Both my grandfathers were great intellectuals and prolific readers and writers. Although I did not get to spend many years with either of them, I grew up hearing fascinating stories of their work during the independence movement and their principles of high thinking and simple living. My parents exemplified the same philosophy, and deeply believed in doing unto others as you would like done to you. Growing up with those value systems around me must have rubbed off. I went to a school affiliated with the Aurobindo Ashram, and we were surrounded by the wisdom and teachings of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. Although it was not the same fancy education that our kids enjoy in the international schools in Singapore, looking back I do believe it was extremely progressive for its age. As a child growing up, I was never spanked - not once, not even lightly - at home or at school! I was also raised to be fearlessly independent and to speak my mind, I am sure there are many who can attest to that!

Why did you choose to do law?

I have a number of lawyers in my family, but my cousin Sriram Panchu was my great inspiration to take up law. I decided to become a lawyer to do human rights work. During my final year in law school, I wrote a paper on animal rights and that was my first horrific exposure to the inhumane way in which farm animals are raised, housed and slaughtered.



The phrase "If slaughterhouses were made of glass, no one would eat meat" has stayed with me ever since. I turned vegetarian overnight, and became a steady donor to animal welfare causes ever since. After graduation from law school, I moved to Singapore because my husband was based here. There wasn't any human or animal rights work to do here in 1995, so I ended up joining a law firm and became a finance and corporate lawyer. I very much enjoy my professional work, but I have been fortunate to have never been too far removed from meaningful and soul-enriching projects. My very first boss in Singapore, Corinna Lim who is now a dear friend, was active in AWARE and the Singapore Association of Women Lawyers. We worked on a number of interesting initiatives, including writing the Singapore chapter "Philanthropy and Law in Asia" sponsored by the Asia Foundation. I have remained a regular donor to animal welfare organizations around the world, and did a course on Animal Rights when I went to Harvard in 2003. I hope someday to do something more impactful and lasting in the field of animal welfare.

I have heard versions of your "it's raining raincoats" story- is there a preferred way of retelling it to inspire the readers of Dhvani? What did your family think?

I was driving home in a pouring thunderstorm one day when I found 2 migrant workers on my road with no shelter or cover. I asked them to get into my car and took them home, told them to have a seat in our porch until the rain stopped. We also gave them some hot coffee and food, and a change of dry clothes and some money. When I took a photo with them they got worried that they might get into trouble, so I gave them my number to call me in case they needed to. Several months later I got a call from the police that one of the workers (Murugan) had tried to commit suicide and was arrested. The only number he had on him was mine. The police wanted to know if I would come and post \$2000 bail for Murugan. I didn't hesitate and went to the mental hospital where they were holding him to post bail, and found out that the reason Murugan had tried to commit suicide was because his employer had not paid him his wages, and loan sharks were chasing his family back home. I took up Murugan's case with the police, and was successful in getting all charges dropped against him while at the same time getting his employer to pay him all his back wages. Released from the mental hospital and police custody, the image of Murugan at my gate to convey his gratitude was an iconic photo that warmed the hearts of many on social media and went viral. This episode was an eye-opener in that as one person alone, without any backing, I could make a difference to someone's life. That it is possible to live the adage "You can't change the world for everyone, but you can change the world for one person". My family was



delighted, my mother has received calls from Murugan's wife in India and my kids are quite used to seeing me stop and interact

with migrant workers on a daily basis. I want them to grow up knowing that one shouldn't hesitate to reach out and be kind, or to speak up on someone else's behalf when they are powerless to do so themselves.

How did your initiative grow? Was it mostly organic or did you have a strategy or plan for it?

I think that from the initial act of helping Murugan, things have grown organically.

- Late last year, I noticed a bunch of workers working on a road side project wearing black garbage bags as raincoats. I took photos of them, sent it to their employer and threatened to take action if they were not given proper raincoats. The very next day when I drove past that same worksite, the workers all clad in bright yellow raincoats flocked to my car to say thanks! This inspired me to start a Facebook page Itsrainingraincoats ("IRR"). A simple initiative to show kindness to migrant workers and inculcate a sense of compassion towards them.

IRR has so far seen the distribution of nearly 10,000 rain coats to migrant workers. The Singapore Kindness Movement collaborated

with me widely in this initiative, the MOM has gratefully supported it and I won an award of recognition from Minister Grace Fu early last year. For the past 2 years on Diwali, a festival when the Indian community is busy celebrating, I felt it would be worthwhile to think of the migrant workers from India who may not have much to celebrate or the means to celebrate with, and organized a collection of phone cards, sweets and other gifts for them which was widely supported, appreciated and covered by the press.

- I was featured in Singtel's National Day campaign last year. This was the first time in its history that Singtel had featured an employee in its national day campaign.
- A few months ago, I was at a Starbucks store at closing time and saw trays of perfectly edible food destined for the bin. Having spotted some workers just outside, I asked for the unsold food to be given to me instead which I then distributed to the road workers outside. My Facebook post on this went viral, and brought Starbucks to the table to discuss a collaboration with her in this space. Starbucks has since agreed to donate food from 18 of their outlets every Saturday, and I have mobilized a group of local and student volunteers to re-distribute this food.
- My sons' school donate its stock of unclaimed lost water bottles and sun hats to me every summer, and along with my kids we distribute these to migrant workers working outdoors in the hot sun.
- The LASALLE College of Arts is collaborating with me this year, and

has its final year Diploma in Fashion students designing raincoats for migrant workers.

These are just a few examples of how the circle of kindness has grown. I don't have any specific plans other than to keep my foot on the peddle. I hope we can inspire and continue to do more.

Do you have a message for our readers?

Never hesitate or be coy about doing something for the needy. I am always on the lookout for volunteers and new ideas, so please don't hesitate to reach out to me!

Congratulations on being nominated the SONY-IWA Woman of the Year! How do you feel?

I was delighted to be nominated for the WoTY Award and honestly never expected to win it. When I heard my name called on the stage, it was my Oscar moment! I can't thank IWA and Sony TV enough for the honour. What has made it truly special are the incredible women (fellow-nominees, judges and IWA committee members) I met and grew to know along the way.



Interviewed by: Sukanya Pushkarna



A Hidden STAR Amidst Us

The untold story of Tejali Ghanekar aka Sulekha

The IWA movie club came into being quietly under the leadership of Selmé Singh in 2016. The intention was to grow our familiarity with the world around us by watching films from the South and south East Asian region. Since April, a motley crew from IWA has been enjoying a varied line up of movies from China, Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Vietnam etc. Imagine my surprise then when one day I receive an YouTube link from one member of this club with a note simply stating "This is my Tamil debut movie. My screen name was Sulekha."

I couldn't believe what I was reading! I quickly googled her name and there it was- movie names in Tamil and Malayalam. I was excited beyond measure- we had a movie star in our midst and she was in our movie club. What were the chances! For most of us, being a movie star was a distant dream and now, right in our midst, was someone who had been there, done that and now lived the same life as the rest of us! There was so much we could learn from her. Everyone was delighted and curious and incredulous. Here is the hitherto untold story of Tejali Ghanekar's life on celluloid and beyond as told to members of our movie club in December 2016.

How did you become a film star? How was your childhood? When did you start acting?

My childhood memories in the Ghanekar family home are of chasing my cousin brothers and sisters around the house, sneaking through the bedroom doors to get a glimpse of yesteryear Marathi actors and actresses who would be attending various festivals at our home. We used to pretend to be them, copying their mannerisms in front

of a mirror, wearing mom's lipstick & a saree, posing and giggling. My young aunts would be discussing movies and fashion in their bedrooms, and my youngest uncle would be playing his guitar loudly! Movies were our lives.

In 1929, just as the silent movie era was ending, the noted film director, Mr.



V Shantaram started the Prabhat Film Company in Kolhapur and then in Pune. He worked with several directors during that time, one of them was my paternal grandfather's brother, Mr. Govind B Ghanekar. Mr. Govind B Ghanekar directed Sant Janabai (produced by Prabhat, in 1949) in Marathi and Hindi, Vaushacha Diva(1951)Shivleela (1951) and others. His son Mr. Girish Ghanekar made 11 Marathi movies between 1984 and 1993 like Rangat Sangat & Prem Karuya Khullam Khulla. Our family was squarely in the hub of all this movie making.

When did you start performing?

My sister and I learnt classical kathak dance for 14 years under the tutelage of Dr. Rajkumar Ketkar and performed on stage every year from 1979 to 1993 along with our Guruji and all his students. Simultaneously, I started working in Marathi theatre around the age of 10. As little kids we were often given roles like that of a tree or domestic animals. I would get teased by my cousins for the same! The highlight of my short-lived children's theatre career was when I got to play the evil queen in Snow White!! I thought I became an overnight celebrity at 12!!

My mother enrolled me at the Madhumati Dance Academy to learn Bollywood dance, acting and Urdu diction. I got my first break in Hindi TV serials on DoorDarshan network working with Zubi Kocchar in 1993-94. The serial was called *Kuch Bhi Ho Sakta Hai*. After that I did, *Reporter* with Shekhar Suman under the direction of Vinod Pande and *Apne Jaise Types* with Mr. Vikram Bhatt. Life was moving fast and I was becoming something of a star.

How was life on the sets? Did you get recognized on the streets? How did it feel?

Dealing with the attention one gets as an artiste is an interesting experience and it's challenging to stay humble. Throughout my Kathak performance and children's theatre period during my teenage years, I got lots of attention. Being an introvert by nature, my school years had been quiet up until then but after my performances and plays became known I was catapulted into a different world. By the time I joined college, I used to get recognized everywhere in Mumbai because of the TV serials I was doing then. People were



interested in clicking pictures with me, shaking my hands etc. On the other hand, TV life was hard, I used to work 2 shifts each day, shooting non-stop for months. Every break was spent in grooming myself and catching up on sleep. My parents and my sister were my support system throughout this journey. My mother has been on every TV serial set, every shift, every outdoor shooting, photo shoot and so on and I don't know what I'd have done without her.

How did you go from theater to movies?

I got my first movie break in a Tamil language film. Directed by Mr. Suresh Krishna, the movie was called *Aahaa*. In my debut film, I was blessed to work with distinguished artistes like Srividya, Vijayakumar, Bhanupriya, Raghuvaran, and other well known stars.

I worked hard on my grooming, not being a native Tamil speaker, I spent each evening learning the dialogues in Tamil and matching the expression to the words etc. I have some beautiful memories of spending time with the senior artiste Bhanupriya as well as the late super star Ms. Srividya.

I was invited to Ms. Bhanupriya's house once, and I was touched by her generosity and simplicity. I remembered her from her Hindi movies in the 80s and had this larger than life image of hers. The late Ms. Srividya was so ravishingly beautiful that she was asked to underplay her eye makeup as she was playing a mother's character in spite of being young. She taught me humility and discipline. She also told me to respect everyone on the sets irrespective of their job role as they play a very important role in the making of the movie.

After *Aahaa* released, it received accolades from the press, from artistes within the industry and it was quite a hit. The esteemed singer, Mr. Hariharan came to watch the premiere with his mother who could not believe that I wasn't a Tamilian. That was a high point for me as an artiste!! Those days were like a dream. The success of *Aahaa* brought me a wealth of attention, a huge fan following and other movie roles. I did 2 Malayalam movies in quick succession, *Chandamama* with Konjaku Boban and *Meenathil Thalikkettu* with Dileep. By this time I was getting 10,000 fan mail every month. I would also get mobbed during shoots in Cochin,

Allepey, Ooty, Chennai by school children, as well as adults.

When and why did you give it all up?

After completing my third movie in April 1999 I came back to Mumbai for a break. It was time to really evaluate the direction of my future. Growing up in the Ghanekar home, surrounded by people from the film industry, my parents and I knew the tenuous nature of success and the stresses following each new release. It was around this time that I was offered a chance to work for a well known MNC. With support and encouragement from my family, I decided to leave my film career to enter the stable profession of business development. I worked for the company for 5 years and went in for a Masters degree in commerce. I met my banker husband at work and we moved to Singapore in January 2004. As I settled into our domestic life I finished a Masters in Mass Communication from Nanyang Technological University in Singapore & then went on to work for another company in Singapore till 2009.

Till date, I am passionate about movies, dance and music. They fill my heart with joy & laughter. That's what drew me to the Indian Women's Association in Singapore. I wanted to stay connected to my Indian roots, make friends & pursue common interests. The Indian Women's Association in Singapore is going to stay very close to my heart as this is the first time in 13 years that I am sharing my humble story. It is making my dormant acting genes come alive and I feel a renewed interest in following my passion!

(Introduction and questions by Sukanya Pushkarna)





Sulekha

by Azeena Badarudeen

The Year was 1969.

While much of Singapore had started to get a taste of development, Kampong Buangkok where Sulekha hailed from, was still pristine and untouched by urbanization. Children caught tiny fish from running streams and young girls with thick plaited hair chatted their afternoons away while chewing on bamboo shoots. Education levels of the local men were not very high, much less that of women. Sulekha's father, Kamal however, was a man with a progressive mind.

Fresh out of Teachers' Training College (TTC) at 25, Kamal was brought a marriage proposal by the maternal uncle of seventeen-year-old Surumi, a doe-eyed beauty with porcelain skin. Surumi had completed her 'O' levels and could speak tolerable English—a trait very rarely found in the other girls at the time. These, coupled with her reputed outstanding culinary skills and humble personality drew Kamal to Surumi instantly. A date was fixed and their wedding took place with great merriment.

Surumi's belly soon swelled with sign of life and in the thick of the North-East monsoons that brought relief from prolonged heat spells, she delivered Sulekha, a beautiful baby girl whom the entire village fussed over.

Sulekha became the center of her parents' life and they channeled their energy and resources to grooming her into a well-heeled and refined young woman. While women's education was not ranked high on the minds of many, Kamal dreamt of Sulekha graduating from the university and seeking a professional career.

However, fate took a cruel twist just three months before Sulekha's 'O' level examinations. On that fateful

Sunday morning, just as Surumi stepped out of her house to do her usual marketing, a motorcyclist in the prime of his youth, knocked her down before callously speeding away. Sulekha and Kamal were left looking on in utter disbelief and helplessness as Surumi hemorrhaged to death in front of their eyes.

Surumi's untimely death threw the entire village into shock. The respect they had for Kamal whom they affectionately addressed as "Teacher Sahib" only grew when he refused to pursue the errant motorcyclist.

Surumi, the sun whose luminance had guided Sulekha thus far, had suddenly been painfully extinguished. Oh, the unpredictable ways of fate!

Following Surumi's 40th day prayers, Saleem, Kamal's uncle stayed behind to speak with him.

"Without Surumi, it's going to be really tough running your home, Kamal. Sulekha's not a child anymore. At 16, it is best she start preparing herself to be a good wife and mother, rather than for an office career competing with men. I have said my piece. The rest is up to you."

As Saleem faded into the distant fields, Sulekha approached her father.

Kamal looked at Sulekha with downcast eyes knowing full well that she had overheard Saleem in the kitchen. He simply could not bring himself to look Sulekha in the eye.

"I'll stop school and help around the house. As Saleem Uppa said, things are tough without Mamma. I'm old enough to look after the house, anyway."

Sulekha's words stumped him. Despite the glistening gold medals and trophies on the shelf that bore

testimony to the fact that she was a high-achiever, how could she ever think of giving up her lifelong goal just like that!

"No, daughter, I will be by your side to help you achieve your dreams!" Kamal said emphatically. He embraced Sulekha, providing momentary comfort to the motherless child.

With the 'O' levels drawing closer, Kamal made every effort to ensure that Sulekha could study well without distractions. Despite being plagued by memories of her mother, Sulekha studied conscientiously and remained unwavering in her zeal to enter junior college. She knew she would be the first female from Kampong Buangkok to do so if she made it.

The cool winds of the North-East monsoons fanned her face during the examinations, making her hopeful for the best. The following March, when her name was announced as her school's top 'O' level student with eight distinctions, Sulekha was elated beyond measure! When she received the scholarship letter from the Education Ministry informing her that they would cover her fees from first-year junior college to university, subject to sustained good academic performance, Sulekha was overjoyed and no one could have been happier than Kamal. He was teary-eyed at his daughter's humility, achievements and resilience in spite of her untimely loss and added family burdens.

"Sulekha Beevi Kamal Ahsan, Class3S70, please report to your classroom now. Your Civics Tutor is waiting for you." The loud voice over the PA system snapped Sulekha out of her thoughts. This wasn't the time to get teary and emotional. There were only goals to achieve.

"Mamma and Pappa, I'm going to make you proud."



SANDS OF TIME

by Kavita Chachcha



A few decades ago.....

The glow of sunsets against the temple gopurams. The silk finery, made with gold threads and motifs adorning village girls on the auspicious day of Vijaydashami. The cool breeze, the majestic river, the melodious hymn chants charming the ears of listeners in the village. That same day decades ago- girls were going through their mother's cupboards and trunks to find themselves a fine ensemble to wear. It was a day when the entire town would be there for festivities. A large gathering of people occurred every year in front of the temples that dot the river banks like a new bride on her wedding day. Excitement fills the air when they set the evil Ravana on fire to signify victory of Maa Durga over Mahisasura, the Buffalo Demon.

Looking back in time, these large gatherings signified total involvement, love and joy and a community spirit.

Some years ago.....

A young girl stood in front of the mirror, discussing with her mom regarding the annual day that turns into a saree day in metro-centric colleges. The warm summer breeze caressed the cotton curtains of their 2 bedroom mid-rise suburban apartment. She was very clear about what kinda saree she wanted to wear- not as traditional like those worn at weddings, but more trendy like Madhuri's in Dhak Dhak. An ensemble that would complement silver jhumkis and a hand adorned with dozens of silver bangles and hair in an updo with black eyeliner and imported lipstick in a glossy shade of brown. In the olden days, the makeup choices were limited unlike today's range of skincare, makeup, fragrance, body and hair care products. Such were the choices of girls of this generation using Lakme cosmetics, watching cable TV- an MTV generation singing Jawani Zindabad, celebrating independent thinking leading to the emergence of a generation of working women in the 90's. A sense of confidence and

individualistic values prevailed and such was the portrayal of the women from this decade.

A few months ago.....

On a Friday evening a twenty-year-old wants to wear a crop top from MDS – a fashion boutique for hip and trendy, that would double as a blouse for the saree she wants to wear to a dinner with friends. On these very rare occasions when a member of generation Y chooses to wear a saree or lehenga it is usually for a family wedding or a festive celebration and simply as a chance to dress up in a costume. Thanks to younger stars of Bollywood such as Shraddha Kapoor and Sonakshi Sinha sporting sarees from time to time, this generation is looking to this traditional costume with interest. Who could resist wanting to look like Deepika in *Batameez Dil* or drape the sheer designer sarees seen on page 3 of tabloids and film promotions.

In my opinion, the past shapes the present and evolves the future. So far, sarees have transcended time, spanned generations and played an integral role in shaping the identity of Indian womanhood in more ways than one.

Can the saree survive and continue to impart color and vividness to the canvas of life? Given that things are ever changing in this digital era, it is up to the next generation to preserve it and take it further.





GLASS BANGLES

by Shilpa Thapliyal

Sheila switched on the fan and sat down on the armchair, mindlessly playing with her glass bangles. They were a shimmering purple and gold, flanked by two heavy gold bracelets on either side. They matched her heavy Kanjeevaram sari perfectly.

Resting her head gently on the backrest she closed her eyes... 'Huzoor iss kadar bhi na lehara ke chaliye' played on her recorder. She played that song at least two or three times everyday, humming silently to the lyrical notes.

Today as she waited for Ashok to take her to his colleague's wedding, she had put on the recorder again. That morning as she was serving the upma and coffee to Ashok, he had instructed her to be ready by 8 pm. He would not brook any delay, he had said, as he picked up his briefcase and headed to the door. She sighed as she picked up the crumbs of the 'rava' which had spilled on the tablemat, and collecting the tumbler and steel plate she headed towards the kitchen. It was a good two hours before she could leave the kitchen and head back to her room. This was her favourite time of day. She would lie on her bed with the latest issue of Women's Era and thumb through it, all the while listening to the recorder. These quiet moments were when she would enter her dreamland.

Today it took her back to the day two years ago when she had received a scented envelope with a rose taped to it. Sheila still trembled gently in ecstasy as she thought of that day, the 'rose day' as they called it in college.

Sheila blushed deeply and then reprimanded herself gently as the guilt seeped in. But she was alone, the cleaning lady was busy washing the clothes in the courtyard and she had the room to herself! She pushed her braid to the other side as she flicked the pages of the magazine. But her thoughts quickly sped to the hallway where she had stopped in her tracks as her friend gave her the letter and rose. Letter tucked safely under her dupatta, Sheila quickly increased her pace and went through the side door leading up to the terrace.

Sheila was almost trembling as she opened the letter, her eyes skipped the words and leapt to the last line, 'awaiting your reply --- Victor' Sheila was taken aback; was it really him? She then started reading the letter from the beginning. Victor was the new lecturer who had joined the college just about 6 months ago. She still remembered the day he walked into the chemistry laboratory, strolling in, casually dressed in light blue denims and a faded Polo tee. His long legs and broad shoulders drew a sigh from many females in the laboratory.

He was a stark contrast to the other pot-bellied shirt and trouser-clad professors who walked around noisily wearing Bata chappals.

Victor had asked her to meet him in cafe Supriya, just about a kilometre down her hostel road. Sheila had gone back and forth on it for the entire day, so much so that she became particularly annoyed with herself and her indecisiveness. 5.30 pm came and sped by, but Sheila didn't muster up the courage to go to the cafe. The next few days she

avoided the chemistry department and changed her route. Sheila was perplexed at her own self - she was very much attracted by him, but couldn't bring herself to take it any further.

Just then she was jolted by the maid's loud voice: 'Mem saahab, raat ke khaane ke liye Kya sabji kategori?' (Madam, what vegetable should I chop for the evening meal?). Sheila masked her annoyance and shooed her away, saying that they were to eat outside as they had to attend a marriage. The maid nodded, and took her leave. Sheila got up from the bed and went to the window. She shut the window and sighed. The sharp honking and traffic noise dimmed noticeably! She drew the curtains and blocked the sun. The warm March breeze would get hotter as the sun climbed up in the sky. Sheila went to her cabinet and prepared a face mask for herself. She always liked to look her best and would leave no stones unturned towards it. Next, she looked at her collection of nail paint bottles and picked a bottle of sharp pink from her dresser. It would complement her purple Kanjeevaram perfectly. As she was painting her nails her thoughts went back to her chemistry department lecturer.

After avoiding Victor for a good few weeks she had bumped into him unexpectedly as she was heading out of her hostel for her monthly trip to the market. He had joined her as she was walking to the bus stop. Without uttering a word he came and sat in the seat next to her. Sheila still remembered every word, every pause on that 15 min bus ride. He was with her the entire evening. They laughed, talked and ate at the roadside go!



gappa stall and he had then bought her glass bangles. Since that day Sheila always wore glass bangles.

Sheila's life changed overnight, and the whole college got the whiff of their romance. It was at her birthday party that he had sung this song on the terrace, Sheila could see her friends squirm in jealous sighs as he rendered the ghazal, looking at her lovingly.

As she finished applying the top coat on her nails, Sheila looked at the clock. It was past 4 pm. She still had a few hours before Ashok would return to pick her up.

She took out the saree from the soft muslin case in which she kept her heavy sarees. She laid out the matching bangles and jewellery on the dresser. She would now need only about 20 mins to get ready.

The third year of her graduation got very busy and she knew she needed a good percentage to get herself a place in the university. Victor would sit with Sheila for hours as she did her work. He was working on his thesis and together they burnt the midnight oil. Weak moments were many and Sheila enjoyed the thrill of weaving passion with her books, of spending herself in his strong arms and then as quickly switching her mind back to her studies.

Sheila looked at the clock again- it was 6.30 pm, she quickly made herself some strong black coffee-

that would keep her appetite in check when she went for the buffet dinner that night.

Later, as she draped herself in the strong yet soft sheaths of silk she hummed the ghazal again. And then as quickly she let out a sigh-she had forgotten to pin up the first tuck of her

pleat, so she had to start draping it all over again. As she admired her petite waist peeping through the saree, she allowed a smile. She knew she was one the most beautiful women there and this evening would again prove that.

As she played with her glass bangles, she heard the car horn- it looked like Ashok had arrived. She got up and picked up her clutch, gave herself one quick look in the mirror before heading to the porch. Ashok looked at her, pleased at having such a plum of a wife. He held the door as she got into the sedan. It was the latest model which had arrived in the market. She had beamed in pride when her income- tax officer husband had got the first of the lot!

As they approached the lawns, the sweet melody of the shehnai caught her ears. She put her hand to her neck and ears, just checking to make sure her diamond ruby set was in place. As they greeted other guests and mingled happily, she could not help feel happy. She knew the effect she had on men as well as on women!

The sudden applause caused her to turn around and she looked in the direction in which everyone was looking. She stiffened as she saw the slowly moving wheelchair accompanied by a demure- looking bride. She quickly craned her slender neck to put aside her fears but, no,

it was not meant to be. Yes, it was him, the same rugged looks, the broad shoulders, but the long legs now folded and covered by a shawl. A drop of sweat slid down her temple and she felt a tug in her heart. God! Did he still have that effect on her? Sheila looked at the bride and saw her face in the bright light. It took her less than a second to recognize the round moon-faced Lara - her junior in the same department.

The afternoon came flooding back -Sheila and Victor had just started off on their motorcycle, deciding to go up to the temple which was about 15 Km north of the city, laughing singing just as the star couple in 'Aradhana', as her friends liked to tell her. On one of the sharp curves Victor had lost control and their motorcycle had skidded, and he had landed on his back after a few somersaults. Sheila had got up instantly, but not Victor. He had badly damaged his spinal column, leaving him paralyzed legs down.

As she felt Ashok's nudge, she quickly pulled herself together. They shook hands with the couple - neither Lara nor Victor seemed to bat an eyelid. Lara politely accepted the bouquet of flowers while Ashok and Victor chatted with each other.

Sheila felt herself sway slightly before her knees gave way.





A Summer Trip to *Allahabad*

by Madhu Suri



The excitement was building. Why did the days seem to pass so slowly? I couldn't wait to get on the train to Allahabad. We were going to attend my cousin's wedding. The anticipation and excitement of meeting my cousins, nephews and nieces was too much to contain. Finally, the day arrived when we would be catching the train to Allahabad.

Waking up early in the morning to go on a holiday is totally different from waking up in the morning to go to school.

For this trip, my mother was trying to let me sleep a wee bit longer since all I had to do was get ready to go. I did not need any prodding or cajoling to wake up. The aroma of my mother making pranthas and karelas (bitter gourd) for the journey was enough to wake me up.

After boarding the train at the New Delhi Railway Station, I went straight to the window seat while my parents got busy putting the luggage away under the seats and on the luggage compartment above. Joy and excitement overwhelmed me when the train left the station and the green spans of farmland came into sight. I was very focused on looking out of the window as I started counting the number of people I would spot defecating in the farms. 14, 15, 16.....and then my attention was diverted by my mother opening the tiffin. Yay, it was time to eat. My mother carefully placed a prantha on her palm, put two or three karelas in the centre, made a roll and handed

it to me. Karela was not one of my favourite vegetables but somehow the same karela filled with spices and mango pickle masala tasted heavenly on the train. At the next station we bought tea served in an earthen cup called kullarh and my mother whisked out a home-made besan ka laddoo (sweet balls made of chickpea flour). mmm... life was good.

The wedding house was filled with excited guests. I was thrilled to meet all my relatives especially those in my age group. The year was 1971.

Anyway, I noticed my aunt Usha aka Usha Mami from Ludhiana wearing very cool sunglasses. She looked very stylish in them. I so wished I could try them on just once. I did not have to wait long. Usha Mami carefully placed them on a side table while she went to take a bath. I slowly picked up the cool shades and started admiring myself in the mirror. I looked way cooler than Usha Mami. I heard the bathroom door opening and quickly put the glasses back where they belonged. Next morning I woke up with swollen, itchy and painful eyes. Unknown to me, Usha Mami was suffering from a very contagious eye infection nicknamed "Bangladesh Conjunctivitis." Now I was really in need of shades to hide my swollen eyes.

The wedding day arrived. I was not excited. My mother handed me a nice shiny blue dress to wear and we all walked to the bride's house while my aunts, uncles and cousins, and danced to Bollywood tunes played by the band. As soon as we started

eating, suddenly out of nowhere, a strong wind started to blow, followed by loud thunder and heavy rain. The sound of falling dishes and crashing decorations scared everyone. Within minutes everyone started running helter-skelter to find shelter. The tent crashed to the ground toppling the lighted tandoor and all the food. The couple had to be married inside the house in a make-shift mandap (wedding dias). The baratis who had not eaten yet had to go home wet, hungry and tired. Back home, my cousins and I slept on the floor on daris (cotton mats). We put the horror of the wedding behind us and were looking forward to the trip to Benaras the next day. The visit to various Hindu and Buddhist temples would cheer us up or so we thought. It was a terribly hot and humid day in late June. We arrived early to get a good seat on the bus. As if sitting in the non-air-conditioned bus with my swollen and itchy eyes was not enough misery for me, I started scratching my head like mad. My mother had a closer look at me and declared "Oh no, you have lice!!!" I bet my cousins had lice and passed them on to me when we slept together.

I remember seeing the sights of Benaras in a miserable state. Looking back today at the situation I was in, I can't help but laugh at my own mistakes, some of which were surely preventable. But then, if it was just another wedding where everything went as planned, it would not have been a memorable trip and I would not be here telling this to all of you!



THE ADDA CLUB

The Adda Club is a unique discussion forum that IWA is very proud of. While most of our clubs are making meaningful contributions to the overall wellbeing of its members, ADDA is special in its comfortable, non-threatening, supportive ambience within which we whittle away at many of our preconceived, often traditional and sometimes conservative ideas on a wide range of topics. This is the space within which the group truly learns to think afresh, understand and embrace what we might have considered "the other." We have been delighted at how often we hear the phrase "I never thought of it this way."

This club which is closed to non-members, meets once a month, usually on a Tuesday or Thursday afternoon at 2pm at the Regency Park Function room. Regular attendance is a cozy group of 20 odd people.

The year 2016, saw some very interesting Adda sessions with topics like:

- Are you strategising for a successful marriage?
- Why is there a predominant anti-establishment sentiment in politics?
- How financially savvy are you?
- Are we guilty of body shaming or victims of body shaming?
- How do we manage our expectations?
- What shackles our minds? Let's attempt to break-free.
- Are social networks real societies?

These were indeed exhilarating sessions each of which had a valuable take home message .

ADDA looks forward to yet another year of vibrant discussions & active participation from more IWA members. This club is thoughtfully chaired by Nirupa Vasudev.





IWA Book Club

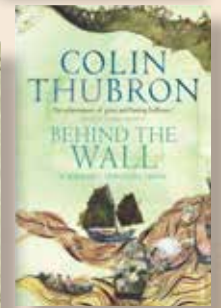
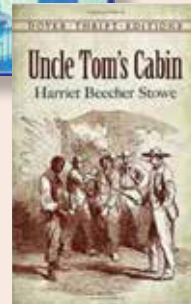
The IWA Book club meets on the second Thursday of every month. This club is open to both beginners as well seasoned readers. We try to cover a wide range of literary genres, classics, fiction, historical novels and non-fiction to romance and mythology. Each participant gets a chance to express views on the book as well as related thoughts and experiences. Members generously host the meet, and each discussion is followed by lunch. The Book Club is very happy to mention that it has not missed a single session in the year 2016 and met every month

of the year, indicating a dedicated reading circle.

Most years the book club also invites new and established authors to come and share their experiences with IWA members. Book club guests often go on to become IWA members.

We welcome all members to try out this very inclusive and caring book reading group.

The Book Club is chaired by Lakshmi (Lucky) Padmanabhan.





Creative Hands Club (CHC)

The "crafty" ladies of IWA got together in 2016 to form the Creative Hands Club with the main aim of sharing creative ideas and to recycle, reuse and repurpose things to create sellable merchandise in support of IWA's community initiatives. This club meets as often as required to complete the task at hand.

Two major projects were undertaken during this year: CHC created different items to sell at the bazaar (these included hand made jewelry, fabric and crochet coasters). The stall was a huge success and we made a profit of \$272 which was donated to SWAMI Home.

The club members also undertook the huge task of creating 242 coasters for the residents of SWAMI home as Christmas gifts.

Going forward the club hopes to have regular meetings with a lot of creative creations !!!! If you are creative and like keeping your hands busy, please join us and let us benefit from your talent. CHC was chaired by the super talented Anjali Tripathi and ably supported by Sudeepta Dasgupta and Madhuri Wagle.

New member Monica Dovedy will be chairing CHC this year.





Health and Fitness



Health and Fitness Club is a multi-dimensional club which aims to promote health & well-being amongst its members.

- i) It regularly introduces its members to various forms of fitness and well-being through talks by certified instructors.
- ii) Fitness Club organizes regular talks on various topics related to health, mind & body.
- iii) The latest & most popular activity is the regular monthly Sunday morning walks along with families. Apart from the benefits of walking - being out in the fresh air, breath-taking views, discovering new trails in Singapore, bonding with members & member families are the added benefits of this popular activity.

THE HIGHLIGHTS FROM MARCH - DEC 2016 HAVE BEEN

Dancercise - an aerobic dance form grooving to Bollywood numbers saw quite a few IWA members taking this up as a regular form of exercise.



Health related talk - 7 steps to lose 7 kilos - 7 simple life changing food habits were discussed by an INN Health Coach.

Sunday Morning Walks - The Sunday walking group has walked the Southern Ridges - to Mt Faber Park & Telok Blangah Hill Park (part1) and another time to Telok Blangah Hill Park (part2) & Hort Park. There was a fun Mac Ritchie Tree Top walk one time and the serene Mac Ritchie boardwalk along the lake on another Sunday. One Sunday morning saw them scale the Bukit Timah Summit which is called the Mount Everest of Singapore and repeating it once more for those who missed it. The Fort Canning walk on the other hand enlightened the participants to the war history of Singapore and its pre-Raffles history.

The Health and Fitness Club flourished under the fit and fab chairs Vidya Dasgupta and Padmaja Balaji. This year Padmaja will continue as chair while Vidya takes up a different responsibility.





GOURMET GODDESS CLUB

The IWA Gourmet Goddess Club or GGC as we call it, is a club for restaurant lovers, cooking aficionados & foodies. The objective is to bring people together to eat, drink and be merry over a delicious meal and to give cooking enthusiasts a channel to explore & express their passion. While having fun with eating, they like to bring in the healthy aspect too! That's why the club events are always done with care by giving importance to health & nutrition.

Gourmet club organized 4 events from March to Dec 2016.

1. A South Indian feast at Green Leaf Cafe with introduction to traditional food & vegetables with medicinal values
2. Members learnt how to make Spanish Paella at a Spanish restaurant.
3. A talk titled "Eat well, Live well" where Nutritionist Meenu Agarwal gave a talk on healthy eating at Elemen restaurant.
4. The fourth was a pot luck Festive feast, with traditional food from various parts of India introduced by club members.

All four events were well attended and greatly appreciated by the members. The club was ably chaired by Latha V Krishnan and Pooja Narayanan. Pooja will be joined this year by Taniya Hathiramani as Co-chair.





Music Club

The IWA Music Club brings together members with a strong interest and training in music as well as those who just enjoy it and are amateur singers. Once a month, a music meet is hosted by a member who also chooses the theme for the month. A wide variety of songs from different regions, eras, genres, composers and singers are sung. This gives our members an opportunity to learn about other cultures, cuisines and traditional attire. This year members sang songs based on Punjab, Bengal and Rajasthan. They celebrated festivals like Holi & Vaisakhi. One of the highlights of 2016 was the Wedding Sangeet at a member's home to kickstart the festivities for her daughter's wedding. Members dressed in their colourful best, sang Hindi and Punjabi wedding songs and danced 'Gidda' and 'Bhangra' in true Punjabi style to the beat of the dholak. Music Club also gives opportunity to members' families to enjoy a fun-filled evening with songs, dances, games and dinner through an annual Musical Gala Night. This year for the gala, IWA collaborated with Kamala Club in a jointly organized musical extravaganza which was very rightly named "Jashn-E-Dosti".

Madhu Suri continues in her role as chair this year while Co-chair Anshoo moves into a new role.





Scrabble & Mahjong

In its third year, the Mahjong Club has progressed a lot from its infancy. It is now a fully established club with the procurement of 3 Mahjong sets along with tables. Members meet on alternate Wednesdays, and actively engage their minds through captivating games of Mahjong and Scrabble played with a competitive spirit! There have been over 35 sessions last year. The Scrabble and Mahjong club looks forward to organizing friendly games with other communities within Singapore this year. Pro or beginners, the Mahjong and Scrabble club welcomes all members into its fold. Anshoo Berry has taken over from the very competitive and enthusiastic Rajni Arora as chair this year.





ENTREPRENEUR CLUB



The IWA Entrepreneur Club aims to foster a spirit of entrepreneurship amongst women business owners and aspiring businesswomen in Singapore. This is done through two key pillars:

- 1. Learning Sessions:** where learning-oriented events are held every quarter in the form of talks or interactive workshops where the members learn about different aspects of setting up and running a business.
- 2. Networking Sessions:** called "Coffee Mixers" which give an opportunity to members to interact with each other in an informal setting.



Major Events held this year were:

- 1) Aids and Tools to help your business - The business advisor from SME gave information on tools and services available for SME owners and aspiring entrepreneurs in Singapore.
- 2) Business Communication Skills: Delivering an impactful message about your business by Bharoti Pande
- 3) Setting up and doing Business in Singapore by Ms. Kanak Bharti

Plans for 2017 include

- A) networking sessions where members can do a short pitch and talk about their business ventures.
- B) covering topics which haven't been covered recently like digital marketing, branding, new media initiatives, e-commerce, and ways/grants to develop and sustain a business.
- C) collaboration with business associations like TiE to provide mentorship and networking opportunities to members.
- D) exploring sponsorships with corporates and small businesses in order to manage their events at a larger scale and in a more professional manner.

This is one of our most popular clubs with a regular turnout of 35-50 people. The club continues to be chaired by Richa Joshi-Kaul and Vinnie Mehta.





Movie Club

The IWA Movie Club started in May 2016. We hoped to explore other cultures around the region through films from these countries while also learning about the craft of movie making and perhaps becoming more familiar with the big names in the industry. The movie club meets on the 4th Friday of every month in the residence of a fellow member and we always have a wealth of takeaways from each session. This year we watched two movies from Mainland China, *Raise the Red Lanterns* by Zhang Yimou and *Farewell My Concubine* by Chen Kaige, two movies from Hong Kong, *In the Mood for Love* and *The Grandmaster* by Wong Kar-wai, a movie from Taiwanese director Ang Lee, *Eat Drink Man Woman* and the Japanese-American film *Memoirs of a Geisha* by Rob Marshall. The club members also watched *Apprentice* by

Boo Junfeng. For this movie the screening was at The Projector where the members met and had a Q&A session with the Director.

In December the members watched a Tamil movie 'Ahaa' starring Tejali Ghanekar. This was a special event as the lead role was played by a member of our movie club. It was fascinating to hear about her work with stalwarts of the movie industry and her journey in and out of stardom. The club will continue to be chaired by Selmé Singh and we can assure you a great learning experience this year as well.





Writing

Enthusiasts' Club



The IWA Writing Enthusiasts' Club is in its third year now and we can see how the members are growing in confidence with each session.

Under the able guidance of club chair, Shilpa Thapliyal, our writers explored many genres like poems, short stories, scene writing, and creative passages based on fun prompts such as 'crooked bookshelf', 'yellow forest', 'stupid farmer' etc etc. The team has also found inspiration in nature by writing in the Botanic gardens.

We are happy to share some of the achievements of this team:

Members, Jyoti Verma and Shilpa Thapliyal won commendable mentions in the first Asian Women's literary festival organised by India Se in 2016 for their short stories.

Azeena had her short story published in a local magazine 'Onam' while Aruna Shahani had her poem published in an anthology.

Many members of WEC have published their poems and stories in the pages of this magazine. Shilpa says, "As a chair it gives me immense satisfaction to see the team showing dedication and passion for writing."





IWA AGM 2017





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