

## Chairperson's Speech

Hello everyone, good afternoon and welcome to our 2023 Annual General Meeting. Now that we have had some hearty lunch, we can begin our AGM proceedings without further ado. We have a completely packed agenda so let's begin in right earnest.

Just one clarification before I start. This speech was written by me and not by ChatGPT!

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all my past and current EC members who have worked tirelessly and supported me, particularly in my final year as Chairperson. There is however one person who has worked tirelessly over the last 4 years to keep everything in order, made sure that we are on track for all our meetings and discussions, and has worked relentlessly in an exemplary manner to perform her duties throughout her tenure. I would be remiss, if I do not give a special shout out to our Secretary, Khursheed Dastur. Thank you, Khursheed.

A big thank you to all our Sunday School Teachers and Mentors for their contributions, dedication, and selfless support towards our kids. You are part of the reason ZAH has a tremendous reputation in North America and our members, youth and young adults are sought after as leaders and performers in the wider North American Zarathushti community.

Now let's shift our focus to the various sub-committees. I have great admiration for all our sub-committee Chairs/Co-Chairs and members for their outstanding work through the years, as without them this beautiful Center and our one of a kind Atash Kadeh would not be the way it is today. All sub-committees do a fabulous job.

- 1) One of the hardest working is the BMC sub-committee and their contributions are just unparalleled. Members of BMC, Yezdi E, Aderbad T, Sheroy H and Jamshed D, please stand up. These folks have spent countless personal hours including removing a Possum and saved ZAH thousands of dollars year after year.
- 2) Arzin and the Entertainment Committee

- 3) Pervin Sagar on the BMSC sub-committee
- 4) Likewise, members of ALL the other sub-committees please stand up

I would also like to acknowledge other individuals who operate on their own, who are not part of any sub-committee, but really work for our ZAH center and the Atash Kadeh.

- 1) Yasmin Medhora who works on multiple initiatives at the same time, like the Carnival, Entertainment committee, WZCC
- 2) Aapro Gary, for always volunteering his DJ services at our functions free of charge
- 3) Next, I would like to thank 3 ladies (or as I like to call them, “teen deviyan”) who have done an absolutely outstanding job to get all of our ZAH accounts in order, Anu aunty, Lyla Daroga and Jasmin Katrak. They were ably assisted by none other than Kayo Sidhwa.
- 4) Thanks also go to Rustom Setna for his pest control services,
- 5) Thanks to Banafsheh M for liaising with our Irani Zarathustis and getting their participation in our events, especially the Jashne-Sadeh.
- 6) Thanks to Diana B, Lyla D and Anita K for coordinating all the golden group get-togethers
- 7) Thanks to Ronnie Patel for all his help with insurance for the center and the AK.
- 8) Thanks to Farhad Mistri for assisting us with our A/C needs. Thanks to Farhad, we were able to save around \$8,000 on the A/C installation for the Library and Vehishta’s room.
- 9) Speaking of savings, thanks to Anu aunty and Zubin Mistry for the savings on annual waste disposal by renegotiating our contract resulting in a saving of over \$2,000 per year.

For the Atash Kadeh:

- 1) Our first and foremost thanks go to our priests Maneck Sidhwa and Parvez Gonda for the daily efforts put in by them towards tending our fire, daily geh ceremonies as well as being available for the death ceremonies for any departed souls

- 2) Thanks also to Persis Behramsha and Khushrav Nariman for taking care of all the administrative work that goes on behind the scenes, especially with the monthly Behram roj prayers
- 3) When you walk into the Atash Kadeh, you always notice that it is very clean and spic and span. That does not happen automatically. Thanks for that go to Tanaaz and Edul Chikhliwalla who clean the AK on a regular basis

Take an event like the AGM today. It does not happen by magic. There is no Harry Potter coming and waving a magic wand to make things happen.

For the AGM, thanks go to:

- 1) Dilnaz Mory, Aban Chhor, Jasmin Katrak, Zia Ankleseria, Yasmin Medhora, Natalya Haveliwala-Katrak, Tanaaz Chikhliwalla, Darius Tamboli and Jidina Mory for helping with the hall setup and other arrangements.
- 2) Sheroy H for the audio-visual setup
- 3) Noshir Bhatena, Jasmin Katrak, Khursheed H and Nazanin S for helping with the front desk activities
- 4) Percy B for helping with the AGM webpage and managing the RSVP list
- 5) Kayo S for running the reports and helping with the membership list
- 6) Last but not the least thanks to our election officers, Raymie D, Zubin M and Yasmin M

You must have heard the saying that, it takes a village to raise a child. Now, just imagine how many volunteers it takes to run the ZAH. I did not even mention the name of each and every volunteer, but please look around and see how many people are involved in the daily functioning of our operations. Please give them a huge round of applause for the unstinted and selfless work they put in year after year. We need more people to step up and serve on different sub-committees, especially young adults 25-40. Start by serving on sub-committees and then make the progression to the EC. We want younger people on the EC.

Besides our ZHCC, which is celebrating 25 years this year, there is one more regular program that celebrated an anniversary last year. Our Z-Camp team, now run entirely by our Young Adults, which has become a marquee event throughout North America, celebrated it's 10-year anniversary last year. All the young adults who have helped to run this event, please stand up.

Talking about our community members, I would like to recognize Sonia Behrana-Rash on her election to the post of Justice of the Peace Precinct 3 in Fort Bend County. Congratulations Sonia.

Also, we should be extremely proud of, what we just witnessed a couple of days ago. For the first time, ZAH was the official sponsor for the Navroze celebrations at the Asia Society spearheaded by our mercurial, Vehishta K. ZAH was represented in good numbers, we had different booths and dancing and our ceremonies displayed by our selfless volunteers. We were given a token of appreciation by Al Green.

Moving forward to next week, I am extremely excited about our 25-year anniversary celebrations of ZHCC and our 4-year anniversary celebrations of our Atash Kadeh and I am sure you all are looking forward to the next weekend as well. Our Entertainment Committee has done a super job to prepare for this event.

A big contingent of 66+ ZAH community members participated at the World Zoroastrian Congress in July last year where our own Aban R was the Co-Chair of the Program Committee and handled the entire Congress program with great aplomb. Vehishta K, together with Khursheed D, were responsible for the entire teens program, which was extremely well received, and Kayo S was part of the Executive Steering Committee as well as the A/V Committee. Not to forget the contribution of our Youth and Young Adults, Mahtab D was the youngest moderator in the entire Congress, Natasha D did a marvelous job with her interactive presentations and Farzad S represented us in the Orchestra. Also, Parynaz V and our girls, Mahtab and Natasha lit up the stage during the fashion show. Thanks to each of you who represented ZAH at the World Z Congress. Now, here is the icing on the cake. To cap the already great show put up by our Houston contingent, Arzan Wadia, President of FEZANA and Co-Chair of the World Congress presented a check of \$15,000 to our NAZC 2024 Co-Chairs, Kayo Sidhwa and Aderbad Tamboli, as a thank you gesture for postponing our own NAZ Congress for four years and enabling them to carry on with theirs. \$15,000 is not a small sum and we sincerely thank Arzan Wadia for his magnanimous gesture.

Our ZHCC is one of the greatest assets we have and our Atash Kadeh, an envy of all in the North American diaspora. We are the most active and most vibrant Z association in all of North America. We are truly blessed to have this as our second home, and it is imperative and obligatory that we maintain both the buildings as our own home. Although, to do that we have to make sure that we deploy effective financial and operational strategies going forward. Please keep renewing your memberships and encourage your friends to be members of this great community.

In closing, I would like to again thank you all for your immeasurable contributions. It was an honor, privilege and a pleasure to serve on the ZAH Executive Committee. Thank you.

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