



**North American Sankethi Association (NASA)**  
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November 15, 2004

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Dear Sankethi Family and Friends,

A new Board of Directors (BOD) for 2004 – 2006 was elected at the July 4, 2004 weekend NASA Get-Together in MD, USA. Their portfolios are listed on the margin. I feel privileged to be elected President of this vibrant and unique organization. First and foremost, I would like to thank all of you for this honor.

NASA, as most of you know, has grown from a handful of members twenty years ago to an organization with more than 140 Life Members today. That it has not only survived, but succeeded as a well-knit entity, in spite of skepticism from some, is in itself a tribute to you all and to the leadership of the previous BODs, and is a testament to its continued existence.

The wealth of talent and enthusiasm of NASA members, especially among the young, and the BOD is unmatched. We expect to bring some exciting programs in the years ahead.

The BOD's immediate goal is to encourage Regional Get-Togethers of Sankethis. The first one of this kind was NAVARATHRI festival which was celebrated on a grand scale on Oct 23, 2004 at Ved Mandir in New Jersey. A large number of members, their families and friends took part in the Festival. The entertainment, cultural, informational and other activities were of a high order. The dinner, of course, was superb. More details on this successful event are found elsewhere in this Newsletter.

Events are being planned for Raleigh-Charlotte NC corridor (late 2004/early 2005), Detroit-Cleveland-Chicago area (Spring 2005) and California. Our Annual Get-Together is slated for Jul 4 2005 weekend, as usual. We are scouting for a possible new location. Details will follow.

Our membership growth rate is rather slow. We would like to see it grow at least at 5 % yearly. I believe it is modest and with your help we can achieve it. Please encourage those you know to become Life members.

NASA will be 25 years young in 2009. We have established two specific major goals for this event. First, we would like to start building a Silver Jubilee Fund. Secondly, we would like to have a NASA Center in place by 2009. We seek your inputs on both these ideas. We realize both are lofty projects. With your encouragement and financial support we are confident we can do it.

The BOD invites your suggestions, advice and guidance on any NASA related matters that you think ought to be addressed. Please feel free to contact any of the Board members. We count on each and every one of you for continued growth and success of NASA. Thank you.

Sincerely Yours,  
K.V. Srikantiah, President

## **Report of Activities from the 2004 General Body Meeting**

The report that follows was graciously written by Dr.K.K.Murthy,Vice President of the Kowshika Sankethi Sangha of Mysore.

As a visitor from India, I had the opportunity to attend and participate in the 20th anniversary of NASA held in New Windsor during July 2-4, 2004. This is my first ever attendance at a NASA annual gathering. I record my impressions briefly. These "impressions" are neither a chronological report nor a description of activities that took place. They represent a brief overall impression.

I was treated like an honored guest representing one of the older Sankethi organizations - the Kowshika Sankethi Sangha, Mysore, and accorded leadership status by the President of NASA and its Board of Directors, for which I, wife Padma, and daughter Ranjana are appreciative and grateful. It was a unique and pleasant experience to witness NASA's work from a personal and mother organization's perspective. We are most thankful to NASA for this.

The three day celebration (July 2,3 and 4) was a judicious mix of cultural, religious, social, educational, and networking activities, which were both absorbing and entertaining. The organization of all the activities had been meticulous and efficient. The food was tasty, roots-oriented and of typical Sankethi flavor. The participation of youth in all the activities was significant, which is a laudable and refreshing feature. We in India envy the large-scale involvement of youth in NASA activities.

The cultural program consisted of two excellent classical music concerts by -- Sangeetha Kalanidhi R.K.Sreekantan and son Ramakant (on the 3rd), Srimathi Vasantha Madhavi (on the 1st). These Sankethi artists were specially flown from India. They were excellent treats in Karnatic music and the appreciative audience was mesmerized by the artists. Both the concerts were ably accompanied by Sandhya Srinath on the violin and Srinath on the mridangam, a local artist couple. It was most appropriate that the high cultural point was provided by these three Sankethi artists.

The religious part of the program consisted of the daily morning chanting of the Vedas, Slokas, and Sahasranamas. The people who took part were attired in appropriate costumes (silk dhotis and sarees), and it was done with visible shradha and bhakti. The second religious activity was the conduct of Laxmi pooja by children (both female and male) which was done with great care using a specially prepared text giving slokas in Kannada and their meanings in English. The children recited the English meanings of Mantras uttered. This helped to familiarize the devotees with the form and meanings of the pooja ritual. This is most appropriate since young people are often skeptical of rituals without the knowledge of their meanings.

Amongst the many social activities such as sports, fellowship interactions, educative talks, the debate on "What comes first: love or commitment" based on a paper prepared by Laxmi Jayaram and Shubha Dattatri drew high and intense participation. It also brought out to the fore the generation gap in outlook. The younger generation's views are significantly different from that of the older generation. The debate generated divisions and had to conclude without any convergence.

In the entertainment program, the English skit on "Comedians" was really amusing. The Kannada drama 'NENU' written and directed by Dr. M.S. Nataraj, president of NASA was ably enacted. It provided not only entertainment but also food for thought. The drama had a great moral for life - "as problems are born in the minds of people, solutions to them must also to be found in their minds only" appears to be the implied message.

In all, it was an enjoyable meet providing opportunities for fellowship in a sylvan setting conducive for relaxation, reflection, and re-orientation. It had the right mix of nostalgic introspection and futuristic imaginations. I and my wife have had a wonderful time meeting relatives, old friends and students and, striking new friendships and linkages. It was an enchanting experience that made me feel proud to be a Sankethi and meet proud Sankethis. It is a reassurance that Sankethiism (whatever that may be) is alive and kicking.

I would like to conclude with a few observations and comments:

- First, the involvement of youth in all the activities is a refreshing phenomenon which should be preserved and enhanced. The number of young people in the newly elected BOD augers well for the future of NASA.
- Second, the cult of volunteerism demonstrated by the wide-spread sponsorship of events (lunches, dinners, concerts, etc.), many on the spot, is a very healthy trend which should be lauded and preserved.

- Third, the social issues such as matrimony, community's future are best left alone instead of trying to evolve convergence and consensus across generations.
- Fourth, the community has evolved splendidly with better organization and better reach, both in India and in USA, over the last 50 years. It has gained a better focus on community service and needs. This is a positive and emerging trend that augers well for the future.
- Fifth, the younger generation is better equipped to face the evolving socio-cultural changes both in India and in USA. Our small community has survived over dozens of generations, still cherishing its "roots" attributes of self-confidence, self-reliance, and self-sufficiency, as it has weathered migrations of several kinds. Any pessimism and worry about the future of the community is not warranted, as it has evolved successfully.
- Sixth, the future is neither deterministic nor chaotic but evolutionary and non-reversible. We should strive to prepare our youth to face any challenges with a positive attitude.

Lastly, organizations like NASA, KSS, and BSS should inculcate a sense of optimism in the future. One drawback of Indian culture is its regressive view of the passage of time (a past era of utopian Rama Rajya) and, a regression of values from one Yuga to the successive Yuga. This is counter productive and retrograde. Our future is likely to be better than our past and our present. We are better educated and informed to face the transition and should strive to improve such preparedness. The motto could be, "Failure to prepare for change could become preparation for failure."

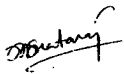
### **Letter from Past President and Thank You to Sponsors**

My Dear Fellow Sankethis of North America,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who attended the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary program and made it a grand success. Honestly, I am a bit overwhelmed by the level of participation and cooperation extended by one and all. The quality and content of the program and food were excellent as expressed by independent observers. There was extensive coverage of the event in Sankethi Sangama, [www.thatskannada.com](http://www.thatskannada.com), and India Abroad newspaper. I received positive feedback on our souvenir, "Vimshati" which also received critical appreciation in [thatskannada.com](http://thatskannada.com). The biggest success of all came in the form of generous, spontaneous and voluntary sponsorships. Most of our major events (like the music concerts) and meals were sponsored by our fellow NASA members. The souvenir was not only self supporting but also made substantial profit (thanks to Aswathanarayana for helping me with the task).

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to all those donors and advertisers (see the lists below) without whose generosity we would not have been financially so successful. I would like to thank the members of my team their families and all the volunteers who strived hard for the success of this memorable event. Thank you all for this opportunity to serve the community.

I wish Sri Srikantiah and his newly elected team of enthusiastic members all the best for a productive term. Let us be proud to be Sankethis



M.S. Nataraja  
Immediate Past NASA President

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## Community News

NASA would like to extend hearty congratulations to the following families:

- Ganesh and Shalini Rao welcomed Jathin Shashikanth, weighing 5 pounds 13 ounces, and measuring 19 inches, on August 25, 2004 at 5:27pm.
- Menaca and Bhaskar Padakandala welcomed Seth Abhishek, weighing 4 pounds 13 ounces, and measuring 17 inches, on Monday, September 20, 2004 at 11:44 am.
- Raghava and Mayura Vishwanathiah welcomed Sindhu, weighing 5 pounds 10 ounces, on October 8, 2004.
- Keshava Datta married Deepa on July 8, 2004 in Mysore, India.
- Niveditha Iyer and Atul celebrated their wedding reception on October 30, 2004 in Raleigh, NC.
- Lakshmi and Jayanth Jayaram welcomed Naveen Krishna, weighing 7 pounds 4 ounces, and measuring 18 ¾ inches, on Monday, November 8, 2004 at 9:41pm.

## Regional Activity

The 2004-2006 NASA Board of Directors was proud to host its first function, in celebration of Navarathri, on October 23, 2004, in Milltown, NJ at the Ved Mandir. The event was attended by about 75 people, and provided an excellent opportunity for participants to enjoy cultural programs and meet other Sankethis. The Board was very pleased to see turnout by both new and veteran members. We hope to continue to encourage organization and attendance of NASA regional functions.

The day started at about noon, with an invocation by Mahathi Keshava Kumar, followed by a group chanting of Lalitha Sahasranama and Lakshmi Ashtothra. The vibrations of the chanting definitely set the mood for the day. This was followed by snacks and a brief social hour. The group reconvened for a talk and presentation by Dr. Jayaraj Mattai on, "Interpretation of Murthis and Symbols in Hinduism". The information was very well presented and provided interesting insights into Hindu symbols.

The cultural program that followed was inspiring, with the participation of children and adults, singing, instrumental music, acting, and dancing. The order of events was as follows:

- Ketaki, Malay and Ameya Shashank sang a Ganapati Bhajan w/ tabla & keyboard accompaniment
- Sheela and Pranav Hanagal presented two narrations from the Maha Bharatha
- Monica and Priyanka sang a Kannada song
- Rekha Magge performed two Karnatic classical songs
- Sheela Nagaraj sang two Karnatic classical songs
- Meera Prasad presented two devotional songs
- Tara Rudrapatna and Ranjini Srikantiah together presented a one-hour dance program in praise of Devi, including a Ganesha piece, a Daru Varnam (Mathe Malayadhwaaja), a Thillana, and a Mangalam.
- Pranav & Mahathi Keshav Kumar presented posters they had made, describing the meaning of Navaratri

While the adults enjoyed a second speaker, Dr. Yelloji Mirajkar, on "Ancient India in the Eyes of Modern Science", the children, led by Prema Kumar and Madhulika Nataraja decorated dolls. The presentation by Dr. Mirajkar was based on archeological research and documented evidence obtained by the use of modern technology. It was really an eye opener to what India was several centuries ago and how its geography has changed with the passage of time. For the doll decorating, Prema and Madhulika had prepared dolls, dresses, decorating supplies, and activities for the children. The evening culminated in a Bombe Aarthi and singing.

NASA thanks both the speakers for their excellent presentations, and all of the cultural program participants, as the day's program was enjoyed by the young and adults alike.

The program was of course, followed by an excellent dinner, which included pakoras, bisi bele bath, aveal, saag paneer, malai kofta, naan, and home-made mosaru-anna.

The New Jersey Regional Get-Together was the first of many the Board of Directors hopes to see in its term. If you are interested in participating in or helping to organize a regional get-together in your area, please contact Mahesh Rao at (919) 423-7369, or [maheshrao\\_99@yahoo.com](mailto:maheshrao_99@yahoo.com).

**Thank You to the Sponsors!**

Drs. K.V. Vishwanatha & Amrutha sponsored the entire Navarathri Festival dinner (value of \$ 410), while Dr. Y.N. Jayaram and Prof. Dathatri contributed \$201 towards the program. NASA thanks them for their generous support, as their support definitely helped to make the program a great success.

**Email and Mailing Address Updates**

The Board of Directors is eager to keep NASA email and mailing addresses updated and current. Please contact Latha Shanthi Ramakrishna or Keshav Kumar with any updates. Also please look for updates via email on use of the services of Plaxo.com to manage member contact information. This service will allow the Board of Directors to periodically send emails to members, requesting any updates to name, address, and contact information.

Thank you all for your continued enthusiasm for and support of NASA. We look forward to a very exciting and productive two years.

Sincerely,

*L Shanthi Ramakrishna*

L. Shanthi Ramakrishna  
General Secretary

## 2004 General Body Meeting Minutes

The 2004 General Body Meeting (GBM) was held at the New Windsor Conference Center, New Windsor MD on Sunday, July 04, 2004.

**Welcome and Roll Call:** The meeting was called to order by Dr. M.S. Nataraja, NASA President, at 2:45pm with 55 members in attendance. Dr. Nataraja welcomed the members to the GBM.

**2003 GBM Minutes:** Dr. S. Sridhara, NASA General Secretary, submitted the 2003 Meeting Minutes, which had been previously published in the NASA Newsletter, for approval by the General Body, after reading highlights of the meeting. Mr. Ashwathanarayana reminded the board that an informational tax return must be filed, regardless of yearly income. Mr. Santhosh Govindaraju, Treasurer, took note of the same. The minutes were approved by a voice vote.

### Reports of the Officers - Treasurer

Mr. Santhosh Govindaraju submitted his report. The yearly balance sheet was distributed to the General Body for their review and approval. Receipts were high, due to money for the Cruise being deposited, and then subsequently refunded. Last year's GBM meeting was profitable. Money is still in the same assets (Money Market and Fidelity), but once the portfolio returns to parity, he will move the money back to a cash position.

As a part of regional activity, NASA funded a DC concert and pooja and sent \$200 to Paschimavahini. The latter generated 3-4 life members. Disbursements for the cruise were more than deposits – due to cost of mailings for the cruise. The apparent discrepancy in the donation account was due to the fact that some of the checks were written in January. Next year's statement should reconcile this apparent discrepancy.

Other questions and topics of discussion from the membership included:

- Mr. Ashwathanarayana questioned why NASA contributed to Paschimavahini, when they have been deemed a separate entity. Dr. Nataraja explained that it was more of an act of goodwill to promote fellowship. He added that even the proceeds from the caps donated to Paschimavahini were donated to Sankethi charitable causes in India. Dr. Ramakrishna noted it was premature to call Paschimavahini the "Western Chapter of NASA." Mr. Ashwathanarayana said that there used to be a West Coast Co-ordinator, but that it appears that tradition has been dropped. He asked when the West Coast Sankethis became a separate organization. Dr. Nataraja explained that, Paschimavahini was an informal group of Sankethis on the West Coast that got together a few times a year and that it was appropriate for NASA to support them, help them, and encourage them in any way possible. He also stated that it was worthwhile to attempt to make Paschimavahina a formal part of NASA.
- Dr. Balakrishna asked why dividend income was so low – Santosh explained that it was because interest rates are so low; we have not seen more money. Dr. Balakrishna felt that the money could be held in CDs with a 1% return.
- Mr. Ashwathanarayana asked why has there been no interest income reported for the \$500 held in reserve. Mr. Sundaresan explained that this was per the bylaws due to the nature of the fund.

Prof. Dathatri made a motion to accept the financials; Srinivas Sridhara seconded the motion, and the motion passed by voice vote.

### Reports of the Officers – General Secretary

Dr. Sridhara presented his report. The board published 6 newsletters over the term and had same number of BOD meetings. The goals which were set forth included: delight the community, get everyone together, and promote regional activities. He said the board has been successful in these areas. Referring to the results from a panel discussion prepared by Srinivas Sridhara – Dr. Sridhara said NASA had pursued a number of activities. He made a suggestion to reserve one full day for social activities during the annual meeting. He also noted that the [www.Sankethi.org](http://www.Sankethi.org) website has been updated on a regular basis. He reported that NASA was blessed with many donations from the General membership, at which time he listed all those who sponsored meals. Dr. Sridhara thanked the members of the BOD for their help in planning activities for the GBM. He also thanked Madras Palace for catering, and hoped the food met the approval of the General Body.

Dr. Balakrishna made a motion to accept the report; Dr. Keshaviah seconded the motion, and the motion passed by voice vote.

### Report on Board of Trustees (BOT)

Review of the concept of a Board of Trustees had been worked on and published by Dr. Ramakrishna in the souvenir article. Voting will occur on this topic next year. The idea for a Board of Trustees originated with panel discussions organized by Shubha Dathatri and Srinivas Sridhara. The desire was to have a way to focus on more than just the yearly activities, also on long-term initiatives, as there is sometimes need for more than 2 years to complete a project. The BOT should provide continuity for more long-term plans.

Term of four years for BOT members had been proposed, with members elected on a staggered basis. The overlap of two trustees should provide more continuity. The issue of how integrate the BOT with the constitution and current BOD are still to be determined. The 2005 General Body meeting will include an official vote on a resolution to create a BOT.

The subject was opened to a brief discussion with no vote by General Body. Points raised are listed below:

- Mr. Balakrishna questioned if four people would be enough? Perhaps need to have more like six or seven people.

- Mr. Bhaskar Padakandala asked why not have the BOT elected next year? The answer from the Board of Directors was to ensure that BOT members are elected the same year there is a Board of Directors election, so that other years will allow the General Body Meeting to accommodate other business.
- Mr. Ashok Rudrapatna questioned the division of responsibilities between the BOT and BOD? Hierarchy? It was noted that the BOD should be independent, in regard to any business having to do with activities within the two years. The BOT will be responsible for long-term vision – then pass off to the BOD for implementation.
- Mr. Ashwathanarayana said he supports the BOT. He suggested that the Chairman of the BOT be a non-voting member of the BOD, so as not to create a power struggle between the two groups. (The BOT concept will have to include changes to the Constitution to accommodate this.)

#### Old and Unfinished Business – Review of the Bylaws

A committee should be formed to conduct a review of the Constitution. In 2000, although a review of the bylaws document was conducted (this forms a baseline), there are still concerns which need to be reviewed. This issue needs to be addressed by the new Board of Directors, with an update submitted to the GBM by December 31, 2004.

#### New Business - Proposed Amendment:

AMENDMENT # 1: Amend the current text of Article III (8) (A) of the bylaws to read as follows:

##### **\*8. MEMBERSHIP DUES**

- There shall be a single category of members called Life Members.  
Any person desirous of becoming a life member shall contribute a sum of US\$200.00 payable in one or more installments of not less than US\$50.00 within a period of one year from the date of the initial payment.
- In the case of a married couple, both husband and wife shall be deemed to be life members if one of them has become a life member. The life membership dues held on account of a single person or a married couple shall be transferred to the corporation's general funds upon the person or the married couple, as the case may be, ceasing to be life member(s) for any reason.
- Deleted.
- Deleted.

Provision is made however, that all persons who have already contributed a sum of US\$25 towards membership dues for the calendar year 2004 shall continue in their membership status until December 31, 2004."

The suggestion was made to revise Section A that the Life Membership amount should be at the discretion of the BOD, so it doesn't need to be debated again. Mr. S. Swamy suggested that Annual Membership continue. Dr. Ramakrishna suggested that these changes should be incorporated into other upcoming changes. He made a motion to incorporate this amendment into the next review of constitution. It was noted that there is need to amend the amendment to include what happens to membership in the event of divorce. 24 members voted to move the discussion to next year's meeting and 12 against, so the amendment was tabled.

#### New Business - Designation of a Parliamentarian

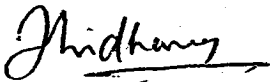
Mr. Bhaskar Padakandala suggested the creation of a new position of Parliamentarian. This will be addressed by the next Board of Directors.

#### Items for the Good and Welfare of the Membership

Dr. Balakrishna thanked the NASA Board for their support of his sister's family, at the time of her death. Dr. Y.N. Jayaram thanked the Board of Directors for all of their hard work. New Life Members were recognized.

#### Adjournment

The General Body Meeting was adjourned at 4:15pm.



Dr. S. Sridhara  
NASA General Secretary  
October 25, 2004