

## NORTH AMERICAN MOBEDS COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF THE TWENTY THIRD ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Location: Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago,  
8615 Meadowbrook Dr. Burr Ridge, Illinois 60527-6263. USA

Date: April 02 & 03, 2010.

Members Present:

Jamshed Antia	Illinois	(April 3 <sup>rd</sup> only)
Jehan Bagli	Ontario	
Khushroo Bharda	Ontario	
Mehbad Dastur	Ontario	
Soli Dastur	Florida	
Freddy Gonda	Illinois	(April 3 <sup>rd</sup> only)
Gev Karkaria	Quebec	
Nozer Kotwal	Ontario	
Adil Minocherhomjee	California	(April 3 <sup>rd</sup> only)
Arda-E-Viraf Minocherhomjee	California	
Noshir Mirza	Ontario	
Behram Panthaki	Washington	
Pesi Vazifdar	Illinois	
Kobad Zarolia	Ontario	

Mobedyar Boman Damkevala from Illinois also attended, as an observer.

Five Proxies were registered.

Meeting was called to order by President Ervad Kobad Zarolia after a short prayer.

(1) Adopt the minutes of the Twenty Second Annual General Meeting held at the Zoroastrian Religious and Cultural Centre, 1187 Burnhamthorpe Road East, Oakville. Ontario. CANADA.

Behram Panthaki proposed that the minutes be adopted as written and Jehan Bagli seconded. The minutes were passed unanimously

(2) Adopt the Financial Statements for the year ending Dec. 31, 2009.

Treasurer Gev Karkaria presented the Statements. Nozer Kotwal proposed to adopt the Statements and Behram Panthaki seconded. Financial Statements were passed unanimously.

(3) Appoint Auditors:

Nozer Kotwal informed the members that Ms. Sheherezad Talati CA has agreed to review and pre-audit our Financial Statements for 2009 and Jang Engineer would audit the same.

(4) President's Annual Report: President Kobad Zarolia highlighted NAMC's activities during 2009.

Lecture Circuit: The NAMC Lecture Team made up of Jehan Bagli, Soli Dastur, Behram Panthaki, Gustad Panthaki and Sarosh Maneckshaw gave very informative and interesting lectures at four different Zoroastrian Associations. They were hosted by Houston, New Jersey, Chicago and Toronto. At each location the lectures were well received and appreciated by the host community.

FEZANA Journal 2010 Spring Edition: Thanks to the untiring efforts of Jehan Bagli and Soli Dastur who volunteered as co-editors for the journal, the spring edition is dedicated to news and information of activities of the NAMC.

List of North American Mobeds: Soli Dastur, after innumerable e-mails, phone calls and reminders to several Zoroastrian Associations, NAMC members and personal contacts, has been able to compile and update the list. This issue had been neglected for many years and it has been a Herculean effort on Soli's part to bring it up to date. NAMC acknowledges Soli's dedication and persistence in completing this task.

NAMC Website: Kobad informed the members that he and Soli Dastur had been in touch with Yezdi Tantra in India. We are considering a contract with him to host and update our website, as the current people who are offering their services do not have adequate capacity. Mehbad Dastur felt confident that this matter could be handled "in house", right here in North America and offered to take on the project. Kobad, Soli and Mehbad will discuss this issue and make a decision about this contract work.

President's "TO DO" List for 2010: Kobad stressed the importance of increasing the NAMC membership and especially work towards active participation from young adults and youth. As an extra effort each member is requested to bring along one new member to our next AGM.

(5) Status report Standardized presentation for Mobeds at Weddings, Navjotes & Jashans: Cawas Desai and Adi Unwalla have not been able to submit a format for wedding ceremony. Kobad suggested that we put these presentations on the website, when they are complete. Kobad also requested all Mobeds to send in any epilogues for Navjote, Jashan, Wedding that they are currently using, to Jehan. Jehan was requested to edit, select, collate, combine these and come up with a standard format for each ceremony.

(6) Status report Directory of Mobeds in North America: Noshir Karanjia has been unable to work on this for the past several years. Soli Dastur took up the “Challenge” and completed it in less than a year. Mehad Dastur assisted him substantially with his “Ontario” Yahoo list. NAMC thanks both these Mobeds along with any other Mobed who assisted Soli.

(7) Status report of Mobedyar training: Soli has been mentoring Houtoxi Contractor from Pittsburgh. She has been given a list of prayers to read and practice reciting.

Jehan has been approached by a young Iranian lady Mahshad Khosraviani. He has met with her just once and explained briefly the requirements for this course.

Gev mentioned that he has a prospect in Montreal. The gentleman’s name is Phiroz Austin. No substantial commitment at this point.

Khushroo Bharda and Mehad Dastur expressed their misgivings about lady Mobedyars. Kobad reviewed the procedure to initiate training of potential Mobedyars. Currently an application is first filled out by the person. The trainer interviews and assesses the applicant and checks the written application. If the trainer is satisfied, the training commences. Council decided to improve the process as follows: When a Zoroastrian is interested in becoming a Mobedyar, he/she should contact a local Mobed, who is a member of the NAMC. The Mobed would interview the applicant, have him/her fill out a formal application, determine the seriousness, enthusiasm and commitment of the person, and assess his/her suitability for the program. The Mobed would then send the completed application with his comments to the NAMC Executive. The Executive after reviewing would decide either in favour or against, to offer the program to the applicant. A letter of approval from the NAMC would be forwarded to the Mobed to commence the Mobedyar training program.

The concern about including ladies in the Mobedyar program was discussed and debated at length. Kobad suggested limiting it to a minimum age

requirement. Arda-E-Viraf came up with a very important observation. He questioned the readiness of the North American Zoroastrian community to accept this introduction. As the members could not reach consensus on this issue, it was decided to “hold this issue in abeyance till the AGM of 2012.” A vote was held and nine members plus five proxies voted in favour and two abstained.

All members were requested by the President, to try and assess the pulse of the community re: introduction of lady Mobedyars and come up with a new resolution to revise the Resolution #9 which reads as follows:

“The main pre-qualification for a Mobedyar must be that such person should be born of two Zoroastrian parents (not a non-Zoroastrian adopted child) and who has been initiated into the Zoroastrian faith by having that person’s Navjote performed by a duly ordained Mobed.”

The new proposed Resolution by any member Mobed of the NAMC should be sent to the Secretary thirty days before the AGM 2012.

(8)Discuss and vote upon the resolution regarding Navjote of adopted children tabled by Behram Panthaki at 2008 AGM:

After substantial discussion the following Resolution was tabled and voted on:

“NAMC would have no objection to any of its members performing the Navjote of children adopted by heterosexual Zoroastrian couples or heterosexual couples of interfaith marriages where one spouse is a Zoroastrian.”

The resolution was unanimously passed.

(9)Discuss maintenance and closure of Agiaries in India: Behram Panthaki appraised the alarming condition and neglect of some Agiaries in India. Members suggested amalgamating some Agiaries and shutting down some that are not in use. Arda-E-Viraf explained that most of these Agiaries are set up and maintained by private trusts and the Parsi Panchayat cannot take any action. Trustees of these private trusts are either indifferent or not inclined to shut down

some of these places due to sentimental reasons. The NAMC was not in a position to suggest any corrective action.

(10)Rohinton Rivetna's presentation: Rohinton addressed the council briefly and presented some points for consideration by the NAMC. He stressed the need for the NAMC to develop a spiritual/religious VISION for the North American Community and device means to engage/inspire the next generation and determine what motivates them.

(11)Presentation of Farvardin Yasht : Soli Dastur gave a very enlightening and interesting discourse on this very important Yasht, which forms the major part of the "Farokhshi" ceremony usually performed with an Afringan or Jashan ceremony in memory of the departed as well as on Farvardin Roj of all 12 months. It is in fact almost a "Universal Zoroastrian Naam Gharan" of nearly three hundred Zoroastrian Religion stalwarts whose Fravashis we invoke, praise, remember and venerate. Jehan Bagli also added a few comments and observations.

Soli Dastur also shared with us Dr. Purviz Kolsawalla's Ph.D. thesis available in electronic format containing compilations of all translations, para by para, of almost all of our scriptures. He specifically referred to Farvardin Yasht in this thesis which was used by him extensively. Soli offered to make a copy of this whole thesis as well as his own presentation for all present. Arda-E-Viraf kindly donated flash drives for all members present and Adil Minocherhomjee and Soli put the information on them. NAMC is thankful for this dissemination of valuable knowledge and information.

(12)Additional Items permitted by the Chair:

(a)NAMC Newsletter: Kobad proposed a short monthly newsletter for the benefit of NAMC members. The newsletter would contain only religious and

scriptural topics and no social information. The purpose of this publication would be to educate our Mobeds. There are three functions required for this letter – Contribute, Edit & Audit, Send out by e-mail.

Members felt that “monthly” was initially too ambitious. We should try quarterly (four issues a year). Khushroo Bharda suggested that the content should be at a level that most Mobeds (young & old) could understand, absorb and find useful.

Khushroo volunteered to try and publish this Newsletter with the help of some of our senior learned Mobeds who could make suitable material available.

(b) NAMC Lecture series: Behram Panthaki requested a stop in Washington DC for our now famous “NAMC Lecture Series”. He proposed either Sept. 25<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> 2010 as the preferred dates. Kobad agreed to check availability of all four speakers before committing to the date.

(c) NAMC Archival Material: Khushroo Bharda and Mehbad Dastur volunteered to try and scan (for electronic storage) all our old records, minutes, resolutions, meeting agendas and other archival material. This would be a long term project with the two Mobeds working on it as and when time permitted.

(d) Thank You letter to Marzi Byramjee: Kobad proposed that we send a letter of thanks to Marzi and Zavahar Byramjee for printing numerous additional copies of the FEZANA 2010 spring edition for free distribution to all Mobeds in North America and to selected places all over the world. Regal Press did not charge anything to FEZANA and NAMC for this generous contribution. Council acknowledges this gift. A letter of thanks was prepared, signed by the President and the two co-authors Jehan Bagli / Soli Dastur and sent out.

(e) “Virtual School / University” : Kobad suggested that we introduce a "Virtual University" program that would offer interactive lessons to our young Navarias and all Mobeds interested in learning more about our religion, rites, rituals, history etc. Jehan, Soli & Behram were requested to organize that.

Kayomarz Mehta in Chicago has suitable material for young adults and youth, on religious subjects and would share the same with NAMC.

Following this, Khushroo came up with a suggestion that we should also devise a suitable, interactive "Virtual School" program for all young Zoroastrian kids and he asked Jehan, Behram and Soli to help him with material in very simple, basic, elementary level format. He would then work with Mehbad and put it on the NAMC website. Khushroo Bharda and Mehbad Dastur will discuss this with Kobad and review the feasibility of this project.

(13) Election of New NAMC Executive Committee: The following members were elected for the next two year term:

Kobad Zarolia	President
Arda-E-Viraf Minocherhomjee	Vice President
Adil Minocherhomjee	Secretary
Tehemton Mirza	Treasurer
Khushroo Bharda	Executive Officer

(14)Next Annual General Meeting: Location not decided. We shall await information from Washington DC.

With a vote of thanks to the Chair, to our Secretary Nozer Kotwal and our Treasurer Gev Karkaria, the latter two who have given continuous yeoman service for **sixteen years**, the meeting was adjourned.

*An important post meeting event needs recording. Mobedyar Boman Damkevala of ZAC, Chicago, Illinois was officially initiated today in an impressive and well*

*attended ceremony. Boman was given the ceremonial ritual Nahan by his mentor Ervad Pesi Vazifdar. He was joined by 15 Mobeds in reciting the Atash Nyaesh and Doa Naam Setaayashne in the prayer room. Following this, Boman led all the Mobeds in a Jashan Ceremony, which completed his initiation. This was followed by speeches and felicitations.*

*All the Mobeds, guests and members of the Chicago community were then treated to a splendid lunch by the association.*