



International
Women's
Association

APRIL 1995

IWA NEWS LETTER

Vol. IX No. : 11
Madras

APRIL 1995

MONTH AT A GLANCE

Saturday, 1st April	MUSIC AND PERFORMING ARTS Theatre Workshop conducted by Helen Edmundson and Polly Teale on adaptation of 'Mill on the Floss'	10-30 a.m.
Monday, 3rd April	EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING	11-15 a.m.
Tuesday, 4th April	ARTS AND HANDICRAFTS Talk by Nirmal Mirza on 'Kashmir Carpets and Embroidery'	10-15 a.m.
Monday, 10th April	ARTS AND HANDICRAFTS Film on American Navajo Rug Making	10-15 a.m.
Tuesday, 11th April	ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING	10-00 a.m.
Tuesday, 18th April	COOKING SWAPSHOP Chettinad Cuisine — Demonstration by Meyyammai Murugappan	10-15 a.m.
Thursday, 20th April	GRAND FINALE — FAREWELL QUIZ All Activity Chairpersons join together to give you this programme	10-15 a.m.
Monday, 24th April	MUSIC AND PERFORMING ARTS American Folk Songs by Andrew Cortez-Greig	10-15 a.m.
Tuesday, 25th April	BOOK DISCUSSION 'Ravan and Eddie' by Kiran Nagarkar — the author will speak about his book	10-15 a.m.

Happy Summer Holidays

FROM THE PRESIDENTS

Dear Members,

This is the last letter that these Presidents will write to you, as in April this Committee will bid you fare-well. As we bid you 'good-bye' we leave you with this poem by Emily Bronte.

LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP

Love is like the wild rose-briar,
Friendship like the hilly-tree —
The holly is dark when the rose-briar blooms
But which will bloom most constantly ?

The wild rose-briar is sweet in spring,
Its summer blossoms scent the air ;
Yet wait till winter comes again
And who will call the wild briar fair ?

Then scorn the silly rose-wreath now
And deck thee with the holly sheen,
That when December blights thy brow
He still may leave thy garland green.

— EMILY BRONTE

LILY MADHOK
MARGARET SEKHRAN

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

Monday, 3rd April, 1995 — 11-15 a.m.

At : Zubeida Asgarali's
19, Sivaganga Road
Madras-600 034



Our grateful thanks to Nanditha Krishna for letting us use her office and staff for franking and mailing our newsletters and other notices throughout the year.

MUSIC AND PERFORMING ARTS

Saturday, 1st April, 1995 — 10-30 a.m.

At : British Council Auditorium
737, Anna Salai
Madras-600 002



This month in collaboration with the I.C.C.R., the British Council will present 'SHARED EXPERIENCED THEATRE' in the first ever theatrical adaptation of George Eliot's classic novel — 'MILL ON THE FLOSS'. A theatre workshop on adapting the text of the novel to suit theatre will be conducted by HELEN EDMUNDSON and POLLY TEALE. The British Council has very kindly extended invitation to IWA for 25 participants only, for this unique workshop. Those interested in theatre may call NIRMAL SESHADRI, (Tel. : 4913820) between 7-30 a.m. and 8-30 a.m. In the event of more than 25 names, we will draw lots to determine the lucky participants (There will be no attendance for this).

NIRMAL SESHADRI
ISSY SANDERSON

(Tickets for the play on 31st March and 1st April at the Music Academy are on sale at the British Council)

Fond Farewell to :

Issy Sanderson, our Music and Performing Arts Co-chairperson, who leaves for cold Latvia, Estonia after torrid Madras. She also served on the Nomination Committee this year. Her pet project is 'Self-Help Project Trust' of which she is Founder and Managing Trustee. This helps women and children at the Institute of Mental Health. Issy's zeal is infectious. She blends beautifully with the local milieu by adapting Indian dress, including the 'tikka' on the forehead and feels quite comfortable in it too! She is SAD to be leaving. So are we Issy. In the 4 years you have been here you have left your stamp of sincere service, true love, a humane understanding of other's problems and a deepfelt desire to help — a combination of virtues hard to find these days. We wish you happiness and good luck.

ARTS AND HANDICRAFTS

Tuesday, 4th April, 1995 — 10-15 a.m.

At : Rukku Seshasayee's
'Shobhana'
17, Bishop Wallers Avenue (West)
Mylapore
Madras-600 004



KASHMIR CARPETS & EMBROIDERY

Kashmir carpets, made of wool or silk, are greatly valued for their intricate weaves, Persian motifs and colour.

Kashmir embroidery is equally attractive and is best seen in pashmina and shahtush shawls and in jamawars.

Nirmal Mirza, an expert on the subject of textiles and carpets, will speak on these Kashmiri crafts.

Rukku Seshasayee will arrange for a display of Kashmiri carpets and shawls.

Monday, 10th April, 1995 — 10-15 a.m.

At : American Centre
Seminar Room, 2nd Floor of Library
220, Anna Salai
Madras-600 006

FILM ON AMERICAN NAVAJO RUG MAKING, 30 minutes

Most anthropologists agree that Navajo women learned the art of weaving from the Hopi and / or Zuni tribes after the Pueblo revolt in 1680. A single blanket took between six months to a year to weave and was a very prestigious item and became a valuable trading item. The programme looks at Navajo blankets/rugs from the collector's point of view and visits museums and private collections to view some of the finest examples of this art. Curators discuss the historical and aesthetic value of one of the American southwest's premier art forms.

**SHAKUNTHALA JAGANNATHAN
SANDRA ROWLAND**

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Tuesday, 11th April, 1995 — 10-00 a.m.

At : Hotel Choja Sheraton
10, Cathedral Road
Madras-600 086

AGENDA

1. Fellowship 10 - 10-30 a.m.
2. Welcome address by the President
3. To approve the minutes of the 8th Annual General Meeting held on Thursday, 7th April, 1994.
4. Secretary's Report
5. Treasurer's Report
6. Membership Treasurer's Report
7. Appointment of Auditors for 1995-96
8. Remarks by outgoing President
9. Any other business
10. Introduction of Nominating Committee
11. Presentation of the new Executive Board Members
12. Introduction of the new Executive Committee
13. Address by the new President
14. Vote of Thanks

Copies of the accounts, minutes and Activity Chairpersons' reports will be kept for members' perusal.

Membership fees must be paid ONLY by crossed cheque or crossed postal order in favour of International Women's Association.

Cheques may be given to Zubeida Asgarali, Lakshmi Padmanabhan or Nirmal Seshadri. Forms should be filled out legibly. No cash will be accepted.

THE EXECUTIVE BOARD 1995 - 96

The Nominating Committee has presented the following slate of office Bearers for the IWA Executive Board 1995-96.

	Indian	Non-Indian
Presidents :	Zubeida Asgarali	Khin-thi-da-Lwin (Dawn)
Vice-Presidents :	Shyla K. Rau	Teresa King
Secretaries :	Sujaya Menon	Ellen Sorensen
Treasurers :	Rupa Kadhiresan	Angelika Mandaiker

CHETTINAD - A TRYST WITH DIGNITY AND GRACE

They say, destiny makes strange bedfellows! the I.W.A. Group bound for Chettinad on the Quilon Express on the eve of 24th February '95 turned out to be a motley, yet thoroughly homogenous group! the entire trip was a roller — coaster ride: of fun, fellowship, laughter, education . . . and also, an almost indecent indulgence of our palates with a variety of the most delightful, scrumptious specialities of the Chettinad cuisine.

. . . . And so, on the appointed day as our train leaves the platform on the dot and gathers momentum, so does the cacophony of the sound of the music and the merriment . . . which brings even the curious T. T. to our bogie! so inspired is he at the sight of a group of women of all shapes and sizes, packed like sardines into one compartment playing "Antakshari" amidst a companionable confusion, that he turns the ongoing session into a "Quiz" session . . . until, tired, we reluctantly retire for the night with a unanimous proposal to make the next group session "Dumb Charades".

At the station the following morning, we are met by five cars and taken to the elegant, palatial homes of Seetha Aunty and Shri A. M. M. Arunachalam . . . eighteen of us accommodated in nine double bedrooms between the two houses, with all the meals at the main family house just opposite Seetha Aunty's home.

On day 1, post-bath and breakfast, we visit two temples — Pillaiarpatti (the Ganesh temple) and the Vairavswami temple at Vairavanpatti, the former about 120 years old and the latter around 200 - 300 years old. Intricate carvings in stone, ceilings painted with vegetable dyes in deep blues, reds & greens, and an atmosphere of piety pervades us as we retrace our steps to the cars.

With plenty of time on hand yet, we embark upon a visit of some traditional homes of the Chettiar families. Magnificent, larger-than-life, artistic facades, each unique in its own way, allows entrance by steps leading to mind-boggling and finely carved front-doors opening into drawing-rooms which, in turn, lead into open courtyards with room after room alongside the adjacent corridors on either side. Just when you think, "that's it", there opens up another section and yet another one, until finally, you reach the kitchen and staff quarters.

High ceilings adorned, some with wood and some with imported tiles; walls decorated with large portraits of family members smiling at you as if to welcome you; beautiful Italian and English tiles along the walls and on the

floors ; Huge Burma teak columns, carved by local carpenters to support and complement the beauty of the ceilings ; the huge kitchens, planned to the last detail, to even incorporate individual grinding stones for each branch of the family owning a section of the house ! the staff, courteous, polite and ever-willing, will do anything for their "Achi" who, in turn, treats them like family members, addressing them as "Ayya".

Post-lunch, we make a beeline for Karaikudi towards the antique, saree and jewellery stores. Shopping accomplished with only one interval for an enormous tea at Mrs. Meenakshi Meyyappan's home, we return to our base once more but wait there's more !

Changing and dressing to kill in all our fineries, we proceed for dinner where our gracious hostess gives us a glimpse of the rooms resplendent with layers and layers of articles which forms an integral part of a Chettiar bride's dowry. This perfect day then culminates in a perfect end . . . a detailed talk by Seetha Aunty on the family history with a barrage of questions from the group, followed by a straight-from-the-heart vote of thanks by Margaret and the gifting of a Conjeevaram silk saree to Seetha Aunty.

Day 2 sees us a couple of pounds heavier and travelling to the "Avudayar" temple, a temple with a difference, an hour and a half away from the house. A Shaivite temple, the God here is revered as formless. The Camphor "Aarti" is done but never brought out. The "Prasad" is offered to the seat of God which symbolises His existence and is accepted by Him in the form of steam. The carvings bear the evidence of eminently skilled craftsmen with an eye for the smallest detail, like veins and nails on the carved figures ; there is evidence of the Greek and Roman influence indicating the period of the construction of the temple as 17th - 18th century. Our guide indicates thirty-two characteristics of this temple before we return, totally amazed and awed by the technical expertise and the superiority of knowledge in those times ! After travelling through the countryside with villages, temples, cashew and banana trees, interspersed with rice mills and occasional small shops, we return for lunch.

After lunch, we visit an abode for health freaks to a farm where an algae known as "Spirulina" is processed for the production of a high-protein nutritive tablet, "Multinal", available at all pharmacies, a sure cure for aches, arthritis and allied ailments, we are assured !

The last phase of our trip comes as a surprise treat before boarding the Sethu Express for Madras. Going back in time and imagination to the times of royalty, we motor upto Chettinad railway station and chance upon a quaint house right next to the station . . . a house so close to the railway tracks that they seem to pass through the house itself !

Of course, we're close . . . there is just a short path leading from the track to the house. An unusual structure, the house is hexagonal in shape, with a sitting room within the hexagon and four bedrooms in alignment with four sides of the hexagon. The interior displays the monogram "RC" (for Rajah of Chettinad) on carved doors, stained glass panels and old English furniture. One can visualise the Rajah walking down the path to board his special bogie.

. . . And so, as all good things must come to an end, with the luggage piled into the cars, we bid a regretful adieu to Seetha Aunty after individually thanking her for her impeccable and warm hospitality, generosity and graciousness.

Not ones to forget the lingering desire for "Dumb Charades", we start playing even as we wait for the train to arrive ! as each act unfolds, we collapse with laughter and provide unbelievable entertainment to the drivers who have accompanied us, the coolies as well as the other people around, waiting to board the train. As our audiences are dumb-struck with our "Dumb-Charades", we board the train, and continue playing and eating the packed dinner from dosai to poori to "Thair-Sadam" to fruit, confident that it takes an I.W.A. group to shake the very foundations of the Karaikudi station and to make the most of a trip ! . . . Three cheers for IWA — Hip, Hip . . . Hurray !

SUREKHA KOTHARI

Of the five cars provided for our comfortable transport in Chettinad, two belonged to Seetha Muthiah, our hostess. The other three were Alagu Muthu's, Devaki Muthiah's and Visalakshi Ramaswamy's — all IWA members. A very BIG THANK you to all of you for your kind generosity.

The Avudayar temple is the place where Manickavasagar sang his 'Thiruvasagam' in praise of Lord Siva. The priest-cum-guide related the story behind it and also pointed out several other interesting details.

LAKSHMI PADMANABHAN

CHANGE IN ADDRESS AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS

PONCHIE KANWAR

26, 2nd Block, 6th Main Road

R. A. Puram

Madras-600 028

Phone : 45 46 25

MARGARET SEKHRAN's number reads as 118/B not 118/8

It is A-1, 118/B, 8th Main Road

Anna Nagar West

Madras-600 040

NAINA SHAH

7-B, Sathyanarayana Avenue

Off Boat Club Road

Madras-600 028

Phone : 45 12 96

Nirmal Seshadri

Phone : 491 38 20

Ramila Sreedhar

Phone : 491 13 52 / 491 86 61

Surekha Kothari has a home Fax number — 827 97 85

MORE ON MALINI

In her many-splendoured year, Malini formulated and used the 'telephone tree' to great advantage. It proved a much quicker way to communicate with members when sudden changes occurred in programmes due to unavoidable reasons like a 'bandh' etc. She continued to organise it for her successors but this year it became obsolete as the telephone department started revamping its exchanges and numbers changed almost every month.

It was heartening to see so many present at the poignant memorial service we had for Malini, proving what IWA is all about — sharing sorrow as well as joy. It was thoughtful of Nirmal Seshadri for organising the function with songs and readings from all the scriptures, encompassing all religions.

Fond Farewell to :

Barbara Cortez-Greig, our Co-Vice-President who was also activity chairperson for Music and Performing Arts in 1993-94. Nimble on her toes, she can trip the light fantastic at a moment's notice. She danced for us at Founder's Day and the International Evening of Music and Dance shows. Madras audiences are familiar with her stage appearances, the most recent being in the pantomime 'Cinderella'. Our good wishes to you.

COOKING SWAPSHOP

Tuesday, 18th April, 1995 — 10-15 a.m.

At : Meyyammai Murugappan's
14/2-B, Valliammai Achi Road
Kotturpuram, Madras-600 085



CHETTINAD CUISINE

Chettinad food is famous for its distinctive flavour and delicious taste. The spiciness of Chettinad Cuisine, tickles one's palate and taste-buds. On popular demand for a demonstration of Chettinad Cuisine, we have requested our own member Meyyammai to show us how to prepare a few vegetarian and non-vegetarian dishes from this delightful Cuisine. All are welcome.

**USHA BAIL
IRENE PRULLER DAS**

GRAND FINALE

Thursday, 20th April, 1995 — 10-15 a.m.

At : Nandita Chaudhuri's
32, Archbishop Mathias Avenue
Madras-600 028

"FAREWELL" QUIZ

As this IWA year draws to a close, all the activity chairpersons together have decided to bid farewell in the form of a combined programme. This promises to be a fun morning with games, puzzles and not too much strain on the old grey cells! We look forward to seeing a large number of you at this participative activity, which will also give us an opportunity to thank you all personally for the support you have extended to us throughout the year.

This is **your** programme as much as it is ours. So do make it convenient to attend.

Condolences to :

Sushila Natraj who lost her father-in-law

MUSIC AND PERFORMING ARTS

Monday, 24th April, 1995 — 10-15 a.m.

At : The American Centre Auditorium
220, Anna Salai
Madras-600 006



ANDREW CORTEZ-GREIG, Programme Officer of the USIS will do a special programme for us on the rich heritage of American folk songs. A diplomat who is also a musicologist, with varied and extensive experience of different cultures, he has a deep understanding of the folk lore of his own native America. We are privileged to hear him speak and sing this morning. All are welcome.

(Those who wish to avail themselves of the limited parking facilities should call NIRMAL (Tel. 4913820) before 21st April and only between 7-30 a.m. and 8-30 a.m.)

**NIRMAL SESHADRI
ISSY SANDERSON**

We thank Gayathri Bewoor and Anupama Pasari for hosting this programme.

BOOK DISCUSSION

Tuesday, 25th April, 1995 — 10-15 a.m.

At : Prema Veeraraghavan's
25, Cenotaph 2nd Street
Madras-600 018



RAVAN AND EDDIE by Kiran Nagarkar

A very funny and at the same time very philosophical novel about two boys born in a chawl in Bombay.

The author is also a playwright and has written quite a few screenplays. He will be with us to discuss his novel. Do not miss this opportunity of meeting this dynamic person.

**SULOCHANA ALEXANDER
ROSA MARIA SRIDHARAN**

Congratulations to :

Sundari Mani, for being awarded the 1st prize given by the State Government for outstanding work in the field of consumer protection.

Lalitha Natarajan, for bagging several prizes in the Garden Competition of the Madras Gymkhana Club.

Menaka Prabhakar, whose son Ashwin wed Kavita.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

THE BOARD

PRESIDENTS	: Lily Madhok	4993125/4990661(R) 4994101(O)
	Margaret Sekhran	
VICE-PRESIDENTS	: Lakshmi Padmanabhan	8264334(R)
	Barbara Cortez-Greig	4344884(R) 8273040/208(O)
SECRETARIES	: Shyla K. Rau	8276676(R) 8276893(O)
	Seema Sait	8261018(R) 8264112(O)
TREASURERS	: Zubeida Asgarali	8271614
	Angelika Mandaiker	611265

ACTIVITY CHAIRPERSONS

ARTS & HANDICRAFTS	: Shakunthala Jagannathan	459199(R)
	Sandra Rowland	4341888(R)
BOOK DISCUSSION	: Sulochana Alexander	8262410(R)
	Rosa Maria Sridharan	417289(R)
CURRENT EVENTS & CAREERS	: Sujaya Menon	4910044(R)
COOKING SWAPSHOP	: Usha Bail	6412621(R)
	Irene Pruller Dass	4990865(R) 417233(O)
HEALTH & ECOLOGY	: Rupa Kadhiresan	4992847(R)
	Vijaya Rangarajan	8284334(R) 4992653(O)
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	Sabine Salam	832670(R)
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	Issy Sanderson	4343348(R)
PHILOSOPHY & RELIGION	: Ranjini Manian	453085/4342466(R)
	Joanne Grady Huskey	4347888(R)