

# NEWSLETTER SERVAS FOUNDATION INDIA

2<sup>nd</sup> Issue-December, 2019



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## From the Editor's desk



*Dear SERVAS Members,*

Humankind is now facing a global crisis. Perhaps the biggest crisis of our generation. Today's declaration of a pandemic is a call to action-for everyone, everywhere. It is also a call for responsibility and solidarity- as countries united and as people united. Since this is a crisis that affects everyone, we must all play our part and together we can change the course of this pandemic. As we mourn all those who have lost their lives and the many families who are suffering, we must show solidarity with the most vulnerable. Let us move forward with resolve and without stigma. Yes, the storm will pass, humankind will survive.

So with that positive note I would like to share with you the second issue of the Servas India Newsletter. This issue includes the experiences of the young, exploring the world with wide-eyed fascination and ardour; the old, adding another block to their world-view; as well as the members from across the Global Servas Community.

A lot of effort has gone into the making of this newsletter, made possible by the enthusiastic participation of all members involved. In times when the world is facing the most difficult situation and with uncertainty , I hope this issue brings a sense of peace and harmony to the readers.

I hope we can emulate Thomas Paine's words "The World is my country, all mankind are my brethren, and to do good is my religion."

*Hamsavahini Singh*

## **Message from the National Secretary, Mr. Abhay Shaha, Servas Foundation (India)**



My dear Servas Members,

Covid-19 has affected the entire world. We heard the sad news of one member from Servas Italy losing her life due to this pandemic. We all are in this together as a global family and send our deepest condolences to her family. May we all find the strength, support and good health to come out of this crisis. Let us pray for the well-being of all.

This has also presented humanity with the opportunity to re-think how we want to live. We may collectively realize the values of peace, love, understanding, environmental consciousness and kindness-- the values we hold at the core of Servas. May we face Corona with Karuna (Compassion!).

Let us also do all that is within our capacity to support those in need in this difficult time--the elderly, the daily wage earners, landless migrant labourers, the sick and marginalized people.

I appreciate and would like to congratulate Dr. Hamsavahini Singh for her efforts as Editor, Servas Newsletter to bring out this second issue of the Newsletter of Servas Foundation (India) which covers news until December 2019. She has done a wonderful job and lots of hard work has been put in bringing out this issue.

Once again, thanks to everyone and let us look forward to the time when all this will be over and we all can meet again together. We had a wonderful last 3 year term with support from all of you. The major highlights from previous term were --the Korea conference, 2 successful organizations of Ganesh Festival in Pune, the 3 national AGMs and the legal registration of Servas India. We will continue to work together and I appeal all of us to spread the message of Servas and invite new people to join as members of Servas. I thank on behalf of newly elected members for trusting us to manage for the next 3 years term of Servas Foundation, India.



## Exco meeting at Jaipur



The Exco members Mr. Avinash Shirole (President), Mr. Abhay Shaha (National Secretary), Mr. Ulhas Joshi (Treasurer), Mr. Hiren Goradia (Host List Coordinator), Dr. J.P.Singh (Peace Secretary), Dr. Hamsavahini Singh (Newsletter Editor) and Mr. Ravindra Verma met in Jaipur on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> March, 2019 to discuss different aspects pertaining to Servas. On 23<sup>rd</sup> March they reviewed the issues related to previous meetings, the details of the Host List with the confirmed current members. They also deliberated upon the membership drive, registration of Servas Foundation, updating of accounts and expenditure incurred till date, the future budget and the forthcoming Ganesh Festival. The possibility of hosting the GA in India in the near future was also discussed.

On 24<sup>th</sup> morning Servas members from Jaipur and nearby places were invited to join the Exco members for breakfast. After the breakfast the members shared their experiences as Host and Traveller of Servas. Exco Members encouraged them to motivate youth members to join Servas. The meeting concluded in the forenoon and the attendees expressed their desire to join the AGM soon.



## Servas India Ganesh festival, 2019



Servas Foundation, India celebrated for the second time the famous Ganesh Utsav from 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> September, 2019. About 13 Guests participated and stayed with the hosts from Pune during this Festival. They not only caught a glimpse into the day-to-day life but also visited many famous places in Pune and around. The Guests could also witness the vibrant Ganesh utsav with the host family members and had the opportunity to take part in various functions, processions and activities as per their interests.

During their stay they visited Baramati and spent time with a farmer, who runs an Organic Centre. The Guests also expressed their gratitude to the host families, Servas Foundation Exco members and other people who were directly or indirectly involved in organising this festival. Overall, this visit was a memorable one and many of them expressed their hope to come to India again.





## Servas Foundation, India Annual General Meeting Chittorgarh, Rajasthan



Annual General Meeting (AGM) of Servas Foundation, India was held from 8-10 November, 2019 at Chittorgarh, Rajasthan. Around 50 members from different parts of India participated in the AGM



The first day started with a Yoga session, followed by Havan and breakfast. The members gathered for introductions and Ms. Arzoo Noor from Turkey talked about stress relief in life, alongwith Mrs. Monica Anand, Faridabad. The formal inaugural session began in the afternoon with Guruji Digviay Ramji as chief guest. Mr. Abhay Shaha, National Secretary, Servas Foundation gave a brief outline of the three days' proceedings.





This was followed by an outreach programme to Badesar Village where the members visited Swami Vivekananda Government Model School and enjoyed the sunset at the lake. Day one concluded with dinner, followed by a Cultural Programme and the members thoroughly enjoyed trying on the colourful Rajasthani costumes and performing dances





The second day's official proceedings began after a Yoga session and breakfast. The National Secretary thanked Dr Mehta and family for taking the initiative to organise the AGM at Chittorgarh. The Exco Members gave a brief account of the different activities performed during their respective tenures. The highlights include an increase in new membership, online linking of Host List, celebration of one week Ganesh festival at Pune, Registration of Servas Foundation, conducting Auditing of Servas, briefing of the previous year's AGM in Jalna and Panchgani.

In the post-lunch session, members shared their experiences as Hosts and as Travellers. The resolutions made at the Panchgani AGM were discussed and passed. The day's proceedings concluded with President Dr. Avinash Shirode thanking one and all for a successful AGM. A tour of Chittorgarh city was organised, with a visit to many important monuments. The highlight of the visit was the light and sound programme at the majestic fort.

All the members re-assembled after dinner with Election Returning Officer Pramod Kumar giving details of the nominations received for the next day's Election for various posts. The candidates gave a brief introduction of themselves and their vision and mission for the growth of Servas Foundation.








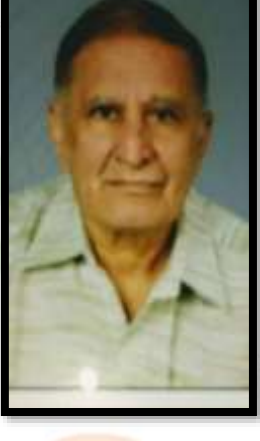
All members re-assembled after dinner with Election Returning Officer Pramod Kumar giving details of the nominations received for the next day Election for different posts. The contestants gave a brief introduction about themselves and if elected their vision and contribution in for the growth of Servas Foundation.





The third day's proceedings started with an Open House discussion and several suggestions were put forth. This was followed by the election via the secret ballot method by Mr. Pramod Kumar. The election was conducted and concluded in a fair and smooth manner with the help of three volunteers- Mr. Adhavan, Mr. Ramu and Mrs Karkare.

The following EXCO members were declared elected :

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| <b>Avinash Shirode</b><br><b>President</b>  | <b>Abhay Shaha</b><br><b>National Secretary</b>                                   | <b>Doddaiiah</b><br><b>Deputy National Secretary</b>                               | <b>Ulhas Joshi</b><br><b>Treasurer</b>  |

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| <b>Hiren Goradia</b><br><b>Host List Coordinator</b>                                | <b>Dr. Hamsavahini Singh</b><br><b>Peace Secretary</b>                              | <b>Ravindra Verma</b><br><b>Newsletter Editor</b>                                     |





Vote of thanks was rendered by the President and the National Secretary to Dr. Mehta & Dr. Pinki Mehta and to other members from Chittorgarh City for organizing this event. Dr. Mehta presented a mementos to all the members on behalf of Servas members from Chittorgarh. The AGM concluded after the Lunch and the members departed with wonderful memories from Rajasthan , the land of Maharajas.



## **My Memorable Visit to India**

**by Jong Huh, Servas (South Korea)**

I have long desired visiting India. The first reason is that my great-great-grandmother came to Korea from Ayodhya, India and the second is that the great poet Rabindranath Tagore was born in this country. When I first came to India, I thought that Korea and India are much alike in terms of thought, religion and culture.

I divided India into two sections in my mind for my travel itinerary- the northern part of India, covering Dharamshala, Manali, Re-pan-Gongcho and the central part of the country, including Delhi, Varanasi, Mumbai, and Pune- with each being covered in a 21-day trip. The northern part of the India (Himalayas) was so beautiful and peaceful. In Delhi, Jaipur, Mumbai and Pune I was able to experience life with SERVAS hosts and the locals.



I can't forget the hosts Mr. Pramod (I think of him as a SERVAS Icon), Mr. Raj Singh Mohitamun in Delhi, the humane and friendly couple Mr. Rajpal Singh Chouhan and Mrs. Hamsavahini (Hamsa) in Jaipur. And the apartment of Mr. Ravindra Laxman Bardolia on Mumbai's seashore, with the devoted hospitality of Mr and Mrs Ulhas of Pune, who hosted me for five days, was so touching.

Through this trip to India, I could feel the power of the Indian SERVAS and it was a precious opportunity to experience the purity and mystery of the Indian people. India



is a country with the potential to make infinite progress. I hope that Korea and India will understand each other well and work together to build a better place for SERVAS and the World in the future.





## Our experience with Servas as traveller to Peru

*by Hiren Goradia (Mumbai)*

We visited Peru as a part of trip to South America during April-May 2019. We communicated with Servas members before our trip and they were kind enough to agree to meet up with us during our visit. We had a great time with Roxana and her children at their home over dinner. A youth member, Dante took us all around Lima city and was a fantastic guide!! During our trip to Machu Pichhu we met Jorge (a retired architect) in Urubamba over a cup of coffee and learnt a lot about the local culture. It was real fun meeting fellow Servas members!!



## Swiss guests and our experience as Hosts

*by Hiren Goradia (Mumbai)*

Ursula, a Swiss Servas member, along with her partner, was on a world tour on a cruise and was scheduled to dock in Mumbai for a day on April 7, 2019. She communicated with me and we decided to meet at our home during their halt. We guided them from the jetty to our home which they managed perfectly well, commuting by Mumbai local train to Parle Station, from where we picked them up.



We spent the day together chatting at home, exchanging ideas and cultural tips and visited Juhu Beach and ISKCON Temple, which they really liked. We are still in touch with each other and use the items we gifted to each other (she, the table mats and we the Swiss travel knife) with affection!!





## My SYLE Experience (SERVAS YOUTH)

*Aruja Goradia (Mumbai)*



My name is **Aruja Goradia** and I'm from India. My parents have been members of SERVAS for about five years. When my dad told me about the SYLE programme in August 2018 and asked me if I was interested in visiting Spain under the programme, I got really excited because Spain has been one of my favourite destinations and at that point I had just started learning Spanish, which I found really interesting.



Thanks to Susana's selfless and immense efforts, I left for Spain on the 30<sup>th</sup> of May. First, I met Dolores Garrido and stayed in her house for four days. I learnt a lot as I started speaking quite a bit in Spanish. It was very nice of her to come to pick me up from the airport and drive me to Girona. I enjoyed a lot with Dolores! We went to the beach, went shopping and she was an incredible host.

Dolores and Esther decided a meeting point where we met Esther and her younger daughter, Zou, and had lunch together. After lunch, Esther drove us to Sabadell... I met



her elder daughter Li Nan. I thoroughly enjoyed my two weeks stay with them at their home, where we undertook lots of activities right from cooking, going to a theme park, sightseeing, shopping, visiting Barcelona city and watching movies!



My last stay was at Montserrat (near Valencia) at Julian and Ruth's house. Zou, Luz, Iris (Julian and Ruth's daughters) and I enjoyed a day together. I also had a new experience as I attended school with Iris for a day. Ruth was extremely kind and took a few days off from work to spend time with me and take me around Valencia.

All the hosts were extremely kind and tried their best to make me comfortable.... This was the first time I travelled by myself and so, i shall treasure these memories forever and I'm really happy that i got to try a lot of new things with my hosts.



And during my entire stay in Spain I learnt a lot of Spanish, especially spoken Spanish!! So much so that I am planning to give my A2 Level DELE Test in November this year!! All this due to Servas and the SYLE Program.....and kind hearted genuinely good people like Susana and Servas Spain members.

## My first experience as a Host

*By Ashok Pandhye (Pune)*

I got an opportunity to Host Mr. Massimo from Italy, who was with me from September 13, 2018 to September 23, 2018.

It was the occasion of Lord Ganesh festival and it was also my first experience with Servas, as I became a member only in September, 2018. I enjoyed the interaction with Massimo and we shared lot of things related to marriage, customs, language, and so on and so forth. He recorded my Pooja (prayer) services and was even curious about the preparation of food, such as Chai, Poha etc. We offered him Modak-Lord Ganesh's favourite prasad (offerings) and Puran Poli, which is a special Maharashtrian sweet dish.

One day, I thought he must be fed up of eating vegetarian food so I offered to treat him with some non-vegetarian food but to my surprise, he refused and told me that whatever we eat he too would eat and that it was no issue for him.

During his stay, he interviewed me about my Servas experience and through a video conference, we interacted with Servas members in Italy, who were attending a meeting hosted by his wife at their home. It was wonderful to be able to connect with them. Other than Massimo, I also had two other guests- Arzu from Istambul and Petricia from Mexico- who were also attending the festival.



Massimo and Arzu were able to witness Lord Ganesh's immersion at Borivali, Mumbai as I accompanied them to my friend's house in Borivali and we took part in the procession. Arzu enjoyed the procession and joined the locals in performing dance.

Thanks to Servas for bringing together friends from around the world, and for giving me an opportunity to share our way of life with them and getting to learn theirs.

## Everlasting memories at Louisville, USA

*By Pankaj Bhatt (Ahmedabad)*

In 2016, I had an opportunity to go to France and learn about the culture of France through an Exchange programme.

I became associated with Servas last year. I was visiting my daughter in Columbus, USA and stayed there for more than 4 months. During my stay there I had the desire to to meet and get acquainted with Servas members.

I communicated with the members in Louisville, the Town nearby and was invited by Nancy Erwin, my Servas host. She arranged for a meeting over lunch with two other members of Servas, Ms Carol Nussbaum and Dr Michael. I had a wonderful time with them and it was a really memorable stay at Nancy's home. She took me to a Farmers' Market, the Opening ceremony of an Art Gallery, to a club for Lunch and a Dinner Party of the Native Indian Spiritual Group.

Over all, the two days passed by so quickly but I gathered life-long memories. I will cherish the wonderful experience of having breakfast in her backyard and the leisure time at the swimming pool.



***Dr Michael, at the Art Gallery and with Nancy at the Joggers park & the River Bank***

I was all the more happy because on my return back home, I was able to host a couple from the US. I was glad to help them with booking the train tickets for their local travel and to show them around my city. In short, I would say that I am very grateful that I am associated with the beautiful organisation of SERVAS.



## **An amaranthine association with Servas Host in Vienna, Austria**

*by Dr. Hamsavahini Singh, (Rajasthan)*



When the lines “first time Servas, second time friends and third time family” echo in my ears, the smiling and good-natured face of Eva Meggeneder from Vienna, Austria comes to mind.

In 2002, I was offered a fellowship by the Education and Cultural Ministry of Austria for German language professionals and had the chance to stay in Vienna, Neu Siedlersee, Graz and Klagenfurt for 5 weeks from May to June. Prior to my visit, my husband was down with typhoid. As a consequence, I hardly had any time to write to Servas hosts and to prepare for my trip. On landing in Vienna in the morning I thought of checking for Servas hosts that did not require prior notice and to my joy, Renate and Dr. Frank Ratty kindly agreed to host me.

Upon my arrival at their home, they informed me that I was the second Servas traveller from India to stay with them. I was curious and asked about the first one. They told me that it was a man on a bicycle tour around the World in 2001. His wife and daughter, who were with him till Germany, had to return back to India because of work and studies respectively. Before they could say his name I asked if the man was called Rajpal. Needless to say, they were incredibly surprised when I told them that his wife was standing right in front of them. The world seems that much closer with Servas!

During my stay, I also wanted to meet other Servas members and got in touch with Eva. We decided to meet near St. Stephen's Dom (Cathedral) in the evening. This was the start of our beautiful friendship. We met several times during my 5 weeks stay and even went on a trip to Salzburg to visit her mother and sister, Heidi.

### *Visit to Salzburg with Eva in 2002*



In my experience, the best way to get to know a place, is to seek the help of the locals. I'm grateful for Eva's friendship, not only because she's a wonderful person but also because of the valuable insights she provided in exploring Vienna. Eva is quite a well-read and informed person and it was great fun exploring the Naschmarkt, Burg Theater, Rathaus, Museums, Ring Strasse and many other places in Vienna with her.

Eva graciously hosted me for about 6 weeks in 2006 while I was working on my doctoral thesis on an Austrian writer. During my recent visit in 2018, together we attended the centenary year celebrations for Nelson Mandela. In addition to sharing enriching discussions on Austrian culture, history, art, music etc. I also had the opportunity to taste delicacies such as Kaiserschamaren, Pfirsichknödel and Sacher Torte with Almdudler thanks to Eva.



### *Kaiserschammren , Pfirsichknödel & Sachertorte*

We, in India, believe in the philosophy of “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam” (The World is one family). It is concordant with the idea, on the basis of which, Servas was founded in 1945.





True to the belief, my family and I can vouch that we have been not only hosted by wonderful Servas members around the world but also visited by kind-hearted and open people from distant lands. Many such guests have visited us multiple times in Rajasthan and a few German friends have even come to my university as guest faculties. We are delighted to be a part of the peace mission of Servas!



**Servas members Siegrid Pessel (Göttingen) and Christine Fischer-v.Bernus (Munich) as Guest Faculty at my University (Left to Right)**

## MY FIRST EXPERIENCE IS THE BEST EXPERIENCE

By *S. Adhavan*  
National Awardee Social Worker  
*Pudhucherry*



This is the first time I got the opportunity of attending servas India conference in Chittorgarh, Rajasthan. Yes, first the experience for me is the best experience. I travelled all the way from Southern most part of India, Puducherry (former Pondichery) along with my father, a senior citizen Mr. Selvam aged 86 to Rajasthan to attend the conference. As a special gesture the executive Committee waived the registration fees of my father because they were quite impressed with the enthusiasm of the senior most member of the conference who had travelled for more than 35 hours by train and covered about 2000 kilo meters.

He also thoroughly enjoyed his stay in Chittorgarh and at the conference. He was considered as the family member and all the members gave him special attention, respect, love and affection. Yes, the brothers and sisters and friends, who attended



the Chittorgarh Annual Conference invited me and my father to visit their state. They also got blessings by touching his feet, shook hands. This gave inner satisfaction not only for them but for my father as well. This feeling shows that our Indian Servas members are humble, polite, and friendly people.



On the last day the newly elected EXCO members of SERVAS Foundation, India were felicitated with a South Indian Shawl by my father. This also created a feeling of unity in diversity. Because we speak different languages, our food habits are different, the costumes we wear is not the same and the religion is also different. But despite that we all were united and were living as one family. That is the beauty of Servas and I could feel it all through my stay in Chittorgarh,

There is no doubt when I say that we both will cherish the Chittorgarh experience all through our life. Thanks to the organisers of Servas Foundation, India.



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