

## Mourning and mortuary ceremonies

Mourning period is observed after the passing away of someone dear and it is observed for up to one year. There are series of activities and physical and visible expressions of the mourning observed by the household members of a deceased. This includes type of clothing they would wear, ceremonies conducted and how certain usual habits in the household is transformed with a stark visibility of grief and lament. In the last decades the mourning period encompassed wide range of ceremonies; these are funeral and burial, *oshi sari taxta* (a meal given to the funeral participants on the day), *sebegaha* (commemoration of the third eve), *dushanbegi* and *jumagi* (commemorative feasts given on Mondays and Fridays), *bist* – commemoration of the twentieth day, *chil* – fortieth day, *shashmohagi* – sixth month, eleventh month and first anniversary. Currently after the funeral only the third, fortieth and annual commemoration days are observed in large scale by inviting friends, relatives and members of community. The remainder observances are limited only to the close circle of the family of the deceased. In general the mourning ceremonies, particularly commemorative feasts are known as *khudoi*, *oshi khudoi* and *nondihi*.

Mourning starts from the event of the death with the lamenting howling of the members of the family. In the past there were known when during the lament women would untie their hair, strike themselves in chest and face, pull their hair or scratch their faces. Young women and elderly ladies would cut the fringes of their hair short as demonstration of their deep grief.

In many regions of Tajikistan there were a practice of professional mourners-lamenters – a ladies who would come to the deceased house and join the family to lament by singing songs of lament and mourning. These professional mourners are known as «*ovozandoz*» (Regar region), «*gūyanda*» (Hisar region), «*nolakun*» (Faizabad, Ramit and Rasht regions), «*haidaregh-khon*» (Darvaz region), «*kushovoza*» (Hisar and Obi Garm regions).

One of the ancient forms of the mourning ceremonies of Tajik people was mourning dances called «*sadr*», «*sama*'» and «*sudur*» which were



performed on the funeral day at the home of the deceased. «*Sadr*»-dance was a group dance performed by women during the funeral of a young adult person.

In Badakhshan province a mourning dance is known as «*pāyamal*», which can be performed a group or individual by both men and women. The motions in this dance are very expressive and demonstrate the deep grief and unhappiness.

Prior burring a funeral *namāz* (ritual prayer) is performed by men and after the burial these return to the home of the deceased where they will perform dedicatory recital of Quran.

In the deceased's household cooking is prohibited for three days and only after the performing the «*sebegohi*» ritual cooking can be permitted. This ceremony is also known as «*halolkunon*», «*siyohburoron*» and «*siyohshuvon*» during which a small animal is slaughtered and a meal is cooked. Usually close relatives and neighbors are called for this ceremony. This is followed by the «*haft*», «*haft*» or «*oshi sari haft*» ceremony commemorated on either the fourth or sixth day after the burial.

The «*chil*» ceremony (commemoration of the fortieth day) is observed between the 35 and 37th day after the burial and it is big event where members of community, far immediate and distance relatives are called. Usually a big cattle is slaughtered to cook soup or pilav. Women cook «*atalai safed*» (unfried flour porridge with milk) and *kalama* (fried bread). Among the population of Hisar and Rasht regions the fortieth commemorative day is called «*khātir*»



jamii arvoh» (settling of the spirit of the deceased) and «azoburoyon» (the leaving of the mourning). Usually after the celebrating of the fortieth day members of the deceased's person's family will gradually discontinue their mourning. In some parts of the Zarafshan valley men would not shave till the fortieth day and for women listening to the music or even participation to festive events were prohibited.

Women mourning clothing during one year is typically made from plain fabrics of white or dark colors and they will not adorn themselves with jewelry. Those mourning will refrain from

participating in festive, such as wedding parties and wearing different type of clothing and attending festive ceremonies becomes possible only after the first anniversary ceremony is observed. In contrary the mourning period is 'lighter' for men and usually lasts till the fortieth day and afterwards they can participate in social gatherings.

The first death anniversary is celebrated similar to the fortieth day where all distance and close relatives, members of community, coworkers etc. are invited to the feast. After celebrating the first anniversary all the practices withheld during the mourning year will be permissible again.

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