

Minutes of SASI meeting on July 7, 2013, in Toronto, 11am-1pm.

There were 28 members present in the meeting, at least a part of the time. They are listed in **Annex I** below. The meeting started half an hour late because of delayed arrivals.

Anandarup Ray, currently a Trustee, opened the meeting following the attached Agenda (**Annex II** below). He noted the special significance of this meeting in inaugurating the third Board of SASI, or SASI III. He called upon Mamata De, who was a Trustee in SASI II and the Secretary of the Board in SASI I, to introduce Ranjit Dhar as the Chief Guest.

Ranjit-da studied in Santiniketan in the 1950s – then at IIT, Kharagpur, for Architecture and later at the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana for graduate studies. In 2011, in Tokyo, he was elected a Council Member (Board) for the Region III (the Americas) of the Union of International Architects (UIA), based in Paris. The UIA is associated with UNESCO, UN and UNDP; in all it covers 134 countries with a membership of over 1.4 million architects.

Ranjit-da spoke about the need to give to the wider community beyond the confines of SASI. Citing his own example, he noted how he became the first South-Asian architect to become the President of the Ontario Association of Architects (OAA) and then the President of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada (RAIC). The OAA bestowed upon him two years ago, the Order of Da Vinci medal, the highest honor. Ranjit-da is one of the most decorated architects in Canada having been honored nationally and internationally with prestigious medals and awards.

Sunanda Sanyal, who was an election commissioner along with Sujata Chowdhury, summarized the results of the elections that took place during March and April this year. The list of persons elected to the Board and to the Trust Council is shown in **Annex III** below. Sunanda said that they found the election process satisfactory.

Chandana Sarkar, Vice-president in the recent Board, mentioned how a group of former ashramiks, including herself, Ranjit-da, Tan Lee-da, and the late Veltu-da (Subrata Roy), had initiated the North America Ashramik Sangha in Toronto in 1992. She also mentioned the Annual General Meeting in Kolkata in January this year (details available from the SASI website). Our goal from the beginning has been to spread the ideals of Rabindranath.

Following a song by Sudeshna Rudra Sanyal (“□□□□□□□□ □□□ □□□□□□”), Swapan De read the Treasury Report on behalf of Joyeeta Raysircar who was unable to come. Swapan has prepared the Report based on bank statements and communications from Joyeeta (a detailed Treasury Report will be posted in the webzine). He noted that SASI’s revenues, all from membership fees and donations, totaled \$6839.00, of which \$800 has been diverted to the ongoing special project—the sequel to “Ek Sutrer Sandhane”.

Anandarup briefly mentioned some of the key dates in the evolution of SASI, beginning with the Toronto meeting in 1992. The volume which eventually became “Ek Sutrer Sandhane” was initiated in the Banga Sammelan in Baltimore in 2004. SASI itself was initiated during the last Sammelan in Toronto in 2008, and now we are meeting again in Toronto: thus the links to Banga Sammelans and to Canada are strong in our history. He stressed the invaluable roles that have been played by Tan Leeda, Bachhuda (Hitabrata Roy), Veltuda (Subrata Roy), and Alodi (Alo

Roy). Our debt to them is immeasurable. Anandarup also reported on the formation of a new Alumni Association in Visva Bharati, one of the special reforms being introduced by the present Vice-Chancellor. It is proceeding well, and the new VBAA should be staffed by elected officials in January next year.

Swapan thanked the members for electing him as the new president, mentioning it would be a challenge to continue after the excellent work done by SASI I and SASI II. He asked for the active cooperation of all members to make SASI a vibrant association. Swapan's principal points are summarized below:

- i. Membership. The current paid-up membership is still below what it was at the end of 2010. Thus it is very important to rebuild the membership. In order to do so, we might develop local chapters of 10-15 people in the major cities, and we should restart SASI's cultural programs which stopped after 2010. Two of our new Board members, Manasi Adhikari and Malabika Guha will provide leadership, and work with such interested people as Apan Goswami and Rupa Roy.
- ii. Publications. Sudeshna Sengupta will continue to manage our webzine ("ashramik.wordpress.com/ashramiks"), but we also need to look at publications more broadly, including books, pamphlets and policy notes, and the Facebook (which has almost reached about 1000 participants). Kathleen O'Connell has agreed to help set up and steer a publication committee.
- iii. Relations with Visva-Bharati. A good relationship with VBU has been developed. We hope to liaise closely with the new VBAA. But we shall maintain our independence as a separate registered body.
- iv. Non-alumni. We propose that SASI's fee-paying membership be widened to include prominent Tagore scholars and activists even if they are not alumni. Swapan explained that this idea was discussed in the 2012 Banga Sammelan; however it has not been implemented yet. Chandana welcomed this idea noting that a similar proposal is a part of the "policy handbook" that she and Joyeeta Raysircar have prepared. Such a change will require an amendment to the constitution.
- v. General meetings. Since North-America-based members are dominant in SASI, they must be given an opportunity to discuss policy issues in person. Meetings in North America should be proper discussion meetings, not just low-key "reunions". Henceforth we propose to designate both our meetings in North America and India as general semi-annual meetings (SAM). Our fiscal year will continue to end on June 30.

Malabika Guha emphasized the need to focus on the standards of performance and suggested that we should plan our cultural events well ahead of time. Anuradha Sinha stressed the importance of regular and clear communications with all members regarding their responsibilities. Rupa Roy suggested that periodic get-togethers and picnics might be considered. Many participants introduced themselves and spoke about their connections to Santiniketan.

Debabrata Bhattacharya stressed the idea of a truly world-wide alumni group, as was created for the BE college. Fund-raising would then become easier, increasing the possibility of making significant contributions to VBU. Kathleen O'Connell supported the idea of inviting qualified non-alumni to join SASI. Ranjit-da remarked that we should reflect the holistic ideals of

Rabindranath, and avoid being too pre-occupied with money and fame. The local chapters to be created should be carefully designed.

Anandarup concluded the discussions by expressing his support for Swapan's main points, and by wishing him and his new team all success. Apan Goswami sang "tamiswaranang". This was followed by the Ashram-sangeet "□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□ □□ □□□ □□□".

(Minutes prepared by Anandarup Ray, with comments and notes from participants.)

Annex I: Reunion Attendance 2013

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Annex II: Reunion Agenda 2013

1. Opening song
2. Introduction of the Chief Guest by Dr. Mamata De, Trustee

3. Introduction of the new set of officers and brief discussion of the election procedure by Sunanda Sanyal
4. Minutes of AGM in Kolkata and a short report by Chandana Sen Sarkar
5. Treasury report read by Dr. Swapan De on behalf of Joyeeta Raysircar
6. History of SASI and the current status of Visva Bharati Alumni Association by Anandarup Ray, Trustee
7. Remarks from the new President Dr. Swapan De
8. Comments from the members and introduction of members present. Concluding comments from the Chief Guest.
9. Chairman's summary by Anandarup Ray
10. Program by Apan Goswami
11. Ashram Sangeet

Annex III: Officers in SASI III

Board: Swapan De (president), Subha Addy, Manasi Adhikari, Tapas Basu, Malabika Guha, Shibaditya Sen, Anuradha Sinha

Trust Council: Jayita Chakrabarty, Srila Chatterji, Anandarup Ray, Chandana Sarkar, Supriyo Tagore.