



North American Mobeds Council

Athravan - Manual

Introduction:

Mobeds are Zoroastrian clergy trained in the recital of Zoroastrian prayers and the performance of Zoroastrian rituals. They are ordained as Mobeds in Zoroastrian places of worship by Navar ceremony after undergoing two nine-night Bareshnums and performing *Yasna* liturgy. Currently, these initiations are only performed in India and Iran.

Mobeds in North America perform all necessary Zoroastrian outer liturgical ceremonies and rituals, including Jashan, Navjote, Sudreh-Pushi, Weddings, funeral ceremonies (consisting of Geh Saarnu, Uthamna, Sarosh nu Patru, Chaharom) and periodic prayers for the deceased, including Muktaad ceremonies. Some are licensed by the local authorities to solemnize marriages.

Mobeds have provided religious, spiritual, and moral guidance to Zoroastrians throughout North America and have satisfied their spiritual needs under the Parsi and Irani ritual traditions.

Zoroastrians have now established their roots and have consecrated Atashkadehs in North America. To be self-reliant and to alleviate the obstacles faced by candidates for Naver in their travel, stay, and initiation in India or Iran, it is felt necessary to establish a procedure to initiate Mobeds in North America that is tailored to North American requirements and needs while respecting Parsi and Irani ritual traditions.

This document outlines the procedure for initiating and practicing Zoroastrian clergy in North America as an Athravan.

Title: In order to distinguish those initiated in North America from those initiated in India or Iran, those initiated in North America will be awarded the title of ***“Athravan.”***

Who is an Athravan:

An Athravan is a Zoroastrian clergy ordained to perform religious ceremonies and meet Zoroastrians' spiritual, ritualistic, and moral needs. They are trained and initiated to

perform Navjote or Sudreh-Pushi, marriage, last rites, celebrations, and other rituals on community and family occasions.

Zoroastrian priesthood has followed patrilineality. However, in recent decades, for several reasons, many sons of Mobed families have abandoned Mobedi in favour of secular professions, leading to an acute shortage of Mobeds worldwide. Yet, members of the laity who express their calling to serve the community as Mobeds are forbidden from this initiation. Considering this disparity, any qualified Zoroastrian is encouraged to become an Athravan to serve the Zoroastrian community in North America.

Athravan privileges:

A duly initiated Athravan is granted the privilege to perform Zoroastrian rituals and ceremonies for which they are appropriately trained and certified. An Athravan is to serve, guide and lead the Zoroastrian community in spiritual, religious and moral matters.

Qualifications of an Athravan:

A Zarhosti, descending from at least one Zoroastrian parent, initiated through Navjote or Sudreh-Pushi ritual, respected by their community, law-abiding, of excellent moral character and willing to commit to the service of fellow Zoroastrians may choose to become an Athravan.

Selection of an Athravan:

Members of the NAMC and the Zoroastrian associations throughout North America are asked to identify suitable candidates and encourage them to undergo this programme to serve, guide and lead Zoroastrian communities in North America.

Following thorough due diligence and background checks, the candidate's home Zoroastrian Association, with the agreement of their local Mobeds, is required to nominate the candidate and submit such nomination, in writing, for approval by the NAMC.

Final approval of the applicant for the Athravan candidate rests with the Executive Committee of NAMC, subject to their own due diligence.

Mentor:

On approval of a candidate, NAMC will assign a senior Mobed in or around the candidate's community to act as a trainer and a mentor to the candidate. A Mentor Mobed

must be a member of the NAMC, well-versed in the art and craft of Mobedi and willing and able to commit to training and mentoring the candidate.

Training:

The Mentor Mobed is required to prepare a comprehensive training schedule commensurate with the candidate's knowledge and ability at the time of training commencement.

The candidate should be trained to recite the following prayers:

To memorize from Khordeh Avesta:

- Padyab Kusti and 101 Names
- Sarosh Baj
- All small Gehs
- Baj Jamwani (Saying Grace)
- Baj Hajate Jawani (to answer the call of nature)
- Names of: 30 Roj, 12 Mah, Hamkara, Gahambars
- Vispa Humata
- Namaskar Char Disano
- Tandarosti

To read fluently from Khordeh Avesta:

- All large Gehs
- All Niayeshes
- Doa Naam Satayeshne
- Patet Pashemani
- Patet Ravan ni
- Sarosh Yasht Hadokth
- Sarosh Yasht Vadi

To memorize the following ritually intensive parts of the Yasna:

- Dibacho
- Ha 1 and first 3 paragraphs of Ha 2
- Ha 26, 62 and 72

To read fluently the ritually intensive parts of the Yasna:

- Ha 2 from paragraph 4 onwards
- Ha 3,4,5,6,7 and 8
- Ha 28 to 34 (Gatha Ahunavaiti)
- Ha 11, 15, 16, 22, 23, 24, 25, 27, 65, 66 and 71

Other ceremonies (read fluently and perform)

- Afringan: Mino Navar, Sarosh, Dahaman and Dadar Ahuramazd
- Baj: Mino Navar, Sarosh, Siroja and Dadar Ahuramazd.

“Understanding and Practice of Concise Navar Ceremony” by Ervad Jehan Bagli and Ervad Adi Unwala is recommended as a training guide for the Yasna ceremony.

The candidate should be trained in the ritual and prayer of:

- Navjote / Sudreh-Pushi
- Wedding
- Jashan / Afringan (3 Karda / 3 Aafrens)
- Afringan (recited for the departed)
- Satum
- Ceremonies and prayers for the deceased
 - o Sachkar
 - o Geh Saarnu
 - o Uthamna
 - o Sarosh nu Patru
 - o Chaharum

The candidate should comprehend:

- meanings of the essential prayers
- understanding of Gathas
- Zoroastrian history
- doctrines and traditions of Zoroastrian religion.

The candidate should be trained in Pastoral services and public speaking.

The Mentor Mobed should keep the NAMC updated with the training progress and seek any additional assistance or guidance for the process.

Upon completing this training, the Mentor Mobed is to confirm to the NAMC that the candidate has completed the preparatory steps and has been found worthy and competent to fulfill the office of an Athravan.

Examination of the Candidate:

With the knowledge of a candidate having completed Athravan training, NAMC is to elect an “Athravan Examination Committee” (AEC) on an ad hoc basis to examine and judge the candidate's competence.

AEC is to meet the candidate, preferably in person, to examine the candidate's knowledge, understanding and ability in:

- reciting prayers with
 - efficiency and confidence
 - proper pronunciation and punctuation
 - clarity and eloquence

- Performing
 - Navjote/ Sudreh-Pushi and wedding
 - Jashan and Afringan as a Jyoti
 - Satum
 - Geh Saarnu
 - Uthamna, Sarosh nu Patru, Chaharum

- Significance and understanding of prayers.
 - Kusti prayers
 - Jashan and Afringan prayers
 - Four-day prayers for deceased
 - Gathas

- Written examination on understanding Gathas, history, Zoroastrian concepts and practices.

The candidate is encouraged to use NAMC IZS resources and courses to gain this knowledge and understanding.

On satisfying themselves with the candidate's competency, AEC should recommend the candidate to the NAMC executives, confirming that the candidate is appropriately trained, examined and found to be worthy and competent to fulfill the role of an Athravan in North America. The NAMC executives, upon satisfying themselves with the candidate's competency, will grant permission to the Mentor Mobed to arrange an “Athravan Initiation Ceremony.”

Athravan Initiation Ceremony (AIC)

Throughout the AIC, the Mentor Mobed and/or a Senior Mobed appointed by NAMC supervises the process to ensure it meets the requirements set out in this document.

While respecting and observing the traditional ritual and physical purity requirements (including observing nocturnal emission and menstruation restrictions), the candidate must undergo two Bareshnums (spiritual retreats) as outlined in the Bareshnum paper published by the NAMC (September 2020). The first Bareshnum is to attain the candidate's ritual purity, and the second Bareshnum is for the benefit of the ceremony's sponsor, with a break of a few days in between if needed.

The candidate must adhere to the code of conduct during this seclusion as set out in the Bareshnum paper and devote time to reflection, meditation, prayers and study.

The Mentor Mobed will instruct the candidate on Zoroastrian studies during the retreat.

Athravan ceremony:

The Athravan ceremony, including the Gewra or preparation ceremony by two Mobeds in charge of the initiation ceremony, the pargana ritual, the Yasna ceremony, the Baj ceremony and Afringan on the fourth day, is to be performed as outlined in “Understanding and Practice of Concise Navar Ceremony” by Evad Jehan Bagli and Ervad Adi Unwala.

Oath of Allegiance:

On completion of the initiation procedure, the newly ordained Athravan is to be recognized and honoured during an assembly of the local Zoroastrian congregation.

The highest-ranking official of NAMC should administer an oath to the candidate as follows:

“State your name and repeat after me.....

I (candidate states their name), of my free will and accord, in the presence of Ahura Mazda, the Lord of Wisdom, and of this congregation of my fellow Zarthostis, take this oath of an Athravan and hereby sincerely and solemnly swear that I will perform my duties as an Athravan for the benefit of my fellow Zoroastrians and as outlined by the North American Mobeds Council, as amended from time to time. I will uphold the teachings of Prophet Zarathustra and maintain purity and righteousness in my personal and professional life. So help me, Ahura Mazda, and give me strength and courage in executing my responsibilities as an Athravan.”

The candidate will be awarded a copy of this oath, dated and signed by the President of NAMC, training Mobed, and the newly initiated Athravan.

The candidate may be initiated during the training process at the Mentor Mobed's discretion, with the NAMC's approval. However, the candidate can independently perform ceremonies and rituals only after Mentor Mobed certifies their competency and proficiency.

Award of Athravan Certification:

Upon completing the AIC, the highest-ranking NAMC representative in attendance will present a certificate to the Athravan.

Membership in NAMC:

An Athravan must maintain membership in NAMC and shall participate in NAMC meetings and activities.

Athravan Certificate renewal:

Athravan must renew their certification to practice as an Athravan in North America every five years.

Professional Development:

Athravans are encouraged to complete at least 5 hours of refresher courses or updates on Zoroastrian religious practices, prayers and ceremonies annually or as recommended by NAMC from time to time.

Authority of NAMC to revoke recognition of an Athravan:

NAMC reserves the right to revoke the recognition and title of an Athravan and announce such revocation to the community under certain circumstances, including (but not limited to):

- Athravan renouncing Zoroastrianism or accepting a different faith.
- Athravan's actions, in the eyes of NAMC, bring disrepute to the Zoroastrian faith in general.
- Athravan, who makes denigrating comments about NAMC.
- Criminal conviction.
- Other reasons that a supermajority of NAMC members would decide.

Revisions:

This document is subject to revisions from time to time at the sole discretion of the NAMC.

July 2024

Athravan application :

From: _____
 (Name and Address of the Candidate for Athravan)

To: _____ and
 (Name of the nominating Zoroastrian Association)

To: The North American Mobeds Council (NAMC)

I hereby submit my application for initiation as an Athravan.

I declare that:

- I am a practicing Zoroastrian with at least one Zoroastrian parent.
- I am a member in good standing of the Zoroastrian Association named above.
- I meet all the qualifications of an Athravan as set out in the current version of NAMC's Athravan Manual.

I undertake:

- to complete the study requirements set out in the NAMC's Athravan Manual
- to abide by the requirements of the Athravan Manual and NAMC policies, as amended from time to time.
- to perform Zoroastrian rituals and ceremonies only when I have demonstrated my competency and proficiency to do so and am certified by the NAMC.

If selected, I understand that I will be initiated as an Athravan only after I have completed all the study and ceremonial requirements set out in the NAMC's Athravan Manual to the satisfaction of the NAMC.

I declare that I am prepared to serve my Zoroastrian community's spiritual, moral, and religious needs to the best of my ability and understanding as an Athravan.

I hereby authorize the Zoroastrian Association, which nominates me and the NAMC, to conduct their due diligence and all necessary checks.

I hereby declare that all the information given above and during the Athravan initiation process is accurate, correct and complete, and any misrepresentation will be sufficient grounds for revocation of Athravan privileges.

 Name of the Candidate

 Date

 Signature

 Name of the Witness

 Date

 Signature

Athravan Nomination:

Date: _____

From: _____
(Name of the nominating Zoroastrian Association)

To: The North American Mobeds Council (NAMC)

Candidate for Athravan: _____

We hereby nominate the candidate mentioned above for initiation as an Athravan in accordance with the NAMC's Athravan Manual.

We declare that:

- We have conducted thorough due diligence and background checks and are satisfied with the candidate's character and background.
- We declare that the candidate meets the criteria of an Athravan, as set out in the NAMC's Athravan Manual.
- We understand that an Athravan is required to abide by the requirements of the Athravan Manual and NAMC policies, as amended from time to time.
- We understand that the NAMC will rely on our declarations and due diligence, and we will hold NAMC harmless from any conflict or liability arising from this candidate's initiation as an Athravan.

Signed by: _____
President (Name of proposing Zoroastrian Association)_____
Secretary (Name of the proposing Zoroastrian Association)