

# **Do we really need to feed the departed soul**

## **IIm-e-Khshnoom explains why by revealing the true meaning of the *Stum* ceremony**

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The presence of rituals or ceremonies is an intrinsic part of any religious or social order. The performance of the various prescribed rituals is an inseparable part of the holistic Zarathushtrian religion and is indeed its lifeline. Yet, lately, the presence and practice of the age-old rituals and ceremonies is viewed as a later addition to the “purely ethical” religion supposed to have been propounded by the Prophet Zarathushtra. The roots of this heretical proposition lie in the ignorance among a large majority of community members, and also within the scholarly and research community as to the real reason for the presence of rituals. Rituals have so far been viewed from a narrow anthropological angle as practices which serve to unite the members of a group, strengthen shared beliefs, celebrate achievements or milestones in the lives of individuals or groups, or to facilitate discussions. Some go so far as to attribute their presence as a means of supporting the livelihood of the clergy. However, the appearance of our Master, Ustad Saheb Behramshah Nowroji Shroff, and his subsequent revelations shed great light on the real significance of Zarathushtrian rituals. Zarathushtrian mysticism has uncovered for us the working of a grand cosmic machinery which permeates every single Zarathushtrian ritual, however small, and has given explanations for each of them to the most minute detail. Our attempt in this essay is to take one of the smallest rituals and analyse in detail how the Zarathushtrian mystic revelation has explained its utility and necessity.

### **An introduction to the *Stum* ceremony**

The *Stum* ceremony (generally mispronounced as ‘*Satum*’) is one of the smallest rituals in the religion. It is essentially a prayer, mainly taken from Yasna Ha 26, which is prayed over a ritually cooked meal, in memory of a departed soul. The *Satum* is one of the various ceremonies which collectively form what is known as the *Hushmordi* group of ceremonies. These ceremonies should preferably be performed by relatives of the deceased as their

personal contribution towards the onward progress of the deceased's soul, and should take place in the same environment or place where the deceased used to reside. However, in recent times, due to the absence of ritual purity in apartments, most of these ceremonies are performed in Fire Temples. The Hushmordi ceremonies are in contrast to the higher liturgical ceremonies which come under the grouping of '*Pav Mahel*' ceremonies, which may be performed only by ordained and qualified priests within the special enclosures (called *Urvisgah*) present in Fire Temples.

An analysis of the Stum prayer shows that it is mainly a remembrance of several groups of Fravashis, as well as the individual remembrance of the Fravashis of different eminent personages of the religion. After the end of the Avesta portion of the prayer, a standard *Pazend* remembrance formula is recited wherein the name of the deceased soul for whom the prayer is being said is taken along with the names of other departed family members, and also the name of the sponsor who has paid for, or who is performing the ceremony himself. This is followed by the remembrance of several famous kings, warriors, priests and leading lights of the community from antiquity to the recent times. The ceremony ends with the standard Avesta closure formulae and the short prayers of *Ahmai Raescha* to *Kerfeh Mozd*.

Despite its simplicity, the Stum ceremony raises several questions: what is the rationale for the ceremony; how does the offering of physical food affect the departed soul; what kind of food should be placed in the ceremony; in what manner does the remembrance of the Fravashis of kings, noblemen, priests who lived thousands of years ago help the soul; how does the soul receive the benefits of the prayer said on earth; how does the recitation of prayers in a language which the person reciting and even the person in whose memory it is being recited do not understand help; these and a myriad other questions need to be adequately answered, a process which is possible only by delving into the Zarathushtrian mystic revelation.

### **The composition of the human body**

Several other preliminary analyses need to be done in order to unravel the mysteries behind the Stum ceremony, one of which involves understanding the constitution of the human body, its origin, and future destiny. According to Yasna 55, the human body is composed of nine parts: *Tanu*, *Gaetha*, *Azda*, *Keherp*, *Ushtan*, *Tevishi*, *Urvan*, *Baodangh* and *Fravashi*. The

Zarathushtrian mystic revelation has explained further that these bodies may be divided into three groups of three bodies each. The first group of three bodies, which we may call the Physical Group, consists of *Tanu* – the physical body, skeletal and muscular system; *Gaetha* – the various internal organs and diverse systems within the body; and *Azda* – the nervous and circulatory systems as well as the liquid profiles within the body. The second group of three bodies, which we may call the Ultra-physical Group, consists of the *Keherp* – the astral body which contains within it 16 spinning centres, called *Chakhras*, which have the ability to attract, absorb and distribute the diverse energies descending on to the earth; the *Ushtan* – the life breath of the body, connected to the life breath of the person's religion and its Prophet; and *Tevishi* – the emotions body which is also the seat of inspiration. The third group of three bodies, which we may refer to as the Divine group contains the *Urvan* – soul, part of the original whole soul which has been fragmented by the process of Mazdadata; the *Baodangh* – the Divine Wisdom of Ahura Mazda, a part of which is contained in every creation; and *Fravashi* – the Spirit of Implicit Obedience, the mother who guides all the other bodies.

### **The origin and ultimate destiny of the human body**

In order to understand the Stum ceremony we need to delve a little deeper into the origin of these bodies, which takes us to a point in time, when even time was not manifest. From the un-manifest Logos there arose an island of consciousness, called *Khao Afrazyamna*. Within this island two entities manifested themselves, *Baodangh* – Divine Wisdom, and *Urvan* – the Progressing One. Both were in a state of great turmoil, having being aroused from the deep slumber of the merged condition. The brilliance of *Ahu* – He who cannot be named, shone on them, several times in receding brilliance. Finally, the Baodangh assimilated the brilliance and cried out in ecstasy – ‘YOU are all and I am nothing, O Great One. I have understood why we have been separated, THY will be done!’ The Urvan, being the Advancing One could not completely comprehend the situation and cried out: ‘YOU are all, but I am something too!’ From this exhibition of Primeval Ego, due to Primeval Ignorance was born Primeval Evil Arising Out Of Ignorance – known in the Avesta as *Dravao*. The objective of all Creation post this occurrence was the removal of this Primeval Ego of Ignorance from the Urvan, and its conversion into the Selflessness of Understanding.

In order to achieve this goal, two steps were taken. Firstly the polluted Dravao was isolated within the Urvan in such a way that its contagion would not affect the behaviour of the

Urvan. Secondly as per the Plan of Creation, it was realised that it would be easier to reform the Urvan by breaking it up into smaller parts and working on these individual parts rather than an unwieldy whole. Hence the process of fragmentation, known in the Avesta as *Daseme Stutam* commenced. Thus the unified Urvan was now fragmented into various parts, based on specific rules, so that the process of cleansing could be better accomplished. Due to the separation of the polluting influence of the Dravao on the Urvan, the comprehension of the gravity of what it had done awakened in the fragmented Urvan, causing it to go through severe pangs of repentance. This comprehension gave rise to a unique body within the Urvan which was akin to the Unified Baodangh. The Urvan, thus fortified with Divine Wisdom now resolved to work in the service of Ahu. Over a period of time (far beyond human comprehension and metrics, yet finite) the blessings of the Mother of Creation – the Fravashi descended on the Urvan, giving rise to a divine connection between the fragmented Urvan and the Unified Fravashi. This connection was made permanent by the descent of an infinitesimal part of the Unified Fravashi into each part of the fragmented Urvan, which from thereon became known as the Fravashi of the fragmented Urvan. Thus each fragmented Urvan part now comprised the Urvan itself, the Baodangh and the Fravashi.

Armed with the blessings of the Fravashi and the Divine Wisdom of the Baodangh, the fragmented Urvan parts now requested that the Dravao which had been so far kept separate be handed over to them for reformation. The request was granted and each fragmented Urvan part was handed over its share of Dravao Ignorance to cleanse, reform and convert into Wisdom. As the process of fragmentation continued, the Urvan groups also moved through the different regions of the Immortal Universe (Hasti) and the Mundane Universe (Nisti), till a point was reached when the process reached our physical earth (Geti). It must be understood that the description of the whole process of fragmentation and descent of the Urvan from the Immortal and Mundane Universes has been very cursorily discussed here in order to focus on the main topic in hand. The process is spread out over vast expanses of time and space quite inconceivable to the human mind. A detailed analysis of this descent and fragmentation will be taken up in a future series.

Now as the process of fragmentation and descent of the Urvan groups reached the earth several events happened which are crucial to the understanding of our main topic of the Satum. The earth at this stage was quite different from the physical earth that we experience today. In the first instance, the Earth as well as the Urvan groups that had descended here

went through a process of fiery purification, (technically called *Ushi*) wherein both the earth as well as its inhabitants (the descended fragmented Urvan groups) took up a fiery form. Over an extended period of time (technically, over several *Zravane Daregho Khadata* periods) the Urvan groups as well as the earth passed through this fiery stage, until a juncture was reached when one-fourth of the Dravao Ignorance attached to each fragmented Urvan was reformed and converted to Wisdom. This converted Dravao part now changed form and transmuted into another body called the *Keherp*, which joined the other constituents of the fragmented Urvan, namely the Baodangh and the Fravashi. Within the *Keherp*, 16 energy receiving, processing and transmitting centres were developed, known as *Chakhras* which would help the fragmented Urvan in its task to cleanse and convert the remaining three-fourths of the Dravao Ignorance. Thus at the end of the first *Ushi* (technically called the *Atashi Ushi*), one-fourth of the Dravao attached to each of the fragmented Urvan groups was converted to a unique body called the *Keherp*. At the end of the *Atashi Ushi* period, the Earth and its inhabitants were enveloped back into the lower regions of the Mundane Universe (*Nisti*) for an extended period of time.

After this, the Earth detached itself from the Mundane Universe and embarked on the second *Ushi* stage, known as the *Badi Ushi*. At this time, the earth and its inhabitants comprising the fragmented Urvan groups took on an airy form and began the process of transmuting the second half of the three-fourth remaining Dravao Ignorance. Over an extended period of time, as the *Ushi* progressed, the second half of the remaining Dravao Ignorance was reformed, redeemed and ultimately converted into a new body, known as *Tevishi*. Thus at the end of the second *Ushi*, the fragmented Urvan, along with its long time friends, the Baodangh and the Fravashi, the earlier acquired *Keherp*, and the newly acquired *Tevishi* bodies reached a stage where half of the share of Dravao Ignorance of the fragmented Urvan was transmuted. As this second stage ended, the Earth underwent the process of involution, merging back into the lower regions of the Mundane Universe.

Thereafter, the third *Ushi* stage, known as the *Abi Ushi* commenced, wherein the Earth evolved from the lower regions of the Mundane Universe, taking on this time a watery form. The fragmented Urvan along with its other 4 constituents (Baodangh, Fravashi, *Keherp* and *Tevishi*) also took on a watery form, and began the process of transmuting one-half of the remaining original half Dravao Ignorance (the third quarter part). Over an extended period of time spread over several *Zravane Daregho Khadata* reigns, the Urvan and its co-workers

succeeded in transmuting the third quarter part of the Dravao Ignorance, which was now converted into a new body, called the *Ushtan-Ap* (in short the *Ushtan*). Thus at the end of the third Ushi, the Urvan, along with its four earlier co-workers and the freshly minted Ushtan had successfully completed three fourths of their original mission to convert the Dravao Ignorance. All that remained now, (and perhaps the most adamant part of the Dravao) was merely one-fourth of the original. As the third Ushi ended, the Earth went through the process of involution and merged back into the lower regions of the Mundane Universe.

Finally, the fourth Ushi, known as the *Khaki Ushi* commenced, with the Earth evolving into a physical form, slowly taking the shape and contours that we see today. The fragmented Urvan groups now descended on the earth taking a physical form, slowly evolving (not in the traditional sense of Darwinian evolution) into the human form we see today, as it attempted to transmute the last quarter of the adamant Dravao Ignorance. In order to do so, this last quarter of the Dravao Ignorance was combined with certain other constituents to form a further three bodies – which comprise the physical group of the 9 bodies mentioned in the Avesta – namely, the *Tanu* – the physical body, skeletal and muscular system; *Gaetha* – the various internal organs and diverse systems within the body; and *Azda* – the nervous and circulatory systems as well as the liquid profiles within the body. The process of transmuting the last quarter of the Dravao Ignorance is therefore an ongoing process and the fundamental mission of man on this earth, taking the help of the other 6 bodies and the systems and processes prescribed in his religion. This process has been ongoing since several thousand Zravane Daregho Khadata cycles, and will continue for several thousand more, until the last vestiges of the Dravao ignorance are finally transmuted into Wisdom. At this point in time, in the remote future, the mission of cleansing the Dravao given to the Urvan as its redemption for the Original Sin will eventually be accomplished and the physical earth, along with its inhabitants will undergo the final process of involution and merge back into the Mundane Universe, thereby beginning the long process of Frashokereiti. After an extended period of time the mundane Universe will merge back into the Immortal Universe, which will then ultimately merge with the Creator.

### **The process of transmutation**

The question arises: how does the process of transmuting the Dravao Ignorance into Wisdom work, because in our daily lives we are not even aware of this development. The

Zarathushtrian mystic revelation has shed great light on this hitherto unknown facet of our lives. Khshnoom reveals that the process of conversion of this last part of the Dravao Ignorance is an extremely tedious process because of the most adamant nature of the Dravao. Hence the Urvan and its other co-workers use the method of “overflow, retribution and redemption.” We may compare this method to the alternative methods used today to cure disease. It is widely recognised today that the allopathic system of medicine merely cures the symptoms of the disease, and not the root cause of the disease itself. On the other hand, the alternative system of homoeopathy disregards the symptoms and instead goes to the root cause which gave rise to the appearance of the symptom. In this method, it is observed that in the immediate days of the treatment, the symptoms become more aggravated and intense, as the medicine works on the root cause. However, after the initial overflow, the curing process begins and over a period of time, the disease and its fundamental cause are totally eradicated. The process of transmuting the last part of the Dravao ignorance is somewhat similar to this process. The Urvan and its co-workers place the Dravao (that is, the physical body of man) in such circumstances that its innate proclivity and tendency to do evil can flourish. Thus freed, the physical body, which is composed mainly of the Dravao Ignorance, and a few other constituents gives vent to its natural tendencies and commits evil. The working of nature is such that every effect has a cause and every cause gives rise to some effect. The Law of Action and Reaction comes into play and the physical body soon bears the fruits of its indulgences, which come in the form of disease, pestilence, misfortune, and ultimately, death. Post death, the process of redemption begins, which will be explained later.

### **The slumber of the Urvan**

The natural tendency of any object thrives even more when the atmosphere around it is conducive to its functioning. For example, without the presence of oxygen, there can be no fire; similarly a fish cannot live outside water. In the same manner, the natural tendency of the physical body mainly composed of the last remaining quarter of the Dravao Ignorance is to veer towards evil. However, it needs to be remembered that the physical body also contains within itself the Urvan and its two original co-workers – the Baodangh and Fravashi, as well as the three other bodies – Keherp, Ushtan and Tevishi - which arose as a result of the three earlier Ushi periods. The Urvan was made aware of its shortcomings long ago, and has since then been on the path of redemption. Similarly the Baodangh and Fravashi have no traces of Dravao Ignorance. Thus these exalted bodies have such an influence that no evil can

gain success in the place where they reside. However, this poses a problem since the redemption of the last quarter of the Dravao Ignorance is, as explained earlier, through the process of overflow, retribution and redemption. If the Urvan, Baodangh and Fravashi were to exert their benign influence over the physical body, then the natural tendencies of the Dravao Ignorance cannot thrive in their exalted presence. At the same time, the physical body cannot continue to live without the absence of the Urvan, Baodangh and Fravashi. Therefore an environment has to be created where the Urvan, Baodangh and Fravashi can remain in the body, and yet allow the Tanu, Gaetha and Azda components to display their innate tendencies and veer towards evil. In order to achieve this delicate condition, the Urvan willingly enters into a hibernation mode. The Urvan is put into a certain type of peaceful slumber, where it exists, but in an unconscious state, so that the physical body stops getting affected by its exalted presence and can display its true evil doing potential. This state of slumber of the Urvan is known as the status of "*Band Darosh*." The Urvan of every human enters this state somewhere around the age of between two to three years. It is for this reason that the first two years of a child are the years of pure innocence, when it is incapable of doing any evil, since the Urvan and its mind are active. As the age of the child increases, its physical mind (governed by the physical senses, which are mainly composed of the Dravao Ignorance) starts getting active, while the Urvan and its own thinking faculty slowly start entering the state of Band Darosh hibernation.

### **The dialogue of the cow and the wolf within the body and its ultimate result**

As the Urvan enters the state of hibernation, the physical mind of the physical body governed by the natural tendencies of the Dravao Ignorance, which is its fundamental building matter starts exerting its influence. At one end of the spectrum is the last vestige of the Dravao Ignorance, which is at its most adamant and desperate stage, wanting to destroy everything that comes in its wake; at the other end of the spectrum is the seat of conscience (called *Daena*), sitting in the 10<sup>th</sup> Chakhra of the Keherp body, situated near the region of the heart, which goes on reminding the physical mind of the futility of falling for items of a material or transitory nature. Every time the Dravao Ignorance motivates the physical body to think one more evil thought, speak one more lie, or commit one more vice, the Daena Chakhra reminds the physical mind of its true mission and counsels it against following that line of action. In the Zarathushtrian mystic revelation, this conflict is represented by the imagery of the cow and the wolf, both running after each other. The cow runs after the wolf, offering him her

milk (of kindness, and wisdom), whereas the wolf runs after the cow, eager to devour her flesh (indulge in the baser passions). Depending on the purity of life of the individual, which is governed by the degree of his adherence to the rules and prescriptions of his religion, as well as his mental strength developed by listening to the voice of the Daena, the individual may overcome the temptation and follow the right path. However, more often than not, the physical mind displaying its weakness for things of the material world, disregards the wise counsel of the Daena, falls prey to the temptation and commits the vice. In the cosmic balance sheet of the individual, a further liability is noted. In the rare case where the person successfully resists the temptation and instead commits an act of kindness, a strong asset is created in his cosmic balance sheet. The collection of liabilities in the cosmic balance sheet gives rise to a malefic entity known as “*Aeshma Druj*”, or the ‘Demon of Wrath’. The collection of assets in the cosmic balance sheet gives rise to a benign entity called the ‘Small or Personal *Sarosh*’. As man lives his life, he keeps on accumulating the good and bad points in his balance sheet. Given the material times we live in, the liabilities far outnumber the assets. This excess of liabilities causes disturbances in nature, and as per the law of cause and effect, some retribution may fall on the individual within the same life, which manifests itself in the form of disease, suffering, stress, misfortune or any other grief causing malady. At a certain point, the excess of liabilities reaches a breakeven point, which ultimately causes the death of the individual. Thus in the three stage process of overflow, retribution and redemption used by the Urvan to reform the last quarter of the Dravao Ignorance, the stage of overflow and some part of the stage of retribution, as may be accommodated in one physical life span, is somewhat accomplished. Now the process continues, but in places other than the physical earth.

### **Awakening the Urvan and the battle of the two clubs**

The last minutes of an individual’s life can be one of peace and quiet, or for some, moments of great despair and fear. A quick recap of the entire life flashes in front of the eye of the person. As the physical mind slowly begins to drift away, and as the bodily functions start shutting down one by one, it is also time for several other spiritual processes to begin within the Keherp, Ushtan and Tevishi. We will not enter into these in this essay, but shall mainly concentrate on the Urvan, since its behaviour now is relevant to our main topic. As described earlier, from around the age of two years, the Urvan and its thinking faculty (in short, the Urvan’s mind) were put into a state of hibernation called Band Darosh. Now, as the moment

of death approaches, it is necessary to rouse the Urvan from its slumber, so that it can take charge of the onward journey from earth to the other regions of the Mundane Universe. Another very important function allocated to the Urvan is to somehow show the sum total of the cosmic balance sheet to the physical mind of the person. The physical mind has however, started shutting down as the point of death nears. At some point in time in the future, the physical mind will have to be made aware of the resultant totality of the person's life. In order to execute these functions, the Band Darosh state of the Urvan has to be lifted, and the Urvan restored to its state of full brilliance.

Immediately after the death takes place, the physical body starts the process of stiffening and decay. Within the ultra-physical bodies of the Keherp, Ushtan and Tevishi, the Urvan resides in the 10<sup>th</sup> Chakhra of the Keherp situated near the region of the heart. In order to carry out its functions, the Urvan needs to shift residence from the 10<sup>th</sup> Chakhra to the 1<sup>st</sup> Chakhra, located on the top of the head. The Baodangh and Fravashi try to rouse the Urvan from its state of Band Darosh so that it may begin its journey. At this time, two new players enter the field. We had observed previously that the collection of bad thoughts, words and deeds accumulated in the cosmic balance sheet of the individual gives rise to an entity called *Aeshma Druj*, whereas the collection of good thoughts, words and deeds gives rise to the *Small Sarosh*. The *Aeshma Druj* as well as the *Small Sarosh* now become active players in the events occurring around the body of the dead person. The performance of bad thoughts, words and deeds by the individual in his life not only gave birth to *Aeshma Druj*, but also invested in him a specific power, technically known in Avesta as "*Khravi Draosh*" – 'the cruelly wounding club'. In the same manner, the performance of good thoughts, words and deeds gave birth to the *Small Sarosh* and invested in him the specific power known in Avesta as "*Darshi Draosh*" – 'the hard hitting (evil smiting) club'. Now, as the Baodangh and Fravashi try to awaken the Urvan from its many years of slumber, the *Aeshma Druj* and the *Small Sarosh* both take positions around the Urvan. Every time the Urvan awakens from its slumber and tries to comprehend what is happening, the *Aeshma Druj* steps in with his *Khravi Draosh* – the cruelly wounding club, and inflicts a heavy blow with this club on the Urvan. The wounded Urvan 'faints', that is, goes back to its slumber due to the effect of the blow. At the same time, the *Small Sarosh* steps in with his *Darshi Draosh* – the evil smiting club and tries to hit the *Aeshma Druj* so that he can be rendered unconscious and stop causing grief to the struggling Urvan. Thus the *Small Sarosh* tries to lift the shackles of the Band

Darosh, now strengthened by the blows of Aeshma Druj; whereas the Aeshma Druj tries to prevent the awakening of the Urvan and its subsequent journey.

### **Arrival at Chinvat and the role of the Urvan there**

At this point in time, it is the performance of the relevant after death ceremonies, including consigning the body to the Towers of Silence and the first four days observances, which help the Urvan move its position from the 10<sup>th</sup> Chakhra to the 1<sup>st</sup> Chakhra and finally facilitate its leaving the physical earth on the dawn of the fourth day after death. Based on the quality of the prayers and observances, the conduct of the person's life, and several other factors, the Urvan, along with the Baodangh and Fravashi leave the physical earth to reach another realm within the Mundane Universe, called the region of *Chinvat*, where the process of redemption can commence. On its arrival at Chinvat from the physical earth, the Urvan is once again confronted by the two entities which have arisen from the thoughts, words and deeds of the person on earth, namely Aeshma Druj and the Small Sarosh. As the Urvan tries to commence its work of redemption, it faces the cruel blows from the club of Aeshma, while the Small Sarosh valiantly tries to stave off the attack on the Urvan. Yet again, the Urvan begins to fall into the slumber of Band Darosh due to the blows of Aeshma, thereby jeopardising its mission to redeem the last quarter of the Dravao Ignorance. A point is reached when the Small Sarosh realises that he is losing the battle. It is now time to call for help.

### **The saviours: the Yazata Sraosha & the Gaas of Zarathushtra**

The wondrous machinery of nature is such that there is never any destruction – there is only conversion and transmutation. In order to efficiently carry out the Plan of the Creator, embodied in the Song of Creation – the *Ahunavar* – known to humans as the *Yatha Ahu Vairyo* prayer, the divine machinery has appointed various helpers and associates for those who are in need of assistance. These helpers are placed at specific stations in the Immortal and Mundane Universes. The most important of all these entities is the Yazata Sraosha, who is the Prime Minister of the earth. In addition to these entities, there exist several 'power stations' where the generic Divine Munificence and other time-specific Divine Blessings are stored in a concentrated form which can be used by the Divine Entities when they perform their function of assisting those who may be in need. Within the Mundane Universe (*Nisti*), in a particular plane (*Dakhyu*) is located the most important and relevant station for humans

known as the *Gaas of Zarathushtra*. Divinely constructed by the Prophet as part of His mission on the earth and the Mundane Universe, one of the many functions of the Gaas is to act as the central receiving, processing, granting and distribution centre for any and all requests made by any human, in any need, at any time. There are specific methods of making these requests (in the form of specific Avesta *Manthras* and compositions); and the granting of requests is subject to certain terms and conditions, laid down in the religion as spiritual practices (*Tarikats*). The connection between a follower of Zarathushtra and the Gaas is established and formalised by the performance of the Navjote ceremony, provided it is done in the proper manner, at the right time and place, by those who have established their rightful spiritual authority to perform such a majestic ceremony. This connection is stored, during the life time of the individual on earth within the ultra-physical body *Ushtan* (life breath) and breaks at the time of death.

### **The search for a messenger between the Urvan and the Gaas of Zarathushtra**

As the Small Sarosh realises that it faces defeat at the hands of Aeshma, (not because evil triumphs over good, but because the life the person lived was such that his bad thoughts , words and deeds totally overwhelmed the good thoughts, words and deeds), its innate and divine thinking faculty comes to the decision that it should approach those who have been appointed precisely to help in such situations. Thus the Small Sarosh decides to ask for help from the Gaas of Zarathushtra, and also the Yazata Sraosha. The question arises: how to send the request for help, the divine SOS to the Gaas of Zarathushtra, since it is not possible for the Small Sarosh to leave the soul unprotected and itself approach the Gaas. It is now that the Urvan and its protector hope for help from the living.

### **The responsibility of the living towards the departed**

Individuals are tied to each other by various bonds, the most important of which is the bond between parents and their children. The responsibility of the child towards his parent is but obvious in terms of the physical, social and emotional ties that bind them in such a unique relationship. It is often presumed by many that this responsibility towards parents concludes on their death. Yet, according to the Zarathushtrian mystic revelation, the real responsibilities of a son or daughter begin after the death of their parent. It is the religious responsibility of the offspring to ensure the onward spiritual progress of the Urvan of his parents. As such,

there can be no time frame attached to this responsibility, hence the question of how long religious ceremonies should be performed in memory of the deceased is irrelevant. This enormous responsibility put on the shoulders of the offspring is formalised during the *Pad-Ruz* ceremony (also called the *Uthamna*) where a list of the spiritual responsibilities of the offspring used to be recounted by the officiating priest in the presence of the assembly (*Anjuman*). The discharge of this responsibility is to be done in consultation with the family priest (*Panthaky*), who is supposed to lay out a time table for the entire year. Just as nature has created an elaborate infrastructure to help the progress of the Urvan in the higher realms, in the same manner, the spiritual responsibilities of the offspring are an indispensable part of the holistic machinery which help the Urvan reach its desired goal. Any shirking of this responsibility, for whatever reasons, can have disastrous consequences on the progress of the Urvan of the deceased.

### **How do ceremonies help?**

The question often asked is this: how do ceremonies help the Urvan? In order to answer this question, an understanding is required of the various processes which happen during any ceremony. In general, the key elements of any ceremony would include:

1. An atmosphere conducive to the performance of the ceremony (ritual purity)
2. The person performing the ceremony (priest or laity)
3. The recitation of specific Avesta Manthras
4. Specific fruit, flowers or food items
5. Specific utensils or apparatus
6. The presence of a fire, or lamp
7. The remembrance of the name of the person for whom the ceremony is being performed

Firstly, an atmosphere has to be created which is conducive for the performance of any ceremony. In addition to physical cleanliness and silence, there are several conditions which need to be satisfied before a place is elevated to the status where the sacred Avesta Manthras can be recited. This is the primary reason why Fire Temples are today the preferred place where all ceremonies are performed since it has become nearly impossible to meet all the conditions of ritual purity in modern homes. Contained within this conducive environment (technically called *Taigi*), the person who will perform the ceremony now needs to create a favourable environment within his own body, so that his mind, body and soul – all three work

in unison – the tongue reciting the Manthras, the mind running thoughts which are corresponding to the Manthras, while the soul sends out a constant signal – attracting the *Fravashi* of the deceased for whom the ceremony is being performed. Once this elevated state has been achieved, the recitation of Avesta Manthras commences. The vibrations produced by this recitation now band together to form a specific, though unseen silhouette – technically known as the *Fareshta* of the ceremony – the unseen messenger, who now prepares itself to provide the required help to the Urvan of the deceased. The *Fareshta* now begins the process of gathering strength – by assimilating the spiritual potencies present in the specific fruit, flowers or food placed; by drawing power from the elevated surroundings of the environment, and the spiritual prowess of the person reciting the prayers; and by the performance of various kinetics using the specific apparatus of the ceremony. The spiritual beacon transmitted by the Urvan of the person reciting the prayer is further transported by the upward moving smoke and fragrance of the fire and incense. At a specific point, the name of the person in whose memory the ceremony is being conducted is recited, along with the name of his father, and other deceased family members. The combination of the elevated environment; the charged person; the newly created *Fareshta*; the potencies of the fruit, flower, food and utensils; and the homing signal of the Urvan along with the fragrant fire energy all create a powerful, throbbing nucleus which attracts the attention of the *Fravashi* of the deceased person. The *Fravashi* arrives at that spot, and realises that an attempt is being made to help the Urvan. As the ceremony progresses, the *Fravashi* and the *Fareshta* of the ceremony now rise up, and move to the place where the Urvan of the deceased is situated, where the *Fareshta* hands over the potencies it has collected in the ceremony to the Urvan.

### **A messenger is found**

As the Small Sarosh realises that it needs help from the Gaas of Zarathushtra to fight Aeshma, it also recognises that it needs someone to requisition the help. *The messenger for this purpose is the Fareshta created from the Stum ceremony.* As the Stum ceremony is performed and its corresponding *Fareshta* formed, the *Fravashi* of the deceased arrives at the spot and collects the *Fareshta* and heads back to the Urvan. The spiritual potency collected by the *Fareshta* from the specific fruit, flowers and ritually cooked food put in the ceremony is now handed over to the Urvan. This potency is utilised for two purposes – as medicine for the Band Darosh of the Urvan; and as nourishment for the Small Sarosh in its fight against Aeshma. Meanwhile, the *Fareshta* carries out its function as messenger to the Gaas of

Zarathushtra and the Yazata Sraosha. As the activated Urvan and the fortified Small Sarosh recommence their battle against Aeshma, help arrives from the Gaas of Zarathushtra in the form of the Yazata Sraosha who now aids the Small Sarosh in overcoming the blows of Aeshma. This is the ongoing battle being fought by the Urvan of the deceased as it struggles to remove the shackles of Band Darosh and progress further till it finally succeeds in its ultimate goal – to convert the last remaining quarter of the Dravao Ignorance. It may take many thousands of years, but finally a day will come, when the process will be completed.

Our objective in this essay has been to demonstrate the practical utility of Zarathushtrian rituals and briefly outline the great purpose they serve in the Plan of Ahu. Those who speak ill of this sacrament put their own Urvan at great risk. May they see the light of the Zarathushtrian mystic revelation and arouse themselves from the slumber of ignorance, for rightly it is said: 'he who shall remember his dead shall be remembered when dead.'

**Primary source:**

*The Fravardin Yasht: Frashogard Anusheh Ruvan Memorial Volume*, Volume 30, Issue 3-4, 1940, by Dr. Framroze S. Chiniwalla.