

A REPORT ON SERVAS FOUNDATION (INDIA) Annual General Meeting held from 3-5th December,2021.

“It is better to conquer yourself than to win a thousand battles. Then the victory is yours. It cannot be taken from you, not by angels or by demons, heaven or hell.”

GAUTAM BUDDHA

Day 1 - Dec 3, 2021

SERVAS FOUNDATION (India) convened it's AGM at Sanchi – A Land of Buddha, which symbolizes Peace & Tranquility; The town, famous as A World Heritage Site of the Great Stupa, built by Emperor Ashoka in the 3rd century BC is the focal point of the Buddhist faith in the region since it contains relics of Buddha. What better location could be there for holding a meeting of SERVAS, which too fosters the core values of Peace and understanding.

The AGM could not be held in 2020 owing to the restrictions necessitated by the pandemic. Naturally, the attendance and active participation of the members, who had travelled from all nooks & corners of the country to this heart land of India, was very enthusiastic and whole hearted, in view of 73rd year of Foundation of SERVAS and completion of 70 years of SERVAS India. There were a total of 45 members present, including participation of 20 ladies and 5 youth members which was a very encouraging representation of the two important segments.

The meeting started with traditional Lighting of the lamp followed by invocation of God almighty by a prayer & a brief meditation with 2 minutes silence observed in memory of & for paying Homage to the departed souls.

The dais was occupied by committee members of SERVAS Foundation, viz. Respected Avinash Shirode (President), Mr. Abhay Shah (National Secretary), Mr. Hiren Goradia (Hostlist Coordinator), Ms. Hansvahini Singh (Peace Secretary) and Mr. Devjyoti Jwardar (News Letter Editor)

Welcome address was by Mr. Abhay Shah, NS, who welcomed all the participants. The Youth volunteers, new members and other organizers were also welcomed, one by one, with traditional Tilak and sweets by old members. In his key note address, Mr.Avinash Shirode expressed satisfaction over the number of participants, notwithstanding the challenges posed by the pandemic, congratulated the Committee members for organizing the AGM at Sanchi (the seat of Buddhas preaching), appreciated the structured agenda of the meeting and wished best for the successful conduct of the AGM.

Then Mr. Hiren Goradia briefed the audience about the success in augmenting membership owing to the Web site being developed and the effective use of social media and also called upon the present members to make all out efforts to further increase the no. by spreading the message of SERVAS amongst various groups across India. The analysis and interpretation of various posters quotations adorning the walls of the venue was then made by youth member Ms Ananya Agrawal. This was followed with a presentation of a skit, on Development of Understanding by learning about Others Perspective, made by Mukesh and Pradeep, the 2- youth guests from Moral Rearmament Institute, Panchagani, who had specially come to attend the meeting. The duo then

conducted an outbound ice-breaking activity to infuse Energy in the attendees and create a bonding amongst them.

In the post lunch session of the day Mr. Abhay Shah briefed the audience about the progress of SERVAS since 73 years of its foundation post the devastating World War II, by American conscientious objector Bob Luitweiler for working together for world peace. and how SERVAS India has progressed in last 70 years of its foundation by Mr. Harivallabh Parikh. He further underlined the responsibility of Gen-next to take this mantle ahead. The high light of the session was the encouraging virtual presence of Ms. Carla Kristensen, **Vice-president**, SERVAS International, who had a very participative and interactive session on Zoom meeting with the present members, particularly the Woman and youth participants. She was not only inquisitive about the way the affairs of SERVAS India are being conducted, but also appreciated the web-site and the work of SERVAS India and gave a very motivating speech by sharing International scenario.

Day 2 – Dec 4, 2021

The second day's session started at 9:30 am with a song, rendered by Mr. Dattatray Mulay, the 78 year old - senior most member present. The theme of the song was a self assertion of confidence that "WE SHALL SURELY SUCCEED" A review of the earlier days proceedings was presented by Youth member Ms Neha Shah. After this Mr. & Mrs. Adhavan, couple members from Puducheri were felicitated for being proud parents of Specially-abled son who was awarded, Presidents Medal, for the second year in a row, for mile stone achievements in field of Education, Music and sports.

Then Mr. Avinash Shirode, President, took review of SERVAS activities of last 2-years. He appreciated the progress made towards membership drive and other activities, since the Chittorgarh AGM held in 2019, but exhorted present members to participate in the subsequent Brain storming group discussions planned during the proceedings of the day and to come up with suggestions on activities that can be conducted, membership drive, youth activities/language programmes etc.

Mr. Abhay Shah, NS, seconded the same by suggesting further that more stress be given on increasing women membership for which more Women representation on executive committee be made and a sub-committee of Women members be made for bringing more women & youth members in fold of SERVAS. The most invigorating slot of the day was a virtual meet with Jonny Sångänger, President, SI, who very kindly consented to spare some time from his busy schedule, notwithstanding the time zone difference and participated in a zoom meeting with the attending members. His august presence was very vitalizing since he in his inimitable style gathered information about the AGM participation, Youth & Women representation and past/future activities etc. by directly interacting with present members. The pleasant surprise to members came when he hinted at the possibility of permitting holding of SERVAS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE in India. The meet with the SERVAS SI President was very encouraging and will go a long way in strengthening the core values of SERVAS in India.

There was then a time slot granted for group discussions on 4 -topics wherein 4 groups were formed viz. Fee Structure, International Conference, Youth Initiative and Membership drive. After the brainstorming each group leader then made a presentation on the outcome of the discussions by way of concrete suggestions and an action plan put up by the respective group. Other members gave their opinions and suggestions on each of these topics

Post Lunch was the business session of Servas Foundation for this AGM

Over the last two years since the 2019 AGM, certain decisions were taken by the Executive Committee. These were put to the members for sanction and approval as below:-

1. Sanction was granted for expenditure of Rs.40000/-incurred during last year.
2. Appointment of Mr. Devjyoti Jwardar as a News letter Editor, due to the sad demise of Mr. Ravi Verma, the then Newsletter editor.
3. A proposal has been given to Servas International Executive Committee to hold the the next Servas International General Assembly Meeting in India. The venue proposed is the MRA Centre, Panchgani, or another suitable center.
4. Excess expenditure incurred for the Sanchi Annual General Meeting to the extent of Rs 50000.

The above were approved unanimously by the members

The Following Resolutions forming part of the agenda, were also put forth to the members and were approved unanimously:-

1. Estimated expenditure up to Rs 1.50 Lacs, under various heads (excluding International Conference's expenses) likely to be incurred during next year.
- 2 The fee structure of the Servas membership is proposed to be following:
 - a. Registration Fee: Rs. 1,500
 - b. Renewal Fee: Rs.1,000 for 5 Years
 - c. LOI for One Year per person: Rs.2,500
 - d. Youth Fees remain unchanged at Rs 500 (Registration) and Rs 500 (up to completion of age 30 years)

Executive Committee authorised to make the necessary changes in the constitution to give effect to the above

- 3 Appointment of Sub-committees as Advisory committees for various projects proposed to be implemented during the year.
- 4 Members who have not yet paid their continuation fees would be most welcome to continue their membership. However, they shall have to pay the Registration Charges afresh, along with the revised continuation charges. They shall consequently not be allowed to vote or stand for committee for a period of two years.
- 5 The appointment and the fees payable to Servas's Advocate (if and when appointed) and Chartered Accountants Ms. Pallavi Kande, was also approved.
- 6 Deposit of the balance amounts remaining after meeting all the expenses, from contributions of Servas members towards Family Get-Togethers, Meetings, Site seeing or any other SERVAS programs.
- 7 The executive committee can be permitted to plan and schedule next AGM after International Conference,

THE Post Tea session was the picnic session where all members visited The Sanchi Stupa and spent the evening in each other's company. The Light and Sound show was the icing on the cake!!

Day 3 – Dec 5, 2022

The session on the final day was a short but interesting one

There was an open house session for expression of Individual ideas, feedback, suggestions and feelings . All the members expressed with a feeling of gratitude their satisfaction and joy about conduct of the AGM. The AGM concluded with Vote of thanks proposed by Mr.Hiren Goradia.

It was time to bid a heartfelt adieu to each other by the attending members who disbursed with many fond and everlasting memories of the wonderful time spent together at the AGM and a promise to meet again during next AGM.

Report by Mrs Amruta Karkare