

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: SAN JOSE 2009

MINUTES

7/8/2009

SASI's first annual general meeting was held on July 3, 2009, in San Jose, California. The list of attendees is given below.

The meeting was opened by Subrata Ray, the president of the former North American Ashramik Sangha, which preceded SASI. Following the opening, there were presentations by Anandarup Ray, Swapan De, Mamata De, Tan Lee, and Alo Roy, as well as general discussions involving other participants. The meeting was attended by three visitors from Visva-Bharati: Professor Swastika Mukherjee, Agamani Saha, and Gaurav Choudhuri, all of Sangeet-Bhavan

In his overview, Anandarup Ray reported on the progress made over the last year. The legal foundations for SASI have been completed. A social and professional network has been established in Santiniketan and Kolkata, and there have been several substantive meetings with Governor Gopal K. Gandhi and Vice Chancellor Rajat K. Roy. In addition, a SASI website has been created; the President's Report and other key documents will be available at that website.

Anandarup Ray emphasized the key role that has been played in creating the network by Santanu Mitra and his many associates in India. He also explained that the two main areas of interest for SASI would be: support for on-going changes in Visva-Bharati, and promotion of cultural and educational activities, particularly in light of the 150th birth anniversary of Tagore in 2011.

Swapan De explained the financial situation of SASI, and reported on his recent discussions with the Internal Revenue Service regarding 501© status. The progress on that score has been satisfactory. Mamata De described the new website and its main characteristics. She later demonstrated its operation on the internet in another location.

In response to questions, the pace of reforms in Santiniketan was briefly discussed. The Prime Minister has taken a strong interest in reviving Santiniketan, and this was apparent last December when he announced a grant of Rs. 95 crores to various parts of the University, including Rs 25 crores for the upgrade and maintenance of heritage buildings and artwork. This allocation has now been confirmed, and Unesco is expected to help preserve the heritage zone.

Alo Roy emphasized the progress already made in reducing heavy traffic on ashram roads, and the strong likelihood of a new by-pass on the eastern side of the railway lines (which has been approved by the vice-chancellor). Chitrita Bhattacharya mentioned the ever-increasing influx of tourists in Santinketan, and pointed to the need to control that volume by imposing fees, and to the need to license tourist guides who at present mislead at will.

Tan Lee expressed his appreciation for the work being done by Tapas Basu, who is trying to establish a critical care unit in Santinketan, as also the efforts of Debadyuti Chakrabarti and Piyali Palit to help reforms in Patha-Bhavan. He suggested the appointment of regional coordinators to improve the effectiveness of SASI.

Regarding the program for 2011, Tan Lee mentioned that he is now preparing a sequel to “Ek Sutrer Sandhane”, which he had edited in 2006, and which had been well-received by the public; this would be a part of SASI’s program in 2011. He is also proposing the publication of a “pocket” book of selected Tagore songs, in both Bengali and English, with appropriate annotations.

Sharmila Roy Pommot’s proposal for a book of photographs called “Story of Rabi” was also noted. Finally, Mamata De said she is developing proposals for bringing Tagore’s works on-line.

Membership fees were discussed. The fees proposed by the president were \$20 per year per person for regular membership, and \$200 for life membership. Residents outside USA would pay the equivalent amounts in their own currencies. However, in India, the corresponding amounts would be Rs 200 and Rs 2000. These proposals were accepted by consensus.

Subsequent to the meeting there was a follow-up discussion of adequacy of staffing. In view of SASI’s impending programs, it was decided to expand the Board. As an interim arrangement, Subha Addy, Srila Chatterji, and Chandana Sarkar will join the Board and assist the operations of SASI as required.

Anandarup Ray

Cleared with Tan Lee, Alo Roy, Mamata De, Swapan De, Subha Addy

Attendees

Shipra Paul
Tripti Mookherji
Sunanda Sanyal
Siddharta Sanyal

Subha Addy
Sunit K. Addy
Chitrita Bhattacharya
Ranjan Bhattacharya

Swatika Mukherjee
Agamani Saha
Gaurav Chowdhury
Anuradha Pal Williamson
David Williamson
Sushmita Mukherjee
Esha Ray

Alo Roy
Tan Lee
Subrata Ray
Anandarup Ray
Mamata De
Swapn De