

# IWA DHWANI

Indian Women's Association

May 2016 • MCI (P) 143/05/2013

Sounds of IWA, Singapore



I  
Care

We  
Connect

All  
Celebrate

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**Let's Talk**  
**Movies!**

**NEW CLUB!**

The **Movie Club** is IWA's newest venture...please mark your calendars!! We will meet on the **fourth Friday of every month**.

It's yet another platform at IWA, to be together and expand our horizons and explore new genres of films.

We intend to watch and appreciate some foreign language films, award-winning cinema, re-watch old favorites...the list is endless.

The joy of watching films together with friends, learning about different cultures and exchanging notes on film appreciation...is what this Club is all about.

Our first screening is a Chinese film 'Raise the Red Lantern' (1991) by director Zhang Yimou.

Zhang solidifies his standing as one of cinema's most brilliant craftsmen with *Raise the Red Lantern*, a heartbreakingly fascinating look into the life of a young, well-educated woman who gives up her future to become the fourth wife of a wealthy landowner in 1920s China.

Gong Li, the director's longtime muse, delivers a performance nearly unsurpassed by anyone, male or female, in the 1990s. Zhang Yimou makes films as exquisitely as any master's painting and his palette extends beyond the obvious beauty of Gong Li to include details of the courtyards, lanterns, silks, and rooftops with an inexplicable mixture of tranquility and austerity.

# Letter from the PRESIDENT



Dear readers,

Greetings from IWA!

Our last issue came out just days before the end of March and what a busy time it has been since!

The 19th IWA AGM was a runaway success. The tower Ballroom at the Shangri-La was the perfect backdrop for an AGM like no other. The event was a blend of serious reporting and fun elements, reflecting the inherent nature of our committee -working with all seriousness but always enjoying the process! Our guests and members unanimously agreed that it was the best AGM they had ever attended!

The core team remains essentially the same in our second term with just a few new Chairs.

Since the AGM, the weeks have seen us at the Botanic gardens with our little friends from BSS, buddying up for Bollywood dancing with the ladies from H.O.M.E, celebrating birthdays at SWAMI home, in a conversation with Deepti Naval in collaboration with Teamwork and SMU, and a members' welcome brunch called Rendezvous Dhamaal. There were some firsts too; a climb to the tree top at MacRitchie with our families and a group of IWA members at IIMPact 2016 and of course there were our usual club events. We are exploring and enjoying a myriad facets of life every week at IWA.

Mothers with young kids, mothers of teenagers stressed out at school, women taking a break from their professional lives, home-based business owners and housewives, empty nesters and even young grandmothers are all enjoying the community we are building together--a community in which we are helping each other learn, grow and succeed.

Happy Mother's Day!

## Sukanya Pushkarna

[president@iwasingapore.org](mailto:president@iwasingapore.org)

### On the Cover

**Title:** TOGETHER

**Artist:** Dr. Aruna Shahani

**Medium:** Oil

Two Asian school girls in a rural area finishing their homework sitting on a rock, on their way home. One is helping the weaker student who is irregular in school due to household chores and other responsibilities.

Inspired by a scene in Vietnam.

*A Medical Microbiologist by profession, Aruna retired a few years ago to chase her passions--painting, writing, reading, traveling. A trained Yoga therapist, she also practises yoga therapy for those suffering from psychosomatic illnesses.*



**IWA Dhwani editorial team:** Lakshmi (Lucky) Padmanabhan, Lakshmi Raghavan, Rashantha Therese Devanesan, Garima Lalwani, Sukanya Pushkarna, Neena Mittal, Alka Joglekar and Piu Lahiri (editor)

**IWA Dhwani is printed and designed by:** Xpress Print Pte Ltd, Crescendas Print Media Hub, 61 Tai Seng Avenue, #03-03, Singapore 534167  
**UEN No.S97SS0085J in iROSES**

*We hope you like this issue of IWA Dhwani. If you have any feedback or suggestions regarding articles and features or if you would like to contribute articles or artwork to our magazine, please write to [editor@iwasingapore.org](mailto:editor@iwasingapore.org)*

# EDITORIAL TEAM



"IWA Bazaar conjures up a vision of colours, movement and energy, and as such having a Bazaar issue of IWA Dhwani with the theme of "Different faces of education" seems like a contrast of ideas?" we were asked. Education i.e. learning is not something stodgy and static- it is evolving and changing. As our members who are teachers, poets, students, actors, counsellors and artists wrote in, the varied vibrancy of the different sides of education surfaced and painted the pages of this issue in beautiful hues.

This issue also has photos to showcase the IWA AGM, held on 28th March at Shangrila Hotel and the updated details of the team headed by Sukanya Pushkarna as she starts her second year at the helm. Two new clubs have been recently introduced, which are a) Movie Club and b) Creative Hands. Our community service events at Swami Home, Beyond Social Services and HOME Bollywood event have been featured here to give you an idea of how you can give back to society while having a wonderful heartwarming time .

As part of our Bazaar special feature, we have interviewed four vendors who have played a crucial and loyal role at the IWA Bazaar for several years We see the IWA Bazaar through their eyes as they share their journey, growth and close bonds with IWA.

Get to know our Strategic Partner GEMS Academy in this Bazaar edition under our Friends & Partners column.

Please send in your articles, artwork, thoughts and your queries to [editor@iwasingapore.org](mailto:editor@iwasingapore.org)

*Happy reading!*

## Write for DHWANI



IWA Dhwani is your magazine and we want to showcase what excites and interests you. Please send in your contributions to [editor@iwasingapore.org](mailto:editor@iwasingapore.org).

Dhwani is always looking for articles, poems, personal narratives, artwork and photographs from our members. We welcome first-time writers and we will provide all editorial support.

IWA is not only about women but also about our families. In IWA Dhwani we welcome husbands, parents & children to send in their contributions.

Did you know we have a special kid's corner just for showcasing our children? They can contribute a 400 word essay on any aspect of life in Singapore which excites or interests them. It might be about people they have met, places they have visited, new food they have tasted or a skill they have developed.

The artwork or photograph should be horizontal, 210mm x 166.7mm and at least 300dpi. No camera phone photos please!

We try to accommodate as many contributions as possible. Sometimes, if an article, poem or artwork does not make it in this edition, we hold it for another issue.

Dhwani is a magazine for you & by you so start sending in your contributions!



# Founding Years

by Radhika Kothari (IWA President 2003-2004)

The Mission of IWA in the early years was to provide a platform for all Indians to meet, interact, support, celebrate, participate in cultural activities & integrate. The "expat" Indian community in those days was much smaller than it is today. Their needs were very different. Families were being relocated to Singapore by companies. They wanted their children to be connected to their Indian culture & roots. The adults wanted to make new friends & they missed celebrating festivals & other Indian cultural activities like art, music, theatre. IWA stepped in by bringing in theatre, art exhibitions, classical music & dance concerts.

During my years as President, there were many challenges. It was the year SARS hit Singapore. The economy took a downturn & corporate sponsorships dried up. But IWA had to go on. That was when we staged "Once Upon a time in Ayodhya" - a dance theatre with homegrown local talent. Over 60 children between the ages of 5 to 15 practised very hard for weeks, after school, weekends & every moment they could spare. Needless to say, the performance was a resounding success.

That year we took the initiative to integrate with all the different nationalities residing in Singapore, including the locals. We contacted our counterparts in different Women's organisations, like the Chinese, American, British, Japanese

IWA HISTORY



and others to exchange ideas, to share info on our different cultures, to learn from each other. We had our first integrated event - a Navratri Dandiya Raas. Close to 150 women of different nationalities got together to celebrate.

There were, of course, ongoing monthly events. Coffee mornings, book club, social & charity work with SINDA to name a few.

It has been an honour and a privilege to lay the foundation of IWA as Founding General Secretary and subsequently lead the organisation as the President. It is heartening to note that IWA continues to evolve, adapt & flourish as an organisation. I wish it all the very best in all its future endeavours.

## Memories of My Days with IWA

by Vanitha Narasimhan

My name is Vanitha Narasimhan and I was the IWA President between 2005-2007. I had been elected Vice President with Nandini Gupta as President. Nandini moved out of Singapore mid 2005 and I stepped in as President. The following year, since it had been only half a year, the committee requested that I continue for one more year. It was one of the highlights of my life here in Singapore.

Singapore did not have the vast Indian community then and the ladies who left behind family and jobs to follow their spouse/partner to a new country were given a place to meet and connect with people with similar backgrounds. With events like Holi by the beach, Navaratri Dandiya , Diwali children's event, IWA brought everyone something they wanted and created a home away from home. This made it easier for them to settle in smoothly and effortlessly and eventually forge ahead with their lives, to integrate easily into the society here.

There were 10 committee members - President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Newsletter editor, Music club, Book club, Children's activities, Events, Social Service. We had between 350-360 members.

During this time, we did a lot of social work with Association for Persons with Special Needs. It was quite gratifying to work with young boys and girls. Many members were pleased to

be able to contribute in a positive way to the society which was giving them so much. We thoroughly enjoyed ourselves.

The Diwali children's event held a special place in all our hearts. Though it was grueling and demanding, coordinating the practice sessions, costumes, venue booking, sale of tickets, etc. while sticking to a budget – the end result was most rewarding. It was a very fulfilling feeling to see all those happy and proud faces on stage and in the audience.

The IWA bazaar was started in 2008. It has grown into a major event to rival all other fairs and exhibitions in Singapore. The atmosphere is electrifying with its wide variety of products and merchandise. I must say though, I'm partial to the chaat counter and spend considerable time there.

As the Indian expat community grows and their requirements and aspirations change, it's wonderful that IWA has evolved to meet the needs of its members. It's been an honour and privilege to be part of IWA for all these years.

Wishing the present and future IWA committees much success in all their endeavours!





## Introducing IWA'S STRATEGIC PARTNER



World Academy  
(Singapore)

# SINGAPORE'S INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL FOR GLOBAL STUDENTS

**G**EMS World Academy (Singapore), (GWA) may be Singapore's newest international school, but it is owned by GEMS Education, the largest provider of Kindergarten-to-Grade 12 education in the world with almost 60 years of history and over 80 schools in the USA, Europe, Middle East and Asia.

Living true to the 'international' title, GEMS World Academy schools are located in Switzerland, USA, UAE and Singapore. GWA is the only truly international school in Singapore that has an international curriculum and demographic mix of students and teachers with no single dominant nationality or ethnic group. Amongst their students, the largest nationality (Indian) only represents 15% of the overall population, followed by American, British, Australasian and over 40 other nationalities.

Exceptional education comes first at GEMS, and the high quality of their committed educators who love teaching children is the true difference. Tony Little, the former Headmaster of Eton College in the UK is the GEMS Global Chief Academic Officer. Jeffrey Beard, the former Director General of the International Baccalaureate (IB) Organisation oversees the GEMS' IB programmes across the network of GEMS schools. GWA's educators have an average of 15 years international experience and the majority have Masters degrees. They represent the top 2% of the thousands of teacher applicants received by GEMS annually.



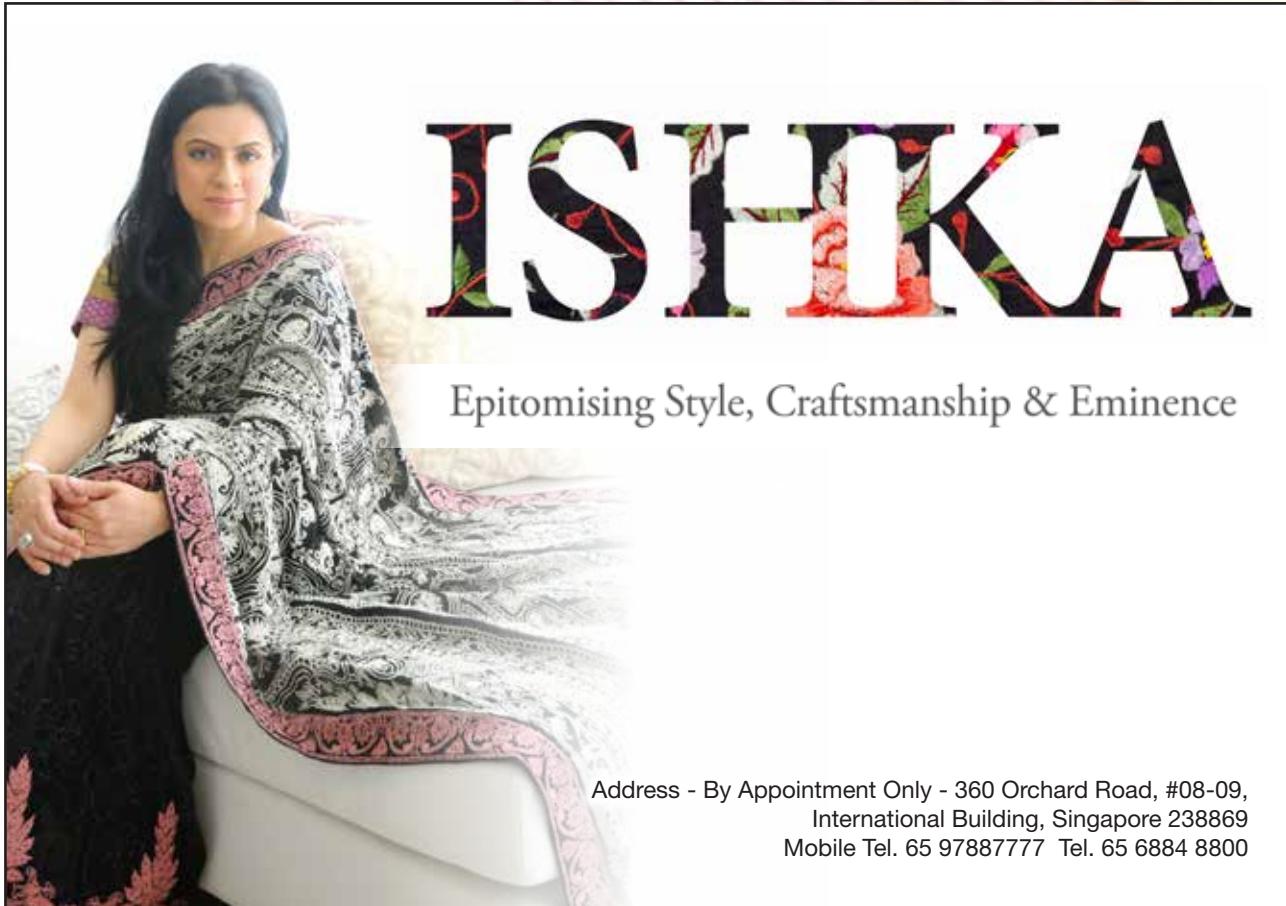
To underpin the GEMS philosophy of quality education for all, The Varkey Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation set up by the Varkey family which owns GEMS. The Foundation's goal is to improve the standards of education for underprivileged children throughout the world, and for every student enrolled in a GEMS school, the Varkey Foundation aims to provide free education to 100 children in third world countries. The Varkey Foundation also awards the \$1 million Global Teacher Prize annually to an exceptional teacher who has made an outstanding contribution to the profession from over 12,000 worthy applicants annually.

GWA is truly Singapore's International School for Global Students.

[www.gwa.edu.sg](http://www.gwa.edu.sg)

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## DOWN MEMORY LANE

by Dina Thacker

Ishka's journey with IWA began a decade ago and since our first bazaar participation, we have both held hands and sailed through together, achieving and growing steadily. Ishka is now an established fashion house in Singapore and is very thankful to IWA for its contribution by way of connecting Ishka with the entire community through its events, like lunches, celebrations of festivals, fashion shows and bazaars.

IWA bazaars are a magnet which attract a multitude of versatile women. Ishka started with one table in IWA bazaar and today we have significantly grown to be one of IWA's largest vendors. Ishka awaits the IWA bazaar with equal eagerness as other members.

IWA bazaars have provided a strong foothold for Ishka to display a wide range of its ethereal collections of gara, pita and other handwoven techniques of embroidery in its creations.

At the Bazaars, which are meticulously organised by a very efficient team, headed by strong versatile personalities, like Piu, Sukanya we gain not only business, but also

strong friendships and everlasting client relationships. It is an amazing event for networking.

Ishka exclusively chooses IWA bazaar to showcase its collection, in spite of its showroom at Orchard. Dina chooses to do the IWA event, as she says there is a need of joy to strike a conversation with the customer - a modern Indian woman of today, who is assured, knowledgeable, educated and aware.

*"They bring out the designer and stylist in me as they add a personal spin to my creations, I love the way, they connect to my designs and are deeply appreciative of different forms of art and weaving techniques that I incorporate in my work. IWA has been a connecting bridge to our clients from various walks of life. If it wasn't for IWA, I would have not met women from different parts of India, who have influenced my designs and enriched me with knowledge about various cultural elements, colours and design techniques of different communities".*

Ishka would like to thank IWA for this enriching and fulfilling experience. Congratulations and hope to continue our journey into the next decade.

# Sonali Jain

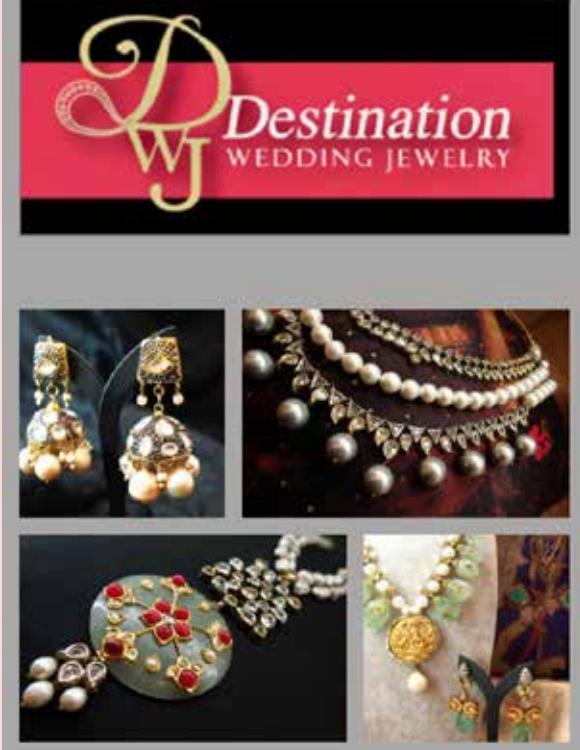
I moved to Singapore in 2003. My son was only one-year-old and working full time was not feasible. I was inclined on being an entrepreneur, as I had the necessary qualifications and experience in the Textile industry.



Earlier, I had worked extensively with International brands and designers acquiring expertise and exposure in handling International markets. Being part of the fashion industry, a diversion into fashion accessories came to me as a natural choice. I enhanced my qualification further, with a Jewelry Design course during my stint in Indonesia. In 2006, I launched my own brand *Divineraga*, designing traditional and contemporary silver jewelry. *Divineraga* was a dream, which became my passion in a decade's time. The brand has not only gained prominence in the past years but has also become part of the prestigious Fashion Design Council Of India (FDCI).

In this decade long journey, I have been very closely associated with the Indian Women's Association which has given me an opportunity to showcase my products through their Bazaars, a bi-annual exhibition cum shopping event. IWA has also propelled me forward by appreciating the work and getting their members to become my long-term business clients.

My first Bazaar experience was at Pines Club, which was a small affair with 20 vendors but has grown to 110 vendors, in the past years. IWA Bazaar team has been supportive and encourages me to put up my best at the exhibition, each time. The meticulously planned bazaar brings in kaleidoscope of ethnicity and variety of shopping bonanza. Each year, I see it growing in strength with fashion shows, charity support, accessories and much more!



# Saloni Mehra

**W**ay back in 2013, I was packing my heirloom jewelry to attend a destination wedding when I saw my husband leaning against the doorway giving me a skeptical look. I was then on the receiving end of flak from him about carrying my real jewelry - the safety issues- the scrutiny from customs.



The idea of starting a business called Destination Wedding Jewelry took seed in my mind. Necklaces, earrings and bracelets designed with fusion in mind, are affordable, one of a kind and can be carried stress free for overseas weddings.

The collection expanded to include "catwalk" which are statement pieces and "Let's Party" which can be worn for light lunches and club evenings. DWJ short for Destination Wedding Jewelry exhibits in Singapore key bazaars and has a loyal fan following since 2013.

**Saloni Mehra** is based in Hongkong but has been a regular part of IWA's bazaar since 2013 and is always one of the first to sign up. She was initially introduced to IWA and the IWA Bazaar courtesy Subina Khaneja and Shalini K Chand. In her very first Bazaar, she had written, " I am very impressed with the turnout of loyal association members at the IWA Bazaar and the professional way it was organized".

# Gaurika Miglani

It's been a decade since IWA and I have had a personal journey together. Initially it was just a platform for socialising but I became an entrepreneur and IWA gave 'Indochine with Gaurika' a big exposure to the expat community in Singapore.

Over the years, the growth for both has been tremendous. From glamorous fashion shows at Shangri-La hotel to a coffee morning hosted by IWG for IWA members, to Hilton hotel and Holiday Inn bazaars...it's a continuous journey.

Each president in her tenure has given IWA a new look and filled the gap it had in its growth. Proud to be an Indian expat living in Singapore who is enveloped by a strong community created by IWA.... It represents the global growing women of today's world.



2012 Bazaar with the IWA Chief Patron,  
Ranjana Raghavan



2012 Bazaar Fashion Show



Bazaar 2009



A traditional Bazaar in India by Sudeshna Chatterjee.



## SAT Prep – a teacher's perspective

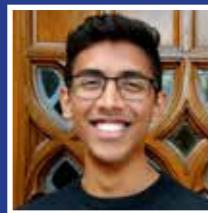
I work at a company that prepares high school juniors to take the SAT. As a Verbal Instructor, I teach grammar rules, reading comprehension techniques, and general strategies on how to score the highest number of points on the SAT by learning the fewest number of rules. We don't go over how to effectively build an argument; that's not on the SAT. We do learn "1 in 6 answers will be 'No Error.'" Rather than learn how to vary sentence structure to craft a compelling story, we spend an entire class on pronoun/noun agreement, and I end up convincing my students that saying "Everybody has their own opinion" is one of the biggest sins you could commit, even though it might sound perfectly fine.

After three years of being an instructor, I can confidently conclude that the SAT doesn't measure how smart you are. It doesn't measure how much you learned in high school, and it doesn't measure how critically you think on complex issues. It doesn't even measure how successful you will be in college. So what is it measuring? Nothing, really, other than how well you take the SAT. Universities know this, which is why they are increasingly placing less emphasis on standardized test scores. Unfortunately, that doesn't stop ambitious students from taking the test three, four, even five times to raise their score by a handful of points. For many students, the SAT becomes a priority in high school, often at the expense of extracurricular activities that fulfill them and teach them more than my class on run-on sentences ever would. I do my best to expand the scope of the curriculum.

When I first became a teacher, I decided I wanted to have a socially conscious class. So we also learn in class about why the SAT is linguistically elitist and why, in real life, if you wanted to say, "Ain't nobody got time for that," that would be perfectly fine despite what the testmakers would tell you.

Then we learn in depth about the college admissions process, and why it's so arbitrary that we'd probably be equally well off having a system where everyone who meets a certain GPA and SAT threshold enters in a lottery, and names are admitted at random. Then we spend 5 minutes at the end of the last class writing down personal goals for the rest of the semester: eat healthier; be a better friend; become a more talented painter or pianist. Of course, we get through the material, but I hope to convince my students that life exists -- indeed, prolifically -- outside the SAT.

I have had the opportunity and privilege not just to help these students come closer to achieving their college goals, but also to allay their fears by credibly placing college admissions in a broader, more realistic context. When I was a high school junior, I regularly slept two or three hours a night and found myself severely affected by the overwhelming and unchecked pressure to get into a prestigious college. Years later, I reflect on the importance I gave to the SAT and college admissions with amusement, but also pity and regret; that stress took away from what should have been enjoyable and healthy high school years. If I can make the process easier for students so they can focus on strengthening their relationships, developing their passions and talents, and enjoying their youth -- biking, hiking, singing, whatever -- I would have succeeded in my job.



**Prayuj Pushkarna** is a junior at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service. He is an SAS alumnus and has been teaching SAT Prep in Maryland for the last three years.

## An Interview with the Head of Education at GWA

1) Could you give us an idea of GEMS World Academy (GWA), and what you feel the school's focus is for students in Singapore?



First and foremost, GWA is a place that highly values people. As a school, it's obvious that we are deeply committed to ensuring that students are provided with wonderful opportunities, and for us these go across Sports, Arts and Academics. Beyond the kids, we are equally committed to engaging with our parents and continuing to enhance the passion our teachers have for education.

2) What do you feel stands out for GWA when it comes to differentiating itself from the rest of the schools here in Singapore?

GEMS Education is a family owned business, founded by educators. Whilst it is easy to focus on facilities and the fact that we have around 250,000 students across our schools around the world, what's most important is the essence of the company manifesto. In short, that no matter who you are or where you are, you have the right to access high quality education. When you have this type of central mission,

everything from a commercial perspective has a people focus. It is this people focus that has been at the core of the success of GEMS Education and the Varkey Foundation globally for almost 60 years.

3) What kind of facilities and activities will students be able to look forward to at GWA?



**David Edwards**  
Head of Education

Phase one of GWA has seen us successfully spend S\$137 million in the first phase of the school. Our second phase will have an investment of around another S\$70 million to complete the 5ha campus. Our current facilities include many start-of-the-art features, ranging from our aquatics center to our auditorium to the investment in hard and software for ICT. Outstanding schools however, are not defined by the facilities they reside in and within Singapore, facilities really aren't a distinguishing feature in such a mature sector. What does differentiate the good to the great to the outstanding, is the quality of the people who are stakeholders in the school, and the programmes put in place for students, parents and teachers to provide them all with outstanding learning opportunities.



# Fun with SCIENCE:

## Channelizing your child's curiosity early

by Vinisha Khemani Kanjilal

I am Vinisha, a scientist by training and as of today a baker by profession. When I think of what took me down the path of science it goes back to early influences in childhood and a special love for nature & hands on gardening.

Biology emerged as a subject with which I felt connected from an early age. In Std 7, my elder sister exposed me to a breakthrough moment in life then... the discovery of monoclonal antibodies and with it sealed my fate with Genetic Engineering, Biotechnology and more. I went on to pursue an undergrad degree in Microbiology in Pune, followed by a Master's in Biotechnology at Madurai and then on to a Ph.D. in Molecular Biology at the prestigious Centre for Cellular & Molecular Biology in Hyderabad.



As it turned out, during my subsequent job stints I felt increasingly disconnected and dissatisfied with the very science that I had aspired to embrace. I soon took a sabbatical and figured that I preferred to walk barefoot in the park if I could every morning! Also realised that while Singapore was trying to foster Science as an academic subject, science outreach was lesser than I thought.

Green Dots was born in the garden @ 7 Wilton Close...a non-text book format done with ads on activities over holidays and celebrations to make science fun, engaging and memorable. Science Education Arts & Media came together seamlessly! With the takeoff a more scalable business that has presented itself viz: Better Breads

Green Dots has been relegated to a backburner but hopefully it will surface again for the joy and memories it creates both for Big Green Dot aka Dr.Vinisha as too the Little Green Dots!





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# My Never Ending Love for Learning



**M**y tryst with acting was very accidental, but what followed thereafter took me by surprise. With no experience at all in drama and theatre I was delightfully surprised at how much I enjoyed being on stage. Even today, after 2 productions, the thrill of facing the audience excites me each time and I often wonder why I never considered acting before. At the end of an acting class I am on a natural high. I really lose myself and become immersed in my character. My first play was "Another ticket to Bollywood," where I played a choreographer called "Dhinchak," a really over-the-top character. Not only did I act in my first production but also ended up singing and dancing! I remember my Director, Sangeeta Nambiar (Play Acting Drama) telling me in no uncertain terms that if I manage to pull off this role, I will always be remembered

as "Dhinchak." People still remember me as Dhinchak, but in theatre, memory is transient and fast changing. Earlier this year, I had the honour of participating in Eve Ensler's iconic play, "The Vagina Monologues." With three successful shows in Singapore, I am looking forward to the fourth one on May 11<sup>th</sup>.

I will also be acting in "Finally She Spoke," a powerful play that will become the voice of all those who've been mute witnesses to inequalities in their lives. This will be performed on 22, 23, 24 September 2016. I am looking forward to grueling rehearsals and the final performance and all the madness in between.

Never could I have imagined that this would be the "passion" I was searching for, my entire life. I know that I will keep



by Sonal Sharma

going for workshops and classes and audition for as many parts as I can. If I could discover my passion at this stage of my life where I am juggling a full time job, kids, family, social life etc .... Anyone can! When you do discover what makes you happy, hold on to it forever. The happiness it brings will always stay unparalleled.

My favourite quote :  
**"Acting is not about dressing up. Acting is about stripping bare. The whole essence of learning lines is to forget them so you can make them sound like you thought of them that instant."**  
**GLENDA JACKSON**

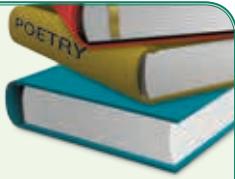


**Sonal Sharma**  
*Marketing Manager  
Raffles Relocation & Mobility*

*Having lived in Kathmandu, Ottawa, Paris, Delhi, Mumbai, Sydney, Brisbane and now Singapore, I can say that I have enriched my life experiencing such diverse cultures. I speak English, French & Hindi. Singapore is home to me now, I have been lived for over 12 years.*



*I live here with my two daughters Shreya (13) & Aarushi (9) and my husband Maneesh. I attend acting and dance classes and have had immense pleasure of performing in both areas. I want to continue balancing between building my company, acting and discovering things I have always wanted to explore.*



## REAL EDUCATION

by Aruna Shahani

*I barely opened my eyes in this world  
To school I was sent  
when I wanted to play.*

*I didn't know the meaning of a book  
but the teacher said  
I must learn from books.*

*The sack on my back  
heavy with books, notebooks  
I started to receive  
education, the usual norm.*

*I crammed till my  
brain cells got tired  
I burned the midnight oil  
I even wore glasses to read.*

*Now I am fifty  
trying to solve puzzles  
life threw at me  
I look for answers.*

*I shiver, I shake, my books don't provide  
the answers I seek.  
In fact, where are the books?*

*Life taught me a lot....  
It was my best educator  
I go through its pages  
To find answers I need.*

*Now I look around:  
Engineers do business  
Doctors write poems  
Lawyers paint nature.*

*With our education surely something is  
wrong Einstein, Bill Gates realized this  
early on.*

*Onward they marched on their journey  
of Self- Education emerging shining  
stars....They understood 'Education'.*

*Don't become a literate fool, a lost  
human being....  
Listen to your heart  
Learn skills, build on, grow...*

*Bring purpose and meaning to your life  
and work to leave this world a better  
place.....*

*That is Real Education.*



# The Story of a Singaporean Teacher

by Azeena Badarudeen

**A**s I reach a milestone in my life this year, I cannot help but think back on the years that have gone by. As a student and then a teacher in Singapore, I saw the evolution of the education system and Singapore itself.

I received my primary school education at the now defunct Chong Shan Primary School. School was fun with abundant opportunities for learning in unconventional ways. The seed for my love of the English Language may have been planted by my family but it was nurtured under the dedicated guidance of my Lower Primary teachers.

My passion for language did not stop with the English Language and under the bilingual policy, I took Tamil as a second language. With a cosy enrolment of just 4 students in Primary 1, it wasn't long before I found myself falling in love with the mother of the Dravidian languages. I grew up on a diet of Mani Ratnam films, A R Rahman's music and lyrics penned by poets like Vairamuthu and Vaali.

My secondary school education at CHIJ St Theresa's Convent (STC) was made special due to the warmth of the teachers with a strong sense of community spirit. I found friends for life with whom I spent many memorable moments. One such memorable moment was the commemoration of Racial Harmony Day in

2002. Celebrations began in the evening with a mass dance showcasing various ethnic groups with their colourful outfits, followed by a theatre performance, mock wedding ceremonies and food stalls with delicious thosai, kueh and popiah!

Following the release of my GCE 'O' level results, I secured a place in Anderson Junior College where I took English Literature, Economics and Geography – subjects which opened my mind to several global issues. It was here that I honed my public speaking skills as a member of the Gavel Club, a subsidiary of the Toastmasters Club. My junior college life, especially the first year, provided me with opportunities to attend all-arts events and exposed me to a multitude of different cultures.

To quote a wise teacher, "Life is akin to the economic cycles of boom and bust. We all have our fair share of fun and tough times."



**Azeena Badarudeen** graduated from the National University of Singapore (NUS) in 2009 and enjoys writing in her free time. She has been an IWA member since 2015.

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The collage features several images: a woman in a traditional Indian lehenga, a woman wearing a gold necklace with a large blue stone, a man in a blue kurta, a man in a grey vest, and a man in a red vest. There are also close-up shots of a clutch bag and a small decorative object.



# NEW EXPERIENCES AND LEARNINGS

 It was a bright sunny day that Saturday. It was a very special day for me as I was looking forward to my first experience at selling. I had my very own stall at the Sentosa Kidz Flea. I was very excited to be the boss of my own stall and manage everything on my own, with little help from my family. I was going to sell a lot of interesting things at my stall, some of which I had made by myself. My stall had friendship bracelets, pencil stands, door hangers and tiny colourful showpieces. There were lots of stalls at the Kidz Flea; each one was managed by children. I made many friends there. There was lots of laughter and happiness all around.

All the things at my stall were very well liked by the people. I sold most of my stuff by the end of the day. My parents asked me if I would like to give a part of my earnings to charity. They explained to me that it was for special children who could not do all the things my friends and I could do. Thinking of all the fun I was having, I felt that all children should

be happy and I gave part of my earnings for charity. All the money collected from charity at the Kidz Flea this year would be given to the Autism Association (Singapore).



My parents always tell me that we can learn many things by experiencing them and from our surroundings. That day I learnt a lot of things – about working hard, about selling, about giving to charity. The Sentosa Kidz Flea was a wonderful learning experience and above all, a whole lot of fun!

*Hi! My name is Aditya Chatterjee. I am a student of Primary 2 at Sembawang Primary School. I love playing outdoors with my friends, skating and music.*

## BOOKS

*Books are my best friend  
They always talk about tales and trend.  
I have fifty and more  
With stories of near and far shore.  
I buy them from the mall  
Some are big and some are small.  
There are thousands of books in store  
So read one every day and still there will be more.  
Books give you so much wisdom  
And they are bad seldom.  
Some might be Lexicons or Encyclopaedia  
In the form of hard copy or Multimedia.  
Keep reading always, that's the key  
This will help to set your mind free.*



*By Abiya Syed  
Age - 9 Years  
NPS International School, Singapore*



# A THRILLING RIDE

by Shreya Gupta

"Have fun!" my mom called out cheerfully.

My brother, dad and I, all happily waved one hand to my mom. It was a bright and sunny day. I could hear the excited kids talking, laughing and enjoying their ride. While the instructor was talking, I glanced over and saw my mom with her camera, facing us. She had already experienced bungee a few years ago, so she decided to take pictures this time. We were all buckled up tightly.

"Remember to pull the string." my dad reminded me.

"Yeah, I'll remember" I replied excitedly. This is going to be so much fun!!( I thought to myself.) "5, 4, 3, 2.. 1!!" the instructor yelled.

The bungee ride started to rise up a little. This is not so scary, I thought. But I still had butterflies in my stomach. We were going higher and higher, up in the air. My hands started to shake a bit. I gave my mom a huge smile, while we were all suspended in mid-air. Suddenly, my dad and brother were yelling at me saying, "Pull the string! Pull the string!!" What string?? I thought to myself. But then I remembered. "Oh yeah!" I yanked the yellow string immediately. Before I got a chance to look down, I was in the air, flying more than 60 feet up, feeling like a bird.

"Ahhh!!!" We all screamed.

"THIS IS SUCH FUN!!" I screamed with joy.

I was trembling with excitement and the adrenaline rush. We zoomed left to right then straight into the air. We swooped across the sky. We were zooming in the sky as fast as a cheetah on the ground."



"WHEEEEEE!!! I shouted.

But suddenly we were going as fast as...nothing. The ride came to a stop and we all had to get out. What!!!???? So soon. I thought to myself. "NOOOO!!!, Why did the ride have to end so soon?!" my brother and I whined.

"It's okay, at least you had fun right?" asked my mom.

"Of course!!" I replied cheerfully.

"Let's go to another ride!!" my mom said joyfully.

As we strolled to our next ride I thought of how scared I had been in the beginning. Now I learned that I should be brave enough to try new rides.

**Shreya Gupta**, an 11-year-old student currently studying at SAS (Singapore American School) who loves to travel around the world with her family.



Akshandha's special rangoli made on the table at the entrance of the Festive Bazaar while waiting for her mother to take her home.



# "Be a Bollywood Buddy"

by *Bhanu Raju*

*"Put music to our troubles and we will dance them away."*

It was to provide just such an opportunity to the domestic workers from the Humanitarian Organisation of Migration Economics (H.O.M.E.) shelter, that IWA organised a 'Be a Bollywood Buddy' event on 5th April 2016. The aim of the event was for members to spend an afternoon as buddies to the ladies from the H.O.M.E. shelter, enjoying a good time together through the medium of Bollywood dance. About 28 IWA members participated in the event, hosting 25 women from the shelter.

Recognising the therapeutic effect of dressing up, IWA team had thoughtfully organised a dress-up session for the guests from HOME, providing bangles, bindis and duppattas, helping to deck up the ladies and taking their pictures. The H.O.M.E. ladies enjoyed this session, trying out all the accessories and posing for the camera like excited teenagers. A special guest livened up the proceedings with his inanimate yet magnetic presence – Pakistani Bollywood star Fawad Khan, in a cut-out standee! While the HOME ladies excitedly posed for pictures with Fawad, our very own IWA ladies were not to be outdone, making a beeline for selfies!

It was only when the music struck up with the latest catchy numbers, that Fawad was finally left alone. Our Bollywood dance facilitator for the day, well known choreographer and dance guru Sampada Tayal, had planned warm-up activities to get people on to the dance floor and pair up the IWA members with their H.O.M.E. 'buddies'. Surprisingly no ice-breaker was required, as the H.O.M.E. ladies shed their inhibitions the moment they heard the music and took to the dance floor with gusto, flooring the rest of us! After a few warm up numbers that helped get the adrenaline going, Sampada

guided us step by step through the peppy number 'Aaj blue hai paani paani'. She kept the steps simple so that those with two left feet could keep up with the right-footed, but also energetic and fun. The idea was to enjoy a workout while feeling a sense of accomplishment by learning a full dance item. The bonding and warm vibes between the IWA and H.O.M.E. ladies was palpable, as they danced together. Sampada threw a challenge in the end to see who could perform the item independently and it was no surprise to see several of the H.O.M.E. ladies come forward.

We also played a game of musical dumb-charades using typical Bollywood props such as bangles and pots, wherein the IWA ladies gently guided their buddies to enact the songs. The game led to a lot of shared fun and laughter.

By the time lunch was served we were more than ready for it. Our H.O.M.E. guests enjoyed sharing the Indian lunch with us, and went back with not only bindis and bangles but also a lingering excitement and cheerful mood. As a special treat they received a framed photograph of themselves along with an IWA buddy. We will never forget their happy smiles. We hope that the camaraderie and happy vibes of the event will help them to stay positive in the face of their hardships.



**Bhanu Raju**, a Bollywood dance enthusiast, was fortunate to enjoy this event both as a member as well as the choreographer's assistant. And yes, she did get a nice selfie with Fawad!

## A Day at SWAMI Home

by *Shradha Singh*

Like every quarterly visit to Swami Home, I was excited to meet our elderly friends on the 18th of April 2016. This time it was special for me as I was sponsoring birthday gifts for 15 residents.

Preparation for our visit started with shopping for decorations and birthday gifts. The gifts were wrapped and taken on the day of the event. Some of the IWA team members including the Chairperson Raji Viswanathan, reached the venue early to decorate the common area and set the scene for the party. The celebrations started with some basic motor skills enhancing games which the elders really enjoyed as it revived their spirit of participation and competition. This was followed by peppy Bollywood songs by IWA music enthusiasts who engaged the elders in music and dance. The high point of the celebration was the cake cutting by the elders who had their birthdays in the last quarter and each of them was given a birthday gift personally by the volunteers. It was worth a million bucks to see some of the smiles we got as we distributed the cake.

Since this was the first visit of the year, we were treated to some yummy vegetarian lunch by the management and also given a tour of the home. We watched a video of the home which gave the history of the institution and the daily routine of the elderly. Coming from India where in my college days I had stayed in a hostel above an old age home which was really badly maintained, I was really

impressed with the facilities that the Swami Home residents enjoy like gym, physiotherapy, games and their own talent show besides basics like good nutritious food and medical care. It was a highly interactive and informative session.

Some of the elders miss having personalised human interaction and that's why IWA has decided to introduce an 'Adopt a Grandparent' program. It will give some of us a chance to visit "adopted" elderly friends at regular intervals if possible with family and give them the warmth of love that they need.

Since I lost my grandparents early in life, I have always craved to have their presence and this would be a nice opportunity to connect again with a generation that's so loving. I just can't wait to start my next adventure at Swami Home with my own grandparent.

What about you?



**Shradha Singh** has been an IWA member since 2014 and is active in the Music Club and Community Service.



# Beyond SOCIAL SERVICES

by Aditi Pathak

I was recently part of a volunteering activity with Beyond Social Services (BSS). I had heard about this opportunity through the IWA newsletter. IWA has been collaborating with BSS for the last 3 years organising Science is Fun workshops, art and craft sessions, storytelling sessions and even a soccer match on the request of the young boys. Upon looking further into this I found out that BSS works to support underprivileged children and their families through Social, Educational and Community Support programmes. IWA and BSS have collaborated on several fun learning and educational activities for young children. I was quite intrigued and decided to sign up for the activity which was to sort and pack the donations. I was not sure what exactly would be expected but I went along as it would mean me doing at least a little bit to support a good cause.

I recall turning up and happily finding my newly made friend ~ through a previous IWA event! Soon more ladies from IWA with donated items turned up. I recall thinking how nice it was that there was such a healthy amount of donated items. Little did I know that there was an entire row of items sitting inside the BSS office and that all of it had to be sorted on the day itself! Yet I noticed that everyone

around was calm and relaxed and enjoying light chitchat. After an introduction on how the items were to be sorted, we got straight to it. As the collection drive was specifically for children aged between six and twelve years, the items were all carefully sorted. The rest of the items would be used by BSS at future events.

During the entire time, there was not a dull moment! We cooed over cute baby dresses and used mutual consensus over reusability when there was any doubt about an item! I was surrounded by women at their best ~ collaborating, problem solving and partnership working! It has always been my belief that a progressive happy society is one where we work together and support one another and nowhere else could I have found a better example of this! We laughed, we joked, we shared stories and somewhere amidst all this, we finished ALL the sorting! It was truly remarkable and a very happy moment for us all. On reflection, the experience was like being enveloped in a bubble of positive energy which left us with happy memories to cherish forever.



*I moved to Singapore in 2014. Back in London, I worked in the Social Care Sector where I truly understood the truth about fulfillment achieved through helping others. Since moving to Singapore I have rekindled my love for the arts. I look forward to all that Singapore has in store for me and making new friends at IWA :)*

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# Of Coffee, Conversations and Camaraderie with the IWA ENTREPRENEUR CLUB

by Richa Joshi-Kaul and Sudeshna Chatterjee



**"The only source of knowledge is experience." - Albert Einstein**

This was the thought with which the IWA Entrepreneur Club held its signature networking event, "Coffee Mixer – Entrepreneurial Stories" in March 2016. It was an opportunity to meet likeminded individuals, share a coffee and learn something from others' experience about what it takes to run a business. Nothing too serious, nothing too boring - just a whole lot of fun with learning to boot.

The mixer was conceived as a panel discussion with four IWA members talking about their entrepreneurial journeys - about what inspired them to start their business, the opportunities and challenges they encountered on the way, the strategies they employ, their struggles and successes, the lessons they learnt and the vision they have for their business.

The session was sold out and saw over 50 attendees – from women with established businesses to those who were budding entrepreneurs, from the field of arts, food, merchandising, consulting, counselling, recruiting, alternative healing therapies, to name a few.

As the event kicked off, the attendees networked and exchanged notes about their work, interests and everyone seemed very excited for the session to start. The moderator, Vibha Gauba, put forth a series of questions to the panelists and it was a discussion packed with practical advice and good insights on running a business.

Kumuda Kroovidi, Co-founder and Director - Strokearts Studio, an ex-finance professional who followed her passion for painting, underlined the importance of chasing opportunities and why it is important to give your business at least 5 years as she talked about her vision and challenges.

We also got some interesting tips on the significance of motivating and retaining employees from Nirmala Kodemela, Director, Ace International Group, a company in the relocation and logistics business. She talked about taking immense pride in her all-women team and had the audience in splits when she quipped that her husband was initially not too keen on that idea!

On being asked what her key message was for women entrepreneurs in the room, Vinnie Mehta, Founder - Nanos Arte, a venture that turns kids' art into merchandise, spoke about planning your weekly agendas. She gave some extremely useful advice on outsourcing and how it helps the business and also touched on the importance of test marketing.

Amita Agrawal, Director - Amore Creations which offers art-and-craft

classes, inspired the audience when her belief in herself shone through as she spoke about chasing one's passion with utmost conviction as she had done with acquiring expertise across various forms of art, how she believes in continuously learning and the importance of self-belief as a mindset which keeps one going.

This was followed by a lively Q&A session between the audience and panelists and the latter impressed everyone with their responses and helpful suggestions.

The event wrapped up with everyone chatting over refreshments and discussing the takeaways from the day. One attendee said that this platform was inspiring, interactive and relevant to personal and entrepreneurial growth; while another noted that the event was very resourceful and the advice could be taken back and implemented to improve their business.

The IWA Entrepreneur Club is working on bringing more such meaningful exchanges for everyone this year. Hope to see you at one of our upcoming sessions!



**Richa** has been living in Singapore for the last 4 years and is a freelance business analyst who loves travelling, reading and enjoys cooking. She is also the co-chair of the IWA Entrepreneur Club.



# IWA BOOK CLUB

by Anila Sivakumaran

I am Anila, a bookworm since the age of six. I am from India but have lived on and off in Singapore for the last 27 years. A mom to three beautiful kids, I love travelling with my family too. As a reader my imagination runs riot and feel I am in the place where the story is situated. So when I actually visit these places it feels as if I have been there before.

At the IWA Book Club this experience is even more fulfilled because on my own I would not have read some of the books.

This month we read the famous 1960 classic "To Kill A Mocking Bird" by Harper Lee. Unfortunately, the author's demise was just announced as we started the book. So, the meeting at one of our members home was like a tribute in memory of Ms. Lee.

Now, about our meeting itself, its a pleasure to meet regularly once a month with other members of the club. One of them usually hosts at their home with great enthusiasm. The chairperson of the club begins the meeting by introducing the book and lets one of us begin by giving an introduction and opinion of the book. Then each one of us gets 5 minutes to review the book. This is an eye opener for me that others can analyze and perceive a book so well and also to see the various opinions and angles of the book. Although we do not agree sometimes, every opinion is taken with a pinch of teasing and laughter.

On this book itself, the opinions were unanimously like/love the book. It was agreed upon that it is a book on prejudice with well crafted situations. Many felt they saw similarities with the charming protagonist and the situations and that they were close to what is in India or their own home. Some of them who had read it as teenagers felt they understood the book differently as an adult and that every character was portrayed maturely. Whether innocence or evil or kindness, each of the characters stood strongly on their own.



There is usually a lunch provided by the hostess and this time she decided to go by the book's theme of southern states of America...mashed potato, corn bread, cajun rice, chili, corn-on-the-cob. Such yummy food!! There is also an informal after-meeting talk on a lot of subjects, current and personal experiences which one can enjoy if one has the time. There is no rush or obligation to go or stay. It is very casual and very stimulating to the mind to spend time with my co-book lovers.

Thanks IWA for keeping this going :)  
Heres to a lot more good reads and gatherings.

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# STRESS IN CHILDREN: WHEN SHOULD WE BE CONCERNED

by Neeta Kapoor

**A**s parents, most of us might recognize the level of stress in children to be at a lower level or even insignificant when compared to what they experience. Several studies conclude that the concern about rising stress levels in children is not unfounded. Not only could children be worrying about examinations or making friends or being popular amongst their peers but they could be facing situations of adjustment in a new environment with family moves, family relationship issues, social media pressures, prevailing global terrorism threats or even grief of losing someone close. Therefore it is not surprising that the "stress" that we once could see as an unavoidable part of life that could bring out positive outcomes is to be viewed with caution as it could cross the boundary of tolerable levels even if there is a supportive and caring environment provided by adults.

It will be worthwhile to ask ourselves, "How will we know that it is getting difficult for my child to handle the stress level?" Children especially the younger ones may find it difficult to express their worrying thoughts that have the potential of manifesting as anxiety disorder. These unhelpful negative thoughts can produce certain changes at a physical level or emotional level or even both. Physical symptoms could include frequent headaches, vague pains, changes in eating habits, bedwetting, sleep disturbance, nightmares and stammering. Emotional symptoms could include excessive worrying, withdrawal from friends and family, extreme behaviours like uncontrollable weeping, aggression, clinginess,

trouble concentrating, development of new fears, keeping away from school activities, regression to early development behaviours and more serious self harm acts and ideation.

When faced with concerning situations most parents tend to reflect on their parental responsibilities. Many a times school is able to give feedback that could validate our own observations. An encouraging approach in communication that allows our child to share and express is needed here. A positive and rewarding technique must be an automatic choice over a punitive one. Setting unrealistic expectations is another aspect that needs to be reviewed. It is not uncommon to find children having a very busy and over scheduled itinerary day after day. Another alert is that it is our own stress handling mechanism that needs to be corrected many a time. Parents are the role models to children early in life and children don't just adopt our good behaviours but pick up the unpleasant ones. It is commonly known that children learn much from what parents are than what parents teach.

Simpler modifications like playing a physical sport together and spending

relaxing time with our children is a good start to developing a positive and healthy relation that prevents stress to take deep root into the child's life. There could be more challenging situations to work on like monitoring child's access to media and setting boundaries for social media interactions. A more helpful approach will be mindfully providing entertainment choices that are more inclusive of the family.

As parents, our goal is to be able to bring up healthy children who can make conscientious choices and live their life independently as responsible adults. At times we may find it challenging to reduce the stress in children due to complexity of the situation, it is then our responsibility to seek professional help. A professional counsellor can help us explore different ways of looking at the challenge that gives a clearer perspective and awareness on resolving the difficulty. It is out of love and care that we acknowledge that we need to do things differently and it is through this journey that much learning and healing happens. Being a parent is said to be one of the greatest joys that one can get out of life's journey that has an equal share of challenges and fulfillment.



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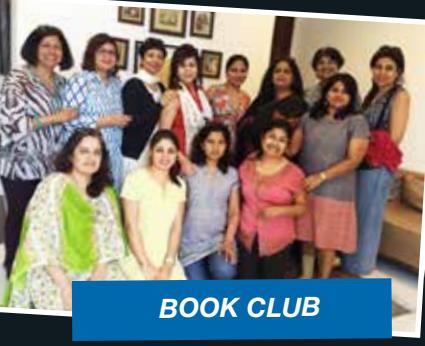
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