

Inspira



A LILA POONAWALLA FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER

Vol. No. 29 / Jan. 2010

FROM MY HEART

My Dear Friends and Lila Fellows,

By the time this issue reaches your hands we would have already welcomed the New Year. We complete the **first decade of the new millennium**. And what a decade it has been! Huge economies that were rock solid, almost crumbled in the wake of the recession. Smaller countries surged ahead. And India, which withstood the worst of the recession, stands tall despite the meltdown and some visible effects in few sectors.

For us at LPF it has been a very rewarding decade. We added almost **400 new Lila Fellows** to our family in this decade. We have been able to put the Foundation on a very firm and solid ground. The system, with a **very knowledgeable and accomplished board of trustees** is established, to select, mentor and impart wholesome leadership to many new aspirants to become confident Lila Fellows. But nevertheless, **the entire system is still very dynamic** and we continue to improve and improvise the best practices as they emerge.

We are now in our **15th year**. We have commenced special programs and initiatives for this special year, which will be engraved in our history. **The 483 girls whom we have given 623 scholarships, have matured into well groomed confident young ladies ready to take all the challenges of life that come their way with grit and determination.** These Lila Fellows are not only the **Pride of India**, but have done proud in whichever country they have chosen to work and live in. Having moved so far, we now are on an **expansion drive**, so that the laudable work that we have started **one and half decade ago can be increased manifolds, both vertically and horizontally.** To achieve this we have stepped up our **fund raising drive and are very confident of being able to motivate well wishers to donate liberally so that we can reach out to many more deserving girls across the country.**

As you all know we have three Lila Fellows on the board of Trustees, two of who have been working very diligently for more than 3 years. **In consultation with them we**

have decided to introduce, Lila Fellows as trustees, in rotation so that, in due course we



have a number of Lila Fellows ready to take over the full responsibility of managing the trust. Two new Lila Fellows i.e. Nusrat Shaikh (LF-1996) and Madhavi Prabhumirashi (LF-1997) have been inducted, in place of Shaheen Shaikh and Neelu Nawani. In this way by the time we **complete our 2nd decade we will have groomed many Lila fellows to ensure that the foundation is managed BY the Lila Fellows, FOR the Lila Fellows and is OF the Lila Fellows.**



Thanks giving to Trustees, Ms. Shahade and their spouses

We had a number of programs in this tertial. Starting with Ms. Ratna Khemani's workshop for the New Lila Fellows – **stepping into the new world. Ms. Khemani is the Director of the Academy of Natural Health & Beauty, Centre for Personality Development.** In her program she taught the girls unique concepts of training that encompass all aspects of personality enhancement, confidence building and communication skills.

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FROM MY HEART

For the first time we had a workshop which taught the girls **how to enable them to become more creative, positive and expressive individuals through music and dance that are inherent within us.** **Pragnya Wakhlu, a software professional who has a degree in management from IIM and a few years of work experience in USA,** conducted this program together with **Sucheta Ukidave.** Ms. Wakhlu is the Creative Director and Inspired Leader of **MOUSAI, a company dedicated to reenergizing people and bringing them back in touch with nature's gifts of music and dance.** What a learning experience!

Fourteen Lila Fellows returned from UK completing their three weeks training program at **ASHA CENTER.** This program was conducted in partnership with Asha Foundation. **Ms. Zerbano Gifford who is a human rights campaigner is also a commentator on current affairs and the author of many books set up Asha Foundation.** The ASHA Foundation trains in building the youth into responsible ambassadors of peace and harmony, through various day programs and visits to different locations for practical experience. **A big THANKYOU to Ms. Zerbano and her team at ASHA Center.**

Another first was a visit to **Janvikas Pratishthan at a village in Kale Nagar near Pawana.** The objective of the visit was to understand the life of the people living in villages and **realise how lucky we are in having what we have and not get frustrated with what we do not have;** to see the good work being done by some NGO's in this area and to see how each one of us can contribute to the needs of those who are less fortunate than us. **LPF donated Rs. 25,000/- to buy bicycles for the girls to reduce their hardship of walking many kilometers to their school.** We also enjoyed the village hospitality and had a **very tasty 'DEHATI' (typical village-like/rural) lunch. It was a very humbling experience!**

A new batch for **Spoken English classes was commenced through an Institute named INLINGUA International School of Languages.** This is an institute of international repute. You can visit their website www.inlinguapune.com. The course is a **60-hour module** divided into 40 hours for developing core language skills and 20 hours for social interaction, complete personality development and confidence building for communicating in English.

Aparna Bhandar (LF-1998) held an art exhibition. I, together with many LFs visited her exhibition and was amazed to see her paintings. What fantastic skills! **She has completed her MCM and MBA in Finance and after working in a software company in Bangalore as a developer, she gave it all up to pursue her hearts desire to become a painter!** She paints folk paintings of different types- **Gond, Madhubani, Pattachitra, Pithora, Tanjore, Warli** and Egyptian paintings.

As you all know INSPIRA is the outcome of hard work and dedication of a team of LFs who call themselves the 'Crusaders' supported vehemently by Ms. Shahade. Thus, it is but natural to say a big 'thank you' to all of them. We had a wonderful get together just for that. We also had a thanks giving dinner for the trustees, Ms. Shahade, their spouses and the LPF staff for all the hard work they have put in throughout the year.



Thanksgiving to Inspira team at Poona Club

We of course enjoyed a **Dandiya party.** What great fun to **experience the joy of Navaratri festival with fabulous music and dandiyas and of course a grand spread of mouth watering dishes to satisfy the palate.** Many, many LFs, **their spouses and children participated** with great enthusiasm. It was one of the most enjoyable events we have had so far, with no one wanting to leave the dance floor and go home.

Recently nine LFs had the opportunity to interact with one of our overseas donors Mr. Gerald Husch from Germany. Mr. Husch has a committed himself an association with LPF for many years to come.

With this happy note I sign off sending each one of you and all your loved ones, my best wishes for a very happy, healthy, peaceful and a very successful, rewarding 2010. I pray for the well being of each one of you and the world at large.

With lots of Love,

Yours always, Lila

Lila.

LEADING LADY

Rajani speaks to courage personified- Vinita Deshmukh, Editor, Intelligent Pune, the vibrant pro-public English weekly tabloid. This winner of the esteemed Chameli Devi Jain Award for outstanding media-person in 2008 has been in the national news lately for her book 'To the Last Bullet' on the life and times of braveheart Ashok Kamte and Cama Hospital episode on 26/11, which she co-authored with Vinita Kamte. Vinita's forte is environment, heritage, social and civic issues, Right To Information and human interest.

What made you take up journalism?

My father was a public health engineer with a transferable government job. I grew up in Orissa knowing Oriya even better than Marathi, amalgamating with the culture of the local people. My father had a passion for writing too and occasionally wrote for leading Marathi dailies, about various aspects of Orissa. In those days he had translated a Marathi play by Bal Kolhatkar into Oriya and also staged it with his colleagues in office. I inherited two virtues from my father; passion for writing and the importance to love local people and their language.

I cannot tolerate violation of law and order, civic disorder and injustice. In an era when common people have given up on governance, I feel that the power of the pen is most formidable and very close to my heart. I always thought- if only I can do my bit.. if only I can make a change...! So I always wanted to be a journalist.

Pune has known Vinita Deshmukh as an illustrious journalist for past 21 years! How did the journey begin?

I always wanted to study journalism. I came to Pune for my college studies. I took up B.A. (History) at Fergusson College. I got married in my third year of college. After graduation, I wanted to do a journalism course in Ranade Institute but realized that I was on the family way. I became a mother at a very young age and so I resorted to writing articles from home. I got into active journalism sometime in 1987 when the Editor of Woman's Herald, Usha Somayaji offered me to do a market watch column. Suddenly from nowhere I was somewhere, getting to be a regular columnist! I found writing this weekly column tedious as I had to visit all markets but took it as an opportunity to enter the world of journalism. However, I enjoyed it all the same. My mother-in-law used to take a dig at me asking me why I was recording prices of onions, potatoes and chilies week after week and whether there weren't better articles to do? But my husband supported me by saying, "Let her do it if she enjoys that". Soon the Express Group came to Pune and asked me to do a regular market watch column for them too. From there began my association with the Indian Express.

When do you think Vinita Deshmukh became a well known name in every house hold?

I think Citizen gave me that identity. Though I believe that it is not important to be well-known just because you are



associated with a leading newspaper but because you are working for the common man and amplifying his cause. Soon from the market watch columns I moved on to writing feature stories for Express. Then I became in-charge of Eve's Express, then Midweek. Finally I took charge of Citizen- a fortnightly of The Indian Express. Through Citizen we did quite a few cover stories dealing in depth with civic issues. In 1993-94 I covered a feature wherein drug orgies were being organized behind Koregaon Park. People were using the Osho Commune passes to gain entry to these parties without the knowledge of the commune officials. Our feature led to the commune making its regulations stricter. In 1996-97 I covered another series of features on environmental degradation of Mahabaleshwar and building violations therein. This campaign went on for four years and resulted in the Bombay Environmental Action Group to go to High-Court. Because of this campaign, the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests put Mahabaleshwar and Panchgani in an eco sensitive zone - the first ever hill station in India to come under such stringent norms. Two of my stories won me the prestigious Statesman Award for Rural Reporting, - once in 1998 for the story on 'Morachi Chincholi', the peacock village and in 2005 for the story on reverse migration in some villages of Maharashtra. Stories close to human interest made Citizen a runaway success and readers looked forward to the arrival of the next issue. It ran for a good seven and a half years.

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LEADING LADY

Have you ever been threatened? Or shunned for making news out of others' emotional moments?

No. Never in life has anyone threatened me. I believe feeling threatened is a state of mind that's overcome with unreasonable fear. While I was working on the Dow Chemicals' issue, I received several emails from friends asking me if I was in the 'Z' security category. I had replied, "*No. I am in the 'G category' where God is there to protect me*". While covering the Osho Commune issue I was a recipient of vulgar calls. But in all this, I am fortunate my husband and my mother-in-law stood by me like pillars with lot of faith and support. I must admit that while pursuing investigative journalism, one needs tremendous family support.

About making news out of others emotions... such issues should be handled with maturity and sensitivity added with a humane outlook. The sanctity of a journalist lies in informing and educating; not making sensational news out of genuine agony. Entertainment comes last. I have been able to bring many civic issues to light by using this approach. So I have never been shunned either!

How did Intelligent Pune happen to you?

My longest span with incisive journalism was with The Indian Express, Pune from 1987 to 2006, where I worked in various responsible capacities. In 2006, I realized that over the past 7-8 years, passion in journalism has been replaced by fashion. I was not interacting with my readers and so I was not enjoying my work. I wanted to quit Express and so I did. Sr. Editor Prakash Kardale encouraged me by reassuring me that out there, there still was an audience who wanted to read things relevant to their lives. He said, "*Let's start a weekly*". He, me and former GM of Express Sanjay Pawar (now GM of DNA) brainstormed for 6 months and came up with the idea of a 32 page weekly coloured tabloid which would take up issues directly affecting the citizens of Pune... And Prakash suggested we call this potential phenomenon 'Intelligent Pune'. Since early January 2007, Intelligent Pune is being published by the prestigious house of Prabhat which is a well known, socially conscious Marathi daily since the past 72 years.

What problems/challenges did you face in this new venture?

I did not face any problems. Initially people did warn us of becoming another piece of trash amidst so many publications hitting the stands daily! But I had tremendous faith in myself and believed that I knew the pulse of Puneites. I knew I had to focus on pure facts to merit their respect. I knew that in this city it is not glamour but clamor that sells. 60 years after independence so many civic problems still trouble the citizens. Diluting the contents with sensational news and cheap gossip would be like betraying the readers and questioning their

integrity and intelligence. My role is to campaign and my main objective is to first address my primary readership and then satisfy the secondary readership (viz. the ones who give my publication business). Today faceless citizens have become helpless victims in the corrupt hands of the political *goondas* and corrupt bureaucrats. The primary duty of newspapers is now to reach the scandals of the government to the common-man, the taxpayer whose money is being played around with. The idea is to get the citizens angry and act; to promote them to vote, invoke the RTI and protest against injustice. With such a focus on what to challenge, there has been no scope for problems!

How was your tryst with 'To the Last Bullet'?

It was a dream come true! I had never thought I would be writing a book. I had gone to meet Mrs. Vinita Kamte for a cover story in July 2009 where I learned about her amazingly courageous fight against the system. The police department had repeatedly said that the three experienced officers, Hemant Karkare, Ashok Kamte and Vijay Salaskar had left in a hurry without understanding the gravity of the situation and this had resulted in their gruesome death. Hurt by such loose allegations about the capability of her martyred husband and his colleagues Vinita Kamte set out to find the truth behind the Cama Hospital episode. For seven months she and her twin sister had struggled to procure voluminous facts under the RTI. I offered to write a book for her which went on to become one of my most beautiful and heart-tugging experiences.

Written in three and a half months, it was released on 24th November 2009, two days before the anniversary of Mumbai 26/11 at the Taj Hotel, Mumbai. The first edition was sold out in the first 3-4 days and now we are in the 6th edition. It is currently the best seller in the non-fiction category.

What outcome do you expect from this book?

I am glad more and more people are getting to know the truth behind the circumstances leading to the mysterious and scandalous death of the elite police officers and their struggle. Firstly, we want that the guilty should be accountable and not go unpunished. In this case, justice delayed is not justice denied. A bigger commission needs to be formed to look into the case anew. Secondly, I want to show the public how powerful a tool RTI is, because of which now the government wants to dilute this Act. So I appeal to every citizen to stand up and protest.

How effective is the combination of RTI and the pen?

I believe RTI is the best weapon for journalists as they can get 100 per cent truth to the readers and not dance to the tunes of government officers and politicians who want to

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LEADING LADY

always hide the truth from the public. Intelligent Pune has exposed many issues of the city for which my team of journalists consistently conduct inspection of files in the government offices under Section 4 of the RTI Act. The best example has been the exposure of the Dow Chemicals row in Pune. Similarly the 60 feet wide road was being cut out of the Aundh Botanical garden which we managed to stall. Another campaign along with other NGOs and youth groups was the Baner-Balewadi Development Plan issue where spaces reserved for public utilities and amenities were being de-reserved for residential construction. We garnered more than 60,000 objections from citizens.

Your message to the public as a civic and RTI activist....

Citizens must stand up for their own rights. Most people come to me seeking help. Though honest and equipped with lots of helpful information they seek anonymity. I must tell them that the percentage of threats and their effectiveness is miniscule and they must rise above their fear which is just a state of mind. Especially if they want a

better country for the future generation they need to be environmentally, civically and socially conscientious.

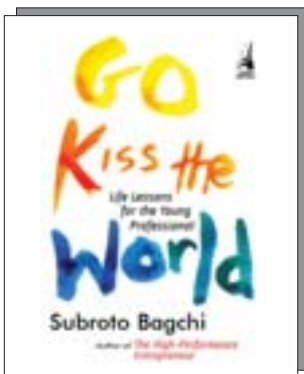
What is your message for youngsters wanting to take up journalism as a profession?

The present generation, especially girls are very intelligent and vibrant. However, I find that they lack concentration and their yearning to go deep is missing. They believe in superficiality and want to have a profile even before they have worked for it! They focus more on the money they are earning through a job rather than the job itself. And that is why they do not mind hopping jobs.

I wish to tell these wanna-be journalists that this profession needs passion and courage to write what citizens must know. It's a 24 hours job; when you are not writing you are thinking. Don't look for a corporate lifestyle. Don't dig for compliments because journalism is a thankless job. I must tell the youngsters that it's a profession that demands constant quality performance because yesterday's performance is like a 'raddi' newspaper, dumped the moment it gets old; or like being a housewife whose amazing deeds of the past are forgotten. If you do not have the passion for this job, don't take it up.

■ - **Rajani Panchang-Dhumal**
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BOOK REVIEW



Name of the Book:

Go Kiss the World

Author:

Subroto Bagchi

Publisher:

Penguin

Subroto Bagchi grew up in a small town in Orissa, imbibing from his family a sense of contentment. Despite his rural background he always found himself

connected to and in constant wonder of the large world via innumerable and unusual sources of information. "Go kiss the World" were Subroto Bagchi's blind mother's last words to him. These words became the guiding principle of his life.

Through this book, Bagchi urges Indian professionals to recognize and develop their inner strengths, thereby helping them realize their own, unique potential. Bagchi says: "Our lives are like rivers – the source seldom reveals the confluence. Does a river fret over the long journey and about its end just as it is about to spurt? It simply does not do that, caring instead to flow, to begin its journey, and on its way builds a beneficial relationship with anyone who comes in contact with her". He also adds that one's first, second and even perhaps the third job will not build or define one's career; but the

respect, patience, affection and gratitude, with which you treat them, will. Bagchi has touched all the facets of life in this book. Each chapter gives an important lesson to be remembered for not only professional growth but also personal growth.

For those who are anxious about their jobs or building their careers, in part II of the book he writes about the making of a young professional by exemplifying his own life. He narrates his journey about the mid life crises that he coped with, how he was benefited by the art of listening, how he learned to bounce back in life and the rewards he reaped. He has defined rules for success based on the principles he learnt from his father. Bagchi writes **"Success is not about building material comforts. Success is your ability to rise above your discomfort, whatever be your current state of wealth."**

In the final part of his book he takes us on a journey of his forties. He says that unlike the twenties when one has many options and can afford to experiment, one's forties is a very defining period with fewer options. He describes some of the challenging assignments he undertook during his association with Mr. Azim Premji at Wipro and the leadership lessons he learned. Finally he wants that his book should urge every reader to reflect upon his own life- he appeals to each one to behold one's own life, than just living it. A befitting appeal to every LF!

■ - **Sanchita Thanedar-Satalkar**
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THE EXPLORER

Ever had a dream of getting marooned on an island surviving only on coconuts and hope? Honestly, I am sure most of us have had this dream or nightmare (definition subject to affinity for adventure). Well, I admit being plagued by such visions for several nights when I got to know that I would leave a cushy commercial town like Visakhapatnam for a place called Port Blair, the capital of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. When I first got to know about this job related transfer of my husband who is with the Indian Navy, despite my generally optimistic view of life I had this sinking feeling of being forced to see more than my fill of sun and sand. This wasn't good news for my three year old daughter too who was turning to be more of a mall crazy shopaholic and junk food enthusiast than me. 'No Big Bazaar, Mc Donald's or movie halls there' earlier visitors hissed while adding to our woes. 'That's defence services life' I consoled myself... 'Frequent transfers and sometimes to such far flung places too but at least good naval facilities for housing, food and children's education exist everywhere'.



With a heavy heart we boarded the airplane which would take us from Chennai to Port Blair. 'Wow, take a look at the island below' an elated co-passenger shrieked. As I leaned over to see what the big fuss was about, I couldn't help but admire the lush green piece of land surrounded by blue aquamarine waters, a pale blue contrast outlining where the waves hit the land mass. 'That's the Sentinel Islands' the amiable air hostess informed 'We will be landing in Port Blair soon'. As we approached, an archipelago of such breathtaking islands came into view. As we touched the runway and my little one screamed "Ma, I have never seen so many coconut trees till now".



Months later I realized that this was not like the infamous 'Kala Pani' I had imagined. Yes the town is small but not underdeveloped either; one can get all necessities of life. The markets are not as classy and the people not too fashionable yet there is a unique charm in their unaffected simple conduct and way of life. The sun is harsh but we have begun to take pride in our healthy tanned complexions and the pure unpolluted air is the extra bonus we get for free. My daughter for certain, has become less materialistic and has begun to enjoy even the simple pleasures of life like a day on the beach spent together as a family, taking ferry rides to tiny islands which have in store unpredictably fascinating tours, picnics with friends to the many exotic places which remain unexploited, a quiet evening outside on the lawn of our sea facing house with a barbecue spreading the

aroma of roasted succulent chicken. She has as I had hoped become more of an outdoor enthusiast and not a couch potato staring at the TV which today is every mother's despair.

Personally I have become far more adventurous than I could have ever imagined. For someone who could never learn how to swim, I have snorkeled in the sea with the help of a guide and an inflatable. The experience is indescribable; the magnificent corals, colorful sea anemones and diverse sea life are just like the pictures straight out of National Geographic. In fact I got so addicted to this activity that I have snorkeled at almost all worthwhile locations and have been fortunate to even spot a herd of gigantic dugongs or Sea Cow, the state animal of the islands. My mother's feat is more



miraculous, despite being a heart patient and having never stepped more than knee deep in water; she summoned the courage to snorkel during her visit and swears by the lifetime experience.

Apart from this there are numerous experiences which would remain etched in my memory for a lifetime. The trip through reserve forests on our way to Baratang and catching a glimpse of the Jarawas, one of the many indigenous tribes of the islands makes one get transported back to the era when man had to hunt and fish for a living; watching wild elephants from a safe distance while sun bathing on the white sands of Radhanagar beach, which boasts of being the sixth best beach in Asia; getting goose bumps watching the poignant story of our freedom fighter's while sitting in the dark during the light and



sound show in the Cellular Jail.

Soon we will be moving back to what is called 'mainland' by the islander's. Back to the noise, pollution, crowds and rampant commercialization but I am sure this life altering experience we have undergone will serve as a reminder to always be grounded and while being humanly ambitious and worldly to also appreciate simple unadulterated joys which life offers for free yet we choose to ignore. Hopefully we have learnt enough to not be completely swallowed by the modern fast paced life and will try to maintain one's individuality even in a crowd. I am reminded of a beautiful quotation by Walter Russel, 'The only way you can find it is through being alone with your thoughts at sufficiently long intervals to give that inner voice within you a chance to cry out in distinguishable language for you. 'Here I am within you.' That is the silent voice, the voice of nature, which speaks to everyone who will listen'.

■ - Preeti (Tamang) Thapa (LF-1997)

CLIP BOARD

In order to ensure newer participation in our discussions, Inspira pulled out a handful of LFs by sheer chance and teased their brains with the following question:

"Do you think networking sites can be a serious communication tool for business development, job findings, relationship building, locating old friends and making new ones etc?"

Networking sites do have their contribution in personal friendships and business networking. These days, people are constantly on the move due to the number of avenues available, hence being in constant contact becomes difficult. The networking sites serve this very purpose. As regards business development and job findings the sites help you with references and larger outreach. However the sites for personal and professional usage should be exclusive as the purpose of networking is different and also a person's privacy should be respected.

-Shraddha Chiplunkar (LF-2006)

Yes. They can become a serious tool for communication. Awareness amongst the people to use it effectively needs to be created. Many people ignore these media as means of communication, which is not correct.

-Darshan Saluja (LF-2000)

It is a serious networking tool. I as an HR professional use it for recruiting also. Some of the links are popular. We can use it to build professional relationships as well building contacts. It can also be a good tool to share knowledge or address queries to.

- Mariam Gunwan (LF-2001)

Social networking has turned into an Internet Phenomenon. The world has been reduced to just a click of the mouse- let it be business or recruitment. Social sites provide a cost effective solution to reach out to your prospective customers/job seekers. However it is very crucial that you know the main objective of being on a social networking site as each has an objective attached. Privacy is one major concern; one should always be aware of what and why he or she is posting on such sites.

-Vanita Kriplani (LF-1997)

No, I do not believe that they can be a serious communication tool for business development and finding jobs. However, sites like Facebook and Orkut may be a medium for keeping in touch with friends and locating old friends. About making new friends, these sites must be used with precaution. You never know the danger that may be lurking on the internet. We have heard enough incidents about youngsters getting conned on the net. All said and done, SNS must be used discreetly; any abuse of these sites can have a detrimental effect on one's well-being.

-Ketaki Deshpande (LF-1996)

Be ready girls! Any one of you could be contacted to get your viewpoint on yet another topic to be published in the next issue.

■ **- Sanchita Thanedar-Satalkar**
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THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT TO THE FOUNDATION WITH YOUR GENEROUS DONATION



Mrs. Kirti Sandeep
Nalawade (Shirke)
LF-1997
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Mrs. Chandrika Mahesh
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LF-1996

NEWS FLASH

Lila Fellows visited the 'Pawana Project Area' of Janvikas Pratishthan on 15th November 2009 in order to witness first-hand what are the social conditions in villages, how NGO's work, how they approach social issues, and how LF's can contribute to this cause. 'Janvikas Pratishthan' is a N.G.O. working for the rights of the marginalized since 1992. Janvikas Pratishthan means 'a platform for people's development'. It was envisioned by a group of likeminded social activists and development professionals from western Maharashtra and Konkan region who shared their aspiration of 'contributing to the creation of an egalitarian society'. Janvikas works on issues such as women's empowerment through micro-finance (Bachat Gat), education of girls, community health, water resource management and social issues such as dowry, domestic violence and female foeticide. The founding members of Janvikas are Nandini Datar and Prakash Kamble, who are



Mrs. Poonawalla and Mrs. Frenny Tarapore pose with the girls to whom the Foundation donated bicycles



Everyone dances to the tunes of Sufi music in gratitude to the Lord Almighty

working in this field for the past 25 years. We also know them as parents of Amruta Prakash, our very own overseas Lila Fellow (2005).

The office of Janvikas is situated in village Kale Colony, which is a picturesque location near Pawana Dam. Their project villages are situated on the banks of River Pawana and are surrounded by forts from all side viz. Tungi, Tikona, Lohgad and Wisapur. The LF's were welcomed at the office in Pawana with hot tea and introductions from both sides. The staff members of Janvikas are young boys and girls who belong to the rural community and want to make a difference in their villages through social work. The staff members welcomed the fellows with a beautiful song with a social message and urged the fellows to join in. The song was 'Geet ga rahe hain aaj hum, ragini ko dhundhate huve....Aa gaye yahan jawan kadam , manzilonko dhundhate huve...' which means 'We are singing along, seeking the light of empowerment and shaping our own destiny'.

In an interactive session, Ms. Nandini Datar, the project director and trustee of Janvikas explained to girls

what NGO's are how they work and what they seek to achieve. This was followed by an engaging 'Patha Natya' i.e. a street-play by the staff. Janvikas is working on the issue of combating the heinous practice of female foeticide through which millions of girls are killed in India each year because they are 'unwanted' as opposed to a male child. The staff members presented a satire which shows how the dwindling number of girls can lead to social issues and how our entire progress as a society can be jeopardised.

After the thought provoking 'Patha Natya', Nandini Tai discussed the issues of gender equality with the girls and told them how it is important for each girl to get educated, to make a successful career and strike a balance between home and work. She also urged them to contribute through social work so that many more girls can benefit in terms of education. The girls took a special oath prepared by Janvikas which relates to women's empowerment and commitment of each girl to make the goal of male female-equality achievable.



Lila Fellows at Janvikas Pratishthan



Our own Vidya with village women

After that, the Fellows visited a village called Sawantwadi and met girls from the village there. Some of the girls of Sawantwadi narrated how participating in

the empowerment programmes of Janvikas and learning about their rights has helped them at a personal level. They also described how difficult it is for rural girls to complete their education due to lack of funds, no schools in the vicinity, and lack of transport facilities. Their struggle for getting equal rights as their brother was a learning experience for the Fellows.

The village visit was followed by traditional Maharashtrian rural lunch at the office. Fellows enjoyed the hot 'Bhakaris', vegetable and spicy 'thecha'. Post lunch the girls shared their experiences sang songs with the staff members and discussed the issues regarding women's empowerment. The Trustees of LPF also

shared their thoughts on these issues.

Due to untimely and unexpected rains, we had to drop the plan of going for boating in the backwaters of Pawana Dam. Instead the LF's enjoyed nice heart warming discussions with a hot cup of tea.

The visit ended with Lila Ma'am, Firoz Sir, Frenny Ma'am and Manjusha Ma'am sharing their experiences. The Lila Poonawalla Foundation donated a sum of Rs.25,000/- to Janvikas Pratishthan especially to buy bicycles for the girls who travel for miles together on foot, to school and back.

Thank you Nandini Tai for showing us life in rural setting. I was an opportunity we shall cherish for a life time. It was a different and wonderful experience.

■ - Amruta Prakash (LF-2005)

SPECIAL FEATURE

Mid October 2009, 14 more LFs returned from UK after having completed their Peace Leadership training at ASHA Center, Gloucester. Like the previous batch, the new batch of Peace Ambassadors also underwent a 3-weeks intensive training program which included various sessions and outdoor visits. The 26th issue of Inspira had covered the training program in detail. Thus, in this issue we highlight only the new activities and how the same leadership program was made different! The collage in itself is the best description of their entire stay.

On 21st September 2009, we landed in London and stayed in the Crompton Guest House. We saw part of London for two days before going to ASHA Center and again for a day before returning to India.



**Sanguine (Air)
Yellow**



**Choleric (Fire)
Red**



**Melancholic
(Earth) Blue**



**Phlegmatic
(Water) White**



This time a few new sessions were introduced whilst some of the sessions like the Four Temperaments and Eurhythmy had been modified a little. We practiced Eurhythmy every day. This time Caroline innovated the art-form by including in it four Sanskrit verses, Indian dance steps, poses of Indian Goddesses and some sounds. Mark and Adrian correlated the four temperaments with Indian goddesses, which not only made the learning easy but also interesting. We learned that temperaments are deeper than emotions and can be changed slowly and improved. Each of these temperaments shows a different sign characteristic of Fire, Water, Earth and Air. These resemble Indian Ayurvedic terms like 'Vaata', 'Cough' and 'Pitta'.

Mrs. Jime (Steve's wife) taught us how to make scones and cakes which are typically British. Using butter and jam inside cakes was a new concept for us.

The very first Sunday at ASHA Center was observed as Peace Day and everybody participated in a peace walk. On the same occasion we laid out an Indian Tea Party. People from nearby places of ASHA Center, mainly from Grange came to celebrate this day. We, the PAs had prepared eats; the menu was *Gaajar Halva*, *Kulfi*, *Shewai Upma*, *Chana Chat*, *Bhajani thalipeeth*, Indian tea and of course the cakes and scones we had learned and baked. Then we presented some entertainment. Madhavi sang and Devika and Gauri gave solo classical dance performances. Then as a group we performed on the track of '*Jai Ho*' song from the Oscar winning movie *Slum Dog Millionaire*. This

was a fusion of Indian classical and western dance. The people from Grange joined in and started dancing with us. The program was a runaway success! After this hit performance, the people demanded a re-performance at the Gloucester theatre. We had organized everything with a lot of team spirit and dedication with the objective that our team from India should be remembered for the good food as well as good talent. The Tea Party was followed by the peace walk through the garden around ASHA center. The garden was decorated beautifully and the path where we walked was full of spiritual readings of Bible, *Bhagwadgita* as well as the *Quran*. The bells were being sounded to drive away the evil and welcome fresh air. Then we lighted candles and let them drift away in a small tank of water.

Dr. Deepak Joshi gave us a talk on Vedant Philosophy over Supper on the evening of the Peace Day Celebrations. He spoke about how the four Vedas and yoga promote coming together and bonding and thus promote happiness. But happiness is incomplete without stability and peace. Peace cannot be achieved without control over speech and action. Integrity is important. He mentioned the importance of a 'Guru' and meditation in life in order to maintain good mental health.

We were introduced to three exercises with a therapeutic effect: the forest walk, horse therapy and painting session. Forest of Dean is a big forest in Gloucestershire which used to be reserved for royal hunting. Adrian took us for a walk through this jungle showing us trees new to us and a spring, Saint Anthony's well made by Monks around 1066. It is preserved so well that no one can assess that it is so old. The silent walk in the fresh air amidst nature humbled our souls. It has a therapeutic effect on us inspiring us to preserve nature. In the **painting sessions** conducted by Mrs. Jeroo Roy, we painted on themes given to us. It was surprising how each mind had a different perception and reflection on the same issue. It was a medium of speechless expression! Mrs. Roy is a well-known artist working on several issues relating to women and children. She used to be a contractor and builder. She gave it up to pursue her heart's call viz. painting. Through her paintings she has been campaigning against social atrocities against women, dowry, female infanticide and child labour. **The last training was with horses.** Horses are social animals. They have distinct personalities, attitudes and moods. Sam Quinlan and her team showed us how this can be of therapeutic value to young

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SPECIAL FEATURE

OUTLINE OF THE PEACE LEADERSHIP TRAINING PROGRAM

Lectures & Training Sessions:

- Poetry session
- Eurhythmmy
- Lucca leadership
- Cake and scones making
- Temperaments and Indian Goddesses
- Alexander Techniques
- Painting Session
- Horse therapy
- Biodynamic gardening

Talks:

- Global peace and spirituality by Satish Kumar
- Supper talk on *Vedant* Philosophy by Dr. Deepak Joshi
- India in Britain by Mrs. Kusum Vadgama

Visits:

- London
- British Parliament
- Grange
- Gloucester Cathedral
- Stratford-upon-Avon
- Sculpture trail
- Tintern Abbey
- Bath
- Jane Austen Centre
- Oxford University

Events:

- Peace Day and Peace Walk
- Theatre Performance
- Navratri
- Gandhi Jayanthi
- Birthday celebrations

offenders, women at risk, traumatic and post traumatic stress disorder, eating disorders, family therapy, learning difficulties, addiction and much more. Each member of our group chose one horse and communicated with it by controlling its rein or speaking to it. We realized that horses do understand our body language and thinking via energy transfer.

Mr. Satish Kumar is an advocate of nuclear disarmament. He and his companions went on a peace walk from India to the four corners of the nuclear world: Moscow, Paris, London and the USA. They called it a 'Pilgrimage for Peace'. Based on this experience he gave us a talk on Global Peace and Spirituality. According to him the Earth in itself is a vast community i.e. '*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*'; and it is our perceptions that make boundaries. He spoke on topics like '*Ahimsa*', '*Upanishads*' and science versus spirituality which was very interesting.

Four lucky PAs had their birthdays during the three week stay- Arpita Chanda, Jyoti Otageri, Devika Daftardar and Nikhat Memon. All of them were celebrated in a different but special way. The Gujrati community of Gloucester had invited us for Navratri celebrations. Celebrating an Indian festival away from home was a great experience. We danced to the beats of *Garaba*. Mark and Diana participated in the Indian folk dance form and enthusiastically learned the steps from us!

The Peace Leadership training ended in style in the magnificent Picturedrome theater of Gloucester. For many of us this was the first stage performance! The theater was packed.... Lila Ma'am, Firoz Uncle; we were seeing Mrs. Gifford for the first time after her accident. The Mayor of Gloucester Mr. David Brown and the Prince of Morocco Mr. Vishal were the chief guests. The residents of Grange and the local Gujrati community were there too! Jyoti and Arpita compered the show. Madhavi had a solo vocal recital whilst Devika and Gauri rendered solo Bharatnatyam and Kathak classical dance recitals, respectively. And then came the test of our learning- as a group we performed Eurhythmmy. It is true that practice makes man perfect! The show was a hit in entirety and everybody was overwhelmed-organizers, performers and audience alike. The program was followed by dinner and at last came the valedictory function wherein the Mayor handed us our certificates and declared us as '**Ambassadors of Peace**'! The theatre performance rid us of our stage fear and strengthened our team spirit and group skills. The Peace Ambassadors saw very little of Ms. Gifford this visit. It was unfortunate that she had met with an accident. But Lila and Firoz Poonawalla and PAs did call upon her at her residence to express their gratitude and extend a warm thank-you!

On our last night in UK we dined at China Town in London with three other LF's Chandrika (LF-1996), Sharmilee (LF-2003) and Ridhi (LF-2009).

■ - **Rajani Panchang-Dhumal**
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(Inputs from PAs Harshada, Prachi and Nisha)

Suggested reading for complete details about the Peace Leadership Program - Inspira Vol. 26, Special Feature, Pages 6 to 14

EMPOWERED LILA FELLOWS

"When asked, how much educated men were superior to those uneducated, Aristotle answered, 'As much as the living are to the dead.'"

I have been very lucky to be born in a family who gave utmost importance to education and especially to women's education. It all started even before India was independent when my illiterate yet visionary grandmother took a stand to educate all her 5 daughters and ensured that they were all financially independent before they got married. My mother faced enormous hardships and troubles but was able to cope with them as she was educated and financially independent.

I was not only blessed to get an education but also to have the freedom to choose my field of education. Most parents insist their child be a Doctor or an engineer and choose Science faculty after 10th especially if you have scored a higher percentage in 10th. But when I decided to choose the Arts faculty inspite of getting high scores my parents encouraged me. I completed my HSC and stood 14th in the Merit list and went on to graduate in Psychology from Fergusson College, Pune (ranked 17th in the University).

I wanted to work in a corporate organization and apply my knowledge of Psychology in a work setting. Hence I chose to specialize in Industrial Psychology for my Masters Degree. There are very few universities in India which offer this specialization. I was very fortunate to have this offered at University of Pune itself. Here at the University I received enormous guidance and support from Prof Dr. B. R. Shejwal, under whose expert guidance I completed various research projects and seminars that gave me an advantage in my work area. Along with my Masters I also completed my Diploma in Human Resource Management and a Course on Psychological Counselling from the Christian Counselling Centre, Vellore, Tamilnadu.

Back in 1999 when I graduated, not many organizations were aware of this field of education and how an Industrial Psychologist could contribute to their organizations. Industrial Psychology (IP) is a relatively new branch of Psychology that was created for corporations and organizations that need more structure. Industrial psychologists contribute to an organization's success by improving the performance and well-being of its people. It researches and identifies how behaviors and attitudes can be improved through hiring practices, training programs, and feedback systems. The most common research and practice areas in IP are: job performance, job analysis, job design, individual assessment, psychometrics, training, work motivation, job attitudes, organizational climate, leadership, organizational development (OD), group performance etc.

Today a psychometric test, behavioral interviews and a predictive index play an important role in the hiring and selection processes of all corporate personnel. Also training and development of key and talented resources, counseling and OD interventions are key activities in an organization.

Most of these areas in an organization are taken care of by the Human Resources Department. I too have worked in the HR departments in some of the leading organizations.

I believe my education in this field has made me a good HR person and a Manager as I am trained to look at an employee not just as a resource but as an individual with needs. Currently I am working independently as a consultant for startup companies, wherein I help them set up their HR processes and systems.



My association with the Lila Poonawalla Foundation has been

very memorable and enriching. Right from receiving the scholarship to being a part of Samagam, it has been one learning journey. I was an active member of NSS in my college days and was passionate and worked on various social causes. But as I got busy with my career and family, I was not able to contribute further. Because of the Foundation and the Peace Ambassador 2008 project I am happy to now be actively involved in various social activities. Recently, I also conducted a training program on 'Corporate Selection Process' for new Lila Fellows, to help them understand the selection process in a company and to prepare for interviews and tests. It was a great opportunity for me to interact and learn from these young Lila Fellows.

I strongly believe that "Planets do not make our destiny; we are the makers of our own destiny". I still have many more things to achieve and do and hope to continue with the same passion and commitment.

■ - Samina Deokar (LF-1998)

PAs explore London



LIVING LIFE WITH A DIFFERENCE

What 'Benarasi' is to North India and 'Kanjivaram' to South India, 'Paithani' is to Maharashtra; one of the richest gold brocade silk saris with stunning gold patterns woven within! Also known as the 'mahavastra' meaning royal fabric, every woman aspires to possess one. Especially a bride would crave to be adorned with a heavily embellished Paithani on her special day. Knowing how famous and in demand these saris are, we were amazed to know that the very identity and existence of this age-old heritage is under threat! Our very own LF Rajashree Ahirgawali is working in association with the Great Missions Group Consultancy, towards registering the Paithani as the Geographical Indication and thereby an Intellectual Property of the city of Paithan and its weavers. Crusader Nisha spoke to these activists and visited Paithan with them to get us an inside story of another section of society leading lives with a difference!

The *Paithani* is completely hand-woven. Just setting the threads on the loom (as per a design first drawn on paper) takes up an entire day. A *Paithani* sari could take up a month to about a year to complete, depending upon the intricacy and complexity of the design. That is the main reason why these saris are expensive. They cost anywhere between Rs.4,000/- to Rs. 1,50,000/- a piece. Very durable as they are, they last for more than 100 years and can be preserved as an antique piece. They are known to be passed on from one generation to the other as a precious gift. Traditionally, the *Paithani* saris, shawls, dupattas and stoles were well known. Now a days, *Paithani* ties, jackets, pillow covers, wall hangings and *Paithani* letter boxes are also made to meet the rising demands. Even today *Paithani* is exported to many European countries.

LF Rajashree who is an advocate by profession, spoke to us about the history of *Paithani* on the basis of her research. The *Paithani* sari is named after the Paithan region in Maharashtra State where they are woven on handlooms from very fine silk and gold yarn known as 'zari'. It is considered one of the richest saris in Maharashtra. In the olden days, everything right from rearing silk to drawing gold yarn was done in Paithan itself. The *zari* was drawn from pure gold. But today silver is substituted for gold thus making the *Paithanis* more affordable to many people. The silk is now procured from Karnataka and the *zari* from Surat in Gujarat. The art of making *Paithanis* dates back to more than 2000 years. Its mention is found in the mythology, in the Vedas and well into recent history. The



interaction between the Hindu and Muslim rulers during the medieval period gave rise to new styles in *Paithani* designing.

The traditional *Paithani* used to be a plain sari with a heavy *zari* border and ornamental pallav. But today, saris with bodies scattered with motifs are in vogue. A *Paithani* sari is characterized by borders of a carpet-like oblique square design and a pallu with a peacock design. It has an ornamental **zari border, pallav and buttis** (little motifs) **tara** (star), **mor** (peacock), **popat** (parrot), **bangdi-mor** (peacock within circular design), **asavali** (flower and vine), **kuyri** (mango), **rui phool** (flower), **paisa** (coin), **pankha** (fan), **kalas pakli** (petal), **kamal** (lotus), **chandrakor** (crescent moon), **narli** (coconut) and so on. Since the Paithan region is quite close to the Ajanta caves, one can find the influence of the Buddhist paintings in the motifs used on the *Paithani* saris. There are different types of *Paithani* saris, classified on the basis of three criteria - motif, weaving and color and the sari is named after the design on it. They are available in more than fifty colours.



Paithani weavers at Paithan city in Aurangabad district are great contributors to preserving this art till date. Dedication and faith of the weavers has kept this art alive. In Paithan, more than 500 expert families are involved in manufacturing *Paithani*. In most of the families, women do the job of weaving because it is a job which earns them their bread sitting at home. Nisha spoke to sixty year old Rehmed Bibi. She weaves from her rental home in which the loom itself occupies a large area of 10"X10". She continues to weave since her childhood. "It

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LIVING LIFE WITH A DIFFERENCE



has been our family business and so I'll be happy to continue weaving the Paithani till my last breath!" Sabiya who is in this profession for the last 12 years said "The loud clack-clack noise of the loom hurts our ears, but we are now used to it. Working on the handloom is very painful. It directly affects our eyes as well as our backs. I have to weave if I have to run my house. The cost of one Paithani ranges from five thousand to five lakh; but we get very little amount for our work with which we have to earn a living as well as educate our children. However, I don't see a future for my children as they are all involved in the weaving business itself. Power shut down is another problem; due to this we are forced to work in the darkness".

Over the years the *Paithani* weaving activity has weakened. Many of the weavers have taken up other professions. Many migrated, and even if they continued to weave, adopted the styles and techniques of the places they had migrated to. Only a few families remained and even from among these, the young men were lured by less-extracting and better-paying professions. It is the old men and the women that have kept the art alive – the old men mostly from Hindu weaving families; the women from the Muslim ones. A *Paithani* training and production center was established at Paithan in 1968 with a view to promoting the weaving of the *Paithani*. The MSSIDC took over its management in 1973. At present there are 38 looms at this center alone and about a hundred and fifty *Paithanis* (both traditional and brocade) are produced annually.

Now-a-days semi-*Paithani* saris resembling the original one have entered the market. Because they are woven by machines, they are available at cheaper rates. Secondly, besides Paithan, similar saris are being woven in Yeola, Pune, Nashik, and Malegaon in Maharashtra with some innovative designs. These imitations ruin the originality of the *Paithani* as well as threaten the employment as well as future of the artisans of Paithan who have been passing on this heritage art for generations together. Great Mission Group Consultancy is a registered Society creating awareness of intellectual property rights in the society

and protecting Intellectual Property Rights of the downtrodden sections in society. They have taken an initiative towards protecting the interests of the Paithan Pratisthan Weavers Association, Paithan.

We spoke to Prof. Ganesh Hingmire, Chairman GMGC about their movement to protect the *Paithani*. He said, "*Paithani is an Intellectual Property of the splendid city of Paithan. It should be protected under GI as its quality, reputation and designs are essentially attributable to Paithan for more than hundreds of years. We wish to protect rights of these weavers and get the best price for their faith and dedication. We took an initiative with authorization from Producer's Association to register a GI (Geographical Indication) for Paithani Sari which projects the pride of Paithan city in Aurangabad. Production of Paithani involves a lot of intellect, capital and hard work. Thus Paithani is the identity of Paithan.*"

We researched through various sources, interviewed the manufacturers of "Paithan's Paithani" in Paithan, and recorded historical evidences and production methods to put our project in place. Our intention is to register "Paithan's Paithani" as Geographic Indication (GI) which will authorise manufacturers of Paithani to sell their products under the GI name Paithani and exclude others from using the same name for saris other than Paithani. Ultimately there will not be any infringement of their rights both nationally and internationally. Also, with this we wish to encourage and enlighten the masses to file GI applications, as this would act as an enforcing measure in protecting the culture and heritage of the city including inventive skills of human mind with the help of resources. Our interest in application of "Paithan's Paithani" as GI are to give it world-wide recognition, increase its demand in market, promote and enhance its export, protect the identity of this legacy of Paithan and to shield it from any kind of infringement, protect the rights i.e. manufacturing, selling, authorising rights, etc. of its manufacturers and generate more employment for women involved in its weaving which will help in their economic up-liftment. We believe that this will help the producers, the society and ultimately the country".

Next time we enter a shop to buy a *Paithani* I am sure we are going to visualise the hard working women of Paithan and shun from buying a duplicate *Paithani*! Inspira lauds GMCG and is proud of LF Rajashree who returned from UK as a Peace Ambassador in 2008. We wish them every success in their noble cause.

■ - **Rajani Panchang-Dhumal & Nisha Pandya**

ERRATUM: Some names of officials were wrongly published in Inspira Vol. 28, in the article on the Poona Blind School girls running a massage center. We regret the error. The correct names are Mrs. Sulabha Pujari the Headmistress, Dr. Sharmila Gujar the Administrative Officer and Pratibha Zagade the staff.

MELTING POT

Inspira covers yet another spectrum of LFs. Like every time, speaking to each girl uncovers a different untold story, yet so close to the heart.... with which many of us are sure to identify, relate and empathize.



Veena Agarwal the only child of her parents lost her advocate father to a cardiac arrest when she was in Class 11. Her mother is a Medical Social Worker working with the ESIS Hospital for over 28 years. Veena enjoys rehabilitating patients; so today she is a Physiotherapist!

The LF of the year in the overseas scholarships category this year shares with us her journey – "After Class 12, I procured admission to Sancheti College of Physiotherapy, Pune through entrance exams. After my graduation, I relocated to Mumbai. I did a part time observer-ship at 'Sankalp' (School for kids with special needs) for 2-3 months. I have also worked at Saifee hospital for the same duration, till I got a job at Bhatia Hospital, Tardeo where I worked for over a year, full time. A Masters programme was always there in my mind, and so the break from studies was a conscious decision to gain some valuable work experience. While I was working, I registered as a Physiotherapist in UK. Currently I am studying M.Sc. in Neurological Rehabilitation at Cardiff University, Wales, U.K. Since my childhood I was fascinated by Neurology and a certain mystery associated to with! Cardiff University has an established faculty, fantastic infrastructure and a sound research background including an advanced research lab. I am planning to pursue research and academics in the future. India is still a 'developing country' in terms of Physiotherapy as well. Coming here strengthens my belief that we have the ability and knowledge but we are an eon away in terms of infrastructure and R&D. Awareness of Physiotherapy amongst masses and medical fraternity is growing but it's still a long and a tedious process. But collectively I believe we can make a difference."

Veena read about the Lila Poonawalla foundation and the scholarships in the newspapers. She then went online and read the details about Lila Ma'am, this foundation, the work it does and of course the LFs featured in the Inspira issues. She says, "I instantly connected with the stories and thought I'd give it a shot. The foundation has a down to earth and an encouraging feel about it. The groundwork is so good that it offers something for everyone. It encompasses the entire spectrum of the society and that's how it reaches out to you."

She shared her experience of the interview with us. She

says..."Actually, when I came for my interview, I arrived on crutches having recently undergone a knee surgery. Lila ma'am told me that I was selected by mistake... the computer should have rejected my application as I wasn't born in Pune and at that time I was living in Mumbai. So I didn't fit the 'born in Pune' or 'must be residing in Pune since 5 yrs' criteria. And looking at Lila Madam's face, I thought it was the end of it all. I faced the rest of the interview with a 'let's give it a try anyways' kind of attitude. So I relaxed and totally enjoyed the interview with all the Trustees! Little did I know that I was being tested? I returned home feeling dejected and having an identity crisis!! ...and a few weeks later I got this awesome news! Lila Fellow of the Year!! Just couldn't believe it!"

Veena passionately voiced her feelings as an LF- "As a LF I have a responsibility towards the foundation and the society at large. Today, I am a product of the foundation's vision of promoting and enabling higher education to girls. Thus it is my responsibility to carry this chain reaction ahead in any way I can. The best part about being a LF is that the scholarship is not just any random act of kindness. The foundation embraces you as a part of their family, supports you, grooms you and encourages you. Lila ma'am, Firoz Sir, the Trustees, you, me and other Lila Fellows were perfect strangers before this. The foundation is already doing a brilliant work of grooming us girls into conscious citizens of tomorrow. To increase the participation of girls with the foundation, we can do something on the lines of 'corporate social responsibility-let's say...'LFs social responsibility' where Lila Fellows (individually or in a group) come together and organize an activity or a task for the Foundation."



Prajakta Rane completed her B. Pharmacy from Sri Chhatrapati Sambhaji Shikshan Sanstha College of Pharmacy, Shirur and aspires to pursue her MBA in Finance from University of Pune. But as she did not get admission for this course she is currently doing PGDBA from Symbiosis externally. Apart from that, she is also preparing for UPSC exams and for the required preparation she has joined Chanakya Academy. She wants

to become an IAS officer. **She was the Lila Fellow of the year-2009 in the Special Category.**

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MELTING POT

In spite of not having both palms from her birth, Prajakta has never let this come in the way of her life, and it is commendable what she has achieved despite this disadvantage. She has always written all her exam papers herself and has one of the best handwritings. She wants to prove that if one is determined and focused on one's goals, one can realize their dreams.

When Prajakta didn't speak much about herself out of modesty, we asked Vidya, the secretary of LPF about her. She said *"Prajakta is really an extraordinary girl, very enthusiastic, and always ready to learn new things. Now it's 5 months that she has been associated with us and I would like to specifically mention that she has not missed a single program organized by the Foundation. She even visited the exhibition organized by our LF Aparna Bhandar. In the foundation she has befriended many."* When asked about Prajakta to her father who is a policeman he said, *"We have approached many doctors. But it does not matter any longer. She learnt to live her life on her own. She has a very helpful nature and so everybody loves her. We are never worried when she is out. She has a good and big friends circle."*

About her success so far Prajakta says, *"I am just standing on my own feet just because of my family. For completing my post graduation I was in need of financial support. Lila Poonawalla Foundation supported me a lot. It's not just a foundation but a family. It has helped so many girls like me to complete my dreams. I am thankful to God and Lila Ma'am for having given me this opportunity to be a part of this beautiful family."* She likes to read and listen to music in her free time. She participates in cultural programs. At the foundation's Navratri Party she carried her traditional dress (*ghaghra-choli*) and changed at the venue so as to celebrate the occasion in true spirits! She believes that everybody should think positive and be realistic.



Shagufta Sayyed was a brilliant student and a first ranker throughout her school days. Having completed her schooling in Urdu medium from Urdu High School, Kondhwa, she completed her graduation in Computer science with a distinction. She is currently pursuing her post graduation from Poona College for which she was

awarded the LPF scholarship. **She became the LF of the year-2009 jointly with Vijaya Pokharkar in the Indian Category.** On getting the scholarship she says, *"My father is a tailor and mother a housewife. Paying for my postgraduate education was really difficult for my family but LPF came to my rescue. Getting this scholarship itself is a great achievement in my life"*.

Shagufta says *"I want to be a Software engineer and make a career in JAVA Programming. My dream company is IBM!"* She has participated in many IT and Software Competitions and also bagged the 3rd prize in a Seminar Competition on Windows Vista power point presentation in Unison 2006-07. She has a special interest in fashion designing and has designed quite a few Indian dresses. She is also good at calligraphy.



Vijaya Pokharkar completed her B.Sc. in Physics from Annasaheb Awate College, Manchar in Ambegaon Taluka. She ranked first in her discipline at the Taluka level with 87% marks. In her struggle to gain higher education, she heard about Lila Poonawalla Foundation Scholarships from one of our older LFs Yogita Mutke

(LF-2008). Hence she applied for the LPF scholarship and became the **LF of the year in the Indian Category** jointly with Shagufta! She is presently pursuing MCA Final Year from Audyogik Tantra Shikshan Sanstha's IICMR College, Nigadi. She believes that a teacher shapes the career of many a student. She loves teaching, aspires to be a good lecturer and wants to serve in the rural areas of India.

Hailing from a rural background Vijaya was a shy person unable to speak English fluently. But her migration to Pune changed her life manifold. She says that her college and the book '21st Century belongs to them' published by the foundation- both were sources of motivation and inspiration to her. She shared with us an incident in her life which changed her attitude. She had failed in one subject during her B.Sc. 1st year. She decided to work hard to make up for this set back. The result of this hard work was that finally she stood 1st in class at the end of the course. From that day she realized that nothing is impossible if the desire to achieve is strong.

Christopher Morley said, "There are three ingredients in the good life: learning, earning and yearning" and according to Marva Collins "Success doesn't come to you...you go to it." In this festive season we wish that may the flame of ambitions be continuously ablaze in the life of all LFs and may Santa Claus gift them all with a set of wings to help them soar higher and touch every star they wish upon. Amen!

■ **-Yogini Deshpande-Karmarkar**
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HEALTH CAPSULE

This column is a part of the health awareness project undertaken by the author in capacity of a Peace Ambassador-2008. In continuation to our new series introduced to our readers in August, this time we discuss general issues of 'Eye Care'..... Just For Your Eyes!

"I look into your eyes where I find another world". Eyes are often quoted as a window to one's soul and it is not possible to shatter the glass without shattering the world, isn't it? This most important part of our body works from the time we wake up till we sleep. Don't you think we should take proper care of this amazing organ that actually connects us with the whole world? In this era of information technology we make extensive use of visual display units (VDU's) which is a major reason for eyestrain, only aggravated by working or reading in poor light or in moving vehicles. **Eye strain** or '**Asthenopia**' manifests itself through fatigue, red eyes, pain, blurred vision and/or headache. Eye strain is caused due to constraint of eye muscles which can lead to irritation, dryness due to poor lubrication and other above mentioned symptoms. It can be easily tackled with general care, simple eye exercises, use of herbal remedies, vitamins and magnet therapy, some of which I list below.

General care: Those who regularly use computers can avoid discomfort by keeping the computer screen at least 25 inches away from their eyes. A monitor with swivel adjustment and an antiglare screen is safer for the eyes. Wash your eyes intermittently with cool water. Blink enough and take frequent breaks by looking away from the screen to a distance for few minutes to relax the eyes. Those suffering from vision problems can reduce the strain with corrective vision aids.

Eye exercises: These exercises should be preferably performed in the given order (1) Cover one eye with one hand and look at different objects continuously, repeat for the other eye. (2) Focus the eye on an object for couple of minutes, repeat for other eye. (3) Rub your hands together and cover your closed eyes. (4) Move both eyes in a circular fashion. (5) Open your eyes and briefly look sideways and repeat step 3 and 4. (6) Close your eyes and rest for 5 minutes by covering them with a dark but soft cloth. (7) Hydrotherapy is done by placing a swab of hot water on your closed eyes for 30 seconds followed by ice-cold water swab for the same time. Repeat few times, this improves circulation and lubrication.

Herbal remedy and vitamins: Vitamin B deficiency may lead to eyestrain for which food rich in vitamins A, B and C or appropriate medication is required. Lutein, an antioxidant available in spinach, broccoli and collard greens is excellent for keeping eyes healthy. Marigold flower (*Calendula officinalis*; **colloquial zendu/genda**) petal extracts prevent cataract. Its infusion can be taken internally or as herbal compress. Herbal compress is the best way of taking natural care of the eyes. The infusion or strong tea can be prepared by boiling 1-2 teaspoons of dried herb in 1 cup of water for 10 to 20 minutes. Use the tea to dampen a soft cloth and keep the swab over you

eyelids for 10-15 minutes. The berries of Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*; **colloquial karvanda/karonda**) shrub (alternatives are blueberry and cranberry) enhance vision. Witch Hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*; **colloquial Winter-Bloom**) infusion is very soothing and refreshing for the eyes. Chamomile (*Matricaria recutita*; **colloquial Babuna/Babuni ke phool**) is used for treating conjunctivitis which can be consumed as a cup of tea or a herbal compress is useful; those with allergies should not use it.

Magnet therapy: It is believed since ancient times that magnets have healing power and this can be used to cure eye disorders. This therapy may not be useful alone. But for general eye care, a magnetic eye mask with 18 magnets of 800 Gauss each can be used. This mask can relax swollen or puffy eyes, dark circles, wrinkles and can aid in curing conjunctivitis, cataract and sinusitis. In minor eye problems ceramic magnets are used where South Pole of the magnet is kept under the right palm for 10 minutes and the north pole of the crescent type ceramic magnet is applied on each eye for 5 minutes. In cataract and conjunctivitis, both poles of crescent type ceramic magnets are applied on both eyes. These masks are commonly available in the market.

So take good care of your eyes and let them be "A world of love, joy, beauty and romance!" I duly acknowledge the authors of several articles from which the information for this column has been derived.

ATTENTION: Those suffering from eye disorders should not implement any of the therapies listed above without consulting an ophthalmologist. This information is purely for non-professional use, and the author has no liability for any fortuities due to misinterpretations.

■ - **Neelu Nawani**
(LF-1997 & Trustee LPF)

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Down Memory Lane... GLIMPSES



LFs attend spoken English classes conducted through INLINGUA International School of Languages



Dandiya party thronged by LFs



LF Aparna Rabade with her exhibits at the Bal Gandharva Kala Dalan



Overseas donor Mr. Gerald Husche with the 9 LFs with whom he spent the entire day



Program by Mrs. Ratna Khemani Step Into A New World - Demo of Non Verbal Communication



Orientation Program for PAs by Trustees Maya Thadani and Shernaz Edibam

EDITOR'S DESK

Wishing all our readers a Very Happy New Year!

It just seems like yesterday when we bid 2008 a goodbye and today already 2009 also has become passé. Amongst a lot of hue and cry about recession and climate change, we and India at large, have managed to survive. As compared to the recent years gone by, natural disasters and terrorism were at a low and all that I can pray for all of us is a healthy and safe year ahead. Amen!

Last year, we started a new column- Health Capsule. **From the current issue, we start a new column 'The Explorer'.** Lila Fellows travel far and wide, either by virtue of their professions, change of location post-marriage or on vacation. Many of them write back about their new environs and experiences to the trustees. It is intriguing to learn from these girls how new places, new people, new lifestyles continue to teach them new lessons as well as to break free of conventional mindsets. Some stories are so heart rendering, we thought they should be shared with you all. After all, joys only know multiplication through sharing! We hope more and more LFs use this new space to share their nice and interesting experiences with us.

Uncle Firoz and Lila Ma'am have been darlings as ever. They hosted a Thanks giving party for the Inspira team on the 18th of September just two days before they left

for UK along with the new batch of Peace Ambassadors. Given the freedom to order whatever we wanted, the Crusaders slowly gave up all inhibitions and hogged on everything right from *paneer* to fish and Indian to Chinese! And the end was the 'icing on the cake' in the literal sense.... Lila Ma'am cut her birthday cake (two days late) just for us! Rich dark chocolate, iced and

mouth wateringly juicy... YUMMMMM! She literally cut out LARGE portions for each one of us. We had forgotten that people were looking at us. All of us including Lila Ma'am were eating with our fingers all dripping with chocolate. If that was not all, as we parted, each one of us received a gorgeous gift. **Only an extremely generous and meticulous Lila Poonawalla who believes in quality and commitment can make such events happen.** The Inspira team is sincerely thankful for



Release of 28th issue of Inspira at the hands of Mrs. Ratna Khemani

her kind gesture; it now becomes inevitable for the crusaders to rise higher.

With this celebrative mood, I sign off requesting our readers to e-mail their opinions and suggestions to me. See you soon with another scintillating issue. Till then, **Happy Reading!**

■ - **Rajani Panchang-Dhumal**
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