



Chiguru
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North American Sankethi Association (NASA)

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Dear Sankethi Friends,

“Vikruti Nama Samvatsarada” Haardika Shubhashayagalu! Happy Ugadi to all of you! As we turn our clocks and prepare for spring, the NASA Board of Directors is actively preparing for our July 4th Annual Get-Together and General Body Meeting, to be held July 2-6, 2010 in New Windsor, MD. For those of you who may not be aware, this is an election year for the organization. If you are interested in serving on the board, please do not hesitate to contact us. Volunteers are the backbone of organizations like NASA, and we are always looking for new faces. In addition to the general election, this year’s festivities will include “Sri Adi Shankaracharya Day,” consisting of RudraAbhiseka, Shivananda Lahari chanting, skits, quizzes, etc. We are also planning a picnic, talent shows and much more! If you or members of your family are interested in participating in any of these events, please contact me or Ramki Nagaraj or Mayank Keshaviah. Mark your calendars and join us!

Recently, some of you may have seen some e-mail messages regarding articles that were published in *Rajata*, the NASA 25th Anniversary souvenir book. We truly appreciate the feedback we have received, as this indicates that you read and thought about the articles presented therein. The *Rajata* Editorial committee and NASA BOD would like to point out that the views expressed in the submitted articles are those of the authors alone. They do not represent the views or opinions of NASA or of the *Rajata* Editorial committee. The NASA BOD is currently considering how best to handle the feedback that has been received, in the interest of continuing and stimulating ongoing positive dialogue. In the meantime, we do encourage all readers to address comments about any specific articles to the authors directly. We can all move forward when we listen and learn from each other. For those of you who did not receive *Rajata*, please feel free to access the electronic version posted on our website: www.sankethi.org.

We would also like to take this opportunity to clarify NASA electronic communication channels. NASA sends e-mails to an undisclosed recipient list in order to maintain each member’s privacy. Distribution lists such as Sankethiyoots@yahoogroups, USSankethi@yahoogroups are independently run forums not moderated or maintained by NASA. As such, the NASA BOD respectfully requests members to refrain from using these lists to discuss NASA-related topics. Please send e-mails of this nature directly to the BOD.

On the topic of addresses, we do plan to print an updated copy of the NASA address database this year. Members of the BOD may be contacting you to confirm your information. We would like to remind every one that information published in the NASA address book is for NASA members’ personal use only.

Many NASA members continue to make donations to BSS and KSS to support various projects in India and NASA’s own Emergency Relief Fund and Disaster Relief Fund to help Sankethis in need in the US and in India (see details in *Chiguru*, Vol 26, No 4). We thank those members who have supported these efforts, and encourage many more to do the same.

Best wishes for Ugadi and I look forward to seeing many of you at our annual get-together!

Yours truly,



NASA President Keshava Kumar & BOD

Community

NASA Ugadi Celebration – April 4, 2010

This year NASA's Ugadi celebration will be held in the Boston area. If you are interested in participating, please contact Ganesh Rao at ganesh_rao@yahoo.com

2010 Annual Get-Together and General Body Meeting

NASA is pleased to announce that the 2010 NASA get-together and general body meeting will be held July 2-5, 2010 in New Windsor, Maryland. As this is an election year for the NASA BOD, we invite all members to attend and participate in this year's activities. The BOD is actively working on a fun and exciting program for everyone, including the following activities (tentative list):

- Picnic
- "Shankaracharya Theme Day"
- Abhisheka
- Shivananda Lahari and Lalitha Sahasranama
- Sports & Games
- General Body Meeting (including elections)
- Fireworks

Member News

Congratulations to **Mahesh** and **Anupama Rao** and big sister Ananya who welcomed Diya Rao on January 9, 2010. She measured in at 6 lbs 13 oz, and 19.5 inches long.

Congratulations to **Srinivas Sridhara** and **Anu Nagarajan** who were married January 17th, 2010 in Bangalore. They currently reside in Baltimore, MD.

Congratulations to **Saroja Lalitha Hanasoge** and **Dmitry Khavulya** who were married March 6, 2010 in New Brunswick, NJ. They currently reside in New York, NY.

NASA BOD member **Mayank Keshaviah** appeared on the TV game show "Jeopardy!" on February 17, 2010. He walked away with \$1000! Congratulations Mayank!

Kartik Subbarao has set up a "Sankethi" group on the professional networking site, LinkedIn. NASA members are encouraged to join and get linked to other Sankethis in the US and around the world. Go to www.linkedin.com to get started.

Seetha Shivashankar-Aiyar will be performing Western classical music with the Vox Ama Deus Ensemble on April 2 (Brahms) and April 30 (Mozart) at the Kimmel Center in Philadelphia. For more information, contact Seetha at Seetha.Aiyar@mmoh.com

In memoriam

We deeply regret to inform the NASA community that **Smt. Vijayalakshmi Somashekar**, Athreya Gotra, wife of Saligrama Somashekar, passed away in New York on Tuesday 3/30/10, after a brief illness. NASA sends condolences to her family and friends.

Sankethi Genealogy

Editor's Note: During the NASA 2009 Silver Jubilee festivities, Kartik Subbarao presented information about the Sankethi Family Tree project. The session was very well-attended, and the information shared was of interest to many members. In follow-up to his presentation, Kartik was requested to share a few words for this edition of Chiguru.

Have you ever wanted to trace your roots back to your great-grandmothers, great-grandfathers and beyond? Have you wanted to see just exactly how you are related to any other Sankethi, past or present? With over 2900 people currently populated and more being added on a regular basis, the Sankethi Family Tree gives our community the potential to do just that. Check it out at <http://sankethi.ourroots.info>. Try searching for yourself and see if your information is up to date. If not, please contact sankethi_family_tree-owner@yahoo.com and we'll be happy to add/update it. Better yet, if you'd like to help contribute to the family tree, we can add you as an editor so that you can update information directly.

As you browse and search through the family tree, be sure to explore the relationship chart feature: <http://sankethi.ourroots.info/gedview/relationship.php> With this, you can find the different relationship paths that connect any two people in the family tree. You may discover connections that you never knew existed before! Other features include descendency charts, pedigree charts, timeline charts and other genealogically useful features.

For those of you who are curious, we are using the PhpGedView software package: <http://www.phpgedview.net/> It's the leading Open Source, open standards-based genealogy software with a large number of installations worldwide. Over time, we plan to take advantage of its extensive featureset to add additional data fields (e.g. Gotra) and multimedia capabilities.

For more information on the Sankethi Family Tree project, take a look at the charter document and the editing guidelines: <http://kartiksubbarao.com/sftcharter.html>
<http://kartiksubbarao.com/sftediting.html>

Please contact sankethi_family_tree-owner@yahoo.com with any information updates, questions or comments.



NASA NEEDS YOU!

(or your contact information, at least!)

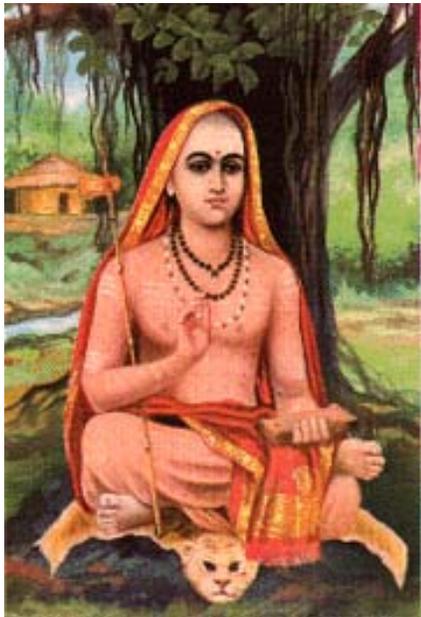
We will be updating and distributing new NASA membership directories this year, and we'd like to make sure that the information we have is up-to-date. Ranjini will be contacting you shortly to confirm your information. Please respond promptly so we can finalize our data in time for the meeting.

Thank you!

Culture

Shankaracharya: A Brief Primer

Editor's Note: This year, the NASA annual get-together will include one day focused on the life and work of Sri Adi Shankaracharya. Although there is not enough space here to describe everything about this great philosopher, we thought it would be helpful to provide some basic information.



Adi Shankaracharya was born around the 8th century in Kaladi, Kerala, under the star Thiruvaitthirai, to a childless couple who had paid homage to Lord Shiva. His father passed away when he was very young. From childhood, Shankaracharya demonstrated his intelligence and mental acuity in spiritual matters and began his path towards becoming a revered and honoured philosopher. He spread the idea of Advaita Vedanta, namely that every person is a manifestation of God and that God and Atman (the spirit) are one. This philosophy stresses the importance of understanding the holy scriptures and using personal learning to guide everyday behaviour. It is very different from other philosophical branches of Hinduism that focus on rituals, or other methods of attaining enlightenment.

Shankaracharya only lived for 32 years, but in that time he made quite an impact on India and Hinduism. He traveled extensively, engaging in debates, teaching his disciples, and creating many works, including the Manisha Panchakam, Vishnu pathati keshanta stotra, Vivekachudamani and the Shivananda Lahari, among other hymns and discourses. He founded 4 Mathas (monastic Hindu establishments) in Sringeri

(Karnataka), Dwaraka (Gujarat), Puri (Orissa) and Jyotimath (Uttarkhand) to guide the Hindu religion. Today, Shankaracharya's works and his teachings on Advaita Vedanta continue to have tremendous influence on Hindus worldwide.

More detailed information about his life and works can be found at the following websites:

<http://www.kamakoti.org/misc/adi.html>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adi_Shankara

<http://www.hindupedia.com/en/Sankara>

<http://www.kanchiforum.org/forum/viewtopic.php?t=1171>



EXPLORE, EXPERIENCE and CELEBRATE!

We hope all NASA members will be inspired to use their creative talents to help us celebrate Sri Adi Shankaracharya during the 2010 NASA Annual Get-Together. We are planning to have Shiva Abhisheka and a group chanting of one of Shankaracharya's most famous works, the Shivananda Lahari. All are welcome to participate. Contact Prema Kumar (same contact info as Keshava Kumar) for more information. Please use the following links to download the chants (in English or other scripts):

<http://thyagaraja.sulekha.com/blog/post/2008/03/sankara-vijayam-sivananda-lahari-text-only-roman.htm>

<http://sankara-vijayam.blogspot.com/2008/03/sivananda-lahari-text-only-roman-script.html>

If you or your family members are interested in performing a skit, monologue, dialogue, music presentation or something else related to the Shankaracharya theme, please feel free to contact Ramki Nagaraj, Mayank Keshaviah or Keshava Kumar. All ideas are welcome!

Charity

NASA members give back

On the Friday morning before President's Day Weekend, **Suresh Magge**, MD arrived at Children's National Medical Center in Washington, DC expecting a standard day of neurosurgery, and a relaxing, non-call holiday weekend afterwards. Little did he know that he was about to embark on a very special (and very last-minute!) journey. When a pediatric orthopaedics colleague told him that he was on his way to Haiti that day, and that their medical team needed a neurosurgeon, Suresh jumped at the opportunity. He had wanted to volunteer in Haiti but he hadn't yet found a strong, reputable organization to work with. Suresh made a few calls to re-arrange his schedule, buy a ticket and talk with family members, and within a few hours he was on his way.

When Suresh arrived in Haiti, he was reminded of India – since the rainy season was just starting it was hot and muggy during the day, temperate at night. By the time he left, the rains had started in earnest. Along with a team of about 60 doctors, Suresh made his way to Milot, a small town outside of Caphaitien, the 2nd largest city in Haiti. Milot was remarkably unaffected by the earthquake and aftershocks that devastated Port-au-Prince just about 4 weeks earlier. It was also the site of Hôpital Sacré Coeur, built in 1968 by CRUDEM (www.crudem.org), a non-profit organization that continues to support the hospital year-round. In addition to serving local patients, the hospital had opened its doors to hundreds of survivors of the Haitian earthquake. Suresh worked alongside Haitian doctors and nurses to care for the injured, setting fractures, treating infections and cleaning wounds, in addition to performing his specialty role as a neurosurgeon. Since he was the only neurosurgeon who had volunteered at the hospital, he saw adults and children with many types of neurosurgical problems (some unrelated to the quake) and also took the opportunity to train the local staff on the procedures he performed. There were many neurological conditions Suresh encountered that would normally be treated at a young age in the US, but due to lack of opportunity, care, finances etc., had not yet been addressed. Medical technology such as CT scans, x-rays and medical tests were not readily available, so Suresh found himself relying on his own medical judgment. Because supplies had to be conserved, he had to be discerning about what he would use, why and how.

Although this was Suresh's first time in Haiti, he had volunteered last year in Uganda. He felt that many of the things he had learned during his trip to Africa were applicable to the situations he faced in Haiti. For anyone considering volunteering in either a medical or non-medical capacity in Haiti or other developing areas, Suresh offered the following advice: Find a good organization that has the necessary infrastructure to support medical missions, preferably one with a solid history. At the end of his week-long stay, Suresh was exhausted, but felt that the entire experience was incredibly rewarding and would recommend medical missions to others. He came back with renewed appreciation for what he has access to each and every day in the US, but also with the memories of what he and his team were able to accomplish for some patients in need in Haiti.

Is Chiguru cluttering your mailbox?

Join the growing numbers of green-minded NASA members who are receiving NASA newsletters in electronic format only!

Help us reduce our environmental impact (and save a few \$\$) by opting for electronic newsletters. It's quite painless! Contact Ranjini at ranjini@alum.mit.edu with your name, and preferred e-mail. Then rest easy knowing that you've contributed to saving more trees.

Thank you!





Nature
+
Nautica
+
NASA??

Would you attend a cruise with other NASA members?

What would your price threshold per person be?

Where would you like to go – the Caribbean, Alaska, Mexico?

Voice your opinion today! Contact the NASA BOD!





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