

Inspira



Vol. No. 21 / April 2007

FROM MY HEART

Dear Lila Fellows, Friends and Well Wishers,

March is one month when Women are in Focus. On 8th of March the whole world celebrates International Women's day. During this month and especially on 8th of March, many organizations have conferences, meetings and gatherings to discuss various topics related to women. Many women are felicitated for their achievements, many are rewarded, many articles are written in the press and media, and also many successful women are invited to talk about their life experiences and how they broke the glass ceiling. I too was invited to a few such events. What did I share with the audience?

The most important belief that I have always talked about is education. Before any individual thinks of opportunities, they must be empowered with the right education. The road to leadership begins with good education, in the field in which one wants to succeed. Nothing comes easy, not even to men. Remember everyone has to work hard; you have to be willing to pay for what it takes to succeed. You don't get a fulfilling career at a bargain-basement price.

To calculate the price of doing what you want to do, here is a lightweight "Price Tag List" • Hard work • Learning • Discipline • Emotional stamina • Innovative thinking • Commitment • Communication skills • And above all handling relations, be it at home with family or at work with the boss and colleagues.

In addition, there has to be continuous learning and self-development. You have to be unconventional, have no self-pity, be persistent and walk that extra bit to make it happen without feeling that you are doing any great sacrifice. Remember you can change your glasses to see the world differently; you and you alone can change your future by

changing your mindset and approach to life. It is your attitude that will make you a winner or a loser. Wish you all good luck in realizing your dreams and have fun doing so. Enjoy and celebrate every achievement in your life, big or small, share the joy with those around you.

Talking about celebrations, we had yet another memorable New Year party this year! The largest number ever of Lila Fellows attended this year's party. We played games, we danced, we got prizes, we enjoyed the delicious food, we cut the cake, we ate mouth-watering ice cream and we loved the twinkling bracelets on our wrists. We all looked marvelous in our Santa caps, welcoming 2007. At this occasion we also released our 20th issue of Inspira at the hands of Mrs. Elizabeth Matthew, past principal of St. Mary's School and one of our founder trustees. We could see the joy on her face and on the faces of all present that lovely sparkling evening. Each one reflected the happiness of just being together and having the opportunity to hug and wish everyone a VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR.

We had another very unique evening on the 4th of March. We got together with Parents of Lila Fellows. This get together enabled parents to get familiar with the foundations objectives, to know it and its activities better. Parents took the initiative to express their thoughts about the Foundation and it is unbelievable that those parents who had never spoken to an audience were able to come forward and express themselves. The evening ended with a sumptuous dinner and all went home happy with a request that we should have this event every year.

A cultural event was sponsored by the Foundation. "Unheard Voices - Unsuni", by Mallika Sarabhai & her troupe from the Darpana Academy. It was a

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FROM MY HEART

musical theatrical piece based on Harsh Mandar's book of the same name. This was an energy packed performance, which showcased lives of people who have confronted life on their own terms but have never let fate control them. These are stories of struggle and courage which culminate in to victories.

We got an opportunity to learn a lot about Mushrooms which has in the recent past not only become a popular food item but also a very lucrative industry. Considering the educative aspect, the foundation organized a visit for the Lila Fellows, to a Mushroom cultivation farm, Weikfield agro product farm. Being the most modern farm with state of the art technology, imported from Canada, it was THE farm to visit. We all learnt a lot of how mushrooms are cultivated, not produced. Weikfield management was also very generous in sponsoring a mushroom lunch and also gifting us with mushrooms and their other products. We had a great day and are thankful to Weikfield Management for giving Lila Fellows this wonderful experience.

This is the 21st issue of our beloved newsletter, "INSPIRA", and it immediately reminds me of our book "21st Century Belongs to Them". The stories of some of the Lila Fellows, who have to a large extent implemented what I have mentioned above and who through persistence and perseverance have not only dared to dream, but also learned how to realize those dreams. Those of you, who have not yet read these inspiring stories, must make it a point to do so. Contact Kalyani at the Foundation office and she will guide you on how to get a personal copy of the book. .

Soon our activities will start for selecting new Lila Fellows for this year, but in spite of this hectic schedule I can promise you we will have some fun-packed and very motivating activities awaiting you this forthcoming quarter. So, dear Lila Fellows keep checking your e-mail inboxes and post boxes.

Warm regards



Lila Poonawalla

SHORT TAKES

The true-life story of Dr. Jyoti Dalvi, LF 1998, seems so untrue! It began from a *chawl* in Pune and today has taken her to a huge industry in Rolla, USA. 'How' is what Jyoti tells us as she takes us through her journey to success...

Are you ready for a new push?

They say you never know what somebody else's life is really like until you've walked a mile in their shoes. Well, allow me to share a few flavours of my life with you. Like many of you, I was born in a middle class family. We used to live in a '*chawl*'. There always used to be a lot of chaos around the house- somebody would either be getting married or somebody would be playing loud music etc. etc. -a classic example of a '*chawl*'. My father was busy running the house while my mother made sure that my brother and I focused on our studies. My parents toiled day in and day out to provide us with good education. They wanted me to achieve what they couldn't. My mother would never let me enter the kitchen during the examinations. Initially, my father used to own a garage but then he also started to drive an auto-rickshaw and worked for 12-14 hours a day, to be able to pay for my private tuitions. My parents, though just high school pass-outs, fuelled my passion for higher education with their determination and hard work. I made use of college/university libraries

and passed both my bachelors' and Masters' degree in Chemistry from the University of Pune with distinction. Meanwhile I also managed to secure a scholarship from the National Chemical Laboratory (NCL), Pune. The seminars hosted by the University, interactions at NCL, visits to the British Council Library in Pune further deepened my interest in Chemistry.

In 1996 I attended a seminar 'Study in Britain' hosted by the University of Pune which inspired me to pursue my Ph.D. research in England. Not having access to computers those days, I used to send handwritten applications and my bio-data to the universities abroad. I had sent hundreds of letters (literally)! With

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Jyoti Dalvi during her LPF scholarship interview in 1998

SHORT TAKES

my teachers' guidance at the Pune University, I got admission to the University of Hull in England. At the same time, I was honoured with the Lila Poonawalla Foundation fellowship. Without the fellowship, it would have been very difficult for me to fulfill my ambition for higher studies. I had lots of other preparations to do for my England trip. I had never been out of Pune so leaving for England was quite a big change for me! The foundation trustees, Mrs. Maya Thadani (I call her Maya Aunty) and Mrs. Surabhi Nag generously donated lots of warm clothes to me for my trip. Also, Nag Ma'am gave me my first lesson on how to eat with a knife and fork before I left for England. They contributed immensely in my preparations for the England trip.

I clearly remember the day I landed in England- it was

November 2, 1998. It was breath taking to see such a pretty country. As fascinating as I found Hull, I was even more impressed by their well-equipped research facilities because chemical resources were limited, rather were not easily accessible during my undergraduate studies in Pune. Initially I had a tough time adjusting to the typical English (rather Yorkshire) accent and their culture; but gradually with the patience and help from my colleagues at the University of Hull, I blended right in. Besides my Ph.D. research, I volunteered to become a graduate teaching assistant at the University of Hull, so that I could get to interact with more students and to adapt myself to their speech. At times, I used to feel shy but then I quickly realized that I needed to develop an important survival skill and that was - Networking!

Besides my group, I used to interact with other groups in the Chemistry Department at Hull. This greatly helped me in enhancing my technical expertise in organic synthesis. I used to live in the student housing on campus. There was a small group of Indian students. On weekends we used to get together for a meal or something *desi* - Indian dishes! It was like home away from home. During the last year of my Ph.D., my supervisor decided to move to the USA. I had an opportunity to relocate with him and complete my thesis from the States. It was a great opportunity for me!

August 2000, I joined the Department of Chemistry at the University of Missouri-Rolla, USA. Because of my stay in England, it was a rather smooth transition for me. The difference was, I was assigned to teach a few early morning undergraduate classes (7 am-10 am) to cater for my financial requirements. It took me a while to get adjusted to this routine. I used to set up at least 3 different alarm clocks to wake me up! The

other difference was the 'American Accent' and their way of writing. I had to get myself tuned very quickly. Life was moving fast for me, as I needed to look for a job, teach and complete my thesis at the same time. Also, I was attending many conferences to present my Ph.D. work, which was important to launch my career.

I wanted to do a post-doctorate before moving onto a job. I applied for post-doctoral positions that were published in scientific magazines (e.g. Chemical and Engineering News). Fortunately, I secured a post-doc position at the Bioscience Division of the Argonne National Laboratory in the Chicago suburbs. It was a big learning curve from being a student to a post-doc. As a post-doc, one is expected to guide the research projects, participate more in proposal writing and supervise students within the group. Sometimes, I used to get overwhelmed, so I thought of looking for a mentor (not necessarily my supervisor) who could guide me professionally. I believe, when one is not sure, seeking someone else's guidance is not a sign of weakness but an indication that he/she has the courage and the will to grow. To me, doing a post-doc was an important step as it prepared me for the 'real world job'.

After my post-doc, I joined Brewer Science Inc, a semiconductor company in Rolla, MO as a Senior Research Associate. At the beginning itself, I understood that working in the industry is quite different from working for a government lab. The projects are short-termed, customer oriented, and the output is expected in days. Before I could realize, I was exposed to lots of different projects wherein I was interacting with multiple teams. I found myself leading some of the projects within a first few months of joining the company. Working with people from different backgrounds can get quite tricky sometimes. However team spirit and a good sense of humor really helps. Yes, I am talking about human resource development skills.... they are the most important keys for success.

So here I am, the girl who never traveled alone out of Pune, decided to do her Ph.D. in England and then came to the USA. This wasn't possible without my parents' support and without the Lila Poonawalla Foundation's help. I must thank a few important pillars of my life viz. my family, Lila Poonawalla Ma'am, Nag Ma'am, Maya Aunty, and last but not the least, my husband and in-laws for their continuous encouragement. I want to leave you with a question: Are you ready to grow?

■ **Jyoti Dalvi-Malhotra**
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Jyoti with her husband and Mrs Poonawalla during her recent visit to India

LEADING LADY

An assertive, poised lady officer of the Armed forces, Surg. Lt. Cdr. Wahida Prizm was preparing honestly for commanding the forthcoming passing-out-parade (POP) of the AFMC (Armed Forces Medical College), a duty assigned to her by her seniors. What happened next however raised her anxiety...What she had thought to be a routine task turned out to be a challenge. She was all over the media projected as the first woman in the country ever to be commanding a POP.... A fact she herself was unaware of till then! The entire country's attention was now focused on her! Few years since then, NCERT has decided to include her biography in its school curricula. Inspira crusaders, LFs Prachi Harkare & Sunetra Chaphalkar met her to know more about her journey from the J&K Valley right into the school books

Wahida was born to parents who believed in empowering their children with education and guiding them to move out of the militant infested village of J&K, Thana Mandi where they belonged to. An introvert girl till class II, she grew up to be a smart active child after moving into the Government school later. Her father who was a school-teacher believed in her overall personality grooming and thus encouraged her in all school activities, especially her adventurous interests. Her active participation in "Scouts & Guides" made her the 'Best Guide' in Std. 8th and also made her the Head Girl in school. Firstly education to a girl child in a conservative muslim society was difficult and moreover the village could not give her good higher education. So her parents shifted Wahida to her maternal grandmother's at Rajouri to continue with higher education.

Wahida took admission into the Jammu Medical College in 1990, where she realized that there is so much to learn and to do in terms of hygiene, discipline, etc. Wahida's father, who a lot later was shot down by militants, wanted her to join the army. However, talking to someone about the navy, she developed a keen interest in joining the navy. "To be able to lead an adventurous yet disciplined life I always wanted to join the defence services. Moreover there are not many opportunities in J&K. I appeared for SSC interview in Delhi and was lucky to get the service of my choice, the Indian Navy in 1997 and later took permanent commission" says Wahida. She was one amongst the 4 girls to be selected for the Indian Navy in her batch.

Soon after commissioning, Wahida was first posted to Naval Hospital, Vishakhapatnam which

was more like an internship where on the job training is conducted. Eventually, she underwent rigorous training typical of the armed forces, for two months at Lucknow, which was a common training for all, Army-Navy-Airforce personnel. Following this, she attended a two-months training at Goa, specifically designed for the Naval officers as per their professional specialization demanded.



Surg. Lt. Cdr. Wahida Prizm

Meanwhile, AFMC had started this new assignment wherein Lady Medical Officers were posted on board naval ships and Wahida was lucky to get one such opportunity. About her experience she says, "I have thoroughly enjoyed spending life on board for 2 months at a stretch. It is a very different, exciting and adventurous experience which very few women in the country get, with endless water all around and no sight of land for days! We were 2 lady officers sharing a cabin on board. Even with almost 300 men around it wasn't the least inconvenient. Rather, the woman in you is respected. Given the inherent virtues of affection and understanding that women have, the male crew on board welcome and acknowledge your presence by discussing personal problems and sharing emotions with Lady Medical Officers. On board our schedule for the day is planned in such a way that it keeps you engaged for the entire day. Also besides each one's routine job profile (for eg. Mine of a Medical Officer), he is given administration work, managing finance, budgeting, to become sports officer, run a mess -checking food, canteen, ventilation facilities etc. Apart from all this cultural programs - dance, jokes, games are organized to keep everyone occupied and entertained. I will always cherish

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LEADING LADY

this experience of my life. However, this practice of posting a woman on board a naval ship was stopped later. I also got chance to participate in the 'Goodwill Visit to Tanzania and also a chance to see the French Naval ship and its set up. Apart from some minor hierarchical problems which are common in any organisation, I have never faced any obstacles / difficulties being a woman. Rather I have always been supported by my colleagues, appreciated by seniors and encouraged by all. For my professional abilities and hard work I was commended by Commander in Chief Eastern Naval Command in the year 2000. My profession has given me all the adventure and respect that I could ever dream of."

When asked about the Passing-Out-Parade episode which shot her into limelight, she shares *"This work was allotted to me as any other duty given to me by my seniors and I took it up as one of the many routine tasks, determined to give it my best and accomplish. To my surprise, prior to the day of the POP, this news was publicized by the press stating- "For the first time in history a woman hailing from the J&K Valley will be commanding the AFMC parade". Only then, not only did I realize the honour bestowed upon me; but also did I feel the pressure and the sense of responsibility. I had to not only uphold the trust of my seniors in me but also perform up to the mark to silence the doubt posed by the media and public. My anxiety had blown out of proportion. I had to command 4 platoons of 100 cadets each and hence had to work on my voice for the same. Holding the sword for an hour itself required stamina which I had to build upon. No doubt, the event was a successful and memorable one, which got me appreciation from one and all, seniors, colleagues, family and friends. But I am thankful my seniors thought of me for this job and gave me this opportunity to prove myself."*

Wahida by then known to every Indian became a hero, especially for the people of Thana Mandi, who rejoiced on her success. A family also named a new-born baby after her, which Wahida takes as an expression of their happiness and gratitude towards herself.

Some authorities from NCERT who had been observing her track record thought that her biography could serve as a live example of a girl from

a small village in the valley, who with her will-power and hard-work achieved her ambitions. Thus, NCERT decided to introduce her life story in the Std. IV curriculum aiming to inspire little girls to pursue a strong career and that they could consider Navy as a career, they could opt to excel in. No doubt Wahida considers this to be a big honour and achievement, but also feels a sense of responsibility towards those who would now look up to her as a role-model.

Prasar Bharati-Doordarshan airs a show called "Prerna Puraskar" wherein daughters are given an opportunity to express their gratitude for their mother. Wahida's mother was invited on the show and Wahida felicitated her mother to acknowledge the support, courage and determination which she imparted to her. About this event, Wahida says, *"My Mother is my role model, who taught me to fight against all odds to move further."*

In 2001 Wahida got married Fawad Farooq Khan, currently a Country Lab expert with Bill Clinton Foundation for HIV Aids in United States. We were lucky to meet him and their son, Ayenoor too during the interview. A loving & caring husband, Fawad respects his wife and is proud of her for having carved her own path from a small conservative village to the present position. Wahida's in-laws have been very supportive and encouraging throughout. Wahida thinks if she had not been a Naval Medical Officer, she would have been a Fashion designer. This is her

personal side where she enjoys designing, loves to listen to music, play with her son and shop around. Of course, her profession and position pose certain restrictions wherein she cannot move around easily and interact freely with civilians. Wahida has a deep desire to support girl's education at some point in life and if possible wants to start an orphanage. She wants to help the society to grow and do something for girl's empowerment. She congratulates Lila Ma'am and the trustees for their massive movement for women's empowerment, called the 'Lila Poonawalla Foundation' and wishes a very bright future for all the young and dynamic Lila Fellows!

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Inspira Team with the leading lady - Wahida Prizm

EMPOWERED LILA FELLOWS...

Lila Fellows empowered over a decade now cover a wide range of disciplines. Of them we have featured in this column Fashion Designers, Geologists, Corporate Lawyers, HR Personnel and many more. In this issue we bring you a Microbiologist, Jyoti Otageri, who gives us a glimpse of her world of viruses through her microscope!

Cornelius Bernardus van Neil, a U. S. Microbiologist, once said, "In essence, science is a perpetual search for an intelligent and integrated comprehension of the world we live in." And that is what I set out to do, in the form of research, when I joined the Agharkar Research Institute as a Junior Research Fellow, after completing my Masters in Microbiology from the Pune University Department of Microbiology. It was what I had always wanted to do, because of a fascination and curiosity about the world we live in, and especially to contribute to the development of India, in whatever small way possible.

Before I share the subject matter of my research work, I find it necessary to briefly acquaint the readers with this intriguing world of 'research'. Even though formally '**research**' is defined as being an active, diligent, and systematic process of inquiry aimed at discovering, interpreting, and revising facts, I would rather describe it as the process of searching for something which already exists **with a new perspective**, using the available material and knowledge resources.

Broadly 'research' falls under two distinct categories, the first being **basic research** (also called *fundamental* or *pure* research), which has for its primary objective the advancement of knowledge, sometimes resulting in discovery, and the second being **applied research**, which (as the name suggests) uses the information generated by basic research to develop practical applications for betterment of humanity. When both are carried out together, it is termed **frontier** research. As many of us know, 'research' is funded by the Government, public authorities, charitable organizations or even private groups, including many companies.

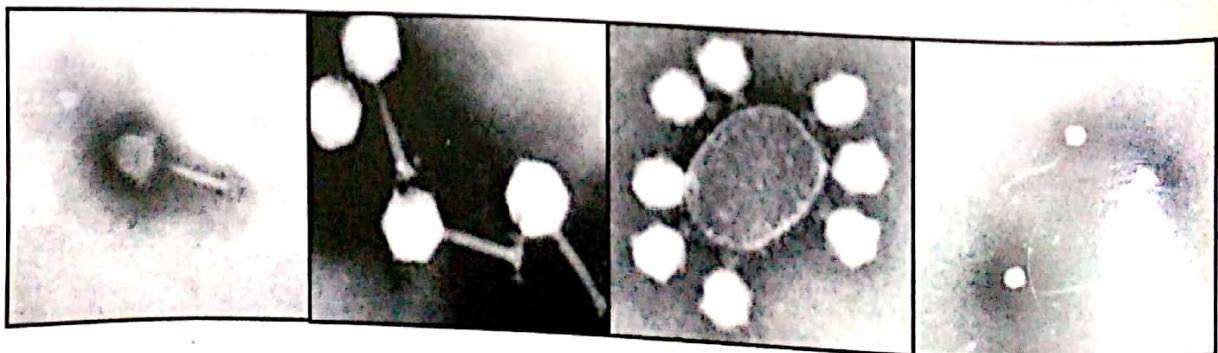


Microbiologist - Jyoti Otageri

Generally, research follows a certain **structural process**. Though the order of steps may vary depending on the subject matter and the researcher, the following steps are usually part of most formal research, both basic and applied:

- Formation of the topic
- Hypothesis
- Gathering of data
- Analysis of data
- Conclusion (may include revising of hypothesis)

Coming back to the research I'm involved in, my research involves the study of the invisible (or microscopically visible) entities, **viruses**. Of course, I call them entities, because they are on the brink of being 'living' and at the same time can't be called 'non-living'. The fascinating beauty of this, shall we call it the **invisible world**, is described nicely by Theodore Roszak, who says "**Nature composes some of her loveliest poems for the microscope and the telescope.**" And so, a major part of my identification work requires the use of a microscope. And what do I do with the viruses? Well I study their



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EMPOWERED LILA FELLOWS...

'**taxonomic significance**'. The baffling term 'taxonomy' simply means a **system of classification** or grouping of organisms, which best reflects the sum of their similarities and differences. I also study their **application in medicine**, which I elaborate upon below.

I study the basis of classification of the animal and bacterial viruses. This, along with study of application of bacterial viruses (also called **bacteriophages**) in bacterial taxonomy and as therapeutic agents, comprises my research topic. My guide for the same is **Dr. Kalyan Banerjee**, a well-known Scientist in Virology, both in India and abroad, who has been the Director of National Institute of Virology, Pune. And though the project is funded by the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Govt. of India, my research fellowship and contingency fund is granted by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR).

And **why work on bacteriophages**? Well, because bacteriophages constitute the largest number of organisms in the world and studies on bacteriophages are likely to lead to the **clues about the origin of life** and throw light on the taxonomy of all types of viruses in general. Also, the uses of bacteriophages are likely to be manifold. The whole science of **molecular biology** (which is currently a very well-known branch of Life Sciences) has developed through the use of bacteriophages as a tool.

In the project under discussion, studies have been undertaken to study the bacteriophages of the **Salmonella group of bacteria**. Salmonellae are pathogenic bacteria, which simply mean those bacteria that are capable of causing infection and/or disease in humans, animals or rarely other living organisms. It is decided to limit ourselves to certain *Salmonella* that are commonly pathogenic for humans and poultry, since these *Salmonella* would be economically important as regards to their ability to cause food-borne diseases in them. Several strains of such salmonellae, which are pathogenic to humans, have been obtained from Span Diagnostics, Surat, and those that are pathogenic to chicken, have been obtained from Poultry Diagnostic and Research Centre (PDRC), Pune.

The study involves isolation, in the laboratory, of bacteriophages, which infect and kill the various *Salmonella* strains. Preliminary identification of these bacteriophages involves **electron-microscopic examination** and study of their **biochemical and physical characteristics**, such as heat sensitivity/resistance, storage conditions/shelf-life, and many more which are out-of-scope of this discourse. The preliminary identification is generally followed by advanced procedures, including molecular methodologies, for further identification

and **classification/grouping** of the isolated bacteriophages. This in entirety constitutes the basic research.

Till date more than a hundred specimens of *Salmonella* bacteriophages have been isolated in the laboratory from the natural environment, and identified and classified as described above. Here are snapshots of a few of the more interesting and relatively rare types of bacteriophages as viewed under an electron microscope (which has resolving power of up to **one millionth part of a millimeter**).

Another aspect of the research being carried out is **applied research**, where appropriate, effective doses of bacteriophage preparations are being composed and tested in poultry to determine their function as therapeutic agents to cure *Salmonella* diseases. This is being carried out at PDRC (see above), a division of Venky's India Ltd and our collaborative partner.

Even though many antibiotics are available in the market for treatment of *Salmonella* diseases in humans as well as poultry, due to indiscriminate use of these antibiotics in clinical practice and in animal/poultry feed to promote growth, **antibiotic resistant strains** of *Salmonella* have developed that are now becoming difficult to control. Such *Salmonella*, as the term suggests become resistant to the action of even higher doses of antibiotics. Antibiotic resistance is resulting in increased morbidity, mortality and health-care cost. Despite intensive work by drug companies, no new class of antibiotics has been found in the last 30 years. And even if they are discovered, these new antibiotics or combinations of existing antibiotics will continue to provide selective pressure, which in turn will continue the emergence of resistance in *Salmonella*. It has also been shown that several recent food-poisoning outbreaks in India and abroad have been occurring due to such multi-resistant *Salmonella*.

This is the reason why bacteriophages are being examined as possible replacement for antibiotics.

I'm sure that after reading this brief account of what **scientific research** may involve, you will agree that scientific research is an exciting career-option, because it **answers our hows and whys** about us and the world we live in. You will certainly agree that it's an exhilarating feeling when you are able to **figure out something new and useful** to mankind and surroundings. My aspiration, therefore, is to continue pursuing research throughout my life. What about you? Are you ready to know more about the unknown within and around us...?

■ **-Jyoti Otageri**
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LIVING LIFE WITH A DIFFERENCE

8:30 a.m... early morning rush hours at the Shivajinagar ST Bus stand. Wrrroooooom Wrrrrrrroooooom...roar the bus engines all warming up to hit the road. Passengers bound for varied destinations, Mahabaleshwar, Satara, Sangli...etc all eagerly waiting for that one person, who controls their boarding – the BUS CONDUCTOR! No sooner amidst all this chaos do you hear "Click Click Ticket Ticket!! But, hey! Wait a minute! It is not the usual rough male voice but that of an assertive yet soft Lady Conductor. All heads turn in response; some with surprise, others with envy and yet some more with no reaction at all because lady conductors are not a rare sight anymore!

Currently, 26 lady conductors are employed with the Maharashtra State Transport (ST) of who 5 have become permanent employees. All the 9 to 5 duty regulations are applicable to them and they enjoy all the medical benefits they are entitled for. But this profession demands tremendous physical effort because these timings are not fixed, as they have to work in shifts! Vacancies for the recruitment of lady conductors are advertised in the leading News Papers and also offered through the Employment Exchange. The basic qualification for the recruitment of lady conductors is class 12 level educations with a minimum of 60%. They are required to apply in the prescribed format after which short listing and selection takes its own time (the women we talked to waited for periods ranging from 2 to 7 years after application!!!). Once the selected candidates are intimated they have to obtain a conductor's badge number from the RTO, which is a formal permission from the transport authorities to work as a conductor. Soon after this, the ladies are given 'on-duty-training',



Proudly posed Lady Conductors

i.e. they are asked to accompany experienced conductors on their work, observe their functioning and learn. Once this training is over, they are sent out on duties independently.

One of the conductors, **Pallavi Sutar** who is pursuing her graduate education, says, "I always wanted to work in a male dominated field. I had heard, enquired and applied at Phaltan for this job. After waiting for 7 long years I got the call." Another lady conductor **Sarika Ran...** who has completed her MA says, "I gave the interview casually and was selected". When asked why she did not opt for the teaching profession given her high qualifications, she came her reply- "That field has tremendous competition, whereas in this job I can make my identity and stand out which the job of a teacher would never give me". For many others this job has not been a cakewalk. A mother of two, **Shaila Limbare** used to sit at home searching for jobs. Then her brother recommended the job of a lady conductor. Initially she had to struggle because she could not cope with the physical work involved; but now she enjoys her job.

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Lady Conductor at work

LIVING LIFE WITH A DIFFERENCE

Mr. Bhise, AST, State Transport says, "The ST started taking lady conductors with the motive of generating employment for women. We do face problems like we cannot send them on night duties. We at ST are like one family and treat them as our sisters. These girls are very hard-working and work with great devotion."

It was very heartening to know that most of them have good family support. For some who are married, their husbands take care of their children. Their families have to adjust to their changing work timings because they have to work in shifts. So has the nature of their job changed their personality or added some qualities? "Yes definitely", says Sarika Rane, "my job has made me courageous and physically strong". Do they also have to wear the conventional uniform? Of course, they do! Though its not mandatory for them to wear trousers, it is a must for them to wear the 'khakhi' shirt with their badge and whistle. It is like wearing a coat over their *salwaar kameez* or *sari*, which also helps them maintain the sanctity of their jobs.

The most pleasing trait in these ladies is that they don't have that 'oh...so burdened!' expression on their faces. They are cheerful, dashing and ready to

face every new day. These women treat passengers like guests visiting their own homes. However, each of them has sweet and sour moments with their passengers. While it is common for them to say that they find urban educated family members being stubborn about change, they do find the college students more helpful. Have they experienced any fatal accidents or emergencies? Recalls **Shaila Limbare**, "There was one such incident wherein the driver and the conductor had to wait at the accident spot till the enquiry was done and till date they have to go to court to give statements during the hearings".

Commenting upon this profession as a possible career for young girls, they say "This field is interesting and girls would enjoy working here. People are supportive and here one feels as if they are working in a family." Actually this is truly the impression we got, seeing this group of lady conductors from a distance, interacting amongst themselves.... happy and ready to accept the forthcoming challenges.

■ **-Prachi Harkare & Sanchita Thanedar**
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STANFORD BUSINESS NEWS

STANFORD BUSINESS

WORK-LIFE
INTEGRATION:
Are There
Reasonable
Options
for MBAs?



84 Sherm Mullin reports: "Still consulting part time at age 71. Will probably quit due to the disgraceful condition of air travel in the US. After 35 good years in Glendale, Calif., moved to the beach at Oxnard. Still collecting selected books, with a personal library of 3,000 volumes. Still studying WWII - have been for 50 years." **Lila Poonawalla** reports that she and Firoz recently celebrated the 11th anniversary of the Lila Poonawalla Foundation. "This year we awarded 39 scholarships (9 for overseas studies and 30 for Indian studies). Today we can proudly say that there are 347 Lila Fellows who received support from the foundation. They will not only improve the quality of their own lives but will also contribute to the development of society at large and make this world a much better place."



KUDOS:

Lila Poonawalla,
SEP' 84, at the
celebration of the
11th anniversary of
the Lila Poonawalla
Foundation.



Since its inception, the 10-year-old Lila Poonawalla Foundation has believed in lending a hand to deserving and talented young women to headline their particular fields of interest. **Mita Banerjee** gets up close and personal with the doyenne and her 'Lila Fellows'



JYOTI Malhotra has a PhD in organic and polymer chemistry.

Jovina Amor has completed her Master's programme in architecture from the University of Colorado, Denver.

Devika Daftardar, after completing a post-graduate course in Bharatanatyam, has acted in the lead roles in Marathi movies such as 'Devraj' and 'Nital'.

Pallavi Gokhale completed her MS in 'Geographical Information Systems with Remote Sensing' with merit from the University of Greenwich, England.

Poonam Doiphode, after completing her PhD in 'Condensed Matter Physics', has worked with the Research Wing in the Department of Atomic Energy.

Dr. Vijaylaxmi Shukla has done research on various subjects such as 'Vertebrate Developmental Neurobiology', and 'The Role of EGF-FNAC in diagnosing proximal CBD strictures', to name a few.

Mitalee Gujar is an alumnus of Stanford, just like Neetu Bhatia, a banker (and a vice-president of a bank at that) on Wall Street... ..and the roll call goes on and on and on. There are no prizes for guessing that these young ladies are all super-achievers. They have entered the highest echelons of education and gone on to high-flying careers. They are architects, engineers, scientists, environmentalists, geologists, microbiologists, nutritionists, actresses, dancers and designers.

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NEWS CHANNEL

you name it. They are spread out all over the country and all over the world, forging a name and path for themselves. What connects them is that they are all from Pune. What forms a closer bond between them is the fact that they are all scholarship awardees of the Lila Poonawalla Foundation (or LPF) and proudly call themselves the 'Lila Fellows'.

Passing the baton on

The LPF was the brainchild of Lila Poonawalla, a legend in Pune - the first lady engineer from College of Engineering, Pune, who started work on the shop floor and rose to be the Chairperson and MD of Tetra Pak and Alfa Laval.

Years ago, young Lila had a dream - of starting a foundation, keeping in mind the girl child's predicament in a typical middle-class Indian family.

It is difficult for many a girl, when she completes her graduation, to find the resources to do her postgraduation. Lila realised that very often, girls' dreams were lost in day to day living.

As education is the foundation of a strong and



successful career, it was her dream to be able to provide such girls a ladder to success. On September 16, 1994 - the dynamo lady's 50th birthday, incidentally! - Lila was invited to Lausanne, Switzerland, where Tetra Pak owners, Dr Bibs and Dr Gad Rausing, threw a grand party in her honour. The grandest part was when she was handed a parchment paper with a commitment of 1,00,000 Swiss Francs. Lila decided to turn this into an education fund for girls. It took two more years to get all the government formalities sorted out and in 1996, the first batch of 30 girls was awarded scholarships at a gala meeting chaired by 'Supercop' Dr Kiran Bedi. Every year, another 30 girls receive this honour at well organised functions chaired by eminent women such as Shabana Azmi, Shobhaa De, Mallika Sarabhai, Kiran Mujumdar-Shaw, Naina Lal Kidwai and Geetanjali Kirloskar, to name a few. Today, 364 girls are on their way to becoming the new Lilas of this 21st century.

A proud Lila reveals, "I had struggled to raise funds for my education and so I made up my mind that whenever it was possible, I would start something that could support struggling girls. I would have certainly started the Foundation with my own funds, though maybe on a smaller scale. As it is, currently too, I put in substantial funds of my own to sustain all the programmes of the Foundation." With her husband Firoz lending her full support, Lila took on PG Date, Maya Thadani, Freny Tarapore, Shernaz Edibam and Elizabeth Matthews as Founder Trustees, not just because they were her friends, but more because they believed in the cause of educating women and making them confident young successful leaders.

Criteria and process of selection

The selection process is meticulous and strenuous.

It really does not matter which field the girl applies for, as long as she is determined to complete her education and make use of it to improve not only her own situation, but also that of her family and the society she lives in. The basic criterion is that

the girl has to be academically excellent and economically needy. She has to be a first class in all the three important years of her academic life, ie HSC, SSC and graduation. She has to be a Pune girl, and below 30 years of age. Thereafter, the computer aids the whole process. The trustees go through the forms, giving points for social and extra-curricular activities, and also their personal assessments. The short-listed girls are called for interviews, where the trustees again grade each girl. These results are once again fed into the computer and the final list comes out in ascending order. All this takes about three months and about four to six meetings of the trustees, each lasting 12 hours at a time.

It's different

Unlike many other trust funds and scholarships, the LPF keeps in constant touch with its Fellows year after year. "I do not want this one to be like other foundations, which give money and believe that

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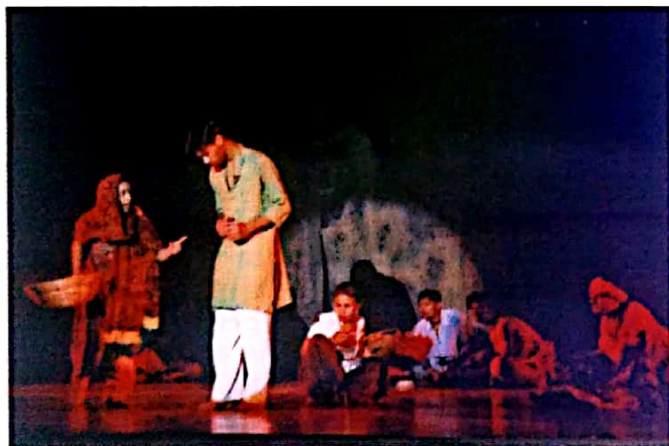
their responsibility is over. I want the girls to grow professionally and achieve higher goals. I do not stop at just giving money for education, but conduct various programmes to make them complete, confident women who are able to step out into the world and reach for the stars. I want to give them a forum to interact with each other, build new friendships, relationships, networks, so that they can help each other in different phases of their life. It is this that makes my Foundation unique."

What do they mean to her? Lila replies simply, "My Lila Fellows are a part of my life. They are family. I meet them, mentor them, support them, advise

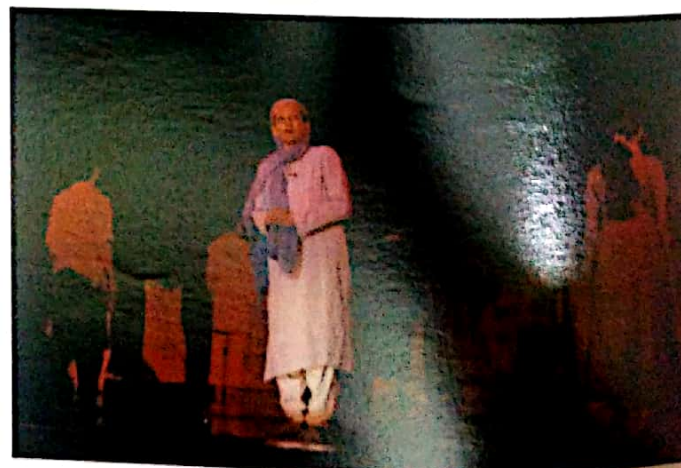
them, help them... In short, I am there for them. Every Lila Fellow receives a birthday greeting from me, with a small gift. This is one way they know they are being thought of. I attend their marriages, their children's birthdays and all the other celebrations that they have. I share their joys as well as their problems and try my best to help them. All this takes a lot of time, but every moment brings joy." On a parting note we wonder aloud about her favourite Lila Fellow. "All my girls are special and it is for this reason that they have been chosen to become Lila Fellows. No mother will ever tell you who her favourite child is..." she trails off.

SPECIAL FEATURE

In continuation with its legacy of grooming the LFs and attending to their overall development, the foundation sponsored the LFs passes to 'Unsuni', a dance drama by Dr. Mallika Sarabhai and her troupe from the Darpana Academy of Performing Arts, Ahmedabad.



entire family (of 16 members) was killed. The stories developed along the lines of the struggle of the protagonists in their respective crusades that resulted in successes, inspiring hope. The stories began in despair and ended in hope. The gripping performances, interspersed with lively, stimulating song-dance sequences composed on popular Bollywood tunes fulfilled the Academy's motive which was to provoke the conscience of the audience and encourage them to come forward and take action to make things better for the unfortunate. The message that the performance gave us that evening was that **'Be the change that we want to see.'**



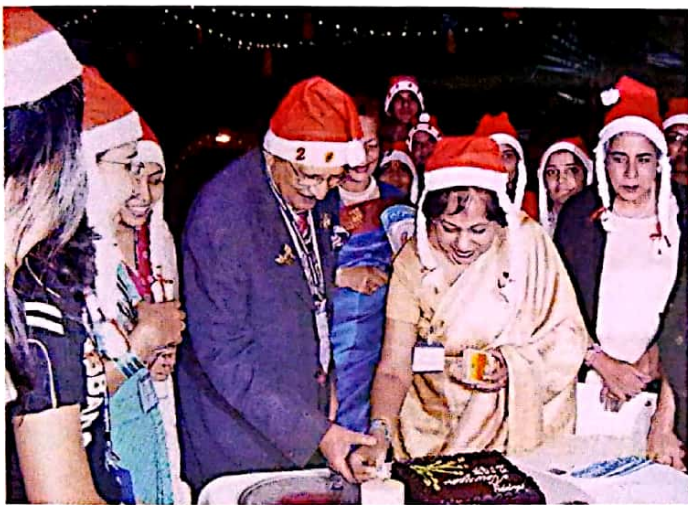
On January 21st 2007, this was at the Chandrashekhar Auditorium, IUCAA at the Pune University. 'Unsuni' is a theatre-adaptation of Harsh Mander's book "Unheard Voices" and gives voice to five of India's millions of voiceless people through a series of monologues. The musical play is based on the real lives of five different Indians, unknown to us, and hence -'unheard'. The stories narrated and enacted are those of- a street child, **Anand**, who is a rag-picker; a manual scavenger of human-excreta, **Narayaniamma**; a tribal, **Jagtu Gond**, whose land has been grabbed; a leper, **Jatin**; and the inspiring biography of **Mallika Bi**, who survived and fought for justice, post the Bhagalpur massacre of 1989, after her

-Jyoti Otageri
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GLIMPSES OF THE NEW YEAR PARTY

As always The Lila Poonawalla Foundation had a rocking party to celebrate the New Year. Trustees, Guests, Lila Fellows their spouses in Santa Caps, twinkling bracelets, they danced; they sang and played a number of fun filled games. These innovative games were organised by some of the LFs who volunteered on this occasion.

The party ended with a sumptuous dinner followed by cutting the New Year cake. The highlight of this party was the largest number ever of Lila Fellows attending this year's party. At this occasion we released Inspira 20th issue at the hands of our former Trustee & Ex-Principal of St. Mary's School, Ms. Elizabeth Mathew. Let's take glimpses of the happening event.....



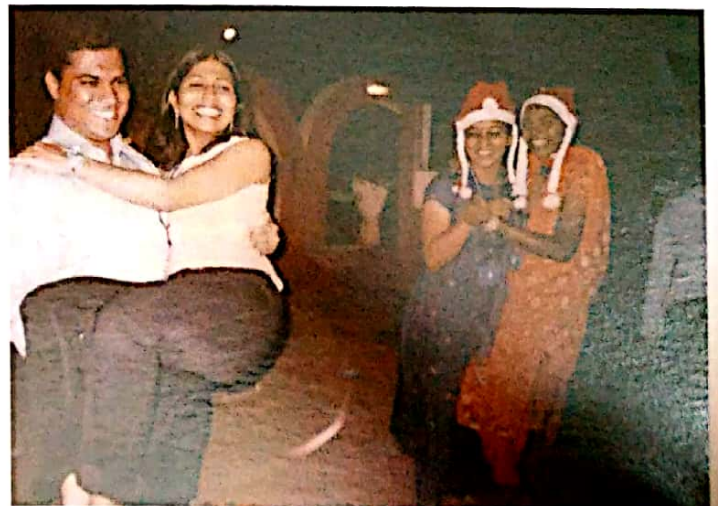
New Year Party - Cake Cutting



LPF - Trustees enjoying at the New Year party



One of our LFs proposing Trustee - Mrs. Freney Tarapore while playing Marriage, Love and Divorce Game



Spouse of one of our LFs lifts her while playing Paper Dance Game, when the paper is folded to make it smaller

■ - Sunetra Chaphalkar
sunetrac@gmail.com



LPF celebrating Trustee - Freny Tarapore's Birthday

Down Memory Lane... SNIPPETS



Mr. Firoz Poonawalla addressing the gathering during Trustee - LF's Parents meet



LPF visit to plant of Mushroom Cultivation at "Weikfeild"



LF's & Parents at Trustees-Parents Get together



Release of Inspira Vol. No. 20 at the hands of our former Trustee & Ex-Principal of St. Mary's School, Ms. Elizabeth Mathew

**Thank you for your support to the Foundation
with your generous donation.**



LF's inside the Mushroom Tunnel at Weikfeild



Mrs. Freny Tarapore
Trustee
(Donated Rs. 30,000)



LF-1998 Dr. Supriya Kulkarni
(Donated USD 1500)

LF-1998 Ms. Madhura Dhoka (Khangaonkar)

SIX THINKING HATS

Sounds strange? Let me take you on a tour of our magical brain, wearing these hats in such a hot summer!

The original concept of '**Six Thinking Hats**' was conceived by **Edward de Bono** wherein he proposed a quick, simple and powerful technique to improve the decision making thought process. The Six Thinking Hats do this by encouraging you to recognize what kind of thoughts you are following and how to apply different attitudes of thinking while solving problem and making decisions.

We all use different thinking hats, usually without realizing it. For e.g.: If we are feeling pessimistic about a situation, the only kinds of thoughts that we follow are negative! This limits our ability to see the alternatives for solving a problem. Let us see how each of these hats plays its role in thinking. There are six different colors symbolizing six thinking hats. They are **Blue, White, Yellow, Black, Red and Green**.



Blue Hat: Wearing a blue hat indicates that you **are setting up your goals**. This hat helps to you to focus, monitor and organize them. One should wear this hat before starting work because it channelises one's thought processes and also controls the subsequent stages of thought, i.e. the other hats.



White Hat: The white hat represents a sheet of paper. It is about the **information that you have**. To make a decision, it's a good practice to list out what all information one has. It could be useful or wrong data! The information could range from hard facts and figures to things one believes but yet not sure of. This hat is neutral and wearing it means nothing but gathering all the information one can.



Yellow Hat: The yellow represents **sunshine and optimism**. It challenges us to find the best out of collected information. So one must wear this hat, only after having worn the white hat. It makes us think about the data on all aspects, and decide how best it could be beneficial.



Red Hat: Red represents **intuitions**. Many times decisions can be controlled by varied emotions But the red hat takes opinions from many people and then based on their responses, use our intuition to make the best decision. It suggests that its always helpful to take someone's opinion before taking a big decision. So when you are confused, don't forget to wear your red hat!



Black Hat: Though the black hat is very popularly used by people, according to Edward, it is a hat that tells us to be **careful and cautious** in taking decisions and making them without being overly negative. By putting on this cap one thinks of all the risks and disadvantages that may exist. This helps to identify things which are incorrect and might go wrong. So it symbolizes natural caution.



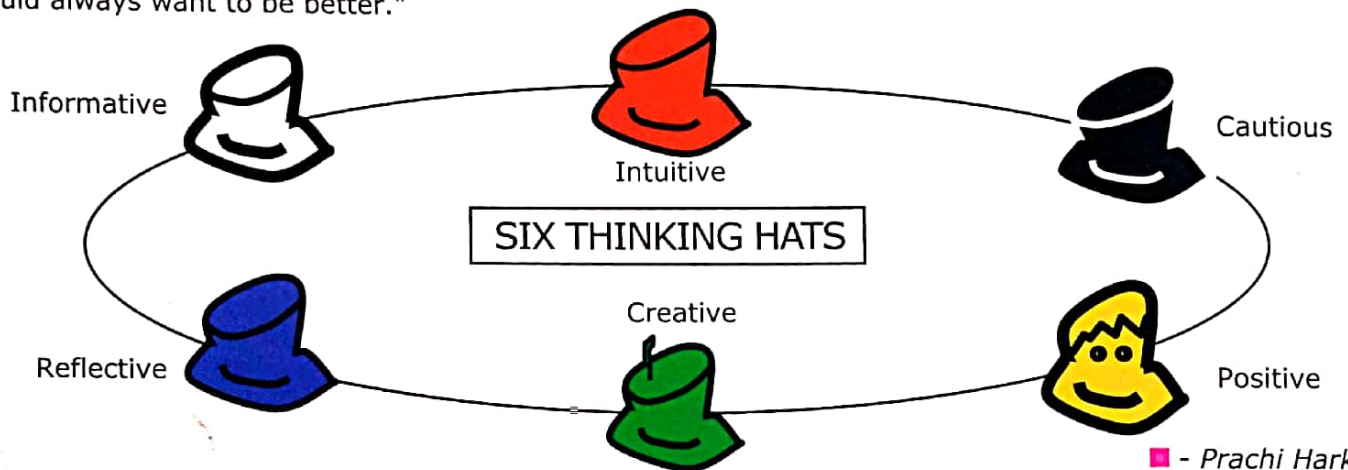
Green Hat: It is said that this hat is used by very few people in their thought process. Green hat signifies **creativity, imagination, originality**. With the help of this hat we seek new ideas, alternatives and make the things more attractive. Some times it may happen that the ideas which seem silly when we first encounter them later become key drivers.

We can use these thinking hats individually or in a group at our work places. In groups, every member of the group should wear the same color hat at the same time, and also switch to another color simultaneously. By using a common colored hat, the team remains in synch and the task of the team becomes easier and will be more productive. Different members of a team wearing different colors would result in disorganization and clashes.

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SIX THINKING HATS

Hats off to Edward de Bono!! for such analytical thinking. He said it right, "Thinking is the ultimate human resource. Yet we can never be satisfied with our most important skill. No matter how good we become, we should always want to be better."



■ - Prachi Harkare
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YOURS TRULY

For many, this is yet another issue of Inspira. But for the crusaders this is yet another paradigm of combined efforts and synchronized teamwork! Lots of planning, brainstorming, research, innovation, co-ordination, networking and last but not the least, groundwork and creativity go into the making of each edition of Inspira.... and those who are at the mill are all Lila Fellows! Some still students, some working, some pursuing research, some in between transfers, some switching jobs, some newly wed brides, and yet some new mothers. Each has a different daily schedule and moreover different demands to cater to, at domestic and professional fronts. Despite inconvenience, overtime, crammed schedules, compromise on personal and professional time, Lila Fellows come forward for a cause called 'Inspira'. What they get in return is the joy and satisfaction of creation, of having contributed to development of society and of having lived up to the responsibility that the foundation vested upon them by identifying them as a Lila Fellow.

LPF being just the talk of the town is now passé and it has now started featuring in national magazines

like the Femina and international publications like the Stanford. In such a scenario Inspira serves as an in-house but broad platform. The academic fraternity, industries, press and media too keep

a close track of our columns. The letters of appreciation indicating minute intricacies within our articles and demand to cover certain other topics within the purview of Inspira, stand testimony to the keen interest we generate amongst our readers. Such positive and critical feedbacks magnify our zeal manifold and are welcome. For those who do not receive a personal copy of Inspira, we wish to

inform them that it is available online at www.lilapoonawallaoundation.com

Given the curiosity and awareness from contributors and readers alike, we have been able to grow into an epitome for the phrase **"As long as it does not matter who the credit goes to, the results that a team can produce are tremendous"**. We hope to continue providing you all good food for thought. Amen!

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