

Death and Beyond

The responsibilities of the living towards the departed

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Death is an inescapable part of life. For some, it is the end of a well lived life, for others it brings great fear. When death strikes a family, it often leaves behind a trail of confusion, sorrow and despair. In this state of disorder, the relatives of the departed *Urvan* (soul, also called *Ruvan*) often have to deal with some new persons who they may have never interacted with. Those who may have an elderly and knowledgeable person around them at that time may gain from their guidance and understanding. But as more and more Parsis live nuclear lives and get further removed from their religion and its essential practices, there arises a need to have some sort of handy guide which they could refer to in this moment of despair. This essay attempts to fulfil such a need by laying down in one place the entire range of ceremonies to be performed and practices to be observed during and after the death of a relative or friend.

It must be understood that several points given in this essay may be different from the actual practice followed today. This is due to many reasons, primary being the shortage of priests, the large scale ignorance of what needs to be done, even among the few priests, and a general laxity in the strictness of certain practices which need to be followed. We will not enter into these differences in the essay, but merely note what **needs** to be done. Whether it is practical to be done or affordable is left to the discretion of the reader. However, it must be noted that the list of ceremonies prescribed is **optimal and necessary**. We have divided the essay into ten main sections as under:

- I. Pre Death analysis
- II. Death and upto Dokhmenashini
- III. Conduct of relatives at the Paidust
- IV. First four days (Chaharum) observances
- V. Conduct of relatives at the Pad-Ruz or Uthamna
- VI. Post Chaharum observances

- VII. Ceremonies for women dying in certain conditions
- VIII. Ceremonies for women dying during pregnancy or childbirth
- IX. Ceremonies for deceased children
- X. Ceremonies for abnormal deaths

I. Pre Death analysis

In some cases, death is sudden and unexpected. However in many cases, it is apparent to the relatives that the person is about to die. In such a case, the under mentioned observances should be followed.

1. As soon as it is apparent that death is inevitable (either on the Doctor's advice or otherwise), external medical equipment such as saline drips, syringes, respirators etc. should be removed (again only with the agreement of the medical staff) and the body of the dying relative should be sponged with clean water. A fresh set of clothes (not new but merely washed clothes which were in use by the person) including the Sudreh should be put on. The head should be properly covered. (For males, a white cotton cap as used by the priests is the best. If not available, a normal prayer cap may be used. For females a white cotton scarf or *matha banu* is optimal.) However, care should be taken to see that the ears are open at all times. A close relative of the person should then wash his own face, hands and exposed parts of the legs (known as performing *Padyab*) and then recite the *Kem na Mazda* prayer and untie his Kusti, and then reciting the *Hormazd Khodae* prayer tie the Kusti and finish off with the *Jasa me avangahe Mazda* prayer. He should then similarly recite the prayers and untie and retie the Kusti of the dying person. In case it is not convenient to tie the rear knots of the Kusti because the person is on the bed, then after tying the front knots, the Kusti should be gently slid till the rear end comes in front and the front knots slide to the back, and then the rear knots should be tied. Once this is done, the Kusti should be brought back to the correct location.
2. The *Panthaky* or head priest of the Agiary where the family's prayers are usually recited should be alerted of the imminent death. This will help him in making further arrangements with the priests at Doongerwadi.

3. If possible, a relative of the dying person should go to any Atash Behram (after taking a bath and changing his clothes; never in the same clothes as from the hospital) and procure some *Hom Water* or *Av* or *Nirang* from the priest in charge over there. Only three to four drops are needed. He should give this consecrated water or Nirang and to the dying relative. If this is not possible, a few drops of pomegranate juice should be given.
4. Meanwhile, the relative who tied the Kusti on the dying person should, if possible, light a fire in a small Fire vase (*Afarganyu*) using pure sandal wood chips (*Tacho*) and place some incense (*Loban*) on it. At the same time, a lamp (*Divo*) should be lit in a glass. Use either pure Ghee made from cow's milk (ex. *Britannia* or *Parsi Dairy Farm*) or use Coconut oil or Palm oil. The glass should be completely filled with oil or ghee. No water should be used. Place the Afarganyu and the Divo near the head of the dying person.
5. The same person should now recite the *Atash Nyaesh* in a soft voice, paying homage to the fire and Divo which has been lit. In case time is short, then the Diva no Namaskar (Homage to the Lamp) should be recited.
6. After reciting the Atash Nyaesh or Diva no Namaskar, the person should recite the *Patet Pashemani* (Prayer of Acceptance and Repentance of Wrong Doing) prayer on behalf of the dying relative. It is imperative that the Patet should be recited *before* death and not after the death has taken place. After finishing the Patet prayer, the Ashem Vohu should be recited in a low voice on a continuous basis till the relative passes away.
7. The last few hours of a dying person are a period of deep anguish, as the person sees his entire life before his mind's eye, and realises the enormity of what he has done in all these years. At this time of struggle, it is absolutely essential for the relatives to maintain a dignified calm and silence. Crying in front of the person, making loud calls on the mobile, arguing about what will be done after death, or discussing who will get what causes even greater pain and anguish to the departing Urvan. All such talk, if at all necessary, should be done in another room. The only sound in the room where the person is lying should be of the soft recitation of the Patet and the Ashem Vohu prayer along with the sweet smell of the burning incense, and the purifying rays of the Divo.

II. Death and upto Dokhmenashini

1. As soon as the person stops breathing completely and the doctor certifies that death has occurred, the same person who had recited the earlier prayers should now bend down and recite one Ashem Vohu softly in each ear of the deceased.
2. The following telephone calls should then be made:
 - To the Doongerwadi informing them of the death and asking for the hearse
 - To the Panthaky of the Agiary in which the deceased or his family have their normal prayers said informing him of the death and asking him to make the necessary arrangements at Doongerwadi.
3. Soon the hearse will arrive and the body is taken to any one of the many Bunglis at the Doongerwadi. It is essential to have all the four days ceremonies performed at Doongerwadi itself. The practice of having the Paidust at Doongerwadi and the rest of the prayers in the Agiary is extremely bad. The Urvan of the deceased person sits near the head of the body where the *Sachkar* (see below) is done. The act of locking the Bungli after the Paidust and having the ceremonies said at the Agiary leaves the Urvan in the Bungli without any protection or the benefit of prayers and causes immense grief to the soul. Hence this should be avoided at all costs and the first four days ceremonies should always and without fail be done at the same place where the Sachkar is done, i.e. in the Bungli at Doongerwadi.
4. While taking the body inside the Bungli, care should be taken to see that it is NOT taken in from the main door. It should be always taken in from the side door provided. This is very important.
5. The body is now taken for the wash before the Sachkar ceremony is performed. It is absolutely essential that water is NOT used while bathing the body for the final time. Only *Taro* (Plain urine from the *Varasyaji*, or any other un-castrated bull) should be used. A plain mul-mul cloth should be made moist with the Taro and then this should be applied over the body just as we sponge with water, moving down from the head to the feet. The whole process should be repeated three times. The person washing the body

should preferably wear thick gloves or cover his hands with a thick cloth while doing this process.

6. The body should now be dressed in the following: loin cloth, pyjama, white cap, a double folded cloth over the cap, (taking care that the ears of the deceased are always open and not covered by the cloth), and Sudreh.
7. The closest relative of the deceased should perform his own Kusti and then tie the Kusti on the deceased for the last time with the recitation of the prayers given earlier. Those relatives who wish to touch the body (although there is no need to do this at all) may do so now.
8. Those non-Parsi friends of the deceased who wish to pay last respects to the departed should be brought in now. They should not however, touch the body. No flowers or floral offerings should be made or accepted at this time.
9. In case the deceased was a priest, then the Jama should be put on at this stage. The Nasseh-salaars (corpse bearers) arrive and after doing the Kusti and taking the Baj of Sarosh, place the body on the stone slabs and proceed to tie seven Bunds, or knots at different parts of the body and prepare it for the Sachkar ceremony.
10. Just before the Sachkar, the dog is brought in for the first time and is made to stand in such a manner that the eyes of the dog gaze on the face of the deceased. It is preferable to have a dog that has two spots over his eyes, indicating the presence of spiritual eyesight. This ceremony is known as *Sagdid*. (The gazing of the dog).
11. After this first *Sagdid*, the Nasseh-salaars perform the Sachkar ceremony, reciting the Sarosh Baj and drawing three *Karshas* (spiritual circuits) around the body with an iron nail. This is an extremely important ceremony and needs to be done in a grave manner. There should be complete silence and the Nasseh-salaars should not talk casually while performing this ceremony. The nail should be firmly held in the hand and the circuits drawn by dragging the nail across the ground, and not by merely throwing the nail from one Nasseh-salaar to the other. They should be properly instructed by the relatives that they wish to have the *Karshas* drawn in this fashion.

12. The performance of the Sachkar ceremony converts the Bungli from a normal building to a consecrated place. After this point, no non-Parsi can enter the building under any circumstances. No Parsi can enter this building without performing the Kusti ritual, just as is done before entering the Agiary.
13. Parsis married to non-Parsis (of either sex), and their offspring (whether Navjote has been performed or not is not relevant) should NOT sit in this Bungli but should take their place in the general bungli outside. If they really love the deceased person, and wish for his spiritual progress then they should not make a fuss out of this issue nor demand any imaginary rights. Needless to say that the presence of such an inter-married person or their offspring gravely affects the efficacy of the prayers to be recited and places spiritual road blocks in the onward progress of the Urvan.
14. It is very essential that the Sachkar ceremony be done as soon as possible, and preferably in the same Gah in which the death has occurred. It is incorrect to wait for a relative to arrive from overseas or out of town and then do the Sachkar. There is no sense in touching a dead body and the delay is extremely harmful to the progress of the Urvan. Hence Sachkar should be done as soon as possible. The Geh Sarna can be delayed if really necessary.
15. After the Sachkar ceremony, the Sagdid should be done once again. Hence, the Sagdid should be done at the following occasions:
 - Before the Sachkar
 - After the Sachkar
 - At the change of every Gah (Sunrise, noon, 3:40 pm, Sunset, Midnight)
 - Before the Geh Sarna ritual
 - In between the Geh Sarna ritual when the body is shifted
 - After the Geh Sarna ritual
 - At the stone slab just before the body is taken to the Dokhma
16. During these four days, care should be taken that the dog used in the Sagdid is fed with milk two or three times a day.

17. During all ceremonies beginning from the Sachkar onwards, it is advisable to shut off electric lights directly above where the body has been placed and also the place where prayers are recited. The presence of electricity has a detrimental effect on the efficacy of the prayers being recited for the Urvan and it is therefore preferable to have the lights in these areas off. Similarly the hum created by the exhaust fans also interferes with the vibration of the Avesta Manthras and they should be switched on only when really required. The lights and fans in the remaining part of the Bungli may be switched on if required. However, the atmosphere created with all the lights of and the presence of as many Divas as possible is unique and should be encouraged as far as possible.
18. From the time the Sachkar ceremony is completed and till the dawn of the fourth day after death, continuous prayers should be recited near the place where the Sachkar has been performed. These are known as the *Small Yashtegan* prayers. It is not at all necessary for a priest to do these prayers. They can be recited by relatives of the deceased. After purifying themselves and doing the Kusti, the relative should sit at a distance of at least 10 feet from where the body has been placed, and recite prayers from the Khordeh Avesta books placed there. Any prayer can be recited except the Patet. All other rules of prayer (such as what can be prayed in which Gah, which are generally given in the Khordeh Avesta book) should be followed.
19. At all times, a small fire should remain near the head of the deceased and this should be periodically fed with sandalwood, Kathi and incense. Similarly, a Divo made either of pure cow's milk ghee (you can get the ghee yourself and ask the Doongerwadi helpers to use it instead of the normal castor oil they use) or Coconut oil or Palm Oil should be lit at all times. At all times, a second Divo should be kept ready for lighting. When the old Divo is about to finish, the new Divo should be lit from the old Divo, hence maintaining continuity. Apart from this main Divo, it is advisable to have several Divas placed at different parts of the Bungli rather than having the electric lights on at all times, as previously explained
20. The stage is now set for the Geh Sarna ritual, also known as the *Great Yashtegan*. The Nasseh-salaars arrive and take the Baj of Sarosh and sit silently next to the body. There should be no discussion between them and the relatives of the deceased should firmly instruct the Nasseh-salaars to maintain their Baj.

21. The Sagdid should be performed just before the Geh Sarna.
22. The two priests arrive in their full gear and commence the recitation of the Ahunavaiti Gatha, which forms the Geh Sarna ritual. The vibrations of the Ahunavaiti Gatha are extremely powerful and have a chopping action, which results in the connection between the Urvan and the body being cut off. It is for this reason that pregnant women should not attend the Geh Sarna ritual (they can attend the Uthamna however). The powerful vibrations of the recitation of the Ahunavaiti Gatha can result in the cutting of the umbilical cord and a possible miscarriage.
23. During the Geh Sarna, the relatives of the deceased should maintain absolute silence. (see section III below.) Their thoughts should be focussed on just one line: ‘may this recitation of the Ahunavaiti Gatha cut the connection between the Urvan of the deceased and its body.’ It is extremely harmful to the Urvan when relatives talk loudly while the prayers are in progress.
24. The body of the deceased should not be touched unnecessarily by the Nasseh-salaars. The practice of applying scented or cologne water is absolutely wrong and doctrinally invalid. This should not be done. When the Nasseh-salaars ask for the cologne water, it should be respectfully denied and explained to them that you do not wish to have this done. The only thing which can be applied after death is Taro, which is used before the Sachkar. After this, no scented waters or talcum powders should be used.
25. After the Geh Sarna, the Sagdid is done once again and then the relatives of the deceased perform the Sezdo and walk out to join the last procession to the Dokhma. The specific responsibilities at this time are covered in the next section.
26. There is no religious practice of surrendering the bangles of a widow before the body of her husband is carried to the Dokhma. The wearing of bangles is a custom borrowed from the Hindus and there is no doctrinal reason for doing so. Hence there is no ceremony by which the Bangles are to be disposed of. The widow may merely stop wearing them after the death of her husband. (Again this is merely a borrowing from the Hindus. Parsis are not supposed to wear Bangles.)

27. Similarly, there is no practice of throwing money in a handkerchief before the body is carried to the Dokhma. There should be nothing in front of the bier in which the body of the deceased is placed. The act of putting money notes on the bier violates its sanctity and causes harm to the progress of the Urvan. In any case, money for the Nasseh-salaars is included in the Bill for the services at Doongerwadi which will be paid after the Paidust. Hence the practice of putting money near the body should strictly not be allowed. These are recent innovations and are totally invalid. They must not be encouraged.
28. There is no bar on ladies joining the last procession. They are welcome to do so. In the earlier days when the Paidust used to be taken out of the homes of the deceased the women would stay behind to take care of the house and make necessary arrangements for the evening prayers. Hence the tradition of women not attending the last procession,. However since today the bodies are taken out from the Bungli, there is no need for the women to remain. In case they wish, they can attend the last procession taking care to follow the observances given in the section below.
29. After returning from the Paidust, it is necessary to perform the Kusti before entering the Bungli. The bathrooms attached to each Bungli should be used to have a complete head bath. Before the bath, the old clothes worn during the Paidust may be lightly rinsed and kept on one side to be taken away by a helper and given for a complete wash. They should then be safely stored and used for any other Paidust you may have to attend. After the bath, a fresh set of clothes should be put on and then homage should be paid to the Urvan of the deceased by putting some incense on the Afarganyu placed near the place where the head of the deceased was resting prior to the Paidust. It should be ensured that the Divo is well lit and the next refill glass is kept ready by its side.
30. After the Paidust, a metal water jar (Karasyo) filled with clean water is placed on a small tripod stand, and over that a small metal cup (Kansyo) is put. In this cup, fresh flowers (preferably only roses) are put and changed periodically. It is in this small water jar that the Urvan of the deceased will now stay for the rest of the days till the Chaharum (Dawn of the Fourth Day after death).

III. Conduct of the relatives during and after Paidust

Attending the Paidust of a deceased friend or relative is a grave spiritual responsibility. While doing so, the following precautions need to be taken.

1. It is preferable to have a different set of clothes to wear for the Paidust. These should be of cotton and white. For men they should be a long sleeved shirt (an old one which is not in normal use anymore) and a white cotton trouser. An old cotton *Dagli* would be even better. For ladies a plain white Sari with long blouse or a white *Salvar* and *Kurta* (both loose and not body hugging) would do. There is no reason to wear Black - that is a borrowing from the Christian funeral rules and should be avoided. Clothes should always be white. In terms of footwear, it is preferable to have a different set of leather shoes or sandals. Avoid rubber soled shoes. It is absolutely necessary to completely cover the head with a good *Topi* or a *Matha banu* for ladies. No hair should be visible from the front of the head. It is better to have a slightly large cap than a very small one covering only half the head. It is extremely upsetting to see several ladies today desperately trying to cover their head with the *Pallu* of the sari. This is not enough. The head MUST be covered with a scarf (cotton) folded over to give a double covering.
2. After coming to Doongerwadi, firstly the Kusti should be performed outside the Bungli after doing the Padyab using the water from the drums kept near each Bungli. This is very important. The benefits of doing the Kusti contribute directly to reducing the confusion of the Urvan sitting next to the body. It is each person's contribution towards lessening the attack of *Druj Nasu* or the Demoness of Pollution on the Urvan. The importance of this ritual cannot be over-emphasised. It should be remembered that one is entering a consecrated place. Just as the Kusti should be done before entering the Agiary, it is necessary to do the same before entering the Bungli.
3. After entering the Bungli, homage should be paid first to the body in the Sachkar pavi by bowing down from a distance. This should be done discreetly.
4. After paying homage, the person should sit down and recite the Sarosh Baj upto the words '*Astavaitish ashahe*' of the Kem na Mazda prayer which forms part of the

Sarosh Baj (This is known as 'Taking the Baj of Sarosh'). One should not sit and start chatting. It should be remembered that one is in the presence of an Urvan and its dead body. Prayers are in progress. While one may not be able to recite the same prayers, one can at least keep quiet or do some normal prayers. It is very disrespectful to sit and gossip. It is extremely beneficial to continuously recite the *Yatha* and *Ashem*, running the thought through the mind that: 'may these humble prayers aid in reducing the confusion of the Urvan and the attack of Druj Nasu.' If one speaks the Baj of Sarosh is 'broken'. Hence the need to keep quiet.

5. As the Mobeds recite the Geh Sarna prayer (reciting the Ahunavaiti Gatha) the constant thought should be run: "May the powerful prayers of the Ahunavaiti Gatha succeed in cutting the connection and attraction between the Urvan and its body."
6. After the Geh Sarna prayers are over, and if the Baj has been maintained, one should go up in front and perform the Sezdo, always standing at least 10 feet away from the body. (Technically known as three "*Kadam*".) If the Baj has been broken by speaking to someone, then the Kusti should be re-done and the Baj of Sarosh taken once again. Then the Sezdo should be performed and silence maintained to hold the Baj.
7. After doing the Sezdo, one should walk out of the Bungli and use a cotton handkerchief to make a *Paiwand* (connection) with another person. The handkerchief should be held by the two in such a way that it forms a U shape. Thereafter one should walk behind the body being carried after the priests and keeping an adequate distance. While walking the following thought should be focussed in the mind: "Because the body has been lifted from the pavi in which it was placed at the time of the Sachkar, the attack of Druj Nasu is now in play. With this handkerchief and the power of my Kusti and Sarosh Baj, I am reducing the attack on the Urvan. May the Earth (*Spenta Armaiti*) take the attack of the Nasu from the Urvan and onto herself through this handkerchief." Those who know the '*Yatu zi Zarathushtra ...*' prayer forming part of the Haptan Yasht should pray the same while walking behind the priests. Otherwise, the simple Ashem prayer would suffice.
8. After the body has been placed on the platform for the final Sagdid, the last Sezdo should be done from a safe distance. One should not go very close to the stone

platform (despite what the Nasseh-salaars may say). A reasonable distance to keep is 8 to 10 feet.

9. After the body has been carried into the Dokhma the attendees should walk to the place where the prayer books are handed out. At the given signal, the Baj of Sarosh which had been taken at the Bungli should be finished by reciting '*Nemascha ya Armaitish...*' and then the rest of the Sarosh Baj. Then the *Namaskar* of the Dokhma and the *Namaskar* of the Mountain given in the book should be recited.
10. After reciting the *Namaskar*, one should go up to the place where the person hands out the Taro, which should be applied this to all the open parts of one's body. Thereafter, without washing the hands or praying anything, the Kusti should be untied, the *Hormazd Khodae* should be recited and the Kusti should be retied while reciting 2 *Yatha*, 1 *Ashem*. No further prayers should be said. After that, all the exposed parts where Taro had been applied should be washed with water, the *Kem na Mazda* should be recited and the Kusti untied. Then *Hormazd Khodae* should be recited and the Kusti tied while reciting the 2 *Yatha* and 1 *Ashem* and then the *Jasa me avangahe...* prayer should be recited to finish off the Kusti ritual. In effect, the Kusti should be untied and tied twice after praying the *Namaskar*.
11. The unfortunate practice of entering the Dadgah or Sagdi immediately after this should be avoided and should not be done. In the earlier days, there were small washrooms next to the Dadgah. The Parsi helpers would take your one's fresh clothes on arrival at the Doongerwadi and keep this set in those bathrooms. After the Paidust, one would have a quick bath and then wear these clothes, and only then enter the Sagdi. If this is not possible today, then one should not enter the Sagdi. One can always visit it when one comes for the Uthamna.
12. One should return by the same path as one came up. In the earlier days, there was a small ritual which used to be done by the Priests accompanying the Paidust. Since the body was taken over the earth, some Druj Nasu was sprinkled on the ground. This needed to be rectified. The priests should again recite the Sarosh Baj and then using a handkerchief, place their right knee and right hand on the ground and recite 1 *Yatha*. Then they should get up, walk some distance and repeat the ritual two more times

(thrice in all) . This will purify the earth and remove the vestiges of the Druj Nasu. Unfortunately this is not done today. This can be done by any person attending the Paidust in a discreet manner on the way back and it is very beneficial.

13. It is necessary to have a bath and change into one's normal clothes before fulfilling one's office duties.

14. The process of attending the Paidust is a sacred responsibility. There are several things one is supposed to do which will help the Urvan in its onward journey. If they are done correctly, the person is blessed by the Urvan in deep gratitude. Such blessings are worth much more than any happiness money can buy.

IV. First four days observances

The ceremonies relating to the first four days after death are intricate and numerous. They may be divided into two parts:

- A. Ceremonies performed near the place of the Sachkar (*Aipi* prayers)
- B. Ceremonies performed in the Agiary or Atash Behram (*Agiary* prayers)

Day	Gah	Aipi prayers	Agiary prayers
Day 1	Havan	Khorshed-Meher Nyaesh	Yazashney of Sarosh Sarosh Baj with 6 Darun
	Rapithwin	Khorshed-Meher Nyaesh	Sarosh Baj with 6 Darun
	Uzirin	Khorshed-Meher Nyaesh	Sarosh Baj with 6 Darun
	Aiwisruthrem	<i>Sarosh nu Patru</i> Sarosh Yasht Vadi	Sarosh Baj with 6 Darun
	Ushahin	Haptan Yasht Sarosh Yasht Hadokht	Vendidat of Sarosh Sarosh Baj with 6 Darun

A. Ceremonies performed near the place of the Sachkar (*Aipi* prayers)

1. From the first day, after the Geh Sarna is over and the body has been consigned to the Dokhma, in the first three Gahs, Khorshed and Meher Nyaesh should be recited in memory of the Urvan by the priests, or by relatives.

2. In the Aiwisruthrem Gah, exactly 36 minutes after Sunset, a pair of priests should sit down for the *Sarosh nu Patru* ritual. It is necessary for the priests to first do their own Farajyat (obligatory) prayers before commencing with the Sarosh nu Patru. It is not proper to recite the Patet during the Patru prayers.
3. In the Ushahin Gah, the priests or the relatives should recite the Haptan Yasht along with the Sarosh Yasht Hadokht.

B. Ceremonies performed in the Agiary (Agiary prayers)

1. Meanwhile in the Agiary, the important Baj ritual needs to be performed in every Gah in honour of Sarosh Yazad. In this ceremony, 6 Darun (consecrated bread) are consecrated in honour of Sarosh Yazad in the name of the deceased.
2. In the Havan Gah, a Yasna ceremony is performed in honour of Sarosh Yazad with the name of the deceased.
3. In the Ushahin Gah, the important Vendidad ceremony is performed in honour of Sarosh Yazad. Both of these ceremonies are essential requirements and care should be taken to ensure their proper and complete observance.

Day	Gah	Aipi prayers	Agiary prayers
Day 2	Havan	Khorshed-Meher Nyaesh	Yazashney of Sarosh Sarosh Baj with 6 Darun
	Rapithwin	Khorshed-Meher Nyaesh	Sarosh Baj with 6 Darun
	Uzirin	Khorshed-Meher Nyaesh	Sarosh Baj with 6 Darun
	Aiwisruthrem	<i>Sarosh nu Patru</i> Sarosh Yasht Vadi	Sarosh Baj with 6 Darun
	Ushahin	Haptan Yasht Sarosh Yasht Hadokht	Vendidad of Sarosh Sarosh Baj with 6 Darun

On the second day the observances are the same as those done on the first day.

Day	Gah	Aipi prayers	Agiary prayers
Day 3	Havan	Khorshed-Meher Nyaesh	Yazashney of Sarosh Sarosh Baj with 6 Darun
	Rapithwin	Khorshed-Meher Nyaesh	Sarosh Baj with 6 Darun
	Uzirin	The Afternoon Uthamna (not required, but done)	Sarosh Baj with 6 Darun
	Aiwisruthrem	<i>Sarosh nu Patru</i> Sarosh Yasht Vadi	Sarosh Baj with 6 Darun
	Ushahin	The Real Uthamna	Vendidad of Sarosh Baj of Mino Ram Baj of Rashne-Ashtad Baj of Meher (for males) Baj of Mohor (for females) Baj of Sarosh Baj of Ardafravash (with Siav and vessels)

On the third day too, the prayers are mostly the same as on the first and second days. The difference is that in the Uzirin Gah, the afternoon Uthamna is done. The correct term for the Uthamna is ‘*Pad-Ruz*’ There is no scriptural reference or tradition mentioning that the Uthamna should be done in the afternoon. It is a tradition started in the last century. Generally, after the Uthamna, the will of the deceased used to be read out aloud and the various charities which the deceased had made in the will would be noted and applauded. However, it was not always possible for the various dignitaries to awake early and come for the Uthamna ritual at around 5 am in the morning. Hence the practice of having the afternoon Uthamna was started so as to make it convenient for the people to attend and listen to the lists of charities in case of the death of very wealthy persons. With the passage of time, the afternoon Uthamna became standard for all persons and has stayed as such. However, it is not at all required and may be dispensed with.

In the Aiwisruthrem Gah the last Sarosh nu Patru is performed as on the earlier days.

In the Ushahin Gah, a lot of different ceremonies are performed at both places, which we shall analyse carefully.

A. Ceremonies performed in the Agiary (Agiary prayers)

1. Starting with the Agiary prayers first, the day prayers remain the same as in the previous two days. In the night two simultaneous prayers are done. While the Sarosh Vendidad starts immediately in the Ushahin Gah, 5 different Baj prayers are commenced at about 2 am. These Baj prayers are of the utmost importance and their correct and complete observance should be insisted upon by the relatives. The 5 Bajs are consecrated in honour of:

- a. Mino Ram
- b. Rashne-Ashtad Yazads
- c. *Either*: Mohor Yazad (in case deceased was a female)
- d. *Or*: Meher Yazad (in case deceased was a male)
- e. Sarosh Yazad
- f. Ardafravash

2. In the last Baj of Ardafravash, the following are also consecrated:

- A complete Siav set consisting of
 - Kusti
 - Sudreh
 - Pyjama
 - Topi
 - White turban worn by the priests (*Pagdi*)
 - Hand gloves (*Petawa*)
 - The flowing robe worn by priests during ceremonies (*Jama*)
 - The waist belt worn during ceremonies (*Pichori*)
 - The mouth veil (*Padan*)
 - Handkerchief (*Rumal* or Matha Banu)

- A set of vessels, made of copper, consisting of:
 - A big plate (*Khumcho*)
 - A small plate (*Khumchi*)
 - A large water vase (*Karasyo*)
 - A small water cup (*Kansyo*)
 - A small saucer (*Rakabi*)
 - A large pan (*Langri*)

- Representatives of the animal and vegetable kingdom including:
 - Pomegranate
 - Various other fruit
 - Dry fruits (after washing)
 - Sweet semolina (*Ravo* or *Kheer*)
 - Any item made with Gram flour (*Chana no atto*)

All these items are placed along with the four Darun and consecrated in the Baj of Ardafravash. As soon as the Bajs are all performed, the consecrated items are kept in the big Langri and taken to the Aipi area where the Sachkar was done and will be kept open during the ceremonies taking place there.

B. Ceremonies performed near the place of the Sachkar (Aipi prayers)

1. Just as the English day is divided into 24 hours of 60 minutes each, the Zoroastrian day is divided into 18 '*Hathra*' of 80 minutes each. The Ushahin Gah starts at midnight and extends to a period of 80 minutes before sunrise. Leaving aside the 8 minute period taken for light to travel from the Sun to the Earth, the 72 minute period before Sunrise is known as *Hoshbam*, or Dawn. This 72 minute period is further divided into two parts of 36 minutes each. The first 36 minute part is known as *Ushahin ni Hoshbam*, and the latter is known as *Havan ni Hoshbam*. Thus the proper way of calculating the time for the Pad-Ruz and other ceremonies, as well as for noting the day on which death has occurred, if it occurs at this time is of vital importance. This is often ignored by priests who use arbitrary measures without taking into account the Sunrise time of the day. The correct method to calculate the timing of the Pad-Ruz and other ceremonies is demonstrated by the example below:

	Hours : minutes
Time of Sunrise (substitute this value with the correct time available from the newspaper)	06: 00 am
Less: 72 minutes of Hoshbam	01: 12
Correct Time to begin Daham Yazad Afringan	04: 48 am
Less: 80 minutes (last Hathra) of Hoshbam	01: 20
Correct Time to begin the Pad-Ruz ceremony	03: 28 am

2. The Pad-Ruz is the most important ceremony in the Ushahin Gah and marks the beginning of a new era for the Urvan. After the completion of this ceremony, the Urvan is freed from its connection to this world and flies away to another realm of the cosmos known as Chinvat.

3. At the correct time as determined by the table above, the Priests should gather and after performing their Kusti and Sarosh Baj, assemble the following. Firstly, a big fire Vase (Afarganyu) is lit with good sandalwood and incense. Touching the fire vase, a big round metal plate (Khumcho) is placed containing the following:
 - A new Sudreh
 - A new Kusti
 - Flowers, including rose, tuberose, jasmine, *champa* and Holy Basil.
 - Milk (either goat or cow's milk)
 - Water (pure, drawn from a well)
 - A silver ring
 - A rosary of 101 prayer beads (*Kerba ni Tasbih*)
 - A metal knife
 - As many Sudrehs as many mobeds will sit for the ceremony

4. In a second Khumcho, also touching the Afarganyu, 5 to 7 Divo made of either pure cow's milk ghee or coconut oil or palm oil should be placed.

5. In the third Khumcho, also touching the Afarganyu, the following items should be placed:
 - Sandalwood pieces (*Sukhad*)

- Sandalwood chips (*Tacho*)
- Incense (*Loban*)
- Agar (*Agar*)
- Two containers of rose water (*Gulabjal pigani*)
- A cup of Jasmine oil (*mogrel*)
- Some condiments (*Akho Masalo*)

6. The priests now sit down on the laid out carpet and begin their customary prayers. The main priest who is to lead the prayers should be the one who has performed the Baj ceremonies as well as the Yasna or Vendidad ceremonies in the first two days. He should put on the same set of clothes which has been consecrated in the Ardafravash Baj. After reciting the customary Gah prayers, the priest then get up and recite the Atash Nyaesh in honour of the kindled fire. The other priests then sit down and the main priest begins the proper Pad-Ruz prayer known as the 'Dhup Nirang'. This prayer is to be recited very slowly, in a loud, sonorous voice. This is the last lesson to the departing Urvan and prepares it for its onward journey. During this prayer, the main priest recites a long list of some of the most spiritually evolved personages who have appeared on the earth at various times, from the Prophet and his family to the great Iranian kings and their mighty knights, to the learned Dasturs of old right down to the present day. The recitation of these names is not only to perpetuate their memory but also to call upon their individual Fravashis to help the Urvan of the deceased as it begins its new journey to Chinvat.

7. After the Dhup Nirang recitation is completed, the Priest sits down while a helper goes around the room with the plate of flowers and the rose water. This is a separate ceremony in itself and is known as the Pai-Mozd ceremony. This is explained in detail in the next section. After the Pai-Mozd ceremony, the eldest son or legal heir of the deceased is made to give an undertaking that he will perform the ceremonies for the deceased Urvan to the best of his ability. This particular recitation is known as 'Sosh' or 'Gaahe' (later corrupted to 'Gaay') and is a solemn pledge given by the spiritual executor of the deceased to ensure the safe and speedy passage of the Urvan in the other realms. In order to remind the spiritual executor of this solemn responsibility, the set of clothes, prayer beads, knife and silver ring put in the first Khumcho during the Pad-Ruz ceremony are handed over to him, while the rest of the Sudrehs are handed out to the priests who had sat for the ceremony.

8. After the Pai-Mozd (explained in the next section) and the Sosh ceremony are completed and the items handed over to the spiritual heir of the deceased, the priests now recite a Tandarosti or benediction prayer for the long life of the spiritual heir so that he may be able to fulfil his grave responsibilities towards the departed Urvan. By this time, the Ushahin Hoshbam begins, and hence the priests and the congregation recite the Hoshbam prayer and complete the ceremony of Pad-Ruz.

Day	Gah	Aipi prayers	Agiary prayers
Day 4	Havan ni Hoshbam	Daham Yazad Afringan	
	Havan	Ardafravash Afringan Farrokshi Stoom	Yasna of Ardafravash Machi at the Sagdi of Doongerwadi or in the Agiary Ardafravash Baj Sarosh Baj
	Rapithwin		Stoom
	Uzirin		Stoom
	Aiwisruthrem		Sarosh-Patet
	Ushahin		Vendidad of Ardafravash Baj Dharna ni Farrokshi

9. At the exact time as determined by the table given earlier, as the Havan Hoshbam period starts, the priests reassemble after doing the fresh Kusti for the new day and perform the solemn ceremony known as the Daham Yazad Afringan (also called Daham Yazad Jashan). The human body is composed of both physical as well as ultra-physical matter. The basic building blocks of ultra-physical matter are known as 'Anasers'. The system of Dokhmenashini is not merely a method of disposing of the physical body, but its talismanic construction also breaks down the Anasers which are inter-twined with the physical body and hands them over to a specific spiritual entity who will then safeguard these Anasers for the use of the Urvan at a later stage of its onward journey in the realms of Chinvat. The specific entity which manages the Anasers is known as Daham Yazad.

10. The ceremony of the Daham Yazad Afringan is done to hand over the specific Anasers of the deceased to the custody of Daham Yazad. This is a ceremony of utmost importance and its timing should be properly noted and maintained.

11. The end of the Daham Yazad Afringan also marks Sunrise and the full beginning of the new day. The Urvan is now completely freed of all its earthly connections and hence soars up. The priest now gets up and takes the Karasyo filled with water which was placed on the tripod stand for all these days and the Kansyo filled with flowers which was placed on top of the Karasyo and gently empties the water out from the Karasyo, and places it on the ground. The tripod stand is also laid down in a sleeping position. This marks the flight of the Urvan. The Urvan, which had resided in the Karasyo for the three days is now set free by the power of the prayers and flies off to its next destination in Chinvat. Therefore there is no need for the Karasyo and the Kansyo and hence they are emptied out.

12. After the Daham Yazad ceremony, it is necessary to give a break of about 3 hours before the Ardafravash ceremonies are done. This is the time it takes for nature to arrange all the things and ensure the smooth flight of the Urvan to Chinvat. In this time, the relatives of the deceased could deal with all the administrative matters as well as settle the bills at Doongerwadi and of the priests for all these days, or they could go home for a short rest. Generally, the Bungli is given to someone else after this period, hence the Ardafravash ceremonies are done immediately after the Daham Yazad ceremonies, although this is not correct. If possible, the Ardafravash ceremonies can be repeated at the Fire Temple where all the prayers will hence forth take place.

A. Ceremonies performed in the Agiary (Agiary prayers)

1. On the fourth day in the Havan Gah, a Machi is offered to the Atash Padshah either in the Agiary where the prayers are to be recited henceforth or at the Sagdi of the Doongerwadi. The Machi acts as a catalyst to all the prayers said and hastens the progress of the Urvan to Chinvat.

2. The Ardafravash ceremonies may be done at the Agiary once again, after the time lapse of about 3 hours after the Daham Yazad Afringan. In addition, Bajs of Ardafravash and

Sarosh are consecrated. It is necessary to consecrate a full Siav during this Ardafravash Baj.

3. Also in the Havan Gah, the first Yazashney ceremony in honour of Ardafravash (as opposed to the earlier ceremonies in honour of Sarosh Yazad) should be performed.
4. In the Havan, Rapithwin and Uzirin Gah, Stoom should be recited over vegetarian food.
5. In the Aiwisruthrem Gah, the first Sarosh-Patet prayers should be offered and this practice should be continued, if possible, for the entire first year.
6. In the Ushahin Gah, a special ceremony known as Baj Dharna ni Farrokshi should be recited. This is again of vital importance though almost totally forgotten today.
7. Similarly, in the Ushahin Gah, the first Vendidad in honour of Ardafravash (as opposed to Sarosh yazad on the earlier days) is recited.

This finishes the entire four days ceremonies for the Urvan of the deceased person. We now analyse the responsibilities of the relatives during the important Pad-Ruz ceremony on the dawn of the fourth day.

V. Conduct of the relatives during the Pad-Ruz (Uthamna)

As we have seen in the previous section, the Pad-Ruz or Uthamna ceremony performed on the dawn of the fourth day after death is one the most important ceremonies during this period in which the relatives of the deceased have an important part to play. The Pad-Ruz marks the point when the Urvan breaks free of the tangles of the attractions of this world and the body it has left and flies away towards its new destination in Nature known as Chinvat. At this time, the Urvan's consciousness is fully developed and it is eager to commence its spiritual mission.

1. For the relatives of the deceased, the Pad-Ruz ceremony is the last instance wherein they can promise to fulfil certain spiritual obligations in memory of their loved one. This act of taking a solemn vow or promising to perform certain spiritual obligations is known as the

ceremony of Pai-Mozd. During the Pad-Ruz ceremony, the thoughts of the relatives of the deceased should be focussed on only one purpose: ‘may the prayers said during these three days and the various ceremonies performed, both in the Aipi and in the Agiary work towards ensuring the safe and speedy flight of the Urvan from the Earth to the lower regions of Chinvat where it will begin its spiritual mission. May our collective thoughts aid the Urvan in its flight.’

2. After the Dhup Nirang recitation is finished, the Pai-Mozd ceremony starts. Here a helper takes the tray containing the flowers in one hand and the rosewater sprinkler in the other. He then goes to the spiritual heirs of the deceased and places the tray of flowers in front of them, and sprinkles the rosewater on their hands. The correct procedure to follow is to first take the rosewater and rub it on the hands and then take one flower from the tray. Holding this flower in front of the eyes, the relative of the deceased should then take the solemn oath to perform certain ceremonies or prayers on behalf of the deceased as his own personal contribution towards the Urvan’s onward progress. It could be a simple promise like: ‘I shall have the Afringan, Baj and Farrokshi ceremonies said every month for the first year’; or ‘I shall have at least one Yasna or one Vendidad ceremony done in the first year after death’; or ‘I shall contribute Rs. Xx towards the cost of the ceremonies in the first year.’ The oath could also be more serious like: ‘I promise to pray the Lakh¹ prayer during the Muktdad for x number of years’; or ‘I promise to pray / or get a priest to pray the Sarosh-Patet² prayer every night for the first year.’ The flower should be kept by the relative in his personal Khordeh Avesta which he uses every day, so as to remind him of his spiritual obligation every day he sits down to pray. The fragrance of the rosewater is also to serve as a reminder of this obligation. This concludes the Pai-Mozd ceremony.

VI. Post Chaharum observances

1. After the Chaharum is over, generally daily prayers of Afringan, Baj, Farrokshi and Stoom are recited every day till the 10th day, known as *Dasma*. On the *Dasma*, the same

¹ The Lakh prayer is the recitation of 5700 Yatha Ahu Vairyo, 2100 Yenghe Hatam and 1200 Ashem Vohu prayers in the first ten days of the Muktdad. Hence every day 570 Yatha Ahu Vairyo, 210 Yenghe Hatam and 120 Ashem Vohu need to be recited in honour of the deceased Urvan. This is one of the most powerful spiritual gifts one can give to the Urvan of the deceased.

² The Sarosh-Patet is the most powerful prayer that can be said by the relative of the deceased during the year, except during the Muktdad days. It involves the recitation of the Sarosh Yasht Vadi and the Patet Urvan ni prayer in a particular sequence in the Aiwisruthrem Gah, after doing ones own Sarosh Yasht Vadi.

set of ceremonies are recited, and the Baj may be consecrated with the Siav. However, instead of the full Siav about 5 to 7 metres of mul-mul cloth may be placed which can be used to make Sudrehs for the relatives of the deceased.

2. The next major day of observance is the 30th day, known as Siroz. On this day, a special Afringan, Farrokshi, Stoom and Baj are consecrated in honour of all the 30 Yazatas, hence called Si (Thirty) Ruz (day). The Darun used to consecrate the Siroza Baj are slightly larger than the usual Darun and sugar is added to the flour, hence making them a bit sweet.
3. The day of the first month after death is known as *Masiso*, and is also observed in the usual way with Afringan, Farrokshi, Stoom and Baj of Sarosh and Ardafravash consecrated, along with Siav of mul-mul cloth.
4. Thereafter, in the first year, it is customary to have this same set of prayers recited on every Fravardin Roj (All Urvan's Day), as well as every *Parab* (i.e. when the Roj and Mah are of the same name, ex. Adar Mah and Adar Roj). All the six Gahambar (seasonal festivals) should also be observed by having special Gahambar Afringan, Farrokshi, Stoom and Baj consecrated.
5. The 180th day after death is also known as the Siroz, and the six month day is known as *Chamsi*. On both these days, ceremonies as described on the Siroz and Masiso should be performed with normal Siav.
6. The first year anniversary and the day preceding that are known as the Varsi and Siroz respectively and the same set of ceremonies is performed with full Siav. If possible, a Yasna of Ardafravash in the Havan Gah and a Vendidad of Ardafravash in the Ushahin Gah should be performed.
7. On either the Dasma, Masiso, Chamsi or the Varsi a Karasyo or Vase should be consecrated in the Ardafravash Baj which is done on these days. This Karasyo or Vase will be used during the Muktrad of the deceased. It is preferable to invest in a large, simple Karasyo with a heavy-weight base as the Muktrad vessel rather than having intricately carved light vases which may topple over when filled with water or flowers.

8. Within the first year and for a period of at least 57 years, the Muktaḍ ceremonies should be performed. If it is not possible to afford a separate table or separate ceremonies, then after a few years of individual prayers, the name of the deceased should be added to the '*Hama Anjuman*' prayers said in every Agiary and the Vase placed on the common Anjuman tables.

VII. Ceremonies for women dying in certain conditions

We are aware that there the Zoroastrian religion prescribes very strict rules regarding ritual purity to be maintained both by men and women. Priests who practice the inner liturgical ceremonies (known as Pav-Mahel ceremonies) maintain strict rules relating to their interaction with the outside world, and live a near secluded existence. Even normal men have specific rules to maintain their purity. Similarly, women too have a set of rules relating to the observance of the days of menstruation. These rules were faithfully followed by the Parsis for thousands of years and the residences of old were constructed so as to allow the following of these practices. However, with the shifting of the Parsis to Mumbai and with increasing urbanisation and westernisation, these practices were given up, causing grievous harm to the community and its members.

Just as there are regulations regarding the conduct of a woman during her monthly periods, there are rules relating to what should be done in case a woman dies in such a state. These conventions too have been long forgotten but are given here with the idea of maintaining the record for the next generation and also so that we may realise the depth and intricacies of the subject of Yasna or ceremonies as prescribed in the religion.

According to the Zoroastrian religion, a woman in the condition of menstruation is doctrinally impure. Why is this so? The bodily composition of a human being is such that he is naturally inclined towards evil. To counteract this, Ahura Mazda has put in him *Daena*, the voice of conscience. When man follows the path of righteousness, his *Daena* becomes more and more insistent whenever he thinks of doing something wrong. However, when man follows his five basic senses and commits sin (in defiance of the five spiritual sense which remind him not to do so), he sets up a burden for himself, which he will need to bear sooner or later, based on the laws of action and reaction.

Different men commit different levels of sin. Similarly, there are different degrees of potentialities in which each man can commit sin. These differing degrees of potentialities are quantified in multiples of 500 and 1000 in the Vendidad. When a man commits a sin, the latent potentiality within him of committing further sin gets increased in multiples of 500 and 1000. In other words, we may say that man's latent potentiality to obey the laws of the religion reduce by multiples of 500 and 1000. Hence when man commits sin, he reduces the level of good-doing potentiality within him. This situation cannot be allowed, and hence various kinetics are prescribed, which if followed, will re-increase the level of good-doing potentiality within the man and decrease his evil-doing potentialities. In certain conditions and situations, these evil-doing potentialities can get converted into full blown threats. At these times, it is important to segregate such people and treat them in a manner different from normal times.

The condition of menstruation in women is one such situation which has been identified in the Vendidad as being susceptible to pollutant threats. In this situation, the weakened physical, emotional and spiritual state of the woman makes her vulnerable to the attacks of Angra Mainyu and his associates in myriad ways. Should she continue with her normal duties, it is possible that her weakened state could precipitate an attack from Angra Mainyu which can cause damage not only to her but also her entire family and environment which she would otherwise nurture. Hence a state of abstinence from normal household duties has been prescribed, not only in the Zoroastrian religion but also in all other faiths.

The sixteenth chapter of the Vendidad deals with these issues and lays down the procedures to be followed by a woman in this condition. It prescribes the special care that these women should be lavished with, the kind of diet that should be given and the limits of seclusion that should be maintained in order to contain the spiritual threat that emanates from her.

It is therefore reasonable to expect that if such great care has to be taken to ensure that the living woman is well protected during her period of unease, then similar conditions would be prescribed in case her death occurred during such a period. The death of a woman in her menses presents a situation where greater spiritual pollution is caused than in the case of the death of a woman in a normal state. Hence, the level of care to be taken in the first four days'

ceremonies and all the observances thereafter are increased to a heightened level in order to deal with the greater pollution threat.

However, not only is it necessary to know whether a woman died in her periods, it is also necessary to know in which part of the menstrual cycle the woman was when she passed away. According to the religion, the period of menses may be divided into three phases:

- The Ascending stage: The first three days of the menstrual period is when the flow of bleeding increases from day to day
- The Descending stage: The next three days of the period are marked by reduced bleeding getting progressively less each day
- The Completion stage: The last three days of the period witness progressive reduction and complete stoppage of the bleeding

1. Given that each woman does not have the same cycle, it is necessary for her to note the three stages for her own self and inform her closest confidant or husband about the same. In the unfortunate case of death, the same can be verified by the friend or husband and ceremonies performed accordingly. Having taken this introduction we now examine the various observances to be followed in case of such a death. In all cases where the death has occurred during the menstrual period, the pre-death observances are the same as mentioned for normal cases. However, once the death occurs and the body is shifted to the Doongerwadi, some differences in the rituals are necessary.
2. After the body is brought to the Doongerwadi, two women should take a bath, perform their Kusti prayers and 'take' the Baj of Sarosh. Then connecting themselves with the help of a long cotton cloth (or a Priest's old *Pichori*), they should take a dog and approach the corpse and perform the first Sagdid. They should then wash the body with Taro using a thick cloth and applying the Taro in a head to foot direction three times. It is critical to note that at no point should water be used to wash such a corpse. The normal clothes should then be put on, the Kusti tied and the body should be placed on the stone slabs on the floor.
3. Sagdid should be done and then the Sachkar should be done, followed by the Sagdid once again.

4. The remaining ceremonies are exactly the same as in the case of a normal death but with the following important exclusions:
 - a. From the fifth day onwards all the normal ceremonies should be done but NO SIAV should be consecrated.
 - b. If possible the normal Afringan, Farrokshi, Baj and Stoom prayers should be done EVERY DAY for the whole year, or six months, or one month as practicable.
 - c. After the fourth day and upto the first year anniversary, NO Yazashney or Vendidad ceremonies should be performed.

5. On the first anniversary of death, it should be assumed that the same death has occurred again and the following ceremonies should be REPEATED.
 - a. Three Sarosh Yasna and three Sarosh Vendidad on the first three days
 - b. On the third night the same set of 5 Bajs with Siav and vessels should be consecrated
 - c. The Daham Yazad Afringan should be done in the Havan Hoshbam period
 - d. The fourth day's ceremonies including Ardafravash Afringan, Baj, Farrokshi, Stoom, Ardafravash Yasna and Ardafravash Vendidad should be done

6. In the olden days, based on the stage of menstruation in which the woman had died this whole procedure was repeated for either one or two or three years. However, in the current day it is sufficient to repeat the procedure as described above only for the first year. After the second year is over, other Pav-Mahel ceremonies may be performed if deemed necessary.

VIII. Ceremonies for women dying during pregnancy or childbirth

In the unfortunate case of a woman dying either during pregnancy or during childbirth, several technical issues crop up which have to be resolved in a logical way. The death of a woman during pregnancy is actually the death of two individuals, and hence specific observances have been prescribed. It is a testament to the wisdom of our forefathers and the intricacy of the rituals of the religion that such matters were understood, analysed and specific rules laid down for ensuring the spiritual safe passage and onward progress of the Urvan of such unfortunate individuals.

According to the Zoroastrian religion, pregnancy is marked by two important occurrences:

1. The actual forming of the foetus by the union of the male sperm and the female ova and its subsequent development in the first 3 months and 27 days
2. The descent of the Urvan of the new child on either the 28th or 29th or 30th day after the 3rd month of pregnancy

The ceremonies for women dying during pregnancy or childbirth can be divided into three main parts:

- A. Death of the woman before 3 months and 29 days of the pregnancy
- B. Death of the woman after 3 months and 29 days of the pregnancy but before delivery
- C. Death of the woman during a miscarriage or on delivery or within 12 days after delivery

A. Death of the woman before 3 months and 29 days of the pregnancy

In case of the death of the mother before 3 months and 29 days of the pregnancy have finished, it is apparent that although the foetus has started forming, the Urvan of the child to be born has not yet descended into the womb of the mother. Hence the following procedure should be followed.

1. On death, 2 pairs of women (4 in all) should connect each other with a Paiwand, take 2 dogs and perform the first Sagdid. The body should then be handled as in the normal corpse and the Sachkar done.
2. For the Geh Sarna, two pairs of priests (4 in all) should stand and recite the Geh Sarna prayer.

All other ceremonies should be done as in the case of a normal individual.

B. Death of the woman after 3 months and 29 days of the pregnancy but before delivery

In case of the death of the mother after 3 months and 29 days of the pregnancy have finished but before delivery, it is apparent that along with the normal physical development of the child, the Urvan of the child has also descended and hence two individuals are to be considered. However, given the fact that the Urvan of the foetus has just descended and the child has not been born, the following procedure should be followed.

1. On death, 2 pairs of women (4 in all) should connect each other with a Paiwand, take 2 dogs and perform the first Sagdid. The body should then be handled as in the normal corpse and the Sachkar done.
2. For the Geh Sarna, two pairs of priests (4 in all) should stand and recite the Geh Sarna prayer.
3. All other ceremonies should be done as in the case of a normal individual.
4. On the third day, one extra Yasna of Sarosh should be done in memory of the foetus and its Urvan
5. On the third night, in addition to the 5 Bajis consecrated, an additional Baj of Sarosh should be consecrated with very small Darun and small cloth gloves.
6. In the Daham Yazad Afringan, one extra Karta (chapter) of Daham Yazad should be recited in memory of the foetus and its Urvan
7. In all ceremonies for the unborn foetus, the name should be taken as '*wahmaan*' (whether male or female) along with his father's name. This is another form of the Avesta name Vohu Mano, or Behman Ameshaspand, since the child is deemed as innocent as Vohu Mano.

C. Death of the woman during miscarriage or after delivery or within 12 days of delivery

In case of a woman who dies in a miscarriage or during childbirth or immediately afterwards and the child also dies along with the mother or is still born, the following procedure should be followed.

1. On death, 2 pairs of women (4 in all) should connect each other with a Paiwand, take 2 dogs and perform the first Sagdid.
2. The bodies should then be handled as in the normal corpse and two Sachkar ceremonies should be done. The first Sachkar should be done on the mother's body
3. In case the child and mother have died with the umbilical cord still intact, they should both be placed in one bier (*Gehan*)
4. In case the mother and child have been separated, the mother's body should be placed in a normal Gehan whereas the child's body should be placed in a shallow metal receptacle available at Doongerwadi for this purpose
5. For the Geh Sarna, two pairs of priests (4 in all) should stand and recite the Geh Sarna prayer.

6. In case the foetus is less than 3 months and 30 days old, it should not be consigned to the Dokhma, but it should be wrapped in an old Sudreh and buried in the ground adjoining the Dokhma
7. In case the foetus is more than 3 months and 30 days old, it should be consigned to the Dokhma
8. All other ceremonies for the mother should be done as in the case of a normal individual.
9. On the third day, one extra Yasna of Sarosh should be done in memory of the foetus and its Urvan
10. On the third night, in addition to the 5 Bajis consecrated, an additional Baj of Sarosh should be consecrated with very small Darun and small cloth gloves.
11. Whether the mother dies during pregnancy or a miscarriage or within 12 days of such an occurrence, then the same set of ceremonies as prescribed for a woman dying in her menses should be followed
12. In the Daham Yazad Afringan, one extra Karta (chapter) of Daham Yazad should be recited in memory of the foetus and its Urvan
13. In all ceremonies for the unborn foetus, the name should be taken as '*wahmaan*' (whether male or female) along with his father's name. This is another form of the Avesta name Vohu Mano, or Behman Ameshaspand, since the child is deemed as innocent as Vohu Mano.

How is the age of the foetus determined?

A valid question may be asked as to how it was possible to determine the age of the foetus in case the death of the mother around the third or fourth month. While with today's modern Sonographic tools it is possible to measure the age to a very accurate degree, how was this done in the early days? It is again a remarkable testament to the wisdom of our forefathers and the intricacy of our ceremonies that even this could be determined through a simple test.

Firstly the Sagdid was done on the foetus. Then a large bowl would be filled with Taro from the Varasyaji and the foetus would be submerged in the bowl. If after a short time the foetus turned BLOOD RED then it was determined to be LESS than 3 months and 30 days of age, and hence the Urvan had not descended, and therefore the foetus would be buried outside the Dokhma. However, if the foetus turned PALE WHITE after being soaked in the Taro, then it

was determined to be MORE than 3 months and 30 days old and hence the Urvan had descended into its body. Therefore, the foetus would be placed inside the Dokhma.

IX. Ceremonies for deceased children

Children are the light of our lives and the death of a child is an intensely sad experience for the family members. However, it should be noted that the death of a child indicates its high spiritual nature and the very short time needed by the child's Urvan on the earth to finish of its mutual obligations with others is a pointer to its rapid progress towards Ahura Mazda.

The growth of a child is closely watched over, not only by its parents but also by certain spiritual entities. These entities are the celestial planets which exercise a varying degree of influence on the child during different years. According to the Zoroastrian religion, children are generally divided into three main groups:

- A. From 1 day to about 5 years
- B. From about 5 years to 12 years
- C. From 12 years to 19 years

The youngest children between the ages of 1 day to about 5 years are governed by the Moon. They are the absolute personification of innocence and are known in the Avesta as '*aperenayu*'. The second group ranging from 5 years to about 12 years are governed by Mercury. This is the growing age and they are known in the Avesta as '*avarnai*'. The third group comprising of adolescents ranging from age 12 to 19 are governed by Venus. These are the awareness years, when the child learns about the real world and develops his physical senses. Such children are called '*perenayu*' or '*purmai*'. The after death ceremonies for these three groups are well defined taking into account their age and the planet ruling over them.

A. Ceremonies for children above 1 day and less than 5 years of age

In case of the death of a child more than a day old but less than 5 years old, the following procedures should be followed.

1. The body of the child should be treated in the same way as a normal person and sponged with Taro.

2. The body should then be wrapped in a clean Sudreh belonging to his father and a Kusti should be loosely wrapped around the Sudreh (without tying the knots) and the Sachkar done
3. The normal Geh Sarna and Dokhmenashini rituals should be followed
4. The three Sarosh nu Patru in the evenings of the first three days should be done
5. Instead of three Sarosh Yasna and 3 Sarosh Vendidad, only 1 pair needs to be done.
6. The 5 Bajs on the third night should be done as normal, except that the Siav should be of small clothes only and with small Darun
7. The Pad-Ruz and Daham Afringan should be done as normal
8. All the ceremonies of the fourth day too should be done, except for the Ardafravash Yasna and Vendidad.
9. Thereafter, for the first 10 days or preferably for a month after death, the dog should be fed with milk two to three times a day
10. Thereafter regular ceremonies relating to the Dasma, 2 days of the Masiso, 2 days of the Chamsi and 2 days of the Varsi should be observed.
11. In all such ceremonies, in addition to normal fruit, some fruit juice or sherbet should also be offered along with milk.
12. In all the Bajs, very small Darun (called chitia) should be consecrated
13. In all the ceremonies, in case the child was named, his name should be recited with the prefix '*khurd*' (i.e. 'small', 'minor'), today incorrectly pronounced as '*khud*' along with his father's name.
14. In case the child dies before being named, in all ceremonies the name should be taken as '*wahmaan*' (whether male or female) along with his father's name. This is another form of the Avesta name Vohu Mano, or Behman Ameshaspand, since the child is deemed as innocent as Vohu Mano.

B. Ceremonies for children more than 5 years but less than 12 years of age

In this case, the following rituals should be observed:

1. The body of the child should be treated in the same way as a normal person and sponged with Taro.
2. If the Navjote of the child has been performed, then its own Sudreh and Kusti should be put on and the Sachkar done

3. If the Navjote has not been done, the body should then be wrapped in a clean Sudreh belonging to his father and the Kusti should be tied around its waist after reciting 2 Yatha Ahu Vairyo and 1 Ashem Vohu and the Sachkar done
4. All normal rituals as applicable to a grown up person should be done.
5. However, it is not necessary to do the Vendidad for such a case
6. It is beneficial to get the Sarosh and Patet done for such a case for the first year.

C. Ceremonies for children more than 12 years but less than 19 years of age

In this case, there is just one important distinction to be remembered. If due to some abnormal reasons, the Navjote of the child is not done, and if the child is a girl and she begins menstruating, or in case of a boy, he gets his first seminal discharge before the Navjote, immense spiritual harm is done to the Urvan of such a person. It is therefore advisable, even in case the child is suffering from some serious disease or is mentally incapable of memorising the Kusti prayers to still get the Navjote ceremony done, with the father doing the prayers for him. The following procedures should be followed in case of such a death.

1. The body of the child should be treated in the same way as a normal person and sponged with Taro.
2. If the Navjote of the child has been performed, then its own Sudreh and Kusti should be put on and the Sachkar done
3. If the Navjote has not been done, the body should then be wrapped in a clean Sudreh belonging to his father and the Kusti should be tied around its waist after reciting 2 Yatha Ahu Vairyo and 1 Ashem Vohu and the Sachkar done
4. All normal rituals as applicable to a grown up person should be done.
5. Specific importance should be paid to getting the 3 Yasna and 3 Vendidad of Sarosh done in such a case
6. It is beneficial to get the Sarosh and Patet done for such a case for the first year and longer if possible.
7. All rituals should be continued as long as possible just as in the case of a grown up individual.

X. Ceremonies for abnormal deaths

Time not known

Day not known

Month not known

Body arrives after Chaharum

Body buried elsewhere

Death during Gatha days