



OSHWAL EDUCATION & RELIEF BOARD

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Oshwal Education & Relief Board

EDUCATION
DEVELOPMENT
PILLAR

MEDICAL WELFARE &
DEVELOPMENT
PILLAR

RELIEF FOR POVERTY
ALLEVIATION
PILLAR

ECONOMIC
EMPOWERMENT
PILLAR

ENVIRONMENT
CONSERVATION
PILLAR

Vision:

*To Be A Socially Responsible Organisation In The
Socio-Economic Development In Eastern Africa*

Board's Chairman

Mr. Rajiv Zaverchand Raja's Speech

24th / 25th / 26th May 2013

72ND BOARD ADHIVESHAN

THIKA, KENYA

The Chairman of Visa Oshwal Community, Thika, Shree Bimal Sobhagchand Shah, Office Bearers, Trustees and Managing Committee Members of VOC Thika, Trustees, Office Bearers, Managing Committee Members and Advisory Committee Members of the OERB, Chairmen and Office Bearers of all Oshwal Centres of East Africa as well as other Oshwal Institutions, fellow Delegates, invited Dignitaries, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Jai Jinendra to you all. It is a proud moment for me personally to address this august gathering on the occasion of the 72nd Board Adhiveshan. We are grateful to the Thika community for their invitation for this Adhiveshan and the hospitality in hosting all of us. Since the inception of the OERB in 1941 Thika has hosted Adhiveshans in 1943,1946,1957,1962,1975,1987,1996 and now 2013. Despite the relatively small size of the community, Thika has one of the strongest- ethos of any Oshwal Community in East Africa. Settled by Oshwals over 100 years ago, the Thika Oshwals have always led Oshwal thinking, in many spheres, both economically and socially. Thika has been home to many prominent Oshwals. One of the personalities in the founding of the Board in 1941 was Shree Premchand Vrajpal Shah. He came to live in Thika in 1922 and set up many industries here besides playing a unique role in the settlement of Oshwals up country and establishment of the first Oshwal institutions all over Kenya. Shree Devshi Mepa Malde of Thika popularly known as DM was awarded an MBE by the Queen of England in 1960. This was the first such award to any Oshwal anywhere. In more recent times, a dynamic personality from Thika has been Shree Mohanlal Dharamshi Shah. His achievements in business and industry are numerous. His service to the Oshwal Community in Thika has been outstanding while his service to the Board has been inspirational. We are privileged to have him as our Trustee today.

The Shah Free Eye and ENT Camp has just completed 34 years and has brought great honour and recognition to Oshwals both nationally and internationally. This year a huge number of over 27,000 people were screened, over 1,000 eye operations and over 200 ENT operations were carried out. We are indeed proud of you Thika Oshwals! The generosity of Thika Oshwals is legendary and all Oshwal fund raising is strongly supported here. At the Board we look forward to any opportunity to partner with you and perhaps we can work together, in achieving your ambition of building a hospital to go with the Shah Free Eye & ENT Camp.

The Adhiveshans here have always ended with significant resolutions that have shaped the philosophy of the OERB.

તા ૨૩,૨૪,૨૫, એપ્રિલ, ૧૯૪૩ માં થિકા મુકામે યોજાયેલ બોર્ડના ત્રીજા અધિવેશન દરમ્યાન એ નિણય લેવામાં આવેલ કે ઓશવાળ બોર્ડિંગ ની સ્થાપના નૈરોબિમાં કરવી. ઇસ્ટ અફ્રિકામાં સીક્ષણ સેત્રે બોર્ડની આ પ્રથમ પ્રવૃત્તિ થઈ.

૧૯૮૭ માં બોર્ડના ૪૬માં થિકા મુકામે યોજાયેલ અધિવેશનમાં એ નિણય લેવાયો હતો કે ઓશવાળ ભાઈઓ અથવા બહેનો ને તાત્કાલીક તબીબી સારવાર માંટે પરદેશ જવાનું થાય તો એવા સંજોગોમાં બોર્ડના ઓફીસ બેરરસ શિ. એક લાખ સુધી તાત્કાલીક રાહત આપી શકસે અને આ રાહત અંગેની અરજી સ્થાનીક જ્ઞાતિ ધ્વારા કરવાની રહેસે.

In 1996, it was resolved at the 55th Adhiveshan in Thika, to create the Advisory Committee of the OERB. This has had far reaching implications to the leadership of the Board and has allowed “new” faces such as myself to ascend to the Chair in the Board. Unless there is rejuvenation and new blood in the leadership of the Board we will fail to remain relevant to the changing needs of the Oshwals. It is my strong opinion that the Advisory Committee plays a vital role in Board affairs and we should protect this institution. For instance, this year the Advisory Committee has played a vital role in dialogue with the

feuding Oshwal factions in Mumbai and Jamnagar over the management of the Board properties in Jamnagar.

The Case for the Oshwal University

In 1986, the Board commissioned a feasibility study for establishing an Oshwal University, authored by Shree Manilal Devchand Dodhia. The Adhiveshan in Thika in 1987 discussed the formation of a college to offer accountancy, commercial and professional courses. Following this the Oshwal College was established in 1992 with just six students at the then Oshwal High School. This was with a view to help us gain the necessary experience in running an institution of higher learning as well as fulfil a need for such an institution. In 1996, this desire became stronger and an eminent Oshwal academic, from a known Canadian university, was brought in to spearhead this initiative. By 1998 it became obvious that the regulations governing a University Charter and the financial resources required were beyond the means of the Board and this quest was abandoned. In 2004 the then Board Chairman Shree Kantilal Velji Shah, at the 63rd Adhiveshan in Nairobi, lamented that the cost of overseas University Education was prohibitive and the Board should do something about a more affordable solution. In 2011 the Oshwal College Committee, once again, started to look at this matter and at the Adhiveshan last year an initial budget to prepare the University application was approved. We now have the opportunity to review this matter in our agenda for this Adhiveshan and I hope we can arrive at a decision to proceed with our application.

Change in the Operational Strategy of the Visa Oshwal Boarding

The Visa Oshwal Boarding traces its roots to the Boys Boarding established in 1943 and the Girls Hostel in 1960. Both these institutions were merged to form the Visa Oshwal Boarding in 2002. At present the facility caters for all Oshwals from outside Nairobi, who use it for educating their children. The age range of these students is very wide from 7 up to 22 years. It is our desire to now set a new policy to limit the admission of all students into VOB up to secondary school level only and to integrate the management of VOB with that of OAN. This means we will no longer offer boarding facilities to college going students. We wish to focus on significant improvement of the academic standards of the remaining students under our care. We hope delegates will support us in this change.

Our new Vision

As part of the agenda we will discuss the new direction the Board should take. In the 1990s' the Board's vision was **"To Provide a World Class, Cost Effective, Friendly and Enabling Education Environment."** With time the Board's focus has widened both in scope and geography. We are now therefore proposing a new vision which is **"To be a socially responsible organisation in the Socio-Economic Development in Eastern Africa."** In line with this let me expound some thoughts on where we should be heading in each of the pillars that we currently endeavour to excel in.

- A) Education Development Pillar:** Our two schools in Nairobi and Mombasa are well established. In Nairobi we need playing fields for our campuses and we will continue searching for land to meet this need. In Mombasa our committee has embarked on a plan to improve the canteen facilities. Further afield, we are offering to partner with our communities in Kisumu, Nakuru and Eldoret who are already running schools to support them with know-how and experience if required. New community schools in other centres would also be considered. For religious education, we are in discussions to come up with a plan to sponsor expatriate teachers to serve in smaller centres, where this would be useful.

- B) Medical Welfare and Development Pillar:** We have successfully launched the Oshwal Health Council in Nairobi. Our support to the three Oshwal medical schemes in Nairobi, Mombasa and the rest of Kenya, is on-going. Our facility to contribute up to KShs 500,000 to Oshwals in distress, over hospital bills in partnership with their local centres has been very well received. We

should continue to expand these programs geographically as well as look at innovative ways to help reduce costs of medical care by negotiating with service providers and setting up a data base of value for money providers world- wide. Incidentally it is worth commenting that when we introduced these initiatives to the Thika community 2-3 years ago we got a polite thank you reply but with a statement that they will not be asking the Board for any assistance as they have enough resources to take care of their own! Such are the qualities of the Thika Oshwals.

- C) Relief for Poverty Alleviation Pillar:** Under the banner of “Oshwal Aid” we have continued with our University scholarship program and we have awarded 54 scholarships to date. For distressed Oshwals, we have partnered with local centres to match shilling for shilling any financial assistance provided to their members. As part of our future, we will continue to look at new programs that help in social development. Also, it is our desire to help other Oshwal institutions in any way possible, to support their activities. We also must consider accepting donations from non Oshwals towards these external relief activities. On a strategic level, we will engage a public relations professional to manage the image of “Oshwal Aid”.
- D) Economic Empowerment Pillar:** Under ECO the Diwali cottage fair has now been held in Mombasa and Kisumu besides Nairobi. The success of the fair has been overwhelming. Oshwal entrepreneurs have greatly benefited from the audience as well as the networking opportunities and we hope to extend this to other towns like Eldoret. New initiatives like an Oshwal Equity Fund are being discussed and we will continue to support and strengthen this pillar.
- E) Environment Conservation Pillar:** The Board is a Trustee of the Karura Forest Environment Education Trust. With our sponsorship a new auditorium has been built and its opening ceremony will be performed on the 2nd of June. Besides supporting a very important cause it has also raised the profile of the Board in the outside community. Our volunteers play a vital role in managing Karura. We will continue to promote our core activity of planting trees in partnership with all Oshwal centres.

The backbone of our organisation are the over 150 volunteers who serve in the 28 sub committees of the Board. With every successful project the expectations of Oshwals are raised and any expansion in activities requires more volunteers. We are fortunate to have a very hardworking and dedicated group of volunteers, whom we would like to thank today, for their services. On our part we have started a program of training, for these volunteers, in helping them make optimum use of their time while at the same time make them more effective governors. There is a wonderful description of community service which I would like to share with you today.

“One of the marvellous things about community is that it enables us to welcome and help people in a way we couldn't as individuals. When we pool our strength and share the work and responsibility, we can welcome many people, even those in deep distress, and perhaps help them find self-confidence and inner healing.” - Jean Vanier.

In the new era that we live in today, in Kenya, where we have more transparency and equity in public life, our training and nurturing of our Oshwal volunteers will hopefully see them well equipped to take up positions of leadership both at the County and National Level.

Since the last Adhiveshan in Arusha, the Board and Oshwals lost two stalwarts in Shree Raichand Lakhamshi Shah, popularly known as R.L. and Shree Jayantilal Shamji Shah, fondly known as Babubhai. R.L., a past Board Trustee, died on the 26th September, 2012 after a long illness bravely borne. When we went to see him a few weeks before he died, he gave us young leaders’ two pieces of advice on community leadership that I will never forget. He said never adopt a hard line position on any matter affecting the community and in deadlock situations be ready to compromise for the sake of unity. The other piece of advice was to never make a decision that has the potential to cause significant division in

the Community. In the many months since, we have had time to reflect on this and believe it to be wonderful advice.

Jayantibhai, our Board Trustee, was tragically killed by criminals on 12th October, 2012 in Nakuru. He was very passionate about the idea of the Oshwal University and was actively working with us on locating a suitable piece of land to establish it. Any organization with a long history has its traditions and we could always rely on Jayantibhai to guide us on the OERB Constitution and the rules of Governance. Always smiling and encouraging, he would temper our youth and vigour with the patience and wisdom of age. The old values of personal sacrifice for the greater good, hard work and dedication to the service of mankind, sharing of wealth to do good and absolute humility despite phenomenal success in all spheres of life are values that we must cherish for generations to come. These very same values are the hallmark of Oshwals in the eyes of the outside world.

We will sorely miss the services of both these stalwarts.

At the end of yet another year, I would like to thank the following for their support to us in carrying out the activities of the Board:

- 1) Members of the Advisory committee for precisely playing the role of giving advice when sought. Your knowledge and wisdom were truly invaluable. Special gratitude to Vijaybhai for the constant interpretation of the Board Constitution and Narendrabhai for his stewardship in guiding the young team of the Oshwal Health Council.
- 2) Both our Trustees, Mohanbhai Karania and Mohanbhai Dharamshi for their guidance and support in various delicate issues relating to Jamnagar, land purchase etc.
- 3) Members of the Managing Committee for the contributions during the formal meetings as well as the role in guiding and working with the various sub- committees of the Board. You made our task lighter with your effort.
- 4) Members of the Office staff, ably led by Rameshbhai and comprising of Bhavnaben, Komalben and Tarakbhai.

Lastly, my special thanks to my team members:

Our Ex-Officio, Mukeshbhai, for his phenomenal enthusiasm, drive and his deep commitment to the cause of the Community has been an inspiration to me.

Our Vice Chairman, Rajulbhai, for his amazing energy and vision for the Board.

Our Secretary, Dharmeshbhai, for his meticulous analyses of all written minutes and reports and his patience in dealing with some very difficult issues.

Our Treasurer, Atulbhai, for his superb handling of the Board's finances and his great ability to think strategically for the Board's future.

I have thoroughly enjoyed being the Chairman this past year and have improved as a person working for the Board. I sincerely thank all Oshwals for this great honour that has been bestowed on our family and myself. In my work, I may not have met some expectations and perhaps may have hurt some people's feelings. I would like to take this opportunity to apologize and seek your forgiveness.

We Oshwals will continue to excel in everything that we do as long as we practice the virtues of thrift, honesty, hard work, humility and selfless service.

Thank you for listening to me.

Jai Oshwal

Jai Board.

YEAR, PLACE AND CHAIRMAN NAME FOR THE BOARD ADHIVESHAN HELD TILL TODATE

ADHIVESHAN	YEAR	PLACE	CHAIRMAN NAME	ADHIVESHAN	YEAR	PLACE	CHAIRMAN NAME
First	1941	Nairobi	Shree Papatlal Karman Malde	Thirty Seventh	1978	Nairobi	Shree Premchand Punamchand Shah
Second	1942	Mombasa	Shree Papatlal Karman Malde	Thirty eighth	1979	Nairobi	Shree Hansraj Devan Shah
Third	1943	Thika	Shree Kanji Meghji Malde	Thirty ninth	1980	Nairobi	Shree Hansraj Devan Shah
Fourth	1944	Nairobi	Shree Kanji Meghji Malde	Fortieth	1981	Mombasa	Shree Maganlal Meghji Shah
Fifth	1945	Mombasa	Shree Kanji Meghji Malde	Forty First	1982	Nairobi	Shree Maganlal Meghji Shah
Sixth	1946	Thika	Shree Kanji Nathooobhai Gudka	Forty Second	1983	Nairobi	Shree Kantilal Narshi Shah
Seventh	1947	Nairobi	Shree Kanji Nathooobhai Gudka	Forty Third	1984	Mombasa	Shree Kantilal Narshi Shah
Eighth	1949	Mombasa	Shree Bharmal Rajshi Haira	Forty Forth	1985	Kisumu	Shree Shantilal Raishi Shah
Ninth	1950	Nairobi	Shree Bharmal Rajshi Haira	Forty Fifth	1986	Nairobi	Shree Shantilal Raishi Shah
Tenth	1951	Kisumu	Shree Dharamshi Kachra Shah	Forty Sixth	1987	Thika	Shree Amratlal Kalidas Shah
Eleventh	1952	Kisumu	Shree Dharamshi Kachra Shah	Forty Seventh	1988	Mombasa	Shree Amratlal Kalidas Shah
Twelveth	1953	Mombasa	Shree Dharamshi Kachra Shah	Forty Eighth	1989	Nakuru	Shree Somchand Bhoja Shah
Thirteenth	1954	Mombasa	Shree Bharmal Rajshi Haira	Forty Ninth	1990	Nairobi	Shree Somchand Bhoja Shah
Fourteenth	1955	Nairobi	Shree Bharmal Rajshi Haira	Fiftieth	1991	Eldoret	Shree Mohanlal Devraj Karania
Fifteenth	1956	Mombasa	Shree Amratlal Rajshi Dodhia	Fifty First	1992	Nairobi	Shree Mohanlal Devraj Karania
Sixteenth	1957	Thika	Shree Amratlal Rajshi Dodhia	Fifty Second	1993	Nairobi	Shree Suresh Dharamshi Gudka
Seventeenth	1958	Nyeri	Shree Amratlal Rajshi Dodhia	Fifty Third	1994	Mombasa	Shree Suresh Dharamshi Gudka
Eighteenth	1959	Nairobi	Shree Meghji Karman Malde	Fifty Forth	1995	Nairobi	Shree Manilal Devchand Dodhia
Ninteenth	1960	Mombasa	Shree Meghji Karman Malde	Fifty Fifth	1996	Thika	Shree Manilal Devchand Dodhia
Twentieth	1961	Eldoret	Shree Meghji Karman Malde	Fifty Sixth	1997	Nairobi	Shree Mohanlal Dharamshi Shah
Twenty First	1962	Thika	Shree Somchand Premchand Shah	Fifty Seventh	1998	Nairobi	Shree Mohanlal Dharamshi Shah
Twenty Second	1963	Jamnagar	Shree Somchand Premchand Shah	Fifty Eighth	1999	Nairobi	Shree Jitendra Harakhchand Shah
Twenty Third	1964	Nairobi	Shree Somchand Premchand Shah	Fifty Ninth	2000	Mombasa	Shree Jitendra Harakhchand Shah
Twenty Fourth	1965	Mombasa	Shree Meghji Karman Malde	Sixtieth	2001	Nairobi	Shree Jitendra Harakhchand Shah
Twenty Fifth	1966	Nairobi	Shree Meghji Karman Malde	Sixty First	2002	Kisumu	Shree Dinesh Meghji Dhanani
Twenty Sixth	1967	Nairobi	Shree Meghji Karman Malde	Sixty Second	2003	Mombasa	Shree Dinesh Meghji Dhanani
Twenty Seventh	1968	Nairobi	Shree Raichand Meghji Khumasia	Sixty Third	2004	Nairobi	Shree Kantilal Velji Shah
Twenty Eighth	1969	Mombasa	Shree Raichand Meghji Khumasia	Sixty Forth	2005	Nairobi	Shree Kantilal Velji Shah
Twenty Ninth	1970	Kisumu	Shree Raichand Meghji Khumasia	Sixty Fifth	2006	Eldoret	Shree Vijay Jethalal Shah
Thirtieth	1971	Nairobi	Shree Dharamshi Bharmal Shah	Sixty Sixth	2007	Moshi	Shree Vijay Jethalal Shah
Thirty First	1972	Mombasa	Shree Dharamshi Bharmal Shah	Sixty Seventh	2008	Kitale	Shree Dhiraj Devan Dodhia
Thirty Second	1973	Nairobi	Shree Dharamshi Bharmal Shah	Sixty Eighth	2009	Nakuru	Shree Narendra Manekchand Shah
Thirty Third	1974	Nairobi	Shree Laxmichand Keshavji Shah	Sixty Ninth	2010	Kisumu	Shree Narendra Manekchand Shah
Thirty Forth	1975	Thika	Shree Laxmichand Keshavji Shah	Seventieth	2011	Nairobi	Shree Anup Zaverchand Shah
Thirty Fifth	1976	Nakuru	Shree Panachand Jivraj Dedhia	Seventy First	2012	Arusha	Shree Mukesh Dhanji Shah
Thirty Sixth	1977	Mombasa	Shree Panachand Jivraj Dedhia	Seventy Second	2013	Thika	Shree Rajiv Zaverchand Raja