



IWA, Chennai, a forum for Indian and non-Indian women promotes learning, diversity, understanding of different cultures and builds friendships. Celebrating 25 glorious years, IWA continues towards a promising future...

Forever Connected. Forever Learning. Forever Inspired.

If undelivered, please send to:

Kothari Bagh, 18, Nungambakkam High Road, Chennai 600 034

Registered Office:

857, Poonamallee High Road, Kilpauk, Chennai 600 010



FEBRUARY 2012

Executive Committee

2011 - 2012

Managing Committee

Presidents	Nina Kothari Cherry Venkatesan	28334501 / 28278888 28293436 / 9841023740
Vice Presidents	Ramani Reddy Bharathi Nair Gopinath	28353608 / 9840086858 42120726 / 9884495778
Secretaries	Nita Reddy Priya Asokan	42030717 / 9962530717 24937357 / 9840073691
Treasurers	Asha Rammohan Jennifer Arun	28332006 / 9840039958 28275032 / 9880399490

Activity Chairpersons

Arts & Handicrafts	Deepali Goyal Anita Nazareth Wedick	24313144 / 9840442260 42815014 / 9500040299
Book Discussion	Tehnaz Bahadurji	26202917 / 9840024726
Cooking Swapshop	Nabila Avais Phyllis Stathis	28264325 / 9840026665 9952012061
Current Events	Ambika Mammen Angelika Schwering	28362733 / 28292777 24490382 / 9840379471
Health & Ecology	Usha B Moorthy Malini Balakrishnan	42150888 / 9840074196 24112690 / 9176687337
History, Culture & Tours	Somna Sachdev Elizabeth Aston	28330232 / 9841022922 24328590 / 9094558566
Music & Performing Arts	Geeta Vasudevan Kiran Rao	24915913 / 9884363550 24991330 / 9841045856
Philosophy & Religion	Jayashree Manradiar Anjali Sacheti	24321882 / 9841041361 42069726 / 9884056000

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February at a Glance

31 Tue Jan	09.00 ^{AM} Managing Committee 12.00 noon Executive Committee
7 Tue	10.15 ^{AM} Health & Ecology
14 Tue	10.15 ^{AM} Arts & Handicrafts
16 Thu	04.30 ^{PM} Music & Performing Arts
18 Sat	03.30 ^{PM} History, Culture & Tours
20 Mon	10.15 ^{AM} Board Event
21 Tue	10.15 ^{AM} Cooking Swapshop

22 Wed	10.15 ^{AM} Book Discussion
27 Mon	10.15 ^{AM} Philosophy & Religion
29 Wed	10.15 ^{AM} History, Culture & Tours

Election Sub-Committee

The Managing Committee has appointed the following members to serve on the Election Sub-Committee for the election of the IWA Office Bearers for 2012 - 2013.

Chairperson : Princess Naik
 Members : Sangeet Chopra (Indian)
 Leena Suryaprakash (Indian)
 Shanta Narayan (Non Indian)
 Sheela Sharath (Non Indian)

To learn more, visit the IWA blog site: www.iwachennai.blogspot.com

IWA Newsletter Volume XXVI No.9 Chennai

From the Presidents

Dear Friends,

We look forward to seeing you for the Endowment Lecture by the eminent **Dr Romila Thapar** on the 29th of Feb.

We welcome the Election Sub-Committee on board to put together yet another comprehensive list of candidates for the new Managing Committee. Yes, time flies, and we hope you enjoy the interesting meetings planned by our capable chairpersons for the next few final months. The months ahead are exciting!

We are overwhelmed with the enthusiastic response for IWA's Got Talent for the month of March. Once again, we see the collective spirit-' to share and to do for IWA'.

Kindly check if you have adequate attendance for the year. Please note that this IWA year ends on March 31 st 2012. The Membership Treasurer has sent a reminder to those members lacking in attendance and we hope these members will make up their attendance in the coming 2 months. The new telephone directories are on sale at the meetings, so please buy your copy.

Enjoy the wonderful meetings this month!

NINA KOTHARI

CHERRY VENKATESAN

31 Tue Jan	9.00^{AM} Managing Committee
	12.00 noon Executive Committee
Venue: Chola Sheraton 13, Cathedral Road, Chennai 86	

From the Treasurer

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT

1st April 2011 TO 31st December 2011

INCOME	Amount
Membership Subscription	592000.00
New Membership(Capital Fund)	95000.00
Membership Contribution	46900.00
Fixed Deposit/SB Interest	47521.00
Hostess Contribution	114048.58
Sale of TeleDirectory ,books and Bylaws	2925.00
Guest Charges	36300.00
Diwali Celebration	98700.00
Gift Sponsorship	600.00
Total Income	1033994.58
EXPENDITURE	
AGM Expenses 2010-2011	57034.00
Meetings	132219.08
Fellowship Morning	24541.00
Silver Jubilee Celebration -Founder's Day	75345.00
Silver Jubilee Celebration -Fashion Show	43000.00
Silver Jubilee Celebration -Morning Magical	2300.00
Silver Jubilee Celebration-Rejoice In Rhythm	2500.00
Silver Jubilee Celebration-Bride's Home Coming Ceremony	2500.00
Printing and Stationery	58601.00
Diwali Celebration	112925.00
Accounting Charges	16000.00
X'mas Celebration	36500.00
Postage and Courier	13015.00
Bank Charges	166.00
Total Expenditure	576646.08
Excess of Income over Expenditure	457348.50
Less : New Membership Amt Trans- Capital Fund	95000.00
Net Income	362348.50
Funds Position as on 31st December 2011	
Opening Balance - 1st April 2011	
Bank - 5,55,330.31	
Cash - 253.24	555583.55
Add:Excess of Income Over Expenditure	457348.50
Less:Advance paid to Chairperson	24000.00
Closing Balance - 31st December 2011	
Bank - 9,87,380.81	
Cash - 1,551.24	988932.05
Fixed Deposits	
1287306000014/2 (Mat.Date28.06.2013)	100000.00
1287303000572/2 (Mat.Date14.07.2013)	424354.00
1287303300637/2 (Mat.Date26.08.2013)	5515.00
Total Fixed Deposits with Canara Bank	529869.00

ASHA RAMMOHAN

7 Tue

10.15^{AM}

Eco Café at Chamiers,
106 Chalmiers Road, RA Puram,
Chennai 600 028

Advocacy for Health: Partnership between Government and Civil Society

Mrs. Sheela Rani Chunkath has had an extraordinary career as an IAS officer. She has served various roles over the years as the Commissioner of Maternal and Child Health and Welfare, the Secretary of Health and Family Welfare in Tamil Nadu, as the Collector of the Chennai and Puddokottai Districts, the chairperson of the Tamil Nadu Industrial Investment Corporation, the Chairperson of the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board, and the Home, Prohibition and Excise Secretary.

Please join us for her fascinating insights. She will talk about issues she has faced as a public servant in the field of Health, such as the need to educate people on preventative care, both public and personal, the role of traditional health care practices in maintaining health, aspects of public health such as maternal mortality, infant mortality and female infanticide, and various government initiatives she has been involved with.

We would like to thank **Chandra Shankar** for graciously sponsoring this event.

We would like to thank **Sudha Sivakumar** for agreeing to be our day facilitator.

USHA MOORTHY

MALINI BALAKRISHNAN

14^{Tue}

10.15^{AM}
 Arcot Hall,
 Sheraton Park Hotel
 132 TTK Road, Chennai 600 018

A Sweetheart at any Age

Ever wondered what goes into your face creams and cosmetics and what benefits each ingredient has for enhancing the quality and glow of your skin?

Ms. Meeta Awatramani, Training Manager, Mumbai, Clarins India will enthrall us with a presentation on the various special and latest ingredients that are used to enhance product performance and results that benefit the individual users.

The presentation will give us an insight to the research that goes into developing new products and the scientific testing process carried out in order to bring us high quality products.

The meeting will also feature a live demonstration of a **quick and easy makeover** for the active, IWA lady on-the-go.

There will be an opportunity for members to ask questions and get further information from qualified Clarins staff.

NOTE: As this has a **Valentine theme**, Please dress in something RED for the event.

Special goodie bags will be presented.

We thank **Clarins** India for graciously hosting this meeting

We thank **Monique De Zwaan** for being our day facilitator.

DEEPALI GOYAL

ANITA NAZARETH WEDICK

9^{Thu}

10.15^{AM}
Sansara
 The Park
 601, Anna Salai
 Chennai 600 006

LSD in relationships – A Modern Mythic Perspective - Lakshmi - Saraswati - Durga

The Chief Belief Officer of the Future Group, **Devdutt Pattanaik**, writes and lectures regularly on the relevance of mythology in business and modern life. Author of over 20 best selling books, he is a brilliant, lucid and exceptional speaker based in Mumbai.

His interpretation of LSD is interesting, inspiring and invigorating. Our constructed world has three components, visualized as the three Goddesses: the material component or Lakshmi; the intellectual component or Saraswati; the emotional component or Durga. LSD, in short! As we seek to make sense of our lives, we chase LSD. Though the Goddesses belong to no one, we seek to possess them, control their flow, and make them predictable and dependable, though to our dismay they remain independent and whimsical.

Come, listen to this very articulate and interesting speaker.

We thank **Molly Jacob, Chandra Lulla, Sharada Rajamani** and **Anjali Sacheti** for graciously sponsoring this event.

We thank **Anjali Sacheti** for being our day facilitator.

AMBIKA MAMMEN

ANGELIKA SCHWERING

16^{Thu}
15

04.30^{PM}

Asharaa Inspired Living,
18, Bheemanna Garden Road, Chennai 18
Near Abhiramapuram Police Stn.
(Off CP Ramaswami Road, turn next to Kirtilal
Jewellers)

Parvathy Baul – Mystic Singer of Bengal

Baul are a group of mystic minstrels from Bengal. Bauls constitute both a synergetic religious sect and a musical tradition. Their membership consists mainly of Vaishnava Hindus and Sufi Muslims. They can be identified by their distinctive attire and musical instruments. Their influence on the culture of Bengal is considerable. In 2005, the Baul tradition was included in the list of "Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity" by UNESCO.

Parvathy Baul is a celebrated Baul singer sought after by Sufi festivals. She is a singer, painter and story-teller from West Bengal. Trained in music and dance from childhood, she studied visual arts at Shantiniketan. Her meeting with the living tradition of Baul prompted her to choose the path of self training in the Baul order. Since 1995, she has performed in Bengal, all over India and several international festivals.

We thank **Padmini Subramaniam, Anupama Pasari, Devyani Shah, Rukku Seshasayee** for graciously sponsoring this meeting.

We thank **Asha Hemdev** for being our Day Facilitator.

Please note this is an **evening meeting**.

GEETA VASUDEVAN

KIRAN RAO

We also express our deepest sympathies to **Sujaya Menon, Saroja Ramamrutham, Lakshmi Viswanathan** for the loss of their brother.

18^{Sat}**03.30^{PM}**

Rani Ananth, "Sai Villa", Plot No. 500,
4th South Main Road,
Sri Kapaleeswarar Nagar, Neelankarai
Chennai 600 041

I Vintage, My Vintages

A Vintage car is a car built between 1919 and 1939. Cars manufactured between 1940 and 1959 are termed classics. Those manufactured between 1960 and 1979 are modern classics. Owning a vintage car is like owning a piece of history. What was once driven by the elitist, rajas and nawabs are now collectibles of individuals with an all consuming passion.

C.S.Ananth, a car lover and collector extraordinaire, took to the hobby of restoring vintage cars, after retirement. He is the proud owner of many vintage cars the oldest being a 1928 car. His passion led to the next logical step: restoration and maintenance of these cars. Most of his cars are winners of the 'Concours d' elegance'.

He will speak on what it takes to restore a vintage car, the trials and the tribulations of a restorer. He will throw open his garage to showcase these beauties and also give a ride to IWA members in some of the cars.

So come feel like royalty and travel back in time to the vintage era!!

We extend an invitation to member - spouses to experience this unique programme.

We thank **Rani Ananth** for graciously hosting the meeting.

We thank **Shirley Verghese** for being our day facilitator.

Our sincere thanks to **Monick De Zwaan** for sponsoring the technical support for this programme.

Members please warn in with **Elizabeth Aston** by SMS **9094558566** or telephone **24328590** from **Monday 13th February – Wednesday 15th February.**

Please note this is an **evening program.**

SOMNA SACHDEV

ELIZABETH ASTON

20^{Mon}**10.15^{AM}**

Taj Coromandel
Nungambakkam High Road
Chennai 600 034

In Conversation with - Dr. Shashi Tharoor

Author, United Nations peace-keeper, refugee worker, human rights activist, a former Minister of State for External Affairs and now an elected member of the Indian Parliament from the Thiruvananthapuram constituency in Kerala, **Dr Shashi Tharoor** straddles several worlds of experience. It is indeed a privilege to have Dr. Shashi Tharoor address IWA in our silver jubilee year.

Dr Tharoor, acclaimed for his informative point of view will address IWA on "**India's Soft Power**".

India is fast becoming a superpower, says Shashi Tharoor -- not just through trade and politics, but through "soft" power, its ability to share its culture with the world through food, music, technology, Bollywood. He argues that in the long run it's not the size of the army that matters as much as a country's ability to influence the world's hearts and mind

Dr Tharoor is also the award-winning author of twelve books, as well as hundreds of articles, op-eds and book reviews in a wide range of publications, including the New York Times, the International Herald Tribune, Time, Newsweek and The Times of India.

For this special morning we invite the IWA – husbands and guests to join us to listen to and interact with Dr Tharoor.

We thank **Ambika Mammen** for being our day facilitator.

NINA KOTHARI

THE BOARD

CHERRY VENKATESAN

21 Tue

10.15 AM
Taj Coromandel
Nungambakkam High Road
Chennai 600 034

“Deccan Delight” at The Taj- Southern Spice

Inspired by the temples, and palaces of the Vijaynagar Kingdom that reigned over the Deccan Plateau from 1336 to 1646, and the traditional homes of South India, a majestic aura permeates the brand new interiors of the Taj Coromandel's Southern Spice!

The tastes and the aroma of spices from the four southern states- Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka will leave your taste buds in a delightful frenzy, offering a sensory exploration of the authentic South! Expert chefs here will demonstrate a sensory exploration of recipes sourced from the heartland!

Our grateful thanks to **Mr Prakash Natraj**, GM, Taj group of hotels for graciously hosting the meeting.

Meeting starts at 10.30 am sharp.

We thank **Anita Koshy** for being our day facilitator.

NABILA AVAIS

PHYLLIS STATHIS

Cooking Swapshop is happy to announce "MasterChef IWA" on the 8th of March. There will be 6 teams comprising 5 members each. Members interested in participating kindly warn-in with **Nabila Avais - 9962525558**. Limited seats available.

Our heartfelt condolences to **Vijaya Balu** on the demise of her husband

22 Wed

10.15 AM
Meyyammai Murugappan's
'The Laurels' 9 (old no 4) Chittaranjan Road
Off Cenotaph Road, Teynampet
Chennai 600 018

Ranvir Shah, on Books that have Influenced him

Ranvir Shah is a well known person on the Chennai cultural scene, prominently present at the city's theatric events. He also has a serious side, and is involved in lec-dems and scholarly discourses on architecture, dance, films and music. Then there is the hard-nosed businessman Ranvir, running his family business and making the necessary practical decisions. And then there is the philanthropic Ranvir, with the heart of candle wax. All these, and many other Ranvirs, make their special appearance for IWA, sharing the early influences that went into the creating of this many sided personality. Ranvir is generously letting us into an extremely personal space, and this is likely to be a fascinating session.

Our thanks to **Meyyammai Murugappan** for graciously sponsoring this event in her beautiful home.

We thank **Nidhi Thadani** for being our day facilitator.

TEHNAZ BAHADURJI

Our deepest condolences to **Sheetal Shah** on the demise of her mother

Our heartfelt condolences to **Kamala Prasad** on the demise of her son

27 Mon10.15 ^{AM}
Park Sheraton Hotel
Chamiers Road
Chennai 600 086

Jyotisha in the Modern World

Jyotisha or the ancient science of light, has been embedded in Indian history for millennia. In ancient texts such as the Ramayana and Mahabharata Jyotishis in the forms of rishis and gurus were consulted for everything from the naming of a child, to when was the most auspicious time for war.

Over time, our belief in Jyotisha has been diluted and our knowledge of Vedic Astrology is close to nil. What exactly is Rahu - Kaalam? Why are certain days more auspicious than others? How are astrologers able to determine which match is favorable?

Please join us as renowned Jyotishi, **Mrs Gayatri Devi Vasudev** will expel our doubts and explain the philosophy of Vedic Astrology, including how it is adaptable to the present and what its limitations are.

We thank **Jayashree Manradiar** and **Anjali Sacheti** for hosting the meeting and **Manisha Singhee** for being the Day facilitator.

JAYASHREE MANRADIAR

ANJALI SACHETI

Our deepest condolences to **Meenakshi Meyyappan** on the demise of her son

Our heartfelt condolences to **Alagu Muthu** on the demise of her brother

29 Wed10.15 ^{AM}
Madras Museum Theatre
Pantheon Road, Egmore
Chennai 600 008

IWA Endowment Lecture - by Prof. Romila Thapar

Prof. Romila Thapar is recognized and honoured throughout the world for her work and publications and we too are honoured and proud that she has consented to present the Endowment Lecture in our Silver Jubilee year. Romila Thapar is the foremost authority on Early Indian History.

Romila Thapar is Professor Emeritus in History at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. In 1983 she was elected General President of the Indian History Congress and in 1999 Corresponding Fellow of the British Academy.

The lecture, **Women in Early Indian Society**, will discuss some of the attitudes to women in the texts of early North India (c. 100 BC to AD 1300), pertaining to their status in society.

A very special thanks to **Geeta Vasudevan** for her tireless efforts in initiating and enabling this lecture. Sincere thanks to the Madras Museum authorities.

We thank **Pushpa Chari** and **Kausalya Santhanam** for being our Day facilitators.

We thank **Usha Jawahar, Nina Kothari, Lakshmi Menon, Meena Naru, E. Rajeshwari, Nita Reddy, Rajni Sabherwal** and **Daksha Sheth** for their valued sponsorship.

Guests are welcome. There will be no guest charges.

We request everyone to be seated by **10.45 am**.

SOMNA SACHDEV

ELIZABETH ASTON

Macigal Mystery Tour

I am a fairly regular traveller with IWA – but – Bombay? – why should I go to Bombay where I grew up, and I doubted I would see anything I had not already seen... Then came the USP of the trip – a visit to the Reliance Refinery at Jamnagar. Ah! Now that was a carrot I could not resist – so I signed up. And am I glad I did!!

Day 1: We flew to Mumbai. There a very comfortable coach, which was to be our transport for the next three days, took us to the Trident Towers. A quick wash and change and we made our way to the first of our family evenings. Nina met us at the Gateway of India and led us to a launch. The launch ride was exhilarating, speeding across a windy, choppy sea, with the lights and silhouettes of the Bombay skyline receding. The Taj Hotel, made even more famous for unfortunate reasons of terrorism, stood like a bastion – its regal architecture restored – a mute but strong testimony to the resilience of this vibrant city of 19 million.

Our destination was the Tian, a luxury yacht belonging to Tina & Anil Ambani. As we arrived at the yacht, we clambered up from a rollicking launch onto a Ferretti masterpiece. In Chinese philosophy, "Tian" literally means "sky, heaven, gods" - it is one of the oldest Chinese terms for the cosmos. How appropriate that a partially portmanteau word (Tina & Anil '! Tian) should mean all these things!

The staff was gracious beyond imagination, and we were led to comfortable seats on the deck, where we lounged and laughed and enjoyed the breeze and the gentle rocking of the boat, while being plied with drinks, the best cheeses and breads and some really lip-smacking finger food. We were supposed to have dinner elsewhere, but we were not deterred by this small detail – we fell on the short eats with gusto! There was some singing and much camaraderie, and soon Tina joined us – seamlessly. Graciously and unobtrusively she became a part of the group and participated in the conversation around her without shifting the mood. This made a huge impression on our members.

A guided tour around this 128 foot palace on the water took us through five exquisitely appointed bedrooms / suites. Works of art are aesthetically placed and the furniture and the woodwork of a quality that is rarely found even in homes! But for the telltale undulations in our

balance, caused by the waves, it was difficult to remember that we were not in some stately home.

Our next halt was for dinner at Indigo – a quaint little place tucked away in a bylane behind the Taj, full of atmosphere! Al fresco dining on a fairy-light lit terrace was arranged for the group of 24 - gave us the liberty to chat and laugh without fear of disturbing fellow diners.

P.S. As we got off the bus at our hotel, we received our gifts from Tina Ambani – with a personal note for each of us! Touch of class!

The next morning was a kind of going-home-to-mother. Thanks to Vidya's co-ordination, we attended an IndUS meeting at the palatial residence of Indira Kilachand. The Presidents Bijal and Rachel welcomed us warmly and made us feel a part of the group very quickly. The programme for the day was a performance by a group of young contemporary dancers – very enjoyable! (A point of take-home value – IndUS serves only coffee and cookies at their meetings! Will IWA follow suit?!!)

Fond farewells, a group photo and a gift – and we were off to Swathi Snacks – an almost iconic eatery which serves street food and snacks of an incredible variety. After gorging ourselves on all that was recommended to us, we piled into the bus. Some of the group checked out the shops around the hotel, while the others chose to stay in and rest.

Afternoon tea, hosted by our outstation member Gayatri Bewoor at the Bombay Gymkhana had many bonuses. Meeting Gayatri, her daughter and her daughter-in-law was a great pleasure. The venue was itself worth a visit (it has siesta rooms for men and women! Will our local clubs pick up this idea?). The spread was in keeping with the ambience – delicate cucumber sandwiches and flavoured teas amongst other things.

The AV presentation by the Dabbawallahs of Bombay, who have attracted much attention for their unbelievable systems and their organisation which is as efficient and prompt as it is complicatedly simple. No highbrow tech support or management jargon – just pure common sense backed by a community of committed hardworking men and women who believe a job is worth doing well.

Dinner that evening was a new experience for many of us – a food safari guided by Rashmi Uday Singh. Beginning with an unusual zucchini

spaghetti (lightly cooked zucchini strings in a roasted almond gravy) and gougeres (warm, melt-in-the-mouth choux pastry rolls with a cheesy flavour) at The Table, we moved to Levantine food at Amadeus where the stuffed pimentos were a 'hot' hit! A longish busride to the Palladium Mall for the main course at the Punjab Grill. Jiggs Kalra's food is authentic and hearty as it is meant to be. The rotis were yum. The twist in the tail was the paan drink which appealed even to those who never eat paan! The last stop was within the same complex – Smokehouse Deli. It was tough to choose which was better – the amazing array of unusual desserts or the startling, stark but incredibly imaginative decor in black and white.

Another late return to bed, with Cherry's threats that if we didn't come down all dressed and breakfasted in time, we would get left behind – a lesson learnt from the dabbawallahs – our new buzzword!

The next morning, armed with sunblock, caps and walking shoes-shod, the group set off with two guides from Mumbai Magic – a company that does walking tours of the heritage areas of Bombay. Beginning at the Gateway once more, we meandered through avenues of granite buildings – relics of the British Raj – The Prince of Wales Museum, The Police Headquarters (which has been morphed from a sailors' home), the earliest hotel, Hotel Watson (some weary looking W's in the brittle grills are the only evidence of a bygone glory), the University Campus, the Rajabai Clock Tower, The High Court – all of these funded by members of the community! On to Flora Fountain, Churchgate, St. Thomas Cathedral and then to Churchgate station (A Vada-paav break!) to take a train ride to see the Dhobi Ghat – where some 10,000 dhobis wash a mindboggling number of clothes every day.

Lunch was at Trishna for sea-food lovers and Paratha Mantra for the veggies. Both were way above average. En route, one passed a Sabayasachi store – so naturally, we had to give it a dekho. Then the energetic ones went shopping at Joy shoes, while the fainthearted crept into their rooms to rest.

The evening held a lot of anticipation – Nita Ambani was to host us for tea at Antilia! (Incidentally, I believe, this is a name used by the media – the property has not yet been named by the family.) A hushed silence of awe and wonder accompanied us from the entrance to the elevators and a smooth rise to the 24th floor, which is actually the equivalent of the

60th floor of a conventional building. Our hostess, beautiful, lively, young and gracious, regaled us with stories of the Mumbai Indians and her involvement with the Team, her experience at the auctions, and a number of other interesting things. Tea was a throwback to the days of marquees and parasols – we had warm scones with clotted cream, strawberries covered in chocolate, deep red juicy cherries and a wide spread of desi stuff too – ponkh pockets, sev puri, etc. The cold coffee was a great favourite.

The warm orange furnishings in the seating area reflect the colours of the setting sun. The breeze plays tiddlywinks with the cane furniture outside and we watch from our warm sanctuary inside. Of course, we had to experience the force of nature, so we did step out for a bit onto the 'balcony' (about 3000 sq. ft. of it!) An unforgettable experience.

Down to the in-house temple – its every corner evoking piety. After making our obeisance, we leave (armed with a gift, as usual!). Back to the hotel, only to refresh and leave for dinner at Sea Wind – the residence of the senior Mrs. Ambani.

Here, we begin with an aarthi at the temple, before proceeding to a 5th level to an open lawn, laid out with tables for our dinner. Kokilaben greets each of us individually, with warmth. We are joined by Tina, Mrs. Tarla Dalal and some other close family friends. Follows a chat session where our hostess (whom we were all by now calling 'Mummyji') has us in splits with her stories about members of her family. The meal was a gourmet spread – there was enough variety to make up at least three meals if not more! Sated with good food and excellent hospitality, we collect gifts, bid goodnight after persuading Mummyji to join us at Jamnagar the next day.

Day 4 – we take a flight to Jamnagar, an airport that envelops us in waves of nostalgia – this was how Bombay airport looked in the '50's. We are greeted by a quartet of smiling ladies who thrust bunches of fresh flowers into our hands with a 'Welcome to Jamnagar'. Nina's Mami and her family make us feel so good! And they did this all the time over the next two days!

Our first halt is the Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Vidyalaya – a wonderful school within Reliance Greens, the township built for the Reliance Refinery employees. The enthusiasm and commitment to education of

the Principal and the teachers are evident in everything they say and do as they guide us through an immaculately laid out premises, complete with a remedial centre for students with learning problems, sports facilities, a school band, etc. Because of the community feeling within the township, parents volunteer at the school in various capacities. The pride they all feel rubs off on us and we are drawn into their world.

We check in to the Guest House (a woefully inadequate name for the 7-star facility!), find our baggage has already reached our rooms! Freshen up and meet for lunch – more great food and unobtrusive service.

We head towards the highlight of the trip – the visit to the Reliance Refinery. Beginning from the enormous gate, you know everything about what you are going to see is special. At the Visitors' Centre we are given an overview of the gigantic plant and its environs on a scale model, then we proceed to view an AV presentation about the genesis of the idea and development of the area. An awesome realisation of one man's dream – the foresight and vision of Dhirubhai Hirachand Ambani is evident in everything we see – and those involved are so inspired that they carry forward this dream with a commitment and love that is almost tangible.

Barebones details – there are two refineries – the first built in 1998 and the second in an SEZ zone in 2008. The total capacity of the two is several times the capacity of any other refinery in the world – the second largest one is a twentieth of the size of the Reliance Refinery! A guided tour reveals the impeccable housekeeping (no piles of industrial garbage anywhere), high levels of automation and remote control (no personnel fiddling with valves or switches anywhere) and a NASA style control room that monitors and titrates the entire procedure. We see samples of the downstream products which are made commercially viable, so that there is near zero wastage of crude. Today, on an average, two out of every 100 cars on the road are using Reliance fuel!

Driving to the ends of the two jetties and seeing tankers loading and off-loading was interesting too.

We make our way to the temple where the school children sing bhajans and we do an aarthi with Mummyji. This is followed by a programme of dances and some dandiya and garba for the members. Live wood fires warm us as we watch and dine on some more gourmet food.

The next day begins with a visit to Nageshwar and Dwarka, where Rajbhog is offered to the Lord by Mummyji. At both temples we are treated to a very special darshan. A walk to the ghats and the baithak, and to lunch at the guest house.

Heading back to Reliance Greens, we are taken on a tour of the Green Belt attached to the Refineries. Any industrial outfit of this kind is required mandatorily to provide afforestation of some prescribed magnitude – but the green cover here extends F-A-R beyond these regulations.

2500 acres of wasteland has been converted into a haven of prosperity. Our tour around the orchards is educative – several varieties of mangoes grow here in plenty and one – the Reliance Jumbo Kesar has also been developed here and will soon be available in the markets. And scientists have figured out a way to grow 1332 mango trees per acre where the conventional orchard would grow 40!! I leave you to do the math about how much the yield will be! Other fruits grow here in profusion too – chickoos, starfruit, pomegranate, ber, grapes – you name it – it is there.

A surprise awaits us – each of us gets to plant a Jumbo Kesar sapling, and our names appear to identify which sapling belongs to whom! We might all go back to eat the fruit off our trees next year! The tour ends with (what else) a feast of fruit and some authentic bajra roti and baingan barta made on a choola! Hmmm....

We move on to a tour of the Hospital in the township – a state-of-the-art facility where employees and their families get the best of care and comfort. So Cherry got her tooth fixed!

The next halt at the Reliance Mart was a popular one for all the ladies – the bandhini counter was overrun and turned over as the vibrant saris and dupattas got bought out!

Our last dinner at the guest house is followed by professional singers allowing us to sing along with their karaoke machine. Old Hindi songs, Gujarathi songs and much fun as Zainab shook a leg and mimed lyrics with gusto! Mummyji sings along with us and participates with suggestions and requests – a lot to be learnt from this woman of substance.

Finally to bed – with the prospect of an early start the next day to leave for Chennai. Of course, Indian Airlines obliged by delaying the flight by over two hours – so our ladies went off to have foot massages or to buy more saris!!!

Reached Chennai in the evening – carrying memories of a level of hospitality that surpasses anything we could even dream of. Every need and whim anticipated and gratified – what a fantastic look into a world where everything is possible and the best things in life are offered to guests with a legendary grace. Thank you Nina. And Cherry and Somna and Liz for handling all the details. And thank you Ambanis all for sharing your world with us.

IWA never repeats trips. But if they ever do this one again, here are some tips:

1. Carry at least one extra outfit per day – there is always some surprise for which you will need it!
2. Carry a large empty suitcase to bring home all your gifts
3. Don't bother carrying a book or any reading material – your days are filled with activity, you will not find the time to read.
4. Don't bother carrying any snacks – the food is plentiful, frequent and varied and available everywhere (including in your room!)
5. Don't bother carrying toiletries – everything is thoughtfully laid out for you
6. Work out and lose substantial amounts of weight before you begin the trip – you are bound to put it all back on!

SUSHI NATRAJ

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Founder Members

Nirmal Seshadri	Lakshmi Padmanabhan	Nancy Dean
Saroja Ramamrutham	Anneliese Hazari	Sunita Shahaney
Reva Singh		

Former Presidents

1986 - 1988	Nirmal Seshadri	Nancy Dean
1988 - 1990	Vanitha Mudaliar	Barbara Clarkson
1990 - 1991	Sunita Shahaney	Janet Picken
1991 - 1992	Nirmal Mirza	Stina Vasu
1992 - 1993	Malini Vijayaraghavan	Maureen Hudson Murari
1993 - 1994	Nanditha Krishna	Aruna Vijaykumar
1994 - 1995	Lily Madhok	Margaret Sekharan
1995 - 1996	Zubeida Asgarali	Khinthida Lwin
1996 - 1997	Alagu Muthu	Poonam Lalchand
1997 - 1998	Rupa Kadhiresan	Anneliese Hazari
1998 - 1999	Shyla K. Rau	Megan Utley
1999 - 2000	Gayatri Bewoor	Chandrika Chidambaram
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