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# Inspira



Vol. No. 2 / December 2000

## FROM THE HEART



I am very happy that our new venture "INSPIRA" has taken off well. We received very good feedback from most of the Lila Fellows and also from many well wishers in Pune to whom we had circulated the Newsletter. Infact a prestigious Newspaper Indian Express published one of the articles **Chalo Amerika** in their columns. This should make all of us feel good.

Many interesting events have happened since our last issue. The most important is that we have added 26 new members to our family this year. **26 young brilliant Lila Fellows** from varied fields have joined us. I am pleased to welcome them to our **WORLD**. We have also achieved one more important milestone in our endeavors. We have launched our very own web site [www.lilapoonawalla.com](http://www.lilapoonawalla.com). Now each one of you can have all the information about your colleagues and can keep in touch with one another. We will be updating the site every tertial, when we have to upload the new issue of Inspira. Do visit the site and give me your feedback/suggestions to make it more interesting and useful. We had a **tea party** for the new Lila Fellows in August, a **cultural program - Cityscapes** performed by **Mallika Sarabhai** and her troupe, and a **training program on self-actualization and self-assessment** conducted by Rekha Charholikar. Another seven-day program is on the cards for **personality development and self-grooming** by Minochar Patel. Soon the details will be circulated. Do look for these in your mail. We also got a good coverage for some of our Lila Fellows in the **local media**. I have mailed a copy of this to all of you. So do keep updating us about your progress and achievements so that we can share this with all Puneites, and also update our web site.

I would also like to share with you a very interesting event that took place early November in Pune. Firoz and I hosted a **reunion of my batch of 1984 Stanford University Alumni** from 3rd Nov to 7th Nov. It was a warm and almost family like gathering. On three evenings we had invited outstanding speakers who spoke on **Indian Stock Exchange** working, comparison of **doing business in USA and India**, and **India in the new Millennium**. We also gave them a taste of rural India. The snake charmer, parrot fortune teller, bangle makers, pottery molders, monkey tricks and mehendiwalis charmed the group. They enjoyed the tandoori food (president Clinton's favorite). All ladies dressed in **salwar kameez** on one day. For the farewell dinner the ladies dressed in **Pune Silk Saris** complete with mangalsutra and saaz and bindis and the men in **Pajama Kurta** with **Punere pagadis** and **Kolhapuri chappals**. I tell you it was great fun. Whole of Pune including our friends from the media were excited. Two additional web sites were launched during this period. Dr. Mashelkar launched a web site called [www.lilblossoms.com](http://www.lilblossoms.com) of Filarozil, Firoz's farm. Those of you who have visited his farm would be able to recognize some of the roses. Mr. Mohan Dharia launched my web site

[www.lilapoonawalla.com](http://www.lilapoonawalla.com). Do visit these sites, and look out for updates.



You all must have celebrated Dassera and Diwali with great enthusiasm. Christmas, Idd and The New Year are round the corner. On behalf of all the Trustees of the Foundation and on my own behalf I wish each one of you and all your loved ones, A **VERY HAPPY AND PROSPEROUS FESTIVAL SEASON**. May each one of you achieve your aspirations and have a healthy and a successful year.

With Loves

# SHORT TAKES

## Mr. Firoz Poonawalla

(Managing Director, Filarozil Exports Pvt. Ltd. and Trustee, LPF)

My dear Lila Fellows,

This is the first opportunity I have got to pen down my thoughts as a trustee of LPF, that upholds a noble mission.

We are all a huge family comprising of Lila Fellows, the trustees and the office bearers. Each one of us must perform the roles we are expected to perform.

Padmashree Lila Poonawalla has done laudable work by establishing the LPF. She sets high standards for herself. Naturally, this has brushed on all of us. Lila sets her own challenges, as she is totally self motivated.

LPF has reached beyond its objectives of extending a friendly hand to budding young girls to meet the challenges of life. With quality education, their confidence is built up to be successful and happy individuals. LPF has created a

compatriotship among all those who come to be associated with it.

Five years have passed since the foundation was started. This will help us to recapitulate our foundation values. We will keep reviving and reviewing our objectives, as ours is a dynamic organization and therefore receptive to the fast changing world order.

I take this opportunity to emphasize that each one of us, like Lila, can and should contribute to the society in turn for everything it has done for us.

Gandhiji said that nobody is so poor that he cannot share anything with his fellow human beings.

I wish all of you good health and a great future with happiness.

## LPF website

Hi guys! we are back again and with a bang! The Lila Poonawalla Foundation web site is on line! Our address is -

[www.lilapoonawallaoundation.com](http://www.lilapoonawallaoundation.com)

There ----- Its all yours!

At the Balewadi residence of Mr. and Mrs. Poonawalla, was organised a little get together of Mrs. Poonawalla's Stanford University batchmates of 1984, the trustees & Lila Fellows to launch the web site.

It was inaugurated on the 4th of November 2000 by two eminent women professionals, Ms. Allison Coolbrith and Ms. Sheila Penrose, who were made tough in the ruthless corporate world and emerged victorious. They are women like us, but women with a difference. Why else would they feature as our 'Leading Ladies' for this issue?

The batchmates interacted with the Lila Fellows who had a whale of a time. The SEP team was impressed with the Lila Fellows as well as the laudable work rendered by the foundation. This is why they chose to present Rs. 75,000 to the foundation, breaking the customary tradition (at every reunion) of presenting a parting 'gift' to the host.

This unique and overwhelming gesture is highly appreciated by the foundation. Here's a big **"Thank You"** to Ms. Allison Coolbrith, Ms. Sheila Penrose and the rest of the teammates. It was truly a great 'reunion'. The web site itself is a birthday gift to Mrs. Poonawalla from Mrs. Jayshree Shahade. A gesture of friendship. Truly!

A kind gesture from Mapin Publication - a link is provided from the foundation site to [www.mapinpub.com](http://www.mapinpub.com). When you order any publications or articles through our site, Mapin Publication offers 50% of the amount as a donation to the foundation.

You can access the web sight to gain insight into your foundation. You can even procure your own hard copies of the application forms for yourself and your friends!

The purpose of the web sight is very obvious - quicker, smoother &



effective communication regarding the foundation activities, Inspira, (that is now online), the process of the application & criteria for the qualification for the scholarships, information about the Lila Fellows, the board of trustees, LPF milestones, updating of plans for it's growth, the genesis of LPF, it's current status & future aspirations.

Phew! So much to digest at a go!

**Of prime importance is the aspiration to reach out to institutions, firms and individuals all over the world who are interested in funding Indian women for higher education.**

Well .... was the launching effective?

You bet!

Long live the Lila Poonawalla Foundation!



## Ms. Sheila Penrose

(Executive Advisor, Northern Trust, Former President, Corporate Services.)

**On her life and Career :** I was born and educated in England and was the 1st one to get a University education in a family of 45-50 cousins. My parents supported women's education. (My mother was denied education) There were financial hardships. Finally I did get financed. I worked during holidays and acquired a degree, taught in a girls school for 2-3 years, then completed my masters in Economics from the London School of Economics. My education and career developed simultaneously. I got the opportunity to work with the British Treasury as an economic advisor for 3 to 4 years, with highly qualified professionals. I was unsure of any career prospects when my husband and I had to shift to the U.S. Within 6 weeks I got 2 job offers in U.S. banks. I have worked for 24 years with the Northern Trust and retired a month ago. We roll out a 1000 million dollars in revenue. I intend to get totally involved with business schools, management consulting firms, advising Corporate Boards and new business workers in new environments and funding scholarships.

**Milestones in my life :** Er..... getting a good education in a supportive family.

**My definition of Success :** Success is doing things that give you energy. Only then can you enjoy the work. Devoting yourself to your work, motivating others, leading and being sincere is success. That which doesn't interest you is certainly not right for you. The privilege of success is helping others develop. Your clients too should feel appreciated.

**My views on The International Educational Scenario :** I see more educated women being accepted. They have overcome social barriers. There's more to be achieved. Several companies are coming up, which means more opportunities for women. There are more opportunities in companies than in government services. Yes, it's hard to move up. There's a search for talent too.

**I admire :** People who are curious. This is my litmus test. (She smiles). Those who care, can inspire and set examples, who share credit and wealth and opportunities & are selfless.

**I get put off with :** Dishonesty and insincerity, those who are untrue to themselves and wallow in self-importance and those who refuse to learn.

**Pearls of wisdom :** Take risks. You learn most when you stretch yourself. It is stressful no doubt, but do it. Be mentors, set examples, support, have confidence in your abilities, take criticism in your stride. You learn from mistakes. Keep practising and develop a balance. Give back to the community in terms of wealth and time. Not power, but what you can *do* with it, is what matters.

**My Indian Experience :** This is my first visit to India. I'm impressed with the diversity and the harmony, the friendliness and peacefulness. It's amazing how things work here even in absence of rational and logical functioning. For instance with the internal airline services here. My luggage arrived on time where as at Frankfurt airport, I had to wait for 40 minutes, in spite of efficient computer facilities !! (She shakes her head) Things just work here! (She laughs aloud.) I'd love to come back and I look forward to the progress of women .....

## KEEPING IN TOUCH

1. **Mona Dange (Divaker) (1997)** gave birth to a baby boy, Arnav, on 9.9.2000. She has started a consultancy in legal work and mainly caters to software companies in setting up companies and drafting agreements.
2. **Anagha Nerurkar (Mitra) (1996)** has gone to London School of Economics, Social Policy Department, for pursuing higher studies, in October. We wish her all the best.
3. **Sabahat Anwar (1997)** has been deputed by her present employer, Mahindra British Telecom, to Atlanta USA, for a period of six months to do a 'Java' project. She will return to India in April 2001.
4. **Ketaki Deshpande (1996)** has gone to the Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi, to complete her M.Phil in French. She will be back in Pune after 2 years.
5. **Priti Tamang (1997)** has been promoted and designated Deputy Manager in Maruti Udyog, Gurgaon, I.T. division.
6. **Harsha Mehta (1999)** has got a job of her choice, as a Fashion Co-ordinator at "Ashdon", Pune, since September.
7. **Manisha Hadavale (1999)** has completed her MCS and stood 2nd in Pune University. She is now working as a software engineer with Asset Link India, Pune.
8. **Pooja Keswani (1999)** has completed her MCS with an aggregate 83.93% and has topped the list of successful candidates in Pune University. She is working as a software engineer with Harbinger Systems P. Ltd., Pune.
9. **Deepali Shah (Ravi) (1997)** participated in a classical senior solo dance competition organized by Federation of Indo-American Assn. Of North California and won the first prize. She also participated in two dance dramas called 'Ramayana' & 'Om Ganesha' in September.
10. **Ruta Inamdar (1999)** moved to UK in November and is working on a project to design a factory layout for a fruit juice processing industry. She is also a professor in the operations management department. We wish her all the best.
11. **Rashmi Dave (1998)** has completed her MCS with a first class with distinction (79.13%) She is now working as a Member of Technical Staff in Persistent Systems, Pune.
12. **Gift : A Lila Fellow (1998)** has contributed an amount of Rs. 501/- from her first salary, to the Foundation. We thank her for this kind gesture.
13. **Kalyani Pathak (1998)** married Arvind Panse on 11th December 2000. Congratulations !
14. **Kanchan Nikumbh (1997)** married Shobhan Madhav on 20th December 2000. Congratulations !

# POT POURRI

## A NEW DISCOVERY

I've just become a part of LPF and address myself as a "Lila fellow". I am proud to be a member of a foundation which upholds 'Leading Indian Ladies Ahead' as its motto.

The foundation has much more to it than apparent.

1. It appears glamorous with award functions held at the Blue Diamond hotel, and great personalities hogging the limelight. *But it basically is for the middleclass awardees.*
2. It appears rich with scholarship grants amounting to thousands of rupees. *But it also means the realization of the scholarly dreams of the young ladies.*
3. It means fun and excitement with tea parties cultural treats. *But it also means seminars and the all round grooming of the awardees.*

Everything about the foundation that is attractive and awe inspiring tells tales of toil, hard work, intense planning and decision making. It began with the basic need to help the needy and deserving fairer sex to step ahead and reach their goals. It believes in recognizing and tapping the potential of bright students and guiding them with encouragement and support.

Academic achievement is no doubt the basic criterion but education here doesn't end with computers, science and technology. It signifies an unending affair with etiquette, ethics culture, aesthetics, skills, in short, an all round development of our personality and smooth transcendence into a modern day self reliant, confident woman with the very essence of "Indianness" clinging to her aura.

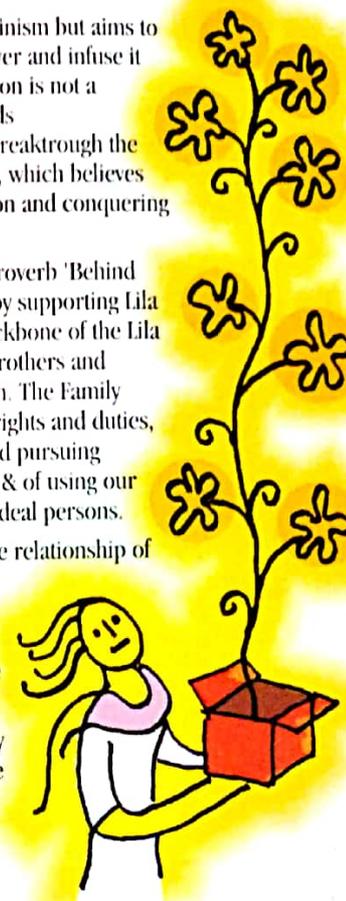
The foundation does not preach feminism but aims to bring out the best of the woman power and infuse it into the Indian society. This foundation is not a 'secret organization' working towards revolutionizing the female mind to breakthrough the ageold blind traditions. It is a family, which believes in setting trends, expanding a mission and conquering the highest peaks.

Mr. Firoz Poonawalla inverted the proverb 'Behind every successful man is a woman', by supporting Lila in each dream of hers. He is the backbone of the Lila Family. He inspires more fathers, brothers and husbands to encourage their women. The Family spreads a realization of equality of rights and duties, of standing up against the wrong and pursuing without fear, the right and the good & of using our inner resources. It moulds us into ideal persons.

Through us, it is trying to convey the relationship of self-confidence and progress. It pushes us to do what we believe in and continue to work towards our dreams with great faith and achieve our goals.

As a Lila Fellow today, I am not only happy but also proud to be with the right people, in the right place and in the right environment.

Rajani Panchang



## "LIFE'S MASTERY" - workshop conducted by Rekha Charholikar

"What lies before us is a small matter compared to what lies within us.

When we bring what is within, out in the world, miracles happen."

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

The above quote is apt for the programme that was organised for Lila Fellows in four sessions. The purpose of this workshop was to help them discover who they are, unfold the wealth of creativity and build healthy relationships. This was done through experimental learning - games and exercises, i.e. wholebody learning.

The feedback from the 20 Lila Fellows who attended, is the proof enough to know its usefulness and long-term benefit that they can derive.

Lubainah - "Make more deposits than withdrawals in my emotional bank account."

Snehal - "Thinking from other point of view ..."

Shweta - "Proper communication and interaction."

Maheshwari - "I will be a good listener."

Jyoti - "Be more organised ....."

Vanita - "Try not to blame others."

Shahin - "Learning to relax with the life stream when in conflict."

Manisha - "Start appreciating others"

These are some of the reactions from the participants. Lila Fellows were overwhelmed and unanimously thanked the trustees of the foundation for organizing this programme. They suggested that a refresher should be organised and more Lila Fellows should be persuaded to participate.

Rekha Charholikar - She is a visiting facilitator at Naval Wadia Institute of Management and Rrotract Club and has conducted customised Learning Modules for some Corporate Companies.

# EVE'S VOICE

If Adams rule the roost,  
can eves be far behind?  
Two of our Lila Fellows  
roost their experiences  
for other eves of the Lila Family.



Shaheen Shaikh -  
Lila Fellow, 1998.

'Follow your dreams' is the motto she preaches through her lifestyle. A senior college teacher at Abeda Inamdar College, her dreams soar high towards making a mark in the arena of teaching.

## Over to Shaheen the Professor.....

Presently I am doing My M. Phil. under the guidance of Dr. Prashant Sinha, Head of the Department of English, University of Pune. I am working as a lecturer in Abeda Inamdar Senior College for Girls. I teach Compulsory, General and Special English papers to all the B.A. students and the first year B.Com. students. I also teach Remedial English to the junior college science students who have not come from English medium schools. This was a particularly rewarding experience since I was given a free hand and allowed to formulate the syllabus on the basis of what I thought fit.

I see myself as a much more confident individual, more motivated and charged up. My Biodata carries much more weight and at interviews I am always asked what the Foundation is all about. After facing a grueling interview for the scholarship, now I am not so jittery in front of any interviewing panel. I have become more focused on my targets. Life has changed for the better.

These 2 years have been a rewarding experience. Frequent tete-a-tete with the Trustees, tea parties, new friends, professional training programmes and celebrity studded award ceremonies have been enjoyable and enriching. Flowers on my B'day, photographs of each function, regular correspondence, press reports - it's been unbelievable yet true. Fond memories, stronger bonds and an ever growing family... What's best is that with each passing year, I have grown to realize more acutely, what a great honour it is to be a part of the Lila Family. I feel even more honoured and indebted now than I was then, back in 1998.

I intend to complete my Dissertation by next year. On the professional front, I guess it will take another 2 or 3 years to become permanent. I would like to do some work in the area of communication skills. I've been neglecting my hobby of designing clothes. So somewhere down the line I wish to continue with it and do something of my own. And most importantly I wish to make some contribution towards LPE.

Don't miss out on any of the programmes organized by the Foundation. For me they are memories that I shall cherish for a lifetime.

I'd like to share a very special moment with you. A few days back I received a handwritten note from Mrs. Poonawalla conveying her thanks for the greeting I'd sent her. She made it a point to mention what I had written to her and that she liked it very much.

Well friends, I guess it is these little things that she does that make her really great. I think M'am really knows how to make my day!

Jyoti Dalvi -  
Lila Fellow, 1998.

Jyoti's determination and dedication to her indepth research at the University of

Hull, UK, moved her professor guide and he chose her as 'assistant researcher' for a project at the University of Missouri-Rolla, USA, where she will also complete her post-graduation. These precious qualities have taken her places, literally!

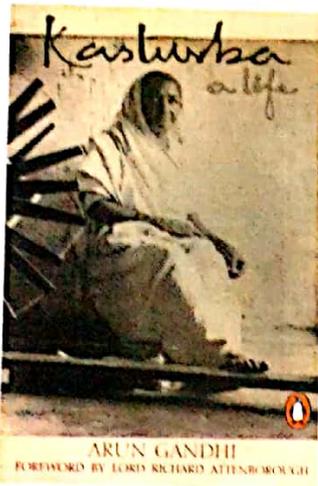
## Over to Jyoti, the globe trotter.....

It was August 3rd, 1998 when I was honored as Lila Fellow. The Foundation awarded me with the maximum amount of one lakh rupees, which brought the golden turning point into my life. Without this help, it wouldn't have been possible for this middle class girl to study abroad and allow her dreams to come true.

By God's grace I flew to UK. As I hadn't been out of Maharashtra, this was extremely exciting for me. I enrolled at the University of Hull, UK for a Ph.D. program in Chemistry. Hull is a small town in the northeast of England, in East Yorkshire County. I spent last two years there and then flew to USA on 25th August 2000. Now I am at the University of Missouri-Rolla. I got the chance to come to USA because of relocation of my advisor. I have not had the chance to know much about the American People, but I look forward to learn more about them and their culture. But yes, I do have a lot of things to tell you about Great Britain.

For me British people are very pleasant and polite, especially the older people in Hull are full of energy and life. They live independent lives and enjoy it the way they want to. Apart from Hull, I had the chance to travel throughout Europe, which was simply great. I left Hull on 9th Dec 1999 for Holland by ferry. I felt as if I was in the arms of sea and it was cradling me. Then I proceeded to Rotterdam and Amsterdam, from there to Belgium (Brussels & Brugge). After having a nice tour of Burgee by horse carriage I left for Luxembourg and then to Germany (Munich, Hamburg & Berlin). In Berlin I saw the remains of the Berlin Wall which was demolished in 1989 and from there went to Austria (Vienna & Salzburg). Here the people were very nice and relaxed. I then proceeded to Greece, which was like being in any crowded city in India and from there to Italy (Venice, Rome & Florence) Italy is truly very beautiful. I loved the boat ride in Venice, the Churches and cathedral of Rome and Florence. I couldn't believe that in whole of Venice the only mode of transport was the boat. There was no noise pollution, just water everywhere. It seemed like a dreamland. I was very lucky to be in Rome on 25th Dec. It was a great experience to visit the Rome Cathedral on Christmas day. From Italy I went to France and visited Nice. It is a beautiful small town and has the world's most popular Riviera with lot of expensive houses. From there I proceeded to the Dream City Paris. Oh my God! The city is huge. I climbed the Eiffel Tower and also visited Disneyland. It was a marvelous experience. I then pushed off to Switzerland. OOPS! It was snow everywhere. I experienced a ride in a sledge. It was frightening but very enjoyable. Here I visited Luzern, Bern, Grindelwald, Geneva and of course Zurich. Each town was unique in its own way. I liked Switzerland very much. Next was Spain - Madrid. The railway station there was very organized. And finally I landed up in Lisbon in Portugal. Here I found everything very systematic. I had a full month's tour. I stayed in youth hostels. In all I visited 12 countries and many cities. It was a tremendous experience. I absorbed so many new things. Some times I think of myself as a small fish, which swam from peaceful stream of Pune into the awesome river of UK, then into the vast absorbing ocean of USA.





**Name of the book** : Kasturba, a Life.  
**Author** : Arun Gandhi  
**Publisher** : Penguin Books  
**Edition** : 1st Edition  
**Year of Publication** : 2,000  
**Price** : Rs 295/

**"I learned the lesson of non-violence from my wife"**

This stupendous compliment was paid by Mahatma Gandhi to his wife Kasturba, who was an idol of patience and virtue. In the book, "Kasturba, a Life" authored by

Arun Gandhi, vignettes from the life of Kasturba Gandhi form the essence of a tribute by a grandson. This biography is the outcome of the lifetime research done by Arun Gandhi and his wife Sunanda. "Grandmother's life is unusual and inspiring. I hope everyone enjoys this labour of love," avers Arun Gandhi. The book throws up some unknown facts about the famous couple.

Kasturba Gandhi was an extraordinary woman; courageous, extremely forgiving and very loyal. Hers was an entity which seemed dwarfed before the enormous stature of her husband, but her identity never went unnoticed because she had mastered the art of blending herself into the image and the philosophy of "The Mahatma".

Biographers have done indepth research on the Mahatma, but very little has been done to focus on the better half of Mahatma Gandhi. Through this biography, the author has endeavored to bring into the limelight the life story of

a woman, who along with her husband laid the foundation of the ideology of ahimsa which defined her life.

The author takes you into a time when child marriages were very common in the society. The narration revolves round the two families of Mohandas and Kasturba. Kastur was her original name and the title "Ba" was given to her after she became a mother. Kastur, being the only girl in her family was brought up in a loving and secure parental environment.

At the tender age of 7, she was engaged to Mohandas but got married at the age of 13 when other girls were married by the time they were 8 years of age. They had 5 children. The first one was born when she was 16. She was illiterate but could efficiently manage responsibilities of marriage and household chores.

Indeed, she played a very important role in the struggle for India's freedom and above all, in the 'the making of The Mahatma'. She made her compromises, yet held fast to her conviction. She was a strong guide to her husband as she led him to attain spiritual heights and to explore the true essence of the philosophy of non-violence.

Research into this task was not a cakewalk as written resources on her life were scarce. Most of the information gathered was oral. When one reads between the lines, one feels the very presence of the Mahatma. This is but natural because one would admit that Kasturba had blended herself with her husband so finely that the distinction between the two is ambiguous.

This book is an exercise to minutely peep into the Mahatma, keeping the main focus on Kasturba. The book also explains the historical and political events which took place at that time, carrying along with it a love story of two human beings that ended with Gandhi's assassination.

- Kavita Vasant

## YOUR'S TRULY

With the launch of Inspira in August this year, the LPF registered its presence anew, not only in Pune and the whole of India, but also abroad. Our overseas Lila Fellows who miss out on the foundation events happening in Pune have responded positively and wished us all the best. So have our well-wishers.

With their encouragement and suggestions we have been able to develop on the earlier issue and the changes are evident. Many refreshing ideas were tossed back and forth by the team and it was difficult to pick and choose. Much has happened in the interim 4 months at the foundation, just waiting to be recorded.

After the 5th scholarship award function of LPF, we had a tea-party for the new members in the Lila Family. Dr. Mallika Sarabhai (also chief guest at our 5th award function) and her troupe from the Darpana Academy of Fine Arts performed the play 'Cityscapes' at our very own Balgandharva Rangmandir. We also had the Stanford University Alumni visit us. Needless to say, they were impressed with 'Amchi Maati' and 'Amchi Manasa'.

We had an extremely fruitful workshop (spread over 4 Sunday mornings) on 'Life Mastery' by Rekha Charholikar, a communicator and guide par excellence. The Lila Fellows who attended the workshop thoroughly enjoyed every minute of the sessions as they discovered some vital truths of life and of themselves. The sessions helped them delve deep within their inner selves and retrieve the treasures embedded there, polish them and utilize them to marinate more meaning into life. The focus was entirely on self-amelioration. Those who failed to attend the course can read the opinions of those who did, to see what they've missed and *missed terribly!* Workshops like these just *cannot* be given a miss. These are some of the unique dimensions of the foundation activities.

Need I add that it left the girls asking for more!

We have conquered 2 milestones - 'Inspira' and 'The LPF website'. So log on to [lilapoonawallafoundation.com](http://lilapoonawallafoundation.com) and discover what has made us proud. It has been a short but a fruitful journey from 1996 to 2000. Our special thanks to Shekhar, Vipul, Sachin and Vijaya who turned the web site into an impressive reality!!

Another important feature is the launch of Mrs. Poonawalla's personal web site [lilapoonawalla.com](http://lilapoonawalla.com). Learn more about the vivacious lady from the site and renew your admiration of her spirit.

This year has added 3 enthusiastic volunteers on the Inspira team - Rajani, Kavita and Lubaina. A hearty welcome to the trio!!

Here it is. Overflowing with information. We are truly glad that the very objective for the birth of Inspira - interaction among the Lila Fellows and conveying loads of information, has been satisfied.

It is December and one can sniff the festive season and breathe in the spirit. We wish each one of you a very 'Happy Christmas', 'Sankranti' and a 'Happy New Year' and above all a 'Happy and Prosperous New Millennium!!!'

We are waiting for your views and contributions, as always. So keep the Inspira pulse beating! Viva La Inspira!!!

Editor : Uzma

**The crusaders : Uzma, Snehal, Kavita, Rajani, Lubainah & Jayshree**

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[www.lilapoonawallafoundation.com](http://www.lilapoonawallafoundation.com)

[www.lilapoonawalla.com](http://www.lilapoonawalla.com)

Down Memory Lane...  
**SNIPPETS**



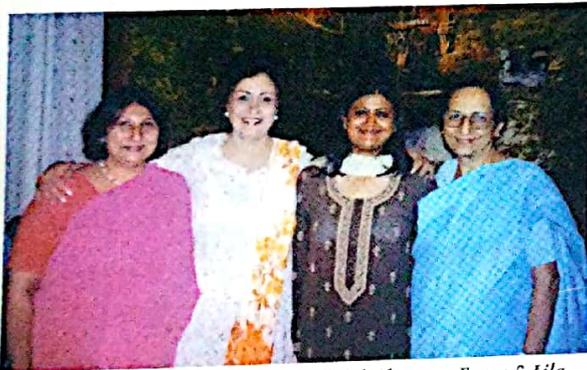
Mallika Sarabbai releasing the first issue of "Inspira"



**Atta Girl !!!**

**Mitalee Gujar**

Donated the scholarship grant of Rs. 100000/- to LPF on being totally funded by Stanford University.



Anagha Mitra before leaving for UK with Sbernaz, Freny & Lila



Award Function, July 2000



Launching of lilapoonawalla.com by Mohan Dbaria



lilblossoms.com launch



Lila & Firoz meet Perna and Rabul in London



Tea-party :  
 Sr. Trustee Maya  
 - sharing info

# LEADING LADIES

Across the seven seas two storms make their presence felt. Its only the heroic who, in the midst of calamities, carve their own paths and define their own successes. Uzma Kazi meets with two women warriors in their own right : Ms. Allison Coolbrith and Ms. Sheila Penrose (Batch mates of Lila from Stanford). Read on and trace their courses to the zenith.



**Ms. Allison Coolbrith** (Former President - Aetna Life & Casualty. Presently she has her own consultancy firm - A & B Enterprises)

**On her life and career :** I was the 1st person in the family to go to the University for higher education. Being the eldest of 4 children of a poor family, I required financial help, so I worked for a scholarship and funded my own education. I volunteered to help other young people too! I had no money after my University education. A job was important to pay back to the government. I always wanted to take up an international job and specialize in foreign service. I have worked for 30 years now in the same insurance company - Aetna Life & Casualty, and retired 4 years ago at 50 years of age. Our turnover is a billion dollars a year.

**Education :** It is very simple to say and not so simple to accomplish this fact - with education women will better their social, economic and family stature; without education, women can expect to receive lower wages, fewer opportunities and will be regarded in more traditional ways that underplay their natural talents. I am an example of this fact and have spent many hours advising other women and providing financial support to educational institutions to assure that women take full advantage of opportunities provided. Women must be assertive in seeking opportunities and generally have to work harder than others

to gain recognition. They often combine other responsibilities with their education so time and money are at a premium and women themselves tend to downplay their own achievements. If we don't speak for ourselves, no one else will. Let's make education important for all women by our own examples. The opportunities throughout the world for educated women are bounded only by our own thinking.

**Milestones in my life :** (There is a look of gratitude in her eyes) The greatest milestones were getting a University education and then a job.

**My definition of success :** Success is knowing yourself, understanding others and embracing change. Or else you cannot be leaders. (Turns passionate) You learn from the good and bad as well. Emulate the good!

**I admire :** Honesty, people who care about others, multifaceted personalities, those who know themselves and are in touch with their inner selves, those who, wherever they go, show *what* they are and are confident.

**I am put off with :** Poor listeners, people who think they know more than others and dismiss (because they are very successful) others lower than themselves.

**About India :** India is at once a country that captivates, challenges, soothes, frustrates, surprises and makes one feel inadequate. And I loved every minute of my visit ! The sheer numbers of people are astonishing, even for those of us who love big cities and crowds. The driving is confusing often and downright hazardous at other times. The drivers have to be magicians sometimes to maneuver. Everyone I met was helpful, intent on showing me what they do best. Everyone from a guide, to a taxi driver, to a snakecharmer, to a business person, strives to be the best at what he or she does. All religions are such a powerful part of everyday life. It was truly a pleasure to be in your country during Dasser and Diwali and see the celebrations and the family gatherings. I also found the special experiences at Lucknow, Varanasi, Calcutta and Khajuraho to be helpful for my understanding in this regard. The northern desert was fascinating, Mumbai a city like no other in the world and what was the best? The "Queen of the Deccan" of course. Pune most assuredly was a fantastic visit with our friends, Lila and Firoz, meeting new friends, seeing the Foundation Fellows and understanding a bit more about your world. Please plan on seeing me again in your country ! But until that time, please know you are welcome in our home any time.

**Pearls of wisdom :** (Her eyes light up) Learn even from those lower than you, and you will succeed. Be open to change. Given the opportunity you *will* give 100% of your best. Opportunities exist, so do problems in reaching out to them. Consult your employees too - they will tell you where the problem lies. A woman employee is scrutinized and judged. She becomes a model for younger women. Be committed to rise to the top. The advantage in big companies is that you can build up your skills and knowledge without the need to change jobs.

[On this wise note we part.]

