

University Women

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From the President's Desk....

This has been an action filled month for Women Graduates Union. On Saturday, 27th February, the Centenary Celebration Seminar on '**Women's Empowerment through Law**' was held. We were fortunate to get legal luminaries like **Mrs. Sujata Manohar**, Former Judge, Supreme Court, **Mrs. Roshan Dalvi**, Former Judge, Bombay High Court and **Mrs. Rajani Iyer**, Senior Counsel, Bombay High Court as our speakers. Amy Rustomjee Hall was filled to capacity with our members, guests and IFUWA delegates. The talk by all three speakers was very well received and was followed by questions and answers.

Government Law College students enacted a few skits on relevant legal topics. This contribution to the morning's programme was much appreciated.

The task of compiling the history of WGU from 1986 to 2015 was taken on by **Jayashri Basak**. **Dr. Padhye** compiled the history of IFUWA over the same period. The history of WGU from 1915 to 1985 had been chronicled by Mrs. Deena Ahmedullah. All three sections have been combined into one book. This book named '**A Hundred Year Journey**' was released on the 27th morning by **Dr. Meena Muthiah**, President of IFUWA. The morning's events were followed by a lunch in our Dining Hall.

The Central Committee Meetings of the IFUWA were held on the 27th and 28th so that the delegates who came from eight different cities could participate in the seminar. The inaugural session of the Central Committee Meeting was held on the 27th afternoon at the Amy Rustomjee Hall.

The Annual Fund Raising Dinner and entertainment was held on the same evening on the lawns of the Radio Club. The ambience was superb and the evening was a great success.

The second session of the CC Meeting was held on Sunday morning and was followed by a lovely leisurely lunch which allowed the delegates to interact informally.

All these programmes necessarily meant a lot of work. Members came in unstintingly and worked for long hours. Sometimes, everyone worked in silence, and sometimes there was a lot of animated discussion and exchange of anecdotes. Many meals were had in the dining room. Friendships grew and strengthened, as did our bonds with WGU.

- **Nandita Singh**

WGU Centenary Seminar

In celebration of the Centenary of Women Graduates Union, a Seminar on **Women's Empowerment through Law** was organised on February 27, 2016 and held in the Amy Rustomjee Hall to a packed audience of nearly 200 attendees.

This unique seminar brought together a galaxy of legal experts, among India's foremost women lawyers, to inform us of the changing scenario as well as the ongoing hurdles in ensuring justice for women at home and in the work place. The seminar was addressed by **Sujata Manohar**, former Judge of the Supreme Court, **Rajani Iyer**, Senior Advocate of the Bombay High Court and **Roshan Dalvi**, former Judge of the Bombay High Court.

The ceremonial lamp being lit, the gathering was welcomed by WGU President **Nandita Singh** who outlined the many activities and projects being undertaken by WGU towards women's higher education and equal status in society, towards fulfilling the goals of the original founders. This was followed by the release of the Book '**A Hundred Year Journey**', an account of the history of WGU by **Jayashri Basak** and **Dr. Sudha Padhye**.

Seminar Chairman **Swarn Kohli** who had had a fall and was unable to be present, in her recorded message proposed dedicating the seminar to all those who carried the baton of WGU's proud history of service to women, significantly, to obtain representation in public bodies and lobbying for legislation to secure social justice for women, while enhancing women's awareness of the importance of legislation in their lives.

Our first Guest Speaker **Justice Sujata Manohar** highlighted the broader perspective of the importance of economic empowerment of women towards a more just society, the current handicaps and the legal protection against discrimination in several areas available to women. She also emphasized the need for educated women to play a key role in improving implementation of laws.

The next Guest Speaker, **Senior Advocate Rajani Iyer**, while infusing her informative message with a large and welcome dose of humour, nevertheless provoked us to think, with a number of examples, about the complex forms of discrimination women continue to face in the workplace, the double edged impact of affirmative action and the role of educated women in taking a stand to fight these challenges. **Justice Roshan Dalvi** further informed those present about different legal and social aspects of gender perspectives, gender equality and affirmative action, with numerous

examples, such as, a trained female Make-up artist's case of being disallowed membership of the hitherto all male Make-up Artists Association, School Rugby camps for boys only, excluding girls who might well want to play the game and be good at it too, and many more.

The legal knowledge and hugely rich repository of judicial decision making processes and experiences, that our respected speakers shared was indeed a priceless gift; with the overall message to women that as we continue to become more empowered by existing laws of the land, it is imperative that we unite to bring about further changes for our protection and equal status.

Vice President **Havovi Gandhi** proposed a Vote of Thanks especially for those who had provided their services for the seminar as well as Tata Sons for their support.

Bringing the event to a close was a short skit performance by a group of law students from the Government Law College, depicting mindsets towards women that are in need of change.

Annual Fund Raising Event

The Programme Committee of Women Graduates Union organized an enjoyable evening of music and dance on the lush green Paradise Lawn of the prestigious Radio Club on Saturday, February 27, 2016. This event was attended not only by the delegates attending the Central Committee Meeting of IFUWA, but also by the members and friends of WGU.

After the appropriate Invocation song by '**The Watts Band**', the Vice President and Chairman of the Programme and Fund Raising Committee, **Havovi Gandhi** welcomed the gathering of delegates from the UWAs of Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai, Pune, Vadodara, Bengaluru and Thiruvananthapuram. She reiterated the goal of WGU and Indian Federation of University Women, namely, the empowerment of women through education. In her welcome address, President **Nandita Singh** expressed her satisfaction at the varied, excellent and successful activities of WGU, Mumbai.

The highlight of the evening was the official honouring of our Chief Guest, the President of IFUWA, **Kumararani Dr. Meena Muthiah**, with a shawl and bouquet. A chocolate cake was cut to celebrate the Centenary Year. The Watts Band then regaled the audience with foot-tapping lively and popular songs - both Hollywood and Bollywood - interspersed with the performances of the magical Rajasthani dances, the

Ghoomer dances, the Thali dance and the ever-popular Garba, a native of Gujarat.

A sumptuous dinner rounded off the memorable evening of undiluted enjoyment and warm fellowship.

International Women's Day Celebration

Women Graduates Union celebrated International Women's Day with a review of the book whose central character is the little-known but fascinating woman, Urmila.

A book reading by the young, smart, up-and-coming author, **Pervin Saket**, took place in the Amy Rustomjee Hall on Wednesday, March 9th, 2016 at 11 a.m.

Pervin is an alumnus of creative writing courses and conducts workshops with children and adults on reading and writing skills. Having published short fiction in various publications and a collection of poems, Pervin was invited to present her first novel, '**URMILA**' to WGU members and guests.

Inspired and intrigued by the story of Laxman's wife, Urmila, in Valmiki's epic 'Ramayana', the author spoke to the audience about being drawn to this little known character, largely ignored by all around her and abandoned by her husband for 14 years. What were her feelings, how did she overcome them, to whom or what could she turn to for solace? Reading extracts from the novel, the author drew moving parallels between the rejected wife of mythology and the central character from the novel, Urmila, the modern woman, in today's world, placed in a similar situation.

Written in simple language, it is an exquisitely moving, gently humourous tale of a central character who battles feelings of rejection and depression to rise victorious and strong at the end. The author elaborated on her desire to explore a common tale through an uncommon hero or an unexplored perspective.

The morning ended after eager discussions between the author and the audience, followed by a sumptuous lunch.

People don't always need advice.. sometimes all they need is a hand to hold on to, an ear that listens, and a heart that truly understands them.....

BOOK REVIEW

WHAT I KNOW FOR SURE

Oprah Winfrey

**"I know for sure:
Your journey begins with
a choice to get up,
step out, and live fully."**

An easy to read book, full of interesting episodes in the life of Oprah Winfrey, it focuses on the most important aspects of life, of values and virtues to make each one's life more meaningful and fulfilling.

She was once asked in a TV interview by a film critic to spell out what she knew for sure, and was at the time totally taken by surprise or at a complete loss for words. But later on reflection, she realised that there was much she was certainly sure of in life, which she shares with readers.

For fourteen years she then wrote a column in O magazine every month with the title, "What I Know for Sure", which she draws from to compile this book.

She emphatically states that what she knows for sure is that every day brings a chance for each one to draw in a breath, kick off one's shoes, and step out and dance. In other words, she advises everyone to live free of regret and filled with as much joy, fun and laughter as one can stand.

Born out of wedlock in 1953, she records her birth as marked with regret, hiding and shame. She was a lonely child and learnt the hard way that: We are each responsible for our own life. She states that if you are holding anyone else accountable for your happiness, you are wasting your time. She urges readers to leave the past behind and heal one's self; to pave one's own road, to keep moving, full speed ahead.

For years Oprah hid the fact that she was sexually abused from the age of 10 to 14. She became pregnant at 14, gave birth to a child that died in hospital weeks later, went back to school and told no one, living in constant fear of discovery, disgrace and rejection. Years later when a family member leaked the information to the tabloids, she was devastated, felt wounded and betrayed. People continued to treat her the same, which finally made her realise that having the secret out was liberating. She could then stop

blaming herself for her past and forget the constant fear she was living with for years.

She admits that she is often amazed at the progress she has made and how successful she has become from such a daunting start, with all the odds against her. Sharing all this with others is satisfying and at the same time an act of sheer bravery.

Her early religious experiences guide her to lead a happier, more fulfilling and a helpful life, while spreading her secrets of living successfully.

Do get a copy and read it.

Ed.

“I think that no matter how old and infirm I may become, I will always plant a garden in the spring. Who can resist the feelings of hope and joy that one gets from participating in nature's rebirth?”

-Edward Giobbi
