

THE IWA STORY

Celebrating 25 Years



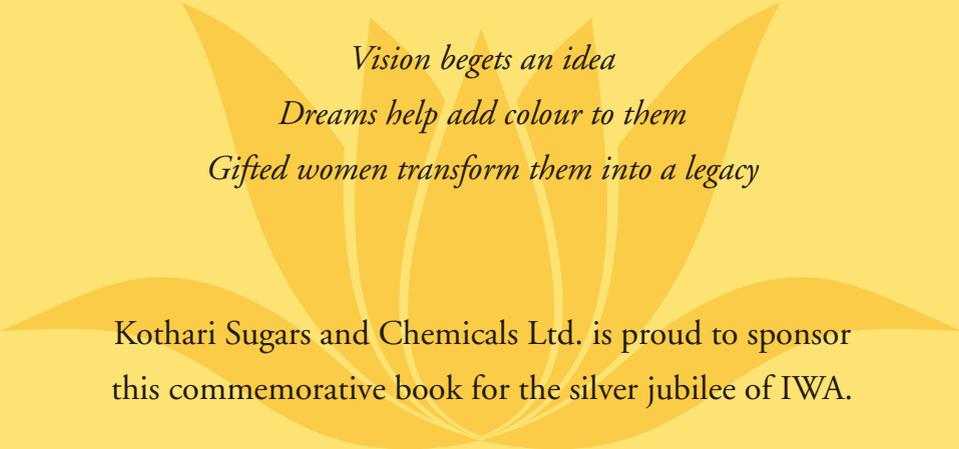




THE IWA STORY

Celebrating 25 Years





*Vision begets an idea
Dreams help add colour to them
Gifted women transform them into a legacy*

Kothari Sugars and Chemicals Ltd. is proud to sponsor
this commemorative book for the silver jubilee of IWA.

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IWA Registered Office: 857, Poonamallee High Road, Kilpauk, Chennai 600 010.

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IWA is a Chennai based cultural organisation of women from India and abroad, whose stated goals are to increase the width and depth of their knowledge in disparate fields, while simultaneously promoting understanding and harmony between different cultures across the world in a spirit of friendship and camaraderie. To broaden their outlook and expand their awareness, IWA holds lectures and demonstrations every month in several activities such as Arts & Handicrafts, Book Discussion, Cooking Swapshop, Current Events, Health & Ecology, History, Culture & Tours, Music & Performing Arts and Philosophy & Religion.





*This book is dedicated
to the indomitable spirit of the IWA woman.*



Foreword

To commemorate our silver jubilee year, we are proud to present ‘The IWA Story’, a book by the IWA members about IWA, paying homage to the 25 glorious years of our unique, vibrant and ever evolving organisation.

This book is a celebration of beauty, cherished memories, events that live forever in our hearts, and above all, the strong bonds of friendships we enjoy at IWA. The very premise of IWA serves as the foundation upon which we have compiled ‘The IWA Story’: our common threads of diversity and friendship, through which we explore and share ideas with each other, are reflected continually throughout the book.

Scores of photographs and articles together chronicle IWA’s 25 year legacy in ‘The IWA Story’; and through its pages we wish to pay tribute to all those who have made this possible: our Founders, Past Presidents and a solid base of active membership that has served IWA exceedingly well over the years. In particular, we would like to recognise and thank our Founders and Past Presidents for their great enthusiasm and prompt responses; their contributions provide a unique perspective to this book.

We have been inspired to compile ‘The IWA Story’, to chronicle the inception and subsequent growth of IWA over the years. This book provides a glimpse of the past and present through the recollection of warm memories and photographs that stand testament to them. It is a window to the world of IWA! With 25 glorious years as a legacy, we look back with gratitude to our Founders and salute their spirit of enterprise and pay tribute to our Past Presidents who have nurtured IWA to make it the vibrant organisation it is today. Thankfully, for IWA, our warm and cherished times together have been memorialised many a time, over the years, through excellent and thoughtful photographs. Sadly however, a modern day requirement for high resolution photos has curtailed the inclusion of numerous and otherwise terrific submissions in the book.

On a personal note, our individual experiences are testimony to the “family” feeling that IWA bestows on its members. Both of us, as ‘outsiders’ who arrived to make our homes in Madras, today feel comfortably ensconced and wonderfully integrated into the city because of our association with IWA; friends we made, courtesy IWA, engulfed us with love and care and made us feel at home almost immediately. The sheer positive energy that greets you at an IWA meeting leaves you with a smile long after its conclusion. Over 25 years, from Madras to Chennai, again courtesy IWA, we have also gained exposure to, and enjoy and respect the diversity of cultural traditions in the city we now call home.

25

YEARS OF

IWA

CHENNAI

1986-2011



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Our grateful thanks to our dream team: Priya Asokan, Asha Rammohan, Nita Reddy and Ramani Reddy, for all their hours of hard work, research, attention to detail and for their organisational efficiency but more for believing in our dream and making it a reality. They embraced “project book” with unparalleled energy, completing it within tight deadlines. These amazing ladies came forward with enthusiasm and zeal, and lovingly gave of themselves. Their involvement, their humorous insights and expert inputs made this monumental endeavour a joy. And, all this, when we have known each other only as IWA friends; as you can see, we have here yet another example of how special friendships can be forged to accomplish something consequential at IWA.

The infectious and unbounded enthusiasm of the members who sent in their messages for the book touched our hearts and spurred us on to work even harder. Our sincere thanks must go to our Founders and Past Presidents, who have been generous with their time and advice; they readily contributed to this endeavour in a timely manner with high quality material comprising shared memories, lovingly put together. Our thanks must also go to Tehnaz Bahadurji for helping pen beautiful words with love and care; to Seema Bhargava, Rupa Kadhiresan and Sushi Natraj for not just being reservoirs of knowledge, but for sharing their wealth through photos, memories and valuable advice enthusiastically and for assisting us with editing ‘The IWA Story’.

We feel proud and privileged to have been a part of this endeavour.

To the next 25 years!

To IWA with love,

Nina Kothari and Cherry Venkatesan



A Dream Comes True

Extract from Founder President Nirmal Seshadri's message for the 10th year celebrations

Whenever I think about the last ten years - my memories come alive to me. Nostalgic though it may be, it seems to me that this last decade is a dream come true.

I returned to Madras in early 1985 after 29 happy years in Bombay, a city I love, a city where I made some wonderful friends and a city where my close association with IndUS International gave me some endearing and perhaps enduring memories.

When I landed in Madras, I was full of hope and inspired by the excellent working of IndUS, I thought it would be easy to begin a similar organisation in Madras. After all, Madras is my hometown. I grew up here, I went to school and college here. My husband and I had kept in touch with all our friends, every time we came here on leave.



Reality struck me only when I actually got down to personally go and meet all of them, and explain my desire to start this organisation. They were all very nice, charming, affectionate and warm but they were not very encouraging. In fact, all I got were evasive smiles and even more evasive remarks about the whole idea. The one person who was very supportive then and who is still very supportive is Kanamma Ranga Rao.

I then commenced my intensive search for support in the U.S. Consulate. When the U.S. Consul General John Stempel and his wife Nancy came to Madras, I saw them at a tennis match and realised that they were both avid tennis fans. This gave me a brilliant idea. My husband being a veteran Madras tennis player, we had very many good tennis friends. One such person was P.L. Reddi who knew the Stempels slightly. I requested or rather bullied P.L. to arrange a meeting with Nancy. P.L. must have got fed up with my constant badgering and he spoke to Nancy.

I still remember vividly when Nancy called me on 27th March 1986. I explained to her my reason for wanting to meet her. For the first time I got a very positive reaction. This friendly American voice was very enthusiastic about my idea and she invited me to tea at 'River House', that very day. She introduced me to Anneliese Hazari who was equally excited about this new

idea. I introduced them to my old friend Lakshmi Padmanabhan who had also belonged to IndUS in Bombay and had now settled back in Madras.

Nancy and Anneliese invited me to an Overseas Women's Club meeting to explain to the OWC members about our idea to form a new organisation which would be cross-cultural.

Contrary to our expectations, there was no encouraging reaction here either, despite the fact that I had repeatedly emphasised that this would be no threat to the OWC. The only person who evinced interest in this plan of ours, was the then OWC President, Aruna Vijaykumar (who incidentally is one of IWA's stalwarts now). I was a little disheartened, but Nancy with a rare courage of her convictions hastened to reassure me. She said, "Don't you worry Nirmal; even if there are only three or four of us, we shall go ahead with our plans."

Egged on by Nancy's infectious enthusiasm, I decided to think positively about our idea.

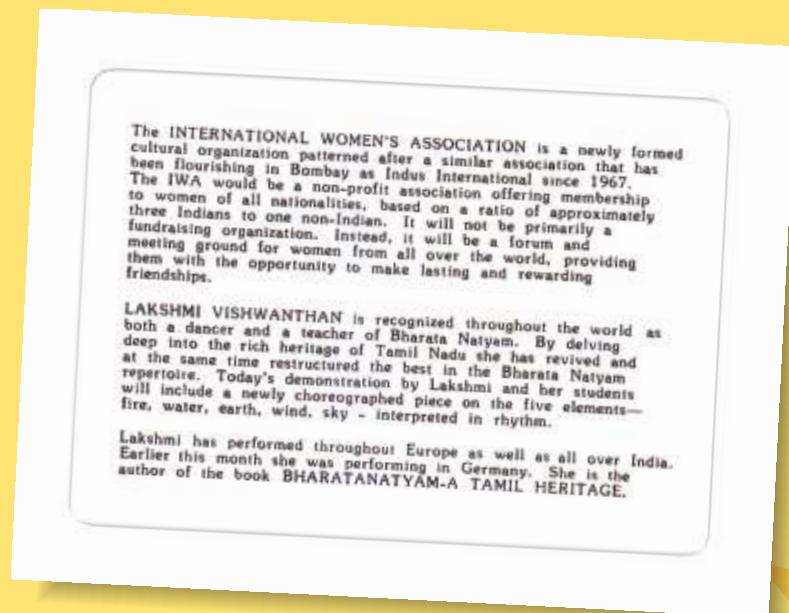
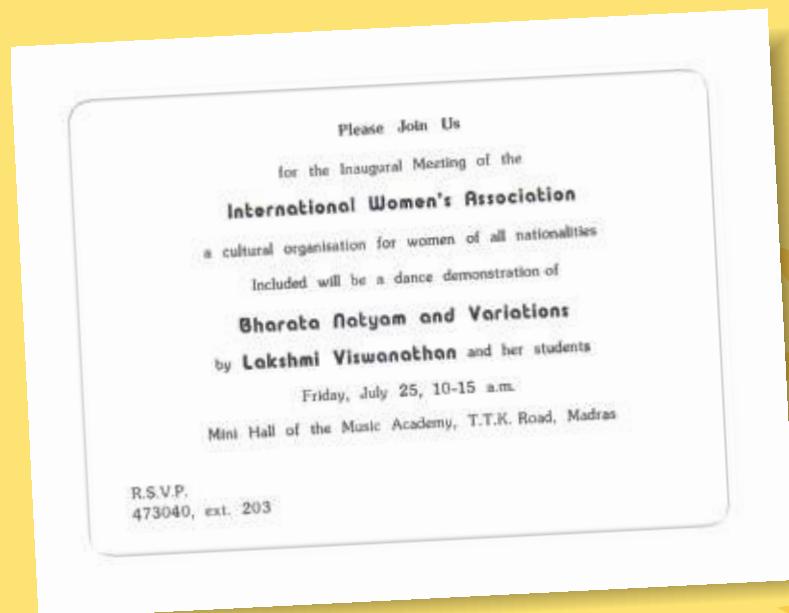
I had contacted and had the promised support of a Bombay friend - Reva Singh whose husband was with Grindlays in Madras. I also met Sunita Shahaney another Bombay friend now residing in Madras. Sunita was absolutely supportive of my idea and she assured me that she would help us in every way. My old Mylapore friend Saroj Ramamrutham (with IndUS and who still lived in Bombay) was visiting Madras and when I told her about my plans she was delighted with the idea and she also promised all help. Lakshmi and Anneliese were of course with us all the way. Nancy and I were encouraged by the fact that atleast we were seven of us. We had already thought of a name - the International Women's Association.

Nancy was leaving for USA on leave so we had to decide things soon. We had to discuss the details of the inaugural function. Nancy and I met T.T. Vasu who very readily arranged for us to have the mini hall of the Music Academy on Friday the 25th July at 10.30 a.m.

The 25th of July dawned with all of us in a dizzy spell. Saroj air-dashed to Madras to be with us. She even made a special Ikebana arrangement to symbolise friendship and the lamps were lit by four young girls. The two Indian girls were Suhasini (artiste par excellence in the movies) and Gowri Krishnan (daughter of tennis ace, R. Krishan). The two non-Indian girls were Nancy's daughter Amy Stempel and Catherine Sprague (daughter of the British High Commissioner David Sprague.) Nancy and I spoke about our idea and I made a fervent plea to enlist their support. Lakshmi Viswanathan danced to a very appreciative audience.

Seven of us were the Founders but on the inaugural day, about 32 people signed up. And so began the International Women's Association and the rest is now history.

We were thrilled with the realisation of our dreams. The U.S. Consulate was consistently encouraging in their help. IWA is now a vibrant organisation with a membership of 260. We have come very far from small beginnings. Little did I dream that my visit to 'River House' ten years ago would result in such a superbly successful organisation. These last ten years, we have had dedicated Presidents who have built up IWA to be a force to reckon with in the city of Madras.



Nancy and I would like to think that the people who came for the inaugural function on the 25th of July could have perhaps said, "We came, we saw, but IWA conquered us."

Nirmal Seshadri
(Founder President)

“The world needs dreamers and the world needs doers. But above all, the world needs dreamers who do.” - Sarah Ban Breathnach

Messages from the Founders



Forever Connected Forever Learning Forever Inspired





Nancy (Stempel) Dean
Founder Member
USA



I had never met her, so I had no idea what Nirmal Seshadri had in mind when she asked to meet with me at 'River House' in the spring of 1968. But, as she presented her plans to establish the organisation that would become the International Women's Association, I agreed with her concept immediately.

Initially however, our ideas about my involvement differed. I intended to serve as an Honorary Chairman. But Nirmal—a very persuasive woman—had another point of view. I would be just as involved in IWA as she. As for the two remaining years I lived in Madras, that's exactly what occurred.

It wasn't long before we had become the very best of friends. I learnt so much from her; I know she would say the same about me. Often, Nirmal would joke that the reason we were so compatible was because we shared the same initials - Nirmal Seshadri/Nancy Stempel.

It was my daughter Amy, then a university student, who lit the lamp to start the first-ever meeting of the International Women's Association on July 25, 1986. Never in my wildest dreams would I have thought that 25 years later that same daughter would be living in India, in Bangalore, with her Indian-born husband. Not even Nirmal's favourite astrologer - the one whose job it was to choose the auspicious moment to begin IWA - could have predicted that!

I've continued to keep up with IWA from afar, reading the newsletter every month. It has been a joy to watch throughout the years, the ever-expanding influence of the organisation. Ironically, it was while I was living in Madras that I was invited to attend the 25th anniversary celebration in Bombay of the founding of IndUS, the organisation model for IWA. How fitting that I hope to attend the 25th anniversary celebration of its very successful clone.



Anneliese Hazari
Founder Member
Germany



Nirmal and Lakshmi approached the Overseas Women’s Club with the idea of setting up a cultural organisation. OWC declined as its function was oriented mainly towards charity.

Nancy and I thought it would be a good idea to start IWA.

A few days later Nancy rang me up and in her crisp way of talking said, “Anneliese, we are starting a new club and we need a Treasurer and that has to be you!”



I told her that I would be unable to wear two hats as I was already the Treasurer for the OWC for 10 years. Her answer was, “Yes you can.” No, did not exist in her vocabulary. She said that it was to be for one year only. Come next year, Nancy and Nirmal decided to carry on as Presidents and I had no

choice but to carry on, for the good of IWA.

At the next election Vanitha Mudaliar offered to be President under condition that I continue as the Treasurer. She carried on for a second term and so did I.

After four years of being Treasurer for both OWC and IWA, I gracefully resigned.

Nirmal could weave words into a web and she caught you with a smile, and all one could say was ‘yes’.



Saroja Ramamrutham

Founder Member

India



I greet you with a lot of pleasure on the happy occasion of celebrating 25 years of IWA. I remember the simple way in which a few of us friends decided to start a ladies' organisation in Madras. I was not yet in Madras, but came down from Bombay to take part in the inaugural function as one of the Founding Members. I remember bringing my own vase from Bombay to do a simple Ikebana arrangement, depicting friendship through flowers. I came to Madras finally, in 1993. IWA was already seven years young. I got fully involved in the various activities. In those days, IWA meetings were hosted in members' homes.

Since then, as you all know, IWA has graduated into a five-star culture. Each of you has contributed to the fantastic progress and growth of IWA. It is with a lot of nostalgic memories of my dear friend, Nirmal Seshadri, who would have been overjoyed to have been part of this celebration that I write to you all. I congratulate the Presidents of this special year – Nina Kothari and Cherry Venkatesan and their capable Committee, who would have planned fabulous events in the coming months. Last, but not least, I want to specially mention all the Past Presidents for their invaluable contribution to IWA's welfare and for maintaining the high standards, we had set for ourselves.



With personal greetings to each and every member, who have become my very good friends. With warm regards and good wishes to IWA.



Lakshmi Padmanabhan

Founder Member
India



On July 25th 1986, the International Women's Association, modelled on the lines of IndUS International, Bombay, was founded by five ladies who had moved to Madras from Bombay, along with Nancy (then) Stempel, the American Consul General's wife and Anneliese (then) Marwah from Madras.

This was a non-profit club with the main objective being fostering friendship among ladies from different countries and nationalities. The accent was on making new friends, learning about their culture and customs, sharing their skills through various activities like art and craft, book discussion, cooking, current affairs, health and ecology, history, culture and tours, music and performing arts, philosophy and religion. There was something to interest



every lady. Two Activity Chairpersons, one Indian and the other non-Indian, arranged a meeting every month for each activity. The Executive Committee also had two Presidents, two Vice-Presidents, two Treasurers and two Secretaries, likewise.

After registration in 2002, the Association came to be called IWA.

From a very shaky start it has now scaled great heights, mainly due to the Presidents who succeeded us, who, with their cooperation, dedication and involvement, have made IWA a vibrant organisation like no other. We thank them and also the many members who supported us in many ways by hosting meetings or arranging speakers. Their contribution was invaluable.

On our 25th year, on behalf of the Founders, I would like to express our deep felt gratitude and appreciation to Vanitha Mudaliar who offered her residence as the official address of IWA, and also for the impeccable arrangements she makes for us to hold our annual elections at her home.

On this occasion I wish IWA many more fruitful years of Interesting Worthwhile Activities and hope the ladies will make new friends every year, which is what our Association stands for. My best wishes and congratulations to all.



Sunita Shahaney
Founder Member
India



It seemed a brilliant idea to start a club in Chennai for women which was to be based on the lines of IndUS International in Bombay. Nirmal Seshadri talked to me about her idea and I was sold on it immediately – and handed her what apparently was the first Rs. 100/- for the “Kitty” – The rest is history.

We’re 25 years today and it makes me proud to know that I’ve played a part in its inception and growth.

IWA proved to be just what this city needed - a platform for friendship, exchange of ideas and cultures among ladies from different countries and different regions of India.

Congratulations IWA!





Reva K. Singh
Founder Member
India



When I heard the International Women's Association in Chennai was celebrating its 25th anniversary I could hardly believe it. It seemed like just the other day that a group of ladies was sitting in the drawing room of my house on College Road, discussing the forming of an international women's club.

Nirmal Seshadri who was leading the conversation had recently returned to Madras after her husband retired from a multinational company in Bombay, while I was newly arrived along with my husband who was on a posting with Grindlays Bank. Nirmal and I had both been members of a similar club in Bombay called IndUS International.

The club in Chennai was to be international from the start and the name we chose was the International Women's Association or IWA. I remember well, admiring the first proofs of the logo which I'm happy to see has remained unchanged. The Committee consisted of a President, Secretary and a Treasurer, with an Indian and foreign lady jointly holding office. I was Joint Secretary with Audrey and the Committee's responsibilities were divided between this small group.

The Committee and membership may have been small, but what we lacked in numbers was more than made up for in enthusiasm and excitement. Our goals were high and our vision, far-reaching. As it turned out, I was just a bird of passage, however. My time with the organisation was cut short when, as a dutiful trailing spouse, I had to pack my bags and leave with my husband for another posting.

IWA however, is unique and bigger than the sum of its parts. I am delighted that the small sapling that we planted has flourished, spreading its roots deep in the special soil of Chennai and become the dynamic organisation it is today.

Many congratulations to IWA for having come so far and my very best wishes for the future.



*“Good leaders make people feel that they’re at the very heart of things, not at the periphery.
Everyone feels that he or she makes a difference to the success of the organisation...”*

Warren G. Bennis

Messages from the Past Presidents



Forever Connected Forever Learning Forever Inspired



INDIA
100 YEARS AGO





Nirmal Seshadri
India

Nancy Dean
USA

1986-1988

Believe me, our early entrance into Madras was not a cakewalk. Though Nirmal, Sunita and I had moved to Madras in 1984, we could make no headway with the idea of starting a club like IndUS International, Bombay, as the ladies here were quite sceptical about its success.

It was only when Nancy (then Stempel) the American Consul's wife burst upon the scene like a meteor that things started hotting up. When Nirmal and I went and saw her at 'River House' and showed her all the IndUS papers, she was immediately smitten by the idea. She took us to an Overseas Women's Club meeting and pleaded our cause. Aruna Vijaykumar and Anneliese then willingly joined us and helped us a lot.

Our first constitution was a copy of the IndUS one, but over the years we amended it several times to suit local conditions.

Our initial subscription was Rs.100 per year and the first Rs.100 came from Sunita Shahaney.

We started with eight activities with one Indian and one non-Indian chairing each of them. Four persons did two activities as there were not enough members to take on separate portfolios.

Our venues were mostly houses: mainly 'River House', the British Council, U.S.I.S., Sunita's residence and C.P. Art Centre, courtesy Nanditha Krishna. There were some other ladies who hosted meetings, but not as many as those mentioned above.

Diwali meetings were at Sunita's or Meera Jayakar's sprawling compound - alfresco - oil lamps were lit, *rangoli* patterns drawn on the floor. Members' children joined us to perform





song and dance recitals. It ended with fireworks, in true Diwali spirit. The catering was by Shanti Vihar.



Christmases were at Sunita's, the British Council or the home of Audrey Sprague, the then British Deputy High Commissioner's wife, who was a very eager member.

Our Annual General Body meetings were held at the U.S.I.S.



Nirmal and Nancy were Presidents for the first two years. Later Vanitha Mudaliar and Barbara Clarkson took over for the next two years.

Anneliese and I were Treasurers for four years in a row, as at that time, no one was willing to take up this job.



In 1986 there were no computers in Madras. Nancy had a word processor on which she did all our newsletters and phone directories. The early phone books had details of members' children and their ages, so we could call them up to take part in our shows. Nancy brought all the loose sheets of our first phone-book to Reva's house, where all of us divided the alphabets amongst us and assembled it. What fun we had! Reva left in 1988 as her husband was transferred.



Our first grand annual event was the 'Lore and Lure of the Gems of Ancient India' modelled by our very own members and their children, many of whom are now married and away from Madras.



Nancy was a generous and hospitable hostess. She threw a grand party for our members and their husbands, which culminated in fireworks at 'River House' as it was also American Independence Day (July 4th). She left in 1988.



We invited the husbands during the early years and many gladly attended our meetings.

For cooking swapshop, we had small coupons printed to be sold at Rs.5 each to members who attended, as the demonstrations were mostly by our own members and we paid them for the ingredients used, through the sale of these coupons.

Our newsletters were not in book form. Our programmes were typed on A-4 paper – the sheets were folded and the addresses pasted on them. Nirmal, Anneliese and I had a great time mailing them every month at Nirmal Mirza's shop, 'Wooltop Weaves' with the help of her staff.

The progress and growth of IWA during these 25 years has exceeded our expectations. Today, people are queuing up to join IWA – a far cry from the days when I used to beg members to make their 10 attendances, a rule we had, even then! They would pay their fees but not come.

I could go on with more details but for space constraints. I am happy at what we have achieved through the kind contribution of so many in several ways!

Happy silver jubilee celebrations!

Lakshmi Padmanabhan





Vanitha Mudaliar
India

Barbara Clarkson
UK

1988-1990

Thank you so much for your kind invitation to join you for your week of celebration in July. Unfortunately, work commitments make it impossible for me to join you but I would like to warmly congratulate and applaud all members (present and past) for this remarkable achievement.

To maintain the founding principles of IWA (friendship and respect) in a fast changing and pressurised world, is truly amazing, but I am sure those principles remain as true today as they did in 1987 when I first joined IWA. I was honoured to have known both Nirmal Seshadri and Nancy Stempel - the Founders of your great organisation.

I recall the range and depth of your activities; the shared skills and knowledge of the members but most of all, I recall the warmth and friendship.

There was one event I remember with particular clarity and that was a play reading (*The Importance of being Earnest*) in the grounds of Cottingley. It was a scorching hot day (but then most days were) and I recall thinking that Oscar Wilde would have been enchanted to witness the scene. I also recall lessons in Ikebana and cooking demonstrations, amongst so much more!

With best wishes and much affection to Vanitha and our dear friends in Chennai - have a wonderful celebration!

With my very best wishes.

Barbara Clarkson



In April 1988 Barbara and I took over as Presidents of IWA and our endeavour was to build upon the solid foundation laid down so well by Nancy and Nirmal. Our Activity Chairpersons were bursting with original ideas to keep our minds active and our fingers nimble and in all things we wanted to continue to provide a cross cultural exchange at which IWA excels even today.

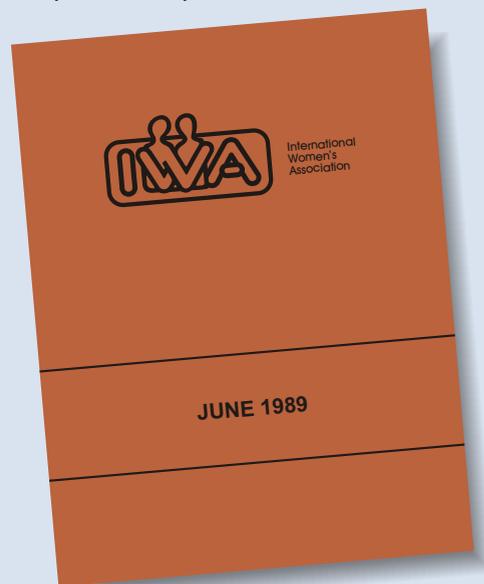
IWA started with 50 members, an annual fee of Rs.100 per member. As membership grew the tempo increased and the attendance also improved.

The Diwali Mela in 1988 was a great success and undoubtedly the highlight of the evening was the colourful *Raas-Garba* dance held in Meera Jayakar's garden; free beer and fireworks followed.

As Presidents, Barbara and I began our term of office very hesitantly not sure of what to expect or indeed what was expected from us, but with the support of our Founder Presidents and Founder Committee Members and with a great deal of team work from the Committee during those two years we survived and established IWA firmly in Madras. Our Grand Finale of the year was the "Supper Theatre" which was a splendid evening. I am sure IWA will grow from strength to strength with the activities and constructive co-operation of all its members.

Thank you all for making IWA a vibrant and active organisation.

Vanitha Mudaliar





Sunita Shahaney

India

Janet Picken

UK

1990-1991

The year 1990 -91 was when I was President along with an English lady Janet Picken – whom I had never met or known of. By this time, we had crossed the 200 member mark and IWA was poised and ready for changes.

This was the year the Committee was split into the ‘Board’ and ‘Activity Chairperson Committee’ (as it had grown too large as a single Committee).

This was the year the Constitution was amended for the first time by only three ladies, Nirmal Seshadri, Anneliese Hazari and myself. Sitting in till late at night sipping cognac!! This was ratified at an EGM and that was it!!

This was the year the first edition of the cookbook was made and released.

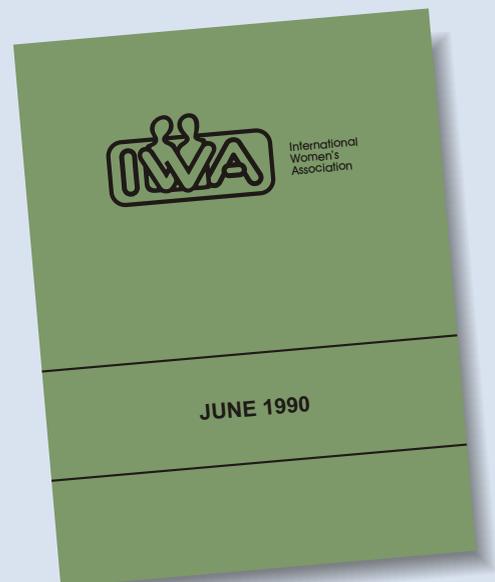
This was the year we changed the format of the newsletter and the cover colour was green!!! We have come full circle now.

All in all – a busy year and one full of changes, growth and bonhomie as I am sure all IWA years have been since.

Congratulations IWA – on 25 years of splendid performance!

Looking forward to future years.

Sunita Shahaney





Congratulations on 25 years of IWA! When I arrived in Madras in July 1988 one of the first things I did was join IWA; little did I realise what a major part of my life there it would become. My time in India was greatly enhanced by IWA. I made lots of good friends, from many countries, and found the wide variety of talks and activities interesting, educational and fun. It was a stimulating and excellent introduction to the culture and traditions of India.

I remember exciting trips, especially a fantastic day in Kanchipuram and an exceptional day in Chettinad. During my term as President we were fortunate to have world-renowned guests including Pandit Ravi Shankar and L. Subramaniam. One of the major accomplishments of the year was the production of an international cookbook to which many of our members contributed delicious recipes. The great strengths of IWA are the wonderful talents of the members, and the success of our year, as others, was due to their skills, experience and wealth of knowledge which was freely shared.

Wishing IWA another 25 years of friendship.

Janet Picken





Nirmal Mizra
India

Stina Vasu
Sweden

1991-1992

Fun, friends, laughter, mental stimulation and all that is fine and good for the soul! That is IWA to me.

It has provided me great personal growth in my 20 years plus in IWA (public speaking for one!). I could hear my heartbeats earlier!



My association with Nirmal Seshadri meant a lot to me, same name and same birthday!
We were soulmates!

Stina was a perfect Co-President. Who could have wished for a calmer person than Stina!

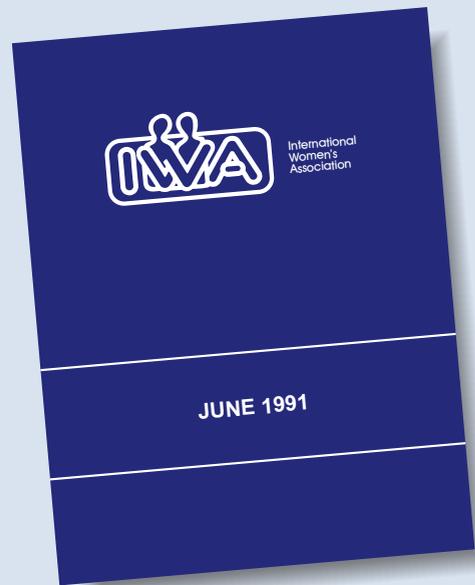
On this special year, I see a great, young team whose enthusiasm speaks of the exciting months ahead.

May IWA continue to grow from strength to strength!

Nirmal Mirza

I echo Nirmal's sentiments; we had a great collaboration and a fun-filled year. In my long association with IWA I fondly recollect the special Health Week we organised at Fisherman's Cove in 1988. This was long before health issues became "fashionable". We had walks, games on the beach, jogging, aerobics, health food and talks on health-related topics. Our ladies were fighting fit and in a great frame of mind at the end of the week and above all we had a lot of fun. My congratulations and best wishes to IWA for its silver jubilee anniversary!

Stina Vasu





Malini Vijayaraghavan

India

Maureen Hudson Murari

Australia

1992-1993

IWA was into its 6th year when Malini and I took flight as Presidents, having both served our apprenticeship as Committee Chairpersons and Vice-Presidents under the tutelage of Nirmal Seshadri in the preceding five years. This period gave us the appreciation of IWA's growth, as well as the substance of the fabulous programmes that had already preceded us. IWA membership was growing and how to reach out in times of emergency was resolved with the introduction of the *Telephone Tree* (at that time email/cell phones had not been established in our pre-globalised India). Rising costs of meetings even then were a major concern which we resolved with a policy of fellowship and participation through *Group Hostesses*.

Like all Presidents who have served IWA with their major commitment of time and energy, Malini and I had the best of years, and forged lasting friendships, and we are happy to know that the policies of the *Telephone Tree* and *Group Hostesses* continue today. A huge thank you to the Executive Committee and Chairpersons and the individual hostesses without whom our year would not have been such a great success. The *Telephone Tree's* initial launch brought news of the unscheduled IWA meeting of Usha Uthup's Song Fest which had a huge response and Usha's inimitable style and presentation had members dancing in the aisles.

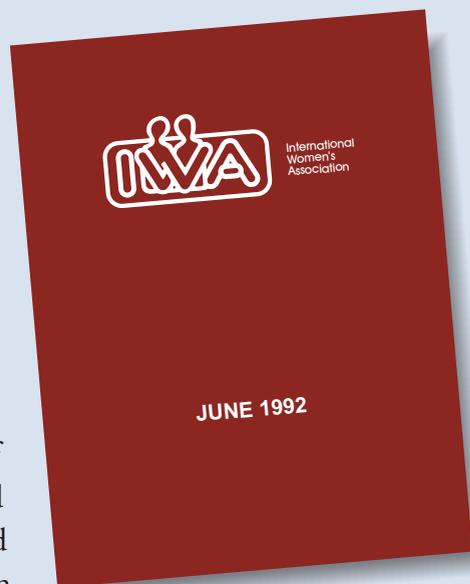
Our commitment to social awareness and the endemic threat of AIDS was raised at an all-day AIDS Symposium. This social awareness continued in our innovative Diwali Mela which had the craft stalls and entertainment presented by IWA members, and the proceeds went to NGOs with whom our members were affiliated.

Trips were contained to India at that time but the bond and memories live on in the trip to Alleppey to witness the snake boat races. Members' children had the best of times at a

Christmas party on the lawns of *Adyar Villa* hosted by Devaki Muthiah. Families also enjoyed the IWA beach party at Fisherman's Cove. I still remember with much warmth and sadness, Malini's exceptional presentation of the Woman of the Year programme at Chola Sheraton. Our Annual General Meeting and Grand Finale was a combination of the AGM and a fashion show, showcasing the fabulous contrasts of India's classic sarees, styles and dress presented by our own members. Our year was definitely member-centric, as well as reminding us of IWA's origins, the format of which had been conceived by Lorraine Hanson in Bombay through IndUS, and who were celebrating their 25th anniversary back in 1993. Lorraine together with IndUS members visited Madras to renew their special friendship with Nirmal, Lakshmi and Shankuntala, with a celebration dinner hosted by Nirmal Mirza.

And now IWA Madras is 25 years old, but sadly many of our members have not been able to grow with us and Malini, my friend and Co-President, passed away in 1995 preceding Nirmal, IWA founder President, and Shankuntala, all stalwarts of IWA. Fittingly Nancy Dean, Founder President with Nirmal Seshadri, is with us today, and we thank her for her contribution to the legacy of IWA and the fellowship of our global world. Congratulations IWA on your 25th anniversary.

Maureen Hudson Murari





Nanditha Krishna
India

1993-1994

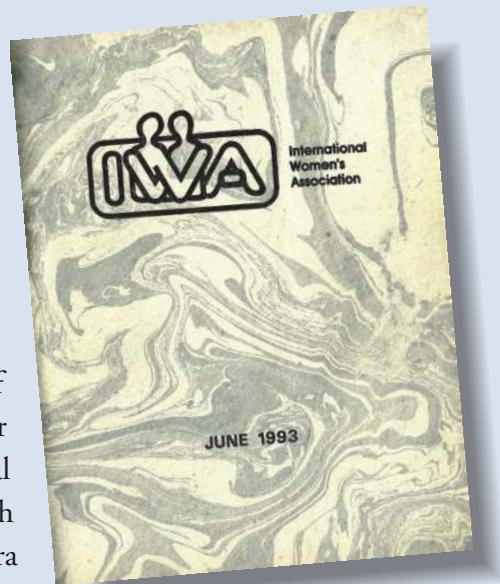
Aruna Vijaykumar
Singapore

1993-1994 saw a big influx of non-Indian members, and consequently, new ideas and events. Under the Presidentship of Aruna Vijaykumar and Nanditha Krishna, each month had a unique event and several firsts.

For the first time, the new IWA year opened with a 'Welcome Back' coffee morning. In July, Issy Sanderson recreated the atmosphere of Victorian India for Founders' Day, when the members wore their grandmothers' saris and dressed up as Victorian gentlewomen, to



watch 'Victoriana' on stage. In August, IWA members were privy to a rare collection of ancient musical instruments, while September saw a trip to Kalahasti, Chandragiri and the Venkateswara and Nelapattu sanctuaries. In October, artist Thota Tharani created a spooky ghost house in an old bungalow at Venus Studios for a Halloween party; the first IWA quiz also took place that month. Diwali as celebrated in different parts of India was the flavour of November, while December saw an enchanting Odissi performance by Sonal Mansingh and Christmas at 'River House' with U.S. Consul General and IWA member Sandra Rowlands. In January, the members visited a Stone Carvers' Workshop. February had several special events such as the 'Woman of the Year Award' to Dr. Sarojini Varadappan; a Valentine evening of love songs, stories and ballads; and a Craft Bazaar to demonstrate the work of handicapped, destitute and needy women. In March, spring was heralded with a visit to an orchid garden and the year ended in April with a starry 'Singapore Nite'. Jasleen Dhamija, Suhasini Mani Ratnam, Dharam Priya Das (film-maker), General A.K. Chatterji (IPKF) and the Battery Dance Company of New York City were among the galaxy of celebrities who graced the programmes.



The monthly IWA newsletter was enlivened by drawings, limericks and poems by poets known (members) and unknown (Mathew Arnold, etc.) and monthly enlightenment on the nutritional qualities of a "fruit for thought". The meetings were managed within the fees collected and tickets sold for special events: no sponsorships were sought or obtained. And most meetings were in the lovely homes of our members. It was a year of novelty and fun.

Nanditha Krishna & Aruna Vijaykumar





Lily Madhok
India

Margaret Sekharan
UK

1994-1995

In June 1994 Margaret and I were elected Presidents for the year 1994-1995 since both of us shared an excellent rapport when we were Vice-Presidents (1993- 94). The theme of our year we chose as ‘The Woman of Today’ who believed in sharing, contributing and participating in all spheres of life and having a vista of multiple choices for a career. They cope magnificently in managing a well-run home, career and being a gracious hostess.



We chose 'Amir Mahal' as the venue for our fellowship which is the palatial residence of the Nawab of Arcot. All IWA members got a royal afternoon and a magnificent feast which was so different to our normal meeting fare. We continued the *Telephone Tree* where members volunteered to pass important and urgent messages like cancellation of meetings. This was an instant success as we could reach members easily.

For Founders' Day Joanne Grady Husky and Rupa Sood presented a tableau of "What it Means to be a Woman of Today". About 22 members walked the stage to the music of *Chotisi Asha*, representing their different careers like an architect, banker, business woman, computer wizard or housewife.

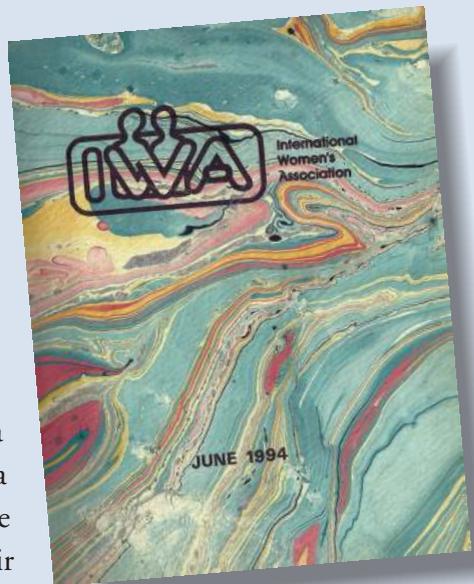
As in all years we had many, very eminent speakers to address the members. To mention a few, P. Chidambaram, Mario Miranda, the cartoonist, Meera & Muzzafar Ali, the designer couple of the Kotwara collection. However the most popular speaker of the year was Aishwarya Rai – who had just won the Miss World title. In March 1995 a memorial service was held for Malini Vijayargavan who was President in the year 1992-93. The memorial service had songs and readings from all the scriptures, encompassing all religious. The AGM went off well, and it was put forward, to increase the membership fees to cover expenses and rely less on sponsorship. The membership decided to have an EGM to decide this matter.

Diwali celebrations were in the form of International Dance Evening with dances from USA, Scotland, Malaysia, Japan and India done by our members. This was a big hit; we ran out of donor cards but still managed to accommodate everyone. A record number of 30 Japanese ladies did the Japanese dance!

The Woman of the Year award went to Gita Ram well-known for her commitment to craft and craftpersons. The Grand Finale programme was a Farewell Quiz which all the Activity Chairpersons put together. Everyone turned up in strength and had a wonderful time. The annual bash was a Singapore Evening at the Taj Coromandel. The members felt they were in Singapore as the food, music and dances recreated a total Singaporean atmosphere.

In conclusion we would like to say that IWA helped us widen our horizons. We learnt to coax the best out of everyone, be good organisers and meet and interact with a wide spectrum of women and make lifelong friendships, which has been IWA's best gift to us.

Lily Madhok





Zubeida Asgarali
India

1995-1996

Khinthida Lwin
Myanmar

A long-time member of IWA and a newcomer to Chennai came together as Presidents in the year 1995-96. It was a daunting responsibility, but our year as Presidents turned out to be one of the most interesting, and a special time for us. Once we took up office, we established a winning team with total support from the excellent Executive Committee who organised thought-provoking, informative and entertaining meetings.

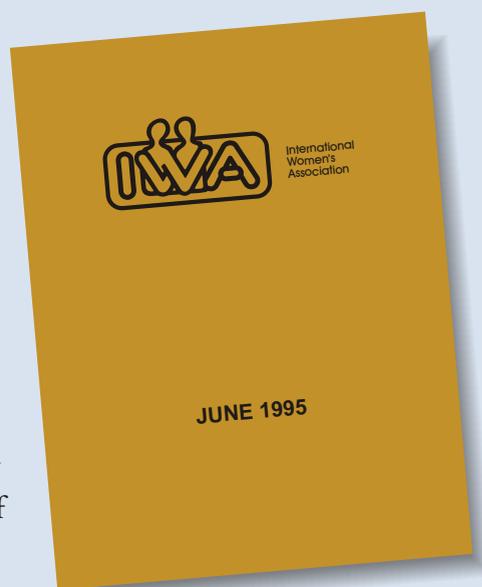


We remember with nostalgia the many programmes in our year. An inspiring talk by Kiran Bedi, the introduction of the Eid Milan gathering with traditional fare – an event which we are happy to see, still continues. We made a culinary journey of the Orient with Burmese and Thai cooking demonstrations, followed the footsteps of the Buddhist scholar, Bodhidharma and had a screening of Bernardo Bertolucci's *Little Buddha*.

We were honoured by a talk by world-renowned spiritual guide, Swami A. Parthasarthy, founder of the Vedanta Life Institute. From the fascinating Indian folk puppet theatre – the ROD puppet show to the screening of an Oscar movie, *Forrest Gump*, with tours through Rajasthan and Mysore, it was truly a year packed with beautiful happenings and forming of special friendships that continue till today.

We wish to honour IWA's Founder Members, Past Presidents and the Committees who worked so tirelessly. Now it is time to reminisce, rejoice and look forward. Congratulations IWA on the completion of twenty five successful years and wishing you all the best to grow from strength to strength.

Zubeida Asgarali & Khinthida Lwin





Alagu Muthu
India

1996-1997

Poonam Lalchand
Sri Lanka

We had the privilege of being Co-Presidents as IWA celebrated its first milestone... its 10th birthday! We had a major challenge ahead of us, but with the support of an extremely enthusiastic and enterprising Committee and the indomitable spirit of our dear Founder President, Nirmal Seshadri – a dynamic and dedicated culturist – nothing was impossible, nothing too much.

Our celebrations started off with a fellowship morning at the Chettinad Palace, leading into the Founders' Week festivities, which included a presentation by Anita Ratnam, a performance by Bombay Jayashree, Vikku Vinayakaram and Aseel Mathur and our concluding event – a brilliant Bharatanatyam recital by Malavika Sarukkai.

Acclaimed art director Thota Tharani designed our logo for the year, a peacock with the globe, epitomising all that IWA stands for – the merging of our culture with the cultures of



the world. The colour we chose for that year was red, a colour signifying auspiciousness and *Stree Shakti* – the strength of a woman.

Founding member, Nancy Dean from America honoured us with her presence at the 10th year celebrations. The jubilee also seemed to be a eulogy and tribute to Nirmal Seshadri – our inspiration – who sadly left us soon after, making us all the more determined to treasure and nurture her precious dream to take IWA to new heights. We dedicate October 1st, which is her birthday, as International Music Day in her memory. We are very grateful for the endowment given by Mr. Seshadri every year for this event.



The meetings through the year included talks by Dr. Karan Singh and Cho Ramaswamy and performances by Alarmel Valli and Padmashree Kadri Gopalnath. Swami Parthasarathy expounded to us the Vedanta, Tim Murari discussed his latest novel and a professional clown from the UK delighted us at Christmas.

Our very first cookery competition, judged by chefs from the city's five-star hotels, formed the base for the second edition of the *IWA Cookbook* – a product of the vast culinary skills of our members. Members' favourite recipes, traditional dishes from countries across the globe, fusion cuisine ideas, make this cook book an epitome of the spirit of IWA. The book was released that year by the then Consul General for the U.S.A., Michele J. Sison.

The Woman of the Year award was given for the first time to an international recipient, Dr. Vomstein, a German national whose years of dedicated service to the cause of leprosy in India was tireless. The IWA Annual Endowment Lecture at the Museum Theatre was also established with some of the proceeds of the cook book sales.

Organisational team spirit should always be on a high note so that strength emanates from the team rather than an individual. Just as a peacock slowly unfurls its beauty and shimmers in its grace, form and dignity, IWA, over the years has stood strong – spreading understanding, cooperation, knowledge and friendship.

We congratulate the International Women's Association on its silver innings and wish it continued success – we are truly proud to be part of it!

Alagu Muthu & Poonam Lalchand





Rupa Kadhiresan

India

Anneliese Hazari

Germany

1997-1998

International Women's Association's year 1997-1998 – a long time ago; yet suddenly there is a kaleidoscope of images bringing with it a host of beautiful memories. Our Committee, besides us, consisted of Shakuntala Jagannathan and Megan Utley as Vice-Presidents, Javanthi Singaram and Seema Sait as Secretaries, Lalitha Krishnan and Angelika Mandaikar as Treasurers and Activity Chairpersons, enthusiastically planning another year.

The highlight of the Founders' Day was Tagore's two plays enacted by our members and their families. *Upagupta* with Nandini Srikanth as the beautiful dancing girl and Nalini Acharya as Upagupta; *Satyakama* with Lily Ratnam's grandchildren, were both touchingly beautiful.



Deepavali was celebrated with a variety of music and dances which included the May Pole. Megan had the music sent out from England and taught our members to perform it. Ramzan and Christmas lent colour and gaiety to the year.

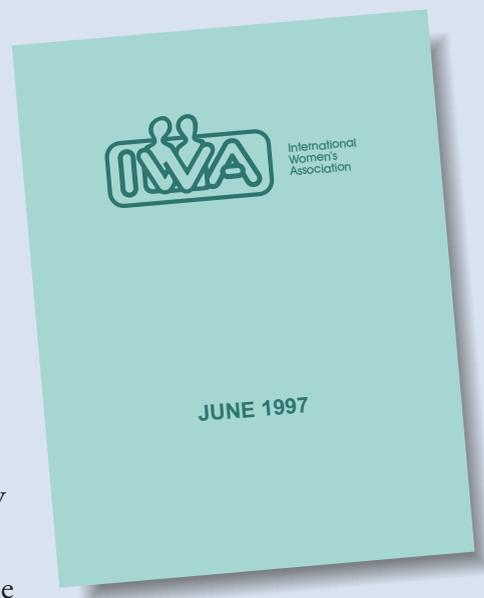
During the year

1. Code numbers were introduced.
2. IWA's Constitution (as today's Bye Laws were then termed) was redone by a Committee especially constituted for the purpose.
3. As per the new Constitution, the first Advisory Committee was set up.
4. The First Endowment Lecture was held at the Museum Theatre.
5. The Girl Child of the Year Award instituted by Prithika Chary was presented for the first time with the Woman of the Year Award. The recipients were a Special Mother and her Down's Syndrome child.

Working with such a good team made our task easy and enjoyable; the friendships we made were many. We miss those who are no longer with us but who will always remain a part of IWA.

We wish Nina Kothari, Cherry Venkatesan and their Committee a great year and may every year of IWA be a glorious one.

Rupa Kadhiresan & Anneliese Hazari





Shyla K. Rau
India

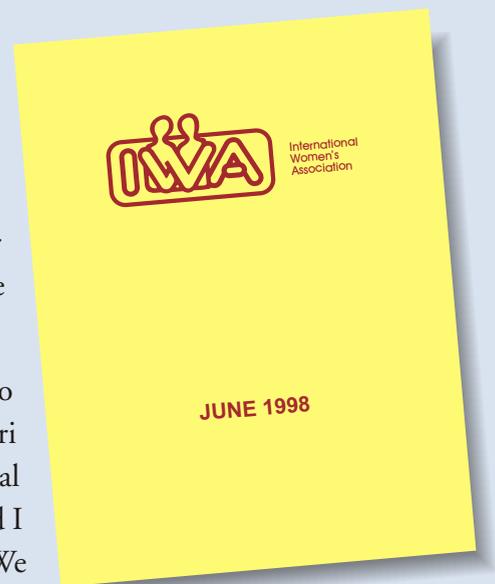
Megan Utley
UK

1998-1999

Roses, chocolates (liqueur), strawberries and fresh cream!! Smiles and overwhelming joy – that was how I felt when I joined IWA in 1986. Megan Utley and I were elected Presidents of IWA (1998-99). Our theme was ‘Sunshine IWA’. Our mottos were ‘Fellowship and Friendship’ and ‘Progressive Programmes with Innovative Ideas’.

We had an excellent working Board. All had served on Sub-Committees many times over and on the Board as well. The immediate task I took on was to streamline the administration, where work had started the previous year. In doing so I realised that future Presidents would need some kind of format. Hence I created a spreadsheet of the IWA year, fixed the dates for the 5 major events, booked halls in five-star hotels and fixed the tariff rates in advance. The Board was very good in streamlining the areas of newsletter, minutes of the meeting, etc. The Treasurer was a real treasure. She sorted out the membership accounts and dues. It was done very professionally so as to make it easy for future incumbents. I am happy to state that these files are still used for reference.

Members were approaching Megan and me to do something for IWA. I remember Nirmal Seshadri telling me the same when I was the Secretary. Nirmal wanted the Presidents to be honoured. Megan and I discussed many times as to what could be done. We





decided to present a medallion to the Past Presidents in the shape of a bell, the chimes signifying peace and friendship and linking of bells representing the bond between the past, present and future Presidents. The pillars represent the Founder Members and the base, the firm, fair and positive members of IWA. The *gopuram* seeks Divine blessings to take IWA to pinnacles of glory.

All these were dipped in 24-carat gold. Seven extra bells were made for future Presidents. The entire set of medals was dedicated to the Presidents of IWA. The medallions are to be exhibited on Founders' Day, placed next to Nirmal Seshadri's photo. The current Indian President is responsible for its safe custody.

Our year was very fruitful. The Sub-Committees brought out many excellent programmes. Ms. Maneka Gandhi and Mr. Javed Akhtar were some of the illustrious personalities to address our meeting.

The highlights of the year were:

1. Woman of the Year Award, sponsored by Nirmal Mirza, was awarded to Ms. Kiran Mazumdar Shaw, CEO of Biocom.
2. The Girl Child of the Year Award, sponsored by Prithika Chary, was awarded to Ms. Anjali.

At the end of the IWA year, the unit happily looked forward to handing over the baton to the new Board.

It is now 25 years since the formation of IWA, I wish the present Board, Committee and members a glorious and happy celebration of 25 years young IWA, with roses and sparklers, and wish all members to remain smiling joyfully.

Shyla K. Rau





Gayatri Bewoor

India

Chandrika Chidambaram

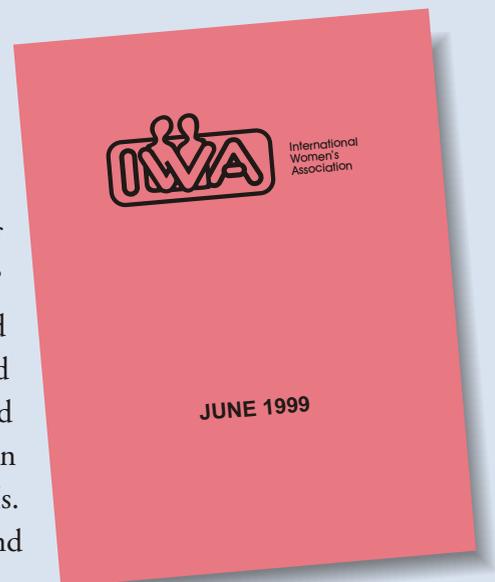
Sri Lanka

1999-2000

To begin with it is IWA that brought us together. We did not know at that time that our fortuitous meeting would develop into a beautiful friendship. IWA has enhanced our lives greatly and also gave us the opportunity to give back to it, when we took on the mantle of its leadership as Joint Presidents.

The year 1999 - 2000 was very special. We were ringing out the old and welcoming the new millennium. And the year for both of us has very fond memories. The turn of the century brought with it high expectations with plenty of excitement as we took over. The general mood was vibrant, joyous and optimistic. We had set ourselves certain goals which we wanted to accomplish in full and with total support of the Executive Committee and the members, who constantly encouraged us.

We started our year with the fellowship morning, for which we had requested our members to come dressed in pink – to symbolise a colour that glows and reflects all that is wonderful in a woman. This was the beginning of a year filled with a series of important events. To mention a few, the Founders' Day saw all the nationalities who were represented in IWA participating in a song that was dedicated to IWA. There were performances by renowned dancers and singers including a popular Sri Lankan Kandyan Dance Troupe from Colombo and Ms. Sudha Raghunathan who with their grace and





elegance provided further inspiration to IWA. Amongst other events, Shobhaa De, from the literary world enthralled our members. The highlight of our year was the Millennium Fashion Show titled 'Back to the Future' held at the Taj Coromandel. Participation was by members, spouses, their children and grandchildren, who displayed hidden talent and skills and reflected the depth of IWA's membership both domestic and from overseas. The show was a grand success and is still recalled with great fondness by many members.

The year passed faster than we imagined and left both of us thrilled and exhausted as we prepared to hand over the baton to the incoming Presidents. We thank IWA for the honour they gave us to lead it. We have always remained proud members of this lovely institution. On the 25th silver anniversary we wish IWA all the very best for further success, hope and continued prosperity.

Gayatri Bewoor & Chandrika Chidambaram





Javanthi Singaram

India

Eira Doshi

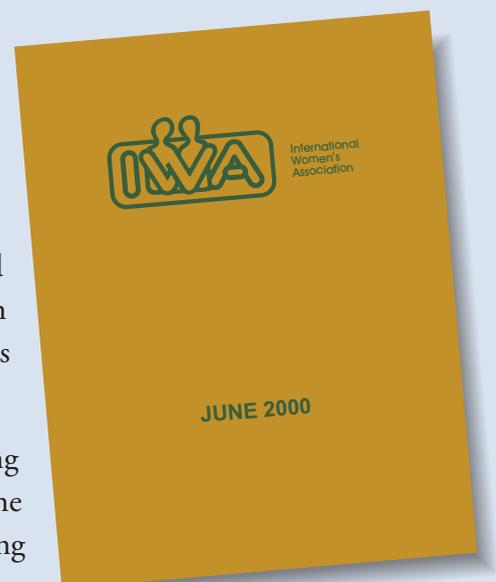
UK

2000-2001

Our theme was the environment and living naturally. Gold and green, the colours of the earth, were chosen for the year. Poised at the dawn of the millennium, we wanted our year to send out a special message and 'natural versus synthetic' became our focus. The meetings explored waste management, vermicomposting, vegetable gardening on the terrace and the art of making beautiful floral creations from waste paper. We made use of natural materials and fabrics in gifts and stage decoration that were both ethnic and cost effective. *Vandanam*, a celebration of earth, wind, water, fire and ether, by our members, and *The Living Tree*, a production of the Cleveland Cultural Association were staged to convey the Spirit of IWA.

Costing for the meetings and events was a huge challenge in those days; while costs were rising all around us, IWA collected just Rs. 500 as subscription from the members. We were constantly trying to economise and seek donations for the everyday running of IWA. We had to push for an increase in the subscription to Rs. 800 and also increase the number of members to 300 from 275. Our generous members willingly supported us and the motion was passed at an EGM.

Today, after a decade, our theme is again seeking inspiration from the environment; it represents the strong links that are forged from year to year, making





for a lasting and enduring IWA. IWA at 25 is stronger and more exciting. We wish her many more years of spreading friendship, knowledge and awareness.

Javanthi Singaram & Eira Doshi





Rani Chada
India

Seema Sait
USA

2001-2002

Coincidentally, we joined IWA the same year. We had both served on almost every Committee. Rani was totally involved with the editing and publishing of both editions of the *IWA Cookbook*. We were both thrilled to be Presidents and we were excited to take on the challenge. We worked together complementing our own individual strengths and what a wonderful year we had. Our friendship blossomed and the bond of that one year together has created a friendship that we still share.

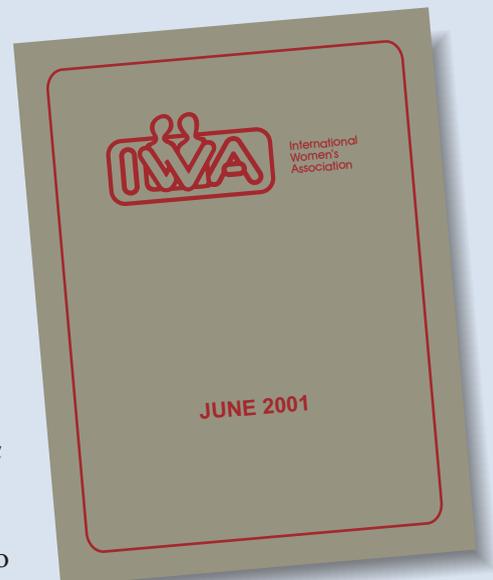
Rani : Our theme for the year was ‘The Year of the Woman’ as 2001 was the International Year of the Woman. We were fortunate to be Presidents while IWA celebrated 15 years.

Seema : We started the year with the fellowship morning at the Madras Club.

For Founders’ Day we collected old photographs and old newsletters through the last 14 years and compiled a slide show and talk called “Now & Then...Remember When”, showcasing important aspects of the years gone by. It was a sentimental journey as we re-counted the experiences through the years.

We interacted with ace tennis star Leander Paes and flamboyant chef Sanjeev Kapoor of *Khana Khazana* fame.

Rani : The Woman of the Year Award presented to





Ms. Lalitha Gupte, ICICI Bank, was for Women of Substance, who excelled in the Corporate world. Thanks to Nirmal Mirza who instituted this Award. The Girl Child of the Year Award was presented to Miss C. Malini, Miss Sarbani Das and Miss Vijaylakshmi, great achievers afflicted with cancer. Thanks to Dr. Prithika Chary for the award and thanks to Sushu Natraj for presenting the other two awards.

Rani and Seema : A Supper Theatre was planned for our Grand Finale. Jasper Utley wrote the play called *Murder on the Menu*. Yamuna directed it. We asked members to participate. Amazingly, we got plenty of ladies and men too!!!! The evening was incredible and the play was outstanding. Our IWA actors were Rani Dasgupta, Prithika Chary, Christina Sauer, Padmini Natarajan, Venky, Princess Naik's husband and Rafiq, Seema's husband. The rest of the actors were friends willing to chip in.

Rani and Seema: We thank our Board and Activity Chairpersons who did an incredible job making the entire year smooth sailing for us. Our understanding and teamwork was incredible. It was a year filled with laughter and fun. We worked very closely with Vanitha Mudaliar, Nanditha Krishna and Kusum Chadda to fine-tune the modalities to register IWA. This was ratified at the EGM and IWA was registered the following year.

Thank you IWA for having given us this opportunity to develop skills we did not know we had, for making us extremely disciplined women, for making friendships which have lasted so many years and for creating bonds of deep understanding.

Rani Chada & Seema Sait



Kusum Chadda
India



Meyyammai Murugappan
UK

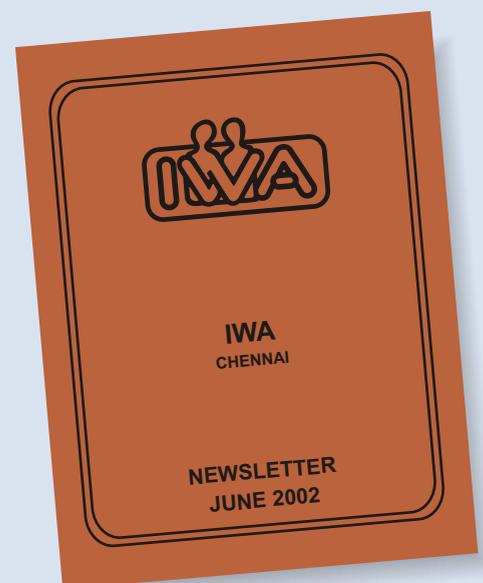
2002-2003

2002-03 was a landmark year in the history of IWA. In the summer of 2002, IWA, with the help of its Founders, Past Presidents and senior members became a registered society. It was truly a year of hard work... what with multiple AGMs and EGMs and amendments to finally consolidate our Constitution.

It was with the support of the Managing Committee and the resourceful Chairpersons that we were able to present some outstanding meetings and events that year.

Face to face with names like David Davidar and his *House of Blue Mangoes*, William Dalrymple and his book, *The White Moghul*, to name a few. The exposure we gained through the health exhibition with demonstrations of Tai Chi, kick-boxing and yoga followed by lectures on holistic and alternative medicine gave us a head start on today's growing awareness of organic, healing foods and varied fitness routines. Ritu Nanda shared her experiences and gave us valuable advice on insurance policies for the woman of today.

One of the most memorable tours till date was how we made use of the peace process in Sri Lanka and organised a culturally enriching trip across 'The Island Nation'. These experiences are still fresh in our memory.



A fund sponsored by the family of Nirmal Seshadri made the International Music Day a platform for young talent, who were chosen on merit and awarded a cheque. This day is now dedicated to the late Nirmal Seshadri, our dear Founder-Member. Much like her, the lilting music of Shahank's flute mesmerised us all. This was followed by performances from greats like Astad Deboo, Malavika Sarukkai and the finale was *The Living Tree*, a beautiful dance drama performed in the gardens of the 'River House'.

Last but not least, was the unforgettable meeting with Raza and his art, presented against the beautiful, elegantly lit, University building. We have grown in our personalities and much of this wisdom has been gained from these experiences. Looking back on a year that had our hands full, we could not have got through it without the able support of our Managing, Executive and Registration Committees, Past Presidents, Founders and senior members. It truly was teamwork at its best. This friendship will last us a lifetime.

Thank you IWA.

Kusum Chadda & Meyyammai Murugappan





Sushy Natraj
India

Elaine Wood
South Africa

2003-2004

Elaine and I had barely met once socially before we were elected Presidents of IWA. But the rapport was instant and has lasted till today! Elaine brought her down-under humour and sense of balance to everything she did, making working a pleasure. Most of the Chairpersons were first-timers too, and their enthusiasm and drive were infectious.

We felt the most important thing we should be doing was to get all our members to feel more involved. So we made a concerted effort to call upon as many members as we could to



participate in various ways. Members were called upon to present gifts to speakers, or introduce them, which made a difference. At the end of the year, we made garlands of photographs of all the members, with their contributions listed below. We felt very satisfied to think that so many members had contributed to the success of the year in so many ways! These photographs were later incorporated into a data file giving relevant details of all the members.

The special meetings saw the team coming together to produce some memorable moments.

We had a Founders' Day with a difference – the Founders exhibited their talent and we watched with awe! Anneliese sang the invocation and Sunita spoke on her philosophies. Lakshmi and Saroj worked in tandem – while Lakshmi, whose articles have been published by leading publications, read one of her favourites, Saroj's deft fingers arranged flowers and greens to complement the reading with Ikebana! Talk about 'saying it with flowers'!!

It was the first year the Music Award was presented. A young keyboard player, Satyanarayana, wowed us with his magical fingers.

The Grand Finale was particularly well-received by all those who were there. Nostalgia was the pervading theme with dances, songs and skits that kept the audience entertained - something for everyone.

We were also given many new administrative systems to follow, which provided the streamlining required by a registered organisation.

For me, IWA has always meant a place where I can go as often as possible - my mid-morning adrenaline fix of meeting friends and learning something new!

Vive IWA!!

Sushi Natraj





Vidya Singh
India

Padma Ashok
UK

2004-2005

The theme of the year 2004-05 was 'Water, the Giver of Life', its conservation and bamboo, the symbol of longevity. This was our year and we chose the colours of aqua and green. It was a year of fun and participation for our members, who seemed to enjoy each meeting and event, which was planned by a very enthusiastic team.

Founders' Day, with its hilarious rendition of the Ramayana by some of our members, was greatly appreciated. The Diwali Mela had, for the first time, *elai saapad* (traditional food served on a banana leaf) in a *kalyana mandapam* and a fashion show with the theme of the elements, 'Let There Be Light' which brought in members, their children and even grandchildren, creating a buzz.



Travelling was extensive, taking our members on a holy trip to Benares, Allahabad and Lucknow, and an educational one to Cambodia and Thailand. The trip to the Bodhi Zendo Center was enlightening, as was the visit to the Saint Gobain glass factory. There were celebrity speakers on various subjects, cooking demos, book discussions, Japanese tea ceremonies and doll festivals. With authors like Sun Shuyun visiting IWA, it was a full and satisfying year for our team and the members.

Christmas celebrations and Music Day with our little maestro, Siddharth Nagarajan and our Grand Finale of Michael Muthu's comedy version of 'Hamlet' concluded the year.

Padma: IWA that year for me was invaluable, as it helped me cope with the loss of my father. A year of intense activity, where firm friendships were formed, leaving lasting impressions of work and play.

Vidya: It was a year of learning for me, of dealing with the enormous and overwhelming challenges that IWA gives. Being thrown into the deep and having to keep afloat and ahead, was exhilarating.

Vidya Singh & Padma Ashok





Princess Naik
India

2005-2006

Rathi Nilakantan
Malaysia

The year 2005-06 was studded with gems of events that adorned the gold and silver colours we chose, signifying joy and festivity for the term. The leaf pattern conveyed our theme, 'Reaching Out', and reach out we did, to all the IWA members.

There were 81 meetings and each one of them had maximum attendance, thanks to the efficient Managing and Executive Committee members:



Seema Bhargava – Amulya Madhava Rao, Rekha Rangaraj – Nalini Panday, Nina Kothari – Uma Ganesan, Urmilla Agarwal – Merete Koefoed, Shalini Biswajit – Radha Gopalakrishnan, Anita Koshy – Manisha Singhee, Rani Das Gupta – Isobel Flint, Mridula Srinivasan – Sandra Le Coz, Rani Ananth – Bernadette McEven – the 24-carat gold team, as they were called.

Talking of packed houses, even the foreign trip to China had a fabulous number totaling to 44 and we had to hire two buses for the inland travels! The week-long Chettinad trip hosted by Meyyammai was again a sellout and this was followed by a grand tour of Central India, the land of Khajuraho.

The Current Events team welcomed the then Chief Minister of Rajasthan, Vasundhara Raje Scindia, and later in the year, Governor Sardar Surjit Singh Barnala. Cine stars Prabhu, Suhasini Maniratnam, Dhritiman Chatterjee and Andrea Jeremiah were some of the visitors during the year. Several authors discussed their books – making the year intellectually stimulating; the year also experienced music that was truly food for the soul.

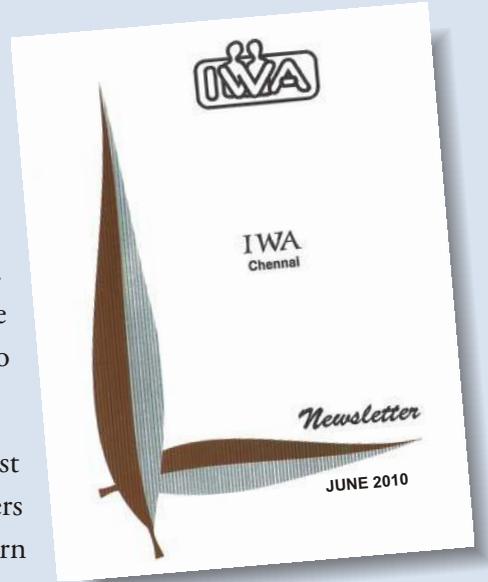
The Diwali Mela was organised with utmost precision and was a thumping success with members enjoying the Kreedha Classical Dance, the Modern Fashion Show and the shopping extravaganza.

Christmas witnessed a serene pageant enacted and an ideal English Christmas lunch was served including the delicious plum pudding!

The Grand Finale was a definite success – jazz music, short theatre show, games and gifts galore.

The AGM was memorable with IWA members looking back to a special and meaningful year and we, the 24-carat gold team, stepped down with contentment that we had lived up to their expectations!

Princess Naik & Rathi Nilakantan





Seema Bhargava

India

Amulya Rao

USA

2006-2007

A score of years... that was the legacy we had to live up to when we took over the mantle of IWA leadership in the summer of 2006. It was a daunting prospect – how to uphold and honour the proud traditions of IWA while trying to give a fresh perspective in her 20th year.

Early on we decided that there should be a personal touch to the meetings and that our membership must be involved to the fullest. With that in mind we decided on the theme,



‘Celebrate IWA’. We were helped by our very capable and dedicated Managing and Executive Committees, to realise this vision.

This theme encouraged us to have many festive meetings, where member participation was paramount. To that end, for Founders’ Day, the Founder Members, Past Presidents, Managing and Executive Committees and members from the General Body, all put up short programmes. There were more than 70 members on stage! Diwali was celebrated with a *Deep Utsav* jewellery fashion show, where our own members were the models!

But the involvement did not end with choreographed skits and fashion shows. Our General Body showed their spirit and enthusiasm at such varied events as Pongal – Chettinad style, dancing the *garba* and Indian and Oriental weddings! The finale was a beautiful, classical Indian dance performed by Dr. Leela Samson, followed by a dinner hosted by IWA. It was truly a year that celebrated IWA’s cultural diversity.

One of our main goals was to celebrate IWA’s past while steering her towards a more mature future. As for the past, we think it was summed up best in Sushi’s IWA retrospective song, unveiled at our Founders’ Day.

As we rejoice in the completion of 25 years, we thank IWA for giving us the opportunity to learn, grow and serve as Presidents.

Beethoven said, “Never shall I forget the days I spent with you. Continue to be my friend, and you will always find me yours.”

We will always celebrate the friendships we made and continue to make in IWA.

Thank you IWA! You rock!

Seema Bhargava & Amulya Rao





Kamala Prasad
India

Raziye Sheerazie
Iran

2007-2008

IWA attained *New Horizons* during the year under the able leadership of Kamala Prasad and Raziye Sheerazie, jointly as Presidents with the tacit and unstinting support of the Executive Committee members during the period – including Rani Ananth and Radha Gopalakrishnan, Shobha Hebbar and Lynne Connor, Mridula Srinivasan and Susan Hopper.



As Presidents, we adopted the tranquil shades of blue as the theme to create positive energy, enabling our vibrant Chairpersons to spread a joyous cheer among all our members especially with the variety of programmes presented across all cross sections of people and subjects.

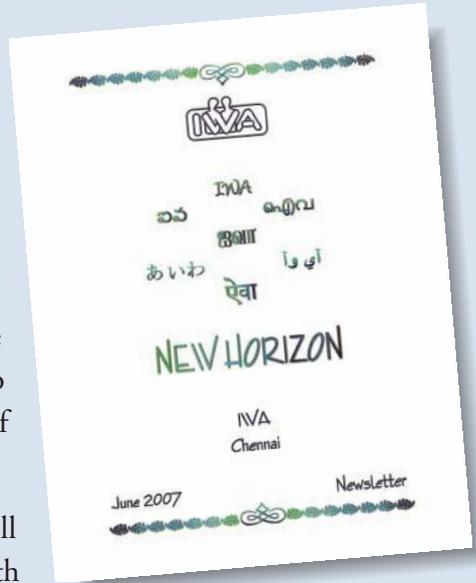
‘Deepavali Kondattam’ was a resounding success, with a number of stalls. Members participation was high and from the proceeds we were able to conduct the Grand Finale at the end of the year on a complimentary basis to all members and their spouses.

Having met with positive feedback in the previous year with partial computerisation of data, we switched to full computerisation in our year of *New Horizons* – keeping with the changing times. All communications were maintained by email, attendance and other records were computerised to make our space more eco-friendly and save on trees and paper. We also set up a web blog on which we posted our monthly newsletter making it available to our net-savvy members. However, posting of newsletters to all members continued as usual.

As Presidents, may we add that it was a challenge – well worth the experience, and very gratifying to work with our Executive Committee and Chairpersons – all of whom, handled their responsibilities most professionally to create a team deserving of success.

In an overview, the year was aptly named *New Horizons*, as new milestones were achieved and new thresholds were crossed during our term. We wish to thank all IWA members most profusely for giving us an opportunity to serve as Presidents at such an illustrious organisation.

Kamala Prasad & Raziyeh Sheerazie





Rani Ananth
India

Lynne Connor
UK

2008-2009

It is indeed laudable that IWA has run this marathon so far. A mosaic of memories come to mind. The day Nirmal aunty said “sign this form” to this day, IWA has become an integral part of me. It was such fun taking part in the dances. From being Activity Chairperson, Secretary, to sharing Presidential space with Lynne Connor, I have evolved. Planning meetings, trying to make them innovative had my creative juices flowing. *Silent Raga* - Book Discussion, had a veena artiste play the same raga as the heroine of the book. The presentation brought appreciation from no less than the author himself. From Padma



Subramaniam's *Jatayu Moksham* set to Tchaikovsky's overture to 'Romeo & Juliet', organising the Diwali Mela with the *pinnal kolattam* and sit-down *sappadu* for the first time, to taking members back in time with the retro 60's-70's Grand Finale, where the line dance by the Committee members had the audience asking for an encore, it was indeed a lovely year. A trophy was instituted for the recipients of the International Music Day Award in our year.

On this celebrative milestone, as I reflect on the years, I am glad that I will leave behind my footprints on this glorious organisation.

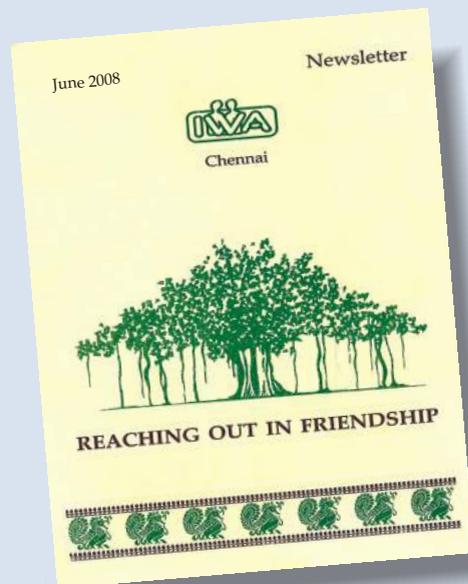
Rani Ananth

Many congratulations on this very special silver anniversary. I am sure you are all going to enjoy the celebrations immensely. IWA has so much to be proud of and it made such a difference to my life while I was in Chennai. The unconditional friendship you extended was priceless. I still see some members here in London. How to choose from the years of memories with you all? It's difficult - but fond memories of Christmas at *Cottingley*, the Eco-friendly Quiz and the Retro-licious 60's - 70's Grand Finale will stay with me forever.

A taster of IWA came courtesy of Elaine Wood two days after I arrived in Chennai but membership and the Health and Ecology brief with Shirley Verghese had to wait until I had coffee with Seema Bhargava and Amulya Rao. My year as Secretary with Shobha Hebbar was invaluable preparation for the privilege of sharing the Presidency with Rani Ananth. What a journey in three years! Thank you to each and every one of you for making that journey possible.

I wish I could be there with you all but unfortunately it's just not possible on this occasion. Enjoy!

Lynne Connor





Shobha Hebbar
India

Elizabeth Aston
UK

2009-2010

Celebrating IWA's 25 years will, for many of us, be a year of wonderful memories, many of them long past but seeming like only yesterday.

Memories of meeting new members, becoming friends and forming lifelong relationships.

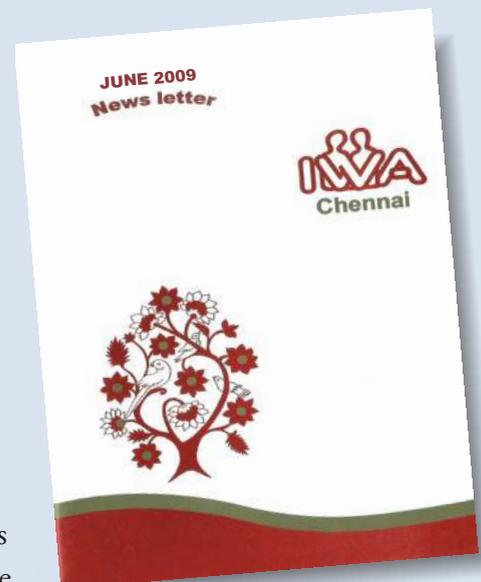
Memories of members who have come into our lives, however briefly, and who will remain in our minds and hearts forever.

Memories of all we have experienced both individually and collectively through the diversity of IWA.

If IWA has reached great heights today, it is due to the collective efforts of many – our seven Founding Members who dared to dream and put their dreams into action; all the Presidents and their Committees through the 25 years, who worked tirelessly to make IWA the vibrant organisation it is today. If we have succeeded it is because, to quote Sir Isaac Newton, we “have stood on the shoulder of giants”.

During our year as Presidents, we feel proud and blessed to have had such tremendous support from the Committees and you the membership to enable us to contribute to those memories.

Our focus for the year was to be able to involve as many members as possible in contributing to the





variety of activities, be it main events like Fellowship Morning, Founders' Day or Diwali Mela, or the various programmes arranged by the Activity Chairpersons. The response was overwhelming and showcased the skills, talents, enthusiasm, commitment and sense of fun from our membership.

A truly memorable year and one in which a simple sentence sums up the response from members when thanked for any contribution made – “I do it for IWA.”

Shobha Hebbar & Elizabeth Aston





Mridula Srinivasan
India

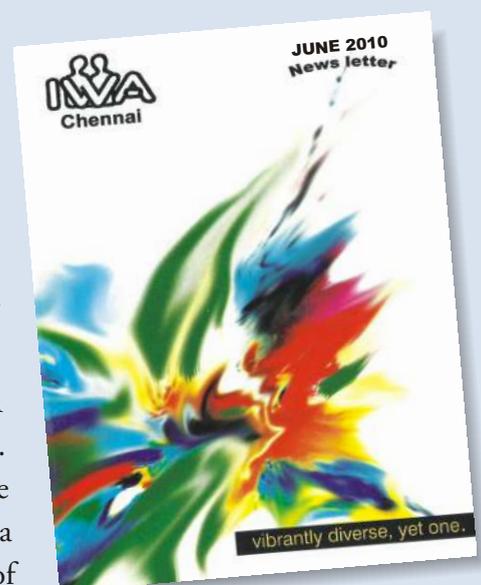
Uma Ganesan
USA

2010-2011

On this, the 25th year of IWA, we are so proud to be members of this vibrant and thriving organisation; one that fosters friendships, enables cultural exchange, creates learning experiences and breaks down boundaries and differences to connect us all. We are diverse as members but united in membership.

Both of us have truly learnt a great deal from being Presidents of IWA. For one, we learnt just how much fun it was to work together as partners! We got to know members on the Committee, and learnt to appreciate their immense skills and broad knowledge. We made new friends and enjoyed the unique camaraderie that is so fundamental to IWA. And, in working together, we also realised that we all have the same goals. Best of all, our work towards these goals seemed to happen entirely spontaneously, as if the ambitions and hopes of IWA were written in our hearts, and not just in our bylaws and minutes.

Most exciting of all, we have seen IWA change and grow over the years. We have a wonderful mix of generations, cultures and skills. We are, slowly but surely, moving into the 21st century – with an IWA blog, electronic mail and SMS communication. Surely there is more to come. We may soon be entirely paperless, with information and data available at the press of a button or the click of





a mouse. Our computers, our phones and other wondrous devices yet to be invented, will keep us connected.

The next 25 years of IWA will be exciting and energising. The IWA that was imagined by a handful of Founders will be re-imagined again and again – and our organisation will grow, and thrive. Here's to the next quarter century!

Mridula Srinivasan & Uma Ganesan





Nina Kothari
India



Cherry Venkatesan
Australia

2011-2012

We are truly honoured and privileged to serve IWA as its Presidents during its 25th anniversary year. We cherish being a part of IWA and embrace the opportunity to make the silver jubilee year a very special one for all of us.

IWA started with the objectives of fostering friendships and furthering learning. As we embark on our silver jubilee year, we have fittingly integrated these founding values in our theme for the year - Forever Connected, Forever Learning, Forever Inspired. We hope our meetings will stimulate inquiring minds, on the one hand and strengthen the camaraderie we enjoy, on the other.

Our newsletter features a commemorative postal stamp to celebrate the milestone of 25 years of IWA. These 25 beautiful years would certainly not have been possible but for the dedication and commitment of the Founders and Past Presidents. The stamp is a tribute to their energy and enthusiasm. The symbol of the burgeoning tree as the central image on the stamp symbolises organic growth, strength and endurance. The myriad leaves and branches of this 'tree of knowledge' represent the diversity of our membership. The success of IWA rests entirely on the infectious spirit and enthusiasm of its members. We chose green to be the colour of the year as it symbolises growth, regeneration and harmony. The colour also signifies progress with balance; aptly echoing the IWA spirit!





We are grateful to our immediate Past Presidents, Mridula Srinivasan and Uma Ganesan for all their guidance. The introduction of the role of 'Day Facilitators' is one initiative which we hope will be greatly beneficial to the organisation going forward. Day Facilitators are members who assist the Activity Chairpersons with the planning and execution of a meeting. Their role is only limited by their enthusiasm, which going by our experience thus far seems to be boundless! To date, our Day Facilitators have performed a gamut of valuable responsibilities, helped with the logistics, made speakers feel like old, long-lost friends, welcomed members warmly at meetings and given the vote of thanks. We hope our initial success with this concept will motivate members to come forward, volunteer their valuable time and be helpful angels, to make wonderful things possible.

Another notable first is the "Baltic Adventure" our History, Culture and Tours Chairpersons have organised in early September. This is the first time our IWA ladies will venture on a 12-day cruise together aboard the *MS Rotterdam*, part of the Holland America cruise line. Their ports of call will be Rotterdam, Copenhagen, Berlin, Tallinn, St. Petersburg, Helsinki and Stockholm. We wish our pioneering seafarers bon voyage and bonny weather!

With the support of our enthusiastic Managing Committee and tireless Activity Chairpersons we have planned a memorable Silver Jubilee Week and twenty five special meetings through the year. These meetings, we hope, will be distinguished by an "only in IWA" experience. With 25 glorious years as a legacy, we wish IWA years of happiness and look forward to being Forever Connected. Forever Learning and Forever Inspired.

Nina Kothari & Cherry Venkatesan



*“In one of the stars, I shall be living. In one of them, I shall be laughing.
And so it will be as if all the stars were laughing when you look at the sky at night.”*

- Antoine de Saint-Exupery

Tribute to Nirmal



Forever Connected Forever Learning Forever Inspired





Nirmal Seshadri

1-10-1927 to 20-8-1996

*Our thoughts Nirmal,
Each thought a bead, lovingly strung together
And offered to you with gladness
That you were amongst us
And left behind
Such beautiful memories.*

International Women's Association



In fond memory of a dear friend...

When I first met Nirmal, I was very impressed by her zest for life and her enthusiasm. When some of us were doubtful whether IWA would be a success – after all, we were only 7 ladies – she used to look at us with her infectious smile and say, “Come on girls, let’s do it, let us transform my dream into reality.” And what a reality it has become. Nirmal always had an open ear for everybody, nothing was too small to be discussed. She had a tremendous capacity for work and even when she was fatigued, she smiled at you, made you feel at home and that you were part of a wonderful scheme.

As long as International Women’s Association exists, Nirmal’s spirit will never die. I am sure that from wherever she is, she will always be the guiding spirit of IWA.

Anneliese Hazari

NIRMAL, one of a kind, human
Focussed, creative, single minded
Thinking clear, extending
Her hands in Friendship
She had time and energy for
Varied areas of interest, weaving,
Blending them into her Persona.

Padmini Natarajan





The news of the death of our beloved Nirmal last month shook us badly. What a dynamic personality she was. Apart from creating IWA, she has contributed to each of us individually. She had the ability to bring out hidden talents in each person. Nirmal was, till the end, full of life and dedication. Highly motivated, inspiring and versatile, it is no wonder she has left all of us feeling lost.

Lalitha Krishnan

In my decade of association with Nirmal, I have undertaken so many projects, pulled off all sorts of crazy stunts, so much so I feel I have accomplished quite a substantial number of feats.

Nirmal is no longer with us now, but she has left us an invaluable legacy – her energy, her love, her courage and her genius. To let this legacy die with her would be the greatest injustice we could do to our Nirmal.

So let us hereby pledge that we will never let this precious gift go unused or unrecognised.

We miss you Nirmal, but thank you for creating IWA.

Aruna Vijaykumar



Fifty years is a long time to know and cherish a friendship. My friendship with Nirmal goes back that long; we had similar events in our lives – we both had romantic weddings in Madras – she in 1955 and I in 1956. We even had, by a strange coincidence, identical wedding sarees. We listened to great concerts by renowned musicians who were at the peak of their careers. We also had our quiet asides, about who was who, being Mylaporeans. We loved going to the Marina Beach. Both of us continued our association in Bombay – Seshadri in Rallis and Ram in Philips. We formed a group called ‘Geet Mala’ with seven to eight ladies and were a well known music group. We were all learning under an enthusiast guru who taught us a very good repertoire of music. Our group was so popular, that we were very much in demand and that kept us all busy.

Both of us were active members of the Parent Teachers’ Association of our boys’ school, and worked in all the school committees. Life members of the Bharatiya Music and Fine Arts Society – again the interaction with well known artists continued. There was no day perhaps when we did not call each other.



Of course IndUS was a strong bond and we could formulate and execute our ideas, and we spent a lot of time in the company of our mutual friends. They called us the Madras MAFIA.

Both our husbands retired and we returned to Madras.

IWA was born ten years ago. Recently the 10th year of IWA was celebrated on a wonderfully large scale – much to the envy of the Bombay sisters of the IndUS. Again, Nirmal and I spent a few hours planning, discussing and executing some of the items. When at times I said, “Nirmal are we not over extending ourselves?” her reply always was, “Saroj, I won’t be there for the next big event – let me do this in a grand manner.” Did she have a premonition? Did she know? These questions haunt us now – but she never gave anyone any time to ask her another question. She had the final say.

Goodbye my dear friend. You will always be remembered.

Saroja Ramamrutham



Nirmal was happiest when she was scripting and producing shows. Music was in her blood. She had a gift for spotting talent and using it. She had a lightning grasp over matters and great organising abilities. She was very resourceful, with a sharp intelligence and amazing stamina to indulge in her various activities. Single-handedly, she could raise thousands of rupees through advertisements for the Bharatiya Music and Arts Sabha for their annual festival of music and dance every year in Bombay.

Her range of contacts was wide-reaching, not only in India but also overseas. She knew nearly all the performing artists in the field of music, dance and drama. They all called her by her first name – how she managed it is a marvel. None refused when she asked them for a programme.

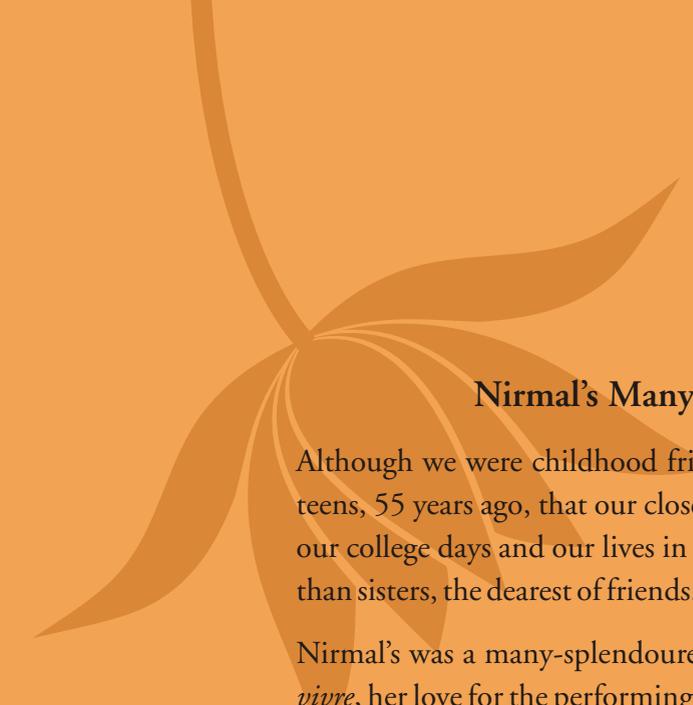
She accomplished more things through the phone than face to face contact. She would call me many times in the same day though we met so often. She told me that the current IndUS President had invited her to Bombay next year to organise their 30th year gala just like IWA's 10th year celebrations. Our show turned out to be her swan song.

Lakshmi Padmanabhan

Music had always been Nirmal's passion. It seeped into her bones through her association with her mother and grandmother, who were both well-versed in music and were composers in their own right. They also wrote plays and short stories. Dramatic Arts therefore became part of Nirmal's heritage.

After thirty years of marriage and living in Bombay and continuing her musical activities within and without India, Nirmal returned to Madras, but not to retire or rest. Nirmal felt that Madras needed an international cultural organisation, so Nirmal stirred and pushed the ladies of Madras to contribute their talents to this new organisation, called the International Women's Association.

Lily Madhok & Margaret Sekharan



Nirmal's Many-Splendoured Personality

Although we were childhood friends, it was only when we were in our early teens, 55 years ago, that our close friendship began and continued all through our college days and our lives in Bombay and then in Madras. We were closer than sisters, the dearest of friends.

Nirmal's was a many-splendoured personality. Her dynamism, drive, *joie-de-vivre*, her love for the performing arts and her infectious laughter were there for all to see. She had so many wonderful qualities, too many to enumerate. To mention just a couple, first and foremost was her great loyalty to friends. She would stand by them through thick and thin. Equally important was her helpful attitude. She would never refuse help even to mere acquaintances. To quote a Tamil saying, if you wanted tiger's milk, you only had to ask Nirmal. She would get it for you somewhere, somehow!

Thirty years ago while in Bombay, I went through a period of great sorrow. Leaving hearth and home, Nirmal (and Seshadri) would be with us all evening. Late into the night, day after day, week after week, giving us strength and sharing our cup of grief. How many friends would do this!

When I moved to Madras I found Nirmal with her new baby, her creation, IWA. She breathed IWA, talked IWA, lived IWA. IWA was her magnificent obsession. Even as the 10th anniversary celebrations were coming to an end, she was talking about grander celebrations for the 20th anniversary.

We in IWA owe it to Nirmal to keep the flag of IWA flying high, and to make it grow from strength to strength.

This will be our tribute to Nirmal's memory, the only one she would really cherish.

Shakuntala Jagannathan



Nirmal never hesitated to praise talent or give the devil his/her due. I remember last year's Founders' Day celebrations when I played the role of an Australian outback man conversing with his dog (that wasn't actually there). It was a difficult piece, and after the performance, Nirmal told me in Malayalam, "*Vasanthi, assalayi, poti patti,*" (the literal meaning of this being: It was good; You made the grains of earth fly. It was a typical Malayalam usage and it warmed my heart very much). She always recognised the talent of people. She knew that I could write fairly well (being a journalist) and would always request me to write something about IWA and its activities. Nirmal, I haven't done it. I feel very sad that I did not write it for you when you were alive.

Vasanthi Sankaranarayanan

Driving Ms. Nirmal

On IWA meeting mornings, the 'phone would ring around 7.30 a.m., and the voice that my family had got to know so well would ask for me. Then would follow the routine of deciding when to leave, whether we could postpone departure by five minutes to allow the omnipresent water lorry to disgorge its contents! At 9.45 a.m. I would drive over to *Vijay Vinayak*. Never have I had to wait. Nirmal would be ready, shout out her last minute instructions and hobble into the car.

And my education would begin. We talked about all kinds of things. Her knowledge of people and their interests, was phenomenal. She collected sports magazines for my daughter, and hounded me with two phone calls a day until I collected them. Her mind was like a sorting machine. She pulled details with great speed and ease out of her mind.

We talked about her No. 1 passion – music. I learnt what little music I know from the same Shankara Bhagavathar, who revelled in Nirmal's talent. When she spoke about music, her eyes would light up like at no other time.

We spoke about IWA – about its difficult but delightful birth – about the various people who were enthusiastic about it and about the few who were sceptical of its success. She talked of the dreams she had – a veritable Alibaba's cave of ideas.

We spoke about her first experience in the studios of A.R. Rahman, which led her to being billed alongside Jesudas! This obviously gave her a lot of pleasure. Thank you Mr. Rahman! She enthusiastically answered any question I asked her about music, never mind that some might have appeared infantile to her.

The Friday before that fateful Sunday, until 8 p.m., we were at a recording studio. That was the other thing. She discovered capabilities in you that you didn't know you had. And she would constantly badger you to tap your potential.

When I chatted happily with her and the rest of the Seshadri family on Saturday, I could not have guessed that I would never be able to do it again. But I feel fortunate to have been the last non-family member to see her. I feel a bit like the boy who said, "Goodbye, Mr. Chips," in James Hilton's famous book.

I also feel fortunate that I lived where I did, and was able to drive Ms. Nirmal – rather like Driving Ms. Daisy. I truly miss her.

Sushi Natraj



Nirmal's dedication and qualities of leadership are well known; but how many of us realised that she was not only the driving force behind us but the binding force that kept us together? With her fantastic memory for faces and names, she knew every member – her talents and her potential, she channelled them for the benefit of IWA. She in turn, was generous in her praise and appreciation of whatever anyone did. When it came to helping others, I have never known anyone like Nirmal. I would like to mention here in passing how, when I was desperately in need of a cook, her first words to me were, “Don't strain yourself – you have a bad back; get someone to cater for you until you find a cook,” and then she went all out to find one for me. That was Nirmal, full of concern for a friend.

Rupa Kadhiresan



Nirmal Seshadri was a woman of extraordinary talent and mental energy. IWA was her brainchild which she lovingly nurtured and in July, proudly celebrated its 10th birthday in a manner she thought most befitting.

Nirmal travelled the journey of her life in a passionate pursuit of the knowledge of music, arts, and culture. Her broad, intelligent and cultivated mind belonged perhaps to another time – for she was indeed a rarity. Possessing an ever youthful heart even at the ripe age of sixty-eight, was one of her most fascinating qualities that never failed to strike us.

She was able to combine her intelligence with the eagerness and joyfulness of a child, filling her mind with the love of wonder, the sweet amazement of the stars and the star-like things and thoughts – the undaunted challenge of events, the unfailing childlike appetite for what's next and the joy in the game of life – she set her ideals and never deserted them. Life to her was a celebration and celebrate it she did – to its fullest. She touched our lives in so many ways. The warmth of her smile, the kindness and generosity of her heart, her patient and listening ear – her words of comfort and concern for all her friends and their families.

Her music, her song, her voice, her command. She had her own way of keeping us all together – a perfect diplomat and leader. Today, she is no more – we will not hear that familiar voice again nor have the honour of her presence at our meetings – 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 re-dedicate ourselves to the ideals she founded IWA on and keep its flag of friendship and fellowship flying high.

Farewell Nirmal – your memory will always hold a very special place in our hearts.

Alagu Muthu & Poonam Lalchand



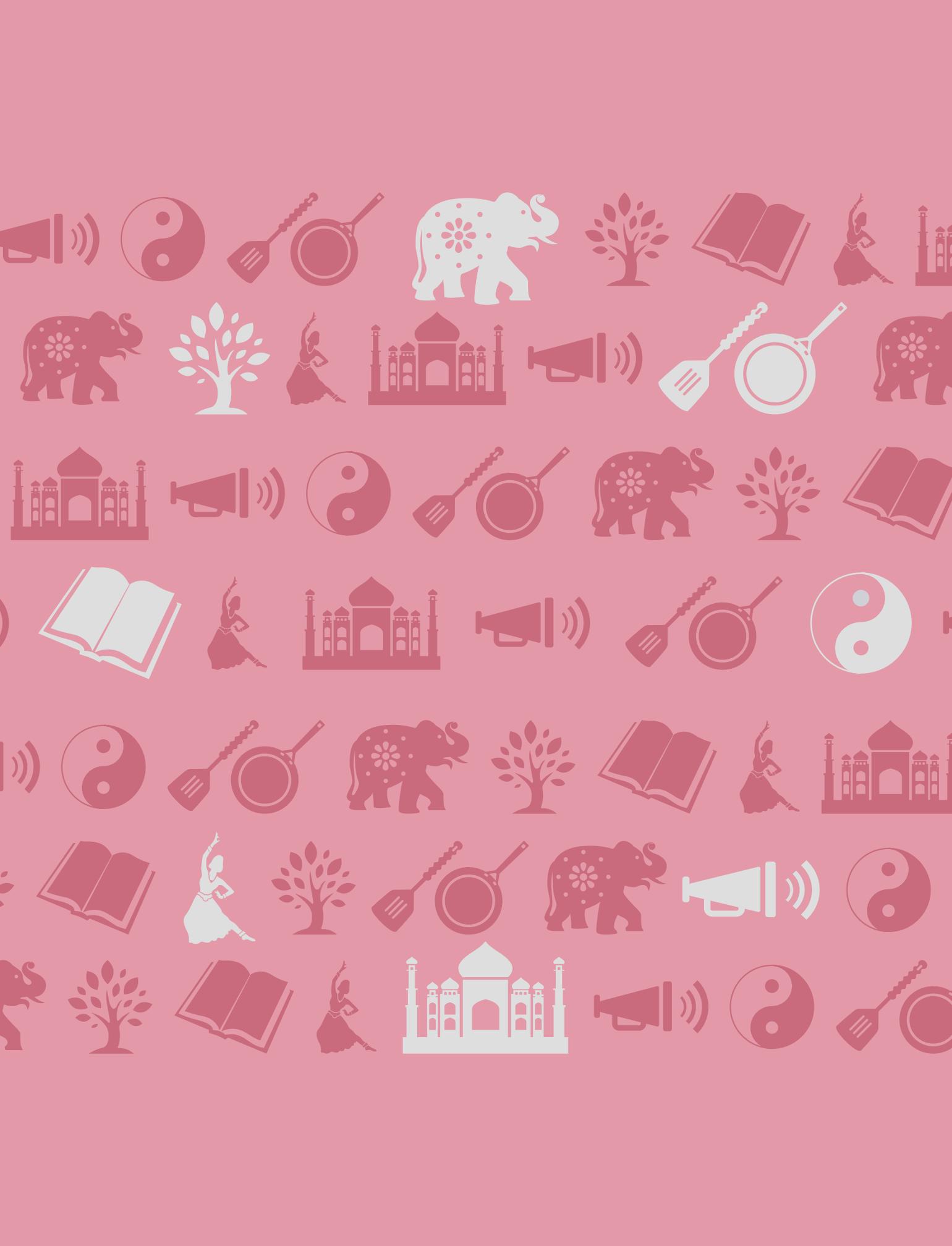
“The more things you love, the more you are interested in, the more you enjoy, the more you are indignant about, the more you have left when anything happens.”

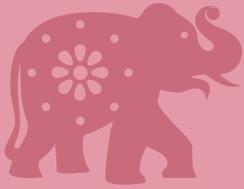
- Ethel Barrymore

Activities



Forever Connected Forever Learning Forever Inspired





Arts and Handicrafts



Meetings are addressed by well known artists, who have made their mark locally and internationally. Some of our past speakers have been Asma Menon, S.H. Raza, Thota Tharani, Nandagopal, Pupul Jayakar, Meera Muzaffar Ali, Reddappa Naidu, Usha Balakrishnan and Anuradha Vakil, personalities. We are privileged to have a glimpse into their worlds of intricate artistry and amazing talent. Participative workshops afford members a chance to try their hands at various arts and crafts.





Cooking Swapshop



A popular activity among IWA members – the meetings are wafted in flavours from many lands. The spices of the various regions of India have mingled with the cuisine of the West and the mysteries of the Far East. All these and more have come together in the 'IWA Cookbook', with recipes from our members.

We have been proud to host and learn from celebrity chefs like Sanjeev Kapoor, Chandri Bhat, Sabita Radhakrishnan, Mallika Badrinath, Rashmi Uday Singh and Jigyasa Giri & Pratibha Jain.



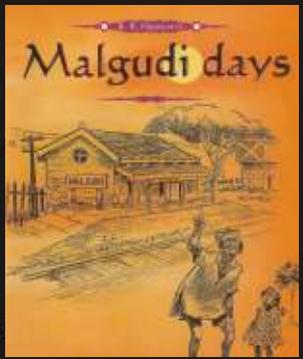
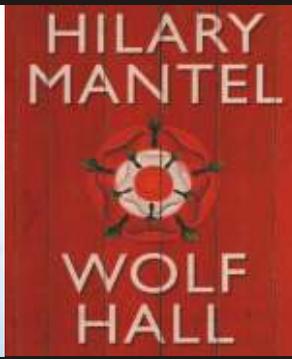
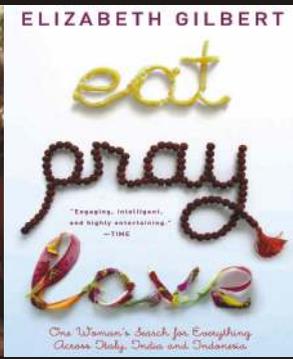
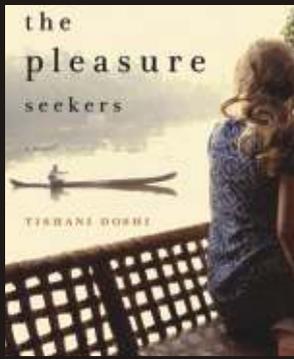


Book Discussion



Avid readers get together to discuss the book of the month, selected by the Chairpersons. Discussions are led by reputed names from the literary field, our own talented members and sometimes the authors themselves! IWA has had the privilege of meeting many a famous author and poet over the years. Some of the authors that have honoured us with their presence are William Darlymple, Amitav Ghosh, Dhritiman Chatterjee, Tim Murari, Vikram Seth, Pepita Seth, Tishani Doshi and Shobha De.

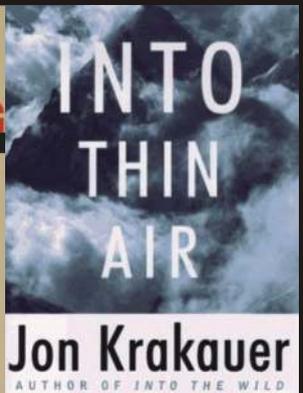
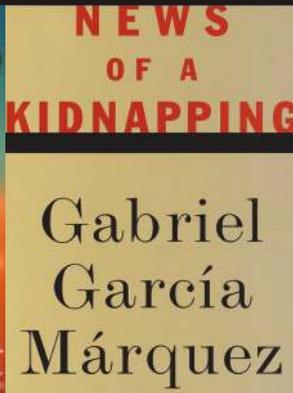
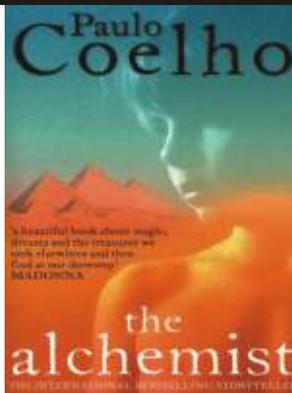
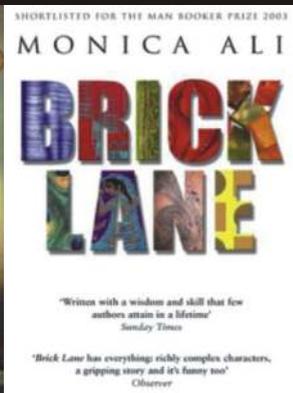
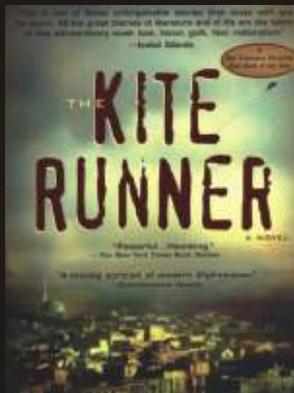




IWA Reads

John Steinbeck – Of Mice and Men
 Kazuo Ishiguro – Remains of the Day
 Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni – Mistress of Spices
 Ruskin Bond – Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra
 Gita Mehta – Snakes and Ladders
 George Orwell – Animal Farm
 Robert James Waller – The Bridges of Madison County

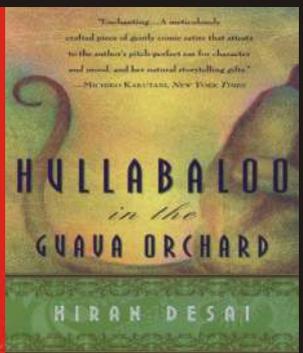
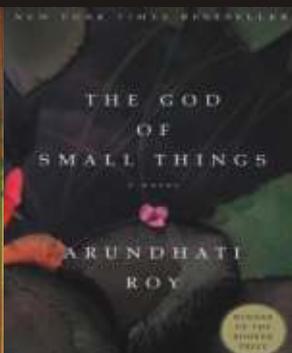
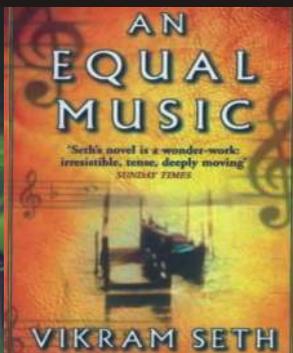
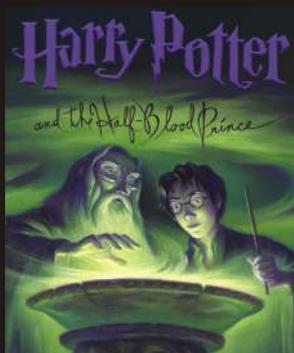
Jane Austen – Emma
 Kiran Desai – Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard
 Gabriel Garcia Marquez – News of a Kidnapping
 Nicholas Evans – The Horse Whisperer
 Arundhati Roy – The God of Small Things
 Jon Krakauer – Into Thin Air



Vikram Seth – An Equal Music
 Stephen Covey – The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People
 Karen Anand – Lean Cuisine Curries
 Arthur Goldman – Memoirs of a Geisha
 Shobha De – Speed Post

Charles Fraiser – Cold Mountain
 Satish Gupta – The Eyes of the Thar
 Paulo Coelho – The Alchemist
 Spencer Johnson – Who Moved My Cheese

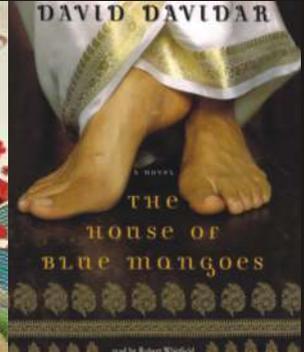
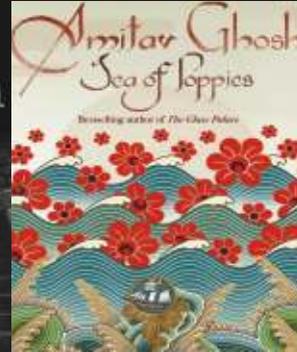
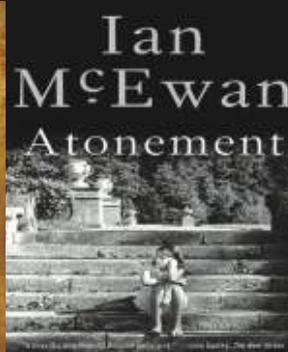
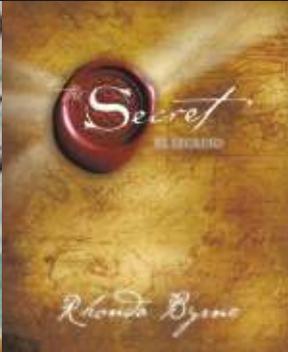
Amitav Ghosh – Glass Palace
 R. K. Narayan – Dark Room
 Anita Nair – Ladies Coupe
 Zadie Smith – White Teeth
 V.S. Naipaul – Half a Life
 Ian McEwan – Atonement



George Bernard Shaw – How She Lied to her Husband
 Yann Martel – The Life of Pi
 David Davidar – The House of Blue Mangoes

Lyane Guillaume - Jahan Ara
 A M Smith - The No.1 Ladies' Detective Agency
 Navroze Contractor - Dreams of the Dragon's Children

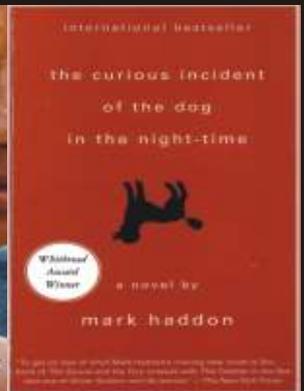
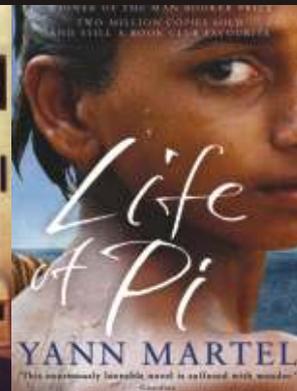
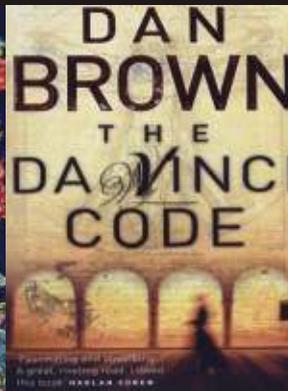
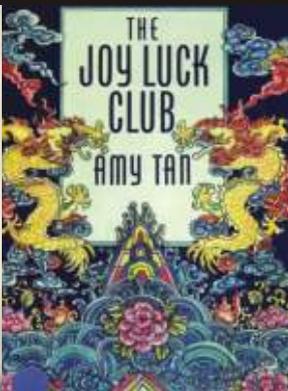
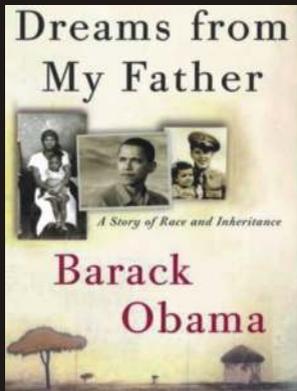
Mark Haddon – The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time
 Timeri Murari – Taj: A Story of Mughal India
 Sun Shuyun – Ten Thousand Miles without a Cloud



Tenzin Tsundue – Kora
 Navroze Contractor – Dreams of the Dragon's Children
 Monica Ali – Brick Lane
 Lyane Guillaume – Jahanara
 Zai Whitaker – Cobra in my Kitchen

Khaled Hosseini – Kite Runner
 Sabitha Radhakrishnan – Quick Cook
 Bapsi Sidwa – Water
 Reena Singh – Wedding Planner
 Mangai Padma Venkatraman – In the Name of Honour

Sandhya Rao – My Friend the Sea
 J.K. Rowling – Harry Potter and the Deadly Hallows
 Manohar Devadoss – Multiple Facets of My Madurai
 Seetha Muthiah – Flavours of Chettinad
 Gita Arvamudan – Disappearing Daughters
 Namita Devidayal – The Music Room
 Rhonda Byrne - The Secret



Ameen Merchant – The Silent Raga
 Saeed Mizra – Ammi
 Khaled Hosseini – A Thousand Splendid Suns
 Amitav Ghosh – Sea of Poppies

Jigyasa Giri & Pratibha Jain – Sukham Ayu
 Soumya Aravind Sitaram – Follow the Hindu Moon
 Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni – The Palace of Illusions

Hillary Mantel – Wolf Hall
 Michel Danino – The Lost River – On the Trail of the Sarasvati
 Leela Naidu – Leela – A Patchwork of Life
 Anita Nair – Mistress
 Tishani Doshi – Pleasure Seekers



Current Events

Topics of immediate interest and those that are of great concern are analysed by great speakers like N. Ram, Vijay Amritraj, Kiran Bedi, P. Chidambaram, M.S. Swaminathan, P.S. Rammohan Rao, Surjit Singh Barnala, Karan Singh, Ritu Nanda, Vasundhara Raje Scindia, Kiron Kher, Dr. Vijay Nagaswami and K. Vijay Kumar I.P.S. From wars to water problems, from business ethics to better investment practices - experts in their fields enlighten members with their acumen and insight.







Health and Ecology



Good health has become a prime concern in the present day generation. Fitness tips and home remedies are made available. Talks on the arrest of environmental degradation and on health foods and diets are regular draws. Speakers have included Dr. Mary Abraham, Dr. Matthew Kalarickal, Dr. Vijayalakshmi Acharya, Dr. S.S. Badrinath, T.V.K. Desikachary, M.B. Nirmal, Rujuta Divekar and many more.

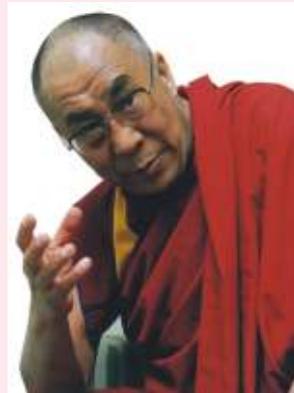




Philosophy & Religion



Members of many religious faiths meet and discover the differences and the essential sameness of their beliefs. Discussions on philosophical issues which contribute to the well being of the individual, are very well attended programmes. The joy of Diwali, Christmas and Eid are celebrated and shared.



Members have had the privilege of listening to discourses by His Royal Holiness the Dalai Lama, Sunandaji, Prema Pandurang and Dr. Subramaniam among others.





Music and Performing Arts

Artists of international repute, several of whom are IWA members themselves, have over the years, been invited to perform or speak at our meetings. Dance performances by Malavika Sarukkai, Vyjayanthimala Bali, Padma Subramanyan, Alarmel Valli, Urmila Satyanarayana, Sonal Mansingh, Lakshmi Vishwanathan, Shobana, Vani Ganapathy, Sudharani Raghupathy, Anita Ratnam, Hema Malini, the Dhananjayans, Astad Deboo, Gopika Verma, Leela Samson and Ramli Ibrahim have been delightful to watch.

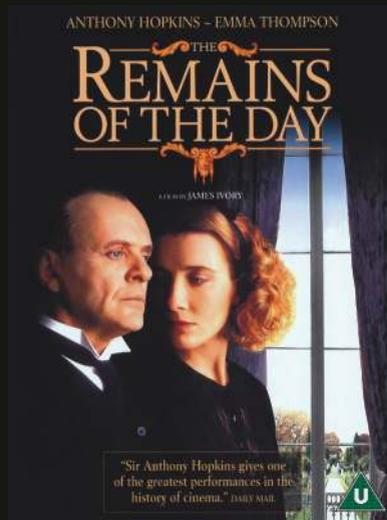
International Music Day on the 1st of October celebrates the memory of Founder President, Nirmal Seshadri. We have been privileged to watch the performances of U. Srinivas & U. Rajesh, Unni Krishnan, Revathy Shankaran, S. Sashank, T.M. Krishna, Prasanna, Kadri Gopalnath, Bikram Ghosh, Fazal Quareshi and Vikku Vinayakaram.

A corpus fund has been set up and an upcoming young artist in music or the performing arts is honoured each year.

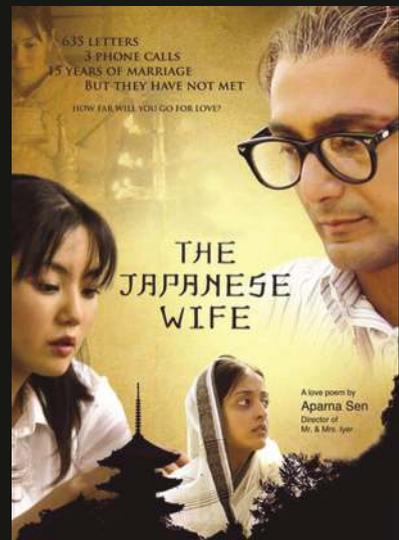
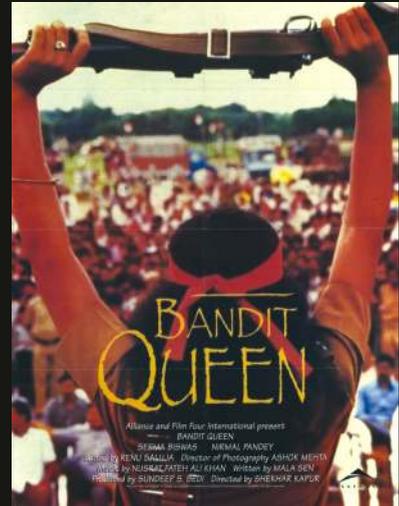




Siddhartha – Herman Hesse
Bandit Queen - Shekar Kapoor
The Mughals
Kama Sutra – Mira Nair
Forrest Gump – Robert Zemeckis

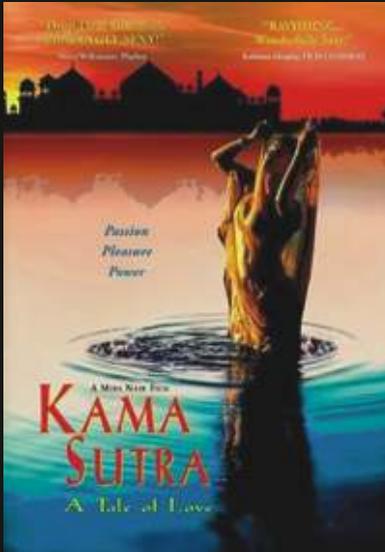


Emma – Douglas McGrath
Richard II – Richard Loncraine

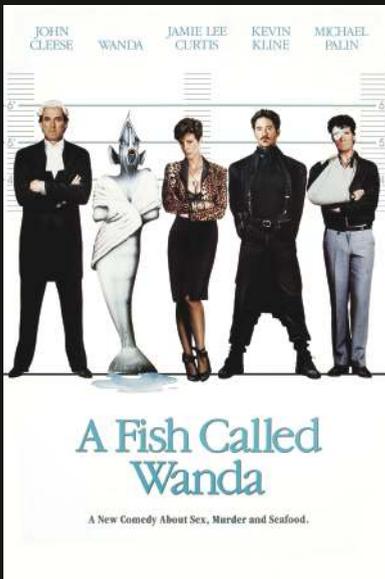


Little Buddha – Bernardo Bertolucci
Schindler's List – Steven Spielberg
Mrs. Doubtfire – Chris Columbus
The Remains of the Day – James Ivory
A Fish Called Wanda – Charles Crichton
Next Year in Jerusalem – Davidd Nahmod

the Movies



The Japanese Wife – Aparna Sen
A Different Pilgrimage – S. Krisnaswamy & Mohana



Dharm – Bhavna Talwar
Persepolis Reconstructed

Poison on the Platter – Mahesh Bhatt
The Truth about Tigers – Shekar Datattri





History, Culture and Tours



From Mohenjo-daro to Mars – our members are treated to information on any place under the sun! Films and slide shows of locations and civilisations rarely seen, are brought to IWA by historians and archaeologists. Historians like S. Muthiah, and speakers like H.H. Arvind Singh and Sashi Deshpande have charmed IWA members with their discussions.

Annual tours to far-flung and neighbouring places of historical and cultural interest are a popular activity. The Annual Endowment Lecture at the Museum attracts an erudite audience.



International Music Day 1988



Founder President Nirmal Seshadri had a great passion for classical music, which IWA members remember fondly, because International Music Day, October 1, has traditionally been a big day in the IWA calendar. We have been privileged to listen to exclusive performances for IWA from great musical maestros such as T.V. Gopalakrishnan, Lalgudi Vijayalakshmi, Mandolin Srinivas, S.M. Ganesan, Vidwan Anayampatti, Prasanna, Kadri Gopalnath and many more.

Coincidentally, October 1st was also Nirmal's birthday, so it was considered very apt to dedicate IWA's International Music Day celebrations in her memory. We thank Mr. Seshadri for the endowment he started, which is used to award budding musical stars. The idea is to honour, encourage and support young musicians of great talent and ability. Some of the young awardees are Master S. Shashank (2002), Master Satyanarayanan (2003), Siddharth Nagarajan (2004), Archana and Arthi (2005), S. Anantharaman (2006), K.P. Nandini (2007), R. Sriram (2008), Sriram Sridhar (2009) and Master N. Vishweshwar & Kumari Aswini (2010).





Woman of the Year 1989-1990

In IWA's second year, Past President Nirmal Mizra sponsored and mooted the concept of IWA Woman of the Year. It was agreed to honour outstanding women chosen from varied fields. Over the years, many remarkable women have been recognised for their special achievements in the fields of rehabilitation work, services to humanity, the corporate sector, literary and artistic fields, as well as doctors, teachers and environmentalists.

The recipients were Shanthi Ranganathan, Uma Karthik Narayanan, Dr. Sharada Menon, M.S. Subbulakshmi, Qudsia Gandhi, Sheela Rani Chunkath, Sarojini Varadappan, Gita Ram, Tara Sathyanarayana, Dr. Elizabeth Vomstein, Rekha Ramachandran, Kiran Mazumdar Shaw, Sivasankari, Maneka Gandhi and Lalitha Gupte.



The IWA Cookbook 1990-1991



The IWA cookbook was a major project taken up in 1990-91. It became such a huge success, that a few years later, in 1996-97, a second edition was presented, with new recipes, pictures and updated glossaries commemorating a decade of friendship in IWA. The recipes were tried and tested member favourites. The flavours, aromas, tastes and cuisines from India and abroad, were seen to represent the colour and variety of the IWA membership in their individuality and in their fusion. Founder Member and Past President Sunita Shahaney was the prime mover behind both the editions of the cookbook, and she and her teams are still remembered for these two excellent volumes.

We thank Sunita Shahaney for her involvement and dedication in bringing out both volumes of the cook book.

Cookbook Committee for the first edition (1990-91): Sunita Shahaney, Rani Chada, Mohini Gill, Anneliese Hazari, Lily Madhok, Sujaya Menon, Janet Picken, Sheila Pride, Rukku Seshasayee and Naina Shah.

Cookbook Committee for the second edition (1996-97): Sunita Shahaney, Vijaya Balu, Rani Chada, Eira Doshi, Mohini Gill, Anneliese Hazari, Poonam Lalchand, Madeline Leone, Lily Madhok, Meenakshi Meyyappan, Alagu Muthu and Naina Shah.





IWA Endowment Lecture 1996-1997

In 1996-97, when IWA was celebrating its 10th anniversary, the Committee also introduced a Heritage Fund, part of which was given to the Madras Government Museum as an IWA Endowment Lecture Fund to hold a public lecture once a year at the Government Museum Theatre. This endowment has ensured IWA's permanent and recurrent contribution to the promotion of the cultural heritage of Chennai city. It is also one of IWA's few events which receives press coverage, and brings IWA to the general awareness of Chennai society.



We thank Nanditha Krishna for arranging and sponsoring illuminating speakers for the endowment lectures, on several occasions over the years.

Some of IWA's Endowment Lectures over the years have been

- 1997-98 Prof. William Skelton, "Performing Music in Two Worlds, India and the West"
- 1999-00 Mr. K.T. Narasimhan, "New Discoveries at Mahabalipuram"
- 2001-02 Dr. Choodamani Nandagopal, "Feminine Forms in Indian Art"
- 2002-03 Dr. R. Champahalakshmi, "The City and Hinterland"
- 2003-04 Dr. Shanthi Pappu, "The Prehistory of Urban Processes in Medieval South India"
- 2004-05 Dr. Rajeshwari Ghosh, on her "Experiences of the Northern Silk Route"
- 2006-07 Dr. R. Kannan, "Holistic Approach to Dating in Ancient History"
- 2007-08 Dr. Sharadha Srinivasan, "Finger-printing of Bronzes"
- 2008-09 Dr. S. Vasanthi, "Varaha Avatar of Vishnu in the Arts & Literature of Tamilnadu"
- 2009-10 Dr. Gill Juleff, "Monsoon Steel: Early Metallurgical Development in Sri Lanka"
- 2010-11 Dr. Chitra Madhavan, "Art Heritage of the Chalukyas"

Girl Child Award 1997-1998



Dr. Prithika Chary, an IWA member, instituted and endowed the Girl Child of the Year Award in 1997 for girls under 18 years of age, who have achieved proficiency in their academic or vocational career, despite battling a serious ailment. It was often deeply moving to hear of the grit and determination shown by these girls to surmount the hardships and obstacles of their young lives, and members rejoiced in being able to share their moments of triumph and achievements. Sushu Natraj generously co-sponsored the award one year.

The recipients were Babli Ramachandran, Miss Sindhuja, Miss Suthasini and Miss C. Malini & Miss Vijayalakshmi, Miss Anjali and Miss. Sarbani Das.





IWA Logistics



We thank Vanitha Mudaliar for graciously providing IWA the venue for its registered office. This is where annual IWA elections are held. Also thanks go to her for receiving all the mail and new membership applications on behalf of IWA. Vanitha has generously provided this invaluable service to IWA ever since the organisation was registered.



A big thank you to the industrious IWA committees whose dedication drives IWA forward every year. These include the Managing Committee, Executive Committee, Advisory Committee, Election Committee, Membership Committee, Music Committee and all the Ad-hoc Committees.



IWA thanks all its members for opening up their homes, their hearts, their purses and devoting their valuable time to make IWA the vibrant organisation that it is.

IWA Logistics



IWA has proudly embraced technology and entered the 21st century!
Please log on to: www.iwachennai.blogspot.com



We thank Raziye Sheerazie for conceptualizing the brilliant IWA blog.



A big thank you to Rani Ananth for her painstaking efforts to maintain the IWA blog and for making available the meeting details to so many so conveniently on the net.



We express our gratitude to Priya, daughter of Past President late Malini Vijayaraghavan, for creating the IWA logo which embellishes our newsletters each month and is still very much in use on all our official correspondence today.





“The world is a book, and those who do not travel, read only a page.”
Saint Augustine

Travelling with IWA



Forever Connected Forever Learning Forever Inspired



Travelling with IWA

When we reiterate about ‘Friendship’ being the ‘leitmotif’ of IWA, the activity that nurtures and promotes friendship best is “Travel”. When our fellowship is bonding and thriving in the company of each other for a week or more, what could be more conducive to cementing lasting friendships?

Our ladies travel for a long distance confined to small spaces such as buses, trains and airplanes which are ideal opportunities to learn about each other and facilitate constant interaction. Also, we share rooms at the hotels where we stay, further paving the way for long-lasting bonds with friends belonging to different countries. We learn to connect with varied personalities and disparate cultures, and observe different traits, as well as absorb new experiences. A perfectly ideal opportunity to reinforce the “Spirit of IWA”!

IWA moments during our sojourns:

1. The *Antakshari* aficionados.
2. The Dumb Charades that exposes the hidden actor/performer among our members.
3. The unlimited supplies of food. It has to be seen and tasted to be believed!
4. The never-say-die photographers among us.
5. The sartorial variedness.
6. The shopaholics who can shop till all those around them drop down in exhaustion.
7. The die-hard, well-trained bargainers who have honed their skill to perfection, and are actively pursued by the rest of us.
8. The bold, the brave and the beautiful IWA ladies who can charm their way out of any sticky situation effortlessly!

IWA's Indian Sojourns



Around the

Not yet conquered!

PORTUGAL
● SPAIN



World with IWA





From Russia With Love 1989-1990

It was a small group consisting of Chandra Sankar, Shobha Hebbar and Nanditha Krishna and four others, that went to Russia. It was a combined trip with the IndUS group from Bombay, a multinational group. Tashkent was the perfect example for 'Greening of the desert'. Samarkhand displayed the softer side of the barbaric Timur. We saw beautiful buildings and one of the greatest observatories in the world. The drive from Samarkhand to Tashkent on the famed Silk Route was scenic, and the fertile cotton and rice fields transformed the desert. The people of Uzbekistan were warm and friendly and were great fans of Hindi films.

Our next destination was Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia where Christianity dates back to the 6th century. Leningrad is probably the most beautiful city in the world. Built by Peter the Great, it is a city of colourful palaces and the Hermitage Museum which houses the greatest collection of European art. The Summer Palace of Peter the Great is yet another magnificent building. With so much opulence, it is quite understandable why the 'Revolution' was inevitable in Russia!

Moscow gave us a taste of freezing temperatures. The capital is dominated by the Kremlin. The churches were distinct with their onion-shaped domes. Inside these churches are exquisite icons and mosaics. It was a thrill to walk through the Red Square. In Moscow, we stayed in a steamer on the river Moskva. Our last stop was Sochi, a beach resort on the Black Sea coast. The place had pebbled beaches.

U.S.S.R was fascinating. Here monuments and nature have been preserved with great love and it is one of the most aesthetically appealing places. Entertainment like the ballet, circus, opera and folk dances are aplenty. The Russians were especially friendly with Indians and gifted us flowers and souvenirs. This trip was an opportunity for the IWA and IndUS members to get together and forge future links.



Nanditha Krishna



The Gudiyam Cave Trail 1991-92

The visit to the Gudiyam pre-historic caves was a very eventful experience. The villagers quickly warmed to us, thanks largely to our polyglot members who spoke to them in Telugu after which, we were invited to share their lunch as well!

The Gudiyam cave is actually a large grotto, so cool and picturesque! The walls of the cave and the ceiling had pebbles of different sizes embedded therein. At the shrine of 'Mamanasa Amma' childless women pray to the goddess for fertility.

At Poondy, we visited a museum exhibiting implements of the Paleolithic, Neolithic, Megalithic and Microlithic ages. Attirambakkam was the site of the discovery of these Paleolithic implements.

Surekha Kothari & Kausalya Jaganmohan

Kerala 1992-93

In Kerala we witnessed the snake boat races at Alleppey and went sightseeing in Cochin.

Seema Sait

Chidambaram-Gangaikonda Cholapuram-Pichavaram 1993-1994

The magnificent temple of Chidambaram is noted for the shrine of Shiva as the Cosmic Dancer Nataraja, and for its exquisite carvings. Gangaikonda Cholapuram with its life-size carvings in the massive temple built by a Chola king whose conquests extended to the Ganges in the north. Pichavaram, where there are 3,000 acres of mangrove forests. A boat ride through the backwater canals is a great experience.



Rajasthan 1995-1996

On our trip to Rajasthan we visited were Jaipur, Ajmer, Jodhpur and Jaisalmer. The highlight was the Pushkar Fair at Ajmer. We enjoyed the elephant ride to Amber fort in Jaipur. We absorbed the rugged grandeur of Jodhpur and the intricacy of sandstone carvings of the *havelis* of Jaisalmer. There was a *Son-et-Lumiere* show at the Red Fort in Delhi.

Shakunthala Jagannathan & Poonam Lalchand

Scandinavia 1996-1997

The IWA bus tour went through Scandinavia from Copenhagen through Denmark. We stopped at Legoland and Odense, the birth place of Hans Christian Andersen. We proceeded by ferry to Gothenburg and on to Sweden along Lake Vattern; next to Stockholm, the Venice of the North and the birthplace of Stina Vasu.

After a day's halt in Stockholm, we drove to Sweden through the famed natural beauty of Varmland. Then we crossed into Norway for the spectacular scenery of mountains and fjords. Midsummer day was spent in Bergen and we continued through Norway to Oslo, the home of the Kontiki raft. We concluded the trip by taking an overnight ferry back to Copenhagen.

Kamala Prasad & Stina Vasu





The Hoysala Experience 1997-1998



Six eager ladies, Kamala, Ruth, Rita N., Rama, Mary Jane and Javanthi left for Bangalore where Rita Saldanha joined us to Shraavanabelagola. Shraavanabelagola lies nestled between the Vidhyagiri and Chandragiri hills. We had to climb 650 steps, without footwear to see the Gomateswara statue.

The temples built during the reign of the Hoysalas, rest on a raised platform with a star shaped base with varying number of projections. The intricacy and detail of the sculptures, particularly in jewellery and garments, was unbelievable. The distinguishing feature of these temples are the pillars polished to appear like metal.

The temples at Belur, Halebid and Somnathpur were our next destination. Belur excelled in the number and variety of the bracket figures. Halebid had the largest number of exterior sculptures and two adorable *nandis* or bulls. Somnathpur was the gem of the three, with *shikharas* for the three deities inside. Our respect for the artisans of that great era cannot be expressed in words. It was an intensely moving experience.



South Africa 1997-1998

South Africa brought nostalgic memories of the Mahatma, and when IWA offered a tour of South Africa, several of us joined it.

Pretoria had well-laid out boulevards and magnificent buildings. Sun City is South Africa's Las Vegas. We drove on the Great North Road towards Potgietersrus and visited Warmbaths hot mineral springs en-route.

In the Kruger National Park, the beautiful, round huts of the camp thatched with reeds, were air-conditioned. We were thrilled to see lionesses, a lion, hundreds of impala, kudu, water duck, giraffe, zebra, wild bison, a hippo with a baby and strange African birds. The highlight was when a huge tusker stood in the middle of the road about 100 metres from us, breaking off branches from a tree!

In Durban, we caught a fleeting glimpse of mosques and temples. We visited Port Elizabeth, a beautiful seaport town with old houses of the Colonial period, and the little town of Knysna. We went cruising around the lagoon.

We next visited cheetah land, and those members who were daring enough to touch a cheetah were given a certificate! The halt at an ostrich farm was pure fun. At Sea Island there were hundreds of seals enjoying the sun.

During the visit to the Cape of Good Hope, it was thrilling to see the meeting of the Atlantic and Indian Oceans from the top of a mountain, which we reached by a funicular train. The most adventurous memory was walking on a very narrow, rickety bridge through the bush.

Ahmedabad & Bhuj 1998-1999

A group of IWA ladies went to Ahmedabad, the capital of Gujarat and visited the Akshara Dham temple and various cultural centres. Next on the itinerary was Bhuj a fascinating place in the Rann of Kutch, famed for its exquisite handicrafts and embroidery.

There were day trips to Morvi, Badreshwar and Shrujan, where our members had a firsthand experience of the lifestyle of the Gujaratis.



China and Mongolia 1998-1999

IWA members embarked on a 15-day tour through China and Mongolia. Four cities in China and Ulan Bator, the capital of Mongolia were our destinations.

Shanghai in Central China is one of the world's greatest seaports. The city with its modern architecture and skyscrapers coupled with old Buddhist temples and lush gardens was a culture shock. Guilin was where we saw the 'Karst' hills of extraordinarily unique shapes. A boat ride through this range of majestic mountains, along the Yijiang River, ended in an antique bazaar. Xian (pronounced Shian), in N.E. China had this magnificent museum, consisting of a whole army of soldiers, horses, carriages, all of finely crafted terracotta. Declared the eighth wonder of the world, it is a breathtaking sight!

China's capital, Beijing, was full of historic sights – the Tiananmen Square, Mao Tse Tung's mausoleum, the Forbidden City where China's emperors lived in arrogance and grandeur, the Summer Palace with its unbelievably long corridors, whose ceilings were covered with paintings from Chinese history and mythology, and finally, that masterpiece of architecture – the Great Wall of China – which has to be seen to be believed! An evening at the Beijing opera was memorable.

We left for Mongolia, a country of friendly people, whose main source of food was the yak. Nomadic tribes still live in tents called 'ghers' specially equipped for withstanding the long and rigorous winters. The Mongolian people treated us to a cultural show, in their colourful costumes and gorgeous masks. It was a very unforgettable and enjoyable tour.





Ooty and Coonoor 1999-2000

In Coonoor we visited a tea factory, Sunita Shahaney's home, 'Amaalfi' where Sunita shared her experiences during the process of construction of 'Amaalfi'. There was a talk on the Nilgiris, its tribes, its history and lifestyles. We went to the BAT office with its 200-year-old history, and to 'Cloverly' which is a 100-year-old residence.

In Ooty there were tours of the Savoy Hotel, the Ooty Club, 'Southwick' with a 200-year-old history, the Madras Regimental Centre, Dasaprakash and Dodabeta, the highest point in the Nilgiris.

Radha Seshadri & Lalini Gautamadasa





Pondicherry, Chidambaram, Thanjavur and Chettinad 2000-2001

Arriving at Pondicherry, we viewed some old Colonial houses with the help of an excellent guide from INTACH. The most memorable experience was a tour of the Hotel de L'Orient which, after restoration, managed to capture the magnificence of a bygone era with its Colonial furniture and Ravi Varma oleographs.

The Nataraja temple at Chidambaram: At the entrance to this temple sits a *nandi* facing the Chit Sabha, which houses Nataraja, the Lord of the Cosmic Dance and the formless lingam. On to the Vaitheeswaran Kovil, dedicated to Shiva and Parvati. The worship of Shiva in this temple heals all illnesses.

We spent the night at Swami-malai, the Sterling Resorts village. Kumbakonam has always been famous for its bronze icons and pottery. A quick *darshan* of Lord Muruga on the hill and then we watched the manufacture of bronze icons nearby. We visited Dharasuram to see the famous Airatesvara temple and then, on to Gangaikonda Cholapuram.



We left for Thanjavur to see the Brihadiswara temple. It was very auspicious as it was *Mahashivarathri*. The Brihadiswara temple built around 1010 A.D., dedicated to Lord Shiva, is one of the few temples in India to have a World Heritage listing. Here stands one of the largest *nandis* in India, looking towards the main sanctum sanctorum.

Chettinad was next on our map. We visited the palace, the Murugappa family house in Pallathur and Mr. Subbiah Chettiar's family house. Next was the Puliyarpatti temple near Karaikudi where we halted at the 'Bangla', a Heritage home, for the night.

At the conclusion of this trip, in the fulfillment of the aims and objectives on which IWA was founded, we made friends and contacts, both Indian and non-Indian and got to know and understand each other better.



Orissa 2001-2002

IWA's trip to Orissa was a real smashing success. The meticulous planning and hospitality offered by our own members was overwhelming. The flow of conversation touched so many aspects, from Divine philosophy to mundane subjects. A peel of laughter in the bus told us, "There goes another one of those jokes!"

In Bhuvaneswar we saw the Lingaraj temple and the unexpected bonus of two Odissi dancers. By the kind courtesy of our member Nirmal Mirza, we had an enjoyable dinner and a dance recital.

Shopping is always an integral part of all IWA trips.

On the way to Konarak, we stopped to see the famous Ashoka Edicts. I wish governments would learn a few lessons from these edicts and help their people have a better way of life!

The Sun Temple at Konarak is very awe-inspiring.

Our next destination was Puri to visit the famous 12th century temple for Lord Jagannath – the Lord of the Universe. This temple is stated to have the largest kitchen in the world. We





were lucky to have the help of a young priest who made sure we had good *darshan*.

We spent the night in Puri, very near the beach and then headed back to Chennai the following night.

For this dynamic, witty and fun group of IWA ladies, this tour will always be a special memory!

Saroja Ramamrutham

IWA moment:

The walk by the sea in the moonlight looking for Olive Ridley turtles because it was their nesting season.

Drying Kamala's drenched new sarees in the Bhubaneswar station while waiting for our train to Chennai. We recreated a 'Dhobi Ghat'!





Malaysia 2001-2002

Rani Chadda came with a rose for each member of the group to wish us bon voyage for our trip to Malaysia. The two Chairpersons, Vidya Singh and Pat Alter, ensured that all members of the group were cared for and all arrangements ran smoothly.

After our arrival in Kuala Lumpur, we travelled to the states of Malacca Kelantan and Terengganu. Selangor and Negeri Sembilan of Malacca were our next halts. We briefly visited Pahang on the East Coast to see a turtle nesting site at Cherating.

The 'Toll Roads' were clean, straight and well maintained.

We visited the tallest building in the world - the Petronas Towers in Kuala Lumpur. In contrast, we visited Heritage sites in Malacca where there is evidence of Portugese and Dutch conquests of the area. We went on a river cruise in Kuala Terengganu. At Kota Bahru we saw the Sultan and his wife in our hotel and in Malacca we heard the Chief Minister of the state speaking. We ate 'Kway Teow' and 'Tahu Goreng', rambutans and roast chestnuts.

We arrived back in Chennai and would you believe it, Rani was there to receive us!

Margaret Sekharan





A Yoga & Ecology Trip to Coonoor 2002-2003

A journey for health... comfortable walks in serene woods, healthy food, meditation or *mounam*, and a keep fit yoga routine. Of course, shopping and relaxation too! There were light *pranayams*, *Surya Namaskar* and 12 basic *asanas* which were demonstrated by Cherry Venkatesan. It was a very relaxing and happy interlude.

Cherry Venkatesan

Sri Lanka 2002-2003

A well-planned trip, an excellent itinerary and the best of Sri Lanka packed into 7 days and 6 nights! Here are a few vignettes:

The beautiful capital of Colombo with its Colonial buildings!

The endearing elephant orphanage at Pinnawala! Our ladies regressed into their childhood and enjoyed themselves.

The Lion rock and frescoes of Sigriya. The climb to the top was tricky and arduous!

The ancient capital of Polonnaruva!

The cave temples of Dambulla!

The sacred tooth relic temple and bazaars of Kandy!

The heart of Sri Lanka's tea country - Nuwara Eliya! A scenically beautiful drive up the lushly forested mountains and the



unforgettable hotel atop the mountain, which was a tea factory during the British reign. Suffice to say our ladies completely lost control when they saw the variety of teas flavoured and otherwise - which were available on sale! The golden sandy beaches of Bentota with its gems market! The Taj Resort was fantastic. Shopping was such an unqualified success because the Sri Lankan rupee is less in value than the Indian rupee. 'Odel' in Colombo had every top designer label at unbelievably low prices! We were thoroughly satiated in every way!

Geeta Vasudevan



IWA in Egypt 2003-2004

‘Time’ has a different connotation in Egypt. They speak in millennia the way we count centuries! ‘Old and ancient’ means over 4,000 years old. Greek and Roman periods are relatively recent history as they are only 2,000 years old!!

The Giza pyramids were ‘awesome’ as the Yankees would say. The daring among us ventured into the pyramid of Menkaure.

The Sphinx was smaller than we imagined but it came alive in the spectacular sound-and-light show. We were awestruck by the mummies of Ramses II and Tutmosis II and there were even mummies of crocodiles!!

Hawking and bargaining reached a crescendo in the colourful and exciting markets.

We became adept at identifying Egyptian gods like Anubis, Isis, Osiris and Hathor.

The belly dancing and the Whirling Dervish were exciting.

We were sufficiently ‘tombled out’ gawking at the riches of Tutankhamen. Egypt is surely ‘the Mother of all Civilisations’.

Shobha Hebbar





Chettinad 2004-2005

Historic homes, magnificent temples, tempting shops, fascinating crafts, delicious food and the warmest and the most thoughtful hospitality possible – the perfect ingredients for an IWA excursion! This sense of fun and generosity of spirit so willingly shared by our hostesses, Meyammai, Umayal and Laxmi will be remembered as much as all that we saw and did.





Cambodia 2004-2005



The first three days of sightseeing were perhaps the most memorable, spent in exploring the ruins and relics of the vanished Khmer civilisation at Angkor Thom, Ta Prohm, the Bayon Temple, Angkor Wat, the Terraces of the Elephant and the Banteay Kdei. Will anyone forget the artistry and magnificence of the neglected friezes and fallen stones of the Angkor temples, or the beauty of a golden red sun framing the lotus spires with mathematical precision? This left our group spellbound and awestruck by this unforgettable experience!!

Equally overwhelming were the towering banyans of Ta Prohm rising majestically (1000 ft. and more) from their stone base, their roots over-running abandoned temples, straddling the loveliest of friezes.

Disturbing though was the sight of little children selling their wares in the most soulful manner and begging for money to pay for their education.





IWA moment:

The Apsara dance in Angkor village.

The karaoke with the crooners on the cruise liner Chao Phraya Princess.

The glimpse of the sun rising in all its glory behind Angkor Wat.

We totaled 499 kgs. of luggage with three more shopping destinations!



Thailand, a kingdom that venerates its king and its monks and is a flag-bearer of Buddhism, was a fascinating mixture of temples and modernity. The most memorable place we visited besides Bangkok and Chiang-Mai was Chiang-Rai. This is the site of the famed Golden Triangle, the point from which one glimpses Burma and Cambodia. The Opium Museum disclosed the startling allegations that this destructive drug was introduced into Asia by the soldiers of Alexander the Great.

Bangkok is notable for its canals, as well as the Bangpa-In Palace or Summer Palace. The cruise on the Menam Chao Phraya by night was memorable. The singing and dancing, while navigating the river by moonlight, was the most enjoyable evening of the trip. The reclining Buddha in Ayuthya and the imposing stupas reminded us of Sarnath in India. A highlight was Jim Thompson's museum of Thai artifacts housed in reconstructed two-century-old Thai houses.

Meyyammai Murugappan & Ramani Reddy





Madhya Pradesh 2005-2006

The trip was unforgettable like all IWA trips.

What a well-planned variety of destinations! From the bedrock of prehistoric man at Bhimbetka to the 'Festival of Music and Dance', with the backdrop of the ancient Khajuraho temple, it was a wonderful experience for the 20 of us.

Sanchi engrossed and totally absorbed our group of women. The Tribal Village Habitat had homes from all over India replicated to complete detail and authentication.

Bhimbetka: Aah!! Primordial. Awe-inspiring is too trite a term to describe the experience!! The rocks, the caves, the drawings, what fantastic sentinels of the Almighty's creation, with a little help from man!

The entire episode was remarkable, from the ride on the plush Shatabdi (sofas, tables and all) to the 'Son et Lumiere' at the Gwalior fort. The deep, rich voice of Amitabh Bachchan narrating legends of generations, the lighting, the acoustics, the mellifluous music of Bhimsen Joshi and Pandit Jasraj blew us away into another sphere of enchantment.





The Scindia museum houses the famous drinks trolley in a silver train. The two largest and heaviest chandeliers in the world are in this museum.

Orcha was lovely in its distinctive architecture with spires reaching skywards, all cenotaphs for its kings.

Khajuraho: So much anticipation for the final leg of our tour! This beautiful complex of temples was built by the Chandela kings in the 10th and 11th centuries. One of the erotic sculptures had our guide terming the pose as 'Mission Impossible'.

We visited the Panna Reserve where we saw a tiger resting majestically in the wild grass.

Dahiya Govind Palace: This precious chunk of history is completely untouched by the ravages of time and man. Its Indo-Islamic architecture and its beautiful paintings on Krishna-lore in vegetable dyes are still almost intact.

Shobha Hebbar & Ramani Reddy

IWA moment:

Every one of our senior members readily volunteered to climb on the elephant howdahs and undulate their way through Panna in search of the tiger.





Turkey and Greece

2006-2007

The tour this year was fraught with a few hiccups because of bomb blasts in Istanbul and other parts of Turkey.

This trip recreated the spirit of IWA which is fellowship and friendship. Both countries gave us an idea of what a true mix of old and new can be – the tradition preserved through building anew without completely demolishing what was existing.

The mosques of Istanbul, the Blue Mosque and the Hagia Sophia Mosque, contained the remnants of the Roman and Christian architecture, which preceded the building of the mosques.

The Parthenon in Greece was originally a temple for Athena, later a Christian and then a Muslim place of worship. Delphi claimed to be the 'Navel of the Universe', Hagia Sophia, 'the central point of the earth'. The architectural marvels of Mycenae, Olympia, Delphi and Troy, though in ruins, the glory of the sun as it rose and set seemed to bring these old civilisations to life, reminding us of the glory that was Turkey and Greece!





We went on two cruises – one on the Bosphorus in Turkey and the other, to the island of Mykonos in Greece.

We arrived in Turkey the day before their Republic Day and were able to see the celebration of fireworks and parades. At the museum of the Topkapi Palace and the Dolmabahche Palace, we experienced the opulence and splendor of the Sultanate of Turkey. Turkey is the only country which lies partly in Europe and partly in Asia.

Mykonos gave us the enduring memory of the pristine white and vibrant blue! Epidaureus, the ancient amphitheatre, was a marvel. The unbelievable acoustics were tested by our members, Surekha Kothari and Prema Kumar when they sang 'Vande Mataram'.

Food is an integral part of all IWA trips. We tasted *Raki* and *ouzo* and the mouth-watering Greek and Turkish cuisine. There was happiness, fellowship, friendship, goodwill and cheer all through.

Ramani Reddy

IWA moment:

The singers, card players, shoppers, drinkers, photographers, all indulged themselves to their heart's content! The old and the slightly disabled were assisted by the younger and more vital members.





Punjab

2006-2007

Punjab conjures up images of valour and vibrant colours, hardworking Sardars and mustard fields. We went there on an 8-day trip with IWA.

Day 1: Our first stop was Kurukshetra. We walked on the Brahmakund – the largest man-made pond in Asia. We drove to Chandigarh and dined at the Taj.

Day 2: The next day we visited the Rock Garden designed by the famous architect, Nek Chand. We met the unassuming artist, who's hobby it was to use all discarded garbage like broken bangles, plug points, construction rubble, etc., to produce the exquisite sculptures which constitute the garden. The Rose Garden had 7,000 varieties of roses. The warmth and affection of the Majithia family was touching.

Day 3: The Pinjore Gardens in Mughal style was a lovely haven and we had a sumptuous packed lunch from Anu's friend.

The Timber Heights is a resort hotel and the ride up the ropeway to the hotel was a novel experience. It was an ideal nature-centric getaway where we played Dumb Charades and other parlour games. Cherry, Sanjitha and Ramani walked to a little temple halfway down the hill and had an exciting encounter with a cow and a bunch of kids.





Day 4: To Patiala to visit the Sheesh Mahal and Phulkari embroidery. Laden with beautiful shawls and salwar suits we proceeded to Amritsar.

Day 5: The Golden Temple. We went there on the auspicious day of *Amavasya*. The temple is a jewel in the centre of a huge tank. Guru Granth Sahib, the holy book of the Sikhs is kept in the sanctum sanctorum. The 'langar' hall feeds the multitudes of pilgrims who visit every day. History records that Bindranwale was holed up here and the cache of arms was kept here during those dark days in the early 1980s.

Jallianwala Bagh: We solemnly trudged through this memorial, and were reminded of the thousands of Indians who were massacred by General Dyer.

Day 6: This was a day of temple visits – Mata ki Mandir and the Durgiana temple.

The Ranjit Singh Palace Museum has beautiful dioramas illustrating battles during Ranjit Singh's life.

Day 7: We returned to Chandigarh and finally caught the flight back to Chennai. I termed this a 'paisa vasool trip'!

Sushi Natraj



Prague and Budapest 2007-2008

The city of Prague is a city to behold! One of the world's oldest living cities, with its many historic synagogues and amazing cathedrals. At the time of our visit, the town square was filled with soccer players of the Czech Republic and Ireland, having a roaring time betting on each other. There were many Czech artists, musicians and souvenir vendors lining both sides of the famous Charles Bridge. We even had Hare Krishna devotees dancing on the bridge. We enjoyed a breathtaking view of the fully-lit Prague castle against the evening sky. Cesky Krumloy is a unique architectural jewel, which has been included in the UNESCO's list of World Heritage Sites.

North Bohemia: We visited the Melnik wine region and Wenceslas Square which is one of the two main squares in central Prague. Sharanya was our knowledgeable in-house guide throughout the trip. She surprised the guide by breaking out into the song, 'Good King Wenceslas'.





Budapest is one of Europe's most fascinating cities. On the Buda side of the city, on Castle Hill, is the Buda Castle.

Next, a trip to Esztergom, a scenic Hungarian countryside and later we visited the charming artist town of Szentendre. At the end of this trip the spirit of adventure and challenge of new frontiers is alive and well among the IWA ladies.



Vijaya Bharathi Rangarajan





Sikkim 2007-2008

Sikkim is an eco-friendly state. Plastic bags have been banned for some years and the Sikkimese people are striving to keep it a tourist friendly state.

We flew to Kolkata, boarded the Darjeeling Mail for Siliguri and arrived in Gangtok the following night.

Tsongmo (Changu) lake: The drive to the lake was beautiful. The snow covered mountains and the clear sunny skies made the mountain roads look narrow and unsafe. We saw many prayer flags which are called Wind Horses and are actually Buddhist prayers. The colours represent the elements – earth, water, air and ether. The flags flutter in the wind and Buddhists believe that prayers are carried throughout the universe and benefit all sentient beings.

Changu lake is a sea of pristine white, frozen in time with the mountains as a backdrop. The yak ride was unexpectedly comfortable.

The visit to Rumtek Monastery was very interesting. We learnt about the Karmapas, Rinpoches and the Dalai Lama. The Namgyal Institute of Technology has a vast and





precious collection of thangkas, rare manuscripts, statues and other religious objects.

The views, as we drove to Pelling were beautiful, with mountains as high as 13,000 feet above sea level. Tashi Gang Resort was our home for the next two nights. We did arduous treks during those two days.

Sangachoeling Gompa on the Khecheopalri lake is sacred to Hindus as well as Buddhists.

Our next stop was the Kanchenjunga waterfalls and the Pemyangste Gompa, with its amazing seven-tiered model of Guru Rinpoche's heavenly abode which was made by the late Dungzin Rinopche.

As the sun rose on our last morning in Sikkim we saw the view of the magnificent Kanchenjunga range. It more than made up for the unexpected drama of insurgents blocking our crossing over into Darjeeling in West Bengal!

Ramani Reddy

IWA moment:

Kusum helping us secure safe passage by contacting the Governor of Sikkim who was known to her family.





Yercaud 2008-2009

The wooded hills, the deep vales, the cool breeze, the winding ribbon of road, and a couple of wee waterfalls gave a fine impression of a 'Hill Station', for the 'heat-crazed' Madrasis. Yercaud is a very pretty hill station, with its garbage and plastic waste kept to a minimum.

We arrived at the Sheveroy Hotel, and breakfasted with the birds surrounding us.

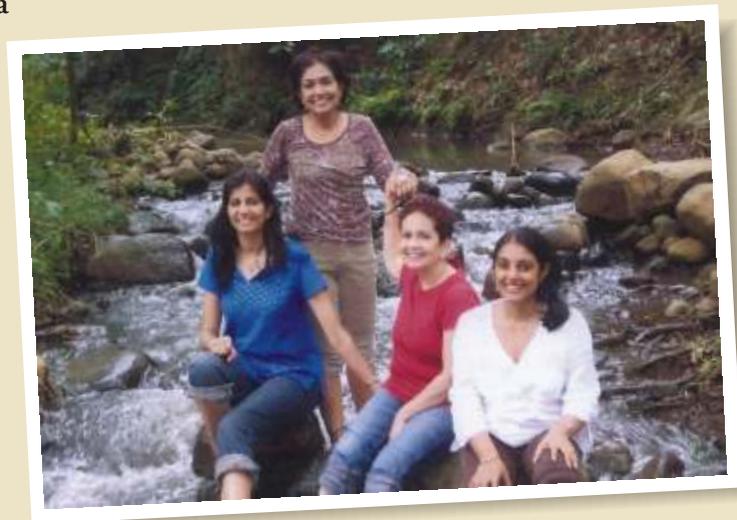
The Salesian Retreat is well-kept. The Montfort School is a legend, and its play grounds are fabulous. Prithika Chary had us all doing meditation in the evening which, along with the serenity of the surroundings, calmed us.



We had a fun picnic at the Kunder's Coffee Estate, ending with lunch and beer at a running stream, with a herd of sheep, several stray dogs, and insects galore! The more intrepid went on a hike up the mountain.

Prithika who would find a friend in the Rann of Kutch, or the Rohtang Pass, found a good one in Salem, where we 'time passed' until we departed for the station at night.

Rita Saldanha





Spain and Portugal 2008-2009

Eight hundred years of Islamic dominance followed by years of the Christian Reconquista left a colourful mosaic of a country and culture. A mosaic, we 20 IWA members and 11 friends were continually amazed with, as our journey began and Portugal and Spain rolled out in front of us.

A Fado dinner welcomed us in Lisbon. A melancholic song of love, life, fate and despair filled our ears. “Senora, are you vegetarian or are you normal?” asked the waiter in exasperation. Lisbon, a beautiful country nestled on the hills overlooking the River Tejo had the Jerimico monastery, where Vasco da Gama was laid to rest.

We drove to the beautiful hill-station of Sintra and Cabo da Roca, then stopped at Cascais, a fishing town and Estoril, with its famed casino. Evora, Seville, Granada and Cordoba are charming Moorish cities of Spain. The Bones Chapel of Evora was made entirely of human bones! Seville’s Plaza de Espana was magnificent! The Alcazar Palace boasting plaster work of the most intricate designs and ceramic tile mosaics in that gorgeous combination of blue, green and mustard were a treat. A Tapas dinner followed by Flamenco with its intensely passionate movements, was a soulful experience. Cordoba’s Mesquita or Mosque Cathedral was outstanding with its brilliant red and white arches. The Alhambra Palace in Granada was a heavenly abode. Its history is so complex that our guide begged us not to make ‘Historical Salad’ out of it!!

A six-hour drive to Madrid just flew by with *antakshari* led by Naina, Surekha’s solo numbers, the food, the gossip, the chatter and laughter, the camaraderie. The thought of





Nirmal and how proud she would have been to see the spirit of her IWA remain in full bloom came to our minds. Madrid is home to the Prada Museum which has masterpieces like Rubens, Goya, Van Dyke and El Greco. At Toledo we went to a city museum of medieval architecture.

Of course, through it all we were wined and dined to the hilt, and we chilled out on pitchers of Sangria – that delightful concoction of red wine and pomegranate juice – not to forget the mad shopping whenever we could snatch the time.

Barcelona: The birthplace of modernism, a city of style and chic, Antonio Gaudi, the Picasso Museum, the fashion street, Passeig Garcia, and much more!

Virgin Mother of Montserrat: A scenic drive through olive groves and a short funicular ride up the mountains got us to her beautiful basilica abode where, made of black stone, she wears Her gracious, compassionate smile. We had a photo-op outside the cathedral.

We returned to Barcelona to join the revelry of the Fiesta of Our Lady of Mercy – a bonus indeed! As we sat among the crowds and watched the colourful floats and historical pageants, the skies burst with a million coloured stars as the grand fireworks display began. We were in the heart of it all, feeling the pulse of the people born to celebrate life to its fullest – a grand finale indeed, we could not have asked for more!

Alagu Muthu

IWA moment:

Hearing a very modern European woman chanting the 'Gayathri Mantra' while walking out of the Church of the Virgin Mother of Montserrat!!





Maharashtra 2009-2010

Sixteen of us embarked on a week-long trip to Maharashtra.

At Aurangabad we were awestruck from the moment we entered the huge bowl of the Ajanta Valley, and wondered at the sheer inaccessibility of the place. Innumerable centuries later, some of the colours seem unreal for their ability to have survived with such clarity! The essence of every aspect of human nature seems to have been captured by the artists in the paintings. We visited the Bibi-Ka-Maqbara where Aurangzeb's wife rests.

Ellora Caves: Three different faiths are represented here, Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism. This is the richest repository of rock-cut art in India.

Daulatabad fort is designed like a maze.

The holy shrine at Shirdi was our next destination. We had *darshan* of Sai Baba.

Kalaram temple at Nasik had beautiful images of Lord Rama in black stone.





Thrimbakeshwar is architecturally stunning and has one of the twelve *jyothirlingas*. The Trinity, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva are represented here.

We visited the coin museum in Nasik and the afternoon stop was the Sula Winery, where our ladies enjoyed the wine tasting.

The Radisson Hotel and spa at Aurangabad was the 'Piece de Resistance' of the trip! We wallowed in the decadence of its luxury and ambience!!

Janjira Fort: The lucky number 22 seems to have worked here. This is the only fort in India which has never been conquered!

We went to Mumbai by ferry and arrived at the Gateway of India. The view of the Mumbai skyline was magnificent; but we had goose bumps when we remembered the horrors of 26/11! Another ferry ride took us to Elephanta Caves. Finally, lunch at Jazz by the Bay and then making our tracks back to Chennai.

Ramani Reddy





Journey to the Land of the Tsars - Russia 2009-2010

Apart from a delay of several hours before takeoff, nothing marred our delightful trip.

At Moscow, we visited an ancient monastery. The belfry tower was in three levels, with bell sizes to match. The gardens were a riot of colourful flowers. An entertaining evening at the Russian circus followed. The equestrian act was superb.

We caught an overnight train to St. Petersburg. The tiny coupés were draped with fringed curtains and were fairly comfortable. We were served hot pancakes and caviar for breakfast!

The grandeur of St. Petersburg was breathtaking – the river flows through the town under ornamental bridges, with large and small boats dotted around. The landscape was filled with imposing houses, palaces, churches and a profusion of museums. The Tsar wanted to recreate Venice!

We lined up at the Hermitage to see a mind-boggling number of artifacts, paintings, chandeliers, furniture, jewellery, armour, curios and everything else. Such art is meant to be taken in small doses over weeks but we had to rush through at breakneck speed.

On the visit to the Windsor Palace and Gardens, we had a glance at one of the highly decorated bedrooms. It did raise a niggling doubt as to how Peter the Great fitted into the puffy bedstead, or enjoyed a romp in it!





We saw so many churches, each one more beautiful than the last.

The visit to the Red Square and the Kremlin was unforgettable. The grandeur of the latter, the size of the former with onion domes springing up in the most unlikely places, were stunning. No torture chambers or underground dungeons were shown.

A night of folk dance, an evening at the Russian circus and an unforgettable ballet – Tchaikovsky's 'Swan Lake', all embellished the trip with a golden patina.

Who would imagine that in spite of rampant Communism, the beauty of Russia would be pristinely preserved?

Rita Saldanha



IWA moment:

Sushi and Ramani had an unexpected adventure of finding their way via the World Heritage Russian underground railway to the Red Square, since they were left behind at the hotel!





Karnataka and Goa 2010-2011

Our IWA members set off on a tour of Karnataka and Goa. This was a perfect amalgam of temples, churches and joyous capers. A sort of pilgrimage with some fun thrown in!



Shravanabelagola has an imposing Gomateshwara, the monolithic statue of a Jain saint. Belur is a functioning temple since its inception in 1117 A.D. The sculptural ornamentation is unbelievable! The main structure of the temple is star-shaped, and built on a raised platform. Halebid, the 12th century marvel built by Ketamela, is shaped like a casket, and sculpturally embellished. The *nandi* figures are majestically imposing. Dharmasthala is an exemplary manifestation of communal harmony.

Maple Beach in Udipi was where we spent the evening and night on the sands. Tehnaz was a riot with her interpretation of Dumb Charades.

Gokarna – Om Beach Resort. The visit to the seashore at sunset was unforgettable! The local Shiva temple, where Lord Shiva was supposed to have emerged from the ear of a cow.

Panjim Inn Welcomgroup was built in the late 1800s. This beautiful home is owned by the same family for 5 generations. A profusion of antique wooden furniture, which was a feast to the eyes! We visited a Heritage home belonging to Francis Xavier Bregenza. At the Basilica of Bom Jesus, are the remains of St. Francis Xavier, preserved in a coffin.

We visited the holy Mangueshi shrine of Lord Shiva and the Shanta Durga shrine. The *aarti* at 1 p.m., with the sun being reflected on Goddess Durga's face, was unforgettable! We learnt that 'feni' is a pure alcohol drink distilled from cashew. It is also used for medicinal purposes.

Ramani Reddy

IWA moment:

The repeated visits to the beautiful ceramic store in our hotel in Goa.

The wonderful evening of bonding during Leena's birthday dinner.





The Syria, Jordan & Israel Experience 2010-2011

Syria: When Mohammed was asked why he did not visit Damascus, the Prophet of Islam answered that one cannot go twice to Paradise! Damascus is one of the oldest, continually inhabited cities in the world. The Umayyad Mosque in Damascus has the tomb of St. John the Baptist! The Azem Palace is an excellent example of a Damascene traditional house! St. Ananais' house on a street called Straight, houses the church, hidden one level below, to escape persecution during the Byzantine times. The Krak Des Chevaliers is a gem of Syrian archaeology.

The Temple of Bel: The sacrificial altars of the gods. The perfectly-intact motifs and geometrical patterns of the vaulted ceiling were magical. The magnificent pillars stretched as far as the eye could see!

The Valley of the Tombs had underground tombs with compact tiered crypts for the burial needs of each family. The Great Colonnade with the magnificent theatre and the dramatically balanced Tetrapylon, was unbelievable in its perfection.

Hama, with its 17 *norias* (Water wheels) have been in existence since the 5th century.





The Museum of Mosaic was beautiful. The chips comprising the mosaic are pieces of natural coloured stone. We saw the lovely vision of pink pods on the pista tree in the plantations along the way! Aleppo is one of the most fascinating cities of the Middle East. The citadel of the Mamluki Dynasty was awesome!

Maaloula: This is the only place where Aramaic is still spoken.

The monastery of St. Takla, the First Martyr: A walk through the canyon in the night to visit the shrine was solemnly sacred.

Bosra: The Roman theatre where the first mosque of the Islamic world was built.

In Jordan our first halt was Jerash Hippodrome where there was an authentically dressed charioteer, who reminded us of *Benhur* (the movie). The Amman Citadel with a temple dedicated to Hercules, houses the Archaeological Museum with exhibits of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Mt. Nebo has the mosaic factory where our ladies went berserk buying up everything on retail!

The Dead Sea! Ah, nirvana! The spa was perfect; the view unforgettable and floating on the salt-saturated lake was an other-worldly experience! Even people who could not swim found that they could not sink!

The Karak Castle, trapezoid in shape with a speaking tunnel, had a magnificent view of the Dead Sea!

Petra: The one most defining moment - the vision of the magnificent facade of the treasury of Al Khazna which rises to a height of almost 40m as we come out of the Siq. The beautiful





edifice is an ode to the Nabataean brilliance in architecture! The city was built without using any slaves! We experienced nature in all her infinite glory, in the rock mosaics! Only 27% of Petra has been excavated till now. Wadi Rum brought back memories of *Lawrence of Arabia!* The ancient inscriptions on the rock face, the brilliant bright red sand dunes, the colour variations and surface textures of the mountains rising from the desert, are all truly breathtaking!

Observations:

Omal is a different version of the Shahi Tukda.

Women are always fully covered with veils and only seen in the souks.

Everything was inexpensive in Syria but prohibitive in Jordan.

The American dollar is widely welcomed everywhere.

The guides were all knowledgeable and proud of their heritage.

A few of us mastered the Bedouin style headgear.

The white cotton shawls are a must in the heat!

The freshly squeezed pomegranate juice, and the yoghurt provided at most meals, with plenty of salt, were surefire heat-stroke busters!

It was fantastic like all IWA expeditions!

IWA ladies, you rock in every kind of situation!

Ramani Reddy

IWA moment:

Our ladies plastered with black mud, blithely floating on their backs on the Dead Sea. Alagu termed it 'The Pochandi Look'!



“Celebrate the happiness that friends are always giving, make every day a holiday and celebrate just living!” - Amanda Bradley

Celebrations



Forever Connected Forever Learning Forever Inspired



Christmas

Deck the halls with boughs of holly,
Fa la la la, la la la la.
Tis the season to be jolly...

IWA celebrates Christmas with great gusto spreading the joy of the season every year! Carol singing, nativity scenes and a sumptuous Christmas lunch, sponsored by our members of the Christian faith, are regular features of our festivities. Our thanks go to Rita Saldanha and her fellow carol singers for ringing in the Yuletide spirit for IWA. They set the mood for the season with their spritely voices and their exuberant spirits.







Pongal, Onam & Eid

Pongalo Pongal! Onam Sadya... Eid Milan

IWA members take great pride and joy in celebrating a host of Indian festivals. While Pongal and Onam are not annual events, the Eid Milan meeting and lunch is a much awaited occasion every year. We thank Zubeida Asgarali for thoughtfully coordinating the Eid celebrations year after year. There is a mouth-watering spread to look forward to every Eid, thanks to our members of the Islamic faith.



Diwali Dar



Diwali

Festival of Lights
Triumph of Good over Evil
Blessings of health, wealth
and prosperity
Deepavali Nalvaazhtukkal!

IWA's Diwali celebrations are marked by the annual Diwali Mela and lunch. We thank all the members for their enthusiastic participation each year. Our thanks to the pioneers of the Khazana stall, Eira Doshi, Radha Gopalakrishnan, Maureen Thadani and Aruna Vijaykumar.





Founders' Day

Every year, as IWA members we fondly remember and recognise our Founder Members for their foresight, initiative and enterprise, as we rededicate ourselves to and celebrate our unique organisation. These amazing women along with the Past Presidents pursued a clear purpose to form an organisation that is committed to cultural diversity, learning and friendship.







Fun & Frolic at IWA

The IWA year commences with the fellowship morning which strengthens the bonds of friendship and camaraderie among its members. The year concludes with the Grand Finale, a befitting ending to another great IWA year.

Who says we can't let our hair down??? Be it a book reading, play or medley of songs, our extremely creative IWA ladies prove time and again that we are a reservoir of talent and our *joie-de-vivre* knows no bounds!

Thanks to Sushi Natraj, Padmini Natarajan and the Late Megan Utley for bring out the best in all of us on many an occasion.







Celebrating 5 Years of IWA

The 5th Year celebrations were conducted with the theme, "Trends and Traditions" where the IWA ladies dressed in their traditional best. Nirmal Mirza and Stina Vasu were the Co-Presidents for that year. The enthusiastic celebrations reiterated the enormous success of the first five years of IWA and set the tone for the organisation to forge ahead.



Celebrating 10 Years of IWA

To commemorate 10 years of IWA, a decade of friendship and fellowship, a special three day programme was organised by the Presidents, Alagu Muthu and Poonam Lalchand.

On the 25th of July, 1996, Anita Ratnam choreographed a contemporary, thematic dance presentation, 'She – In Movement'. It portrayed women with a contemporary flavour, symbolising unity, harmony and peace, in keeping with the theme of that year 'Global Unity'. There was also a performance by Vikku Vinayakram and Aseel Mathur.

A Gala Event on the 26th of July at the Ballroom, Hotel Taj Coromandel was a magnificent multimedia presentation titled, 'Madras, its Melody, its Rhythm'. Madras was showcased – its arts, crafts, culture and performing arts. Woven around the pageant of the seasons, the show featured many talented IWA members and well-known names in the field of performing arts.

The next evening, Malavika Sarukkai presented 'Srinkhala – Living Links' at the residence of Sunita Shahaney. *Srinkhala* was an exploration of the many links between the inner and outer landscapes and between man and the environment.





Celebrating 15 Years of IWA

We went down 'Memory Lane' with a revival of nostalgic memories of all the ladies who had contributed towards this great organisation. The vision of our Founder members, which is now a reality, was greatly appreciated. The Presidents were Rani Chada and Seema Sait.



Celebrating 20 Years of IWA

To celebrate 20 years of IWA the theme was 'Celebrate IWA'. The Presidents were Seema Bhargava and Amulya Rao.

Fellowship commenced with the theme, 'Festivals around the World' representing the diverse cultures of the IWA ladies. Founders' Day was best remembered for a 20-year retrospective song penned by Sushi Natraj and sung by the Past Presidents.

The dance performance by Leela Samson was a fitting end to a year of celebratory meetings.







"Life isn't a matter of milestones, but of moments."

- Rose Kennedy

Celebrating 25 Years



Forever Connected Forever Learning Forever Inspired







Silver Jubilee Celebration Week
July 25-29, 2011





EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2011-2012

Managing Committee

Presidents	:	Nina Kothari Cherry Venkatesan
Vice-Presidents	:	Ramani Reddy Bharati Nair Gopinath
Secretaries	:	Nita Reddy Priya Asokan
Treasurers	:	Asha Rammohan Jennifer Arun

Activity Chairpersons

Arts & Handicrafts	:	Deepali Goyal Anita Nazareth Wedick
Book Discussion	:	Tehnaz Bahadurji
Cooking Swapshop	:	Nabila Avais Phyllis Stathis
Current Events	:	Ambika Mammen Angelika Schwering
Health & Ecology	:	Usha B Moorthy Malini Balakrishnan
History, Culture & Tours	:	Somna Sachdev Elizabeth Aston
Music & Performing Arts	:	Geeta Vasudevan Kiran Rao
Philosophy & Religion	:	Jayashree Manradiar Anjali Sacheti







July 25, 2011 | The Sheraton Park Hotel
Monday | 132, TTK Road
10:15 am | Chennai - 600 018.



Founders' Day

To celebrate 25 years of IWA

As IWA enters its silver jubilee year and celebrates the indelible mark it has made on the Chennai landscape, we reminisce about the good old times and look forward to the enriching events in store for the years to come.

On this landmark 25th year, we fondly remember our Founder Members for their foresight, initiative and enterprise as we rededicate ourselves to and celebrate our unique organisation, IWA. These seven amazing women along with the Past Presidents pursued a clear purpose to form an organisation that is committed to cultural diversity, learning and friendship.

To mark the silver jubilee and highlight our journey, we will enjoy a film – the story of 25 eventful years of IWA. In addition, we proudly release our very own book dedicated to the indomitable spirit of the IWA woman.

A warm thank you to Vijay Goyal, Deepali Goyal, Shashi Malhotra and Chandra Seoni for hosting today's lunch.

The IWA film evokes a feeling of nostalgia as we reminisce about the wonderful times gone by and exudes a sense of fellowship as we celebrate the spirit of camaraderie in this organization. The film poignantly captures the wonderful diversity of IWA's members, its engaging meetings and globe trotting travels. A fitting tribute to a dynamic group of global women. We thank all the members who made the effort to come for the film shoot and Usha Saravanan for the use of her studio. Our gratitude goes to Vanitha Rajkumar for the video recording at the AGM.

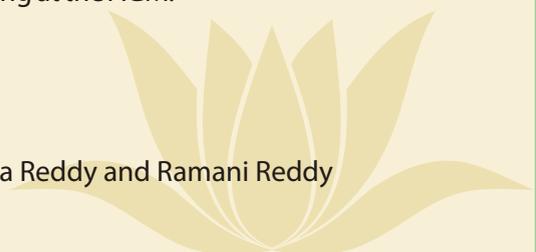
Film Credits:

Producer and Facilitator: Nina Kothari

Director: Cherry Venkatesan

Assistant Directors: Priya Asokan, Asha Rammohan, Nita Reddy and Ramani Reddy

Starring: The Lovely Ladies of IWA



July 26, 2011
Tuesday
3:45 pm

Mayor Ramanathan Chettiar (MRC) Centre
75/2, Janaki Avenue, MRC Nagar,
Santhome High Road, Chennai - 600 028.



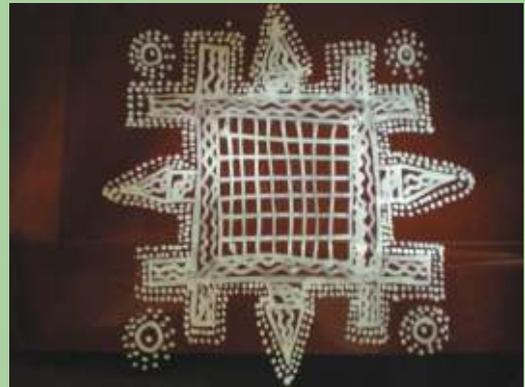
Penn Azhaippu

To celebrate 25 years of IWA

We the Aachis of IWA have great pleasure in inviting you to the *Penn Azhaippu* – Bride's Homecoming Ceremony – to celebrate 25 years of IWA.

Join the celebratory traditional procession at 4 pm, dressed in your Chettinad best to witness and participate in the many traditions that take place as a bride enters her new home. Experience the traditional pomp and splendour of the Chettiar community at their weddings.

An authentic *Penn Azhaippu* feast specially prepared for you by master chefs from Chettinad follows the ceremony.



Alagu Alagappan	Valli Murugappan
Meenakshi Arunachalam	Kamala Muthiah
Umayal Chettyappan	Kumararani Meena Muthiah
Chandrika Chidambaram	Seetha Muthiah
Rupa Kadhiresan	Alagu Muthu
Meenakshi Meyyappan	Visalakshi Ramaswamy
Meyyammai Murugappan	Debbie Thiagarajan

July 27,2011
Wednesday
10:15 am

Burgundy's
Somerset Greenways
Block No: 94, Satyadev Avenue
MRC Nagar, Chennai - 600 028.



Morning of Magical Melodies

To celebrate 25 years of IWA

Tara Kumaravelu is blessed with a truly enchanting voice. Perhaps it is all that clear air and garden vegetables up in the hills, perhaps a divine gift, perhaps the result of training and effort, or perhaps a combination of all of these and more. This singing sensation from the Nilgiris will brighten an IWA morning, singing a selection of familiar songs from popular music and pop opera.

Our thanks to Vipin Sachdev and Chef Willie for hosting this morning's performance and brunch, and to Yamaha for providing the music support.



July 28, 2011
Thursday
5:30 pm

Nina Kothari
“Kothari Bagh”
18, Nungambakkam High Road
Chennai - 600 034.



Rejoice in Rhythm - T.M. Krishna

To celebrate 25 years of IWA

Vidwan T.M. Krishna, a multifaceted personality, at the forefront of classical vocalists in India will enthrall us with his awe inspiring voice. His tremendous stage presence and his ability to transcend cultural borders, makes him one of the greatest ambassadors of Carnatic classical music.

His resonant and mellifluous voice will emphasise our nostalgic mood. Truly a “classical” tribute to the traditional and timeless IWA woman.



29 July, 2011
Friday
3:45 pm

The Raintree
636, Anna Salai, Teynampet
Chennai - 600 018.



Threads of Tradition

To celebrate 25 years of IWA

An afternoon of style and substance; where tradition meets modernity.

Come see our very own IWA ladies resplendent in fabulous revival sarees and traditional Indian ensembles adorned in their own exquisite heirloom jewellery.

Reflecting a gloriously rich Indian heritage in a contemporary vocabulary, the show will epitomize the beauty of tradition with the soul of today.

This event is dedicated to celebrate the distinctive style of the IWA woman – a woman of substance.

We are delighted to have Sabyasachi Mukherji, India's finest designer, spend a collaborative afternoon with us IWA ladies. Antique textiles have been a life long inspiration for this designer. Sabyasachi will talk about his passion for textiles and design. Known as the designer who embodies empathy in his creations, his elegant revival sarees will grace the IWA woman.

We thank Rekha Rangaraj and Vidya Singh for co-ordinating the fashion event with their inimitable style.







"I meant what I said and I said what I meant."

Dr. Seuss

Memories, Musings & Melodies



Forever Connected Forever Learning Forever Inspired





Susan Abraham



Nalini S. Acharya



Urmilla Agarwal



Alagammai Alagappan



IWA brings back wonderful memories when I was a member from 1987-1993. IWA means friendship, sharing, get togethers, learning and fun. I am indeed delighted to be back and meet all my old friends and am looking forward to making new friends too. I enjoy all the meetings I attend – they are so well organized and I wish them, the team, all the very best.

Lalita Naidu



Founders' Day Song

(To the tune of *Raindrops on roses..*)

Waitlists and interests in IWA membership
Admission forms and some dual sponsorships
Nail-biting waits and committee decisions
Some get rejected but the lucky get in.

Membership numbers
And names on white badges
Fellowship meetings
And first introductions
The thrill of attending an IWA meeting
These are IWA members' favourite things.

Members in silks and designer cut outfits
Art and craft demos and cookery classes
Tours and debates and music recitals
IWA newsletter tells us everything!

When Chennai's heat burns
When the life is dull
When we're feeling sad
We simply attend an IWA meeting here
And then we don't feel so bad.

I have the privilege of being in IWA for the past twenty-one years! Thank you, Meera Jayakar, for introducing me to IWA. I have immensely enjoyed my stint as Chairperson for cookery and health. Every year gets bigger and better. Thank you IWA.

Bina Ram Mohan



Sulochana Alexander



Rani Ananth



Jennifer Ann



Jennifer Arun



Meenakshi Arunachalam



Zubeida Asgarali



Padma Ashok



Priya Asokan

‘Yes, I Can!’

When I was filling in my IWA membership form two years ago, I merrily wrote ‘Yes, I can’, in response to the question, ‘Can you host a meeting?’ not quite realising what I was going in for!

Having organised many cultural events in an American campus, some years ago, I felt I was an old hand at this. First things first. The programme was ‘Book Discussion’. So, I promptly borrowed the book and read it. A forced enjoyment, so to speak. Then preparations for the meeting to be held in our home started with the making of many lists - lists for house cleaning, re-arrangement of potted plants, flowers, refreshments, extra chairs, crockery and so on.

A ceiling to floor clean-up of this old house began 5 days earlier. The high ceiling has a propensity to gather cobwebs speedily - so I moved from room to room in my wheelchair making sure the helpers removed the minutest speck of dust. The windows were washed and the old red flooring given an extra scrub till it gleamed.

I woke up early the previous day as I had a mission to accomplish. I had to “catch” the bullock-drawn rubbish cart to make sure the large bin at the end of the street was cleared. Predictably, there was far more rubbish around the bin than inside. As I waited, I wondered when our Madrasis would develop Singaporean discipline. I made a mental note about writing a letter to ‘Madras Musings’ on this. Just then I saw someone whiz past and empty the contents of her rubbish basket right outside the bin. “Valli,” I screamed, “What are you doing? Can’t you empty the basket into the bin?” She looked at me with hurt bewilderment and said, “But Amma, everybody else does it.” I dropped my plan of writing to *Madras Musings*. After all, cleanliness, like charity begins at home. I should first educate Valli, my helper, before I venture to educate others.

By this time, the poor, tired bullock dragging the cart had come to the corner of the lane. The conservancy worker looked at me questioningly wondering why this woman in a wheelchair was ‘guarding’ the dust bin. I smiled at him beguilingly and my driver explained how we wanted a special cleaning done as a group of very particular ladies were visiting this area the following day and that I was anxious that the road should be specially clean.

The cart man scratched his head. "I am an honest man, Amma. I do my duty faithfully but no one appreciates me. We are poor people. If Amma gives something, I'll see to it that not only this bin, but all the ones down the road too are emptied."

This mission accomplished the rest of the day was spent waiting for the extra chairs, plates and glasses we had ordered. Ears attuned to the ringing of the door bell, eyes to the clock, tension mounting - they finally arrived late at night and we heaved a sigh of relief.

Manohar, generous soul that he is, offered to prepare the snacks. As he leaves for work at 7.00, Mano woke up at 5.00 a.m. to prepare his very special chicken sandwiches as well as tomato and lettuce sandwiches for the vegetarians to be stored in air tight containers. Then came the making of the punch. All sorts of fruit juices were poured into a large container, then a dash of clove oil, some pepper and a tiny bit of salt. My husband tasted the punch one last time, "It needs some sugar," he said. "Valli," he called out, "just add two spoons of sugar and stir," and dashed off for his bath.

Within minutes Vijaya, the cook came rushing into the bedroom. "Oh, Amma," she said, "Valli just realised that instead of sugar, she has mixed two spoons of *ravai* into the soos! Whatever will we do?" I could only say, "Oh no." Manohar stepped out of the bathroom. "Quick," he said, "there's no time to lose. Bring the fine strainers you have." With the help of Valli and Vijaya, the punch was strained, till the incriminating *ravai* was removed. "Now be sure to add some ice cubes to the punch just before you serve." I smiled gratefully at my knight in shining armour.

I dressed quickly. The home and the garden looked green and inviting. I asked Vijaya to draw a large special *kolam* under the portico to welcome our guests.

The guests began arriving by 10 a.m., first in trickles and then in droves... Some of the guests who visited our house for the first time liked its friendly ambience, the red floor and Manohar's ink drawings. The gracious presence of the IWA ladies certainly added a dash of charm to the house.

The heaped sandwiches began to disappear. The ladies were full of praise. "Mahema, what scrumptuous sandwiches!" Vijaya brought the chips we had as reserve, in case we ran out of sandwiches. The punch



Elizabeth Aston



Nabila Avais



Fakhira Ayer



Tehnaz Darius Bahadurji



Jatinder Bahl



Mano Bakthavatsalam



Malini Balakrishnan



Vijaya Balasubramaniam

too was liked by everyone. One member in a gorgeous Ghadwal saree asked for the recipe. “But Mahema, you haven’t mentioned what the tiny, floating flecks are,” she protested. I stifled my gasp. So, the *ravai* had not been fully filtered out after all. “Ah, that’s a secret ingredient which makes the punch taste even better,” I replied, before turning away. At last, the meeting started. The book discussion began. It was a lively exchange of thoughts, but a part of my mind circled around TNEB. “The only thing that can go wrong now,” I thought, “is an electricity breakdown.” Then I consoled myself thinking that since it was cool November, it may not be too much of a problem.

I came back to reality when I heard my name being mentioned. They were thanking me. “How beautifully you have arranged everything!” I was told. Little did they know my tale of averted mishaps.

As the last guest sped away, a sense of contentment of a job well done settled over me. However, at that point of time, I was not to know that within three months there was to be another programme, in our house, titled, “The World of Manohar Devadoss”. But that is another story...

Late Mahema Devadoss

Joined IWA. Sometimes sad ,sometimes HAPPY, NEVER BAD. Mingle with so many cultures,1 never vultures. It’s almost getting to be amateur poetry. Had great information, gourmet delights from all over. Never a dull moment. Long Live IWA – Intelligent Women’s Association.

Jatinder Bahl



*For the fun and fellowship
For the knowledge and know how
That I’ve acquired over these years
I thank thee IWA*

Susan Koshy

Some IWA ladies from Madras
Went on an action-packed tour 'en-masse'
Wearing high heels and pants
They ran into ants
Those poor bitten ladies from Madras.

There was on IWA lady from Madras
Went to Venkateswara Sanctuary, alas.
She could not walk five miles
And a panther she riled
So ended that lady from Madras.

So here is a piece of advice
Keds and two socks will suffice
Stay close to your guide
And you won't have to hide
From panthers and tigers or mice.

Margaret Sekhran



One of the main reasons I like being part of IWA is because it provides me with a sense of community and belonging. I get to meet intelligent women from different walks of life who have different experiences to offer to our community. I always look forward to the wide plethora of meetings - whether it is listening to an explanation on how to live a healthy lifestyle or discussing a book with everybody.

Somna Sachdev



Latha Baratan



Seema Bhargava



Kala Bhashyam



Anuradha Bhasker



Amita Bhatia



Anita Bhatia



Mansha Bhatia



Bimla Bhatla

The I-WA Lady

They join in large numbers as members,
Though some leave, I-WA is never bereft of its clan.
Its an ocean that stretches its arms out
Beckoning all ladies, COME, open your keen minds
And listen to the plethora of subjects we explore
Ecology, History, Culture,
Health, Religion and Art,
Handicrafts, Philosophy, Literature
And Swapping Recipes Galore.

Like a fountain those learned ones pour out
Varied topics week in, and without doubt
Thus thought-provoked we find answers
To matters manifold.

We journey to places of interest
So let it not be said, that Meena
And Mary are dull 'uns
For that would get us a scold!

If you are an I-WA lady
The mind will not cloy!
'Tis said age will not wither you,
Though that might be stretching it perforce!
In this beautiful world of I-WA
As we quench our thirst for Enlightenment
But still allow time for play
Let us spread joy and friendship
In each and every way.

Lily Swamy

IWA means soooo much to me. It's a real stress buster. My mornings are taken care of by attending all the interesting meetings and most of all being among my friends.

Y. Sucharitha Prasad



Rekha Bhatla



Shalini Biswajit

Congratulations to IWA for completing 25 years of which I have been a part from the very beginning. I have served 8 years in various committees ranging from Activity Chairperson to Board member and my last post was that of Vice President. I have enjoyed IWA all along; have gone on most of the trips national and international. All the best!

Vijaya Balu



Rani Chada



Kusum Chadda



Sarah Chanda



Pushpa Chari



Chandrika Chidambaram



Kashmira Daruwala



Rani Chandani



Prithika Chary



Sangeet Chopra



Rani Das Gupta



Usha Chandrakumar



Umayal Chettyappan



Sue Cook



Moniek De Zwaan



Gita Chandrasekaran



Bilquis Chida



Dhun Dalal



Rehane Yavar Dhala



Meenakshi Dhamija



Indira Dutt



Uma Ganesan



Radha Gopalakrishnan



Ritika Dhingra



Suma Eapen



Jyothi Ganesh



Bharati Nair Gopinath



Leila Diraviam



Jessica Elias



Sanyukta Gill



Deepali Goyal



Eira Doshi



Amala Emmanuel



Sushi Goklaney



Deepika Goyal



Vijay Goyal



Kanta Gupta



Mahmooda Haja Shareef



Anneliese Hazari

The Hot Seat

When I moved to Madras I became a member of the coveted Association called IWA. I attended meetings regularly, thoroughly enjoying them and I started dreaming of becoming a Chairperson for some activity.

I have always liked the sound of my own voice and here I had visions of my standing at the podium or mike and introducing the speaker or giving a heartfelt vote of thanks. Of course the illusionary soundtrack of applause, not unlike the canned version on TV sitcoms, fired my imagination as did the wah-wah's and approbation from the Board and members.

My imagination did go wild with the Founder-President and current year's President saying, "Oh my dear, we couldn't have managed such a successful activity without your help, efficiency and ideas. You have to be the President next year, may be even President for life."

Darlings, was I in Nirvana when I was really approached to take over as Chairperson of an activity! This was a familiar territory where I could really show my talents and ingenuity. I started to look around for speakers, films and exotic locations to give our dear members the time of their life. A group tour was selected by consensus a la modern politics, costs worked out, itineraries chalked out and soon enthusiastic members started calling in confirming their acceptance. While the cheques were promptly paid by some, others with amnesia had to be politely reminded a few times.

The date of departure was at hand when suddenly a member decided to drop out. And I spent the next three days on the phone acting as the intermediary between the travel agent and the member trying to get her documents back and a decent refund. Soon my ears were full of recriminations and rancour and finally a deal was made not entirely up to the expectations of the member who thought that she had been done in.

The whole experience shook me up, but the tour was a great success with the members truly appreciative of the attention to details that had made their trip enjoyable. A member even volunteered to show slides and give a talk on the trip. However, even today, I hide from that travel agent, for he continues to moan about his loss on the deal, whenever he spots me.

Next year I took up another activity and with great enthusiasm we decided to hold a *mela* with craftpersons from all over the country. This ambitious venture was great on paper but to execute it was a nightmare. The co-ordination with the local NGO dealing with such matters was full of problems. When a venue for the *mela* was fixed and the notices nearly ready for printing, the member who was to host the *mela* suddenly backed out - she was going away to the States! After frantic appeals to the printers, two days of desperate phone calls and miles of running around in the car, an alternate site was located.

But our problems were not over, for the trains carrying the craftsmen from the North were delayed for over 24 hours due to, you guessed it right, a derailment. The *mela* was hurriedly rearranged with local craftsmen to occupy the stalls. The two Chairpersons and the rest of the Executive Committee sportingly rushed in to help and much to our relief the show was inaugurated at the appointed hour. You could say that I spent that day with a box full of antacids in my purse. We did have our detractors asking, "Where are the bangle-makers from Rajasthan? I was hoping to buy all the bangles for my daughter's Bangle Ceremony cheap." We managed to convince the member that she could do her shopping the next day. On the other hand our foreign members were really appreciative for they could stock up on their Indian memorabilia at very reasonable prices. And some of our members quickly added to the bottom drawers of their marriageable offsprings.

Logic and my husband should have taught me to take a year off from the travails of being a Chairperson, but my undiminished enthusiasm persuaded me to accept an office again. This time I thought it would be a cakewalk for all I had to do was to get a few books and get discussions through.

Oh, boy was I in for a rude awakening! The first bad news was that I did not have the support of a Activity Co-Chairperson as no foreigner was available. Secondly, the current book for discussion would frequently disappear while on the reading rounds and its recovery was a challenge fit for Remington Steele. A local author promised to talk about his latest book and sign some autographs. He had given us a date two months in advance as is customary. I had confirmed in writing with a copy of the IWA newsletter blurb and I rang him up a week before the date and my dears, was he enthusiastic about meeting



Shobha Hebbar



Asha Hemdev



Monica Holly



Sherna Irani



Renuka Ishwariah



Geetha Iyengar



Molly Jacob



Premila Jacob

“all those lovely ladies” as he flatteringly put it.

Call it woman’s intuition or plain experience, I decided to ring up our guest speaker two days before the scheduled meeting. The phone was answered by his wife. “My husband has gone to Agra. He has been called by the king film-maker to stay in a five-star hotel and write the screenplay for his next movie. He won’t be back for the next few months.”

“And what about the meeting with IWA?” Oh, he cannot be troubled by such trivialities when its the Big Bucks!” The *Telephone Tree* consisting of twenty members was activated, who in turn contacted the entire list of 240 members to convey the cancellation of the meeting. (The travails of the *Telephone Tree* is another story all together.)

I did take a year off and in the year of our national elections decided to tackle the current issues at stake. My Co-Chairperson and I decided to have a few personalities talking to us about the elections from their point of view. One sitting MP promised to give us a talk in a month’s time. The venue was booked, the group hostesses lined up. But, he disappeared into the blue, lost along with his deposit. Another media guy decided that his promise to give a dissertation on the election scene was identical to that of any politician - not to be taken seriously. The last I saw of him, he was mouthing his platitudes from Timbuktu, courtesy a satellite transmission.

The one great experience was that of a famous cop whose scheduled meeting had to be postponed to the afternoon due to the vagaries of the national airline. Our members returned that afternoon in full strength and made the meeting a unique and memorable one.

In recent times quizzes and *anthakshari* programmes have become very popular with our members who may not all be aware of the elaborate preparations and planning required for staging such a programme. Even so, many things can and do go wrong. Music or public address systems can fail at crucial moments. Questions can be misinterpreted or quibbled about and the quiz master’s decision is sometimes not always accepted as final!!

The biggest nightmare of a Chairperson is when a meeting really goes off the rails with members taking over the floor and not allowing the speaker to conclude their scheduled programme. The wisdom of

Solomon is required in the person of the President to clear the floor and to end the meeting with grace.

So, my own experiences with various activities and some hearsay events do make the office of a Chairperson seem like a tightrope walk. The final result is a few bouquets and many brickbats. Mind you I have not touched upon the offices of the Board Members. Putting together the newsletter and posting it to reach members on time is a subject on which we can write a doctoral thesis.

After you read this you will ask me how I could take on the office again. Darlings, fools venture where angels fear to tread! A Chairperson's job does have its moments of agony and ecstasy but it's one helluva experience!!

Padmini Natarajan

I have been a member from the very first day and have enjoyed every year; IWA to me has been very educational.

Rukku Seshasayee

Being a member of IWA has been an exhilarating experience. 'Forever Connected, Forever Learning, Forever Inspired' – this is IWA in a nutshell. I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks and gratitude to IWA for all the wonderful friendships and moral support it has provided me. Thank you!

Indira Srinagesh



Kausalya Jaganmohan



Renu Jalan



Usha Jawahar



Meera Jayakar



international
indian
intellectual
intercultural
interesting
informative
imaginative
interactive
innovative
impressive
invigorating
involvement
invitations
inspiring
integration
increasing
informal
interpersonal
ingenious
introspective
ideas
impatient
impulsive
intelligent
ice-breaking

women
water
welcome
wisdom
what
witty
willing
wondering

watch
wonderful
worry
wake-up
weight
when
warm

where
why
wishful
wanting



Contributed by Seema Bhargava, Amulya Rao and the Board of 2006-07.



Saranya Jayakumar



Thayabae Kakar



Raheela Kareem



Mahin Rabi Khaleeli



Shrikanta Jhaver



Era Kalra



Shanthi Karunakaran



Sharada Khemka



Zainab Kachwalla



Brahada Kameshwaran



Sadiya Khaleel



Jansi Kishore



Rupa Kadhiresan



Anita Kapoor



Bela Mistry Khaleeli



Anita Koshy



Susan Koshy



Nanditha Krishna



C. Prema Kumar



Koshu Lalchand



Nina Kothari



Radhika Krishna Mohan



Achu Kurian



Poonam Lalchand



Surekha Kothari



Lalitha Krishnan



Pushpa Lakshman



Helena Lau



Malini Krishna



Gayatri Krishnaswami



Rita Lal



Chandra Lulla



Lily Madhok



Badrunissa Mahadevan



Shobha G. Mahtani



Farida Majid



During the Presidency of Vanitha Mudaliar and Barbara Clarkson all of us had a great year, full of very interesting events. On March 22nd, 1990. Lilly Ratnam presented the new slate of Office Bearers. As the Chairperson of Philosophy and Religion with Catherine Brown we scanned the interesting spots, full of history and spirituality.

At Kanchipuram we were very lucky to meet all the three Shankaracharyars. Then on to Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo Ashram was another enriching trip. In Madras a visit to the Sufidhar and the Sikh Temple, a full service with kirtan and langar was enjoyed by everyone who participated. Meetings at my house have always been delightful as you can see from the faces of Nirmal Sheshadri and others in photographs. Food in a Punjabi home with channa, chat and gulab jamuns, you can't go wrong – that's love, fun, fellowship of IWA meetings at home with a personal touch!

Sangeet Chopra



I joined IWA almost by chance.

A friend asked me if I would be interested, and I said, "Why not"?

And what a rich and fertile harvest I have reaped from that spontaneous decision!

Floods of new ideas, introductions to new subjects, fresh insights into old ones and fulfilling friendships.

IWA is indeed a high value Return-On-Investment.

Tehnaz Bahadurji.



Shobha Mujumdar



Lily Malhan



Mina Malhotra



Shashi Malhotra



When we come to IWA meetings we are looking forward to:-
Interacting - wish each other and being active
When we leave the meeting we are:-
Inspired - wiser - attentive

Renu Jalan





Tina Malhotra



Ambika Mammen



Cibi Mammen



Jayashree Manradiar

In response to Nirmal Seshadri's invitation I turned up at the Music Academy one fine morning. After the Bharatanatyam performance by Lakshmi Vishwanathan, Nirmal came to the point. She and a few friends wished to start a socio-cultural organisation in Madras similar to IndUS of Bombay. Membership would be open to women of all nationalities. The objective was to promote global friendship and understanding. The response to the idea was good and thus was born the International Women's Association (later IWA) on Friday 25th July, 1986.

The first President was Nirmal Seshadri (India) and Nancy Dean (then Nancy Stempel, U.S.A.). Both were strict disciplinarians. Punctuality was a must. So also wearing of name badges and observing attendance rules.

Some highlights during the early years:

- Music concerts by Aruna Sairam and Usha Uthup.*
- The glittering jewellery show – 'The Lore and Lure of Indian Gems' by the members.*
- The annual presentation of the 'Woman of the Year' Award.*
- Who can forget the Decennial celebrations? The three-day extravaganza was the talk of the town.*
- Talks and demos, film shows and factory visits, added variety to the activities.*

What a thrill it was to meet Aishwarya Rai 'face to face', courtesy Sheela Shetty.

I have put down only a few happenings. A perusal of the diary of events at IWA for the past 25 years would be mind-boggling.

Mano Bakthavatsalam

The interactive sessions conducted by IWA Chairpersons not only promote friendship but also tolerance of varied points of view among women of different faiths, cultures and countries.

Working with IWA for the past few years has helped me hone my skills in communication, planning, given me a bird's eye for details and made me motivated and result-oriented.

Asha Rammohan



*I love the lively
fellowship at IWA.*

Vimal Shivdasani

*IWA is a life-line
for me.*

Kanika Parekh



Minnie Mathan



Ann Mathew



Bina Mathew



Darley Mathew

The venues of the meetings and the camaraderie I share in IWA are great.

Friendship develops in IWA automatically.

Prema Veeraraghavan

To be part of an organization that is so dynamic and diverse is a wonderful and unique experience. Whatever members do to contribute they will always say 'I DO IT FOR IWA'. IWA is like a relaxing coffee morning; a place to meet people, make friends, enjoy the coffee and snacks and look forward to the morning activities. But, its success lies behind the scenes, where the committees and members come together year after year to plan and deliver those activities.

Elizabeth Aston

IWA meetings are a complete package.

Era Kalra

IWA meetings and IWA trips have given me friendship and joy. I come for the meetings to bond with my friends, learn something and have a good time. I hope I can continue to come for many more years.

Kamala Muthiah

I wish to congratulate IWA on its 25th anniversary. Having been a member for the past 5 years has been an enriching experience. IWA has helped me to make many good friends and integrate into community. The various activities organized by IWA has made me appreciate the culture and traditions of this society and have been of great value to me personally. Finally, I found my 2 year stint as a committee member a very rewarding experience. I shall always cherish the memory of my association with IWA.

Balveer Singh

I joined IWA 25 years ago. In the beginning I thought it would be like other places but once I attended the meetings I thoroughly enjoyed it. I love to have people over at my home, I've made lots of friends, the meetings are very interesting, amusing and knowledgeable. I organised a Qawwali with Nirmal Seshadri. We had nearly 500 people at that meeting. I would love to be a member until I die. I wish IWA all the luck and lovely times.

Mahmooda Shareef

IWA has become such an important part of my life. It's just wonderful!!

Rajni Sabherwal

I joined 2 years back. It's been a great journey of learning, enjoying and making new friends. Cheers to 25 years of IWA.

Anita Bhatia

One of the most important things that stand out to me about IWA is the strong friendships that are made. I find that no matter how far away we have travelled or time consuming other aspects of our lives become, we still manage to not lose sight of the friendships we have built here.

Here's to all the dedicated presidents who have built up IWA to be a force to reckon with!

My co-president, a special person with an amazing capacity to plan, work and execute things to near perfect success.

Cherry Venkatesan

IWA is a prestigious organization and I am proud to be a member.

Geetha Rajagopalan

The excitement I felt at my first IWA meeting years ago is unforgettable and I know that feeling is a lasting one. . .

Fazeela Nurdeen



Maya Mathew



Marina Mathias



Aseel Mathur



Bina Mathur

IWA Serenade

(To the tune of *Those were the days...*)

Once upon a time there was Nirmal
And naturally there was Nancy too
They worked on making waves in good ol' Madras
Thought of all the great things we could do.

Those were the days my friend
When talks would never end
They'd think and plan for ever and a day
They'd bring a fresh idea, and set our minds on fire
For we were keen for them to show the way.

Came Saroj with all her art and talent
And Lakshmi with amazing common sense
Anneliese had accounting skills a-plenty
Reva and gracious Sunita joined hands.

Those were the days my friend
When talks would never end
They'd think and plan for ever me-oh-my
They'd bring a fresh idea, and set our minds on fire
And IWA was born one Friday in July

These seven ladies laid a strong foundation
For friendship and thoughtful activity
Bridging countries – drawing us together
IWA set the stage for harmony.

Those were the days my friend
When all our ladies lent
Their precious time and hospitality
The pattern from the start
Saw members play a part
And IWA grew with great vitality.

Today we thank these enterprising seven
Salute their vision, for all that was to be
We celebrate IWA's unique charm and wonder
At the difference it has made to you and me.

These are the days my friend
We hope they never end
We'll meet and laugh forever and a day
We'll find a lot to do and learn a thing or two
And make a million friends along the way

Sushi Natraj

I am very happy to be a part of this vibrant group of global women for the last 18 years. Having served as an Activity Chairperson for two years, I have enjoyed putting together meetings and in the process, learning. I thank IWA for fostering great friendships and helping me discover myself.

Nita Reddy



Jai Ho IWA! It's been great to be a part of IWA. Tons of love,
Urmilla Agarwal

IWA to me has been a unique blend of fun, knowledge and camaraderie.

Nandini Srikanth

Hi I am Devyani Shah I have been a member of IWA for 10 years. I love to come to the meetings.

Devyani Shah



Praveen Mehra



Archana K. Meiyappan



Jaya Menon



Lakshmi Menon



Sujaya Menon



Shweta Mohapatra



Maureen Hudson Murari



Meyyammai Murugappan



Meenakshi Meyyappan



Rashmi Mohindra



Asha Harish Murthi



Valli Murugappan



Nirmal Mirza



Bilkis Moosa



Usha B. Moorthy



Kamala Muthiah



Asha Mohan



Vanitha Mudaliar



Athena Moratis



Meena Muthiah

IWA is the quilt that Nirmal conceived and together all of us have woven many hues and shapes into it. After 25 years, it is emerging bright and lovely and will continue to do so into the future.

Sujaya Menon

I love IWA and am very proud to be a member of IWA. I love IWA because of the wonderful meetings IWA organizes in beautiful homes, hotels and clubs. And last but not least... the yummy yummy eats we get to enjoy!

Rita Lal

All the meetings are fantastic and very informative. I have learnt a lot from my association with IWA. I wish I could attend ALL meetings.

Naaz Tyebbhoy

IWA – A fun, happy and friendly association indeed!

Darley Mathew

Love, Friendship, Fun, Togetherness and Everlasting Relationships - no matter which part of the world you come from you always feels very warm and invited. This is IWA to me. I love IWA and am very happy to be a part of the organisation.

Sheetal Shah

Wow! How did IWA start? I came to Chennai in September 1984 and got so busy!! How? Jumping from one party to another and I found I had no time for myself. Then came Madam Nirmal Seshadri. She called me and said Meera "inda city ore bore!!" I said why? Then she had a small meeting at Music Academy and I decided to join her and I found that IWA was founded. I have enjoyed all the programmes, everything done so meticulously and so much trouble taken by everyone.

Meera Jayakar



Seetha Muthiah



Alagu Muthu



Lalita Naidu



Princess Naik



My association with IWA goes back many years. I look back fondly on my two stints as Activity Chairperson where I made long-lasting friendships that I treasure deeply. I have, over the years, learnt a lot from the meetings organized and owe it to the many committees who ensured the best speakers on a wide range of topics.

The many wonderful travel adventures with the IWA group especially the trip to Egypt and the trips to Hampi, Chidambaram and Chettinad that I organized with Aruna Vijaykumar, really stand out as memorable.

One event that I was personally moved by and hold close to my heart was the Durga Puja celebrations held last year. It was amazing how we felt the Durga idol come alive through the dance and floral décor... a truly divine experience!

On this 25th anniversary, I wish IWA a longer innings, continuing in the same spirit of the past years.

Visalakshi Ramaswamy

Founders' Day at IWA

A handful of talented Chennai women
Gathered one afternoon to examine
How to give shape to a collective dream
For building a multinational platform
For the meeting of heart, mind 'n wisdom.

The composition quickly grew
A constitution did logically brew
The structure was thoughtfully built
Brick upon another strong brick
To become popular IWA, pan ethnic.

Many did spend hours striving
To a bright template forming
Pursuing myriad paths interesting
Classifying, etching and selecting
To bring the Activities into being.

New blood was annually inducted
Guided by the hands experienced
The Founders stood close on guard
On the ramparts of the citadel strong
Always honoured, revered, never wrong.

The years did eventfully, rapidly pass
Some stalwarts changed their paths
Migrating to other shores and goals
While a few did depart, alas
Mourned and remembered en masse

Change is but a path of growth
What was, is gone now by sooth
Giving way to the new truth
Let us celebrate a fresh outlook
Building on the steps, the Founders took.

Padmini Natarajan



Mridula Narasimhan



Shantha Narayan



Shantha Narayanan



Meena Naru



Sushila Natraj



Padmini Natarajan



Anita Nazareth



Sharmilee Neilsen

IWA - A Musical 'Score'

(To the tune of *Mary's boy child...*)

Long time ago in good ol' Madras
A new beginning dawned
Nirmal and Nancy hatched a plan
And our dear IWA was born.

Trumpets sound and we all sing
Of a kinship born today
And ladies of IWA all rejoice
On the twentieth Founders' Day

Lakshmi, Saroj, Reva, Sunita
And Anneliese did come
With their creative ideas
Said 'bye' to things humdrum

Twenty years of joy and fun
In twenty different ways
All in all a great innings
Of class and style and grace

Along came Vanitha and Barbara
They worked for two great terms
Followed by Sunita and Janet
And the cookbook of the years

Nirmal and Stina set the pace
For fitness and good fun
Malini and Maureen worked so hard
To rope in everyone

Nanditha and Aruna have always given
For IWA their time and care
Lily and Margaret brought to us
'The Woman of Today'

With Zuby and Dawn at the helm
The flag flew high and then
Alagu and Poonam took the guard
As our dear IWA turned ten

Ten years young and full of life
Vibrant with dance and song
But Nirmal sadly went away
Yet IWA's pledged to go on

Rupa and Anneliese won our hearts
With sensible simplicity
Shyla and Megan brought to us
Sunshine in great quantity

Gayathri and Chandrika's year was pink
With silver for health and cheer
Javanthi and Eira cared for trees
The rivers and the earth

Rani and Seema's energy
Brought joy and harmony
Kusum and Meyyammai did their best
To keep IWA trouble-free

Sushi and Elaine reached out to all
And made members feel as one
Vidya and Padma put together
A year of thought and fun

Princess and Rathi's Midas touch
Brought programmes of great cheer
Now Seema and Amulya have begun
To celebrate a score of years

Presidents come and Presidents go
Leaving such fond memories
Closer ties and firmer friends
As the years go by in a breeze

Trumpets sound and we all sing
Of a kinship born today
And IWA will live forever more
For friendship will prevail.

Sushi Natraj



Rathi Nilakantan



Fazeela Nurdeen



Chandra Padmanabhan



Lakshmi Padmanabhan



Nalini Panday



Kanika Parekh



Anupama Pasari



Jaya Tambay-Patwardhan



Among the wonderful ways IWA has touched my life – foremost is the joy of seeing the world with IWA and through IWA'ites. On two extensive travels to Spain and the Near East, I realized our History, Culture and Tours chairpersons are SMART! They certainly got us the best deals – we could not have asked for more!! They wined and dined us with the best, saw to it that we saw and did everything the country offered, made us comfortable always. But that was not all – seeing everything through the eyes of our wiser and more learned members, we learnt and appreciated so much more. There was never a dull moment – our long bus journeys were filled with music, song and snacks and the camaraderie was great. It is super travelling with the IWA group. Once you do so you wouldn't want to miss another tour if you can help it.

Alagu Muthu

IWA means friendship, knowledge and togetherness. I am proud to be a member of IWA.

Jayanti Rajaram

After living for sixteen years in the United States, I returned to Chennai to find myself a stranger in the city of my upbringing. In an almost, magical "voila" sort of way, IWA helped me to reestablish my roots quickly; I am happy to say that a sense of belonging is something that IWA helps inculcate quite effortlessly.

Priya Asokan

Dear IWA, Thank you very much for years of friendship, travel, knowledge and above all the confidence I have achieved over the years.

Asha Hemdev



Menaka Prabhakar



Aruna Prasad



Dolly Prasad



Kamala Prasad

The IWA has come a long way! From a very small beginning, and a few members, some of the members found themselves taking on a two year term as activity chairpersons. Meetings were invariably held at homes.

It was "selection" of the office bearers, and not "elections". But all good things have to come to an end when you get "registered"

Sarah Chanda



IWA is the most interesting and happening organization in Chennai. I am fortunate to be a part of this organization.

Praveen Mehra

The wonders of the world, the joy of travelling with lovely friends, learning about 'n' number of things at the great meetings, celebrating Christmas and other events; these are some of the beautiful things about IWA.

C. Prema Kumar

Keeping the mind and spirit alive for information; for preserving and remembering our cultural roots, keeping the community alive with companionship and support for fellow women of all nationalities. I believe this defines IWA for me. Thanks so much for the information and camaraderie. I will miss you all.

Bess Simkin



Frankly I joined IWA when I heard that they go on tours to interesting places both in India and abroad. But after becoming a member I really look forward to the many wonderful meetings on varied topics that always comes up with. This has also helped me in several ways for IWA.

Saranya Jayakumar



IWA means much to me - friendship, camaraderie and smiling bees. All sugar, all honey, and all spice - that's nice. Cooking, travelling, listening, performing, meeting cultures, melting pots. IWA sure is always on TOP!!

Thayabae Kakar



Sucharita Prasad



Latha Rajan



Nalini Ramakrishna



Sharmila Ramji



Geeta S. Rajagopal



Jayanti Rajaram



Saroja Ramamrutham



Asha Rammohan



Rama Rajagopalan



Vanitha Rajkumar



Visalakshi Ramaswamy



Beena Ram Mohan



Sharada Rajamani



Malathi Ramachandran



Raji Ramesh



Shilu Ranganathan



Rekha Ranagaraj



Vijaya Bharathi Rangarajan



Kanamma Ranga Rao



Amulya Rao



IWA trips are fun. Members come with several pieces of luggage - one for several changes a day with matching accessories, one for woollies, one for shoes and slippers...

Geeta Vasudevan



I am enjoying being in the 'hot seat'. It is very challenging and with the 'Dream team' I have, we hope that this IWA year, like the others will be enriching and memorable! I cherish my association with IWA.

Nina Kothari.



Bala Rao



Meera N. Raghavendra Rao



V. Kiran Rao

IWA to me means opening the mind to ideas, self-growth and an opportunity to contribute to the talent pool we nurture.

Deepali Goyal



Meena M. Rao



Shyla K. Rau



Jeyasree Ravi



Linda Raymond



Anita Reddi

Friendship

Theme of IWA 2008-09

Friendship is a warm feeling
That gives us a lot of healing
We are all here as friends
Our friends are everybody's friends
So, it fosters good relationships
The credo of IWA Fellowship

Founders

IWA was launched by five friends
Now a membership of over 200 damsels
Friendship is the kind of love
That can never grow old
Our Founders and Past Presidents
Retain their freshness
And like beautiful evergreens
Continue to bless us.

Arts and Handicrafts

Friends of IWA are knitted together
On a large and bright canvas by a painter
Brushed with forms and shapes
Making a palette of glorious, bright colours

Book discussion

Genuine buddies care for you
They don't hesitate to help through
Like a good book they can read you true
From cover to cover like a review
Finding new talents to discover anew

Cooking Swapshop

Allies are like cooks forsooth
Too many will not spoil the broth
Together they can create great cordon bleu
Feeding, nourishing and making a tasty brew

Current events

Girlfriends without reservations
Create lovely companions
They vote and watch out for each other
They ventilate and share with one another

Health and ecology

Mates with patience as their wealth
Stick together in sickness and health
Working for a better environment
Saving the planet is IWA's tenet

History, Culture and Tours

Amity is between all sorts of people
Dilli ki chori
Or Mumbai ki anari
London's beauty
Or America's Aunty
All are now friends of Chennai Singari

Philosophy and Religion

Comrades believe in Honesty and Truth
They are the source of eternal youth
Friends do things without expectations
They guard us from doing wrong actions

Music and Performing Arts

Friendship is like singing in groups
Sometimes solo, most times chorus
The orchestration depends on all
To make music harmonious to enthrall

Padmini Natarajan

IWA is the best thing that has happened to me. I have so many good friends here and I have learnt so much.

Nalini Ramakrishnan



L. Aasha Reddy



Nita Reddy



Parvathi Reddy



Preeya Reddy



Ramani Reddy



Sherien Ryan



Anjali Sacheti



Neena Sanghavi



Sharada Reddy



Rajni Sabherwal



Seema Sait



Chandra Sankar



Shobhana Reddy



Anuradha Sachdev



Sabine Erlich Salam



Vasanthi Sankaranarayanan



Urmilla Reddy



Somna Sachdev



Rita Saldanha



Kausalya Santhanam



Hemalatha Santhavadanan



Chandra Goyal Seoni



Sheetal Shah



Raziye Sheerazie



Usha Saravanan



Rukku Seshasayee



Sunita Shahaney



Daksha Sheth



Rajeshwari E. Sathyanarayana



Devyani Shah



Shalini Shandil



Sabita Shetty



Angelika Schwering



Naina Shah



Sheela K. Sharath



Sheela Shetty



Vimal Shivdasani



Sudha Shivkumar



Javanthi Singaram



Balveer Singh



*I am impressed by IWA's ability to organize excellent events and speakers; it is truly an exceptional organization and I am happy to be a part of it.
Jaya Tambay-Patwardhan*

I thrive in the uncompromising work ethic, though, I must be honest and say that I do complain that there is no life outside IWA - once you get chosen to serve on the committee(s).

The intellectual stimulation, the unexpected challenges, the constant demand to come up with innovations and alternatives and the ability to adopt and adapt without altering the benign expression on one's visage! IWA for me is everlasting learning, everlasting improvising and everlasting friendship.

Ramani Reddy





Banu Singh



Vidya Singh

W&A has so many extremely interesting learning and entertaining programs. It's a wonderful opportunity to make new friends and reconnect with old. What a great asset W&A is to Chennai and to me.

Deborah Thiagarajan




Chandan Singh



Manisha Singhee





Fharzana Siraj



Kalpana Sonthalia



Nisha Sood



Nandini Srikanth



A very dynamic and interactive organization enriched with members from all over the world and different cultures, giving it a grand and yet informal experience.

Raheela Karim

I find IWA a very enjoyable experience. I get to meet everyone and there's always something new and interesting to learn.

Dhun Dalal



I was new in Chennai and did not have many friends. . . IWA was the best thing that happened to me. Thanks to Nirmal Seshadri, she got me involved from day one and before I knew it, I started feeling at home. There was no stopping. It was a great learning experience making the two editions of the IWA cookbook. I am passionate about cooking and I have thoroughly enjoyed the cooking swapshops. The IWA tours are the best, travelling with the members got me closer to them.

IWA members have mutual admiration for one another. Every meeting one is loaded with appreciation for what people wear or carry. So if you are feeling low just go to an IWA meeting, you will get an automatic smile on your face and cheer up.

I have thoroughly enjoyed all programmes and most of all making a lot of friends. Being a member of IWA makes me feel proud as IWA has done itself proud. IWA is all of us ladies.

Naina Shah



I have been in and out of IWA a couple of times. I am now very happily 'in' to stay. That says it all!

Chandra Lulla



Indra Srinagesh



Lita Srinivasan



Mridula Srinivasan



Vidya Srinivasan



Phyllis Stathis

IWA for me is a fabulous platform to forge friendships; for fun and fellowship. With a charming bunch of ladies there is so much one can contribute and get from IWA, a truly cool organization!

Shalini Biswajit



Padmini Subramaniam

Being a member of IWA got me great friends for life, expanded my knowledge base and gave me a chance to travel all over the world in the company of interesting people.

Usha Chandrakumar



Sunanda Sundaram



Anjana Sunil

Good meetings (meaningful)
Good fellowship
Good venues chosen
Keeps you acquainted with current subjects

Sharda Khemka

I like IWA as it is a forum to meet people and to attend meetings which are very informative.

Sunanda Sundaram



Bharathi Suresh



Leela Suryaprakash



Lily Swami



Veena B. Swamy

I was there from the beginning of IWA in 1986 and have a lot of memories and hope to have a lot more in the coming years.

Jennifer Ann Macedo

IWA is an excellent organization. I have been a member from the very beginning. I suggest we have more innovative tours like the upcoming cruise, etc.

Kanamma Ranga Rao

IWA is really very very special and every team makes their year truly memorable.

Dolly Prasad



Maureen Thadani



Alexandra Thompson



Usha Umapathi



Ranjani Venkataraghavan



Nidhi Kapoor Thadani



Debbie Thiagarajan



Stina Vasu



Cherry Venkatesan



Shanthi Thomas



Naaz Tyebbhoy



Geeta Vasudevan



Reena Verghese



Shobana Thomas



Anuradha M. Uberoi



Prema Veeraraghavan



Shanthi Verghese

I have been a member of IWA for over 24 years. So you can imagine the wrench to leave. I enjoyed every single meeting I attended. The activity chairpersons guided by the Managing Committee did a great job, each meeting so interesting, full of intellect and educational. We all made so many friends, met people from other countries and most of all, the friendly affectionate ambience and atmosphere made us all look forward to each outing.

Thank you for all the joy you gave me. The memories of IWA I shall treasure all my life and can only wish the wonderful organization will go from strength to strength in all aspects to be known as the best women's organization in all of India.

*With affectionate regards,
Dorothy Saldanha*



IWA is awesome! It is an association like no other in Chennai. IWA is class, elegance, beauty, culture, brains! It is a cross cultural amalgamation of women! I am very lucky to be a part of IWA. Thank you IWA.

Nalini Acharya

A place where I get to meet friends – all kinds – all very interesting, each unique and enterprising in their own way. I look forward to the meetings.

Lita Srinivasan

After living for sixteen years in the United States, I returned to Chennai to find myself a stranger in the city of my upbringing. In an almost, magical “voila” sort of way, IWA helped me to re-establish my roots quickly; I am happy to say that a sense of belonging is something that IWA helps inculcate quite effortlessly.

Padma Ashok





Shirley Verghese



Aruna Vijaykumar



Gowri Visvanathan

One of the best things that happened to me was my becoming an IWA member. Meeting a vast cross-section of ladies of all ages kept me young and I simultaneously appreciated the enthusiasm of the older members. I also developed an interest in many subjects which I was never exposed to earlier.

Ambika Mammen



IWA is the most 'complete' women's association that I have been part of. Its presentations and programmes are a combination of depth, meaning, fun and the spirit of adventure, all set up by interesting women of style and substance. Here's wishing IWA more elbow room and lots of 'gold' in its silver jubilee year - and in the years to come...

Pushpa Chari





IWA has been a part of my life for a couple of decades and I can honestly say that I have gained so much! For those of us who are creative but shy to come forward, IWA is a caring, nurturing, fun-filled platform to express ourselves. You can discover yourself all over again and in the process make life-long friendships. Thank you IWA.

Rekha R. Rangaraj



Lakshmi Viswanathan



Lalitha Zachariah

To me IWA's beauty lies in it providing a very rich social experience in its diversity. While the meetings enrich me in several ways, the members are friends spanning 2 weeks to 2 decades!!!

Anuradha M. Uberoi



*“As the flowers are all made sweeter by the sunshine and the dew,
So this old world is made brighter by the lives of folks like you.”*

Bonnie Parker

A loving remembrance for those of our members
who are no longer with us today..
Their spirit remains with us as an abiding presence.

Nirmal Seshadri

Radha Vasudevan

Rosa Maria Sridharan

Indira Satyamurthy

Jaya Naidu

Sundari Mani

Maya Reddy

Molly Tharayan

Mahema Devadoss

Leela Ratnam



Aruna Goyal

Megan Utley

Sheela Rajaratnam

Shobha Seshasayee

Dolly Simon

Leelamani John

Pronoti Banerjee

Shakuntala Jagannathan

Malini Vijayaraghavan

Shantha Prasad

The IWA Story - A book to commemorate 25 glorious years.

As you turn the pages, we hope you will bask in the glow of old memories. We have enjoyed being a part of this momentous endeavour. The long hours we spent pouring over old newsletters, sifting through photographs, penning chapters and making numerous phone calls to verify facts have resulted in our proud publication. We thank our families for their unflinching support and encouragement during our race against time in compiling the book.

The book would not have been possible but for the tireless efforts of:

Nina Kothari for the idea, for all her hard work, and for being a slave for perfection.

Cherry Venkatesan for gathering and sorting out photographs, fact checking and for her charm and patience.

Priya Asokan for her script writing, meticulous attention to detail and her wizardry with words.

Asha Rammohan for her conscientious compilation of IWA events and for being our pillar of strength.

Nita Reddy for culling information, compiling exhaustive lists of celebrity speakers and awardees and for her gentle persuasiveness.

Ramani Reddy for painstakingly chronicling the IWA travels, sourcing the appropriate photographs and for her infectious laughter.









