

Whither Goes the Veerashaiva Samaja of North America?

A Study of VSNA's History



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History: “A chronological, often explanatory or commentarial record of events as of the life, or development of a people or institution.” (source: Webster’s Riverside University Dictionary)

There is NO Present without the Past; there is NO Future without the Present. Hence, the Past serves as the Foundation to the Present, and the Present serves as the Foundation to the Future.

The Veerashaiva Youth are the Present and the Future of the Veerashaiva Samaja of North America.

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Preface

It is with great pleasure that we to put this introspective record of the VSNA in the hands of the members. This document has been prepared not only to know where the VSNA has come from and where it is at the present time but also to determine where we would like the VSNA to go. Our youth are our Samaja's future. We believe in it absolutely and categorically. That is why a sincere attempt has been made think through the ramifications involved and to conduct a fruitful dialog with the Veerashaiva youth.

It is for this is the reason that the VSNA's Board of Directors passed a resolution asking a handful of senior members to shoulder this responsibility. With a view to help the VSNA and the Veerashaiava youth, this group undertook this self-study. They have looked at almost all problems, including the VSNA's leadership, annual conventions, religious instruction, finances, chapters, projects, Board of Regents, membership, convention trust fund, newsletter, etc. The VSNA considers our youth to be its present and future and hence 'Dialog with Veerashaiva Youth' and 'Special Appeal to the Youth' have been included herein. This document also discusses pertinent points often raised in our discussions of our religion. As the VSNA moves forward, this document will serve as a blue print to build a beautiful edifice. For this, on behalf of the members, I would like to express our appreciation and thanks to the seniors' group for preparing this document.

July 7, 2007

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1. Under-Current

Prior to 1962, the only way to gain permanent residency in the US was to marry an indigenous citizen (a US citizen). Otherwise it was well nigh impossible for Asians (non-Caucasians) to get residency-permit from the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Services of the Department of Justice. After the arrival of the John F. Kennedy's New Frontier and Lyndon Johnson's Great Society, the Congress modified the then existing immigration rules and regulations. This ushered in a steady but slowly growing stream of immigrants trickling into the US from India. Included in this stream of immigrants were the Lingayats from Karnataka and Maharashtra. With the arrival of the computer era and information technology the trend of Veerashaiva immigration received a shot in the arm.

After the liberalization of the immigration laws during the mid 1960s and early 1970s by the US administration, the number of the Veerashaivas arriving in the United States began to rise. The first generation of the Veerashaivas needed about a decade to settle down to routine life in their adopted land. This adjustment required lot patience and forbearance. They had to face enormous problems that confront the first generation of immigrants coming from alien cultures and religious faiths. First they had to get accustomed to working and earning their livelihood and then to raising their families. When they began to feel comfortable, they started to think of the surrounding environment and the prevailing local practices. Some of these pioneering families began to receive visitors from the church organizations. The visitors from Christian churches tried to lecture and impress the Veerashaiva families living in the Southern part of the US. Often they would drop by, knock on the front door and start canvassing about their religious faith. This led the Veerashaivas families to think how best not to get assimilated and swallowed by the melting pot of multi-social and multi-religious ideologies pervading throughout their adopted land and how best to successfully save their families and their off-springs from ambush by the alien culture and religious ideologies. It is more than group dynamics or the birds of the same feather flock together mentality that brings people together. It is sort of blood is thicker than water variety; meaning the same culture and heritage, the same religious way of life, similar upbringing, common spiritual aspirations etc flowing through their veins that bring people closer.

This led the immigrant Veerashaiva families to think of ways and means of preserving, protecting and propagating the Veerashaiva way of life, legacy and heritage they had been fortunate enough to inherit from their own parents and grandparents, for the benefit of their off-springs born and/ or growing-up in the alien land. Thus, the first generation of Veerashaiva immigrants soon came to realize that their strength lies not as flourishing

and prospering individuals but as a group of people having similar religious beliefs and sharing common heritage and values. This undercurrent of thought began to surface in the minds and hearts of the Veerashaiva settlers in the Northeastern corridor of the United States, namely North Carolina, Virginia, Washington (DC), New Jersey and New York. This under current created some kind of telepathy amongst these pioneering families and words began to go forth North Carolina to New York via Washington, DC. During this ensuing period, more than a year had elapsed (**Ref. 2, pages 7 and 8**). Perhaps, the mail delivery was a little slow in those days! Guru Bale (NJ) began to vent his concerns a little more vocally than others. Here it must be admitted that Guru Bale did demonstrate dynamic leadership in the early days (**Appendix 1**). His efforts bore fruit and culminated in organizing the first “Veerashaiva Get-together” in a Maryland sub-urban place, on the outskirts of Washington, DC. This place was chosen because it was half-way between New York and North Carolina and was convenient for vehicular travel. Guruswamy Ayya and Sarojini Ullagaddi acted as the Conveners of this conference (**Appendix 2**).

2. Ground Swell of Good Will

The Veerashaiva families responded to the initial words of mouth about the conference and the first handwritten newsletter in Kannada (**Appendix 1**). This was reflected in the **Ground Swell of Good Will** that had been generated by the verbal messages. This overflow of good will served as the dynamic driving force that energized the participants. There wasn't a single discordant note during the proceedings. Neither was there any dissenting voice. However, there was a forceful venting of opinions and suggestions. All the families assembled at the conference felt that they were sort of an extended family. All faces were smiling. One could read on their happy, smiling faces that they were proud to be Veerashaivas. The participants felt that they had just participated in the proceedings of the historic Anubhava Mantapa. The most passionately discussed subject was how best to expose the Veerashaiva children and the youth to the Veerashaiva Way of life, legacy and heritage.

3. The First Veerashaiva Get-together Invitations

Words went out about the impending ‘**Veerashaiva Get-together**’. Invitations (**Appendix 2**) were mailed to people who initially had indicated in writing or by word of mouth that they would definitely attend such a conference. All Veerashaiva families based around the Washington metropolitan area had graciously and voluntarily agreed to host at least two Veerashaiva families as guests in their abodes. Admittedly, this put an enormous burden on these local Veerashaiva families. In addition to organizing the conference and taking care of all and sundry things associated with this historic endeavor,

they had to bear the burden of providing boarding and lodging facilities to the visiting guests. In another sense, this arrangement worked wonders in providing opportunities for these families and their hosts to bond. In fact, a large majority of these bonds, over the course of years, have matured into permanent friendship. This arrangement proved very successful until 1985 when the increasing number of participants proved rather too inconvenient for the local members of the host chapter to house the guests and organize the convention at the same time. This practice gave way to the present system of the participants staying in hotels and motels close to the VSNA annual convention center.

What appears to be the first recorded summary of the **First Veerashaiva Get-together** is reproduced below with minor editorial modifications for the purpose of an historical over-view. The original document is available with the VIRC (**Veerashaiva International Resource Center**).

4. Birth-Pains

Before the impending conference took place, the New York folks founded their own “**Veerashaiava Sangh**” (**Appenix 3**). Added to that soon after the conference transactions of the Washington get-together were over and before the good-byes were exchanged, dark clouds began to appear on the horizon. Up until that time, things were rosy and cozy. After the delivery of the child – founding of the VSNA - angst and anguish began to generate even before the conference was declared over. This pushed forth feelings that the individual egos were looming larger than the loftier goals of establishing an organization designed to preserve, protect, and propagate the Veerashaiva way of life, legacy and heritage. This impression appears to have been bolstered by the feeling of ‘what is in it for me’ rather ‘what is good for the community’. The news of the creation of the VSNA at the Washington conference seems to have caused considerable consternation among some New York based Veershaivas about calling the newly established organization located around the Washington-Baltimore metropolitan area as the national organization. This suggests that some New York folks had chosen to ignore the fact that the newly founded organization was created by delegates spread across the North American sub-continent. Unfortunately for the VSNA, this atypical superiority feeling did not subside for over a quarter of a century and often contributed to unpleasant environment at the executive committee meetings!

The one-page hand-written Kannada newsletter put out by Guru Bale (NY) and B. Prasannaswamy (NJ) in 1977 has been credited with creating an awareness among the Lingayats settled down in North America and inspiring them to explore the possibility of setting up a religio-cultural organization with the stated mission of preserving, protecting,

and promoting the Veerashaiva (Lingayat) Way of Life (*page 7, Ref. 2*). This letter is reproduced for historical purposes (**Appendix 1**). What precedes this letter is the unrecognized fact that there was an undercurrent supporting this endeavor from all across the Northeastern part of the US and that Guru Bale had the knowledge of it. It was the Northeastern corridor, where there was a heavy concentration of the Veerashaivas (Lingayats). This inference stands supported by a latter demographic study conducted by then young Uday Kumbar (**Appendix 4**). The overwhelming response elicited by this hand written newsletter sent out during January 1977 inspired and motivated Guru Bale and B. Prasannaswamy to take a step forward. What they and their friends in the near by vicinity of New York did was to set up in 1977 an organization by themselves and for themselves and called it the ‘Veerashaiva Sangh’; not wanting to go through the trouble and travail of setting up a National Organization, since that involved too much effort and too much time. An undated letter signed by Guru Bale (NY) and B. Prasannaswamy (NJ) announced the establishment of the “**Veerashaiva (Lingayat) Sangh**” (**Appendix 3A**). They asked their friends to make copies of the newsletter and circulate it.

Another letter (*page 11, Ref. 2*) states, “Mr. G. Ayya, Washington (DC) has graciously agreed to draft a constitution of our organization.” To which organization this letter refers to is not clear, for it does not carry the date on which it was written. The Constitution Committee of the VSNA was appointed at the first convention of the VSNA held in Maryland on November 25, 1978. The said newsletter raises several questions. First of all, this claim certainly does not appear to apply to the VSNA on the face of it. This assertion is based on the following observations:

1. The VSNA was not in existence when this newsletter was published and circulated. This is a FACT based on evidence.
2. The VSNA was not formed until sometime after the arrival of the Ayyas in the Washington Area.

On the other hand, it is conceivable that the above claim really pertains to the newly formed national organization, the VSNA. To avoid confusion, the correct date of writing the newsletter ought to have been indicated in the above-cited reference.

5. Veerashaiva Samaja of North America

5.1 There is Magic and Music in a Name

The folks who say, “What is in a name? A rose by any other name would smell as sweet”, ought to know that there is magic and music in a name! There is more to it than the

words in a name connote. There was and is a sense of bubbling joy and pride in a name. There is a feeling effervescent happiness in a name. Particularly, if that word happens to be the name of a cherished religion, then there is also a feeling of salvation attached to it. This realization dawned on the minds of the Veerashaivas when they uttered the words, “**Proud To Be A Veerashaiva!**” at the first VSNA Annual Convention. Different folks suggested different names for the new organization even before it was officially established. Within a span of a few months the organization set up in New York had undergone a change in its name by modifying its name from ‘Veerashaiva (Lingayat) Sangh’ (cf. page 11, Ref. 2) to ‘Veerashaiva Samaja’ (*page 12, Ref. 2*).

The names in the hopper for the national organization proposed to be soon established during the first national meeting of the Veerashaivas (Lingayats) were:

1. Veerashaiva Association of North America
2. Lingayat Association of North America
3. Basaveshwara Samaja of North America

These names were suggested by G. S. Murthy, Petersburg (VA) to G. Bale in his letter dated March 12, 1977 (cf. **Appendix 3B**).

What finally came out was **Veerashaiva Samaja of North America**. It is quite apparent and obvious to surmise from the above, that the name chosen happened to be a combination of parts of the above suggestions.

Guru Bale’s 4th Newsletter speaks of the antiquity and progressive nature of the Veerashaiva religion. He also states, “Many of my friends would like to know how to expose and to instruct children to religious principles.” This statement still reverberates and resonates in our minds even after 30 years!

Mahadev Kumbar’s assertion –“meanwhile Washington DC people were pondering about transplanting New York Samaja, which is already in existence, to Washington, DC so that a national recognition can be achieved.” – stands unsupported by documented evidence. His statement - “There were many endless meetings and debates between New York and Washington DC people for a year.” – perhaps refers to the chaos resulting from the unanticipated resignation of Linga Raju and the attempts to establish common grounds and unified approach to constituting an organization dedicated to serve the interests of the Veerashaiva community.

Mahadev Kumbar mentions (*Ref. 2*) about the intra- and inter-conflicts in and between the Veerashaiva organizations based in New York and Washington DC area. Thus, there was a tug of war going on. There was and is nothing wrong with this. This was sort of

turf and seniority war and growing up, all rolled into one unpleasant mess. Even in the 1980s Mahadev Kumbar was claiming and playing the same game, namely separate existence and seniority, as the New York based Veerashaivas were doing in the 1970s. At one Exec. Comm. in the 1990s, when he played this card, he was politely asked, “in that case, why are you here?” He had no answer to this question. He continued to exert this claim even in the 21st Century!! This was one of the contributing factors that resulted in the expulsion of the VSNY as a VSNA-entity.

It seems that a couple of Veerashaiva/Lingayat organizations, namely Basava Samiti, Washington (DC) and Basava International (New York) were in existence prior to the founding of the VSNA. The name ‘Basava Samiti’ clearly conforms to the notion that “imitation is the sincerest form of flattery”, for Basava Samiti, Banglore (Karnatk, India) was operative, for some time earlier than the one in Washington, under the guidance of the late Honorable B. D. Jatti, ex-Chief Minister of Karnatak and ex-Vice President of India.

Two potential sites – Washington (DC) and New York City – were considered for the first meeting of the Veerashaiva community. Of the two, the metropolitan Washington DC area came to be chosen for three reasons:

1. Guru Bale was not able to sell the idea and convince his fellow New York based Veerashaivas on the advantages of holding the meeting in or around New York City.
2. The Washington (DC) and Virginia area seemed convenient for folks from the south (North Carolina) to drive.
3. Guruswamy Ayya and Sarojini Ullagaddi were able to secure the willing cooperation from their friends to serve as hosts by providing boarding and lodging facilities to the expected influx of out of state Veerashaivas (around 50 or so, cf. **Appendix 5**)

The above inference derives its strength and support from the fact the Guruswamy Ayya and Sarojini Ullagaddi were asked to serve as the conveners of this conference. Accordingly, they mailed invitations (**Appendix 2**) to folks who had earlier expressed genuine interest in attending the first annual convention of the VSNA (cf. **Appendix 5**).

The election of Vimala Channabasappa as the first president of the VSNA was in the Veerashaiva (Lingayat) tradition. Whatever else was there at that moment was of secondary nature and ancillary. Vimala Channabasappa had established a name for

herself as a budding poetess in Kannada. The folks gathered there also wanted to highlight the cardinal principle of the Veerashaiva religion, namely EQUALITY of humans beings. She was also a good articulator in her own right. Later on she tried, in vain and for some unexplained reasons, her personal address designated as the VSNA's permanent postal address (cf. **page 35, Ref. 2**). When three VSNA Presidents did not buy the idea and the rationale behind the suggestion, it was dropped by the proponents.

5.2 The VSNA Constitution

A resolution adopted by the 1st Annual Convention created an *ad hoc* constitution committee composed of S. Munavalli, P. Basavappa, H. Siddhalingaiah, G. Bale, G. Ayya, K. Rajasekhara, G. Kori and Vimala Channbasappa and charged it to come up with an acceptable draft within three months (cf. **Proceedings of the 1st Convention**). “In January of 1979, Mr. Guruswamy Ayya prepared the initial draft of the constitution and distributed it among the members and obtained input” (**Ref. 1**). Five members of the Constitution Committee (G. Bale, G. Ayya, G. Kori, Vimala Channbasappa and H. Siddhalingaiah) participated in the preparation of the final version of the draft of the constitution. The other members of the committee either sent their input via mail or did not show up. The draft of the constitution approved by the committee at its meeting of February 18, 1979 (cf. **Appendix 6**) and was transmitted on March 16, 1979 by G. Ayya to VSNA's interim president, Vimala Channbasappa, who mailed copies of the draft to 25 families who attended the First VSNA Annual Convention (cf. **Appendix 7**). This draft was ratified by the General Body of the 2nd Annual Convention held on November 24, 1979 at Washington, DC. The absence of a sizeable number of representatives from the New York area at this convention was noticeable. The third convention held in the metropolitan Washington, DC on November 29, 1980 elected Linga Raju (New York) as the President of the VSNA. What was thought as a blessing in disguise and would go a long way in patching up the differences, healing the wounds and bringing the two groups together, as the events unfolded later in 1981, turned out to be only a wishful thinking! What Mahadev Kumbar describes under the caption “**Turmoil in the Paradise**”, confirms the surmise that there was lot of intra- and inter-bickering and fighting within and between the groups. There was lot internal fighting among the members of the New York group itself (cf. **page 16, Ref. 2**). Vimala Channabasappa's letter addressed to Sarojini Ullagaddi simply represented griping, probably because the former expected to be consulted (sort of turf war) about the contents of the newsletter. The newsletter editor thought that she had a free hand and partly because the responsibilities and privileges of the editor had not been well defined and spelled out. The latter's response went to Guru Bale, for he had entrusted the editorial task to her (Mrs. Ullagaddi) (cf. footnote on page 12, Ref. 2). In a sense, the static among the office-holders came about because their

prerogatives and privileges had not been clearly defined other than the fact they were all on an **interim basis**. That was the mandate of the resolution passed by the 1st General Body (cf. proceedings of the 1978 conference). The use of this term suggested that the offices of these folks became extinct once the constitution had been approved and accepted by the general body.

5.4 The Proceedings of the First Conference of the Veerashaiva Samaja

(December 9, 1978)**

“Please find enclosed a revised version of the conference proceedings. This is a little more readable and has more details. And gives credit to deserving folks. A statement of accounts is a must. With regard to the constitution, let us do it a little differently. I will work at my end and send the members of the committee a copy asking her/him to freely comment, criticize and change it. A second version will then follow incorporating the suggestions of the majority of folks. The suggestions that are not included will be given a reason for not doing so. The final version accepted by the committee will be given to the interim office-bearers.

“The one day conference took place on **November 25 1978** in a church in Silver Spring (MD). The total number of participants was **51**, who came from New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Virginia, Mid-west and their host families came from the Washington, DC metropolitan area. Attending the meeting were 12 teens and 19 children.

“The conference deliberations began with appropriate opening remarks by G. Ayya, G. Bale and G. Kori on the importance of organizing and establishing the Samaja and its mission and function. Guru Bale gave information on the back ground that directly led to the momentous meeting. The proceedings were characterized by candidness and concerns on the parts of the parents and anxiety and inquisitiveness on the part of the teens and brisk business of making new friends by children.

“After the sandwich lunch, the participants were divided onto three groups: (1) “fathers”, “mothers” and “children”. Each group was charged with the task of discussing their concerns and airing what was uppermost in their minds.

From the Mothers Corner:

“Vimala Channabasappa gave a vent to what transpired in the ladies corner. Among the items discussed were the ways and means of:

- Making available to our children the stories on religious and cultural events and information on festivals and customs to preserve our heritage.
- Preserving and protecting our own identity and heritage from undue exposure and influence of the native culture.
- Preparing a directory of the Veerashaivas settled in North America.
- Orienting our children vis-à-vis the prevalent social customs and practices including ‘dating’.

From the Fathers Corner:

“This group was surcharged with concerns about the present status of affairs and their faces were covered with question-marks about future directions we should take to see that our children do not get lost in the wilderness.

- Raising kids in an environment totally lacking facilities and motivation readily available in our home land.
- Communicating with our children and understanding their needs,
- Developing educational material to help our children.
- Avoiding native social pitfalls or fringe benefits of living in the land of affluence and opportunities we all had voluntarily chosen to spend our lives; more particularly how to approach and solve the problem of dating.
- “Like mother, like father” was resonating in the meeting hall.

From the Youth Corner:

“The hearts and the minds of the parents became pleased and proud when the youth group started voicing their concerns, which were genuine and down to earth. There was nothing fancy, nothing imaginary about them. There was the usual anxiety and difficulty in coping with and adjusting to the dual cultures – one inside the home and another outside the home.

- Lack of religious awareness both on their part as well on the part of their parents.
- Local social gatherings with other Indian communities often turn out to be eating and chatting parties.
- Give us ‘Lingayatism’ (Veerashaivism) was the demand of the day. Give us something in writing on what Veerashaivism really is.
- Heart-felt eagerness to know more about their culture, history, philosophy and religion.

- Make available to us the reading material and hold religious seminars.
- Since the Veerasahiva Samaja is being organized for our benefit, give the tools and encourage and motivate the youngsters.

Open Discussion on Veerashaiva Philosophy

“The group discussion was initiated by Mrs. Ullagddi. After the group warmed up, every body jumped in on the act. The vachana recitals, particularly the melodious voice pf Miss Ayya, created nostalgic memories in the minds of the audience.

Future Course

“The furor was all about the next meeting! Although the exact date was not fixed, the following participants agreed to explore the possibility of organizing local/regional meeting:

1. Guru Bale New Jersey and New York area
2. K. Rajasekhara North Carolina and Virginia
3. H. Siddalingaaih DC area

“A committee composed of S. Munavalli, P. Basavappa, H. Siddalingaaih, K. Rajasekhara, Guru Bale, G. Ayya, G. Kori and Vimala Channabasappa was unanimously elected and charged with the responsibility of coming up with the draft of an acceptable constitution for the Samaja. In the meantime a slate of **interim office-bearers** was elected by acclamation to hold their offices until fresh elections were held under the new constitution.

Office-Holders

Vimala Channabasappa (President)
 Guru Bale (Vice President)
 H. Siddalingaaih (Secretary)
 G. Ayya (Treasurer)

Executive Committee

Sarojini Ullagaddi
 G. Kori,
 Madhu Prasannaswamy* and
 .Srishaila Basavappa*

* Youth members

‘It was decided to establish a Library containing books on Veerashaiva culture, religion and philosophy.

“In conclusion, the conference was a complete success. It helped us to polarize our opinions and get us started on the road to establishing the Veerashaiva Samaja. It created awareness in us to preserve, protect and promote our Lingayat identity, culture, religion and heritage so that our children will have some thing to cherish and some thing to be proud of and that they will have strong roots in our adopted land and yet maintain links with our native land.”

** The copy of this write-up is available with VIRC.

6. Growing Pains

It appears that the ‘New York area Veerashaivas were not delighted to hear that the VSNA has been founded.’ (cf. Ref. 1) The Yankee-Veerashaivas, instead of welcoming the national organization, went ahead and formed their own organization – VSNY” (cf. Ref. 1). During 1980, the New York area Lingayats grudgingly “agreed to become a chapter of the VSNA.” (cf. Ref. 1). Very little of any significance, if any, occurred during the 2nd annual convention other than the acceptance and approval of the VSNA Constitution drafted by the *ad hoc* constitution committee. The 3rd VSNA annual convention was also held in Washington, DC area. This convention elected Linga Raju (NY) as its next president for the year 1981.

The Linga Raju Episode

This was and still is one of the most disheartening growing pains that the VSNA had to contend and endure. What ought to have been a smooth sailing for Linga Raju, turned out to be a turbulent twister and he did not deserve this. From the historical point of view, the following were among some of the factors that might possibly have contributed to this unpleasant episode:

1. Non-cooperation and group-mentality on the part of his fellow Veerashaivas from New York;
2. Belligerent attitude of his team-members (office-holders);
3. Discouraging intrigues and in-fighting on the part of the members of the Exec.Comm. and

4. Him being the ‘lone ranger’ from New York among the elite-members of Washington (DC) dominated office-holders and the members of the Exec. Comm.

Linga Raju wrote in his resignation letter dated March 9, 1981, “I have noticed among some of the members, selfishness, hatred, hostility, personality conflict, and have noticed that many members of the Exec. Comm. do not work in the best interest of the Samaja” as his primary reason for giving up. This quote is extracted from his letter published *in toto* somewhere else (**Appendix 8**, cf. *page 18, Ref.2*). This was a tragic blow to the infant organization (VSNA), for it lost the services of a gentleman and generated a twister!

In all fairness, it should be stated here that in spite of his bitter experience, Linga Raju did not hold any grudges against the VSNA and came back to organize the 4th VSNA Annual Convention in New York in 1981. The primary reason for hosting the first three conventions around the metropolitan Washington Area is the fact that the New York based Veerashaivas were jockeying and fighting among themselves and their unwillingness to share and cooperate with the Veerashaivas from the rest of the country. Although the environment during the 2nd and 3rd VSNA Annual Conventions was not congenial and not conducive to constructive results, it certainly did not smell of the impending death of the VSNA. This was not helped by the non-cooperative attitude of the New York based Veerashaivas either. Had this group come down from its high pedestal and risen above their infightings, perhaps things could have been different! Every organization goes through the growing pains.

Anyway, the 4th VSNA Annual Convention was hosted by New York on October 11, 1981. According to Mahadev Kumbar, “the general body was tense and not very civil. When the time for the election of the new officers came, much time was spent in exchanging words. ----“ By some stroke of goodwill, the attendees voted in two persons from New York and two persons from the Washington, DC area as the next office-bearers. Soon after this event, things took a turn for good! Credit for this turn around goes to the incoming president and secretary, Veeresh M. Patil and Mahadev Kumbar. Immediately, after taking charge of their office, the first thing they did was to issue a friendly appeal for cooperation and unity (cf. **Appendix 9**). This genuinely, sincere appeal created conditions conducive to cooperation instead of confrontation and acrimonious gridlock.

The overall result emanating from this was the fact that this team was elected and re-elected for three years in succession. At that time, the term of office of the office-holders was one year. This fact alone, by any stretch of imagination and measurement,

represents the strongest vote of confidence in the duo's dynamic leadership. This was reflected in a hand written letter posted in Mahadev Kumbaar's write-up: "Congratulations on your election as the VSNA –Secretary for an unparalleled third time! This speaks highly of your success in the past and bodes well for your service in the future. ----- A similar letter has been mailed to Dr. Patil."(**Appendix 10**, cf. *page 23 Ref. 2*).

The second most important thing this team accomplished was to make the VSNA fiscally solvent and viable. It has been stated that when this team took charge, the VSNA bank balance was a virtual - **\$25.07** (the books showed a balance of \$127.93 with a claim of \$153.00 against it; leaving a net balance of – (**negative**) **\$25.07**). They set right this downright disheartening situation.

Life-Membership

The duo conceived in 1982 the concept of Life-membership with a fee of \$500 per family. After getting the approval of the Executive Committee, they went to work at it right away. In those days, the need to get the general body's approval was not considered necessary. Probably, this came under the purview of the administrative prerogative and power! In a sense, it worked out very well. That year 5 members became life-members and this generated \$2500.00. Incidentally, this action happens to be the most constructive thing that occurred during the first decade of the founding of the VSNA. It brought the VSNA from the brink of red balance sheet to positive cash flow. The first year it became effective, it brought in \$2500.00. This is not, by any chance, a big sum now. But in the by-gone days, it was a milestone! A graphical description of the number of life members *vs.* the calendar-year is given in **Fig. 1**. Only the interest generated from this account was and is being used for day-to-day administrative expenses.

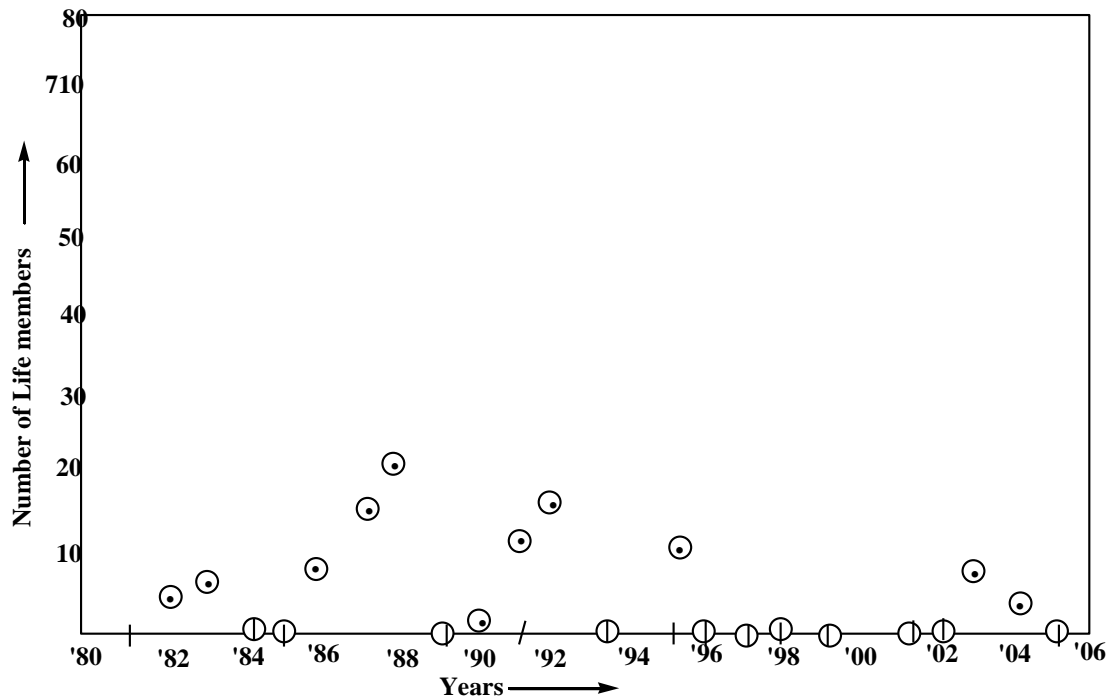


Figure 1: Number of Life members added each year. When the circle is on the axis, it means either no life members were added or data is unavailable.

It was during this period, the VSNA newsletter’s cover page received the ‘first face-lift’ and became known as the Veerashaiva and carried a logo/ emblem designed by the Patil family. The same logo is still in use. Until this time, it was like anything goes with the newsletter (more on this later). Whether one agrees with some of the things said/done by them, the fact that they were able to lay a strong foundation for the sustained growth of the VSNA; what they did was and is truly **commendable and remarkable**. On a lighter side, Mahadev Kumbar seems to miss the earlier hot-air and hot-word filled Exec. Comm. meetings, for he has lamented, “*Now Exec. Comm. meetings, which are sober and dull with no fun!* (cf. Ref. 2)”

Contrary to contention and published records (cf. **Appendix 11**), running the VSNA is not a one-man show. Listed under the caption, **Milestones**, one

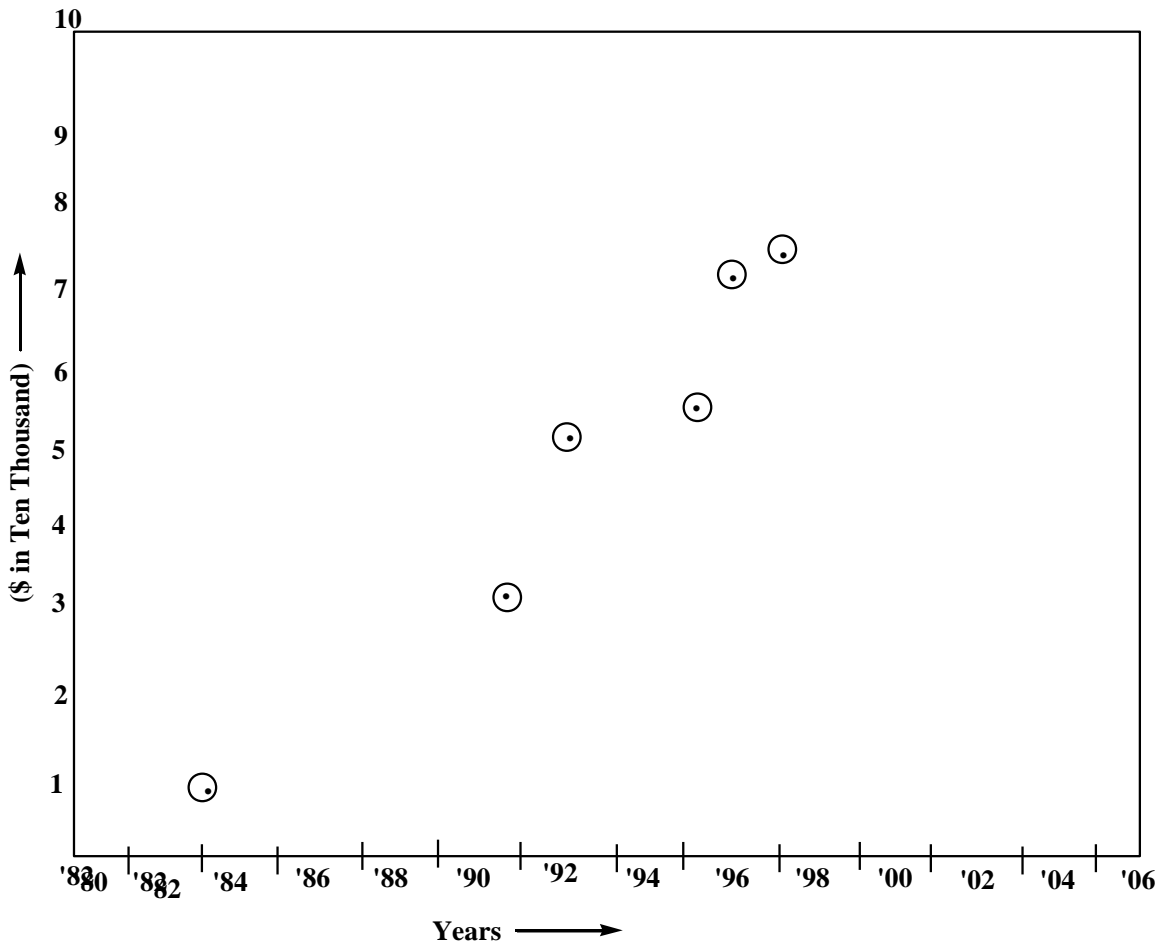


Figure 2: Represents the Amount in the Life membership Account

finds the names of the VSNA Presidents only in the VSNA's Newsletter. This is unquestionably unfair. The day-to-day administration of the VSNA has always been and will always be a team effort. In order to rectify this practice, a comprehensive up-to-date listing of the VSNA Office-holders is given below. However, in order to impress the fact that the primary *raison d'être* of the VSNA is its concern for the Veerashaiva youths, the names of the members of the first elected Executive Committee (present **BOD**) is also included. The names marked with the * were youth members. Actually and factually, youth members of the **First Exec. Comm.** formed of **one-half** of the total Exec. Comm. members elected in 1978!

Name	Chapter	Position	Year
Vimala Channabasappa	Washington, DC	President	11/1978
Guru Bale	New York	Vice-President	
H. Siddhalingaiah	VA-MD	Secretary	
Guruswamy Ayya	VA - MD	Treasurer	

Executive Committee 11/1978

Sarojini Ullagaddi
 Gangadhar Kori,
 Madhumati Prasannaswamy*(NJ, youth)
 Srishaila Basavappa* (NC, youth)

Gangadhar Kroi	Washington,DC	President	11/79
Chandrasekhar Nadiga	Pittsburgh	Vice-President	
H. Siddhalingaiah	VA-MD	Secretary	
Guruswamy Ayya	VA-MD	Treasurer	

<i>Linga Raju</i>	<i>New York</i>	<i>President</i>	<i>10/1980</i>
<i>Gangadhar Kroi</i>	<i>Washington, DC</i>	<i>Vice-President</i>	
<i>Guruswamy Ayya</i>	<i>VA</i>	<i>Secretary</i>	
<i>Saraswati Hiremath</i>	<i>VA</i>	<i>Treasurer</i>	

** Gangadhar Kroi	Washington, DC	President	3/1981
Guruswamy Ayya	VA-MD	Secretary	
Saraswati Hiremath	VA-MD	Treasurer	

* VA-MD means there was only one joint chapter.

** For personal reasons, Linga Raju (New York) submitted his resignation on March 9, 1981 and the Vice-President took over as per VSNA Constitution.

Veeresh M. Patil	New York	President	10/1982
Guruswamy Ayya	VA	Vice-President	
Mahadev Kumbar	New York	Secretary	
Saraswati Hiremath	VA	Treasurer	

Veeresh M. Patil	New York	President	1983
Sharada S. Hulbanni	Detroit	Vice-President	
Mahadev Kumbar	New York	Secretary	
Saraswati Hiremath	VA	Treasurer	

Veeresh M. Patil	New York	President	1984
Guruswamy Ayya	VA	Vice-President	
Mahadev Kumbar	New York	Secretary	
Saraswati Hiremath	VA	Treasurer	

1985-1987

Chandrakant Bilgi	Toronto	President
G. Shankar	Detroit	Vice-President
Lingaraj Patil	Detroit	Secretary
Nayanatara Swamy	Pittsburgh	Treasurer

K. Channarasappa (Pittsburgh), Chair, Board of Trustees

1987-1988

Somashekar Munavalli	Maryland	President
K. Umashankar	Chicago	Vice-President
Koosappa Rajasekhara	Maryland	Secretary
Nayanatara Swamy	Pittsburgh	Treasurer

K. Channarasappa (Pittsburgh), Chair, Board of Trustees

1989-1990

Shivappa Hulbanni	Detroit	President
Nayanatara Swamy	Pittsburgh	Vice-President
G. Shankar	Detroit	Secretary
C. S. Ullagaddi	Virginia	Treasurer

Guruswamy Ayya (Maryland), Chair, Board of Trustees

1991-1992

Koosappa Rajasekhara	Maryland	President
Vijay Athani	Pittsburgh	Vice-President
S. G. Malghan	Maryland	Secretary
Vimala Shekar	Ohio	Treasurer

Guruswamy Ayya (Maryland), Chair, Board of Trustees

1993-1994

Chandrasekhara Nadiga	Pittsburgh	President
Shaila Uppin	North Carolina	Vice-President

D. Basavaraj	Virginia	Secretary
Vimala Shekar	Ohio	Treasurer

Somashekar Munavalli (Maryland), Chair, Board of Trustees

1995-1996

Shaila Uppin	North Carolina	President
G. S. Doddamani	Detroit	Vice-President
S. Nagaraj	North Carolina	Secretary
Prema Shankar	Ohio	Treasurer

Somashekar Munavalli (Maryland), Chair, Board of Trustees

1997-1998

G. S. Doddamani	Detroit	President
Prema Shankar	Ohio	Vice-President
D. Tumkur	Detroit	Secretary
Sada Ananda	Virginia	Treasurer

Shaila Uppin (North Carolina), Chair, Board of Reagents

1999-2000

Prema Shankar	Ohio	President
Mallikarjun Nalawadi	Toronto	Vice-President
Ravi Topgi	Chicago	Secretary
Suresh Channabasappa	Pittsburgh	Treasurer

Shaila Uppin (North Carolina), Chair, Board of Reagents

2001-2002

Mallikarjun Nalawadi	Toronto	President
Ravi Bhooplapur	New York	Vice-President
Sarojini Ullagaddi	Virginia	Secretary
Suresh Channabasappa	Pittsburgh	Treasurer

Sajjan Shiva (Alabama), Chair, Board of Trustees

2003-2004

Ravi Bhooplapur	New York	President
Ananda Hiremath	New York	Vice-President
Raksha Sundeeep	Ohio	Secretary
Seema Byahatti	New jersey	Treasurer

D. Basavraj (Virgina), Chair, Board of Reagents

2005-2006

Prabhu Patil	Detroit	President
S. Chandramouli	Chicago	Vice-President
Raj Adapur	Detroit	Secretary
Uma Sajjan	Detroit	Treasurer

G. Shankar (Detroit), Chair, Board of Reagents

In this context, it must be stated here to set the record straight that in one case, the names of the VSNA's Vice-President and Treasurer were not even made known to the incoming VSNA President and Secretary by the outgoing VSNA's President until the former were about to take charge of their offices. Also, the out going officers did not give even a single sheet of record to the incoming VSNA-officers. The interest of the Samaja and the confidence in their ability to do what was needed and expected of them kept this team going. This statement is made here to show that the Linga Raju episode could have been avoided and averted with a little bit of calm and cool on the part of the parties concerned.

6. VSNA's Newsletter

The newsletter of an organization plays a prominent part in the life of an organization. The VSNA is no exception to this general observation. It is the first hand-written newsletter that has been credited with creating awareness among the Veerashaivas/Lingayats and to have convinced the pioneers that there was a groundswell of goodwill bubbling in the hearts and minds of their fellow Veerashaivas/Lingayats spread across North America. They heard loud and clear a call for the creation of a National organization representing all Veerashaivas/Lingayats. Not even a single dissenting whisper was heard on this score. The members were eager to know the new news and happenings about and in the newly established organization. Since then the newsletter has become a part and parcel of the VSNA, although its format has undergone and still undergoing a metamorphism. Its' appearance and contents have also changed

from one to another depending on the whims and fancies of the VSNA office-holders and the availability of funds to produce it (**Appendix 12**). During a span of 24 months (1989–1890) only two issues of the newsletter were brought out. On the other hand during the periods, 1887-988, 1991-1992 and 1997-1998, there was a regular flow of newsletters on regular basis. Often times, there have been occasions; when the contents were woefully unfit for inclusion in the Newsletter. Once there was a two-page spread-out of the tour-map of a visitor from India!!

It must be admitted that the cost of production and bulk mailing has sky-rocketed since the early days from a fistful of dollars to about **\$8000.00** per year! When everything has been said and done, the fact remains that the newsletter is the eye, the ear and the mouth of the VSNA. In other words, it is the only cost effective and efficient means of communication with the general membership (of course, except e-mailing).

However, as the saying – “it is the apparel that proclaims a person” – goes, its appearance and the standard of its contents, project a public perception of the organization. Hence, the newsletter has got to be streamlined. Its appearance has got to be aesthetic and pleasing to the eye. Its contents have got to be standardized and inspiring enough. In one sentence, the newsletter has got to be streamlined and standardized. To engage our youths and housewives, it has got to cater to their needs as well; meaning there should be **youths’ corner** and **women’s page** where they can voice their concerns; for the VSNA is a **FAMILY**.

In this context, it is worth mentioning here Guruswamy Ayya’s observation, “Newsletter has become ineffective. The format keeps changing. We scramble to fill its pages without vision to create continuity of thought. Therefore, the effort is not cost effective. Newsletter is an important communication tool. It is a group symbol. It is a place where our history is recorded. As the agency’s mouth piece, it should promote the VSNA agenda in a systematic manner. It can be a good conduit for education. A three year editorial committee should be formed to create a long term well connected content in a standard format.” (cf. Ref. 4). Halleluiah!!

How to achieve this is the sixty-four thousand dollar question! An attempt is made here to suggest the format of an 8-page newsletter. *If the income permits, it can be mailed in an envelope.*

Front Page	Cover	2 nd -page (Inside the cover)	3 rd page Half-a-page President’s Message	4 th page One-page scholarly article on Veerashaiva religion
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<i>logo</i>	<i>Office-holders/BOD/BOR names once a year in the Jan. issue of the newsletter</i>	advertisement	
5 th page Women's page*	6 th page advertisements	7 th page Youth's corner*	8 th page advertisement

* in the absence of any of the two, those pages should be devoted to publishing scholarly articles on the Veerashaiva religion/philosophy, etc.

A logical question: As remarked elsewhere, the costs of publishing and mailing of the newsletter have shot up tremendously since the early days. The VSNA is experiencing a budget crunch right now, since it has got to subsidize the annual convention from its trust fund account. More than double the number of Veerashaivas/Lingayats in North America than the number of bona fide members are sitting on the fence and do not want to become dues paying members. They also want to receive the newsletter free; meaning without becoming the dues paying members! There has been lot of hot discussion on this point in the meetings of the Exec. Comm. This has been the dilemma for the VSNA! It is a pity that living in one of the most compassionate countries in the world, our own brothers and sisters (Lingayats) have not found it fit to support their own organization.

Supporting the Newsletter through Ads:

The Veerashaivas/Lingayats now living in North America are much more affluent and diversified than the first generation of Veerashaiva immigrants. These folks should girdle up and come to the aid of the Samaja. In view of the fact that donations to the VSNA are tax deductible, they should come forth and sponsor advertisements in the VSNA's newsletter. Members should consider announcing their anniversaries, births, marriages, etc. in the VSNA Newsletter as advertisements and financially support the newsletter. A similar suggestion had been made earlier by G. Bale (cf. Ref. 2).

Recently, the **Veerashaiva** - the Samaaja's newsletter - received a 2nd face-lift and a new name (**Appendix 13**). According to its enthusiastic editors -Bhavani Moodabagil and Vidya Betkerur - the new name -**BHANDHVYA**- implies "bringing people together, sharing common goals, living the Veerashaiva way of life, a sense belonging and bonding," The editors expect the newsletter to serve as 'the voice of the community'. It is encouraging and pleasing to note the optimism of the editors.

7. Convention Trust Fund

In a sense, the special summit meeting of October 7, 1995 gave rise to the concept of the Convention Trust Fund! In fact it was at this meeting that Mallikarjuna Udoshi's name was suggested, though this effort did not get underway until 1997. During the VSNA Annual Convention hosted by the Detroit chapter, Mallikarjuna Udoshi (PA) and Koosappa Rajasekhara (MD) got on the platform, provided dynamic driving force and guidance aimed at the realization of the goal and collected pledges for about half-a-million dollars (cf. **Appendix 14**). Unfortunately for the VSNA, **not all those who came forward with their pledges have honored their own words!** Some have made **ONLY partial payments** on their pledges! Some others have not paid even a **DIME** on their pledges!! **Appendix 15** lists the names of the members, who came forward and pledged their contribution to the Convention Trust Fund and the amount the respective members have so far really contributed.

As stated earlier, the Convention Trust Fund project was the beneficiary of the leadership of Mallikarjuna Udoshi (PA) and Koosappa Rajasekhara (MD). At the end of the first year, K. Rajasekhara wanted in writing from the VSNA President the authority for the next five years to spend and allocate the income from the said account. He said if he did not get this authority, he would resign from the project. The VSNA President, after consulting the BOD, said since the sitting President lacked constitutional authority to commit in writing on behalf of three future presidents and the BODs, he could not comply with the said demand. Consequently, K. Rajasekhara resigned. Then, Naga Manohar (MI) did pitch-in and has been one of the prime movers of the convention trust fund drive.

As of December 31, 1997, of the 96 pledges, 32 persons who had pledged a total of \$180,000.00 had **NOT** made good on their words and honored their own pledges. One year after the convention trust fund drive got under way; the unpaid amount was \$354,791 as against the total pledged amount of \$481,322. The uncollected amount was thus a whopping **73%**. Even after one year 16 persons had not found it in their hearts to honor their own words; they had paid **ZERO** amount (as of December 31, 1997)!

Unfortunately the Boot Camp of September 30, 2006 did not adequately address this question and discuss it. Next year – **July 2007 Detroit Convention** - it would be the **TENTH ANNIVERSARY** of the Convention Trust Fund drive. Hope there will be a more pleasing and encouraging news to hear on this point at that time. According to the updated list (**Appendix 15**), out of 167 persons who had pledged, about 23% had paid \$00.00 in the last **TEN YEARS** as of January 31, 2007!! This non-payment amount represents % of the total pledged amount of \$ ----- . The total paid up amount so far is % of the total pledged amount!!

The Math Project

During the mid 1980s, some members voiced keen interest in inviting a swamiji from India and having him visit various chapters to hold religious discourses. Sentimentally, it seemed like a great idea! But logistically, it posed many problems, particularly providing hospitality arrangements on an extended period, for many of the families were dual-worker families and hence it turned out to be an unworkable idea. This then gave rise to the so-called **Math Project**. This concept involved buying a suitable property and transforming it into a math, where we could house the swamiji and hold discourses. Some members bought this idea and contributed donations to show their support. Then an unexpected problem cropped up: its location? The general consensus was south of Washington, DC, in Northern Virginia. Kumar Rajasekhara even published a progress report (cf. **Appendix 16**). Around this time, there was a shift in the demographic distribution of the Veerashaivas in the USA. At that time, there were four chapters – Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles and Toronto – with a sizeable number of members. These folks started saying that Northern Virginia was too far for them to drive. Also, some of the members of the BOT expressed serious objections to this, for this came under the purview of the BOT. A prominent member of the BOT put his foot down and said **no**. Since the project was not going anywhere, a donor from NJ asked for the refund of his contribution and was reimbursed.

A cursory examination of the data in **Table 1** shows the fact that there was a Land-Math project under the aegis of the VSNA in the late 1980's and early 1990's. This item seems to have disappeared in 1996. This does not mean that it vanished in thin air. Since the project was not going any where, probably the account was merged with another fixed account such as the Life Membership Account.

1985	Life Membership	\$7402.00	Land and Math	\$1070
1991	Life Membership	\$30,000	Land and Math	\$2939
	Revenues*	\$17686	Expenditures*	\$9352
1992	Life Membership	\$51,257	Land and Math	\$3272
	Revenue*	\$39787	Expenditures*	\$18781
1995	Life Membership	\$54,249	Land and Math	\$3726
	Revenues*	\$23507	Expenditures*	\$11423
1996	Life Membership	\$71719	Land and Math	?????
	Revenues*	\$59784	Expenditure*	\$39612

1997 Life Membership	\$73104	Land and Math	?????
Revenues*	\$37210	Expenditures*	\$33362

* The overall budget of the VSNA.

Table 1: Life Membership Account, and the VSNA’s Overall Incomes and Expenditures

An elaborate and extended version of the abandoned math project, called the “Future VSNA Retirement Community”; was then advanced by Kumbar in 1995. The concept included: Anubhava Mantapa, guest house, condos for retirees, gymnasium, research institute, hospital/clinical nursing home. Truly, a very ambitious project at that! In a sense, it was a timely concept (cf. page 31, Ref. 2), for many of the first generation of Veerashaiva immigrants were soon going to be in the bracket of senior citizens! The late H. Parvathraj (NY), an orthopedic surgeon, acquired a 12-acre tract in an up-state New York area with a house and a barn on it. There was a running creek in it. The Bales (NJ) and the Ayyas financed the construction of a Shiva temple on its’ shore. Mr. and Mrs. G. Ayya (MD) provided the Shiva Linga to that temple. Their Holiness Seregeri and Suttur swamijis inaugurated the temple in 1994. His Holiness Sri Siddheshwar Swamiji (Bijapur) conducted a 2-day religious discourse and Sangameshwar swamiji conducted the yoga lessons there in 1995. Since the lingaiyka of H. Parvathraj, this is not operative at the present time. During an accidental meeting in New York, H. Parvathraj before his death did let know the Chairman of the VSNA’s BOT that he would like to deed the New York property to the VSNA if it agreed to accept the responsibility of its mortgage obligations. At that time, the chairman did not know of H. Parvathraj’s illness. Besides, he could not make any commitment, because firstly the property was not clear and free, secondly the mortgage payment involved was far beyond the means of the VSNA at that time, thirdly the property was located far away from the commuting distance of the majority of the members and fourthly it was not easily accessible and unusable during the winter’s snowy days. Since then, it appears that H. Parvathraj’s heirs have sold this property.

The statement - “Though Linga Raju was a President for a brief period of time, his name does not appear in the Presidents roll call or in the VSNA newsletter”- appears under the caption, “**Some of Misgivings**” (cf. page 41, Ref. 2). Apparently this refers to the”**Milestones**” appearing in some issues of the VSNA newsletters. It is a customary practice to mark the mile stone if one walks a mile otherwise one would not notice it. Linga Raju had not walked even one-quarter of a mile (literally and figuratively), when he resigned on March 11, 1981 (**Appendix 8**). Also, when one is making a blanket statement in a historical document, one ought to be careful. Contrary to the claim (cf. *loc*

cit), the unvarnished fact confirms that Linga Raju's name did appear as the VSNA's President in one issue of the VSNA's Newsletter (**Appendix 17**). Regrettably, Linga Raju's name was not even spelled correctly in this newsletter.

In a sense the caption - "**Some of Misgivings**" - Kumbar uses in his article appears to be **some sort of misgivings** on his own part, for his erroneous inference that the presence of the BOT-Chair at this special summit indicated the relationship between the Exec. Comm. and the BOT (Ref. 2, page 33). This is far from the truth. The relationship was EXTREMELY CORDIAL and CONGENIAL. It did not occur to Kumbar that the BOT-Chair attended the meeting because of his personal friendship with the organizer of the special summit, namely Kumar himself. He has also listed under the title "**Founding Fathers**" the names of people who were not even present when the VSNA was founded. **Appendix 5** lists the names of the persons who attended the 1st VSNA Annual Convention, These are the people who received from Vimala Channabasappa, interim VSNA President, the draft of the VSNA constitution approved by the *ad hoc* Constitution Committee.

There is another statement that does not seem to hold water. Kumbar states "The New York Samaja, though an independent organization, did not join the VSNA as a chapter until 1983" (**Ref. 2, 2004**). Contrary to this assertion, a reference (cf. **Ref. 1**) that Kumbar himself quotes in his write up (*loc cit*) says "in 1980 VSNY agreed to become a chapter of the VSNA". Suffice it to say that it is rather difficult to reconcile Kumbar's statement with the fact he got elected as the VSNA's secretary for three years from 1982, 1983 and 1984 not being a member of the VSNA. It is hard to imagine how the VSNA could have elected him as its Secretary if he did not belong to it.

8. VSNA Chapters

The genesis of VSNA's chapters owes much to the vision of the late Gangadhar Kori. Chapters are the arms and limbs of an extended family. There is symbiotic relationship between the two. The following are some of purposes that the chapters serve:

- (1) They enable the parent organization to bond with the members-at-large;
- (2) They keep the torch burning and alive in the hearts and souls of the members and
- (3) As go the chapters, so goes the Central VSNA.

Thus, if the chapters do not pull in unison in the same direction, there would not be any cohesion and as a consequence, the parent organization would be crippled. The Exec.

Comm. developed specific guidelines to prevent the occurrence and reoccurrence of such a sorrowful situation. This unique relation between the Central VSNA and its chapters did not escape the keen

Table 1: List of the VSNA Chapters along with their year of their founding:

Number	Chapter's Name	Year(established)
1	Detroit	1980
2	Washington, DC*	1980
3.	Los Angeles	1981
4.	Pittsburgh	1981
5	Chicago	1981
6	Toronto (Canada)	1983
7	New York**	1980/2004
8	Maryland	1983
9	Ohio	1986
10	Texas	1987
11	North Carolina	1988
12	Georgia	1992
13	Alabama	1994
14	Tennessee	1994
15	Northern California	1995
16	West Virginia	1996
17	Florida	2002
18	New England	2004
19	New Jersey -New York	2004
20	Metropolitan New York	2004
* Name changed to Washington DC-Virginia		
** Originally formed-then reconfirmed		

* The original Washington DC-Maryland-Virginia chapter (1978) was too big and spread across the states of Maryland and Virginia. Sandwiched in between was Washington, DC. This was split into two chapters in 1983: the Maryland and Basava Samiti, Washington DC. Chapter. The latter name was changed to Washington DC. – Virginia chapter.

** Similarly the original New York chapter (1978) was too big and spread across the states of New Jersey and New York. To cut down the time required for travel and other inconveniences, the old New

York Chapter was divided into two chapters, New York – New Jersey (2005) and New York Metropolitan chapter (2005).

eyes of Guruswamy Ayya, who has been calling for redefining and rejuvenating the VSNA chapters (cf. **Appendix 18**). In fact, the recently concluded Boot Camp (August 2006) recommended and entrusted G. S. Doddamani to come up specific guidelines, similar to the ones he had prepared for the Central VSNA, to orient and train the chapters' new office-bearers. At the present time, there are **20** chapters. **Fig. 2** shows the growth of the chapters.

What to believe? Somewhat Confusing...

One of the reasons given for organizing the special summit meeting was, “But the things began to change, as a result of which, the Samaja started witnessing decay”. (**Appendix 19**, cf. **Page 33, Ref. 2**). However, the author states under the caption **Smooth Sailing**, “By 1995, the VSNA was pretty much established itself as a viable organization and things began to flow smoothly.” (cf. **Page 24, Ref. 2**). Which of the two versions really represents the correct picture of the VSNA at that epoch?

A couple of Kumbar's statements cited in **Ref. 2** raise eye-brows. Firstly, he states, “Most of the problems in the early days rose due to inherent weakness in the constitution and needed overhaul. Munavalli and Doddamani took on this venture and face-lifted the constitution written by the **New York group---**.” The general consensus until now was and is that VSNA's constitution was prepared by the Constitution Committee named by the general body meeting of 1978 (cf. the section on Constitution and **Appendix 6**). A written record does not appear to have been presented to support the contention that the New York group wrote VSNA's constitution.

Another comment made in **Ref. 2** appears to be somewhat curious and dubious, “Few progresses have been made through the years hither and thither but they are not earth shattering”. What is meant by “**earth shatter-ing**” has not been spelled out. Does arranging a banquet the first night of the convention an earth shaking event?

The VSNA Library

In fact, it was the first annual convention of the VSNA that mandated the establishment of a Central VSNA library (see the proceeding of the 1978 meeting). About 20 years ago, it was again recognized that the VSNA lacked resource material (printed literature) to support the yearning of the Veerashivas living in North America. During the discussions of religious topics, the most common complaint heard was “we do not have

any books”. Two options were discussed: (1) to permit each chapter to have its own library and (2) to set up a central library for the benefit of the membership at large. After debating the pros and cons of the two options, the Exec. Comm. decided in favor of the latter. Thanks to the generosity of Dr. and Mrs. Mallikarjuna Udoshi, this goal was accomplished and the VSNA’s Central Library materialized. The VSNA President at that era on his visit to India procured 50 or so books and in 1987, the Exec. Comm. appointed Nayanatara Swamy, Pittsburgh (PA), who at that time was the VSNA’s Treasurer, as the Temporary Custodian of the VSNA’s Library with the stipulation that she would return the VSNA’s property whenever she was asked. **Appendix 20** published by her when she was the Vice President of the VSNA, lists the books currently available. Now that the VSNA has established its own resource center (**Appendix 21**), she should return the VSNA’s property in her care to the VSNA.

9. The VSNA’s International Resource Center

To meet the expected demand of the increasing population of the Veerashaivas of North America, and the challenges of the electronic age, the BOD and BOR established in 1999 the Veerashaiva International Resource Center - VIRC (**Appendix 21**). They named a committee headed by Gadigeppa Doddamani and composed of two VSNA members, the BOR-Chair and the VSNA-President.

What is VIRC?

It is a combination of Real and Virtual storehouse of all printed literature on Veerashaiva religion and philosophy. The electronically stored information would be accessible to all interested folks from all over the world. It would house print material, audio and video materials as well. It would also be a storehouse of CD, VCR, cassette tapes, photographs, religious artifacts, manuscripts, etc. In essence, it would be a service-arm of the VSNA.

What is its Mission?

- To create spiritual awareness, fellowship and kinship among all Veerashaivas.
- To build and maintain a Real and Virtual Treasure house of information on Veerashaiva religion and philosophy.
- To preserve, protect and propagate the Veerashaiva heritage and legacy.
- To enable all Veerashaivas to cherish the Veerashaiva way of life.
- To help all those who would like to know and study the Veerashaiva religion and philosophy.

What are its Functions?

- To maintain and constantly update all published material on Veerashaiva religion and philosophy.
- To invite and arrange religious discourses.
- To develop curricular materials for a systematic instruction and study of the Veerashaiva religion.
- To make available the self-study materials to all interested persons.

Thus, G. Doddamani has grand plans for the VIRC. When asked whether he expects to accomplish the stated goals, he enthusiastically asks in turn “Why not? By and large, the Veerashaivas are generous people. Just look at the convention trust fund.” He seems and sounds like an ever-charged energizer battery! Those interested in lending a helping hand to this worthwhile endeavor should roll-up their sleeves and pitch-in.

9.1. The BOR and the VIRC

What is needed to create and get the VIRTUAL RESOURCE CENTER started, is the financial resources. What VIRC needs is a helping-hand from the BOR. The VIRC is a LONG RANGE project. Let the BOR set a modest goal say, of raising **\$10,000.00** within the next 12 months. Let the BOR use its collective wisdom as to how it can accomplish this goal. This is not an unachievable goal. The current VSNA members are far more affluent than their elders. In the plans, include modifications to be done along the way, if the situation calls for. Take the BOD into confidence and explain the plan. Use the VSNA Newsletter to inform the general membership and to solicit financial support.

Summit Conference on VSNA: Past, Present and Future

Organizer: Mahadev Kumbar (1995)

What now may be described as the First Boot Camp to redefine, retool and rejuvenate the VSNA took place on October 7, 1995, thanks to the vision and untiring enthusiasm of Mahadev Kumbar (**Appendix 19**, cf. page 33 - 34, Ref. 2). It was an intensely interactive and introspective two-day meeting. It was attended by 45 persons, among them were 6 or so youths who accompanied their parents. They did not seem to have actively participated in the meetibg; otherwise their contributions would have been acknowledged by the organizer in the proceedings published by him. Among the various topics discussed and debated during the conference, four of them stand as relevant even today. They are: (i) Annual Conventions and Their Financing (ii) Religious Activities, (iv) VNSA Newsletter and (iv)

Membership and Energizing Chapters. These are some of the things that G. Ayya has been actively, loudly and rather convincingly canvassing for the past three years or so (cf. **Ref. 5**). This topic will be revisited later. It is worthwhile recapitulate here what was said eleven years ago.

1. The scope and use of the Convention Trust Fund was defined in 1995 by this statement, “The special endowment fund solely dedicated to the purpose of conducting annual conventions be initiated.”
2. This special meeting called for the “systematic development of religious curriculum.”
3. G. Bale recommended that we should “solicit advertisements” for generating funds to support the increasing costs of publishing the VSAN’s newsletter. He also asked us to ‘keep the format of the newsletter consistent and reduce the costs of printing.’
4. G. Shankar asked what is the purpose of the VSNA? This question seemed to carry weight coming as it did from the ex-Vice President and ex-Secretary of the VSNA. He wanted to know “what can we do for the members”. He suggested to the attendees to ‘impress on the prospective Veerashaivas what it means to be members.’ He went on to say, “Focus on one or two priority projects, complete them and publicize the achievements. Arrange the scholars to visit the chapters and encourage them to give talks on Veerashaivism. The VSNA officers should be life members so also the chapters’ presidents and secretaries.” His last statement is stunningly simple yet powerful: “**Mend not end; evolution not revolution and always go for the goals**”.

Finally to set the record straight, something needs to be said in connection with the timing of this conference and the comments that Kumbar makes at the end of his narrative (cf. **Ref. 2**). As the organizer’s letter (**Appendix 19**) announces the special summit conference was scheduled “**in 1994 or spring of 1995**”. In view of this suggested schedule of the summit, the VSNA officers arranged their Exec. Comm. meeting on October 7, 1995 in Chicago (IL). As was well known in those days, the dates of the Exec. Comm. meetings were announced early in the beginning of the year. Also, the notices of the meeting were required to be mailed out at least one month in advance of the actual date of the meeting. This permitted the hosts of the meeting to take care of the hospitality arrangements to house the members attending the meeting. When the VSNA President telephoned Kumbar on the apparent conflict of the schedules, he would not have any thing to do with it. In fact, Kumbar was adamant and unyielding, though it was he who had changed the dates in the first instance. Yet, he goes on to question the VSNA Officers (Ref. 2).

Since the BOT-Chair attended the Special Summit, the organizer draws the inference that there was something going on between the BOT and the Exec. Comm. This inference contradicts the facts. The relationship between the two bodies was as friendly as has existed at any time in the history of these two bodies.

10. Board of Trustees / Board of Regents

When the Board of Trustees (BOT) was established in 1984; it was ostensibly conceived as a judiciary body to discipline improper behavior on the part of members and/ or chapters. THE LONG RANGE PLANNING RESPONSIBILITY WAS ADDED TO ITS CHARGE TO MAKE THE CONCEPT PALATBLE AND SALEABLE to the general membership. After an over-charged debate and discussion in the Executive Committee (the present BOD) until the wee hours of the morning, the next day it was rushed through the general body meeting of the first Convention hosted by the Toronto Chapter of the VSNA. This unplanned rush-job to create the BOT, according to Mahadev Kumbar, “**almost cost their term as Secretary and President**”. The probable reason for the static and flak V. M. Patil and Mahadev Kumar received at the meeting of the Exec. Comm. held at Toronto in 1984, might be due their desire to create a supra-powerful body by combining the BOT and Life-Members and to label it “Board of Trustees of Life Members” and to give it sort of veto power over the administrative functions of the Exec. Comm. (cf. V. M. Patil’s letter dated April 1, 1984; **Appendix 22**. Source: Ref. 2, p. 21). This letter might have created unintended consequences for them at the said meeting. Patil and Kumbar might not have meant what the above-cited letter seemed to imply. Nonetheless, it created an unpleasant environment and resulted in the temporary walkout by the duo during the meeting of the Exec. Comm. presided over by V. M. Patil himself.

It was soon found out that this hurriedly written article of the constitution had too many loopholes in it. It required to be re-written to broaden the scope and limitations of the BOT’s responsibilities. As mentioned earlier, the article creating the BOT as a supra-judiciary body, approved over night during a heated debate, was sold to the General Body of the VSNA (at the 1st Convention hosted by Toronto in 1984) through the good offices of the then VSNA-Vice-President G. Ayya, who was charged with this responsibility by the Exec. Comm. (BOD). Since then, several modifications have been made to this article. The first amendment was effected in 1984 (**Appendix 23**).

The second change was introduced a little later (**Appendix 24**). This By-law permitted each of the existing VSNA Chapters to nominate one of its members in good standing to serve as the member of the Board of Trustees (BOT/BOR). In the meantime, the constitution was revised (**Appendix 25**). Since there was not a single meeting of the BOT where all members were present and often times it was hard to have a full quorum of members, the By-Law relating to the BOT was again modified by reducing the number of members of this body to seven members elected by the general membership; out of which six members came from the VSNA Chapters based in the continental USA and the

remaining one was elected/nominated from the Toronto Chapter located in Canada. This unusual arrangement created two tiers of the chapters; conferring a special status to Toronto. Realizing the fundamental fact that all VSNA Chapters are co-equal entities, this special status arrangement for the Toronto Chapter was removed in 2004 by the General Body of the VSNA. The constitution was amended in 1997 (**Appendix 26**) and was then modified to meet the requirements for the incorporation of the VSNA (**Appendix 27**).

In the past there have been instances where the BOT/BOR wanted to exercise administrative functioning and decision making. The VSNA By-law strongly forbids such an endeavor, for the VSNA's constitution had vested this authority and empowered the Executive Committee (BOD) with all administrative responsibilities. However, with a view to maintain checks and balances, the BOR was given the additional responsibility of giving the final approval of the VSNA budget prepared and approved by the BOD. To make certain that the BOR does not step over its boundary and hold the BOD at bay, additional stipulations have been placed on this provision. In fact, the BOD and the BOR are co-equal bodies with shared responsibility to the general membership. This is reflected in the joint meeting of the BOR and the BOD at the time of the VSNA Annual Convention. The BOR Chairman presides over this joint meeting.

Contrary to the expectations of the general membership, the BOR has so far failed to live up to its billing and fulfilling its obligation under the charter. It has often times, stuttered and failed to provide dynamic leadership and inspirational motivation. The BOR was and is supposed to be the “**think-tank**” of the VSNA; defining and refining the future direction that the VSNA should pursue in order to fulfill its mission succinctly stated and well articulated in the Preamble to the VSNA By-laws. Its' primary function is to develop and execute viable and realistic long range plans and then pass them on to the BOD for further exploitation of the goals and objectives in furtherance of the stated and expected outcomes.

Very little was accomplished during the first four years of its existence and it was like sailing in an uncharted ocean. During the past decade or so, the BOR has not played the role it was supposed to. It is a pity that the BOR has missed a golden opportunity to render a **yeomen**'s service to the VSNA.

Perhaps the current BOR Chairman G. Shankar, could heed his own words (see Special Summit organized by Kumbar on Oct. 7, 1995 on pages 36 and 37). As the saying goes, it is better late than not! Even now it can easily pick up the bat, go to bat for the VSNA and hit a home run and thus fulfill its **raison d'etre** and obligations to the VSNA's membership. A list of the names of the BOR Chairmen in a chronological order along with the VSNA officers is given on pages **20 - 24**.

11. VSNA's Constitution

The draft of the first VSNA constitution was approved by the Constitutional Committee on February 18, 1979. It was mailed on April 20, 1979 to all delegates who attended the first **Veerashaiva Samaja conference of North America** along with a request to return it before November 20, 1979 with comments, for eventual approval and ratification. As described in the document accompanying the draft, "This brings to successful conclusion of the 'first chapter' of the Samaja – the birth of a historic organization."

The 1st Constitution Amendment: The approval and acceptance of the Exec. Comm.'s recommendation to create the **Board of Trustees** by the general body of the VSNA at the annual convention hosted by the Toronto chapter in 1984 forms the first amendment to the VSNA Constitution. (cf. **Appendix 23**). As described else where, the creation of the BOT was a 'rush-job'. This was done at the General Body meeting held in 1984 in Toronto, Canada. In their hurry to get the green signal from the general Body, the proponents forgot to get the required constitutional amendment passed by the General Body. This had to wait for 4 years (cf. **Appendix 23**). Patil and Kumbar had forgotten to get the required amendment passed by the General Body when they got its approval for the creation of the BOT. All this time the BOT was functioning. At the time this amendment was passed, there were 6 VSNA Chapters in existence and hence 6 members of the BOT; one member per chapter.

The 2nd Amendment:

This dealt with the term of office of the VSNA-Office holders. The General Body on July 6, 1985 amended **Article VI Section 3** to read as: "*The officers shall hold offices for a term of two years and until their successors are elected.*" This amendment came in to effect as of January 1, 1986. Prior to this, the term of officers was limited to one year. It was found that one year was too short a period to accomplish something worthwhile and hence the change (cf. **Appendix 28**).

The 3rd Amendment: **Article II Section 4** -This amendment approved in 1989 prescribes what goes on the front cover page of the Veerashaiva, the VSNA's Newsletter (**Appendix 23**).

The 4th Amendment: Article III Section 4 –approved in 1989, reads as "Voting for all elections of the Central VSNA shall be conducted by mail and supersedes all other methods of election."

After the passage of this amendment, a member lamented, “We lost all the firework and fun of the general body!” The electioneering chaos and heated exchange of words in a hot and muggy conference-room did provide some amusement and diversion to some folks in the audience and headache for the office-holders!!

In view of the possibility of the VSNA office-bearers being sued for any and all accidents that occurred during the VSNA’s Annual Conventions and its chapters’ meetings, attorneys suggested to the VSNA to consider incorporating itself as a Corporation. Since a law suite could have taken the VSNA Officers to the cleaners, and to protect the VSNA officers from unwarranted legal headaches and problems, the Exec. Comm. thought that indeed legal advice and serious consideration were needed and asked President G. S. Doddamani to look into it and it also appointed a two men committee. Accordingly, the services of Mr. Kenneth L. Gross, Attorney-at-Law, (Specialist in Corporate Laws), Detroit, MI were secured. Mr. Gross prepared a lengthy document and the two men ad hoc committee modified it to apply to the specific needs of the VSNA. The up-dated VSNA Corporation’s By-laws were overwhelmingly approved in **1989** by the General Body. Mr. Doddamani then used this document and got the VSNA incorporated as a Corporation in Michigan (**Appendix 29**). Cost-wise, this was an effective move. The credit for successfully accomplishing this arduous job squarely goes to G. Doddamani. Experience with new by-laws during the succeeding three years showed that there were still some problems. The BOD (formerly known as Exec. Comm.) appointed a three men ad hoc committee (**Appendix 30**), which submitted the up-dated By-laws for the consideration of the BOD (cf. **Appendix 30**). The VSNA Corporation’s up-dated By-Laws were then approved by the VSNA’s General Body (**Appendix 31**). These are the by-laws in force at the present time.

The First Expulsion of a VSNA Chapter

It is a sad event, indeed. This has got to be considered in proper context to prevent its repetition in the future. The former VSNY or the VSNA New York chapter has the dubious distinction of having been suspended by the VSNA’s BOD in 2003 for conduct unbecoming and ignoring the decisions of the BOD. The former VSNY got the permission and approval from the VSNA’s BOD to host the 2003 VSNA Annual Convention in New York. The designated convention chair went to the VSNA’s BOD and submitted periodical progress reports as dictated and demanded by the VSNA’s By-laws. But after the convention was over, the convention chair did not follow the By-laws of the VSNA Corporation. The convention chairman began to circulate reports saying that the VSNY was not a part of the VSNA. Unfortunately, the Chairman played this card too many times and in the end got burnt. To cut the long story short, it is suffice to

state that when repeated demands of the VSNA's BOD were ignored by the VSNY folks, even after stern warnings by the BOD, the BOD put into effect its decision to expel the VSNY as an entity of the VSNA. This was a very painful decision for the VSNA President and the BOD; but had to be taken to demonstrate that the organization is far more important than its constituent part or any individual, howsoever important he/she may be.

The overall outcome of this incident was that the VSNY folks agreed to abandon their non-cooperative challenging attitude, gave the VSNA in writing a statement to the effect that they are an integral part of the VSNA-umbrella and that they will fully respect the VSNA's By-laws. Thus, one of the most turbulent events in the annals of the VSNA's history, thanks to Prabhu Patil's reconciliation efforts, came to a pleasant, fruitful and successful conclusion.

Recognition/ Respect

By the very nature, Recognition/ Respect are psychic rewards for a job well done or service rendered without expecting any personal rewards. Thus, recognition has to be earned, meaning one cannot demand recognition/ respect. In order to encourage and motivate members to voluntarily come forward and serve the organization, certificates of recognition were presented to all members who had served as Presidents and members of the executive committee for the first time during the 1^{st*} annual conventional hosted by the Chicago Chapter in 1987.

After a lapse of a couple of years, this practice was picked up again. A couple of past VSNA Presidents and a couple of VSNA members were presented with plaques during the 2^{nd*} annual convention hosted by the Toronto Chapter for the service they had rendered to the organization by the then VSNA President, K. Rajashekara. In addition, the late Dr. M. C. Modi, the famous eye surgeon from Karnatak (India) was honored with Life Time Achievement Award in recognition of the services he had rendered to humanity-at-large. Chandra Reshmi was honored along with two past VSNA Presidents at the 1^{st*} convention hosted jointly by the Atlanta-NC-AL Chapters. Chandrasekhara Nadiga was the VSNA President at that time. Similarly, Mallikarjuna Nalawadi honored three or four persons during the VSNA Silver Jubilee Convention hosted by the Ohio Chapter. At the time of the Silver Jubilee Celebration, all the past presidents of the VSNA were honored in 2002. In continuation of this tradition, Ravi Bhooplapur, the VSNA President, presented Life Time Achievement Awards to Prabhakar Kore, Chairman, K. L. E. Society, Belgaum (India), Shamannur Shivashankarappa, Director, Bapuji Institute, Davangeri (India) and S. Munavalli (Bel Air, MD) during the VSNA Silver Jubilee Celebration organized by the New York chapter of the VSNA. He also

recognized and honored Supreme Court Justice Shivaraj Patil, New Delhi (India), Manu Balegar, Karnatak (India) and Sampat Shivanagi (USA). Prabhu Patil (the current VSNA President) did honor G. Doddamani (MI) and C. Shiva Prakash (MD) at 2005 Annual Convention hosted by the Maryland chapter. Thus, acknowledging the service rendered by the members has become a time honored tradition left entirely to the discretion of VSNA's BOD. **But, then to demand recognition for the service rendered, as the Sharanas have put it succinctly, is like asking for wages to be paid for the services rendered!** Sometimes the deserving folks do not receive any recognition. Their names do not get into the system. The best way to address this is to put the names of the deserving members into the hopper and let the system take care of it. For this purpose, namely for recommending a member for an award, the form shown in **Appendix 32** can be conveniently used.

* This number refers to the number of convention hosted by a given chapter.

12. First World Veerashaiva Conference

One of the high lights of the first 25 years of the VSNA, was the Millennium Veerashaiva World Conference organized under the aegis of the VSNA Annual Convention hosted by the Toronto Chapter. Komala Prabhakar was the chairperson of the said convention. One thing that had not received any attention is the fact that the religious discourse program and the publishing of the 2000 Commemorative Volume was the brain child cooked up in Bel Air over the course of the previous year. Mahadev Kumbar was persuaded to pitch in at a wedding reception held at Martin's in the metropolitan Baltimore area (MD). The selection of the topics of the four panel deliberations including the youth panel as well as the names of the participants in the panel discussions, along with the contingency list of the names of the alternate members in case the primary selections did not work out, was done during the course of two meetings held in Bel Air (MD). The primary objective of the youth panel was to provide an opportunity for our youths to take an active interest in religious debates and thus prepare them to take charge of the VSNA in the near future. Nayanatara Swamy (Pittsburgh) served as the moderator of a panel. Chandra Akkihal (WV), P. Kotrappa (MD), Mahadev Kumbar (NY) and Danesh Chekki (Canada) served as the leaders of the panel discussions. S. Munavalli (MD) and Mallikarjuna Nalawadi (Toronto, then the VSNA's Vice-President) organized and orchestrated the entire program (**Appendix 33**). There was complete cooperation among all panel members – the youngsters and the elders- reflecting the fact that given the opportunity the Veerashaivas will rise up to the occasion in a befitting manner.

Another outstanding outcome of this endeavor was the publication of the commemorative volume to celebrate the **2000 First World Veerashaiva Conference (Appendix 34)**. This volume contains articles written in four languages, namely English, Kannada, Marathi and Hindi. In this context, two persons worked hard to meet the printer's deadline. B. C. Shivananda Prabhu (Toronto), Coordinator of the printing of the Commemorative Volume, worked tirelessly and wholeheartedly under the gun of the printer's deadline. The editor and the printing-coordinator worked across the border until the wee hours of the mornings of the last week of the deadline. What can any one say about the machine-like efficient working of the Convention Chair, Komala Prabhakar, except to offer her a bouquet of red roses! Her active involvement in every aspect of the convention was visible to all attendees. She even took up the responsibility of garnering friends and soliciting funds to publish the Commemorative Volume (**Appendix 35**). The news-reporter for the **India Abroad** based in Toronto (Canada) wrote a column dated July 21, 2000 summarizing the proceedings of the millennium world Veerashaiva conference (**Appendix 36**).

Declaration of the First Veerashaiva World Conference

The following declaration was issued after the panel discussions held during Annual Convention hosted by the Toronto Chapter on July 2 ~ 4, 2000:

- a. All Veerashaivas shall emphasize and propagate social and gender equality and justice in the community and country wherever they live, by practicing the Veerashaiva philosophy.
- b. An opportunity shall be provided to all those who are interested, especially Veerashaivas, to learn and study Veerashaiva religion and philosophy on a systematic basis.
- c. Attempts shall be made to de-mystify and de-ritualize the Veerashaiva religion so that the Veerashaivas spread over the world shall be able to conveniently practice their faith.
- d. Every Veerashaiva household ought to maintain a resource center to help impart religious education to their children.
- e. Electronic super-highway – **internet** – shall be explored and utilized to teach and to spread the philosophy, principles and practices of Veerashaiva religion.

- f. Veerashaiva parents and grand-parents ought to inculcate their children and grand children in their formative years the Veerashaiva values of life, philosophy and religion.
- g. The parents shall encourage and facilitate a comparative study of the religions of the world so that the Veerashaiva children shall become acquainted, educated and well rounded.

VSNA Silver Jubilee Celebration

The VSNA’s BOD somehow approved the request from the Ohio Chapter to allow them to host and organize VSNA’s **Silver Jubilee Celebration** in 2002. The next year’s convention-host chapter (New York) got upset, for they thought VSNA’s silver jubilee ought to be celebrated in 2003, when they were scheduled to conduct their VSNA Annual Convention. Factually and mathematically, this was an undeniably valid point. Mahadev Kumbar, the designated 2003 convention chairperson became some what agitated by the announcement brochure put out by the Ohio chapter members. The two chapters could not come to some understanding on this matter. Mallikarjuna Nalawadi, the VSNA-President not being able to bridge the gap between the two chapters, contacted an elderly member and explained his predicament to him. This person was able to persuade Mahadev Kumbar by suggesting him to let the Ohio chapter begin the silver jubilee celebration and the New York chapter will have a chance to complete the finale of the grand party and thus we will have a year-long silver jubilee party. Mahadev Kumbar graciously accepted this suggestion and it worked out well for the VSNA.

VSNA 25 Years



“TODAY marks the most memorable day in the history of the VSNA. TODAY we announce the beginning of year-long Silver Jubilee Celebration of the VSNA.

“Twenty-five years ago a band of faithful Lingayats got together around Washington metropolitan area (Silver Spring, MD) and established the VSNA for the preservation, protection and propagation of the legacy, heritage and philosophy of the Lingayat religion and to provide a sense of belonging while growing up in America. Dedication, faith, hope and prayers of these pioneers have yielded fruits. The seed that they sowed 25 years ago has yielded the golden harvest of sixteen VSNA chapters spread across North America. The VSNA membership has mushroomed from less than 50 to more than 800 families. There are at least double that who have not heard their calling....

A Few of the Milestones:

- **Has Celebrated 25 Successive VSNA Conventions**
- **Has Published 25 Volumes of the Newsletter, the Veerashaiva**
- **Has Published 12 Books**
- **Has Become an Incorporated Institution**
- **Has over 200 Life Members**
- **Has a Trust Fund to Support Annual Conventions**
- **Organized the First World Veerashaiva Conference**
- **Has Established Veerashaiva International Resource Center**

A bouquet for these and other achievement goes to the pioneers...”*

* Abstracted from the 2002 Annual Convention souvenir- Ohio Chapter.

The 2003 annual convention hosted by the New York chapter was a very lavishly thrown silver jubilee celebration party. Perhaps, a bonanza befitting the Big Apple! With professionally choreographed modern dynamic and rhythmic dances and melodious singing, it was just too great! Added to that was the inspiring address by the Indian Supreme Court Justice, the Honorable Shivaraj Patil. One word would describe it better: **WOW!!**

It is a sad irony that what Kumbar had stated in his write-up (Ref. 2) about the status of the VSNA in the infancy of its existence came back to haunt the New York chapter during the occasion of the 2003-annual convention. The acrimonious intra-chapter squabbling marred the otherwise almost well-run lavishly thrown extravagant VSNA Silver Jubilee Celebration Party. That is the only time in the life of the VSNA when one Annual Convention produced two convention souvenirs! The one souvenir produced by the convention organizers did not even carry the VSNA President’ State of the Samaja, which is a must according to the VSNA’s By-laws. Perhaps, sermonizing is easier than practicing!

13. VSNA-Annual Conventions

Over the course of the years, the VSNA members have come to realize that their annual conventions do play a singularly unique multi-faceted role. They also have come to accept the fact that the annual conventions, in spite of their short comings, do fill a void in their life and living in their adopted homeland, the North American subcontinent. The conventions thus cater to different needs of different folks; for some an opportunity to socialize, for some to know something about their cherished religion, for some to quench their thirst/hunger for spiritual uplift, for some to bond with friends of similar upbringing,

for some an occasion to showcase their histrionic talents and skills, for some a chance to sharpen and hone their ability to communicate, for some to bind for ever in holy matrimony, etc. However different their needs are, one thing is CERTAIN, the conventions have given the members a unique sense of belonging, bonding, kinship and UNITY. The VSNA takes PRIDE in Being UNITED. Though now and then the members' lose their tempers, they have never lost sight of their commitment to unity and the Veerashaiva way of life. Thanks to the annual conventions, this commitment is growing stronger and stronger. This inference stands supported by the buttons they wear on their chest and on their smiling faces: **PROUD TO BE A VEERASHAIVA!**

Evolution of the VSNA Conventions

In view of their commonalities, the first exploratory meeting of some **51** Veerashaivas was meant to give the attendees an opportunity to feel their pulse, to cherish their beloved religious sentiments, and then to bond and bind together. In the initial years, the host families were gracious and kind enough to provide boarding and lodging facilities even though they had never met their guests. Frequently, a single host family had to accommodate and house four or more guest families, in addition to conducting and organizing the conventions. In the beginning there was almost no registration fee. Gradually, members were charged \$10 ~25 registration fee to pay for the rental costs of the meeting place and other sundry supplies. The local hosts were always gracious to their out of town guests attending the VSNA conventions. In order to cut down the burden on the host families, the early conventions used to be a one day affairs. The dates of the convention have shifted from November (Thanksgiving) to October (Columbus) to September (Labor Day) and usually around the holidays. Now a day, they are held around the July 4th time period. Notice that they have always been organized around holidays, so that the children won't miss their schools and the participants would not miss their work. As the immigrant Veerashaivas became more affluent and wanted to have more time for site seeing and socializing, they changed to the present 2-day arrangements including the Youths on the City and Banquet for the participants. Since some body has to pay for these costs, the registration fees have gone up. Also, the cost of hosting the annual conventions has simultaneously gone up in keeping up with the inflation from a fistful dollars for the first convention to close to \$ 80, 000 ~ 90,000 (**2005;Appendix 37**). In 1987, the cost of hosting the convention was \$4896.00 (**Appendix 38**). A comparison of the two figures shows what inflation does to \$\$! The amount collected via the registration fee was not and is not enough to meet the expenses involved. A feeling that we might have to forgo the conventions began to sink slowly in the minds of the members. Hence the host chapters started asking for some relief, for raising this kind of green was becoming increasingly a very tough job. Slightly more than decade ago, a

call went out at the Special Summit Meeting organized by Kumbar, asking the members to consider the possibility of helping the chapters through the creation of the convention trust fund. It took about two years for this idea to jell (see Convention Trust Fund).

Five Veerashaiva ladies, Prema Shankar (OH), Komala Prabhakar (Toronto), Manjula Sankrarappa (OH), Sangeeta Patil (Atlanta) and Jayashree Jagadeesh (MD) have distinguished and demonstrated their skills and talents in successfully organizing and conducting the VSNA annual conventions. Of course, they did receive help from their fellow members. Conventions, as usual, require not two hands but one hundred hands! But then, credit must be given to these ladies for show-casing and harnessing the talents of their respective chapters. This, believe it or not, is by no means a mean task. We – the VSNA members –take our hats off to them. Thanks to the efforts of the MD-convention chair, the Honorable Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr., Governor of Maryland issued a special Governor’s proclamation on the occasion of the 2005 annual convention.

The 13th VSNA Annual Convention hosted by the New York chapter on July 6 – 7, 1990 in Bridgewater (NJ) was **dedicated to the Veerashaiva Youth (Appendix 39)**. The reason for citing it here is to impress on youth that they are the future of the VSNA. Just as the present day **Veerashaiva Youth go, so will go the VSNA**. So, youth, make a difference; make your mark!

What appears to be the first attempt or one of the earliest attempts to gauge how the convention attendees felt about the various programs was carried out in 1988 by the VSNA Secretary, K. Rajasekhara (**Appendix 40**). Of the 84 responses, about 94% expressed opinions ranging from fair to excellent, while 6% gave a poor rating. It would be extremely helpful if the organizers of the convention conduct performance evaluation after each convention. The results of the survey would be extremely useful in planning the activities of the annual convention; in determining the activities that the participants like and do not like. The evaluation ought to be done at the time of the convention before the closing of the curtains.

What do the participants expect to get out of a VSNA annual convention? This is rather a legitimate question, for the participants – youth and adults – expend their money and time in journeying to the convention site. Here is how a youth from the Chicago chapter, Dayanand Manoli, answered this question on July 3 – 4, 1999. “Veerashaivism is a profound religion with numerous aspects to explore in history, philosophy, rituals and practices. As Veerashiavas we should be proud of our faith. During the conventions we should try to increase our awareness and further develop our understanding of our faith. Youth as well as adult members should leave the convention with a better understanding of Veerashaivism. Suspend some activities in favor of other religious activities.”

According to Sajjan Shiva, “Conventions have served several needs of the community; they have yet to create the religious awareness to the level the community needs.” A chronological listing of the VSNA annual conventions is given below.

Veerashaiva Samaja of North America Dates and Hosts of the Annual Conventions

Convention	When	Where
1 st	<i>November 25, 1978</i>	Silver Spring MD
2 nd	<i>November 24, 1979</i>	Gaithersburg MD
3 rd	November 29, 1980	Washington, DC Area
4 th	October 11, 1981	Staten Island, NY
5 th	September 5, 1982	Detroit, MI
6 th	September 4, 1983	Staten Island, NY
7 th	September 2, 1984	Toronto, Canada
8 th	July 6, 1985	Pittsburgh, PA
9 th	July 4, 1986	Los Angeles, CA
10 th	July 4, 1987	Chicago, IL
11 th	July 4, 1988	Rockville MD
12 th	September 3, 1989	Detroit, MI
13 th	July 7, 1990	Bridgewater NJ - N Y*
14 th	July 6, 1991	Toronto, Canada
15 th	July 4, 1992	Columbus, OH
16 th	July 4, 1993	Los Angeles, CA
17 th	July 3, 1994	Atlanta, GA
18 th	July 2, 1995	Bowie MD
19 th	July 5, 1996	Pittsburgh, PA
20 th	July 4, 1997	Detroit, MI
21 st	July 4, 1998	McLean VA
22 nd	July 4, 1999	Chicago, IL
23 rd	July 4, 2000	Toronto, Canada
24 th	July 4, 2001	San Jose, CA
25 th	July 4, 2002	Columbus, OH
26 th	July 4, 2003	Secaucus NJ-NY*
27 th	July 4, 2004	Atlanta, GA
28 th	July 4, 2005	College Park MD
28 th	July 4, 2006	On the Ocean off FL

29th
30th

July 7, 2007
July --, 2008

Detroit, MI

* Hosted by the VSNA-New York chapter

VSNA Chapters:

The VSNA-By-Law Article VIII, describes the VSNA-Chapters' rights, responsibilities and privileges. There is an absolute need to revitalize and streamline the functioning of the VSNA's Chapters. Up until now, they have been functioning with a lasissez-faire attitude. This was in part due to the fact that the Chapters started popping up like mushrooms here and there in an unorganized fashion (cf. Table below). This was in a sense a part of the growing-up process for the VSNA. Now that the VSNA is an ADULT BODY, it is time that we conduct a serious examination of the working of our chapters. The general membership is demanding the Central VSNA to do this. Some chapters are functioning properly and provide the services expected of them. Some are not. While some others are barely doing what is expected of them. It is time we streamline our chapters' working. We ought to develop a strict code of conduct for the benefit of the chapters. The chapters that do NOT function appropriately as expected by the members, must be taken to task. For the sake of discipline in the organization, this is a must in order to maintain discipline. It is good to remember in this context that BOR was created to handle all problems arising on this score.

A word of caution to all the officers of the VSNA and its affiliated chapters: The VSNA cannot afford to have officers, at all levels, who do not accept accountability and responsibility; accountability for their actions or inactions and responsibility for owning up the results. They are answerable not only to the VSNA's membership but also to US Internal Revenue Service. This is the only course open for the VSNA's sustained growth and survival.

Local Chapters' Responsibilities (cf. Appendix 41)

In order for the smooth functioning of the Samaja, a set of guidelines were developed and defined in the 1990s and were communicated to all VSNA Chapters. They were also published in the VSNA's newsletters. Reproduced below is the description that appeared in the first issue the VSNA Newsletter of 1995:

1. The local chapters shall elect a President and a Secretary at least once a year.

2. The Chapter Secretary shall notify in writing the names of new chapter's officers to the VSNA Secretary as soon as the election is completed and these names will be published in the newsletter.

3. The local chapter shall elect a member to serve as member of the Board of Trustees for a period of four years.*

* **This has been changed. (See VSNA's By-laws).**

4. The chapter shall collect the annual VSNA dues (\$30) from members other than life members and shall forward the amount to the Central VSNA's Treasurer on or before March 31st of each year. It should be noted that the unpaid members will not be eligible to vote.

5. A list including the local members' names, telephone numbers, addresses, etc. shall be forwarded to the Central VSNA Secretary before March 31st of each year. The format for recording this information will be furnished by the latter if requested.** This information will be useful in preparing the Directory of the VSNA members (cf. **Form 1**).

** **For this purpose, Form 1 given below can be used.**

6. The chapter president shall prepare a statement of her/his chapter's activities during the year for presentation at the annual convention. If the president cannot do this, he/she will designate a member to do this honor. If this also is not possible, then a copy of the activities shall be deposited with VSNA Secretary.

7. The local chapter's president shall serve as the ex-officio member of the Executive Committee (BOD) and shall attend at least two such meetings. Since 2003 the meetings are conducted via tele-conferences and hence there is no excuse for a chapter president or her/his representative not to participate in the proceedings.

8. The local chapter shall prepare a brief summary of the chapter's activities and send it to the VSNA Secretary for publication in the newsletter.

9. In order to meet the Internal Revenue Service's requirements the chapters shall submit the Chapter's Annual Financial Statement (January to December) to the VSNA Treasurer before March 31st of the year. The statement shall include chapter's total revenues, expenses and balances and shall be signed by the president and the treasurer and verified by a member of the BOD (cf. **Form 2**).

Form 1			
Member's Address Reporting Form			
Name of the Chapter			
Member's Last Name	First name	Address	Phone:

Wife's Last Name	First name	---- Street Name	e-Mail:
	City	State:	Zip:
Children's Name(s)			

Chapters: Building Blocks of the VSNA

In any set up and with any religion, religious learning usually occurs at three sites: homes, schools, and worshipping places such the churches, temples, veerashaiva-maths, mosques, synagogues, etc. Of course, in the vast affluent land of America, where the churches cannot reach their congregation and under the circumstance where neither Mohammed can go to the mountain nor the mountain can go Mohammed, tele-Evangelism has taken over the slack. Preaching religion via television medium got started in the USA some where in the mid 1950s. Since then it has gotten a strong foothold and has become a very powerful political voice, business and fund raising arrangement during the past decade.

However, home is the primary place where religious learning occurs. Home is the best place for children to learn their religion from their parents. In other words, the burden to impart and instruct religious education rests with the parents. This is particularly so with the Veerashaivas, who have sailed across the seven seas and settled in an alien country with altogether different religio-cultural backgrounds and heritages. In fact, America represents a melting pot of various religious ideologies and cultures, where a Veerashaiva could easily get assimilated and absorbed in no time if he/she does not take pride in his/her religious heritage and legacy.

This forces us to ask ourselves: what can the parents do if they themselves have not been well exposed to their religious heritage and legacy? And how can they instruct their children, who demand rational explanation rather than implicit blind beliefs?

VSNA-Chapters – Religious Study

Under the present circumstances, the Chapters –the building blocks - should bear the burden of cultivating and developing their members to engage in religious activities. The chapters should develop their in-house expertise. But, then how? Well, the chapters should see whether any of their own members can confidently handle the chore of conducting religious instruction. If not, could some members come forward and take

upon themselves this responsibility and summon enough confidence to handle this aspect? If not, then the chapters should pass the buck to the Central VSNA. This then falls on the shoulders of the Central VSNA to come to the aid of its chapters. This does not need to be over-emphasized, for ultimately it is the Central VSNA, where the buck stops and it has got to accept responsibility to meet the legitimate needs and demands of its chapters and hence its membership.

G. Ayya has discussed the subject of the “revitalization of the VSNA chapters (Ref. 5). [2003 Annual Convention Souvenir] He has called the chapters as the “Service Stations”. Perhaps, he left out an adjective ‘Full’; adding this to his description would make the chapters the “Full Service Stations”; meaning the chapters will develop expertise and provide “training in yoga, mediation and lingapuja”. He also asks the chapters “to learn and conduct life cycle rituals such as *namakarana*, engagements, weddings, and *lingaiyka*”. He further demands the Central VSNA “to develop a program of interaction with the chapters so that the chapters will become local stations to deliver energetic services to their members throughout the year”.

This brings the VSNA back to **square one**; namely the same question that was posed on November 25, 1978! The question was how best to educate our children and who should do it? Guru Bale did ask a similar question in one of his earliest newsletters (cf. **Appendix 12**, page 1). For the natives in America, it is a different story, for the children are exposed to their respective religions at various levels at an early age. Christian children begin learning about their religion in Sunday Bible Study Classes (**Appendix 42**), then continue in their schools, particularly if they are church-run schools. At the undergraduate level, the study of religion forms a required part of liberal arts education curriculum. There are Departments of Religion in the undergraduate colleges and universities.

In India, it is altogether a different story. There, the students rarely study religion on a systematic basis unless they plan to take it up as their avocation. Usually the children pick up bits and pieces from their parents and grandparents and now and then from their religious preceptors. When the first generation of Veerashaiva immigrants arrived in America, they brought with them whatever information they had managed to pick up from their parents. After their arrival in North America, their first and foremost consideration was their profession, getting settled down to normal life and raising their family. Often, the parents feel uncomfortable in imparting religious education to their own off springs. Also, they think they are not well equipped to answer pointed and sharp questions from their children, who demand a rational and logical explanation. It is laudable that the parents would like their children not to lose sight of their religious

heritage and legacy. If they do not do this, in all probability, their children would be assimilated in the melting pot of the American way of life.

The Central VSNA-Religious Study

Since the VSNA chapters cannot handle this chore by themselves and have been asking the Central VSNA to help them, the latter cannot pass the buck. The Central VSNA has got to come to the aid of its chapters. Since there are no readymade solutions to this problem, the Central VSNA has got to work through this in a deliberate manner. The Boot Camp it conducted on September 30, 2006 was one step to explore how to solve this problem and come to a consensus. During the Boot Camp, a couple of things happened. Firstly, the VSNA President and the Chairman of the 2007 Annual Con-vention stated that participants who would like to learn about the Veerashaiva religion would be given ample opportunity to do so. The interested parties would be divided into different age-brackets and would be exposed to religious instruction according to their level using appropriately prepared textual material and under class room settings. Secondly, a 10-page hand out titled “**Veerashaivism Made Simple**” written by Sateesh Kavi would be useful in teaching 4 ~ 8 year old kids. This was a direct output of the Boot Camp. All the textual material used during the forth-coming convention would be made available to the chapters for their use and would be put on the VSNA’s webpage specially reserved for religious learning activities. While developing the text, it is good to bear in mind that **there isn’t a single source or a stepwise guidebook in our religion describing how to proceed.** Secondly, it is advisable for all to keep in mind the saying ‘**different strokes for different folks**’! The high-lighted statement reflects the sense of urgency and hence the Central VSNA should heed and act on this suggestion.

It has been stated that there is a need for the “literature on Veerashaiva religion in the context of life in new land. We have to move beyond the 12th century scenario and place ourselves in the North American environment. We need to become VSNA centric in our writings” (Ref. 5). (G. Ayya, 2002 VSNA Annual Convention Souvenir, page 21.) The author further continues, “There is a current need to develop new literature to expound religion in contemporary terms. Philosophy of religion is required to be translated into a value system as guideposts, which can be used by families to cope with their life concerns.” The sum and substance of the above seems to be a call for the publication of Veerashaiva literature compatible with contemporary way of life and living in North America and free from the age-old ritualistic burdensome and cumbersome practices. A similar call was issued in the declaration of the 2000 First World Veerashaiva Conference (**Appendix 43**).

But a word of caution is needed here! In our hurry to modernize our religious way of life, we should not lose sight of the eternal values of what our **Sharanas** proclaimed in the 12th century. Their words are ever-green. Just because we live in America does not negate the truth in what they said in the 12th century. Just look at the elegance and simplicity and loftiness of their thoughts. Is not the following still true and valid?

When one's body is the temple,
Why does one need a separate temple?
When life is the linga,
Why does one need a separate linga?
Didn't say; didn't hear, Oh! Guhesvara,
What could I say or do?

In one of his early newsletters G. Bale states: "The heritages of Veerashaivas are beautiful. Take a few minutes to recall them and share them with your loved ones so that they can cherish proudly during their life time." The same issue of the newsletter carries an interesting article in Kannada. Because of its elegant description, an attempt has been made to give below an English version of the first part for the benefit of the VSNA members and their off-springs. Coupled with Sateesh Kavi's note, it makes an interesting and informative reading.

Veerashiavism is a Natural Religion!

Veerashiavism/ Lingayatism does not belong to any caste. It teaches how to transform mundane life into sublime divine life. That is, how the day-to-day worldly activities can be transformed into activities, which one can dedicate to God. Those who would like to be a real Veerashaiva and would like to do real lingapuja, should read the vachana of Allam Prabhu.

One has to live this religion to realize it. Shtsthala (six stages), Asthavarana (Eightfold way) and Panchachara (Five codes of conduct) are all its part and parcel. The Shtsthala is the soul, the Panchachara is the life and the Asthavarana forms the body. All these –soul, life and body – are necessary for a living person. This is the mantra of Veerashaivism and the tantra of democracy. The Veerashaiva religion does not stand alone and away from other religions. It incorporates all religions. It does not bow to King's commands. Neither does it bow to the rich. Nor does it owe itself to any debt or under obligation to any body. One does not practice it for show, pride, prestige, fame and name. This is a natural religion!

This religion manifests itself in attitude, behavior, action and knowledge of the natural religion. This religion wishes well for every body, men and women. It does not recognize neither higher nor lower

beings; it is non-discriminatory. It derives its strength from hundreds of years of experience. It is the natural religion!

According to the tenets of Veerashaivism, all are equal; neither none is lower nor none greater nor higher than the other. It does not accept unnatural distinction between the haves and the have-nots and between men and women. Equality is not a strange thing to the Veerashaivas. Over the course of hundreds of years, the Veerashaivas have come to internalize equality by practicing it in their every day life. It is a natural religion!

In this context, it is worth mentioning here. The author of the write-up “**Veerashaivism Made Simple**’ (Appendix 44A), is a self-educated person. In that he committed and dedicated himself to study the Veerashaiva/ Lingayat religion. Only a few months ago, he was hungry for knowledge and was distraught about the answers he received from his parent when he asked questions to his father. One should read the predicament he was in just a few months ago (Appendix 44B). A comparison of the two Appendices (loc cit) shows what all one needs in her/his quest is a single-minded commitment on one’s part. A short note appeared in one of the VSNA newsletters published in 1980. This note is both instructive and informative. It began with the title “**How can one be a Better Lingayat/Veerashaiva in North America?**” In view of its relevance, this note is reproduced below with editorial modification(s).

Question: What can I do

- (a) to be a better Lingayat?
- (b) to make the members of my family better Lingayats?
- (c) To help preserve and propagate Veerashaivism /Lingayatism

Answer: (a) By wearing and worshipping Linga.
(b) By studying the Veerashaiva scriptures – the Vachanas.
(c) By practicing the principles and holding meaningful and productive discourses.

Question: How can the VSNA assist

- (a) me to become a Better Lingayat?
- (b) the members of my family to become better Veerashaivas?
- (c) the Lingayat community to meet the challenges of the time and the local environment?

Answer: The VSNA can HELP

- (a) By providing educational and learning experiences.
- (b) By making available the needed resource materials.
- (c) By creating community awareness and encouraging community-wide celebration of the Veerashaiva festivals and religious rites

This note was signed simply as ‘VC’ (**Vimala Channabasappa**).

How to Practice Lingayatism in the Western World?

This has been a constant question for debate and discussion. For the past 40 years or so, not having deep religious roots in the adopted land and not having free and frequent access to religious teachers, this question has appears to be insurmountable to the practitioners of this faith. When one broods over this question, one comes to the conclusion that there is not a single solution to this question. For the solution depends upon the environment one is in, some faithful-followers follow the scriptures to the letter and while other follow the spirit of the scriptures. It seemed that one Veerashaiva youth, Snehalata Topgi had found a solution in her prize- winning essay titled, “How to practice the Veerashaiva Religion in the Western Culture” (cf. **Appendix 45**). On reading the essay, one invariably comes to the conclusion that the said essay does not offer any solution(s) and that it is only a brief summary of the principles of the Veerashaiva religion. Additional research on the subject at hand lead to another note titled, “How Youths Should Practice Religion in the Next Millennium” [cf. **Appendix 46**; the Veerashaiva, VSNA’s Newsletter, November 21, 2001 (p. 9)]. This happens to be a summary of the Youth Panel Discussion organized under the aegis of the 2000-First World Veerashaiva Conference at Toronto. The panel members were: (1) Shailesh Nalawadi, (2) Leena Paul, (3) Monica Ullagaddi, (4) Sandhya Karajgi and (5) Amit Akkihal. Mahadev Kumbar prepared a succinct simplified record of this panel discussion.

The real solution to the above question: **How to Practice Lingayatism in the Western World?**, lies in the sentence that Leena has written; namely **“The only way of practicing Veerashaivism is the way that provides you with the peace of mind, brings you closer to your conscience and closer to Shiva.” Amen!!**

There is another component that is worth mentioning here. Quite a few members have expressed the desire to learn their religion via the internet and in the comfort of their homes. The Central VSNA expecting this need had prepared an outline of a program called Long Distance Learning some four years ago. Not knowing how the membership felt about it, this project was put on the backburners (**Appendix 47**). If there is enough interest to warrant its resurrection, the Central VSNA should further look

into it and request the member who first conceived the project to develop it in detail for the consideration of the BOD. Such a program would be extremely beneficial and useful for Veerashaivas spread across the world. Better yet, this program once developed ought to be operated by the VIRC.

“At the local chapters’ level, there needs to be more education and practice because some of them have become just social gatherings.” “The bond between the Central VSNA and its local chapters needs to be strengthened and smoother working arrangements need to be established with the development of guidelines to create more amicable and efficient working relationship.” “The Samaja should first start at the grass root level, i.e. from the chapter, as the chapters are basic vital components of the Samaja. The chapters are making sustained continuity of annual conventions; therefore more attention should be given to recognize these chapters.” These are some of the comments voiced by the members.

A model is described below to show how a religious event could be arranged at the Chapter’s level. This is only an example and can be conveniently modified to suit the organizers’ choice. The celebration of the **Basava Jayanti** is a MSUT for all VSNA chapters. On this day, sit with friends and family members and mull over what Basava’s ringing words mean and what his deeds demonstrate and how he modernized our religious thoughts. The word Basava can be paraphrased in several ways. The first attempt to define the word Basava was carried out by **Allam Prabhu**, the 12th Century’s magnificent mystic mahayogi and a contemporary of Basava. He divided the word Basava into three parts Ba + Sa + Va; Ba stands for stopping the wheel of birth; Sa stands for making a person omniscient and Va means charging the soul with spiritual energy respectively [Ref. 6: ‘Shunyasampa-dane’, Vol. V; S. M. Sunkapur and A. Menezes (translators), Karnatak University, Dharwad (1972), page 313, vachana #14]. Ask the children to sing a few selected vachanas of Basava and ask them to interpret them. Have the English versions of the same handy, for our children may not be able to read Kannada. Give them the English versions and ask them to discuss what they mean and how they apply to our present-day life and living. Also, compare the diagram given on page 63.

The use of the diagram given on the next page 63, will make it easy to explain the meaning of Basava Jayanti in simple terms. Festivals such as Mahashivaratri, Deepavali, etc should comprise enough activities for a given year. This does not mean you cannot observe other festivals. For a starter the above should be alright to bolster the spirits of the participants.

14. Veerashaiva and Lingayat

Many of us have tried to distinguish and still distinguish between the two words - **Veerashaiva and Lingayat**. Some folks vehemently oppose the use of word, **Veerashaiva**. Some others dislike the use of the word, **Lingayat**. Perhaps, this opposition to the use of the particular word derives its support from the regional usage rather than rational basis. The words; Veerashaiva and Veerashaivism have been profusely used by Dr. S. C. Nandimath in his book titled “A Handbook of Veerashaivism”. (Ref. 7). Another justification for the use of the word, Veerashaivas lies in the fact that the practitioners of this religion, which disclaimed and dismissed the Vedanthic caste system based on the accident of birth, had to be brave to openly practice their faith in the face of staunch opposition by the supporters of the Vedanthic *vaarnashrama* system. To quote Nandimath, “Veerashaivism rebelled against the sacerdotal traditions of the Vedic Hindu religion”. While the former word has been popularly used in the old-Mysore state, the latter is commonly used in North Karnatak. Perhaps this regional based usage and connotation have caused and created some misgivings and misunderstanding.

Other than that there is no rational basis for differentiating these two words. Preliminary research indicates that Channabasava, the 12th Century Sharana, was the first one to use the word **Veerashaiva**. It must be stated that Allam Prabhu, the 12th Century’s noted mystic, has also been credited with the use of this word (cf. the following Vachana). It simply means that one has to be brave to practice the Veerashaiva religion. After the bloody revolution of Kalyana in the latter part of the 12th Century, which caused the massacre of hundreds of innocent Veerashaiva sharanas by the unruly soldiers owing their allegiance to the murdered King Bijjal, open and public practice of the Veerashaiva religion meant certain death at the hands of the royal soldiers. One had to be brave to openly practice one’s religious faith. Hence the word, Veerashaiava; veera meaning brave and **shaiva** meaning worshipper of Lord Shiva. Whether this word was in vogue at time of the **Shivagamas** (the original Veerashaiva scriptures) or not is not known. Perhaps, religious scholars ought to look into this.

Ascetism without *anubhaava*
Is like a brave man without a weapon,

There should be anubhaava to devotion,
Ascetism, deliverance, Veerashaivism,

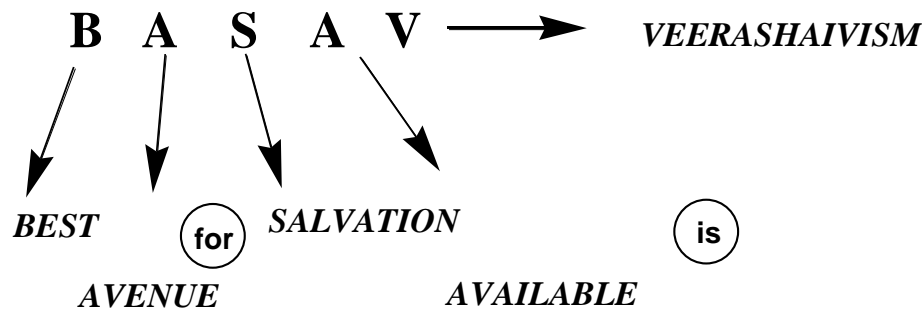
Were in true, Guheshwar linga,
Oh! Channabasavanna. (Ref. 10)

Whereas the use of the Sanskrit word Lingayat, rests on two words: Linga and ayat; Linga meaning the **isthalinga**; the miniature linga carried on the body and **ayat** meaning the wearer of the Linga and hence the word Lingayat (cf. M. R. Sakhare, “History and Philosophy of Lingayat Religion, (2nd ed), Karnatak University, Dharwad (1978).). There is another word, Lingavant. This word was popularly used in the Government census conducted by the British Government. In this write-up, the two words, namely **Veerashaiava** and **Lingayat**, have been used **synonymously**.

Recently, another word - **Veerashaiva Lingayat** – has come in vogue. **Appendix 48A** is taken from the web version of the Sanjevani dated February 1, 2007.

What Does the Linga Represent?

Based on a study of the thousands of year–old practices in Egypt and other Mediterranean countries, the Western writers have attributed sinister meaning to the **Sthavar Linga** (immobile Linga) found in the temples of India and some where else in the Middle East–Mediterranean region. However, the Linga has a sublime spiritual meaning. One explanation is due to His Holiness Lingaiyka Sri Kumarswamiji, Dharwad (ref. Veerashaivism and Bhakti, cf. **List of VSNA’s publications**). The **Isthalinga** worn on their bodies by the Lingayats/Veerashaivas contains inside of an almost spherical black shiny object, a miniature of the sthavar linga. This miniature linga, according to Professor Sakhare (Ref. 8), represents a person who is ‘**Lingarupa**’ – a person in a meditative posture (cf. **Appnedix 48B**).



What is the take home message of Basava Jayanti?

Once the LINGA is placed on us, we become EQUAL in ALL respects, IRRESPECTIVE of our GENDERS and STATIONS in Life.

Linga is the Great Equalizer.

Corollary 1: There is no Heaven and No Hell. Good attitude and character make Heaven, while Bad attitude and Bad character create Hell for real.

All Subcastes among the Lingayats Ought to be Vanquished and
Corollary 2: Transformed into
ONE WHOLESOME HUMANE HOMOGENEOUS SOCIETY.

Corollary 3: Take Pride in Being a VEERASHAIVA! Taking PRIDE in ONE'S RELIGIOUS HERITAGE does NOT NECESSARILY Translate into Putting down somebody else's FAITH!!

Veerashaivism and Hindu Religion

Often, the question whether the **Veerashaivism** is a part of the **Hindu Religion** or a **different religion** has been debated and discussed. The **proponents** say that there is

nothing new in Veerashaivism and it is some what a modified form of the Hindu Religion; sort of Protestant Hindu religion. Even the Government of India thinks so. And hence it decided not to accord the status of a different religion to the Veerashaiva philosophy and religion. However, a majority of the Veerashaivas thinks differently and say that their's is altogether a new religion. According to this school of thought, their claim is based on fundamental ideological differences and not based on a dogmatic demand. The Veerashaivas rightly ask how come Sikhism received the status and designation of an altogether different religion? An unbiased person sees a clearly defined influence of both Hindu and Islam religious thoughts in Sikhism.

In the same vein, modern Christianity has inherited the influence of Judaism. In fact, the Jewish scripture is regarded by Christians as their old-testament; a label the Jewish folks do not like. Yet for all practical purposes, Christianity is regarded as a different religion.

Extending this analogy a little further, whether one accepts or not, the fact remains that one sees an apparent influence of both Judaism and Christianity on Islam. To cite a couple of instances, Prophet Mohamed saw the same angel in his dreams as Moses had seen some 2800 years before him. While Moses received his ten commandments on Mount Sinai, Prophet Mohamed went to heaven and came back on a mountain top. There is gold colored dome on this spot, which is claimed as a holy place both by the Jews and the Moslems. There are other similarities between the two religions such as the Day of Judgment or the Day of Resurrection. In fact the Quran (Koran) describes the Jews and the Christians as the 'People of the Book'. Islam believes that God sent them His words – scriptures – containing Divine thoughts. It accepts this and considers Judaism and Christianity as true religions. To contradict this would tantamount to contradicting the Quran" (Ref. 12 a). The Islamic scholars such as S. H. Nasr consider the "core of spiritual and social values of Islam as complimentary to Jewish and Christian values" (Ref. 12b). Yet, Islam is recognized as a religion unto itself by the entire world.

The apparent and obvious influence of the Hindu religious thoughts on Jainism and Buddhism cannot be denied by a rational thinking mind. Yet, these ideologies have received the status of independent religions.

Although there are several other subtle differences, an impartial comparison of **eight** fundamental Hindu religious concepts with those of the Veerashaiva religion convincingly demonstrates the fundamental differences between the two religious ideologies. It is admitted that one can find a shadow of influence of the Hindu thought over the Veerashaiva ideology, just as one finds the influence of Hindu religion on

Jainism and Buddhism. **Living in close proximity, this is but natural.** The same can be said of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Yet, these are considered as distinct religions.

In this context, it is worth mentioning here the words of S. Radhakrishnan: “The author takes great pains to make out that the Lingayat faith is altogether independent of the Hindu religion----- . Repudiates the distinction of caste, it is said to be non-Hindu. I am afraid that this is taking a some what narrow view of the spirit of Hinduism”. (Ref. Preface, M. R. Sakhare, “History and Philosophy of Lingayat Religion, (1st ed), Lingayat Education Association, Dharwad (1942). Radhakrishnan’s opinion should not surprise any one, for he does not even mention one word about the Veerashaiva/Lingayat religion or its Sharanas in his treatise of 637 pages on “Indian Philosophy” written some 15 years later and after 15 years of his writing the Preface to Professor Sakhare’s book. (Ref. 11)

Concept/Principle	Hindu religion	Veerashaiva religion
Concept of Karma	Yes	No
Concept of Reincarnation	Yes	No
Concept of Heaven and Hell	Yes	No
Concept of Worshipping in the Temples and Holy-dip	Yes	No
Concept of the Isthalinga	No	Yes
Practice of Varnashrama	Yes	No
Concept of Equality of Men and Women	No	Yes

14.1. Swamjis and the VSNA

Over the course of the years, a mutually benevolent symbiotic relationship has evolved between the Swamijis and the VSNA. The VSNA is trying to do a balancing act on the one hand and at the same time it has to maintain a workable relationship with the

Swamijis. The religious leadership in the Veerashaiva religion is non-hierarchical. This means that the VSNA has to deal with swamijis, who have a wide spectrum of goals and objectives, sometimes conflicting with each other's politics and policies. This complicates the situation for the **apolitical organizations** such as the VSNA, for its members have differing allegiance to different swamijis and hence the attendant conflict of interests. Added to this situation is the basic fact that the VSNA has to cater to the legitimate demands of its membership. It is for this reason the VSNA decided early in the game not to extend an official invitation to any swamiji to participate in its proceedings and pay the travel and hospitality costs. The customary practice has been to issue a general announcement and to provide legal support to a swamiji planning to attend the VSNA functions. However, it must be openly stated here that once a swamiji is in North America, the VSNA and membership do extend any and all courtesies including boarding and housing arrangements. It also must be admitted that the swamiji's visits do serve a beneficial purpose and enable overseas Veerashaivas to fill a void in their mundane and hurly-burly lives. They do provide religious and spiritual enlightenment, uplift and solace. G. Ayya has succinctly stated, "Swamijis and religious scholars are indeed the messengers of knowledge and spirituality" (Ref. 5; New York 2003 Annual Convention Souvenir). It must be clearly stated here that the Swamijis gave rendered a magnificent service to the Lingayat community by operating and providing boarding and lodging facilities to deserving poor Veerashaiva students so that they could get educated in high schools and colleges. Without their efforts, the Veerashaiva community would have simply remained farmers and merchants. Because of the swamijis selfless service, we have Lingayat professionals in all walks of life.

Both Tangible and Intangible Results

One of the outstanding achievements of the VSNA is that it is one of a handful of institutions that have published books on the Veerashaiva religion and philosophy in the English language. The following list gives the titles of the books published by the VSNA and their authors and/ or editors (**Ref. 2**). These books were designed for the benefits of the parents so that they could feel comfortable in talking to their children. Unfortunately, this does not seem to have happened.

1. Veerashaism and Bhakti, S. Munavalli (ed.) (1988)
2. Lingadharan, Vimala Channabasappa (1988)
3. Veerashaiva Religion; An Introduction, Sri Kumarswamiji (Dharwad), S. Munavalli (ed.) (1989)
4. Veerashaivism: A Collection of Essays, Sri Kumarswamiji (Dharwad), S. Munavalli (ed.) (1990)

5. Veerashaivism: History and Fundamental Concepts, Sri Kumarswamiji (Dharwad), S. Munavalli (ed.) (1991)
6. Veerashaiva Religion: Questions and Answers, S. Munavalli (1991)
7. Veerashaivism: Comparative Study of Allama Prabhu and Basava, Shunyasampadhane and Vachanshastra, Sri Kumarswamiji (Dharwad), S. Munavalli (ed.) (1993)
8. Veerashaiva Sharaneyaru, S. Munavalli and S. Puranik, (1994)
9. In Search of Shiva, Sarojini Ullagaddi, (1995)
10. Life, Legacy and Lyrics of Devara Dasimayya, C. S. Bennur, S. Munavalli (ed.) (1998)
11. Veerashaivism for the New Millennium, S. Munavalli (ed.) (2000)
12. The Veerashaiva Religion: Its Practices and Principles, S. Munavalli (2002).

15. 2006 VSNA- Boot Camp

It is worth remembering here the idea of holding a group review meeting had been previously advanced by some members. “A selected group of youths and elder members should sit together for a one-day or two-day meeting, discuss freely and honestly and carefully chart out the path for the next five years”, (cf. page 42, Ref. 2) G. S. Doddamani had suggested that there was and still is a need for “brainstorming sessions to come up with solutions to improve the organization. In addition, the VSNA needs long range plans. We have utterly failed to bring our younger generation into the VSNA” (cf. page 41, Ref. 2).

The VSNA Boot Camp held on September 30, 2006 provided a singularly wonderful experience to its participants, composed of a blend of the youth and the elders. All were hoping and wishing for a very successful end so that they can home with a feeling of having answered and heeded the call of the membership. Prior to the group’s meeting lot of legwork had been done behind the scene to ensure its success. This required meticulous planning and careful execution of the plans without sacrificing individual contributions. It was an eight-hour intensive workshop dedicated and committed to one cause – **revitalizing, re-energizing, retooling, reinvigorating and rejuvenating the V S N A. Even during the lunch break, there was a one-hour teleconference to receive input from the members spread across the North American sub-continent.** The agenda of the workshop did not leave any free time for the participants (**Appendix 49**). After the formal welcome note and the explanation of the primary purpose of the Boot Camp by Prabhu Patil, the presenters of the morning made their pitch. Each presentation was followed by an intensive question and answer session. What was noteworthy was the absence of acrimonious arguments. The elders and the youth blended harmoniously.

The youths' presentations were meticulously prepared and presented and thus demonstrated their breadth and depth of the problems confronting the organization. The proceedings were recorded and burnt in computer's memory right there on the spot by VSNA's efficient Secretary (**Appendix 50**). Described below is a brief summary of the proceedings of the 1-hour teleconference. Even the teleconference had attracted the youth, showing that a fresh breeze was and is blowing across the horizon. The success of the Boot Camp owes a bouquet to its planners, namely Gurusawmy Ayya and Prabhu Patil, who choreographed and orchestrated the entire workshop. The program ended with a hearty socializing and sumptuous dinner at the abode of Prabha and Gadigeppa Doddamni.

Conference within a Conference (September 30, 2006)

The following persons participated in the teleconference on September 30, 2006 organized as a part of the first VSNA's Boot Camp Program:

1. Basavaraj Mudenur	Chapter	NE
2. Somashekhar Pallegar	”	FL
3. Nitu Jagadeesh	”	MD
4. Sajjan Shiva	”	TN
5. Shilpa Jagadeesh	”	MD
6. Ms. Shanta	“	CA
7. Sadanada Hebbal	”	CA-San Jose

Summary of the participants' statements along with their names:

Nitu would like the VSNA to develop a centralized structured system for the youth board. He stressed the need for the creation of a youth organization under the umbrella of the VSNA and the desirability of having a youth representative at all levels of the VSNA organization; namely the BOD, the BOR and the VSNA Chapters. He also expressed the need to come up with teaching modules to facilitate the teaching of the Veerasahaiva religion.

Basavaraj wanted the VSNA to organize more attractive conventions. He expressed the hope that each VSNA Chapter would conduct religious classes for the benefit of the Veerashaiva children and the youth and that all VSNA Chapters establish an **inter-linking network** so that each chapter would know what everybody else was and is doing and thus avoid the duplication of efforts and hence the attendant waste of effort, time and resources.

Shilpa would like to create Video, cassette and CD on the 12th Century Veerashaiva relics for the enlightenment of the general populace and to make all aware of their religious heritage.

Shanta shared the experiments her chapter is doing and wanted to divide the children according to compatibility of their ages in organizing religious tutorial classes.

Sajjan Shiva wanted the VSNA to provide enriching wholesome experiences via exposing the children and youth to religious discourses during the Annual Conventions. This activity should be transmitted to all chapters. He also expressed the need to highlight the values and virtues of the Veerashaiva concept of Dashoha and its application and use in our day to day activities. He further stated that he would like to pitch-in on this score.

The President assured the participants that particular attention would be paid to provide the participants an exciting and enriching experience through a variety of innovative activities such as religious modules designed to meet the needs of different age groups at the next convention in 2007 to be hosted by the Detroit Chapter. The VSNA will develop well structured arrangement for the youth leadership board* within the VSNA family. The BOD will make definite provisions for the participation of the youth at all levels. Shilpa was asked to develop a full-pledged detailed project along with estimated costs and the BOD would seriously consider such an endeavor.

The overall impression was that the participants seemed to be satisfied with the answers they received from the VSNA President, who moderated the teleconference in the presence of the Boot Camp attendees.

*** This objective was accomplished in February 2007.**

16. How do you measure VSNA's success?

When one speaks of the success of a volunteer service-oriented organization, one invariably looks for visible outcomes or products. This is normal, for it is human nature to quantify results for comparison and evaluation purposes. Often times the success of socio-religio-cultural organizations such as the VSNA are not apparent to the eye, for they are a blend of tangible and intangible variety and the tangible ones cannot be separated from the intangible outcomes. In other words, they are often inter-twined. However, a discernable eye can penetrate this blend and pick up the strengths and weaknesses of an organization. So, here is how a discernable eye views the overall accomplishments of the VSNA during the course of its existence:

1. Past history or record,
2. Number of constituent chapters,
3. Number of members participating in the annual conventions,
4. Number of Dues-paying regular members
5. Number of Life-members forming the bedrock of the institution
6. Number of members involved with a given chapter's activities,
7. Educational opportunities provided by the organization,
 1. Scholarships,
 2. Print-materials (in-house)
 3. Essay competitions,
 4. Vachana recital competitions,
 5. Dance competitions,
 6. Guided Travels.
 7. Resource material such as the Central Library.
8. Financial Support from the Members,
9. Future of the Organization
 1. Intangibles such as development of programs,
 2. Development and training of new cadre of leaders,
 3. Fiscal stability
 4. Long term survivability and viability.

1. **Past history** of the VSNA reflects aspects, which are associated with the birth and growth of a child and hence are no different from those experienced by similar service oriented organizations, which are manned by volunteers. This experience has helped weather its weakness and gather and muster strength. The year-long (2002 – 2003) Silver Jubilee Celebration supports this contention. *Isn't this a measure of success?*

2. **Number of constituent chapters:** To start with the VSNA began with one or two units (the current term is chapters). When the VSNA was founded, there was no thought of organizing the chapters. As stated else where, the chapters owe their origin the far sightedness of the late Gangadhar Kori. Now there **20** chapters, the latest chapter being the **New England Chapter**. The number of the VSNA chapters has been slowly but steadily growing (cf. **Table 1**). This should not be construed as the end of the growth. There are still quite a few virgin areas, namely South Carolina, Mid West, Montreal (Canada) etc. to conquer. *Isn't this a measure of success?*

3. **The Number of members participating in the annual conventions** of the VSNA has mushroomed from a paltry 51 or so to 1000 from the 1st convention to

the special millennium conference (2000 Convention) hosted by the Toronto chapter. This large rise was due to 200 or so visitors from India who accompanied Seregeri and Chitradurga swamijis. The average number is around 600 (2005 Maryland Convention). *Isn't this a measure of success?*

4. The Number of Dues-paying Regular Members of the Samaja is somewhat disappointing, disheartening and puzzling, for the number has remained stagnant and may have even witnessed a decline. Appendix – lists the names of the regular members in **1997**. A comparison of this number with the roster of the names of the current regular members in 2007 (cf. **Appendix 51**), shows a precipitous decline in the number of members during the decade of 1997 – 2007. This drop represents a very serious problem for the VSNA and is probably due to two reasons: (i) a decline in the interest on the part of the Veerashaivas and (ii) the attendant decrease in the net revenue for the VSNA. In spite of the spirited and wholehearted attempts on the part of the office-bearers, the Veerashaivas at large are sitting on the fence and are not heeding the call of their conscience. It has been estimated that there are about 4000 Veerashaivas in North America. The current number of regular members does not amount even to **5%** of the estimated number of the Veerashaivas in North America. There is something more than paying the dues that is hindering and preventing these folks from becoming the members of the Samaja. Could this be apathy and disinterest? A request to these folks is to mull over what Sir Walter Scott, speaking of patriotism, has said over a century ago: **“Breathes there a man with soul so dead who never to himself hath said that is my motherland?”** When translated this turns out to be: **Breathes there a man with soul so dead who never to himself hath said that this is not my legacy and heritage!**

However one may look at the situation, this does not bode well for the organization. The responsibility for taking appropriate action rests squarely at the door-steps of two bodies, namely the BOR and the BOD. They should scratch their heads and use their collective wisdom to come up with a definite plan of action to reverse the trend.

5. The Number of Life-members: The life-members formed and still form the bedrock of the institution. This number has been slowly but steadily inching upwards (see **Fig. 1**) since its inception in 1983. The first year the concept was introduced by the Patil – Kumbar dynamic combination 5 members became life members (**Appendix 22**). The expectation and the hope of this duo that the income from life membership account would provide financial support for the survival of the Samaja indeed was well founded and as such reflected their farsightedness. Presently this number stands around 300 (cf. **Table 2**) and is slowly inching upwards. An up-dated list of life members is not available. Thanks to the practice of listing the life members in the VSNA newsletter, the

data through 1997 is on hands. The names for 2003 and 2004 and the numbers for 2005 and 2006 are available (cf. **Appendix 51**). A new list is being generated from the available data and additional information is being sought to complete the roster. A look at **Appendix 51** shows that some members had made only a partial payment towards their life membership. An attempt should be made to ascertain whether these folks have fulfilled their obligation by paying off the balance. If they have not done so, then they ought to be reminded of their obligation. This is something on which the VSNA's Secretary and the Treasurer ought to take some action.

Many of the projects of the VSNA are experiencing financial crunch because of the lack of funds and the rising costs of operating expenses. If this number of life-members can be raised to 500 within the next tow tears, it would be extremely helpful to the **BOD** and the **BOR**. This is an achievable realistic goal. Working out the mathematics, the two bodies together have **37** members. If each member takes upon herself or himself the responsibility of bringing in **3** life members per year, low and behold, the VSNA would achieve this goal and a milestone would be established for future development. **Figure 2** gives a graphical description of the financial status of the life membership account.

Year**	Life Members* (includes partial)
1982	5
1983	7
1984	?
1985	?
1986	8
1987	16
1988	21
1989	?
1990	2
1991	13
1992	18
1993	?
1994	?
1995	11
2003	9

2005	7
2006	12

Table 2: Number of life members added during the indicated years.

* Includes partially paid life members.

** Data not available for 1993, 1994 and from 1996 through 2002.

6. Number of members involved with a given chapter's activities:

Extrapolating the available data, the number of persons participating in the chapters' activities far out numbers the number of regular dues paying members. From this it can be inferred that not all of the persons participating in the chapters' activities are regular dues paying members. Here is an opportunity for the Chapters' office-holders to increase their pool of active dues paying members.

7. Educational opportunities provided by the organization:

A number of educational and non-academic activities have been and are being sponsored by the Samaja to attract the members' children. The VSNA has provided over \$25,000 as scholarships, trophies, cash prizes, etc. The items listed above under # 7 (cf. pages 69 - 70) indicate the scope of this activity.

8. Financial Support from the Members:

Over the course of the existence of the VSNA, the Veerashaivas been generous and have been extremely supportive of their cherished organization. Some of these members donated money even before the VSNA was founded and others have opened their hearts and pockets. The Life membership concept represents a salient example of the members' generosity. During the 1989 ~ 1996 years, several members donated thousands of dollars to support the scholarship project. The Convention Trust Fund is another milestone. The VSNA members not wanting to imagine the missing of the Annual Convention for lack of funds, came forward and established Convention Trust Fund (the details are given else where). The interest from this account goes to support the VSNA Annual Conventions as subsidies to the host chapters.

9. Future of the Organization:

Often, it is the intangibles that help solidify the bricks of the walls of a building. The intangibles such as the development of supportive sentimental programs, for example the VSNA calendar project, the publication of the books, the supporting of the children's activities, etc. have done and are doing lot to

assure and ensure the organization's long term survivability. Another intangible attempt is the intense desire of the VSNA office-holders to develop a new cadre of leadership.

Appendix 52 lists the partial financial statement of the organization in 1997, while **Appendix 53** describes the financial statement of accounts for 2005.

A Comparison of the budgets for 1997 (Appendix 52) for 2005 (Appendix 53) permits one to make the following observations:

The overall revenue of the organization has declined considerably over the period under consideration. The significance and importance of this dramatic decrease become apparent when inflation during this period is put into the equation. This leads one to ponder as to why this decline in total revenues has occurred. This is certainly not attributable to the lack of enthusiasm on the part of the office-holders. Two probable reasons come to mind: (i) a decline in the amount of individual donations and (ii) the establishment of the Convention Trust Fund in 1997. These two reasons are sort of cause – effect type. Members stopped making individual donations, for they thought they were contributing to the Convention Trust Fund any way. Perhaps, the organization was going to the same well again and again; meaning the VSNA did not locate new sources. As stated somewhere else, the younger generation of the Veerashaivas are much more affluent than the first generation of Lingayat immigrants and hence the former can afford to be more generous. How to tap this new source? This is a problem the BOR and the BOS should tackle jointly using their collective wisdom. Fiscally the VSNA is a strong, solvent organization. **Appendices 54** and **55** furnish information on the audited statement of activities and changes and financial position of assets as of December 31, 2006 respectively. Also, additional information on the VSNA's finances is given in **Appendix 56**. The VSNA's budget for 2007 is spelled out in **Appendix 57**. It has close to half a million dollars in various accounts, **coupled with a compounded interest on the part of the members as documented by the ever increasing number of the annual convention attendees**, the current fiscal position of the VSNA ought to be enough to guarantee long term survivability and viability of the organization. The above information should convince even the skeptics amongs us that the financial position of the organization is sound; it is admitted that more positive cash flow would certainly motivate and spur the office-holders to engage in more constructive activities. That's why they are advertising with a new slogan: "**Help us to help you**".

Veerashaiva Youth

Since the Future of the Veerashaiva Youth is inextricably tied up with the future of the VSNA, it is appropriate at this juncture to talk and think aloud about our youth. The Veerashaiva Youth born and/ or growing up in North America are a big enigma; a big

question mark (?). Sometimes they are a very, very resourceful about what they would like to do for the VSNA. Then, they altogether forget about the VNSA and the fact that the VSNA IS BY AND FOR THE YOUTH. This statement stands supported by the fact that the THEME of the 1989 VSNA Annual Convention hosted by the Detroit chapter was: **“YOUTH; YOU ARE THE FUTURE OF THE VSNA.”** Secondly, the 1990 VSNA Annual Convention hosted by the New York chapter was **DEDICATED** to Veerashaiva Youth (**Appendix 39**). May be it is growing up or may be there are too many distractions. May be it is all a consequence of their leading a dual life – one inside their house and another outside their house and in the presence of their peers. Inside the house, they come under pressure from their parents and siblings and outside their house they become subjected to invisible peer pressure. Thus, often this turns out to be a rough going. This does not mean that they should forget their heritage and legacy. If they do, then they should be reminded of Walter Scott’s pronouncement “breathes there a man with soul so dead that he never to himself hath said that this is my motherland.” Here what Scott’s alludes to motherland, the VSNA alludes to the Veerashaiva way of life, heritage and legacy. It should be pointed out here to our youth that compared to what the first generation of Veerashiva immigrants went through in their adopted homeland, the life and living of second generation of Veerashaivas is easy and cozy.

The primary purpose of founding the VSNA was and still is the Veerashaivas youth and the dedicated commitment of their parents to preserve, protect and propagate the Veerashaiva way of life, heritage and legacy and values for the benefit of the youths, If one takes just a cursory look at the first executive committee (BOD) elected at the first VSNA annual convention (cf. page 20), the above inference becomes crystal clear. One-half of the elected members of this body were the youth. This was not by a chance. This was due to the deliberate attempt on the part of the elders to train the youth and to leave the VSNA in their care. In other words, the elders wanted the youth to carry on the torch. Many an elder-member are often frustrated and disappointed at the lack of wholehearted commitment, dedication and sustained interest on the part of the youth.

It isn’t enough for our youths to say at the podium ‘let us dispatch our old-timers to the geriatric ward. We will take care of the VSNA’. One word to the wise is that ‘it is easier said than done. Put the metal to the pedal and start pumping up the hill and down the hill!’ In other words, walk the talk youngsters! Building and leading an organization is not a cake-walk. Neither is it a board-walk! One needs to forget external distractions, make personal sacrifices, and become thick-skinned, goal oriented, considerate, thoughtful and truthful to oneself. It would be helpful if the youth bear in mind that opportunity knocks the door but once and that they have to cease it, otherwise they would not get a second chance.

Growing-up: Skepticism Admixed with Optimism!

What our youth need is growing-up and maturing, Life poses many problems that have no ready-made solutions. This does not mean that a youth's life is doomed in skepticism. It only means that he/she has to grow-up and mature through personal experience. A case in point: Kavitha Patil. Her one-page essay on "My Thoughts on Religion" reflects and corroborates the above observation. In it she describes a college-seminar scenario that took place in her class. The instructor asked the class whether they believed in God or not. Almost every one in the class raised their hands and said 'yes'. But when "asked to answer the question why they believed in God, they only came up with a blank! But, back then, **I had found it (religion) all so boring and meaningless, and hated the concept of religion, dismissing it altogether as disbelief.**

"But today, **by growing older**, I have become aware of the world as a whole. I no longer see a world through narrow-minded eyes. There are several worlds out there ----." (Appendix 58)

These two cases, Sateesh Kavi and Kavitha Patil, are not unique by themselves; they are uniquely common particularly among the youth growing up in North America, for they ask questions and would like to have convincing answers. They would like to be convinced by logic and rationale. There is nothing wrong with this. In fact this is how it should be, for the lessons thus learned last a lifetime.

Dialog with the Teens/Youth and the Elders

Veerashaiva Youth: The VSNA was established with the youth in the forefront of their eyes and minds. Even after 28 years we are still struggling to attract the active attention of our youth and keeping them in our fold. Many reasons have contributed to this sorry state of affairs. If we seriously analyze the problem at hand, we notice the underlining cause: **OUR CHILDREN LEAD A DUAL LIFE IN OUR ADOPTED LAND.** They lead one life at home and another life outside the house. In fact, very few parents really realize this aspect of our children's growing up in North America, which is melting pot of various cultures and religious ideologies. They are terribly worried about being swallowed by external forces. As parents we should sympathize and empathize, instead of finding faults and being critical of them. We should solicit their inputs on every aspect of our family. This could then be extended to the **extended family**, namely the **VSNA**.

Yes, there is an apparent 'DISCONNECT'. This is and will always be true between two succeeding generations. Often, we do not speak the same language. Yet with

accommodative understanding on the part of the parents a bridge can be built across the “disconnect”. We should ask the youth what they expect of us as parents, of our religion and philosophy. **WE, AS PARENTS, SHOULD SMOOTHEN THEIR TRANSITION AND MAKE THEIR ADJUSTMENT FRICTIONLESS AND PAINLESS.**

We often cannot respond “effectively” when our children ask questions about our religion. How can the parents who themselves have very little or no knowledge of their religion and way of life offer guidance to their children, who are lot smarter than the parents were at their children’s age? We as parents have to realize this and accept it as a fact of life. This then boils down to the bottom line: we - the parents - have to retool ourselves to meet the challenges of the times. Let us remember the old adage: **“The family that prays together stays together”**. To this one can add: the **family that stays together sustains and survives.**

A Veerashaiva Youth Talks to Veerashaiva Youths

The best way to dialog with the Lingayat youth is to let them talk with their own peer. SANJAY PATIL, a Veerashaiva youth from Toronto (Canada) in his keynote address **“Youth, Veerashaivism and Tomorrow: What is Our Path”** delivered at the 2000 VSNA Annual Convention held in Toronto has made the same suggestion to the youth that reminds one of Swami Vivekanda’s statement made to the people of India over a century ago! Sanjay extolled the Lingayat youth with these words, “--- the onus is on us to take the initiative when it comes to religion and spirituality. We must make a concerted effort to learn about Veerashaiva religion and the teachings of Basava if for no reason but for our own spiritual health. ---- it is important to ensure that we are in a position where we can impart our heritage and religion to our children. [cf. **Appendix 59**; VSNA Annual Convention Souvenir, (2000), page 37,]

Of late, our VSNA annual conventions have become the run of the ordinary mill variety. We have to drastically change our directions in order to provide a sense of belonging to our members. We have got to make our religious thinking and philosophy more meaningful and relevant to the changing times. To do this, we must first accept the fact all religious ideologies are subject to the stipulations of the theory of evolution. To survive and to be more meaningful, religions must adapt to the changing times and the needs of the society. Otherwise, they will become irrelevant and meaningless. To make our religion more palatable, our approach should be to strive to answer the 21st Century’s youth, who ask questions before they accept any thing.

An Appeal to the Veerashaiva Youth

Since the concept of collaborative participation has failed to produce the expected dividends, the VSNA would like to explore another approach to motivate and inspire the Veerashaiva youth. This novel approach lets the youth run their very own Youth Board and function on their own under the VSNA umbrella. This time there won't be any excuse for the Veerashaiva youth not to bring home the ship – VSNA- and anchor it safely with all the regalia there unto.

Whether the name of **Swami Vivekananda** rings bell or not among our youth, the fact remains that the 19th Century's one of the most well-known articulator of the Vedanthic Dharma (Religion), Swami Vivekananda, mesmerized the gathering of the **World Parliament of Religions** held at Chicago on September 11, 1893 by his oratory. He wept and prayed for the soul of India. He issued a Clarion call to Indians to unite to throw away the centuries old foreign yolk and asked Indians to “**awake, arise and act**” to save the soul of India. Borrowing Swami Vivekananda's famous quote, the Veerashaiva youth are hereby being asked to heed his words, namely **awake, arise and act in unison to preserve, protect and propagate the Veerashaiva way of life and legacy by taking charge of the VSNA.**

17. The VSNA Goes Hi-Tech

The credit for developing the VSNA-web page and putting the Lingayat religion on the internet goes to G. Doddamani and M. Kumbar respectively. For about two decades (1978 - 2002), the Samaja's Exec. Comm. (BOD) and BOT (BOR) had trouble getting the members to attend the scheduled regular meetings, for it involved traveling across North America. Often times, there used to be a lack of quorum to conduct the business of the Samaja. The required quorum number had to be changed a couple of times. Ravi Bhooplapur (President 2003 ~2004) in 2003 changed the meeting format, in that he introduced the teleconference practice. This meant that members could attend these meetings without traveling and in the comfort of their homes. This practice has elicited maximum participation by the members and it has dramatically cut down travel time and unwanted lengthy diatribe. Since its benefits soon became apparent, this practice has been continued by the present officers, **Prabhu Patil** (president) and **Raj Adapur** (secretary). Now the Samaja offers matrimonial services through www.eLagna.com site. The members can also check the Samaja's financial statements through the web site provided they know the password. **Figure 3** gives a graphic description of VSNA's incomes and expenditures for the period from 1991 to 1997. The numbers for the

remaining period are not available. The last three VSNA annual conventions have also witnessed the proceeding through power point presentations and high-tech graphics.

The election procedure has been streamlined by developing a general nomination form to cover all VSNA elections (**Form 3**). The VSNA should explore the possibility of making available its newsletter to the members via the VSNA' web site and to cut down the cost of its printing and mailing it. Of course, this raises another question: What about the folks who do not have access to computers? Well, in this day and age, it is hard to imagine that highly educated people like the VSNA members to live in the US without access to computers. Agreed, that there are exceptions. But at least putting it on the web would cut down the number of hard copies to be printed and mailed. This would amount to some saving over the course of time. The VSNA has done its fair share of producing and providing the resource material in English (**Appendix 60**). It knows that more, the better. It is working hard.

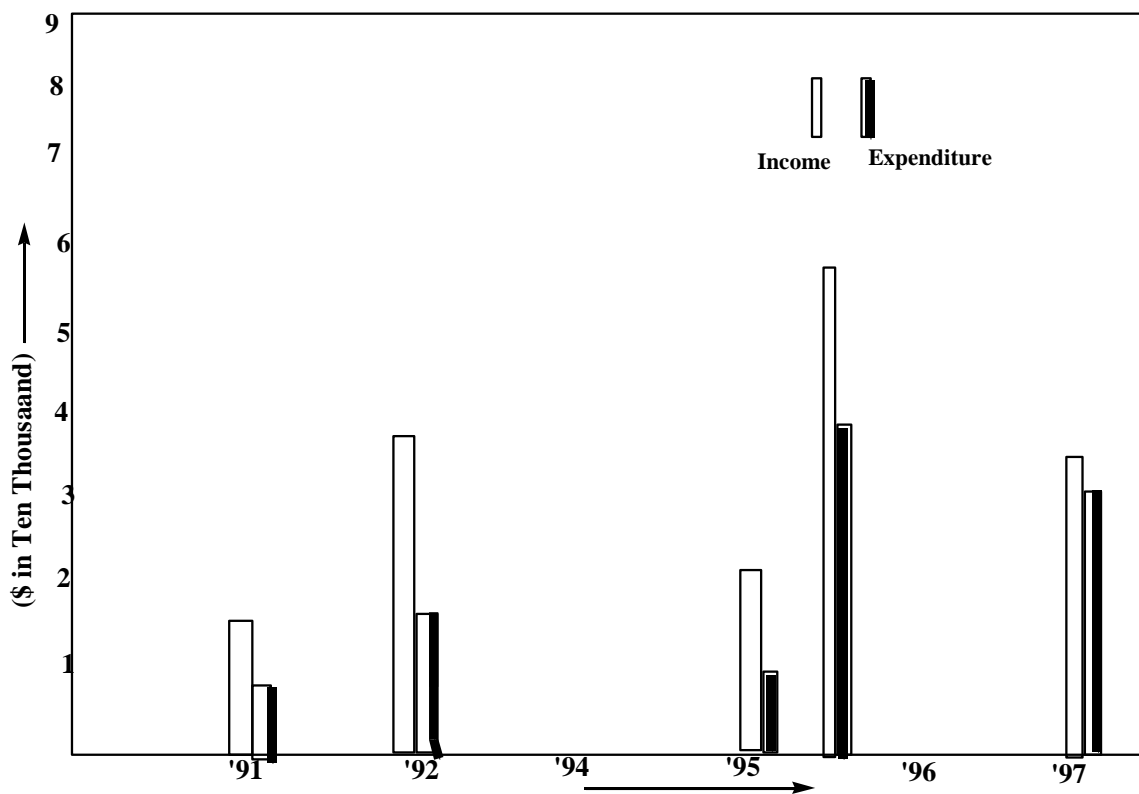


Figure 3: Income-Expenditure Bar-graph

The Barograph in **Figure 3** clearly demonstrates the fact that most of the VSNA-officers have lived within VSNA's frugal means and that they did not strain the VSNA's budget. Some of them spent their own money rather than claim expenses from the VSNA for VSNA's work.

Land and Math Project

A cursory examination of the data in **Table 1** shows the fact that there was a Land-Math project under the aegis of the VSNA in the late 1980's and early 1990's. This item seems to have disappeared in 1996. This does not mean that it vanished in thin air. Since the project was not going any where, probably the account was merged with another fixed account such as the Life Membership Account.

Action and Accountability

A “**Master Plan for VSNA –July 2005 to July 2007**” was developed by a three-member committee composed of G. Ayya (Chair), Ravi Bhooplapur (VSNA-President) and D. Basavaraj (BOR-Chair) and published on December 20, 2004. The said document consists of: (1) Preamble, (2) Plan of Action for BOD, (3) Plan of Action for BOR and (4) Plan of Action for VSNA Chapters. The preamble calls for “a series of action plans for various committees. The plan sets forth an agenda for the organization so that all activities are prioritized and implemented in a coordinated manner. The action plan will identify budget for each committee and the actors implementing the various projects.” Since the publication of the said action plan, more than two years have elapsed. Where does the VSNA stand now? Is there a progress report on the so-called action plan?

VSNA Needs Tested Stewardship

It is a pity that some of the VSNA's officers missed making their own mark in the annals of the VSNA's history. They contributed very little, if any at all and used their positions for self-glorification, both here at home and abroad. There are others, who on the other hand, exhibited tremendous commitment, dedication and vision in projecting a positive picture of the VSNA and taking it to a higher height. This is a call for such committed visionary VSNA members to come to the aid of the Samaja. This is a blunt statement. The VSNA can do without the glittering ornaments; what it needs is committed soldiers, who can roll up their sleeves and get to work without expecting any recognition or reward.

A Word on Financial Record Keeping

There is much to be desired and said against financial record keeping for the first 22 years or so of the existence of the VSNA. A uniform system of financial record keeping has not been employed; at best it has been a shoddy method. In the past, the Officers

have used whatever system that was simple and convenient. This was aided by the fact that the VSNA books were not audited by certified accountants. Added to this, the records do not appear to have been transferred to the succeeding officers by the outgoing officers. A similar situation seems to be prevailing with the VSNA chapters. The adoption and use of a **uniform system** would be of considerable assistance to all the concerned, more particularly if the VSNA's account-books are audited by the US Internal Revenue Services. A general form has been developed by the present office-bearers can be conveniently used by the VSNA Chapters to annually report their financial status to the Central VSNA. The filing of this form in a timely manner would go a long way in creating a responsible way of financial record keeping by the Chapters.

Archiving Documents

All outgoing officers of the Corporation ought to leave their VSNA-related correspondence with the VIRC for archiving and future research and reference needs. If they would like to have access to their correspondence, they may make copies for their file and leave the originals with the VIRC. This also would be of considerable assistance to the incoming officers and thus smoothen the transition of the functioning of the newly elected officers upon taking charge of their new offices.

**Veerashaiava Samaja of North America
Annual Financial Statement
Form 2**

Chapter's Name _____
Beginning Date _____ **Ending Date** _____
Treasurer's Name _____ **Phone Number** _____
Preisent's name _____ **Phone Number** _____

Revenues

1. Balance Forwarded
 2. Membership Dues
 - (a) Chapter's
 - (b) Central VSNA
 3. Contributions/Donations
 4. Earned Interest
 5. Special Project Contribution
- Overall Total**

Expenses

1. Reimbursed to Central VSNA
 2. Administrative Expenses
 3. Religious Activities
 4. Picnic
 5. Prizes Awarded to Children
 6. Others (specify)
-
-

Overall Balance

Signature of the Treasurer _____ Date _____
 Signature of the President _____ Date _____

Verified by a BOD -Member

Name of the Verifier/ Certifier _____
 Signature of the Certifier _____ Date _____

**CALL FOR NOMINATIONS
 For VSNA Elections
 Form 3**

Pursuant to the VSNA By-laws, nominations are solicited for various positions. At the present time, the vacant positions are shown in *italics* and are underlined. The deadline for submission of the nomination is -----. The voting shall be via postal balloting system. Only life-members and bona fide dues paying members shall be eligible to cast ballots. Nominations should be mailed to -----.

Nomination Form

Candidate's Name _____ Phone # _____

Candidate's Address _____

If elected, are you willing to serve the VSNA? _____ Yes _____ No

Candidate's Signature _____ Date _____

Position Contesting (Circle the position)

- 1. **President*** **By-law: Article VI Section 2**
- 2. **Vice-President*** **By-law: Article VI Section 2**
- 3. **Secretary*** **By-law: Article VI Section 2**
- 4. **Treasurer*** **By-law: Article VI Section 2**

*** These positions are normally filed as a slot by the interested group(s).**

- 5. **Member of the BOD** **By-law: Article V Section 2**
- 6. **Member of the BOR** **By-law: Article VII Section 1**

Name of the Bona fide Nominating Member _____

Signature _____ **Date** _____

Name of the Bona fide Seconding Member _____

Signature _____ **Date** _____

For Eligibility to Vote: See VSNA By-Law Article IV Section 8.

Thee results would be posted on the web site.

A Pat on VSNA’S Back

Finally, imitation has been stated to be sincerest form of flattery! No body likes to imitate a failed organization or a person. Failed organizations or persons serve as doormats and nobody wants to even talk about them. When viewed against this background the VSNA is a success story, for it has received high praise from overseas Veerashaivas and Veerashaiva organizations. The Veerashaiva Samaja of United Kingdom and the Veerashaiva Samaja of Australia stand as testimonials to VSNA’s success, for these organizations have been patterned after the VSNA. When measured against the above view, the VSNA’s story is nothing but a complete success!

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