

WTB PROGRAM MINUTES – APRIL 19, 2026

“Sarees: 6 Yards of Tradition” Jowonio School, 2-4 pm

As we gathered on a cold, cloudy Sunday, we sampled finger foods and snacks from India, and chatted with friends old and new. President Lorraine Markley opened the meeting at 2:15 pm. She welcomed everyone, shared general information about WTB and read WTB’s mission statement. She then introduced Smita Rane—a long time WTB member who was gracious to share her heritage of the saree with us.

Smita brought a table full of gorgeous sarees and she showed us most of them as she went through her PowerPoint presentation, “Saree—The Timeless Elegance”. Sarees have been worn by women in India and some of its neighboring countries. The tradition of the saree goes back almost 5000 years. Originally the saree had no blouse. Sarees are not just a piece of fabric—they are emotion, tradition and culture. Length of saree is 6 yards or 9 yards plus one yard for the blouse. Each of the many regions of India has its own particular style of saree—these often reflect the climate, art and culture of that geographic area. Smita showed us a lovely, hand-painted white saree from Kerala, a southern area that is hot and humid. Sarees worn by dancers in each state often are heavy so they are pre-stitched. The half-saree worn in the Southern part of India; as the name indicates it is a half saree worn with pleated long skirt and blouse. The huge Indian film industry influences the popularity of different styles of sarees and blouses.

Sarees can be worn at home, office work, but especially for festivals, weddings, housewarmings, parties and other occasions. Wedding sarees are very thick and heavy; usually come in the culturally auspicious colors of yellow, red, or green. Poorest poor people can also afford to buy sarees; keeping these people in mind the sarees starting price is 3 dollars, these are very simple nylon sarees. Prices go higher depending upon the quality of fabric and other elements added while weaving. Generally, silks, embroidered, hand painted sarees are expensive; ranges few hundred dollars to thousands of dollars. Very expensive sarees have gold, silver threads. When the saree is worn out, the precious metal can be obtained by burning the saree.

So far, the most expensive saree is valued at \$43,000 and weighs 16 pounds and it made it to the Guinness Book of World Records.

Women who wear a sari every day can wrap one in about 2 minutes! It takes Smita 5-7 minutes—but for those less familiar it can be a lengthy process. Smita showed us the pieces of the saree and then used a video to demonstrate how to drape it. Sarees consist of a piece of fabric (often bordered) six yards long, a blouse made from 1 yard of a different material, often 3 safety pins to hold the draping. Sarees are pleated as they are draped. A slip is worn under the garment. Danya showed us her lovely pink sari--she had the pleats sewn in permanently when

the saree was made. Blouses can be expensive to make; they come in different styles and are easy to mix and match with saree.

Every woman has a special relationship with the saree. Girls can start wearing a sari when they wish these days—but they usually begin about when they leave college, or when they are getting ready for marriage. Smita's sister-in-law showed a gorgeous hand-beaded saree given to her by her husband at their wedding over 50 years ago... sarees like this are passed down from mother to daughter through the generations. Women share sarees freely with family and friends. No saree goes to waste—the fabric is recycled into other garments or textile items.

As the meeting wound down, Smita spoke about many of the lovely, colorful sarees she had brought to display. The meeting was adjourned about 3:40 pm.

Thanks go out to Smita sharing the rich culture of the saree with all of us!

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Bova,

Sunday Secretary