



International
Women's
Association

OCTOBER 1996



A DECADE OF FRIENDSHIP

IWA NEWSLETTER

Vol XI No 5
Madras

OCTOBER 1996

MONTH AT A GLANCE

Tuesday	1st	October	INTERNATIONAL MUSIC DAY Demonstration by Saxophone artiste Kadri Gopalnath	10-15 am
Thursday	3rd	October	BOOK DISCUSSION Book Club Versus Book Discussion	10-15 am
Monday	7th	October	BOARD MEETING	10-00 am
Monday	7th	October	EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING	10-30 am
Tuesday	8th	October	ARTS AND HANDICRAFTS Terracotta Magic	10-15 am
Friday	11th	October	PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION What is Prayer ?	10-15 am
Tuesday	15th	October	ARTS AND HANDICRAFTS Face to Face with Urundavan Solanki	10-15 am
Friday	18th	October	HISTORY, CULTURE AND TOURS 'Gandhi' - An Interactive Multimedia Presentation	10-15 am
Wednesday	23rd	October	HEALTH AND ECOLOGY Medicine Today	10-15 am
Monday	28th	October	CURRENT EVENTS & CAREERS Affirmative Action - a talk by Michele Jeanne Sison, US Consul General	10-15 am
Wednesday	30th	October	COOKING SWAPSHOP Cooking Contest	11-00 am

AMONG FRIENDS – FOND MEMORIES OF NIRMAL

It began quite unassumingly 10 years ago April, after I had been living in Madras, India, for nearly a year. An Indian woman whom I had never even met asked to meet with me. I invited her for tea to River House, my very grand, quite imposing residence. As wife of the US Consul General for South India, the house came with my husband's title. Not that Nirmal Seshadri was intimidated by all the trappings. Certainly not! She had a mission and she intended to see it fulfilled.

Nirmal wanted to establish a cross-cultural organization in that bustling city of five million, but she couldn't do it alone. To be truly inter-cultural, she needed a prestigious non-Indian to act as a co-leader and thus encourage and validate non-Indian membership. That's where I came in, though at the time I thought I would be doing little more than lending my name to an organization I thought worthy, rather like being an honorary chairman. My newly acquired friend thought otherwise. My final two years in Madras working to firmly establish the International Women's Association, consumed a major part of my time.

As the wife of a diplomat, I'd lived overseas most of my adult life. I consider myself broad minded, well aware of other cultures. Still, I was unprepared for Nirmal's announcement that the start up meeting for the IWA would begin at 10-15 am. I protested.

"Start the event at 10-00 or 10-30", I said, "nothing ever starts at 10-15".

But Nirmal was adamant. Since I still barely knew her, I felt in no position to argue.

"OK", I thought, "I'll humour her. This is her project, after all".

Approximately 30 women of various nationalities became IWA members that first day. As the co-founders, Nirmal and I were chosen co-presidents. Our "baby" grew stronger each month. Because of our constant association, our relationship also grew, from being merely acquaintances to becoming close friends to ultimately operating as soul mates. By Christmas the mystery of the starting time had been solved.

"Every good Hindu knows that in order for a new venture to be successful, it has to begin at the auspicious moment, precisely", explained Nirmal in her clipped, perfect English. "My astrologer told me when the first IWA meeting should begin.

I didn't know you well enough in July to explain. I didn't want you to laugh at me". By then, our relationship was close, an easy give and take. I could chuckle about the seriousness.

Meanwhile, the membership expanded rapidly. In that first year nearly 100 IWA programmes were presented. Ten activity groups meet each month, in the arts, in philosophy, to travel both in and out of India, to cook. Each activity, plus the Executive Committee is chaired by two women, an Indian and a non-Indian. When two dozen Indians are working closely with non-Indians planning monthly programmes, strong friendships naturally evolve. Both the officers and the general membership enjoy the opportunity to meet their counterparts from India and other countries in a nurturing environment. The International Women's Association generates cross-cultural understanding at its best.

I left Madras in 1988, with greater sadness than I had ever felt when ending an overseas assignment. Nirmal and I never lost contact. Our friendship was too deep to be terminated by distance. There were letters posted and packages exchanged. As Nirmal's arthritis worsened, her requests for Extra Strength Ben Gay became more frequent. Each month, when my copy of the latest IWA Newsletter would arrive, I would devour its contents. I couldn't attend any of the programmes, but I always knew what IWA was up to.

In July I returned to Madras for the International Women's Association 10th Anniversary celebration. I had known for a couple of years that somehow I would scrape together the airfare, but I had no idea how meaningful the trip would be. It was like watching a tiny baby that has blossomed into a thriving adolescent. For three days the IWA sponsored outstanding cultural events. Nirmal had not been an officer for some time, but she was the guiding force behind the celebration. Her health had deteriorated in the intervening years, but her organisational skill had not. Our time apart made no difference. We fell back into our bantering ways immediately. "Be here, stand here", Nirmal would tell me as she orchestrated the events. My "Yes, Mother" response would always draw a smile.

The tables would turn when I would lecture her like a daughter about her obviously failing health. "You must see the doctor about the arthritis" I said. "Walking has become very difficult for you. The membership is already talking about another celebration in five years. You've got to be there then, too. We're in this together.

She would laugh and say that when the furore over the IWA celebration subsided she would see the doctor.

The last of the events was on a Saturday, a garden party at the showplace home of a leading Indian industrialist whose wife was a former IWA president. The entertainment was a magnificent display of Bharatanatyam, the dancing of South India that is so different from the classical ballet and modern dance of the West. The solo dancer, Malavika Sarukkai, has an international reputation. In fact, she was leaving to tour in the US two days later.

After eight days, with a heavy heart, I left Madras myself. With tears welling up, I promised Nirmal, "I'll be back. You can start planning the 15th anniversary celebration".

On a Sunday afternoon just three weeks later, I was immersed in Indian culture once again, watching Malavika perform in Huston. Just as before, the audience was large and enthusiastic, but it wasn't the same there at Rice University as it had been under giant trees shading the stage in an Indian friend's back yard. I told Malavika that when I spoke to her afterwards.

Two days later I cut the laudatory review of her performance out of the front page of the entertainment section of the Chronicle. I planned to send it along with a copy of the programme to Nirmal. I knew she would appreciate the fact that I had an opportunity to see Malavika dance again so soon. Moments later a fax arrived. It read, "So sorry to be the bearer of very sad news. Nirmal passed away lunchtime today. Had massive brain haemorrhage Sunday morning and was in a coma with only life systems. But to the end, she was up and running".

Of course, I was devastated. But now that the tears have been replaced by a dull ache, there is also a trace of a smile on my lips. I could never forget Madras and the IWA and how they have affected by life, but Nirmal wanted to be absolutely certain of that. Though Madras and Huston are literally half a world apart, she managed to tie me to Madras and the International Women's Association on both the day she took ill and the day she died. I could hear her explanation now :

"But Nancy, I had no choice. Those were the auspicious moments".

NANCY A DEAN
Founding President, IWA

FROM THE PRESIDENTS

Dear Friends,

It is with a heavy heart that we record the sad and untimely demise of our dear friend and founder President, Nirmal Seshadri on Tuesday August 20th 1996. We will greatly miss her. But we must carry on - we must continue in her light, in the knowledge that her spirit lives on and will be there to guide us. Friends, the need of the hour is to find strength in the unity of our purpose. IWA was Nirmal's dream, we all helped to make it a reality - let us today rededicate ourselves to the ideals she founded IWA on and keep its flag of friendship and fellowship flying high. Nirmal was lovingly remembered at our memorial meeting held on Wednesday 4th September at the CPR Foundation. Thank you to Nanditha Krishna and Shakunthala Jagannathan for the perfect arrangements made and all the members who participated to make the occasion such a moving and memorable one.

As the IWA year speeds by we come close to the festive part of the year. Your Committee is busy organising a DIWALI MELA, details of which you will find in the following pages.

Our appreciation goes to Shushila Natraj for bringing out our new Telephone Directory in record time. Both IWA's new Telephone Directory and 'TRIBUTE TO NIRMAL' will be available to members from 1st October onwards at the International Music Day function and thereafter at all other IWA meetings.

Ladies, as a point of courtesy, may we remind you that out of respect for your guest speakers, please refrain from talking or having coffee during arranged programmes. Thank you so much.

**ALAGU MUTHU
POONAM LALCHAND**

BOARD MEETING

Monday 7th October 1996 - 10-00 am

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

Monday 7th October 1996 - 10-30 am

Both meetings at :

Gayatri Bewoor's
20 Gilchrist Avenue
Off Harrington Road
Madras 600 031

FROM THE VICE PRESIDENTS

Nirmal leaving us so suddenly has shaken up all of us at IWA. We can never forget her love and caring - the moment she received the Newsletter, she would phone in with her comments and praise - so little deserved, yet so encouraging. Will there be another like her ?

Having just returned from home leave, I would very much like to add my condolences to those you have all shown to Nirmal's family. She was 'one in a million' as the Americans would say. I was most moved by the condolence meeting and I was most delighted to find that just as Nirmal would have wished, the show is going on. She would have been thrilled to attend the lecture on palmistry held on September 9th. I know she will always be our guiding light in IWA.

I am always impressed by how well the IWA ladies do their events. How new and interesting items are constantly found is quite impressive. This month I believe we have a very full and interesting calendar of events. Items featuring Gandhi, Affirmative action, a chance to meet the new US Consul General and preparations for Diwali which is on the doorstep will fill our lives. Our Diwali Mela will need all your usual support and concern.

Do give our meetings your full support and your guest speakers your best attention.

SHAKUNTHALA JAGANNATHAN
MEGAN UTLEY

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Smile", she said, "things could get worse"

So I did.

So they did !!!

FROM THE TREASURER

	Rs.	P.
Bank Balance on 22 August 1996	1,18,281.62	
Income		
Subscriptions received after 30 June 1996	11,550.00	
Guest Charges collected	490.00	
Name badges sold	195.00	
Gifts sold	45.00	
Total	<u>12,280.00</u>	
Expenditure		
Advance to Secretary	1,000.00	
Advance to Music and Performing Arts for Singapore Surprise	4,000.00	
Lighting for the Show	3,800.00	
Total	<u>8,800.00</u>	

ANNELIESE HAZARI

WE WELCOME OUR NEW MEMBERS :

PRONOTI BANERJEA
Eden Park
43 McNichols Road
Madras 600 031
Tel : 8272715

THAYABAE KAKKAR
6-A Chandika Towers
B College Lane
Madras 600 006
Tel : 8234880 / 8268018

NOREEN DIEHR (CANADIAN)
Julie's Apartments
Flat 5
11 Pycrofts Garden Road
Madras 600 006
Tel : 8232546

ANITA KOSHY
30 Spartan Nagar
Mogappair
Madras 600 050
Tel : 6357152

SUSHILA NATRAJ

DIWALI MELA

Diwali - the festival of lights, will be celebrated by IWA on **Saturday 2nd November 1996.**

At : The Trident Hotel **From : 10-00 am to 2-00 pm**

Diwali has traditionally meant good food, dancing, and shopping. We attempt to bring all this under one roof for you to enjoy the spirit of the festivities.

There will be stalls selling all manner of things, there will be traditional Indian folk dancing (in which we invite you all to participate) and the bazaar ambience will be heightened with bangle vendors and fortune tellers ! And as you leave, you could have your palms decorated with exquisite designs of henna. This year, IWA's Diwali Mela aims to be a participative rather than a spectator occasion, so do come in large numbers - bring your families and friends, and celebrate Diwali with us.

We would love to see everyone in ethnic Indian attire !

Stalls : Members may book stalls to sell or display items. The rent for the evening will be Rs.300/- per stall. (All payments by Cheque please). Interested members please call **Jayashree Prabhakar** on 4342147 or **Sushi Natraj** on 4911015 to book your stalls.

As space permits only a limited number of stalls, bookings will be made on a first come first served basis. Until 15th October, we will accept bookings from members only. From 15th to 30th October, we will accept bookings from members' friends and families. No bookings will be accepted after 30th October.

Tickets : Tickets will be available at all IWA meetings in October. They will also be available with **Kamala Prasad** on 6262035 and **Stina Vasu** on 8278900. Please ensure that you get your tickets before October 25th. Again, numbers will be limited. The price of the ticket will include a sumptuous brunch.

Rates : Adults - Rs.100/- Children below 10 years - Rs.50/-

There will be a "Khazana Stall" - a contributory raffle. Members are requested to help collect gifts for this stall. Any unused article (value not less than Rs.50/-) will be welcome. Please drop off your gifts at Aruna Vijaykumar's or the Shrungar Beauty Parlour at the Park Sheraton (courtesy Lily Madhok). Gifts may also be deposited with any Activity Chairperson at any regular IWA meeting. Please look through your cupboards for things that you may not need but someone else might ! Zubeida Asgarali, Aruna and Lily have kindly agreed to run this stall.

RINI KUMAR
IRENE DASS

KAMALA PRASAD
STINA VASU
SUSHI NATRAJ

JAYASHREE PRABHAKAR
MARIKO IBARA

FESTIVALS OF THE MONTH

Wednesday 2nd October 1996 – Gandhi Jayanthi

To celebrate the birth anniversary of the father of the nation, Mahatma Gandhi, group spinning on **charkhas** are held at various places such as at Gandhi Mandapam and also at the Gandhi Statue at Marina Beach. Also prayer meetings are held all over the city, and a **sama-banthi-bhojanam** (eating together of all communities) at the Marina. It is a day of rededication to the causes the Mahatma lived for, which are forgotten in today's crass materialism.

13th October to 20th October 1996 – Navarathri Pooja

Monday 21st October 1996 – Vijayadasami or Dasara

The three goddesses Durga - Mother Goddess, Lakshmi - Goddess of Prosperity and Saraswathi - Goddess of Learning are worshipped during the nine-day festival. On the 9th day is Saraswathi Pooja or Ayudha Pooja, when students worship their books and workmen the tools of their trade.

In some homes a doll festival (or Kolu) is held when mud figures of gods, goddesses, animals, birds and flowers, in fact all creation, is worshipped in thanks giving. On Vijayadasami day is celebrated the victory over the demon, Mahishasura. It is also the day of Rama's victory over the demon-king, Ravana. Both events signify the triumph of good over evil.

CONGRATULATIONS !!!

To Chanda and Shiv on their marriage on 16th August 1996. Chanda is the daughter of our member Amrita and her husband Ram Bisalla.

To Rani Chada on winning the South India Ladies' Tournament Team Event together with her partner Sonya Singh. She also won the Bronze Division Best Nett in the Handicap Event.

To Mahema and Manu Devadoss on their Shastlabdhapoorthi.

To Sri Ganesh son of Prema Veeraraghavan who married Vani on 15th September 1996.

MUSIC AND PERFORMING ARTS

Tuesday 1st October 1996 - 10-15 am

At : Sindoori Hotel
Greams Road Madras 600 006



INTERNATIONAL MUSIC DAY

As 1st October was Nirmal's birthday, we are dedicating this event to her memory. Internationally renowned Saxophone artiste, Mr. Kadri Gopalnath, will talk to us about how he adapted the western saxophone to Indian music. He will be accompanied by a special percussion orchestra. Mr. Kadri Gopalnath will give us an enlivening demonstration which will be a special treat for music lovers. The event will be followed by lunch hosted by the members of the Sindhi Community of IWA.

**GAYATRI BEWOOR
LALINI GAUTAMADASA**

BOOK DISCUSSION

Thursday 3rd October 1996 - 10-15 am

At : Sujaya Menon's
52-A Beach Road
Kalakshetra Colony Madras 600 090



BOOK CLUB VERSUS BOOK DISCUSSION

Are you happy with the book discussion group the way it is or do you feel there is room for improvement?

This month we will not review a book. Instead, we'll take the opportunity to find out from two of our members how they were involved with book 'clubs' in other countries. Lalini Gautamadasa was part of such a group for four years in Beijing and Madeleine Leone was involved with a book club in Portugal. They are happy to share their experiences with us.

We will follow on from our speakers by having a discussion to find out what YOU really want from our group. Your views will be very important for this meeting.

NO GUESTS PLEASE

**SHYLA K RAU
TERESA KING**

In November we will be reviewing the book "Paula" by Isabel Allende.

ARTS AND HANDICRAFTS

Tuesday 8th October 1996 - 10-15 am

At : Jayashree Prabhakar's
Shepalika 12 Archbishop Mathias Road
Crescent Street Madras 600 028



TERRACOTTA MAGIC

Murganandam hails from a family of Terracotta artisans and his family business goes back 60 years from its inception. His father is the chief craftsman from Poompuhar, and he himself is a student of the Mahabalipuram Government College of Architecture and Sculptures. Murganandam and his artisans will be demonstrating the art of Terracotta with wheel work, the designing of wheel products, modern art sculptures and also copper work, plaster of Paris work and the making of murals, lamps and Ganesha idols.

Mr. Sunderajan who has nurtured Terracotta as a hobby, has kindly consented to give IWA members a deeper insight into the techniques of Terracotta work and Jayashree Prabhakar has opened up her beautiful home and garden for us to see how this Terracotta magic transforms the interiors and exteriors in a way that will delight the hearts of all home decorators.

Many thanks to Jayashree for hosting this meeting.

**RINI KUMAR
IRENE PRULLER DASS**

PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

Friday 11th October 1996 - 10-15 am

At : Aikya Alayam
Centre for Inter-faith Dialogue
96 Santhome High Road Madras 600 028



WHAT IS PRAYER ?

Prayer is the expression of one's relationship to God. What is its strength, its effect and its value? On this subject, the Rev Father Dhanaraj S J - Director of Aikya Alayam, will address us, taking us through the various forms of prayer as the universal bridge that takes man closer to the Divine Power. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank our hostesses for the September meeting, 'The Palm and its Fortune', namely, Sulochana Alexander, Amrita Bhalla and Shobha Seshasayee.

**JAYASHREE PRABHAKAR
MARIKO IBARA**

ARTS AND HANDICRAFTS

Tuesday 15th October 1996 - 10-15 am

At : Sunita Shahaney's
Ashley House
2nd Avenue
6 Boat Club Road
Madras 600 028



FACE TO FACE WITH URUNDAVAN SOLANKI

Urundavan Solanki grew up in a joint family in Junagadha and established himself as a famous artist after his Masters of Arts degree in Graphics, from Baroda. His paintings will be on exhibition at Ashley House from 16th to 19th October and he has kindly consented to spend a morning with IWA members for a private viewing and face to face exposition of his art. He will talk about his experiences and will also demonstrate his skill.

A workshop for those seriously interested in painting will be organised for 16th October at the same venue. Details of this will be discussed at the meeting on the 15th. Only those members particularly interested in art should attend this meeting due to its rather specialist nature.

We would like to give special thanks to Sunita for arranging and hosting this meeting.

**RINI KUMAR
IRENE PRULLER DASS**

A CHANGE OF ADDRESS FOR YOUR DIARY

Please note that Madeleine Leone's new address is :

5 Riverview Apartments
9 Third Avenue
Boat Club Road
Madras 600 028
Tel. 4340824

HISTORY, CULTURE AND TOURS

Friday 18th October 1996 - 10-15 am

At : The British Council Auditorium
Anna Salai Madras 600 002



GANDHI - AN APOSTLE OF PEACE - An Interactive Multimedia Presentation

A tribute to the Mahatma - a project conceived to celebrate his 127th birth anniversary - it is being released on 2nd October 1996.

IWA is privileged to view an exclusive collection of video clippings, writings, photographs and - the piece de resistance - to hear a recording of the voice of Mahatma himself.

This exhaustive information is encapsulated in a neat format to make it easily accessible. The morning promises to be educative and enlightening. Come join us as we remember the Father of the Nation.

**KAMALA PRASAD
STINA VASU**

HEALTH AND ECOLOGY

Wednesday 23rd October 1996 - 10-15 am

At : Sindoori Hotel
Greems Road Nungambakkam
Madras 600 006



MEDICINE TODAY

Recognising Dr Pratap C Reddy's eminent position in the country's health care industry, we have asked him to talk to us this month. Dr Reddy believes that given the right environment and medical infrastructure, Indian doctors could match the world's best. So he has begun a movement to revolutionise India's health care industry. The country's first Corporate hospital was commissioned in September 1983. Dr Reddy will also enlighten us on the International Standards Organisation award that the Apollo Cancer Institute recently received.

**BINA MATHEW
SEEMA SAIT**

CURRENT EVENTS AND CAREERS

Monday 28th October 1996 - 10-15 am

At : The Madras Club



AFFIRMATIVE ACTION : Is it still needed ? Was it ever ?

Michele Jeanne Sison, Consul General in Madras of the United States of America, is new in Madras, having taken up her position in August of this year. Prior to this she held positions in the Ivory Coast, Togo, Benin and Haiti.

Affirmative action is one of the issues facing the American voters as the November election approaches. It was meant to aid the development of minorities both educationally and in the job sector. Being similar to the Indian Reservations Policy in many ways it is of interest to us all.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the hostesses who sponsored the special meeting to mark the commencement of the 50th Anniversary of India's Independence :

Mano Bakthavatsalam, Lella Diraviam, Zubelda Asgarali, Sushila Natraj and Madeleine Leone.

**GITA CHANDRASEKAR
MADELEINE LEONE**

FROM A CYNIC

- * The light at the end of the tunnel has just gone out.
- * Smile as soon as you get up in the morning - and get it over with.

COOKING SWAPSHOP

Wednesday 30th October 1996 - 11-00 am

At : The Madras Club



COOKING CONTEST

ATTENTION ALL COOKING BUFFS !!!

Here is a splendid opportunity for all those IWA members who would like to exhibit their culinary expertise. We have in store for you on 30th October, our very first **cooking contest**, which is being held in connection with the compiling of the much awaited second edition of the IWA Cook Book.

We offer fabulous prizes for the winners of several categories of food, so please bring your typed recipe, together with a pre-cooked dish of your choice (servings for 10 people) to the venue outlined above. Don't be disappointed if you don't win a prize for your recipe may at the very least find its way into the prestigious IWA Cook Book.

So start working on your entry now and cook up a family favourite dish, or the most innovative dish you can. Remember ladies, no cooking or heating up can be done on the premises on contest day.

Now, wouldn't it be a shame to throw away the golden opportunity for international fame, for as you know, the IWA Cook Book literally goes places.

The categories are :

- | | | | |
|---|------------------------|----|----------------------------|
| 1 | Hors d'oevres | 6 | Bread, pastry and biscuits |
| 2 | Salads and dressings | 7 | Casseroles and stews |
| 3 | Sea food | 8 | Desserts |
| 4 | Vegetables and lentils | 9 | Pickles and chutney |
| 5 | Pasta and noodles | 10 | Low calorie cooking |

There will be an experienced panel of judges and very attractive prizes for the winners of each section. Please warn in your intention to participate with the name and category of your entry latest by 26th October to the Cooking Swapshop.

NAINA SHAH - 451296, 453147

USHA CHANDRAKUMAR - 8275341
LATA MURUGAN - 6428215

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

THE BOARD

PRESIDENTS	:	Alagu Muthu Poonam Lalchand	(R) 4938683 / 4937050 (R) 8257157 / 8272947 (O) 8559110 / 8559108
VICE-PRESIDENTS	:	Shakunthala Jagannathan Megan Utley	(R) 459199 (R) 4343348
SECRETARIES	:	Sujaya Menon Eira Doshi	(R) 4917464/4910044 (R) 4911126
TREASURERS	:	Sushila Natraj Anneliese Hazari	(R) 4911015 / 4910707 (R) 4919505

ACTIVITY CHAIRPERSONS

ARTS & HANDICRAFTS	:	Rini Kumar Irene Pruller Das	(R) 4349319 (R) 4990865
BOOK DISCUSSION	:	Shyla K. Rau Teresa Mary King	(R) 8276676 / 8276893 (R) 4341066
CURRENT EVENTS AND CAREERS	:	Gita Chandrasekaran Madeleine Leone	(R) 412935 (R) 4340824
COOKING SWAPSHOP	:	Usha Chandrakumar Lata Murugan	(R) 8275341 (R) 6428215
HEALTH AND ECOLOGY	:	Bina Mathew Seema Sait	(R) 4941874 (R) 8261018
HISTORY, CULTURE AND TOURS	:	Kamala Prasad Stina Vasu	(R) 6282035 (R) 8278900 (O) 8275792
MUSIC AND PERFORMING ARTS	:	Gayatri Bewoor Lalini Gautamadasa	(R) 8264035 (R) 6412868
PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION	:	Jayashree Prabhakar Mariko Ibara	(R) 4342147 / 453394 (R) 8275755