

Inspira



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FROM MY HEART

Dear Friends,

Whenever I settle down to write to all of you "From My Heart," I always get very nostalgic. Today will soon become yesterday! Only the Future counts. But alas time is flying! Soon the future will become today and hence the past. Then my mind wonders what is permanent? It is only our **Friendship** and our **Deeds**, our **Good Thoughts**, the **Happy Moments** spent together, and the **Memories** of the **Joyful Events** enjoyed together that will remain forever. Let us all join hands into making our beautiful movement called **Lila Poonawalla Foundation** a vibrant cause that does **justice without favor or fear**.

We are moving into the **8th** year of our establishment. I am thankful to **God**, to the **Trustees**, to the **Lila Fellows** and of course **my friends, my kith and kin and society at large** that the Foundation has grown from strength to strength. **Some more Lila Fellows have sent in donations, which motivates me to set a Goal for the Foundation.** I would like that when we complete a decade, which you all will agree, is not far away, we should aim at **supporting at least 50 girls** (currently we average out to 29). This is a modest goal and with the support of all those mentioned above, we should be able to achieve it. We also must bring more **warmth and superlative interaction** amongst all of us, the **Trustees, The Lila Fellows**, specially the senior ones, and the new additions.

Those of you who joined in the **New Year Celebrations at Fili Villa** would recollect the wonderful time we had together. This time it was not just meeting, greeting and eating, but also playing games, winning and dancing. We had a young **vibrant D J M/S Leena Boomra**, who got us all lined up, including the **Trustees**, to have great fun. There were many prizes won by many **Lila Fellows**. This gathering also had another unique feature, we had some **Spouses participating**. And to appreciate their presence we released the **8th issue of INSPIRA** at their hands. All in all everybody had a great time and left the Party with a **Bunch of roses** to remind them of the joy and happiness that we share long after they reached their Homes.

AWAKEN YOUR POWER WITH POSITIVE THINKING. In keeping with our practice and objective of continuous enrichment of **LILA FELLOWS**, we arranged a full day workshop on the **"Power of Positive Thinking"** at Hotel Pancharatna. **30 Lila Fellows**, along with **6 Trustees** including myself attended the full day workshop and found the experience very enlightening, helpful and relaxing. The workshop was conducted by **Mrs. Surabhi Bannerjee**, an accredited Trainer of the **"Dynamic Living Institute"**, U.K. She very lucidly conveyed the benefits



of positive thinking without exhausting the participants. Many participants have sent me feedback. Sunetra summarizes some of it in this issue. From this you can judge for yourself the benefits each participant derived from the Seminar. Mr. Poonawalla joined in and at the end **gifted roses to all the participants**.

Not to leave out **Cultural development** and appreciation of the **Indian heritage**, The Foundation sponsored **Lila Fellows**, along with one additional member of their family, and the **Trustees** to attend **A UNIQUE CONCERT...** titled **"AMAN.... A CONCERT FOR PEACE"**. The Performance was by **Santoor Maestro, Pandit Shiv Kumar Sharma** with his son & disciple, **Rahul Sharma**. They were accompanied by **Ustad Shafat Amhed Khan** on tabla and **Bhavanishankarji** on Pakhawaj. The concert was organized by an **NGO Pragati Foundation**, which is working towards **World Peace**. By our participation, we have shown our support for this cause.

During the last few months I have attended marriages of many **Lila Fellows**. Many have visited other **Trustees** and me. They have shared their successes with us and some have shared their problems. We have been able to assist those needing advice and share the joys of success of the others. In all, the communication with **Lila Fellows** has improved. Some of you are still not in touch. **I hope when you read this message "From My Heart" you will respond.**

In conclusion I am looking forward to the next four months when we will process the new applications, and after a lot of hard work by the **Trustees**, finalize the list of new **Members** to join our **ever growing family of Lila Fellows**.

Wishing all of you good Luck and great success in achieving your goals.

Lovingly yours

Lila Poonawalla
Lila Poonawalla



POT POURRI



Jovina Amor & Maya Thadhani in Denver

1994, 1995, 1998, 2001, 2002...The unstoppable American Juggernaut? Absolutely. With a passport, visa and ticket in hand and LPF Trustee Shernaz Edibam for company and moral support till London's Heathrow airport, I flew out on British Airways from Mumbai to San Francisco on April 26, 2002.

This time, I was alone. My husband Indur passed away suddenly and tragically on November 21, 2001, so my dearest friend and companion for many years could not share many joys. It was the worst of times to say the least and the shock landed me in the hospital ICU for a couple of weeks. What better antidote than a getaway to USA to my children Sharmila /Kevin and Sonya for a change of scene? They insisted: and won after all...

Was I bored? Far from it. San Francisco's famous sights - the Golden Gate Bridge, Alcatraz, Fisherman's Wharf, Crooked Street, Twin Peaks, China Town and cable cars - have been around for a long long time. Yet every time they look different, exude life and are pure joys to withhold.

Lila Fellow **Neetu Bhatia** (1996) planned her visit to California to coincide with my arrival and on May 5, she and her brother Akash spent the entire day with us. After brunch, Sonya drove us to Tiburon and San Sali to across the Golden Gate Bridge. We soaked in the scenery and were back home to end the evening with glass of wine. Neetu is Vice President of an Investment Bank in Manhattan, New York. **Mitalee Gujar** (LF 2000) spent an evening as well and invited us to her graduation ceremony at Stanford on June 16. Graduation is a high point of academic achievement; it makes your degree official, be it school or college. I was delighted to attend two such ceremonies - Mitalee's and my niece Alisha Tolani's (Junior High School) at Harker School, Saratoga, CA, on June 6. Sonya and I got to the Old Union courtyard on the Stanford campus around noon and were happy to see Mitalee, cap, gown and all receive her Master's Degree in Computer Science. Later, we joined her family for a celebration lunch at a Thai restaurant off campus. Mitalee is working for Nokia in California.

Uma Kelkar (LF 1999) connected over the phone and insisted that I spend a whole day with her in Carmel - a quaint seaside town -, on June 29. It was an invitation I couldn't refuse. She fetched me at the Mountain View station and drove me along the ocean to Carmel, a hundred miles away. En route, we stopped at a strawberry farm and feasted on giant sized, handpicked, tangy strawberries under the Sun! At Carmel, we relaxed on the beach with chips and salsa and then headed for the famous art galleries down town. Uma is an accomplished artist herself. After chai at her home, she and her husband Mahesh drove me back to San Francisco. She is currently

working as a circuit designer with Transmeta Corporation in Santa Clara, CA.

Wonder of wonders! Meeting **Neetu, Mitalee and Uma** in person was one thing, but three LPF Trustees converging in California at the same time was something else. **Freny Tarapore, Surabhi Nag** and I, met at a lunch hosted by Freny's daughter Navaz and her husband Zubin at their home in Vacaville, CA, on May 19. It was a long drive from San Francisco, and once again, Sonya was happy to drive us there.

July 19, 2002. Destination Colorado. Breathtaking, enchanting and inviting don't even begin to describe it. Nothing can beat Colorado's majestic Rockies, golden aspens, blazing sunsets, spectacular views, fresh mountain air and its sheer cosmic beauty. **It is God's own country.** It was in this ethereal setting that Indur was finally laid to rest in the serene and beautiful Lake Brainard, nestled high in the Rockies.

Boulder, where my elder daughter and her husband Kevin Hutchins live, is an hour's drive from the Denver International airport. It is several planets away from the glare of city lights and indeed, the rest of the world. This is where I spent the next three months. What makes Boulder, Boulder? It is synonymous with the University of Colorado where our very own **Kalpna Chawla, Sharmila & Kevin** earned their post-graduate degrees.

Lila Fellow **Jovina Amor** (LF 1997) is a senior architect with J.G. Johnson & Co., in Denver, the State Capital. I was happy to visit her home and office in end July. She has worked on some amazing projects, which were on display. Jovina and her fiancé Rahul, spent an evening with us in Boulder. They were married on December 21, 2002 in Pune.

Unfortunately, just when all was going well for me, I had a nasty fall on a Boulder sidewalk on August 8, and was grounded with severe ankle injuries for six weeks. My children maintained a 24-hour vigil but family apart, Alisha, my niece and Freny separately flew in from California to nurse me through this difficult time. It was a rare gesture and their timely help and support got me back on my feet again. Somebody up there loves me for sure!

During my convalescence, I spoke to Lila Fellows **Chandrika, Samidha, Shama, Shilpa, Koyal, Deepali, Manjusha, Supriya, Neetu, Vijayalaxmi, Urvashi and Joyti Dalvi** quite often. These girls have worked wonders! I also had interesting conversations with the 2002 award winners **Radhika, Preeti, Ashonita, Ketki and Uttara** who had just arrived in USA for the Fall semester. Their first



Trustees Ms. Thadhani, Freny Tarapore & Surabhi Nag with Zubir, Nawaz and Sonya in Vacaville

impressions were volatile. Versus Ketki Desai who screamed "I love USA!" a hundred times, Radhika Lohankar whined "It is so difficult here. I have to do everything myself. I am just not used to this." For all of them, America was a radically new experience.

All good things come to an end. I returned to India on October 15. Dassera - ready to start anew. This vacation was intended as a retreat: from loss, pain, stress, routine and the familiar. Rest, relaxation and a contemplative state of mind brought about a profound shift; a realization that I need to be in the present again. Boulder, especially, did that for me.

None of this would have been possible without my children, my family, and my friends and in great measure, the Lila Fellows who showered me with their care, concern kindness and love in plenty. It was yesterday(s) once more.

- Maya Thadhani

(Trustee LPF)



THREE ALICES IN WONDERLAND...

Thanks to LPF, some of the Crusaders (Jayshree, Snehal, Lubainah and myself) had the opportunity to be in Delhi for a week in December to interview Ms. PRIYA PAUL, our Leading Lady for this issue. Did the Alices have a whale of a time??? You bet! Here goes...

We left Pune on the 10th December, reached Dadar, walked around, lunched and then boarded the 4 o'clock Rajdhani to Delhi. We reached the marvelous city on the 11th December 2002 at around 11 in the morning. We were quite impressed by the polite and respectful way of speaking of the Delhiites, even to the chanawallas and mochees on the road.

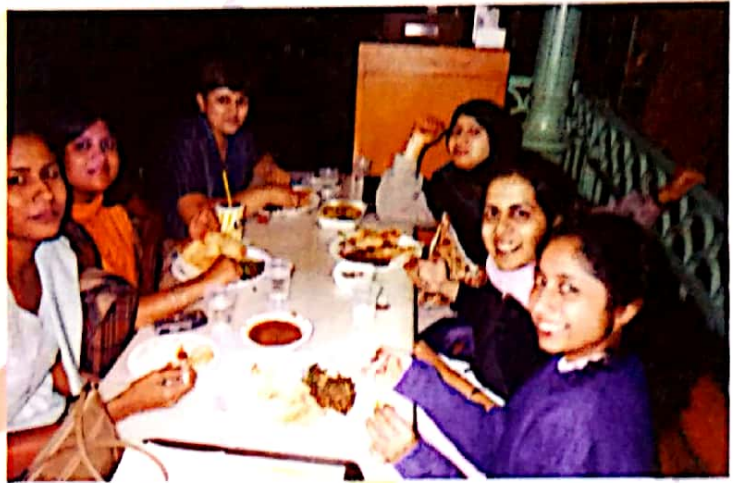
We got ready and left for lunch and some shopping around 1 o'clock. We strolled at Janpath (10 minutes walking distance from the YWCA International house at Parliament street where we lodged) and returned around 5 p.m., had tea then left for the SOUND and LIGHT SHOW at the Red Fort. The guesthouse arranged a car for us, which was stopped some distance away because of parking probs. The rest we had to cover by the cycle rickshaw (which we later learnt is called as 'rickshaw' and our regular ricks are called as 'auto's).

The show began at 7.30 p.m. sharp and ended at 8.30 p.m. sharp. For once I can't talk of the Indian standard time:))) My god! The fort looks scary and foreboding at night. It was a FABULOUS show - the lights, the sound effects and the narration of mughal history followed by the history of free India.

The temperatures were near freezing, or so I felt. Though we were wrapped in sweaters and shawls, we were shivering. The cycle rickshaw was total fun. We ENJOYED it - the thrill of the fear of falling off any minute as it was so bugged up. To top it there was nothing to hold for support! It appeared as if we were leaning forward with our rears raised at a terrific angle!:(:)))

(Forgive me but the description was necessary for you to picturize us jokers...)

We came home by 9.30, had dinner as Jayshree suggested at the restaurant 'Savor the Flavor' attached to the guesthouse. It is a



L-R : Snehal, Anagha, Jayshree, Uzma, Lubainah & Ketaki relishing 'Chola Bhatura' at 'Etopia', INDIA HABITAT CENTRE, Delhi

sleek and quiet place. This was the most expensive dinner of the whole trip! Other times we ate mostly at tapri's where the food is good. By the way, Delhiites are no good at south Indian cuisine.

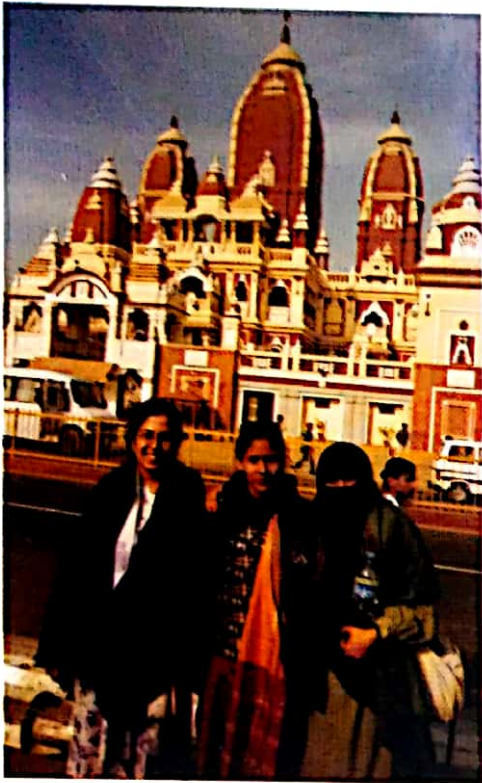
The next day (12th) we had breakfast and left for the interview. It was just a couple of lanes away. Snehu and I ran around hunting for flowers but the only flower market was closed by 8 in the morning! So we bought a box of chocolates instead which she was delighted to receive and shared with her employees. The interview was DELIGHTFUL! Ms. Paul is an amazing lady - warm and charming and opened up easily. She also invited us for lunch at THE PARK. We were shown around the hotel and its unique facilities.... For us, it was HOSPITALITY at its best....

Snehu, lubs and I then left for the Delhi Tourism Center. As ill luck would have it, after waiting for an hour, the oh-so-sweet guides told us that the trip would not be arranged.

(AARGH!!! I could have punched that beaming idiot!!!)

This is typical of Delhiites--- they'll sweetly say "bas paanch minute aur" and take a whole hour!!!!

We had no choice but to go to Palika Bazaar, which is 5 minutes away, did some purchasing and came home by 5 p.m. We then left to go to INDIA HABITAT CENTRE which is a massive commercial complex that also houses an amphitheatre, an art



Lubainah, Snehal & Uzma before the Birla Temple, New Delhi

gallery, research centers, conference halls etc. Before we got to the place, we had a tough time getting a taxi as the strike was still on. Gosh! The traffic just wouldn't stop !!! Finally a serdy (sardarji) came to our rescue.

Mind you, some of these kind and helpful serdys do more harm than help. (No hard feelings!)

Here's a slice of the serdy fun...

(Please fill in the serdy accent for the real effect)

Lubs: Bhaiyya, India Habitat Center le jaoge? (can you take to India Habitat Center)

Serdy: haan ji kyon nahi, (Yes, sure, why not...)

Le jaenge.... Badey araaam se le jaenge...(will take you very comfortably).

Lubs: dekho bhaiyya..., barabar se le jaanaa...(please take us safely....)

Serdy: haan ji... fikr na ki jiye...(don't worry at all)

He settled for 50 bucks (from 100) After we crossed the road (which was eternity). We got in the cab, settled in the warmth...

Serdy uncle: "haan ji , zaraaa batai ye ...ye India Habitat Center kahaan hain?????" (can you tell me where is India Habitat Center?????)

We looked at Lubs who was SHOCKED!!! We burst out laughing. No sardarji joke.. this was a real life situation.....

Some time later we reached the place. There we were hunting for Jayshree who was right behind us. Finally Jayshree and all of us Lila fellows - Ketaki, Anagha - (Lila Fellows, who are in Delhi, at present,) , Lubs, snehu and I met, looked around and had

dinner at 'EATOPIA' an in-campus restaurant. Anagha's hubby who later joined us was kind enough to drop us home after a quick trip around the city. The day ended with a delicious dessert at the restaurant.

The next day, 13th, we left for **AGRA**, though we couldn't see the wonder of the world, the **TAJ MAHAL** (as it is closed for cleaning on Fridays) we saw one side of it from outside. We saw the **AGRA FORT** too. We bought some souvenirs to take home. We reached Delhi at 10 p.m., dead tired and hit the sack.

The following morning, 14th, we boarded the bus for a tour of **New Delhi** from the tourist Center. We saw the the mind boggling **Jantar-Mantar**, the magnificent **Lotus Temple**- a beauty of architecture with a breadth taking landscape, the exotic **Birla temple**, the splendid **Kutub Minar** and finally a quick trip past the **Parliament**, the **Embassies** of the world, the **RBI** head quarters, and **numerous palaces** of maharajas and nawabs.

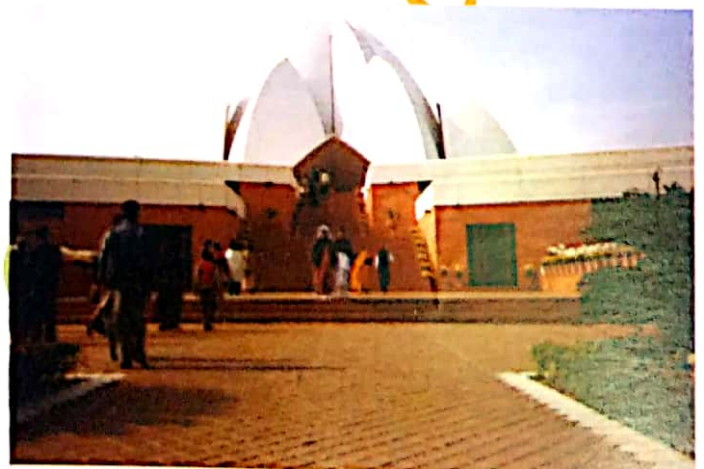
We stopped for lunch, came back to the Delhi Tourist Center, did whirl wind shopping through the **Palika Bazaar**, (where **Humpty Dumpty** had a great fall... I fell down the stairs!!! Hee Hee!!!).

We then dashed off to the guesthouse, collected our baggage, thanked them and rushed to the station. We reached Mumbai Central at around 9 a.m. of the 15th, got a bus from Dadar at 9.30 a.m. and reached home sweet home around 1 o'clock in the afternoon.

All in all it was a TREMENDOUS learning experience... about people, about their life styles, their food habits, their manners, and above all travelling ALONE in an unfamiliar place...walking a lot, exploring new roads and lanes while finding places, understanding directions... AAAAAAH!!!! It was REAL, UNFORGETTABLE FUN...

THANK YOU MRS. POONAWALLA AND LPF for arranging the most memorable trip for us and helping us learn so much!!! The Rabbit hole sure runs deep!!!

-UZMA KAZI



Snehal & Lubainah before the Lotus Temple, New Delhi

SAMATA SABALA meets two interesting Lila Fellows **MITALEE GUJAR** and **JYOTI OTAGERI** - one aspiring for an MBA and the other a Post-Doctorate in Bioinformatics.



Mitalee Gujar

Hi pals!!! I am Mitalee. It had always been my dream to come to the US and study computer science at some reputed university. I still remember those endless hours studying for engineering exams, all those trips to Mumbai for some exam or the other, running around to get my transcripts and recommendations and filling up various applications. I got admitted to quite a few schools - but my pleasure knew no bounds when I got the last and best reply from Stanford University. Located right in the heart of Silicon Valley, the best students from all over the world come here to get an experience of a lifetime. Although I had no funding at Stanford whereas some other schools were offering me full aid, I had made up my mind. I applied for various scholarships and it was a great honour when LPF chose to give me the highest scholarship for that year. I still kept corresponding with the professors and as luck would have it, I was offered full funding and a job as a Research Assistant. That was more than enough to take care of all my expenses, and I decided that the scholarship money should go to someone, who really needs it, so I returned it.

Life at Stanford was amazing. Of course it was a lot of hard work and long nights, but it was all worth it. I got an opportunity to interact with students from all over the world, and I had a lot of fun making friends and learning about different cultures. Unfortunately the economy hit rock bottom when I graduated and there were layoffs everywhere, but I guess the Stanford experience really made an impact and I got a few job offers. I accepted the offer from Nokia, primarily because the work was in my area of interest which is systems and networking, and secondly because it is located in the Bay Area. I've been working here as a s/w engineer for the past 7 months and I've learnt a lot. I plan to continue working for a few more years and then do an MBA.

What I'd like to tell all the Lila Fellows is - believe in yourself and your capabilities, and strive for your goals. Always put in your best efforts, and success will be with you!

Hi friends!!! I am Jyoti. I did my M.Sc. in Microbiology from Pune University (thanks to the scholarship from the Lila Poonawalla Foundation. I cleared the National Eligibility Test for Junior Research Fellowship conducted jointly by 'Council of Scientific and Industrial Research' and 'University Grants Commission', and was among the top 20% candidates qualifying at national level.

Earlier I worked as a Lecturer in Ahmednagar College, Ahmednagar, teaching Post-graduate students. It was a gratifying experience but not completely fulfilling. Hence, I am now working as a Junior Research Fellow and pursuing Ph.D. in a project in Agharkar Research Institute (ARI), Pune, titled "Taxonomy of Viruses" conceived and funded by the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India.

My Ph.D. guide is Dr. Kalyan Banerjee, ex-Director of National Institute of Virology and Honorary Secretary of ARI who is a world-renowned Virologist and committee member of the World Health Organization. He is extremely intelligent and hence, equally demanding. I am enormously fortunate to have him as my guide.

What proficiency my research requires and of course I possess is efficient communication and inter-personal skills, independent thinking ability, proper maintenance of log-books, efficient working and excellent capacity to grasp.

My future career plans are to pursue a Post-Doctorate in Bioinformatics, abroad. I aspire to be a conscientious Scientist and work assiduously to take India one more step nearer to becoming a 'Developed' country.

I draw inspiration from my Ph.D. Guide, Mrs. Lila Poonawalla and my parents. My hobbies include reading just about anything and everything, sports and dancing.

One thing I can't get over is the unremitting personal attention showered by Lila Ma'am and the foundation as a whole. I go by the line: "Live Life Queen Size"!!!



Jyoti Otageri

LEADING LADY



Lubainah with Ms. Paul

Q: How did you set your future goals as a young child?

A: I was born in a joint and a business family. Brought up in this atmosphere from the age of 10, I had decided to join the family business. During my vacations, I would spend time in office. I was quite sure that I wanted to be in the business but since it was quite large-hotels, shipping, real estate and others, I had not decided which one I would like to be a part of. After finishing my BA in Economics from the US, I joined the hotel industry on 1st July 1988 and am still there.

Q: How have you been able to develop hospitality as one of the leading businesses?

A: We had 3 hotels at Calcutta, Delhi and Vishakhapatnam, when I started to work under my father (the first one was started in 1967). At that time the hotel industry was very underdeveloped. We decided to give our hotels a new look i.e. to make them 'fun places'. We have events as a part of our strategy, which attract a lot of interest. We introduced a common system, rules and procedures across the three and professionalism in terms of management. This exercise started in 1989-90 by just getting in common procedures, renovation etc. I then brought in professional managers and introduced different accounting policies. Over the years I hired a team of people who worked and are still working to re-organize the structure of the company. Along with this we were conducting internal training, HR and recruitment and also working on the design of the hotel in a much more contemporary manner. After stabilizing these hotels, we launched 2 more hotels in our chain at Bangalore and Chennai.

Q: How are you accepted as a woman boss?

A: I don't make a difference between men and women in the work place. I believe that either you are a good, bad or an average manager. I don't think of myself as a 'woman manager' but I think of myself as a manager who happens to be a woman. I don't approach management or my work from a female's point of view. In my case, since it was a family business, people had seen us since childhood and had anticipated that my sister or I would get into the business. Hence there was no acceptance issue as far as they being a woman was concerned.

Q: You have been the founder member of World Travel and Tourism Council - Asia Chapter. Do you think as a developing country, we have tapped the potential to promote India as a tourist destination?

A: Not at all. We have a tourism arrival of about 2.6 million whereas a tiny country like Thailand has an arrival of 10-11 million. Given India's size, natural and cultural heritage, we should be getting more. Our potential is under-tapped. There are a lot of issues that prevent the increment of the tourism arrival. World Travel and Tourism Council is a think tank which works with the entire tourism industry. Our role is to look out for issues, which are confronting tourism and try to find out answers for them.

Q: What interested you in being the trustee of India Foundation of Arts (IFA). What is its function?

A: I've always been interested in visual art. IFA gives grants to people

LUBAINAH VAPRA treats you to the flavour of a delightful conversation with Ms. PRIYA PAUL, Director, APJ Surendar Group and President, Park Hotels. A vivacious and down-to-earth personality who makes one extremely comfortable even in her imposing presence...

who are doing new work in art. It could be someone who is researching the ancient tradition or somebody who is developing a new piece of dance work. It helps people to gradually explore things in the field of art.

Q: What is your role as a member of the board of trustees of the South Asia Women's Fund?

A: The Ford Foundation is in the process of setting this up. It is a grant-making body for organizations that are promoting the development of women. It is a large body and people over Southeast Asia meet once in 4-5 months. It is still under formulation and will take sometime to get structured.

Q: Since you are in a city surrounded by a lot of political currents would you like to enter politics in the near future?

A: Yes. I wanted to enter politics when I was younger. For people like us, there is a lot we can do like talk to foundations, water programs, funding etc. That sort of work is perhaps more rewarding like the work your foundation is doing. We also have our family foundation. I would not mind getting involved in such type of activities in the near future. We have to help people. Maybe politics is not the only route. To change people, to change the country as a whole you need to get people involved.

Q: In retrospect, what is that one wrong business move which you feel needed to be rectified?

A: I can't think of one but I've certainly made more than one mistake. All of us do and we learn from those mistakes. There is not one that changed my life, there are probably many because at every stage you are making choices and decisions. Some are right and some are wrong. I can't hook myself into it and not move ahead. I can't think of any regrets in that sense.

Q: One valuable thing you've learn from your family?

A: Our family motto is to work hard and play hard and to become responsible.

Q: Your plans for the future...

The hospitality industry has a lot of potential and I plan to be an active part of it.

Q: Your advice to Lila fellows?

A: My advice to Lila fellows is that there are opportunities everywhere and you should be ready to work hard and put your minds into it be it art, hospitality or English literature. You have to seek the opportunities and go after them. If you are confident and have a good education then there are numerous possibilities. It is very competitive out there. You have to present yourself properly and enjoy what you are doing. It is a growing country; there are opportunities everywhere, though they are not easy. But then, (grins) nothing is easy...



L-R : Uzma, Lubainah, Ms. Priya Paul, Jayshree & Snehal

And the winner is ...

IT was disheartening to get so many rejections, but I was still hopeful of getting at least one scholarship," says 23-year-old Devayani Bhawe who won the scholarship from the Lila Poonawalla Foundation to pursue a Masters course in the UK Last year.

In Pune for a couple of weeks to visit her family, Devayani says that studying in the UK has been a great experience, but getting there took a lot of hard work. After applying for some 20 odd scholarships, she finally got two, the other being the scholarship from The Paul Foundation in Calcutta which took care of her living expenses. To cover the rest of her 10,000 pound sterling tuition fees, she took a soft loan.

This allowed her to pursue a one year Masters' course in Chemistry at Kings College, London. Initially, adapting to a new country was a little difficult, says Devayani. It took her about a month and a half to adjust to the surroundings and the people. It took her even longer to understand what the course was all about and what it demanded. "Research was really tough for the first six months as it was completely different from what I've done before. One thing I've realised is that research takes a lot of patience!" she remarks. "But I had an extremely helpful supervisor and very supportive classmates which made it a lot easier to cope with the stress."

Devayani remembers thinking it would be relatively easy conversing with the Brits since she had been speaking English all her life, but she soon discovered that most of her classmates were foreign students. Interacting with them was a real challenge, and they ended up playing more of Dumb Charades than talking!

After Devayani finished her course she decided that she would pursue a PhD. Almost all the universities she applied to, however, offered her a place but required her to get her own funding. "So it's as good as not getting a seat at the University because, without any sort of funding it's very difficult to support yourself through the course. A PhD takes up almost all of your time, so you can't even work part-time and partly fund yourself," says Devayani, a tad disappointed.

Not one to be held back, she then attended a career fair in London with a couple of friends and found the only company at the fair looking for chemistry graduates. She applied, aced the interview and bagged the job. Devayani now works with a

pharmaceutical company in Scotland called Organon Research and will be involved in researching synthetic organic chemistry. She plans to work for a while and save up enough money to pay back her loan and fund herself for the PhD. She also plans to contribute to the grant she received from the Lila Poonawalla Foundation in the near future so that other young girls may also benefit from it.

This B.Sc. graduate from Fergusson College has also spent two years at Temasek Junior College in Singapore and says she has learned a lot during the past year, but mainly she has gained confidence that she never had before. "When you meet a lot of different people, learn about them, where they come from and how they live, all your inhibitions just melt away," she says.

Eventually Devayani would like to come back home to Pune as she says she's a real homebird and misses her family terribly when she's away. And what would she like to tell other aspiring young girls who harbour similar ambitions? "If you want to do something and you work hard towards it, then nothing's impossible."



Devayani Bhawe (right) with Lila Poonawalla

ZAHRA KHAN ●

PUNENewsline

Of gestures and generosity

FOR the past eight years the Lila Poonawalla Foundation has been helping girls who want to pursue higher education abroad with financial assistance. But what makes this foundation different from the rest is the fact that they do so unconditionally - without demands or expectations of any returns.

It was thus a very pleasant surprise for Lila Poonawalla, chairperson of the Foundation when Shalaka Sankpal called on her the other day. Shalaka, an engineering graduate from the Vishwakarma Institute of Technology, Pune had been helped by the foundation in 1999 with a grant of Rs. 50,000 to pursue her Masters in Electrical and Computer Engineering in the USA. Having finished her education and started work as a senior consultant in Gaps Gemini Ernst & Young in California, the 24 year old was back in Pune last week. And top of her agenda was one important task - the returning of that valuable Rs 50,000 to the foundation, which she did with a deep sense of gratitude for their timely help, so that more girls could benefit from the good work started by them.

Tuesday Tango

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"We have advanced financial help to 205 girls for higher education, since we began the Foundation in 1996. And while some have given say a hundred dollars or more as a return gesture to the Trust, she is the first person to have given the entire amount back and that too from her own earnings," smiles a deeply touched Poonawalla. Meanwhile 24 year Shalaka who stays in Mukund Nagar feels this is the least she could have done in return. "It was an overwhelming feeling for me at that time when I found that there were people whom I didn't even know who just gave Rs. 50,000 without any conditions for my education. Since I had no sponsorship at that time, the sum was a big help along with the other amounts that my father raised through loans and his fixed deposits."

"I can't say I am well off already but I do have a job. I joined the company in September 2001 and though the work is good, given the situation in USA right now, the job security is nil," smiles Shalaka who plans to return to India in the near future to pursue her dream of teaching. "I used to take tuitions even

when I was in Std XI and XII. Teaching is my passion," she says.

Adds Poonawalla, "very often I have had arguments with the trustees who felt that I should put a condition in the contracts of girls we help that they should return the money when they can, but I have never done so. I feel they should return it only if they feel like it. Shalaka's gesture has made me feel so proud today - because this is what I wanted to develop in the girls - this joy of giving. It's not the money but the spirit behind it that makes me feel that I have been successful in what I have set out to do."



In a heart warming gesture Shalaka Sankpal, who availed of the Lila Poonawalla Foundation scholarship in 1999 and is now working in the USA, has said thanks to the foundation by returning the amount given to her, so that the foundation can lend wings to even more girls to pursue education abroad

Down Memory Lane... SNIPPETS

"The path from dreams to success does exist. May you have the vision to find it, the courage to get on to it, and the perseverance to follow it. Wishing you a great journey."

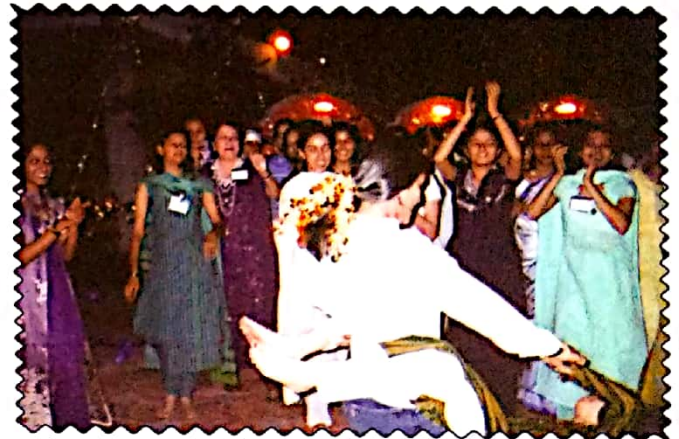
- A message from Kalpana Chawla to students of Punjab Engineering College.



'Jamai Rajas' of the Foundation (spouses of Lila Fellows) releasing Inspira Vol 8, at The New Year Party at Fili Villa



Four Maestros, one evening ... a perfect concert for peace "Aman"



Lila Fellows break into a Bhangra step at The New Year Party at Fili Villa



Uma Kelkar (seen here with Ms. Poonawalla) is happy to donate \$625 to the Foundation



All smiles - LF's and Trustees with Mrs. Surabhi Banerjee at the close of the workshop on "Positive Thinking"

WORKSHOP ON POSITIVE THINKING

Power let's you Tower!!!

If you have the power, only then can you tower...

This is what we realized after attending the One-day workshop on "Positive Thinking" arranged by the Foundation on 2nd Feb. 2003. Attending this workshop was a beautiful experience along with the trustees who spared their time to know and learn about positive thinking.

Mrs. Surabhi Banerjee, Counselor of Dynamic living institute UK began the workshop by saying, "I am not going to give you anything, Nature has provided us with everything. The only thing is you have to use it and I will make an attempt to make you understand your capabilities."

She is a very soft-spoken and a wonderful trainer who lucidly conveyed the benefits of positive thinking without exhausting us. We experienced tremendous relaxation in all the techniques that she made us go through. Going to the 'Alpha' state of the mind was very fulfilling experience. It also gave us good sleep. This state is said to be a very powerful one because the brain is in an accepting and non-judgmental state.

Another technique of 'Creative visualization' was very real. You create your own reality with your thought, feeling and attitude. It helped us in discovering our own negative blocks.

Lastly we learned about 'Positive Affirmations' which can in a short time transform our attitudes and expectations about life.

The trustees and the Lila fellows truly enjoyed this workshop and are very thankful to Mrs. Surabhi Banerjee for developing faith in us and making it a memorable Sunday for all of us. At the end of the day she recommended the well-known book on positive thinking "Awaken your Inner Power" By Rex Johnson and David Swindley to all the trustees and Lila fellows.

This book will help us to understand about the positive thinking and positive attitudes as well as the techniques in a better way to help us in future. It dwells on how one can be positive, enthusiastic, and active all the time and believe in oneself and realize that one is a capable person. We will also feel good about ourselves and become more self-reliant as there is an indefatigable power in positive thinking.



*'Simple Living, Positive thinking'
LF's at the workshop on positive thinking*

The girls who participated this session have send their feedback to Lila Ma'am that each of them is experiencing great miracles in life. They are implementing all the techniques and have understood how to unleash the negative energy and "untie" themselves from the negative thoughts and move ahead to achieve the goals.

One of the Lila fellows avers, "this session has certainly contributed to my peace of mind". She also observed that Surabhi Ma'am herself was calm and composed during the entire session, thus displaying a perfect example of the relaxed person.

Another Lila fellow adds, "Everybody on this earth has to go one day, if we all have to go one day then why not touch the stars. For that this is the right time to learn how to think in a positive manner and tackle the situations which are not in our hands".

I believe that if more and more Lila fellows attend these training workshops they will surely succeed in their life as these will boost their personality, which will enable them to tackle all difficulties coming their way as they sail through various stages in career, social and personal life.

- SUNETRA CHAPHALKAR.

YOUR'S TRULY

Hullo all you wonderful people! We have had an eventful time since the last issue, haven't we? We had a dhamaal at the New Year party with games, prizes, music, dance and a sumptuous dinner with the trustees! Inspira was released by-(surprise, surprise) spouses of our own Lila Fellows!! Hardly had this ended when we were herded for another not-to-be-missed workshop on 'Positive Thinking' by Ms.S.Banerjee. Lila Fellows also basked in the beautiful strains of the santoor, the tabla and the pakhawaj at 'Aman', a concert for peace.

On behalf of the Inspira team, I extend my heartfelt Thanks to Mrs. Poonawalla and the foundation for arranging a trip for some of us to Delhi. I'm sure you enjoyed reading about it.

Makes one reflect that Lila Fellows are truly the 'Chosen Ones'.

Pssst Along with the temperatures Inspira is hottening up too!! Whaz zat? Exciting innovations? With Inspira? Sorry Buddies, I'm not letting the cat outta the bag now!!! Hold it there till we meet again!

Till then, all you Damsels out there Take Care 'n' have a COOL summer!!!

**-UZMA KAZI
EDITOR**



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