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Inspira



Vol. No. 11 / Dec. 2003

FROM MY HEART



Dear Lila Fellows,

It has been an exhilarating experience since I last communicated with you, "From My Heart", in the Vol. No. 10, Aug 2003 issue.

We had our **8th Scholarship Award** function with an outstanding ICON in business management - **Dr. Ms. Naina Lal Kidwai**, Vice Chairperson and Managing Director of HSBC Securities and Capital Markets, as our **Chief Guest**. Her Message to all of us was very simple and clear. **"Life is all about limitations and limits. Limitation is what is forced on us by circumstances and limits are what we force on ourselves. We need to get out of our Comfort Zone and we need to push ourselves a little more."** How very true! If each one of us put in that extra bit, we would never have to look behind.

With this Award function of the Foundation our family grew to **233 Lila Fellows**, of which over 60 are currently overseas, either pursuing their studies or working in very renowned organizations.

The Foundation Award function was followed by an award given to me by **HIS MAJESTY THE KING OF SWEDEN**, called the **Royal Order of the Polar Star**, naming me as the officer of **The Royal Order**. This award was conferred on me at the hands of **His Excellency the Ambassador of Sweden in India Mr. Johan Nordenfelt**, at a Banquet held in Pune. In his speech he said "According to the 1748 statutes, the Royal Order of the Polar Star is awarded as a mark of distinction to persons of great merit. **The device of the Polar Star is: "Occasum nescit" i.e. it knows not descent. Lila Poonawalla is a friend of our country.** Her broad knowledge of Sweden and its industry, and her deep understanding of its culture and civilization makes **her uniquely suited to build bridges between our two countries and to know where to build them.** She is an indispensable advisor to me and to the Swedish Embassy."

Befittingly, this award function was followed by a **felicitation by all The Lila Fellows, under the guidance of our very dedicated team of Trustees**. I was both impressed and emotionally happy with that wonderful, memorable evening. I **thank you all**, and specially those of you who put in a lot of effort to put together a wonderful **entertainment program**. Thank you also, for the specially designed **Memento and the Scroll** signed individually by all LF present that evening, and the Trustees. These will always find a **very special place not only in my Home but also in my Heart**. My special thanks also go to those of you who came up to the stage and had wonderful memories of our association to share. **Parents,**

sisters, and even one Husband came forward with kind words. And my special appreciation goes to **all the Trustees and specially Ms. Frenny Tarapore** for her interesting way in conducting the evening.

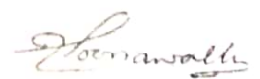
Besides these very special functions we had a **tea party** at Le Meridien for this year's batch, followed by **two orientation programs**. One was exclusively for overseas Lila Fellows, by **Mrs. Maya Thadhani** our senior Trustee and the other by **Mrs. Ratna Khemani** on the art of **positive thinking and confidence building**. **Mr. Poonawalla** also organised a get-together of all Trustees with their spouses at Rajwada, as a thanksgiving for all their support to the foundation.

A training program on importance of **Etiquette** in one's life was conducted by **Ms. Romilla Thakur and Mr. Deepak Thakur** of "Finishing Touch" at Aurora Towers. We also participated in a cultural evening, **"Two Lives in Dance and One More"**, a biography in dance by the three generations of the Sarabhais. The Batch of 1999 will remember interacting with **Ms. Mallika Sarabhai**, who was the Chief Guest at that year's Award function.

The **book on the life stories** of some of the Lila Fellows is well in progress. The stories bring to fore **their dreams, their aspirations, their achievements, the ups and downs of their lives and how they have faced these**. And who has influenced their lives and helped them to be what they are today. I am very excited reading the drafts of these stories and I am sure when the book is published it is going to be a **motivation for all the aspiring young ladies the world over**.

One more New Year party! I am now looking forward to meeting all of you with your spouses and children at the **NEW YEAR Party**. I expect all Lila Fellows to come and take this **opportunity to network** with each other. I am sure to meet many of you but just the same I send all of you my **best wishes** for the New Year. **Wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Very Happy, and Healthy New Year!**

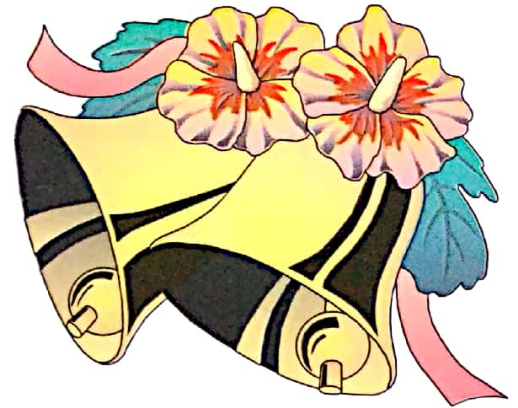
Loves


Lila Poonawalla

SHORT TAKES

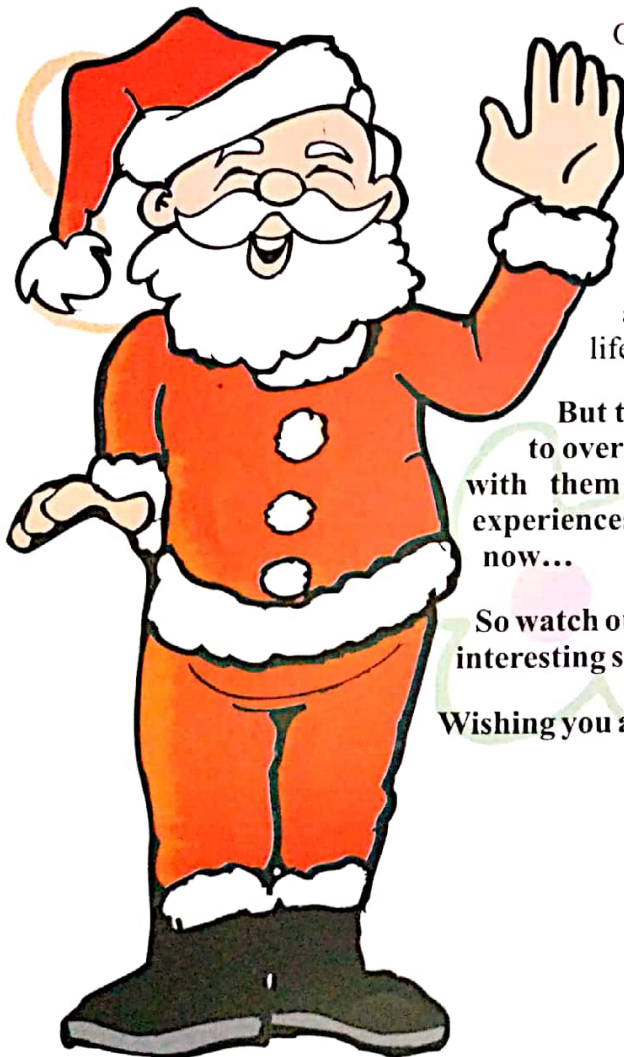


Lubainah



The Lila Poonawalla Foundation is well into its 8th year of establishment with over two hundred and thirty Lila Fellows as a part of our family. It is amazing to see the family grow every year with over 60 overseas fellows as a part of the foundation till date.

The family has grown and so its activities too.... in Pune we have had the privilege of attending many interesting programs, seminars, get-togethers, parties, picnic.. and so on. We have shared this feed back with all our Lila Fellows and have missed them when we are together, and particularly, the overseas Lila Fellows, who have few opportunities to be a part of this....



Our fellow mates based abroad usually interact with us through mail and keep pouring in their messages and suggestions and tell us how they miss these functions and would be happy to be a part of them. The foundation website and Inspira also serve as a common medium to share our experiences with each other. The trustees who visit these places meet them and update us about their careers and their progress but this does not give us enough exposure about their lives. We are sure the Lila fellows abroad will be delighted to share their experiences and their lifestyles with us.

But the good news, is that we are going to have a page dedicated to overseas Lila Fellows : our overseas correspondent will interact with them from close quarters and share with you their lives, experiences.... And why not, the overseas Lila Fellows are a BIG family now...

So watch out for this page..... in our next issue.... which will have some interesting stories of Lila Fellows overseas...

Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a Very- Very Happy New Year.....

 *Lubainah*

YOUR LIFE LINE IN I.C.U. (Intensive Care Unit)

ICU... the name itself scares you... all thoughts come to you mind when you hear about someone near and dear to you admitted in ICU... The atmosphere of a hospital, pains and agonies of the patients, worried looking faces of the relatives...

But what brings a smile on the faces of the patients is the person who is there during your time of pain and sorrow looking after you with care and compassion.....And we are talking about the Nurse ... who is attending to you in ICU.



Correspondent Sadhavi with the Life Line Nurses

There are many reasons why they chose this profession. For some, it was an entry into the medical profession; for others, their family members were in the same profession or for obvious reasons... the NEED to work. But one thing was common, they all wanted to take care of the sick.

As Rupali told us, "I never got sick, because I work here and know so many things.... and hence take care with prevention". I think this is an important message for all us.

In ICU, the more experienced staff, who have basic knowledge of work are given duty. We have knowledge of all the equipments in ICU & are able to operate them with ease. Like in wards, even for checking the blood pressure, nurses have to call the doctors, but in ICU, we manage first aid on our own.

I asked a few of them how they manage shift duties, particularly, after marriage. Do they get support from their family members? They said, "It is difficult to work in the

night shift as we have to work in the day time at home. At times, it does get tiring as we have the mental stress of work." In ICU, there are critical cases, many difficult situations we handle, and hence as one of the nurses rightly put it "While working here & seeing death occurring everyday, I have started believing that every one of us should enjoy our life to the fullest... while it is possible".

They said, "we sometimes develop emotional bonding with the patients. You see them in ICU for about few days and suddenly find that they are no more in this world. We do feel for the relatives of the patient ... but we have to go on with our work." They get tremendous satisfaction when some of the patients who are battling with death come out of it and go home with a smile... There are other times when they have to deal with difficult patients. "Sometimes we get very bad treatment from the relatives of the patients as they think we are not understanding the pains of the patient. But we learn to take all that in our stride and take it with a smile... because we understand that they do not have anything personally against us, but it is only that they cannot see their loved one suffering".

Something interesting that was noticed by me was that, there were only two or three male nurses. I was curious to know about it, and they told me "women are more stronger than men when it comes to crisis situations, women are more sensitive towards to patients and they can come out of it also fast".

HATS OFF TO THESE WOMEN... WHO GIVE STRENGTH TO US WHEN IN PAIN...AND BRING A SMILE ON OUR FACES WITH THEIR CARE AND COMPASSION.... truly our LIFE LINE IN THE I.C.U.

Lila Poonawalla Foundation Award Function 2003



Inauguration of 8th LPF Award function
by Dr. Ms. Naina Kidwai and LPF Trustees

LEADING BY EXAMPLE....

This year's July award function was graced by Ms. Naina Lal Kidwai, Vice Chairman and Managing Director, HSBC Securities and Capital Markets (India) Private Limited.

When one meets Ms Kidwai, she comes across as a really humble, down to earth individual who believes in one simple principle in life, which we are well aware of but never really give a serious thought. She believes that everything that we set out to achieve can be achieved.

Ms Kidwai commenced her address by congratulating the members of the Lila Poonawalla Foundation, and the new awardees. She then went on to talk about how corporate India has changed over the years, and the encouraging factor of diversity being recognized in the workplace. It is about race and ethnicity but also about gender. She added that in India this area of diversity is still new but the number of women in corporate India is still growing. This can only get better with better education and as the sheer number grows, there will be more who will reach the top because at the end of the day its not about numbers but getting to levels of positions of influence where one can then influence the field one works in and also inspire hopefully, those that follow.

She further stated that one should make sure to strive up the ladder and not give up as one goes up and that we as a breed of women have a lot in our favor like technology. She also touched upon the time in the 19th century when a woman's role was limited to carrying firewood and how she has moved ahead to make a mark at the workplace. She brought to light how even today, rural India lacks the basic infrastructure and hence it is up to those of us who are in places of privilege to demand from the government, basics like electricity, water and health care schemes. We need to use our voices and our hands to ensure that it happens.

The important question that comes up then is why are there not many women on the corporate scene? She elaborated that a lot depends on the support at home from the men folk. It's all about limitations that are placed on us by circumstances and limits that we impose on ourselves. So let us go out and at each stage, raise the bar for what we set out to achieve and when we achieve it, raise it yet again. She quoted Martin Luther King, "The ultimate challenge to man or the ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy." She added a dash of humor by saying that the operative here is 'man' because women always knew it.

She also stressed that we need to get out of our comfort zone, push ourselves just that little bit more because we are in times of change which is a challenge and also an opportunity. She then shared with us some of her reflections on the reasons of there being less women in places of authority and why some drop away early. There are choices and also adversities that will come our way and how we deal with them is what is important. We have to realize that fear of the unknown is natural. Everyone feels it. The difference is the courage that you have and the ability to manage this fear, without getting paralyzed.

Another important point that she touched upon was that we all need to keep reviewing ourselves. To reinvent and retrain ourselves which in turn prepares us to anticipate change and to be ready for it when it comes. One must ask oneself, "What new skills and competencies do I need to use all my potential?" It helps us focus our energy on what we can influence instead of getting bogged down with the worry of what we cannot change. She recalled her father's principle, "As long as you have done your best the result does not count."

Dwelling on the importance of respecting oneself, she added that the world will reward you on your success. Success requires no explanation and failure permits none. But you need to respect yourself so that your self-confidence is intact, irrespective of whether you succeed or fail. Fail we all will, at some stage. The important thing is the lesson we learn from it and how we turn that into success.

The last point she emphasized on was, in spite of all the change around us, our core views never change. All of us have a responsibility to utilize our potential to make our country a better place for others, particularly for those not as fortunate or endowed as us. She concluded her talk by appreciating the Lila Poonawalla Foundation for its activities. She encouraged us to use our talents, competence and energy for creating happiness and peace and help those around us.



8th Batch of Lila Fellows New Awardees Aug. 2003

■ Hamsa Subramaniam

PUNE Newsline

The Indian EXPRESS

PUNE Newsline ■ WEDNESDAY ■ AUGUST 6, 2003

NEWSLINE SPECIAL Mariam to study Masters in Computer Arts in the US after bagging a scholarship

Strapped to wheelchair, youngster prepares to fly high

Ketaki Ghoge
August 5

THE Lila Poonawalla Foundation awarded scholarships to 28 students this year. But 26-year-old Mariam Lakdawala stands out from the rest. Because this feisty youngster did not allow her wheelchair to obstruct her from realising her dreams.

Rendered a paraplegic at the age of 17 in a mishap, Mariam will be pursuing a Master in Computer Arts at the Academy of Art in San Francisco, California.

"Like everybody else I am a little worried and thrilled about going abroad. I know it will be tough adjusting to my new life," says Mariam.

But overcoming obstacles is not new to Mariam. Her whole life changed after she suffered a spinal cord injury that rendered her immobile from waist down. Since their third-floor residence at Shankarseth Road did not have a lift, the family shifted to Kondhwa.

Mariam was in HSC at the time of the mishap and had to take a break of nearly one year before she could resume academics again. However, financial help from relatives enabled her to go to London for rehabilitation.

Her experience in London gave her the courage to forge ahead. "There no one sets any limits on you. I saw people with worse disabilities driving cars and even climbing stairs," says Mariam, who now drives a Zen herself.

On returning to India, she went on to do her Masters in Commerce from Pune University and started working as a designer with Global E Commerce Solutions and later Axis Software. But the going was not smooth.

"In India, it is as if handicapped people do not exist. There are no special facilities, no ramps. My biggest hassle is accessibility," rues Mariam who had to contend with rude stares, apathetic rickshawallas and dependence on others for help.

Marriam says her family and friends have been her greatest assets in her attempt to lead a normal life.

Now, thanks to the scholarship and a bank loan taken by her father, she's looking forward to starting a new chapter.



Mariam Lakdawala

Pune lasses lead the way

The five Puneri girls featured, are a selection of some of the best Lila Fellow' in the batch of awardees selected for the year 2003 - conversation

The Lila Poonawalla Foundation (LPF) in the mid 90s has been a benchmark for zeroing in on latent talent, awarding girl students scholarships for post graduate studies, helping them travel unhindered across the boundaries of the world, to study in universities of their choice, and ultimately associate with the Foundation for a lifetime.

The criteria for selection are certainly very strict and the awardees have to be residents of Pune for the past five years at least, besides having a consistent first class throughout their academic careers. The scholarships are normally awarded for post graduate study, only for girls and exceptions are made in certain cases for doctoral study as well.



(Standing L to R) Sujata Dongre, Mubashshara Shaikh,
(Sitting L to R) Devika Daftardar, Ritu Jain, Rajashree Phadtare - Lila Fellows

SPECIAL REPORT

"I would be even more happy, if they turned out to be better people than I am. I would really love that. Especially in today's present world, they have to be much more competitive and successful, they have to do much more than what I did thirty years ago," says Lila Poonawalla, the chairperson of LPF.

Perhaps Neetu Bhatia, (1996), who is the vice president of a bank in the United States, or Dr Supriya Kulkarni, (1996), an ace medico, who is always invited to speak at international seminars on cancer, or Dr Jyoti Dalvi, (1998), a rickshaw driver's daughter who globe trotted across the seven seas (UK and US) to complete her doctoral thesis in chemistry and is now aiming for her post doctoral speak more about the kind of success the Foundation is. Dr Jyoti even aims to be the future prime minister of the country. The Foundation has picked its winners carefully till date. Has it chosen correctly this year too? Over to the girls for this year, 2003, and you to decide.

Sujata Dongre (21), Mubashshara Shaikh (21), Devika Daffardar (23), Ritu Jain (20), and Rajashree Phadtare (22), are five among almost 30 awardees selected for this year at the hands of the chief guest Naina Lal Kidwai. The girls are ambitious in wanting the best the world has to offer, and yet modest enough to state that not all of them expected to win right away.

For example, Sujata Dongre who is doing her MCS has big dreams. "I would love to comper and earn money on the side. (She has compered a show for the LPF Function held in September). My aim in life is to be known as a software programmer. It is a very creative field. At the same time I am learning Japanese. My aim is to work with a company that has Japanese clients so that my knowledge can be put to good use. Money wise I needed the scholarship and I was friends with Shweta Lagoo who had 100%

obtained the award last year. She told me more about the Foundation and I decided to apply. Actually I had gone for a lark, and though the interview was good, I was not expecting a 100% win. When I got the admission letter I was thrilled."

A slightly different story is narrated by Mubashshara Shaikh, (21), whose grandfather, a complete source of inspiration, also belongs to the league of pen pushers. Currently doing her MCS, she relates what winning the award meant. "For me the scholarship award has meant a lot. Without this I would not have been able to pursue my education further. I would have had to do a job".

"In fact I had obtained a job at MSource a huge organization as a call center executive and I had received their offer cum appointment letter. That was when I also received the award. I was overjoyed because then I was able to pursue my studies, I felt I was great, and one of the luckiest persons there is. I too am learning Japanese and planning to learn Jetro, a technical language, and if given a chance would like to go abroad. I possibly owe all my success to my grandfather A H Khan who has been freelancing especially for the Times Of India. He was very keen that I obtain the scholarship and egged me onto apply. It was he who got the details for me from the advertisement and wished me luck. I would like to thank him for everything."

Devika Daftardar who has been responsible for the awesome choreography of Dahavi F a well appreciated, part musical Marathi movie owes her success to her parents and to Sumitra Bhawe, director. "Sumitra ma'am has been guiding me in every sense of the word. Perhaps our greatest success is the fact that the movie will be exhibited in Hindi too, with Manoj Bajpai as the lead actor. Her ambitions include a PhD in dance if possible, at a university abroad.

Ritu Jain is another awardee who is doing MCS. According to her, "I would have pursued my studies irrespective of anything, because they are important to me. But when I actually won, I felt very special.

Rajashree Phadtare, who is working as a lecturer in Cusrow Wadia is perhaps the most forward thinking and optimistic of the entire lot. She is clear, "I applied because I wanted to get the award. If I had not won this time, I may not have tried again. When I won I certainly felt that I was the luckiest. I would like to thank my parents for all that they have done for me."

 Gauri Ghatnekar



CITADEL

13th
ANNIVERSARY

Champagne MOMENTS

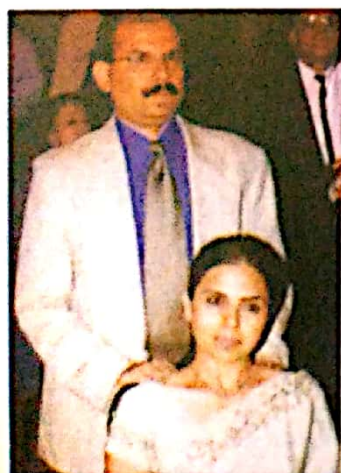
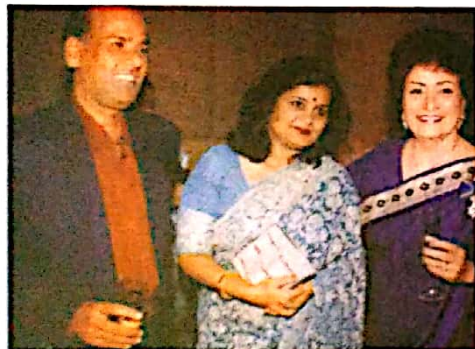
SHE is inimitable. No one, but can beat her in the art of diplomacy. That's the Peshwa City's very own **Lila Poonawalla** who received one of the highest awards conferred upon her by Sweden - the *Swedish Royal Polar Star* - at a glittering soiree hosted at Le Meridien Pune last month. His Excellency **Johan Nordenfelt**, Ambassador for Sweden to India did the honours. While family - Lila and better half **Firoz Poonawalla**'s entire clan was present in full number - and friends like **Mohan Dharia**, **Sabina**

Star-studded Soirée

Sanghvi, **Dr Shejalkar**, **MCCIA** president **Ravi Pandit**, **Dr Ashok Kolaskar** Vice Chancellor - Pune University, **Gita & Gapt Rajan Vir**, **Yogini Gandhi** and her husband **Shekar**, **Cora Menezies** amongst a host of celebrities from across the city rose as one to give this dynamic lady a standing ovation as Nordenfelt felicitated her.

"I am thrilled and honoured to be receiving this award and I know that along with this recognition also comes a lot of added responsibilities, which I hope to fulfill to the best of my abilities," said an overwhelmed **Lila Poonawalla**.

Moral of the story : follow your dreams ... er, in this case, your stars!



Two of a Kind

Individually, they are a force to be reckoned with. Together they are staggering. They have collectively made it an art form of making a statement wherever they go. So what is it that makes them tick? How do they manage to have it all and still be the cosy twosome? What's the secret behind the couple's chutzpah? CORINA B MANUEL gets to the bottom of what makes some of Pune's most exciting twosomes so charming

FOLLOW A STAR

Lila & Firoz Poonawalla

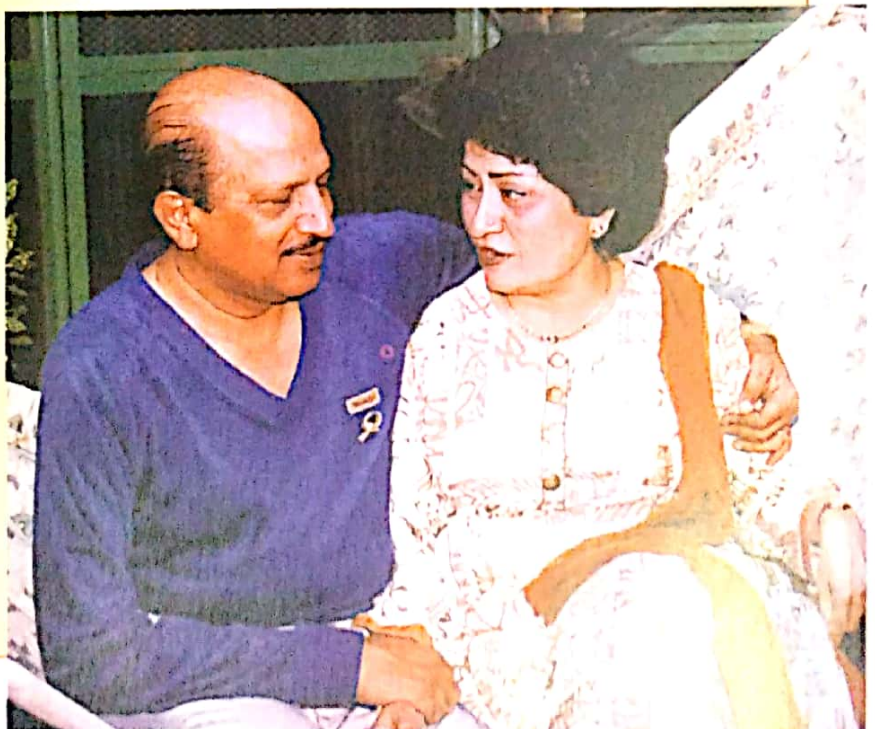
She : Is the first Indian - and only woman - to be honoured with the *Royal Order of the Polar Star* by the Swedish government. When one thinks about this lady, one immediately conjures up an image of a tightly coiled spring waiting to leap into action. Her vibrant laugh and exuberant nature are her calling card. This go-getter has made it a habit of collecting accolades, awards and admirers. You can bet your last rupee that when Lila, "I want it done like 90 seconds ago" Poonawalla is around, there's never a dull moment.

He : Is totally nuts about her. The wind beneath her wings and her supportive soul mate, Firoz Poonawalla of the 'great sense of humour' is single-handedly responsible why many single, young women (including yours truly) would still give that walk-down-the-aisle routine a try.

They : Have been voted as the Peshwa City's most endearing couple time and again. It was only right that duo was the opening act of this feature.

Together : They are dynamite. 37 years of togetherness hasn't taken away the sparkle of bliss a bit. Don't take our word for it. At the recently concluded felicitation ceremony by the Swedish government in honour of the lady, this is what her devoted beau had to say, "Stars are supposed to guide you home. But 37 years ago, I found a star - and I am still lost ..."

We rest our case.





Swedish Ambassador Mr. Johan Nordenfelt presenting the Polar Star Award to Mrs. Lila Poonawalla

The Royal Order of the Polar Star to Padmashree Lila Poonawalla ...

Dated 26th August 03
Hotel Le Meridian

Glittering evening, Light music, rare and prestigious event, only for the star of the country, Mrs Lila Poonawalla.

His Excellency Ambassador of Sweden to India, Mr. Johan Nordenfelt while giving the presentation of the Royal Order of the Polar Star to Lila Poonawalla.

"Our gratitude to the Chairperson of Pune Sweden Business Development Committee Mrs. Lila Poonawalla. Her commitment and her dynamic and creative efforts to further flourishing trade and cultural relations between Pune and Sweden are well known to us here, but they have also been noted and recognised at the very highest level in my country. It is this recognition that we first and foremost celebrate today.

The background

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the feudal system in Europe moved towards consolidation and the nation states emerged. Princes found it of great value to be able to reward those who served them loyally. One way of doing that was to induct them into royal orders, which was usually done with great pomp and circumstance including the prince tapping you on your shoulder with his sword. Some Swedish monarchs created their own orders in the 15th and 16th centuries. But these usually disappeared as the monarch passed away. In 1748, it was finally deemed necessary to bring some order to the business of royal orders. The Institution of His Majesty's Order was founded. It included three Royal Orders: the Order of the Seraphim (usually limited to Heads of State and members of royal families); the Order of the Sword, which was intended as a recognition of courage and prowess in the military field; and the Order of the Polar Star.

In 1772, yet another Order was added: the Order of the Vasa. It was conceived as an award for outstanding achievements in industry and trade. Since 1975 the Vasa Order has been merged with the Polar Star Order.

According to the 1748 statutes, the Royal Order of the Polar Star is awarded as a mark of distinction to persons of great merit achieved in the civilian sphere, the sciences, for literary, learned and beneficial works and for useful institutions. And, since 1975, also for outstanding achievements in industry and trade. The device of the Polar Star is: "Occasum nescit" i.e. it knows not descent.

With this noble device in mind, it should come as no surprise that His Majesty the King of Sweden has graciously decided to confer His Order of the Polar Star on Mrs. Lila Poonawalla, naming her an Officer of this Order in recognition of her highly valuable services to Sweden.

It gives me the greatest pleasure to present Mrs. Lila Poonawalla with the insignia of Royal Order of the Polar Star. My warmest congratulations.

It is a true privilege to be able to count on some one like Lila Poonawalla as a friend of our country. Her broad knowledge of Sweden and its industry, and her deep understanding of its culture and civilisation makes her uniquely suited to build bridges between our two countries and to know where to build them. She is an indispensable adviser to me and to the Swedish Embassy.

Indispensible is also Firoz Poonawalla, Lila's partner in the extraordinarily successful team that has given its name to the city, isn't it so? By honouring Lila we also honour Firoz".

Firoz Poonawalla adds, the Polar star is the guiding star to help find the course in most challenging journey and is very bright as Lila Poonawalla.

In the long history of Polar Star Awards, only three Indian men namely Mr Ravi Uppal, Mr Ashok Nehru and Mr Aloke Mukerjee have received this prestigious award. Lila is the fourth Indian but the first Women to receive this high and rare international award

Mrs Lila Poonawalla is very happy and excited on this occasion and says "36 years of association has culminated into this celebration and given me more responsibility to build a strong bond with the beautiful country along with joy, excitement and happiness".

She attributes her success to dedication, determination, timeliness, planning and concentration on the present with an eye on the future goals.

"Wish you a hearty congratulations and felicitations and All the Best for your future"

Sunetra Chaphalkar



Mrs. Lila Poonawalla addressing guests at the Polar Star Award ceremony at Hotel Le Meridian



Scroll gifted to Mrs. Lila Poonawalla (Our Polar Star) by the LF Trustees & Lila Fellows

TWINKLE TWINKLE POLAR STAR...

A felicitation function was organized by the trustees and Lila fellows in honor of Aamchi Lila. It was unique and different, enriched by the family members and friends of the Foundation.

His Majesty Carl Gustaf, the King of Sweden conferred on Mrs. Poonawalla, Sweden's Royal Order of the Polar Star in recognition of her numerous and valued contributions to Sweden and towards strengthening ties between it and India. The Polar Star was presented by his Excellency Johan Nordenfelt the Ambassador of Sweden to India at a glittering ceremony on 26th August 03 at Hotel Le Meridian.

Lila Ma'am is the fourth Indian but the first woman to receive this high, rare and prestigious international Award. Our hearty congratulations and Felicitations to her!!!

We all are proud that the head of the Lila family has emerged victorious once again-with this award. Who says the Lila family wants to be left behind? Celebrate we did and in a different way. You know, our hallmark is to be "hatke" So we sprang a wonderful surprise on Lila ma'am. It was one more occasion when the family met in large numbers-the old ones and new ones came together for this special event. Do we need to introduce the evening star?? ...er...well, where do we begin? A role model for the young generation, a media favorite, a guiding light to her colleagues, a very loving and caring friend and mentor to all the Lila fellows and an inspiration to god knows how many women out there.....!!!!

Filled with emotions and excitement, the family began the programme in a traditionally Indian way - the Aarti, a Ganesh dance, followed by a small entertainment programme. Lila fellows put up performances of Bharatnatyam, Kathak and some songs. We had a BLAST!!!

Hey, we sure have star performers amidst us!!!

For the first time in the history of the Lila Poonawalla Foundation a spouse of Lila fellow shared his thoughts with us - what the foundation meant to his wife and to

him. Lila Ma'am has not only touched the hearts of the young girls but also their parents, who came up to share their feelings.

A scroll especially made for this occasion was presented to Lila Ma'am on behalf of the trustees and the Lila fellows. The Trustees presented a memento to her to celebrate this special event, which has a Star on the top of the globe and below are the Flags of India and Sweden.

We have a big thank you for *Firoz Uncle* who like a true comrade, stands like a rock besides his wife through all her virtuous endeavors. Coming close to our felicitation programme was a Birthday celebration for Lila Ma'am who turned 59 on the 16th September 2003. We all wished her a very Happy Birthday and lots of Happiness, Good Health and all the Best in life. It ended with slices of cake and a delicious dinner!!!

■ *Sunetra Chaphalkar*



Lila Fellows celebrating Mrs. Lila Poonawalla's birthday with all the trustees

As always, here we are with a Lila Fellow who defines grit and determination - SNEHAL MAHAMUNI who shares with RAJANI PANCHANG her choice of career and yardsticks of success.



Snehal Mahamuni

"Knowledge is adorned by Modesty" wears Lila Fellow 1996, SNEHAL MAHAMUNI on her sleeve. Rajani Panchang reveals the dynamic life this placid woman leads.

Snehal's thirst for knowledge and perseverance has not only earned her several academic degrees, but also boosted her career graph, keeping it on a steady rise. An alumnus of Ahilyadevi High School for Girls, she pursued her graduate degree from BMCC. While she was an undergraduate, she realized the financial liabilities of her small family; a family comprising only of a very early widowed mother, and a younger brother, but these adversities only made her more responsible and she completed her graduation with the help of the "Learn and Earn Scheme". Luckily she got a job as a trainee with Winlec Marketing Services before she graduated, and went on to get a permanent position as an Accounts Assistant. As her office shifted, she quit the job after a year and joined in the same position with Technofour. Meanwhile, she appeared externally for her M.Com. exam and simultaneously acquired her C.S. (Company Secretary) Certificate of Completion.

After her post graduation, she felt the need to gain some knowledge in General Law so as to reinforce her commerce background. This is when her professor and principal of BMCC told her about an advertisement for a scholarship in the newspaper. She learned more about LPF from Mrs. Joshi of ILS Law College. This was enough for her to apply for aid to complete LLB from ILS Law College. She was awarded the LPF scholarship in 1996 - the very first batch of Lila Fellows.

After completing her 2 year course in General Law, she joined a Chartered Accountancy firm, Gosavi & Co. as Assistant Company Secretary. During her tenure of one year she got a very good opportunity to gain experience and also a thorough knowledge about audits, accounts, sales tax, income tax, etc. Meanwhile she gained another feather in her cap - a Diploma in Taxation Law. Having cleared her CS intermediate examinations she concentrated on the Final CS examination. She then joined the 'legal department' with Biotech Limited, again as a Company Secretary. She enjoyed complete independence and was given a free hand in all transactions and matters dealing with shares and legalities of SEBI. A fulfilling job that it was, she worked for 3 years. In 2000, she enrolled for a MBA programme with Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University, with specialization in Finance. She has recently appeared for her last paper.

When asked how she planned all this, she humbly says, "It was my mother's wish that I learn as much as possible. It was only after LLB that I started thinking more seriously and consciously as to how to put my theoretical knowledge to practical use. My career has been on the right track offering me the right opportunities." This young lady believes that she has not yet gained personal satisfaction even after conquering six significant degrees!!! She is currently working in the service sector for A.M. Bhatkal Financial Services, giving financial services to the Birla Group, ICICI, Centurion, etc.

She proudly states, "My mother is my pillar of strength, and my source of inspiration. My family has offered complete support in terms of liberty, faith, financial help and co-operation". But according to her, life changed after the LPF award ceremony. She reminisces, "Earlier I was very hesitant, not confident and aware that I came from a Marathi medium school. Though I was always clear in my ideas I was never able to express myself. But at LPF I have not missed a single workshop or play in the past seven years. I have overcome all these communication barriers and now take the initiative in meeting new people. Through what I have learnt at the workshops, I can analyze a person's psyche and thereby deal with them to attract the best benefit towards myself and my organization..... a new tactic to deal with failures. Being a part of the Inspira editorial team, I have learned and developed a lot, by talking to and sharing memorable moments with personalities over the country. I have enjoyed the journeys, the Anand trip having given me maximum satisfaction. The meeting with IPS Officer Kiran Bedi and the talk by Mrs. Amrita Patel has brought me pleasure and pride".

What is Snehal like apart from her fast and hectic professional schedule? The answer that came was surprising..... "This is the first time I am thinking about it.....!! Well... a good listener who makes impartial judgments, who believes in maintaining a balance between the norms set by the family and the society.... I think a lot about society, social obligations, people and myself. I believe that the world is as nice and good as I am....and if it is not, I will try to bring out the goodness in it - after all my determination is my strong point and my faith in God, my driving force! I want to remember everybody fondly and leave behind fond memories of my own. My hobbies include listening to music, watching plays and skits, reading and touring the peaceful world. I like to be alone, self-observant and above all, remain silent....."

Silent waters sure run deep!!! Our girl is truly packed with a lot of punch!!!

Wonder where you get that from Snehal.....!!!

LEADING LADY



Meher Pudumjee Vice Chairperson Thermax Limited.

An Interview with the Vice-chairperson Meher Pudumjee of Thermax Limited was nothing short of her varied experience.

For kind and humble Meher Pudumjee, Thermax is home.

A place which tapped, nurtured and helped her to be the Vice Chairperson at an early age.

Full of values and discipline, Meher finds fulfillment in what she is and what she does...

A postgraduate in Chemical Engineering from the Imperial College of Science & Technology, London, Meher joined Thermax as a trainee engineer in the Water Treatment Division of Thermax in August 1990. Being the daughter of the Chairman and Managing Director, Agu Aga, initially it was difficult and challenging to begin her career in Thermax as a trainee. There was a psychological barrier and it took a little time before the employees accepted her as 'Meher'.

Thermax had an overseas operation in the UK, which was not doing well. In 1991 she, along with her husband Pheroze and their 'mentor' Dr N D Joshi, took over the responsibility of turning around this operation. Many fundamental issues had to be addressed such as what products to sell in that market; where to manufacture or source the products; what team to create with limited resources and so on. Being a small operation with a total of 6 people, each of them had to multi-task and work very hard. Fortunately in the third year, the company saw a turnaround.

In 1996, Meher's father suddenly passed away and hence within a year, Meher and her husband decided to come back to Pune. She was inducted as a Director on the Board. In spite of being an engineer by profession, Meher has a natural aptitude and inclination towards finance and that meant taking a keen interest in working capital management and treasury operations. The next step was to move to Corporate Strategic Planning which was a very different kind of learning.

There was an economic downturn in the Indian economy and Thermax's performance also started sliding. In 2000,

for the first time in the history of Thermax, it made an operational loss. The Board brought in a consulting company and many radical changes were made. The company divested from many businesses, re-constituted the Board and brought in a performance culture. The family decided to let the professionals manage the operations and chose to be non-executive Board members.

This decision of the family was difficult, but has helped the organization in its turnaround. Thermax made operational profits in the last two years and the organization is slowly becoming more disciplined and people more accountable.

Meher explains "We had to be cruel to be kind, we are moving to a performance culture, a complete 180 degree move, and want discipline along with vibrancy and fun in our organization as we do not believe in growth for the sake of growth but look for profitable growth, see to it that our employees, our customers and all our stakeholders are delighted." Many tough decisions had to be taken and for the first time a VRS was offered to the unionized and non-unionized employees. Non-performers were trained and coached, but if they did not improve their performance, they were asked to leave. Earlier, Thermax never asked an employee to leave except on an integrity issue. This new culture did create some fear and uncertainty but it also brought in greater accountability and discipline.

As per Thermax's vision - "To be a globally respected high performance organization offering sustainable solutions in energy and environment", Meher wants her organization to become international over time, offering world class products. Thermax has some unique strengths like their experience in burning over a 100 different fuels, energy efficient solutions such as CHPC, a rare combination of energy and environment products that can be packaged in giving solutions to customers, all of which need to be leveraged. Meher would like to say to her customers that they should leave their utility management to Thermax and concentrate on their core businesses.

Meher is very proud of both her parents. She proudly tells us that her father was a perfectionist. To illustrate this point she fondly narrates an incident. "In the UK, where I was studying for my A level, there was a piano competition for which I decided to play the Moonlight Sonata. I was practicing but was not happy. My father encouraged me by even hiring a place where I could practice. But the most important lesson he taught me was when he said play to express and not to impress. These words have stayed with me forever and I have learnt to put in my best, enjoy what I am doing and not to go after public applause."

Meher strongly believes that in life you need to be always in a learning mode. The day a person stops learning and growing she is dead.

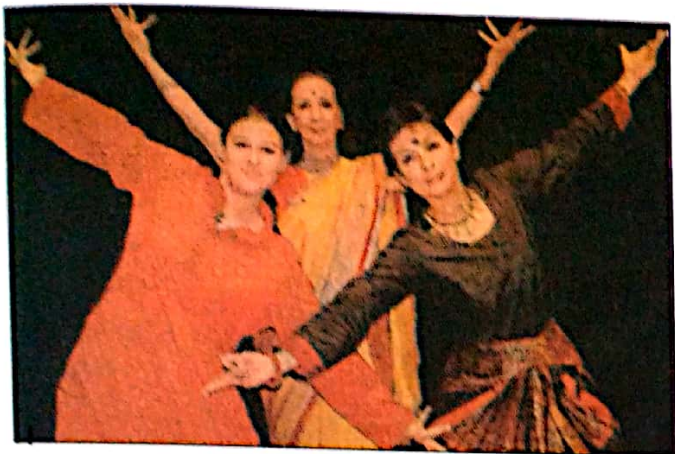
When asked how she spends her leisure time she promptly said: "Of course with my children my son Zahaan and my daughter Lea." She may not be able to spend long hours with them but she believes in spending quality time with them. Mahabaleshwar is her favourite hideout, where she loves to relax with family and friends. She also loves travelling, particularly to England and going to the theatre and concerts.

What is the message Meher has for the Lila fellows? "Whatever you choose to pursue give out your best and enjoy it; find meaning in it. Each of us has something unique to offer; find out your uniqueness and then excel in it. What is most important is a sense of inner peace and contentment."



Sunetra with Meher Pudumjee

Sunetra



'Two Lives in Dance - and One More' by Mrinalini Sarabhai & Dr. Mallika Sarabhai with Anahita Sarabhai at IUCCA

Down Memory Lane... SNIPPETS



The film "The Virgin Spring" screened at The Swedish Film Festival Aug. 03



Tea Party for New Batch at Le Meridian



Finishing Touch Workshop by Ms. Romilla Thakur & Mr. Deepak Thakur at Hotel Aurora Towers



Maya, Sr. Trustee, sharing info with the new overseas awardees



Mrs. Ratna Khemani's workshop on the Art of Positive Thinking and Confidence Building



Trustees get-together at Hotel Rajwada



The Inspira Team at the Tea Party Aug. 2003

Bridging Gaps...BCL - The Golden Link



"We all need to change with the times" said Anil Bakshi, Chief Librarian, British Council Library, as she shared her budding ideas and showed how this library is acons away from the old fashioned libraries which would be associated only with bespectacled studious kids.

Anil Bakshi, Chief Librarian, BCL

A world of information and knowledge at the British Library (estd. 1960). In the buzzing metropolis of Pune as the cacophony of traffic swirls on Fergusson Road, the British Council Library stands etched like a lighthouse in the seas of flux. It is the only library in Pune with the biggest collection of books, educational videos and journals and the largest readership that includes children, corporates, families and students.

Whether you are interested in the arts or culture, English as a language, or literature and fiction, the social sciences or history, their collection of books covers a wide spectrum. The pride of the Library is their special collections covering a host of subjects.

For the professional, British Council Library offers books on Economics, Engineering, Information Technology, Law, Management, Medicine and Science and Technology.

Apart from the finest collection of books, the library has educational videos, home videos, periodicals and newspapers from the UK.

This fully automated library is designed to make your experience in the library smooth and efficient. The library offers 3 different membership structures - Individual, Family and Corporate. Their online catalogue maintained on several computers throughout the library will help you find the book you are looking for. The automated check-in and check-out facility for the issue and return of books will mean no queues or waiting time. You can reserve or renew

your books by phone, fax or email or online through their website. You can also access selected web-based online information resources from the Library.

The British Council communicates across boundaries and borders, providing a platform for cultural exchange and growth. Towards this aim, the eleven libraries of the British Council regularly host events that foster a greater understanding and appreciation of the arts, commerce, education and technology of and between India and the UK.

Another facet of the British Council is 'The Association of British Scholars, India'. The ABS India is a national forum to facilitate the networking of Indians who studied or trained in the UK. It aims to encourage information sharing, contact making and social interaction.

They also administer the 'Chevening (India) Scholarships' which is the UK government's flagship scholarship scheme aiming at strengthening the academic connections between India and the UK.

The British Council along with the University of Cambridge also presents the Business English Certificate, which is a set of examinations focusing on applications of the English language in the real world business context.

Definitely, the British Council Library can never pass off as one of those conventional libraries; it is more than just a library which exposes its members to various opportunities and also contributes immensely to an individual's intrinsic growth. And a lot of credit goes to Anil who has been with BCL for half a century now, and with the Pune branch for the past 3 years. She has managed and co-ordinated the functioning of the library with a lot of dedication. Discovering this treasure trove of knowledge in the true sense was possible only because of Anil's co-operation and Savitri, Deputy Librarian who showed me around at BCL.



Samata Sabla

YOURS TRULY

Hullo everybody! Here we are, at the end of another year! Gosh! Feel like we just celebrated the New Year party to welcome 2003!!! It was surely a Year of pleasant surprises, the most exciting being the declaration that our dear Mrs. Poonawalla is a Star!!! (How many more times are we going to give her a 'starry' standing ovation?!)

Well, talking of celebrations, I feel sad to be so far away from home. Life here is slow in this part of the U.A.E. I feel lonely without my 'kith n kin' near me. Of course there are a lot of Indians here. But I am missing out on being with MY family and friends. I am reminded of that gazal - 'Woh kakaz ki kashti...' Poetry couldn't come any closer to defining that yearning for the glorious past. I could happily barter this luxurious but inactive life style for my simple but active and meaningful life of the past!!! I know now how Lila Fellows abroad must feel...they sure are a courageous lot!!!

My mum's insistence that I flow with the pulse of Inspira has truly kept me in touch with my essence. I am grateful to be able to

edit it from this great a distance... Lubainah, our team mate will cover the life of the Lila Fellows abroad in the Overseas page which will be introduced in the following issues of Inspira. Yes, 'the old order changeth yielding place to new...' Did ya guys notice Inspira's facelift? I am sure you enjoyed reading Sadhavi's first article on 'Living life with a difference...' - a page that will bring to light the struggles and the pride of women who dare to step into a male domain. Your comments on what you loved reading and why will fuel our team to perform better and Inspira will only emerge more and more captivating!!! What say fellas?

Right then, get back to us. We wish you all a VERY HAPPY AND EVENTFUL 2004!!! (So gals, just go ahead n have a great 'gobble all-the-goodies' time at the New year party at Fili Villa!) ☺

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