



North American Sankethi Association (NASA)

20017 Doolittle Street, Montgomery Village, MD 20886

<http://www.sankethi.org>

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Dear Fellow Sankethis of North America,

On behalf of the NASA Board of Directors, I would like to wish you all a happy Deepavali! Let the spirit of Deepavali lead us throughout the coming year.

The annual get-together at New Windsor was a great success, thanks to all those who participated with such enthusiasm and my fellow members of the Board who worked extremely hard. Our theme for the extravaganza was; "Excitement, Entertainment, and Enlightenment," and I believe we succeeded in providing all three! We received very positive feedback and many kind and encouraging words of praise from all those who attended and several calls from the disappointed members who could not make it. I take this opportunity to thank all the donors and sponsors, without whose contribution we would not have made it. We hope to work hard to make the next annual get-together even better.

Talking about the next annual program, it will be our 20th year as an association. It is not easy for a small ethnic group like ours, scattered allover this vast country, to function effectively and be meaningful to its membership for two decades. We have done that. The credit goes to all the founding members and past presidents who have dedicated a significant amount of their time, energy and resources to establish the organization, give it a solid foundation and provide guidance and direction. It is appropriate that we celebrate our success and rededicate ourselves to making our association stronger and attractive for our youngsters.

With this objective in mind, we have started looking ahead to the year 2004 and are planning several activities. (1) As you already know, we are planning for a cruise to the Bahamas during the weekend of March 26, 2004 about which you have already received details. I invite you all to take this cruise along with your family and friends. It will be short and sweet, three nights only. (2) We have announced our intent to entertain visiting Sankethi artists during our 20th anniversary celebrations. If you know of any talented artists (in the fields of gamaka vaachana, Karnatic music, dance, drama and literature) who are planning to visit USA in June/July timeframe, please let us know well in advance so that we can consider them in our planning. (3) We will try to publish a souvenir consisting of articles and a membership directory.

Based on the feedback received from the general body, we have tried to explore a different location for our get-together in July 2004. But unfortunately, we have not been successful so far. We have not given up although we have realized that it is hard to find a place that will be as convenient and reasonable (with respect to location, comforts and cost) as the New Windsor facility. We will keep you informed of any developments.

Best wishes for 2004 and we are looking forward to an exciting year in your service. Let us be proud to be Sankethis.

Sincerely,

M.S. Nataraja, President

Dear Friends:

It is my great pleasure and pride to present to you the full details of our annual July 2003 get-together event. Please visit our website www.sankethi.org where upcoming events are regularly posted and updated. The 2003 GBM minutes are appended to this report. As always, please send us your comments so we can continue to improve our organization.

Report on the New Windsor Get-Together:

The 19th annual NASA function was held from July 3- 6, 2003 in New Windsor, Maryland. This year we had a very good turn out with approximately 170 attendees. We have been meeting at this venue for the last few years and it has been convenient and reasonably priced for the NASA event. This year food was catered by 'Madras Café' restaurant located in Gaithersburg, Maryland. The survey conducted towards the end of the event indicates that the attendees were pleased with the food arrangements this year. We also welcomed several new members to our organization. Congratulations & Welcome! We look forward to your continued support. Our new members are:

Life Members:

Vijayalakshmi Murthy
Vidya Attre
Arun and Shalini Murthy

Annual Members:

BKN Kumar
Ganesh Rao
Srinivas Sridhara
Shankar Sridhara

A complete event by event report written by Ms. Ramya Keshava Ram (Thank you Ramya!) is posted on our website at: http://www.sankethi.org/Events/2003/2003_GBM_report.html.

Summary of Activities:

Guests arrived on the evening of July, 3 in time for dinner. They were greeted by members of the Board of Directors, and were able to purchase various NASA souvenirs (NASA hats and mugs, reading "NASA – Building a Community for Generations"), the production of which was coordinated by Mr. Pavani Ram. A game of Bingo and a Kannada movie closed out the evening.

On Friday the 4th, a Vedaghosha and Lalithasahasranama chanting preceded breakfast. Following breakfast were athletic events in which the categories were divided into children and adult tournaments. The various sports included basketball, carom, table tennis, musical chairs, and jump-roping. Winners for the main events were as follows, and a full list of all the winners will be posted to the NASA website.

Ping Pong

Men: 1st Place: Shankar Sridhar
2nd Place: Jayanth Jayaram
Women: 1st Place: Rumya Keshava Rao
2nd Place: Veda Shekhar
Juniors: 1st Place: Sunil Rao
2nd Place: Jayanth Shekhar

Carrom

Men: 1st place: Ramesh Nagaraj
2nd place: Murthy
Women: 1st place: Vani Pavaniram
2nd place: Veda Shekhar

The sports events were followed by an outdoor picnic lunch, including freshly made masala dosas for all. As the dosas were being served, the well known artist Mr. Mayur Simha, demonstrated his talent and exhibited many of his paintings. This was followed by a violin concert from Smt. Lakshmi Nagaraj, daughter of renowned violinist R.R. Keshavamurthy. The performance was unique because the violin used was a seven-stringed violin, as opposed to the standard four stringed-violin – the result was a rich tone unlike any other. Next, the children had an opportunity to showcase their talents. Rohini Rao exhibited some of her exquisite acrylic paintings. She explained techniques she used to achieve her effects, e.g. shadows and sunlight. After the kids' entertainment, was dinner, followed by the evening's much awaited bharathanatyam dance demonstration by Shrutiranjani and Madhulika Nataraja and Vidya Mohan. These spectacular artists gave an informative synopsis of the dance. They included the history, explanation of facial expressions, rhythm, positions, and movements of this beautiful art form. It was a wonderful learning experience and was very well presented. Afterwards, everyone enjoyed fireworks, snacks, and charades.

On Saturday morning, a nature walk was conducted at 6:30. After breakfast, members gathered in the auditorium for a Vedic chanting lecture presented by Dr. Ramakrishna, who discussed the Purusha Sukta.

Then, a World Religions Lecture was given by Professor Hebbar, who provided a chronological compilation of significant dates in the various religions of the world and shared his knowledge about the history of the spread of religions from their native countries into foreign lands and what factors played a part in those movements. Next, a group pooja was held for youths. After lunch, was the General Body Meeting (Meeting minutes are attached). Once the meeting adjourned, Mr. Narayana Subbarao offered a helpful lesson on how to preserve old concert tapes by copying them onto a compact disc via computer by utilizing a software program. Also, Bina Chandrasekhara presented her new book *Roadmap for College Admissions* which she composed with her children. Graduation awards for college students were presented (new graduates include Ashwini Srikantiah, Tara Rao, Mayank Keshaviah, Rajeev Magge, Aruna Vishwanath, Veena Vishwanath, and Sowmya Murthy). In addition, the multi-talented president of NASA, Dr. M.S. Nataraja, was introduced by Dr. Sridhara and recognized for being a recipient of the prestigious Gorur Award and an award from the Houston Kannada Vrinda. Another prominent Sankethi, Vidhwan Sri R. R. Keshava Murthy was also recognized by his grandson Dr. Ramesh Nagaraj, for his contributions to Karnatic music. The evening concluded with several events comprising first of a veena concert performed by Smt. Amrutha Vishwanath. She also shared her extensive knowledge of Karnatic music and gave a demonstration. Other affairs of the night included Anthakshari and awards for the athletic events held on Friday. Sunday morning started with Vishnusahasranama chanting, followed by breakfast and farewells.

Special Thanks to all of the Sponsors:

NASA would like to thank the following sponsors for their generosity – without which the get-together could not have been such a success!

Mr. and Mrs. Natesh Magge sponsored Friday's lunch

Drs. Amrutha & Vishwanath sponsored Soft Drinks for the weekend

Latha Shanthi Ramakrishna sponsored Friday's late-night snack

Madhulika and Shruthiranjani Nataraja sponsored Paan Beeda

Drs. Sudha & Sanjoy Sundaresan sponsored Saturday's dinner

Dr. Jai Rangappa sponsored all of the Fireworks

Srinivas Sridhara sponsored the Ganesha Pictures for Sunday's Pooja

M.S. Nataraja sponsored all of the Pooja Materials

Mahalakshmi & Nataraja and Uma & Ramakrishna sponsored Saturday's late-night snack

Activities for next year's get-together:

We would like to encourage participation by all NASA members in the 2004 Annual Get-together. We should try to increase the diversity of programs and participation, though. For those of you who would like to participate in cultural activities during the 20th Anniversary meeting, here are some suggestions: make groups, prepare well in advance - perhaps dance dramas, one-act plays in Kannada, English and Sankethi, kolata, group songs (classical, semi-classical, light and folk), etc.... We will try and give reasonable representation to each region if you make groups and rehearse. The idea is to encourage participation in large numbers, rather than individual items. Of course we will also have individual items, but would like to encourage more people to participate. Finally, share your ideas with us, but don't wait until it is too late!

NASA Community News:

NASA wishes best of luck to Rekha, daughter of Usha and Ramamurthy, for her upcoming wedding with Parag, on October 19, 2003 in Wisconsin.

NASA is very proud of young Kushal Seetharam (6th grader at Forest Edge Elementary School), son of Indu and Sampath Seetharam, for being honored by Fairfax County upon his return from the world championship competitions conducted by "O-M" (Odyssey of the Mind).

Congratulations and best wishes to Karthik Seetharam, son of Indu and Sampath Seetharam for his initiation into "Brahmacharyashrama." Karthik's "Upanayanam" was celebrated in the Washington DC Metro area on May 25, 2003.

Congratulations to Meena and Sanjay Rao of the DC metro area on the birth of their first baby, Mihika.

Congratulations to our NASA president Dr. M.S. Nataraja on turning 60! He celebrated 'Shashtyabdhi' with his family and friends in the Washington DC Metro area in September 2003.

We deeply regret to announce the demise of Col. Sri H.C. Vengopal, recipient of Vishishta Seva Medal, Govt of India, on September 2, 2003 in Bangalore. He was a great freedom fighter and retired as the Commandant of Border Security Force of India, at Bangalore. We offer our condolences to his daughter, Dr. Hema Bhargava, NASA life-member.

Regional Activity:

The Bay Area Sankethis met on September 27th to celebrate the first anniversary of Paschimavaahini and Ganesh Pooja. Over 100 people attended the get-together. After the invocation by Deepa Koundinya, all the kids performed Ganesh Pooja and sang shlokas. The day being the first day of Navaratri, Smt Vasanthalakshmi sang shlokas from Soundaryalahari, praising Devi. She also sang a song in Sankethi. The entertainment programs consisted of poetry reading, mimicry etc. Several members of the audience came forward and showed their singing talent. By popular demand a game of Bingo was conducted. A fundraiser raffle was held to assist the Sankethi Sangha in India. The proceeds from the fundraiser will be sent to the Mysore girls hostel. The program ended with delicious Sankethi dinner.

NASA encourages regional get-togethers by Sankethi families and hopes to continue the tradition in the various regions. Anyone interested in organizing a group of at least ten to twenty Sankethi families, should please contact a member of the Board of Directors, and we will assist in any way we can.

Sankethi Cruise:

We invite you to join other Sankethis on a cruise to the Bahamas in March 2004. The cruise date was set based on the survey feedback received at the GBM in July. The 4 days/3 nights cruise was chosen over a weekend, so families do not have to take their kids out of school for too long. This will provide a short break for the kids & the family.

The total deposit is \$100 per person for cabins holding 2 people. For triple & quadruple occupancy cabins, the total deposit is \$200 per cabin. The deadline for payment is October 31, but the deposit is refundable until November 30, without penalty. Please see www.sankethi.org for all of the details.

Please make checks payable to NASA Inc. and mail to Veda Shekhar at 12209 Wallborough Lane, Glen Allen, VA 23060. With your check, please specify the deck and cabin type you prefer, and the full names (as they appear on each passport) of all of the people traveling. If you have any questions, please call Veda at (804)364-2070 or contact her via email at vedashekhar@hotmail.com.

Best wishes to all of you from NASA!



S. Sridhara, Gen. Secretary, NASA

2003 General Body Meeting Minutes

The 2003 General Body (GB) Meeting (GBM) started at 2pm on Sunday, July 6th at the New Windsor Conference Center, New Windsor, MD.

Welcome: The meeting was called to order by the President, Dr. M.S. Nataraja. Dr. Nataraja welcomed the GB and introduced his Board of Directors (BOD).

Roll Call & Approving of Preceding GBM Minutes: Dr. S. Sridhara officially noted the roll call by getting signatures from the attending members. The minutes of the 2002 GBM were published in the September 2002 Newsletter and also distributed to the attending members at the GBM. The 2002 GBM minutes were approved by a voice vote with one correction, as suggested by Ms. Saroja Hanasoge (the 2002 General Secretary's report was amended to '3 members have resigned' instead of '3 members have resigned because of their other commitments').

Reports of Officers: Dr. Sridhara gave the General Secretary's report of the 2002- 2003 activities. The BOD started their office in July of 2002 with 9 elected members. Since then they have published 3 newsletters and held 3 BOD meetings. In the very first BOD meeting, the board members took suggestions from the survey completed by the GB and the outcome of the panel discussions moderated by Srinivas Sridhara and set goals to promote regional activities, delight the community, plan an excellent GBM, plan a grand 20th anniversary celebration for 2004, increase membership, and most of all, bring all Sankethis together. The attached table was distributed to the GB, and lists the activities that are in-progress, planned to be accomplished during the tenure of this board, and long term plans. Regional meetings were held in California (Paschimavahini), Washington DC (Group Sathyanarayana pooja and concert by Smt. Seetalakshmi Madhavan), and in Detroit, MI (Ugadi celebration). New life members and annual members were introduced to the GB. Dr. Sridhara thanked all the sponsors of the event and recognized the volunteer work of the spouses of the BOD. The Secretary's report was unanimously approved by the GB.

Reports of the Committees: A financial update was given by Mr. Santosh Govindaraju and financial statements were distributed to the GB. There was no full-fledged audit conducted for 2001, due to lack of time, but Mr. Sundaresan agreed to reconcile 2002 accounts with 2001 accounts. The 2001 financials were accepted with one amendment. One concern raised was the status of the West Coast Sankethi group, Paschimavahini. Depending on if the group is considered to be an independent group, a Chapter, or sister organization, there is an impact on how any financial disbursements are classified. It was determined that the group was an independent entity. There was no need to file a tax return for 2002, since the organization's gross receipts were less than \$25K. The 2002 financials were accepted by the GB. It was also noted that there is a need to increase the balance of the High School Graduation Awards fund, as it is currently operating with a low balance.

Old Business: In regard to the amendment submitted last year (regarding disallowing members of the same family to serve on the same Board of Directors) it was determined that there needs to be a formal review process initiated, in order to properly investigate any constitutional issues. Some of the key points discussed included how to define a legal member (child or person who pays the membership fees) and a financially independent child (one who pays his or her own membership fees). Furthermore, that this issue calls attention to the responsibility the BOD has to the NASA community, as objectivity of the board may be compromised if several members of the same family are allowed to serve on the BOD at the same time. A resolution was made to formally investigate any constitutional issues posed by the amendment during 2003-2004.

New Business: There is a planned activity to review the NASA bylaws document. Specifically the sets of formal bylaws for the NASA Corporation, the scholarship fund, and the catastrophe fund. There is a need to review the bylaws to see if there are any amendments needed. The previously proposed NASA Board of Trustees concept was presented and discussed briefly by Dr. Nataraja, and will be clearly researched and detailed, so that it can be submitted for a vote by the General Body in the 2004 annual meeting. Dr. K. Ramakrishna is working with other past Presidents and members of NASA on this issue. Ms. Latha Shanthi Ramakrishna gave an update on the 'Chiguru' publication. There has been no publication in the last year, but Mrs. Lakshmi Jayaram solicits any suggestions to bring this to fruition. Ms. Sangeeta Sastry reported that the www.sankethi.org website is periodically updated with newsletter postings and other updates as they become

available. The cruise trip had to be cancelled in the past year because of risks of infections on board reported last year, but will be considered for 2003-2004.

Regarding NASA's 20th Anniversary Celebration, scheduled for July 2004, an informal poll of the General Body revealed that approximately 1/2 of the attendees would like to change the venue of the event, and approximately 1/3 of attendees would be willing to pay up to 50% more (per family). The BOD appreciated the interest and enthusiasm of the General Body regarding the 20th Anniversary Celebration.

Other items in regard to the 20th Anniversary celebration included potential sponsorship or advertisements to help defray any additional cost, creation of a 20th Anniversary sub-committee to support the efforts of the BOD, and the idea of making next year's get-together feel more like a vacation for attendees.

Good & Welfare: Mr. Y.N.Srinivas, Kowshika Sankethi Sangha, India, presented an update regarding work of Sankethi organizations in India. He requested donations from interested members. And Mr. Sundaresan made a motion to thank the BOD for meritorious service and an excellent program.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 4 pm.

Thank you and with best wishes,



Sri Sridhara, Gen. Secretary, NASA

Date: October 10, 2003

During the 2002 NASA 4th of July Get-together, Srinivas Sridhara led the General Body in a series of roundtable discussions designed to brainstorm programming ideas and organizational goals. The following is a recap of the results of these brainstorming sessions.

A common thread among many of the participant's comments was that NASA should focus on certain core themes – namely, religion, music, dance, language, and cooking/food. Other prevalent comments included:

- Revive the family atmosphere
- Ensure continuity of goals and ideas
- Ensure the translation of values and ideas to the youth generation
- Increase community and youth involvement
- Increase educational opportunities for important Sankethi activities
- Create resources for the community – especially professional and educational networking
- Have year-round and regional activities
- Reduce the work load for the Board of Directors – create committees to lead certain activities
- Change the venue

The NASA Board of Directors is committed to implementing the ideas generated by the General Body. The table below details the outcome of the roundtable discussions and the NASA BOD's progress towards implementing them.

	In Progress	Planned	Long-Term
Create a NASA Board of Trustees	X		
Plan Regional meetings throughout the year	X		
Reinstate the group pooja	X		
Music and Veda appreciation sessions	X		
Age stratified activities	X		
Revive Chiguru	X		
Showcase and support talents in community	X		
Highlight the history of NASA and the work of famous Sankethis	X		
Increase membership size	X		
Change the venue for the 20 th Anniversary celebration			X
Group, Unstructured, and/or Outdoor/Picnic activities			X
Plan Concurrent/Parallel Sessions			X
Perform Kannada/Sankethi Plays			X
Give members the opportunity to cook together			X
Kannada/Sankethi Speaking Hour			X
Yoga Demonstration			X
Conduct a Health Fair			X
Invite Sankethi artists from India to perform			X
Create a family database and/or professional directory			X
Compile a Sankethi recipe book and/or collection of Sankethi songs			X
Distribute NASA news over email and increase website information			X
Fundraise from different sources (ie. grants and advertisements)			X
Create a Youth Board			X
Conduct youth summer camps - Music, Dance, Language			X
Start mentor programs (within youth, between elderly and youth)			X
Organize spiritual retreats			X
Coordinate and work with Sankethi organizations in India			X
Plan Group trip to India			X
Offer more Community Service Opportunities			X
Build a permanent NASA location			X
Address issues of Seniors in community			X



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