
Hindu

Rites of Passage

A Historical Overview

JAYANTA BHATTACHARYA

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Preface

Like, most of the Indians, I was always interested to know how my ancestors welcomed a newborn infant, celebrated marriage or encountered death in the past four millenniums of our civilization, but I could not get enough time for a systematic study earlier. I knew that, Hinduism being the major and most ancient religion in South Asia, the rites of passage have been mostly celebrated throughout most part of its history as Hindu religious ceremonies. Therefore, almost four years from now, I started my journey in search of a comprehensive work on the Hindu rites of passage. During my quest, I found that the major works on this subject belong to either of the two distinct genres. The works belonging to the first genre, written by the most erudite modern scholars, like P.V. Kane, Rajbali Pandey, Ram Gopal, Willem Caland and Jan Gonda and many others are extremely rich in material from the Hindu normative texts and their scholastic insight, but the normative texts are not discussed in these studies in the historical perspective. On the other hand, the works belonging to the second genre, written by the eminent cultural anthropologists all over the world are mostly based on the ethnographic data and the historical evolution of the rites of passage is not elaborated from the normative texts. A study, combining the both is the need of the hour and it can be made possible only by a scholar, who has the mastery over the diverse subjects. Such mastery is already evident in the recent works of the scholars like Ute Hüsken. Indeed, a significant number of research papers and monographs written by the finest brains of the world in the last few decades have made tremendous inroads into many hitherto unknown aspects of the Hindu rites of passage, but only a few of them are known outside the academic arena.

I must confess here that, I did not get the opportunity to study any one of the subjects, which are required to be mastered for such a comprehensive work in any university. Still, I decided to attempt for collating the related materials to present them in a systematic manner with the hope that it can be used as a preparatory material for a comprehensive study on this subject in a future date by an expert. If my study is really found useful by such an expert as a starting point for his project, the purpose of this work will be accomplished. Due to lack of resources, I could only access a very limited number of texts and modern works for the preparation of this edition. However, I can assure the readers that I will continue my endeavour to access more materials on the life-cycle rites, most of which are still available only as manuscripts and incorporate the data extracted from them in the future editions.

I have to accept the fact that there is a huge room for improvement or elimination of the unintentional mistakes in this study. It is my humble request to all readers to come forward with the suggestions and criticism. I can assure that in the next edition, they will be definitely taken care of. I would also like to admit here that a major shortcoming, which I experienced while organizing the materials for this work is the lack of proper guidance. If any sympathetic scholar agrees to guide me in future, I promise to bring forth a much better edition.

At the end, I like to express my gratitude to the Digital Library of India. Most of the ancient and medieval texts I cited in this study are downloaded from this site.

1st January, 2015
Mumbai, Maharashtra

Jayanta Bhattacharya

***“asato mā sadgamaya;
tamaso mā jyotirgamaya;
mrtyormāmṛtaṃ gamaya.”***

Śatapathabrāhmaṇa XIV.4.1.30

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Timeline of South Asian history

- **Proto-historic period** **3000 BCE – 600 BCE**
- **Ancient period** **600 BCE – 700 CE**
- **Early medieval period** **700 CE – 1200 CE**
- **Late medieval period** **1200 CE – 1707 CE**
- **Pre-modern period** **1707 CE – 1858 CE**
- **Modern period** **1858 CE – till date**

Transliteration of Sanskrit alphabet

In this study, the words and phrases in Vedic Sanskrit/ Classical Sanskrit as well as the other Indic languages are transliterated using the IAST letters in most of the cases. Following are the Sanskrit letters in the *Devanāgarī* script and their equivalent IAST (International Alphabet for Sanskrit Transliteration) letters. It is to be noted that vedic accents are not used in this study.

अ	आ	इ	ई	उ	ऊ	ऋ	ॠ	ऌ	ॡ
a	ā	i	ī	u	ū	r̥	r̄	l̥	l̄
ए	ऐ	ओ	औ	अं	अः				
e	ai	o	au	m̐	ḥ				
क	ख	ग	घ	ङ	च	छ	ज	झ	ञ
k	kh	g	gh	ṅ	c	ch	j	jh	ñ
ट	ठ	ड	ढ	ण	त	थ	द	ध	न
ṭ	ṭh	ḍ	ḍh	ṇ	t	th	d	dh	n
प	फ	ब	भ	म	य	र	ल	ळ	व
p	ph	b	bh	m	y	r	l	ḷ	v
श	ष	स	ह						
ś	ṣ	s	h						

Abbreviations:

Abbreviation	Text	Abbreviation	Text
ABr	<i>Aitareyabrāhmaṇa</i>	LŚS	<i>Lāṭyāyanaśrautasūtra</i>
ĀgGS	<i>Āgniveśyagr̥hyasūtra</i>	MārP	<i>Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa</i>
AgnP	<i>Agnipurāṇa</i>	MatsP	<i>Matsyapurāṇa</i>
ĀGP	<i>Āśvalāyanagr̥hyapariśiṣṭa</i> (Nārāyaṇa)	MBr	<i>Mantrabrāhmaṇa</i>
ĀGS	<i>Āśvalāyanagr̥hyasūtra</i>	MDh	<i>Mānavadharmasāstra</i>
ĀpDh	<i>Āpastambadharmasūtra</i>	MGS	<i>Mānavagr̥hyasūtra</i>
ĀpGS	<i>Āpastambagr̥hyasūtra</i>	MīmS	<i>Mīmāṃsāsūtra</i> of Jaimini
ĀpMP	<i>Āpastambamantrapāṭha</i>	MNT	<i>Mahānirvāṇatantra</i>
ĀpPS	<i>Āpastambapit̥medhasūtra</i>	MS	<i>Maitrāyaṇīsamhitā</i>
ĀpŚS	<i>Āpastambaśrautasūtra</i>	MŚS	<i>Mānavaśrautasūtra</i>
ĀŚS	<i>Āśvalāyanaśrautasūtra</i>	Mitā	<i>Ṛjunitākṣarā</i> of Vijñāneśvara
AVP	<i>Atharvaveda, Paippalādasamhitā</i>	NārP	<i>Nārādapurāṇa</i>
AVŚ	<i>Atharvaveda, Śaunakīyasamhitā</i>	NirS	<i>Nirṃayasindhu</i>
BāU	<i>Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad</i>	PadP	<i>Padmapurāṇa</i>
BDh	<i>Baudhāyanadharmasūtra</i>	PBr	<i>Pañcaviṃśabrāhmaṇa</i>
BGS	<i>Baudhāyanagr̥hyasūtra</i>	PDh	<i>Pārāśaradharmasāstra</i>
BGŚS	<i>Baudhāyanagr̥hyaśeṣasūtra</i>	PGS	<i>Pāraskaragr̥hyasūtra</i>
BhGS	<i>Bhāradvājagr̥hyasūtra</i>	RV	<i>Ṛgveda, Śākalasamhitā</i>
BhPS	<i>Bhāradvājapit̥medhikasūtra</i>	RVKh	<i>Ṛgveda Khilāni</i> (in Kashmir ms of RV)
BhŚS	<i>Bhāradvājaśrautasūtra</i>	ŚBM	<i>Śatapathabrāhmaṇa Mādhyam̐dina</i>
BPS	<i>Baudhāyanapit̥medhasūtra</i>	ŚGS	<i>Śāṅkhāyanagr̥hyasūtra</i>
BŚS	<i>Baudhāyanaśrautasūtra</i>	SmC	<i>Smṛticandrikā</i>
DŚS	<i>Drāhyāyanaśrautasūtra</i>	SṃM	<i>Saṃskāramayūkha</i>
GarūḍP	<i>Garūḍapurāṇa</i>	SṃP	<i>Saṃskāraprakāśa</i>
GarūḍSār	<i>Garūḍapurāṇasāroddhāra</i>	SṃR	<i>Saṃskāratnamālā</i>
GBr	<i>Gopathabrāhmaṇa</i>	ŚŚS	<i>Śāṅkhāyanaśrautasūtra</i>
GDh	<i>Gautamadharmasūtra</i>	ŚudP	<i>Śuddhiprakāśa</i>
GGS	<i>Gobhilagr̥hyasūtra</i>	ŚudT	<i>Śuddhitattva</i>
GPS	<i>Gautamapit̥medhasūtra</i>	SV	<i>Sāmaveda, Kauthumasamhitā</i>
HDh	<i>Hiraṇyakeśīdharmasūtra</i>	SV(J)	<i>Sāmaveda, Jaiminīyasamhitā</i>
HGS	<i>Hiraṇyakeśīgr̥hyasūtra</i>	TĀ	<i>Taittirīya Āraṇyaka</i>
HGŚS	<i>Hiraṇyakeśīgr̥hyaśeṣasūtra</i>	TBr	<i>Taittirīyabrāhmaṇa</i>
HPS	<i>Hiraṇyakeśīpit̥medhasūtra</i>	TS	<i>Taittirīyasamhitā</i>
HŚS	<i>Hiraṇyakeśīśrautasūtra</i>	ViṣDh	<i>Vaiṣṇavadharmasūtra</i>
JBr	<i>Jaiminīyabrāhmaṇa</i>	VārGS	<i>Vārāhagr̥hyasūtra</i>
JGS	<i>Jaiminigr̥hyasūtra</i>	VārŚS	<i>Vārāhaśrautasūtra</i>
KauśGS	<i>Kauṣītakagr̥hyasūtra</i>	VasDh	<i>Vasiṣṭhadharmasūtra</i>
KauśS	<i>Kauśikasūtra</i>	VDh	<i>Vedavyasīyadharmasāstra</i>
KauthG	<i>Kauthumagr̥hya</i>	VDhP	<i>Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa</i>
KGS	<i>Kāṭhakagr̥hyasūtra</i>	ViṣP	<i>Viṣṇupurāṇa</i>
KāS	<i>Kāṭhakasamhitā</i>	VkhDh	<i>Vaikhānasadharmasūtra</i>
KP	<i>Karmapradīpa</i>	VkhGS	<i>Vaikhānasagr̥hyasūtra</i>
KpS	<i>Kapiṣṭhala-Kāṭhakasamhitā</i>	VkhŚS	<i>Vaikhānasaśrautasūtra</i>
KhādGS	<i>Khādiragr̥hyasūtra</i>	VSM	<i>Vājasaneyīsamhitā Mādhyam̐dina</i>
KŚS	<i>Kātyāyanaśrautasūtra</i>	YDh	<i>Yājñavalkīyadharmasāstra</i>
Laghu-Āś	<i>Laghu-Āśvalāyanasmṛti</i>	YS	<i>Yamasmṛti</i>

Chapter 1

Samskārāḥ: Hindu rites of passage

Every culture in the world, ancient, medieval or modern has devised its own ways to deal with biological and sociological events, which typify life. Performing public ritual ceremonies, mostly religious, to help an individual and the community to deal with the emotionally charged situations during crises of life or at the time of the transition from one social identity to another, is a common phenomenon across the cultures. In 1909, Belgian anthropologist Arnold van Gennep (1873-1957) noticed this commonality and named these ceremonies as 'les rites de passage' (the rites of passage). On the basis of his studies, Van Gennep identified three successive but separate stages of these rites of passage: an initial or pre-liminal stage of separation from the earlier identity, a transitional or liminal stage of destruction of the earlier identity and creation of a new identity and the final or post-liminal stage of incorporation into the society with new identity.¹ In South Asia, the rites of passage are celebrated as the Hindu religious ceremonies, as Hinduism remained as the most dominant, ancient and vibrant religion in this geographical region.

In South Asia, the adherents of the dominant sets of intertwined beliefs were together explicitly termed as the 'Hindu' for the first time by Raja Ram Mohan Roy in his work *Translation of an Abridgement of the Vedant* (1816). However, there are earlier instances of usage of this word in the same meaning in some late medieval texts and the articles of the European authors. These sets of intertwined religious beliefs, designated together as Hinduism in the early 19th century, are actually based upon very ancient religious traditions of South Asia originated either in the proto-historical period or earlier. In fact, unlike the other three major world religions, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity, Hinduism was never based on a common set of beliefs codified in a particular canonical scripture. The adherents of the Hinduism rather led a particular way of life, following a large common set of traditions, rituals and practices, defined as *dharma* in the Hindu normative texts since the last centuries of the first millennium BCE. This huge set of common traditions, which was the basis for formation of the Brahmanical perception of *varṇāśramadharmā* in the early centuries of the Common Era, comprises a large number of intersecting sub-sets of common traditions based on the social class (*varṇa*), caste (*jāti*) and gender of the adherent. These common rituals performed by the followers of Hinduism include the rites of passage of the life cycle.

Āśrama (stages of life)	Brāhmaṇ (4)	Kṣatriya (3)	Vaiśya (2)	Śūdra (1)
<i>brahmacarya</i> (stage of a student)	√	√		
<i>gārhasthya</i> (stage of a householder)	√	√	√	√
<i>vānaprastha</i> (stage of a forest hermit)	√	√	√	
<i>saṃnyāsa</i> (stage of a renouncer)	√			

Figure 1: Brahmanical perception of *Varṇāśramadharmā* in the early centuries of the Common Era (*Vāmanapurāṇa* 15.62-63)

In the last three millenniums, the Hindu *śāstras* (normative texts) have examined their religion in almost every possible way and developed the terminology to explain most of its aspects. Most of these terms are unique to Hinduism and cannot be translated properly in to any non-Indic language. Hence, in this study, the majority of the terms related to Hinduism have been mentioned in Sanskrit or other Indic languages for the better understanding and their literal translations in to English have been provided within the brackets.

In the early vedic ritual texts, influenced by the predominant importance of the sacrificial rituals in the contemporary social context, the rites of passage of the life-cycle were codified as the sacrifices belonging to a genre of domestic sacrifices known as the *pākayajña* (the sacrifices, which involve offering of cooked food as oblations into fire) and included them among its various categories.

Since the early centuries of the Common Era, the life-cycle rites of passage are being mentioned in the *smṛti*² texts as *saṃskāra* (plural *saṃskārāḥ*), which literally means “a sanctifying rite” for the body of the performer and every *saṃskāra* has been prescribed as obligatory, whenever the occasion requires it. In contrast, *Dīkṣā* (literally, “initiation”), the rite of passage for religious initiation in Hinduism (as well as in Jainism) was always remained a voluntary one.

As the Hindu *śāstras* (normative texts) are composed only by the Brāhmaṇs (social class of the priests, performances of most of the codified life-cycle rites prescribed by the *śāstras* are restricted to the Hindu males belonging to the three elite ‘twice-born’ *varṇas* (i.e., the social classes of the priests, rulers and commoners) within the framework of Brahmanical orthopraxy. As a result, performances of a significant number of life-cycle rites for a Hindu female or a Śūdra (social class of the slaves) or an 'Antyaja'³ have always remained grounded in the folk traditions outside this framework and the descriptions about the performances of these life-cycle rites are not available in the *śāstras*. Major source of information about the rites of passage performed by them is the ethnographic field studies of the modern era, the travelogues of the ancient and medieval foreign travellers, the district gazetteers published during the British rule in South Asia and the descriptions found in the ancient, medieval and modern literature in almost every Indic language. As an example, to get a detailed information on the Hindu female life-cycle rites such as *Valaikāppu* (literally, “adorning with bangles”) and *Puchutal* (literally, “bedecking with flowers”), the pregnancy rites performed in Tamil Nadu or *Sādh* (literally, “gratification of cravings”), a pregnancy rite performed in Bengal, we have to depend on ethnographic field studies by the modern scholars.

The scope of this study has been kept limited to the construction of a historical overview of the Hindu rites of passage, based on the data available in the written sources, mostly in the Hindu *śāstras* (normative texts). In certain cases, archaeological data also have been used for a comparative study. The Hindu *śāstras*, in spite of being composed by the Brāhmaṇs and their study being limited to the Brāhmaṇs, never ignored the contemporary customary practices of the other social classes throughout the historical period and continuous attempts have been made by them to codify these practices. Similarly, the social groups who lived beyond the framework of Brahmanical orthopraxy also incorporated many rituals prescribed by the Hindu *śāstras* in their life-cycle ceremonies. So a broad outline of the celebrations of the life-cycle rites by the Hindus of South Asia in ancient and medieval period, irrespective of their perceived social class can be constructed, based on these textual sources. In modern India, with the rapid urbanization, the cultural differences between the social groups as well as the social classes are reducing every day and as of now, except perhaps the marriage and funeral rites, influence of the ritual texts on the performances of the life-cycle rites has been reduced to a minimal. The elements of the Hindu marriage rite in different regions of India are also changing with the time and a significant number of cross-cultural elements are being added continuously.

1.1 Textual Sources

The vedic texts, vedic ritual texts, some of the *dharmasāstra* texts, the medieval commentaries of these texts and the independent digests on *smṛti* are the major textual sources for the study of the performance of life-cycle rites in line with the Brahmanical framework of orthopraxy. The *Mahābhārata*, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and several *Purāṇas* also included the descriptions of the life-cycle rites within the periphery of the same framework. In this study, the descriptions from the *āgama* texts are also included to understand the nature of the performances of the life-cycle rites beyond the instructions of the vedic texts and vedic ritual texts.

1.1.1 Vedic texts

Early descriptions of the marriage rite are found in the *Ṛgveda* (*Śākalasaṃhitā*) X.85 and the

Śaunakīyasamhitā XIV.1-2 (*Paippalādasamhitā* XVIII.1-14) of the *Atharvaveda*. The descriptions of ancient funeral rites are found in the *Ṛgveda* (*Śākalasamhitā*) X.14-18 and *Śaunakīyasamhitā* XVIII.1-4 of the *Atharvaveda*. The detailed descriptions for the funerary rites are found in the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* and the *Jaiminīyabrāhmaṇa*. An early description of the initiation rite, *Upanayana* is available in the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* XI.5.4.1-17 and references to this rite are found in the *Gopathabrāhmaṇa* I.2.1-8.

However, most of the life-cycle rites are only occasionally mentioned in the early vedic texts. Perhaps, the exceptions are a short Sāmavedic *brāhmaṇa* text, the *Mantrabrāhmaṇa* (as the first two *prapāṭhakas* or sections of the *Chāndogyabrāhmaṇa* are known) and two fragmentary *brāhmaṇa* texts of Kṛṣṇayajurvedic *Kāṭhaka śākhā*, the *Upanayanabrāhmaṇa* and the *Śrāddhabrāhmaṇa*. The *Mantrabrāhmaṇa* is a collection of the *mantras* (the *mantras*, one of the essential components of any Hindu ritual, are the formulas and incantations, believed as possessing supernatural power, which must be recited or murmured according to the instruction to get the desired result) for usage in various domestic rituals. The majority of the *mantras* of this text are prescribed for usage in marriage and pregnancy rites by the vedic ritual texts. The passages from the sixth *prapāṭhaka* of the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* are used by several vedic ritual texts as the *mantras* for the funeral rites. Detailed descriptions of the rites for pregnancy and childbirth are found in one of the early *Upaniṣads*, the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* VI.4.

1.1.2 Vedic ritual texts

Earliest precise, systematic and detailed descriptions of the life-cycle rites are found in the *gṛhyasūtras*, a genre of vedic ritual texts, which codified the *gṛhyakarmas* (domestic rituals). The probable intended purpose of the composition of the *gṛhyasūtras* was to equip the performer or the priest with an instruction manual for the proper procedure to perform of the *gṛhya* (domestic) rites including the life-cycle rites in their codified form, in a pattern, similar to the *śrauta* (solemn) rites. The performances of both of these genres of rites were believed in the contemporary predominantly rural South Asia as the essential acts for a married male to achieve religious merits. Most of the early *gṛhyasūtra* texts like the BGS (ca. 6th century BCE) began with the description of *Vivāha*, the marriage rite and ended with the description of *Samāvartana*, the rite for ending vedic study.⁴

Early descriptions of the funeral rites are found in the *śrautasūtras* (handbooks for performance of the solemn rites), mostly in context of the death of a performer of the solemn rites or his wife. The *gṛhyasūtra* texts, which narrated the funeral rites, added the descriptions of the funerary rites for those who are not eligible to perform the solemn rites also. This same tradition was followed in the *pitṛmedhasūtra*⁵ (specialized handbooks for the performance of the funerary rites) texts belonging to some of the vedic *śākhās* (literally “branches”; the theological schools formed due to the differences in opinion about the procedures for performance of the rituals). Some vedic *śākhās* also had *śrāddhakalpa* texts for detailed description of post-cremation funerary rites and the rites for veneration of the ancestors.

1.1.2.1 Ṛgvedic domestic ritual texts

Three extant *gṛhyasūtra* texts belonging to the Ṛgvedic *śākhās* are available to us. The *Śāṅkhāyanagṛhyasūtra*, one of the early *gṛhyasūtra* texts has six *adhyāyas* (chapters), further divided into 28, 18, 14, 19, 11 and 6 *khaṇḍas* (sections). Its fifth and sixth chapters and the 26th *khaṇḍa* of the first chapter are seems to be late additions. This text is believed as composed by Suyajña Śāṅkhāyana. It belongs to the *Śāṅkhāyana śākhā*, an early sub-branch of the *Bāṣkala* branch.

Another extant Ṛgvedic *gṛhyasūtra* text, the *Kauṣītakaḡṛhyasūtra*, probably written somewhere in

south India, had closely followed the *Śāṅkhāyanagrhyasūtra*, in its first four *adhyāyas* (chapters). These four chapters are further divided into 21, 8, 15 and 4 *khaṇḍas*. Its fifth chapter on the funeral rites seems to be based on the *Śāṅkhāyanaśrautasūtra*. This text is ascribed to Śāmbavya and it belongs to the *Kauṣītaki śākhā*.

The third extant Ṛgvedic *grhya* text, the *Āśvalāyanagrhyasūtra*, comprises four *adhyāyas* (chapters), which are further divided into 24, 10, 12 and 8 *kaṇḍikās*. This text is believed as composed by Āśvalāyana, a student of Śaunaka and it belongs to the *Āśvalāyana śākhā*, which was a sub-branch of the *Śākala* branch. Unlike the ŚGS, which cited the complete *mantras* (mostly the verses from the early vedic texts), this text mentioned the *mantras pratīkena* (by the beginning words) only. A separate text, the *Āśvalāyanamantrasaṃhitā* provided the *sakalapāṭha* (the complete text) form for all the *mantras* from the RV mentioned in the ĀŚS and the ĀGS in the *pratīka* form.⁶ A late domestic ritual text, the *Āśvalāyanagrhyapariśiṣṭa*, comprising 30 sections, is considered as the supplement to this *grhyasūtra* proper. There is another text bearing the same name, ascribed to Nārāyaṇa and comprising four chapters. The names of several other Ṛgvedic *grhyasūtra* texts, like *Śaunaka*, *Bhāravīya*, *Śākalya* and *Paiṅgi* are found in the later *nibandha* texts and the commentaries, all of which are lost.⁷ It is also possible that the *Śaunakagrhyasūtra* mentioned in the later texts is identical with the *Āśvalāyanagrhyasūtra*.

1.1.2.2 Sāmavedic domestic ritual texts

Three extant *grhyasūtra* texts belonging to the Sāmavedic *śākhās* are available to us. Among the three extant Sāmavedic *grhyasūtra* texts, the *Gobhilagrhyasūtra*, a comparatively late *grhyasūtra* text, comprises four *prapāṭhakas*, which are further divided into 9, 10, 10 and 10 *kaṇḍikās*. According to the tradition, it was composed by Gobhila. This text was used by both the followers of *Rāṇāyanīya* and *Kauthuma śākhās*. A large portion of the *mantras* from the *Mantrabrāhmaṇa* has been used in this text. A very late domestic ritual text of this *śākhā*, known as the *Gṛhyasaṃgraha* or *Gṛhyasaṃgrahapariśiṣṭa* is considered as the supplementary text to this *grhyasūtra* proper. This text is divided in to two *prapāṭhakas* and ascribed to certain Gobhilaputra. Another late but more significant text, the *Karmapradīpa*, comprising 3 *prapāṭhakas* and 29 (or 30) *khaṇḍas* (chapters), is also considered as the supplement to the *Gobhilagrhyasūtra*. This text is also known as the *Chandogapariśiṣṭa* and the *Gobhilasmṛti* and sometimes ascribed to Kātyāyana, a Śuklayajurvedic authority. The *Gobhilīyaśrāddhakalpa*, comprising eight *kaṇḍikās*, is considered as the handbook for funerary rites of these two *śākhās*.

Another extant Sāmavedic *grhyasūtra* text, the *Khādiragrhyasūtra*, a brief text, comprising four *paṭalas* (sections), further divided into 5, 5, 5 and 4 *khaṇḍas*, is almost entirely based on the *Gobhilagrhyasūtra*. This text is believed as composed by Khādirācārya. It belongs to the *Drāhyāyana śākhā*, which was probably a sub-branch of the *Rāṇāyanīya* branch. A late medieval digest, *Gṛhyaratna* of Veṅkaṭanātha Vaidikasārvabhauma, while citing the passages from this text, mentioned it as the *Gautamagrhyasūtra*.⁸ A late text, the *Drāhyāyanagrhyapariśiṣṭasūtra* comprising two *prapāṭhakas*, is considered as its supplement. Another late text of this branch, the *Gautamapitṛmedhasūtra*, the handbook for the funerary rites, comprises two *paṭalas*, each of which are further divided in to seven *khaṇḍas*. A further later text, the *Gautamaśrāddhakalpa* or *Khādiraśrāddhakalpa* is also considered as the handbook for the funerary rites of this branch.

The *Jaiminigrhyasūtra*, the third extant *grhyasūtra* text is divided in to two halves, *pūrvam* (first half) and *uttaram* (second half), which are further divided in to 24 and 9 *khaṇḍas* (parts) respectively. This text belongs to the *Jaiminīya śākhā*⁹ and this text is believed as one of the compositions of Jaimini, a teacher of Sāmaveda and student of Vyāsa, son of Parāśara.

In 1956, The Asiatic Society, Calcutta published a text, under the title, “*Kauthumagrhya*” based on a single corrupt manuscript. The modern scholars are not unanimous, whether this text is the fourth

Sāmavedic *grhyasūtra* text or a medieval *paddhati* text.

1.1.2.3 Śuklayajurvedic domestic ritual texts

The only extant *grhyasūtra* text belonging to any Śuklayajurvedic *śākhā* is the *Pāraskaragrhyasūtra*, which is also known as the *Kāṭīyagrhyasūtra*. This early text is traditionally ascribed to Pāraskara and it belongs to the *Mādhyamīna śākhā*. Most probably, the text mentioned as the *Mādhyamīnagrhyasūtra* by Nārāyaṇa, a medieval scholiast of the ŚGS is identical with this text. This text comprises three *kāṇḍas*, which are further divided into 19, 17 and 16 *kaṇḍikās* respectively.

Extensive citations from a very late Śuklayajurvedic *grhyasūtra* text, the *Baijavāpagrhyasūtra* are found in several commentaries and *nibandha* texts composed between the 11th and 16th centuries, Aparārka being the earliest. Barring a few fragments, this text is no more available to us.¹⁰ A late ritual text, the *Kāṭīyānaśrāddhakalpa* or *Kāṭīyāśrāddhsūtra*, comprising 9 *kaṇḍikās*, is considered as the handbook for funerary rites of this branch.

1.1.2.4 Kṛṣṇayajurvedic domestic ritual texts

Nine *grhyasūtra* texts belonging to the Kṛṣṇayajurvedic *śākhās* have been published so far. Six of them belong to the *Taittirīya śākhā* alone.¹¹

The *Baudhāyanagrhyasūtra*, one of the earliest *grhyasūtra* texts of the *Taittirīya śākhā*, is incorporated in a larger corpus, the *Baudhāyanakalpa*, which is believed as composed by Baudhāyana. This text forms four (33rd to 36th) *praśnas* (sections) of the *Baudhāyanakalpa*, which are further divided into 11, 11, 13 and 12 *adhyāyas* (chapters). In the *Baudhāyanakalpa*, this *grhyasūtra* proper is followed by another much later domestic ritual text, known as the *Baudhāyana-grhyaparibhāṣāsūtra*, forming its next two *praśnas* (sections). Its two *praśnas* are divided into 16 and 7 *adhyāyas* (chapters) respectively. It is followed by another late domestic ritual text, known as the *Baudhāyanagrhyāśeṣasūtra*, forming the next five *praśnas* (sections) of the corpus, which are further divided into 24, 22, 23, 21 and 8 chapters respectively. This text is followed by the manual for the funerary rite, *Baudhāyanapitṛmedhasūtra*, which forms next three *praśnas* (sections) of the corpus, comprising 21, 12 and 12 chapters respectively. A very small late text, the *Baudhāyanapitṛmedhāśeṣasūtra*, comprising 3 chapters, is also considered as part of this *śākhā*.

The *Bhāradvājagrhyasūtra*, also a very early text of the *Taittirīya śākhā*, is part of the larger *Bhāradvājakalpa*, believed as composed by Bharadvāja. It comprises three *praśnas*, which are further divided into 28, 32 and 21 *kaṇḍikās* (sections) respectively. The handbook for the funerary rites of this *śākhā*, *Bhāradvājapitṛmedhikasūtra*, comprising two *praśnas*, each further divided into 12 chapters, is also part of this larger *Bhāradvājakalpa*.

The *Āpastambagrhyasūtra*, a slightly later text of the *Taittirīya śākhā*, forms the 27th *praśna* of the *Āpastambīyakalpa*, comprising thirty *praśnas* and believed as composed by Āpastamba. This text is divided into 8 *paṭalas* and 23 *khaṇḍas*. Most of the *mantras* mentioned in this text belong to an earlier compilation, known as the *Āpastambamantrapāṭha* or the *Ekāgnikāṇḍa*, which forms the 25th and 26th *praśnas* of the *Āpastambīyakalpa*. In later traditions, the *Āpastambapitṛmedhasūtra*, manual for the funerary rites of this *śākhā*, comprising 5 chapters, was considered as the 31st *praśna* of the *Āpastambīyakalpa*.

The *Hiraṇyakeśīgrhyasūtra*, another *grhyasūtra* text belonging to the *Taittirīya śākhā*, is part of the *Hiraṇyakeśīkalpa* or the *Satyāśādhakalpa* and forms the 19th and 20th *praśnas* of this corpus. Each of its *praśnas* is further divided into eight *paṭalas*. A late text, the *Hiraṇyakeśīgrhyāśeṣasūtra*, considered as its supplement, is also divided into eight *paṭalas*. The *Hiraṇyakeśīpitṛmedhasūtra*,

funerary ritual text of this *śākhā*, forms the 28th and 29th *praśnas* of this corpus and each of its *praśnas* is further divided into 4 *paṭalas*. This text is believed as written by Satyāśāḍha Hiraṇyakeśī.

The *Vaikhānasagr̥hyasūtra*, fifth *gr̥hyasūtra* text belonging to the *Taittirīya śākhā*, is a very late text and its extant version was probably composed in somewhere in south India. It forms 1st to 7th *praśnas* of the complete corpus of the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* of ten *praśnas*, comprising 21, 18, 23, 14, 15, 20 and 9 chapters respectively. The complete form of the *mantras*, which are mentioned in this text *pratīkena* (by the beginning words) are found in the first four *praśnas* (sections) of another text, known as the *Vaikhānasa mantrapraśnaḥ* (and also the *Mantrasaṃhitā Vaikhānasīya*, a text consulted by Caland for his translation of the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra*).

The sixth *gr̥hyasūtra* text of the *Taittirīya śākhā* is also a very late text, *Āgniveśyagr̥hyasūtra*, believed as composed by Agniveśya. This text, comprising three *praśnas*, which are further divided into 7, 7 and 12 chapters, belongs to the *Agniveśya śākhā*, a sub-branch of the *Vādhūla śākhā*. Based on a commentary named, the *Vādhūlagr̥hyakalpavyākhyā*, it was inferred by the modern scholars that a *gr̥hyasūtra* text of the *Vādhūla śākhā* proper also existed and some parts of the lost *gr̥hyasūtra* text in all probability preserved in this commentary. Later, the manuscripts of the *Vādhūlagr̥hyasūtra* and the *Vādhūlapitr̥medhasūtra* have been found, but these texts are not yet published and not much is known about them.

Two extant *gr̥hyasūtra* texts belong to the *Maitrāyaṇī śākhā*, the *Mānavagr̥hyasūtra* and the *Vārāhagr̥hyasūtra*. The *Mānavagr̥hyasūtra*, belonging to the *Mānava* sub-branch, is ascribed to certain Mānavācārya by the medieval scholiast Aṣṭāvakra. This text is divided in to two *puruṣas*, which are further divided into 23 and 18 *khaṇḍas* respectively. The *Mānavaśrāddhakalpa* is considered as the handbook for the funerary rites for this *śākhā*. The *Vārāhagr̥hyasūtra*, belonging to the *Vārāha* sub-branch is a comparatively late text, comprising a large number of *sūtras* common to the *Mānavagr̥hyasūtra* and the *Kāṭhagr̥hyasūtra*. It is a small text, comprising only 17 *khaṇḍas*, believed as composed by Varāha (boar) incarnation of Viṣṇu.

The *Kāṭhagr̥hyasūtra* is believed as composed by Laugākṣī (or Laukāksī) in the tradition of Kashmir and hence, it is also known as *Laugākṣīgr̥hyasūtra*. This text belongs to the *Kāṭhaka śākhā* and its 73 chapters are distributed in to five big sections, from which, the name *Gr̥hyapañcikā* for its commentary of Brāhmaṇabala was originated. With all probability, the *mantras* mentioned in this text by their *pratīkena* (beginning words) belong to a separate text, now lost. The names of some other Kṛṣṇayajurvedic *gr̥hya* texts, like *Śāṇḍilya*, *Māvila* and a certain *Maitareyasūtra* are found in the later *nibandha* texts, but they text have not yet been found.¹²

1.1.2.5 Atharvavedic domestic ritual texts

The *Kauśikasūtra*, comprising 141 *kaṇḍikās* distributed into 14 *adhyāyas*, believed as composed by Kauśika, belongs to the *Śaunakīya śākhā* of the Atharvaveda. This ancient text, probably composed before the *Vaitānasūtra*, solemn ritual text of this *śākhā*, is not a mere *gr̥hyasūtra* text. It was composed to describe all rituals of the Atharvavedic tradition including the life-cycle rites, domestic rituals, royal consecration rituals and the magical Atharvanic rituals.¹³ Although, no extant *gr̥hyasūtra* text is available for the *Paippalāda śākhā* of the Atharvaveda, citations from a certain *Paiṭhīnasisūtra* are available in several late medieval *nibandha* texts. From these citations, it has been inferred that probably it was the *gr̥hyasūtra* text of this *śākhā*. Only the fragments of the handbook for the funerary rites of the *Paippalāda śākhā*, the *Paippalādaśrāddhakalpa* are available in the citations. Some of the *Pariśiṣṭa* texts of the Atharvaveda like *Śrāddhavidhiḥ* (44th *Pariśiṣṭa*) and *Uttamaṭāla* (46th *Pariśiṣṭa*) also described the life-cycle rites.

1.1.2.6 The *dharmasūtras*

The youngest genre of the vedic ritual texts, *dharmasūtras* also described the life-cycle rites, but in

contrast to the *grhyasūtras*, these texts shifted the starting point to *Upanayana*. With the change in perception in the centuries immediately prior to the Common Era, these texts viewed the life-cycle rites as the part of a set of *karma* (literally, “actions”; righteous deeds) that must be performed to follow the *dharma*, the righteous way of living prescribed by these texts for every person belonging to each of the four *varṇas* (but mostly, for a Brāhmaṇ). As *Upanayana* was the initiation rite for the observance of *brahmacarya*, the beginning of the righteous way of life for a ‘twice-born’ male, it became their starting point for the discourse. In the extant *dharmasūtra* texts, as well as the commentaries and *nibandha* texts, a text of Hārīta had been cited very often. These numerous citations most probably belonged to a lost text, the *Hārītadharmasūtra* (or the *Hārītadharmasāstra*; a manuscript of this text was discovered from Nashik by V.S. Islampurkar, the editor of the *Parāśaradharmasamhitā*, but never published). From these citations, it seems that this text discussed at length about the life-cycle rites. Significant information regarding *Upanayana* and the post-cremation rites is found in all four early *dharmasūtra* texts, the *Baudhāyanadharmasūtra*, the *Āpastambadharmasūtra*, the *Gautamadharmasūtra* and the *Vasiṣṭhadharmasūtra*. Descriptions of the life-cycle rites found in a comparatively later text, the *Hiraṇyakeśīdharmasūtra* are almost identical with the *Āpastambadharmasūtra*. The 8th to 10th *praśnas* of the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* (ca. 4th-5th century) are together known as the *Vaikhānasadharmapraśna* or *Vaikhānasadharmasūtra*. It provided the detailed information about the funeral rites for the ascetics and the post-cremation rite of *Nārāyaṇabali*. A late text of this genre, the *Vaiṣṇavadharmasūtra* or *Viṣṇusmṛti* (ca. 7th century), which is closely associated with the *Kāthaka śākhā*, also provided detailed descriptions about the life-cycle rites.

1.1.3 The *dharmasāstras*

The evolution of the Hindu rites of passages from the period of the late vedic ritual texts (ca. 2nd century BCE) till the early medieval period (late 10th century) can be traced from the large number of the *dharmasāstras* written during this period. Compositions of the early *dharmasāstras*, a genre of the *smṛti* texts (others are *śrautasūtras*, *grhyasūtras* and *dharmasūtras*) believed to be composed by the ancient sages or gods, were probably commenced within a short period after the early *grhyasūtras* and *dharmasūtras* reached their extant form. Compositions of the *dharmasāstras* continued till 9th-10th century.¹⁴ In these texts, the rites of passage are mentioned as the *saṃskāras* (obligatory purifying rites), which must be performed by a pious person to live within the social order of the *varṇāśramadharmā* (literally, “*dharma* to be followed in different *āśramas* [stages of life] by a person according to the *varṇa*”) instructed by these texts. However, most of the extant *dharmasāstras* did not deal with the performance of the life-cycle rites and none of them prescribed any detailed procedure for their performance.¹⁵ Apart from the significant descriptions in two early *dharmasāstra* texts, the *Mānavadharmasāstra* and the *Yājñavalkyadharmasāstra* and a late *dharmasāstra* text, the *Laghu-Āśvalāyanasmṛti* associated with the *Āśvalāyana śākhā*, brief descriptions of the life-cycle rites are also found in the *Vedavyasīyadharmasāstra* I.13-20, the *Śaṅkhasmṛti* II.1-13 and the Chapters VI and VII of another very late *dharmasāstra* text, the *Bṛhatparāśarasamhitā*.¹⁶ A very late work on *smṛti*, the *Caturviṃśatimata*, which summarized the views of twenty-four sages, also consists significant information on the life-cycle rites. From the citations of the *Bṛhaspatismṛti* in the *nibandha* texts, it seems that this text provided valuable information about the auspicious periods for the performance of the life-cycle rites. A sizeable section of the citations of Kātyāyana on the life-cycle rites found in the medieval *nibandha* texts are not traceable to the *Karmapradīpa*, the vedic ritual text, later identified as the *Kātyāyanasmṛti*. These citations may belong to the *ācāra* (customary practices) section of a lost *dharmasāstra* text ascribed to Kātyāyana, whose *vyāvahāra* (jurisprudence) section has been reconstructed by Kane.

1.1.4 The commentaries and the *nibandhas*

The evolution of the Hindu rites of passages from the period of the very late *dharmasāstra* texts

(early 11th century) till the pre-modern period (early 19th century) in various parts of the Indian sub-continent can be studied from the large number of the commentaries of the *gṛhyasūtras*, *dharmasūtras* and *dharmasāstras* and the independent *nibandha* (literally, “compendia, digest”) texts written during this period. Composition of the *vṛtti*, *vivṛti*, *vyākhyā*, *bhāṣya*, *vivaraṇa* and *ṭīkā*, the various sub-genres of the commentaries, commenced in the 8th century, before the composition of several very late *dharmasāstra* texts.

Composition of the other genres of the medieval texts of similar nature, known as *prayoga* (literally, “practical handbooks”) and *paddhati* (literally, “procedure”), the handbooks for the priests, which detailed the procedures for performance of the rituals based on the vedic ritual texts, commenced much later.

1.1.4.1 The commentaries

Initially, the medieval commentaries concentrated only in explaining the ancient texts from the contemporary viewpoint. However, within a few centuries, this genre of texts evolved as the de-facto digests on the topics discussed in the original texts and provided solutions to various disputes related to those topics. The commentary on the YDh by Aparārka¹⁷ (early 12th century) is one of the early notable commentaries known for descriptions on the life-cycle rites. The *kārikā* (1266) of Reṇukācārya, the *bhāṣyas* of Harihara (13th century) and Gadādhara (late 16th century) and *Sajjanavallabhā* (1554-55) commentary of Jayarāma are significant works on the evolution of the life-cycle rites prescribed in the PGS. The *bhāṣya* of Devapāla, the *Gṛhyapaddhati* and *Gṛhyapañcikā* of Brāhmaṇabala and the *vivaraṇa* of Ādityadarśana on the KGS are immensely useful for understanding the evolution of the life-cycle rites in the early medieval Kashmir valley. Śrīnivāsadīkṣita’s *Tātparyacintāmaṇi* (ca. 1350) commentary on the VkhGS and *Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇa*, written as its introduction, provided significant information about the life-cycle rites performed by the *Vaikhānasas*, a Vaiṣṇava Brāhmaṇ social group in the medieval period. *Keśavavaijayantī* (1623), Nandapaṇḍita’s commentary on the ViṣDh comprises the extensive details on the life-cycle rites. A list of major commentaries of the *gṛhyasūtras* and the *pitṛmedhasūtras* is furnished in Table 1 of this study.

Kauśikapaddhati of Keśava (2nd half of the 11th century) and *Daśakarmāṇi brhmavedoktāni* are two very significant *paddhati* texts on the KauśS. *Śāṅkhāyanagrhyasūtra paddhati* of Rāmacandra (17th century) is a notable text on the life-cycle rites prescribed by the ŚGS. The *paddhati* text for the BhGS written by Bhaṭṭaraṅga helps us to understand the descriptions of life-cycle rites in the original text. Two *paddhati* texts on the VārGS by Gaṅgādhara and Vasiṣṭha provided the details about the *mantras* used in this *gṛhyasūtra*. *Prayogarātna* and *Antyeṣṭipaddhati* (2nd half of the 16th century) of Nārāyaṇabhaṭṭa (born 1513) were very popular handbook on the life-cycle rites for the followers of the *Āśvalāyana śākhā* till mid-20th century.¹⁸ *Karmaṇājikā* (1590) of Śrīdhara was a popular *paddhati* text for the followers of the *Paippalāda śākhā* in Orissa till recently. *Āpastambayallājīya* of Yallājībhaṭṭa is a significant *paddhati* text on the funeral rites for the followers of this *Āpastambīya śākhā*. *Baudhāyanasmārtaprayoga* (in two parts, *pūrva* and *apara*) of Kanakasabhāpati, also known as *Kārikāmañjari* and *Baudhāyanagrhyakārikā*, was a significant handbook on the performance of the life-cycle rites for the followers of the *Baudhāyanīya śākhā* in the present-day Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. The numerous specialized *prayoga* and *paddhati* texts were written in the late medieval period on almost every life-cycle rites, which provided detailed procedure for the performance of these rites.

1.1.4.2 The *nibandhas*

The *nibandha* (or *dharmanibandha*) texts, unlike the commentaries, did not associate themselves with any particular ancient *smṛti* text. These digests are known for the independent opinions of their authors on a large spectrum of topics associated with the different aspects of ‘*dharma*’ (righteous

actions), based on the comparative analyses of the citations from a wide range of ancient texts. Composition of this genre of the texts began in the twelfth century.¹⁹ A large number of *nibandha* texts, composed between the twelfth and nineteenth centuries, described in details about the performances of the life-cycle rites of passage. In these texts, detailed narratives are available for the various contemporary practices followed during the performance of the life-cycle rites. In addition, as Pandey (1969) pointed out,²⁰ the procedures for performance of many ancient life-cycle rites, which already became outdated at the time of composition, are also recorded. Among these numerous *nibandha* texts, some of the significant works, which covered the life-cycle rites thoroughly, are:

- *Brahmacārikāṇḍa*, *Gṛhasthakāṇḍa*, *Niyatakālakāṇḍa*, *Śuddhikāṇḍa* and *Śrāddhakāṇḍa* of Bhaṭṭa Lakṣmīdhara (12th century), composed as the parts of his treatise on *smṛti*, *Kṛtyakalpataru*;
- *Samṣkārakāṇḍa*, *Āsauhikāṇḍa* and *Śrāddhakāṇḍa* of Devaṅṇabhaṭṭa (late 12th century), written as the parts of his digest on *smṛti*, *Smṛticandrikā*;
- *Smṛtyārthasāra* of Śrīdhara (late 12th century);
- *Kṛtyacintāmaṇi* of Caṇḍeśvara Ṭhākura (early 14th century);
- *Madanapārijāta* of Viśveśvarabhaṭṭa (late 14th century)
- *Samṣkārasāra* and *Śrāddhasāra* of Dalapatirāja (early 16th century), written as the parts of his treatise on *smṛti*, *Nṛsimhaprasāda*;
- *Samṣkāratattva*, *Śuddhitattva* and *Śrāddhatattva* of Raghunandana Bhaṭṭācārya (16th century), written as the parts his treatise on *smṛti*, *Smṛtitattva*;
- *Samṣkārarakāśa*, *Śuddhiprakāśa* and *Śrāddhaprakāśa* of Mitramiśra (early 17th century), written as the parts of his encyclopaedic digest on *smṛti*, *Vīramitrodaya*;
- *Varṇāśramadhramakāṇḍa*, *Āsauhikāṇḍa* and *Śrāddhakāṇḍa* of Vaidyanāthadīkṣita, composed as the parts of his digest, *Smṛtimuktāphala* (ca. 1600);
- *Nirṇayasindhu* (1612) of Kamalākaraḥṭṭa;
- *Samṣkāramayūkha*, *Śuddhimayūkha* and *Śrāddhamayūkha* of Bhaṭṭa Nīlakaṇṭha (early 17th century);
- *Samṣkārakaustubha* (2nd half of the 17th century) of Anantadeva written as a part of his treatise on *smṛti*, *Smṛtikaustubha*;
- *Samṣkāraratnamālā* (1773) of Bhaṭṭa Gopīnāthadīkṣita and
- *Dharmasindhu* (1790) of Kāśīnātha Upādhyāya.

Samṣkāravidhi (1884) of Swami Dayananda Saraswati is probably the only notable work on the life-cycle rites by a modern scholar written in the traditional *paddhati* format.

Since the pre-modern period, a large number of works are written in almost every major Indian language in the *paddhati* format for the guidance of the priests to perform the rituals in proper manner. These works provide the detailed instructions on the procedure of the life-cycle rites, as they should be performed according to the local traditions in different parts of India. *Purohitdarpan* (1904) in Bengali is a popular work of this genre.

The name of a modern work, *Dharmakośa Samṣkārakāṇḍa* (Volume 3) edited by Lakṣmaṇa Śāstrī Jośī and published from Wai by Prājña Pāṭhaśālā Maṇḍala in 6 parts (from 1959 to 1985) must be mentioned here. This major encyclopaedic work is a compilation of almost every description on the sanctifying rites including the life-cycle rites found in the textual sources, arranged according to the commonly accepted chronology.

1.1.5 The *Itihāsa* and the *Purāṇas*

Descriptions of the life-cycle rites are found in both the ancient texts belonging to the genre of

Itihāsa, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*. However, as these texts were composed over a long period of time, it is difficult to co-relate these descriptions with any particular time period. A detailed description of cremation rite of Rāvaṇa is found in the *Yuddhakāṇḍa* of one of the vulgate editions of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. A fairly elaborate description of cremation rite of Pāṇḍu is available in the *Ādiparva* of the *Mahābhārata*.

A number of *Purāṇas*, another significant genre of Hindu religious texts, compiled during the early medieval period also described several life-cycle rites and in many cases, these descriptions are almost similar to the descriptions found in the late *dharmaśāstras*. Several chapters of the *Pretakāṇḍa* (or *Pretakalpa*) of the *Garūḍapurāṇa* are well known for the detailed descriptions of the funerary rites and the practices mentioned in this text are still followed over a large part of India. The description of the rites of passages are also found in the *Agnipurāṇa* (32.1-12, 153-154, 163 and 166.9-16), the *Viṣṇupurāṇa* (III.10), the *Skandapurāṇa* (*Kāśīkhaṇḍa*, *Pūrvārdha* 36 and 38) and the *Nāradaipurāṇa* (*Pūrvabhāga* I.25-26 and II.56).²¹ Frequent quotations on the life-cycle rites from a lost text, the *Ādityapurāṇa* are found in the medieval *nibandha* texts.²² *Kailāśasaṃhitā* 22.1-45 and 23.1-24 of the *Śivapurāṇa* have dealt with the funerary rites performed for the ascetics on the 11th and 12th day respectively.²³ Brief descriptions of the life-cycle rites are found in the *Brāhmaparva* 3.2-34 and 4.1-3 of the *Bhaviṣyapurāṇa*. The description of the life-cycle rites are also found in a late text, the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* II.52.23-133.

A late medieval text, *Garūḍapurāṇasāroddhāra* written by Naunidhirāma, the *Purāṇa* reciter of Śārdūl Siṃh Śekhāvaṭ (reigned 1730-1742), the ruler of Jhunjhunu as a summary of the *Pretakāṇḍa* of the *GarūḍP* in sixteen chapters, comprises detailed descriptions on funerary rites. In some instances, the descriptions of this text are different from the extant versions of the *GarūḍP* and probably based on some other texts.²⁴

1.2 Inscriptural records

In South Asian context, the inscriptional records can be used as the important tools to relate the life-cycle rites prescribed in the Hindu religious texts with the actual contemporary practices.

An early reference to the contemporary Hindu rites of passage is found in the 9th major rock edict of the Maurya emperor Aśoka (ca. 268-232 BCE). It also indicates his attitude towards these rites. Girnār text of this edict recorded that Devānāmpīyo Priyadasi Rājā (Emperor Aśoka) had observed, “There are people (who) perform various *maṅgalam* (auspicious ceremonies). During sickness, or at the *āvāha-vivāha* (marriages of sons and daughters), or at the birth of sons (children in Kālsi version), or before (embarking on) a journey, on these and other (occasions), people perform various auspicious ceremonies. On these (occasions) again, women perform manifold and various kinds of trivial (foul in Shāhbāzgarhī text) and useless *maṅgalam* (auspicious ceremonies). Now, auspicious ceremonies should certainly be performed, but auspicious ceremonies such as these are of little fruit indeed. However, this auspicious ceremony, viz., this auspicious ceremony of *dhamma* is of great fruit.” Kālsi text of this edict has recorded an additional comment of him, “...The other [kinds of] auspicious ceremonies are [of] doubtful [fruit]; perhaps the purpose may be achieved (thereby), or perhaps not, and they bear fruit only in this world. But these auspicious ceremonies of *dhamma* are timeless; even if the purpose is not achieved here, they produce the fruit of endless merit in the next [world]. However, if the purpose is achieved here, then thereby [the fruits of] both are obtained. Through the auspicious ceremonies of *dhamma*, [the achievement of] the purpose is produced here [in this world] and endless merit in the next [world].”²⁵ From this edict, it can be observed that Emperor Aśoka was particularly critical about the folk elements of these life-cycle rites performed by the females, and possibly ĀpGS I.2.14 and BGŚS II.3.1 also mentioned the similar elements as *maṅgalāni*. Sudarśanācārya, a medieval scholiast of the ĀpGS while commenting on ĀpGS I.2.14, explained *maṅgalāni* as the sound of conch shells, drums, lutes, flutes

and other musical instruments and the songs of the *kulastrī* (females of good family).

Four Prakrit inscriptions incised on long narrow slabs of stone were discovered in Andhau in Kutch district of present day Gujarat. All four of these inscriptions were recorded on the same date, the 2nd day of the dark half of the lunar month of *Phālguna* (February-March) in the year 52 of the reign of Saka ruler Rudradāmana I (130 CE). All four inscriptions recorded erecting funerary monuments for the deceased by their relatives. Three of these inscriptions recorded erections of *laṭṭhis* (literally, “sticks” = *yaṣṭis*, memorial pillars) by Madana, son of Sīhila to the memory of his sister Jeṣṭavīrā, brother Rṣabhadeva and wife Yaśodattā respectively. The fourth inscription recorded erection of a memorial pillar by Treṣṭadata in the memory of his son Rṣabhadeva.²⁶ This practice of erecting funerary monuments for the deceased is mentioned in the *Vanaparva* 188.64-67 of the *Mahābhārata* and a late text, VDhP III.84.1-15, which described the construction of such monuments as '*aiḍūkarūpanirmāṇa*'. According to this description, an *aiḍūka* (funerary monument) included a *yaṣṭi*, memorial pillar.

An inscription dated Saka era 867 (945) belonging to the reign of Raṣtrakūṭa king Kriṣṇa III found on a temple pillar in Salotgi village in the present day Bijapur district of Karnataka mentioned about the performances of *Upanayana* and *Cūḍākarāṇa* rites by the villagers.²⁷

A copper plate grant of Balavarman III (10th century), found in Sutargaon village in the present day Nagaon district of Assam, recorded the performance of the rite of *Samāvartana* by a Brāhmaṇ, Śrutidhara after the completion of his study.²⁸

Two copper plate grants of the Gahadavala king Jayacandra (reigned 1170-1193) dated VS 1232 (1175) were found from Kamauli and Sihvar villages of Varanasi district of present-day Uttar Pradesh. The former was issued on the 8th day of the dark half of the month of Bhādrapada in VS 1232 (10th August, 1175) on the day of performance of *Jātakarma* rite for his son Hariścandra.²⁹ The latter was issued on the 13th day of the bright half of the lunar month of Bhādrapada (31st August, 1175) on the day of performance of *Nāmakaraṇa* rite for the same prince (Indian Antiquary 17: 130). This two grants shows that during 12th century, *Nāmakaraṇa* was not performed as prescribed by the early ritual texts (on the 10th or 12th day after the birth), but as prescribed by the later *smṛti* texts.

The inscriptional evidence of performance of *Upanayana* by a Jaina king is found in the Bastihalli inscription of the Hoysala king Narasiṃha III, which mentioned about his performing the rite on 25th February 1255 at the age of fifteen.³⁰

An inscription found in Malavalli in present day Karnataka, composed during the reign of Vijayanagara emperor Bukka Rāya I, mentioned about performance of *Upanayana* rite for the *aśvattha* (*Ficus religiosa*) trees planted at the four corners of a tank by a person named Bācāppa or Bācā Rājā in 1358. Probably, textual reference to this exotic rite can only be found in a late vedic ritual text, the BGŚS II.10.³¹

1.3 Life-cycle rites in ancient and medieval literature

Descriptions of Hindu life-cycle rites are also found in the ancient and medieval literature in Sanskrit, Prakrit and other South Asian languages. The descriptions in these literary texts again help us to co-relate the actual practices with the practices prescribed in the ritual literature. An outline of these descriptions is provided in this chapter. Detailed descriptions will be mentioned in the related chapter.

Aśvaghōṣa (late 1st century–early 2nd century), in his *Buddhacarita* I.82-83, mentioned that king Śuddhodana performed *Jātakarma* rite for his son and after completion of the tenth day, he performed *homa* (the act of offering oblations into the sacrificial fire), *japa* (the act of murmuring

vedic *mantras*), *maṅgalādi* (auspicious acts); offered most elaborate oblations of clarified butter to the deities and gifted one hundred thousand milch cows to the Brāhmaṇs.³² In contrast with the Buddhist canonical works, *Buddhacarita* explicitly mentioned that the Hindu life cycle rites were performed for Buddha by his father.

Kālidāsa (late 4th century–early 5th century) in his *Raghuvamśa*, *Kumārasambhava*, *Abhijñānaśākuntalā* and *Vikramōrvaśīya* described about some of the life-cycle rites. In *Raghuvamśa*, he mentioned about the rites of *Puṁsavana* (III.10), *Nāmadheya* (X.67), *Cūla* (III.28), *Upavīta* (III.29), *Godāna* (III.33), *Vivāha* (III.33) and *Daśāha* (VIII.73). From the description in *Raghuvamśa* III.33, it seems that *Godāna* rite was probably performed immediately before marriage.³³ In *Raghuvamśa* III.28, the age of performance of *Vrittacūla* rite for prince Aja, a Kṣatriya and sons of the Brāhmaṇ ministers are mentioned as the same, which indicates that the practices mentioned in the early vedic ritual texts, the ŚGS and the KauṣGS were not followed in Kālidāsa's time. In this same verse, an early reference of mastering *lipi* (alphabets) and commencement of education after *Vrittacūla* rite is also found. Elsewhere in the same work (XVIII.46), the method of learning alphabets by writing on ground was described.³⁴ Several elements of marriage rite are described in *Raghuvamśa* VII.17-28 and *Kumārasambhava* VII.72-88.

Varāhamihira (6th century) in his *Bṛhatsamhitā* and other works mentioned the names of several life-cycle rites, like *Niṣeka*, *Jātakarma*, *Karṇavedha*, *Mekhalā* (*Upanayana*) and some elements of *Vivāha*, namely, *Vivahayātrā* (marriage procession), *Madhuparka* and *Pāṇigraha*.³⁵

In the first *ucchvāsa* of the *pūrvapīṭhikā*, a supplement to the *Daśakumāracarita* of Daṇḍin (6th – 7th century), it is narrated that, king Rājahaṁsa of Magadha invited the friendly kings on the occasion of *Sīmantotsava* or *Sīmantamohotsava* (literally, “*Sīmanta* festival”, same as *Sīmantonayana*) for his pregnant queen Vasumatī and celebrated with the splendour befitting his desire. Prahāravarmā, the king of Videha attended the celebration along with his wife and son.³⁶ In *Avantisundarīkathā* ascribed to Daṇḍin, the birth rite is described as *Janmotsava*. This work mentioned about the performances of the childhood rites of *Gṛhaniṣkramaṇa* in the fourth month after birth, *Annaprāśana* in the sixth month and *Caulakarma* in the first or third year. It mentioned about the performance of *Upanayana* rite in the eighth, eleventh and twelfth year from the conception for the Brāhmaṇs, Kṣatriyas and Vaiśyas respectively. It also mentioned that (for the Brāhmaṇs) this rite may be performed in the fifth, sixth, seventh or eighth year.³⁷

Bāṇabhaṭṭa (7th century), in his *Kādambarī* mentioned that while Tārāpīḍa, a Kṣatriya performed the naming rite for his son Candrāpīḍa on the tenth day after birth, his minister Śukanāsa, a Brāhmaṇ, performed it for his son Vaiśampāyana on the eleventh day.³⁸

In his *Harṣacarita* (*ucchvāsa* 5 and 6), Bāṇabhaṭṭa described the funeral rites for king Prabhākaravardhana. When the king died, his corpse was brought on a bier by the feudatory rulers and townsmen headed by the family priest to the bank of the Sarasvatī, placed on a funeral pyre and the cremation was performed at dusk. Next morning, his son, Harṣavardhana, after taking a bath in the Sarasvatī, offered water-libations to his father, put on a pair of white silk garments and went back home on foot. After certain days, a Brāhmaṇ ate the first *piṇḍa* (ball of white rice) for the *preta* (deceased) and the period of impurity ended. The paraphernalia of the deceased king's bier, beds, chairs, whisks, parasols, vessels, carriages and swords were gifted to the Brāhmaṇs. The bones were collected and brought to the sacred places. A monument in brick was constructed at the location of the funeral pyre.³⁹

Bhavabhūti (8th century) in his *Uttararāmacarita* mentioned that the performance of *Caula* rite for Kṣatriya boys was followed by *Upanayana* rite at the age of eleven (II.4). It was said in the same work that all subjects other than the Vedas were taught between *Caula* and *Upanayana*.⁴⁰

Bhavabhūti also mentioned about performance of *Godāna* rite immediately before the marriage (I.18).⁴¹

Kalhaṇa (12th century) in his *Rājataranṅgiṇī* I.75 mentioned about the performance of *Jātakarma* rite for king Gonanda II, posthumous child of king Damodara I by the Brāhmaṇ priests.

The Western Chalukya king Someśvara Bhūlokamalla (reigned 1126-1138) described several life-cycle rites, which include *Puṃsavana*, *Sīmantonayana*, *Jātakarma*, *Nāmakaraṇa*, *Annaprāśana*, *Karṇavedha*, *Cūḍākārya*, *Mauñjībandhana*, *Vidyārambha*, *Godāna*, *Samāvartana* and marriage in the chapter of *Putrabhoga* (3.12.1245-1341) of his encyclopaedic work *Mānasollāsa* (ca.1131).

1.4 Ethnographic data in modern works

An inexhaustible number of modern works is written in the last few centuries, which provided enormous ethnographic data on the performances of life-cycle rites by various social groups in South Asia and enhanced our knowledge much beyond the data received from the Hindu religious texts. The following is a brief introduction to some of the significant works.

Abbé Jean-Antoine Dubois (1765-1848), was a French Catholic missionary, who lived in India from 1792 to 1823. His work in French, *Moeurs, institutions, et cérémonies des peuples de l'Inde* in two volumes (1825) consists description of performance of several Hindu life-cycle rites as observed by him in the early 19th century, mostly in the southern peninsula. This work was later translated in to English as *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies* (1899) by Henry K. Beauchamp. In the mid-19th century, the British Indian Government commenced the compilation of every possible data related to the Indian Empire for their administrative requirements. The district, provincial and imperial gazetteers prepared by the British civil servants for this purpose contain enormous ethnographic data on the performance of the life-cycle rites by various social groups in different parts of the Indian sub-continent in the late 19th century and early 20th century.

An early 20th century work, *The Rites of the Twice-Born* (1920) by Sinclair Stevenson, is a minutely detailed eyewitness account of the performances of the rites of passage in the early 20th century in the present-day Gujarat, although she was not much aware of the textual sources.

In the anthropological field study, “*Hindus of the Himalayas*” (1963) of Gerald D. Berreman, the performances of the life-cycle rites by the residents of Sirkanda, a village in the present-day Uttarakhand are detailed. Lynn Bennett in his work, *Dangerous Wives and Sacred Sisters: Social and Symbolic Roles of High-Caste Women in Nepal* (1983) provided insight about the performance of the life-cycle rites by the social groups, belonging to the ‘upper castes’ in Narikot, a village in Nepal. A recent work, *Play, symbolism, and ritual: A study of Tamil Brahmin women's rites of passage* (1991) by Vasumathi K. Duvvury significantly added our knowledge on the performance of the rites of passage by the females in Tamil Nadu outside the Brahmanical framework of orthopraxy. Jonathan P. Parry’s work, *Death in Banaras* (1994) presented an in-depth ethnographic field study of Hindu funerary rites performed at Banaras, the holy city in Uttar Pradesh in the last quarter of the twentieth century. A very recent work, *Rites and Rituals of Kashmiri Brahmins* (2010) by S.S. Toshkhani recorded the life-cycle rites performed by the Brāhmaṇ community of Jammu and Kashmir and this work has taken cognizance of the textual sources.

1.5 Varying numbers of the *saṃskārāḥ*

Earlier in this chapter, it has been mentioned that the Hindu life-cycle rites of passage were laid down as the obligatory sanctifying rites (*saṃskārāḥ*) in the *smṛti* texts. Enumeration and classification of these sanctifying rites, which included the life-cycle rites, are found in several ancient and early medieval *smṛti* texts and some of the *Purāṇas*. From these texts, it can be inferred that, the inclusions and exclusions in the enumerations of *saṃskārāḥ* continued throughout the historical period, depending on the contemporary perceptions of purification, influenced by the

social and economic reasons.

Probably, the earliest enumeration of the sanctifying rites is found in a comparatively later *dharmasūtra* text, GDh VIII.14-23. This text enumerated forty rites, comprising solemn and domestic sacrificial rites and life-cycle rites as the sanctifying rites (*catvāriṃśat saṃskārāḥ*) and eight human qualities as the virtues of the self (*aṣṭau ātmaguṇāḥ*). GDh VIII.25, emphasising the importance of the eight human qualities over the rites of passage, stated that a person who may have performed only a few of the forty sanctifying rites, but possesses these eight virtues is sure to obtain union with and residence in the same world as Brahmā (after the death).⁴² In this list of sanctifying rites, the GDh did not segregate the life-cycle rites from the *śrauta* (solemn) rites and the *grhya* (domestic) rites. This is a reflection of the contemporary perception of ritual purification, still being influenced by the predominance of the solemn sacrificial rites. Fourteen life-cycle rites are included in this list.

Gautama's List of <i>catvāriṃśat saṃskārāḥ</i> (forty sanctifying rites)			
1	<i>Garbhādhāna</i>	27-33	Seven sacrifices where clarified butter is offered (<i>sapta haviryajña</i>)
2	<i>Puṃsavana</i>		
3	<i>Sīmantonnayana</i>	27	<i>Agnādheya</i>
4	<i>Jātakarma</i>	28	<i>Agnihotra</i>
5	<i>Nāmakaraṇa</i>	29	<i>Darśapūrṇamāsya</i>
6	<i>Annaprāśana</i>	30	<i>Āgrayaṇa</i>
7	<i>Caula</i>	31	<i>Cāturnmāsya</i>
8	<i>Upanayana</i>	32	<i>Nirūḍhapaśubandha</i>
9-12	Four vedic vows (<i>catvāri vedavratāni</i>)	33	<i>Sautramaṇi</i>
13	<i>Snāna</i>	34-40	Seven sacrifices where pounded <i>soma</i> (<i>Ephedra sinica</i>) juice is offered (<i>sapta somayajña</i>)
14	Union with the joint 'dharma' practitioner (marriage) (<i>sahadharmacārīṇī saṃyoga</i>)		
15-19	Five great sacrifices (<i>pañca mahāyajña</i>)	34	<i>Agniṣṭoma</i>
	15 <i>Devayajña</i>	35	<i>Atyagniṣṭoma</i>
	16 <i>Pitryajña</i>	36	<i>Ukthya</i>
	17 <i>Manuṣyayajña</i>	37	<i>Ṣoḍaśī</i>
	18 <i>Bhūtayajña</i>	38	<i>Vājapeya</i>
	19 <i>Brāhmaṇayajña</i>	39	<i>Atirātra</i>
20-26	Seven sacrifices where cooked food is offered as oblations (<i>sapta pākayajña</i>)	40	<i>Āptoryama</i>
	20 <i>Aṣṭakā</i>		
	21 <i>Pārvaṇa</i>		
	22 <i>Śrāddha</i>		
	23 <i>Śrāvaṇī</i>		
	24 <i>Āgrahāyaṇī</i>		
	25 <i>Caitrī</i>		
	26 <i>Āśvayujī</i>		

Two almost similar lists of the sanctifying rites are found in AgnP 32.1-10 and 166.9-16. Both of these lists mentioned the names of forty-eight sanctifying acts, comprising both the forty *saṃskārāḥ* and the eight *ātmaguṇāḥ* listed by the GDh. In a verse, similar to GDh VIII.26, AgnP 166.9 mentioned that, one attains the world of Brahmā (after the death) by performing forty-eight sanctifying rites.⁴³

The names of twenty-five sanctifying rites (*pañcaviṃśati saṃskārāḥ*) mentioned in the lists in

Āśvalāyanasmṛti 11.4-6⁴⁴ and the verses of Aṅgirā⁴⁵ cited in SṃP and SṃR. The perception of ritual purification found in these lists are similar to the GDh. Eighteen life-cycle rites are included in these lists and four life-cycle rites, *Viṣṇubali*, *Niṣkrama*, *Utsarga* and *Upākarma* are mentioned in this list, in addition to the 14 life-cycle rites mentioned in the GDh.

Aṅgirā's List of <i>pañcaviṃśati saṃskārāḥ</i> (twenty-five sanctifying rites)			
1	<i>Garbhādhāna</i>	15	<i>Snāna</i>
2	<i>Puṃsavana</i>	16	<i>Udvāha</i>
3	<i>Sīmanta</i>	17	<i>Āgrayaṇa</i>
4	<i>Bali</i> (<i>Viṣṇubali</i>)	18	<i>Aṣṭakā</i>
5	<i>Jātakṛtya</i>	19	<i>Śrāvaṇī</i>
6	<i>Nāmakarma</i>	20	<i>Āśvayujī</i>
7	<i>Niṣkrama</i>	21	<i>Mārgaśīrṣī</i>
8	<i>Annāśana</i>	22	<i>Pārvaṇa</i>
9	<i>Caulakarma</i>	23	<i>Utsarga</i>
10	<i>Upanayana</i>	24	<i>Upākarma</i>
11-14	<i>Vrata catuṣṭaya</i> (four vows)	25	<i>Mahāyajña</i> (great sacrifices)

VkhGS I.1 classified forty purificatory rites (*saṃskārāḥ*) into two categories – eighteen rites for the purification of the body (*saṃskārāḥ śārīrāḥ*) and twenty-two sacrifices (*yajñāḥ*). The list of the rites for the purification of the body included *Ṛtusamgamana*, *Garbhādhāna*, *Puṃsavana*, *Sīmanta*, *Viṣṇubali*, *Jātakarma*, *Utthāna*, *Nāmakaraṇa*, *Annaprāśana*, *Pravāsāgamana*, *Piṇḍavardhana*, *Cauḍaka*, *Upanayana*, *Pārāyaṇa-Vratibandha*, *Visarga*, *Upākarma*, *Samāvartana* and *Pāṇigrahaṇa*.⁴⁶ Most of the rites categorized as the rites for the purification of the body in the VkhGS are essentially the life-cycle rites.

With the further reduction in the significance of the solemn sacrificial rites in the early centuries of the Common Era, a change of perception is observed. In a prose passage of Hārīta, an ancient authority on *smṛti* cited by SmC, SṃP and Harihara on PGS II.1 (*Hārītadharmasāstra* XI.1-5, in its manuscript discovered) all *saṃskāras* are divided into two distinct categories: *daiva* and *brāhma*. While the life-cycle rites beginning with *Garbhādhāna* and ending at *Snāna* (*Samāvartana*) were placed under the category of *brāhma saṃskāra*, the *śrauta* rites like the *Haviryajñas* and the *Somayajñas* and the *grhya* rites known as the *pākayajñas* were placed under the category of *daiva saṃskāra*.⁴⁷ In a verse of Śaṅkha and Likhita, two ancient authorities on *smṛti* cited in SṃP, it is stated that a Brāhmaṇ, purified by these two categories of *saṃskāra* and always equipped with the eight virtues of the self, attains the world of Brahmā (after the death). It can be observed that both Hārīta and Śaṅkha-Likhita segregated the life cycle rites and the solemn and domestic sacrificial rites into two distinct categories, but still accepted the sacrificial rites also as the *saṃskāras*.⁴⁸

The MDh finally broke away from the earlier traditions of the late *grhyasūtras* and the *dharmasūtras*. It segregated the life-cycle rites from the solemn and calendrical domestic rites. MDh II.26, probably for the first time, explicitly proclaimed that these life-cycle rites, performed in the manner prescribed by the Vedas are the only acts for the purification of the body (*śarīra saṃskāraḥ kāryaḥ*). With the diminishing importance of the sacrificial rites, it decided to shift from the perceptions of the predecessors like, Gautama, Vaikhānasa, Aṅgirā and Hārīta and prescribed that only the life-cycle rites are the *saṃskāras*, the purificatory rites for the body. However, it (II.28) did not fail to add that the study of the Vedas, observance of the vows, and performance of the *śrauta* and *grhya* sacrificial rites are necessary to make one's body fit for union with Brahma. MDh II.16 prescribed that the purificatory rites for a 'twice-born' male should commence with the impregnation rite (*Niṣeka*) and end with the funerary rite (*Śmaśāna*).⁴⁹ This text (II.16, 26-27, 29-30, 34-36, 65; III.1-4) mentioned thirteen life-cycle rites, namely, *Niṣeka*, *Puṃsavana*, *Sīmantonayana*, *Jātakarma*, *Nāmadheya*, *Niṣkramaṇa*, *Annaprāśana*, *Cauḍa* or *Cūḍākarma*,

Upanāyana or *Mauñjībandhana*, *Keśānta*, *Samāvartana*, *Dārakarma* (marriage) and *Śmaśāna*. The YDh (I.10-14, 36, 52) also described the same life-cycle rites except *Samāvartana*, as probably its performance as a distinct rite was discontinued by this time.

VDh 1.13-20, following the tradition of the MDh and the YDh enumerated only the life-cycle rites in its list of sixteen sanctifying rites (*ṣoḍaśa saṃskārāḥ*). This list included *Garbhādhāna*, *Puṃsavana*, *Sīmanta*, *Jātakarma*, *Nāmakriyā*, *Niṣkramaṇa*, *Annāśana*, *Vapanakriyā* (or *Cūdākarma*), *Karṇavedha*, *Vratādeśa* (or *Upanayana*), *Vedārambha*, *Keśānta*, *Snāna*, *Udvāha*, *Vivāhāgniparigraha* (literally, “acceptance of *vivāhāgni*, the sacrificial fire for the married householders”) and *Tretāgnisaṃgraha* (literally, “collection of three sacrificial fires”). The rite, *Karṇavedha* mentioned in this list was not enumerated by the earlier texts. The last two rites mentioned in this list are also not found in any other earlier text as a *saṃskāra*. Another late authority of *smṛti*, *Jātukarṇya*, cited in *Saṃskāradīpaka* and *SṃP*, included four vedic vows in its list replacing *Vedārambha* of the VDh list. Further, he added the *Antya* (funeral) rite in the list and dropped the last two rites of the VDh.⁵⁰ Sixteen purificatory rites mentioned by him are *Ādhāna* (*karma*), *Puṃsa* (*karma*), *Sīmanta* (*karma*), *Jāta* (*karma*), *Nāma* (*karma*), *Anna* (*karma*), *Caula*, *Mauñjī* (*bandhana*), four *vratas*, *Godāna*, *Samāvarta*, *Vivāha* and *Antya* (*karma*).

An early medieval text, *Gṛhyasaṃgraha* I.2-9 listed the names of the sacrificial fires for the performance of various domestic rites including life cycle rites. 14 life cycle rites are mentioned in this context: *Garbhādhāna*, *Puṃsavana*, *Śuṅgākarma*, *Sīmanta*, *Jātakarma*, *Nāmakaraṇa*, *Prāśana*, *Cūdākaraṇa*, *Vratādeśa*, *Godāna*, *Keśānta*, *Visarga*, *Vivāha* and *Caturthīkarma*. An early medieval text, the *Nāradaparivrājaka Upaniṣad* I.2, II.1 mentioned about forty *saṃskāra*, but did not provide any details.⁵¹

A number of late medieval authors of the *paddhati* texts like Paśupati (late 12th century), Bhavadevabhaṭṭa (12th century), Kāleśi, Gaṇapati Rāvala (late 17th century), Nārāyaṇapaṇḍita, Pṛthvidhara and Rāmadatta Maithila considered only ten life-cycle rites as *saṃskāras*, and their texts are typically styled as *Daśakarmapaddhati* (literally, “the handbook of the ten rites”).⁵² The treatise of Bhavadevabhaṭṭa, variously named as *Chāndoga-Karmānuṣṭhānapaddhati*, *Daśakarmapaddhati*, *Daśakarmadīpikā* and *Saṃskārapaddhati* and it followed the Sāmavedic ritual texts. Contents of this text are dedicated to the ten *saṃskāras* of *Vivāha*, *Garbhādhāna*, *Puṃsavana*, *Sīmantonayana*, *Jātakarma*, *Nāmakaraṇa*, *Niṣkramaṇa*, *Annaprāśana*, *Cūdākaraṇa* and *Upanayana*, other life-cycle rites like *Soṣyantīhoma*, *Pauṣṭika*, *Putramūrdhābhīghrāṇa* and *Samāvartana* and the domestic rites of *Kuśaṇḍikā*, *Udīcyakarma* and *Śālākarma* (rite of entering a new house).⁵³ The treatise of Paśupati is also known as *Daśakarmadīpikā* and followed the Śuklayajurvedic ritual texts. *Daśakarmapaddhati* of Kāleśi and Nārāyaṇapaṇḍita followed the Ṛgvedic ritual texts.

A late medieval *tantra* text, probably written in the early 18th century, MNT 9.4 mentioned that the number of *saṃskāras* is ten and the life-cycle rites named as *saṃskāras* are: *Jīvaseka* (*Garbhādhāna*), *Puṃsavana*, *Sīmantonayana*, *Jāta*(*karma*), *Nāma*(*karma*), *Niṣkramaṇa*, *Annāśana*, *Cūdā*(*karma*), *Upanayana*, and *Udvāha*.⁵⁴

Swami Dayananda Saraswati in his *Saṃskāraavidhi* (1884) described the performances of the life cycle rites from the viewpoint of the *Ārya Samāj* movement. The sixteen life-cycle rites he described in his work as the vedic *saṃskāra* (purificatory rites) are *Garbhādhāna*, *Puṃsavana*, *Sīmantonayana*, *Jātakarma*, *Nāmakaraṇa*, *Niṣkramaṇa*, *Annaprāśana*, *Cūdākarma*, *Karṇavedha*, *Upanayana*, *Vedārambha*, *Samāvartana*, *Vivāha*, *Vāṇaprasthāsrama*, *Sannyāsāsrama* and *Antyeṣṭikarma*.

Table 1: Major commentaries of the *gr̥hyasūtras*, *piṭṛmedhasūtras* and *śrāddhakalpas*

Text	Commentaries	Author
<i>Śāṅkhāyanagr̥hyasūtra</i>	1. <i>Gr̥hyapradīpaka</i>	Nārāyaṇa
	2. <i>Arthadarpaṇa</i>	Raghunātha
<i>Kauṣītakagr̥hyasūtra</i>	<i>Kauṣītakagr̥hyasūtravivaraṇa</i>	Bhavatrāta
<i>Āśvalāyanagr̥hyasūtra</i>	1. <i>Āśvalāyanagr̥hyavṛtti</i>	Nārāyaṇa
	2. <i>Anāvīlavṛtti</i>	Haradatta
	3. <i>Vimalodayamālā</i>	Jayantāsvāmin
	4. <i>Tātparyavyākhyā</i>	Dāmodarabhaṭṭa
	5. <i>Āśvalāyanagr̥hyabhāṣya</i>	Devasvāmin
	6. <i>Ānandacandrikā</i>	Ānandarāyavājapeyajvan
<i>Gobhīlagr̥hyasūtra</i>	<i>Gobhīlagr̥hyabhāṣya</i>	Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa
<i>Gobhīliyaśrāddhakalpa</i>	<i>Gobhīliyaśrāddhakalpabhāṣya</i>	Mahāyaśas
<i>Khādiragr̥hyasūtra</i>	<i>Drāhyānagr̥hyasūtravṛtti</i>	Rudraskandasvāmin
<i>Jaiminigr̥hyasūtra</i>	<i>Subodhinī</i>	Śrīnivāsa
<i>Gautamapiṭṛmedhasūtra</i>	<i>Gautamīyapiṭṛmedhasūtravivaraṇa</i>	Anantayajvan
<i>Pāraskaragr̥hyasūtra</i>	1. <i>Pāraskaragr̥hyasūtravyākhyā</i>	Karka Upādhyāya
	2. <i>Sajjanavallabhā</i>	Jayarāma
	3. <i>Pāraskaragr̥hyasūtravyākhyā</i>	Harihara
	4. <i>Pāraskaragr̥hyasūtrabhāṣya</i>	Gadādharma
	5. <i>Pāraskaragr̥hyasūtraprakāśikā</i>	Viśvanātha
<i>Baudhāyanagr̥hyasūtra</i>	<i>Baudhāyanagr̥hyasūtrabhāṣya</i>	Vopānabhaṭṭa
<i>Baudhāyanapiṭṛmedhasūtra</i>	<i>Baudhāyanapiṭṛmedhasūtravivaraṇa</i>	Raṅganātha
<i>Bhāradvājagr̥hyasūtra</i>	<i>Gr̥hyasūtrabhāṣya</i>	Kapardīsvāmin
<i>Bhāradvājapaitṛmedhikasūtra</i>	<i>Paitṛmedhikasūtrabhāṣya</i>	Kapardīsvāmin
<i>Āpastambagr̥hyasūtra</i>	1. <i>Anākūlavṛtti</i>	Haradatta
	2. <i>Gr̥hyatātparyadarśana</i>	Sudarśanācārya
	3. <i>Āpastambagr̥hyasūtravṛtti</i>	Dhūrtāsvāmin
	4. <i>R̥juvimalā</i>	Gopālamīśra
	5. <i>Gr̥hyatātparyavivaraṇa</i>	Gopīnātha Maunī
<i>Āpastambapiṭṛmedhasūtra</i>	<i>Āpastambapiṭṛmedhasūtravyākhyāna</i>	Gārgya Gopālayajvan
<i>Hiraṇyakeśīgr̥hyasūtra</i>	<i>Satyāśāḍhasūtraṭīkā</i>	Mātr̥datta
<i>Hiraṇyakeśīpiṭṛmedhasūtra</i>	<i>Vaijayantiṭīkā</i>	Mahādevadīkṣita
<i>Vaikhānasagr̥hyasūtra</i>	1. <i>Vaikhānasasūtradarpaṇa</i>	Nṛsiṃhavājapeyin
	2. <i>Vaikhānasasūtratātparyacintāmaṇi</i>	Śrīnivāsadīkṣita
<i>Mānavagr̥hyasūtra</i>	<i>Pūraṇavyākhyā</i>	Aṣṭāvakra
<i>Kāṭhagr̥hyasūtra</i>	1. <i>Cārayanīyamantrabhāṣya</i>	Devapāla
	2. <i>Kāṭhagr̥hyapañcikā</i>	Brāhmaṇabala
	3. <i>Ādityadarśanavivaraṇa</i>	Ādityadarśana
<i>Kauśikasūtra</i>	<i>Kauśikasūtrabhāṣya</i>	Bhaṭṭa Dārila

Chapter 2

Origin of the Hindu life-cycle rites

The findings of the archaeological excavations carried out in the last few decades have yielded substantial data about the funerary rites practised by the proto-historic people in different regions of South Asia. So far, these customary practices could not be convincingly matched with the funerary rites prescribed in the Hindu *śāstras*. Any information about the other life-cycle rites like the pregnancy rites, the rites after the birth of a child or the coming of age rites could not be inferred from the artefacts discovered during these excavations. Therefore, we have to depend solely on the textual sources to apprehend the origin of the Hindu life-cycle rites in the proto-historic period.

2.1 Codification of the customary practices

Hindu life-cycle rites evolved historically with the socio-economic changes of the South Asian communities and their effects on the kinship patterns in the last three millenniums. Major constituent elements of these rites since the late second millennium BCE until modern times can be traced from the textual sources. Undoubtedly, the ceremonies prescribed for the life-cycle rites in these textual sources are the codified forms of the ancient customary practices of various social groups in South Asia since a time unknown to us. However, the exact geographical locations, where these customary practices were originated cannot be ascertained with sureness from these textual sources. Only, from the definitions of 'Āryāvarta' (literally, "the land of the Āryas") provided in the late vedic ritual texts like VasDh I.8-16 and BDh I.2.9-12, it may be safely assumed that at least some of the life cycle rites prescribed in these texts were originated within the geographical boundary of Āryāvarta (roughly corresponds to the present-day Indian states of Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and Western Uttar Pradesh).

Between ca. 600-300 BCE, composition of a new genre of vedic ritual texts, the *grhyasūtras* commenced in various principalities of the Indian sub-continent. These texts codified the popular domestic rituals including the life-cycle rites¹ by restructuring their constituent elements on the existing *śrauta* (solemn) rituals and by making them compatible with the contemporary Brahmanical theology. However, this process of codification perhaps initiated a few centuries earlier. Codification of the pregnancy and birth rites is already evident in the BāU, a comparatively earlier text. The extant *grhyasūtras*, in a significant number of cases, in addition to its their own opinions on the performance of the *grhya* (domestic) rites also incorporated the alternate views expressed by the earlier authorities and mentioned their names too. It indicates that the extant forms of codified rites prescribed in these texts are actually the outcome of detailed discussions on codification over a long span of time before these texts came in to existence in the present form.²

Almost up to the end of the early medieval period, like their predecessor *śrautasūtras*, the *grhyasūtras* were not accepted as of equal importance of the main corpus of the Vedas, which is believed as the *śruti* (literally, "heard", believed as the eternal and infallible truth, '(revealed to and) heard' by the primordial *ṛṣis* (sages)). These texts were classified at an early stage as the part of the secondary revelations known as the *smṛti*. However, since the early centuries of the Common Era, the authority of these *smṛti* texts on the performance of any ritual is accepted as long as it is not in contradiction with the diktats made by a *śruti*.³ As we have noted in the earlier chapter, some of these *grhyasūtras*, belonging to the *Taittirīya śākhā* of the *Yajurveda* were also incorporated into a larger corpus of the *Kalpa* (procedures for performance of the vedic rituals), believed as composed by certain ancient authorities on the vedic rituals, who were also believed as the founders of the late vedic *śākhās*.⁴

The *grhyasūtras*, unlike the latest genre of vedic ritual texts, the *dharmasūtras*, which codified the *ācāras* (customary practices) as the rules for an individual for following '*dharma*' (righteous way of

life), never felt any requirement for proclaiming the origin of any rites in the Vedas, as a sacred corpus. Indeed, it was known to the compilers of the early *gr̥hyasūtras*, that the origin of the domestic rites described in their texts, classified either as the *pākayajñāḥ* (the sacrifices in which cooked food is offered) or *gr̥hyakarmāṇi* (domestic rituals) was the prevalent *ācāras* (customary practices) followed by the social groups known to them. These customary practices were later classified into three broad categories, *deśācāras* (customary practices which vary from one region to other), *kulācāras* (customary practices which vary from one family to other) and *jātyācāras* (customary practices which vary from one social group to other).⁵ However, except the ĀpGS, no other *gr̥hyasūtra* text explicitly mentioned this fact.

The opening aphorism of the ĀpGS (I.1.1) stated, “Next, the rites that are obtained from *ācāra* (customary practices)”. While commenting on this aphorism, Haradatta (ca. 12th century) in his *Anākulā vṛtti* (commentary) explained that the *karma* (rituals) are of two kinds, *śrutilakṣaṇa* (those characterized by the Vedas), and *ācāralakṣaṇa* (those characterized by the customary practices).⁶ ĀpGS I.1.11 prescribed to perform the codified life-cycle rites only when occasions demand as these rites were occasioned by special occurrences (*naimittika*).⁷ Probably in the early centuries of the Common Era, the proponents of the philosophical school of *Mīmāṃsā* arranged all vedic rituals into three broad categories of *karma* (righteous acts) – the mandatory categories of *nitya* (indispensable daily rituals) and *naimittika* (rituals necessitated by an occasion) and the optional category of *kāmya* (rituals performed for a desired object). They maintained that, these three categories of *karma* are prescribed by the Vedas. The later *smṛti* texts, following this tradition, included all life-cycle rites into the *naimittika* (occasional) category. A late text, *Āśvalāyanasmṛti* 11.8-10, cited later by SṃP and *Prayogarātna*, mentioned that in the list of twenty-five *saṃskāras* stated in *Āśvalāyanasmṛti* 11.4-6 (mentioned in the earlier chapter), the first sixteen *saṃskāras* (1-16) ending with *Vivāha*, i.e., all life-cycle rites are *naimittika* (occasional) rites. Whereas, the next seven *saṃskāras* (17-21, 23-24) in that list, beginning with *Āgrayaṇa*, are *vārṣika* (annual) rites; *Pārvaṇa* (*Śrāddha*) is a *māsika* (monthly) rite and the five *Mahāyajñas* are *nitya* (daily) rites.⁸

As we have seen in the earlier chapter, Hārīta made a clear-cut distinction between the life-cycle rites and the other *śrauta* and *gr̥hya* rites. In the same passage mentioned earlier, he also stated that the *brāhma saṃskāras* (codified life-cycle rites) are prescribed only in the *smṛti* texts (by the ancient sages, therefore not of vedic origin) and proclaimed that unlike *daiva saṃskāras* (other *śrauta* and *gr̥hya* rites), the performance of the *brāhma saṃskāras* (life-cycle rites) enable one to attain the equality with the sages only (and not the gods) and live in the same *loka* (after world) with the sages after death.⁹

ĀpGS I.2.15 and BGŚS II.3.1 accepted that for all life-cycle rites, in addition to the codified elements, a number of additional elements exist, which are grounded on the customary practices. They mentioned such elements as ‘*āvṛt*’ (literally, “to repeat”; similar to the codified elements). In general, the *gr̥hyasūtra* texts also mentioned the rites (or elements of a rite) performed without the recitation of any *mantra* as the *āvṛt*¹⁰ (but later, several *nibandha* texts explained *āvṛt* as *Jātakarmādikriyā*, the codified life-cycle rites from *Jātakarma* to *Cūḍākarāṇa*). The *gr̥hyasūtra* texts instructed the performer to consult the female members of the family for the performance of such *āvṛt* rites. Haradatta on ĀpGS I.2.15 explained *āvṛt* as the elements of marriage rite performed without any *mantra* and well known in a particular *janapada* (principality), *grāma* (village) or *kula* (family). ĀGS I.7.1-2, while describing the codified procedure for *Vivāha*, the marriage rite, stated that the local customary practices for *Vivāha* rite in different *janapadas* (principalities) and *grāmas* (villages) are *uccāvaca* (literally, “high and low”, not same) and all of them should be taken into consideration during marriage. It also accepted that only the customary practices followed universally were codified in that text.¹¹

2.2 Removal of evil influences

Pandey (1969)¹² rightly pointed out that the Hindu life-cycle rites were originated from the belief of the proto-historic South Asian people that they were surrounded by the superhuman influences. Like other ancient cultures, one of the early purposes of the performance of a Hindu rite of passage was seeking removal of evil influences, mostly during its liminal stage, regarded as the potentially dangerous period by developing various means for it, including propitiation. It was believed that when an unfavourable superhuman power is propitiated, it turns away without harming an individual who is ritually purified by performing the rite.

This early perception of performing a ritual as a propitiation to remove evil influences is mostly visible in the rites related to the birth and death. An aphorism of the PGS (I.16.24), which is the part of its description of the birth rite, instructed that if a new born child is attacked by Kumāra¹³ in the lying-in chamber, the father of the child should cover the baby with a net or take the baby on his lap and recite a *mantra*, “Kūrkura, Sukūrkura, Kūrkura, who hold fast children, *Cet, Cet*, doggy let him loose. Reverence is to you, Sīsara, barker, bender.”¹⁴

Perception of removal of evil influences by performing a ritual is more particularly noticeable in the aphorism immediately preceding it (PGS I.16.23). It prescribed that the father, during the sacrifice with the *sūtikāgni* (literally, “the fire kindled in the lying-in chamber”), after the birth of his child, should recite two *mantras*, “May Śaṇḍa and Marka, Upavīra and Śauṇḍikeya, Ulūkhala and Malimluca, Droṇāsa and Cyavana vanish hence; *svāhā*.” and “May Ālikhat, Animiṣa, Kiṃbadanta, Upaśruti, Haryakṣa, Kumbhī, Śatru, Pātrapāṇi, Nṛmaṇi, Hantrīmukha, Sarṣapāruṇa and Cyavana vanish hence; *svāhā*” while throwing mustard seeds mixed with rice-chaff into the *sūtikāgni*.¹⁵ For the similar rite, a passage of the JGS (I.8) prescribed two *mantras*, “May Śaṇḍa, Marka, Upavīra, Śauṇḍikera, Ulūkhala, Malimluca, Duṇāśi and Cyavana vanish hence; *svāhā*” and “Ālikhat, Vilikhat, Animiṣa, Kiṃbadanta, Upaśruti, Aryamṇa, Kumbhī, Śatru, Pātrapāṇi, Nipuṇahan, Antrīmukha and Sarṣapāruṇa vanish hence; *svāhā*.” A similar passage is also found in the HGS (II.1.3.7), which prescribed to recite more *mantras* to scatter away more goblins and demons, “May Śaṇḍa and Marka, Upavīra, Śauṇḍikera, Ulūkhala and Cyavana vanish hence; *svāhā*”, “May Ālikhat, Vilikhat, Animiṣa, Kiṃbadanta, Upaśruti, Aryamṇa, Kumbhī, Śatru, Pātrapāṇi, Nipuṇi, Āntrīmukha and Sarṣapāruṇa vanish hence; *svāhā*”, “Keśinī, Śvalominī, Bajābojā, Upakāśinī go away, vanish hence; *svāhā*”, “Wearing variegated garments (*viśvavāsaḥ*), the servants of Kubera (*kauberakā*) sent by the king of demons (*rakṣorāja*), all of one common origin walk through the village, wishing [to harm] those who are unprotected; *svāhā*”, “Kill them. Bind them.” Thus says this messenger of Brahmā (Atharvavedic priest). Agni has encompassed them. Indra knows them. Bṛhaspati knows them. I the Brāhmaṇ know them who seize (men), who have prominent teeth, rugged hair, hanging breasts; *svāhā*”, “[Vanish] the night-walkers, wearing ornaments on their breasts, with lances in their hands, drinking out of skulls; *svāhā*”, “Their father Uccaiśrāvyaḥkarnaka, [walks] at their head, their mother walks in the rear seeking *vikhura* (distress) in the village; *svāhā*”, “[Their] sister, the night-walker, looks at the family through the *sandhi* (crevice) of the door, she who wakes the sleeping [child], whose mind is turned on the wife, who has become the mother; *svāhā*.” and “O god with the black path, Agni, burn the lungs, the hearts and the livers of these female demons; burn their eyes; *svāhā*”.¹⁶ Similar passages are available in ĀpMP II.13.7-14, BhGS I.23,¹⁷ ĀgGS II.1.3, VkhGS III.15 and KGS 35.1-2 also. From the contents of these *mantras*, it can be inferred that these *mantras* were of purely magical nature intended to scatter away the goblins and demons, who were believed responsible for the early childhood diseases and disabilities.

The popular rituals associated with the worship of the goddess Śaṣṭhī or Janmadā in the sixth night after the birth of a child were codified only in the late medieval period. Nevertheless, these rituals

were originated in a much earlier period as a means for propitiation of evil superhuman influences. This is evident in a *mantra* for worship of twelve *mātrikāgrahas* (female fiends), which is prescribed by Raghunandana in *Jyotistattva* for recitation during the performance of the rituals associated with Śaṣṭhī worship.¹⁸

2.3 Perception of ritual purification

The verb *saṃskaroti* means ‘join together’ or ‘preparing’.¹⁹ The noun *saṃskārāḥ* (plural) has been used by the *dharmasāstras* in the sense of the sanctifying rites, mostly to mean the rites of passage. But this word, *saṃskāra* is not found in the entire early vedic literature, only its derivative *saṃskṛta* is used in the RV V.76.2 in the sense of ‘purified’. It states that the two Aśvins do not harm the *gharma* (vessel) that is *saṃskṛta* (purified). In ŚBM I.1.4.10, the word, *saṃskṛta* was used in the sense of preparation or purification of the oblations.²⁰ The vedic ritual texts PGS II.5.42-43, ĀpDh I.1.1.9 and I.1.2.9, VasDh IV.3 and the philosophical text MīmS VI.1.35 used the word *saṃskāra* only for the initiation rite, *Upanayana*. Perhaps, the earliest use of the word, *saṃskāra* to denote all sanctifying rites including the rites of passage is found in GDh VIII.14-24.²¹ In a late portion of the BPS (III.1.3-4), it is mentioned that for every human being, there are two categories of *saṃskāra*: *jātasamskāra* and *mṛtasamskāra*. According to this text, it is well-known that, through *jātasamskāra*, one conquers this world and through *mṛtasamskāra*, the other worlds.²² An almost similar passage is found in a late vedic ritual text, the VkhGS VII.1, which mentioned two categories of *saṃskāra* as *jātakasamskāra* and *mṛtasamskāra*. Probably, these are the two early known usages of the word, *saṃskāra* in the sense of the rites of passage, as *jātasamskāra* or *jātakasamskāra* and *mṛtasamskāra* mean the rites of passage after birth and after death only. Another equally early use of this word in the sense of the rites of passage is found in Śāntiparva 189.2-3 of the *Mahābhārata*, which mentioned that one, who has been sanctified by the *saṃskāras* beginning with *Jātakarma* and others, is called a Brāhmaṇ.²³

Etymology of *saṃskāra* also suggests that, these rites of passage were originally devised as the preparation or purification of one's body in order to protect the person from evil influences. This original perception is very prominently found in the passages of the early *grhyasūtra* texts. However, these texts were composed during a period when, explaining everything in terms of a *yajña* (sacrifice) was the common practice. Hence, BGS I.1.1-12 included these rites as a part of a broader category of *pākayajña*.²⁴ Still, the perception of performing the rites of passage to purify the body was never completely lost from the communal memory, which is evident from a passage found in the late text, VkhGS I.1, where the eighteen rites of passages are mentioned under the category, *saṃskāraḥ śārīraḥ*, which literally means sanctification of body and made distinct from the other category, *yajña*, under which twenty-two *śrauta* rites are mentioned.²⁵

Remnants of this original perception of performing the life-cycle rites for purification are found even in the early *dharmasāstra* texts, written in the early centuries of the Common Era. But, the perception of purity was changed in these texts to a Brahmanical view of ritual purity, which resulted in restricting the performance of some of the rites of passage to the ‘twice-born’ (a member of the first three *varṇas* of the Hindus) males only.

According to MDh II.26, the life-cycle rites beginning with *Niṣeka* (literally, impregnation) must be performed for each ‘twice-born’ male following the procedures prescribed in the Vedas, as these rites sanctify the body (*śārīrasamskāra*) and make it pure both here [in this life] and after death.²⁶ MDh II.27 stated that by performing other life-cycle rites, like *Jātakarma* (literally, the birth rite), *Cauḍa* (literally, arrangement of the hair tuft, tonsure) and *Mauñjīnibandhana* (literally, tying the *muñja* grass cord, vedic initiation rite, *Upanayana*) the taints of semen and womb is wiped off from a ‘twice-born’ male.²⁷ An identical view was expressed in YDh I.13.²⁸ In his *Saṃskāratattva*, Raghunandana quoted a passage from Hārīta, which went further and proclaimed, “When a person

has intercourse according to the procedure for *Garbhādhāna*, he establishes in his wife a *brahmagarbha* (a foetus that becomes fit for reception of the Vedas), by the rite of *Puṃsavana* he makes the foetus a male, by the rite of *Phalasthāpana* (*Sīmantonayana*) he removes from the foetus the taint derived from the parents, and for the five accumulated taints due to seed, blood and womb, the first one is removed by *Jātakarma*, the second one by *Nāmakaraṇa*, the third one by *Prāśana*, fourth one by *Cūḍākaraṇa* and the fifth one by *Snāna* (*Samāvartana*). By these eight *saṃskāras* [from *Garbhādhāna*], purity arises.”²⁹ ŚmR cited the similar verses from a late text, *Smṛtisaṃgraha*, which stated that by the performance of the rite of *Niṣeka* (spray) of seeds, the womb is made purified, hence, this rite is known as a *kṣetra saṃskāra* (purification of the field); the result of *Sīmantakarma* is identical to *Niṣeka*; the taint of consuming amniotic fluid before birth is wiped off by performing *Jātotsava* (*Jātakarma*) and by *Annāśana* (*Annaprāśana*), the impurity caused by the *mātrigarbhamala* (womb) is removed.³⁰ A late *dharmaśāstra* text, PDh VIII.19 stated that, just as a picture of myriad parts gradually becomes perceivable, in the same manner, the state of *brāhmaṇya* (ritual purity) is brought out by performing the *saṃskāras* (one by one) according to the injunctions (Aparārka and ŚmP also cited this same verse but as of Devala³¹ and Aṅgirā³² respectively).

Chapter 3

Historical evolution of the life-cycle rites in India

3.1 Evolution of Hindu life-cycle rites in ancient India

In the previous chapter, it has been mentioned that the constituent elements of the ancient Indian life-cycle rites were restructured at the time of codification in the *grhyasūtras* to fit them in the Brahmanical theological perception of the mid-2nd millennium BCE. By that time, the Brahmanical framework of orthopraxy was already rooted on the stratification into the social classes and gender discrimination. During the process of codification, these rites were transformed into the *grhya* (domestic) sacrificial rites similar to the *śrauta* (solemn) sacrificial rites by adding the elements like offering oblations to the vedic deities into the sacrificial fire and the recitation of the *mantras* from the early vedic texts. As these rites were fundamentally the rites of passage, ritual purification was an essential constituent of the elements of their separation period even before their codification. Now, after the codification of the life-cycle rites, these acts of ritual purification were also transformed to fit into the Brahmanical theological framework. The performance of the codified life-cycle rites became a means of implicit acceptance of the Brahmanical concept of ritual purity and impurity. An example of the transformation of the acts of ritual purification can be found in a passage of vedic ritual text, GDh X.52. It, justifying the denial of the right to perform the purification ritual by a Śūdra stated that according to some authority, for a Śūdra, washing the hands and feet serves the purpose of *ācamana* (sipping of water, for ritual ablution) performed by a 'twice-born' male.

In the last centuries before the Common Era, the *dharmasūtra* texts emerged. These texts included the performances of the codified *saṃskāras*, in line with the Brahmanical concept of ritual purity and impurity as one of the components of their overall schema of the *dharma*, the righteous way of living. *Dharma*, which these texts claimed as rooted in the diktats of the Vedas, became the core ideology for these texts to establish a new hierarchical social order. In this new theological construct of *dharma*, to protect the Vedas from the perceived pollution, the right to perform any ritual by reciting the *mantras* from the vedic texts were denied to the females of all social classes and the social groups placed in the social class of the Śūdras,. Definitely, the underlying idea was to ensure the cultural hegemony for the male members belonging to the elite social classes of the priests and rulers by giving them the exclusive right to perform the rituals, which produce the religious merits. As the life-cycle rites prescribed in the vedic ritual texts required recitation of the *mantras* from the vedic texts by the performer, one of the major transformations took place with the emergence of this new social order was the exclusion of the Śūdras and the females of all *varṇas* from performing these life-cycle rites in their codified form. This transformation is evident in a passage of a *dharmasūtra* text, VasDh IV.1, which stated that four *varṇas* (social classes) are distinguished by their origin and by the distinction of the *saṃskāra* (sanctifying rites, including codified life-cycle rites) performed by them. In desperation to prove the existence of a vedic diktat denying the right to perform the codified life-cycle rites for the Śūdras, VasDh IV.3 cited a purported vedic passage, which stated that the Brāhmaṇs were created with the *Gāyatrī* metre, the Rājanyas were created with the *Triṣṭubh* metre, the Vaiśyas were created with the *Jagatī* metre and the Śūdras were created without any (vedic) metre (this purported vedic passage is probably a late invention as the vedic texts like TS VII.1.1.5-6, PBr VI.1.11 and JBr I.69, I.266 and II.102 and an early vedic ritual text, ŚSS XIV.33.19 associated the Śūdras with the *Anuṣṭubh* metre). Therefore the Śūdras have no right to undergo the *saṃskāras* (with the *mantras* in any vedic metre).¹ Here, the word, *saṃskāra* most probably means the initiation rite of *Upanayana*, as some of the *grhyasūtras* prescribed that a Brāhmaṇ, a Kṣatriya and a Vaiśya should be initiated with the *mantras* in *Gāyatrī* metre, *Triṣṭubh* metre and *Jagatī* metre respectively. An almost similar passage of Yama (cited by Aparārka) is also

found, which stated that since the Prajāpati created the Śūdras without any vedic metre, therefore a Śūdra should perform all *saṃskāras* (life cycle rites) without the (vedic) *mantras* like one who is not eligible to perform the initiation rite, *Upanayana* (i.e. the life-cycle rites performed before *Upanayana* only).

Later, in the early centuries of the Common Era, at the time of composition of the early *dharmaśāstras*, the Brahmanical theologians made the codified life-cycle rites obligatory and transformed these rites into the rites of institution, serving the purpose of maintaining the hierarchical social order of *varṇāśramadharmā*. Largely, this transformation was successful until the late medieval period, as the performances of similar codified obligatory life-cycle rites created a sense of uniformity among the members of the three elite ‘twice-born’ social classes, most significantly the Brāhmaṇs, belonging to different regions of India with significant differences in social, economic and cultural background. This sense of commonality is reflected in a passage of Sumantuḥ, a late authority of *smṛti*, cited by SṃP and other *nibandha* texts, which stated that for the Brāhmaṇs, Kṣatriyas and Vaiśyas, the rites of *Garbhādhāna*, *Sīmantonayana*, *Jātakarma*, *Nāmakaraṇa*, *Annaprāśana*, *Cūḍākaraṇa*, *Upanayana*, *Vratācaryā*, *Adhyana*, *Samāvartana*, *Vivāha* and *Yajñādāna* are same.² Pandey (1969) also noticed this transformation of the life-cycle rites and he explained the reasons of this successful transformation from the viewpoint of a traditional scholar:³

By making the Saṃskāras compulsory, the Hindu sociologists aimed at evolving a type of humanity uniform in culture and character and having the same ideal of life. They were successful to a great extent in their attempt. The Hindus form a peculiar race with a wide cultural background. They influenced and assimilated the people who came into contact with them by their cultural scheme, and they are still living as a nation.

This successful transformation of the life-cycle rites into the rites of institution prompted MDh II.16 to instruct that only the individuals, for whom the performances of the series of the obligatory life-cycle rites beginning with the rite for the ‘placement [of seed]’ and ending with the rite for the ‘[construction of the] sepulchral mound’ have been prescribed with the recitation of the (vedic) *mantras* (i.e., the members of three ‘twice-born’ social classes), have the right to study the normative texts (the *dharmaśāstras*) and no one else.

3.1.1 Social stratification and Hindu life-cycle rites

One of the most significant factors behind the successful transformation of the Hindu life-cycle rites into the rites of the institution was the general acceptance of the social stratification in the early historical South Asia. Therefore, it would be more relevant, if the evolution of the Hindu life-cycle rites in ancient South Asia is analysed in the backdrop of the transformation of the social stratification during the proto-historic period and the early historical period.

The chronological history of formation and transformation of the social classes in the proto-historic South Asia is a subject of continuous debate among the modern scholars. It seems that, since the early centuries of the 1st millennium BCE, the idea of social stratification by positioning every social group into one of the four social classes or *varṇas* of Brāhmaṇ (the priestly class), Rājanya (later known as Kṣatriya, the ruling class), Vaiśya (earlier known as Viś, the commoners) and Śūdra (the slaves), the names of which are found mentioned in a verse of the hymn, *Puruṣasūkta* (RV X.90.12), became dominant in the North and the North West. But, the perception of the three elite ‘twice-born’ social classes with the exclusive rights to perform the solemn and (later) domestic rites including the life-cycle rites reciting the *mantras* from the vedic texts and the denial of these rights to the other social groups, who were identified as the part of the fourth social class of Śūdra, which became an essential component of the theological construct of *dharma* of the *dharmaśūtra* texts, was not universally accepted till a much later period even in the geographical region of ‘Āryāvarta’

which roughly corresponds to the present-day Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. A direct evidence of it is found in a vedic ancillary text composed in ca. 5th century BCE, the *Nirukta* III.8, which mentioned the view of Aupamanyava, an earlier vedic etymologist, that the meaning of “*pañcajanāḥ*” (literally, “five people”), whom RV X.53.4 mentioned as the partakers of the sacrificial food, is the four *varṇas* and the Niṣādas, the fifth.⁴ Further later, the *Bṛhaddevatā* 7.69 also mentioned this view and attributed it to Śākaṭāyana. Megasthenes, the Seleucid ambassador to the court of Candragupta Maurya who lived in Pāṭaliputra around 300 BCE also mentioned about the seven social classes in India and it is quite possible that, at the time of his sojourn, the concept of four social classes was not yet universally accepted in Magadha, which was of course outside the territory of early ‘Āryāvarta’, where the social order of four social classes were already established.

There are more evidences available in the early vedic texts and some of the early vedic ritual texts to firmly establish the fact that the perception of exclusiveness to the right to perform the solemn and domestic sacrificial rites with the vedic *mantras* to three elite ‘twice-born’ social classes was not universally accepted among the composers of these texts at least till mid-1st millennium BCE. It is also possible that, when these early vedic texts were composed, even the perception of three elite ‘twice-born’ social classes was not accepted universally in the geographical region where these texts were composed. An early vedic text, MS II.2.4 prescribed to perform a solemn rite for a *Niṣādasthapati*, the chief of the Niṣādas, a social group later placed in the social classes of the Śūdras and Antyajās in the Hindu normative texts and mentioned as an inferior caste (*hīnajāti*) in the Buddhist canonical texts. ŚBM XIII.8.3.11 also prescribed to construct the *śmaśāna* (sepulchral mound) for the Śūdras. TBr I.1.4.8 allowed the Rathakāras, another social group, which was also later placed in the social class of the Śūdras in the later Hindu normative texts and mentioned as a *hīnajāti* in the Buddhist canonical texts, to perform the rite to establish sacrificial fire. An early vedic ritual text, ĀŚS II.1.13 prescribed that an Upakruṣṭa (an ancient social group, but Nārāyaṇa, its scholiast explains as a carpenter of Vaiśya *varṇa*) should perform the rite of *Agnyādheya* (or *Ādhāna*, the rite of establishment of sacrificial fire) in autumn. A number of early vedic ritual texts, BŚS II.12 and XXIV.16, BhŚS V.2.4, ĀpŚS V.3.18, HŚS III.2, VārŚS I.4.1.1, KŚS I.1.9 and IV.7.7 and VkhŚS I.1 prescribed that a Rathakāra should perform the rite of *Agnyādheya* in the rainy season. KŚS I.1.10-11 also allowed a Rathakāra to perform *niyata* (literally, “obligatory”) rites, in spite of the denial by Vātsya, an earlier authority. BhŚS V.2.9 mentioned that while some authorities allow a person belonging to the fourth *varṇa* to perform the rite of *Agnyādheya*, some do not. HŚS III.1 allowed the Niṣādas and the Rathakāras to establish sacrificial fire and perform the solemn rites of *Agnihotra* and *Darśapurnamāsa*. VārŚS I.1.1.4-5 allowed a Rathakāra to perform the solemn rite of *yajña* and a *Niṣādasthapati* to perform the solemn rites of *Iṣṭi* and *Agnyādheya*. BhŚS IX.16.16-17 and ĀpŚS IX.14.11-13 prescribed that a *Niṣādasthapati* should perform the *Iṣṭi* rite for Rudra by offering *caru* of *vāstu* grains if Rudra is attacking one’s cattle. Further later, KŚS I.1.12,14 stated that a *Niṣādasthapati* has the right to perform a rite of offering oblations of *gavedhukā* (*gavīdhuka*, *Chionachne gigantean*) corns to Rudra, but only in the *Laukika* fire (domestic fire used for cooking), not in the sacrificial fire.⁵ MŚS V.1.9.29 also prescribed that the *Iṣṭi* (solemn) rite for Rudra should be performed by a *Niṣādasthapati*. Bādari, an early authority on vedic rituals (cited in MīmS VI.1.27), stated that the persons belonging to all four *varṇas* are entitled for the vedic sacrifices.

Probably, as the followers of this early tradition, two comparatively late vedic ritual texts, BGS II.5.6 and BhGS I.1 prescribed the initiation rite, *Upanayana* for the Rathakāras. Much later, GDh X.53 allowed a Śūdra to perform the funeral rites, *Śrāddhakarma* and GDh X.65 mentioned that according to some authority (who may be a follower of the early tradition), a Śūdra is allowed perform the domestic sacrificial rites of *pākayajñas* (which include the life-cycle rites) on his own (without any priest). Further later, the *Śāntiparva* 60.36 of the *Mahābhārata* also mentioned that the

authority of *trayī* (literally, “three Vedas”, a synonym for the Vedas) allowed a Śūdra to perform the *pākayajñas*.⁶ This view was echoed in the later *Purāṇa* texts, the ViṣP III.8.34, VI.2.23 and the *Kūrmapurāṇa* I.2.41, which stated that a Śūdra has the right to perform the *pākayajña*. It may be of interest to note that, in the early centuries of the Common Era, when the hierarchical social order of *varṇāśramadharmā* and its corollary of denial of the rights to perform the rituals with the vedic *mantras* for the Śūdras were universally accepted by the Brahmanical theologians, the text composed as the philosophy of the rituals, MīmS VI.1.50, in order to provide a justification for the rights given to the Rathakāras in the early texts, positioned them in to an imaginary caste, ‘*Saudhanvana*’ (an epithet for the Ṛbhūs, a group of vedic deities), slightly inferior in social status than the castes belonging to the ‘twice-born’ social classes, but at the same time not a Śūdra caste.⁷ But, about the Niṣādasthapati, also mentioned in the early texts as the performer of the solemn rituals, MīmS VI.1.51 had no other option but to accept that he does not belong to any ‘twice-born’ caste.

Although, we do not have any direct evidence, but, probably this Brahmanical social order of *varṇāśramadharmā* was not accepted by the adversely affected social groups without resistance and surely, the social order of *varṇāśramadharmā* never existed in any period of South Asian history in entirety. From the assertion in *Vajrasūcī*, an ancient work critical to the Brahmanical social order, ascribed to Aśvaghoṣa, it seems that in the early historical period, at least till the early centuries of the Common Era, the social groups like the Kaivartas, Rajakas and Caṇḍālas, who were positioned in to the social classes of Śūdra and Antyaja, had their own priests, who were also known as the Brāhmaṇs. These Brāhmaṇs officiated over the performances of the life-cycle rites, including *Cūḍākarāṇa* and *Muñjadandakāṣṭha* (*Upanayana*) for them.⁸

It is also evident that the members of the Hindu social groups for whom the codified life-cycle rites with the vedic *mantras* were denied by the *dharmasāstras*, never stopped performing these rites throughout the last two millenniums with almost similar elements as the ‘twice-born’ social groups and reciting almost similar *mantras* from two non-vedic Hindu traditions, the *Purāṇas* and the *Āgamas* (literally, “scriptures”), both of which accepted their right to perform the codified life-cycle rites denied by the *dharmasāstras*. While, the procedures laid down in the *Purāṇas* for the performance of the rituals are similar to the vedic ritual texts and the early *dharmasāstras*, most of the rituals prescribed in the *Purāṇas* are not the vedic sacrificial rituals and these rituals have their origins in the ancient *Āgama* texts. Unlike the *Purāṇas*, the procedures for the rituals prescribed in the texts, known as the *Āgamas* or *Tantras* (literally, “traditions”), are also contrary to the procedures asserted as the vedic injunctions by the vedic ritual texts and the *dharmasāstras*. These differences were so significant that Hārīta (most probably in the lost *dharmasūtra* ascribed to him), in a passage cited by Kullūkabhṭṭa (ca. 1250) on MDh II.1 states that *dharma* is based upon the *śruti* (revealed texts) and the *śruti* is of two kinds: *vaidikī* (vedic) and *tāntrikī* (tantric). Later, *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* XI.27.7 also mentioned that the *makhah* (rituals) are of three kinds: *vaidika* (vedic), *tāntrika* (tantric) and *miśra* (combination of both). The *Āgama* texts, belonging to the various sects of the ancient and early medieval Hinduism prescribed the performance of the Hindu life-cycle rites in accordance with the injunctions proclaimed as the revelations by Śiva and Viṣṇu (in contrast to the vedic injunctions which is believed as the revelation by Brahmā) and allowed the social groups forbidden by the *dharmasāstras* to perform these life-cycle rites with the tantric *mantras* prescribed in these texts. In general, since these texts were also composed by the Brāhmaṇs, the hierarchical social order of *varṇāśramadharmā* was mostly not challenged explicitly. But a late medieval text *Kulārṇavatantra* I.72 disapproving the *varṇāśramadharmā*, stated that Śiva has revealed to Pārvatī that if the people only perform the rituals according to their respective *varṇāśramadharmā* without any knowledge about the *paramatattva* (literally, “the higher truth”, the tantric doctrine), then their ignorance would be the cause of their destruction.

Pāñcarātra is one of the early *Āgama* traditions in India. The *Vaiṣṇava* sect of the *Pāñcarātrins*, (followers of the *Pāñcarātra* texts), was probably originated in the last centuries before the Common Era. In the early medieval period, the *Pañcarātrins* and the *Vaikhānasas* were the two significant Vaiṣṇava Brāhmaṇ social groups in South India and many of them were the hereditary priests of the significant temples. In *Sanatkumārasaṃhitā* (*Brahmarātra*.4.68-71), one of the early medieval *Pāñcarātra* texts, three different procedures was prescribed for the initiation rite of *Upanayana*: the *vaidika* (according to the vedic injunctions), *vaidikatāntrika* (following both vedic and tantric injunctions) and *tāntrika* (according to the tantric injunctions). It prescribed that *Upanayana* for a Brāhmaṇ should be performed according to the *vaidika* injunctions with the vedic *mantras*; for a Kṣatriya according to the *vaidikatāntrika* injunctions with the *Viṣṇugāyatrī mantra* and for a Vaiśya and a Śūdra according to the *tāntrika* injunctions with the *tāntrika mūlamantra*. Alternately, everybody may be initiated following the *tāntrika* procedure. But, instead of the common (vedic) procedure for the *Upanayana*, the appropriate injunctions for *Dīkṣā Upanayana* (tantric injunction rite) should be followed in case of the females and the Śūdras.⁹ A late medieval *tantra* text, MNT 4.84-85 also prescribed to perform the rites of *Udvāha*, *Puṃsavana*, *Sīmantonayana*, *Jātakarma*, *Nāmakaraṇa*, *Cūḍākaraṇa*, *Mṛtakriyā* (cremation) and *Pitṛśrāddha* according to the procedure approved by the *Āgamas*.¹⁰ Elsewhere (2.14-15), this text also stated that in the *Kaliyuga* (current mythical epoch) only the tantric *mantras* yield immediate results. The *śrauta* (vedic) *mantras* yielded results in the *Satyayuga* (the first mythical epoch) and the other (mythical) epochs, but in the *Kaliyuga*, they are as powerless as a snake whose poison-fangs are drawn on a corpse.¹¹

In the mid-1st millennium BCE, in addition to the *varṇa*, a new concept of social stratification known as ‘*jāti*’ (caste) emerged. The social groups are now being identified as the *jātis*, and all *jātis* were either positioned in one of the four *varṇas* (social classes) or kept outside the social structure as the *Antyajas*. In the last centuries before the Common Era, in order to cope up with the continuous changes in the social positions of various social groups and regular inflow of the new social groups into the existing social order, another new concept of *varṇasaṅkara* (literally, “confused *varṇa*”) had to be introduced by the *dharmaśāstras* to provide the justification for placement of a particular social group in a particular position in the existing stratified social order. The *varṇasaṅkara jātis* were further divided into two categories: *anuloma*¹² and *pratiloma*, believed as the descendants of the imaginary male progenitors born from the hypergamous and hypogamous marriages respectively. Initially, most of the *varṇasaṅkara jātis* were looked down with contempt, which is reflected in *Bhagavadgītā* 1.41. But, later, the composers of the *dharmaśāstras*, the protagonists of the social order of *varṇāśramadharmā* accepted that, all the *jātis* positioned as the social classes of the Śūdras and the *varṇasaṅkaras* cannot be excluded from the social structure altogether (but the perception of keeping the *jātis* placed in the social class of the *Antyajā* outside this social order did not change), possibly due to the changed economic environment. So, they were allowed to perform a number of rituals including the life-cycle rites meant for the *grhasthas* (literally, “householders”), the only *āśrama* (ideal stage of life) allowed for them by these texts (and more explicitly in the *Purāṇas*). But the *jātis* belonging to the social class of the Śūdra were never allowed to perform them with the *mantras* from the vedic texts. Since the mid-1st millennium CE till the late medieval period, both the number of the *jātis* and the number of the life-cycle rites they were being allowed to perform continuously enhanced by the composers of the texts on this subject. Most probably, they did so under the influence of their royal patrons belonging to the *jātis* placed at a low position in the hierarchical social order.

The early *dharmaśāstra* text, MDh X.41 only allowed the males belonging to three *anuloma varṇasaṅkara jātis* to perform all *saṃskāras* (life-cycle rites in the codified format) performed by a “twice-born.”¹³ A late *dharmaśāstra* text, VDh 1.16, written in the mid-1st millennium of the

Common Era, prescribed the Śūdras to perform ten out of *saṃskāras* (codified life-cycle rites) performed by a ‘twice-born’ male, but without uttering any vedic *mantra*.¹⁴ From a citation in SṃP of the lost *smṛti* text, *Brhaspatismṛti*, most probably composed during the same period as VDh, it is evident that it allowed the Śūdras to perform the life-cycle rite of *Karṇavedhana*.¹⁵ But, as an exception, a very late text, *Laghu-Viṣṇusmṛti* I.15 did not accept the right for the Śūdras to perform any *saṃskāra*.¹⁶ The *Baijavāpagṛhyasūtra*, a very late *gṛhyasūtra* text, most probably composed during Gupta or post-Gupta period but definitely dated before the 7th century cited in SṃP allowed the Śūdras to perform seven *saṃskāras* (codified life-cycle rites), namely, *Niṣeka*, *Puṃsavana*, *Sīmantonayana*, *Jātakarma*, *Nāmakaraṇa*, *Annaprāśana* and *Caula* but without uttering any *mantra* from the vedic texts. Maskarin (ca. 10th century) on GDh X.51 and *Smṛtimuktāphala* (ca.1600) cited an almost similar passage, but as of a certain *gṛhyakāra* (literally, “the composer of the *gṛhyasūtra*”), where *Upaniṣkramaṇa* is added in the list.¹⁷ A similar opinion was expressed by Aparārka (early 12th century), who allowed the Śūdras to perform the eight *saṃskāras* listed in YDh I.11-12, *Garbhādhāna*, *Puṃsavana*, *Sīmanta*, *Jātakarma*, *Niṣkrama*, *Nāmakaraṇa*, *Annaprāśana* and *Cūḍākarma*.¹⁸ Citing a verse from the *Brahmapurāṇa*, which prescribed that the Śūdras should have the right to perform the rite of *Vivāha* alone, Aparārka commented that by using the word ‘alone’, the *Brahmapurāṇa* either denied the right to utter the (vedic) *mantras* during the performance of every *saṃskāra* or it did not allow the performance of the *saṃskāras*, which are prescribed for performance prior to *Vivāha*. Therefore, for the performance of the *saṃskāras*, there is an alternative for the Śūdras notwithstanding the injunction of the *Brahmapurāṇa*. Citing this same verse from the *Brahmapurāṇa*, Harihara (13th century) on PGS II.1 added *Vivāha* to Aparārka’s list of eight codified life-cycle rites which a Śūdra is allowed to perform without any *mantra* and his view was echoed by another late medieval scholiast, Jayapāla (16th century) cited in *Śūdrakamalākara*. In a passage from Sārṅgadhara cited in NirS (1612) the number was increased to twelve, but the names of these *saṃskāras* are not known. The late medieval authors of the *nibandha* texts drew a line between pure (sat) and impure Śūdras. Gadādhara (late 15th century) while explaining PGS II.1 prescribed twelve life-cycle rites for a Satśūdra (literally, “pure Śūdra”), but only one, *Vivāha* for the impure Śūdras. It is possible that Sārṅgadhara also allowed only a Satśūdra to perform twelve life-cycle rites. Sārṅgadhara, in the same passage cited in NirS also allowed the performance of five life-cycle rites to a person belonging to a *miśrajāti* (considered as the untouchables in the late medieval texts).¹⁹

Following the tradition of the *Āgamas*, the late medieval *tantra* text, MNT 9.4-5 allowed the Śūdras and the others, who were considered as the ‘mixed-castes’ in the Brahmanical framework of orthopraxy to perform nine out of ten *saṃskāras*: *Jīvaseka*, *Puṃsavana*, *Sīmantonayana*, *Jātakarma*, *Nāmakarma*, *Niṣkramaṇa*, *Annāśana*, *Cūḍākarma* and *Udvāha*.²⁰

3.1.2 Gender discrimination and Hindu life-cycle rites

It seems that the gender discrimination in South Asian context followed a historical pattern similar to the social stratification. Brahmanical perception of gender discrimination originated before the social stratification but it was not universally accepted till a much later period. The references to the performance of the rites independently by the females are found only in the early texts, the RV, AVŚ and AVP. A number of such rites including the pregnancy rites can be traced in various *sūktas* scattered through the first seven *kāṇḍas* of the AVŚ. KauśS 32.28-36.40 used these *sūktas* for the rites it classified as the *Strīkarmāṇi* (literally, “rites of the females”). Two such *sūktas*, AVŚ II.36 and VI.60 are used in KauśS 34.13 and 34.22 for the rite of *Pativedana* (literally, “rite to obtain a husband”). The *Brāhmaṇa* texts were not averse of the female participation in the solemn rites. However, their roles were mostly limited to the functions of the sacrificer’s *patnī* (ritual wife). The contemporary perception is reflected in TBr III.3.3.1, which stated that a *yajña* (sacrifice) without the *patnī* is no *yajña* at all. When the *śrautasūtra* texts were composed, the importance of the

females in the solemn rites had already declined, but their right to recite the *mantras* from the vedic texts was still not denied. Later, during the time of composition of the *gr̥hyasūtra* texts, further changes in perception took place. Still, the participation of the householder's wife in several domestic rites including the life-cycle rites was allowed in these texts. GGS I.4.17-19 prescribed that, for the domestic rite of *Baliharaṇa*, both husband and wife should offer the *balis* (portions of food offered by placing them at various places, but not offered into sacrificial fire) or the female (wife) should offer the *balis* in the evening and the male (husband) in the morning. Further later, in the beginning of the Common Era, when the recitation of the *mantras* from the vedic texts was prohibited for the females, MDh III.121 allowed the wife to offer the *balis* in the evening but without vedic *mantras*.

Irrespective of the changes in their social position, the knowledge of the females on the local customary practices for the performances of the life-cycle rites was always recognised in the vedic ritual texts. A late vedic ritual text, VkhGS III.21 prescribed that during the performance of the rite of marriage anniversary, whatever the wife directs as the traditional customary practice (*pāraṃparyāgata śiṣṭācāra*), should be followed.²¹ ĀpDh II.6.15.6, while describing the funeral rite, referred to the authority of women in particular.²²

In several medieval *nibandha* texts like SmC and SṃP, citations of two ancient authorities, Hārīta and Yama are found on the performance of initiation rite, *Upanayana* for the females, which may be a remnant of their early social status. However, no extant *gr̥hyasūtra* texts actually prescribed this rite for the females. Two comparatively early *gr̥hyasūtra* texts, ĀGS I.17.18 and GGS II.9.22-23 prescribed the rite of *Cūḍākarāṇa* for the females, but without repeating any *mantra* from the vedic texts. ŚGS I.28.22 mentioned that the *Godāna* rite should be performed for the girls, but silently.²³ Both MDh II.66 and YDh I.13, two early *dharmaśāstra* texts prescribed the performance of all the life-cycle rites from *Jātakarma* to *Caula* for the girls without reciting any *mantra*.²⁴ YDh I.13 allowed a female to perform her marriage rite with the recitation of the *mantras*. ViṣDh XXVII.13-14 prescribed that for a female, the same life-cycle rites, which are performed for a male, namely, the rites of *Niṣekakarma*, *Puṃsavana*, *Sīmantonayana*, *Jātakarma*, *Nāmadheya*, *Ādityadarśana*, *Annaprāśana* and *Cūḍākarāṇa*, should be performed, but without the *mantras*. Only the marriage rite should be performed with the *mantras*. VDh I.15-16, which added the rite of *Karṇavedha* after *Vāpanakriyā/ Cūḍākarma* in its list of *saṃskāras*, allowed a female to perform nine life-cycle rites (from *Garbhādhāna* to *Karṇavedha*) without the recitation of the *mantras* and the marriage rite with the *mantras*. YDh I.254 allowed a person to perform both the post-cremation rites, *Ekoddiṣṭa Śrāddha* and *Sapiṇḍīkarāṇa Śrāddha* for his female relatives. A later text, MārP 28.17-18 also echoed the same view.²⁵ Much later, SṃP came out with a new interpretation to MDh II.66. According to SṃP, MDh II.66 only debarred the females from reciting the *mantras* pertaining to the primary acts of eating clarified butter, honey and the rest; recitation of the *mantras* for the subsidiary acts is not debarred by it.²⁶

3.2 Life-cycle rites in Buddhism and Jainism

The origin and growth of both Jainism and Buddhism in South Asia as the religious movements bitterly critical of the Brahmanical theology are well known to us. However, whether any codified life cycle rites existed for the Jaina and the Buddhist laity based on an alternate theological perception during the early days of these religious movements is not known. About the Buddhist laity in ancient India, Renou (1953) expressed his opinion as:²⁷

My view is that the people of India as a whole must always have been Hindu; they did not have to be won back from Buddhism, which, in spite of royal patronage, was from the start more or less confined to monasteries and schools.

Udayana (10th century) in his *Ātmatattvaviveka* stated about the performance of the life-cycle rites

by the contemporary Buddhist laity, “There is no *darśana* (philosophical school) in which people, even if they claim that [the world is] illusory, do not perform the vedic rites from *Garbhādhāna* to *Antyeṣṭi*.”²⁸

From the descriptions in the modern works about the marriage²⁹ and funeral³⁰ rites of the Buddhist laity in the present-day Chittagong Division of Bangladesh, it can be inferred that, since the pre-modern period, these life-cycle rites of passage are grounded on the distinctive Buddhist theological perception. But the details about the evolution of these rites of passage are not available to us.

For Jainism, codification of life cycle rites began in the early medieval period. In an early medieval *Digambara* Jaina text, the *Ādipurāṇa* 38.52-53 of Jinasena (8th century), fifty-three *Garbhānvayakriyā* (literally, “conceptual rites”), including twenty-two life-cycle rites in their Brahmanical form but endowed with distinct Jaina meaning are found mentioned. But, by accepting the Brahmanical value system for their performance, this text also denied some of the life-cycle rites including monkhood for a Śūdra.³¹ The descriptions of the Jaina life-cycle rites are also incorporated in a *Śvetāmbara* treatise, the *Ācāradinakara* of Vardhamāna (early 15th century) and another *Digambara* text, the *Traivarṇikācāra* (early 17th century) of Somasena.

Fifty-three *Garbhānvayakriyā* are enumerated in the *Mahāpurāṇa* 38.55-63. These include five pregnancy and childbirth rites: *Ādhāna*, *Prīti*, *Suprīti*, *Dhṛti* and *Moda*. The rite, *Ādhāna* is a combination of two Hindu rites, *Garbhādhāna* and *Puṃsavana*. *Prīti*, *Suprīti*, *Dhṛti* and *Moda* are the pregnancy rites without any Hindu equivalent. The childhood rites mentioned in the text are *Priyodbhava*, *Nāmakarma*, *Bahiryāna*, *Niṣadyā*, *Prāśana*, *Vyuṣṭi* and *Keśavāpa*. *Bahiryāna* (literally, “exit from the house”) is equivalent to the Hindu *Niṣkramaṇa*. *Priyodbhava* (literally, “birth of the beloved”) is same as Hindu *Jātakarma*. The rite of *Niṣadyā* (literally, “seating on a couch”) has no parallel in Hinduism (Although, *Upaveśana* is similar). *Prāśana* (or *Annaprāśana*) and *Vyuṣṭi* (or *Varṣavardhana*) rites are similar to their Hindu equivalents. *Keśavāpa* (literally, “hair cutting”) is same as the Hindu rite of *Cūdākaraṇa*. The educational rites described in the text are *Lipisaṃkhāyanasaṃgraha*, *Upanīti*, *Vratacaryā* and *Vratāvatarāṇa*. *Lipisaṃkhāyanasaṃgraha* (literally, “learning alphabets and numbers”) is equivalent to Hindu *Vidyārambha* rite and this is probably the earliest reference to this rite in any religious text. Acceptance of performance of the rite of *Upanīti* (or *Upanayana*), which is same as the Hindu initiation rite for the ‘twice-born’ male was probably a paradigm shift in Jainism. The rite of *Vratāvatarāṇa* was also the counterpart of Hindu *Samāvartana*. The marriage rite *Vivāha* is described in this text is similar to its Hindu form but with additional Jaina elements. The professional rites mentioned in this text, *Varṇalābha* (literally, “selection of profession”), *Kulacaryā* (literally, “following the family tradition”) and the retirement rite, *Prasānti* or *Prasāntatā* (literally, “peace of mind”) are predominantly urban popular rites of passage, so their Hindu equivalents are not found. This text also included the household rites *Gṛhiṣitā* and *Gṛhatyāga*. *Gṛhiṣitā* is the rite for taking charge as the head of the (joint) family. *Gṛhatyāga* (literally, “leaving the house”), the rite to be performed before leaving home for renunciation, is unique to Jainism. Other *Garbhānvayakriyā* mentioned in this text actually refer to the different stages through which a man has to pass after renunciation till his attainment of Jinahood according to Jaina belief.³¹

3.3 Hindu Life-cycle rites in the modern period

Since the late 19th century, the rites of passage performed by most of the Hindu social groups of South Asia and the Hindu Diaspora elsewhere are *Vivāha*, *Antyeṣṭi*, *Annaprāśana* and *Upanayana* (performance of *Upanayana* is limited to the males of ‘twice-born’ social groups only). The ritual handbooks composed in the last few centuries have allowed a ‘twice-born’ male to perform the ancient codified life-cycle rites for the childhood at the time of performance of *Upanayana* with certain expiation rites for delay.³² Presently, the pregnancy and childhood rites are performed by

most of the Hindu social groups (except a few small Brāhmaṇ social groups whose principal occupation is priesthood) following the local customary practices only. Only for the performances of the marriage and funeral rites, still the injunctions of the ritual texts are followed to a large extent. Following are the observations of Kane seven decades ago about the contemporary practices:³³

It is to be noted that in modern times most of the saṃskāras (except garbhādhāna, upanayana and vivāha) have fallen into oblivion and are hardly ever performed even by the brāhmaṇas in the manner and at the times prescribed by the smṛtis. Owing to the rapid rise in the marriage age of brāhmaṇa girls, even the saṃskāra of garbhādhāna is falling into abeyance. Nāmakaraṇa, annaprāśana are performed in a popular way but without vedic mantras or without calling a priest to officiate. In most cases caula is performed on the day of upanayana and samāvartana is also performed a few days after upanayana. Jātakarma and annaprāśana are performed on the same day in some parts (e.g. in Bengal). It appears that this state of things has continued for centuries.

3.3.1 Attempts for revival of the ancient life-cycle rites

In the late 19th century, Swami Dayananda Saraswati made an attempt to revive the performances of the sixteen ancient life-cycle rites. He re-modelled these rites in his *Samskāravidhi* (1884) for the performance of the followers of the *Ārya Samāj* movement initiated by him. Similar attempt was also made by the contemporary *Sanātana Dharma* movement. But after the initial enthusiasm, these ancient rites lost their popularity among the followers of these two movements within a few decades.³⁴

3.4 The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955

In 1955, as the culmination of the process of codification of the Hindu customary laws in India, which began with the drafting of 'Hindu Code Bill', The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 was enacted. This act incorporates the traditional view that Hindu marriage is a life-cycle rite. It says, "A Hindu marriage may be solemnized in accordance with the customary rites and ceremonies of either party thereto" and "Where such rites and ceremonies include the saptapadi (that is, the taking of seven steps by the bridegroom and the bride jointly before the sacrificial fire), the marriage becomes complete and binding when the seventh step is taken."

As this act mentions that it also "applies to any person who is a Buddhist, Jaina or Sikh by religion", it can be inferred that this modern law also accepts the traditional perception that the marriage rites for the Buddhists, Jainas and Sikhs are also performed according to the similar customary practices.

3.5 Hindu life-cycle rites and the 'dalits'

After the Indian independence, the Article 17 of the Constitution of Republic of India, effective since 26th January 1950 abolished all forms of the untouchability. But, still in many parts of rural India, social segregation is still in vogue. As a result, the attempts to follow the similar customary practices during the performance of the life-cycle rites like marriage and funeral rites by the members of the social groups, who were positioned outside the social structure of *varṇāśramadharmā* as *Antyaja* in ancient or medieval period (and presently being referred as the 'dalit') are still not accepted by a sizable section of the persons who perceive themselves as belong to the elite social classes in the same structure (presently being referred as the 'ucca jāti' or 'umcī jāti').

One of the customary practices prevalent in northern and western India since the medieval period is riding a horse by the bridegroom while leading the marriage procession to the house of the bride. It seems that, in these regions of India, till today, a cognizable section of the persons who perceive themselves as belong to an 'umcī jāti' is averse of this practice is being followed a 'dalit'

bridegroom. From the news reports, it can be construed that the atrocities on the '*dalit*' bridegrooms and the other participants of the marriage procession with the intention to 'punish' for riding a horse are still taking place in several Indian states. Regular instances of denial by the persons belonging to the perceived '*ucca jāti*' from carrying the corpse of a '*dalit*' through the localities where they inhabit and its cremation in the common cremation ground are still taking place in several parts of India. There are also instances of abandoning the common cremation ground by the persons belonging to the perceived '*ucca jāti*' after the cremation of the corpse of a '*dalit*' there.

Chapter 4

Pregnancy and childbirth rites

Like many ancient cultures in the world, Hindu tradition recognizes a foetus as a social person. Hindu pregnancy and childbirth rites (at least in their codified forms) are predominantly influenced by this perception.

In this study, the historical evolutions of ten ancient and medieval pregnancy rites – *Rtusamgamana*, *Caturthikarma*, *Garbhādhāna*, *Puṃsavana*, *Garbharakṣaṇa*, *Sīmantonayana*, *Viṣṇubali*, *Phalasnāna*, *Soṣyantīkarma* and *Pañcāmṛta* are discussed. These discussions are mostly based on the textual sources. These ancient and medieval pregnancy rites are no more celebrated according to the procedures prescribed in the ritual literature, except perhaps within a few small social groups, mostly in the southern states of India. In fact, since the late medieval period, the popular pregnancy rites celebrated for the Hindu females in different regions of South Asia are grounded on the local traditions and belief.

4.1 Pregnancy rites or prenatal rites?

In the *dharmasāstra* texts, Hindu rites for pregnancy and childbirth are categorised as the prenatal rites for a “twice-born” male. Probably the earliest explicit expression of this view is found in GDh VIII.14-26. This passage mentioned a series of 40 *saṃskāras* (purificatory rites) for a ‘twice-born’ male, required to be performed for obtaining union with Brahmā and the residence in the same *loka* (world) with him after death. This series of purificatory rites begin with *Garbhādhāna*, the rite for his conception. However, earlier, when the early *grhyasūtra* texts were composed, the pregnancy rites like *Garbhādhāna*, *Puṃsavana* and *Sīmantonayana* were still perceived as the rites performed for the purification of a married female. Therefore, these rites were prescribed by them for performance only once during the first pregnancy. KhādGS II.2.17 prescribed to perform *Puṃsavana* rite only once during the first pregnancy. ŚGS I.22.1, GGS II.7.1, PGS I.15.1-3, BGS I.10.1, ĀpGS VI.14.1, HGS II.1.1.2, BhGS I.21 and ĀgGS II.1.2 similarly prescribed to perform *Sīmantonayana* rite only once during the first pregnancy. The explicit evidence of the complete transformation of these ancient life-cycle rites for the pregnant females into the prenatal rites for the ‘twice-born’ males as well as the means of acceptance of the Brahmanical social order is found in the MDh II.16 and 26-27. This text categorically mentioned that the rites for the purification of the body (*śarīra saṃskāra*) for the ‘twice-born’ males begin with *Niṣeka* and only those who have undergone these purificatory rites with the prescribed [vedic] *mantras* are entitled to study the *śāstras* (normative texts) and no one else. YDh I.10 also echoed the same view. It is evident from a discussion on the pregnancy rites in the SṃP (early 17th century), that even after the transformation of the perception, some of the ancient authorities still continued to implicitly accept a number of the pregnancy and childbirth rites as the purificatory rites for the pregnant females (*kṣetra saṃskāra*, literally, “rite for the field”). However, the rite of *Garbhādhāna* was almost universally accepted as the prenatal rite (*garbha saṃskāra*) for a male foetus by this time. From the citations of Śaunaka and an anonymous authority in SṃP, it can be also inferred that these authorities were well aware of the original nature of *Garbhādhāna* rite also.¹

An indication of the transformation of the pregnancy rites to the prenatal rites in the early centuries of the Common Era can be identified in the descriptions of a puranic ritual for donation, *Hiraṇyagarbha mahādāna* (literally, “the great gift of the golden womb”) in MatsP 275.1-29 and *Uttarabhāga* 29.1-13 of the *Liṅgapurāṇa*. This ritual for donating the Brāhmaṇs a golden *kuṇḍa* (vessel) symbolic of the god Hiraṇyagarbha (literally, “the golden womb”, Brahmā) was performed by several rulers of peninsular India, like the Ānanda dynasty ruler Attivarman, Cālukya king Pulakeśin I and the Viṣṇukuṇḍin ruler Mādhavarman III. An earlier version of this ritual is found

in a late vedic ritual text, *Hiraṇyagarbhavidhiḥ*, the thirteenth *pariśiṣṭa* of the *Atharvaveda*. This text instructed to prepare a small golden vessel of the size of a navel with a lid (1.9), probably as a symbolic representation of the ‘golden womb’ and to pour the remnants of the oblations into it (2.6). At the end of this ritual, this text prescribed to gift ten thousand coins, a village and a cow to the Brāhmaṇs (4.5-6). It is evident from the account of the *Hiraṇyagarbhavidhiḥ* that this ritual was seemingly designed to accept an outsider into the Brahmanical social order. However, the *Hiraṇyagarbhavidhiḥ* did not mention to perform any prenatal rites. With the transformation in perception about the pregnancy rites, the MatsP 275.16-17 instructed that, as a part of this rite, the performer should enter the golden vessel; sit in the foetal position and the rites of *Garbhādhāna*, *Puṃsavana* and *Sīmantonayana* of the ‘golden womb’ should be performed² before his second divine birth from the ‘golden womb’. This transformed perception is evident even in the narrative of VkhGS VI.3, which described an archaic version of this rite as a *prāyaścitta* (expiation) rite for a person, who has either did not performed *Garbhādhāna* rite for his pregnant wife in time, or omitted any act during its performance, or reverted the correct order of the acts inadvertently. It prescribed to make a piece of gold in the shape of a womb, place it on the abdomen of his wife and fasten it with a *darbha* grass stalk. Next, he should offer oblations in to the sacrificial fire for Viṣṇu, Brahman, Rudra, Indra, Agni and Bṛhaspati and then perform the rite of *Garbhādhāna* as prescribed. Subsequently, with the *Viṣṇusūkta* (RV I.154) he should touch his wife’s abdomen. At the end, he should remove the golden womb (*suvarṇa garbha*) from the abdomen, donate it to the Brāhmaṇs and serve food to them. It also instructed that the same *prāyaścitta* rite should also be performed before *Puṃsavana* and *Sīmanta* rites, but the golden womb should be made with a sign of the male in its middle.³ In spite of the differences in the purpose for performing the rite, the usage of the word ‘golden womb’ in narratives of the VkhGS and the MatsP and their underlying meaning are strikingly similar. Yet, probably as a remnant of an earlier tradition, VkhGS VI.3 prescribed to perform these *garbha saṃskāra* only once during the first pregnancy, although this text was aware that some authorities already prescribed to perform these rites at every pregnancy.

Serious debate continued in the medieval period on whether the ancient pregnancy rites are performed for the sanctification of the unborn child or for the purification of the expectant mother.⁴ Medhātithi (8th century) in his explanation of the MDh II.16 implicitly accepting *Garbhādhāna* as a rite for a pregnant female, stated that he considered this rite should be performed only once before the first sexual intercourse after marriage although some authorities prescribed the performance of this rite before the first sexual intercourse after every menstruation till conception. Viśvarūpa (early 9th century) while explaining YDh I.11 in his *Bālakṛīḍā*, accepted only *Sīmantonayana* as the purificatory rite for a female (*strī saṃskāra*) and allowed the performance of this rite only once. Similar view was expressed by Laghu-Āś IV.17. However, the SmC (late 12th century) cited a verse of Viṣṇu, which stated that according to some authorities even *Sīmantonayana* should be performed during every pregnancy. Aparārka (early 12th century) said that while *Puṃsavana* should be performed at every pregnancy, *Sīmantonayana* should be performed once and cited Hārīta and Devala in support. Two later texts, SmM (early 17th century) and SmP expressed the same opinion. Vijñāneśvara (early 12th century) in his commentary *Mitā*, while explaining YDh I.11 considered both the pregnancy rites, *Puṃsavana* and *Sīmantonayana* as the purificatory rites for a female and according to him these should be performed only once during the first pregnancy. He cited the authority of Devala in support of his view. His views were further extended by *Saṃskāratattva* of Raghunandana (16th century) which implicitly considered three pregnancy rites, *Garbhādhāna*, *Puṃsavana* and *Sīmantonayana* as the purificatory rites for the females and prescribed to perform these rites only once during the first pregnancy. This text also cited Devala in support.⁵

4.2 *Rtusamgamana*

The description of the rite of *Rtusamgamana*, which literally means, “sexual intercourse [in the

favourable period] after menstruation” is found only in a late vedic ritual text, the VkhGS. VkhGS I.1 and VI.2 mentioned this rite as an independent rite, distinct from *Garbhādhāna*. In fact, in this text, *Garbhādhāna* is not prescribed for performance before the sexual intercourse. Probably, the VkhGS I.1 and VI.2 also identified *Ṛtusamgamana* rite with the rite of *Niṣeka* (literally, “pouring [of semen]”, impregnation).⁶ While some parts of the description of *Ṛtusamgamana* rite in VkhGS III.9 is similar to the descriptions of the rite of *Caturthikarma* in the early vedic ritual texts, the description of the element of the consummation of marriage as a part of the rite of the fourth day after marriage (mentioned as *Caturthivāsa* by the scholiasts) in VkhGS III.8 is also partly similar to the descriptions of *Caturthikarma* in those vedic ritual texts. The medieval scholiast Nṛsiṃhavājapeyin identified the element for the consummation of marriage described in VkhGS III.8 as *Niṣeka*.⁷

According to VkhGS III.9, on the day of performance of the *Ṛtusamgamana*, the wife should brush her teeth, take a bath in water mixed with fragrant substances, put on a white garment and anoint her. Then she should eat the food prepared from the best quality of rice and barley and mixed with milk. Having pounded a fruit of *lakṣmī*, or a *vaṭaśuṅga* (sprout of *Ficus benghalensis*) or a fruit of *sahadevī*, the husband should insert it in to the right nostril of his wife if he desires a son and in to her left nostril if he desires a daughter. The wife should not spit it out and should avoid grief and anger. Then the husband should sprinkle water with the *mantras* of sprinkling beginning with, “The frightful sin of mine as I lived in the uterus” and others. Next, he should proceed for sexual intercourse with the *mantras* beginning with, “Let Viṣṇu prepare the womb” and others. This text also mentioned that according to some authorities, he should proceed for sexual intercourse after *pariṣecana* (literally, “sprinkling water”, the rite of sprinkling water around sacrificial fire), offering oblations to Viśvedevāḥ and Viṣṇu, performing *mūla homa* and *aṅga homa* sacrifices.⁸

4.3 *Caturthikarma* and *Garbhādhāna*

Early references to a rite for conception are found in RV X.184.1-3 and AVŚ V.25.1-13. An early detailed description of a rite for conception is found in BāU VI.4.19-22. The rite, as described in it, comprised several elements. In the very morning of the performance, this text prescribed the husband to prepare clarified butter in accordance with the ritual procedure for preparing *sthālīpāka* (a mess of cooked food) and offer oblations of this *sthālīpāka* to Agni, Anumati and Savitṛ. After the sacrifice, this text instructed that the remnants of the oblations should be consumed first by the husband and then by the wife. Next, the husband should wash his hands, fill up a pitcher with water and sprinkle water from it three times on his wife with the *mantra*, “O Viśvāvasu, get up from here and seek another blooming girl, a wife [who is] with her husband.” Then, he should embrace her with the *mantra*, “I am *ama* (vital force), you are *sā* (speech); you are *sā* (speech), I am *ama* (vital force). I am the *sāman*, you are the *ṛc*; I am the *dauḥ* (sky), you are the *prthivī* (earth). Come; let us strive together, so that we may have a male child.” Next, the husband should spread apart the thighs of his wife for the sexual intercourse with the *mantra*, “Spread yourself apart, *dauḥ* (sky) and *prthivī* (earth).” Having inserted his male organ in his wife after having joined mouth to mouth, he should stroke his wife thrice from the head to toe with the *mantras* (first three are almost similar to RV X.184.1-3), “Let Viṣṇu prepare the womb; let Tvaṣṭṛ shape the form [of the embryo]; let Prajāpati sprinkle [the seed for growth]; let Dhātṛ place the embryo in you.”; “Place the embryo, Sinīvālī; place the embryo, Pṛthuṣṭukā (literally, “a lady with large buttocks”, a vedic goddess); let the twin Aśvins, the lotus-garlanded gods, place the embryo in you.”; “With the golden *araṇi* (kindling woods) the Aśvins churn out fire, I invoke that embryo for you to bring forth in the tenth month.” and “Like the *prthivī* (earth) is pregnant with *agni* (fire), like the *dauḥ* (sky) is pregnant with Indra (clouds), like *vāyu* (wind) is inside [as the embryo of] the *diśā* (directions), similarly I am placing the embryo in you; O so and so (name of his wife).”⁹

The rite for conception, mentioned in most of the *smṛti* texts as *Garbhādhāna* (literally, “placing the

embryo in the womb”). However, this pregnancy rite is not mentioned in the early *gr̥hyasūtras*. Instead, the early *gr̥hyasūtras* like ŚGS I.18.1-19.6, KauṣGS I.11.1-I.12.6, PGS I.11, ĀpGS III.8.10-11 and HGS I.7.23.11-I.7.25.2 described a rite for consummation of marriage along with the sacrifices on the fourth day after marriage, known as *Caturthīkarma* (literally, “the rite of the fourth day [after marriage]”) or *Caturthīhoma* (literally, “the sacrifice of the fourth day [after marriage].”) Early references about *Garbhādhāna* are found only in a few *gr̥hyasūtras*, like BGS IV.6.1, KGS 30.1 and a slightly later *dharmasūtra* text, GDh VIII.14. The BGS and the KGS did not describe it as a rite separate from *Caturthīkarma*. Only in the GDh, this rite is mentioned as the rite for impregnation after the regular menstruation. In the *Gr̥hyasaṃgraha* I.2 and 6 *Garbhādhāna* and *Caturthīkarma* are mentioned as two distinct rites.¹⁰ It seems that at the time of composition of the early *dharmasāstras*, already child marriage became prevalent in India and immediate consummation of marriage was not possible. Therefore, MDh II.16, 26, YDh I.10-11 and ViṣDh II.3, XXVII.1 considered *Garbhādhāna* as a rite associated with the ceremonial defloration after the menarche and employed the word *Niṣeka* as equivalent to *Garbhādhāna*.¹¹

An early indication of further change in perception is observed in a late *gr̥hyasūtra* text VkhGS I.1, which is of opinion that *Garbhādhāna* rite is distinct from the impregnation rite, *Niṣeka* or *Rtusamgamana* and elsewhere in this text (III.10), the rite of *Garbhādhāna* is prescribed for performing next to *Rtusamgamana* in order to ensure safe conception.¹² Similar perception is reflected in the late *smṛti* texts and the *nibandha* texts.

4.3.1 Caturthīkarma

The very early descriptions of a rite for consummation of marriage immediately after marriage are found in AVŚ XIV.2.32-40 and AVP XVIII.10.2-10. Several *gr̥hyasūtras* described this rite and some of them instructed to perform a *homa* for several deities with the expiatory *mantras* at the beginning.

An early description for the rite for consummation of marriage after three nights is probably found in ĀGS I.8.13, which, following the early vedic tradition of the RV X.85.28-30, 34-35, AVŚ XIV.1.25-30 (AVP XVIII.3.4-9) and XIV.2.41 (AVP XVIII.11.2), instructed to gift the bridal garment after the consummation of marriage to a Brāhmaṇ, who knows (the narrative of) Sūryā.

According to ŚGS I.18.1-19.6, *Caturthīkarma* rite should begin after a lapse of three nights after marriage with the offering of eight oblations of *sthālīpāka* (mess of cooked food) to Agni, Vāyu, Sūrya, Aryamaṇ, Varuṇa, Pūṣaṇ, Prajāpati and (Agni) Sviṣṭakṛt with eight *mantras* (first three are for expiation, similar to MBr I.4.1-2 and 4) by the husband. Next, at a proper time after menstruation of his wife, the husband should pound the roots of *adhyaṇḍā* (*Mucuna pruriens*) plant and sprinkle it to the wife's right nostril while reciting two verses (RV X.85.21-22), invoking Viśvāvasu to leave his wife. Finally he should touch her and just before the sexual intercourse, he was instructed to say to his wife, “You are the mouth of Gandharva Viśvāvasu” and after completion of the intercourse, he was instructed to say, addressing his wife by her name, “Into your breath, I put the sperm.”¹³ The description of this rite in KauṣGS I.11.1-I.12.6 is almost similar to the ŚGS.

BGS I.5.18-25 prescribed that after the performance of sacrifice on the fourth night, the husband, reciting certain *mantra*, should take up a staff made of *udumbara* wood, covered with a cloth or threads, and hand it over to his wife with another *mantra*. The wife should accept it with a *mantra* and return it back to him. Then the consummation of marriage should take place. The staff should be placed on a *sthūṇā* (supporting pillar of the house) and thrown in water on the next day.

The rite of *Caturthīkarma*, according to ĀpGS III.8.10-11, should begin on the last part of the third night after marriage. The husband should take up the staff representing Viśvāvasu, the king of the

Gandharvas kept for three nights between the sleeping places of him and his wife, he should wash it and throw it away reciting two *mantras* from the ĀpMP (I.10.1-2).¹⁴ After the sacrifice, the husband should make his wife sit to the west of the fire with her face to the east and pour over her head the remnants of the oblations of clarified butter with three *Vyāhrtis* (*bhūh*, *bhuvah*, *svah*) and the fourth, *om*. Then, both of them should look at each other, each with a *mantra* from the ĀpMP (I.11.1 by the husband and I.11.2 by the wife). Next, he should besmear their chests with the remnants of the clarified butter oblations with certain *mantras* from the ĀpMP (I.11.4-6) and finally during consummation recite some other *mantras* from the ĀpMP (I.11.7-11).¹⁵ ĀpGS III.9.11 also prescribed to gift the bridal dress after consummation of marriage to a Brāhmaṇ, who knows the rite.

HGS I.7.23.11-I.7.25.2 prescribed an elaborate rite for consummation of marriage, which it mentioned as *upagamana* (I.7.25.3). HGS I.7.25.3-4 mentioned that this rite, according to Ātreya, an authority, must be performed during each sexual intercourse, but according to Bādarāyaṇa, another authority it should be performed only at the time of the consummation of marriage and the first sexual intercourse after each menstruation. BhGS I.20 mentioned these same two views, but the names of the authorities mentioned in this text as Āśmarthya and Ālekhaṇa respectively. The HGS I.7.23.11-I.7.24.3 instructed to commence the rite in the fourth night towards morning with the offering of nine expiatory oblations, with a series of *mantras*, which undoubtedly intended to overcome the dangerous magical power of menstrual blood. After the sacrifice, the husband was prescribed to pour the remnants of oblations on the head of the wife with certain *mantras* and then place a water pot near the fire. He is then instructed to circumambulate the fire and the water pot, keeping his right side turned toward them. It should be followed by the consummation of marriage. This text (I.7.24.4-I.7.25.2) provided a detailed description of it and ended with the prediction of birth of a valiant son as the outcome of the performance of the rite. The nine *mantras* prescribed for the consummation in this text (I.7.25.1) included the *mantras* similar to RV X.184.1-3 and BāU VI.4.21-22.

GGs II.5.1-10 described this rite as *Caturthīkarma*. The GGS referred to some (probably, early authorities), who prescribed the consummation of marriage after three nights, but then, this text prescribed the consummation of marriage after regular menstruation. This text instructed to begin the rite of *Caturthīkarma* with the offering of five oblations of clarified butter, the first four to Agni, Vāyu, Candra and Sūrya individually and then the fifth to all of these four deities together; each oblation with an expiatory *mantra* from the MBr (I.4.1-5). (A later text, KP III.6.1-4, prescribed to offer twenty oblations of clarified butter into fire with twenty *mantras* on this occasion). The remnants of each oblation were instructed by the GGS to pour in a water pot. Next, the whole body of the wife including her hair and nails was prescribed to smear with these remnants and finally she was instructed to wash herself. It should be followed by the consummation of marriage. The description of this rite in the KhādGS I.4.12-16 is almost similar. In JGS I.22, the five *mantras* prescribed for the initial expiatory *homa* is similar to the MBr I.4.1-5. Next, it prescribed to offer oblations from a *sthālīpāka* to Agni and Prajāpati and pour the remnants of each oblation into a wooden vessel. Then the husband should tell his wife, “Anoint your vital canals”. At the end, the wife should anoint first the upper parts of her body and then the lower parts. This should be followed by the consummation of marriage.

KauśS 79.1-13 also described the rite for consummation of marriage vividly and utilized a *mantra* from the AVŚ for recitation during performance of each element. According to Keśava (second half of the 11th century), the rite described here is *Caturthīkākarma*. The KauśS prescribed that in the morning of the fourth day after marriage, the oblations should be offered with the *mantra* beginning with, “Seven pathways” (AVŚ V.1.6). Then, at the beginning of the rite (in the night of the same day), both the husband and wife should anoint each other’s eyes with *añjana* (salve) with the

mantra beginning with, “The eyes of us” (AVŚ VII.36.1). Then they should touch the bed with the *mantra* beginning with, “[Let us invoke to aid us] the mighty [mother]” (AVŚ VII.6.2) and mount the bed with another *mantra* beginning with, “Mount the bed” (AVŚ XIV.2.31). Next, they should sit on the bed with the hemistich beginning with, “Sitting on it” (AVŚ XIV.2.23a). They should lie down together with the *mantra* beginning with, “The gods in the beginning” (AVŚ XIV.2.32) and the wife should envelop her husband (with her bridal garment) with the *mantra* beginning with, “I bridle you [with my Manu-born garment]” (AVŚ VII.37.1). It should be followed by the acts of consummation of marriage. With the *mantra* beginning with, “Unite, O [you two] parents” (AVŚ XIV.2.37) they should begin the sexual intercourse. With another *mantra* beginning with, “Here, [O Indra, you push together] these two” (AVŚ XIV.2.64), they should embrace each other three times and the husband should penetrate his wife with the *mantras* beginning with, “[The] Brahma was [first] born” (AVŚ IV.1.1 and V.6.1). Before the sexual intercourse, the *madugha* (liquorice) amulet should be removed from the ring finger of the bride and thrown into the *aukṣa* (a mixture of fragrant water, clarified butter and honey) reciting the *sūkta* beginning with, “This plant” (AVŚ I.34.1-5) and the *mantra* beginning with, “I am *ama* (vital force)” (AVŚ XIV.2.71). After the consummation of marriage, the couple should get out of the bed with the *mantra*, beginning with, “[Awaking from the] pleasant *yonī* (lair)” (AVŚ XIV.2.43) and with two *Paridhāpanī mantras* (AVŚ XIV.1.45 and 53), the husband should cover his wife with an *ahata* (new and unwashed) garment. KauśS 79.20-27 prescribed that after consummation of marriage, the bridal garment should be given away with six *mantras*, the first of which begins with, “[You] give away” (AVŚ XIV.1.25-30). With two *mantras*, the first of which begins with, “[This bridal garment is] given by the gods” (AVŚ XIV.2.41-42), the priest should accept the garment. He should tie it with a post with the *mantra*, “Let the darkness [go away] from us” (AVŚ XIV.2.48) and leave the place reciting the *mantra* beginning with, “As many as the *kṛtyā* (witchcraft) [in the bridal garment]” (AVŚ XIV.2.49). Then, the priest should wrap his garment around a tree with the *mantra* beginning with, “What is my dearest [body]” (AVŚ XIV.2.50); take a bath with the *mantra* beginning with, “[The sky and the earth are] beautiful” (AVŚ XIV.2.45); cover himself with another garment with the *mantra* beginning with, “As many borders there are” (AVŚ XIV.2.51) and go back with the *mantra* beginning with, “Wearing new” (AVŚ XIV.2.44).¹⁶

4.3.2 Garbhādhāna

The perception about the nature of the rite of *Garbhādhāna* continuously varied with the passage of time. Keśava in his *Kauśikapaddhati* identified the aphorisms 35.5-7 and 35.11 of the KauśS as the descriptions for *Garbhādhāna* rite. But, the KauśS only mentioned certain rituals prescribed for a male before a sexual intercourse, not any specific life-cycle rite.

A remnant of early perception of performance of this life-cycle rite immediately before the sexual intercourse is found in a passage of Śaunaka, an authority on *smṛti* cited in SṃP. He mentioned that the act of impregnation of a female by her husband following the [proper] procedure has been stated as *Garbhalambhana* by the great thinkers. The description of this rite in the late vedic ritual text, BGŚS II.2.1-7 is also grounded in this early tradition.

VkhGS III.10 instructed to perform the rite of *Garbhādhāna*, next to *Ṛtusamgamana*, when the symptoms of pregnancy like swelling of stomach, weariness of the thighs, aversion towards husband, loss of appetite, increased production of saliva, hoarseness of voice and foetal movement are visible. The description of this rite (not explicitly named in this text) is similar to the rite of *Garbharakṣana* described in the early vedic ritual texts like ŚGS I.21.1-3, KauśGS I.13.1-2 and ĀGS I.13.5-7. The rite, according to this text should begin with the performance of the *āghāra* (libation) of clarified butter. Then the husband should make his wife sit down and adorn with auspicious objects. Next, he should perform *pariṣecana*, the rite of sprinkling water around the sacrificial fire, followed by the sacrifice with the sixteen *mantras*, the first of which beginning with,

“[May] Dhātṛ gives us.” (TS III.3.11.2c) and then *mūla homa* sacrifice with the five *mantras* addressed to Varuṇa and to Agni Sviṣṭākāra. Next, the husband should put some barleycorns in the hand of his wife with the *mantra*, “You are a begetter.” Then he should make her consume the three-fold drink prepared with equal parts of milk, yoghurt and clarified butter, with the *mantras*, “*Bhūḥ*, I give to you”, “*Bhuvah*, I give to you”, “*Suvah*, I give to you” and “*Bhūḥ*, *bhuvah*, *suvah* I give to you”. Next, the wife should sip water and then, the husband should stroke his wife’s body thrice from the navel upwards with a *darbha* grass stalk with the *mantras*, “With these ten fingers I touch you that you may give birth to a male child,”; “Thither wards, not hitherwards, may Tvaṣṭṛ bind you in his bond” and others. At the end, he should perform *punṣyāha* and serve foods to the Brāhmanas.¹⁷ A late vedic ritual text, ViṣDh XXVII.1 also prescribed to perform the rite of *Niṣekakarma* (*Garbhādhāna*) after the confirmation of pregnancy.

Most of the *dharmasūtras* and *dharmasāstras* did not provide any details about the link between this life-cycle rite and the actual sexual intercourse. Rather, MDh III.46, YDh I.79 and VDh II.42-43 only prescribed the most appropriate period for impregnation. A late *dharmasāstra* text, Laghu-Āś III.1 prescribed to perform the *Garbhādhāna* rite on the 4th day after the appearance of the first menses,¹⁸ and thereafter on an even numbered day (from the beginning of the menstruation), if a male child is desired. It (III.1-19) narrated a detailed description of the rite, which includes the performance of *Nāndīśrāddha*, sprinkling of the juice made from *aśvagandhā* root in the right nostril of the wife and giving her some fruits like citron, coconut, banana and dates. But, again it did not instruct to perform this rite immediately before the sexual intercourse.

Medhātithi (8th century), while explaining MDh I.16, mentioned that *Niṣeka* and *Garbhādhāna* are same and is performed only at the time of first sexual intercourse after marriage with the *mantra* beginning with, “Let Viṣṇu prepare the womb” (RV 10.184.1).

As the child marriage was prevalent, the medieval *nibandha* texts prescribed the rites for ceremonial defloration after the menarche. These texts prescribed to perform the rite of *Garbhādhāna*, only after the symptoms of pregnancy became visible. Early mention about the performance of *Niṣeka* after the symptoms of pregnancy became visible is found in a late *dharmasāstra* text, *Śaṅkhasmṛti* II.1.¹⁹ In the description of this rite, the medieval *prayoga* and *paddhati* texts added a few new elements like the *saṅkalpa* (literally, “to resolve”) and worship of Vināyaka and Mātṛkā goddesses²⁰

Al-Biruni, a well-known medieval Persian scholar in his work on India, *Kitāb-ul-Hind* (1030) observed about the performance of this rite as follows,

It is the duty [of the Brahman], if he wants to cohabit with a wife to get a child, to perform a sacrifice to the fire called *Garbhādhāna*; but he does not perform it, because it requires the presence of the women, and therefore he feels ashamed to do so. In consequence he postpones the sacrifice and unites it the next following one, which is due in the fourth month of the pregnancy, called *Sīmantonayana*.²¹

The description of *Garbhādhāna* (or *Jīvaseka*) rite in MNT 9.85-116 is somehow similar to the ancient vedic ritual texts and it provides an idea about the procedure for performance of the life-cycle rites in the tantric tradition. As we know, the child marriage was prevalent in the late medieval period, the rite of *Garbhādhāna* for a married female took place only after her menarche and it was preceded by the rite of *Ṛtusamskāra* (literally, “the rite of purification [after] menstruation”). It prescribed that after the performance of the daily rites and purificatory rites, the performer (husband) should worship the five deities - Brahmā, Durgā, Gaṇeśa, the Grahas (planetary deities) and the Dikpatis (guardians of the quarters) on the *ghaṭas* (jars) kept to the east of the *sthaṇḍila* (a level piece of ground prepared for sacrifice). Then he should worship the sixteen *Mātṛkā* goddesses: Gaurī, Padmā, Śacī, Medhā, Sāvitrī, Vijayā, Jayā, Devasenā, Svadhā, Svāhā, Śānti, Puṣṭi, Dhṛti,

Kṣamā, his own tutelary goddess and his family goddess. After invoking the *Mātṛkā* goddesses, the performer should make five or seven marks with vermilion and sandalwood paste on the wall at the height of his navel within a distance of one *pradeśa* (9 inches). With the murmuring of ‘*Klīm*’ (*kāmavījāmantra*), ‘*Hrīm*’ (*māyāvījāmantra*) and ‘*Śrīm*’ (*ramāvījāmantra*), he should pour an unbroken stream of clarified butter from each of these marks and worship Vasu. After offering the *vasudhārā* (*vasordhārā*, the continuous stream of clarified butter), construction of *sthaṇḍila*, placement of sacrificial fire, consecration of the sacrificial implements, preparation of *caru* (boiled rice with clarified butter) and performance of *dhārā homa*, the proper rite of *Ṛtusamskāra* should begin with offering three oblations of *caru* with the *mantra*, “*Hrīm*, to Prajāpati, *svāhā*.” Then, he should offer an oblation with the *mantra* from the AVŚ (V.25.5). This oblation should be of *caru* or clarified butter or a combination of both *caru* and clarified butter and meditating on Sūrya, Prajāpati and Viṣṇu. Next, meditating on the goddesses, Sinīvālī and Sarasvatī and the two Aśvins, he should offer oblations with the *mantra* from the AVŚ (V.25.3), adding ‘*svāhā*’ to it. Then, the oblations should be offered to the sanctified fire meditating on Ravi (Sūrya) and Viṣṇu with the *mantra*, “*Klīm* (*kāmavījāmantra*), *strīm* (*vadhūvījāmantra*), *hrīm* (*māyāvījāmantra*), *śrīm* (*ramāvījāmantra*), *hūm*, place embryo to so and so (the name of the wife), desirous of a son.” Next, an oblation should be offered to Viṣṇu with the *mantra*, “As the goddess Pṛthivī ever carry a complete foetus, similarly you carry the foetus and deliver in the tenth month; *svāhā*.” Again, another oblation of clarified butter should be offered to Viṣṇu with another *mantra*. Then, with the *mantra*, “*Klīm*, *hrīm*, *klīm*, *hrīm*, *strīm*, *hrīm*, *klīm*, *hrīm*”, the husband should touch the wife’s head. Surrounded by the females whose husbands are alive and having the male issues, the husband should place both hands on his wife’s head. Meditating on Viṣṇu, Durgā, Vidhi and Sūrya, he should place three fruits on his wife’s lap. The rite of *Ṛtusamskāra* should end with the oblations to Sviṣṭikṛt (Sviṣṭakṛt) and the expiation rites. Alternately, the couple may be purified by worshipping Gaurī and Śaṅkara in the evening and offering *arghya* to Bhāskara (Sūrya). The rite of *Ṛtusamskāra* should be followed by the rite of *Garbhādhāna*. This rite should be performed in the same night or on the night of an even numbered day (from the beginning of the menstruation). After entering the room with his wife, the husband meditating on Prajāpati, should touch her and recite, “*Hrīm*, O bed, be favourable to us for begetting a good progeny.” After mounting the bed with his wife, he should sit facing east or north and looking at his wife, he should embrace her with his left hand and place his right hand murmuring the *mantra*, “*Klīm*” on her head a hundred times; over her chin murmuring the *mantra*, “*Aim*” a hundred times; over her throat murmuring the *mantra*, “*Śrīm*” twenty times and the same *mantra* over each of her two breasts a hundred times. Then, he should murmur the *mantra* “*Hrīm*” ten times over her chest and twenty-five times over her navel. Next, he should put his hand on her genitals and murmur both the *mantras*, “*Klīm*” and “*Aim*” together a hundred and eight times and the same *mantras* over his penis for a hundred and eight times. Then, he meditating on Viśvakṛt (Prajāpati) should proceed for the sexual intercourse. After the intercourse, he should recite the *mantra*, “Like the *bhū* (earth) is pregnant with *agni* (fire), like the *dauḥ* (sky) is pregnant with Indra, like the quarters are pregnant with *vāyu* (air), be pregnant similarly.”²²

4.4 Pumsavana

The pregnancy rite of *Pumsavana* (literally, “rite for obtaining a male child”) is indicative of the patriarchal nature of the proto-historic South Asian social groups, when this rite was originated. Prayers for obtaining a male child are found in several early vedic texts. Two *sūktas* (hymns) of the AVŚ, namely, III.23 and VI.11 consist prayers for obtaining a male child. Prayers for obtaining a male child are also found in the MBr I.4.8-9. The earliest reference to the word, *pumsavana* is found in the AVŚ VI.11.1, where it is used literally, in the sense of ‘giving birth to a male child’.²³ An early description of a rite for obtaining a male child is probably found in one (III.23.1-6) of the *sūktas* of this text, consisting the prayers for a male child. The rite mentioned here (III.23.5) as *Prājāpatya*, the rite of Prajāpati (the god of procreation). It seems that this rite included giving some

sort of medicinal herb to the pregnant woman, with the *mantra* (III.23.6), “The plants of which the *dauḥ* (sky) has been the father, *pṛthivī* (earth) the mother, ocean the root, let those divine herbs favour you, in order to acquire a son.”²⁴ An almost similar *sūkta* (III.14.1-7) is also found in the AVP, where the *mantra* (III.14.7) for this rite is mentioned as, “Of which, the *parjanya* (cloud) has been the father, *bhūmi* (earth) the mother, let those divine herbs favour you, in order to acquire a son.” A hymn of the RVKh (2.10), which also consists similar verses later became known as the *Prajāvat sūkta* (hymn) and the *Brhaddevatā* 5.92 prescribed this hymn along with the *Jīvaputra sūkta* (RVKh 2.11) for the rite of *Garbhakarman* (literally, “impregnation rite”).²⁵ Another detailed description of this rite is found in a *sūkta* of the AVP (V.11.1-9). The purpose of the rite was mentioned as producing a son (*pumsavana*) in this text and included presenting a son-acquiring (*putravedana*) ointment (*añjana*) to the pregnant woman.²⁶

In GBr I.3.23, it is prescribed that if the wife of the *dīkṣita* (a person initiated to perform a sacrifice) is in her menses, after she has bathed, a *sthālīpāka* (mess of boiled rice) should be cooked with the milk of a cow which has a calf having same colour (as herself). With the utterance of ‘*hiṃ*’ and the recitation of the hymns for *garbhavedana* (literally, “impregnation”) and *pumsavana* (literally, “producing a son”), oblations of clarified butter should be offered into the sacrificial fire and the *sampāta* (remnants of the oblations) should be mixed with the mess of boiled rice prepared earlier. Then, the *dīkṣita* should cause his wife to eat that mess of boiled rice. It was believed that by performing this rite, the wife of the *dīkṣita* gets a male child.²⁷ A similar description of this rite is found in the *Vaitānasūtra* III.2.14.

BāU VI.4.14-16 and 18 described a number of rites for obtaining a male child with various combinations of physical features and mental abilities, which are known as *Putramantha* (literally, “the churning out of the son”). This text (VI.4.17) also prescribed a rite for obtaining a scholar daughter, which may be a vestige of the ancient tradition of gender equality.

The rite of *Pumsavana* (literally, “engendering a male issue”) is mentioned in almost every *gṛhyasūtra* text. ŚGS I.20.1, ĀGS I.13.2, HGS II.1.2.2, BhGS I.22, MGS I.12.7, VārGS 16.5, GGS II.6.1, KhādGS II.2.17 and JGS I.5 prescribed to perform this rite in the third month of pregnancy. ĀgGS II.1.1 prescribed to perform this rite in the third month of pregnancy in the fortnight of the waxing moon and the moon is in an auspicious *nakṣatra* (lunar mansion). VkhGS III.11 prescribed to perform this rite in the fourth month from *Garbhādhāna*. BGS I.9.1 and ĀpGS VI.14.9 prescribed to perform *Pumsavana* when the pregnancy has become apparent and the moon is in *Tiṣya* (Puṣya) *nakṣatra* (lunar mansion). KGS 32.1-2 prescribed to perform this rite on the expiry of a larger number of months of pregnancy. Devapāla, in his *bhāṣya* (commentary) for this aphorism said that the *śiṣṭas* (cultured people) perform this rite in the eighth month and Brāhmaṇabala, in his *paddhati* text said that the usage was performing in the seventh or eighth month of pregnancy. Hemādri in his *Kālanirṇaya* (a part of *Parīśeṣakhaṇḍa* of his *Caturvargacintāmaṇi*) cited Yama, who prescribed to perform this rite in the first, second or third month of pregnancy when the moon is in a *nakṣatra* with a male name. NirS quoted a verse of Jātūkarṇya cited in *Prayogapārijāta*, which instructed to perform this rite either in the second or third month of pregnancy depending on the visibility of the symptoms of pregnancy or together with the rite of *sīmanta*. SmP also cited this verse of Jātūkarṇya.

A brief narration of this rite is found in ŚGS I.20.1-5, which prescribed to perform this rite in the third month of pregnancy, when the moon is in either Puṣya or Śravaṇā *nakṣatra* (lunar mansion). It instructed the husband to pound a *soma* (probably, *Ephedra sinica*) stalk or a *kuśa* (*Desmostachya bipinnata*) grass blade or the tip of the shoots of a *nyagrodha* (*Ficus benghalensis*) tree or a part of a *yūpa* (sacrificial post) exposed to the fire or (to collect) the remnants of the oblations from the juhū (small wooden spoon) after the sacrifice. Next, it prescribed him to insert the pounded substance or the remnants of the oblations in the right nostril of his wife with four *mantras* from the RV

beginning with, “Through Agni one may win wealth” (I.1.3); “That sperm to us” (III.4.9); “With kindled fire and strewn grass” (V.37.2) and “Like gold in hue, well formed” (II.3.9) adding “*svāhā*” at the end of every *mantra*.²⁸

According to ĀGS I.13.2-7, the performance of this rite should take place in the third month of pregnancy when the moon is in *Tiṣya nakṣatra*. After the daylong fasting, one grain of barley and two *māṣa* (beans) should be handed over thrice to the pregnant wife by her husband, which she should consume along with a small amount of yoghurt prepared from the milk of a cow, having a calf of same colour. While consuming the yoghurt, the husband was instructed to ask, “What are you drinking?” and the wife was instructed to answer, “*Pumsavana* (for the generation of a male child)”.²⁹ Then, in the shadow of a *maṇḍalāgāra* (round apartment), the husband should insert a sap of *ajītā* (literally, “an unfading herb”, *dūrvā* grass, *Cynodon dactylon*) in to the right nostril of his wife. This text mentioned that some (authorities) also prescribe to recite the *Prajāvat* (RVKh 2.10) and *Jīvaputra* (RVKh 2.11) *sūktas* (hymns), while inserting the sap.

Both the Śuklayajurvedic ritual texts, PGS I.14.1-2 and the *Baijavāpagrhyasūtra* (quoted in Smp) prescribed that this rite should be performed before the foetal movement, in the second or third month of pregnancy, when the moon is in a *nakṣatra* (lunar mansion) with a male name.³⁰ YDh I.11 also prescribed to perform this rite before foetal movement. According to PGS I.14.3,5 the wife should fast on the day of the performance and after taking bath, she should put on *ahata* garments. The central point of this rite is inserting the juice prepared by pounding the shoots of a *nyagrodha* tree in the previous night, in the right nostril of the pregnant wife by his husband with two *mantras* from the VSM beginning with, “*Hiraṇyagarbha*” (XIII.4) and “*Formed of water*” (XXXI.17). In case the husband desires a virile son, this text instructed to place a *kūrmāpitta* (literally, “bile of a tortoise”, according to Karka, Jayarāma, Harihara and Gadādhara, its medieval scholiasts, a shallow dish filled with water) on the genitals of his wife with the modified version of the *mantra* from the VSM (XII.4) beginning with, “*Suparṇa* are you” before reciting the *mantra* (VSM XII.5) beginning with, “*Viṣṇu’s* steps are you”. PGS I.14.4 also mentioned that according to some (authorities), pounded *soma* stalk and *kuśa* grass blade are also used for preparing the juice.

HGS II.1.2.1-6 provided a detailed account of this rite. According to this text, this rite should be performed in the third month of pregnancy in the fortnight of the waxing moon, when the moon is in an auspicious *nakṣatra*. At the beginning, the husband should put wood in the sacrificial fire and perform usual rites down to the offering oblations with the *Vyāhrtis*. Then, he should offer oblations to Dhātṛ and other deities with the certain *mantras*; serve food to the Brāhmaṇs and cause them to utter a benediction. Next, the wife should take a bath and put on a clean dress and ornaments. In a *maṇḍalāgāra* (round apartment), the husband should sit facing east (believed as ritually auspicious) and give his wife barley grains with the *mantra*, “*A begetter* are you.” Then, he should place a mustard seed or bean on either side of the barleycorn with the *mantra*, “*Two testicles* are you.” Next, he should pour a drop of yoghurt on these grains with the *mantra*, “*Śvāvṛttat*.” Then, he causes his wife to consume them. After she has sipped water, he should touch her abdomen with the *mantra*, “*With my ten fingers*, I touch you so that you may give birth to a child after ten months.” Next, he should pound the tip of the shoots of a *nyagrodha* tree, mix (the powder) with clarified butter or a silkworm and (mix the same) with a gruel of *priyaṅgu* (*Setaria italica*) seeds or a splinter of a sacrificial post taken from the north-easterly part (of that post) exposed to the fire and insert that into the right nostril of his wife, who should rest her head on a widely spread root.³¹

JGS I.5 described a similar procedure for the rite. It prescribed to perform the rite in the third month of pregnancy except for a female who already has a child. According to this text, the husband should offer oblations of either *caru* (boiled rice with clarified butter) or *prṣadājya* (clarified butter mixed with curdled milk) prepared in accordance with the ritual procedure for preparing *sthālīpāka* (a mess of cooked food) with the *Puruṣasūkta* (SV(J) II.3.6-4.2). Next, he should arrange a barley-

corn and two beans in the shape of a *pulliṅga* (male genitals) and give his wife to consume with a drops of yoghurt with the *mantra* (uttered by the wife), “Prajāpati, the male, the overlord, may he giving me a long living glorious son. May I, together with my husband bring forth living children”. Then she should wear (till the birth of the child) on her neck, a shoot of a *nyagrodha* tree together with its fruits fastened with two threads, one white and one red. It was believed that this is a sure means to get a male child. This text prescribed to give a garment as the fee.³²

GGs II.6.2-11 provided a different procedure for this rite. According to this text, in the morning of the day of performance, the wife, sitting on northward-pointed *darbha* grass, should clean her whole body including her head. Then, she should sit west of sacrificial fire on northward-pointed *darbha* grass, facing east (a late medieval scholiast Nārāyaṇa, son of Mahābala added here the performance of usual rites down to the oblations with the *Vyāhṛtis*). Standing behind his wife, the husband should first touch her right shoulder with his right hand and then he should touch uncovered part of her navel with the *mantra* from the MBr (I.4.8) beginning with, “The two males, Mitra and Varuṇa.” Next, they should do whatever necessary (Nārāyaṇa instructed to perform expiation rites). Later, the husband in exchange of twenty-one barley-corns or beans should buy a *nyagrodhasūṅgā* (shoot of a banyan tree) with two fruits on both sides and located on its north-eastern trunk. The fruits should not be dry or touched by worms. While buying, he should recite seven mantras, which say that if that shoot belonging to any of the deities, Soma, Varuṇa, the Vasus, the Rudras, the Ādityas, the Maruts or the Viśvedevāḥ, he is buying that for him (or them). Then, he should take it up with another *mantra*, “You herbs, being well-minded, bestow virility on this [shoot]; for it will do its work” and cover it with grasses. After bringing it home, he should place it in the open. A *brahmacārī*, or a *vratavatī* (a female devoted to her husband) or a *brahmabandhu* (unworthy son of a Brāhmaṇ), or a *kumārī* (a girl, who has not yet attained maturity) should pound this *nyagrodha* shoot on a cleaned *dṛṣad* (lower millstone), without moving backward the upper millstone used for pounding. In the next morning, the wife should clean her whole body including her head, sitting on northward-pointed *darbha* grass and lie down west of sacrificial fire on northward-pointed *darbha* grass, with her head to the east. Standing behind her, the husband should hold the pounded substance with the thumb and the ring finger of his right hand and insert it in her right nostril with a *mantra* from the MBr (I.4.9) beginning with, “Agni is a male; Indra is a male.” Next, they should do whatever necessary.³³ A similar account of this rite is found in KhādGS II.2.17-23.

The description found for this rite in VkhGS III.11 is similar to the early *gr̥hyasūtra* texts. According to this text, in the forenoon of the day of performance, the husband should first perform the rites up to the *mūla homa* sacrifice offering oblations to Agni Sviṣṭākāra in the same manner as *Garbhādhāna*. Next, he should mix the mustard seed with the barley-corns with the *mantra*, “A begetter are you” and then he should give it to his wife, who has sat on the west of sacrificial fire with the *mantra*, “Two testicles are you.” If these (mustard seed and barley-corns) are not available, he may use beans and grain corns as substitutes. With the *mantra*, “Om, bhūḥ, bhuvah, suvah”; the *mantras* from the TS beginning with, “[With fair praise,] I invoke Rākā” (III.3.11.5a) and “All your kind thoughts, O Rākā” (III.3.11.5b) and the *mantras* beginning with, “Soma is our king” (similar to ĀpMP II.11.13) and “By you we would as through streams of water” (similar to ĀpMP I.5.5), he should touch her abdomen and then cause her to drink the three-fold drink in the same manner as *Garbhādhāna*.

The original magical nature of this rite can be identified from the items prescribed for consumption during this rite by the *gr̥hyasūtra* texts we have seen so far, namely, the pounded shoot of a *nyagrodha* tree with two fruits on its both sides, the barley-corn and two beans and yoghurt. All are suggestive of male genitalia. This has been made explicitly clear in the description in ĀpGS VI.14.10-12. It instructed that the husband should collect a shoot of a *nyagrodha* tree located on its

north-eastern trunk along with two fruits, that look like testicles for this rite and then a girl, who has not yet attained maturity, should pound it on a *dr̥ṣad* (lower millstone) with another *dr̥ṣad* and pour water over it. Next, the husband should make her wife lie down on her back on the west of the sacrificial fire, facing east and insert the pounded substance on her right nostril with his thumb, reciting the *mantra* from the ĀpMP (II.11.14), “[For] your *pumsavana* (production of a male issue)”.

Several pregnancy rites are described together in the chapter 35 of the KauśS under a common heading of *pumsavanāni*. Keśava in his *Kauśikapaddhati* identified the aphorisms 35.1-4 and 35.8-10 of it as the descriptions for *Pumsavana* rite, which is quite different from the descriptions in other *gr̥hyasūtra* texts. KauśS 35.1-4 prescribed that on a *tithi*, when the moon is in a *nakṣatra* (lunar mansion) with a male name, after the wife has bathed, the husband should pluck out a *bāṇa* (reed) from its sheath and tie it (on the body of his wife) with the *mantra* (AVŚ III.23.1) beginning with, “Cause of [you being a] barren”. Next, he should pour rice and barley in the milk of a cow, which has a calf having same colour as the cow in a *phālacamasa* (cup made from a plough) and mash them. Another mixture, prepared by pounding together the leaves of *br̥hatī*, *palāśa* and *vidarī* plants with a couple of *adhyañḍā* (roots) should be added to it. This substance should be inserted like a *paidva* (literally, “crushed insect”, a powder used as medicine) in to the right nostril of the wife with his right thumb. This text (35.8-10) further prescribed that after churning out fire from the woods of *aśvattha* and *śamī* with the *mantra* (AVŚ VI.11.1) beginning with, “The *aśvattha* [tree] on the top of *śamī* [tree]”, the husband should insert in to the right nostril of the wife with his right thumb the clarified butter made from the milk of a cow, which has a male calf like a *paidva*. Then, he should cause her drink *madhumantha* (a drink made from honey). At the end, he should surround (the sacrificial fire, according to Keśava) with a black woollen thread and tie it on the body of his wife.

The ancient medical text, the *Carakasamhitā*, mentioned a rite to obtain a male child with the desired features in *Śārīrasthāna* 8.9-11. According to this text, this rite should be performed on the eighth day from the beginning of the menstrual period before the sexual intercourse. This rite is similar to the rite for the consummation of marriage mentioned in the vedic ritual texts and includes the recitation of the well-known *mantra* beginning with, “Let Viṣṇu prepare the womb;” and offering three oblations of the *sthālīpāka*, according to the vedic procedure. The *Carakasamhitā* also instructed to perform certain rituals for the reversal of the sex of the foetus from female to male, which it named as the rite of *Pumsavana*. In *Śārīrasthāna* 8.19, four alternate procedures are prescribed for this rite. All of these procedures are purely magical in nature and similar to the procedures of the pregnancy rites in the *gr̥hyasūtras*. According to this text, this rite must be performed before the manifestation of the sex of the foetus. As *Śārīrasthāna* 4.10 mentioned that the manifestation of the sex of the foetus takes place in the second month of pregnancy, so it seems that it prescribed to perform this rite prior to it. According to this text, this rite should be performed when the moon is in *Puṣya nakṣatra* (lunar mansion). For the first procedure, it prescribed that the husband should collect two leaf-buds from the easterly and northerly branches of a *nyagrodha* tree grown in a cow-pen. These two shoots along with two *dhānyamāṣa* (black grams) or two *gaurasarṣapa* (white mustard) seeds should be mixed with yoghurt and given to the wife to drink. For the second procedure, it prescribed that, the husband should prepare a paste of *jīvaka*, *ṛṣabhaka*, *apāmārga* (*Achyranthes aspera*) and *sahacara* (*Barleria cristata*) – collectively or individually as required and should add milk to it; or else he should put a *kuḍyakiṭaka* (a type of insect) or *matsayka* (a type of insect) in a handful of water. The product should be given to the wife to swallow it. For the third procedure, it instructed that the minute fire-coloured man-shaped pieces of gold, silver or iron should be put in yoghurt, milk or a handful of water and should be consumed by the wife without leaving any part. For the fourth procedure, it is laid down that the wife should inhale the steam coming from the paste of *śāli* rice (*Orzya sativa*) mixed with water, while being

heated. Else, she should use a drop with a cotton swab in the right nostril of the liquid made of the flour of *śāli* rice previously soaked in water and put on the threshold. This text mentioned that, whatever in addition suggested by the Brāhmaṇas or the reliable females as desiderata, should also be performed.³⁴

Mānasollāsa 3.12.1249-1252 prescribed to perform this rite in the third month after conception, when the signs of pregnancy like flushed cheeks, darkening of areolas and slight swelling of stomach are visible. It instructed that the king should feed his queen a porridge made of barley and lentil mixed with clarified butter reciting the *mantras* from the *Vedas*.³⁵

4.5 Garbharakṣaṇa

The ancient pregnancy rite of *Garbharakṣaṇa*, which literally means, “protection of the womb” is described only in two Ṛgvedic ritual texts, ŚGS I.21.1-3 and KauṣGS I.13.1-2. These texts prescribed to perform the rite in the fourth month of pregnancy. Most probably, the same rite is described as *Anavalobhana* (literally, “prevention of miscarriage”) in another Ṛgvedic ritual text ĀGS I.13.5-7. From the description provided in the ĀGS, it seems that this rite was part of a common pregnancy rite, performed in sequence with *Garbhalambhana* and *Puṃsavana* rites in the third month of pregnancy.³⁶ SṃP cited a passage from the *Baijavāpagrhyasūtra*, which prescribed to perform *Puṃsavana* and *Anavalobhana* on the same day, in the fortnight of the waxing moon, when the moon is in a *nakṣatra* with a male name. Another passage from the *Baijavāpagrhyasūtra* quoted in SṃM stated that both *Puṃsavana* and *Anavalobhana* must be performed in the second or third month of pregnancy.³⁷ Brāhmaṇabala, in his *paddhati* text, while explaining KGS 31.6 also mentioned about the performance of this rite for the protection of the foetus.³⁸

ŚGS I.21.1-3 instructed that at the beginning of the rite of *Garbharakṣaṇa*, the husband should offer six oblations of *sthālīpāka* (a mess of cooked food) with six *mantras* from the RV (X.162.1-6), the first of which begins with, “May, Agni, yielding to our prayer”. Next, he should besmear the body of his wife six times with clarified butter, with each of the six verses of the RV X.163, the first of which begins with, “From your eyes, from your both nostrils.”

According to ĀGS I.13.7, after the performance of *Garbhalambhana* and *Puṃsavana* rites, the husband should offer a *sthālīpāka* (a mess of cooked food) oblation to the sacrificial fire for Prajāpati and then touch the chest of his wife near her heart with the *mantra*, “O you, whose hair is well parted, what is hidden in your heart, in Prajāpati, that I understand. [May you understand] me who know that; may not the injury to the son be my lot.”

4.6 Sīmantonayana

The name of the pregnancy rite of *Sīmantonayana* (literally, “parting of hair upwards”) or *Sīmantakarāṇa* (literally, “parting of hair”) has been derived from its principal element of parting the hair of a pregnant female. Early descriptions of this rite are found in most of the *grhyasūtra* texts. ŚGS I.22.1-18, KauṣGS I.14.1-12, ĀGS I.14.1-9, GGS II.7.1-12, KhādGS II.2.24-28, JGS I.7, KauthG IX, PGS I.15.1-9, BGS I.10.1-12, ĀpGS VI.14.1-8, HGS II.1.1.1-3, ĀgGS II.1.2 and VkhGS III.12 described this rite as *Sīmantonayana*. A late *dharmasūtra* text, ViṣDh XXVII.3 also mentioned this rite as *Sīmantonayana*. GGS II.7.1-12, BhGS I.21, KGS 31.1-5, MGS I.12.2, I.15.1 and VārGS 16.7-10 narrated this rite as *Sīmantakarāṇa*. However, KauṣS 79.14 mentioned that during this rite the husband loosens the parting of hair (*sīmantaṃ vicṛtati*) of his wife. MDh did not mention this rite. Two later *dharmasāstra* texts, YDh I.11 and VDh I.17 only mentioned this rite as *Sīmanta*, but did not provide any details about its performance. It seems that the performance of this rite in its ancient form was discontinued by most of the Hindu social groups by the early medieval period. The description in a late *dharmasāstra* text, Laghu-Āś IV.8-16 is nothing but a summary of ĀGS I.14.1-9.³⁹

The ancient belief in propitiation for the removal the evil influences by the performance of this rite is preserved in the verses of *Āśvalāyanācārya* cited in SmP, which stated, “Evil *rākṣasas* (demons) bent on sucking the blood, come to the wife in the first pregnancy to devour the foetus. In order to remove them, the husband should invoke the goddess Śrī, as the lurking spirit leave the woman protected by her. These invisible cruel flesh-eaters catch hold of the woman in her first pregnancy and trouble her. Therefore, the ceremony of *Sīmanta* is prescribed.”⁴⁰

The only extant *grhyasūtra* text of *Kāṭhaka śākhā*, KGS 31.1 instructed to perform *Sīmantakarāṇa* in the third month of pregnancy, while the *grhyasūtra* texts of *Maitrāyaṇīya śākhā*, MGS I.15.1 and VārGS 16.7 extended their options to the third, sixth or eighth months and the fifth, sixth or seventh months respectively.⁴¹ The *grhyasūtra* texts of *Taittirīya śākhā*, BGS I.10.1, BhGS I.21, ĀpGS VI.14.1, HGS II.1.1.2 and ĀgGS II.1.2 prescribed to perform this rite in the fourth month of the first pregnancy. VkhGS III.12, a late text of this *śākhā*, prescribed to perform this rite in the eighth month from *Garbhādhāna*. According to ĀGS I.14.1, a Ṛgvedic *grhyasūtra* text, this rite must be performed in the fourth month of pregnancy, while the other Ṛgvedic *grhyasūtra* texts, ŚGS 1.22.1 and KauṣGS I.14.1 instructed to perform this rite in the seventh month of first pregnancy. KhādGS II.2.24, a Sāmavedic *grhyasūtra* text, prescribed to perform *Sīmantakarāṇa* in the fourth or sixth month of pregnancy only. JGS I.7, another Sāmavedic *grhyasūtra* text, prescribed that *Sīmantonayana* should be performed by the husband in the fourth, sixth or eighth month of pregnancy, during the bright lunar fortnight⁴² and yet another Sāmavedic *grhyasūtra* text, GGS II.7.1-2 said that *Sīmantakarāṇa* should be performed fourth, sixth or eighth month of first pregnancy. KauthG IX, a late Sāmavedic *grhya* text, prescribed to perform this rite in the fourth month of pregnancy. The Śuklayajurvedic *grhyasūtra* text, PGS I.15.3 prescribed to perform this rite only during the sixth or eighth month of the first pregnancy. The same view is reflected in YDh I.11. ViṣDh XXVII.3, AgnP 153.3 and the *Kāśīkhaṇḍa* (*Pūrvārdha* 36.4) of the *Skandapurāṇa* also prescribed to perform this rite in the sixth or eighth month of pregnancy. *Pūrvabhāga* I.25.4 of the NārP stated that *Sīmantakarāṇa* should be performed in the fourth month of pregnancy. But it may be performed in the sixth, seventh or eighth month also. The *Baijavāpagrhyasūtra* (quoted in SmC, *Kālanirṇaya* of Hemādri, NirS and SmP) instructed to perform this rite in the fourth, fifth or sixth month of pregnancy.⁴³

4.6.1 Descriptions in vedic ritual texts

One of the early detailed descriptions is found in the ŚGS I.22.1-18. ŚGS I.5.2 prescribed to perform this rite in the outer hall (*bahiḥ-śālā*) of a house. The wife is instructed in the ŚGS to take a bath, put on an *ahata* garment and sit behind the sacrificial fire before the commencement of the rite. It prescribed that the husband should begin the performance offering oblations with the *Mahāvyaḥṛtis* into the sacrificial fire, while the wife should hold his hand. Next, the husband should prepare a *sthālīpāka* (mess of cooked food). This text mentioned that, according to some authorities, boiled rice and *mudga* beans (*Vigna radiata*) should be prepared. It instructed that the names of the implements used should be of male gender. Then, he should sacrifice first with two *mantras*, “May Dhātṛ give to his worshipper further life and safety; may we obtain the favour of the god whose laws are truthful” and “Dhātṛ disposes of offspring and wealth; Dhātṛ has created this whole world; Dhātṛ will give a son to the sacrificer; to him you shall sacrifice, an offering rich in clarified butter”; followed by three *mantras*, the first of which begins with, “Please return, O Nejaṃṣa” (RVKh 4.13.1-3) and the sixth *mantra* beginning with, “Prajāpati” (RV X.121.10). After the sacrifice, the husband should part the hair of his wife upwards, beginning from the middle with a *śalālī* (porcupine's quill) that has three white spots or with a needle of *darbha* grass together with unripe *udumbara* (*Ficus racemosa*) fruits with the words, “*bhūḥ, bhuvah, svaḥ*” and then should lay down the item used for parting hair in her lap. A *śalālī* (porcupine's quill) with three white spots was believed as an auspicious object in the ancient period. An early reference of this belief is found in

the TBr I.5.6.6. After parting the hair, he should tie the unripe *udumbara* fruits to a *trivṛta* (string of three twisted threads) and fasten them to the neck of his wife with the *mantra*, “Rich in sap is this tree, like the sappy one you be fruitful.” Next, the husband should say to the lute players to sing together a song, praising a king or someone else who is *vīratara* (more valiant). After the musical performance, the husband should pour roasted grains in to a water pot and cause his wife to drink with six *mantras* from the RV, first one beginning with, “Let Viṣṇu prepare the womb” (X.184.1) and followed by the five *mantras*, the first one beginning with “I call on Rākā” (II.32.4-8). Then, he should touch her abdomen and say, “*Suparṇa* (well winged) are you, Garutmān; the *trivṛt* (chant) is your head, the *gāyatra* (*gāyatrī mantra* sung in *sāman* tunes) your eyes, the *chandas* (metres) are your limbs, the *yajus* (prose *mantras*) is your name and the *sāman* is your body.” At the end, the husband should cause her sing merrily and if she desires, she may wear a large number of gold ornaments. It instructed to give a bull as the sacrificial fee.

The description of this rite in ĀGS I.14.3-9 is similar to one in the ŚGS. According to this text, the rite should begin with the offering of oblations of clarified butter into the sacrificial fire by the husband, while his wife should sit on a bull's hide. This text instructed that, he should offer oblations of clarified butter with two (verses) beginning with, “May Dhātṛ give to his worshipper” (same as the ŚGS); two *mantras* from the RV (II.32.4-5) beginning with, “[With eulogy,] I call on Rākā” and with the three *mantras* beginning with “Nejameṣa” (RVKh 4.13.1-3) and finally a *mantra* from the RV (X.121.10), “Prajāpati, no other than you”. Then he should part his wife's hair upwards from the forehead three times, with a bunch of an even number of unripe fruits, with a *śalalī* (porcupine's quill) that has three white spots and with three bunches of *kuśa* grass with the words, “*bhūḥ, bhuvah, svaḥ, om*”. Next, the husband should order two *vīṇā* (lute) players to sing together the *gāthā* (song) praising the king Soma. For the performance of this rite, ĀGS I.14.8 prescribed to follow the instructions of the elderly Brāhmaṇ women, whose husbands and children are alive. This is definitely a vestige of its pre-Brahmanical tradition. This text prescribed a bull as the sacrificial fee.

The rite of *Sīmantakaraṇa* described in GGS II.7.1-12 has significant differences with the ŚGS and the ĀGS. According to this text, the rite should begin in the morning with the washing the wife including her head, while she is seated on the northward pointed *darbha* grass. After the bath, she has been instructed to sit on the west of the sacrificial fire on the northward pointed *darbha* grass, facing towards east. The husband has been instructed to stand behind her and tie an *udumbara* twig with an even number of unripe fruits on her neck with a *mantra* from the MBr (I.5.1) beginning with, “Rich in sap is this tree” (same as the *mantra* used in the ŚGS). Next, he should part his wife's hair upwards, first with the *darbhapiñjula* (bunch of *darbha* grass blades) three times with the *mantras*, “*Bhūḥ*”, “*Bhuvah*” and “*Svah*” respectively. Next, he should part her hair with a strip of *vīratara* (*Andropogon Muricatus*) grass, reciting the *mantra* from the MBr (I.5.2), “As Prajāpati establishes the boundary of Aditi for great prosperity, so I part the hair of this female and make her progeny live to an old age”. Then, he should part her hair with a full spindle with the *mantra* from the MBr (I.5.3) beginning with, “[With eulogy,] I call on Rākā” (almost similar to RV II.32.4). Finally, he should part her hair with a *śalalī* (porcupine's quill) that has three white spots with the next *mantra* from the MBr (I.5.4) beginning with, “All your kind thoughts, O Rākā” (almost similar to RV II.32.5). Then, a *sthālīpāka* (mess of boiled rice) with sesame seeds should be prepared and covered with clarified butter and the husband should make his wife look at that. Then, he should ask his wife, “What do you see?” (MBr 1.5.5a) and cause her to answer, “[I see] children, cattle, good fortune for me and long life for my husband” (MBr 1.5.5b). The food should be eaten by the wife. The Brāhmaṇ females should sit by her side and say auspicious words such as, “Be a mother of valiant sons, a mother of living sons and wife of a living husband.” The rite described in KhādGS II.2.24-28 is very brief and similar to one described in the GGS. Both the GGS and the KhādGS had not mentioned anything about the element of *Vīṇāgāna*.

The description of this rite in JGS I.7 has commonalities with the other Sāmavedic ritual texts. According to this text, the rite should begin with the preparation of a *sthālīpāka* (mess of boiled rice) mixed with sesame seeds and *mudga* beans. Then, the husband should offer it as oblations into the sacrificial fire, first with the *Mahāvyaḥrtis* and then with the *mantras* addressed to Prajāpati. After the sacrifice, he should make his wife sit on the west of the sacrificial fire on a *bhadrapīṭha* (soft chair) or on a mattress of *erakā* grass covered over with a new garment. Next, he should part his wife's hair right over the nose up to her head beginning at the forehead and ending at the top of the head by means of white spotted part of a *śalālī* (porcupine's quill) that has three white spots with the *mantra*, "For your *prāṇa* (out-breathing), for your *apāna* (in-breathing), for your *vyāna* (through-breathing)". After parting the hair, it instructed the husband, in difference with the GGS and the KhādGS, to adorn the tips of his wife's hair on the right side with a wreath and in similar way on the left side. Then he should fill a vessel of bell metal with water mixed with gold; make his wife to look at it and ask, "*Hiṃ, bhūḥ, bhuvah, svah*; what do you see?" and his wife should reply, "[I see] children, cattle, good fortune for me and long life for my husband" (almost similar to the MBr 1.5.5b). This text prescribed a garment or a piece of gold as fee⁴⁴ and it is silent on the element known as *Vīṅgāna*.

PGS I.4.2 prescribed to perform this rite in the *bahiḥ-śālā* (outer hall) of a house. PGS I.15.1-9 instructed that this rite should begin with the preparation of a *sthālīpāka* (mess of boiled rice) mixed with sesame seeds and *mudga* beans and offer it as oblations with the *mantras* addressed to Prajāpati. Then, he should part the hair of his wife while she is seated on the west of the fire on a *bhadrapīṭha* (soft chair) upwards beginning at the forehead, with a bunch containing an even number of unripe *udumbara* fruits, and with three *darbhapiñjula* (bunches of *darbha* grass blades), with a *śalālī* (porcupine's quill) that has three white spots, with a wedge-shaped (strip of) *vīratara* grass and with a full spindle with the *mantra*, "*Bhūḥ, bhuvah, svah*." Alternately, he should part three times, each time with the *mantra*, "*Bhūḥ*", "*Bhuvah*" and "*Svah*" respectively. Then he should tie (a bunch of *udumbara* fruits) with three twisted strings reciting the *mantra*, "Rich in sap is this tree, like the sappy one you be fruitful" (same as the *mantra* used in the ŚGS and the GGS). According to this text, it should be followed by the element, which was later known as *Vīṅgāna* and serving food to the Brāhmaṇs at the end.

An early description of performance of this rite as performed by the communities, which followed the *Taittirīya śākhā*, is found in BGS I.10.1-12. According to this text, at the beginning, the Brāhmaṇs are entertained with food and caused to pronounce auspicious blessings. Then the husband should perform the *agnimukha* (usual rites with the sacrificial fire) and then should offer the oblations of cooked food and clarified butter to the sacrificial fire. Then, he should part upwards the hair of his wife with a *śalālī* (porcupine's quill) that has three white spots, with three *darbhapuñjīla* (bunches of *darbha* grass blades) and with young shoots of *udumbara* and barley with two *mantras* from the TS beginning with, "[With eulogy,] I call on Rākā" (III.3.11.5a) and "All your kind thoughts, O Rākā" (III.3.11.5b). Next, he should tie the young shoots of barley on the neck of his wife. According to this text, it should be followed by the element, which was later known as *Vīṅgāna*.⁴⁵

The description of this rite found in ĀpGS VI.14.1-8, is nearly similar to the one mentioned in the BGS. It also prescribed to begin the performance with serving food to the Brāhmaṇs and causing them to give blessings. Next, he should perform the rites from putting the wood in the sacrificial fire down to offering oblations of *ājyabhāga* (two portions of clarified butter). Then, he should offer oblations with the *mantras* from the ĀpMP (II.11.1-8), while his wife should hold him. It should be followed by offering oblations with "*Jaya*" (TS III.4.4) and other *mantras*. After performing the rituals down to *pariṣecana*, he should make his wife sit down on the west of the sacrificial fire facing east. Then, he should part her hair upwards (beginning from the forehead) with a *śalālī*

(porcupine's quill) that has three white spots, three *darbhapuñjīla* (bunches of *darbha* grass blades) and with a bunch of unripe *udumbara* fruits either with the *Vyāhṛtis* (ĀpMP II.11.9) or with the *mantras* from the ĀpMP (II.11.10-11) (same as TS III.3.11.5a,b). The next element of musical performance prescribed by this text was later became known as *Vīṅāgāna*. After this musical performance, it prescribed that the husband should tie barley-grains with young shoot (to the head of his wife) and she should keep silence till the stars appear. When the stars have appeared, he should go (with his wife) towards the east or north, touch a calf, and murmur the *Vyāhṛtis*. Then, the wife should break her silence. This last element is not found in the BGS.

The rite described in BhGS I.21 is similar to the BGS, but comprises additional elements. According to this text, after offering oblations with “*Jaya*” (TS III.4.4), “*Abhyātāna*” (TS III.4.5) and “*Rāṣṭrabhṛt*” (TS III.4.7) *mantras* and certain other *mantras*, the husband should part the hair of his wife upwards with a *śalālī* (porcupine's quill) that has three white spots, with three *darbhapuñjīla* (bunches of *darbha* grass blades) and with a bunch of unripe *udumbara* fruits, reciting the *mantras*, “*Bhūḥ*”, “*Bhuvah*” and “*Suvah*”, two (*mantras*) from the TS (III.3.11.5a-5b) (same as prescribed by the BGS) and finally another *mantra* same as the *gāthā* mentioned in the ĀpGS. Then, three *śarāvas* (earthen dishes) of boiled rice sprinkled with clarified butter and the fourth *śarāva* filled with water should be placed in front of the sacrificial fire and while the wife is looking at them, the husband should ask her, “What do you see?” and the wife should answer, “Sons and cattle.” One of the dishes of boiled rice should be served to the Brāhmaṇ males, another dish should be served to the Brāhmaṇ females and the third dish should be shared by the wife with the small boys. She should sit silently until the appearance of the stars.⁴⁶

Sīmantonnyana in HGS II.1.1.1-3 is codified in the same manner as *Puṃsavana*. For this rite also, the husband had been instructed to put wood in the sacrificial fire and perform usual rites down to offering oblations with the *Vyāhṛtis* at the beginning. Next, he should offer four oblations to Dhātṛ with four *mantras* from the TS (II.4.5.1c-4.5.2b) beginning with, “May Dhātṛ give us wealth” followed by offering oblations to Varuṇa and Agni with certain other *mantras*. Finally, he should serve food to the Brāhmaṇs and cause them to utter a benediction. At the beginning of the proper rite, the wife had been instructed to take a bath and put on a clean dress and ornaments. In a *maṇḍalāgāra* (round apartment), she should sit down on the west of the sacrificial fire, facing east. The husband should stand on the east of his wife, facing west and part her hair upwards (beginning from the forehead) with a *śalālī* (porcupine's quill) that has three white spots, holding (also) a bunch of unripe *udumbara* fruits with the *Vyāhṛtis* and with the same two (*mantras*) from the TS (III.3.11.5a-5b) prescribed by the BGS. Next, the husband had been instructed to recite a *mantra* over his wife, which is same as the *gāthā* mentioned in the ĀpGS followed by another one (same as ĀpMP I.5.5). Description of this rite in ĀgGS II.1.2 is exactly same as the HGS.

The description found in KGS 31.1-5 comprises a few elements different from the other vedic ritual texts. According to this text, after the sacrifice with “*Jaya*” and other *mantras*, the husband should loosen his wife's hair while she is seated on *darbha* grass blades on the west of the sacrificial fire facing east. Then, he should comb her hair with three *mantras* and part her hair with a *śalālī* (porcupine's quill) that has three white spots and with a *śamī* branch having leaves on it with a *mantra* beginning with, “All your kind thoughts, O Rākā” (KāS XIII.16, similar to TS III.3.11.5b). Next, he should braid her hair, which has been parted into two with a *nīlalohita* (blue and red) thread with a *mantra*. At the end, the *guru* (guiding priest) should be honoured with the *madhuparka*.⁴⁷ KGS 31.6 prescribed that after *Sīmantonnyana*, the rite of *Saṭoddharaṇa* (literally, “putting up of the braids”) should be performed for a *kumārī* (unmarried girl) following the same procedure as the *Sīmantonnyana* and after the rite, the girl should be anointed.

The MGS described this rite twice, first time (I.12.2-7) as an element of the marriage rite before departing from the bride's house and the second time (I.15.1) as a pregnancy rite. In its first

description, it instructed that after the element of *Anumantraṇa*, the bridegroom should part his bride's hair with a *śalālī* (porcupine's quill) that has three white spots or with a *darbha* grass blade having roots with it. Then, he should massage her hair with oil with a *mantra* and braid her hair with the wool of an animal, which is still alive. At the end, both of them should consume yoghurt and honey. In its second description, it prescribed that, after the performance of sacrifice with “*Jaya*” and other *mantras*; the husband should loosen the hair of his wife, while she sits on *darbha* grass on the west of sacrificial fire. Next, after anointing her hair with *navanīta* (fresh butter), the husband should part her hair with a porcupine-quill with three white spots and a *śamī* branch with leaves, while reciting a verse (RV X.85.39), “Agni has given the wife back again, together with long life and beauty. Let her have a long life-span, and let her husband live for a hundred autumn.”⁴⁸

The rite described in VārGS 16.7-10 is similar to the KGS. This text prescribed that, at the beginning, the husband should loosen her wife's hair with a *mantra* (RV V.3.2). Then, he should smear his palms with fresh butter, apply it on the hair of his wife and bring together her hair with another *mantra*, beginning with “Indrāṇī made a comb”, unite the hair with a *śamī* branch with leaves, then part her hair with a porcupine's quill that has three white spots and at the end plait her hair to form two braids with a with a *nīllohita* (blue and red) thread or wool of an animal which is still alive.

KauśS 79.14-15 described this rite as an element of the consummation of marriage rite. According to this text, for three nights, the wife should sleep with her hair wrapped with a *śanaśakala* (piece of hemp). After consummation of the marriage in the fourth night, the husband should cover his wife with an *ahata* garment. Then, the husband should sprinkle the head of his wife with young sprouting grass, reciting the *mantra*, “Bṛhaṣpati has first arranged the hairs of Sūryā; with this, O Aśvins, we completely prepare this woman for her husband” (AVŚ XIV.1.55, Keśava in his *Kauśikapaddhati* instructed to employ an additional *mantra*, AVŚ XIV.1.56 also). Next, he should place rice and barley up on it and then, he should loosen her hair (*sīmantam vicṛtati*) with the *darbhapiñjula* (bunch of *darbha* grass blades).⁴⁹ As the KauśS did not describe it here as a separate rite, Keśava in his *Kauśikapaddhati* identified this aphorism as an element of *Caturthīkākarma*. Instead, Keśava mentioned another aphorism, KauśS 35.20, as the instruction for the rite of *Sīmantakarma*. This aphorism instructed the husband to make an amulet with white and yellow mustard seeds and then tie it on the neck of his wife with a hymn from the AVŚ (VIII.6).

4.6.2 *Sīmantonnayana* in the medieval period

Mānasollāsa (ca.1131) 3.12.1253-1257 prescribed to perform *Sīmantonnayana* in the sixth or eighth month after conception. This text mentioned that it is also known as *Aṣṭamaṅgala* as eight auspicious items are required for this rite. It instructed that, the pregnant female should wear a garland of *udumbara* fruits around her neck during the rite and the emperor should part the hair of his wife with a porcupine quill. The Brāhmaṇs should utter the *mantras* from the Sāmaveda and the musicians should play a melody, *Soma Rāga* with five types of musical instruments (probably, the trumpet, *kāhala*, conch shell, tabor and pair of *kāmsyatālas*). Cow, land, gold and clothes should be gifted to the learned Brāhmaṇs and it should be celebrated as a festival.⁵⁰

It seems that, since the late medieval period, *Sīmantonnayana* is the only ancient pregnancy rite, whose performance has been continued, mostly by the elite ‘twice-born’ social groups in South Asia. *Kholo Bharavo* (literally, “filling the lap”) or *Simant*, the pregnancy rite practiced since the late medieval period in the present-day Gujarat comprises the elements of ancient *Sīmantonnayana* rite along with other folk elements. Some of the other modern Hindu pregnancy rites celebrated in the different parts of India, although based on the folk traditions, but definitely influenced by this ancient rite. Mary McGee in her article, *Samskāra* (2004) also observed:⁵¹

These particular prenatal rituals, especially that of *pumsavana* are rarely observed among Hindus

today. The *garbhādhāna*, for the most part, has been incorporated into the wedding ritual. Modern vestiges of the *sīmantonmayana saṃskāra* have been transformed into occasions for celebration, for showering the mother-to-be with attention and gifts.

4.6.3 *Vīṇāgāna*

A significant ancient element of *Sīmantonmayana* rite found in a number of *grhyasūtra* texts is singing a *gāthā* by the lute players, which was later known as *Vīṇāgāna*. The verse mentioned in ĀGS I.14.7 for singing during this element is, “May Soma, our king protect the people, whose dominion is settled [your banks], O [the river] so and so.” This text prescribed to pronounce here the name of the river near which the performer dwells. An almost similar verse is also mentioned in PGS I.15.8, BGS I.10.11, ĀpGS VI.14.6, HGS II.1.1.3, ĀgGS II.1.2 and VkhGS III.12 in their descriptions of for *Sīmantonmayana* rite. Most probably this *gāthā* was originally part of an ancient *ākhyāna* (ballad), which is now lost. The probable original version of this *gāthā* is the first of two identical verses found in ĀpMP II.11.12-13 and mentioned in ĀpGS VI.14.5-6. This first verse praises king Yaugandhari, and name of the river mentioned here is the Yamunā. This *gāthā* was prescribed for the Sālvas in the ĀpGS.⁵² The next verse which praises Soma as the king was prescribed for the Brāhmaṇs (as Soma was believed as the king of Brāhmaṇs) living elsewhere and this text instructed to substitute the word ‘*asau*’ with the name of the river near which they live. This second verse is also found in BGS I.10.11, HGS II.1.1.3, ĀgGS II.1.2, BhGS I.21 and VkhGS III.12. The later Taittirīya ritual texts, the HGS, the ĀgGS, the BhGS and the VkhGS did not mention about the lute players. Instead, these texts instructed the husband to recite this *gāthā* as a *mantra*. The word ‘*asau*’ has been actually substituted in the HGS and the ĀgGS with the Gaṅgā and in the BhGS with the Yamunā and in the VkhGS this verse is mentioned only by the *pratīkena* (beginning words). PGS I.15.7-8 laid down the procedure that after tying a bunch of *udumbara* fruits fastened with three twisted strings on the neck of the wife, the husband should say to two lute players to sing together a song, praising a king or someone else who is more valiant. The *gāthā* in praise of Soma, mentioned in this text as prescribed by some authority for singing is very similar to the one mentioned in the ĀGS.⁵³ ŚGS I.22.11-12 and KauṣGS I.14.9 also prescribed that after fastening a bunch of unripe *udumbara* fruits with three twisted strings and tying it on the neck of the wife, the husband should say to the lute players to sing together a song, praising a king or someone else who is more valiant. However, these two texts did not mention the song to be sung.

4.7 *Viṣṇubali*

The rite of *Viṣṇubali*, which literally means “offerings to Viṣṇu” (believed as the protector god of the foetus) is described in BGS I.10.13-16, 11.1-14 and two late *grhyasūtra* texts of the same *śākhā*, ĀgGS II.5.7 and VkhGS III.13. A late vedic ritual text, HGŚS I.3.15 also described this rite. BGS I.11.2 prescribed to perform this rite in the eighth month of pregnancy, in the fortnight of the waxing moon, on the 7th or 12th *tithi*, when the moon is in Rohiṇī or Śroṇā (Śravaṇā) *nakṣatra*. According to Vaśiṣṭha, an authority cited in SṃP, this rite is to be performed in the eighth month of pregnancy by the husband⁵⁴ as this month belongs to Viṣṇu. The detailed description of this rite is not found in the texts of the medieval authors on *smṛti*, with the exception of the texts of the followers of Baudhāyana, the *Pañcarātrins* and the *Vaikhānasas*, the last two being the *Vaiṣṇava* Brāhmaṇ social groups in South India. The *Vaikhānasas* still perform this ancient rite.⁵⁵

According to BGS I.11.3-14, this rite should begin with the serving food to the Brāhmaṇs by the husband and making them to utter benediction. It should be followed by several sacrifices by him. After, invoking Agni first, Puruṣa should be invoked with the *mantras*, “*Oṃ, bhūḥ, I invoke Puruṣa*”; “*Oṃ, bhuvah, I invoke Puruṣa*”; “*Oṃ, suvah, I invoke Puruṣa*” and “*Oṃ, bhūḥ, bhuvah, suvah, I invoke Puruṣa*”. The *tarpaṇa* to Viṣṇu should be offered with the *mantra*, “*I satiate Keśava; I satiate Nārāyaṇa, Mādhava, Govinda, Viṣṇu, Madhusūdana, Trivikrama, Vāmana, Śrīdhara,*

Hṛṣīkeśa, Padmanābha and Dāmodara.” It should be followed by the *arcana* (worship) of Viṣṇu with fragrant substances, flowers, incense and lamp and offering oblations into the sacrificial fire with the *mantras* from the TBr (II.8.3.2-3). The husband should offer a mess of rice cooked in milk and jaggery, mixed with clarified butter twelve times with the “So and so *svāhā*” *mantras*, each time invoking one of the twelve names of Viṣṇu. After the sacrifice with the *Īyāhrtis* and releasing Puruṣa with the *mantra*, “I release Puruṣa”, remnants of the mess of rice should be consumed by the wife. According to this text, it was believed that the performance of this rite results in the birth of a male child. The description in ĀgGS II.5.7 is same as the BGS.

The description of this rite VkhGS III.13, a late *gr̥hyasūtra* text written in South India is probably influenced by the customary practices of the early centuries of the Common Era. According to this text, the main element of this rite was invoking Viṣṇu by his twelve names (Keśava, Nārāyaṇa, Mādhava, Govinda, Viṣṇu, Madhusūdana, Trivikrama, Vāmana, Śrīdhara, Hṛṣīkeśa, Padmanābha and Dāmodara) on *darbha* grass (*Imperata cylindrica*) mats and bathing him. It should be followed by worship of Viṣṇu by each of his twelve names and offering twelve oblations of clarified butter into the sacrificial fire with the *mantras* from the TBr (II.8.3.2-3). Then the husband should pour clarified butter on a *pāyasa* (mess of rice cooked in milk and jaggery) and offer it to Viṣṇu again by each of his twelve names. The remaining part of *pāyasa* should be consumed by his wife.⁵⁶

The early medieval *Pañcarātra* text, *Sanatkumārasaṃhitā* (*Brahmarātra*.4.54-55) prescribed to perform the rite of *Viṣṇubali* in the eighth month of pregnancy. It instructed the *sādhakas* (worshippers of Nārāyaṇa) to offer eight oblations of sweet milk and boiled rice to sacrificial fire with the *Puruṣasūkta*. Then he should touch the abdomen of his wife with the *mantra* beginning with, “All glories unto you” (*Bhāgavatapurāṇa* IV.24.33).⁵⁷

4.8 Phalasnāna

The description of an ancient pregnancy rite performed in the eighth month of pregnancy is found in MGS I.16.1-4. According to the MGS, this rite, *Phalasnāna* (literally, “bathing with fruits”) should begin with the sacrifice by the husband with “*Jaya*” and other *mantras*. It should be followed by washing of his wife with water mixed with fruits. Next the husband should put on her a new garment with an *anuvāka* (MS IV.14.6), adorn her with fragrant substances and flowers and put a garland of fruits around her neck. At the end, he should again perform the circumambulation of the fire with certain *mantras*. After completion of the rite, the husband should feed the virtuous Brāhmaṇs and give them the fruits as sacrificial fee.⁵⁸

4.9 Pañcāmṛta

The pregnancy rite of *Pañcāmṛta* (literally, “[regaling with] five nectars”), popular in Bengal and Assam since late medieval period, was codified only in the late medieval digests. Raghunandana in his *Jyotistattva* prescribed to perform this rite after *Puṃsavana*, in the fifth month of pregnancy on a Thursday, Friday or Sunday, when the moon is in Revatī, Aśvinī, Punarvasū, Puṣya, Svātī, Mūlā, Maghā, Anurādhā, Hastā or Uttara Phalgunī *nakṣatra* and in any *tithi* except the *riktā* (4th, 9th and 14th) *tithis*. The central element of this rite, according to him, is giving the pregnant female *pañcāmṛta* comprising milk with sugar, clarified butter, yoghurt and honey to eat.⁵⁹ A late medieval *tantra* text, MNT 9.128-130 also prescribed to perform this rite in the fifth month of pregnancy. It instructed that the husband should mix together equal parts of sugar, honey, milk, clarified butter and yoghurt and give it to his wife to eat.⁶⁰

4.10 Soṣyantīkarma

Soṣyantīkarma (literally, “the rite for a female in labour”) was an ancient pregnancy rite for the faster delivery for a female. This rite is described as *Soṣyantīhoma* (literally, “a sacrifice for a woman, who is in labour”) in KhādGS II.2.29-30 and GGS II.7.13-14. This same rite is mentioned

as *Soṣyantīsavana* in KGS 33.1-3. ĀpGS VI.14.13-15 and BhGS I.22 described this rite as *Kṣiprasavana*, while HGS II.1.2.8 mentioned it as *Kṣipraprasavana*.⁶¹ PGS I.16.1-2 also mentioned about a similar rite. A passage of Budha cited in SṃP has mentioned this rite as *Soṣyantīkarma*.⁶²

The earliest indication to the existence of a rite for the faster delivery is probably found in RV V.78.7-9. It seems to be prayer for faster delivery, which stated, “As the wind stirs up a *puṣkariṇī* (lotus pond) on all sides, so may the foetus stir and come out when it is ten months old. As the wind, the forest and the *samudra* (ocean) stir, so may you [the foetus] that are [now] in the tenth month, come out together with the afterbirth. May the male child having been laid for ten months inside the mother, come out alive and unharmed, from the living woman.”⁶³ An early description of performance a rite for female in labour is found in BāU VI.4.23. According to this text, the husband should sprinkle water on his wife, when she is in labour and recite the *mantra*, “Just as the wind moves a *puṣkariṇī* (lotus pond) on all sides, so may the foetus come out with the afterbirth. This is a pen of Indra with a bolt and a chamber for rest: O Indra, leave it and come out with the foetus and the afterbirth.”⁶⁴

ĀpGS VI.14.13-15 instructed that at the beginning of *Kṣiprasavana* rite, the husband should draw water in the direction of flow (from a river or a spring) with a *śarāva* (a shallow cup or dish, made of earth) not used before. Then he should place a *tūryantī* plant at the feet of his wife. Next, he should touch the head of his wife and recite a *mantra* from the ĀpMP (II.11.15). Then he should sprinkle water from the cup on her with another three *mantras* from the ĀpMP (II.11.16-18). If still the afterbirth has not come out, then he should again sprinkle water on her with another two *mantras* from the ĀpMP (II.11.19-20). HGS II.1.2.8-3.1 instructed that at the time of performing *Kṣipraprasavana* rite, the husband should keep a water pot near the head of his wife and a *tūryantī* plant at the feet. Then, he should touch her abdomen and with a *mantra* (similar to ĀpMP II.11.16), “As the wind blows, as the *samudra* (ocean) trembles, so may your foetus move; may it come out together with the afterbirth,” he should stroke (her body) downwards from above. BhGS I.22 instructed the husband to touch the head of his wife and recite a *mantra* (similar to ĀpMP II.11.15), “I touch you with ten fingers for the delivery of child after ten months.”

Both the Sāmavedic ritual texts KhādGS II.2.29-30 and GGS II.7.13-14 mentioned this rite as *Soṣyantīhoma* and prescribed to offer two oblations of clarified butter into the sacrificial fire with two *mantras* from the MBr (I.5.6-7). KGS 33.1-3 prescribed that when the wife is about to deliver her child, the husband should place his hand dripping with water on her head and touch her with the dripping wet hand from the head to the heart downwards with the *mantra*, “As the wind blows, as the *samudra* (ocean) trembles, so may your foetus move; may it come out together with the afterbirth.” It was believed that by performing this rite, the wife delivers sooner.⁶⁵ A late Sāmavedic ritual text, KP I.5.4 mentioned this rite as *Soṣyantī* and laid down the rule that no *Ābhyudayika Śrāddha* should be performed before this rite.

VkhGS III.14 provided a vivid description of the rites performed during the delivery of a child. It prescribed that, when a female is about to deliver a child, three or four females who has the expertise in midwifery should hold and massage her. When her womb becomes loose, her *hṛdayabandha* (blouse) should be removed. The pang in her hips and loins indicates that she will soon deliver the child. If the foetus clings to the womb, a *viśalyā* herb or *suvarcalā* (*Ruta graveolens*) should be squeezed out and placed on her genitals. The genitals should be fumigated with *pinḍītaka* (*Vangueria spinosa*) or the slough of a serpent (pounded to powder). The roots of *hiranyapuṣpī* should be placed on her feet and hands. As soon as the point of nose (of the child) is visible, the husband should, observing the position of the planets, prognosticate the weal and woe (that await the new born child), so that he may endeavour to increase that aspect of the (child's)

future which is endowed with good qualities. At the time of parturition, he should place a pitcher of water on the right side of the mother towards her head and a *tūryantī* plant at her feet and should stroke her abdomen, reciting a *mantra* beginning with, “As Soma flows” (similar to ĀpMP II.11.16).⁶⁶

Devapāla in his *bhāṣya* (commentary) on KGS 33.1 implicitly refused to accept this rite as a *saṃskāra*, as it has a *dr̥ṣṭārtha* (seen result). Ādityadarśana (14th century) also in his *vivarāṇa* (commentary) on the same aphorism did not accept this life-cycle rite as a *saṃskāra*. From their views, it is amply clear that this ancient rite had lost its every significance by that time.⁶⁷

Chapter 5

Birth and childhood rites

5.1 *Jātakarma*: the birth rite

In any culture, birth of a child is considered as a major event for the entire social group. Like many ancient cultures, where infant mortality was high, the practices like the isolation of the mother from the other members of the family before and after the birth of the child, giving only a secret name to a newborn child and the performance of the formal naming rite, signifying the social birth of the child a few days later, after the survival is assured are also found in the ancient Hindu rites for birth of a child and early childhood. Since the period of the vedic ritual texts, the rite performed on birth of a child is mentioned as *Jātakarma* (literally, “the birth rite”) or *Jātakaraṇa*.

The earliest description of a rite performed on birth of a child is probably found in TS II.2.5.3-4, which prescribed to perform *Vaiśvānareṣṭi* (the rite of *Vaiśvānara*) after the birth of a male child. It instructed to offer a cake cooked on twelve *kapālas* (burned earthen potsherds) to *Vaiśvānara*, when a male child is born. It stated that, by offering eight *kapālas*, the son is purified for *brahmavarcasa* (eminence in vedic knowledge); nine *kapālas* are offered for the *tejaḥ* (vigour) of the son; ten *kapālas* are offered for his abundance in food; eleven *kapālas* are offered for his *indriya* (virility) and twelve *kapālas* are offered for his possession of cattle. So, by performing this rite, the son becomes pure, full of vigour, abundant in food, virile and possessed of cattle. Śābarasvāmī (ca. 4th century), in his *bhāṣya* (commentary) on MīmS IV.3.38 which discussed on *Vaiśvānareṣṭi*, prescribed to perform this rite after the completion of *Jātakarma* rite on a new moon day or a full moon day following ten days after the birth.¹ Early references about performance of some of the elements of the birth rite can be traced in ŚBM XI.8.3.6, which prescribed to perform it before severing of the navel cord.² An elaborate narration of a rite performed after a male childbirth is found in BāU VI.4.24-28 comprising several elements, which later became known as *Medhājanana*, *Stanapratidhāna* and *Mātrabhimantraṇa*.

The description of performance of *Jātakarma* rite is mentioned in almost all *gr̥hyasūtra* texts, namely, ŚGS I.24.1-5, KauṣGS I.16.1-20, ĀGS I.15.1-3, GGS II.7.17-23, KhādGS II.2.32-34, JGS I.8, KGS 34.1-35.2, MGS I.17.1-7, PGS I.16.3-22, BGS II.1.2-18, BhGS I.23-26, ĀpGS VI.15.1-7, HGS II.3.2-11 and II.4.1-5, ĀgGS II.1.3-4 and VkhGS III.14-15.³ Most of the *gr̥hyasūtras* prescribed to perform *Jātakarma* before severing of the navel cord.⁴ The underlying belief is explained in a medieval *nibandha* text, SmC. This text, citing three authorities of Hārīta, Śāṅkha and Jaimini stated that the period of impurity for the relatives due to birth begins only after severing the navel cord.⁵

From the descriptions in the *gr̥hyasūtras*, the major elements of this rite apart from the *homa* (offering oblations in to the sacrificial fire) can be identified as:

- *Medhājanana* (literally, “production of intelligence”) and *Prāśana* (literally, “feeding”),
- *Āyuṣya* (literally, “for procuring long life”),
- *Aṃsābhimarśana* (literally, “touching on the shoulder”),
- *Pañcabrahmaṇasthāpana* (literally, “placement of five Brāhmaṇs”),
- *Deśābhimantraṇa* (literally, “addressing the earth”),
- *Mātrabhimantraṇa* (literally, “addressing the mother”),
- *Stanapratidhāna* (literally, “giving the breast”), and,
- *Nāmakaraṇa*, the ritual for giving a secret name.

The element of *Ābhyudayika Śrāddha* or *Nāndīmukha Śrāddha* or *Vṛddhi Śrāddha* was probably added to this rite in the ancient period but it became popular only in the early medieval period. A

late vedic ritual text, KP I.5.4 prohibited the performance of *Ābhyudayika Śrāddha* in *Jātakarma*. ViṣP III.13.6 may be one of the early texts, which prescribed that one should worship the *Nāndīmukha* manes after the birth of his son. *Mānasollāsa* (ca.1131) 3.12.1259-1260 prescribed that one should perform *Jātakarma* rite after the birth of his son, according to the injunction of the *grhya* text followed by him. He should feed the child with clarified butter and honey in which gold has been rubbed with a spoon made of gold. Then, the child should be put to the breast of the mother. The *Ābhyudayika Śrāddha* should be performed and gold coins should be gifted to the Brāhmaṇs.⁶ Later, most of the medieval authors on *smṛti*, like Raghunandana in *Śrāddhatattva*, prescribed to perform *Ābhyudayika Śrāddha* after the birth of a child.⁷

In the descriptions of the *dharmaśāstra* texts, the *Purāṇas* and the medieval *nibandha* texts, emphasise was made on donating items to the Brāhmaṇs on the occasion of *Jātakarma* of a male child. *Parāśaramādhava* (early 14th century) cited from the *Ādityapurāṇa* and Śaṅkha on gifting the items on the birth of a male child. According to the *Ādityapurāṇa*, gold, land, cow, horse and chariot should be gifted and according to Śaṅkha, servants, animals, grains and gold should be gifted.⁸ The *Brahmapurāṇa* (cited by Aparārka) also instructed to gift gold, land, cow, horse, chariot, parasol, goat, garland, sesame seeds, house and huge wealth on the occasion of the *Jātakarma* of a male child.⁹

5.1.1 Medhājanana and Prāśana

An early reference to the element later became known as *Medhājanana* and its sub-element *Prāśana* (literally, “feeding”), is found in BāU VI.4.24, which prescribed the father to put his mouth near the right ear of his son and say thrice, “Vāk (speech)”. Next, he should feed the child yoghurt, clarified butter and honey with a (spoon of) *jātarūpa* (gold) without entering it into his mouth, reciting the *mantra*, “I put inside you the *bhūḥ* (earth), I put inside you the *bhuvah* (sky), I put inside you the *svah* (heaven), I put inside you all, the *bhūḥ*, *bhuvah* and *svah*.”¹⁰

The vedic ritual texts described this element either as the first or the second element of the *Jātakarma*. ŚGS I.24.3-4 prescribed that the father of the child should either mix together clarified butter, honey, yoghurt and water or pound together rice and barley and give it the child to eat thrice from a gold (vessel or spoon), with the *mantra*, “I give the *veda* (knowledge) produced by bountiful Savitṛ, for a honeyed sacrifice; may you be protected by the gods, enjoy longevity, and live a hundred autumns in this world, so and so.” This text has instructed to insert a name for the child in the *mantra*, which should be known to the parents only. ŚGS I.24.7-8 quoted here a more ancient rite prescribed by Māṇḍukeya (founder of the Māṇḍukeya *śākhā*). Māṇḍukeya prescribed that, black, white and red hairs of a black ox should be pulverized and mixed with mixture of clarified butter, honey, yoghurt and water. Then the father should give it to the child to eat four times with the four *mantras*, “*Bhūḥ*, I put into you the *Ṛgveda*, so and so (name of the child); *svāhā*”, “*Bhuvah*, I put into you the *Yajurveda*, so and so; *svāhā*”, “*Svah*, I put into you the *Sāmaveda*, so and so; *svāhā*” and “*Bhūḥ*, *bhuvah*, *svah*, *Vākovākya*, *Itihāsa*, *Purāṇa* and *om*; all the Vedas I put into you, so and so; *svāhā*.” This part of the *Medhājanana* element was also known as *Prāśana* (feeding). After *Prāśana*, ŚGS I.24.9-10 prescribed to perform *medhājanana* by saying three times in the right ear (of his son), “Vāk (speech)”. Next, it prescribed the father of the child to recite a *mantra*, “May Vāgdevī (the goddess of speech), perceiving through mind together with breath, her child, uttered by Indra; may she rejoice in you, the goddess, for the sake of pleasure, the great goddess, who is sweet sounding, melodious, fluent and self-produced.” Finally, ŚGS I.24.11-14 prescribed the father to tie a piece of gold with *śaṇa sūtra* (hempen string) and bind it on the right hand (of the child) until *Utthāna*. After the tenth day, he should either give it to a Brāhmaṇ or keep it himself. The description of *Jātakarma* in KauṣGS I.16.1-20 is almost similar to the ŚGS.

ĀGS I.15.1 prescribed that, before anybody touches the child, the father should give the child honey

and clarified butter in which gold has been rubbed by means of a golden (vessel or spoon) with the *mantra*, “I give you the *veda* (knowledge) of honey and clarified butter, which is produced by Savitṛ, the bountiful; may you have a long life and may you live in this world for a hundred autumns being protected by the gods.” According to ĀGS I.15.2, after *Prāśana*, the father, bringing (his mouth) near the child's ears, should recite the *mantra* for the *medhājanana* (generation of intelligence), “May Savitṛ bestow on you intelligence; may Sarasvatī bestow on you intelligence and may Aśvins wearing wreaths of lotus give you intelligence.”¹¹

GGs II.7.17-23 stated that, when the son's birth is announced to his father, he should say, “Delay severing of the navel cord and giving the breast” and pound rice and barley grains in the same way as the shoots of a *nyagrodha* tree (was pounded during *Puṃsavana* rite). Holding the pounded substance with the thumb and ring finger of his right hand, he should smear it on the tongue of his son with the *mantra* from the beginning with, “This order.” (MBr I.5.8). This text instructed to perform *Medhājanana* in the same way as *Prāśana*, with clarified butter. Alternately, he should take a gold (golden spoon) and offer (clarified butter) in the mouth of the child with a *mantra*, “May Mitra and Varuṇa bestow intelligence on you, may Agni bestow intelligence on you and may the Aśvins wearing wreaths of lotus give you intelligence” (MBr I.5.9) and another *mantra* beginning with, “Sadasaspati, the wonderful” (SV I.2.2.6.7). Then, he should instruct, “Sever the navel cord and give the breast.” He should refrain from touching his wife for ten days. KhādGS II.2.32-34 narrated a brief description of this element, almost similar to the GGS. It prescribed that before severing of the navel cord and giving the breast, the father of the child should pound rice and barley grains in the same way as the shoots of a *nyagrodha* tree. He should take the pounded substance with the thumb and ring finger of his right hand and give it to the child to eat with a *mantra* from the MBr (I.5.8) and similarly, he should give the child clarified butter to eat with the next *mantra* from the MBr (I.5.9).

JGS I.8 prescribed that before giving the breast, the father of the child should pound rice and barley and give the child this pounded substance with a piece of gold (golden spoon) to eat with the *mantra*, “Here is food, here is sap, here is nectar together with breath; the *pr̥thivī* (earth) is your mother, the *dauḥ* (sky) is your father. Live a hundred autumns, see a hundred autumns.”

PGS I.16.3-4 named this element as *Medhājanana* and stated that during the performance of this element, the father of the child with his ring finger having anything of gold on it should give his child clarified butter and honey or only clarified butter to eat with a *mantra* almost similar to BāU VI.4.24.

BGS II.1.7-8 prescribed that the mixture of yoghurt, honey and clarified butter should be given to the child to eat with each *ṛc* of an *anuvāka* of the TBr (II.5.1.1). The remnants should be poured on the hoofs of a cow with the *Vyāhṛtis*. ĀpGS VI.15.4 prescribed that a piece of gold, tied with a noose on a *darbha* grass blade should be dipped into a mixture of honey and clarified butter (prepared in a brass vessel, according to *Anākulā* of Haradatta, the medieval scholiast). With the three *mantras* from the ĀpMP (II.12.3-5), the father should give the child some portion of the mixture to eat by means of the piece of gold. Then, with the five *mantras* from the ĀpMP (II.12.6-10), the child should be bathed. Then, some amount of yoghurt should be mixed with clarified butter in a brass vessel and the child should be given this mixture to eat, with the recitation of the *mantras*, “*Bhūḥ, svāhā.*”, “*Bhuvah, svāhā.*”, “*Suvah, svāhā.*” and “*Om, svāhā.*” (ĀpMP II.12.11-14). The leftover should be mixed with water and poured in the cowshed.

HGS II.1.3.9-10 described this rite as *Medhājanana* and instructed that a piece of gold, tied with a *darbha* grass blade should be dipped in to clarified butter and that clarified butter should be given to the child to eat, keeping his face to the east, with the *mantras*, “*Bhūḥ, I offer oblations of ṛcs into the sacrificial fire over you; svāhā.*”; “*Bhuvah, I offer oblations of yajuses into the sacrificial fire*

over you. *svāhā*.”; “*Svaḥ*, I offer oblations of *sāmans* into the sacrificial fire over you. *svāhā*.” and “*Bhūḥ*, *bhuvah*, *svaḥ*, I offer oblations of *Atharvan* and *Āṅgiras* hymns into the sacrificial fire over you; *svāhā*.”¹² Then the child should be bathed in lukewarm water with the *mantras* similar to ĀpMP II.12.6-7 and 10.

KGS 34.4-5 instructed to establish the *Laukika* fire (ordinary fire used for cooking) in the lying-in chamber after the birth of the child (Brāhmaṇabala in his *paddhati* text prescribed to establish the *Laukika* fire after severing of navel cord) and offer the oblations of *ājyabhāga* (two portions of clarified butter) into it with certain *mantras* from the KāS (XL.1, XL.2, XV.8). The remnants of the oblations should be poured in to a brass vessel, which has a piece of gold in it. With the *mantra* from the KāS (XI.7) beginning with, “You are the life of Agni”, the father should consecrate the child’s mouth with the piece of gold and rinse the child’s mouth with his hand wet with water.¹³

MGS I.17.1-4 prescribed that a gift should be given away after the birth of a son. Having kindled fire by the attrition of two *araṇīs* (kindling woods), the father should perform the *Āyusya homa* (literally, “sacrifice for the longevity of the child”) with this fire. With an *anuvāka* from the MS (II.3.4) beginning with, “You are the life of Agni”, he should offer twenty-one oblations of clarified butter into the fire. Then, he should mix yoghurt, honey and water with the remnants of the oblations, stir it with a piece of gold and feed the child thrice with this mixture. MGS I.17.6 prescribed that after the performance of the elements known as *Prāśana* and *Kumārābhimantraṇa*, the father should roll-up a middle leaf of a *palāśa* (*Butea monosperma*) tree on the child’s ears, should say through it, “*Bhūḥ*, I give to you” in the right ear; “*Bhuvah*, I give to you” in the left ear; “*Svaḥ*, I give to you” again in the right ear and “*Bhūḥ*, *bhuvah*, *svaḥ* I give to you” in the left ear once again.¹⁴

KauśS 10.16-19 described *Medhājanana* as a rite. It prescribed that, a mixture, prepared by pounding *śuklapuṣpa* and *haritapuṣpa* together should be consecrated and it should be given to a child to eat by means of a piece of gold with the *mantra* beginning with, “I am with the Rudras, the Vasus” (AVŚ IV.30.1), before giving milk to the child.

MDh II.29 considered the element of *Medhājanana* as the central to this rite and it prescribed to make the child eat gold, honey and clarified butter with the recitation of *mantras* during the performance of *Jātakarma*.¹⁵

Brahmacārikāṇḍa of *Kṛtyakalpataru* (12th century) cited a passage of Śaṅkha and Likhita, which mentioned this element as *Medhādhika* (literally, “enhancement of intelligence”) and instructed the father to feed the child pounded barley, honey and clarified butter by means of the ring finger.¹⁶ SṃP also cited this same passage.

5.1.2 Āyusya

PGS I.16.5-7 prescribed to perform the element of *Āyusya* next to *Medhājanana*. This text stated that the father should murmur over the navel or in the right ear of the child a number of *mantras* invoking the bestowal of long life on the boy, which included repeating three times a *mantra* (VSM III.62) beginning with, “The threefold age”.¹⁷

5.1.3 Aṃsābhimarśana and Kumārābhimantraṇa

According to PGS I.16.8-9 and 18, if the father is desirous of the long life of his son, the next element to be performed is known as *Aṃsābhimarśana*. The father should touch the shoulders of his son twice, first time with the *Vātsapra anuvāka* (VSM XII.18-29) and second time with the *mantra*, “Be a stone, be an axe, be imperishable gold. Live a hundred autumns.”¹⁸ This element is also prescribed by ĀGS I.15.3, he should touch his son's two shoulders with the *mantra*, “Be a stone, be an axe, be indestructible, you are indeed the knowledge called son; so live a hundred

autumns.” followed by two other *mantras* beginning with, “O Indra, bestow us best wealth” (RV II.21.6) and “O Maghavan, O [Indra], partaker of *ṛjīṣa* (soma), bestow on us” (RV III.36.10).

A number of vedic ritual texts had prescribed to perform an element, which was later known as *Kumārābhimantraṇa* (literally, “addressing the male child”). BGS II.1.2 prescribed to perform the element of *Kumārābhimantraṇa* at the beginning of the rite with the *anuvāka* from the TĀ (III.13.1).

ĀpGS VI.15.1-3 prescribed that after the birth, the father should touch the child with the *Vātsapra anuvāka* (TS IV.2.2.1-4 and ĀpMP II.11.21-31, similar to RV X.45). Then, he should take the child in his lap with a *mantra* (ĀpMP II.11.32). Next, he should address the child with a *mantra* (ĀpMP II.11.33, similar to ĀGS I.15.9), kiss the child on the head with another *mantra* (ĀpMP II.11.1) and murmur still another *mantra* (ĀpMP II.11.2) into the right ear of the child. The ĀpGS instructed the father to give the child a secret name after the *nakṣatra* (lunar mansion).

JGS I.8 prescribed to perform this element after *Prāśana*. It instructed that the father should address his son, “From limb to limb you are produced and out of the heart you are born. You indeed are the *ātman* (self) called son, so live a hundred autumns, see a hundred autumns” (an almost similar *mantra* is prescribed in ĀGS I.15.9, for recitation by the father while kissing the head of his son, when for the first time he meets his new born son after returning back from a journey). Next, he should consign him with the *mantra*, “I consign you to the day and let the day consign you to the night; let the night consign you to the day and night together; let the day and night consign you to the half-months; let the half-months consign you to the months; let the months consign you to the seasons; let the seasons consign you to the year; let the year consign you to the old age, to death.” Then, he should say, “Who are you? Who of many are you?” and “Enter upon the month that belongs to the Lord of the days, so and so” (similar to MBr I.5.14). He should give his son a secret name with the *mantra*, “You are the *veda* (knowledge).” At the end, he should kiss the head of his son with the *mantra*, “Be a stone, be an axe, be indestructible gold; with the cattle’s utterance of “*hiṃ*”, I kiss you.”¹⁹

According to KGS 34.7, after giving the breast, the father of the child should kiss the head of the child with the *mantra*, “May you live a hundred autumns, may you see a hundred autumns” and should cause the pronouncement of auspicious words.²⁰

MGS I.17.5 instructed the father to recite over his son, “Be a stone, be an axe, be indestructible gold; you indeed are the *veda* (knowledge) called son, so live a hundred autumns.”

5.1.4 *Pañcabrāhmaṇasthāpana*

The element known as *Pañcabrāhmaṇasthāpana* can be traced to ŚBM XI.8.3.6, which instructed the father of a newborn son to say to five Brāhmaṇs, “Breathe over him”. If he could not obtain them, he may even himself breathe over his son, while walking around the baby. It was believed that this act would make the child live up to the full span (hundred years) of human life and die at old age. According to PGS I.16.10-16, this element should be performed after *Aṃsābhimarśana*. The father of the child, after positioning five Brāhmaṇs in five directions should say them, “Breathe over this child.” The Brāhmaṇ positioned in the east should say, “*Prāṇa* (up-breathing)”; the one who is positioned in the south should say, “*Vyāna* (back-breathing)”; the one who is positioned in the west should say, “*Apāna* (down-breathing)”; the one who is positioned in the north should say, “*Udāna* (out-breathing)”; the fifth one looking upwards, should say, “*Samāna* (on-breathing)”. If Brāhmaṇs are not available, the father may do the same, going round in these directions.²¹ ŚGS I.24.2 began its description of *Jātakarma* with this element and instructed the father to breathe thrice over his son saying, “Draw in your breath (*prāṇiḥi*) with the *ṛc*”; “Breathe within (*samaniḥi*) with the *yajus*” and “Breathe forth (*udaniḥi*) with the *sāman*.”

5.1.5 *Deśābhimantraṇa*

Most of the Kṛṣṇayajurvedic ritual texts mentioned the element known as *Deśābhimantraṇa* (literally, “addressing the earth”) or *Deśābhimarśana* (literally, “touching the earth”). PGS I.16.17 prescribed to perform this element after *Pañcabrahmanasthāpana*. It instructed that, the father of the child should recite over the place at which the child is born, “I know, O Bhūmi (earth), your heart that dwells in heaven, in the moon. That I know; may it know me. May we see a hundred autumns; may we live a hundred autumns; may we hear a hundred autumns.” BhGS I.25 instructed the father of the child to touch the ground where the child has been laid down and recite a *mantra*, similar to the MBr I.5.11 (first half of it is same as PGS I.16.17), “I know, O Bhūmi (earth), your heart that dwells in heaven, in the moon. Thus, the protector of the immortality of the Vedas, may I not cry over the cruel acts which may cause the death of my son (*pautramagha*).” ĀpGS VI.15.5 prescribed that after *Stanapradāna*, the father of the child should touch the earth with two *mantras* of the ĀpMP (II.13.3-4). HGS II.1.3.8 instructed to perform this element before *Medhājanana*. According to this text, the father of the child should wash his hands; then, touching the ground, should recite two *mantras*, “Your *susīma* (literally, “with well parted hair”, beautiful) heart that dwells in heaven, in the moon. Impart to me that immortality; may I not cry over the cruel acts which may cause the death of my son.” and “I know, O Bhūmi (earth), your heart that dwells in heaven, in the moon. Thus, the lord of immortality, may, I not cry over the cruel acts which may cause the death of my son.” ĀgGS II.1.3 prescribed this element in an almost similar manner as the HGS, with only a few minor differences in the two *mantras*, which are to be recited.

5.1.6 *Mātrabhimantraṇa*

An early description of the element known as *Mātrabhimantraṇa* (literally, “addressing the mother”) is found in BāU VI.4.28. It was believed that performance of this element would enable a male Brāhmaṇ child to exceed his father and grandfather in fame and *brahmavarcasa* (eminence in vedic knowledge). PGS I.16.19 prescribed this element next to *Aṃsābhimarśana*, *Pañcabrahmanasthāpana* and *Deśābhimantraṇa*. This text instructed the father to address the mother and say the same verse as prescribed by the BāU VI.4.28, “You are Idā, the daughter of Mitra and Varuṇa; you, the valiant one has given birth to a valiant son. Be blessed with valiant children, [as] you have made us possessed of a valiant son.”

HGS II.1.3.11 and 1.4.1-2 prescribed that after *Medhājanana*, the child should be placed in the mother’s lap with a *mantra*, “The four divine directions of the heaven, the wives of wind, whom the sun surveys: to their long life I turn you; may consumption go away to destruction.” (similar to ĀpMP II.12.8). Then, the father of the child should address his wife with the *mantra*, “May no demon harm your son, no cow that rushes upon him; may you become a favourite of the wealth; may you live in prosperity in your own way.” (similar to ĀpMP II.13.1).

5.1.7 *Stanapratidhāna*

PGS I.16.20-21 prescribed to perform the element of *Stanapratidhāna* (literally, “giving the breast”) after *Mātrabhimantraṇa*. According to this text, the father of the child should wash the right breast of the mother with the *mantra* (VSM XVII.87) beginning with, “This breast” and give it to the child. Similarly, he should wash the left breast with *mantra* (VSM XXXVIII.5) beginning with, “Your breast, which”.

ĀpGS VI.15.5 prescribed that after *Prāsana*, the father of the child should place the child in the mother’s lap with a *mantra* from the ĀpMP (II.13.1) and he should make the child suck her right breast with the next *mantra* from the ĀpMP (II.13.2).

HGS II.1.4.3-5 prescribed that after *Mātrabhimantraṇa*, the father of the child should wash the right breast of the mother with the *mantra*, “May this boy suck long life; may he reach old age. Let your

breast be exuberant for him, and long life, glory, excellence, fame and strength.” (similar to ĀpMP II.13.2). Then, he should wash her left breast similarly. At the end, he should touch her both breasts with the *mantra*, “He does not suffer, he does not cry, when we speak to him and when we touch him.” (similar to ĀpMP II.13.5).

According to KGS 34.5-6, after consecrating the child’s mouth, the father should wash the breasts of the mother and recite a *mantra* (Kās XXXIX.3) over the breasts, beginning with, “Let the wind waft sweet”. Having rubbed together with a piece of gold, the remnants of the oblations or the remnants of the oblations mixed with honey and having put the piece of gold into the mouth of the child, the father should make the child suck the mother’s breast with the *mantra*, “Suck long life, suck old age, suck truth; suck splendour; suck vigour; suck prosperity of wealth; suck *brahmavarcasa* (eminence in vedic knowledge).”²² MGS I.17.7, as the last element of the performance of *Jātakarma* rite, instructed the father to wash the breasts of the mother and make the child suck them.²³

5.2 Rites performed in the lying-in chamber

Several vedic ritual texts stated that after the birth of the child, the parents become impure for ten days (JGS I.8) and the regular domestic sacrificial fire known as the *Aupāsana* should be taken away and replaced with the lying-in chamber fire known as the *Sūtikāgni* (PGS I.16.23, BhGS I.26 and HGS II.1.3.4), *Jātakāgni* (VkhGS III.15) or the *Uttapanīyāgni* (VkhGS III.15). This fire is not permitted to be used for performing any solemn or domestic rite, only warming dishes or fumigation is allowed with it. JGS I.8 prescribed to sacrifice mustard seeds and rice-chaffs to the *Sūtikāgni* for ten days with two *mantras* to keep the evil spirits away²⁴ (already mentioned in chapter 2). PGS I.16.22-23 prescribed that the father of the child should lay down a water pot near the head of the mother with a *mantra*, “O water, you watch with the gods. As you watch with the gods, thus watch over this mother who is confined, and her child.” Then, he should establish the *Sūtikāgni* near the door of the lying-in chamber and sacrifice mustard seeds mixed with rice-chaffs at the time of *saṃdhivelā* (morning and evening twilight) till *Utthāna* with certain *mantras* to ward off evil spirits (already mentioned in chapter 2). KGS 35.1-2 also prescribed to sacrifice mustard seeds and rice-chaffs every morning and evening for ten days with almost similar *mantras* to ward off evil spirits.

5.3 Śaṣṭhīpūjana

An additional rite after the birth of a child, comprising the *Śaṣṭhīpūjana* or *Janmadāpūjana* (worship of goddess Śaṣṭhī or Janmadā) and the *jāgaraṇa* (nightlong vigil) by the relatives of the child on the sixth night after birth was codified in the late medieval period. But this rite was originated in a much earlier period. Bāṇabhaṭṭa (7th century) in his *Kādambarī* mentioned about the preparations for the worship of the image of goddess Śaṣṭhī after the birth of the son of Tārāpīḍa. He also mentioned about the rite of *Śaṣṭhījāgara* (literally, “waking on the sixth night [after the birth of a child]”) in this work.²⁵ *Jyotistattva* cited a verse from a late *Purāṇa*, the VDhP on the performance of this rite. It stated, “The goddess Janmadā resides in the lying-in chamber. For the sake of the performance of the sacrifice for her, the father of the child is considered as pure [from the pollution] due to the birth.” This verse is cited in NirS, SṃM and *Bālambhaṭṭī* as of Vyāsa. *Jyotistattva* cited another verse from the VDhP, which stated, “[A newborn child] should always be guarded there (in the lying-in chamber) with special attention on the sixth night. O Rāma, one should remain awake [in the sixth night] and offer *bali* (food) to Janmadā.”²⁶ In NirS and *Bālambhaṭṭī*, this verse, with variants, is cited as of Mārkaṇḍeya and Nārada respectively.

Apart from the comparatively brief descriptions of this rite in NirS and SṃM and a significant discussion in *Jyotistattva*, a very extensive narrative of *Śaṣṭhīpūjana* is found in *Bālambhaṭṭī* (1770), a pre-modern gloss on Mitā, written by Bālambhaṭṭa (or Bālakṛṣṇa) Pāyaguṇḍe (1730-

1820). A pre-modern *nibandha* text, *Dharmasindhu* (1790) also provided a notable account. It described this rite as *Janmadāpūjana* and prescribed to perform it on the fifth or sixth day after birth.

Both NirS and *Bālaṃbhaṭṭī* cited a verse of Vyāsa, which stated that during the period of impurity due to the birth, three days, viz., the first, sixth and tenth day are not considered as impure in case of the birth of a son (for the performance of this rite). *Dharmasindhu* prescribed to perform this rite on the fifth or sixth day after the birth of the child. It prescribed that, the father and other male relatives of the child should take bath in the first *yāma* (between 06:00 pm and 09:00 pm) of the night. Next, after making *saṅkalpa*, first Gaṇeśa should be invoked and then the goddess, Śaṣṭhī or Janmadā or Bhagavatī should be worshipped, both on the handfuls of rice with sixteen types of *upacāras* (offerings). At the end, *tāmbūla* (betel leaves) and *dakṣiṇā* (fees for the *pūjana*) should be given to the Brāhmaṇs. On the tenth day, the *bali* should be offered.²⁷ *Jyotistattva* and *Bālaṃbhaṭṭī* prescribed to worship the *manthānadaṇḍa* (churning stick) during the performance of this element and to tie a goat near the door of the lying-in chamber. *Bālaṃbhaṭṭī* prescribed to make a mark on the forehead of the child with a yellow pigment. NirS and *Bālaṃbhaṭṭī* cited a verse, which stated that throughout the night (on the sixth day), the male relatives should remain awake, armed (with swords) and the female relatives should dance and sing. The same should be repeated on the tenth night also. This verse, according to NirS is of Mārkaṇḍeya, but according to *Bālaṃbhaṭṭī* is of Nārada. In the pre-modern period, this rite of *Śaṣṭhīpūjana* became more popular than the ancient rites prescribed by the vedic ritual texts for the performance in the lying-in chamber.

Stanley Rice, a retired Indian Civil Service officer penned his *Hindu Customs and their Origins* (1937) during his stay at Baroda (Vadodara). The description of this rite in his work is based on the information supplied by the ‘Mārāṭhā Brāhmaṇs’ of the Baroda state. This description seems to be closer to the one prescribed in the late medieval *nibandha* texts than the actual one:²⁸

The sixth night after the birth of a child the worship of the goddess Sashti (Sashti = sixth) is performed, for the removal of calamities, the attainment of long life and health for the new-born baby, its father and mother. The father first worships Ganapati, [...] then scatters mustard seed with the prayer, “Fly away, ye evil spirits and goblins that dwell on earth. May all the evil spirits that obstruct our life be destroyed at Shiva’s command.” Then he takes a jar of water, [...] and worships Varuna. Next, he sets up the image of the goddess and does obeisance to her. After that the goddess Durga is invoked with the “Sixteen Mothers” for the protection of the child; then the six Kritikas, Brahma, Siva, and Narayan (Vishnu), and Kartikeya, the son of Siva. [...] A sword, a bamboo mace, a conch shell, a churning stick, Vishnu and a plough are invoked. [...] After a long prayer to the goddess Shasti for the protection of the baby, couched in the usual form of repetition, [...] the father touches his eyes with water and another long prayer to each of many gods in turn is recited. Then the father takes eleven threads and makes eleven knots in them and the nurse or mother puts this composite cord round the child’s neck. The lying-in chamber is fumigated with mustard seed, salt, and the leaves of the nim tree (*Melia Indica*), which is thought to have special disinfectant properties. Further worship of numerous gods follows. The Brahmins are entertained as usual and finally the *tilak* or so-called caste mark is put upon the baby to symbolize his reception into the community.

Various rites on the ‘sixth day after birth’, known as *Chaṭṭī* (literally, “the sixth”) are performed by the communities across northern India till today and their performances are mostly based on folk traditions outside the periphery of the Brahmanical framework of orthopraxy.

5.4 Utthāna

Utthāna, which literally means “getting up from bed (by the mother)” is an ancient life-cycle rite, performed on the tenth or twelfth day after the birth of a child. The ancient perception for performing this rite was probably to celebrate the end of the period of ritual impurity due to the birth of the child which can be inferred from a passage of one of the *gṛhyasūtra* texts, JGS I.8,

which stated that for a period of ten nights after the birth of the child, the parents should be considered impure and at the end of this period, the mother should take a bath and get up from the child-bed.²⁹

This ancient rite is described in several vedic ritual texts, namely, ŚGS I.25.1-9, BGS II.1.22, HGS II.1.4.6-9, BhGS I.26 and VkhGS III.18. ŚGS I.25.1-9 prescribed that, on the tenth day after the birth of the child, both the parents should wash their whole body including the head and wear *ahata* (new and not yet washed) garments. Same should be done for the child too. Then, the father should cook the *sthālīpāka* (a mess of cooked food) in the *sūtikāgni* (lying-in chamber fire) and make ten oblations with it. First oblation should be offered to the *tithi* (lunar day) of child's birth, followed by six oblations to three *nakṣatras* (lunar mansions) of the day of birth and the days preceding and following it and the three presiding deities of these *nakṣatras*, two oblations should be offered to Agni and the tenth oblation should be offered to *Soma*.³⁰ Then, the name of the child should be announced loudly by the father and the Brāhmaṇs should be caused to pronounce blessings. HGS II.1.4.6-9 prescribed to perform this rite on the twelfth day. It should begin with the bathing of the mother and the child. Next, the house should be cleaned. The *sūtikāgni* should be taken away, *Aupāsana*, the sacred domestic fire should be brought in and twelve oblations should be offered to Dhātṛ.

Long after, Al-Biruni observed about this rite as follows:³¹

As long as the woman is in the child bed, she does not touch any vessel, and nothing is eaten in her house, nor does the Brahman light there a fire. These days are eight for the Brahman, twelve for the Kshatriya, fifteen for the Vaisya, and thirty for the Sudra. For the low-caste people which are not reckoned among any caste, no term is fixed.

Further later, in ca. 1590, Abu'l Fazl in his *Ain-i-Akbari* mentioned about the performance of this rite by the Hindus as follows:³²

As soon as a child is born, the father bathes himself in cold water, worships the deities and performs the *Srāddha* ceremonies, and stirring some honey and ghee together with a gold ring, puts it into the infant's mouth. The midwife then cuts the umbilical cord, and immediately upon its severance the whole family become unclean. In this state they refrain from the *Homa* sacrifice and the worship of the deities and from repeating the *gāyatri* and many other ceremonies, contenting themselves with interior remembrance of the deity. If this takes place in a Brāhmaṇ's family, his children and relations to the fourth degree of consanguinity are ceremoniously unclean for ten days; the relations of the fifth degree, for six days; those of the sixth degree, for four days; of the seventh, for three; of the eighth for one day and night, and those of the ninth continue so for four *pahrs*.

At the close of these periods they are freed after ablution of the body. But the usual rule is that a Brāhmaṇ together with his kindred to the seventh degree, are unclean for ten days; a Kshatriya, for twelve days; a Vaisya and the superior class of the Sudra for fifteen days, and the inferior Sudras for thirty days. During this time strangers avoid associating or eating with them. This state is called *Sutaka* (impurity from childbirth). A prince and his attendants, his physician, cook, overseer, and other servants of the crown are not subjected to this condition, but on the sixth day certain prayers are offered to the deity and rejoicings are made and the mother and child are bathed.

5.5 Dolārohaṇa

The early childhood rite of *Dolārohaṇa*, *Khaṭvārohaṇa* or *Preṅkhārohaṇa* (literally, “placing [a child] in the cradle”) is found in its codified form in the late medieval *nibandha* texts only. The early descriptions of this rite are found in the citations of Bṛhaspati, a late authority in several medieval *nibandha* texts. The late medieval texts, NirS and SṃR cited a verse of Bṛhaspati quoted in *Pārijāta*. It stated that *Dolārohaṇa* must be performed on the tenth (mentioned by NirS only), twelfth, sixteenth or the thirty-second (according to NirS, twenty-second) day after the birth of a child. NirS and SṃR also cited another verse of Bṛhaspati, which stated that for this rite, the twelfth

day (after birth) is auspicious for placing a male child in the cradle and the thirteenth day for a female child. SmR prescribed that this rite should be performed on either the twelfth or the sixteenth day for a male child and on the thirteenth day for a female child. At the beginning of this rite, the tutelary deity must be worshipped. Then, the child should be adorned and placed in the cradle with the head towards the east by the mother and other female relatives with songs and music.³³ SmP described this rite as *Preñkhārohaṇa*, and cited a similar verse of Bṛhaspati which prescribed to perform this rite on the tenth, twelfth, sixteenth or the thirty-second day after the birth of the child. Nārāyaṇabhaṭṭa in his *Prayogarātna* described this rite as *Paryañkārohaṇa*

5.6 Nāmakaraṇa

The significance of a naming ceremony in any culture lies in the fact that a child's status remains ambiguous until he or she is formally named. Although, the evidence of formally naming a child is found in the early vedic texts, the earliest description of the Hindu life-cycle rite for formal naming a child, *Nāmakaraṇa*, which literally means “the naming rite” is found only in the *grhyasūtra* texts. But, except GGS II.8.8-18 and KhādGS II.3.6-12, which described the rite as *Nāmadheyakaraṇa*, no other early *grhyasūtra* text considered it necessary to prescribe recitation of the vedic *mantras* during the rite proper.³⁴ ŚGS I.24.6 and KauṣGS I.16.15 prescribed to perform the rite of giving the child a name for common use, which is pleasing to the Brāhmaṇs on the tenth day. PGS I.17.1 prescribed that the father should formally name the child on the tenth day after *Utthāna* and serving food to the Brāhmaṇs. BGS II.1.23 prescribed to perform this rite on the tenth or twelfth day after the birth of the child. ĀpGS VI.15.8-11 prescribed to perform the rite of formally naming the child by both the father and the mother on the tenth day after *Utthāna* and (ritual) bath by the mother. BhGS I.26 also prescribed to perform the naming rite on the tenth day. HGS II.1.4.11-15 prescribed that both the parents should formally name the child on the twelfth day after *Utthāna*. MGS I.18 prescribed to perform the naming rite of the child on the tenth night after birth. MDh II.30 prescribed to perform *Nāmadheya* rite on the tenth or twelfth day after birth or on an auspicious *tithi*, *muhūrta* and *nakṣatra* thereafter. ViṣP III.10.8 prescribed that the father should formally name the child on the tenth day.

According to GGS II.8.8 and KhādGS II.3.6, *Nāmadheyakaraṇa* should be performed after the lapse of ten nights or a hundred nights or one year from birth. According to KhādGS II.3.7 the performer of the rite (father or his representative) after bathing the child should sit down, the mother should dress the child with a clean garment and hand over to the performer (father) from south to north, with its face turned towards north. GGS II.8.12 prescribed to offer oblations to Prajāpati, the *nakṣatra* at the time of birth, the *tithi* (lunar day) of the birth and the presiding deities of the *tithi* and *nakṣatra* (lunar mansion) of birth. Next, GGS II.8.13-14 and KhādGS II.3.9-11 instructed that, the father should touch the sense organs of the child and recite a *mantra* from the MBr (I.5.14), “Who are You? What person are you? Enter up on the month that belongs to Āhaspati.” and after the recitation, he should utter the name given to the child. According to KhādGS II.3.12, the name should be first told to the mother.³⁵

JGS I.9 prescribed to perform *Nāmakarma* rite in the first fortnight of the lunar month (after birth), when the moon is in an auspicious *nakṣatra* (lunar mansion) or on the twelfth day. Either the father of the *ācārya* (priest) should formally name the child. The father should sit down with the child in his lap, dressed in an *ahata* garment. After naming the child, the father should perform the sacrifices on behalf of his child to the *nakṣatra* of the day of birth, deity of the *nakṣatra* and to the weekday of the birth of his child. Next, the father should offer oblations to Agni, Dhanvantarī, Prajāpati, Indra, the Vasus, the Rudras, the Ādityas and the Viśvedevāḥ.³⁶

A late medieval *nibandha* text, SmR prescribed to perform this rite on the twelfth day, after the expiry of the period of impurity. According to this text, if it is not possible to perform this rite on the

twelfth day, then it may be performed on the eighteenth day, after the lapse of one month, hundredth night or a year. On the day of performance, the father should arrange the items required for the rite before commencement of the rite. Then, at the auspicious time prescribed by an astrologer, he should sit facing east and the mother, with the child on her lap, should sit on his right side. The father should begin the rite with the *saṅkalpa*, followed by the worship of Gaṇapati, *Punyāhādivācana* (declaration of an auspicious day), the worship of the sixteen Mātṛkā goddesses, the *Nāndīśrāddha* and the *Nāmakaraṇa homa*. It prescribed that the parents should give a secret name of the child at the time of *Jātakarma* (immediately after birth). If the day of birth is an inauspicious day, then this secret name should be given on the day *Nāmakaraṇa* rite is performed. This secret name should be known only to the parents till the *Mauñjībandhana* of the son, after that son also should know it. For the formal naming, it prescribed that the father should spread the husked grains of rice on a vessel of bronze and with a golden *śalākā* (scriber), he should write the words, “Śri Gaṇapataye *namaḥ* (reverence to Śri Gaṇapati)” followed by four formal names for the child. The first one should be derived from the name of the tutelary deity; the second one should be derived from the lunar month of birth of the child; the third one should be given for common use and the fourth one should be derived from the lunar mansion at the time of birth. After writing the names, he should announce them in the right ear of the child. The rite should end with the serving food to the Brāhmaṇs, giving them plenty of gifts and receiving blessings from them.³⁷

An early injunction to perform the naming rite on the eleventh day is found in YDh I.12. Laghu-Āś VI.1 prescribed to perform *Nāmakarma* rite on the eleventh, twelfth or sixteenth day. Aparārka (early 12th century) quoted a passage from the *Gṛhyapariśiṣṭa* which prescribed that *Nāmadheya* rite should be performed after the expiry of the period of impurity; it may be performed after the lapse of the tenth night, hundredth night or a year. He also quoted the verses from the *Bhaviṣyatpurāṇa*, which said that this rite should be performed after the tenth night or twelfth night or on the eighteenth day or after a month, on an auspicious *tithi*, *muhūrta* and *nakṣatra*.³⁸ SṃP cited an injunction of Brhaspati that this rite must be performed on the tenth, twelfth, thirteenth, nineteenth or thirty-second after the birth of a child.³⁹ It is evident that these injunctions were made keeping in mind of the early medieval perception of three different periods of impurity due birth of a child for three ‘twice-born’ *varṇas*. Devapāla, while explaining KGS 34.1, prescribed to perform *Nāmakaraṇa* rite on the eleventh day after the expiry of the period of impurity. In his *Samskāratattva*, Raghunandana prescribed that an able person must perform the naming rite (for his son) only on the proper day, the eleventh day.⁴⁰

Bāṇabhaṭṭa (7th century), in his *Kādambarī* mentioned that while Tārāpīḍa, a *Kṣatriya* performed the naming rite for his son Candrāpīḍa on the tenth day after birth on an auspicious *muhūrta*, his minister Sukanāsa, a Brāhmaṇ, performed it for his son Vaiśampāyana on the eleventh day. *Mānasollāsa* (ca.1131) 3.12.1261-1265 prescribed to perform this rite after completion of the twelfth day. It instructed a king to give his son a name ending with Siṃha, Malla, Bāhu, Pāla, Varma, Parākrama, Sena, Candra, Divyasatva, Keśarī, Ratha and Anīka.⁴¹

The Kamauli copperplate inscription of Gahadavala king Jayaccandradeva dated VS 1232 (1175) recorded the grant of a village on the occasion of *Jātakarma* of his son Hariścandradeva on 10th August 1175 and the Sihvar (Benares College) copperplate inscription of the same king dated VS 1232 (1175) recorded the grant of two villages on the occasion of *Nāmakaraṇa* of the same prince on 31st August 1175. It shows that the *Nāmakaraṇa* of the prince took place on the twenty-first day after birth.⁴²

It seems that by the early medieval period, the completion of the tenth night after birth was universally accepted as the expiry of the period of impurity (for both the parents) due to the birth of a child. The medieval scholiasts were not very sure whether the naming rite should be performed on

the tenth day (*daśamyām*) as prescribed by these ancient texts or not. To get rid of this confusion, several scholiasts had to invent new etymologies for the word, '*daśamyām*', so that it should mean 'after the lapse of the tenth day'. Medhātithi (8th century), while explaining MDh II.30 mentioned that some earlier scholiasts explained that, the word '*atītāyām*' (having passed) should be understood after '*daśamyām*', so that it should be interpreted as, 'for the Brāhmaṇs, the naming should be performed after the lapse of the tenth day; for the Kṣatriyas, after the lapse of twelve days and for the Vaiśyas, after the lapse of fifteen days'. But, Medhātithi rejected their explanation and argued that, if the rite of *Jātakarma* can be performed within the period of impurity then this rite may be performed on the tenth day. Viśvarūpa (early 9th century) while explaining YDh I.12, cited MDh II.30 and explained '*daśamyām*' as 'when the tenth night is past'. Another early medieval scholiast, Aparārka (early 12th century) was also aware of the confusion about the meaning of '*daśamyām*' and his solution was that one should follow the instruction of the *grhyasūtra* text followed by him.⁴³ Only a few other medieval scholiasts like Bhavatrāta (ca. 7th century) on KauṣGS I.16.15 (interpreted as 'on the tenth night'), Haradatta in his *Anākulā vṛtti* on ĀpGS VI.15.8 and Harihara on PGS I.17.1 explained '*daśamyām*' as 'on the tenth day'. Most of the medieval scholiasts like Karka (late 11th century), Jayarāma, Gadādhara and Viśvanātha on PGS I.17.1, interpreted '*daśamyām*' as 'on the eleventh day, after completion of the tenth night'. Kullūkabhaṭṭa (ca. 1250) on MDh II.30 also interpreted '*daśamyām*' as 'on the eleventh day, after the lapse of the tenth day' and cited a verse of Śaṅkha in his support which said that *Nāmakarma* must be performed after the expiry of the period of impurity.

Kane (1941) described about the contemporary practice in the following words:⁴⁴

In modern times *nāmakaraṇa* generally takes place on the 12th day after birth and no Vedic ceremony as prescribed in the *sūtras* is gone through, but women assemble and after consulting the male members of the family beforehand announce the name and place the child in the cradle.

5.7 Niṣkramaṇa

The ancient rite of *Niṣkramaṇa*, which literally means "(first) outing (of the child)" is also mentioned as *Upaniṣkramaṇa*, *Ādityadarśana* and *Nirṇayana* by different vedic ritual texts. This rite is mentioned only in a few *grhyasūtras*. PGS I.17.5 and KauṣGS I.18.1 mentioned this rite as *Niṣkramaṇikā*. BGS II.2.1 described this rite as *Upaniṣkramaṇa*. MGS I.19.1 aptly named it *Ādityadarśana*, while the KauṣS 58.18 described it as *Nirṇayana*.⁴⁵ This rite is mentioned in YDh I.12 as *Niṣkrama* and MDh II.34 mentioned it as *Niṣkramaṇa*.⁴⁶ Both of these texts prescribed the fourth month after birth of the child for performance of this rite. VDh I.13,18 mentioned this rite both as *Niṣkramaṇa* and the rite of looking at the *arka* (sun). It prescribed the fourth month after birth for performance. Later texts like the *Uttarakhaṇḍa* 236.22 of the PadP also mentioned about performance of this rite in the fourth month after birth. The *Brāhmaṇaparva* 3.12-13 of the *Bhaviṣyapurāṇa* prescribed either the twelfth day or the fourth month after birth for performance of this rite.

PGS I.17.5-6 prescribed a very brief rite. In the fourth month, the father should take his child out and he should make the child look at the sun while reciting the *mantra* beginning with, "That eye" (VSM XXXVI.24).⁴⁷

According to KauṣGS I.18.1-6, in the fourth month, the child should be bathed and adorned with fragrant substances and garlands. The mother or any other woman representing her should hold the child in her lap. The child holding *kuśa* blades in his hand should touch *Hotṛ* (R̥gvedic priest) with them. A *sthālīpāka* (a mess of cooked food) should be offered for sacrifice, Brāhmaṇs should be caused to pronounce auspicious words. Next, according to this text, the child with an umbrella should visit a *devāyatana* (shrine) and the residences of the friendly householders. On the return of the child, Brāhmaṇs should be given a feast.⁴⁸

MGS I.19.1-6 prescribed to perform *Ādityadarśana* (literally, “looking at the sun”) in the fourth month after the child's birth. A very late *dharmasūtra* text, Viṣḍh XXVII.10 and Śaṅkha, an authority quoted in SmC, also prescribed to perform *Ādityadarśana* in the fourth month after child's birth.⁴⁹ According to the MGS, first, a *sthālīpāka* (a mess of cooked food) should be offered to Sūrya. Next, after worshipping Āditya with a *mantra* (MS I.3.37), the father should show the sun with another *mantra*. The Brāhmaṇs should be regaled with food and a bull should be given as the fee. KGS 37.1-6 instructed to perform *Ādityadarśana* during the first half of the third month after child's birth. This text said that on an auspicious day after sunrise, a *sthaṇḍila* (a level piece of ground used for sacrifice) having the dimensions of a chariot wheel should be smeared. On that place the sacrificial fire should be established with due rites. Next, oblations of clarified butter should be offered into the sacrificial fire with certain *mantras* (KāS X.13, IV.9) and oblations of *sthālīpāka* should be offered with certain other *mantras* (KāS XXXV.19, XXIII.12). Then, the child should be lifted up by his father with a *mantra* (KāS XVI.14) with his face towards the sun. The father should worship Āditya with certain *mantras* (KāS XXVI.12, IV.11) and the Brāhmaṇs should be regaled with food mixed with clarified butter. KGS 38.1-5 prescribed another rite *Candradarśana* (literally, “looking at the moon”), which should be performed in the same way as *Ādityadarśana*. But a different set of *mantras* are prescribed for this rite. A *prakāśa* (mirror) had been prescribed as the fee.⁵⁰ Yama, an authority, cited by a late medieval text SmP, prescribed to perform the rite of *Sūryadarśana* (another name for *Ādityadarśana*) in the third month and the rite of *Candradarśana* in the fourth month.⁵¹ Śaṅkhasmṛti II.5 described this rite as *Ādityapradarśana* (or *Ādityadarśana*, according to some printed editions) and also prescribed to perform this rite in the fourth month after the birth.

Two Sāmavedic ritual texts, GGS II.8.1-5 and KhādGS II.3.1-5 have prescribed a rite of worshipping Candra by the father of the child on the third day of the third bright lunar fortnight after the birth. For performing this rite, the child was bathed in the morning and after sunset the father worshipped Candra.⁵²

In the medieval period, some additional elements were prescribed by the *nibandha* texts. According to *Muhūrtasamgraha* quoted in SmP, it is desirable to invite the maternal uncle of the child to perform the rite. According to the VDhP cited in SmP, a solicitous nurse should take the child out with the sounds of blowing conch-shells and benediction.⁵³

In ca. 1590, *Ain-i-Akbari* described about this life-cycle rite as, “In the fourth month they bring it into the sun before which time it is never carried out of the house.”⁵⁴

A pre-modern text *Bālaṃbhaṭṭī* cited a passage from the *Skandapurāṇa*, which stated, that *Niṣkramaṇa* preferably to be performed on the twelfth day after birth. The same text also cited Garga, an authority who allowed the option to perform this rite along with *Annaprāśana*.

5.8 Upaveśana

The early childhood rite of *Upaveśana* (literally, “the (first) sitting”) or *Bhūmyupveśana* (literally, “the (first) sitting on the ground”) is found only in the late medieval *nibandha* texts. Gadādhara, in his *paddhati* (handbook on rituals) on the PGS I.17, quoted a passage from *Prayogapārijāta*, which instructed to perform this rite in the fifth month after birth of the child. Gadādhara himself instructed to perform this rite in the morning of an auspicious *tithi* of the bright lunar fortnight in the fifth month after the birth. The performance should begin with the benediction by the Brāhmaṇs present. Next, the child should be made to sit (on the ground) along with the auspicious sound of blowing conch-shell and trumpet and the *mantra* for the worship of goddess Vasudhā (earth) should be recited. At the end, the Brāhmaṇs should bless the child.⁵⁵ Nārāyaṇabhaṭṭa in his *Prayogaratna* also prescribed to perform this rite in the morning of a *tithi* of the bright lunar fortnight prescribed as auspicious by the astrological texts in the fifth month after the birth.

5.9 *Karṇavedha*

In different cultures, ear lobe piercing of the children are done either to reflect their identity with a particular social group or to enhance their beauty by wearing earrings. It seems that in early South Asia, ear lobe piercing of a child was primarily done to enhance the beauty, not as a life-cycle ritual for identification with a particular social group. The rite of *Karṇavedha*, which literally means “the ear lobe piercing” is not mentioned in any early *gṛhyasūtra* texts except KauṣGS I.20, which described this life-cycle rite as *Karṇavedhana*.⁵⁶ It is described only in the later texts like the *Kātyāyanasūtra*, a text written as the *pariśiṣṭa* (supplement) of the PGS, BGŚS I.12.1 and VDh 1.14-15,18.⁵⁷ The almost near absence of citations of the ancient authorities in the medieval *paddhati* texts in their descriptions of *Karṇavedha* indicates very late codification of this ritual as a life-cycle rite.⁵⁸

KauṣGS I.20.1-2 said that this rite should be performed in the 7th or 8th month or according to the custom of the family.⁵⁹ BGŚS I.12.1 prescribed to perform this rite in the 7th or 8th month. Bṛhaspati, an authority quoted in SṃP prescribed to perform this rite either 10th, 12th or 16th day after birth or in the 7th or 10th month after birth.⁶⁰ But the *Kātyāyanasūtra* prescribed to perform this rite in the third or the fifth year. VDh 1.18 prescribed to perform this rite after *Cūḍākarma*. The *Uttarakhaṇḍa* 236.22 of the PadP also mentioned about performance of this rite in the fourth month. According to Śrīpati, another authority quoted in SṃP, this rite must be performed before the eruption of deciduous teeth of the child and while it is still creeping on the lap of the mother. In the opinion of a late medieval text *Gargapaddhati* or *Gṛhyapaddhati*, suitable period for this rite is the sixth, the seventh, the eighth or the twelfth month.⁶¹ *Mānasollāsa* 3.12.1278 prescribed to perform *Karṇavedhana* after completion of the first or second year.⁶² A pre-modern digest, *Bālaṃbhaṭṭī* cited an authority Bṛhaspati, who prescribed that *Karṇavedha* must be performed in an auspicious day in the fortnight of the waxing moon in the lunar months of *Kārttika*, *Pauṣa*, *Phālguna* or *Caitra*.

Abu'l-Fazl in his *Ain-i-Akbari* (ca. 1590) observed about this rite of the Hindus as, “In the fifth month, they bore the lobe of the right ear.”⁶³

Early description of this rite is found in KauṣGS I.20.6-8. According to this text, this rite should commence with the sacrifice of offering oblations of a mixture of *trimadhura* (three sweet substances, namely jaggery, honey and clarified butter). It should be followed by the piercing of the earlobes of the child with a needle of gold or any other metal. The right ear should be pierced first. Later, a red coloured ring or thread should be put in each hole. At the end, the mixture of *trimadhura* should be distributed to the Brāhmaṇs who pronounced auspicious words and then saluted.⁶⁴ The description in the *Kātyāyanasūtra* is a brief one. It prescribed that on an auspicious day, this rite should be performed in the forenoon. The child should sit facing east and some sweet substances should be given for eating. Then the right earlobe should be pierced first with the *mantra* (VSM XXV.21) beginning with, “May we hear auspicious things through ears” and the left earlobe should be pierced with the *mantra* (VSM XXIX.40) beginning with “*Vakṣyanti*”. At the end, the Brāhmaṇs should be given a feast.⁶⁵

In the medieval period, several additional elements were added to this rite by the *nibandha* texts. SṃP cited the verses from the VDhP, which provided a description of performance of this rite in the medieval period. According to the cited text, the rite should begin with the worship of Keśava, Hara, Brahmā, the sun, the moon, the deities of directions, the Nāsatyas, Sarasvatī, the Brāhmaṇs and cows. The teacher of the family should be decorated and offered a seat. Then the nurse, wearing a white garment should bring the child, well adorned, with its ears painted with red powder. The child should be persuaded and kept still. The surgeon should pierce the ear in one stroke but very lightly. The right earlobe for a male child and left earlobe for a female child should be pierced first.

At the end, gifts should be given to the Brāhmaṇs, astrologers and the surgeon. Respect should be paid to the females, friends, Brāhmaṇs and relatives and they should be entertained.⁶⁶ ŚmP also cited Brhaspati on the needle to be used for this rite. According to him, the golden needle is the most descent choice, but even the silver or iron needle, whatever is available, is considered auspicious. He prescribed the golden needle for the princes, the silver needle for the Brāhmaṇs and Vaiśyas and the iron needle for the Śūdras and mentioned that the length of main part of the needle must be eight *aṅgulas* (6 inches). He also prescribed for the use of the copper needle with a white thread.⁶⁷

5.10 Annaprāśana

The early descriptions of *Annaprāśana*, the rite of giving the child first *anna* (solid food), are found in the *grhyasūtra* texts. This rite is described in almost all *grhyasūtra* texts. ŚGS I.27.1, KauṣGS I.19.1, ĀGS I.16.1, PGS I.19.1, ĀpGS VI.16.1, BGS II.3.1, BhGS I.27, HGS II.1.5.1, ĀgGS II.2.4, KauthG XIII and VkhGS III.22 prescribed to perform this rite in the sixth month after the birth. The MGS I.20.1-2 allowed the option to perform this rite in the fifth month after the birth too. KGS 39.1 added the option to perform *Annaprāśana* after the eruption of teeth into the mouth. VārGS 3.8 mentioned a rite similar to *Annaprāśana*, which is to be performed after the eruption of teeth of a male child. Two Sāmavedic *grhyasūtra* texts, the GGS and the KhādGS omitted this rite. The third extant Sāmavedic *grhyasūtra* text, JGS I.10 mentioned this rite as *Prāśanakarma* (literally, “the rite of feeding”). The Atharvavedic ritual text, KauśS 58.19 had only mentioned a rite to give the child rice and barley with the *mantra* (AVŚ VIII.2.18). This rite is identified by its early medieval scholiast Keśava as *Annaprāśana* and he quoted the lost domestic ritual text of Paiṭhīnasi, which prescribed to perform this rite in the sixth month after birth. Both of the early *dharmaśāstras*, MDh II.34 and YDh I.12 and a later text, VDh I.18 prescribed to perform this rite in the sixth month after birth. Laghu-Āś VIII.1 prescribed to perform this rite in the sixth or eighth month. It also informed that, according to some (authority), this rite might be performed in the tenth or twelfth month also. Aparārka, in his commentary on YDh I.12 cited two authorities. According to Yama, one of the authorities, the options to perform the rite are in the sixth or eighth month, whichever may be auspicious for the family. Śaṅkha prescribed that this rite should be performed after one year or after sixth month, as prescribed by some (authority).⁶⁸ *Mānasollāsa* (ca.1131) 3.12.1265 prescribed to perform *Annaprāśana* in the sixth month after birth.⁶⁹

The Ṛgvedic ritual text, ŚGS I.27.2-11 prescribed that the food should be prepared by the father of the child. He should prepare goat's flesh, if he desires for abundance of food (for his child); flesh of *tittira* (*Francolinus francolinus*), if he desires *brahmavarcasa* (eminence in vedic knowledge); he should prepare fish in case he desires swiftness and prepare boiled rice with clarified butter if he desires *tejah* (vigour). The food should be mixed with clarified butter, yoghurt and honey before giving it to the child. Before feeding the child, he should offer oblations with the *mantra* (TS IV.2.3.1), “O Annapati (the lord of food), accord us food, un-injurious and strong; bring forward the donor; bestow power on us, on two legged and four-legged creatures (men and animal)”; the *mantras* from the RV, beginning with, “Whatever” (IV.12.4), “Even [in the presence] of great” (IV.12.5) and the *mantra* (similar to AVŚ II.28.5 and TS II.3.10.3), “Him, O Agni, [lead] to long life and splendour; sharp strength [may you], Varuṇa, king Soma, protection, may Aditi, like a mother, afford to him and Viśvedevāḥ that he may reach old age.” Next, he should recite over the child, a *mantra* (RV IX.66.19) beginning with, “Agni, [you pour] life” and place the child down on northward pointed *kuśa* grass, with the *mantra* (RV I.22.15) beginning with, “Be soft, O earth” and feed him with the *Mahāvvyāhṛtis*. It instructed the mother to eat the remnant. KauṣGS I.19.2-11 prescribed a similar rite, adding some more options for the food given to the child. In addition to the ŚGS, it instructed that the father should prepare boiled rice with honey, if he desires long life for the child; he should prepare boiled rice with yoghurt, if he desires endeavour to obtain power for the

child and boiled rice with *kṣīra* (sweet milk), if he desires possession of cattle for the child.

Another Ṛgvedic ritual text, ĀGS I.16.2-6 prescribed the same food as the ŚGS except fish. It instructed a very brief rite of feeding the child with a *mantra* (TS IV.2.3.1), used by the ŚGS also.⁷⁰

JGS I.10 provided a very brief description of this rite. It instructed that on the day of performance, after feeding the Brāhmaṇs, the father should cause the child to partake the food as *haviṣya* (fit for sacrifice) with a *mantra* almost similar to TS IV.2.3.1. KauthG XIII also provided a brief description, which include feeding the child with *pāyasa*, followed by feeding the Brāhmaṇs.

A detailed description of this rite is found in PGS I.19.2-13. It instructed the father to prepare a *sthālīpāka* and to offer, at first, the oblations of two *ājyabhāga*, followed by two oblations of clarified butter into the sacrificial fire. He should offer the first oblation of clarified butter, with the *mantra* (RV VIII.100.11), “The gods created the goddess speech; all kinds of creatures speak it; may that, eloquent, highly-praised speech, like a milch cow that gives food and strength to us, come to us; *svāhā*.” He should offer the second oblation of clarified butter with the *mantra* (VSM XVIII.33), beginning with, “May vigour [produce for] us today [gifts].” Next, he should offer four oblations of *sthālīpāka* into the sacrificial fire, with the *mantras*, “Through *prāṇa* (up-breathing) may I enjoy food; *svāhā*”; “Through *apāna* (down-breathing) may I enjoy fragrance; *svāhā*”; “Through my eyes may I enjoy visible things; *svāhā*.” and “Through my ears may I enjoy fame; *svāhā*.” After eating the food, he should set apart all kinds of solid food and juices and should give it to the child to eat. He should feed the child silently or with the word, “*hanta* (well!).” This text prescribed that the father should feed the child with flesh of *bhāradvājī* (*Centropus sinensis*) if he desires fluency of speech for the child; with flesh of *kapiñjala* (*Francolinus pondicerianus*) if he desires abundance of food for the child; with fish if he desires swiftness for the child; with flesh of *kṛkaṣā* (a bird) if he desires long life for the child; with flesh of *āṭi* (a bird) if he desires eminence in vedic knowledge for the child and with all if he desires everything for the child. At the end, it prescribed to feed the Brāhmaṇs.

BGS II.3.2-6 narrated a brief description of the rite, which should begin with serving food to the Brāhmaṇs and causing them to utter benediction. It instructed to feed the child with the boiled rice together with yoghurt, honey and clarified butter with the *mantras* (TS IV.2.6). BhGS I.27 only mentioned that during the performance, the child should be fed first with the word, “*Bhūh*”, second time with, “*Bhuvah*” and third time with, “*Suvah*.”⁷¹

ĀpGS VI.16.1-2 prescribed that the rite should begin with the serving food to Brāhmaṇs and causing them to bless the child. Next, he should pour together yoghurt, honey, clarified butter and boiled rice and feed this mixture to the child with four *mantras* from the ĀpMP (II.14.11-14), “*Bhūh*, I feed you with the essence of water and of the plants; may water and plants be kind towards you; may water and plants do no harm to you, so and so (name of the child).”; “*Bhuvah*, I feed you with the essence of water and of the plants; may water and plants be kind towards you; may water and plants do no harm to you, so and so (name of the child).”; “*Suvah*, I feed you with the essence of water and of the plants; may water and plants be kind towards you; may water and plants do no harm to you, so and so (name of the child).” and “*Bhūh*, *bhuvah*, *suvah*, I feed you with the essence of water and of the plants; may water and plants be kind towards you; may water and plants do no harm to you, so and so (name of the child).” It informed that, according to some (authority, the father should feed the child with) the flesh of *tittira*.

HGS II.1.5.2-3 codified this rite by adding the same initial elements it added to codify other domestic rites. It prescribed that the rite should begin with putting wood to the sacrificial fire and performance of the usual rites down to the offering of oblations with the *Vyāhrtis*. It should be followed by offering oblations to Varuṇa with the *mantras* from the TS beginning with, “This O Varuṇa” (II.1.11.6c) and “For this I entreat you” (II.1.11.6d); Agni with the *mantras* from the TS

beginning with, “You Agni” (II.5.12.3b) and “Thus you Agni” (II.5.12.3c) and the *mantra* from the TBr II.4.1.9 beginning with, “You Agni are quick”; Prajāpati with the *mantra* from the TS I.8.14.2c beginning with, “O Prajāpati” and conclude the sacrifice with the words, “What I have done is too much in this sacrifice.” This text mentioned that, some authority prescribes to offering oblations with “*Abhyātāna*” (TS III.4.5) and “*Rāṣṭrabhṛt*” (TS III.4.7) *mantras*. The sacrifice should be followed by serving food to the Brāhmaṇs and cause them to utter a benediction. Then, he should feed the child with the *trivṛt* (threefold) food of clarified butter, yoghurt and honey with the *mantras*, “*Bhūh*, I lay in to you”; “*Bhuvah*, I lay in to you” and “*Suvah*, I lay in to you.” Next, he should give the child other foods to eat with the *mantra*, “I feed you with the essence of water and of the plants. May water and plants be kind towards you. May water and plants do no harm to you.”

MGS I.20.1-6 gave a slightly different description for this rite. It instructed to cook a *sthālīpāka* in milk before commencing the rite. The child should be bathed, adorned and dressed in an *ahata* garment. The rite should begin with offering oblation to the fire with the *mantra* (MS II.10.10) beginning with, “O Annapati (the lord of food), give us food.” Then, the child should be fed with gold (golden spoon). Next, it prescribed that jewels, artefacts made of gold and weapons should be shown to the child. This may be a very early reference to the element of *Jivikāparīkṣā*, which will be mentioned in the next sub-section. At the end, it instructed to serve food to the Brāhmaṇs. It prescribed a garment as the fee.⁷² The other vedic ritual text of this *śākhā*, VārGS 3.12 provided a very brief description of this rite. As the VārGS prescribed elsewhere (3.7) that after the birth of the son, the parents should abstain from eating meat for one year; it seems that the rite described by it was performed after the completion of the first year. It prescribed that, after offering the flesh of a goat and a sheep to Agni and Dhanvantarī, the child should be fed with the *Vyāhṛtis*. A *mantra* (MS IV.12.4) should also be recited during feeding.

KGS 39.2 also made a brief description of the rite. It prescribed to mix together all kinds of food that are *haviṣya* (fit for sacrifice) and to offer oblations into the fire with a *mantra* (KāS XI.13). Next, the child should be fed with the *mantra* beginning with, “O Annapati (the lord of food), give us food.”⁷³

VkhGS III.22 prescribed that having set down the child adorned with auspicious items on a mat of grass, facing east, the father should feed him with the rice boiled with milk with six *mantras*. Next, he should give the child water to sip with the *mantra* (TS IV.1.2.1d) beginning with, “At every pursuit we invoke the strong one.”

The MGS, the KGS and the VkhGS are entirely silent about feeding the child with flesh or fish in their descriptions for *Annaprāśana*.⁷⁴ The probable reason may be that both the MGS I.18.7 and the KGS 36.13 prescribed elsewhere that after the birth of the son, the father should abstain from eating meat for one year.

5.10.1 *Jivikāparīkṣā*

The element of *Jivikāparīkṣā* (literally, “checking the [future] profession”), probably a late addition to this rite, is still followed by many Hindu families in India. After the performance of the *Annaprāśana* proper, the artefacts related to various professions are placed in front of the child. The child is allowed to crawl among these items. Whichever artefact is first touched by the child is noted and it is deemed that the child would select the profession related to the artefact for livelihood in future. The earliest description of this element is provided by Aparārka (early 12th century), citing the verses of Mārkaṇḍeya as authority. According to this text, Mārkaṇḍeya prescribed that in front of the deity worshipped in the house, *śilpabhāṇḍas* (tools and equipment required for various professions), normative texts and weapons should be spread about. It should be deemed that in future, the child is destined to follow that profession for his livelihood, which is represented by the artefact first touched by him.⁷⁵ The same verses of Mārkaṇḍeya are also quoted by SmC, which

mentioned this element as *Jivīkāparīkṣā* and prescribed to perform it after the rite proper. SṃR also mentioned this element as *Jivīkāparīkṣā* and described it in details. This element is mentioned by Gaṅgādhara in his *Vārāhagr̥hyasūtrapaddhati*, while explaining the aphorism 3.12 of the VārGS. It prescribed that after feeding the child, mother should leave the child where coins, texts and garments are placed. It is believed that the item first touched by him indicates his future profession.

In ca. 1590, *Ain-i-Akbari* mentioned about the rite of *Annaprāśana* as, “In the sixth month, if the child be a boy, they place various kinds of food around him, and feed him with that for which he shows a preference. If it be a girl, this is not done till the sixth or seventh month.”⁷⁶

5.11 Varṣavardhana

An early reference to the performance of a rite on the occasion of the first birth anniversary is found in KGS 36.12,14. It prescribed that after *Nāmakaraṇa*, every month oblations of *sthālīpāka* should be offered in the same manner as *Jātakarṇa*. At the end of the year, flesh of a goat and a sheep should be offered to Agni and Dhanvantaṛī and the Brāhmaṇs should be fed with boiled rice with plenty of clarified butter.⁷⁷ MGS I.18.8 also prescribed to offer flesh of a goat and a sheep to Agni and Dhanvantaṛī after the completion of one year (of the child).

Early mention of *Varṣavardhana* (literally means “increase of the years of life”), a rite of celebrating birth anniversary of a person, is found in VkhGS III.20-21. Aparārka (early 12th century) cited the verses of Mārkaṇḍeya, which said that everybody should celebrate a *mahotsava* (grand festival) on his birthday every year. On the day of his birth, after taking a bath in auspicious water, he should honour his elders and worship Agni, Prajāpati, the *pitṛs*, the *nakṣatra* of his day of birth and Brāhmaṇs. These verses are also mentioned in a late medieval text, the *Nityācārapaddhati* of Vidyākara Vājapeyin (15th century), in its description for the *janmadivasakṛtya* (birthday ceremony). In addition, this text prescribed that on every birthday, the eight immortals of Hindu mythology - sage Mārkaṇḍeya and seven *cirajīvī* (literally, “immortal”), namely, Aśvatthāmā, Bali, Vyāsa, Hanumān, Vibhīṣaṇa, Kṛpa and Paraśurāma should be worshipped also. Two other late medieval texts, SṃP and NirS named this rite as *Abdapūrti* (literally, “completion of a year of life”) and provided a detailed description of its performance. SṃR also described this rite at length and named this rite as *Ayurvardhāpana*.⁷⁸ Nārāyaṇabhaṭṭa in his *Prayogaratna* described this rite as *Vardhāpana*. He cited the verses from the *Ādityapurāṇa*, which prescribed that on the birthday, after taking bath in auspicious water, one should worship his *gurudeva* (teacher), Agni, Brāhmaṇs, the *nakṣatra* of his day of birth, the *pitṛs* and Prajāpati and should celebrate a *mahotsava* every year. A detailed description of this rite was provided by him too. *Dharmasindhu* (1790) also described this rite as *Vardhāpana*.

5.12 Cūḍākarāṇa

The rite of *Cūḍākarāṇa* (literally, “arranging the hair tuft”) or *Cūḍākarma* (literally, “rite of the hair tuft”) is an ancient rite for the first haircut for a child. During the performance this rite, the head of the child is shaved, leaving a tuft (or a number of tufts) of hair on the crown, known as *śikhā* or *cūḍā*. The alternate names of this rite, *Cauḍa* or *Caula* was originated from *cūḍā*. Detailed descriptions of this rite are found in most of the vedic ritual texts, namely, ŚGS I.28.1-4, KauṣGS I.21.1-4, ĀGS I.17.1-18, GGS II.9.1-29, KhādGS II.3.16-33, JGS I.11, PGS II.1, BGS II.4.1-19, BhGS I.28, ĀpGS VI.16.4-11, HGS II.1.6.2-15 and VārGS 4.⁷⁹

ŚGS I.28.1-4 and KauṣGS I.21.1-4 prescribed to perform *Cūḍākarma* or *Cūlākarma* after completion of the first year or in the third year for a Brāhmaṇ boy, in the fifth year for a Kṣatriya boy and in the seventh year for a Vaiśya boy. KauṣGS I.21.5 in addition, prescribed performing this rite after completion of the first year as an alternate for all *varṇas*. VkhGS III.23 prescribed to perform *Cauḍaka* rite in the first or the third year. BGS II.4.1 also prescribed to perform this rite in

the third year. ĀGS I.17.1 prescribed to perform *Caula* rite in the third year or according to the *kuladharmā* (custom of the family). VārGS 4.1 described this rite as *Jaṭākarāṇa* and prescribed to perform this rite either in the third year or according to the *kulakalpa* (procedure of the family). PGS II.1.1-2 and 4 prescribed to perform this rite either after completion of the first year and before completion of the third year or the according to the custom of the family. GGS II.9.1, KhādGS II.3.16, KauthG XIV, KGS 40.1, HGS II.1.6.1, MGS I.21.1 and ĀpGS VI.16.3 prescribed specifically to perform this rite in the third year. JGS I.11 described this rite as *Jaṭākarāṇa* and prescribed to perform this rite in the third year from the birth. It also informed that according to some (authority), it should be performed in the third year from conception. BhGS I.28 perhaps the only *grhyasūtra* text, which specifically prescribed to perform the *Cauḍa* rite in the first year.⁸⁰

In view of MDh II.35, *Cūḍākarma* for all ‘twice-born’ children should be performed in the first year or the third year in accordance with the rules of the *śruti* (the Vedas).⁸¹ YDh I.12 held exactly opposite view. This text did not specify any year for *Cūḍākārya* and prescribed to perform it according to the family usage. VDh I.18 also followed the same tradition. Yama, an authority cited by Aparārka, prescribed to perform this rite in the first, second or third year. Śaṅkha and Likhita, two authorities (cited by Aparārka and in *Jyotistattva* of Raghunandana) prescribed to perform this rite in the third or the fifth year. Śaṅkha and Likhita (cited in *Jyotistattva*) also stated that, for the rite of *Cūḍākārya*, the third year is accepted by all the *grhya* texts. Ṣaḍguruśiṣya, an authority cited by SṃP and Nārāyaṇa on ĀGS I.17.1 mentioned that some persons perform this rite at the time of *Upanayana*.⁸² Āśvalāyana, an authority cited in SṃP, mentioned that it is praiseworthy to perform this rite in the third or the fifth year, but it can be performed in the seventh year or at the time of *Upanayana*.⁸³ The *Uttarakhaṇḍa* 236.22 of the PadP mentioned about performance of this rite two and a half years after birth.

Mānasollāsa (ca.1131) 3.12.1280 prescribed to perform *Cūḍākārya* after completion of the second year from birth or according to the custom of the family.⁸⁴

In ca. 1590, Abu'l-Fazl ibn Mubarak described this rite as, “When it is a year old, or in the third year, they shave his head, but by some this is delayed till the fifth year, by others till the seventh and by others again till the eighth year when a festival is held.”⁸⁵

5.12.1 Descriptions in vedic ritual texts

The elements of this rite described in various vedic ritual texts are more or less similar but there are distinctive differences in the procedures followed by the adherents of different vedic *śākhās*.

5.12.1.1 Ṛgvedic ritual texts

An early description of this rite is found in ĀGS I.17.1-18. It instructed that four vessels should be filled separately with rice, barley, beans and sesame seeds and these vessels should be placed to the north of the sacrificial fire. The mother with the boy on her lap should sit to the west of the sacrificial fire. Two vessels, one filled with dung of bull and the other with *śamī* (*Prosopis cineraria*) leaves should also be placed to the west of the sacrificial fire. To the right of the mother, the father should sit holding twenty-one bunches of *kuśa* grass. *Brahmā* (Atharvavedic priest, who conducted the domestic rites) also held these 21 bunches sometimes. The father should mix the hot and cold water with the *mantra*, “O Vāyu, come hither with warm water” and put some *navanīta* (fresh butter) or drops of yoghurt in it. Then he should apply the water three times to moisten his son's head from left to right with the *mantra*, “May Aditi cut your hair; may the water moistens you for vigour”. Next, he should place three bunches of *kuśa* grass on the right side of the boy's hair with the *mantra*, “Herb, protect him” and press a copper razor on the *kuśa* blades, with the *mantra*, “Axe, do not harm him”. The hair should be cut four times on the right side and three times on the left side with certain *mantras*. Each time the hair is cut, the cut hair should be wrapped up in *śamī*

leaves and handed over to the mother, who should put them down on the bull dung. After the tonsure is over, he should wipe off the razor with a *mantra*. The tuft should be kept according to the custom of the family. The same rite should be performed for a girl child without recitation of any *mantra*.⁸⁶

The description found in the ŚGS I.28.5-24 is similar to the ĀGS. Like the ĀGS, it also prescribed to place four vessels with rice, barley, beans and sesame seeds. It instructed to make ready some dung of bull and a layer of *kuśa* grass for receiving the hair, a mirror, some *navanīta* (fresh butter) and a copper razor before commencing the rite and place them on the north of sacrificial fire. At the beginning of the rite, the father should put the woods in the sacrificial fire in the outer hall and pour cold water into hot with the *mantra*, “Mix yourselves, you holy ones, with your waves, you honeyed ones, mixing milk with honey, you lovely ones, for the obtaining of wealth.” Next, he should sprinkle lukewarm water three times on the right side of his son’s head with the *mantra*, “The threefold age of Jamadagni, the threefold age of Kaśyapa, the threefold age of Agastya and the threefold age that belongs to the gods; may that threefold age I produce for you.” After loosening the tangled locks of the hair of the child with *śalālī* (porcupine’s quill), as prescribed by some (authority) according to this text and anointing the child’s hair with *navanīta* (fresh butter), the father should place a young *kuśa* shoot among the hairs with the *mantra*, “Herb, protect him.” Then, he should touch the hair and the *kuśa* shoot with a mirror and take up the copper razor with the *mantra*, “Sharpness are you. Axe is your father. Do no harm to him.” He should cut the tips of the hair and the *kuśa* shoot with the *mantra*, “The razor with which in the beginning Savitr, the knowing one, has shaved the beard of king Varuṇa, and with which Dhātṛ has shaved Bṛhaspati and Indra’s head, with that, you *Brahmā* (Atharvavedic priest), shave this (head) today; blessed with long life, with old age, be this so and so (name of the child).” The hair should be cut three times on the right side and two times on the left side with this same *mantra*. At the third round of shaving, the father should gift a cow and an ahata garment. The cut hair should be buried in the earth at a place in the north-east direction, either covered with herbs or in the neighbourhood of water. The barber should be given the vessels of grain. Like ĀGS, it also prescribed that the rite should be performed for a girl child without recitation of any *mantra*. A nearly similar description of the rite is narrated in KauṣGS I.21.6-22.

5.12.1.2 Sāmavedic ritual texts

GGGS II.9.1-29 provided a detailed account of this rite. It prescribed to kindle the sacrificial fire at a place on the east of the house after smearing the surface (with cow-dung). In contrast with the ĀGS, it prescribed to place four vessels with rice, barley, beans and sesame seeds on the east of the sacrificial fire. Before commencing the rite, it instructed to make ready 21 bunches of *darbha* grass, a brass vessel with hot water, a razor made of *udumbara* wood or a mirror and place these items on the south of the sacrificial fire. A barber should also sit there with a razor in his hand. The dung of a bull and the *sthālīpāka* of boiled rice with sesame seeds, which is prepared without any ritual should be placed on the north of the sacrificial fire. (After the rite) all vessels of grain and the *sthālīpāka* should be given to the barber. At the beginning of the rite, the mother should dress her son in a clean garment and sit down (with the child on her lap) on the west of the sacrificial fire facing east on northward-pointed *darbha* grass. To the west (of her), the performer (father) should sit facing east. Looking at the barber, he should recite a *mantra* from the MBr (I.6.1), “Hither has come Savitr with his razor.” Next, looking at the brass vessel with warm water, (he should recite a *mantra* from the MBr (I.6.2)), “With warm water, O Vāyu, come hither.” Then, he should draw water from the vessel with his right hand and moisten the patch of hair on the right side of the child’s head with the *mantra* from the MBr (I.6.3), “May Āpa (the divine water) moisten you for life.” With the *mantra* from the MBr (I.6.4), “You are the teeth of Viṣṇu”, he should look at either the razor of *udumbara* wood or the mirror. With the *mantra* from the MBr (I.6.5), “Herb, protect

him”, he should place seven bunches of *darbha* grass, with their tips pointing towards the child’s head, into the patch of hair on the right side of his head. Pressing them down with his left hand, and seizing with his right hand the razor of *udumbara* wood or the mirror, he touches with it (the *darbha* bunches), with the *mantra* from the MBr (I.6.6), “Axe, do no harm to him.” Next, he should move forward the razor or the mirror three times towards the east without cutting the hair; once with the *mantra* from the MBr (I.6.7), “[The razor] with which Pūṣaṅ has shaved Br̥haspati’s head”, twice silently. Then the barber should cut the hair with the copper razor and throw the cut off hair ends on the bull’s dung. The patches of hair on the left side and rear side of the child’s head should be cut in the same manner. After completion of shaving the head, he should hold the child’s head with both the hands and recite the *mantra* from the MBr (I.6.8) beginning with, “The threefold age of Jamadagni.” After walking away from the sacrificial fire, in the northerly direction, the arrangement of the tuft of hair should be made according to the custom of his *gotra* and family. The cut hair on the bull’s dung should be taken to a forest and buried. This text informed that according to some authority, the cut hair should be thrown on a bush. A cow is prescribed as the fee for this rite. Like ĀGS and ŚGS, it also prescribed that this rite should be performed for a girl child without recitation of any *mantra*. An almost similar description is found in KhādGS II.3.16-33.

The description of JGS I.11 has significant differences with other Sāmavedic ritual texts. The rite, according to this text should begin with causing the Br̥hmaṇs to utter benediction. This text prescribed that, in the afternoon, the performer (father of the child) should carry forward the sacrificial fire and four vessels should be placed on the south of the sacrificial fire, the vessel filled with rice and barley on both sides and the vessels filled with sesame seeds and beans between the other two. The child, after he has sipped water, should touch his father from behind and the father should offer oblation in sacrificial fire, four times with the *Mahāvvyāhrtis* and the fifth time with the *Virūpākṣa mantra* (MBr IV.5.3, mentioned in JGS I.2). Next, the water decocted from the herbs, viz, rice, barley, sesame seeds and beans should be poured and the performer should take the water with the *mantra*, “Hither has come Savitṛ with the razor, approved by Viśvedevāḥ and Maruts; May he, Viśvakarmā be propitious to us; you protect us ever with prosperity”. Then, he should take the water with the *mantra*, “O Vāyu, come hither with warm water; may Aditi cut the hair.” He should moisten the hair near the right ear with the *mantra*, “May the water moistens you for life, for longevity, for splendour.” In this hair of the right side, he should place three bunches of *darbha* grass or one. Then, with his left hand, he should hold the hair and bunches of *darbha* grass and recite the *mantra*, “Prajāpati hold again and again, for good shaving.” Having touched the hair and bunches of *darbha* grass with a mirror thrice in upward direction, he should shave off some hair with parts of *darbha* blades with a razor, reciting the three *mantras*, “With the razor, by which Dhātṛ has shaved [the head] of Br̥haspati, Agni and Indra, for the sake of long life, I shave your [head] for the sake of long life, glory and welfare”; “With the razor, by which Prajāpati has shaved [the head] of *grhamedhi* (literally, “one who perform domestic rites”, a clan of the Maruts) Maruts, I shave your [head] for the sake of long life, glory and welfare” and “With the razor, by which this one may go about further and may long see the sun, I shave your [head] for the sake of long life, glory and welfare.” The hair on the left side and rear side of the head should be cut in the similar manner. With the each *mantra*, he should deposit the cut hair and the rest of the *darbha* blades on bull’s dung and these must not be kept on bare ground. If the child is a Br̥hmaṇ, this bull’s dung should be placed on the east, if he belongs to any other *varṇa*, it should be placed on the west. He should then hand over the razor to the barber with the *mantra*, “When you shear with the razor, O barber make the limbs clean; do not injure the life, the splendour, O barber.” The barber then should shave the hair according to the custom of the *gotra* or family of the child. After the child is washed, the father should perform the *prāyaścitta* (expiation) offerings. For a girl child it prescribed to perform this rite without any *mantra*. When this rite is performed with the *mantras* (for a male child), it instructed to perform the *prāyaścitta* (expiation) offerings at the end. At the end, the father should

hold the child's head and recite the *mantra*, "The threefold age of Kaśyapa, Jamadagni's threefold age and the threefold age that belongs to the gods; may that threefold age belong to you" (similar to MBr 1.6.8). The cut hair should be buried in a *dhānyapalvala* (paddy field) or a cowshed. The person who has arranged the tuft of hair should be given the full vessels. This text also prescribed a cow as the fee for this rite.⁸⁷

5.12.1.3 Yajurvedic ritual texts

PGS II.1.5-6, 8-17, 19 and 21-23 prescribed to begin the performance of this rite with serving food to the Brāhmaṇs. The mother is instructed to bathe her child, put the *ahata* upper and lower garments on him, put him on her lap and sit down on the west of the sacrificial fire. Then, the father should hold the mother of the child and offer oblations of clarified butter into the sacrificial fire. After consuming the sacrificial food, he should pour warm water into cold water with the *mantra*, "With warm water, O Vāyu, come hither; may Aditi cut the hair." Next, he should throw a lump of fresh butter or clarified butter or some yoghurt into it the water. Taking some water, he should moisten the hair of the child near the right ear with the *mantra*, "On the impulse of Savitṛ, may Āpa (the divine water) moisten your body so that long life and splendour may be yours." Having unravelled the hair with a *śalalī* (porcupine's quill) that has three white spots, he should put three *kuśa* shoots into it with the *mantra* beginning with, "Herb" (VSM IV.1). Next, he should take up a copper razor with the *mantra* beginning with, "Friendly by name" (VSM III.63a) and cut the hair with the *mantra* beginning with, "I cut off" (VSM III.63b) and "The razor with which Savitṛ, the knowing one, has shaved [the beard] of king Soma and Varuṇa, with that you *Brahmās* (Atharvavedic priests), shave his [head], so that he may be blessed with long life and may reach old age." After cutting off the *kuśa* shoots together with hair, he should throw it on a lump of bull's dung kept on the north of the sacrificial fire. He should cut the hair of the child in the same manner for two times more but silently. Moistening and other rites should be followed for the other two tufts of hair. Then, he should cut the hair on the rear side of the head with the *mantra* beginning with, "The threefold age" (VSM III.62) and the left side with the *mantra*, "With that prayer by which may you, a mighty one, go to heaven, and long may you see the sun; with that prayer, I shave you for the sake of life, existence, glory and welfare." Finally, he should shave the child's head three times, from left to right reciting the *mantra*, "When the shaver shaves his hair with the razor, the wounding, the well-shaped, purify his head, but do not take away his life." Again, he should moisten the head of the child with water and hand over the razor to the barber with the *mantra*, "Without wounding him, shave him." The tufts of hair, which are left over should be arranged in the manner believed as auspicious by the family. The bull's dung with the cut hair should either be kept hidden in a cowshed or should be thrown in to a pond or in the vicinity of water. An optional gift may be given to the *ācārya*.

ĀpGS VI.16.4-11 also prescribed to begin the performance of this rite with serving food to the Brāhmaṇs (in the same manner as *Upanayana*). Then, the father should put the woods in to the sacrificial fire in the same manner as *Sīmantonmayana*. Next, he should make the child sit down on the west of the sacrificial fire, facing east, comb his hair silently with a *śalalī* (porcupine's quill) that has three white spots, with three bunches of *darbha* grass and with a bunch of unripe udumbara fruits. Then, he should arrange the tuft of hair of the child in the fashion of his ancestral *ṛṣis* or according to the custom of the family. The elements beginning with pouring together of warm and cold water and ending in putting down the hair should be same as *Upanayana*, which is described in ĀpGS IV.10.5-8 and are as follows. The father should pour warm water in to the cold with the *mantra* from the ĀpMP (II.1.1) and should moisten the child's head with the next *mantra* from the ĀpMP (II.1.2). Having put the three bunches of *darbha* grass in to his hair towards each of the four directions, he should cut the hair of the child with the next four *mantras* from the ĀpMP (II.1.3-6), using different *mantras* for cutting towards different directions. With the next *mantra* from the

ĀpMP (II.1.7), somebody should address him while he is shaving. Towards the south, the mother or a *brahmacārī* should strew barley-grains on a lump of bull's dung. With this dung, she should catch up the cut hair and put it down with the next *mantra* from the ĀpMP (II.1.8) at the root of an *udumbara* tree or on a tuft of *darbha* grass. He should put down the razor after using it. This razor should not be used for next three days. The father may give an optional gift to the *ācārya*.

HGS II.1.6.2-15 prescribed a similar procedure for this rite. The initial elements of this rite, added by this text at the time of codification, which begin with putting wood to the sacrificial fire and end with serving food to the Brāhmaṇs and causing them to utter a benediction, are same as *Annaprāśana*. Next, it instructed the child to sit down on the west of the sacrificial fire, facing east. Towards the north of sacrificial fire, the mother or a *brahmacārī* should hold a lump of bull's dung to receive the cut hair on it. The father should pour cold and warm together. After pouring warm water into cold water, he should moisten the child's hair near the right ear with the *mantra*, May Āpa (the divine water) moisten you for life." (TS I.2.1.1a). With the *mantra*, "O herb, protect him." (TS I.2.1.1b), he should put an herb into the hair with its tip upwards. He should touch that herb with the razor with the *mantra*, "Axe, hurt him not." (TS I.2.1.1c). Next, he should shave the head (of the child) with the *mantra*, "Obedient to the gods, I shave that [hair]" (TS I.2.1.1d). He should moisten and shave other sides of the head in the similar manner from left to right. While shaving the rear part of the head, he should recite the *mantra*, "The razor with which Savitṛ, the knowing one, has shaved [the beard] of king Soma and Varuṇa, with that you *Brahmās* (Atharvavedic priests), shave his [head], so that he be united with vigour, with wealth, with glory." While shaving the left side of the head, he should recite the *mantra*, "[The razor] with which Pūṣaṇ has shaved [the beards of] Bṛhaspati, Agni and Indra, for the sake of long life, with that I shave your [head], so and so (the child's name)." While shaving front portion of the head, he should recite the *mantra*, "That he may long live in joy, and may long see the sun." After the completion of shaving, arrangement of the tuft of hair of the child should be made according to the custom or the fashion of his ancestral *ṛṣis*. The cut hair should be buried in a cowshed or at the root of an *udumbara* tree or near a tuft of *darbha* grass, with a *mantra*. This text instructed to give the Brāhmaṇ according to his liberality and boiled rice with clarified butter to the barber.

5.12.1.4 Atharvavedic ritual text

KauśS 54.15-22, instructed to perform the rite of *Cūḍākarāṇa* in the similar manner as *Godāna* rite, except the elements of *Paridhāpana* and *Aśmamaṇḍala*. Keśava in his *Kauśikapaddhati*, while explaining these aphorisms, prescribed to perform *Cūḍākarāṇa* after the completion of the first or second year after birth. He also insisted that the KauśS had prescribed to perform *Godāna* before *Cūḍākarāṇa* and *Godāna* should be performed in the first year after birth.

5.13 Some minor early childhood rites

In some of the late medieval digests like SṃP and NirS, descriptions of a number of minor early childhood rites like *Dugdhapāna* (literally, "[first] drinking of [cow] milk") on the thirty-first day after birth, *Tāmbūlabhakṣaṇa* (literally, "[first ceremonial] chewing of betel leaves") after completion of two and a half months, *Navanītaprāśana* (literally, "[first] consumption of fresh butter") in the third month after birth, *Kaṭisūtrabandhana* (literally, "tying a thread on the waist") in the fifth month and *Ghrāṇavedha* (literally, "nostril piercing") are found. It seems that the late medieval digests attempted to codify every possible ritual in the early childhood celebrated by the relations of a child.

Chapter 6

Coming of age and educational rites

In every culture, both coming of age and education are significant for every individual as these are the essential requirements for the acceptance of an individual in the social group. Like many cultures, *Mauñjībandhana*, as the Hindu coming of age rite was known in the early period, was most probably a rite for investiture of a *mauñjī* (girdle made of *muñja* grass) to an adolescent for wearing around the waist, signifying the commencement of the period of *brahmacarya* (celibacy). Later, this rite was named as *Upanayana* and became a pre-requisite for the commencement of the study of the vedic texts (mostly memorizing them) and finally it became a rite of institution for the Brahmanical social order (when even a ritual for *Upanayana* for an *aśvattha* tree was developed). With the growth of literacy and general education (*vidyā*) in South Asia, the new educational rites like *Vidyārambha* became popular.

6.1 *Vidyārambha*

The educational rite of *Vidyārambha*, which literally means “beginning of education”, is of much later origin. Although, the performance of *Upanayana*, the ancient initiation rite and subsequent commencement of the study of the Vedas and the vedic ancillary texts are described in the vedic ritual texts, these texts are almost silent about the study of other subjects, including learning alphabets, essential for literacy. Earliest reference about learning alphabets and other subjects are found in the Kauṭilya’s *Arthaśāstra* I.5, which said that a prince should learn alphabets and arithmetic after the performance of *Caula* rite and he should study the *trayī* (the Vedas), *ānvīkṣikī* (metaphysics), *vārtā* (agriculture and economics) and *danḍanīti* (statecraft) between the period of the *Upanayana* and *Godāna* in the sixteenth year.¹ The references about learning alphabets and receiving secular education after *Caula* rite are also found in Kālidāsa’s *Raghuvamśa* III.28 and Bhavabhūti’s *Uttararāmacarita* Act II. Bāṇabhaṭṭa in his *Kādambarī* mentioned about his hero, Candrāpīḍa entering a *vidyāmandira* (residential school) at the age of six and remaining there until sixteen. According to a medieval Tamil text *Periya Purāṇam* (stanza 3681), at the age of three, tonsure ceremony was performed and the child was sent to a school.

In a verse cited by SṃP and SṃR, Bṛhaspati, a late authority of *smṛti* had instructed the pious people to learn alphabets before the second birth (*Upanayana*).² *Mānasollāsa* (ca.1131) 3.12.1286-1287 is one of the early known texts, which prescribed to perform the rite of *Vidyārambha* (for a prince) after his *Upanayana* on a Wednesday, Thursday or Friday. It instructed that one should be taught the Vedas, use of weapons and riding horses, elephants and chariots.³ Mallinātha (early 15th century), while explaining Kālidāsa’s *Raghuvamśa* III.28, cited a verse (of Mārkaṇḍeya), which prescribed to perform *Vidyārambha* in the fifth year of the child.⁴

A late *Purāna*, VDhP II.52.123-133 also described this rite. These verses are cited as of Mārkaṇḍeya by Aparārka and in SmC and *Parāśaramādhava*, and cited as from the VDhP in *Jyotistattva* and SṃM. This apparent anomaly was resolved by Hazra (1940) as follows:⁵

The facts that the great majority of verses ascribed to ‘Mārkaṇḍeya’ is found in the Viṣṇudharmottara wherein the sage Mārkaṇḍeya is the speaker, that the same verses are sometimes quoted as from the ‘Viṣṇudharmottara’ in some places and from ‘Mārkaṇḍeya’ in others, and that in some cases verses of the Viṣṇudharmottara are quoted with the words ‘*viṣṇudharmottare mārkaṇḍeyah*’ show that ‘Mārkaṇḍeya’, to whom these verses are ascribed in the Nibandhas, is, in the great majority of cases, identical with the sage Mārkaṇḍeya, the speaker in the Viṣṇudharmottara.

All medieval *nibandha* texts, which narrated this rite, had prescribed to perform this rite at the time of commencement of learning alphabets. Aparārka (early 12th century) is probably the earliest known author of *nibandha*, who mentioned this rite. According to the verses of Mārkaṇḍeya on this

rite cited by Aparārka, *Vidyārambha* should be performed in the fifth year of the child, during the period of the year when according to the belief, Janārdana (Viṣṇu) is awake, viz., the period between the twelfth day of the bright half of the lunar month of *Kārttika* (October-November) and the eleventh day of bright half the lunar month of *Āṣāḍha* (June-July) excluding 1st, 6th, 8th, *riktā* (4th, 9th and 14th) and 15th *tithis*, Saturdays and Tuesdays. Having worshipped Hari, Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī, *svavidyā* (branch of knowledge cultivated by his family), the *sūtrakāras* (literally, “the aphorists”, the promulgators of the normative texts) of that particular *vidyā* (branch of knowledge) and *vidyā* of his own choice, the performer (father of the child) should offer the oblations of clarified butter in to the fire for the deities, whose names have been mentioned earlier and honour the Brāhmaṇs with the *dakṣiṇā* (fees). Then the teacher should sit facing east and the child facing west. Next, the teacher should teach the first lesson to the child, and subsequently the child should receive the benedictions of the Brāhmaṇs. SmC and *Parāśaramādhava* also cited these verses of Mārkaṇḍeya in their descriptions of this rite.⁶ Raghunandana (16th century) in his *Jyotistattva*, cited almost similar verses about this rite, but as mentioned before, he ascribed them to the VDhP and Bṛhaspati. He, in *Jyotistattva*, also quoted a verse from *Madanapārijāta* (cited as of *Rājamārtaṇḍa* in SmP) which asserted that, Thursday is the best suitable day for performing *Vidyārambha*, but it can be also performed on a Friday or a Sunday. Performing this rite on a Saturday or a Tuesday will result in (an early) death and performing this rite on a Wednesday or a Monday will result in (acquiring) *avidyā* (improper education).⁷ SmP (early 17th century) had an extensive account of this rite. A verse attributed to Vaśiṣṭha by this text mentioned this rite as *Akṣarasvīkaraṇa*; a verse of Mārkaṇḍeya cited in this text mentioned it as *Akṣarālekhaṇa* and a verse cited from *Nṛsimha* (*Nṛsimhapurāṇa*) mentioned it as *Akṣarasvīkṛti*. According to the verses of Viśvāmitra and Vaśiṣṭha cited in this text, this rite must be performed in the fifth year. It cited a verse from *Nṛsimha* (*Nṛsimhapurāṇa*), which stated that during the performance of this rite, Sarasvatī and Gaṇapati should be worshipped and then the teacher should be honoured.⁸ Bhaṭṭa Gopīnātha in SmR described this rite as *Akṣarasvīkāra*, which literally means “acceptance of alphabets” and provided a detailed account about the performance of this rite. It prescribed to perform a *homa* (sacrifice) on this occasion, where eight oblations of clarified butter should be offered into the fire for each of the following deities: Sarasvatī, Hari, Lakṣmī, Viḡhneśa (Gaṇeśa), *svavidyā sūtrakāras* and *svavidyā*. Both SmP and SmR cited VDhP II.52.132, which instructed that on this occasion, having honoured the Brāhmaṇs, teacher and the deities, one should honour the *dhātrī* (mother of the child). The last element of this rite prescribed in SmR was most probably a contemporary practice. It stated that, the child should be instructed to read the *mantra*, “*Om namaḥ siddham*” and write it and then the child should read the letters of the alphabet and write them.⁹ SmR also cited an additional verse of Mārkaṇḍeya (not mentioned by Aparārka, SmC and *Parāśaramādhava*), which stated that, at the beginning, the child should be given an oil massage and bathed. Then, the child should write fifty letters with a golden stylus.¹⁰

A very late *Purāṇa*, most probably written in Bengal, the *Devībhāgavatapurāṇa* IX.4.22 mentioned that the goddess Sarasvatī is worshipped every year on the fifth *tithi* of the fortnight of the waxing moon in the lunar month of *Māgha* and at the time of performance of *Vidyārambha* rite. Since the late medieval period in Bengal, *Vidyārambha* rite is known as *Hāte khaḍi* (literally, “(giving) a piece of chalk in the hand”) and performed on the fifth *tithi* of the bright fortnight of the lunar month of *Māgha*, the *tithi* marked for the worship of Sarasvatī in the *Devībhāgavatapurāṇa*. During performance of this rite, the father of the child or the *ācārya* (teacher), writes a few letters of the Bengali alphabet with a piece of chalk and then guides child to trace over the letters with that piece of chalk. Kṛṣṇadās Kabirāj (early 16th century) in his *Caitanyacaritāmṛta* (*ādikhaṇḍa*).¹⁴ mentioned about the performance of *Hāte khaḍi* rite for Caitanya Mahāprabhu by his father. In present-day Kerala, since the late medieval period, the rite performed before commencing the learning is known as *Vidyārambham*, and performed in the tenth *tithi* of the bright fortnight of the

lunar month of *Āśvina*, the *tithi* known as *vijayādaśamī*. During the performance, the child is caused to write a few sacred words with the forefinger on rice grains spread on a platter.

6.2 Upanayana: the initiation rite

6.2.1 Evolution of a coming of age rite

The literal meaning of *Upanayana*, the Hindu rite of initiation to vedic studies is “leading (a person) near”. The name of the rite indicates that originally it was a rite of passage for coming of age, a rite for leading a person towards the adulthood. It is clearer from the literal meaning of another name of this rite, *Baṭūkarāṇa*, ‘the rite of making into a youth’. A passage is found in the JGS I.12, which said that, according to sacred tradition, one should not perform the rite of *Upanayana* after he completed his sixteenth year, as he becomes a *prasarṣṭavrṣaṇa* (one with shattered testicles). It directly links the rite with attaining maturity.

An early detailed description of this rite is found in ŚBM XI.5.4.1-17. References to this rite are found in GBr I.2.1-8.¹¹ Description of *Upanayana* rite also found in a fragmentary *Brāhmaṇa* text of the *Kāṭhaka śākhā*, the *Upanayanabrāhmaṇa*. Some of the elements of *Upanayana* rite mentioned in the vedic ritual texts, can be identified in this text. A citation from this text is found in KGS 41.24, where it is referred as a *śruti*.

Most of the vedic ritual texts described this rite in details as *Upanayana*. KGS 41.1, MGS I.22.1 and ĀpDh I.1.1.6 described this rite as *Upāyana* and VasDh II.3 described this rite as *Mauñjibandhana* (literally, “tying the girdle of *muñja* grass). Both MDh II.36 and YDh I.14 mentioned this rite as *Upanāyana*.¹² According to the medieval scholiast Vijñāneśvara, both *Upanayana* and *Upanāyana* are synonymous and *Upanāyana* is an archaic form of *Upanayana*. The MDh also employed the words *Mauñjīnibandhana* (II.27) and *Mauñjibandhana* (II.169, 170, 171) as synonyms of *Upanayana*. A late *dharmaśāstra* text, the *Śaṅkhasmṛti* described this rite as both *Mauñjibandhana* (I.6-7) and *Upanāyana* (II.6). Ādityadarśana in his *vivaraṇa*, while commenting on KGS 41.1 explained that *Upāyana*, *Upanayana*, *Mauñjibandhana*, *Baṭūkarāṇa* and *Vratibandha* are all synonymous with each other.¹³

The earliest codified form of *Upanayana* is probably described in the ŚBM. In the *gr̥hyasūtras* it described as a Brahmanical initiation rite for incorporation in to the elite ‘twice-born’ social classes. But, still a few Hindu normative texts, ancient and medieval, allowed the performance of *Upanayana* for various social groups who are generally not included in the three ‘twice-born’ social classes, probably depending on their contemporary social status. A unique example of such changes in social status can be traced for a social group, the Rathakāras. An early reference to their high status as a social group among the early communities following the *Taittirīya śākhā* of the *Kṛṣṇayajurveda* is found in the in their *Brāhmaṇa* text, TBr I.1.4.8, which in addition to the Brāhmaṇs, Rājanyas and Vaiśyas, also allowed the Rathakāras to establish sacrificial fire with the *mantra*, “*Rbhūnāṃ tvā*”. Following this tradition, most of the *śrautasūtras* of this *śākhā*, namely, BŚS II.12 and XXIV.16, BhŚS V.2.1-5, ĀpŚS V.3.18-20, HŚS III.2 and VkhŚS I.1 prescribed that the suitable season for the rite of *Agnyādheya* (or *Ādhāna*, the rite of establishment of sacrificial fire) is *varṣā* (rainy season) for a Rathakāra, *vasanta* (spring) for a Brāhmaṇ, *gr̥ṣma* (summer) for a Rājanya, *śarad* (autumn) for a Vaiśya and *śiśira* (winter) for all (the BŚS is silent on the last one). An exactly similar passage is found in one of the *śrautasūtras* of the *Maitrāyaṇī śākhā* of the *Kṛṣṇayajurveda*, VārŚS I.4.1.1-2. A comparatively later *Śuklayajurvedic* ritual text, KŚS I.1.9 and IV.7.5-7 instructed the Rathakāras and the Vaiśyas to establish sacrificial fire in *varṣā* (rainy season), a Brāhmaṇ in *vasanta* (spring) and a Kṣatriya in *gr̥ṣma* (summer). Following this same tradition of the early *Taittirīya* ritual texts, BGS II.5.6 prescribed suitable seasons for performing *Upanayana* for different *varṇas* as *varṣā* (rainy season) for a Rathakāra, *vasanta* (spring) for a Brāhmaṇ, *gr̥ṣma* (summer) for a Rājanya, *śarad* (autumn) for a Vaiśya and *vasanta* (spring) for all.

The BhGS I.1 similarly prescribed the suitable season for performing this rite for a Rathakāra as *varṣā* (rainy season), *vasanta* (spring) for a Brāhmaṇ, *grīṣma* (summer) or *hemanta* (fall) for a Rājanya, *śarad* (autumn) for a Vaiśya and *śiśira* (winter) for all.¹⁴ These two early texts of the *Taittirīya śākhā* are probably the only extant vedic ritual texts, which explicitly prescribed the *Upanayana* rite for a Rathakāra.¹⁵ With the downfall of the social status of the Rathakāras, later *Taittirīya* ritual texts, namely, the ĀpGS, the HGS, the ĀgGS and the VkhGS did not mention anything about the eligibility of this social group for performing *Upanayana*. But again, a late vedic ritual text of this *śākhā*, BGŚS II.8.5 mentioned about the specific rules for the *Upanayana* rite for the Rathakāras. As mentioned in the chapter 3, MDh X.41 allowed a male belonging to any one of the six *anuloma varṇasaṅkara* castes to perform *Upanayana*. BGŚS II.8.8-11 prescribed the rules for the *Upanayana* rites for various *anuloma varṇasaṅkara* castes which included the rules for the Ambasthas and the Karaṇas also.¹⁶ Later, in early 12th century, Vijnāneśvara while explaining YDh I.92, 95, mentioned that a male belonging to any one of the six *anuloma varṇasaṅkara* castes or the mixed-castes believed as formed by further hypergamous marriages among the six *anuloma varṇasaṅkara* castes is also eligible for *Upanayana*.¹⁷ Max Müller mentioned about a manuscript of a very late text, the *Samskāraganapati* (1750) which actually altered a passage of the ĀpDh (I.1.1.6) to allow the *Upanayana* rite for a *Śūdra*.¹⁸

6.2.2 Age for *Upanayana*

Prompted by the contemporary perception of social stratification, the vedic ritual texts prescribed different ages for the performance of *Upanayana* depending on the *varṇa* of the male child. ĀpGS IV.10.1-3, GGS II.10.1-3, KhādGS II.4.1,3,5, BGS II.5.2 and GDh I.6,8,12 prescribed the eighth year from conception for a Brāhmaṇ boy, the eleventh year for a Kṣatriya boy and the twelfth year for a Vaiśya boy as the preferred age for this initiation rite.¹⁹ ŚGS II.1.1,4,5 also prescribed the same ages for the boys of three *varṇas* for performance of this rite but it added an option for a Brāhmaṇ boy to perform this rite in the tenth year after conception. BhGS I.1 prescribed to perform this rite in the eighth year from conception for a Brāhmaṇ boy, tenth year from conception for a Kṣatriya boy, twelfth year from conception for a Vaiśya boy and ninth year from conception for others.

The vedic ritual texts also fixed the maximum age limits for the performance of *Upanayana*. According to ŚGS II.1.6, 7, 8, ĀGS I.19.5-6, BGS III.13.5, GDh I.13-14 and MDh II.38, the maximum age limits for performing this rite are till the sixteenth year for a Brāhmaṇ boy; till the twenty-second year for a Kṣatriya boy and till the twenty-fourth year for a Vaiśya boy. ŚGS II.1.9-13 and ĀGS I.19.6-7 declared that one, who fails to perform *Upanayana* within the stipulated age limits, is considered as *patitasāvitrīka* (literally, “one who lost the right to learn the *Sāvitrī*”). No one should perform *Upanayana* for him nor should teach him, nor perform any sacrifice for him or should interact with him.²⁰ MDh II.39 mentioned that one who has not undergone the *samskāra* (*Upanayana*) at the proper time becomes a *vrātya*, a *sāvitrīpatita* and spurned by *Āryas*. Even at the time of distress, a Brāhmaṇ, should never establish any relation with him, either vedic (by officiating sacrifices) or matrimonial, until he is duly sanctified according to the rule.²¹

ĀGS I.19.1-4 prescribed to perform this rite in the eighth year from either birth or conception for a Brāhmaṇ boy, in the eleventh year for a Kṣatriya boy and in the twelfth year for a Vaiśya boy.

PGS II.2.1-4 also prescribed to perform this rite in the eighth year from either birth or conception for a Brāhmaṇ boy, in the eleventh year for a Rājanya boy and in the twelfth year for a Vaiśya boy. It allowed the option for every ‘twice-born’ boy to perform this rite at an age which is considered to be auspicious (by the family).²²

KGS 41.1-3 prescribed the seventh year from birth as the preferred age for a Brāhmaṇ boy, the

ninth year for a Rājanya boy and the eleventh year for a Vaiśya boy. HGS I.1.1.1-3 prescribed that *Upanayana* should be performed at the age of seven for a Brāhmaṇ boy, at the age of eleven for a Rājanya boy and at the age of twelve for a Vaiśya boy. Mātṛdatta, the medieval scholiast, while commenting on these three aphorisms, said that the prescribed ages are to be calculated from birth. MGS I.22.1 did not make any *varṇa* distinctions and laid down general rule for every ‘twice-born’ boy that *Upāyana* should be performed in the seventh or ninth year. KauśS is silent on the age of *Upanayana*.

In the early centuries of the first millennium BCE, *Upanayana* was associated with the studies of the Vedas, mostly memorizing these sacred oral compositions. GBr I.2.5 prescribed the period for *vedabrahmacarya* (literally, “(observance of) celibacy for acquiring the Vedas”) as maximum 48 years for studying all four Vedas and minimum 12 years to study each Veda. It also allowed everybody to choose the option according to his ability.²³ Following this same tradition, PGS II.3.13-15, ĀGS I.22.3-4 and GDh II.45-47 prescribed the similar periods for *brahmacarya* and allowed the option for learning till acquiring the knowledge. ĀpDh I.1.2.11-16 also prescribed the same maximum and minimum number of years of *brahmacarya*. But, BDh I.3.1-4 mentioned the period of 48 years of *vedabrahmacarya* for studying as an ancient practice. It prescribed the options of studying 24 years, 12 years for each Veda, one year for each *kāṇḍa* (of the TS) and studying till acquiring the knowledge. After the development of the writing system in South Asia in the mid-1st millennium BCE,²⁴ the requirement for memorizing the vedic texts was reduced to a certain extent (but the tradition of oral transmission of the vedic compositions from the teacher to the student was continued till recent). As a result, *Upanayana* was slowly disassociated from the actual vedic study and its associated celibacy and slowly transformed into a rite of institution. This changed perception is explicitly expressed much later by Śabarāsvāmī (ca. 4th century) on MīmS I.3.4. Ridiculing the ancient practice, he stated that 48 years of *vedabrahmacarya* was a device of those who wanted to hide their impotence. Further later, Aparārka (early 12th century) cited a verse from the *Brahmapurāṇa*, which listed the long period of *brahmacarya* as one of the actions forbidden in the *Kaliyuga* (current mythical epoch).²⁵ An almost similar verse is cited by SmC, but as of the *Ādipurāṇa*.

As a fallout of this changed perception, some of the comparatively later vedic ritual texts linked the preferred age for *Upanayana* with the desires of a person rather than the vedic studies. JGS I.12, although like early vedic ritual texts prescribed the seventh year, the eleventh year and the twelfth year as the preferable ages for performance of this rite for the young males of Brāhmaṇ, Kṣatriya and Vaiśya *varṇa* respectively but then added that for a Brāhmaṇ boy the age for performance can be advanced to the fifth year, if he desires *brahmavarcasa* (eminence in vedic knowledge) or can be extended up to the ninth year if he desires a long life. BGS II.5.5 prescribed the initiation rite in the seventh year for a person desirous of *brahmavarcasa*, in the eighth year if he desires a long life, in the ninth year if he desires *tejaḥ* (vigour), in the tenth year if he wants an abundance of food, in the eleventh year if he desires strength, in the twelfth year if he desires cattle, in the thirteenth year if he requires intelligence, in the fourteenth year if he needs prosperity, in the fifteenth year if he has an adversary and in the sixteenth year if he needs everything.²⁶ ĀpDh I.1.1.20-26 also prescribed the same list of the desires and their corresponding preferred years for performance, but its list ended in the twelfth year. The list in HDh XXVI.1.22-23 is almost same as the ĀpDh and it also ended in the twelfth year, but it reversed the desires behind performing *Upanayana* in the seventh and eighth year. VkhGS II.3 prescribed to perform this rite for a Brāhmaṇ boy in the fifth year from *Garbhādhāna* if he desires *brahmavarcasa*, in the eighth year if he desires long life and in the ninth year if he desires fortune. For the young males of Kṣatriya and Vaiśya *varṇas* (for whom, memorizing vedic texts was not essential) it prescribed the eleventh year and the twelfth year like the early vedic ritual texts. GDh I.7 allowed performing *Upanayana* for a Brāhmaṇ boy in the fifth year of the

ninth year according to the objective in mind. MDh II.37 extending this perception to all three *varṇas*, prescribed to advance the preferred age to the fifth year for a Vipra (Brāhmaṇ) boy desiring *brahmavarcasa*, the sixth year for a Rājan (Kṣatriya) boy aspiring for power and the eighth year for Vaiśya boy who desires to become a successful entrepreneur.²⁷

Mānasollāsa 3.12.1283-1284 prescribed to perform *Mauñjīnibandhana* either in the eighth or eleventh year (for a Kṣatriya boy) from conception on a Monday, Tuesday, Thursday or Friday. It also mentioned the rite as *Vratibandha*.²⁸

In the medieval digests, along with preferable ages, the auspicious times for performance of *Upanayana* were discussed in details. *Rājamārtaṇḍa*, an astrological text cited in SmP stated that a young male whose *Upanayana* is performed in the month of *Māgha* would become wealthy, in the month of *Phālguna* knowledgeable, in *Caitra* intelligent and well-versed in the Vedas, in *Vaiśākha* provided with all kinds of enjoyments, in *Jyaiṣṭha* wise and great, in *Āṣāḍha*, a great conqueror of enemies and a well-known scholar.²⁹

6.2.3 Insignia for *Upanayana*

The early references to the insignia for a *brahmacārī* are found in the AVŚ and AVP. In the vedic ritual texts and the *dharmaśāstra* texts, mostly four insignia are prescribed for the *Upanayana* rite and the subsequent period of *brahmacarya*: a *vāsa* (lower garment), an *ajina* (animal skin) used as upper garment, a *mekhalā* (girdle of grass) and a *daṇḍa* (staff). The numerous variations made for the insignia for the three 'twice-born' *varṇas* in these texts defy any logic, except for the Brāhmaṇs, which are more or less same in all texts. It is doubtful whether these rules were actually followed ever. In fact, MGS I.22.7 and 11 while prescribing the insignia did not differentiate based on one's *varṇa*. It uniformly prescribed the *mekhalā* of triple cord of *muñja* grass, the *kṛṣṇa ajina* (black antelope skin) and the *daṇḍa* made of any wood suitable for sacrifice for all irrespective of their *varṇa*. YDh I.29 did not even mention any particular rule for the insignia for *Upanayana* for any *varṇa*. It only mentioned that the four insignia are *daṇḍa*, *ajina*, *upavīta* (a new addition) and *mekhalā*. Further later, VDh I.23 mentioned five insignia, *daṇḍa*, *kaupīna*, *upavīta*, *ajina* and *mekhalā*.

6.2.3.1 The *vāsa* (lower garment) and the *ajina* (animal skin)

The earliest reference of wearing an animal skin during the period of *brahmacarya* is found in AVŚ XI.5.6 (AVP XVI.153.6), which mentioned that a *brahmacārī* wears a *kārṣṇa* (black antelope skin) and keeps long beard. In GBr I.2.2, it is mentioned that the *mṛga ajina* (deerskin) is symbolical of *brahmavarcasa*.

Among the early vedic ritual texts, ĀGS I.19.8-9 prescribed that, a young male should wear an *ahata* garment or an *ajina* (animal skin). If he wears a garment, it should be a dyed one, viz., the *kāśāya* (saffron coloured) garment for a Brāhmaṇ boy, the *māñjiṣṭha* (red coloured) garment for a Kṣatriya boy and the *hāridra* (yellow coloured) garment for a Vaiśya boy. For *ajina* (animal skin), the *eṇa* (black antelope) skin was prescribed for a Brāhmaṇ boy, the *ruru* (spotted deer) skin was prescribed for a Kṣatriya boy and the *aja* (goat) skin was prescribed for a Vaiśya boy. GGS II.10.8 and JGS I.12 also prescribed the same animal skins for upper garment as the ĀGS, but JGS added the option of using an *eṇa* (black antelope) skin for all as an alternate. PGS II.5.16-20 prescribed the garments of *śaṇa* (hemp) and *kṣumā* (linen) for the young males of Brāhmaṇ and Rājanya *varṇas* and the *āvika* (woollen) garment for a young male of Vaiśya *varṇa*. It also prescribed the same animal skins as the *uttarīya* (upper garment) for the young males of Brāhmaṇ and Kṣatriya *varṇas* as the ĀGS, but it provided the option of wearing either the goatskin or the cow hide for a young male of Vaiśya *varṇa*. It also instructed that if the prescribed skin is not available, the cowhide should be used by everybody irrespective of his *varṇa*. ŚGS II.1.2, 4, 5 and KauśGS II.1.1,3,4 also

prescribed the skins of *eṇa* (black antelope) and *ruru* (spotted deer) for the Brāhmaṇ and Kṣatriya young males respectively but it prescribed the cow hide for a Vaiśya young male. KGS 41.13 prescribed the *eṇa* (black antelope) skin for a Brāhmaṇ boy, the *vyāghra* (tiger) skin for a Rājanya boy and the *ruru* (spotted deer) skin for Vaiśya boy. MGS I.22.11 prescribed the *kṛṣṇa ajina* (black antelope skin) for all irrespective of their *varṇa*. GGS II.10.7, 11, 13 prescribed the *vāsa* (lower garment) of either the *kṣumā* (linen) or *śaṇa* (hemp) for a Brāhmaṇ boy, the *kārpāsa* (cotton) lower garment for a Kṣatriya boy and the lower garment made of *ūrṇā* (wool) for a Vaiśya boy. In case the dress material prescribed for the *varṇa* of the performer is not available, it allowed everybody to use any one of the other two prescribed dress materials.³⁰ JGS I.12 prescribed the lower garment of either *kṣumā* (linen) or *śaṇa* (hemp) for all, irrespective of their *varṇa*.

ĀpDh I.1.2.39-3.10 instructed that *śaṇa* (hemp), *kṣumā* (linen) and *ajina* (animal skin) should be used for the *vāsa* (lower garment). It mentioned that some (authority) had instructed that, the garment should be dyed with *kāśāya* (saffron) colour (only. But) the garment should be *māñjiṣṭha* (red coloured) for a Kṣatriya and *hāridra* (yellow coloured) for a Vaiśya. This text prescribed the skin of a *hariṇa* deer or a *kṛṣṇa eṇa* (black antelope) doe for a Brāhmaṇ, the skin of a *ruru* (spotted deer) for a Rājanya and the skin of a *basta* (goat) for a Vaiśya. It also allowed the young males of all *varṇas* to wear an *āvika* (sheep skin) or a *kambala* (woollen blanket). It mentioned that, according to a *Brāhmaṇa* passage, a person should wear only an *ajina* (animal skin) if he desires to increase his Brahmanical might or he should wear only a *vastra* (cotton garment), if he desires to increase his martial valour. A person, who desires both, should wear both. But, one should wear only an animal skin over his upper part of the body. VasDh XI.61-67 prescribed the animal skins of *kṛṣṇa* (black antelope) and *ruru* (spotted deer) for the upper garments of the Brāhmaṇ and the Kṣatriya, but it prescribed either the cowhide or the goatskin for the upper garment of the Vaiśya. As *vāsa* (lower garment), it prescribed a white *ahata* cotton cloth for a Brāhmaṇ, a *māñjiṣṭha* (red coloured) cotton cloth for a Kṣatriya and either a *hāridra* (yellow coloured) cotton cloth or a *kauśeya* (silk) for a Vaiśya. Alternately, it allowed everybody to wear undyed cotton garments.

BDh I.3.14, GDh I.16 and MDh II.41 following the tradition of the most of the vedic ritual texts, prescribed that a Brāhmaṇ boy should wear the *kṛṣṇa* (black antelope) skin, a Kṣatriya boy should wear the *ruru* (spotted deer) skin and a Vaiśya boy should wear the *basta* (goat) skin (as upper garment). GDh I.17-20 prescribed that everybody irrespective of his *varṇa* should wear *vāsa* (lower garment) of hemp, linen, *cīra* (tree bark) or a *kutapa* (blanket made of the hair of the mountain goat) or else of raw *kārpāsa* (cotton). It mentioned that some (authority) had prescribed to wear a dyed garment; dyed with tree resin, madder and turmeric for the Brāhmaṇ, Kṣatriya and Vaiśya young males respectively. MDh II.41 instructed that the young males of Brāhmaṇ, Kṣatriya and Vaiśya *varṇas* should wear garments of hemp, linen and wool respectively.³¹

A late *dharmasūtra* text, ViṣDh XXVII.20, *Śaṅkhasmṛti* II.10 and AgnP 153.9 prescribed the skins of *mṛga* (deer), *vyāghra* (tiger) and *basta* (goat) for the young males of Brāhmaṇ, Kṣatriya and Vaiśya *varṇas* respectively. ViṣDh XXVII.19 and AgnP 153.11 prescribed the *upavīta* and *vāsa* (garment) of cotton and wool for the Brāhmaṇ and the Vaiśya respectively. For the Kṣatriya, the ViṣDh prescribed hemp and the AgnP prescribed linen. Kālidāsa in *Raghuvamśa* III.31 mentioned that Raghu (a Kṣatriya) put on the skin of *ruru* (spotted deer) after his *Upanayana*.

6.2.3.2 The *mekhalā* (girdle)

An early reference to the *mekhalā* (girdle) of a *brahmacārī* can be traced in AVŚ VI.133.3 (AVP V.33.3), but its material is not mentioned. In the vedic ritual texts, the materials for the *mekhalā* (girdle) for the initiated young male are prescribed according to his *varṇa*. ĀGS I.19.10-11, ŚGS II.1.15-17, KauṣGS II.1.13-15 and BGS II.5.13 prescribed that for a Brāhmaṇ boy, the *mekhalā* (girdle) should be made of *muñja* (*Saccharum munja*) grass, for a Kṣatriya boy the girdle should be

made of *dhanurjyā* (bowstring) and for a Vaiśya boy the girdle should be woollen. BGS II.5.13 also prescribed the *mekhalā* of *muñja* grass for all as the alternate. VārGS 5.7, VkhGS II.4, BDh I.3.13 and VasDh XI.58-60 also prescribed the same as the BGS for the young males of Brāhmaṇ and Kṣatriya *varṇas* but these texts prescribed *śaṇa* (hemp) for a young male of Vaiśya *varṇa*. GGS II.10.9 prescribed the *mekhalās* of *muñja* grass, *kāśa* (*Saccharum spontaneum*) grass and *tambala* for a Brāhmaṇ boy, Kṣatriya boy and a Vaiśya boy respectively. Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa, the medieval scholiast, while explaining this aphorism explained *tambala* as *śaṇa* (hemp). PGS II.5.21-24 prescribed that the *raśanā* (girdle) for a Brāhmaṇ boy should be made of *muñja* grass, the bowstring for a Kṣatriya boy and *mūrvā* (*Sanseveria Roxburghiana*) fibre for a Vaiśya boy. In case of non-availability of the prescribed materials, it allowed the options of using *kuśa* grass, *āsmantaka* (*Bauhinia tomentosa*) fibre and *balbaja* (*Eleusine indica*) grass for the young males of Brāhmaṇ, Kṣatriya and Vaiśya *varṇa* respectively. JGS I.12 prescribed that for a Brāhmaṇ boy, the *mekhalā* should be of *muñja* grass, for a Rājanya boy it should be of *mūrvā* fibre and for a Vaiśya boy, it should be of *tāmala* bark mixed with *muñja* grass. Alternately, for the young males of all *varṇas* it may be of *muñja* grass. MGS I.22.7 prescribed the *mekhalā* of triple cord of *muñja* grass for everybody irrespective of his *varṇa*.³² KGS 41.12 prescribed the *mekhalās* of triple cord of *muñja* grass, *dhanurjyā* (bowstring) of *mūrvā* fibre and *sūtra* (cotton thread) for the young males of Brāhmaṇ, Kṣatriya and Vaiśya *varṇa* respectively. A later text, GDh I.15 also prescribed the same. KauśS 57.1-3 prescribed the *mekhalās* of *bhadramuñja* (*Vallis solanacea*) grass for a Brāhmaṇ boy, *mūrvā* fibre or bowstring for a Kṣatriya boy and *kṣumā* (linen) for a Vaiśya boy.

ĀpDh I.1.2.33-37 prescribed the *mekhalā* for a Brāhmaṇ boy should be of a triple cord of *muñja* grass and the grass should have its ends turned to the right. For a Rājanya boy, it should be a *gyā* (bowstring) or a string of *muñja* grass with a piece of iron intertwined in it. For a Vaiśya boy, it should be of *āvīsūtra* (woollen thread) or according to some (authority) a *sairī* (yoke-string) or a string made with *tāmala* bark.³³ MDh II.42-43 stated that the *mekhalā* should be made for a Vipra boy with a triple cord of *muñja* grass, smooth and soft, for a Kṣatriya boy with a *gyā* (bowstring) of *mūrvā* fibre and for a Vaiśya boy with a string of hemp. In case, *muñja* grass (and other prescribed materials) is not available, the girdle should be made with *kuśa* grass, *āsmantaka* fibre or *balbaja* grass for the young males of Brāhmaṇ, Kṣatriya and Vaiśya *varṇa* respectively. The girdle should be wrapped three times (around the waist) and one, three or five knots to be made.³⁴ A late *dharmasūtra* text, ViṣDh XXVII.18 prescribed the *mekhalās* of *muñja* grass, *gyā* and *balbaja* grass for the young males of Brāhmaṇ, Kṣatriya and Vaiśya *varṇa* respectively. A medieval digest, SmC quoted a passage of Paithīnāsi, which prescribed the *mekhalā* of *muñja* grass or *āsmantaka* fibre for a Brāhmaṇ (this portion is also quoted by Aparārka); the *mekhalā* of *balbaja* grass or *mūrvā* fibre for a Kṣatriya and the *mekhalā* of hemp or linen for a Vaiśya.³⁵

6.2.3.3 The *daṇḍa* (staff)

Most of the vedic ritual texts prescribed three different woods for the *daṇḍa* (staff) of the initiated young male according to his *varṇa* and it is influenced by the earlier instructions in the *Brahmana* texts for the sacrificial woods according to the *varṇa* of the sacrificer. ĀGS I.19.12-13; I.20.1 prescribed that for a Brāhmaṇ boy the *daṇḍa* (staff) should be of *palāśa* (*Butea monosperma*) wood, for a Kṣatriya boy the staff should be of *udumbara* wood and for a Vaiśya boy the staff should be of *bilva* (*Aegle marmelos*) wood. It allowed that the *daṇḍa* made of any one of the three woods (viz., *palāśa*, *udumbara* or *bilva*) can be used alternately by a young male belonging to any of three *varṇas*.³⁶ PGS II.5.25-28 expressed a slightly different view. Prescribing the same as the ĀGS for a Brāhmaṇ boy, it reversed the woods prescribed for the staff of a Kṣatriya boy and a Vaiśya boy to *bilva* and *udumbara*. Like the ĀGS, it also allowed the alternate usage of any one of the three woods by all three *varṇas*. ŚGS II.1.18-24 said that for a Brāhmaṇ boy, the *daṇḍa* should be of either *palāśa* wood or *bilva* wood, for a Kṣatriya boy the *daṇḍa* should be *nyagrodha* (*Ficus*

benghalensis) wood and for a Vaiśya boy, it should be of *udumbara* wood. The length of the *daṇḍa* for a Brāhmaṇ boy should be up to his tip of nose (from his toes), for a Kṣatriya boy, it should be up to his forehead and for a Vaiśya boy, it should be up to his hair. Alternately, everybody may use the staff with any combination of three prescribed woods and lengths. KauṣGS II.1.16-24 also laid down same rules, but added an option of *khādira* wood for a Kṣatriya boy. KGS 41.22 and KauṣS 57.4-6 prescribed the staff of *palāśa* wood, *aśvattha* (*Ficus religiosa*) wood and *nyagrodha* wood for the young Brāhmaṇ, Rājanya and Vaiśya males respectively.³⁷ GGS II.10.10 prescribed the *daṇḍa* of *parṇa* (*palāśa*) wood for a Brāhmaṇ boy, the *daṇḍa* of *bilva* wood for a Kṣatriya boy and the *daṇḍa* of *aśvattha* wood for a Vaiśya boy. JGS I.12 prescribed the *daṇḍa* of *palāśa* wood for a Brāhmaṇ boy, but instructed to use a *daṇḍa* of *bilva* wood, if he desires *brahmavarcasa*. It prescribed the *daṇḍa* of *nyagrodha* wood and *udumbara* wood for a Rājanya boy and a Vaiśya boy respectively. As their alternates, it prescribed the use of the *daṇḍa* of *palāśa* wood for everybody. This text prescribed the length of the *daṇḍa* for everybody up to his tip of nose (from his toes). BGS II.5.17 prescribed the *daṇḍa* of either *palāśa* wood or *bilva* wood for a Brāhmaṇ boy, the *daṇḍa* of either *skandhajamavāṅgra* (prop root) of *nyagrodha* or *rohītaka* (*Andersonia rohitaka*) wood for a Rājanya boy and the *daṇḍa* of either *badara* (*Zizyphus jujuba*) or *udumbara* wood for a Vaiśya boy. The rules for the *daṇḍa* prescribed by other vedic ritual texts belonging to the *Taittirīya śākhā*, viz., ĀpGS IV.11.15, ĀpDh I.1.2.38, HGS I.1.1.17, BhGS I.2, ĀgGS I.1.1 and VkhGS II.4 are almost similar to the BGS. MGS I.22.11 laid down a simple rule for everybody irrespective of his *varṇa* that the *daṇḍa* may be made of the wood of any tree suitable for the sacrifice. BDh I.3.15 also prescribed the same and added that the length of the *daṇḍa* should be up to the crown of the head, the forehead and the tip of the nose (for the Brāhmaṇ, the Kṣatriya and the Vaiśya respectively). GDh I.21-24 prescribed the *daṇḍa* of *bilva* or *palāśa* wood for the Brāhmaṇ and the *daṇḍa* of *aśvattha* and *pīlu* woods for the Kṣatriya and the Vaiśya respectively. Alternately, for everybody, the *daṇḍa* may be made of any wood suitable for the sacrifice. The *daṇḍa* should be undamaged, curved like a *yūpa* (sacrificial post) at the tip and *saśalka* (have its bark intact). KGS 1.5 also prescribed for a *saśalka daṇḍa*. VasDh XI.52-57, following the tradition of the vedic ritual texts, prescribed the *daṇḍa* made of *palāśa* wood and of length up to the hair for the Brāhmaṇ, the *daṇḍa* made of *nyagrodha* wood and of length up to the forehead for the Kṣatriya and the *daṇḍa* made of *udumbara* wood and of length up to the nose for the Vaiśya.

According to MDh II.45-47, a Brāhmaṇ boy should have a *daṇḍa* of *bilva* or *palāśa* wood, a Kṣatriya boy should have a *daṇḍa* of *vaṭa* (*Ficus benghalensis*) or *khādira* (*Acacia catechu*) wood and a Vaiśya boy should have a *daṇḍa* of *pīlu* (*Salvadora persica*) or *udumbara* wood. The length of the *daṇḍa* for a Brāhmaṇ boy should be up to his hair (from his toes), for a Kṣatriya boy, it should be up to his forehead and for a Vaiśya boy, it should be up to his tip of nose. Every *daṇḍa* should be straight, without blemishes, not with frightening look and its bark should be intact and not damaged by fire.³⁸ A late *dharmasūtra* text, ViṣDh XXVII.21 prescribed the *daṇḍa* of *palāśa* wood, *khādira* wood and *udumbara* wood for the young males of Brāhmaṇ, Kṣatriya and Vaiśya *varṇa* respectively.

A late *dharmasāstra* text, *Śaṅkhasmṛti* II.11 stipulated the *daṇḍa* of *parṇa* (*palāśa*), *pippala* (*aśvattha*) and *bilva* woods for a Brāhmaṇ, a Kṣatriya and a Vaiśya respectively. AgnP 153.9 also prescribed the *daṇḍa* of *parṇa* (*palāśa*), *pippala* (*aśvattha*) and *bilva* woods for the Brāhmaṇ, Kṣatriya and Vaiśya *varṇa* respectively. A medieval digest, SmC quoted Yama, an authority on *smṛti*, who allowed two options for the *daṇḍa* for each *varṇa*. For a Brāhmaṇ, the options are *bilva* or *palāśa* wood; for a Kṣatriya, the options are *aśvattha* or *khādira* wood and for a Vaiśya, the options are *udumbara* or *plakṣa* (*Ficus infectoria*) wood.³⁹

6.2.4 Descriptions in vedic ritual texts and the *dharmasāstras*

Early systematic descriptions of the rite of *Upanayana* are found in the *gṛhyasūtras*. Every

gr̥hyasūtra has described this rite as an obligatory rite of initiation for young male. Detailed descriptions of this rite are found in ŚGS II.1.1-30, 2.1-15, 3.1-5, 4.1-6, 5.1-12 and 6.1-7; KauṣGS II.1.1-35, 2.1-17 and 3.1-17; ĀGS I.19.1-13, 20.1-11, 21.1-7 and 22.1-16; GGS II.10.1-46; KhādGS II.4.1-31; JGS I.12; PGS II.2.1-21; 3.1-10, 4.1-8 and 5.1-28; BGS II.5.1-71; BhGS I.1-10; ĀpGS IV.10.1-12 and 11.1-19; HGS I.1.1.1-27, 1.2.1-18, 1.3.1-14, 1.4.1-13, 2.5.1-15, 2.6.1-11 and 2.7.1-25; ĀgGS I.1; VkhGS II.3-8; KGS 41.1-22; MGS I.22.1-21; VārGS 5.1-39, KauśS 55.1-20, 56.1-17 and 57.1-31 and KauthG XV.

The major elements of this rite found in the *gr̥hyasūtras* are:

- *Upanayanahoma*, the preliminary sacrifice
- *Aśmārohaṇa*, the ritual of mounting the stone (prescribed by some texts),
- A formal interview of the young male by the *ācārya*,
- The rituals of holding the hand and touching the heart, shoulders and navel of the young male by the *ācārya*,
- The investiture of the insignia (*daṇḍa*, *mekhalā*, *ajina* and *vāsa*),
- *Sāvitrīyupadeśa*, the ritual of teaching *Sāvitrī*,
- *Bhikṣācaraṇa*, the ceremonial begging of alms, and,
- *Trirātravrata*, the vows for next three nights (prescribed by some texts).

6.2.4.1 Preparations for *Upanayana*

Several variations are found in the descriptions of the preparations for the *Upanayana* rite in the *gr̥hyasūtra* texts. PGS II.2.5 prescribed that before the performance of this rite, food should be served to the Brāhmaṇs, the head of the young male to be initiated should be shaved and he should be adorned with ornaments. BGS II.5.7 instructed that before the performance of this rite, food should be served to the Brāhmaṇs. Then, they should be made to utter benediction. Next, the head of the young male should be tonsured silently following the same procedure as the *Caula* rite. He should take a bath, put on a clean garment and the *yajñopavīta* should be given to him with a *mantra* of unknown origin, “This *yajñopavīta* is very sacred, it emerged along with Prajāpati.” ŚGS II.1.26-27, before the rite, the young male should shave his head, take a bath and adorn himself. According to ĀGS I.19.8, before the performance of *Upanayana*, the young male should be adorned, his hair should be shaved and arranged and he should wear an *ahata* garment. GGS II.10.7 prescribed that on the day of the rite, in the early morning the boy should be served food, his hair should be arranged (shaved). Then, he should take a bath, adorn him with ornaments and put on an *ahata* garment. JGS I.12 prescribed that having taken a bath, the boy should be adorned, his eyes should be anointed and the *nāpitakṛtya* (literally, “the hair-styling done by a barber”, shaving of head) should be carried out. Then the boy should be made to wear an *ahata* garment with one of the three different *mantras* according to his *varṇa*. For a Brāhmaṇ boy, the *mantra* should be, “We dress, O Soma, this (boy) with the auspicious word, for the sake of great *śrotra* (learning), so that it (this garment) may lead him to old age and he may long watch over *śrotra* (learning). You live a hundred autumns, you see a hundred autumns.” For a Kṣatriya boy, the *mantra* should be, “We dress, O Indra, this (boy) with the auspicious word, for the sake of great *rāṣṭra* (power), so that it (this garment) may lead him to old age and he may long watch over *rāṣṭra* (power). You live a hundred autumns, you see a hundred autumns.” Similarly, for a Vaiśya boy, the *mantra* should be, “We dress, O Poṣa, this (boy) with the auspicious word, for the sake of great *poṣa* (wealth), so that it (this garment) may lead him to old age and he may long watch over *poṣa* (wealth). You live a hundred autumns, you see a hundred autumns.”

6.2.4.2 *Upanayanahoma*

Several *gr̥hyasūtra* texts prescribed an element of *homa* (offering oblations in to the sacrificial fire) during *Upanayana* rite. This element was later known as *Upanayanahoma*. The proper rite,

according to ĀGS I.20.2 should begin with the *homa* by the *ācārya* (teacher), and while the young male touching his hand. GGS II.10.16 and KhādGS II.4.7 prescribed that this *homa* should be performed with the five *mantras* from the MBr (I.6.9-13) beginning with, “Agni, lord of the *vrata* (vow).”

After the *Upanayanahoma*, ĀGS I.20.4-5 prescribed that the *ācārya* should sit on the north of the fire facing east and the boy should sit facing his *ācārya*. Both the *ācārya* and the boy should fill their *añjali* (joined hands) with water with the *mantra* (RV V.82.1), “We chose that of Savitṛ” and the *ācārya* should pour all water from his *añjali* (joined hands) to the boy's joined hands. This element was later known as *Añjalipūraṇa*. Next, the *ācārya* should seize the boy's hands together with the thumbs, three times. First time, he should seize with the verse, “By the order of Savitṛ, with the arms of Aśvins, with the hands of Pūṣaṇ, I seize your hands, oh so and so (name of the boy).”; second time with the verse, “Savitṛ has seized your hands; O, so and so (name of the boy).” and the third time with the verse “Agni is your *ācārya*, O, so and so (name of the boy).”⁴⁰

MGS I.22.3 and KGS 41.10 prescribed that after the *homa*, the boy should taste some yoghurt thrice, each time with the *mantra* beginning with, “I praise Dadhikrāvan” (MS I.5.1 and KS VI.9).

6.2.4.3 *Aśmārohaṇa*: Mounting the stone

Most of the Kṛṣṇayajurvedic ritual texts, namely, KGS 41.8, MGS I.22.12, BGS II.5.10, BhGS I.8, ĀpGS IV.10.9, HGS I.1.3.14-I.1.4.1 and VkhGS II.5 prescribed the element of *Aśmārohaṇa* (literally, “mounting the stone”) after *homa*. JGS I.12 prescribed this element after the boy is made to put on an *ahata* garment and before *homa*. All vedic ritual texts instructed that the boy should be made to tread with his right foot on a stone kept on the north of the sacrificial fire. The *mantra* prescribed in HGS I.1.4.1 for this element is, “Tread on this stone; like a stone be firm. Destroy those who seek to do you harm; overcome your enemies.” Almost similar *mantras* are prescribed by JGS I.12, BGS II.5.10, BhGS I.8, ĀpGS IV.10.9 (ĀpMP II.2.2) and VkhGS II.5 for this element.⁴¹

6.2.4.4 The investiture of the insignia

The investiture of insignia to young male was a very significant element of *Upanayana* rite when the *gṛhyasūtras* were composed.

ŚGS II.1.29-30, 2.1-2 prescribed that after *Upanayanahoma*, the *ācārya* should stand facing east and the boy should stand facing west. Then the *ācārya* should first invest an *ahata* lower garment, an *ajina* (animal skin) with a *mantra*. Then, he should tie the *mekhalā* three times around the waist of the boy, repeating a *mantra* three times and tie one, three or five knots on the *mekhalā*.

According to ĀGS I.22.1-2, after *Sāvitrīyupadeśa*, the *mekhalā* should be tied to the waist of the boy and the *daṇḍa* should be handed over to him. Then, the *ācārya* should instruct the boy the duties of a *brahmacārī*, “A *brahmacārī* are you, sip water, do service, do not sleep in the daytime and learn the Vedas under the tutelage of the *ācārya*.”

GGS II.10.35-37 prescribed that next to *Paridāna*, the *ācārya* should go towards the north of the sacrificial fire and sit down facing east on the *darbha* grass with their tips pointing towards north. Bending his right knee, the boy should also sit down facing the *ācārya* on the *darbha* grass with their tips pointing towards north. Then, the *ācārya* should tie the *mekhalā* made of *muñja* grass around the waist of the boy thrice from left to right and cause the boy to repeat the *mantras*, “Here, protecting me from evil words, purifying my kind as a purifier, bringing strength from *prāṇa* and *apāna*, this blessed *mekhalā*, sisterly goddess has come to me.” (MBr I.6.28) and “A protector of *rta* (righteousness), a defender of mortification, slaying the goblins, overpowering the foes, O blessed *mekhalā*, surround me from all sides; may we, that wear you, not perish.” (MBr I.6.29). Almost similar *mantras* are prescribed in JGS I.12 for recitation, while tying the *mekhalā*.

PGS II.2.8-12 prescribed that, while the *ācārya* is tying the *mekhalā* around his waist, the boy should either recite a *mantra* similar to MBr I.6.28 or “A youth, well attired, dressed, came to this place. He, being born, becomes glorious. Wise sages extol him, devout ones, turning their minds to the gods.” (almost similar to RV III.8.4). Alternately, the *mekhalā* can be tied silently. Next, the *daṇḍa* should be given to the boy and the boy should accept it with the *mantra*, “My *daṇḍa*, which fell down to the ground in the open air, that I take up again for the sake of long life, *brahma* (vedic knowledge) and *brahmavarcasa* (eminence in vedic knowledge).”

ĀpGS IV.10.10-11 prescribed that after *Āsmārohaṇa*, the *ācārya* should recite two *mantras* (ĀpMP II.2.3-4) over a garment that has been spun and woven in a single day. Then, he should cause the young male to put on the garment with three *mantras* (ĀpMP II.2.5-7). Next, the *ācārya* should recite over the boy a *mantra* (ĀpMP II.2.8). He, then should tie a three-fold twisted *mekhalā* of *muñja* grass, three times around the waist of the young male with two *mantras* (ĀpMP II.2.9-10, almost similar to MBr I.6.28-29, except that the *mekhalā* is described here as the beloved of the gods) and give him an *ajina* (animal skin) as the upper garment with a *mantra* (ĀpMP II.2.11).

HGS I.1.4.2-6 prescribed that after the element of *Āsmārohaṇa*, the young male should take off his garment and the *ācārya* should make him to put on a new garment with three *mantras* (almost similar to ĀpMP II.2.5-7). Having made the boy to put on the garment, he should recite over him a *mantra*, “You have put on this garment for the sake of welfare; you have become a protector of your friends against curses. Live a hundred long years; a noble man, blessed with life, may you distribute wealth.” (similar to ĀpMP II.2.8). Then the *ācārya* should tie a *mekhalā* three times around the waist of the boy with a *mantra* (similar to ĀpMP II.2.9, except that the *mekhalā* is described here as the sister of the gods). It mentioned that some authority prescribed to tie the *mekhalā* two times around the waist of the boy. Next, the *ācārya* should present him an *ajina* (animal skin) as the upper garment with two *mantras*, “The firm, strong eye of Mitra, glorious splendour, powerful and flaming, a chaste, mobile vesture, put on this skin, a valiant (person), so and so (name of the boy)” (similar to ĀpMP II.2.11) and “May Aditi tuck up your garment, that you may study the Vedas, for the sake of [your] insight and belief, to prevent [you] from forgetting what you have learned and for the sake of vedic knowledge and the eminence in vedic knowledge.”

BGS II.5.11-24 also described this element in details. It prescribed the present the *daṇḍa* (staff) to the boy after *ajina* (animal skin), with a different *mantra* for each type of wood, that *daṇḍa* is made of.

KauśS 56.1-4 prescribed to tie the *mekhalā* of *bhadramuñja* grass with two *mantras*, “She (the *mekhalā*) has come into being as daughter of faith, born out of *tapas* (heat), as sister of the *ṛṣis*, creators of beings. O *mekhalā*, assign thought and wisdom to us. Also bestow on us *tapas* (heat) and virility.” (AVŚ VI.133.4) and “O *mekhalā*, you, whom the ancient *ṛṣis*, creators of beings, have put on, embrace me for longevity.” (AVŚ VI.133.5). Next, the *daṇḍa* of *palāśa* wood should be given with a *mantra* and it should be accepted by the boy with certain *mantras* along with the *mantras* from the AVŚ, the first of which begins with, “A falcon are you” (AVŚ VI.48.1-3).

6.2.4.5 Formal interview of the young male

The element of the formal interview of the young male is mentioned in most of the vedic ritual texts. ŚGS II.2.4-10 prescribed that after the investiture of the insignia, both the *ācārya* and the young male should fill their *añjali* (joined hands) with water. Then, he should ask, “What is your name?” and the boy should answer, “Sir, I am so and so (name of the boy).” Next, the *ācārya* should ask, “Are you a descendant of the same *ṛṣi* [as me]?” and the boy should answer, “Sir, I am descendant of the same *ṛṣi*.” Then, the *ācārya* should order, “Say, that you are a *brahmacārī* (student).” And the boy should reply, “Sir, I am a *brahmacārī*.” Then, with the *mantras*, “*Bhūh*,

bhuvah, svaḥ”, the *ācārya* should sprinkle water from his joined hands three times to the joined hands of the boy.

ĀGS I.20.6-8 prescribed that, next to *Upanayanahoma* and the ritual of holding the hand, the *ācārya* should order the boy to look at the sun. This element was later known as *Ādityadarśana*. Then, the *ācārya* should recite the *mantra*, “Savitṛ, this is your *brahmacārī*, protect him, he should not die”. This element was later known as *Paridāna* (literally, “consigning to the deities”). Then, *ācārya* should commence the formal interview with the question, “Whose *brahmacārī* are you?” and answer himself, “You are *brahmacārī* of *prāṇa* (vital force)”. Then he should ask, “Who does initiate you and whom [does he initiate]?” and “Whom shall I give you?”

GGs II.10.16-26 prescribed that, next to the *Upanayanahoma*, the *ācārya* should position him to the west of the sacrificial fire and stand on northwardly pointed *darbha* grass, facing east. The *māṇavaka* young male) should stand between the *ācārya* and the sacrificial fire on northwardly pointed *darbha* grass, facing the *ācārya* with joined hands raised upwards. Standing on the south of the sacrificial fire, a Brāhman, well versed in *mantras* should first fill the joined hands of the *māṇavaka* with water and then the joined hands of the *ācārya*. The *ācārya*, looking at the *māṇavaka*, should murmur the *mantra* beginning with, “With him who comes to us, [we have come together]” (MBr I.6.14). Then he should make the boy to say, “I have come here for *brahmacarya*.” (MBr I.6.16). Then, the *ācārya* should ask the boy, “What is your name?” (MBr I.6.17) and the boy should answer, “My name is so and so (name of the boy).” (MBr I.6.18). Next, the *ācārya* should choose a name for the boy, which should be used at the time of salutations. This name should be derived from a deity or a *nakṣatra*. The GGS also mentioned that according to some authority it should be derived from the *gotra* of the boy. Having let the water run out of his joined hands over the boy's joined hands, the *ācārya* should seize (the boy's) right hand together with the thumb with his right hand, reciting a *mantra*, “By the impulse of the god Savitṛ, with the arms of the Aśvins and with Pūṣaṇ's hands, I seize your hand, so and so (name of the boy).” (almost similar to MBr I.6.19).

PGS II.2.14-21 prescribed that after the investiture of *mekhalā* and *daṇḍa* to the boy, the *ācārya* should fill water from his joined hands to the boy's joined hands three times with three *mantras* beginning with, “Your waters are” (VSM XI.50-52). Then the *ācārya* should make the boy look at the sun with the *mantra* beginning with, “That eye” (VSM XXXVI.24). Next, the *ācārya* should touch the boy near the location of his heart, reaching over his right shoulder with the *mantra*, “I will take your heart into my heart. Your mind will follow my mind. You will rejoice my words from your heart. May Prajāpati join you to me.” It should be followed by the formal interview. The *ācārya* should seize the right hand of the boy and ask him, “What is your name?” and the boy should answer, “Sir, I am so and so (name of the boy).” Next, the *ācārya* should ask, “Whose *brahmacārī* are you?” and the boy should answer, “Yours.” Then the *ācārya* should correct him by saying, “You are *brahmacārī* of Indra; Agni is your *ācārya*; I am your *ācārya*, so and so (name of the *ācārya*).” This should be followed by the element of *Paridāna*. The *ācārya* should recite the *mantra*, “To Prajāpati, I give you in charge; to the god Savitṛ, I give you in charge; to the waters and the herbs, I give you in charge; to the *dauḥ* (sky) and *prthivī* (earth), I give you in charge; to the Viśvedevāḥ, I give you in charge; to all beings, I give you in charge for the sake of freedom from harm.”

6.2.4.6 Rituals of touching the heart, shoulders and navel

The ritual of touching the chest of the boy near the location of his heart by the *ācārya* during *Upanayana* rite is found in several vedic ritual texts. ĀGS I.20.9-10 prescribed that, after the formal interview, the *ācārya* with the first hemistich beginning with, “A youth, well attired, dressed, came to this place” (RV III.8.4a), should cause the boy to turn around from left to right, touch the boy near the location of his heart over his shoulders (from behind) and recite the second hemistich of the

mantra (RV III.8.4b) he recited earlier.

KhādGS II.4.14-18 prescribed that next to the element of *Añjalipūraṇa*, the *ācārya* should make the boy turn round from left to right with the *mantra*, “Move in the sun’s course” (MBr I.6.20). Grasping down over the right shoulder of the young male, the *ācārya* should touch his uncovered navel with the *mantra*, “[You are the knot] of *prāṇa* (out-breathing); [do not loosen].” (MBr I.6.21a). Then, it instructed to perform the element of *Paridāna*. The *ācārya* should first consign the boy with certain *mantras* from the MBr (I.6.21b-23), the first one beginning with, “*Antaka*” and the rest. Then, the *ācārya* should touch the right shoulder of the boy with the *mantra*, “I consign you to Prajāpati, so and so (name of the boy).” (MBr I.6.24). Next, the *ācārya* should touch the left shoulder of the boy with his left hand reciting the *mantra*, “I consign you to the god Savitr, so and so (name of the boy).” (MBr I.6.25).

6.2.4.7 *Sāvitrīyupadeśa: Teaching of the Sāvitrī*

In Hinduism, *Sāvitrī* (RV III.62.10), composed in *gāyatrī* metre, is believed as the most sacred *mantra*. The earliest description of the element of teaching of *Sāvitrī* is found in ŚBM XI.5.4.6-15. This element is prescribed next to the *homa* in some of the *gr̥hyasūtras*.

ŚGS II.5.1-3 prescribed that the *Sāvitrī* may be imparted immediately after the *homa* or it may imparted either after the lapse of three nights or one year. ŚGS II.5.8-12 prescribed that both the *ācārya* and the boy should sit to the north of the sacred, the *ācārya* facing east and the boy facing west. The boy should request the *ācārya* to recite the *Sāvitrī* and the *ācārya* should recite the *Sāvitrī*, first each *pada* (word) separately, then each hemistich separately and finally the complete verse together.

ĀGS I.20.11-21.7 prescribed that, the boy should first wipe the ground near the fire and silently put a *samidh* (fuel stick) to the fire. It also mentioned that according to some authority, it should be done with a *mantra*, “To Agni, I have brought a *samidh*, to the great Jātavedā; by the *samidh*, O Agni, may you increase and we may [increase] through *brahma* (vedic knowledge).” Then the boy should touch the sacrificial fire and thrice wipe off his face while saying, “I anoint myself with lustre.” Next, he should bend his knees, touch the feet of his *ācārya* and say, “Sir, recite the *Sāvitrī* (RV III.62.10), Sir, recite.” The *ācārya* should hold the hand of the boy along with his upper garment in his hand and recite the *Sāvitrī*, first each *pada* (word) separately, then each hemistich separately and finally the complete verse together. The boy should also make effort to recite the same as best as possible. Then the *ācārya* should touch the boy again near the location of his heart with fingers upturned and say, “I place your heart for my duty. Your mind should follow my mind. You will pay attention to my words only. May Bṛhaspati appoint you for me.”⁴²

MGS I.22.13-15 prescribed the performance of this element immediately after *Aśmārohaṇa*, or on the third, sixth or twelfth day or after the lapse of one year.

Some of the *gr̥hyasūtras*, like ŚGS II.5.4-6, PGS II.3.7-9, MGS I.22.13 and a *dharmaśūtra* text BDh I.3.11 had prescribed to teach the *Sāvitrī* to the young males of Brāhmaṇ, Kṣatriya and Vaiśya *varṇas* in *Gāyatrī*, *Triṣṭubh* and *Jagatī* metres respectively. VārGS 5.26, in fact prescribed three different *mantras* as the *Sāvitrī* for teaching to the young males for three different *varṇas*. For the Brāhmaṇs, it obviously prescribed the *mantra* beginning with, “That esteemed [glory] of Savitr” (MS IV.10.3, similar to RV III.62.10) in *Gāyatrī* metre. For the Kṣatriyas and Vaiśyas, it prescribed the *mantra* beginning with, “May the god Savitr, rich in goodly treasures (MS IV.14.6, similar to RV VII.45.1) in *Triṣṭubh* metre and the *mantra* beginning with, “Harness [their] thoughts” (MS I.2.9, similar to RV V.81.1) in *Jagatī* metre respectively. BGŚS II.8.12 prescribed the *mantras* beginning with “That esteemed [glory] of Savitr” (TS I.5.6.4) in *Gāyatrī* metre; “Coming with true light” (TS III.4.11.2) in *Triṣṭubh* metre and “Harness [their] thoughts” [TS I.2.13.1] in *Jagatī* metre

as the *Sāvitrī* for teaching to the young males of Brāhmaṇ, Kṣatriya and Vaiśya *varṇas* respectively. The medieval scholiasts, Devapāla and Brāhmaṇabala, while explaining KGS 41.20 prescribed the verses, KāS IV.10 and KāS XVI.8 should be taught to the Kṣatriya and Vaiśya young males respectively. Nārāyaṇa, another medieval scholiast, while explaining ŚGS II.5.4-6 prescribed three verses, RV III.62.10, RV I.35.2 and RV I.35.9 or IV.40.5 in *Gāyatrī*, *Triṣṭubh* and *Jagatī* metres for teaching the Brāhmaṇ, Kṣatriya and Vaiśya young males respectively.

6.2.4.8 *Bhikṣācaryā*: Ceremonial begging of alms

Most of the *grhyasūtras* prescribed ceremonial begging of alms as the last element of the rite. According to ĀGS I.22.7-16, the instructions of the *ācārya* should be followed by the element of begging of alms. The young male should first ask for alms to a male or a female who will not refuse, with the words, “Sir, give (me) alms” or “Sir, give (me) *anupravacanīya* (food for study)”. After announcing the alms received to the *ācārya*, the boy should stand silently for the rest of the day.⁴³ After sunset, the boy should cook the *brahmaudana* (the boiled rice for feeding the Brāhmaṇs present) for the *anupravacanīya* sacrifice and should announce to the *ācārya* that it is ready. The *ācārya* should sacrifice, while the boy holding his hand, first time with the *mantra* beginning with, “Sadasaspati, the wonderful” (RV I.18.6), second time with the *Sāvitrī* (RV III.62.10) and whatever else has been studied afterwards, third time to the *ṛṣis* and the fourth time to the (Agni) Sviṣṭakṛt. At the end, food should be served to the Brāhmaṇs present and the end of the study should be announced.

PGS II.5.1-7 prescribed that a Brāhmaṇ boy should beg to a female for alms with the words, “Madam (*bhavati*), give alms”; a Rājanya boy should beg with the words, “Give, Madam alms” and a Vaiśya boy should beg with the words, “Give alms, Madam.” It also instructed that the young male should beg to three females who will not refuse or alternately from six, twelve or an innumerable number of females. It mentioned that according to some (authorities), the boy should commence begging from his own mother.

6.2.4.9 *Trirātravrata*

A number of *grhyasūtra* texts instructed the young male to observe certain vows for three nights after *Upanayana*. ĀGS I.22.17 prescribed that, for the next three nights or twelve nights or one year, the young male was instructed to eat food that has no salt or alkali (spices), sleep on the ground and observe abstinence from sex. GGS II.10.47 prescribed to eat food without any salt or alkali (spices) for three nights. KhādGS II.4.32 prescribed that for three nights, food with salt and milk should not be consumed. HGS I.2.8.1-6 provided an elaborate description for the *Trirātravrata*.

6.2.5 Descriptions in the commentaries and the *nibandhas*

Several additional elements for *Upanayana* rite are codified in the medieval commentaries and *nibandha* texts. Some of these additional elements codified by these texts are common for several life-cycle rites including marriage. The early codifications of some of these common additional elements like *Gaṇapatipūjana* (worship of Gaṇeśa), *Kumbhasthāpana* (placing the auspicious jars filled with water), *Puṇyāhavācana* (literally, “declaration of an auspicious day”, benediction), *Mātrkāpūjana*⁴⁴ (worship of the Mātrkā goddesses), *Nāndīmukha*, *Aṅkurāropaṇa*, *Udakaśānti* and *Pratisarabandha* are found in an early medieval vedic ritual text, HGSS I.3.1-9.⁴⁵

Haradatta (ca.12th century) while explaining ĀpGS IV.10.5, mentioned that *Nāndīśrāddha* should be performed one day prior to *Upanayana*. Bhaṭṭa Gopīnātha in his *SmR* provided a detailed description of the elements of this rite as performed during the late medieval period⁴⁶ and included the additional elements of *Puṇyāhādivācana*, *Mātrkāpūjana*, *Nāndīśrāddha*, *Grahayajña* (sacrifices to the nine planetary deities), *Gaṇapatipūjana*, *Kuladevatā pūjana* (worship of tutelary deities),

Maṇḍapadevatā pratiṣṭhāpana (consecration of the images of the deities placed inside the canopy) and *Aṅkurāropana* before the performance of the main rite. SmR, citing a verse from the *Jyotiḥsāgara* in support, prescribed that *Grahamakha* (or *Grahayajña*) should be performed on the previous day or any day before the rite but within the two alternate maximum limits of seven and ten days. These additional elements before the main rite should be performed by the father of the boy to be initiated. SmR also prescribed that in the morning of the day of performance of the rite, six or any even number of Brāhmaṇs should be served food and they should utter benediction. Then the boy should take the ceremonial bath and adorn himself. Next, he should eat together with his mother from the same plate (for the last time). Eight *brahmacārīs* should also be served food on this occasion.⁴⁷

Pandey (1969) described about several preparatory rites, which should be performed on the previous night and in the morning of the day of *Upanayana*. These rites probably became popular only in the late medieval period. These preparatory rites include smearing the boy with a yellow substance all over his body and inserting a silver ring in his top knot in the previous night and observance of silence by the young adolescent throughout the night.⁴⁸

6.2.6 Upanayana and Yajñopavīta

The investiture of a cord of threads as *yajñopavīta* (literally, “an *upavīta* for a sacrifice”) to the initiated young male belonging to the first three *varṇas* is the most distinctive element of this rite since the late medieval period till date, which symbolizes his elevation to the status of a ‘twice-born’. But it was not considered as an element of *Upanayana* rite in most of the *gr̥hyasūtra* texts.

In fact, the earliest reference of *upavīta* is found in the TS II.5.11.1, where it is described as one of three styles of wearing an upper garment (covering left shoulder), which was used during the rites related to the *devas* (gods). The other two styles of wearing an upper garment were *nivīta* (covering both shoulders), used during the rites related to man and *prācīnāvīta* (covering right shoulder), used during the rites related to the *pitṛs* (ancestors). This is also evident from a passage, ŚBM II.4.2.1, where the gods were mentioned dressed as *yajñopavītin*, the *pitṛs* were mentioned dressed as *prācīnāvītin* and the men were dressed in garments.⁴⁹

An early reference of the change of perception of *upavīta* as a style of wearing a cord of threads instead of an upper garment is probably found in ĀpDh II.2.4.21-22, which said that a householder should always wear an upper garment or a he might use only a thread for the *upavīta*. Further development of this perception is known from a prose passage of Ṛṣyaśṛṅga, an ancient authority, quoted in a medieval text, SmC, where he stated that a garment should be used as *yajñopavīta*, but in case a garment is not available, a thread of three strands can be used for the purpose. The roots of the late medieval perception of *yajñopavīta* itself as a cord of threads (not a style of wearing it) may be found in MDh II.44 and ViṣDh XXVII.19, where it is stated that a *yajñopavīta* of a Brāhmaṇ should be made of three cotton threads twisted to the right, that of a Kṣatriya should be made of hempen threads and that of a Vaiśya should be made of woollen threads.⁵⁰ According to Devala, an authority quoted in SmC, a *yajñopavīta* can be of cotton, *kṣumā* (flax fibre), hair of cow's tail, hemp, tree bark or *kuśa* grass according to availability of material. The actual practice in the late medieval period is found from a sarcastic comment of Bhaṭṭa Nīlakaṇṭha in his SmM (early 17th century), that he had no idea about the origin of contemporary practice of using cords of cotton threads as the *yajñopavīta* by the Kṣatriyas and the Vaiśyas.⁵¹

Early references about wearing *yajñopavīta* during *Upanayana* found in the Yajurvedic *gr̥hyasūtra* texts, HGS I.1.2.6, MGS I.22.2 and BhGS I.3, where the boy was described as wearing it over his left shoulder while sitting with his *ācārya* for the initial sacrifice. But from the description of the GGS I.2.1-4, *yajñopavīta* worn by the boy during *Upanayana* can be identified with one of the two styles of wearing a cord of threads, a garment or a rope of *kuśa* grass, the other one being

prācīnāvīta. It is already mentioned that, BGS II.5.7, another Yajurvedic *gr̥hyasūtra* text, described that before the performance of *Upanayana* rite for a young male, foods should be served to Brāhmaṇs, his head should be tonsured followed by bathing and investiture of the *yajñopavīta* with a *mantra* of unknown origin, “The *yajñopavīta* is very sacred, it emerged along with Prajāpati,” but this was not the part of the proper *Upanayana* rite. VkhGS II.5, a late *gr̥hyasūtra* text, first described the investiture of *yajñopavīta* as an element of *Upanayana*, at the time of handing over the *mekhalā*, *uttarīya* (upper garment) and black antelope skin by the *ācārya*. The late medieval scholiasts of the *gr̥hyasūtras* desperately tried to incorporate this element somehow in to the original rite. Karka (late 11th century) and Harihara (13th century) on their commentaries on the PGS stated that *yajñopavīta* was handed over by the *ācārya* after tying the *mekhalā*. Raghunandana (16th century) also expressed the same view. Sudarśana (late 14th century) in his commentary on ĀpGS IV.10.5 states that the boy should put *yajñopavīta* himself either before taking meal or before putting the wooden stick to fire. In 1773, Bhaṭṭa Gopinātha prescribed to wear *yajñopavīta* before the initial sacrifice.⁵²

6.2.7 Medhājanana

Some of the vedic ritual texts, like ĀGS I.22.18-19 and BhGS I.10 prescribed a rite, *Medhājanana* (literally, “generation of intelligence”), which should be performed on the fourth day after *Upanayana*.⁵³ ĀGS I.22.18-19 prescribed to perform this rite after the completion of the [*Trirātra*]vrata. It stated that the boy should sprinkle water thrice from left to right in an unobjectionable direction (the medieval scholiasts, Devasvāmin, Nārāyaṇa and Haradatta on ĀGS I.22.19 mentioned that three directions, namely, south, south-east and south-west are the objectionable directions) from a water pot around a *palāśa* tree with one root or a bunch of *kuśa* grass, if the *palāśa* tree is not available and the *ācārya* should cause him to say, “O *Suśravas* (glorious one), you are glorious; as you, *Suśravas*, are glorious, thus, O *Suśravas*, make me glorious. As you are the protector of the wealth of the *yajña* for the gods, thus make me the protector of the wealth of the Vedas for the *manuṣya* (humans).” BhGS I.10 prescribed that the young male, having wiped and sprinkled with water from left to right a *palāśa* tree with one root in easterly or northerly direction, he should anoint it with clarified butter and recite a *mantra*, “O *Suśravas* (glorious one), make me glorious; O *Suśravas*, as you are glorious, thus make me glorious; O *Suśravas*, as you are the protector of the wealth of the Vedas for the gods, thus make me the protector of the wealth of the Vedas for the Brāhmaṇs.” MGS I.22.17 and KGS.41.20-21 also prescribed a similar rite. These texts prescribed that after *Sāvītryupadeśa*, having anointed a *palāśa* tree (a *daṇḍa* made of *palāśa* wood, according to the KGS) with the fresh butter, the *ācārya* should make the young male to recite a *mantra*, similar to the one in the BhGS, in the shade of the *palāśa* tree. In the *mantra* mentioned in the MGS, the word *manuṣya* (humans) is mentioned in place of ‘Brāhmaṇs’. A similar *mantra* is also found in the ĀpMP II.5.1, but this *mantra* is not used in the ĀpGS for this rite. ĀpGS IV.11.24, without mentioning anything about the rite of *Medhājanana*, prescribed that on the fourth day, the *ācārya* should take the garment from the boy with a *mantra* from the MBr (II.6.15) and the boy should put on another one.

The medieval scholiast Sudarśanācārya on ĀpGS IV.11.24 described a rite similar to *Medhājanana* as *Pālāśakarma*. According to him, this rite should be performed on the fourth day. It prescribed that the young male along with his *ācārya* should go towards the east or north, and three *sthaṇḍilas* should be prepared to the north or east of a *palāśa* tree. On these three *sthaṇḍilas*, *Praṇava* (“om”), Śraddhā and Medhā should be invoked. Then, they should be worshipped with garments, fragrant substances, flowers, incense, lamps and other items for worship. The *Praṇava* should be worshipped with the *mantra* starting from “[May that Indra] who is [the greatest] in the vedic hymns” till “Guard for me what I have heard” (*Taittirīya Upaniṣad* I.4.1), Śraddhā should be worshipped with the *sūkta* beginning with, “By faith, Agni [is kindled]” (RV X.151, TBr II.8.8) and

the Medhā should be worshipped with the *anuvāka* beginning with, “The goddess, Medhā (TĀ X.41). Next, the *daṇḍa* (staff) should be deposited at the foot of the *palāśa* tree, another *daṇḍa* (staff) is taken and the young male should come back to the house with his *ācārya*.⁵⁴ SṃP, in its description of this rite cited the verses of Śaunaka, who prescribed an almost similar procedure to the ĀGS.

6.3 Vedārambha

The rite of *Vedārambha*, which literally means “beginning of the (study of) the Vedas” is definitely of late origin, when the link between *Upanayana* and study of the Vedas was lost from the Brahmanical perception. The earliest mention of this rite is found in a late *smṛti* text, VDh 1.14, which even employed a new name, *Vratādeśa* for the more ancient rite *Upanayana* (later, *Grhyasamgraha* I.4 also used the word *Vratādeśa* for *Upanayana*). The detailed description of this rite found in the late medieval text, the *Gargapaddhati*. It prescribed to perform this rite on an auspicious day after *Upanayana*. The rite should begin with *Mātrpūjā* (*Mātrkāpūjana*), *Ābhyudayika Śrāddha* and other preliminary elements. Then, the *ācārya* should establish the *Laukika* fire, invite the student and make him sit down to the west of the sacrificial fire. In case of commencement of the study of the Ṛgveda, oblations of clarified butter should be offered to the earth and Agni. For the commencement of study of the Yajurveda, oblations should be offered to the *antarīkṣa* (sky) and *vāyu* (air). If the study of the Sāmaveda is to be commenced, oblations should be offered to *dauḥ* (heaven) and the sun and for the Atharvaveda, to the directions and the moon. If the study of the four Vedas should be commenced together, then all the offerings mentioned earlier should be made together. Next, the *homa* should be performed for Brahmā, *chandasa* (vedic metres) and Prajāpati. At the end, the *ācārya*, after offering the gift to the officiating Brāhmaṇ, should start teaching.⁵⁵

6.4 Keśānta

The rite *Keśānta*, literally, “the (first ceremonial) shaving of beard” is originally an ancient Hindu rite of passage for coming of age. This rite was also known as *Godāna*, which literally means, “gift of cow”, as the gifting a cow to the *ācārya* was one of the essential elements of this rite. Probably, the *mantras* for a rite of (ritual) shaving have been mentioned in the AVŚ VI.68.1-3. From the reference to this rite by Āśvalāyana, an authority cited in the SṃM, it seems that, when the early vedic ritual texts were composed, this rite was considered as one of the four *vedavratasa* (vedic vows), observances of which rendered a student eligible for commencing the study of certain portions of the Vedas.⁵⁶ The medieval scholiast Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa remarked while explaining GGS III.1.26 that observance of *Godāna-vrata* is essential for studying the collection of vedic *mantras* sacred to Agni, Indra and Soma Pavamāna.⁵⁷ Most of the *grhyasūtras* described this rite. While ĀGS I.18.1, KauṣGS I.1.5, GGS III.1.1 and KauṣS 53.1 described this rite as *Godāna*, PGS II.1.3, MDh II.65 and YDh I.36 described this rite as *Keśānta*. The ŚGS used both *Keśānta* (I.5.2) and *Godāna* (I.28.19) to describe this rite. ŚGS I.28.20 prescribed to perform this rite in the 16th or 18th year. MDh II.65 instructed to perform this rite in the 16th, 22nd or 24th year respectively for a Brāhmaṇ, Kṣatriya or a Vaiśya. A comparatively late text, BhGS I.9 mentioned that according to some authority one could end the period of *vedabrahmacarya* by performing the *Godānakarma*.⁵⁸

An early indication of the change of perception about this rite in the early centuries of the Common Era is found in *Bālakāṇḍa* 71.23 of the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki, which mentioned that *Godāna* would be performed immediately before the marriage of Rāma. Further later, when this ancient life-cycle rite was almost forgotten, most of the medieval scholiasts of the *Rāmāyaṇa* explained *Godāna* as *Samāvartana*. Kālidāsa in *Raghuvamśa* III.33 mentioned about the performance of *Godāna* rite by Dilīpa for his son Raghu immediately before his marriage. A late *dharmaśāstra* text, the Laghu-Āś XIV.1 prescribed to perform *Godāna* in the 16th year or immediately before the marriage.

Bhavabhūti in his *Uttararāmacarita* I.18 (as mentioned in chapter 1) also mentioned about the performance of *Godāna* rite for Rāma immediately before the marriage. Absence of any detailed description about this rite in the late medieval *nibandha* texts indicates that performance of this rite was discontinued by that time.⁵⁹ A late medieval text written in the present-day Assam, *Kālikāpurāṇa* 38.3 mentioned that *Keśānta* for Naraka, a mythical king was performed with the *mantras* from Ṛgveda, Sāmaveda and Yajurveda. This may be an indication of contemporary perception about this ancient life-cycle rite.

The descriptions of this rite found in the *gr̥hyasūtras* are almost similar to *Cūḍākarāṇa*, with a few minor differences. This rite comprises mostly shaving the beard of a boy for the first time, but in addition, hair of other parts of the body, like armpits and head is also shaved and nails are cut. ĀGS I.18.3 prescribed to use the same *mantras* used for *Cūḍākarāṇa* rite by replacing the word *keśa* (hair) in these *mantras* with *śmaśru* (beard).⁶⁰ PGS II.1.7 instructed to replace the word 'hair' with 'hair and beard' in the *mantras* recited. PGS II.1.24 and ŚGS I.28.21 prescribed the sacrificial fee of only one cow to the *ācārya* (the teacher) irrespective of the *varṇa* of the performer. But, GGS III.1.5-7 and KhādGS II.5.3 added the options of a cow and an ox for a Brāhmaṇ performer, a pair of horses for a Kṣatriya performer and a pair of sheep for a Vaiśya performer.⁶¹ ŚGS I.28.24 instructed to give vessels filled with rice as the fee to the barber. GGS III.1.9 and KhādGS II.5.5 instructed to give a goat as the fee to the barber.

6.5 Samāvartana

An early reference to a rite of taking ceremonial bath to mark the end of the vedic studies is found in ŚBM XI.3.3.7, where it is instructed not to beg after the *Snāna*. An early detailed description of this rite is found in BŚS XVII.39-44, where this rite is mentioned as *Samāvartana* (literally, "return [from teacher's home]"). This life-cycle rite for marking the end of the vedic studies is described as *Samāvartana* in some of the vedic ritual texts, namely, ĀGS III.8.1, ŚGS III.1 and BGS II.6.1. But, JGS I.19, KGS 3.1, MGS I.2.8, PGS II.6.1, ĀpGS V.12.1, HGS I.3.9.1 and later GDh VIII.16 and YDh I.51 described this rite as *Snāna*, which literally means "taking bath." GGS III.4.7 and KhādGS I.3.2-3, III.1.1 described this rite as *Āplavana*, a synonym for *Snāna*.⁶² Probably, most elaborate description of this rite is found in the HGS I.3.9.1-4.13.19. In an early *dharmaśāstra* text, MDh III.4, *Snāna* and *Samāvartana* are mentioned as two distinct rites. Medhātithi (8th century) on MDh III.4 explained *Snāna* as the *saṃskāra* of ceremonial bath, marking the end of the period of *vedavratas* (in the house of the *ācārya*) and *Samāvartana* as the *saṃskāra* of receiving *madhuparka* after returning to father's house.

In ancient India, the period of life for a young male (mostly Brāhmaṇ) between his ritual bath marking the end of the vedic studies and his marriage was perceived as a transitional stage of his life and he was known as a *snātaka* (literally, "one who has taken the [ceremonial] bath") during this period. The late vedic ritual texts instructed a *snātaka* to follow certain rules (*snātaka dharma*). The insignia for a *snātaka* are also described in these texts. VasDh XII.14 prescribed that a *snātaka* should wear a lower and an upper garment and two *yajñopavīta* and should carry a *yaṣṭi* (stick) and a *kamaṇḍalu* (water pot) filled with water.

Mānasollāsa (ca.1131) 3.12.1304-1305, prescribed to perform *Godāna* (for a prince) after he becomes a young adult and *Samāvartana* next to it. It instructed the king to honour the teacher with the gift of village, town, hamlet, garments, gold and land.⁶³

6.5.1 Descriptions in vedic ritual texts

A number of the *gr̥hyasūtra* texts provided extensive descriptions of this rite. One of the early detailed descriptions of this rite is found in ŚGS III.1.2-18. This text prescribed that at the beginning of the rite, the student should sit on a bull's hide after bath and have a haircut, get his

beard shaved, body hair trimmed and nails clipped. Then his body should be rubbed with the powder of rice, barley, sesame, mustard, *apāmārga* and *sadāpuṣpī* (*Calotropis gigantea*). He should be then sprinkled with water with the recitation of the *Āpohiṣṭhīya* hymn (RV X.9) and adorned. Next, he should be dressed with two pieces of garment with the *mantra* (RV I.152.1) beginning with, “The robes which you put on”. Then, he should be decorated with a *niṣka* (golden ornament) with the *mantra* (VSM XXXIV.40) beginning with, “Giving life and vigour.” Similarly, he should be given a *veṣṭana* (turban) with the *mantra* (RV X.128.1) beginning with, “Let me [win] glory, Agni.” Next, he should receive a *chatra* (parasol) with the *mantra* (RV I.123.4) beginning with, “Showing her wonted form each day”, a pair of shoes with the *mantra* (RV X.18.6) beginning with, “Live [your full lives]” and a *vaiṇava-daṇḍa* (bamboo staff) with the *mantra* (RV VIII.17.10) beginning with, “Long be your grasping hook.” Next, he should board a chariot and go to that place where the *argha* is performed in his honour or he may return after going up to the cows or a fruit-bearing tree. He should eat his favourite food and should not expose himself to the sun on that day. At the end, the student should present his *ācārya*, a pair of garments, a turban, a jewel, a pair of earrings, a staff, a pair of shoes and a parasol.⁶⁴

Another early description of this rite is found in ĀGS III.8.1-9.4. ĀGS III.8.1-5 prescribed that, before the commencement of the rite, a student should be ready with two sets of eleven items for his *ācārya* and himself. If he cannot afford to arrange for the both, he should at least be ready with one set for his *ācārya*. These eleven items are a *maṇi* (jewel), *kuṇḍala* (a pair of earrings), a pair of garments, a *chatra* (parasol), *upānat yuga* (a pair of shoes), a *daṇḍa* (staff), a *sraj* (wreath), *unmardana* (fragrant powder) for rubbing the body with, *anulepana* (ointment), *añjana* (eye salve) and an *uṣṇīṣa* (turban). He should also collect a fuel stick from the north-east side of a tree, whose wood is used for the sacrifices and place it somewhere higher than ground level.⁶⁵

According to ĀGS III.8.6-9.3, the rite should commence with the gifting of a cow and serving food to the Brāhmaṇs, followed by the performance of *Godāna* rite, altering the *mantras* in such a way that these *mantras* should refer to himself. Then, he should rub himself with the powder of *ekaklītaka*.⁶⁶ It should be followed by the most significant element of this rite, *snāna* (bathing) in lukewarm water. After bath, the student should put on the pair of *ahata* garments, with the *mantra* from (RV I.152.1), “The robes which you [Mitra and Varuṇa] put on abound with fatness.” Then, he should apply *añjana* on his eyes with the *mantra*, “You are the lustre of stone, protect my eyes” and put on the pair of earrings with the *mantra*, “You are the lustre of stone, protect my ears.” The next element of the rite is rubbing *anulepana* on both palms and then applying it on the different parts of the body. This text prescribed that a Brāhmaṇ should start applying *anulepana* from his face, a Rājanya from his arms, a Vaiśya from his belly, a female from her genitals and those whose profession involves running should start applying from his thighs. Then, the student should put on the *sraj* with the *mantra*, “You are free from distress, may I become free from distress.” This text specified that only a *sraj* (an ancient word for ‘garland’) can be used for the rite, not a *māla* (another word for ‘garland’, but of later origin) and still anybody confuses it with a *māla*, he must be corrected. He, then, should step in to the pair of shoes with the *mantra*, “You two are the support for the gods. Protect me from all sides.” Similarly, he should put on the parasol with the *mantra*, “You are the cover of the heaven”, picked up the *vaiṇava-daṇḍa* (bamboo staff) with the *mantra*, “You are bamboo, descendant of a tree. Protect me from all sides.” and put on the necklace with jewel with the *Āyusya sūkta* (hymn) (RVKh 4.6), praising gold. Finally, after arranging his turban, the student, in a standing posture, should place the fuel sticks in to the fire reciting the hymn (RV X.128.1-9), beginning with, “[Let] me win glory, Agni”, verse by verse. After the completion of the rite, the student, (now became known as the *snātaka*) should stay in the night only such a place where the people will honour him (by offering *madhuparka*).⁶⁷ This text (III.9.4) has instructed that after learning the student must either offer something to his *guru* (teacher) or take his permission

before taking the (ritual) bath.

PGS II.6.9-32 also prescribed an elaborate *snāna* rite. This text prescribed that, at the beginning of the rite, the student, after embracing the *guru* (teacher), should station himself towards the north of an enclosure where eight jars full of water should also be placed on eastward-pointed *kuśa* grass. He drew water from each jar and poured over his head with certain *mantras*. Then he loosened his girdle and changed his garments with some *mantras*. After consuming some amount of yoghurt or sesame seeds, he cut off his matted hair, beard and nails and cleansed his teeth with an *udumbara* twig. GGS III.4.23 prescribed to take off the *mekhalā* during the rite.⁶⁸

MGS I.2.11-18 instructed that the student should take the (ritual) bath with the recitation of certain *mantras*. Then, he should put two *ahata* garments, anoint his eyes, wear golden ornaments, take a *chatra* (parasol), a *daṇḍa*, a *mālā* (garland) and fragrant substances. At the end, he should put on his shoes and return home after taking permission from the *guru* and his kinsmen.⁶⁹

6.5.2 Soḍamuñja

Since late medieval period, this rite is performed in several Brāhmaṇ social groups in Maharashtra as *Soḍamuñja* (literally, “[the rite of] leaving the muñja girdle”), a pre-nuptial rite. A brief description of this rite is mentioned by Abbott (1932), which may be the contemporary practice in the early 20th century:⁷⁰

This ceremony is performed three days or more prior to his marriage. The boy’s parents install Nāndi; then a hom is performed to atone for any breach of rule since the boy’s thread ceremony. The boy is shaved and bathed; then with fire from the first hom the samāvartana hom is celebrated. The boy then pretends to go on a pilgrimage to Benares and sets out with an umbrella, walking-stick and a bundle of rice flour and pulse. He is dissuaded from going by a maternal uncle or friend or relative and told that he will be given a bride.

The pre-nuptial rite of *Kāśīyātrā* (literally, “pilgrimage to Varanasi”) performed among some Brāhmaṇ social groups in southern Indian states, most probably since late medieval period, is almost similar to this *Soḍamuñja* rite. Pandey (1969) also described a similar rite performed immediately after the *Upanayana*:⁷¹

At present, a few new features, unknown to the scriptures, have been introduced in the Upanayana Saṁskāra, which are located after the ceremonial begging. The student undertakes a mimic performance. He enacts a comedy of going on educational mission to Benares or Kashmir. But he is persuaded by his maternal uncle or brother-in-law who allures him by promising a bride.

6.6 Upākarma

Upākarma or *Upākaraṇa* literally means “beginning”. This ancient rite for annual commencement of the vedic studies is described in most of the *gr̥hyasūtra* texts. This rite is mentioned as *Adhyāyopākaraṇa* in ĀGS III.5.1, *Adhyāyopākarma* in PGS II.10.1 and *Svādhyāyopākarma* in the VasDh XIII.1, which literally means “beginning of the study of the sections of the Vedas”. This rite mentioned as *Upākarma* in VkhGS 1.1 and included in the list of eighteen rites for the purification of the body.⁷² As this rite was prescribed for performing annually, ĀGS III.5.19 and GDh XVI.1 mentioned this rite as *Vārṣika*.⁷³ Most of the vedic ritual texts prescribed to perform this rite in the forenoon.⁷⁴

6.6.1 Auspicious times for Upākarma

The rite of *Upākarma*, according to the Ṛgvedic and Yajurvedic ritual texts, namely, ĀGS III.5.2-3, PGS II.10.2, HGS II.8.18.2 and ĀpDh I.3.9.1, should be performed in the lunar month of *Śrāvaṇa* (July-August), while according to the Sāmavedic ritual texts, KhādGS III.2.14-15 and GGS III.3.1, III.3.13, this rite should be performed on the full moon day of the lunar month of *Praṣṭhapaḍa*

(August-September). However, another Sāmavedic ritual text, JGS I.14 prescribed to perform this rite on the full moon day in the lunar month of *Śrāvaṇa* or *Prauṣṭhapada*, when the moon is in *Hastā nakṣatra*. BGS III.1.2 prescribed to perform this on either the full moon day of the lunar month of *Āṣāḍha* (June-July) or *Śrāvaṇa*. KauśS 141.2 prescribed to perform this rite in either *Śrāvaṇa* or *Prauṣṭhapada*. The *dharmasūtra* texts, GDh XVI.1 and VasDh XIII.1 prescribed to perform this rite on the full moon day of the lunar month of either *Śrāvaṇa* or *Prauṣṭhapada*. Similar views are expressed in the later texts MDh IV.95 and ViṣDh XXX.1 also. A much later text, the *Kūrmapurāṇa* II.14.60-61 prescribed to perform this rite on the full moon day of the lunar months of *Āṣāḍha*, *Śrāvaṇa* or *Bhādrapada*. Most of the *gr̥hyasūtras* prescribed an *anadhyaṃya* (break from the study) for three days after performing *Upākarma*.

6.6.2 Descriptions in vedic ritual texts

6.6.2.1 Descriptions in Ṛgvedic ritual texts

One of the early descriptions of performance of this rite is found in ŚGS IV.5.1-13, which mentioned this rite as *Upākaraṇa* and instructed to perform this rite when the herbs appear (in the rainy season) and the moon is in either *Hastā* or *Śravaṇā nakṣatra*. The rite, as instructed by this text, should begin with the sacrifice by the *ācārya* offering the oblations of *saktū* (groats of unhusked barley) and roasted grains mixed with yoghurt and clarified butter. This text mentioned several views of the earlier authorities on what should be recited by the *ācārya* during this rite. According to some authority, he should recite the whole Veda, verse by verse during sacrifice or the first verse of each *sūkta* and *anuvāka*. According to Māṇḍukeya (founder of the Māṇḍukeya branch), he should recite the first verses of each *adhyaṃya* and the sections belonging to each *ṛṣi*. According to Kauṣītaki (founder of the *Kauṣītaki śākhā*), he should first recite the first verse of the first *maṇḍala* of the RV beginning with, “I praise Agni, the *purohita*” (I.1.1) and then the last verses from the first to the ninth *maṇḍala* of the RV, viz., “The *kuṣumbhaka* has said it” (I.191.16); “O bird, when crying, announce welfare to us” (II.43.3); “Sung by Jamadagni” (III.62.18); “In your abode whole world rests” (IV.58.11); “You [Maruts] that deserve sacrifice, come to our sacrifice” (V.87.9); “Whosoever, whether ours or a stranger” (VI.75.19); “Look towards us, look in various directions” (VII.104.25); “Come here, O Agni, the friend of the Maruts” (VIII.103.14) and “O king, the oblation that is cooked for you” (IX.114.4), two verses at a time. Finally, he should recite the last verse of the *Bāṣkala* recension of the RV (RVKh 5.1.5) beginning with, “We choose the welfare and fortune which.” Next, the *ācārya* and his students should consume the remnants of the oblations with the *mantra* beginning with, “I praised Dadhikrāvan” (RV IV.39.6). After sipping water, they should sit down and recite the *Mahāvyaḥṛtis* (*bhūḥ*, *bhuvah* and *svah*), the *Sāvitrī*, the beginning of the RV (the first *sūkta* or *anuvāka*) and the auspicious hymns, commencing from the beginning of the Veda. At the end, the *ācārya* should pronounce auspicious words.⁷⁵ KauṣGS III.7.1-12 instructed to perform this rite on either the full moon day of the lunar month of *Śrāvaṇa* or when the moon is in either *Hastā* or *Śravaṇā nakṣatra* (lunar mansion). It prescribed an almost similar procedure but added that oblations should be offered to the Vedas, the deities, the metres and the *ṛṣis*.

The ĀGS III.5.1-12 allowed two options for performance of this rite, either when the moon is in *Śravaṇā nakṣatra* (lunar mansion) in the lunar month of *Śrāvaṇa* or on the fifth *tithi* of the lunar month of *Śrāvaṇa* when the moon is in *Hastā nakṣatra*. According to this text, after offering two oblations of clarified butter, the *ācārya* should offer oblations of clarified butter to *Sāvitrī*, *Brahmā*, *Śraddhā*, *Medhā*, *Prajñā*, *Dhāraṇā*, *Sadasaspati*, *Anumati*, the metres and the *ṛṣis*. Then he should offer the oblations of *saktū* mixed with yoghurt. The verses, according to this text, he should recite during the sacrifice are same as the ŚGS and the KauṣGS but it added the option to recite either the last verse of the *Śākala* recension of the RV (X.194.4), “One is our intention” or the last verse of the *Bāṣkala* recension mentioned earlier. Next, when he together with his students, intends to

commence the study, he being touched by his students, should offer oblations to the deities mentioned earlier and Agni Sviṣṭakṛt and consume the *saktū* with yoghurt. After *mārjana* (sweeping), he should sit to the west of the sacrificial fire on *darbha* grass, whose tips should point towards east. The *ācārya* should dip the *darbha* blades into a water pot; join his hands in *brahmāñjali* style and recite (along with his students) thrice the *Vyāhṛtis* (*bhūḥ*, *bhuvah* and *svah*) preceded by syllable “*om*” and the *Sāvitrī*. Then he should recite the beginning of the RV (the first *sūkta* or *anuvāka*).⁷⁶

6.6.2.2 Descriptions in Śuklayajurvic ritual texts

The procedure prescribed in the Śuklayajurvic ritual text, PGS II.10.3-25 is quite different from the Rgvedic ritual texts. It instructed that after offering two initial oblations of clarified butter, the *ācārya* should offer oblations clarified butter to the *prthivī* (earth) and *agni* (fire) if he intends to commence the study of the *Ṛgveda*, to the *antarikṣa* (sky) and the *vāyu* (wind) if he intends to commence the study of the *Yajurveda*, to the *dauḥ* (heaven) and the *sūrya* (sun), if he intends to commence the study of the *Sāmaveda* and to the *diks* (directions) and the *candra* (moon), if he intends to commence the study of the *Atharvaveda*. Every time, he should also offer oblations to Brahmā and the metres. Next, he should offer oblations to Prajāpati, the deities, the *ṛṣis*, Śraddhā, Medhā, Sadasaspati and Anumati. With the *mantra* beginning with, “Sadasaspati” (VSM XXXII.13), he should offer the oblations of roasted grains thrice and all [of his students] should repeat the *mantra* after him. After each oblation, the students should put into the sacrificial fire three pieces of *udumbara* wood with fresh leaves and branches anointed with clarified butter, reciting the *Sāvitrī*. They should put the *samidh* wood in the sacrificial fire in the same procedure as *Upanayana*. Next, with the *mantra* (VSM IX.16) the students should swallow the roasted grains without chewing them and consume yoghurt with another *mantra* (VSM XXXIII.32). Then, the teacher, with the *Sāvitrī* or with the *anuvāka* of the VSM (XVII.80-86) should sacrifice the as many sesame seeds as the number of students he desires by means of an *ākarṣaphalaka* (dice-board). After the completion of consumption of the remnants of the oblations by the students, the *ācārya* should pronounce the syllable ‘*om*’ and repeat the *Sāvitrī* three times. Finally, he should commence the study with the recitation of the opening verses of every *adhyāya* for the students of the *Śuklayajurveda*, the opening verses of every section belonging to different *ṛṣis* for the students of the *Ṛgveda*, the *parvans* to the students of the *Sāmaveda* and the *sūktas* to the students of the *Atharvaveda*. During the study, he should sit facing west and the students should sit facing east. At the end of the study, everybody should recite the *mantra*, “May it [the Vedas] be ours in common; may it bless us in common; may this Brahman be powerful for us together; Indra knows [and so he may teach us] that by which we may not hate each other.” For the next three days and nights, this text prescribed the students to take a break from the study and not to cut their hair, shave or clip their nails. It also mentioned that some authority had prohibited the haircut, shaving and clipping of nails till the performance of *Utsarga*.⁷⁷

6.6.2.3 Descriptions in Sāmavedic ritual texts

The Sāmavedic ritual text, GGS III.3.2-8 provided another different procedure for the performance of this rite. According to the procedure laid down by this text, this rite should begin with the sacrifice by the *ācārya* with the *Vyāhṛtis* (*bhūḥ*, *bhuvah*, *svah*), followed by the recitation of the *Sāvitrī* to the students in the same manner as *Upanayana*. Next, he should sing the *Sāmasāvitrī* (the *Sāvitrī* *mantra* with *sāman* melody) and the *Bārhaspatyasāman* of the SV (*Pūrvārcika*, 1.2.10.1), beginning with “Soma, the king, Varuṇa”. They should learn the *chandas* part (comprising the *Agni*, *Indra* and *Pavamāna kāṇḍas* of the *Pūrvārcika*) of the SV, starting from its beginning and as much as is suitable (the first verses). Next, they should eat fried barley grains with a verse from the SV (*Pūrvārcika*, 3.1.2.7), “That which is accompanied by grains and by a *karambha*” and consume yoghurt with another verse from the SV (*Pūrvārcika*, 4.2.7.7), “I praised Dadhikrāvan.” After

sipping water, the *ācārya* should cause the students to repeat the first verses and sing the first *sāmans* of different sections of the SV. The KhādGS III.2.16-22 in difference with the GGS, instructed that the *ācārya* should sacrifice in the same manner as *Upanayana* and in the morning of the following day after causing the students to repeat (the first verses of the SV), he should cause them to repeat the beginning of the *ṛcs* and the *prastāvas* [of the *sāmans*] of the SV. At the end, he should cause the students to sing the *Rahasya* (also known as the *Ūhyagāna*) songs.⁷⁸

Another Sāmavedic ritual text, JGS I.14 mentioned an elaborate procedure for this rite. At the beginning, the *ācārya* along with his students, should perform *prāṇāyāma* (breathing control exercise) thrice and sip water. Then, they should recite the *mantra* for *purastājjapa* (the prayer to be recited before the rite), “May it [the Vedas] be ours in common; may it enjoy us in common; may it be efficacious to us in common; may we not hate each other; may it be efficacious to all of us.” Next, the *ācārya* should recite the *Sāvitrī* to the students in the same manner as *Upanayana* and inaudibly the *Sāmasāvitrī* and the verse from the SV (J) I.1.10.1 beginning with, “Soma, the king” (the *Bārhaspatyasāman*). After the study of the *chandas* part (comprising the *Agni*, *Indra* and *Pavamāna kāṇḍas* of the *Pūrvārcika*) of the SV, starting from its beginning and as much as is suitable, the *ācārya* should offer nine oblations of fried barley grains and yoghurt to the *ṛsis* [of the *ṛcs* of the SV], the deities [of the *ṛcs* of the SV], the metres [of the *ṛcs* of the SV], the *ṛcs*, the *yajuses* (prose *mantras* of the *Brāhmaṇas* and the ritual texts), the *sāmans* and with the following verses from the SV(J): “The *ṛc*, the *sāman*, we worship” (I.2.3.6.10), “Sadasaspati, the wonderful” (I.2.1.6.7) and “The one gives intelligence” (III.28.6). Then he should offer *tarpaṇa* (water libations) to the first six (the *ṛsis*, the deities, the metres, the *ṛcs*, the *yajuses* and the *sāmans*), his *ācārya* and thirteen [ancient] *ācāryas*: Jaimini Talavakāra, Sātyamuṅga, Rāṇāyani, Durvāsā, Bhāguri, Gauruṇḍi, Gaurgulavi, Bhagavat Aupamanyava, Kāraḍi, Sāvarni, Gārgya, Vārṣagaṇya and Daivantya. Next, after sanctifying with the verses from the SV (J), “That which is accompanied by grains” (I.2.1.10.7) and ““I praised Dadhikrāvan” (I.2.3.5.7), the remnants of oblations should be consumed by all. Then from the next day, they should study in the morning. A goat, a sheep and a cow should be given as the fee after completion of the study of the *Agni*, *Indra* and *Pavamāna kāṇḍa* respectively.⁷⁹

6.6.2.4 Descriptions in Kṛṣṇayajurvedic ritual texts

As the early Kṛṣṇayajurvedic ritual texts of the *Taittirīya śākhā* followed the *Ārṣeyapātha* divisions of the vedic texts of this *śākhā*, the procedures prescribed by BGS III.1.3-9, HGS II.18.3-5, BhGS III.8, ĀgGS I.2.1 and ĀpGS III.8.1-2 for this rite are also based on this division. ĀpGS III.8.1-2 provided the briefest description of this rite. It mentioned that the two deities (whom oblations should be offered during) the *Upākarāṇa* (rite of commencing study) and the *Samāpana* (rite of concluding study) for each *kāṇḍa* of the TS are the *ṛsi* of the *kāṇḍa* to be studied and Sadasaspati (literally, “Lord of the assembly”, Indra or Agni).

HGS II.18.3-5 provided a more elaborate description of the rite. It prescribed that at the beginning, the *ācārya* should put wood in the sacrificial fire and perform usual rites down to the oblations with the *Vyāhṛtis*. Then, he should offer oblations to Prajāpati, Soma, Agni, Viśvedevāḥ and Svayambhū, the *ṛsis* of the *kāṇḍas* of the TS followed by offering oblations to Sāvitrī, the *Rgveda*, the *Yajurveda*, the *Sāmaveda*, the *Atharvaveda* and Sadasaspati. After the sacrifice, they should recite either the first three *anuvākas* or the beginning of all the *kāṇḍas* of the TS.⁸⁰ BhGS III.8 prescribed only to offer oblations to five *ṛsis* of the *kāṇḍas* (or the names of the *kāṇḍas*), namely, Prajāpati, Soma, Agni, Viśvedevāḥ and Svayambhū and Sadasaspati. ĀgGS I.2.1 prescribed to offer oblations to five *kāṇḍa ṛsis*, Sāvitrī, four Vedas and Sadasaspati.

BGS III.1.3-9 provided a further elaborated description of the rite. In addition to the HGS, it instructed that the *ācārya*, while the students touching him should first offer oblations to three

deities: Yājñikī, Sāṃhitī and Varuṇī⁸¹ individually and then all three together. Next, he should offer oblations to the *kāṇḍarṣis* (five *ṛṣis* of the *kāṇḍas*), Sadasaspati, Sāvitrī and the Vedas. The *vedāhuti* (oblations to the Vedas) should include offering oblations to four Vedas, Atharvan and Aṅgiras, the *Itihāsapurāṇa*, the *Sarpadevajana* and *sarvabhūta*.

VkhGS II.12 prescribed to perform the rite of *Upākaraṇa* in the fortnight of the waxing moon of the lunar month of *Āṣāḍha*, avoiding the *riktā* (4th, 9th and 14th) and *parvaṇi* (new and full moon days) *tithis* and preferably on a Wednesday. On the day of performance, the teacher after performing *āghāra* (libation) of clarified butter should cause his students to shave and to take bath, and receive benediction from the Brāhmaṇs. Then, he should sprinkle water on them, while they recite the *mantra* for sprinkling, then he should cause them to circumambulate the sacrificial fire from east to west and next, he should give them a *kūrca* (bunch of *darbha* grass) to sit on his right side and sprinkle them with the *mantra* beginning with, “*śaṃ no devī*” (TBr I.2.1.1). Next, the teacher should offer fifty principal oblations of clarified butter, *caru* (boiled rice with clarified butter), or roasted grains to Agni, Pṛthivī, the *Rgveda*, the *Yajurveda*, the *Sāmaveda*, the *Atharvaveda*, Vāyu, *antarīkṣa*, *divasa* (the day), *sūrya*, *dik* (the directions), *candra*, the study, the suspension of study, the deity of study, the deity of suspension of study, Śraddhā, Medhā, *dhāraṇa*, *ācārya*, vedic metres, the *ṛṣis*, the *saptarṣis*, the *munis*, the *gurus*, *ahorātra* (day and night), the half-months, the months, the seasons, the *saṃvatsaras* (years), the *parivatsaras*, the *idāvatsaras*, the *iduvatsaras*, the *vatsaras*, Brahmā, the *Sāvitrī*, Prajāpati, Uśanas, Cyavana, Bṛhaspati, Soma, Aṅgiras, Darbha, Śaṅkha, Likhita, Sthūlaśiras, Vainateya, Śikhin, Īśvara and the Adhikṛtādhidevatā. Then he should offer oblations with the *mantras* from the TĀ X.1.4, “Sadasaspati, the wonderful” and others should commence the *Prājāpatyavratibandha* (observance of Prajāpati). Next, he should sacrifice with the sixteen *mantras*, the first of which beginning with, “Dhatṛ gives me.” (TS III.3.11.2c), followed by the *mūlahoma* (the principal rite of offering oblations into the sacrificial fire) with the five *mantras* addressed to Varuṇa and to Agni Sviṣṭākāra. At the end, he should give his students the remnants of oblations to eat with the *mantra* beginning with, “May Aditi tuck up your garments” and should give them the water for sipping with the *mantra* (TS IV.1.2.1d), beginning with, “At every pursuit we invoke the strong one.” To the students seated facing east or north on his right side, after causing them to make a *brahmāñjali*, he should teach three Vedas or two or one together with the *sūtras*. If the teacher desires to commence any further study in between (the *Upākarma* and the *Utsarjana*), he should teach the students only after offering the oblations into the sacrificial fire.⁸²

Two Kṛṣṇayajurvedic ritual texts of the *Maitrāyaṇī śākhā*, MGS I.4.2-5 and VārGS 8.2-5 and the only extant ritual text belonging to the *Kāṭhaka śākhā*, KGS 9.2-3 again prescribed the procedures for this rite different from the *Taittirīya śākhā* texts. MGS I.4.2-5 prescribed that the *ācārya* should offer oblations into the sacrificial fire with certain *mantras*; then he should recite certain other *mantras*; with *darbha* grass in his hand, he should recite the *Sāvitrī* thrice and should recite first three *anuvākas* and certain other *mantras*.⁸³

Sudarśanācārya (late 15th century) while explaining ĀpGS III.8.1-2 in his *Tātparyadarśana* mentioned about two types of *Upākaraṇa* rites: *Adhyāyopākaraṇa* (rite for commencement of the study of the entire *Taittirīya* texts) and *Kāṇḍopākaraṇa* (rite for commencement of the study of the individual *kāṇḍa*). According to him, *Adhyāyopākaraṇa* should be performed on the full moon day of the lunar month of *Śrāvaṇa*. The *ācārya* along with his students, after the bath, should first offer libations of water to nine *ṛṣis* (Prajāpati, Soma, Agni, Viśvedevāḥ, Svayambhū, Sāṃhitī, Yājñikī, Vāruṇī and Sadasaspati) and then offer nine oblations of clarified butter to them. *Kāṇḍopākaraṇa* should be performed before commencement of the study of each *kāṇḍa*. During the performance, first, the oblations should be offered to four *pradhānahomadevatās* (major deities for sacrifice): Prajāpati, Soma, Agni and Viśvedevāḥ and then the oblations should be offered to the deity of the *kāṇḍa* (Sāṃhitī or Yājñikī or Vāruṇī or Svayambhū), who is an *upahomadevatā* (minor deity for

sacrifice).⁸⁴ Remnants of these rites are still found in the rite of *Kāṇḍa ṛṣi tarpaṇa* of the Tamil Brāhmaṇs.

A late text on vedic rituals, KP III.8.17 stated that when a ‘twice-born’ performs every year the rite of *Upākarma* together with *Utsarga* according to the prescribed procedures, that results in the growth of the *chandas* (vedic study). It seems that these two educational rites had metamorphosed in to the rites of institution for the ‘twice-born’ elites by this time. In the late medieval period, when *Upākarma* lost all its significance, both *Upākarma* and *Utsarjana* rites were performed in the same day, one after another, mostly by the Brāhmaṇs. Since the late medieval period, this rite is also known as *Śrāvaṇī* and it is performed on either the full moon day or the fifth *tithi* of the bright lunar fortnight in the month of *Śrāvaṇa*.⁸⁵ A previously insignificant element of replacement of the *upavīta* (sacrificial thread) became its most significant element.

6.7 Utsarjana

Utsarga or *Utsarjana* (literally “dismissal”) was an ancient rite of seasonal giving up of the vedic study. In the VkhGS 1.1, this rite is mentioned as *Visarga* and included in its list of eighteen rites for the purification of the body.⁸⁶ ĀpGS VIII.1 mentioned this rite as *Samāpana* (literally, “completion”). ĀGS III.5.13 and 23 mentioned this rite both as *Utsarga* and *Utsarjana*.

The Ṛgvedic ritual texts prescribed to perform this rite in the lunar month of *Māgha* (January-February). ŚGS IV.6.1 and KauṣGS III.8.2 instructed that this rite should be performed on the *pratipada* (first) *tithi* of the bright fortnight in the lunar month of *Māgha*. According to ĀGS III.5.14, this rite should be performed after six months of continuous vedic study from *Upākarma*, so according to this text also, this rite should be performed in the lunar month of *Māgha*. Later, VasDh XIII.5-7, which is traditionally considered as a Ṛgvedic *dharmasūtra* text, reduced the period of continuous vedic study to either four months and a half or five months and a half. For the rest of the year, it prescribed to study the Vedas in the bright fortnights only. It also mentioned that one may also study the *Vedāṅgas* (ancillary texts) in addition during this period, if he desires so.

The Sāmavedic ritual texts prescribed to perform this rite in the lunar month of *Taiṣa* (December-January). GGS III.3.14 described this rite as *Utsarjana*, KhādGS III.2.24, JGS I.15 mentioned this rite as *Utsarga*, and all three texts prescribed that it should be performed on the full moon day in the lunar month of *Taiṣa* or *Pauṣa* (December-January). KhādGS III.2.24 prescribed to perform this rite after four months and a half of vedic study, one and a half month less than the Ṛgvedic ritual texts.

The Śuklayajurvedic ritual text, PGS II.12.1 stated that the rite of *Utsarga* should be performed in the lunar month of *Pauṣa*, when the moon is in *Rohiṇī nakṣatra* (lunar mansion) or at the time of performance of middle *Aṣṭakā* rite (on the eighth *tithi* of the dark fortnight in the lunar month of *Pauṣa*). It (II.11.10-11) also prescribed to perform this rite after a continuous vedic study for five and a half months or six and a half months.

The Kṛṣṇayajurvedic ritual text, BGS III.9.1-2 prescribed to perform *Utsarga* either on the full moon day in the lunar month of *Taiṣa* or on the full moon day in the lunar month of *Māgha*. HGS II.8.18.8 and ĀgGS I.2.2 instructed to perform *Utsarga* on any *tithi* in the *taiṣīpakṣa* (the bright fortnight, which precedes the full moon day in the lunar month of *Taiṣa*) when the moon in the *nakṣatra* of *Rohiṇī* or on the full moon day itself. BhGS III.8 added the third option to perform it on the full moon day in the lunar month of *Māgha*.⁸⁷ KGS 9.10 and MGS I.4.7 without specifying any particular *tithi*, simply instructed to perform *Utsarjana* after the continuous vedic study of four months and a half, five months or five months and a half.⁸⁸ VārGS 8.7 prescribed an additional option of performing this rite after the continuous vedic study throughout the period of *dakṣiṇāyana* (from summer solstice to winter solstice) also. Later, a Sāmavedic *dharmasūtra* text, GDh XVI.2 also prescribed the continuous vedic study for four months and a half, five months or throughout the

period of *dakṣiṇāyana*. Probably, following this same tradition, a later text, the KP III.9.2 also instructed that a wise person should not study *Rahasya* (literally, “mystery”, *Āraṇyaka* texts) and *Upaniṣad* texts for the six months after the *dakṣiṇāyana*.⁸⁹

KauśS 141.2, the only extant Atharvavedic ritual text, prescribed to perform this rite after performing *Upākarma* on the full moon day in either the lunar month of *Śrāvaṇa* or *Prauṣṭhapada* and then the continuous study of four months and a half. Exactly the same instruction is echoed in a later text, ViṣDh XXX.1-2, which also instructed to perform this rite outside (the village).

MDh IV.95-96 prescribed the period for continuous vedic study of four months and a half and perform *Utsarjana* thereafter. It instructed to perform this rite outside (the village) in the forenoon of the day when the moon is in Puṣya *nakṣatra* (lunar mansion) or on the first (lunar) day of the bright fortnight in the lunar month of *Māgha* (January-February). YDh I.143, following the tradition of the Śuklayajurvic texts, prescribed to perform this rite at a place outside (the village) near water on the eighth day (of the dark fortnight) or when the moon is in Rohiṇī *nakṣatra* (lunar mansion) in the lunar month of *Pauṣa*.

After the performance of *Utsarga*, MDh IV.97 prescribed the suspension of the study for a *pakṣiṇī* (two days and the intervening night) or just during that day (of the performance) and (the following) night. After the break, this text (IV.98) prescribed that (instead of studying all the vedic texts and their ancillaries everyday), the *chandās* (the Vedas) should be studied during the bright fortnights of the lunar months and all the *aṅgas* (ancillary texts) of the Vedas should be studied in the dark fortnights (till the next *Upākarma*).

According to ŚGS IV.6.1-6, the performers should go in the north-east direction to a place where herbs are abundant. At the beginning, they should recite the hymns from the RV revering the sun, beginning with, “(His brilliant banners draw) upwards the god who knows all creatures” (I.50), “The brilliant presence of the gods” (I.115), “Adoration to Mitra’s [eye]” (X.37) and “May Sūrya guard us out of heaven” (X.158). Then they should throw clods of earth to all directions from left to right with a hymn (RV X.152) verse by verse, which begins with, “A mighty ruler.” Next, they should offer libations of water to the *ṛṣis*, the vedic metres, the deities, Śraddhā, Medhā and each of the [three] *pitṛs*.⁹⁰

ĀGS III.5.13 prescribed to perform *Utsarga* in the same way as *Upākarma*. ĀGS III.5.20-22 instructed that oblations of boiled rice must be offered to the same deities whom the oblations of clarified butter were offered during *Upākarma*. Then they (the teacher and his students) should take a bath and offer libations of water to the same deities, *ācāryas* (teachers), *ṛṣis* (vedic poets) and *pitṛs*.⁹¹

GGs III.3.15 prescribed that the teacher and his students should go out of the village turning their faces to the east or north and should approach the water that is deeper than waist. They should take a bath, and offer *tarpaṇa* (libations of water) to the vedic metres, the *ṛṣis* and the *ācāryas*.

JGS I.15 prescribed that the rite of leaving the study of the Vedas should be performed with the *mantra*, “May, the metres that increase each by four syllables repose duly in the Vedas. May, they think of us propitiously.”⁹²

PGS II.12.1-3 provided a brief description of the rite. This text instructed that the teacher and his students should go to the brink of water and offer libations of water to the deities, vedic metres, ancient *ācāryas*, the *Gandharvas*, other *ācāryas*, the year with its divisions, the *pitṛs* and own *ācāryas*. After reciting four times the *Sāvitrī* rapidly, they should say loudly, “We have stopped [the vedic study].”⁹³

BGS III.9.3-16, BhGS III.8-11, HGS II.8.18.8-10, 19.1-7, 20.1-13 and ĀgGS I.2.2 prescribed the

rite of *Utsarga* in the similar manner. According to these texts, the teacher accompanied by his students should go out of the village in the eastern or northern direction to a place where they would find pleasant water with a good bathing place. There, they should dive into it and perform *prāṇāyāma* three times with the *Aghamarṣaṇa* hymn (TĀ X.1.13-14). Holding *darbha* blades in their hands, they should take a bath reciting certain *mantras*. Then, they should come out of water, wring out their wet garments, put on another garment, sip water, prepare *sthaṇḍilas* near the water and give the *darbha* blades to each other. Then they should arrange the mats of *darbha* grass with their tips pointed towards east from north to south, first for the *devagaṇa* (group of deities), such as Brahmā, Bṛhaspati, Prajāpati, Indra, Soma and Vaiśravaṇa. Being *nivītin* (covering both shoulders with the upper garment), they should arrange towards the north at a northwardly inclined place, the mats of *darbha* grass with their tips pointed towards north from west to east for the seven *ṛṣis*, namely, Viśvāmitra, Jamadagni, Bharadvāja, Gautama, Atri, Vasiṣṭha and Kaśyapa. A mat for Arundhatī (the wife of Vasiṣṭha) should also be arranged between the mats for Vasiṣṭha and Kaśyapa. Then a mat should be arranged for Agastya towards south. Next, they (being *nivītin*, according to the BGS) should arrange mats towards the north for the vedic teachers, namely, Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana, Jātūkarma, Tarukṣa, Tṛṇavindu, Somaśuṣmiṇ (only in the BGS and the BhGS), Somaśuṣmāyana (only in the BGS and the HGS), Vājin (only in the BGS and the HGS), Vājaśravas, Bṛhaduktha, Varmiṇ, Vajriṇ (only in the BGS), Varūtha (Varūthina in the BhGS, the HGS and the ĀgGS), Sanatkumāra (only in the BGS, Sanatvāna in the ĀgGS), Vāmadeva, Vājiratna (Vājaratna in the BhGS, Vājarāja in the ĀgGS), Vīrajita (only in the BGS), Haryaśva (Haryajva in the BhGS, Haryajvāyana in the HGS), Udamegha (Udamaya in the BhGS and the HGS), Rṇamjaya (only in the BhGS), Rtamjaya, Tṛṇamjaya (only in the BGS), Kṛtamjaya, Dhanañjaya, Satyañjaya (only in the BGS), Babhru, Tryaruṇa, Trivarṇa (only in the ĀgGS), Trivarṣa, Tridhātu, Aśvajña (only in the BGS, Aśvayajña in the BhGS), Parāśara, Vasiṣṭha (only in the BhGS), Śravas (only in the ĀgGS), Suśravas (only in the BGS, the HGS and the ĀgGS), Sutaśravas (only in the BGS and the HGS, Stutaśravas in the ĀgGS), Satyaśravas (Satraśravas in the ĀgGS), Somaśravas (only in the BhGS), Satvavat (only in the BhGS and the HGS), Gautama (only in the HGS and the ĀgGS) and Śibinta (only in the HGS). They should also arrange the mats for the deities, the *Sāvitṛī*, the vedic metres, the *Ṛgveda*, the *Yajurveda*, the *Sāmaveda*, the *Atharvaveda*, the Atharvāṅgiras, the *Itihāsa* and the *Purāṇa*. Next, being *prācīnāvītin*, they should arrange the mats towards the south for Vaiśampāyana, Phaliṅgu (Paliṅgu in the HGS), Tittira, Ukha, Ātreya, the *padakāra* (the author of the *pada* text), Kauṇḍinya, the *vṛttikāra* (author of the gloss), Kaṇva Bodhāyana, the *pravacanakāra* (authority on the rituals), Āpastamba, the *sūtrakāra* (only in the BGS and the BhGS), Satyāśādhā Hiranyakeśī (not mentioned in the BhGS, but the HGS and the ĀgGS had mentioned only his name), Vājasaneya Yājñavalkya (only in the BGS), Bharadvāja (inserted between Kaṇva Bodhāyana and Āpastamba in the BhGS, not mentioned in the HGS and the ĀgGS), Āgniveśya (only in the BGS), the *ācāryas*, the *ūrdharetās* (chaste persons), the *vānaprasthas* (who live in the forests) and the *ekapatnīs* (monogamous persons). Then, they should prepare the mats for their paternal and maternal ancestors. Each should prepare the mat with the words, “I prepare (*kalpayāmi*) for so and so; I prepare for so and so.” Each should offer *gandha* (perfumes), *puṣpa* (flowers), *dhūpa* (incense) and *dīpa* (lamps) with the words, “Reverence to so and so; reverence to so and so.” Each should offer food with the words, “To so and so *svāhā*; to so and so, *svāhā*.” Each should offer water with fruits with the words, “I satiate (*tarpayāmi*) so and so; I satiate so and so.” Each should worship with the words, “Reverence to so and so; reverence to so and so.” Then they should repeat the first three *anuvākas* or first three *mantras* of all the *kāṇḍas*. With the recitation of two *mantras* from the TS (IV.2.9.2) beginning with, “Arising from every stem, every joint” and “You that extend with a hundred”, they should plant *dūrvā* grass on the brink of water. They should stir up the waves in the water and run a race in the eastern or northern direction until they lose their breath. After returning to home, they should serve the Brāhmaṇs with *apūpa* (cakes), *dhāna* (roasted

barley grains) and boiled rice.⁹⁴

6.8 *Kṣurikābandhana* or *Churikābandha*

The rite of *Kṣurikābandhana* or *Churikābandha* (literally, “tying the sword”) probably became popular in the medieval period as a rite for the completion of military training. One of the early descriptions of this element is found in *Pūrvabhāga* II.56.380-384 of the NārP. The late medieval digests NirS and SṃP, in their descriptions on *Churikābandha*, cited these verses of the *Nārada-purāṇa* with a few variants. The description of *Churikābandhana* found in an early medieval text on astrology, *Nāradasaṃhitā* 25.1-5 is almost similar to the NārP. The NārP prescribed that the rite of *Kṣurikābandhana* should be performed by the princes before the marriage, in the same month, in which the marriage has been fixed. The rite should be performed in the fortnight of the waxing moon, when the planets, Jupiter, Venus and Mars are not set, on any weekday except Tuesday, in any *tithi* (when the moon is in any *nakṣatra*, according to the variant in SṃP) auspicious for the *Mauñjībandhana*. The rite should begin with the worship of the deities and the *pitṛs*. Then, the sword should be worshipped by placing it in front of the deities. Next, in an auspicious *lagna* (ascendant), the sword should be tied to the waist of the performer.⁹⁵ NirS also cited another text *Samgraha*, which prescribed to perform the investiture of the weapons for the Śūdras and the Kṣatriyas in a fashion identical to the investiture of the *muñja*. It also prescribed to perform this rite in the *tithis* which are auspicious for the *Mauñjībandhana* and on any weekday except Tuesday.⁹⁶ The performance of the rite of *Kharg bandhāi* (literally, “binding of the sword”), popular till the early 19th century in the present day Rajasthan⁹⁷ is influenced by this rite.

Table 2: The *ajina* (animal skins) prescribed for three 'twice-born' *varṇas*

Text	Brāhmaṇ	Kṣatriya/ Rājanya	Vaiśya
ĀGS	black antelope	spotted deer	goat
ŚGS	black antelope	spotted deer	cow
KauṣGS	black antelope	spotted deer	cow
GGS	black antelope	spotted deer	goat
JGS	black antelope	spotted deer	goat
PGS	black antelope	spotted deer	goat/ cow
BGS	black antelope	spotted deer	goat
BhGS	black antelope	spotted deer	goat
ĀgGS	black antelope	spotted deer	goat
VkhGS	black antelope	spotted deer	goat
KGS	black antelope	tiger	spotted deer
MGS	black antelope	black antelope	black antelope
ĀpDh	<i>hariṇa</i> deer/ black antelope	spotted deer	goat
BDh	black antelope	spotted deer	goat
GDh	black antelope	spotted deer	goat
VasDh	black antelope	spotted deer	cow/ goat
MDh	black antelope	spotted deer	goat
ViṣDh	deer	tiger	goat
<i>Śaṅkhasmṛti</i>	deer	tiger	goat
AgnP	deer	tiger	goat

Table 3: The materials prescribed for the *mekhalā* (girdle) for three 'twice-born' *varṇas*

Text	Brāhmaṇ	Kṣatriya/ Rājanya	Vaiśya
ĀGS	<i>muñja</i> grass	<i>dhanurjyā</i> (bowstring)	<i>āvi</i> (woollen)
ŚGS	<i>muñja</i> grass	<i>dhanurjyā</i>	<i>ūrṇāsūtra</i> (woollen thread)
KauṣGS	<i>muñja</i> grass	<i>dhanurjyā</i>	<i>ūrṇāsūtra</i>
GGS	<i>muñja</i> grass	<i>Kāśa</i> grass	<i>tambala</i> (hemp)
JGS	<i>muñja</i> grass	<i>mūrvā</i> fibre	<i>tāmala</i> bark and <i>muñja</i> grass
PGS	<i>muñja</i> grass/ <i>kuśa</i> grass	<i>dhanurjyā</i> / <i>aśmantaka</i> fibre	<i>mūrvā</i> fibre/ <i>balbaja</i> grass
BGS	<i>muñja</i> grass	<i>jyā</i> (bowstring) of <i>mūrvā</i> fibre	<i>āvisūtra</i> (woollen thread)
BDh	<i>muñja</i> grass	<i>dhanurjyā</i>	<i>śaṇa</i> (hemp)
HGS	<i>muñja</i> grass	<i>jyā</i>	<i>āvisūtra</i>
ĀpDh	<i>muñja</i> grass	<i>jyā</i> / <i>muñja</i> grass and iron	<i>āvisūtra</i> / <i>sairī</i> / <i>tāmala</i> bark
BhGS	<i>muñja</i> grass	<i>mūrvā</i> fibre	<i>sūtra</i> (cotton thread)
ĀgGS	<i>muñja</i> grass	<i>jyā</i>	<i>āvika</i> (woollen)
VkhGS	<i>muñja</i> grass	<i>mūrvā</i> fibre	<i>śaṇa</i> (hemp)
ĀpGS	<i>muñja</i> grass	<i>muñja</i> grass	<i>muñja</i> grass
KGS	<i>muñja</i> grass	<i>dhanurjyā</i> of <i>mūrvā</i> fibre	<i>sūtra</i> (cotton thread)
MGS	<i>muñja</i> grass	<i>muñja</i> grass	<i>muñja</i> grass
VārGS	<i>muñja</i> grass	<i>dhanurjyā</i> of <i>mūrvā</i> fibre	<i>śaṇa</i> (hemp)
KauśS	<i>bhadramuñja</i> grass	<i>mūrvā</i> fibre/ <i>dhanurjyā</i>	<i>kṣumā</i> (linen)
GDh	<i>muñja</i> grass	<i>mūrvā</i> fibre	<i>sūtra</i> (cotton thread)
VasDh	<i>muñja</i> grass	<i>dhanurjyā</i>	<i>śaṇatantu</i> (hemp fibre)
MDh	<i>muñja</i> grass/ <i>kuśa</i> grass	<i>mūrvā</i> fibre/ <i>aśmantaka</i> fibre	<i>śaṇatantu</i> / <i>balbaja</i> grass
ViṣDh	<i>muñja</i> grass	<i>jyā</i>	<i>balbaja</i> grass
Paithīnasi cited in SmC	<i>muñja</i> grass/ <i>aśmantaka</i> fibre	<i>balbaja</i> grass/ <i>mūrvā</i> fibre	<i>śaṇa</i> (hemp)/ <i>kṣumā</i> (linen)

Table 4: The woods prescribed for the *daṇḍa* (staff) for three 'twice-born' *varṇas*

Text	Brāhmaṇ	Kṣatriya/ Rājanya	Vaiśya
ĀGS	<i>palāśa</i>	<i>udumbara</i>	<i>bilva</i>
ŚGS	<i>palāśa/ bilva</i>	<i>nyagrodha</i>	<i>udumbara</i>
KauṣGS	<i>palāśa/ bilva</i>	<i>nyagrodha/ khādira</i>	<i>udumbara</i>
GGS	<i>paṃa (palāśa)</i>	<i>bilva</i>	<i>aśvattha</i>
JGS	<i>palāśa/ bilva</i>	<i>nyagrodha</i>	<i>udumbara</i>
PGS	<i>palāśa</i>	<i>bilva</i>	<i>udumbara</i>
BGS	<i>palāśa/ bilva</i>	<i>nyagrodha/ rohītaka</i>	<i>badara/ udumbara</i>
ĀpGS and ĀpDh	<i>palāśa</i>	<i>nyagrodha</i>	<i>badara/ udumbara</i>
HGS	<i>bilva/ palāśa</i>	<i>nyagrodha</i>	<i>udumbara</i>
BhGS	<i>bilva/ palāśa</i>	<i>nyagrodha</i>	<i>udumbara</i>
ĀgGS	<i>bilva/ palāśa</i>	<i>nyagrodha</i>	<i>udumbara</i>
VkhGS	<i>palāśa/ bilva</i>	<i>nyagrodha</i>	<i>udumbara</i>
VārGS	<i>palāśa</i>	<i>nyagrodha</i>	<i>aśvattha</i>
MGs	<i>yajñīya vṛkṣa</i>	<i>yajñīya vṛkṣa</i>	<i>yajñīya vṛkṣa</i>
KGS	<i>palāśa</i>	<i>aśvattha</i>	<i>nyagrodha</i>
KauśS	<i>palāśa</i>	<i>aśvattha</i>	<i>nyagrodha</i>
BDh	<i>yājñīkasya vṛkṣa</i>	<i>yājñīkasya vṛkṣa</i>	<i>yājñīkasya vṛkṣa</i>
GDh	<i>bilva/ palāśa</i>	<i>aśvattha</i>	<i>pīlu</i>
VasDh	<i>palāśa</i>	<i>nyagrodha</i>	<i>udumbara</i>
MDh	<i>bilva/ palāśa</i>	<i>vaṭa/ khādira</i>	<i>pīlu/ udumbara</i>
ViṣDh	<i>palāśa</i>	<i>khādira</i>	<i>udumbara</i>
Paithīnasi cited in SṃP	<i>udumbara</i>	<i>badara</i>	<i>varaṇa</i>
Śaṅkhasmṛti	<i>paṃa (palāśa)</i>	<i>pippala (aśvattha)</i>	<i>bilva</i>
Yama cited in SmC	<i>palāśa/ bilva</i>	<i>aśvattha/ khādira</i>	<i>udumbara/ plakṣa</i>
AgnP	<i>paṃa (palāśa)</i>	<i>pippala (aśvattha)</i>	<i>bilva</i>
NārP	<i>palāśa</i>	<i>udumbara</i>	<i>bilva</i>
<i>Bhaviṣyapurāṇa</i> cited in SṃP	<i>bilva/ palāśa/ plakṣa</i>	<i>nyagrodha/ khādira/ vetasa</i>	<i>pīlu/ udumbara/ aśvattha</i>

Chapter 7

Coming of age rites for young females

An early indirect reference to the performance of coming of age rites for a young female is probably available in a verse of AVŚ XI.5.18, which stated that a maiden gets a young husband by observing *brahmacarya* (celibacy). This inference can be drawn on the basis of the known association of observance of *brahmacarya* with *Upanayana*, the coming of age rite for a young male. An actual reference to the performance of the coming of age rite, *Upanayana* by a female is found in a passage of Hārīta, an early authority on *smṛti* cited by SmC. It categorized all females into two broad categories: the *brahmavādinīs* (literally, “students of vedic knowledge”) and the *sadyovadhūs* (literally, “those who marry straightaway”) and allowed *Upanayana*, maintaining sacrificial fire, vedic study and ceremonial begging inside one’s own house for the *brahmavādinī* young females. For the *sadyovadhū* young females, it prescribed that when their marriage is imminent, a mere ceremony of *Upanayana* should be somehow performed and then their marriage should be celebrated. The reference to the performance *Upanayana* by a young female is also found in a citation of Yama, an authority on *smṛti* in SmC and SmP, which said that in the former eras, the women also performed the rite of *Mauñjībandhana* (literally, “to tie a girdle of *muñja* grass”, the ancient coming of age rite), studied the Vedas and recited the *Sāvitrī*. A passage of Hārīta cited in SmP prescribed that for a young female, *Samāvartana*, the rite marking the end of *brahmacarya* must be performed before appearance of her menses. ĀGS III.8.14 also while prescribing the specific procedures for the element of smearing ointment during the *Samāvartana* rite for the males of three ‘twice-born’ *varṇas*, added a specific procedure for the females.¹ These scattered information indicate that the performances of the coming of age rites like *Upanayana* and *Samāvartana* for the young females were not uncommon to the composers of the vedic ritual texts till the late centuries of the first millennium BCE. N.N. Bhattacharyya (1960) described the scenario since the centuries immediately prior to the Common Era as follows:

In the *Gṛhya* and *Dharmasūtras*, we find that girls were married just before the time of puberty or immediately after it. [...] the Brahmanical law books prescribe no rite for women; they become pure by marriage which is their only *saṃskāra*. It seems possible that some of the ancient puberty rites of the girls were incorporated in the marriage rites. [...] relics of menstrual rites are found in the *Strīācāra*, in the *Snāpana*, *Paridhāpana* and *Samnāhana* rites, in the *Tailaharidrōpaṇa* and others.²

But, fortunately, the descriptions of some of the remnants of ancient coming of age rites for young females survived in vedic ritual texts and they will be discussed in the next section.

7.1 Remnants in vedic ritual texts

Remnants of two coming of age rites for young females are found in the KGS, a late *gṛhyasūtra* text. Descriptions of the performance of these two rites, *Haviṣyakalpa* and *Haviṣyapūnyāha* in the KGS indicate that these rites were part of an ancient folk tradition outside the Brahmanical social framework.

7.1.1 *Haviṣyakalpa*

The rite of *Haviṣyakalpa* (literally, “a procedure for offering oblations”) according to KGS 19.1-7, must be performed by a young woman after completion of ten or twelve years of *brahmacarya* and before marriage. According to the KGS, this rite comprises sacrifice of two animals or one animal or rice near a natural spring or in a *devakula* (shrine), where two fires had been lighted. First, ordinary oblations should be offered in the usual way. Next, the oblations mixed with fragrant substances should be offered to Agni, Soma, Varuṇa, Mitra, Indra, Bṛhaspati, Skanda, Rudra, Vātsīputra, Bhaga, Bhaganakṣatras, Kālī, Śaṣṭhī, Bhadrakālī, Pūṣaṇ, Tvaṣṭṛ and Mahiṣika.³

7.1.2 *Haviṣyapūṇyāha*

The rite of *Haviṣyapūṇyāha* (literally, “an auspicious day for offering oblations”), according to KGS 20.1-2 should be performed by a relative of the young woman. He should cook a mess of food (*sthālīpāka*) with milk near a water reservoir or any convenient location. Then, the whole body of the young woman including her head should be washed with water mixed all types of perfumes and fruits. Then, she should be dressed in an *ahata* garment. Finally, the oblations of the *sthālīpāka* should be offered to Indrāṇī, Varuṇāṇī, Gandharvāṇī, Udakāṇī, Agni, Jīvaputra, Prajāpati, Mahārājā, Skanda, Aryamaṇ, Bhaga and Prajānaka.⁴

7.2 A coming of age rite in 19th century Bengal

In 1881, Shib Chunder Bose in his work, *The Hindoos as They Are* described the coming of age rite for a Hindu young female, as it was performed in the late 19th century Bengal. As the child marriage was prevalent, this rite was performed after marriage, at their menarche. This rite was based on the folk tradition, but probably also influenced by the codified rite of *rajodarśana* (literally, “menarche”) prescribed in the late medieval *nibandha* texts.

The young female was kept in a corner of a dark room for four days and no one was allowed to touch her, even her sisters, as she was regarded as unclean. This room was known as *tīrghar*. She was not allowed to see the sun. She was allowed to eat only boiled rice, milk, sugar, yoghurt and tamarind without salt and provided only a mat for sleeping. On the morning of the fifth day, she was taken to a nearby water reservoir, accompanied by five married females whose husbands are alive. She was besmeared with turmeric and water. Finally, she and other females took bath and returned home, after throwing away the mat and other items used by her in the room. After returning home, the girl sat in another room with five married females whose husbands are alive. A female belonging to a caste considered as very low in contemporary perception, performed certain fertility rites. A large number of females were invited on the occasion, who were entertained with music and dance by professional performers and a meal was served to them. Before leaving, they uttered the benediction, “May you be blessed with a male child.”⁵

Chapter 8

Betrothal and marriage rites

8.1 Betrothal rites

Ancient Hindu betrothal rite, like other ancient cultures, essentially consisted of the visit of the wooers sent by the prospective bride seeker to the house of the father of the prospective bride to negotiate with the bride's family and in case both the sides agreed, it ended with the common resolve for marriage by both the wooers and the relations of the bride. This ancient rite was later known as *Varapreṣaṇa* (literally, "sending wooers") and the description of this ancient betrothal rite is found in the vedic texts and vedic ritual texts. This ancient practice probably continued till the first few centuries of the Common Era. Later, when the child marriage became rampant and the parents or other elder members of the extended family of the bride and the bridegroom made all arrangements for the marriage, new betrothal rites emerged. Following the earlier tradition, these new betrothal rites also included the bridegroom's visit to the bride's house, but only after the finalization of the marriage by the parents. It consisted of the visit of the bridegroom himself to the house of the bride's father and honour the bride after receiving the formal consent from the father of the bride. This betrothal rite became known as *Kanyāvaraṇa* (literally, "solicitation for the bride") or *Varaṇa*. A similar betrothal also emerged soon, which consisted of the visit by the relations of the bride to the house of the bridegroom after finalization of the marriage and presentation of gifts to him. Early references to these new betrothal rites are found in the late *dharmaśāstra* texts. In the late medieval period, the betrothal rites further transformed into the rite of verbal agreement for the marriage by the parents of the bridegroom and the bride followed by the presentation of gifts, sometimes much before the actual marriage. This rite became known as *Vāgdāna* (literally, "verbal commitment") or *Vānniścaya* (literally, "verbal assurance"). Descriptions of this rite are found in the late medieval digests. From the descriptions of this rite, it is visible that the earlier tradition of honouring bride still continued but now it was performed by the father of the bridegroom.

8.1.1 *Varapreṣaṇa*

The early mention to the ancient rites of sending wooers by the bride seeker to the house of the bride, which later became known as *Varapreṣaṇa* (literally, "sending wooers"), are probably found in RV X.85.8-9 and AVŚ XIV.1.9. These verses mentioned that for Sūryā, Soma became the bride seeker and the Aśvins became the wooers. The descriptions of this ancient customary practice most probably followed in the late 1st millennium BCE are found in ŚGS I.6.1-6, KauṣGS I.2.1-3, BGS I.1.14-15, ĀpGS I.2.16 and II.4.1-2,¹ JGS I.20 and KauṣS 75.8-9.

According to ŚGS I.6.1-6 and KauṣGS I.2.2-3, the wooers should be sent with the *mantra* beginning with, "Thornless" (RV X.85.23). They should carry flowers, fruits, barley and a pot of water to the house of the prospective bride and after reaching her house, say three times, "I am here, Sir." Then, the visitors should sit facing west and the residents of the house should sit facing east. The wooers should ask for the girl in marriage, pronouncing the *gotra* and the family details of the bride seeker. When, both the sides have agreed, they should touch a vessel completely filled with water in which, flowers, roasted grains, fruits, barley and a piece of gold have been immersed, and say, "Undisturbed are you, the undisturbable vigour of the gods, not cursed, protecting against a curse, unexposed to a curse. Might I straightway attain to truth. Put me into prosperity." With the *mantra* beginning with, "May [Prajāpati] create progeny for us" (RV X.85.43), the *ācārya* of the bride's family should stand up, touch the water vessel on the head of the bride and say, "I give you progeny; I give you cattle; I give you vigour and the *brahmavarca* (eminence in vedic knowledge)".

JGS I.20 prescribed that the messenger should be sent by the bridegroom with the *mantra*, “May the paths on which our friends go for wooing be free of thorns and straight; May Aryamaṇ and Bhaga lead us together, O gods, may our united household be easy to manage.” (same as RV X.85.23).

ĀpGS II.4.1 prescribed that the friends of the prospective bridegroom who are versed in the *mantras* should be sent as wooers. ĀpGS I.2.16 and I.3.4 prescribed that the wooers should be sent when the moon is in Invakā (Mrgaśīras) *nakṣatra*. BGS I.1.14 prescribed to send an even number of Brāhmaṇas as wooers during *udagayana* (the period from winter solstice to summer solstice), in the fortnight of the waxing moon, when the moon is in an auspicious *nakṣatra*. KGS 14.2 and MGS I.7.4 prescribed that the wooers must be sent when the moon is in one of the following *nakṣatras*: Kṛttikā (the Pleiades), Svātī (Arcturus) or the Pūrvas (Pūrvāṣāḍha, Pūrva Phalgunī and Pūrva Proṣṭhapadā).

KauśS 75.8-9 prescribed that the wooer and his companion should be sent with the first hemistich beginning with, “You [two bring together] prosperity” (AVŚ XIV.1.31ab) and the Brahmā (Atharvavedic priest) should be sent along with them with the second hemistich beginning with, “O Brahmaṇaspati” (AVŚ XIV.1.31cd).

Rudrasaṃhitā III.32.34-38 of the *Śivapurāṇa* narrated that Śiva instructed the *saptarṣis* (seven venerable sages of Hindu tradition) to go to the residence of Himavat, the father of Pārvatī as wooers and convince him for his marriage with Pārvatī. Bāṇabhaṭṭa in the *ucchvāsa* 4 of his *Harṣacarita* mentioned that the Maukhari king Grahavarmaṇ sent messengers for his marriage with Rājyaśrī, the sister of Harṣavardhana.²

VārGS 10.13-18 described a unique ritual for finalizing the marriage for a *brahmadeyā* bride, which the medieval scholiasts named as *gomayagolakadānagrahaṇa*. It instructed that both the *kaumārikā* (bridegroom’s party) and the *janyā* (bride’s party) should sit down on the mats facing each other for the settlement. Next, four lumps of cow-dung should be prepared. Two of them should be given to the bride’s party and the other two should be given to the bridegroom’s party. The bridegroom’s party should say, “No wealth (dowry for the bride).” and the bride’s party should say, “No cattle (as the bride-wealth) for the son”. Next, holding the lumps of the cow-dung in both hands, the bride’s party should say thrice, “Given” and thrice in reply, holding similarly the lumps of the cow-dung in both hands, the bridegroom’s party should say, “Accepted” and thus, the marriage is settled.

8.1.2 Kanyāvaraṇa and Varavaraṇa

Nāradaśmṛti 12.2 instructed that the betrothal rite of *Varaṇa* (*Kanyāvaraṇa*) must take place before the union of a male and a female. According to this text, *Varaṇa* is succeeded by *Pāṇigrahaṇa*; thus these are the two stages of the *Vivāha saṃskāra*.

The description found in *Pūrvabhāga* II.56.407-414 of the NārP and the *Nāradasaṃhitā* 28.1-8 (also cited in SṃP with some variants) is probably one of the early descriptions of this Hindu betrothal rite, *Kanyāvaraṇa*. This rite, according to the *Nāradaśmṛti*, should be performed on an auspicious day according to the *pañcāṅga* (Hindu almanac), at the rise of the lunar mansion of the marriage. The bridegroom well adorned and dressed in white garments, should go to the bride’s house with the *praṇava mantra* (with a loving heart, according to the variant in SṃP), carrying fruits, betel leaves, perfumes, flowers and unhusked grains with him. He should proceed amidst the music and uttering of benediction for warding off the obstacles by the Brāhmaṇas. The bride’s father should offer him the bride with pleasure. Then, the bridegroom, having propitiated the goddess Śacī, should worship the well-adorned bride. At the end of the rite, he should pray with the *mantra*, “O, goddess Indrāṇī, the beloved consort of Indra, my reverence to you; bestow on me, fortune, health and male child after marriage.” Another text, the *Kaśyapasamhitā*, cited in SṃR, also provided a similar description of *Kanyāvaraṇa*. It prescribed the bridegroom to carry perfumes, garland, rice

and fruits with him to the bride's house and the elderly Brāhmaṇs should accompany him.³ The description of this rite is also found in ĀGP (of Nārāyaṇa) I.21, which is more similar to the description of Gadādhara on *Vāgdāna*.

The rite of *Kanyāvaraṇa* gave way to the rite of *Varavaraṇa* (literally, “welcoming the bridegroom”), another similar rite but with the changed perception. A late medieval author from the present-day Bihar, Caṇḍeśvara Ṭhākura (early 14th century) described this betrothal rite in his *Kṛtyacintāmaṇi*. According to him, the brother of the bride and Brāhmaṇs should go to the house of the bridegroom and offer him a *upavīta* (sacrificial thread), fruits, flowers, clothes and other items at the occasion. Later, in northern India it became the rite of presenting the dowry along with the sacrificial thread and fruits and became known as *Vararakṣā* or *Phaladāna*.⁴

8.1.3 *Vāgdāna* or *Vāñnicaya*

Gadādhara, the late medieval scholiast of the PGS described the betrothal rite of *Vāgdāna* (literally, “verbal contract”). According to Gadādhara, in an auspicious time according to astrology, two, four or eight gentlemen, putting on agreeable robes, with the father of the bridegroom, having seen a *śakuna* bird should go to the house of the bride. After reaching there, the father of the bridegroom should request the father of the bride to gift his daughter to his son and the bride's father should say that he would gift his daughter only after the permission of his wife and others. After obtaining the permission, the father of the bride should sit facing east, make the *saṅkalpa* for the verbal contract and worship Gaṇapati. Then, he should leave his seat for the father of the bridegroom and he himself should go and sit opposite to the father of the bridegroom, facing west. Next, he should say, “On this auspicious *muhūrta* prescribed by the astrologer, I gift this girl, born in such and such *gotra*, daughter of such and such person and namely, so and so.” It should followed by reciting two *mantras*, “[This girl has] no physical disability; [she has] never fallen from the righteousness; [she is] not deprived of sexual virility and [her horoscope is] free from the ten defects. I gift this girl in the proximity of the deities, sacrificial fire and the Brāhmaṇs [present]” and “I have orally committed to gift my daughter and you have accepted [this gift] for your son. [Now,] be happy in seeing the bride, having made up your mind.” The bridegroom's father should reply, “You have orally committed to gift your daughter and I have accepted [this gift] for my son. [Now,] be happy in seeing the bridegroom, having made up your mind.” After the proposal is accepted, the father of the bridegroom and others should worship the bride with fragrant substances, unhusked rice grains, a pair of white garments, ornaments, betel leaves, flowers and other items according to their family customs. The rite should end with the recitation of the *mantras* for benediction by the Brāhmaṇs.⁵

A detailed description of *Vāgdāna* rite is found in SmR. According to this text, in an auspicious *muhūrta* prescribed by the astrologer, the father of the bridegroom, having seen a *śakuna* bird, should go to the house of the father of the bride, accompanied by his well-wishers, friends, *kulastrī* (females of good family), the elderly and distinguished persons and a band playing auspicious music. He should sit in the courtyard of the house. The bride, well adorned and well dressed, should be made to sit on a *pīṭha* (wooden seat) covered with a white cloth, facing east with the *mantras* from the RV (X.85.23 and VIII.100.11). The father of the bridegroom should sit facing her and say to the father of the bride, “I request you to gift this girl of so and so name, daughter of so and so (name of the father), granddaughter of so and so (name of the grandfather), great-granddaughter of so and so (name of the great-grandfather) and born in so and so *pravara* and so and so *gotra* as the wife for the boy of so and so name, son of so and so (name of the father), grandson of so and so (name of the grandfather), great-grandson of so and so (name of the great-grandfather) and born in so and so *pravara* and so and so *gotra*.” The father of the bride after receiving permissions from his wife, well-wishers and friends, should pronounce the gift of his daughter in a similar statement. Then the father of the bridegroom should besmear the palms of the girl with saffron and perfumes and her forehead with sandalwood paste. Next, he should give her clothes, ornaments, fruits and

betel leaves with certain *mantras*. Then, both the fathers of the bridegroom and the bride should make *saṅkalpa* for the worship of the bride and the verbal commitment for marriage respectively. Next, both the fathers of the bridegroom and the bride should worship Gaṇapati and then Varuṇa in a water pot and then, finally the father of the bridegroom should worship the bride with perfumes, unhusked grains, flowers and clothes. Next, the father of the bride should sit in front of the father of the bridegroom, facing west and gift his daughter with the *mantras*, almost same as those described by Gadādhara. At the end, the father of the bride should worship Śacī.⁶

Since the late medieval period, betrothal rites performed in different regions of South Asia are mostly rooted in the local customary traditions. In present-day northern India, two betrothal rites are performed. Among them, *Tilak* is similar to *Varavarāṇa* and *Sagāi* is similar to *Kanyāvaraṇa* but both of these are modern life-cycle rites mostly comprising the folk elements. *Sākharpuḍā* and *Pākādekhā*, the betrothal rites since pre-modern period in Maharashtra and Bengal are also based on the local customary traditions.

8.2 *Vivāha*: the marriage rite

In any culture, marriage is one of the most significant life-cycle rites of passage for an individual, as well as the means to regulate sexual access between males and females by the society endorsing the relationship only when certain customs and rules followed. The literal meaning of *Vivāha* or *Udvāha*, as the Hindu marriage rite mostly known, is “the leading away (of the bride by the bridegroom’s family)”, which indicates one of its basic characteristics that always a male brings his mate to his household after marriage. As a rite of passage, for a female, *Vivāha* always emphasised on her separation from the parents and the related social context, transition of her social status from a daughter to a wife and future mother and finally her integration with husband’s extended family. For a male, *Vivāha* emphasised on his incorporation into the new social status of a householder.

In the Buddhist canonical texts and the 9th major rock edict of Aśoka, the word *Āvāha*, which literally means, “the leading of (the bride by bride’s family)” is compounded with the word *Vivāha* to describe the marriage rites. However, it is not certain whether this compounded word *Āvāha-Vivāha* indicates to two different rites or the same one. Hindu normative texts never used this compounded word for the marriage rite.

8.2.1 Marriage rite in the vedic texts

Early descriptions of the marriage rite are found in RV X.85.1-47, AVŚ XIV.1.1-64, 2.1-75⁷ and AVP XVIII.1.1-10, 2.1-10, 3.1-10, 4.1-10, 5.1-10, 6.1-12, 7.1-10, 8.1-10, 9.1-10, 10.1-10, 11.1-10, 12.1-10, 13.1-10 and 14.1-7. The descriptions in the AVŚ and the AVP are the expanded versions of 139 verses, which included all of the 47 verses of the RV. But, the verses in the AVŚ XIV.1-2 and the AVP XVIII.1-14 are not same. 5 verses of the AVŚ (XIV.1.4, 41 [same as AVP IV.26.7], 42 and 62 and XIV.2.50) are not found in the AVP and similarly 5 verses of the AVP (XVIII.6.1 and 6; XVIII.7.7; XVIII.12.10 and XVIII.14.6 [same as AVŚ VII.78.1ab]) are not there in AVŚ.⁸

The marriage rite described in the RV, AVŚ and AVP, most probably is in context of the marriage of Sūryā, the daughter of the sun-god Savitṛ with the Aśvins, twin gods⁹ (but, according to the more common interpretation by the medieval scholars, Sūryā married Soma and the Aśvins were the wooers). It may be an indication of the ancient customary practice of giving a bride to a family of several brothers, not to an individual as mentioned in TS VI.1.6.6 and later ĀpDh II.10.27.3. The practice of delivering a maiden to a family is also mentioned by Bṛhaspati, an authority cited in a late medieval text, SmC, as one of the ancient popular practices, which he instructed that a king should not meddle with.¹⁰

From the description in the AVŚ XIV.1.1-64 (AVP XVIII.1-6) and XIV.2.1-75 (AVP XVIII.7-14) the major elements of the marriage rite can be traced. The marriage rite described in this text was very

brief and simple. On the day of the marriage, the bride was sprinkled water through a hole in the yoke and a piece of gold, which were placed over her head (XIV.1.40-41).¹¹ During the marriage rite, the bride was made to stand on a stone, to represent, 'the lap of earth' (XIV.1.47) and the bridegroom took her hand, while reciting certain verses and promised to cherish her. Another element of girdling the bride with a cord is also described in this text (XIV.1.42). The bridegroom presented the bride the garments and jewels, which were put on her, while the bridegroom expressed his rapture at the sight of newly dressed and bejewelled bride (XIV.1.59). After reciting certain verses to drive away demons and blessing the chariot, the bridal procession started.¹²

AVŚ XIV.1.6-13 had described the bridal procession after the marriage. The bride was put on a beautiful garment and a coverlet and her eyes were anointed with unguent. Her head was dressed up in the *opaśa* or the *kurīra* style. She travelled in a canopied cart with two bulls yoked to it. She was accompanied by *anudeyīs* (bridal friends), who sang *gāthās*, *raibhis* and *nārāśamsīs* (hero worship songs) during the journey. A *koṣa* (chest) was placed in her cart.¹³

During the progress of the procession towards the bridegroom's residence, the verses signifying a very ancient belief were recited, "Soma is her first husband; Gandharva the second and Agni the third; the fourth husband is of human birth. Soma passes her on to Gandharva, who gives her to Agni; and Agni gives her to man." (XIV.2.2-4). After the procession reached the bridegroom's residence, the bride sat on a red bull-skin, on which *balbaja* grass (*Eleusine indica*) was strewn and worshipped Agni with the bridegroom (XIV.2.22-24).¹⁴ Some elements of the marriage rite like mounting the stone and the circumambulation of the sacrificial fire were repeated.

Consummation of the marriage immediately followed the nuptial ceremony at bridegroom's residence. At night, the bride was conducted to the bridal bed and the bride was told by the bridegroom to mount the bridal couch with the *mantras* appropriate to the occasion (XIV.2.31), where she and the bridegroom anointed each other's eyes (VII.36.1). Next, Viśvāvasu, the *Gandharva* was prayed to go away from the bride (XIV.2.33-36) and the consummation of marriage followed (XIV.2.37-40). The bride enveloped her husband with her bridal dress, which is described as Manu-born (VII.37.1). Then, valiant sons were prayed for and Agni was supplicated for giving ten sons to the couple. In the end, the garment worn by the bride on the nuptial night, known as *śāmulya*, believed as inauspicious, was presented to the *Brahmā* (Atharvavedic priest) so that demons go away with that robe and numerous benedictions were uttered on the newly married couple. The husband, finally welcomed his wife, "I am the man, that dame are you. I am the *sāman*; you are the *ṛc*. I am the heaven; you are the earth. So we will dwell together, parents of children yet to be." (XIV.2.71).¹⁵

8.2.2 Selection of mate

Marriage is a very complex rite of institution in every culture and the modes of selection of mate is an important part of it. In the Hindu normative texts, all possible modes of obtaining a wife are classified as the forms of *Vivāha*, the marriage rite. A few vedic ritual texts, like ĀGS I.6.1-8, VkhGS III.1, BDh I.20.1-9 and ViṣDh XXIV.17-26 and later most of the *dharmasāstra* texts and the *Purāṇas* classified these modes into eight forms of the marriage rite, namely, *Brāhma*, *Prājāpatya*, *Ārṣa*, *Daiva*, *Gāndharva*, *Āsura*, *Rākṣasa* and *Paiśāca*.¹⁶ But most of these forms of marriage are not found in other vedic ritual texts. MGS I.7.11 and VārGS 10.11 mentioned about only two: *Brāhma* and *Śulka* (mentioned as *Āsura* in the later texts).¹⁷ Both of these two modes of selection of mate involve marital exchanges practised in most of the ancient cultures. In case of the former, dowry is given the bridegroom while in case of the latter the *Śulka* (bride wealth) is paid to the bride's parents. KauśS 79.31-33 mentioned about three forms of marriage: *Saurya*, *Brāhma* and *Prājāpatya* and from KauśS 79.17 and 33, it can be inferred that in *Saurya* form of marriage, *Śulka* (bride wealth) was paid and in *Prājāpatya* form of marriage, *mantras* were not used. One of the

early *dharmasūtra* text, the ĀpDh mentioned of six types, *Brāhma* (II.5.11.17), *Ārṣa* (II.5.11.18), *Daiva* (II.5.11.19), *Gāndharva* (II.5.11.20), *Āsura* (II.5.12.1) and *Rākṣasa* (II.5.12.2). A later text, VasDh I.28-35 also mentioned about six types of *Vivāha*, but in its list, the names of the last two forms mentioned in the ĀpDh replaced with *kṣātra* and *mānuṣa*,¹⁸ which may be indicative of their origin. Hārīta (cited in *Gṛhasthakāṇḍa* of *Kṛtyakalpataru*) also mentioned the *mānuṣa* and *kṣātra* forms of marriage in his list of eight forms of marriage along with *Brāhma*, *Daiva*, *Gāndharva*, *Āsura*, *Rākṣasa* and *Paiśāca*.¹⁹

8.2.2.1 Selection by divination

The early descriptions of the ancient divination rituals for the selection of mate in Hinduism are found in the *grhyasūtras*. Like many ancient cultures, divination was used for selection of bride in the ancient South Asia and it was known as *Vijñāna* or *Vijñānakarma* (literally, “the ritual for attainment of knowledge”). Description of the divination ritual is found in ĀGS I.5.3-6, GGS II.1.2-9, KGS 14.3-9, MGS I.7.9-10, VārGS 10.9-10, ĀpGS I.3.15-18, BhGS I.11 and KauśS 37.7-12.

ĀGS I.5.3-6 instructed that one should marry a girl who is endowed with intelligence, beauty, a noble character, auspicious characteristics and who is healthy. As these characteristics are difficult to discern, he should prepare eight *piṇḍas* (earth-clods) and recite a *mantra* over it, “*Ṛta* (righteousness) has been born first in the beginning; truth is founded on *ṛta*; may this girl attain here for which she is born; may what is truth be visible.” Then, he should say the prospective bride, “Take one of these.” If she chooses the earth-clod taken from the field that yields two crops per year, it should be deemed that her children will be rich in food; similarly if she chooses the earth-clod taken from a cowshed, a *vedi* (altar) or a pool which does not dry up, it should be deemed that her children will be rich in cattle, vedic knowledge or everything respectively. But if she chooses the earth-clod taken from a gambling place, a crossroads or a barren field, it should be deemed that her children will be addicted to gambling, wandering in every directions or poor respectively. If she chooses the earth-clod taken from a *śmaśāna*, it should be deemed that she would bring death to her husband.

GGS II.1.2-9 prescribed that one should marry a girl who possesses the auspicious characteristics in the due way. If such a girl could not be found, he should prepare nine *piṇḍas* (earth-clods) of equal size. Out of these, eight should be prepared from the earth collected from a *vedi* (altar), a furrow, an un-drying pool, a cowshed, a crossroads, a gambling place, an *ādahana* (*śmaśāna*) and from a barren field and the ninth should be prepared by mixing the earth collected from those eight locations. Then he should take them in his hand and offer these earth-clods to a girl with a *mantra*, “*Ṛta* (righteousness) alone is the first; Nobody oversteps *ṛta*; this earth is founded on *ṛta*; may so and so (name of the girl) become everything.” Pronouncing her name, he should say her, “Take one of these.” If she takes any one of the first four clods of earth (collected from an altar, a furrow, a pool and a cowshed respectively) or according to some authority the ninth one, he should marry that girl. KGS 14.3-9 provided an almost similar description of the ritual as the GGS and Devapāla and Brāhmaṇabala on KGS 14.7-8 cited two different verses of unknown authorities on the ritual of selection by divination. A late vedic ritual text, *Gṛhyasamgraha* II.21-22 also prescribed a divination ritual with nine *piṇḍas* similar to the GGS.

ĀpGS I.3.15-18 provided a slightly different description of the ritual. It prescribed that the prospective bridegroom should place five *loṣṭas* (clods of earth) in front of the prospective bride and should tell her to touch one of them. The first clod of earth should be prepared by mixing several kinds of seeds; the second one should be prepared from the earth collected from a *vedi* (altar); the third one should be prepared from the earth collected from a ploughed field; the fourth one should be prepared by mixing *śakṛt* (cow-dung) and the fifth one should be prepared from the earth collected from a *śmaśāna*. If she touches any one of the first four that is an indication of

prosperity, the fifth one is objectionable. This text finally stated that, one should marry a girl of good family and character, with auspicious characteristic and of good health. The medieval scholiast Sudarśana in his *Tātparyadarśana*, mentioned this ritual as *Ṛddhiparikṣa*. BhGS I.11, in its description, mentioned about four *loṣṭas* (clods of earth). The first one should be prepared from the earth collected from a *vedi* (altar); the second one by mixing with cow-dung; the third one from the earth collected from a furrow and the fourth one from the earth collected from a *śmaśāna*. It instructed that one should not marry a girl, who chooses the clod of earth collected from a *śmaśāna*. VārGS 10.9-10 described this ritual as *Vijñāna* and prescribed a ritual similar to the BhGS.

MGS I.7.9-10 also described this rite as *Vijñāna*, but prescribed to prepare eight clods of earth. In addition to the four mentioned in the VārGS, it also prescribed to prepare the fifth one by mixing *dūrvā* grass, the sixth one from the earth collected a place under a fruit bearing tree, the seventh one from the earth collected from a crossroads and the eighth one from the earth collected from a barren field. These eight clods should be placed in a *devāgāra* (shrine). If the girl takes up any one of the three clods, prepared from the earth collected from a *śmaśāna*, a barren field or a crossroads, she should not be married.²⁰

KauśS 37.1-12 described several divination rituals as *Vijñānakarma* and two of them are for the selection of mate (Keśava, the medieval scholiast named them as *Kumārīvijñāna*), described in the aphorisms 37.7-12. The first one is similar to the ritual prescribed by other *grhyasūtras*. It prescribed to prepare four *loṣṭas* (clods of earth); an *akṛtiloṣṭa* (a clod from the field in its natural shape), a clod of earth collected from an anthill, a clod of earth collected from a crossroads and a clod of earth collected from a *śmaśāna*. If the prospective bride chooses any one of the first two, it should be considered as a good omen. If she chooses the clod of earth collected from a crossroads, it should be deemed that she will be adulterous and if she chooses the clod of earth from the *śmaśāna*, it should be deemed that she will not live long. In the second ritual, the prospective bride should be asked to pour out a handful of water that is blessed. If she pours in the easterly direction, it should be considered as a good omen.

The *Kāmasūtra* III.1.19, written by Mallāṅga Vātsyāyana probably in the 2nd century CE also prescribed *Daiva Parīkṣaṇa* (divination) of the girl before finalizing the marriage. Yaśodhara (13th century) in his commentary, *Jayamaṅgalā*, while explaining this aphorism, cited a verse of unknown authority, which instructed to perform this ritual with eight *mṛtipiṇḍa* (colds of earth) collected from a cowshed, a furrow, a pool, a place below a tree, a *śmaśāna*, a barren field, a gambling place and a crossroads.²¹

8.2.2.2 Selection by matching horoscopes

Since the medieval period, matching the horoscopes of the bride and bridegroom has become more popular for selection of mate in Hinduism than the divination. Early references to these practices are found in the astrological texts only. Later, this practice was incorporated in the *nibandha* texts and still largely followed across India. The astrological method of matching the horoscopes is known as *yoṭaka vicāra*, which comprises the comparison of eight astrological factors, known as the *kūṭas*. These factors are derived from the horoscopes of the bride and the bridegroom. In the astrological texts, each of these of eight *kūṭas*, namely, *Varṇa*, *Vaśya*, *Nakṣatra* (or *Tārā*), *Yoni*, *Graha* (or *Grahamaitrī*), *Gaṇa*, *Rāśi* and *Nāḍī* (or *Rajju*) has been assigned a *guṇa* (numerical value) from 1 to 8 in the ascending order. After comparison of each of these eight *kūṭas* for the bride and the bridegroom according to the instructions of the astrological texts, if the outcome is found satisfactory by the astrologer, the numerical value of that particular *kūṭa* is added to the tally for the final reckoning. After the comparison of all eight *kūṭas*, if the sum total is found more than 18 (maximum 36), then only the bride is selected, otherwise she is rejected. The *kūṭas* with the higher numerical value, like *Gaṇa* (6), *Rāśi* (7) and *Nāḍī* (8) are believed as more significant.

8.2.3 Marriage rite in vedic ritual texts

Except perhaps the description of the element of *Vaivāhikahoma* in the ĀpŚS and the BŚS, almost nothing is mentioned about the marriage rite in the *śrautasūtras*.²² The Marriage rite is described in all *grhyasūtras*, as these vedic ritual texts were meant for the married male householders. ŚGS II.13.3 mentioned the marriage rite as *Udvāha* and the BGS I.1.13 and ĀpGS I.3.5 described this rite as *Vivāha*. KGS 15.3 mentioned this rite as *Upayamana* (literally, “taking possession of”) and ĀGS I.9.1 mentioned this rite by its one of the principal elements, *Pāṇigrahaṇa* (literally, “taking the hand”).²³ Descriptions of the major elements of the *Vivāha* rite in the *grhyasūtra* texts belonging to the different vedic *śākhās* have substantial differences. Probably the local customary practices followed in the particular geographical region, to which the adherents of a *śākhā* belonged was reflected in the vedic ritual text of that *śākhā*.

Detailed and methodical descriptions of the major elements of *Vivāha* rite are narrated in all *grhyasūtras*. These descriptions are found in ŚGS I.12.3-I.17.4, KauśGS I.8.2-I.10.13, ĀGS I.7.1-I.8.11, PGS I.3.4-I.8.20, GGS II.1.10-II.4.11, KhādGS I.3.5-I.4.4, JGS I.20-I.22, BGS I.1.24-5.14, BhGS I.13-I.18, ĀpGS II.4.3-II.6, HGS I.6.19.4-I.7.23.1, ĀgGS I.5 (collection of the *mantras* for the marriage rite) and I.6.1-3, VkhGS III.2-III.5, KGS 23.1-28.5, MGS I.10.8-I.14.13, VārGS 13.1-15.23 and KauśS 75.25-78.15.

ŚGS I.5.2, KauśGS I.1.4-5 and PGS I.4.2 prescribed to perform the marriage rite in the outer hall (*bahiḥ-śālā*) of a house signifying the public nature of this rite of passage. After the codified marriage rite, the PGS allowed the performer to follow the customary practices of the village (*grāmavacana*).

8.2.3.1 Auspicious times for marriage

Earliest belief about the auspicious day for marriage are found in both RV X.85.13 and AVŚ XIV.1.13 (AVP XVIII.2.2), which mentioned that cows are killed when the moon is in the Aghā (Maghā in AVŚ) *nakṣatra* (lunar mansion) and the bride is carried away when the moon is in in the Phalgunīs (Pūrva Phalgunī or Uttara Phalgunī *nakṣatra*). It can be inferred from these very ancient texts that the killing of the cows on the occasion of marriage, an old preliminary ritual for marriage, later became part of the *arḡha* reception of the bridegroom, was performed on the first day. As, the moon moves to Pūrva Phalgunī and Uttara Phalgunī in the next two days after it is in Maghā, it can be also inferred that bride went to the bridegroom’s house on the second or the third day. This ancient belief was repeated in KauśS 75.5 without any change. Both ĀpGS I.3.1-2 and BhGS I.12 mentioned that cows are provided when the moon is in Maghā *nakṣatra* and the bride is carried when the moon is in the Phalgunīs (Pūrva Phalgunī or Uttara Phalgunī). Providing cows as bride-wealth to the father of the bride before marriage was also a very ancient practice and it later became known as the *Ārṣa* (literally, “practiced by the *ṛṣis*”) form of marriage. Another ancient belief is found in TBr I.5.2.3, which mentioned that, one who desires that his daughter should be dear to her husband, should perform her marriage when the moon is in Niṣṭyā (Svātī) *nakṣatra*. Thus, she becomes dear to her husband and never returns to her parent’s house. This passage was later quoted as a *Brāhmaṇa* passage in two vedic ritual texts of this *śākhā*, ĀpGS I.3.3 and BhGS I.12.

Early systematic descriptions about the auspicious times for marriage are found in the *grhyasūtra* texts. ŚGS I.5.5, KauśGS I.1.8 and PGS I.4.5 prescribed that *Pāṇigrahaṇa* (marriage) should be performed during *udagayana* (the period from winter solstice to summer solstice), in the fortnight of the waxing moon, on an auspicious day. ĀGS I.4.1 prescribed that *Caulakarma*, *Upanayana*, *Godāna* and *Vivāha* must be performed during *udagayana*, in the fortnight of the waxing moon on a *tithi* when moon is in an auspicious *nakṣatra*. But, ĀGS I.4.2 also mentioned that according to some authority the marriage can be performed at any time. ĀpGS I.2.12-13 mentioned that all seasons are fit for marriage except the two months of *śiśira* (winter), i.e., *Māgha* and *Phālguna* and the second

month of *nidāgha* (summer), i.e. *Āṣāḍha*. It said that all *nakṣatras* (lunar mansions) are auspicious for marriage. BGS I.1.18-20 mentioned that all months are fit for marriage, except the months of *Śuci* (*Āṣāḍha*), *Tapas* (*Māgha*) and *Tapasya* (*Phālguna*), according to some authority. It also mentioned that only *nakṣatras* (lunar mansions) auspicious for marriage are Rohiṇī (Aldebaran), Mṛgaśīrṣa, Uttara Phalgunī (Denebola) and Svātī (Arcturus). MGS I.7.5 prescribed that the *nakṣatras* fit for the performance of marriage are Rohiṇī, Mṛgaśīrṣas, Śravaṇā, Śraviṣṭhā (later known as Dhaniṣṭhā) and the Uttarās (Uttarāṣāḍha, Uttara Phalgunī and Uttara Bhādrapadā). KGS 14.1 prescribed to begin the search for the wife during *udagayana*. KGS 14.10 and VārGS 10.4 prescribed the same *nakṣatras* as MGS as fit for the performance of marriage. PGS I.4.6-7 instructed that the marriage must be performed when the moon is in any one of the three *nakṣatras*, whose names begin with *Uttara* (Uttarāṣāḍha, Uttara Phalgunī and Uttara Bhādrapadā). Else, it may be performed when the moon is in Svātī, Mṛgaśīrṣas or Rohiṇī *nakṣatra*. KauśS 75.2-4 prescribed that the marriage should be performed after the full moon day in the month of *Kārttika* and up to the full moon day of *Vaiśākha* or one may do, as he likes. But the period in *Citrāpakṣa* (the fortnight of the waxing moon in the lunar month of *Caitra*) must be avoided.²⁴ GGS II.1.1 prescribed to marry when the moon is in an auspicious *nakṣatra*.

In *Bālakāṇḍa* 71.24 of the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki, king Janaka mentioned that on that particular day moon was in Maghā *nakṣatra* and the *Pitṛkārya* (*Nāndīmukha*) should be performed. The marriage of Rāma and Sītā would be performed in three days, when the moon would be in Uttara Phalgunī *nakṣatra*. *Bālakāṇḍa* 72.13 mentioned that the marriage was performed when the moon was in Uttara Phalgunī *nakṣatra*, whose presiding deity is Bhaga. *Uttarakāṇḍa* 5.33 mentioned that the marriages of three sons of *rākṣasa* king Sukeśa were performed when the moon was in the *nakṣatra*, whose presiding deity is Bhaga. *Ādiparva* 8.16 of the *Mahābhārata* also mentioned about the performance of marriage, when the moon is in the *nakṣatra*, whose presiding deity is Bhaga.²⁵

Kālidāsa in his *Kumārasambhava* VII.6 mentioned that the female relatives of Pārvatī commenced her decoration on the marriage day in the *Maitramuhūrta* (the third *muhūrta*, which begins at 1 hr. 36 min. after sunrise), when the moon was in Uttara Phalgunī *nakṣatra*. Perhaps, this is one of the early references to the auspicious *muhūrta* for marriage, which has been described in details in the medieval digests.

Varāhamihira in his *Bṛhatsamhitā* XCIX 7-8 added several astronomical factors for the auspicious *muhūrta* for the marriage. He prescribed to perform the marriage when the moon is in Rohiṇī, the Uttarās (Uttarāṣāḍha, Uttara Phalgunī and Uttara Bhādrapadā), Revatī, Mṛgaśīrṣas, Mūlā, Anurādhā, Maghā, Hastā and Svātī. He also instructed to perform the marriage during the northern course of the sun, in any *tithi*, except the *riktā* (4th, 9th and 14th) *tithis* and in all months except *Pauṣa* and *Caitra*.²⁶

Most probably since the late ancient period, the auspicious *muhūrta* of the day for the performance of the marriage rite has changed from the forenoon to the evening in eastern India, while the ancient practice is still continued in the south and the Deccan. According to an early medieval text, *Vivāhapaṭala* 13 of Vindhyavāsī (inserted as chapter CII in *Bṛhatsamhitā*), the dust that is raised in the evening by the pointed hoofs of the cows beaten by the cowherds with their sticks is favourable for the marriage of beautiful girls. It bestows abundant wealth, sons, good health and good fortune. At this time, it is not necessary to consider the *nakṣatra*, *tithi*, *karaṇa*, *yoga* and *lagna* (ascendant). For, the dust raised by the cows is known for giving pleasure to the males and it wards off all sins. This particular period of the day is known as *godhūli* (literally, “dust that raised by the cows”) and it seems when this text was composed, the performance of the marriage rite in the evening already became prevalent.

Pūrvabhāga II.56.512-514 of the NārP (and *Nāradasamhitā* 29.144-147, with an additional verse),

explaining the astrological beliefs behind both of these practices, stated that, the fourth *lagna* from the *lagna* at the sunrise is called *Abhijit* and the seventh is called *Godhūlikā*. Both of these are auspicious for marriage and they will bless the couple with sons and grandsons. While, *Godhūlikā* is considered as the most significant *lagna* for the people of the east (present-day Bihar, Jharkhand, Bengal and Assam) and *Kaliṅga* (present-day Odisha), *Abhijit* is considered as the most significant *lagna* for in all regions (of India) as a destroyer of blemishes. The *muhūrta*, when the sun is at the zenith is called *Abhijit*. It wipes out all blemishes as Pinākī (Śiva) wiped out the *Tripuras*.²⁷ Later, ŚmP also cited these verses of the NārP with a number of variants.

8.2.3.2 Prenuptial rites at bride's residence

Several *gr̥hyasūtra* texts had recorded various ancient prenuptial rites performed in the bride's residence. These rites were never codified as a part of the *Vivāha* rite and rooted in the popular tradition. It seems that these rites were the actual customary practices since the last centuries before the Common Era till the early medieval period.

8.2.3.2.1 *Indrāṅīkarma*

Two vedic ritual texts, ŚGS I.11.1-5 and KauṣGS I.7.1-4 described a prenuptial rite of ritual bath of the bride on the marriage day or two days before marriage, in the early morning before sunrise. This rite was later known as *Indrāṅīkarma* (literally, “the rite of goddess *Indrāṅī*”). According to this text, the female relatives of the bride should wash her including her head with the water mixed with all types of herbs, choicest fruits and perfumes. Then she should be made to put on a newly dyed or an *ahata* garment. Next, the bride should sit to the west of the sacrificial fire and while she takes hold of the *ācārya* of the family, the *ācārya* should first offer oblations with the *Mahāvyaḥrtis* and then, offer oblations of clarified butter to Agni, Soma, Prajāpati, Mitra, Varuṇa, Indra, *Indrāṅī*, Gandharva, Bhaga, Pūṣaṇ, Tvaṣṭṛ, Bṛhaspati and king Pratyānīka. Next, four or eight females, who are not widows should be entertained with lumps of cooked vegetables, food and liquor. It should be followed by a dance performance by the experts. Later, the food should be served to the Brāhmaṇs. These texts mentioned that for the bridegroom, the same rite should be performed but additionally, the oblations should be offered to Vaiśravaṇa and Īśāna.

KGS 21.1-2 and 22.1-3 also described a similar rite. According to this text, this rite should be performed two days before the marriage, in the early morning. A mess of cooked food should be prepared on a new vessel for the rite. The bride should be washed including her head with all types of perfumes and choicest fruits. Then she should be made to wear an *ahata* garment. Oblations of the mess of cooked food should be offered to Agni, Soma, Mitra, Varuṇa, Indra, Udaka, Bhaga, Aryamaṇ, Pūṣaṇ, Tvaṣṭṛ and king Prajāpati. The Brāhmaṇs and four or eight females, who are not widows, should be entertained with lumps of cooked vegetables and food. Then, the females should sing in chorus a song, “Sing forth, O Kaṇvas to the playful horde of Maruts; sporting, resplendent on the chariot.” (KāS XXI.13) with the lute players or a dance performance by the experts should take place.²⁸ It should be followed by offering oblations of the groats of unhusked barley to Agni, Puṣṭipati and Prajāpati with the *mantra*, “Through Agni one may win wealth and growth from day to day, glorious and most abounding in heroic sons” (RV I.1.3). It prescribed that the same rite should be performed for the bridegroom also, but for him, oblations of the mess of cooked food should be offered to Kumbha, Vaiśravaṇa and Īśāna in addition.

AgnP 153.4 mentioned that marriage rite comprises four kinds of acts, *Kanyādāna*, *Śacīyāga*, *Vivāha* and *Caturthikā* (*Caturthīkarma*) and AgnP 153.12 prescribed that on the day of marriage, an image of Śacī should be made with potter's earth. She (that image) should be worshipped at a water reservoir and then the bride should be taken inside the house accompanied by music.²⁹ *Vivāhapaṭala* 9-14 of Varāhamihira (6th century) described a rite of *Indrāṅī* worship by the bride before marriage. It narrated that a clay image of *Indrāṅī* was taken in procession by the females to

the bank of a river or a reservoir and worshipped by the bride. She brought the image back to her house and worshipped thrice in the morning, afternoon and evening until her marriage. Sudarśanācārya (late 15th century) while explaining ĀpGS I.2.15 in his *Tātparyadarśana*, mentioned that *Indrāñīpūjā* should be performed without any (vedic) *mantra*.³⁰

8.2.3.2.2 Jñatikarma

GGs II.I.10-11 had described a unique rite of sprinkling the bride with wine. According to this text, at the beginning of this rite, the bride should be bathed with water mixed with the powder of *klītaka* (*Glycyrrhiza glabra* root), barley and beans, then a female, affectionate to the bride, should sprinkle her three times on her head with the best quality of *surā* (a kind of beer) in such a manner that her whole body is moistened with it.³¹ At the time of sprinkling, this female should recite a *mantra* from the MBr (I.1.2), “Kāma, I know your name. You are intoxication by name. Bring so and so (the bridegroom's name) together [with her]. To you there was *surā*. Here [may there be your] excellent birth. O Agni, you are created from *tapas* (heat); *svāhā*.”³² Next, the genitals of the bride should be washed by one of her relatives with the next two *mantras* from the MBr (I.1.3-4). In the early medieval text, *Gr̥hyasaṃgraha* II.15-16, this rite was described as *Pāñikarma*. It instructed that the bride should be bathed by the females belonging to the same *varṇa* of the bride and of unblemished character from four pitchers filled with water mixed with barley and unhusked grains. It prescribed to use one of the three types of liquor for the rite: *Gauḍī* (liquor distilled from molasses), *Paiṣṭī* (liquor distilled from ground rice) and *Mādhvī* (liquor distilled from flower or honey). According to this text, *Gauḍī* is the best suitable liquor for the rite and *Mādhvī* is the worst.³³ This rite was later mentioned by the medieval *nibandha* authors as *Jñatikarma*.

8.2.3.2.3 Pravadanakarma

KGS 17.1-3, 18.1-3 had prescribed a rite which should be performed on the eve of the marriage. The bride, adorned with ornaments, should sit on a four-legged *bhadrapīṭha* (soft chair). Four females whose husbands are alive, her parents and her *guru* (teacher) should pour water through a strainer of a thousand holes and recite the *mantras* used for *Godāna* rite. Next, the bride should be made to put on an *ahata* garment and oblations of cooked food should be offered with the *mantras*, “To Indra, *svāhā*”; “To Indrāñī, *svāhā*”; “To Kāma, *svāhā*”; “To Bhaga, *svāhā*”; “To Hrī, *svāhā*”; “To Śrī, *svāhā*”; “To Lakṣmī, *svāhā*”; “To Puṣṭi, *svāhā*” and “To Viśvāvasu, the king of the *Gandharvas*, *svāhā*”. After consecrating all musical instruments with the water mixed with fragrant substances, the bride should play *Nāḍī*, *Tūṇaka*, *Mṛdaṅga* and *Paṇava*. At the end, the bride should be handed over a twig of a sacrificial tree (by her *guru*) with the *mantra*, “Whatever inauspiciousness is present in you, which originally belonged to your mother or father, or which transmitted itself to you from some other person, or which is yours from birth; that I separate, drive away with the help of *Tiṣya*, who is accompanied by his spouse; let it go to the enemy, reverence to *Tiṣya* and *Bṛhaṣpati*.” She should cut this twig in one stroke and then it should be wrapped up with an unbroken thread by her *guru*. Later, this branch should be thrown in a water reservoir or a sanctified *devatāyatana* (shrine).³⁴

A similar rite is described in VārGS 13.1-6 as *Pravadanakarma* (literally, “announcement (of marriage)”). This text instructed that the bride after taking bath should put on an *ahata* garment. Next, she should be brought to a place, where musical instruments are kept ready. Then, oblations should be offered to *Sviṣṭakṛt*, *Vāc*, *Pathyā*, *Puṣṭi*, *Pr̥thivī*, *Agni*, *Senā*, *Dhenā*, *Gāyatrī*, *Triṣṭubh*, *Jagatī*, *Anuṣṭubh*, *Pañkti*, *Virāja*, *Rākā*, *Sinīvāli*, *Kuhū*, *Tvaṣṭṛ*, *Āśā*, *Sampatti*, *Bhūti*, *Nirṛti*, *Anumati* and *Parjanya*. After the sacrifice, the face of the bride should be anointed with the hands smeared with the remnants of the clarified butter oblations with two *mantras*, “I shall make you dear to your husband, brother-in-laws and your father-in-law; may *Agni* unite you with splendour, may you be agreeable to your husband.” and “May the goddess *Ilā Ghṛtapadī*, *Indrāñī*, *Agnāyī*, *Aśvinī*, *Rāt*, *Vāc*,

Dauḥ and Arundhatī unite you with prosperity.” Next this text instructed that, the musical instruments should be addressed with the *mantra*, “Who gives the fourfold utterance, who is in *agni* (fire), who is in *vāta* (wind), who is the great one belonging to the animals and whom they [gods] deposited for the *brāhma* (charm), let her [goddess Sarasvatī], the auspicious one, pronounce here.” After adorning the musical instruments, the bride should play them. Two *mantras* should be recited while the musical instruments are being played, “Proclaim good omen, O *dundubhi* (drum); for excellent progeny, O *gomukha* (horn), let the friendly girls of same age and living under the same roof play with *Indrāṇī*” and “*Prajāpati*, who lives in progeny, who creates friendly offspring, may he delight these progenies, may he rejoice himself with happiness for the progeny.”

8.2.3.3 *Nāndīśrāddha* and *Pūṇyāhavācana*

Among all early vedic ritual texts, only BGS I.1.24 has mentioned about the performances of *Nāndīmukha* (*Nāndīśrāddha* or *Vṛddhiśrāddha*), serving food to the Brāhmaṇs and causing them to utter *Pūṇyāhavācana* (literally, “to declare the day auspicious”) as the prenuptial rites in the bridegroom’s house. Later, most of the late medieval digests prescribed these rites as prenuptial rites and they are being performed before the marriage till today. *Bālakāṇḍa* 71.23 of the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki mentioned about the performance of *Pitṛkārya* before the marriage of Rāma when the moon is in *Maghā nakṣatra*, whose presiding deities are the *pitṛs*. Most of the medieval scholiasts explained *Pitṛkārya* in this verse as *Nāndīmukha Śrāddha*.

8.2.3.4 The marriage procession of the bridegroom

The marriage procession of the bridegroom was not considered as an element of the proper marriage rite by most of the *gṛhyasūtra* texts. But it always remained a significant part of the Hindu marriage rite and described in several *gṛhyasūtra* texts. According to ŚGS I.12.1-2, the bridegroom, after taking a bath and after completion of the auspicious ceremonies performed for him, should proceed to the bride's residence, where the *Vivāha* rite would be performed. He should be escorted by happy young females but the widows should not be allowed. He was also instructed not to disregard the advices of his escorts except about the forbidden foods and degradation of sins. BGS I.1.24 instructed that after *Nāndīmukha* and *Pūṇyāhavācana*, the bridegroom should take a bath, put on an *ahata* garment, anoint his body with perfumes, wear a garland and take a rich meal. Then, he should proceed towards the residence of the bride, holding a *pratoda* (long whip) in his hand on a vehicle and not on foot. KGS 23.1-4 described the rituals performed by the bridegroom before and during the marriage procession to bride's residence as *Prāsthānika* (literally, “departure rite”). According to this text, on the marriage day oblations should be offered in to the sacrificial fire with “*Jaya*” and other *mantras*. After offering oblations, a sister of the bridegroom should seize a hem of his upper garment from behind, holding a weapon in her hand (and the marriage procession should commence). The marriage procession should first proceed to a water reservoir with the *mantra* from the KāS (VII.2.9). After touching the water with the *mantra* beginning with, “You [waters] are beneficent” (KāS XIII.16), the procession should further proceed to the direction of the bride's residence with the *mantra* beginning with, “The eastern direction” (KāS VII.2.9).³⁵

8.2.3.5 Reception of the bridegroom at bride's house

A number of *gṛhyasūtras* prescribed the reception for the bridegroom on arrival at the bride’s house as a distinguished guest. BGS I.1.24 instructed the bridegroom should be received by the relatives of the bride with the ceremonies performed for a distinguished guest. According to ĀpGS I.3.5 and 7-8, the reception of the bridegroom should be same as the reception for a distinguished guest, which was known as *argha* reception. One cow must be slaughtered by the guardian of the bride for *argha*. Another cow should also be slaughtered on this occasion to honour the person revered by the bridegroom. ŚGS I.12.10 also prescribed that one cow should be offered at marriage, and this cow was known as *madhuparka* cow. KGS 24.2-3, had laid down that the *argha* reception to the

bridegroom should be performed at the beginning of the nuptial rites.³⁶

The instruction of *argha* reception for the bridegroom perhaps also found in PGS I.3.1, which stated that the *vaivāhya* is one of the six categories of persons eligible for *argha* reception. Although, Karka, Jayarāma and Gadādhara, three medieval scholiasts of the PGS explained *vaivāhya* (literally, “related by marriage”) as the son-in-law, but two other scholiasts, Harihara and Viśvanātha explained it as the bridegroom.³⁷ Descriptions of the reception of the bridegroom at bride’s house in most of the late medieval Yajurvedic *paddhati* texts are primarily based on the PGS I.3.4-30.

GGs II.3.16 prescribed that *argha* reception should be offered to the son-in-law after completion of the marriage rite. But GGS II.3.17 mentioned that according to some authorities this reception should be offered when the bridegroom and his companions have arrived at the house of the bride.

In the marriage rite described by Kālidāsa in his *Raghuvamśa* VII.17-18, 20, on arrival at the bride’s house, the royal bridegroom was led to the *antaścatuska* (inner quadrangular courtyard) of the palace for the marriage ceremony. He sat there on a throne and received the *arghya* reception with jewels, *madhuparka* and a pair of silk garments offered by the father of the bride. It was followed by the performance of *Vaivāhikahoma* by the royal priest.³⁸ In the description of the marriage rite in *Kumārasambhava* VII.72, he narrated that, on arrival at Umā’s house, Śiva sat on a mat made of *viṣṭara* (bunches of *kuśa* grass) and received the *arghya* reception with jewels, honey, *gavya* (literally, “bovine products”, yoghurt and clarified butter) and a pair of silk garments from the father of the bride.

8.2.3.6 *Snāpana, Paridhāpana, Saṃnahana and Samañjana*

A number of the *gr̥hyasūtras* prescribed to perform the elements of *Snāpana* (literally, “to bathe [the bride]”), *Paridhāpana* (literally, “[causing the bride] to put on a garment”), *Saṃnahana* (literally, “to gird [the bride]”) and *Samañjana* (literally “anointing together”) at the beginning of the marriage rite.

According to PGS I.4.12-13, at the beginning of the marriage rite, the bridegroom should present the bride an *uttarīya* (upper garment) with a *mantra*, “The goddesses, who spun, who wove, who spread out and who drew out the threads on both sides, may those goddesses clothe you with long life. Blessed with life, [you] put on this garment.” and a *vāsa* (under garment) with another *mantra*, “Live to old age; [you] put on the garment. Be a protector of the humans against curses. Live a hundred autumns full of splendour; [you] clothe yourself in wealth and children. Blessed with life, [you] put on this garment.” PGS I.4.14 prescribed to perform the element of *Samañjana* of the bride and bridegroom (by each other) after *Paridhāpana*. During its performance, the bridegroom should recite the *mantra*, “May Viśvedevāḥ, may Āpa (divine water) anoint our hearts together. May Mātariśvā, may Dhātṛ, may [the goddess] Deṣṭṛī join two of us together.” (RV X.85.47). Probably, this unrelated *mantra* was chosen during codification due to the presence of the word *samañjatu* (anoint) in the *mantra*.

GGs II.I.17-18 instructed for the bathing of the bride and subsequent putting on an *ahata* garment,³⁹ with the recitation of two *mantras* from the MBr (I.1.5-6). KhādGS I.3.6 prescribed only one *mantra* from the MBr (I.1.5) for this occasion. JGS I.20 prescribed the bridegroom to present the bride two *ahata* garments and to make her put them with the *mantra*, “The goddesses, who spun, who wove, who spread out and who drew out the end on both sides, may those goddesses clothe you with long life. Blessed with life, [you] put on this garment.” (similar to MBr I.1.5).

ŚGS I.12.3-9 provided a detailed description of presentation of wedding gifts by the bridegroom after his arrival to bride’s house, including the elements of *Paridhāpana* and *Samañjana*. According to this text, the bridegroom, after obtaining permission from the young females who escorted him to the bride’s house, should gift a garment to the bride with the *mantra*, “*Raibhi* (song) was her dear

bridal friend and *nārāśamsī* (hero worship songs) accompanied her home. The fine robe of Sūryā was adorned by the *gāthā*.” (RV X.85.6). Next, he should take up the *añjanakośa* (salve-box) brought by him with the *mantra*, “Thought was the pillow (of her bridal couch) and sight was the *añjana* (salve) for her eyes; heaven and earth were the *kośa* (chest), when Sūryā went to her husband.” (RV X.85.7) and anoint the bride with the *mantra* (RV X.85.47), same as prescribed in PGS I.4.14. Next, the bridegroom was instructed to give a porcupine quill and a *trivṛta* (string of three twisted threads) on the bride’s right hand with the *mantra*, “As this (has protected) Śacī, the beloved one, Aditi, the mother of excellent sons and Apālā, who was free from widowhood, may it thus protect you, so and so (name of the bride)” and a mirror on the bride’s left hand with the *mantra* beginning with, “In every figure” (RV VI.47.18). Then the relatives of the bride should tie a red and black string of wool or linen adorned with three jewels with the *mantra* beginning with, “*Nīllohita* (blue and red)” (RV X.85.28). At the end, the bridegroom should tie *madhūka* flowers with the *mantra* beginning with, “Sweet be the herbs” (RV IV.57.3).⁴⁰ A similar description of these elements are narrated in KauṣGS I.8.2-9.

It would not be irrelevant to mention here that, the early references of an element of *patnīsamnahana* (literally, “girding the wife [of the sacrificer]”) for the sacrificer’s wife before her participation in the solemn sacrifice of *Darśapūrṇamāsa* (new moon and full moon day sacrifices) can be traced to the TBr III.3.2-3 and ŚBM I.3.1.12-16. ŚBM I.3.1.13 stated that she is girdled with a *yoktra* (cord) to conceal her impure parts below her navel. TBr III.3.3.2 described this element as the *vratopanayana* (literally, “initiation ritual for the vows”) for the sacrificer’s wife. This element was most probably a remnant of a very ancient coming of age rite for the females. Later, the vedic ritual texts ĀpŚS II.5.2-5 and KŚS II.7.1 prescribed that the *agnidhra* (the priest, who kindles the sacrificial fire) should gird the wife of the sacrificer before the *Darśapūrṇamāsa* sacrifice, after she sits down in the sacrificial arena with a rope of *muñja* grass with a *mantra* from the TS (I.1.10.1) and VSM (I.30) respectively. Another similar procedure is prescribed in ĀpŚS X.9.16 at the time of initiation of the sacrificer’s wife before the *soma* sacrifice with another *mantra* from the TS (3.5.6.1). These two *mantras* from the TS (I.1.10.1 and 3.5.6.1) with a few variants are found in AVŚ XIV.1.42 and AVŚ XIV.2.70 respectively. Similar *mantras* are used in most of the *grhyasūtra* texts for the recitation during the performance of *Samnahana* of the bride before the marriage.

ĀpGS II.4.5-8 provided the elaborate descriptions for the elements of *Snāpana* (literally, “to bathe someone”), *Paridhāpana* and *Samnahana* (literally, “girding someone with a rope”). According to this text, the bridegroom should hold a *darbha* grass blade with his thumb and ring finger and wipe the interstice between the eyebrows of the bride with a *mantra* (ĀpMP I.1.5). Later, he must throw it behind towards the west. Next, he should send an even number of persons who have assembled there to fetch water with a *mantra* (ĀpMP I.1.7). Then, he should place a *darbheṇḍva* (a net of *darbha* grass) on bride with a *mantra* (ĀpMP I.1.8) and fit the hole of the right yoke of a chariot over it with another *mantra* (ĀpMP I.1.9). Next, he should place a piece of gold in the hole with a *mantra* (ĀpMP I.1.10) and make the bride bathe through the hole with five *mantras* (ĀpMP I.2.1-5), cause her to put on an *ahata* garment with a *mantra* (ĀpMP I.2.6) and finally he should gird the bride with a *yoktra* (yoke-rope) with another *mantra*, “I, hoping for a favourably disposed mind, progeny, good fortune, [beautiful] body and becoming the observer of the vows of Agni, gird [you] for the meritorious actions” (ĀpMP I.2.7, similar to TS I.1.10.1).⁴¹

A more detailed description of *Samnahana* and *Snāpana* elements is found KGS 25.1-9. It stated that after receiving the *arghya* reception (in the bride's residence), the bridegroom should send away an *udāhāra* (water carrier) for fetching water with a *mantra* (similar to RV X.85.23). The water carrier should bring the water (pitcher) for usage in the marriage rite, covering it with a *samī* branch with leaves. Next, the bride should take a bath with water mixed with perfumes and put on an *ahata* garment. Next, with the recitation of a *mantra* (KāS I.10), a *yoktra* of *muñja* or *darbha* grass should

be tied around her waist in such a way that it remains covered under her garment. She should then be led to a place where the *ācārikāṇi* (traditional customary practices) are to be performed. A sacrificial fire should be established outside the house with due rites and oblations of clarified butter should be offered to it. A chariot or cart should be placed to the west of the sacrificial fire. The bridegroom should be tied to its left yoke while the bride should be tied to its right yoke, with their faces to the east with the recitation of certain *mantras*. Later, they should be unyoked silently. Next, a piece of gold should be tied loosely to the hole of the right yoke with a *darbha* grass string; the bride should be brought under this hole and water to be sprinkled on her head through this hole.

MGS I.10.7 narrated a similar description for *Snāpana*. According to this text, the bride should be brought under the left hole of the right yoke of a cart or a chariot, a piece of gold to be placed in the hole and water to be sprinkled on her through this hole. A musical instrument, known as *bāṇa* to be played during the performance of this element.⁴² Next, MGS I.10.8 prescribed that bride should put on the first set of *ahata* garments with a *mantra* (nearly similar to ĀpMP II.2.5).

The elements of *Paridhāpana* (second time), *Samnahana* and *Samañjana* are also described in MGS I.11.4-8, but these elements are prescribed for performance between the elements, *Agni Pariṇayana*, and *Lājahoma*. According to MGS I.11.4-5, after *Aśmārohaṇa* and *Pariṇayana*, the bride should put on a second set of garments with the same *mantra* as mentioned in MGS I.10.8 and the priest (or the bridegroom) should draw together two ends (of the garments of the bride and the bridegroom) and tie them in to a knot (male-knot, according to this text) with a cord of *darbha* grass with a *mantra* beginning with, “[The cord] of Indrāṇī” (MS I.1.2). Then, MGS I.11.6 prescribed that the bride should be girded with a cord of *darbha* grass with the *mantra*, “I gird you with the milk of the earth; I gird you with waters and herbs; I gird you with progeny, with wealth; being such girded, you win prosperity.” (similar to AVŚ XIV.2.70). Next, MGS I.11.7-8 instructed that the bride should anoint thrice the eyes of the bridegroom with the *añjana* (salve) of the *traikakubha* by means of stalks of *darbha* grass or reed wrapped with *muñja* grass, first the right eye and then the left eye, while reciting certain *mantras*. Then, the bridegroom should anoint the bride silently with the rest of the *añjana*, and throw the reeds away.⁴³

VārGS 14.1-2 prescribed that the bride should put on an *ahata* garment with a *mantra*, “In the nave of the chariot, in the nave of the cart and in the nave of the yoke, O Indra Śatakṛatu, you cleansed Abālā three times and made her shining like the sun” (similar to RV VIII.91.7) and then she should be girdled with a cord of *darbha* grass with another *mantra* almost similar to MGS I.11.6.

The descriptions of *Snāpana*, *Paridhāpana* and *Samnahana* elements are also found in the KauśS. Before the element of pre-nuptial bathing of the bride, KauśS 75.10-21 prescribed an element of fetching water for ritual bathing and sprinkling of water, after the wooers and the Brahmā (Atharvavedic priest) reach the bride’s house. Probably this element was performed in the early morning as the wooers sent by the bridegroom were instructed that if they are afraid of darkness, then they should light a lamp in the bride’s house. At the beginning, the wooers should scatter *pūlyāni* (shrivelled grains) with five *mantras*, the first of which begins with, “In the beginning, the gods” (AVŚ XIV.2.32-36). Then, the *kumārīpāla* (bodyguard of the bride) should be sent to fetch water for with the *mantra* beginning with, “Without thorns” (AVŚ XIV.1.34, similar to RV X.85.23). During the journey, the guards carrying bows and arrows should be at the front, the *udāhāra* (water carrier) should be at the middle and the Brahmā should be at the rear. After reaching the water reservoir, a *loga* (a stick of wood) should be pierced into the water with the *mantra* beginning with, “[He], who [shines] without fuel” (AVŚ XIV.1.37). The stick of wood should be removed and water should be drawn up with the half verses beginning with, “I [remove] this” (AVŚ XIV.1.38ab) and “What [sheen] is excellent” (AVŚ XIV.1.38cd) respectively. The water vessel should be given to the water carrier with the hemistich beginning with, “[Let the] Brāhmaṇs [bring] for her” (AVŚ XIV.1.39ab). While returning, the Brahmā should be at the front and the guards

carrying bows and arrows should be at the rear. On reaching the bride's house, the water vessel should be kept outside to the north of the sacrificial fire on the branches of *plakṣa* and *udumbara*. Water from this vessel only should be used for marriage (but, if the amount of water in the vessel reduces to a minimum, then) water may be sprinkled from another vessel. The rite of pre-nuptial ritual bathing of the bride is described in KauśS 75.22-27. It prescribed that an oblation should be offered to Aryamaṇ with the *mantra* beginning with, “[We make offering] to Aryamaṇ” (AVŚ XIV.1.17). Then, with the *mantra* beginning with, “I release you [from Varuṇa's noose]” (AVŚ XIV.1.19), the *veṣṭa* (scarf) of the bride should be loosened. The bride should kindle the fire to warm the water with a *mantra* beginning with, “[These young girls who are] eager” (AVŚ XIV.2.52) and the water should be heated with next six *mantras* (AVŚ XIV.2.53-58). The bride should be bathed with this warm water in the north-eastern corner of the house with the *mantra* beginning with, “That which is there on the *āsandī* (chair)” (AVŚ XIV.2.65). At the end, she should be sprinkled with water by others with the *mantras* beginning with, “[Both] what splendour” (AVŚ XIV.1.35) and “As the Sindhu (ocean)” (AVŚ XIV.1.43). According to this KauśS 76.1-6, after the ritual bathing, the bride should be dried with a cloth with a *mantra* beginning with, “Whatever ill deed” (AVŚ XIV.2.66) and it should be given to the *kumārīpāla*. This cloth should be collected with a *tumbara* (*Avicennia officinalis*) staff, carried to a forest and thrown away. The bride should be draped with an *ahata* garment with two *mantras* beginning with, “Those who have woven” (AVŚ XIV.1.45) and “Tvaṣṭṛ [laid] the garment” (AVŚ XIV.1.53). Then, her hair should be combed with a hundred-toothed comb accompanied by the *mantra*, beginning with, “[The] artificial [hundred-toothed comb]” (AVŚ XIV.2.68) and after use, the comb should be thrown away with the *mantra*, “[Its] function is performed”. Next, KauśS 76.7-9 prescribed that the bride should be girdled with a *yoktra* accompanied by two *mantras* beginning with, “Hoping” (AVŚ XIV.1.42) and “I gird you” (AVŚ XIV.2.70). Then, a thread dyed in red with lac and fastened with a *madugha* (liquorice) amulet should be fastened to the ring finger of the bride with the *sūkta* beginning with, “This plant” (AVŚ I.34.1-5). Then, KauśS 76.10-14 instructed that the bride should be led out of the inner house (*kautukagrha*, according to medieval scholiast Keśava) by holding her hand [by the priest] with the *mantra* beginning with, “[Let] Bhaga [lead] you” (AVŚ XIV.1.20). Next, a person should hold a yoke placed on a branch of tree. The bridegroom should fasten a piece of gold in the left yoke-hole on the right yoke end with a *darbha* grass blade. The piece of gold should be made to touch the forehead of the bride with the *mantra* beginning with, “[Let the gold be] generous to you” (AVŚ XIV.1.40) and then, the bridegroom should sprinkle water on the bride through the yoke-hole, while reciting the *mantra* beginning with, “From every limb” (AVŚ XIV.2.69).⁴⁴

8.2.3.7 Kanyādāna and Vadhūvaraniṣkramaṇa

The element of *Kanyādāna* (literally, “giving a girl [in marriage]”) is explicitly mentioned in a very few *gṛhyasūtra* texts. A similar element can be traced to PGS I.4.15, which stated that after the completion of the elements in the inner house, the bridegroom should accept the bride gifted to him by the father of the bride with a *mantra*, “When you wander far away with your heart to the regions of the world like the wind, may the gold-winged Vaikarṇa grant that your heart may dwell with me, so and so.” Next, both bride and bridegroom were instructed to come out to the outer hall. This element was later known as *Vadhūvaraniṣkramaṇa* (literally, “coming out of the bride and the bridegroom”).

A rite of *Kanyāpradāna* is mentioned by KGS 15.1-5, 16.1-5 and MGS I.8.1-11. This rite, as described in these texts, was performed before bridegroom's departure and it appears to be a betrothal rite, rather than an element of the marriage rite. Two different procedures for this rite are described in KGS and MGS for the *brahmadeyā* (literally, “gifted in the *Brāhma* form [with dowry]”) and *śulkadeyā* (literally, “gifted in *Śaulka* form [on receipt of bride-wealth]”) brides respectively.

The rite for a *brahmadeyā* bride is described in KGS 15.1-5 and MGS I.8.1-6. KGS prescribed to perform this rite on an auspicious day in a bright fortnight. According to these texts, at the beginning of the rite for a *brahmadeyā* bride, four mats of *darbha* grass should be placed on the west of sacrificial fire. The *pradātā* (literally, “a person, who gifts the bride”, according to the MGS, either the father or brother of the bride) should sit facing west; to the north of him, the bride should sit facing west and to the west of him the *pratigrahītā* (literally, “a person who accepts the bride”, the bridegroom) should sit facing east. The KGS prescribed that the relatives (the uncles of the bride, according to the medieval scholiast Ādityadarśana) of the *pradātā* also should sit along with him. To the south of both the parties, the priest (*ṛtvik* in the KGS, *mantrakāra* in the MGS) should sit facing north. A brass water vessel (containing rice and barley according to the KGS and unhusked grains and a piece of gold according to the MGS) should be placed on the middle on *darbha* grass. According to the MGS, a female whose husband is alive should handover the water pot to the *pradātā*. The priest should first propose to the *pradātā* to gift the bride and then he should propose to the *pratigrahītā* to accept the bride. The *pradātā* should then announce three times, “I give” and the *pratigrahītā* should also say thrice in response, “I accept.” Having pronounced the blessings, “May this act of yours be true”, the priest should recite the *mantras* (RV X.191.2,4) looking at the *pradātā* and the *pratigrahītā*.

The rite for a *sūlkadeyā* bride is described in KGS 16.1-5 and MGS I.8.7-11. After the settlement of the bride price, the *pradātā* (the guardian of the bridegroom) should give the pieces of gold, saying (according to the KGS), “I give it for progeny” or (according to the MGS), “I give it for wealth”. The *pratigrahītā* (the guardian of the bride) should accept it saying, (according to the KGS), “I accept it for prosperity”⁴⁵ or (according to the MGS), “I accept it for my son”. After placing the pieces of gold in a brass vessel, the relatives of the bride should touch water. According to the KGS they should recite four *mantras*, probably from the *Kaṭha Āraṇyaka*.⁴⁶ According to the MGS, they should recite a *mantra* from the RV (VIII.91.7). At the end, the bride should be sprinkled with the water from the brass vessel.

An early detailed description of the *Kanyāpradāna*, which is similar to the element still being performed during the marriage rite, is found in a late vedic ritual text, the VkhGS III.2, which described it in the context of the *Brāhma* mode of marriage. This text prescribed that after the performance of the element of *Samīkṣaṇa* and following the *Agnimukha* (usual rites with the sacrificial fire) by the *guru*, the guardian of the bride should hand her over to the bridegroom as his *sahadharmacāriṇī* (partner in religious duties), pronouncing the name and *gotra* of the bridegroom, adding the suffix Śarmā to his name, with the recitation of the *mantra*, “I am gifting her for *dharma*, progeny and prosperity, for the success in sacrifices, for the satisfaction of Brahma, deities, *ṛṣis* and *pitṛs* and for the purpose that the couple should procreate progeny and jointly perform sacred acts.” He gifts the bride by pouring water in the hand of the bridegroom and the bridegroom accepts her by pouring water, reciting six *mantras* (TBr II.4.6.5-7), the first of which begins with, “Prajāpati, put glory in women.”

An elaborate description of *Kanyādāna* is found in an early medieval vedic ritual text, ĀGP (of Nārāyaṇa) I.22, which almost remained same till today.⁴⁷

8.2.3.8 *Samīkṣaṇa* or *Paraspara Samīkṣaṇa*

Samīkṣaṇa or *Paraspara Samīkṣaṇa* (literally, “looking at each other”), one of significant elements of the marriage rite in later period, is described in several vedic ritual texts. PGS I.4.16 prescribed it as the first element for performance in the outer hall, followed by the acceptance of the bride as wife by the bridegroom. It instructed that, while looking at his bride, bridegroom should recite the *mantras*, “Have no evil eye, do not be a husband-killer, be helpful to the cattle and be full of joy and vigour. Give birth to the heroes; proper as one beloved of gods and pleasant [to me]. Be

generous for our two-legged and four-legged creatures (men and animals).” (RV X.85.44) and “Soma has obtained [you] first [as his wife]; after him Gandharva has obtained [you]. Your third husband is Agni; the fourth is your human husband. Soma has given you to Gandharva; Gandharva has given you to Agni. Wealth and children Agni has given to me, and besides this wife.” (RV X.85.40-41).

ĀpGS II.4.3-4 prescribed that the bridegroom should recite the third *mantra* from the ĀpMP (I.1.3) while looking at the bride and the fourth *mantra* from the ĀpMP (I.1.4) when the bride looks at him. BGS I.1.24-25 instructed that with the recitation of a *mantra* (similar to ĀpMP I.1.3 and AVŚ XIV.1.62), the bridegroom should look at the bride, after she has taken a bath, put on proper garments, anointed her body with perfumes, worn a garland, finished her meal and already gifted to the bridegroom. The bride should hold an *iṣu* (arrow) in her hand. The bridegroom should recite another *mantra* (similar to ĀpMP I.1.4 and RV X.85.44), when the bride looks at him. HGS I.6.19.4 made a very brief instruction that the bridegroom should look at the bride, who is led to him, with a *mantra* (similar to RV X.85.33). VkhGS III.2 prescribed that after reaching the bride’s house, the bridegroom should recite the *mantras* beginning with, “Going forward quickly” (same as ĀpMP I.1.1), “Thorn-less and straight” (same as ĀpMP I.1.2) and others while looking at her and then he should recite a *mantra* beginning with, “Not brother slaying” (same as ĀpMP I.1.3) while the bride looks at him.

The early medieval domestic ritual text, ĀGP (of Nārāyaṇa) I.23 instructed that after the entry of the bride (in the marriage arena) from the inner-house with auspicious songs and music, both the bridegroom and the bride should stand facing east and west (i.e. facing each other) respectively and a *tiraskariṇī* (curtain) marked with a *svastikā* (an auspicious symbol) should be held between them. The priest should recite the *Sūryāsūkta* (RV X.85) and the female relatives (of the bride) should sing auspicious songs till the proper moment instructed by the astrologer arrives. The curtain should be removed at the proper auspicious moment and both should look at each other.⁴⁸ Another early medieval text, Laghu-Āś XV.20-21 also prescribed a similar element. It instructed that at the time of looking at each other, the bride and the bridegroom should pour *akṣata* (unhusked grains) on each other. This cloth was later known as the *antarpaṭa*, and this practice is still found in Maharashtra. In Bengal, since the late medieval period, the bride covers her face with the betel leaves until the arrival of the auspicious moment for seeing each other.

8.2.3.9 Preparations for the *Vaivāhikahoma*

Several vedic ritual texts instructed that before the commencement of the *Vaivāhikahoma* (literally, “nuptial sacrifice”), necessary preparations for the performance of the marriage rite should be made. ĀGS I.7.3 prescribed that a *dr̥ṣad* (lower millstone) should be placed to the west of the sacrificial fire and a water pot should be placed to the north-east of the sacrificial fire. GGS II.1.12-16 prescribed that a place on the east of the house should be besmeared (with cow-dung) and fire should be established there. Next, a *janyānām* (member of the bride’s party) should fill a vessel with water from a water reservoir. Wrapped in his robe, holding the water pot, he should pass in front of the fire and station himself silently to the south of the fire, with his face towards the north. Another person with a *prājana* (goat) in his hand should pass in the same way and station himself to the south of the fire. To the west of the fire, four handfuls of roasted grains mixed with *śamī* leaves should be placed in a *śūrpa* (winnowing basket) along with a *dr̥ṣad* (lower millstone). KhādGS I.3.5 prescribed that a Brāhmaṇ, wrapped in his robe, holding a water pot, should step in front of the fire and station himself silently to the south of it, with his face towards the north. JGS I.20 prescribed that to the east of the fire, a Brāhmaṇ, restraining his speech should stand facing west, holding a vessel filled with water. To the south of the fire, the mother of the bride should stand holding a winnowing basket with roasted grains mixed with *śamī* leaves. In the absence of mother, any other female who is entitled to represent her should do so.⁴⁹

8.2.3.10 *Vaivāhikahoma*

Some of the early vedic ritual texts prescribed that the bridegroom and the bride should offer oblations into the sacrificial fire at the beginning of the marriage rite. This element was later known as *Vaivāhikahoma*.

According to PGS I.5.2-12, after *Samīkṣaṇa*, both the bride and bridegroom should walk towards the place where the sacrificial fire is kept, bridegroom should lead and both of them should keep the fire on their right side and they should sit on the mats made of grass on the west of the fire. It should be followed by the rites of offering oblations into the sacrificial fire (*homa*) by the bridegroom with the *mantras*, “*Rāṣṭrabhṛt*” (TS III.4.7), “*Jaya*” (TS III.4.4) and “*Abhyātāna*” (TS III.4.5). While performing these rites, the bride should touch the hand of the bridegroom.

HGS I.6.19.5-8 also prescribed this element at the beginning of the marriage rite after *Samīkṣaṇa*. The bride is instructed in this text to sit down to the south of the bridegroom. Next, she should sip water and touch the bridegroom, while the bridegroom should perform *pariṣecana* (sprinkling of water around sacrificial fire). After performing the usual rites down to the offering of oblations with the *Vyāhṛtis*, he should offer oblations with certain *mantras* of magical nature for the protection of the bride. Offering oblations with almost similar *mantras* of magical nature is prescribed in BhGS I.14 also.

ŚGS I.12.11-13 instructed that after the *argha* reception, the bridegroom should make the bride sit down behind the sacrificial fire and while she takes hold of him, he should offer three oblations (of clarified butter) to sacrificial fire with each of the three *Mahāvvyāhṛtis* (*bhūh*, *bhuvah* and *svah*) and finally the fourth oblation with all three together. The description of KauṣGS I.8.15-16 is similar.

ŚGS I.13.1 prescribed that after the bridegroom has offered the oblations into the sacrificial fire, either the father or brother of the bride facing west and standing, should offer the oblations on her head with the point of a sword or a *sruva* (small sacrificial spoons) while she sits facing east. He should recite a *mantra* (RV X.85.46) beginning with, “Be queen over your father-in-law.” KauṣGS I.8.14 prescribed this element before *Vaivāhikahoma*.

MGS I.10.9 prescribed to kindle fire with two *mantras* beginning with, “Joined [in front], you carry, [O, Jātavedā]” and “What [has flown from] the purpose”. Next, he should offer oblations to the *nakṣatra* (lunar mansion for the marriage day), the presiding deity of the *nakṣatra*, the *tithi* (of the marriage), the presiding deity of the *tithi*, the *ṛtu* (season of the marriage) and the presiding deity of the *ṛtu*.

8.2.3.11 *Lājahoma*

Lājahoma (literally, “offering oblations of *lājān* [roasted grains] into the sacrificial fire”) by the bride is one of the more ancient elements of the marriage rite. A reference to this element is found in *Nirukta* VI.9. This element is described in most of the *grhyasūtras*. In PGS I.6.1-2, this element is prescribed immediately after *Vaivāhikahoma*. This text instructed that the brother of the bride should pour out of his joined hands, the roasted grains mixed with *śamī* leaves on the firmly joined hands of the bride, which she should offer as the oblations into the sacrificial fire, standing in front of it. The roasted grains to should be offered in the sacrificial fire once for the *deva* (deity) Aryamaṇ with the *mantra* “To Aryamaṇ *deva* the girls have made sacrifice, to Agni. Let him, Aryamaṇ *deva*, loosen us from here, and not from the husband; *svāhā*.” and twice for Agni with the *mantras*, “This woman, strewing grains, prays thus, “May my husband live long; may my relations be prosperous; *svāhā*.”” and “These roasted grains I throw into the fire: may this bring prosperity to thee, and may it unite me with thee. May Agni grant us that; so and so; *svāhā*.” According to PGS I.7.4-6, the elements of *Lājahoma*, *Pāṇigrahaṇa*, *Aśmārohaṇa*, *Gāthāgāna* and *Pariṇayana* should be performed three times in sequence, which should be followed by the performance of *Lājahoma* for

the fourth time. At the time of the fourth *Lājahoma*, the bride should offer the roasted grains by the neb of a winnowing basket for the deity Bhaga with the *mantra*, “To Bhaga; *svāhā*.”

GGs II.2.5-7 and KhādGS I.3.20-23 prescribed to perform *Lājahoma* after *Aśmārohaṇa*. It is instructed that after the brother (or a friend, in place of brother), according to the KhādGS) of the bride pours the roasted grains into her joined hands, the bride should offer oblations of roasted grains to sacrificial fire three times; first with the *mantra* beginning with, “This female prays” (MBr I.2.2); next with the *mantra* beginning with, “Aryamaṇ *devā*” (MBr I.2.3) and third time with the *mantra* beginning with, “Pūṣaṇ” (MBr I.2.4).

ŚGS I.13.15-17, 14.1 prescribed this element after *Pariṇayana* and ĀGS I.7.8-15 prescribed this element after *Aśmārohaṇa*. According to the ĀGS, after pouring some clarified butter in to the joined hands of the bride, her brother or a person acting as her brother should pour the roasted grains twice in to the bride’s joined hands. If the bridegroom is a *Jāmadagnya* (descendant of sage Jamadagni) then this element should be performed thrice.

HGS I.6.20.3-4 prescribed that the bridegroom should pour some clarified butter into the joined hands of the bride and then he should pour the roasted grains twice in to the bride’s joined hands and he should also sacrifice along with the bride by seizing her joined hands.

ĀGS I.7.16-18 prescribed an additional ritual after *Lājahoma*, which is based on a very ancient belief. It said that the bridegroom should loosen two *śikhās* (locks of hair) of the bride, if they are already made, i.e., if two tufts of wool have been already bound around her hair on two sides. The right one should be loosened first with the *mantra*, “I release you from the noose of Varuṇa, with which the benevolent Savitṛ bound you.” (RV X.85.24). The left one should be loosened with the next *mantra* (RV X.85.25). This ritual was later known as *Śikhāvimocana*.

KauśS 76.17-18 prescribed that after *Aśmārohaṇa*, the bride standing on the stone should scatter *pūlyāni* (shrivelled grains) with the *mantra* beginning with, “This female” (AVŚ XIV.2.63). She should scatter three times uninterruptedly and then the fourth time for Kāma. The medieval scholiast Keśava, while explaining these aphorisms, following the popular tradition, prescribed that the bride should offer oblations of three handfuls of *lājān* (roasted grains) with the *mantra* prescribed by the KauśS and then the father of the bride should perform the element of *Kanyādāna*, pronouncing the name and *gotra* of the bride.

VārGS 14.7 and BDh I.20.4 mentioned this element as *Lājāhuti*. BDh I.20.4 prescribed that in case of *Ārṣa* form of marriage, the bridegroom must handover the bride-wealth of a cow and a bull to the father of the bride before commencement of this element.

Kālidāsa in his *Kumārasambhava* VII.80-82 and *Raghuvamśa* VII.25-27 described this element as *Lājamokṣa* and *Lājavisarga* (literally both mean, “release of roasted grains”) respectively. In *Kumārasambhava*, he narrated that after being instructed by the *guru* (priest), the bride threw roasted grains to the sacrificial fire and then she bent herself forward to inhale the fragrant smoke. In *Raghuvamśa* VII.26-27, this practice of inhaling the fragrant smoke generated from burning clarified butter, roasted grains and *śamī* leaves was mentioned as an *ācāra* (customary practice) only. But later, Mallinātha while explaining the verse VII.82 of *Kumārasambhava* quoted an author, Prayogavṛttikāra, who actually prescribed to inhale the smoke generated from the burning of roasted grains offered to sacrificial fire.

8.2.3.12 Pāṇigrahaṇa or Hastagrahaṇa

A very significant element of Hindu marriage rite is *Pāṇigrahaṇa* or *Hastagrahaṇa*, which literally means, “taking hold of bride's hand”. Most of the *grhyasūtra* texts described this element.

PGS I.6.3 stated that, *Lājahoma* should be followed by *Pāṇigrahaṇa*. The bridegroom was

instructed by this text to seize the right hand of the bride with the thumb and say the *mantras*, “I seize your hand for the sake of happiness, which you may live with me, your husband to old age. Come, let us marry.” (RV X.85.36); “This am I, that are you; that are you, this am I. I am the *sāman*, you are the *ṛc*; I am the heaven, you are the earth.” and “Loving, bright with genial minds, may we see a hundred autumns, may we live a hundred autumns, may we hear a hundred autumns.”

ŚGS I.13.2-4 and ĀGS I.7.3-5 prescribed to perform the element of *Pāṇigrahaṇa* after the *Vaivāhikahoma*. Both of these texts instructed that bridegroom should stand facing west and the bride should sit facing east during the performance. Then, the ŚGS stated that the bridegroom should seize the right hand of the bride with the thumb, palms of their hands being turned upwards. ŚGS I.13.4 prescribed the same *mantra* (RV X.85.36) as prescribed by the PGS for the recitation by the bridegroom while seizing the hand.

GGs II.2.16 prescribed to perform the element of *Pāṇigrahaṇa* at the end of the marriage rite after *Saptapadī*. It prescribed that the bridegroom should put up her joined hands with his left hand, seize with his right hand her right hand with the thumb, her hand being turned with the palm upwards and recite six *mantras* (MBr I.2.10-15) beginning with, “I seize your hand.”

KGS 25.21-22 prescribed that the bride should sit on a mat of *darbha* grass to the north of the sacrificial fire facing east and the bridegroom should sit in front of her facing west. With a pure mind, reciting a *mantra*, he should take hold of her right hand along with the thumb with his right hand. The hand of the bride should be with its palm upward and not empty. Similarly, the hand of the bridegroom should not be empty and it should be kept under her hand. In the same way, he should take hold of her left hand with his left hand.⁵⁰ After taking hold of the bride’s hand, the bridegroom should utter four *mantras*.

According to KauśS 76.19 after the scattering of *pūlyāni* (shrivelled grains) by the bride, the bridegroom should seize the bride’s hand with five *mantras*, the first of which begins with, “As Agni” (AVŚ XIV.1.48-52).

In the marriage rite described by Kālidāsa in his *Raghuvamśa* VII.21-23, the element of *Hastagrahaṇa* was performed after the *Vaivāhikahoma*.

8.2.3.13 *Aśmārohaṇa*

The element of *Aśmārohaṇa* (literally, “mounting the stone”), another significant element of the marriage rite is described in most of the *gr̥hyasūtras*. Several *gr̥hyasūtras* prescribed this element for both in initiation and marriage rites.

In PGS I.7.1, *Aśmārohaṇa* is prescribed as the next element after *Pāṇigrahaṇa*. It instructed that the bride should be told by the bridegroom to tread on a stone to the north of the fire with her right foot, while the bridegroom should recite a *mantra*, “Tread on this stone; be firm like a stone. Tread the foes down; turn away the enemies.”

ŚGS I.13.10-12 mentioned this element as *Aśmākramaṇa* and prescribed to perform this element after *Pāṇigrahaṇa*. It prescribed to place a piece of stone towards the northern direction. The bridegroom should make the bride rise with the words, “Come, O joyful one.” Then, he should make her tread with the tip of her right foot on the piece of stone with the *mantra*, “Come tread on the stone; be firm like a stone. Trample the foes down; overcome the enemies.”⁵¹ The description in KauśGS I.8.19 is almost similar. ĀGS I.7.7 prescribed to place a *dr̥ṣad* (lower millstone) and a water pitcher on the west and north-west of the sacrificial fire. After *Pāṇigrahaṇa*, it prescribed that the bridegroom and the bride should circumambulate the water pitcher and the sacrificial fire three times with a *mantra* and bridegroom should lead the bride. This element, known as *Pariṇayana* is described later. According to this text, during each circumambulation, the bridegroom should make the bride tread on the piece of stone with a *mantra* similar to one prescribed in ŚGS I.13.12.

HGS I.6.19.8 prescribed this element after *Vaivāhikahoma* and the *mantra* prescribed is, “Tread on this stone; be firm like a stone. Destroy those who seek to harm you; overcome the enemies.” According to the MGS I.10.16-17, prescribed this element after *Gāthāgāna*. It instructed that, both the bridegroom and the bride should be made to trade simultaneously with their right feet on a piece of stone placed to the west of the sacrificial fire with the *mantra*, “Come tread on this stone, and you both become firm like a stone. May Viśvedevāḥ bless you with a life of hundred years.” Then they should be made to get down from the piece of stone with a *mantra* addressed to the bridegroom, “As Indra descended with Indrāṇī from the Gandhamādana Mountain, you get down with your wife from this stone.” Next, the bride is addressed with a *mantra*, “Mount the same, [put] forward your feet and may you, O *kanyā* (bride), be blessed with long life and sons.” This text prescribed to repeat this element once more. KGS 25.28 prescribed that first the bridegroom should tread on the stone with his right foot with a *mantra* similar to MGS I.10.16 and then the bride should tread on the stone with the *mantra* similar to HGS I.6.19.8.⁵²

KauśS 76.15-16 prescribed that, the bridegroom should place a stone on a lump of bull-dung with the *mantra*, “I place for you, for the progeny, a pleasant, firm stone on the lap of the earth (AVŚ XIV.1.47a) and then the bride should be made to tread on the stone with the *mantra* beginning with, “Stand on it” (AVŚ XIV.1.47b). Elsewhere, this text (77.17-19) prescribed to repeat this element after the bride reaches the bridegroom’s house.

8.2.3.14 *Gāthāgāna*

The element of singing a *gāthā* praising goddess Sarasvatī is a very ancient element of the Hindu marriage rite. This element was later known as *Gāthāgāna* (literally, “singing ballads”). Early references of singing a *gāthā* during the marriage found in MS III.7.3 and its root can be traced to a narrative found in several early Yajurvedic texts. The *brāhmaṇa* passages in TS VI.1.6.5-6, KāS XXIV.1, KpS XXXVII.2, MS III.7.3 and ŚBM III.2.4.1-7 recounted a narrative that once both the *Gandharvas* and the *Devas* (gods) tried to impress Vāc (the goddess of speech, identified with Sarasvatī) to join them. According to the TS, KāS, KpS and MS, the *Gandharvas* uttered a *brāhma* (charm). In the ŚBM account, they displayed their knowledge of the Vedas. The gods sang a *gāthā*. She turned to the gods as they sang a song. Hence, a female loves one who sings (and dances, according to the ŚBM), not one who utters a charm (or display his knowledge). MS III.7.3 added to this common passage that, this is the reason of singing a song at a wedding and one who knows thus, sing a song during *Hastagrahaṇa* (the marriage rite or an element of the marriage rite, *Pāṇigrahaṇa*). Then, the married couple grow old together, live their whole lifespan and do not get into difficulty.⁵³

A detailed account about this *gāthā* is found in a late *Brāhmaṇa* text of the *Vādhūla* sub-branch of the *Taittirīya śākhā*, known as *Vādhūla Anvākyāna*. In its appendix passage to TS VI.1.6.6 mentioned above, it added that, the *Gandharvas* recited a *brāhmaṇa* passage, “Those people who existed previously (and) those who were conveying benefits previously to them, for (all of) them, the *Gandharva*, with the head heated (it) before the gods.” and the gods sang a *gāthā* of two verses, “In which this *jagat* (whole world) exists, which is the highest glory of women, that *gāthā* I will sing today.” and “Further this, O Sarasvatī, *subhagā* (fortunate one), *vājinīvatī* (rich in prizes). As such we will sing (praise) you at the beginning, before every being.” This text also mentioned that women desire one who sings and sure to desire one who knows this.⁵⁴ Later, almost a similar *gāthā* was prescribed by several Yajurvedic *grhyasūtras* for singing during the marriage rite.

KGS 25.23 prescribed that after *Pāṇigrahaṇa*, (the priest should) make either the bridegroom or according to some (authority) both the bride and the bridegroom, to recite a *gāthā*. Devapāla, in his *bhāṣya* (commentary) to KGS 25.23, mentioned an ancient *gāthā*, named *Sarasvatyanuvāka* comprising 21 verses, which should be sung in this occasion. The first two verses of this *anuvāka*

are, “O Sarasvatī, promote [this, our undertaking], o *subhagā* (gracious one), *vājinīvatī* (rich in steeds); you, whom we sing first of all that is.” and “She, who was all in the beginning, she in whom this *jagat* (whole world) dwells; that word (song), I will sing today, which is the highest thought of women.” These two verses are almost similar to the *gāthā* sung by the gods. The third verse of this *anuvāka* is similar to the *brāhmaṇa* passage uttered by the *Gandharvas*, “The men who existed previously [and those] before the previous ones, for [all of] them, the *Gandharva*, with the head before the gods became hot”.⁵⁵

BGS I.4.9 prescribed the first verse of the *Sarasvatyānūvāka* as the last of the *mantras* to be murmured by the bridegroom in the right ear of the bride before *Hastagrahaṇa*. ĀpGS II.4.15 prescribed four *mantras* (ĀpMP I.3.3-6) for recitation during *Pāṇigrahaṇa*. One of these *mantras* (ĀpMP I.3.5) is same as the first verse of the *Sarasvatyānūvāka*. This same verse is also prescribed in BhGS I.16 and HGS I.6.20.1 for recitation during *Pāṇigrahaṇa*. This same verse is also listed in ĀgGS I.5.3 as a *mantra* for the marriage rite. VkhGS III.3 mentioned this verse by its *pratīkena* only, as the *mantra* for recitation during *Pāṇigrahaṇa*.

MGS I.10.15 prescribed several *mantras* for recitation during performance of *Pāṇigrahaṇa*. Its second and third *mantras* are, “What in the beginning, *Vāc* uttered (sang) before the gods and the demons (*Asuras*, instead of the *Gandharvas* in the early texts); that (song) I will sing today which is the highest thought of women.” and “O Sarasvatī, promote [this, our undertaking]. O *subhagā* (gracious one); o *vājinīvatī* (bountiful one); you, whom I praise, are source of everything, in the past and the future.” Its second hemistich of the second *mantra* is same as the second hemistich of the second verse of the *Sarasvatyānūvāka* and its third *mantra* is almost similar to the first verse of the *Sarasvatyānūvāka*. The second line of the second *mantra* and the first line of the third *mantra* mentioned by VārGS 14.13 for recitation during the element of *Pāṇigrahaṇa* are same as the second and first lines of the first verse of the *Sarasvatyānūvāka* respectively.

PGS I.7.2 prescribed that after *Aśmārohaṇa*, the bridegroom should next sing a *gāthā* praising the women in general and addressing it to goddess Sarasvatī. The *gāthā* mentioned in this text, comprises two verses. The first one is, “O Sarasvatī, promote (this, our undertaking). O *subhagā* (gracious one); o *vājinīvatī* (bountiful one); you, whom I praise, are source of all creation.” and the second one is, “It is you, in whom the whole creation arose and in whom this *jagat* (whole world) dwells. Today, I will sing that *gāthā* which is on the highest glory of the women.”

8.2.3.15 Agni Pariṇayana or Agni Parikramaṇa

The element of circumambulation of the sacrificial fire by the bride and the bridegroom, later known as *Agni Parikramaṇa* (literally, “circumambulation of the sacrificial fire”) or *Agni Pariṇayana* (literally, “leading around the sacrificial fire”) is found in most of the vedic ritual texts.

ŚGS I.13.9 and KauṣGS I.8.19 prescribed that after *Pāṇigrahaṇa* and before *Aśmārohaṇa*, the bridegroom and the bride should walk round the *stheyā* (literally, “stagnant”, water with magical power) water pot placed to the north-east (of the sacrificial fire). During circumambulation, they should turn their right sides towards it. ŚGS I.13.13-14 and KauṣGS I.8.20 instructed that after *Aśmārohaṇa*, the bridegroom should lead the bride round the sacrificial fire clockwise and give a second set of garments with the same *mantra* (RV X.85.6) as the first set.

ĀGS I.7.6 prescribed to perform this element after *Pāṇigrahaṇa*. It instructed that the bridegroom should lead the bride three times round the sacrificial fire and the water pot (placed to the north-east of the sacrificial fire) clockwise, with the *mantra* “This am I, that are you; that are you, this am I. I am the *sāman*, you are the *ṛc*; I am the heaven, you are the earth. Come let us marry. Let us have children. Loving, bright with genial minds, may we live a hundred autumns.”

PGS I.7.3 prescribed this element after *Aśmārohaṇa* and *Gāthāgāna*. It prescribed the

circumambulation of the sacrificial fire by the bride and bridegroom with a *mantra* (RV X.85.38). But PGS I.5.1 mentioned that, according to some (authority), circumambulation of the sacrificial fire by the bride and bridegroom should be performed even before *Paridhāpana*.

Both GGS II.2.8 and KhādGS I.3.24 prescribed this element after *Lājahoma*. According to these texts, after *Lājahoma*, the bridegroom, passing behind her, should return to his original position (viz., to the left of the bride) and lead her round the sacrificial fire with a *mantra* (MBr I.2.5). Alternately, a Brāhmaṇ well versed in the *mantras* may lead her. But, another Sāmavedic ritual text JGS I.21 prescribed the element of *Agni Parikramaṇa* before *Lājahoma*. It instructed that the couple should walk around the sacrificial fire, while the bridegroom murmurs the *mantra*, “You are food, strength by name is your mother; you come to me with progeny, with wealth.”⁵⁶

ĀpGS II.5.7-11 also prescribed that after *Lājahoma* and offering oblation to the sacrificial fire, the element of *Agni Pradakṣiṇa* (literally, “circumambulation of the sacrificial fire”) should be performed by the bride and the bridegroom for three times. The first and the second circumambulations of the sacrificial fire should be followed by (second and third) *Aśmārohaṇa* and offering oblations into the sacrificial fire. The third circumambulation must be followed by offering oblations with “*Jaya*” and other *mantras*. The first circumambulation should be performed with three *mantras* from the ĀpMP (I.5.3-5). The second circumambulation should be performed with another three *mantras* from the ĀpMP (I.5.8-10) and third circumambulation should be performed with again another three *mantras* from the ĀpMP (I.5.13-15). MGS I.10.18-19 prescribed to perform *Pariṇayana* four times after *Aśmārohaṇa*.

KauśS 76.20 prescribed to perform the element of *Agni Pariṇayana*, circumambulation of the sacrificial fire by the bride and the bridegroom three times after the element of *Pāṇigrahaṇa*, with the hemistich beginning with, “Of Aryamaṇ” (AVŚ XIV.1.39b). While explaining this aphorism, Keśava mentioned that the circumambulation of fire may be performed four times, if such is the local customary practice.

In the marriage rite described by Kālidāsa in his *Raghuvamśa* VII.24 and *Kumārasambhava* VII.78-79, the element of *Agni Parikramaṇa* was performed next to the *Pāṇigrahaṇa*. According to *Kumārasambhava* VII.80-86 and 88 this element was followed by *Lājavisarga*, *Dhruvadarśana* and *Ādrākṣatāropana*.⁵⁷ The order of the elements mentioned in the narrative of the marriage of Śiva found in the *Pūrvabhāga* 103.59-61 of the *Liṅgapurāṇa* are *Hastagrahaṇa*, *Vaivāhikahoma*, *Lājahoma* and *Agni Pradakṣiṇa* for three times.

8.2.3.16 Saptapadī

Saptapadī (literally, “the rite of seven steps”) is one of the significant ancient elements of the Hindu marriage rite. Most of the *grhyasūtra* texts described this element.

ĀGS I.7.19 instructed to perform this element after *Śikhāvimocana*. It prescribed that the bridegroom should make the bride step forward seven steps in the north-eastern direction with the *mantra*, “With one step for food, with two steps for vigour, with three steps for prosperity, with four steps for happiness, with five steps for progeny, with six steps for seasons and with seven steps be (my) friend. So be my follower. Let us acquire many sons who may reach old age.” According to PGS I.8.1-2, *Saptapadī* should be performed after the element of *Pariṇayana*. It is laid down in the PGS that, the bridegroom should ask the bride to step forward in northern direction seven steps, while reciting the *mantra*, “First one is for food, second one is for vigour, third one is for prosperity, fourth one is for happiness, fifth one is for cattle and sixth one is for seasons. O friend, take your seventh step, and so be my follower.” The words, “May Viṣṇu escort you” should be added to the every part of the *mantra*.

BGS I.1.28 prescribed to perform this element almost at the beginning of the marriage rite, after the

element of *Hastagrahaṇa* and before the *argha* reception of the bridegroom. KGS 25.42 prescribed this element after *Lājahoma*.

BhGS I.17 prescribed that this element should be performed with the *mantra*, “One [step] for food, may Viṣṇu escort you; two [steps] for strength, may Viṣṇu escort you; three [steps] for vows, may Viṣṇu escort you; four [steps] for happiness, may Viṣṇu escort you; five [steps] for prosperity, may Viṣṇu escort you; seven [steps] for seven *hotras* (sacrificial invocations), may Viṣṇu escort you. At the seventh step, the bridegroom should look at the bride and recite the *mantra*, “Be a friend with seven steps. We have become friend by seven steps. May I attain your friendship; may I not be separated from your friendship; may you not be separated from my friendship.”⁵⁸

KauśS 76.21-24 prescribed that the bridegroom should draw seven lines extending towards east to the north of the sacrificial fire with the *mantra* beginning with, “Seven pathways” (AVŚ V.1.6). Then the bride should step on each of these seven lines, while the bridegroom reciting seven *mantras*. First step should be taken with the *mantra*, “You [step] for food, the auspicious lady, bearer of progeny and beautiful.” Similarly, the second to seventh steps should be taken with the similar *mantras* replacing the word ‘food’ with vigour, prosperity, fortune, realm, wealth and long life. After the seventh step, the bridegroom should say, “Be a friend with seven steps.” KauśS 76.25-30 added two more elements between *Saptapadī* and *Mūrdhābhiṣeka*. The first element, later known as *Talpārohaṇa* (literally, “mounting the bed”) is unique with no parallel in any other vedic ritual texts. According to KauśS 76.25-27 prescribed that, the bride should be made to sit on the bed with two *mantras* beginning with, “Mount the bed” (AVŚ XIV.2.31) and “Bhaga has carved [the four legs]” (AVŚ XIV.1.60) respectively. While the bride is seated on the bed, her well-wishers should wash her feet and they should say while washing her feet, “Let these precious feet bring fortune, not mishap. May the feet of this excellent wife that are being washed give progeny, cattle and long life.” Next element described in KauśS 76.28-30 is ungirding the *yoktra* (rope) around the bride’s waist with which she was girdled before. This element is found in KGS 25.41 and MGS I.11.23 also. The KauśS prescribed that the *yoktra* should be loosened with two *mantras* beginning with, “I loosen” (AVŚ XIV.1.57) and “I release you from [Varuṇa’s noose]” (AVŚ XIV.1.58) respectively. It mentioned that while the bridegroom is loosening the rope, the [female] servants of the bride should try to stop it. It is believed that whichever side wins is stronger than the other.

According to the *smṛti* texts, legally a Hindu marriage becomes complete and irrevocable with the end of the element of *Saptapadī*. MDh VIII.227 stated that the *mantras* recited in marriage rite are a sure indication of the wife-hood; but the learned persons should understand that the marriage completes only with the seventh step (of *Saptapadī*). Aparārka, while explaining YDh I.65 cited a similar verse of Nārada. In *Udvāhatattva*, Raghunandana also cited a similar verse of Yama.⁵⁹ This same perception is also reflected in the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955.

8.2.3.17 Mūrdhābhiṣeka

The element of sprinkling auspicious water on the bride and bridegroom, later known as *Mūrdhābhiṣeka* (literally, “sprinkling on the head”), is found in several *grhyasūtras*. ŚGS I.14.8-9 prescribed that the *ācārya* should wipe the bride and the bridegroom with the *stheyā* water, while reciting three *Āpohiṣṭhīya mantras* (RV X.9.1-3). Then he should sprinkle the *stheyā* water on the heads of the bride and the bridegroom. ĀGS I.7.20 prescribed that after *Saptapadī*, water should be sprinkled from the water pot on the heads of both the bride and the bridegroom, standing together closely. PGS I.8.3-6 prescribed that, after *Saptapadī*, the bride should be sprinkled with water on her head by a person, who carried the pot on his shoulder with a *mantra* followed by three *mantras* (VSM XI.50-52) beginning with, “You waters are”. HGS I.6.21.5-6 prescribed that after the elements of *Saptapadī*, ‘touching heart’ and ‘touching navel’, the bridegroom should make the bride to sit down to the west of the sacrificial fire facing east. He, standing to the east of the bride, facing

west, should sprinkle water on her with three *mantras*, the first of which begins with, “You waters are healing” (TS IV.1.5.1.b-d); then with four *mantras*, the first of which begins with, “Golden of colour, pure, purifying” (TS V.6.1.a-d) and finally with an *anuvāka* beginning with, “The purifier, the heavenly one” (TBr I.4.8). At the end, the seeds should be poured on the heads of the bride and bridegroom. KauśS 76.31 prescribed that the powder of all kinds of fragrant substances should be poured on the head of the bride by means of *kāmpīla* (*Crinum latifolium*) leaves with the *mantras*, the first of which begins with, “By Bṛhaspati” (AVŚ XIV.2.53-58).

8.2.3.18 *Sūryodīkṣaṇa*

The element of *Sūryodīkṣaṇa* (literally, “to [make the bride] look at the sun”) is described in several *gṛhyasūtra* texts. According to the PGS, this element should follow *Mūrdhābhiṣeka*. PGS I.8.7 prescribed that the bridegroom should make the bride look at the sun, while reciting the *mantra* beginning with, “That eye” (VSM XXXVI.24). KGS 25.43-44 also prescribed a similar procedure, but it added that if sun has set, the bride should be made looking at the fire.

8.2.3.19 *Hṛdayasparśa* and *Prekṣakānumantraṇa*

The ancient element known as *Hṛdayasparśa* (literally, “touching the heart”) is described in several *gṛhyasūtras*. PGS I.8.8 prescribed that after *Sūryodīkṣaṇa*, the next element should be touching the chest of the bride near her heart by the bridegroom over her right shoulder with the *mantra*, “I will take your heart into my heart. Your mind will follow my mind. You will rejoice my words from your heart. May Prajāpati join you to me.”

BGS I.4.1, prescribed the bridegroom to touch the chest of the bride near her heart over her right shoulder with the *mantra*, “Let your heart be in my heart, let your mind be in my mind, you hear only my words with concentration, take a vow of following me alone and be companion of me.” during the performance. BhGS I.17, ĀgGS I.6.3 and VkhGS III.4 also prescribed nearly similar procedure. HGS I.6.21.3-4 prescribed that after *Saptapadī*, the bridegroom should place his right foot on bride’s right foot, move his right hand down gradually over her right shoulder and touch her chest where heart is located. Next, he should touch her navel with a *mantra*, “You are the knot of all breath; do not loosen yourself.”

Next to the element of *Hṛdayasparśa*, according to the PGS I.8.9, the bridegroom should invite all assembled guests and relatives to bless the bride, and recite the *mantra*, “This bride has auspicious omens. Come up to her and look at her. Having brought luck to her, go away back to your houses.” (RV X.85.33). This ritual is known as *Abhimantraṇa* or *Prekṣakānumantraṇa* (literally, “addressing the visitors”). MGS I.12.1 also prescribed the same *mantra* for this ritual of *Abhimantraṇa*, or *Anumantraṇa*, as this text mentioned the element.

After *Prekṣakānumantraṇa*, PGS I.8.10 mentioned that a *ḍṛḍhapuruṣa* (literally, “a person of strong physique,” medieval scholiasts are not unanimous about its intended meaning) should snatch the bride from the ground and set her down in an eastern or northern direction, in an out-of-the-way house on a red bull’s hide, saying, “Here may cows sit down, here horses, here men. Here may *yajña* (sacrifice) with a thousand gifts, here may Pūṣaṇ sit down.” According to PGS I.8.11-13, this is the last ritual of the codified marriage rite. It should be followed by the *grāmavacana* (customary practices of the village).

8.2.3.20 *Dakṣiṇā*: nuptial fee

The vedic ritual texts are not unanimous about the nuptial fee. PGS I.8.14-18, ŚGS I.14.13-17 and KauśGS I.8.33-37 prescribed that, at the end of the performance of marriage rite, the bridegroom should pay the nuptial fee to the *ācārya*, who guided him to perform the rite. As the nuptial fee, a Brāhmaṇ bridegroom should give a cow, a Kṣatriya bridegroom should give a hamlet and a Vaiśya bridegroom should give a horse. The ŚGS and KauśGS prescribed to give a horse in addition to a

priest well versed in *yajña*. But GGS II.3.23, KhādGS I.4.6, JGS I.22, BGS I.4.38 and KauśS 79.29 prescribed a cow as the nuptial fee, irrespective of the *varṇa* of the bridegroom.

8.2.3.21 Dhruvadarśana or Dhruvārundhatīdarśana

The last major element of the marriage rite is known as *Dhruvadarśana* (literally, “looking at the pole-star”) or *Dhruvārundhatīdarśana* (literally, “looking at the pole-star and Alkor”). Most of the *gṛhyasūtra* texts described this element.

ŚGS I.17.3-4 prescribed the performance of this element in the bridegroom’s house on the next day. After sunset, the husband should show his wife the Dhruva (pole star) with the words, “You be firm, thriving with me” and the wife should reply, “I see Dhruva; may I obtain offspring.” ĀGS I.7.22 prescribed that the bride should break her silence in the night (in the house of an old Brāhmaṇ woman) after looking at the Dhruva (pole star), Arundhatī (Alkor) and the *sapta ṛṣis* (Ursa Major) with the words, “May my husband live and I get offspring”. According to the PGS I.8.19-20, after sunset, the bridegroom should show his bride the Dhruva (pole star) and say, “You are firm. I see you the firm one. O thriving one, be firm with me. Brhaspati has given you to me. Obtain offspring through me, your husband. Live with me a hundred autumns.” Even if the bride could not see, still she should say, “I see.” MGS I.14.9 prescribed that the bride should be shown the Dhruva, Arundhatī, Jīvantī and the *sapta ṛṣis*. The bride should murmur a *mantra* while looking at these stars. KGS 25.45 prescribed that the bridegroom should show the bride a number of auspicious stars, namely, Jīvantī, Dhruva, Svastyātreya and Arundhatī (Alkor) one by one and ask, “do you see such and such star?” Even if the bride could not see, still she should say, “I see it.” JGS I.21, has also prescribed that the bridegroom should make his bride look at the pole star, Arundhatī (Alkor) and the *sapta ṛṣis* (Ursa Major), when she says, “Let me see”. While, looking at Dhruva, the bride should say, “You are firm, may I become firm in the house of my husband so and so.” While looking at Arundhatī, she should say, “Arundhatī, may I be held fast by my husband so and so.” ĀgGS I.6.3 prescribed to worship Dhruva and the *sapta ṛṣis* (Ursa Major).⁶⁰

8.2.3.22 Patigrhagamana: journey to the bridegroom’s house

Vedic ritual texts described in details the rituals to be performed at the time of departure from the bride’s house and during the journey to the bridegroom’s house. This element was later mentioned as *Patigrhagamana*. The medieval scholiast Keśava, while explaining KauśS 77 mentioned this element as *Udvāha*.

ŚGS I.15.1-21 instructed the bridegroom to recite three *mantras* (RV X.85.24-26) beginning with, “I free you (from Varuṇa’s snare)” at the time of the bride leaving her house. He should recite a *mantra* (RV X.40.10) beginning with, “The living one they bewail” if she begins to cry. Next, the bride should smear the axle of the chariot with clarified butter, while reciting the *mantra* (RV I.82.2) beginning with, “They feasted; they got drunk.” With the first of the two *mantras* beginning with, “Pure are your wheels” (RV X.85.12) and “Your two wheels” (RV X.85.16) respectively, she should smear the first wheel of the chariot, and the second one with the second *mantra*. Next, she should smear the bullocks. A branch of fruit-bearing tree should be placed in each yoke-hole, intended for pins, with the *mantra* (RV VIII.80.7) beginning with, “In the box of the wheel.” In case, such branches are already fitted there, only the *mantra* *should* be recited. Next, two bulls should be harnessed with two *mantras* (RV I.82.5-6) beginning with, “Harnessed be your right one.” When they are harnessed, the hemistich (RV X.85.10) beginning with, “White the two bulls” should be recited over them. When the bride rides the chariot, the bridegroom should recite a *mantra* (RV X.85.20) beginning with, “Adorned with *kiṃśuka* flowers.” If the chariot breaks down during the journey, he should take the bride to the house of an *āhitāgni* (one who maintains three *śrauta* fires) and rectify the defect with a *mantra* (RV III.53.19) beginning with, “Cover yourself with *khadira*.” If any part that is bound loosens, the knot should be tied with a *mantra* (RV X.143.2). During the

journey, the bridegroom should utter certain *mantras*, while passing through a crossway (RV X.85.32), near any *śmaśāna* (RV X.85.31), or a big tree (RV III.8.11a), while riding a boat (RV X.63.10) or crossing a river (RV X.53.8).

Two vedic ritual texts, HGS I.7.22.1-2 and ĀpGS II.5.12-13 (as explained by their late medieval scholiasts), mentioned that after the completion of the marriage rite, the bride was either carried away in a cart or a chariot or in a palanquin from her house. The nuptial fire was also carried (in a vessel) along with the newly married couple. ĀpGS II.5.19-22 prescribed to recite certain *mantras* from the ĀpMP, while the chariot is put into position (ĀpMP I.6.1), at the time when each of the two animals is yoked to the chariot (ĀpMP I.6.2-3), first the right one (and then the left) and at the time of bride's mounting the chariot (ĀpMP I.6.4-7). Next, according to ĀpGS II.5.19-23-24, with a *mantra* from the ĀpMP (I.6.8), the bridegroom should spread out two threads in the wheel-tracks in which the chariot is to move, one of *nīla* (dark blue) colour in the right track and the other of *lohita* (red) colour in the left track and with certain other *mantras* from the ĀpMP (I.6.9-11), he should walk on these tracks. MGS I.13.1 and KGS 26.1 (as explained by their late medieval scholiasts) instructed to arrange for a vehicle on the auspicious day (of marriage) for the bride's departure. Both MGS I.13.2-8 and KGS 26.1-6 prescribed to recite certain *mantras* when the animals are yoked, when the bride mounts the chariot and at the time of commencement of journey. KGS 26.3 prescribed to fix a *śamī* branch in both the yoke-holes with a *mantra*.⁶¹

ĀGS I.7.21 prescribed that the bride should stay for a night in the house of an old Brāhmaṇ woman whose husband and children are alive. GGS II.3.1 and KhādGS I.4.1-2 prescribed to carry the bride to a suitable house belonging to a Brāhmaṇ in the north-easterly direction.

KauśS 77.1-15 prescribed that before the commencement of the journey, while the bride is mounting the vehicle, the bridegroom should recite two *mantras* beginning with, “[Mount] this *sukimśukam* (well-flowered) [well-carved vehicle]” (AVŚ XIV.1.61) and “[The] gold-cushioned [vehicle]” (AVŚ XIV.2.30). Then, the Brahmā (Atharvavedic priest) should move forward to lead the procession with two *mantras* beginning with, “[We have ascended] this road” (AVŚ XIV.2.8) and “[Let the] Brahmā [be yoked] after” (AVŚ XIV.1.64). During the journey, two *mantras* beginning with, “[Let] not [the robbers] find [the couple]” (AVŚ XIV.2.11) and “[Let the roads be] free from thorns” (AVŚ XIV.1.34) should be recited. If another bridal procession is found already travelling through the same road, then the priest should stand on the tip of the bridal dress placed on the crossroad from the right side with the *mantra* beginning with, “She, who has [come here] before” (AVŚ XIV.1.34) and then the priest wishing the well-being of both the brides, should murmur the *mantra* beginning with, “To Sūryā, to the gods” (AVŚ XIV.2.46). The Brahmā should stand between both the processions and allow the other procession to pass through saying, “Not disturbing these two, wishing to have good limits, both the supreme ones, both having good progeny, go on your own path.” In case the vehicle needs any repair, it should be sprinkled before the repair with the *mantra* beginning with, “He, who without a clamp” (AVŚ XIV.2.47). On arrival at a *tīrtha* (bank of a river), a *loga* (a piece of wood) should be pierced into the water with the *mantra* beginning with, “[You are] rejoicing that” (AVŚ XIV.2.6). While passing a big tree, the *mantra* beginning with, “[Listen to] these [words] of mine, [O men]” (AVŚ XIV.2.9). Addressing the females who gathered to see the bride during the journey, the *mantra* beginning with, “[This bride] has auspicious [omens]” (AVŚ XIV.2.28) should be murmured. During the journey, when the places mentioned in the *mantra* beginning with, “What herbs” (AVŚ XIV.2.7) i.e., the areas covered with herbs, rivers, fields and forests are sighted, this *mantra* should be recited. Near a *śmaśāna*, the *mantra* beginning with, “What *pitṛs*” (AVŚ XIV.2.73) should be recited. If the bride sleeps during the journey, she should be woken up with the *mantra* beginning with, “Stay awake” (AVŚ XIV.2.75). When the bridegroom's house is sighted, the bridegroom should recite the *mantra* beginning with, “I cause [the vehicle of the bride] to be viewed” (AVŚ XIV.2.12). On reaching the destination and

having sprinkled the vehicle with the *mantra* beginning with, “[Let] your wave [strike the pegs]” (AVŚ XIV.2.16), the animals should be unyoked.

8.2.3.23 *Grhapraveśa*

The element of *Grhapraveśa* (literally, “entering the house”), comprising the rituals performed at the time of entering the bridegroom’s house are mentioned in a number of vedic ritual texts.

ŚGS I.15.22 and KauśGS I.8.17-18 instructed that when the bride reaches the bridegroom’s house, the bride should recite seven *mantras* (RV X.85.27-33) beginning with, “May happiness here”, omitting the *mantras* already recited. ĀGS I.8.8 prescribed that the bridegroom should recite the *mantra* (X.85.27) beginning with, “May happiness be fated for you here through your progeny” and make her enter the bridegroom’s house.

ĀpGS II.6.8-9 instructed that the bridegroom should spread out a red bull’s hide in the centre of the house with its neck to the east and the hairy side turned upwards with *mantra* from the ĀpMP (I.8.1). Then, he should cause her to recite the next *mantra* from the ĀpMP (I.8.2), while making her enter the house with her right foot first. It instructed that she should not stand on the threshold. HGS I.7.22.6 prescribed that when the bridegroom enters the house with his bride, he should say her, “Cross the threshold with your right foot first; do not stand on the threshold.”

MGS I.13.19-14.1 instructed the couple to enter the bridegroom’s village with cows at sunset or with the permission of a Brāhmaṇ and the bride should enter the bridegroom’s house at the time of evening twilight. MGS I.14.2-5 prescribed that the bride should be made to dismount from the chariot with the *mantra* (MS III.11.8c) and the *maṅgalāni* (auspicious objects, according to the medieval scholiast Aṣṭāvakra, yoghurt and sandalwood paste) should be displayed in the bridegroom’s house. From the cow-pen (the outer portion of the house, where the bride should dismount from the chariot) to the bedroom for the bride, bunches of *ulapa* (*Eleusine indica*) grass should be strewn in an unbroken line and the bride should enter the house by that line with a *mantra* (similar to VSM III.42 and AVŚ VII.60.3).⁶² KGS 28.1-2 also prescribed that the bride should enter through a path strewn with the bunches of *ulapa* grass.

KauśS 77.16-23 prescribed that on entering the bridegroom’s house, the bride should first sprinkle her room with the *mantra* beginning with, “Stand up [from here]” (AVŚ XIV.2.19). Next, the bridegroom should place a stone on a lump of dung of bull with the *mantra*, “I place for you, for the progeny, a pleasant, firm stone on the lap of the earth” (AVŚ XIV.1.47a) and then he should place a leaf on the stone and then dip four *dūrvā* grass tips in clarified butter poured at the middle of the leaf. Then, the bride should be again made to tread on the stone with the hemistich beginning with, “You stand on” (AVŚ XIV.1.47b). The bride and bridegroom should proceed forward with the *mantras* beginning with, “Having auspicious omens, extender [of the houses]” (AVŚ XIV.2.26), “[Let,] what is dear” (AVŚ XIV.1.21), “Do not injure [this female]” (AVŚ XIV.1.63) and “[Let the] Brahmā [be yoked] after” (AVŚ XIV.1.64) at every step and a friend (of the bridegroom) should lead them with a jar filled with water. Next, she should be again led around the sacrificial fire thrice with two *mantras*, the first of which begins with, “[with] no evil sight” (AVŚ XIV.2.17-18) and then she should pay obeisance to the tutelary deities of the house with the *mantras* beginning with, “When [this bride has offered oblations into] the *Gārhapatya* [fire]” (AVŚ XIV.2.20) and “To Sūryā, to the gods” (AVŚ XIV.2.46).⁶³

8.2.3.24 *Grhapraveśanīya homa*

The element of offering oblations into the sacrificial fire by the husband after entering his house was later known as *Grhapraveśanīya homa* (literally, “sacrifice on entering the house”). This is described in several vedic ritual texts.

ŚGS I.16.1-7 prescribed that after entering his house, the husband should make his wife sit down on a bull's hide and while she takes hold of him, he should offer four oblations (of clarified butter) with four *mantras*. Next, he should besmear the eyes of his wife with clarified butter with the *mantra* (RV X.85.44) beginning with, "Have no evil eye." Then, he should touch the ends of her hair with three *mantras* (RV IV.31.1-3) beginning with, "How may us the resplendent one" and having quickly recited four *mantras* and the word "svāhā" at the end, he should pour the remainder of the clarified butter oblations on her head. ŚGS I.16.8-11 and KauṣGS I.10.7-10 mentioned that according to some authority after the *homa*, a boy of good birth should be placed on the lap of the wife, either with a *mantra* beginning with, "Into your womb" (almost similar to RVKh 2.10.1) or silently and the husband should give fruits in joined hands of this boy. It was believed that by performing this element, one can give birth to a male child. Next, ŚGS I.17.1-2 instructed that, the husband and the wife should consume yoghurt together with the *mantra* (RV IV.39.6) beginning with "I praised *Dadhikrāvan*." Then both of them should sit silently till the pole star appears.

ĀGS I.8.9 prescribed the husband to place the nuptial fire properly and spread a bull's hide to the west of it with its neck towards east and its hairy side upwards and offer oblations (of clarified butter) to sacrificial fire with four *mantras* (RV X.85.43-46) while his wife takes hold of him sitting on that hide. Then, with the *mantra* (RV X.85.47) beginning with, "May Viśvedevāḥ, (may Āpa) anoint", he should partake yoghurt and give it to his wife or besmear their chests with the remnants of clarified butter oblations.

JGS I.22 prescribed that after entering the house, the husband should make his wife sit down on a bull's hide with its hairy side turned upwards with the *mantra*, "Here may cows sit down, here horses, here men. Here may also Pūṣaṇ with a thousand sacrificial gifts sit down." Having placed a boy in her lap, he should give the boy *śakloṭās* (literally, "lumps of lotus leaves", sweetmeats) or fruits." After removing the boy from her lap, he should, while his wife holds on to him from behind, offer oblations into the sacrificial fire with eight *mantras*, concluding each *mantra* with the word, "svāhā."⁶⁴

ĀpGS II.6.10-11 prescribed that, on the north-eastern part of the house the husband should perform the rites from putting the wood on fire down to offering of *ājyabhāga* oblations at the beginning. Then, while the wife touches him, the husband should offer the oblations with the *mantras* from the ĀpMP (I.8.3-15). It should be followed by offering oblations with "Jaya" and other *mantras* and performance of the rites down to *pariṣecana*. Then, the newly married couple should sit down on the red bull's skin with the *mantra* from the ĀpMP (I.9.1), the husband to the north. Next, the husband should place on the lap of his wife the son of a female who has only sons and whose children are alive with a *mantra* from the ĀpMP (I.9.2), give fruits to the child with the next *mantra* from the ĀpMP (I.9.3). At the end, he should murmur the next two *mantras* from the ĀpMP (I.9.4-5). Then, he and his wife should observe silence until the stars appear. HGS I.7.22.7-10 prescribed that, on the eastern part of the house the husband should put down the nuptial fire and put wood on it. To the west of the sacrificial fire, he should spread out a red bull's hide in the centre of the house with its neck to the east and the hairy side turned upwards. On that both the husband and the wife should sit down, facing east or north, so that the wife sits behind her husband, with the *mantra*, "Here may cows sit down, here horses, here men. Here may also Pūṣaṇ with a thousand sacrificial gifts sit down." They should sit silently still stars appear. BGS I.5.9 prescribed a similar *mantra* for recitation for sitting on the red bull hide, "May here cows propagate, here horses, here men. Here let there be increase of wealth with a thousand sacrificial gifts." For this element, ĀgGS I.5.4 and BhGS I.18 prescribed a *mantra* almost similar to HGS.

GGGS II.3.2-8 prescribed to perform the sacrifice with the nuptial fire at the house of a Brāhmaṇ in the north-eastern direction from the bride's house, where the newly married couple residing after marriage. A red-bull's hide has been instructed to spread with its neck to the east and the hairy side

turned upwards and the bride should be made sit down on the hide and keep silence until the stars appear. When somebody informs that a star has appeared, the husband should offer six oblations of clarified butter with six *mantras*, the first of which begins with, “In the junction of the lines” (MBR I.3.1-6). After offering the oblations, he should pour the remainder of each oblation over his wife’s head. After the sacrifice, they should and go out of the house to see the pole star. KhādGS I.4.4 prescribed that after the sacrifice, the couple should circumambulate the sacrificial fire, with their right sides turned towards it.

KauśS 78.1-13 prescribed that at the beginning of the rite, a red bull’s hide should be brought with the mantra beginning with, “[Take] this protection, defence” (AVŚ XIV.2.21). With the quarter of the verse, “What hide you spread beneath” (AVŚ XIV.2.22b) should be recited while spreading the hide. Then, the *balbaja* grass should be kept with the quarter of the verse, “What *balbaja* grass [you keep]” (AVŚ XIV.2.22a) and it should be strewn over the hide with the hemistich, “Strew [the *balbaja* grass over the red hide]” (AVŚ XIV.2.23ab). Then the bride should be made to step on the red bull’s hide with the hemistich, “Let [the girl of good progeny, who has found her husband] step on it” (AVŚ XIV.2.22cd) and she should be made to sit down on it with the hemistich, “Sitting down there, [let her, of good progeny, worship this fire]” (AVŚ XIV.2.23cd). The bride should position herself such a way that her lap is in north-south direction. A Brāhman boy with an auspicious name should be made to sit in her lap with the quarter of the verse, “[May this son of yours be of] good primogeniture” (AVŚ XIV.2.24d). Having given an item for enjoyment to the boy, he should be made to get up from the lap with the *mantra* beginning with, “Stay here” (AVŚ XIV.2.25). Next, oblations of clarified butter should be offered into the sacrificial fire with the *mantras* beginning with, “Through that *bhūta* (oblation)” (AVŚ VI.78.1); “In the beginning, [they carried Sūryā] for you” (AVŚ XIV.2.1); “[The sky and the earth are] beautiful” (AVŚ XIV.2.45) and the *mantras*, “Agni, who knows the people gave this wife to me.” (AVP I.34.1); “Soma, who knows the wealth, gave this wife to me.” (AVP I.34.2); “Pūṣaṇ, who knows relatives, gave this wife to me.” (AVP I.34.3); “Indra, the mightiest one, gave this wife to me.” (AVP I.34.4); “To Agni, who knows the people; *svāhā*.” (AVP I.35.1); “To Soma, who knows the wealth; *svāhā*.” (AVP I.35.2); “To Pūṣaṇ, who knows the relatives; *svāhā*.” (AVP I.35.3) and “To Indra, the mightiest; *svāhā*.” (AVP I.35.4). It should be followed by the offering the oblations with two *sūktas* beginning with, “[I take the name of the] arriving” (AVŚ VI.82.1-3) and “Savitṛ, is [overlord of] procreations” (AVŚ V.24.1-17). Then, the remnants of the oblations should be poured on the heads of the bride and the bridegroom. Next, a jar filled with water should be brought and the water should be poured into the folded hands of the bride and the bridegroom with the *mantra* beginning with, “[The sky and the earth are] beautiful” (AVŚ XIV.2.45).

8.2.3.25 *Trirātravrata*

Several vedic ritual texts prescribed certain *vrata* (vows) for the newly married couple for the first three days after marriage. These vows were later known as *Trirātravrata* (literally, “vows for the (first) three nights”). PGS I.8.21 prescribed that, the husband and wife should not take any food that has any alkali (spices) or salt and should sleep (together) on the ground for three nights after marriage. They should refrain from sexual intercourse for the period of one year, twelve nights, six nights, or at least three nights. GGS II.3.15 and JGS I.22 also prescribed the similar vows for three nights after marriage. KGS 30.1-2 prescribed that the couple should sleep together and abstain from sexual intercourse for the period of one year, twelve nights, six nights, three nights or at least one night. MGS I.14.14 and VārGS 15.24 also prescribed that the couple should abstain from sexual intercourse for the period of one year, twelve nights, three nights or at least one night. ĀGS I.8.10-11, HGS I.7.23.10 and ĀgGS I.6.3 added that the couple should wear ornaments during this period. KhādGS I.4.9, in addition, prohibited drinking milk during this period. ĀGS I.8.12 also mentioned that in the opinion of some authority, if the couple refrains from sexual intercourse for one year, a

ṛṣi (sage) will be born to them. ŚGS I.17.5-10 additionally prescribed that the couple should eat together boiled rice and yoghurt and should serve the nuptial fire every morning and evening. If the wife desires a male child, she should offer the first oblation to the nuptial fire with the *mantra*, “Both Mitra and Varuṇa are males. The Aśvins are males. Indra and Agni are also males. May a male child grow in me” (similar to MBr I.4.8). It also prescribed that the couple should not leave their residence to partake any journey for ten days.⁶⁵ Both ĀpGS III.8.8-9 and BGS I.5.16-17 in addition, prescribed to place a staff of *udumbara* wood (ĀpGS did not mention the name of the wood) anointed with perfumes and wrapped around with a garment or a thread between the sleeping places of the husband and the wife. This staff of *udumbara* wood was believed as the symbolic representation of Viśvāvasu, the king of the *Gandharvas*.⁶⁶

The description of a rite similar to *Trirātravrata* is also found in the *Kāmasūtra* III.2.1. According to this text, for the first three nights after marriage, the couple should sleep on the ground, remain sexually continent, and eat their food that has no alkali (spices) or salt. For the next seven days, they should bathe ceremoniously to the sounds of musical instruments, should dress well, dine together, attend performances and pay their respects to their relatives. This text mentioned that all of this applies to all *varṇas*.⁶⁷

In the early centuries of the Common Era, when the child marriage became rampant, these ancient vows lost their significance and disappeared from the texts composed. Later, probably influenced by the contemporary social context, the *Brahmapurāṇa* (cited in *Gṛhasthakāṇḍa* of *Kṛtyakalpataru*) stated that, if the bride is eight years of age and the bridegroom is twenty-four, then the period of *brahmacarya* (abstinence from sex) after marriage should be at least one year. If the bride is twelve and the bridegroom is thirty, then the period should be reduced to twelve days. If the bride is sixteen and the bridegroom is thirty-two, the period should be further reduced to six days and if the bride is twenty, the period should be only three days (as prescribed by the ancient texts). For a bride of age above twenty years, it should be only one day and night.⁶⁸

8.2.3.26 *Sthāgara Alamkāra*

ĀgGS I.7.1 described a post-nuptial rite, *Sthāgara Alamkāra* (literally, “adorning with a fragrant powder), which has no parallel in any other vedic ritual text. An early reference to the rite of *Sthāgara Alamkāra* is found in TBr II.3.10.4 in connection with the explanation of the *hotṛmantras*. The *mantras* used in this rite are can be traced to MS I.9.1, but there these *mantras* were used in the rite for placing the bricks named after the *hotṛmantras* for the *caturhotraciti* altar.⁶⁹ According to the ĀgGS, this rite should be performed in the next morning after the marriage. This text prescribed a mirror, an ointment, an *ahata* cloth, all types of fragrant substances, rice-grains, upper and lower millstone as the necessary items required for the performance of the rite. Before the commencement of this rite, the mother of the bride or alternately her father or her brother should besmear the *sthaṇḍila* of quadrangular shape, having the dimensions of a *gocarma* (3.34 sq. m) with cow-dung, consecrate it and scratch five lines. The newly married couple, having clothed themselves in a clean, white and dry garments and well-washed hands and feet, should seep water at the beginning. Then, holding *darbha* grass in their hands, they should sit on the western side of the *sthaṇḍila*. The officiating priest should scatter the rice-grains on the eastern side, place the upper and the lower millstone and cover them with an *ahata* cloth. Having worshipped the deities with perfumes, flowers, incense and lamp, the officiating priest, with barley-corns, un-husked grains and rice-grains, should murmur the *daśahotṛmantras* from the east of the *sthaṇḍila*; then he should murmur the *caturhotṛmantras* from the south of the *sthaṇḍila*, followed by the murmuring of *pañcahotṛmantras* from the west of the *sthaṇḍila*, the *ṣaḍhotṛmantras* from the north of the *sthaṇḍila* and finally the *saptahotṛmantras* above the *sthaṇḍila*. At the same time, the sister of the bridegroom should sit to the west of the *sthaṇḍila*, ground all fragrant substances with the upper and

the lower millstones, offer it to the deities, and anoint them with the powder prepared by grounding the fragrant substances. Then, the mother of the bride should make the couple look at the mirror; adorn first her daughter and then the bridegroom with the remainder of the fragrant powder with certain *mantras* from the TĀ. According to this text, on this occasion, whatever the females prescribe that should only be done.⁷⁰

8.2.3.27 *Sthālīpākahoma* and *Samaśana*

GGs II.3.18-22 prescribed that on the next day after reaching home, the husband should prepare a *sthālīpāka* (mess of cooked food) and he should offer it to Agni, Prajāpati, Viśvedevāḥ and Anumati. This element was later known as *Samaśanīya Sthālīpākahoma* or *Samaśanīya Caruhoma* (literally, “the sacrifice of boiled rice [prepared] for *Samaśana*”). Then, he should take that food out of the vessel. Having spread the food out on another vessel, he should touch a part of it with three *mantras* from the MBr (I.3.8-10). The

The emotive *mantras* from the MBr prescribed for recitation during the element of *Samaśana* (eating food together):

*annapāśena maṇinā prānasūtreṇa pṛśninā |
badhnāmi satyagranthinā manaśca hṛdayaṃ ca te ||I.3.8*

“With a bead set on the string of food, with the thread of breath which is speckled, I bind your mind and heart with the knot of truth.”

*yadetat hṛdayaṃ tava tadastu hṛdayaṃ mama |
yadidaṃ hṛdayaṃ mama tadastu hṛdayaṃ tava ||I.3.9*

“May that heart of yours be mine and may this heart of mine be yours.”

he should eat a part of it and give the rest to his wife to eat. This element was later known as *Samaśana* (literally, eating together”). This text prescribed a cow as the fee for the complete rite. KhādGS I.4.10-11 prescribed the element of *Samaśana* same as the GGS. KauśS 78.14-16 prescribed for *Samaśana* (eating together) of the juices along with the *sthālīpāka* (cooked mess of food) with the recitation of a *sūkta* beginning with, “Through that *bhūta* (oblation)” (AVŚ VI.78.1-3) followed by offering of a handful of barley mixed with clarified butter to the fire. KGS 29.1 also described this element. It prescribed that the husband should prepare a *sthālīpāka* silently and should offer its oblations to Agni and Prajāpati. Then, the couple should eat the remnants of the oblations with certain *mantras*. MGS 14.11-13 prescribed that after the *homa*, the husband should thrice eat the remnants of the sacrificial food mixed with clarified butter and yoghurt with a *mantra*. The rest of the food should be consumed by the wife silently.⁷¹

This rite is described in ĀpGS III.7.1-16, HGS I.7.23.2-6 and BhGS I.18 as *Āgneya Sthālīpāka* (literally, “oblations of the cooked food for Agni”). According to the ĀpGS and HGS, the wife should husk rice grains for preparing the *sthālīpāka* to be offered to Agni. When the *sthālīpāka* is cooked and its oblations have been offered to Agni, a (learned, according to the HGS) Brāhmaṇ revered by the husband should be served with the remainder of the oblations along with clarified butter. At the end of the rite, a bull should be gifted to that Brāhmaṇ.

VkhGS III.5 also described this rite as it *Āgneya Sthālīpāka*. It prescribed the rite as a part of the *Caturthīvāsa* (literally, “the ceremony of the fourth day”), the rituals performed on the fourth day when the bridegroom returns to his house with his bride. According to this text, at the beginning of this rite, the husband should touch the *sthalī* (earthen pot) to be used for cooking the *sthālīpāka* with a *mantra*. Then, he should throw the unhusked and winnowed rice into the pot with another *mantra* and the mess should be cooked by the wife with certain *mantras*. Next, the husband should sprinkle the mess of boiled rice with clarified butter, remove it from fire in the northern direction, and having strewn grass around the fire and fuel sticks laid on it, he should murmur a *mantra* to invoke Agni Sviṣṭakṛt. Then, he should sacrifice a part of the mess with the *mantra* addressed to Agni Sviṣṭakṛt. At the end, he should satiate a *śrotriya* (learned Brāhmaṇ) with the remaining part of the mess and gift him a bull.⁷²

8.2.4 Marriage rite in the commentaries and the *nibandhas*

The process of codification of the contemporary customary practices did not end with the composition of the vedic ritual texts. It continued with the additional codifications made by their *pariśiṣṭa* (supplementary) texts, which were composed until the early medieval period. Then, the *paddhati*, *prayoga* and independent *nibandha* treatises of the medieval period further codified a large number of elements, which were not mentioned in either the vedic ritual texts or their *pariśiṣṭas*. Still, most of the medieval authors of the commentaries and the *nibandhas* admitted the existence of a significant number of elements of the marriage rite, which were not yet codified and based on local customary practices.

Nārāyaṇabhaṭṭa in his *Prayogarātna* (second half of the 16th century) mentioned that although he had described the marriage rites (according to the vedic ritual texts) but it should be followed according to one's own *deśācāra* (customary practices). His grandson Kamalākarabhaṭṭa also said in his NirS, that the customs prevalent in one's own province and village should be relied upon in the matter of *Vivāha* rite. Anantadeva in his *Samskārakaustubha* (2nd half of the 17th century) had informed that many people ignored the express rules of the ritual texts and followed the *deśācāra*.⁷³ Sudarśanācārya (late 15th century) while explaining ĀpGS I.2.15 in his *Tātparyadarśana*, divided the *āvṛtaḥ* (elements of the marriage rites which are not codified by the vedic ritual texts) into two groups: the elements like *Grahapūja*, *Aṅkurāropana* and *Pratisarabandha* which should be performed with the (vedic) *mantras* and the elements like *Nāgabali*, *Yakṣabali* and *Indrāṅgipūjā* which should be performed without any (vedic) *mantra*. He also mentioned that these additional elements should not be performed by everybody and everywhere. These elements should be performed according to the prevalent customs of the *janapada* (province), *varṇa* (social group) and *kula* (family) of both the bride and the bridegroom.⁷⁴

The medieval *nibandha* texts also added the detailed calculations derived from the astrological texts to ascertain the auspicious time for the marriage. The auspicious day and time are dependent on several factors including the horoscopes of the bride and the bridegroom.

An idea of the contemporary perception about the order of the elements of the marriage rite in the medieval period in the eastern India can be derived from the description of marriage in an early Maithili work, *Varṇa Ratnākara* (1324) of Jyotirīśvara Ṭhākura. According to this text, the order is *Yajñopavītadāna*, *Madhuparka*, *Kanyādāna*, *Vaivāhikahoma*, *Lājahoma*, *Pāṅgrahaṇa*, *Aśmārohaṇa*, *Agni Pradakṣiṇa*, *Saptapadākramana* (*Saptapadī*) and *Sindūradāna*.⁷⁵

8.2.4.1 Prenuptial rites

8.2.4.1.1 *Maṅḍapakaraṇa*

The prenuptial rite of *Maṅḍapakaraṇa* or *Maṅḍapanirmāṇa* (literally, “the erection of the [nuptial] canopy”) or *Maṅḍapapraṭiṣṭhā* is described in details in several late medieval digests. SmP cited the verses of Vasiṣṭha, which prescribed to erect a canopy for marriage of 8 *hasta* x 8 *hasta* or 12 *hasta* x 12 *hasta* with four gateways with *torāṇas* (decorative arches). It instructed that the *vedi* (platform) for the performance of the marriage should be placed inside it.⁷⁶

8.2.4.1.2 *Mṛdāharaṇa*

Early references on *Mṛdāharaṇa* (literally, “bringing some earth”), a prenuptial rite performed at the bride's residence is found only in the late medieval *paddhati* texts only. According to the *Jyotiribandha* quoted by Gadādhara, on the ninth, seventh, fifth or third day before marriage, in an auspicious moment with music and dance, one should go to the northern or eastern direction of bride's house to fetch the earth for growing sprouts in a pot of clay or a basket of bamboo. These sprouts were later used for decoration during marriage.⁷⁷ This rite was undoubtedly originated from

a folk fertility ritual.

8.2.4.1.3 *Ghaṭikāsthāpana*

The medieval scholiast Gadādhara, while explaining PGS I.4-I.8, mentioned about the rite of *Ghaṭisthāpana*, a rite of installation of a *ghaṭikāyantra* (sinking bowl type water clock) on the day of marriage to monitor the auspicious time for marriage. It should be set up with a *mantra*, “You are the mouth of all *yantras* (mechanisms); [you are] created by Brahmā at the beginning. You are the measurer of the *bhāva* (good relationship) and *abhāva* (lack of good relationship) between the husband and the wife.”⁷⁸ SṃR and NirS described this rite as *Lagnaghaṭisthāpana*. According to these texts, at first, the place for installation of the *ghaṭikā* should be smeared with cow-dung and two earthen vessels, tied together with the threads dyed with saffron should be placed there. The vessels should be filled up with clear water. After the water becomes standstill, the *ghaṭikāyantra* should be placed in it. The *ghaṭikāyantra* should be set up in the morning after seeing the sun's disk. According to these texts, at the time of placing the *ghaṭikāyantra* in water, a *mantra* almost similar to one mentioned by Gadādhara, which eulogises the *ghaṭikā* as the most excellent among all *yantras* (mechanisms) should be recited.⁷⁹

8.2.4.1.4 *Tailaharidrāropana*

The rite of *Tailaharidrāropana* (literally, “applying oil and turmeric powder”) or *Haridrālepana* is another prenuptial rite originated from folk fertility ritual, which was incorporated in the medieval *nibandha* texts. Early descriptions of this rite of applying powder of turmeric ground root to the bridegroom's body from what is left after applying to the bride's body is only found in the late medieval texts, *Dharmasindhu* (1790) and *Samśkārakaustubha* (2nd half of the 17th century).⁸⁰ *Dharmasindhu* prescribed to perform this element either on the marriage day or a day before.

Since pre-modern period, similar prenuptial rites are being performed as *Tel Haldi* or *Tel Bān* in Northern and Central India and *Gāye Holud* ⁸¹ in Bengal.

8.2.4.1.4 *Simāntapūjana*

The rite of *Simāntapūjana* (literally, “to worship at the boundary”) is a late codified prenuptial rite mentioned only in very late *nibandha* texts like *Dharmasindhu* and *Samśkārakaustubha*. This rite, in essence, is the rite of honouring the bridegroom on arrival of the marriage procession at the bride's village. According to *Dharmasindhu*, the father of the bride should go to the bridegroom's house before marriage and having worshipped Gaṇeśa and Varuṇa, should wash the feet of the bridegroom, honour him with clothes, fragrant substances and flowers and give him milk or some other food items according to the custom. After *Simāntapūjana*, the bridegroom should ride the vehicle with auspicious music for the journey to the bride's house.⁸²

8.2.4.2 The elements of *Vivāha*

The medieval *paddhati* and *nibandha* texts provided elaborate descriptions of the initial elements of *Madhuparka* (evolved from the *argha* reception of the vedic ritual texts) and *Kanyādāna*, which were most probably codified in the present form in the early medieval period only. These texts also codified several elements of popular origin after *Kanyādāna* and before *Vivāhahoma*, which are still being performed in different part of India.

In the descriptions of *Kanyādāna*, the medieval *nibandha* texts mostly cited the *mantras* from the *Purānas* for the recitation of the father of the bride during its performance. SṃP prescribed a *mantra* from the *Vāyupurāṇa* should be recited by the father of the bride, “I give away this bride adorned with gold ornaments to you Viṣṇu, with the desire to conquer the *brahma loka* (world of Brahmā). Viśvambhara (Śiva), all living beings and the gods are witness to the fact that I am giving away this bride for the salvation of the *pitṛs*.”⁸³

Early references to some of the elements, namely, *Ārdrākṣataropana* (literally, “showering wet unbroken (rice grain)”), *Tilakakaraṇa* (literally, “making a mark on the forehead”), garlanding each other with *sraja* (wreath), *Kautukasūtrabandhana* (literally, “tying the marriage thread”) and *Uttariyaprāntabandhana* (literally, “tying the ends of the upper garments”) are found in an early medieval vedic ritual text, *ĀGP* (of Nārāyaṇa) I.24, which prescribed to perform them after the elements of *Kanyādāna* and *Parasparāvalokana* (literally, “looking at each other”).

A late medieval *paddhati* text of Maṇḍalika mentioned the additional elements of *Kaṅkaṇabandhana* (literally, “tying the (protective) thread”), *Ārdrākṣataropana*, *Tilakakaraṇa* and *Maṅgalasūtrabandhana* (literally, “tying an auspicious string”) after *Kanyādāna* before *Vivāhahoma*.⁸⁴ According to *SṃR*, the elements should be performed next to *Kanyādāna* are *Sūtraveṣṭana* (literally, “encircling with threads”), *Kaṅkaṇabandhana*, *Ārdrākṣataropana*, *Tilakakaraṇa* and *Maṅgalasūtrabandhana*. The elements of *Ārdrākṣataropana* and *Kaṅkaṇabandhana* are found in the late medieval text, *SṃP* also.

8.2.4.2.1 *Sūtraveṣṭana* and *Kaṅkaṇabandhana*

An early reference to an element of tying threads on the wrists of the bridegroom is found in *Raghuvamśa* VIII.1, which mentioned about wearing *kautuka* (the marriage thread) by king Aja. *Grhasthakāṇḍa* of *Kṛtyakalpataru*, while explaining a verse of Kaśyapa, mentioned that *Kautukamaṅgala* (the early name of this element) and *Kaṅkaṇabandhana* are the same element of the marriage rite. The descriptions of the elements of *Sūtraveṣṭana* (literally, “encircling with threads”) and *Kaṅkaṇabandhana* (literally “tying the threads”) are found in several medieval digests. In *SmC*, the rite of *Kaṅkaṇabandhana* is mentioned as an example of the *ācāras* (customary practices).⁸⁵

SṃR, in its description of these two elements, cited the verses from the *Smṛtisamgraha*, which instructed that, the priest should take two white threads, dipped in the milk and make three strands. Starting from the northeast direction, he should encircle the bride and the bridegroom around their necks and waists four or five times with these strands of threads without tearing them. Then, the thread which has been wound around their necks should be pulled down (over their feet), joined together with a black woollen thread dyed red with *kuṅkuma* and along with a piece of *rajani* (black turmeric) it should be tied by the bridegroom tightly on the left wrist of the bride with the *mantra* beginning with, “*Nīlaloḥita* (blue and red)” (RV X.85.28). The thread which has been wound around the waists should be drawn up over their heads, joined together with a similar black woollen thread dyed red with *kuṅkuma* and along with a piece of *rajani* (black turmeric), it should be tied by the bride on the right wrist of the bridegroom either with a *mantra* or silently.⁸⁶ The first element of encircling the couple with the threads is known as *Sūtraveṣṭana* and the second element of tying threads on the wrists of the bride and the bridegroom is known as *Kaṅkaṇabandhana* or *Kautukabandhana*. The element of *Sūtraveṣṭana* is described in *Prayogaratna* also.

8.2.4.2.3 *Ārdrākṣatāropana* and *Tilakakaraṇa*

An early description of the element of *Ārdrākṣatāropana* is also found in *Raghuvamśa* VII.28. While describing a royal marriage rite, it mentioned that after the element of *Lājavisarga*, both the royal bride and the bridegroom sat on the golden seats and wet unhusked rice grains were applied on their forehead first by the *snātakas*, then by the king and his relatives and finally by the females whose husband and children are alive.⁸⁷ In *Kumārasambhava* VII.88, this element is mentioned as a customary practice, not a codified one. In this narrative, Śiva and Umā, after *Dhruvadarśana*, sat on the golden seats placed on a quadrangular platform while this element was performed. The early medieval texts like *ĀGP* (of Nārāyaṇa) I.24 and *Laghu-Āś* XV.24-29 also described this element of *Ārdrākṣatāropana*.

SmR prescribed to perform *Ādrākṣatāropana* next to *Kañkaṇabandhana*. This text described that in a vessel of some metal like silver, a little milk should be poured and clarified butter should be sprinkled over and unhusked wet rice grains should be poured therein. Then, the bridegroom should apply milk and clarified butter to the joined hands of the bride twice and then he should thrice place unhusked rice grains in the joined hands of the bride so that her folded hands became filled up and twice sprinkle clarified butter over her joined hands. Some other person should do the same with the joined hands of the bridegroom and the father of the bride should place a piece of gold on the joined hands of the both. Then the bridegroom should place his joined hands on those of the bride and the father of the bride should recite a *mantra* and raise her up. She then should pour the rice grains over the head of the bridegroom who should follow her in the same way. This should be done thrice by each and then once more by the bride only. Next, the priest should sprinkle water with an *udumbara* twig together with *dūrvā* grass after reciting the *mantras* (RV X.9.1-3). Next, both of them should make a *tilaka* mark on each other's forehead and garland each other.⁸⁸

8.2.4.2.4 Maṅgalasūtrabandhana

Earliest reference of *Maṅgalasūtrabandhana* is found in a late *dharmaśāstra* text, the *Śaunakasmṛti*. Another late *dharmaśāstra* text, the Laghu-Āś XV.33 also prescribed to perform this element and mentioned a *mantra* beginning with, “*Māṅgalyaṃ tantunānena*” to be recited by the bridegroom while tying the string with jewels around the neck of the bride. This same *mantra* is also mentioned by SmR, which instructed for tying the *maṅgalasūtra* after garlanding each other.⁸⁹ Gadādhara, while explaining PGS I.8, stated that the bride should wear a *maṅgalasūtra*.⁹⁰ Wearing a *maṅgalasūtra* (a string with golden and other beads) around the neck symbolizes completion of marriage for a Hindu female in a large part of present day South Asia, similar to the wedding rings worn by the females in some cultures. Mary McGee in her article, *Samskāra* (2004) described about the present form of this element as:⁹¹

Today the rite of *maṅgalasūtra-dāna* or *tali-bandhana*, tying the thread of auspiciousness, is one of the more significant rites during the marriage *samskāra*. Styles of *maṅgalasūtras* vary among class, kin, regional, economic, and religious groups: the *sūtra* may be as simple as a cotton thread soaked in turmeric until it attains a golden hue, as ornate as a solid gold necklace, or as intricate as a black string threaded with heirloom gold ornaments and black beads.

8.2.4.2.5 Uttariyaprāntabandhana

One of the early descriptions of the element of *Uttariyaprāntabandhana* (literally, “tying the ends of the upper garments”) is found in the ĀGP (of Nārāyaṇa) I.24. It prescribed that following the performance of the elements of *Ādrākṣataropana*, *Tilakakarana*, garlanding each other and *Kautukasūtrabandhana*, five *pūgīphalas* (areca nuts) should be tied on to the end of the upper garment of both the bride and the bridegroom and these ends of the upper garments should be tied into a knot. This passage of ĀGP (of Nārāyaṇa) is cited in SmP almost verbatim.⁹²

Gadādhara, while explaining PGS I.8.11, stated that the elements of marriage rite like tying the ends of the garments of the bride and the bridegroom, tying of *maṅgalasūtra*, wearing garlands by the bride and the bridegroom, touching the cup of a *nyagrodha* tree, touching the nose of the bridegroom on arrival, besmearing the chest of the bridegroom with yoghurt, which are not prescribed in the *sūtras* (PGS), but the elderly females of the family remember, should be performed according to the *deśācāra* (local customary practices).⁹³

8.2.4.2.6 Mananmāl

An early description of the element of *Mananmāl*, perhaps in vogue in Kashmir valley since the early medieval period is provided by the medieval scholiast Brāhmaṇabala on KGS 25.7. He mentioned this element as one of the contemporary *ācārikāṇi* (popular elements) followed in

Kashmir. Brāhmaṇabala stated that, the mother of the bride along with the others, who are not widows, ties a garland known as *maṅgalyamālā* (literally, “auspicious garland”, later known as *Mananmāl* in Kashmiri) first on the forehead of the bridegroom and then on the forehead of the bride. Having tied the garland on the forehead of the bridegroom, she worships him by depositing flowers on seven parts of his body, first on the right side and then on the left side with seven *mantras*. She worships his right foot as of Maheśvara, left foot as of Tryambaka, right knee as of Īśvara, left knee as of Śiva, right shoulder as of Bhava, left shoulder as of Śarva and the head as of Rudra. Similarly, having tied the garland on the forehead of the bride, she worships her by depositing flowers on seven parts of her body, first on the left side and then on the right side with seven *mantras*. She worships her left foot as of Gaurī, right foot as of Gāyatrī, left knee as of Sāvitrī, right knee as of Sarasvatī, left shoulder as of Umā, right shoulder as of Kāntā and the head as of Bhavānī. A *mantra* beginning with, “With flowers” (KāS XVI.13) is also recited on this occasion.⁹⁴ This element with the further addition of the worship of goddess Lakṣmī is still performed during the marriage of the Pandits (a Brāhmaṇ social group) of Jammu and Kashmir but the garland has now been replaced by the golden thread.

8.2.4.3 Elements after *Vivāhahoma*

The medieval digests codified a number of additional elements after *Vivāhahoma*, which include *Sindūradāna* (literally, “gifting vermilion”), *Airiṇḍāna* (literally, “gifting bamboo casket”), *Devakotthāpana* (literally, “removal of the deities from the shrine”) and *Maṅḍapodvāsana* (literally, “the dismantling of the [nuptial] canopy”), which are not found in the vedic ritual texts.

8.2.4.3.1 *Sindūradāna*

The element of *Sindūradāna* is one of the most significant rites of the Hindu marriage rite in Northern and Eastern India since late medieval period. *Sindūra* (vermilion) mark on the forehead symbolizes completion of marriage for a Hindu female in present day Northern and Eastern India. But this element is not found in the vedic ritual texts. Harihara in his *bhāṣya* of the PGS prescribed to perform this rite next to *Abhimantraṇa* element. This text said that after *Abhimantraṇa*, the bride should sit on the left of the groom and the groom should besmear *sīmanta* (forehead) of the bride with vermilion.⁹⁵ According to Gadādhara, another late medieval scholiast of the PGS, *Sindūradāna* is performed according to the customary practices. This element, since pre-modern period is known in Northern India as *Sumaṅgalī* and this name was most probably derived from the first *pada* of RV X.85.33, recited on this occasion.⁹⁶

Gosvāmī Tulsīdāsa in his *Rāmacaritamānasa* (Bālakāṇḍa 325.4) mentioned that after completion of the circumambulation of the sacrificial fire and all marriage rites including the ceremonial gifts, Rāma applied *Sindūra* on the forehead of Sītā.

8.2.4.3.2 *Airiṇḍāna*

Perhaps, the earliest description of this element is found in Laghu-Āś XV.64, where it is described as *Vaṃśadāna* and prescribed to perform in the night of the fourth day after worshipping Umā and Maheśvara. The element of *Airiṇḍāna* (literally, “gift of wicker-work basket”) is found in several late medieval digests like *Prayogarātna* of Nārāyaṇabhaṭṭa and SṃR. These texts prescribed that mother of the bridegroom should be presented with several gifts in a large wicker-work basket with the illuminated lamps and request her and the other relatives of the bridegroom to treat the bride affectionately. This rite should be performed just before the bride leaving her house for the journey to the bridegroom’s house.⁹⁷ According to SṃR, this element should be performed in the night of the fourth day from the *Maṅḍapapratīṣṭhā* or *Pāṇigrahaṇa*. If this particular night is found as *bhadrā* (inauspicious half of a *tithi*) or inauspicious due to any other reason, it may be performed in the daytime. At the beginning, the parents of the bridegroom and the guests related to the

bridegroom should be honoured with perfumes, flowers and garments. Then, bamboo basket known as the *Airiṇī* should be filled with the garments, fruits, betel leaves, cooked food, eleven coconut shells and the pieces of gold. After worshipping Umā and Maheśvara, the bamboo casket with the illuminated lamps should be gifted to the mother of the bridegroom or another relative having equal status as her.⁹⁸

8.2.5 *Sāt phere*: a modern element

A new element combining the ancient elements of *Agni Pariṇayana* and *Saptapadī* is found being performed in northern India, probably since the pre-modern period. This element of circumambulation of the sacrificial fire for seven times (instead of four times as prescribed in the ancient texts) by the bride and bridegroom, with the recitation of the *mantras* for the *Saptapadī*, is popularly known as *Sāt phere* (literally, “seven circumambulations”). Since the mid-20th century, this element has been popularized by the Bollywood movies as the most significant element of the marriage rite.

Table 6: Major elements of the marriage rite in the *nibandhas*

Text	Elements			
Prayogaratna (16th century, 2nd half)	1 Tailaharidrāropana	6 Madhuparka	11 Sūtraveṣṭana	16 Maṅgalasūtra bandhana
	2 Nāndīśrāddha	7 Gaurīharapūjana	12 Sūtravandhana	17 Vivāhahoma
	3 Grahayajña	8 Kanyādānīya jalaśuddhi	13 Akṣataropana	18 Ḡhapraveśanīya homa
	4 Maṅḍapadevatā pratiṣṭhā	9 Kanyādāna	14 Tilakakaraṇa	19 Airiṇīdāna
	5 Vadhūḡrhagamana	10 Udaka abhimantrana	15 Mālāropana	
Dharmasindhu (1790)	1 Tailaharidrāropana	6 Ganapatipūjana	11 Lagnaghaṭī sthāpana	16 Vivāhahoma
	2 Maṅgalasnāna	7 Grahayajña	12 Madhuparka	17 Ḡhapraveśanīya homa
	3 Mātṛkāpūjana	8 Svastivācana	13 Paṭadhāraṇa	18 Airiṇīdāna
	4 Nāndīśrāddha	9 Sīmāntapūjana	14 Akṣataropana	19 Maṅḍapodvāsana
	5 Maṅḍapadevatā sthāpana	10 Gaurīharapūjana	15 Kanyādāna	

Chapter 9

Funeral rites

Horror of death is a universal phenomenon across every ancient culture in the world. Like every ancient culture, the obsequies in Hinduism are also originated from it. Being the rites of passage in nature, the Hindu funerary rites emphasise on the temporary separation of the family members of the deceased from the social context due to the ritual pollution caused by the death and their subsequent reintegration after ritual purification; smoothening of the journey of the subtle body of the deceased to its destination leaving the family in peace and finally, the ritual incorporation of the subtle body of the deceased in the realm of the ancestors.

The textual sources betray a very complex evolution of the funerary rites in South Asia in the last three millenniums with the continuous changes in eschatology from the period of composition of the early vedic texts till the period when the late *Purāṇa* texts took their present shapes. The actual performances of the Hindu funeral rites in the present-day South Asia also vary to some extent, first regionally and then depending on the social group to which the deceased belong.

9.1 Descriptions in the vedic texts

Early descriptions of the funeral rites and eschatology can be traced in RV X.14.1-16, 15.1-14, 16.1-14, 17.3-6 and 18.1-14 and AVŚ XVIII.1.1-61, 2.1-60, 3.1-73 and 4.1-89. From the verses describing the rites in these texts, the principal rites can be identified. According to Pandey (1969),¹ the rites included washing and dressing of the corpse, carrying the corpse in a bullock cart to the cremation ground, piling up of the funeral pyre, collecting the charred bones and their burial in a tumulus and communal bathing after cremation. In the late *Brāhmaṇa* texts, both the cremation and burial rites are described in details, but only for a sacrificer. The *mantras* from the sixth *prapāṭhaka* of the TĀ, an *āranyaka* text were utilized in several vedic ritual texts for recitation during the funeral rites.

9.1.1 Cremation rite

9.1.1.1 Description in the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa*

A detailed and perhaps the earliest systematic description of the cremation rite for a person died in the midst of the performance of a sacrifice is found in ŚBM XII.5.2.1-15. The narration in this text began with a more ancient customary practice, mentioned as prescribed by an ancient authority on rituals, Nāka Maudgalya. According to this text, Nāka Maudgalya instructed that before his death, two sacrificial fires should be taken out by a churning stick by the *yajamāna* (sacrificer) and a new fire should be kindled by him at the place designated for his cremation. He should continue his *agnihotra* sacrifice at the new place with the new sacrificial fire till his death. After his death, a pile should be built at the same place and he should be cremated with the same sacrificial fire. The ŚBM, however, prescribed a different practice, which may be the contemporary one. According to this text, three pots should be prepared by putting cow-dung or straw inside it and then three sacrificial fires should be placed separately in them. Next, this text described the (probably contemporary) practice of taking out the faeces from the intestine of the corpse, which, according to the ŚBM is guided by the belief that if a deceased is cremated with his faeces inside his body, he will be re-born as a jackal. But the ŚBM did not approve this practice relying on another belief that if it is done so, then the family of the deceased will starve. Instead, it prescribed to clean the corpse and anoint it with clarified butter to make it sacrificially pure. Next, it prescribed that the seven pieces of gold should be placed on the seven seats of the vital air (two eyes, two ears, two nostrils and mouth). Then, a funeral pile should be prepared and a black antelope skin to be placed on it with the hairy side upwards and the neck part towards east. The corpse should be laid down on it

and the sacrificial implements should be placed on the corpse. It prescribed to place the *juhū* (small spoon made of *palāśa* wood) filled with clarified butter and the *sphya* (sword made of *khadira* wood) on the right hand of the corpse, the *upabhṛt* (small spoon made of *aśvattha* wood) on the left hand and the *dhruvā* (big wooden ladle) on the chest. The *agnihotrahavaṇī* (wooden spoon with long handle) is to be placed on the mouth, two *sruvas* (small dipping spoons made of *khadira* wood) are to be placed on the nostrils and two *prāśitraharaṇas* (wooden dishes, circular or square in shape) are to be placed near the ears. The *camasa* (cup made of *nyagrodha* wood, square in shape) used for *praṇītāpraṇayana* (fetching purified water) is to be placed on the head. Two *śūrpa*s (winnowing baskets) are to be placed on the sides, the *pātrī* (wooden vessel) used as *samavattadhānī* (holding the limbs of the sacrificial victim) filled with *pr̥ṣadājya* (clarified butter mixed with curdled milk) is to be placed on the abdomen. The *śamyā* (yoke pin made of *khadira* wood) is to be placed on the penis. Two *vṛṣāravas* (striking stone for the upper and the lower millstones) are to be placed on the scrotum and the *ulūkhala* (wooden mortar) and the *musala* (wooden pestle) should be placed on his back. Other sacrificial vessels should be placed between the thighs. Then all three sacrificial fires should be lit. This text mentioned about the contemporary customary practice of gifting earthen and stone vessels to the Brāhmaṇs, but it disapproved the practice as it was of opinion that one who accepts them becomes equal to the remover of the corpse. Instead, it instructed to throw the vessels in to the water. It instructed that, while the corpse is burning, the son of the deceased or his brother or any other Brāhmaṇ should offer the oblations into the fire with the *mantra*, “You [Agni] are born from of this [man], let him again be born from you; for this so and so (name of the deceased) be in the *svarga loka* (heavenly world); *svāhā*.” (VSM XXXV.22). Then everybody should leave the place without looking back and touch water.²

9.1.1.2 Description in the *Jaiminīyabrāhmaṇa*

A nearly similar description of cremation rite is found in JBr I.46-49. According to this text, as soon as the sacrificer has fallen ill, he should find out a suitable spot on a level ground and churn his sacrificial fire there. Even if this ritual transfer of fire had not taken place, then, after the death of the sacrificer, his corpse should be taken to the spot selected by him. The two fires (the *Gārhapatya* and the *Āhavanīya*) should be placed into two separate pots and an *ulmuka* (firebrand) to be seized from the *Anvāhāryapacana* fire (in which the rice for the priests are cooked). The sacrificial implements of the deceased, clarified butter, water (for cleansing the corpse), pieces of wood (for the pyre), the *anustaraṇī* animal, a razor, and nail scissors should be carried to the spot discovered by the deceased and the fires established by him should be disposed there. A hole should be dug in this location. The hair and beard of the corpse should be shaved and nails should be trimmed. Next, his bowels should be taken out; the faeces to be removed and bestrewed in the hole with sand. After washing, the bowels should be put back in his body and the corpse should be laid down between the sacrificial fires. The performer (son of the deceased) should melt clarified butter on the *Gārhapatya* fire and purify it, take four ladlings, go to the *Āhavanīya* fire and put a *samidh* (fuel stick) and offer oblations in it. Next, touching the deceased, he should recite a *mantra*, “He has come into existence through you, you through him. He is your womb, his womb are you. As a father clearing the way for his son, Jātavedā lead him to the world of the virtuous. From him you were born, he must be born from you; *svāhā*.” Then funeral pyre should be piled up, the corpse should be laid thereon and the sacrificial implements to be arranged on the corpse. Two *sruvas* should be placed on his nostrils, the *juhū* should be placed on his right hand and the *upabhṛt* should be placed on his left hand. On his chest, the *dhruvā* should be placed and the *agnihotrahavaṇī* should be placed on his mouth. The *camasa iḷopahavana* (ladle used for carrying the limbs of the sacrificial victim) should be placed on his head. Two *prāśitraharaṇas* should be placed near his ears. The *pātrī samavattadhānī* should be placed on his abdomen. The *dṛṣad* and the *upalā* (lower and upper millstones) should be placed at his scrotum. The *śamyā* should be placed on his penis. His pudenda should be covered with the *kṛṣṇājina* (skin of the black antelope). The *sphya* should be kept along his back. Two *musalas* and

two *śūrpa*s should be placed on both sides and the *ulūkhala* should be placed at his feet. The other vessels should be laid on top of his head. The earthen ones should be thrown away into the water and the iron ones should be given away. Then the complete corpse should be smeared with clarified butter and the sacrificial vessels should also be filled with clarified butter. Next, the *anustaraṇī* animal should be brought to the spot. After consecrating her and causing her to circumambulate the sacrificial fires and the pyre three times to the left, the performer should kill her with a *kuṭa* (hammer). The JBr mentioned that some (authority) instructed to lead her to the right, but the practice was not acceptable to it. Next, the omentum of the *anustaraṇī* animal should be cut out and spread on the head of the deceased. The kidneys should be laid on the hands, the heart on the chest, the forelegs on the arms and the other limbs should be distributed over the corresponding limbs of the corpse. Finally, the performer should cover the deceased with the hide of the *anustaraṇī*, while reciting the *mantra*, “Prosper with your own body.” After spreading out the hide of *anustaraṇī*, the pyre should be set on fire.³

9.1.2 Burial rite

From the use of the word *anagnidagdha* (literally, “unburnt by fire”) for a class of the *pitṛs* in RV X.15.14 (also AVŚ XVIII.2.35 and VSM XIX.60), inference can be made about the existence of the burial in the 2nd millennium BCE. The use of word, *śmaśāna* for a tumulus or mound over the remains of a dead is found in AVŚ V.31.8, X.I.18, TS V.2.8.5 and ŚBM XIII.8.1.1.⁴ TS V.4.11.3, KāS XXI.4 and MS III.4.7 used the word *śmaśānacit* for a fire altar piled up like a burial mound.⁵ In the opinion of the *Nirukta* III.5, etymologically, the word *śmaśāna* is formed from two words, *śman* (body) and *śayana* (couch), which probably indicate its original meaning as burial mound.⁶

ŚBM XIII.8.1-4 provided a graphic description of the burial rite followed during early 1st millennium BCE, including construction of the four-cornered *śmaśāna* (sepulchral mound) facing south-east on a barren ground inclined towards north and located in a secluded spot far from the village.

From the descriptions in ŚBM XIII.8.1.5 and XIII.8.2.1, some information can be gathered about the burial rites of other ancient communities who probably did not follow the vedic practices. It stated that the people of demonic nature (*Āsuryaḥ*), the easterners (*Prācyah*) and others construct their sepulchral mounds round shaped (*parimaṇḍala*), bank up the mound and separate it from the earth by means of a *camū* (a basin or trough made of bricks or stones).⁷ A later text, the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 8.8.5 mentioned that the *Asuras*, the people who do not perform the *yajñas* (vedic sacrifices), perform the funerary rites for the corpse by offering food, garments and ornaments to it, as they believe that these will help the deceased to win the next world. Most probably like the ŚBM, here also the early communities of the east, viz., present day eastern Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Jharkhand states were implied by the word ‘*Asura*’ and their funerary practice was undoubtedly inhumation.

As mentioned earlier, the sixth *prapāṭhaka* (VI.1.1-VI.12.1) of the TĀ, a late vedic text compiled the *mantras* for the funeral rites, mostly from the RV. The late medieval scholiast Sāyaṇa mentioned on TĀ VI.1.1, that the *mantras* in this *prapāṭhaka* of the TĀ are prescribed by the *Bhardvājakaḷpa* (BhPS) and the *Baudhāyanakaḷpa* (BPS) for utilization during *Pitṛmedha* (literally, “oblations offered to the pitṛs”), a common term used for the rites for cremation and post-cremation rites in the vedic ritual texts, ending with building a tumulus over the remains.⁸ In the BhPS II.3-5, the *mantras* mentioned in TĀ VI.6.1-VI.9.2 have been prescribed for recitation during the performance of *Śmaśāna*, the post-cremation rite of building a mound over the remains of the deceased.⁹

9.1.2.1 Burial rite in the Śatapathabrāhmaṇa

Probably the earliest systematic description of the burial rite in South Asia is found in the ŚBM

XIII.8.1.1-4.12. But, whether the practice described is of an actual inhumation or a post-cremation burial is not clearly mentioned in this text. It has instructed to construct the *Śmaśāna* (sepulchral mound) neither immediately after death, nor so late that everybody has forgotten the number of years passed after the death. The suitable day prescribed by this text for the construction of the mound is any new moon day in either the season of *śarad* (autumn) or *nidāgha* (summer) or in the lunar month of *Māgha*, in an uneven numbered year after the death.

According to this text, the rite should begin with the element of *Bhūmijoṣaṇa* (literally, “selection of the burial spot”). It prescribed that the selected spot must be an open space located in a secluded area and it should be inclined towards the north, as north is believed as the direction of the *manuṣya loka* (human world). It also mentioned that according to some authority on rituals, it should be inclined towards south, as south is believed as direction of the *pitṛ loka* (world of the ancestors). But this text disapproved the practice, as it believed that this practice may cause an early death of a family member of the deceased. It also instructed that the direction of the flow of water at the spot should be from the south-east to the north-west. The selected spot should be marked by encircling it with a twisted cord (and four pegs driven into the ground at four corners).

After marking, the area selected should be swept with a *palāśa* twig and a *mantra* should be recited on this occasion, “Go away the Paṇis, hence away, rebellious, scorners of the gods.” (VSM XXXV.1). Then the area should be dug by a plough to which six oxen to be yoked after the *adhvaryu* (Yajurvedic priest) gives the order, “Yoke” and recites a *mantra*, “May Savitṛ approve a spot upon earth for your *śarīra* (remains); may the oxen be yoked for it.” (VSM XXXV.2). The first furrow should be ploughed from the north-west to north-east corner, the second furrow from the north-east to the south-east corner, the third furrow from the south-east to the south-west corner and finally the fourth furrow from the south-west to the north-west corner. During the ploughing of the first four furrows, the *mantra*, “May Vāyu purify; may Savitṛ purify; with Agni’s glitter; with Sūrya’s lustre.” (VSM XXXV.3) should be recited. In similar way, the whole area marked for the mound should be ploughed and after its completion, the *adhvaryu* should give the order, “Let the oxen be unyoked.” Next, seeds of the herbs should be sowed with a *mantra*, “The *aśvattha* is your abode, on the *parṇa* (*palāśa*) the residence is made for you.” (VSM XXXV.4).

Before sunrise, *adhvaryu* should place (the charred bones or the corpse) on the earth with the *mantras*, “May Savitṛ place your remains in the mother’s lap; O Pṛthivī (earth), be pleasant to him; here in the deity Prajāpati, near water, I lay you down, O so and so (name of the deceased).” (VSM XXXV.5-6a). Then, the *adhvaryu* should instruct someone, “Proceed in the (southern) direction without drawing breath and after throwing down the jar, return here, without looking behind.” It should be followed by muttering the *mantra*, “O Mrtyu (death) go away, pursue your special way, apart from that which the gods are wont to travel; I call upon you, who can see and hear; do not touch our offspring, do not injure our heroes.” (VSM XXXV.7). Next, the *adhvaryu* should arrange (the charred bones or the corpse) limb by limb with the *mantras*, “The wind be pleasant to you, the heat of the sun be pleasant to you; the bricks be pleasant to you; the terrestrial fires be pleasant to you and let them not scorch you in their flames. May the quarters and waters prosper for you and may the seas be most propitious for you; the air be auspicious to you, may all quarters prosper well for you.” (VSM XXXV.8-9).

If the deceased is an *agnicit* (who had performed the rite of *agnicayana*) the mound should be constructed like a fire altar. For an *anagnicit* (who had not performed the rite of *agnicayana*) the whole rite beginning from the *Bhūmijoṣaṇa* (up to the end) should be performed, but that his mound should not be built like a fire altar. This text mentioned that while some authority prescribed to use *śarkarās* (pebbles) instead of bricks, some other authority opposed it. Hence, one should construct a mound for an *anagnicit* as he likes. The sepulchral mound should be made just as big as the size of the deceased, so that no room is left (for another burial at the same spot). *Śmaśāna* (construction of

the mound) should be followed by the performance of *Parīśrayaṇa* (literally, “enclosing (the fire altar) with stones”) silently unlike the performance of the similar element at the time of building a fire altar. The height of the sepulchral mound prescribed in ŚBM XIII.8.3.11-12 is of a man with upstretched arms for a Kṣatriya; up to the mouth for a Brāhmaṇ; up to the hips for a female; up to the thighs for a Vaiśya and up to the knee for a Śūdra. But, it should reach a height, so as to reach below the knee. This text prescribed to use thirteen square shaped bricks of one *pada* (11.25 in.) sides to construct the mound. The bricks should be laid down silently unlike building a fire altar. After completion, barley seeds should be sowed on the mound and covered with *avakā* (*Blyxa octandra*) and *darbha* grass. Finally, the pegs of *palāśa*, *śamī*, *varaṇa* (*Crataeva roxburghii*) should be fixed on the front, on the left and behind the mound respectively. A *vṛtraśaṅku* (literally, “peg of *vṛtra*”; stone pillar, according to the medieval scholiast) should be placed on the right of the mound. On the south of the mound, two narrow trenches should be dug and filled with milk and water respectively. On the north of the mound, seven narrow trenches should be dug and filled with water. The *adhvaryu* and the relatives of the deceased should throw three stones each in to the northern trenches and pass over them with a *mantra*, “On flows the stony flood; hold fast each other, keep yourselves up, my friends, and pass the river; here let us leave the powers that brought no profit, and cross the flood to powers that are auspicious.” (VSM XXXV.10). Then, they should cleanse themselves with *apāmārga* plants with a *mantra*, “O *Apāmārga*, drive away evil, drive away fault, sorcery, guiltiness and evil dreams from us.” (VSM XXXV.11).

After the performance of the rite of *Śmaśāna*, they should take a bath at a place where there is water with a *mantra*, “May the water and plants be friendly to us.” (VSM XXXV.12a). Then, they should take water with joined hands with the *mantra*, “May who hate us and whom we hate be unfriendly to him.” (VSM XXXV.12b) and throw the water in the direction in which the hated person may be. After taking the bath and putting on an *ahata* garment, they should hold on to the tail of an ox and return (later, KŚS XXI.4.25 added that it should be performed with the *mantra*, “For our prosperity, we hold on to the ox, the son of Surabhī; be bearer and deliverer to us as Indra to the gods.” [VSM XXXV.13]). Then, they should proceed towards village muttering the *mantra*, “From out of the gloom, have we risen.” (VSM XXXV.14). Having fetched a clod from the boundary, the *adhvaryu* should place it halfway between the *śmaśāna* and the village with the *mantra*, “Here I erect this rampart for the living; let none of these, none other reach this limit. May they survive a hundred lengthened autumns, and may they bury death beneath this mountain.” (VSM XXXV.15).

After their arrival to the village, the *añjana* (ointment) for the eyes and the feet should be given to them. After entering the house, they should establish the fire and lay the *paridhis* (literally, “enclosing wooden sticks”) of *varaṇa* wood around it. With a *sruva* (spoon) made of *varaṇa* wood, he should offer an oblation to Agni Āyusmat with the *mantras*, “You Agni cause vital powers to flow.” (VSM XXXV.16) and “Waxing with oblations, live long, O Agni, *ghṛta* (clarified butter) faced, *ghṛta* born; drinking the sweet, pleasant cow’s *ghṛta*, you guard these people, as a father guards his son; *svāhā*” (VSM XXXV.17). Sacrificial fee for this rite should be an old ox, old barley grains and an old *āsandī* (couch) with a pillow. But the performer may give more out of respect.

9.2 Funerary practices in proto-historic South Asia

The proto-historic cultures in South Asia, which have been suggested by several modern scholars as associated with the people who composed the early vedic texts, comprise the Gandhara Grave Culture (ca. 1700-200 BCE), the Painted Grey Ware (PGW) culture (ca. 1100-500 BCE) and its related Black Slipped Ware (BSW) culture. Around 600 BCE, the BSW culture transformed in to the Northern Black Polished (NBP) Ware culture, which marked the urbanization and beginning of the historical period.

In the area between Peshawar and Chitral of present day Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province of

Pakistan, on both sides of the Hindu Kush mountains, a number of cemeteries have been discovered with distinctive range of grave goods, which were termed as Gandhara Grave Culture by A.H. Dani. The sites include Loebanr, Aligrama, Birkot, Ghundai, Kherari, Timargarha, Lalbatai, Kalako-deray, Balambat and Zarif Karuna. The graves generally consist of an oblong pit, sometimes with stone-lined walls, usually closed in with a stone slab. This pit was often dug in to the base of a larger upper pit, which was filled with soil and charcoal, and often surrounded by a circle of stones. There were three types of burials – flexed burials, post-cremation burials including those in urns and fractional burial. Both single and multiple burials occurred. The site of Katelai yielded two burials of horses along with their masters. The grave goods included lots of plain, buff-red, or grey pottery in a range of shapes such as tall goblets, pedestal cups, beakers with flared mouths and bottles with long and slender necks. Some graves yielded flat terracotta female figurines with appliqué breasts, occasionally with incised eyes and necklaces. Metal objects found from the graves include copper or bronze objects such as pins with decorated tops and more rarely objects of iron. A bronze model of horse was found at Katelai.¹⁰

During the excavation of the ancient site of Abhaipur-Chena-Naktikhera in Pilibhit district of Uttar Pradesh in 2005-2006, two human burials, one of an adult and the other of a child were found from the Painted Grey Ware (PGW) culture period (ca. 1100 BCE) in the northern side of the site. The burial of the adult was found at a depth of about 0.9-1.0 m below the surface. The body of the adult was probably interned in a shallow, narrow pit dug in to the floor of the house. Therefore, it had acquired slightly curved posture with the waist down and head and legs in a slightly elevated position. It was an extended burial aligned slightly northeast to south-west direction. Lying on its back, the skeleton was found slightly tilted towards right and the head was placed laterally facing to the right. The legs were placed in straight position with the right ankle over the left. The position of the legs indicated as if these were tied at the ankle. The pelvis slightly sloped to the right. While the left arm was folded at the elbow and kept on the waist with the fingers hanging down, the right arm was peculiarly folded up at the elbow and the palm was kept against the chin. A number of big fragments of PGW were found stacked at the waist of the skeleton. When these fragments were joined together, a wide-mouthed convex-sided bowl of 20 cm in diameter was formed. The bowl was painted with red colour on the outer side and in the inner side only the impressions of the designs can be noticed. The designs are linear in nature. The rim is painted with a thick band on the outer side. Probably this bowl, supposed to be offered to the deceased was accidentally broken and hence the pieces were kept carefully near the grave. No other grave good was found. The skeleton of the child was also found below the floor level and it was poorly preserved. Other than the long bones, nothing survived properly. The skull was partially preserved and some of the rib bones were traced. The skeleton was lying exactly in the north-south direction. It was placed laterally, lying on its right hand. The right hand was kept on the waist. The ankles were totally destroyed by a thick root of a tree, which was found in a decomposed condition. No grave good was found from this grave.¹¹ This discovery has provided us the information about actual customary practice of inhumation in northern India when the early vedic texts were composed. As mentioned earlier, these texts also mentioned about the funerary practice of construction of *Śmaśāna* (burial mounds).

9.3 Descriptions in the Buddhist canonical texts

The Buddhist canonical texts provide us the glimpses of the funeral rites probably actually performed during the mid-1st millennium BCE, when the second urbanization was unfolding in the Ganga valley.

The *Mahāparinibbāna-Suttānta* 6.13,15,18 mentioned that after the death of Buddha, Mallas of Kusinārā paid respect to him with dance, recitation of hymns, music and with the garlands and perfumes. They made canopies of garments and hung wreaths on it for decoration. As instructed by Ānanda, the disciple of Buddha, they wrapped his corpse like a universal monarch in the alternate

layers of new cloth and carded cotton wool. Initially, they planned to carry the corpse to a spot on the south and outside the city for the cremation (similar instructions are found in the vedic ritual texts also). But, finally the funeral procession entered the city through the north gate and went out of the city through its eastern gate. The cremation was performed in front of a shrine known as *Makuṭabandhana*. They placed the body of Buddha on the funeral pyre after placing it in an oil vessel of iron, which was covered by another oil vessel of iron. Next, according to this text (6.21-22), four Malla chieftains had bathed their heads and clad in new garments with the intention of setting on fire of the funeral pyre. Before the cremation, Mahākassapa, a Brāhmaṇ disciple of Buddha, came up to the funeral pyre, arranged his robe on one shoulder (this fashion of wearing upper garment is described as *prācīnāvītin* in the vedic ritual texts) and after bowing down with clasped hands, circumambulation of the funeral pyre was performed by him for three times. Then, he uncovered the feet of Buddha and bowed down at his feet. Elsewhere in this text (5.11), it was mentioned that Buddha instructed before his death to Ānanda that, after cremation, a *thūpa* (tumulus) containing the remains of his body should be erected at the crossing of four highways (*cāturmahāpathe*) in the same manner as the *thūpa* of a universal monarch. Accordingly, this text mentioned that eight *thūpas* were erected over his relics.¹² It is quite probable that, these funeral practices were actually prevalent in the urban areas at least for the royal families during ca. 5th-4th century BCE.

This customary practice of placing the corpse in a sesame oil vessel for bringing back home is found in BhPS II.10.13, HPS XXIX.4.29 and the *Vaikhānasaśrautasūtra* XXXI.23. The *Ayodhyākāṇḍa* 66.14-16, 76.4 of the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki mentioned about placing the corpse of Daśaratha in a *drona* (tub) containing oil for several days till the arrival of Bharata. The ViṣP IV.5.7 stated that, the corpse of Nimi was covered with oil and fragrant substances to prevent decomposition.¹³

9.4 Descriptions in vedic ritual texts and the *dharmaśāstras*

Very elaborate and systematic descriptions of the Hindu funeral rites are narrated in the vedic ritual texts. These descriptions are most probably based on the actual customary practices in the late centuries of the first millennium BCE. Several early *dharmaśāstra* texts also mentioned about the funeral rites.

The funeral rites described in the vedic ritual texts and early *dharmaśāstra* texts mostly comprise:

- preparation of the corpse for cremation,
- funeral procession,
- cremation rite, which include the sacrifice offered at the cremation spot, and,
- a series of post-cremation rites, which include:
 - *Udakakarma*, the rite of water libations,
 - *Asthisamcayana*, the rite for collection of the charred bones and their disposal,
 - *Punardahana*, the rite for re-cremation of the charred bones,
 - *Śmaśāna*, the rite for building a mound over the charred bones,
 - *Śāntikarma*, the rite for the well-being of the relatives, and,
 - post-cremation *Śrāddha* rites, which include:
 - *Ekoddiṣṭa Śrāddhas*, the rites of offering food (*piṇḍa*) only to the *preta* (deceased person), and,
 - *Sapinḍikarāṇa*, the rite for ritual union of the food (*piṇḍa*) offered to the *preta* (deceased person) with the food (*piṇḍa*) offered to the *pitṛs* (ancestors).

The cremation rite is mentioned in the late medieval digests as *Antyeṣṭi*, which literally means the “final sacrifice”. However, the vedic ritual texts mentioned the cremation rite as *Dahana* (BPS III.1.1, BhPS I.1.1 and ĀgGS III.4.1) or *Dahanakarma* (GPS I.1.13 and I.2.7). These texts

described this rite as a part of the *Pitṛmedha* (literally, “sacrifice for the distant ancestors”) rituals, which include the sacrifices performed before cremation, the cremation rite itself and the post-cremation rites of libations of water, collection of charred bones and their disposal. The mention of the cremation rite as the *Antya* rite by a late authority on *smṛti*, Jātūkarnya, cited in SmP¹⁴ probably the earliest one. The early *dharmasāstras*, MDh II.16 and YDh I.10 mentioned the cremation and post-cremation rites together as *Śmaśāna* (the medieval scholiast Kullūkabhaṭṭa (ca. 1250) on MDh II.16 explained *Śmaśāna* as *Antyeṣṭi* rite).

Codification of the *Śrāddha* rites is a late development and these rites are not mentioned in any early vedic text. How these *Śrāddha* rites, the rites for offering food to the deceased ancestors by feeding that food to the Brāhmaṇs, were originated is still a matter for speculation, but surely, these rites are of non-vedic origin. While, the vedic rites, comprising solemn and domestic sacrificial rites are performed for their perceived religious merits (*iṣṭāpūrta*), the *Śrāddha* rites are grounded on the faith (*śraddhā*) of the performer. ĀpDh II.7.16.1-2 narrated that the rites named as *Śrāddha* were proclaimed by Manu, for the benefit of those people who could not attain the heaven after death by virtue of their performing sacrifices. This belief of Manu as the promulgator of the *Śrāddha* rites was echoed later in *Upodghātapāda* 9.15 and 10.99 of the *Brahmāṇḍapurāna* and Manu was designated in this text as *Śrāddhadeva* (the deity for the *Śrāddha* rites). But, according to *Śāntiparva* 345.18-25 of the *Mahābhārata* (part of the late *Nārāyanīya* section), Vṛṣākapi (boar incarnation of Viṣṇu) created the rite for worshipping the deceased *pitṛs* (ancestors) by offering three *piṇḍas* (balls of rice). VDhP I.139.14-17 also stated that Nṛvarāha (boar in human form) incarnation of Viṣṇu created *Śrāddha*, the rite of offering *piṇḍas* to one’s deceased father, grandfather and great-grandfather. Early references to the *Śrāddha* rites are found in *Kāṭha Upaniṣad* I.3.17 and the *Śrāddhabrāhmaṇa*, a fragmentary *Brāhmaṇa* text of the same *Kāṭhaka śākhā*. Pāṇini in his *Aṣṭādhyāyī* V.1.109 mentioned that the word ‘*śrāddha*’ is derived from *śraddhā* (faith) and in *Aṣṭādhyāyī* V.2.85, he explained the forms, ‘*śrāddhin*’ and ‘*śrāddhika*’ in the sense of ‘one who has partaken the *śrāddha* dinner’.¹⁵

A number of elements of the codified post-cremation *Śrāddha* rites described in the vedic ritual texts had their origin in the ancient solemn rites for the veneration of the ancestors, namely, the solemn rites of *Piṇḍapitṛyajña* (later, GGS IV.4.1-2 explained *Piṇḍapitṛyajña* also as a *Śrāddha* rite and mentioned that some of its elements are similar to *Anvaṣṭakya*) or *Pitṛyajña* and *Mahāpitṛyajña* and the domestic rite of *Anvaṣṭakā* or *Anvaṣṭakya* (the rite for ancestor veneration performed on the ninth day, after eight day long performance of *Aṣṭakā* rite). Mostly, the codified elements of the post-cremation *Śrāddha* rites closely follow the elements of *Pārvaṇa Śrāddha*, the ancient most *Śrāddha* rite described in the vedic ritual texts. This rite was prescribed for performing on the new moon day in every lunar month by offering *piṇḍas* to three deceased paternal ancestors, viz, the father, grandfather and great-grandfather.

9.4.1 Funeral rites for the married adults

The detailed descriptions of various funeral rites for the married adults belonging to the elite social classes, known as the *śālīnas* or *gṛhapatis* (literally, “householders”) are found in the *śrautasūtras*, *gṛhyasūtras*, *pitṛmedhasūtras* and the *śrāddhakalpas* of different vedic *śākhās*.

The *śrautasūtras*, following the tradition of the early vedic texts, mostly described the funeral rites only for the *āhitāgnis* (literally, “one who has established the sacrificial fires”), the economically privileged persons of the elite social classes, who could afford to sponsor hugely expensive solemn rites and in return, were allowed to establish and maintain three sacred *śrauta* fire hearths in their houses. All three sacred *śrauta* fires, *Āhavanīya*, *Dakṣiṇa* and *Gārhapatya* were used for their cremation and the sacrificial implements used by them were burned together with the corpse. Later, the *gṛhyasūtras* and the *pitṛmedhasūtras* described the funeral rites for both the *āhitāgnis* and the

anāhitāgnis (a married adult male householder, who could not afford to sponsor the expensive solemn rites and thus not allowed to maintain three *śrauta* fire hearths, was known as an *anāhitāgni*). The sacred domestic fire hearth (mentioned as *Aupāsana*, *Gṛhya*, *Eka* and *Śālā* in different vedic ritual texts) established by him for the performance of the domestic rites was used for his cremation. PGS III.10.10-12 specifying the differences in the funeral rites for the persons with different social status, stated that, if the deceased is an *upeta* (one who has performed *Upanayana* rite), the procedures for his funeral rites from the *Bhūmijoṣaṇa* (rite of selection of the cremation spot) to the *Udakakarma* (rite of water libations) should follow the procedures prescribed for an *āhitāgni*. If he has established only the sacred domestic fire, *Śālā* (literally, “house”) before death, the same should be used for his cremation. If he has not established any sacrificial fire before death, he should be cremated with the fire from the common village hearth, *Grāma* (literally, “village”) without any *mantra*. Specifying the differences in disposal of the charred bones of the deceased having different social status, which was prevalent among the followers of the *Taittirīya śākhā*, BPS II.3.2 instructed that for the *anāhitāgni* and the females, the charred bones should be placed in an urn and buried; for the persons, who had performed the *Haviryajñas* (the sacrifices, where oblations of clarified butter are offered), the charred bones should be deposited on the earth alone; for the persons, who had performed the *Somayajñas* (the sacrifices, where oblations of *soma* are offered), the charred bones should be re-cremated and for the persons who had performed the *agnicayana* (the rite of construction of a fire altar), a (brick or clod) mound should be built (over the burial spot). BhPS I.12.13 and HPS XXVIII.4.28 also mentioned this passage as the opinion of some other authority.

ĀŚS VI.10 described the funeral rites for a person, after being *dīkṣita* (initiated) for a *soma* sacrifice or a *sattra*, died before its completion. Among the other *śrautasūtras*, ŚŚS IV.14-16 provided a detailed description of the funeral rites for the *āhitāgnis*. KŚS XXI.3-4 and XXV.7-8,¹⁶ DŚS 23.4 and LŚS 8.8.14-38 also supplied brief descriptions. The funeral rites for both the *āhitāgnis* and the *anāhitāgnis* are described in the eighth chapter (19-24) of the MŚS (this chapter is known as *Anugrāhika adhyāya* and considered as a later interpolation). KauśS 80-86 described the funeral rites in details as *Pitṛmedha*. Among the *gṛhyasūtras*, detailed descriptions of the funeral rites are found in two early Ṛgvedic ritual texts, the ĀGS IV-1-7 and KauśGS V.1-8 (heavily influenced by the ŚŚS IV.14-16). Two late *gṛhyasūtras* belonging to the *Taittirīya śākhā*, the ĀgGS III.4-11 and VkhGS V.1-15 also incorporated the detailed descriptions of the funeral rites. Comparatively brief descriptions are found in the PGS III.10 and JGS II.4-5.¹⁷ Possibly the descriptions of the funeral rites found in a late vedic ritual text, KP III.1 to III.5 are also based on much earlier practices.

All five extant *pitṛmedhasūtras*, the BPS, the BhPS, the ĀpPS, the HPS and the GPS provided elaborate descriptions of the cremation and post-cremation rites. In addition to the general procedure for the cremation and post-cremation rites, mentioned in these texts as *Pitṛmedha*, a special procedure for the cremation and post-cremation rites for the most venerable Brāhmaṇs like *ācāryas* and *śrotriyas* is described in BhPS II.1, ĀpPS XXXI.4 and HPS XXIX.3 as *Brahmamedha*. This special procedure is also mentioned in BPS II.2. But, later its significance was lost and in the late vedic ritual text, VkhGS VII.1 both the procedures for *Brahmamedha* and *Pitṛmedha* became same.

9.4.1.1 Preparation of the corpse and funeral procession

The early descriptions for preparation of the corpse of an *āhitāgni* for cremation are found in the ĀŚS, the KŚS and the ŚŚS. The detailed descriptions of the preparation of the corpse and the funeral procession (*pretanirharaṇa*) to the cremation spot are found in the ĀGS, BPS, BhPS, HPS, GPS, ĀgGS, VkhGS, KauśS and a later text, the KP.

After the death of an *āhitāgni*, ŚŚS IV.14.4-6 prescribed to cut off the hair of the body and trim the

nails of the corpse, wash and deck it.¹⁸ Then the corpse should be carried towards the south to a spot inclined towards the south or the southeast for cremation.

KŚS XXV.7.13-20 instructed that after the death of a sacrificer, the relatives (agnates, according to the medieval scholiast, Karka) of the deceased, with three burning *ukhās* (small earthen pots) in their hands, should carry the corpse in a cart towards the south to a *vitāna* (a temporary shed). A pyre should be made there between two sacrificial fires and plenty of grass should be strewn on it. Next, they should arrange *viśākha* grass (according to Karka, *viśākha* is another name for *dūrvā*), *śara* (reed), *aśmagandhā*, *prṣniparnī* (*Uraria picta*) and *adhyañḍā* plants on the pyre. Then, they should cut off the hair, beard and the hair on the body of the corpse, trim its nails and take out the faeces (after cutting open the entrails of the corpse), if they want. Having thrown the hair in a hole made in the earth, they should smear the inner part of the abdomen with clarified butter. A black antelope skin should be placed on the pyre and the corpse should be placed on it, with its head towards the east. Seven pieces of gold should be placed on seven seats of *prāṇa* (vital force) of the corpse, beginning with that in the mouth.¹⁹

ĀŚS VI.10.1-7 prescribed that, after the death of a *dīkṣita* (initiated) for a *sattra*, his corpse should be taken to *avabhṛtha*, a place designated for taking the bath after the sacrifice through the *tīrtha* (path to the sacrificial ground) and then the hair, beard and the hair on the body of the corpse should be cut off and nails of the deceased should be trimmed; the corpse should be decked with a garland of *nalada* (*Nardostachys jatamansi*) flowers and its body should be smeared with a paste made from *nalada* flowers. Next, it instructed to cut open the intestine of the corpse, take out the faeces and fill up the empty space with *prṣadājya*. Then, a portion as wide as the foot of the corpse should be cut-off from an *ahata* cloth and the corpse should be covered with the rest part of the cloth in such a way that the fringe is towards the west (the head of the corpse is placed towards the east) and the feet remain visible. The cut-off portion from the *ahata* cloth should be taken by the sons or like.²⁰

In its description, BPS I.2.5-8, 3.1 also instructed to cut off the hair, beard and the hair on the body and to trim the nails immediately after death. It also mentioned about the disembowelling of the corpse. According to this text, this practice includes cutting open the entrails of the corpse from the right side of the abdomen, removal of the faeces, cleaning the entrails followed by filling it with clarified butter and finally sewing the cut portion again with *darbha* grass. However, citing the same belief as mentioned in the ŚBM, it disapproved the practice. According to this text, next (to disembowelling, if performed), the deceased should be washed, covered with a piece of cloth and decked. The corpse should be removed from the fire-hall through the path between the *vedi* (fire altar) and *utkara* (a rubbish heap) and placed on an *āsandī* (couch or bier), over which a black antelope skin should be placed with the head of the corpse towards the south. Then, a garland of *nalada* flowers should be placed on the deceased and it should be covered with an *ahata* cloth²¹ with the *mantra*, “[O deceased, this garment has reached you first” (TĀ VI.1.1). BPS III.1.20 further prescribed that a piece of gold should be placed on the face of the deceased. BPS III.2.2 prescribed to adorn the corpse with the ornaments readily available in the village, place a garland of *nalada* flowers on it and place the corpse on a *talpa* (bed or bier) of *udumbara* wood after fastening its thumbs and great toes. BPS I.4.9-12, 5.2-5 instructed that the funeral procession should stop at two places on the way to the cremation site. A kid of a goat should be killed at both the resting places. If the goat is not available, then some *caru* (boiled rice with clarified butter) prepared in the *Anvāhāryapacana* fire should be placed with a *mekṣaṇa* (stirring ladle).

BhPS I.1.16-18 and HPS XXVIII.1.18-20 prescribed that the corpse should be taken out through the eastern door and laid down on the ground strewn with *darbha* grass towards the west of *Gārhapatyā* fire with its head towards the south. BhPS I.1.21 and HPS XXVIII.1.21 prescribed to take the corpse towards the south of the *vihāra* (sanctuary of the three sacrificial fires); shave its head, beard and the hair on the body and clip its nails. Next, BhPS I.1.21 instructed to wash the corpse and

cover it with a cloth (the HPS omitted the practice of covering with a cloth, but the medieval scholiast added it in his explanation of this aphorism); adorn it with the ornaments readily available in the village; fasten its thumbs and great toes with white thread and deck it with a garland of *nalada* flowers. Then, BhPS I.2.1-3 and HPS XXVIII.1.22-24 instructed to place a black antelope skin with its head towards south and hairy side downwards over an *āsandī* made of *udumbara* wood, place the corpse over it and cover it with an *ahata* cloth reciting the *mantra*, “[O deceased, this garment has reached you first” (TĀ VI.1.1). The cloth placed on it earlier should be removed with another *mantra*, “[O deceased] you leave this garment which you have worn earlier” (TĀ VI.1.1). The son or brother or any other relative of the deceased should wear it and use it till it is worn out. BhPS I.2.10-13 instructed that the deceased should be carried by the males only but it mentioned that, according to some authority it should be carried in a cart. It mentioned that, according to the *Śāṭyāyanikas* (followers of the *Śāṭyāyanī śākhā*, a sub-branch of the *Taittirīya śākhā*, now lost), black bullocks should be deployed and the bullocks should be yoked with the *mantra*, “[O deceased], I yoke these two conveyers (bullocks) to carry your body; with these [two], you go to the abode of Yama and the righteous.” (TĀ VI.1.1). BhPS I.2.15-17, 3.1-6 and HPS XXVIII.1.38-46 prescribed that the funeral procession, on the way to the *dahana deśa* (cremation site), should rest at three places. At every location, they should keep down the corpse, crush clods of earth and place some *caru* (boiled rice with clarified butter) over them. At the third resting place, these texts instructed to break the pot of *caru* into pieces after placing all its contents on the crushed earth clods to ensure that no water remains inside the pot.

GPS I.1.10-14 instructed to wash the corpse after the death. Then, it should be adorned with the ornaments according the customs of the locality, caste and family of the deceased. Next, its thumbs and great toes should be fastened; it should be covered with an *ahata* cloth and placed in an *āsandī* made of *udumbara* wood with its head towards the south.

ĀgGS III.4.1 prescribed that the corpse of an *āhitāgni* or an *anāhitāgni* male or any female should be laid down on a clean and level ground smeared with cow-dung and strewn with southwardly pointed *darbha* grass with the *mantra*, “Stretch the vital force to the [maximum] length of the life” (TBr I.5.7.1). The head of the corpse should be placed towards the south. A piece of gold should be placed in the mouth of the corpse. The corpse should be decked with the ornaments readily available in the village; its thumbs and great toes with should be fastened and covered with an *ahata* cloth and oblations should be offered into the *Āhavanīya* fire. Then, four Brāhmaṇs should carry the corpse to the cremation spot.

VkhGS V.2-3 described the preparation of the corpse for the cremation and the funeral procession. For an *āhitāgni*, immediately after death, the corpse should be brought outside the house, washed at a pure spot, sprinkled with clarified butter and adorned with the ornaments available in the village. For an *anāhitāgni*, the corpse should be washed with the water mixed with all kinds of herbs and adorned after carrying it to the cremation spot. In the funeral procession, the sons should carry the sacrificial fires in the earthen vessels, each fastened to three staff joined at the top, keeping them well apart. The wife of the deceased should follow them with a jar filled with water and the mourners carrying the other sacrificial implements should follow her.

KauśS 80.3 prescribed that a person threatened with death (deceased) should be laid down on the ground strewn with *darbha* grass with the *mantra*, “Be pleasant to him, O *prthivī*, [be] a thorn-less resting place [for him]; provide a broad refuge [to him]” (AVŚ XVIII.2.19). According to KauśS 80.13-17, the hair, beard and the hair on the body of the deceased should be cut off and the nails should be trimmed after moistening with the *śāntiyudaka* (literally, “pacifying water”). Then the corpse should be bathed, anointed and a *sraj* (wreath) should be placed on it. Finally, the body should be covered with an *ahata* cloth with two *mantras* (AVŚ XVIII.4.31 and XVIII.2.57). After adorning the corpse, this text (80.18-22) prescribed that, an oblation should be offered to Agni with

a *mantra* (AVŚ XVIII.2.27), *ukhās* (small pots) of clay, besmeared with *śakṛt* (cow-dung) and filled up with dry cow-dung should be made ready. Then, these three pots filled with the pieces of dry cow dung should be lit one by one with the three sacrificial fires; first *Āhavanīya*, then *Dakṣiṇa* and finally *Gārhapatya*. These pots should be carried with the deceased. Next, KauśS 80.31-34 prescribed to carry the corpse on a cart drawn by two bullocks or two men. At the time of yoking these bullocks or men to the cart, a *mantra* should be recited, “[O deceased], I yoke these two conveyers (bullocks) to carry you to the other life; with them (two bullocks); you go down to the abode of Yama and the assemblies.” (AVŚ XVIII.2.56).²²

ĀGS IV.1.1-2.9 narrated a very extensive description of the preparations before the cremation, which most probably was in vogue in ca. mid-1st millennium BCE. The selection procedure for the cremation site described in ĀGS IV.1.6-15 has the similarities as well as the differences with the description in ŚBM XIII.8.1.6-16. It prescribed that the cremation spot should be located towards the south-east or the south-west (from the village). The spot should be inclined towards the south or the south-east, open from all sides and fertile in herbs. But it also mentioned that according to some authority, the spot should be inclined towards the south-west. For cremation, this text prescribed to dig a piece of ground of the length of a man with upraised arms, width of one *vyāma* and depth of one *vitasti*. After the death, according to the ĀGS IV.1.16-17, the hair, the beard, the hair of the body and nails of the deceased should be cut off and provisions for plenty of sacrificial grass and clarified butter should be made. In addition, clarified butter should be poured in to yoghurt to prepare *prṣadājya*, for the use for offering to the *pitṛs* (deceased ancestors). Next, ĀGS IV.2.1-3 prescribed that the relatives of the deceased should lead the funeral procession carrying the sacrificial fires and the sacrificial vessels. They should be followed by the aged persons odd in numbers, men and women not going together carrying the corpse. This text also mentioned that some authority prescribed to carry the dead in a *pīṭhacakra* (cart with a seat) drawn by oxen.²³

A brief description of the preparation of the corpse and the funeral procession is found in KauśGS V.1.12-14 and 2.1-9. It prescribed to cover the corpse with an *ahata* cloth with the *mantra*, “[O deceased, this garment has reached you first” (TĀ VI.1.1).

The early medieval text, KP.III.2.3-6 narrated briefly about the preparation of the corpse and the funeral procession. It prescribed to wash the corpse immediately after death, cover it with a pure cloth and place it on the ground strewn with *kuśa* grass with its head towards the south. Next, the corpse should be soaked with clarified butter and washed again, covered with another fine cloth and a sacrificial thread should be invested on it. The limbs of the corpse should be smeared with sandalwood paste and it should be decked with flowers. Then, seven pieces of gold should be placed on seven *chidras* (literally, “orifices”; two eyes, two ears, two nostrils and mouth), the face of the corpse should be covered with a piece of cloth and the sons and others should carry it to the cremation spot. Having taken a mess of boiled rice in an unbaked earthen vessel, the sons and others should follow the *preta* (corpse) and the vessels carrying the sacrificial fires should be carried in front of the corpse. The half portion of the mess of boiled rice should be scattered on the way to the cremation spot.

Although, early vedic ritual texts did not prohibit anybody from carrying the bier (only a late vedic ritual text, ĀgGS III.4.1 prescribed to carry the bier of a Brāhmaṇ by four Brāhmaṇs). With the changes in percept (discussed in details in chapter 3) in the early centuries of the Common Era, MDh V.104 instructed that a bier for a Brāhmaṇ should not be allowed to be carried by a Śūdra, if the members of his own community are available for it²⁴ (later, the medieval scholiast Medhātithi added that, this verse implies that a Śūdra should not be allowed to carry the bier of a Kṣatriya or a Vaiśya also). ViṣDh XIX.1-2 instructed that neither a Śūdra should carry the bier of a ‘twice-born’ nor a ‘twice-born’ should carry the bier of a Śūdra. This same injunction is found in VDhP II.76.1. Yama, cited in *Parāśaramādhava* stated that when a *yajamāna* (sacrificer) dies, a Śūdra should not

carry his corpse. That deceased, for whom a Śūdra carries fire, grass or wood for sacrifice, remains in the state of *preta* for ever and becomes defiled by *adharmā* (sin). This tradition of social segregation for funeral procession has continued till the modern period, but no more followed in the urban India.

In the early centuries of the 1st millennium BCE, when the early vedic texts were composed, cremation took place within the inhabited area, near the sacrificial arena (ŚBM XII.5.2.1-2). Later, in the mid-1st millennium BCE, when the early vedic ritual texts were composed, the cremation spots were shifted to the locations outside the villages, preferably near a water source (ĀGS IV.1.12-15). In the 3rd and 2nd centuries BCE, cities in Northern India expanded in size and complexity and urbanism spread to many new areas. Urban growth in the far south can also be identified during this period.²⁵ In these newly expanded cities, the cremation sites were located outside the city walls and the corpses were carried to the *śmaśāna* through one of its gates. It has been mentioned earlier that according to the *Mahāparinibbāna-Suttānta*, initially it was planned that

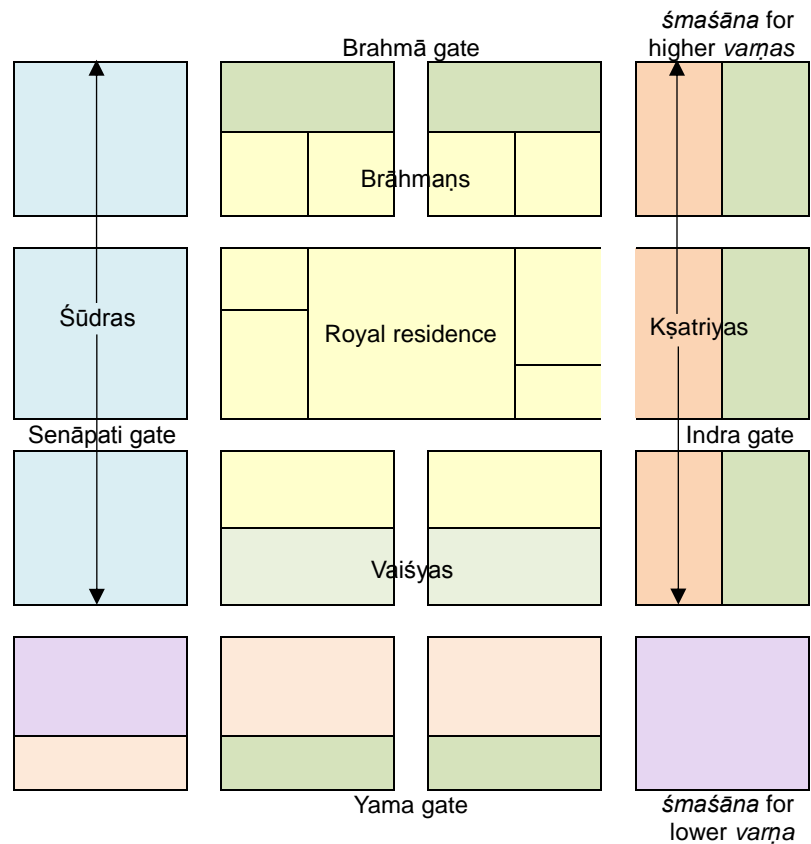


Figure 2: Schematic plan of a fortified city based on the *Arthaśāstra* (Rangarajan 1992: 192)

the funeral procession carrying the body of Buddha would go to the cremation site through the southern gate of the city of Kusinārā, but finally it went through its eastern gate. Later, an early evidence of the social segregation in cremation is found in the *Arthaśāstra* 2.4.21, which instructed that the *śmaśānas* should be located outside the city, one for the higher *varṇas* towards the north or the east and the other for the lower *varṇa* (Śūdra) towards the south. MDh V.92, echoing a similar social segregation as the *Arthaśāstra*, instructed that the funeral procession carrying the corpse of a Śūdra should go to the cremation site through the southern gate of a city. Similarly, the funeral procession carrying the corpse of a Vaiśya should proceed to the cremation site through its western gate, a Kṣatriya through its northern gate and a Brāhmaṇ through its eastern gate. A late *Purāṇa* text, the *Ādipurāṇa* (cited by Aparārka) instructed that the funeral processions carrying the corpses of the Brāhmaṇs, Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas and Śūdras should proceed towards the east, north, west and south respectively.²⁶ With the advent of the medieval period in South Asia, the socio-economic environment changed and urban context of the *Arthaśāstra* and the MDh is found missing in this early medieval text.

9.4.1.1.1 Anustaraṇī or rājagavī: Companion of the deceased

One of the important elements of the funeral procession from the residence of the deceased to *śmaśāna* (cremation spot) found in the vedic ritual elements is carrying an animal for sacrifice. This animal is mentioned in the majority of the vedic ritual texts as *anustaraṇī* (literally, “a she-animal for covering”) and as *rājagavī* in BhPS I.2.7, ĀpPS XXXI.1.24, HPS XXVIII.1.30, KauṣGS V.2.3

and ĀgGS 3.5.6.²⁷ This animal, generally a cow or she-goat was sacrificed before cremation and its limbs were used to cover the corpse with the underlying belief of providing the deceased a companion during the journey in the afterlife. Early reference about offering an aged, stupid and utterly bad looking cow as *anustaraṇī* is found in TS VII.1.6.4. PBr XXI.1.7 also mentioned the *anustaraṇī* as an old, leprous, hornless, smoke-coloured cow, short from the hips for offering to Yama.²⁸ The descriptions in JBr I.46, 49 on *anustaraṇī* sacrifice have been mentioned earlier. According to ĀGS IV.2.4-9, this she-animal should be a cow or a she-goat of one colour, but some authority prescribed for a she-goat of black colour. This animal should be tied with a rope on her left forefoot and carried at the front of the procession behind the corpse. The relatives of the dead should follow the she-animal, wearing their upper garments below (around the waist), with their *śikhā* (hair-tuft) untied, aged persons in the front and younger persons at the behind.²⁹

9.4.1.2 Dahana: Cremation

An early description of the cremation rite is found in ĀŚS VI.10.8-10. This text prescribed a brief rite for a sacrificer and his wife. It instructed to carry the corpse of the sacrificer to a place outside the sacrificial ground, towards the south of the *vedi* (fire alter). Next, the ritual of transferring three sacrificial fires (*samāropaṇa*) to two *araṇīs* (kindling woods) should be performed and the cremation should be carried out by kindling fire with two *araṇīs*. For an *anāhitāgni* and the wife of the *āhitāgni*, only *Āhārya* (*Aupāsana*) fire should be used for cremation.³⁰ The detailed descriptions of cremation rite are found in the ĀGS, KauṣGS, ĀgGS, VkhGS, KauṣS and all extant *pitṛmedhasūtras*.

9.4.1.2.1 Arrangement of the pyre and sacrificial fires

According to the majority of the vedic ritual texts, the cremation rite should begin with the sweeping of the cremation spot (mostly with a *palāśa* or a *śamī* twig). Next, the arrangement of the funeral pyre and the sacrificial fires at the cremation spot should be made. It should be followed by the laying down the corpse on the pile.

According to the ĀGS IV.2.10-22, when the funeral procession reaches the cremation spot, the performer (son of the deceased) should circumambulate the spot thrice, with his left side towards it and sprinkle water with a *śamī* twig, reciting a *mantra*, “[O evil spirits], go away, withdraw and depart from here; the *pitṛs* have provided him this place; Yama has given him this place for rest, adorned with the days, nights with water.” (RV X.14.9). Next (if the deceased is an *āhitāgni*), he should place the *Āhavanīya* fire on an elevated place on the south-east corner, the *Gārhapatya* fire on the north-west corner and the *Dakṣiṇa* fire on the south-west corner. After the funeral pyre is prepared by a person who knows the procedure, the corpse should be laid down on a black antelope skin with its hairy side upwards, over a layer of sacrificial grass with the head of the corpse towards the *Āhavanīya* fire after having carried it to the north of the *Gārhapatya* fire. The bow of the deceased should also be placed near the body if he is a Kṣatriya (the warrior *varṇa*). His wife should also be made to lie down on the pile and should be raised later by her brother-in-law or a student of the deceased with the *mantra* beginning with, “Rise up, woman, into the world of living” (RV X.18.8). The bow should be then taken back from the pile with a *mantra* beginning with, “I take the bow from the hand of the deceased” (RV X.18.9) and after breaking it, should be thrown back to the pile.³¹ The ritual acts of making the wife of the deceased to lie down on the pile and raising her later are also found in BPS I.8.1-2, BhPS I.5.6-8 and HPS XXVIII.2.14-15. BPS I.8.3-5, BhPS I.5.9-12 and HPS XXVIII.2.17-20, as a variant of the ritual act of placing the bow near the corpse and taking it back for a Kṣatriya mentioned in the ĀGS, prescribed to cleanse the hands of the corpse by his wife with a piece of gold, if the deceased is a Brāhman; with a bow, if the deceased is a Kṣatriya and with a piece of jewel, if the deceased is Vaiśya.

KauṣS 80.38-42 prescribed that the corpse should be laid down to the north of the sacrificial fires

with a *mantra* (AVŚ XVIII.2.19) and then the *adhvaryu* should offer oblations into the sacrificial fires. Then, the *śāntiyudaka* (literally, “pacifying water”) should be sprinkled with two *mantras* (AVŚ XVIII.1.55, similar to RV X.14.9 and XVIII.2.37) and the cremation spot should be swept with a branch of *kāmpīla* (*Crinum latifolium*). KauśS 80.43-45 prescribed that the wife of the deceased should be made lie down on the pyre beside her husband with a *mantra* (AVŚ XVIII.3.1) and subsequently she should be raised with another *mantra* (AVŚ XVIII.3.2, similar to RV X.18.8). KauśS 80.46-47 instructed that, with the first hemistich, “You wear this gold, which your father wore before.” (AVŚ XVIII.4.56a), the *adhvaryu* should remove the gold (ring) worn by the deceased from the right hand, smear it with clarified butter and pass it on to his eldest son. With the second hemistich, “You wipe off the right hand of your father, going to heaven.” (AVŚ XVIII.4.56b), the *adhvaryu* should make the son to wipe off the right hand of the deceased. Then, KauśS 80.48-50 prescribed that the staff should be taken back from the hand of the deceased if he is a Brāhmaṇ with a *mantra* (AVŚ XVIII.2.59). Similarly the bow should be taken back from the hand of the deceased if he is a Kṣatriya with a similar *mantra* (AVŚ XVIII.2.60) and the goad from the hand of the deceased if he is a Vaiśya with the modified version of these *mantras* (AVŚ XVIII.2.59 and 60), replacing the word ‘staff’/ ‘bow’ with the word ‘goad’. Next, KauśS 80.51-53 prescribed that the funeral pile should be prepared by strewing *darbha* grass accompanied by a *mantra* (AVŚ XVIII.1.46). Then, the corpse should be laid down on the pile with another *mantra* (AVŚ XVIII.4.14) and it should be fixed in place on the funeral pile with certain *mantras* (AVŚ XVIII.3.30-35). KauśS 80.54 mentioned that Uparibabhava, an earlier authority had prohibited this practice.

9.4.1.2.2 Pātracayana: Arrangement of sacrificial implements

According to the majority of the vedic ritual texts, the next element of the cremation rite for an *āhitāgni* after the arrangement of three sacrificial fires is the arrangement of the sacrificial implements on the corpse by the son of the deceased. It is a very ancient customary practice, mentioned in the ŚBM and the JBr. MīmS XI.3.35 mentioned about the injunction for final disposal (*pratipattividhāna*) of the sacrificial implements, and Śabarasyāmī, to explain this aphorism quoted a passage, which said that the sacrificial implements of an *āhitāgni* are disposed only by burning along with his corpse.³² The description of the element of *Pātracayana* (literally, “arrangement of the sacrificial implements”) are found in a number of *śrautasūtras* (viz, the ŚŚS, the LŚS, the DŚS, the KŚS and the MŚS), all extant *pitṛmedhasūtras* (viz the BPS, the BhPS, the HPS, the ĀpPS and the GPS), some of the *grhyasūtras* (viz the ĀGS, the JGS, the KauśGS, the ĀgGS and the VkhGS) and the KauśS. A late *dharmasāstra* text, the PDh also mentioned about this element.

The arrangements prescribed by the ritual texts belonging to different vedic *śākhās* have substantial differences. Two early and similar descriptions about the arrangement of the sacrificial implements for the adherents of the Sāmavedic *śākhās* are found in the *śrautasūtra* texts, LŚS 8.8.18-32 and DŚS 23.4.18-33. There are only minor differences between these two texts. The DŚS prescribed to place two *sphyas* on both the sides of the corpse and while the LŚS prescribed to place only the *śūrpa* (the winnowing basket) on the feet, the DŚS added the *śakaṭa* (cart used for carrying *soma* stalk for sacrifice) with it. The Sāmavedic *pitṛmedha* text, GPS rendered a comparatively late description of this element. A late Sāmavedic *grhyasūtra* text, JGS II.4 made only a reference to JBr I.48 instead of providing any description.

A late Sāmavedic ritual text, KP III.2.9-11 provided a brief description of this element. It prescribed that the *sruca* (large offering spoon) filled with clarified butter should be placed on the mouth of the corpse. The *sruva* should be placed on its nose with the tip of its handle pointing towards south. The lower *araṇi* (kindling wood) should be placed on the legs and the upper *araṇi* should be placed on the chest. The *śūrpa* should be placed on its left side, the *camasa* should be placed on its right side and the *musala*, *ulūkhala*, *cātra* (spindle of the fire drill), and *ovīlī* (the crossbeam of the fire drill)

should be placed between the thighs of the deceased. Placing the components of the *manthanayantra* (fire drill) near the corpse is a new addition to this element, not found in the earlier texts. The KP III.2.15-16 narrated the belief behind the ancient practice of burning sacrificial implements along with the corpse. It mentioned that as a traveller, carrying his own weapons, traverses through the forest fearlessly and reaches his destination; similarly, a deceased who has maintained the sacrificial fires during his lifetime, being armed with his sacrificial implements (burned with his corpse), passes through other realms and reaches the realm of Brahma.

An early description of the arrangement of sacrificial implements on the corpse for the adherents of the Ṛgvedic *śākhās* is found in the *śrautasūtra* text, ŚŚS IV.14.18-35. According to this text, the *juhū* should be placed on the right hand of the corpse and the *upabhṛt* on the left hand. On the chest of the deceased, the *dhruvā* should be placed. The *agnihotrahavaṇī* should be placed on the throat. Two *sruvas* should be placed on the nostrils of the deceased. The *prāsitraharaṇa* should be placed near the right ear of the corpse and the *praṇītāpraṇayana* should be placed near the left ear. The *grāvāṅs* (pressing stones for soma stalks) should be placed on the teeth. On the head of the deceased, the *kapālas* (burned earthen potsherds) should be placed. The *samavattadhānī* should be placed on the abdomen and two *pātrīs* were placed on two sides of the corpse. The *sphya* should be placed on the right side of the corpse, and on the left side the skin of a black antelope should be placed. The pieces of *araṇi* (kindling woods) should be placed on the pudenda. The *ulūkhala* (wooden mortar) and the *musala* (wooden pestle) should be placed on the knees. The *śūrpa* and the *śakaṭa* should be placed on the feet and other sacrificial vessels used for *agnihotra* should be placed near the feet. The implements with hollow spaces should be filled with both clarified butter and *pr̥ṣadājya*. The description of the arrangement for the placement of sacrificial implements found in the Ṛgvedic *grhyasūtra* text, KauṣGS V.3.7-24 is almost same as the ŚŚS. Only differences found in the KauṣGS are that it did not mention about placing the *śūrpa* and the *śakaṭa* on the feet and the implements with hollow spaces according to this text were filled with either clarified butter or *pr̥ṣadājya*.³³

The description found in another Ṛgvedic *grhyasūtra* text, ĀGS IV.3.1-18 is also similar but with a few differences. According to this text, on the left side of the corpse the *agnihotrahavaṇī* should be placed. Like the ŚŚS, it also prescribed that two *sruvas* should be placed on the nostrils of the deceased, but in addition, it narrated that, if, there is only one available, it should be torn in to two pieces and placed on both nostrils. In difference with the ŚŚS, it mentioned that two *prāsitraharaṇas* should be placed near the ears of the corpse and again if, there is only one available, it should be torn in to two pieces. The *pātrī* and the *camasa* used for *samavattadhāna* (carrying limbs of the sacrificial victim) should be placed on the abdomen. The *śamyā* should be placed on the pudenda. Two pieces of *araṇi* should be placed on the thighs. Two *śūrpas* should be placed on the feet. In case only one is available, it should be torn in to two pieces and placed. The implements with hollow spaces should be filled with *pr̥ṣadājya*. The son of the deceased should take the *dr̥ṣad* and the *upalā* (lower and upper millstones) and the sacrificial implements made of copper, iron and earthenware.³⁴

The only extant Atharvavedic ritual text, KauṣS 81.4-19 prescribed a different arrangement for placing the sacrificial implements. It, like the ĀGS, prescribed to place the *juhū* on the left hand and the *upabhṛt* on the right hand of the corpse. But, it instructed to place the *dhruvā* on the throat, with a *mantra* (AVŚ XVIII.4.5-6) and the *agnihotrahavaṇī* on the mouth. It again agreed with the ĀGS in prescribing placement of two *sruvas* on the nostrils of the deceased (Keśava, the early medieval scholiast added that these *sruvas* should be filled with *pr̥ṣadājya*). But, it instructed to place the *prāsitraharaṇa* on the forehead (silently, according to Keśava), the *iḍācamasa* (vessel made of *aśvattha* wood, also known as *dārupātra*) on the head with the *mantra* from the AVŚ (XVIII.3.53) and a *puroḍāśa* (pancake made of barley flour) on the chest with the *mantra* from the AVŚ

(XVIII.4.2). It also, like the ĀGS, prescribed to place the *sphya* on the right side of the corpse, but it said that the *upaveṣa* (stirring stick) should be placed on the left side. The *pātrī* (*piṣṭapātrī*, according to Keśava) is prescribed for placing on the abdomen and the *ulūkhala* and the *musala* are instructed to place on the knees. The *śakata* is prescribed to place on the hips and all other sacrificial vessels are prescribed to place between the thighs. It instructed to place the *śūrpa* on the feet. It also instructed that the earthenware should be thrown away, the iron vessels should be safely kept and the *dr̥ṣad* (and the *upalā*) should be taken by the relatives and the son of the deceased person.³⁵

Among the Kṛṣṇayajurvedic ritual texts of the *Taittirīya śākhā*, two different descriptions for arrangement of the sacrificial implements on the corpse are found in the BPS. The description in BPS I.8.11, I.9.1-5 is very ancient and different from the other texts of this *śākhā*. The second description in BPS III.3.12, 4.1 is comparatively late and similar to the other texts of this *śākhā*. BPS I.8.11-I.9.1 prescribed to break a *prāśitraharaṇa* and place two broken pieces near the ears of the corpse. Two pieces of gold should be placed on the eyes or two *sruvas* filled with clarified butter should be placed on them. It also prescribed that after being filled with the a mixture of yoghurt and clarified butter, the *agnihotrahavaṇī* should be placed on the mouth and two *sruvas* should be placed on the nostrils of the deceased. The *prañītāpraṇayana camasa* and the *kapālas* (burned earthen potsherds) should be placed near the head of the deceased and the *ekakapāla* (a piece of earthen potsherd) should be placed on the forehead. The Like most of the vedic ritual texts, BPS I.9.2 prescribed to place the *juhū* on the right hand and the *upabhṛt* on the left hand of the corpse. It also prescribed to place the *mekṣana* (stirring ladle) on the right shoulder, the *piṣṭodvapanī* (vessel for holding flour) on the left shoulder, the *sphya* on the back, the *dhruvā* and the *araṇīs* on the chest, the *dārupātrī* (wooden vessel) on the abdomen, the *anvāhāryasthālī* (dish for cooking the rice for the priests) and *carusthālī* (dish for serving the porridge) on the hips, the *dr̥ṣad* and the *upalā* on the scrotum, the *vṛṣārava* (striking stone for the upper and the lower millstones) and the *śamyā* on the penis, the *agnihotrasthālī* (earthen pot with straight brim for keeping milk) and the *ājyasthālī* (pot for keeping clarified butter) on the feet, *upasādanīyaḥ kūrcaḥ* (bunches of grass used a cushion) on the head, the *ulūkhala* and the *musala* between the thighs and the *sāmnāyya kumbhīs* (pots for *sāmnāyya*) on the groins. It instructed that the two *śūrpas* should be placed on the two sides. If only one is available, it should be torn in to two pieces and both the pieces should be placed. BPS I.9.3-5 prescribed that all sacrificial earthenware should be either thrown into water or buried and the sacrificial vessels made of stone and iron should be donated to a Brāhmaṇ.

The description in of the arrangement of the sacrificial implements in BPS III.3.12, 4.1 and BhPS 1.5.16-20, 6.1-20 are almost similar. ĀpPS XXXI.2.21 also narrated a similar arrangement of the sacrificial implements. In difference with BPS I.9.2, both BPS III.3.12, 4.1 and BhPS 1.5.16-20, 6.1-20 stated that the *juhū* and the *sphya* should be placed on the right hand of the corpse. They prescribed that, the *agnihotrahavaṇī* should be placed on the mouth and two *sruvas* should be placed on the nostrils of the deceased. Two pieces of gold should be placed on the eyes or two *sruvas* filled with clarified butter should be placed on them. Two *prāśitraharaṇas* should be placed near the ears of the corpse. If, there is only one, it should be broken into two pieces and these pieces should be placed near the ears. The *ulūkhala* and the *musala* should be placed on the two jaws (BPS III.3.12, following the tradition of BPS I.9.2, prescribed to place them between the thighs). The *grāvāṇs*, if available, should be placed on the teeth. The *kapālas* should be placed on the head of the deceased, and a single piece of *kapāla* should be placed on the forehead. The *piṣṭasamyavani pātrī* (earthen vessel for the dough) should be placed on the abdomen (BPS III.3.12 prescribed to place the *piṣṭodvapanī* on the abdomen). The *ājyasthālī* should be placed on the navel. Two *śūrpas* should be placed on the two sides. If only one is available, it should be torn into two pieces and both the pieces should be placed. In case the deceased was a *sāmnāyya* (a mixture of fresh milk and sour milk or yoghurt) offerer (to Indra), two *sāmnāyya kumbhīs* (pots for *sāmnāyya*) should be placed on

the groins. The *dr̥ṣad* and the *upalā* should be placed on the scrotum. The *vr̥ṣārava* and the *śamyā* should be placed on the penis. The *agnihotrasthālī* and the *anvāhāryasthālī* should be placed on the buttocks. The *upāvaharaṇī* (a bunch of grass used for carrying *agnihotra*-ladle) should be placed near the feet. The *veda* (a bunch of *darbha* grass, folded and tied with a rope, used for sweeping the *vedi*) should be placed near the hair-tuft. The BhPS prescribed to place the *upasādanī* (a bunch of grass used as cushion) and the *iḍāpātra* near the head (the BPS prescribed to place the *iḍāpātra* near the hair tuft) and the *camasa* at the middle with a *mantra* (TĀ VI.1.4). The remaining sacrificial vessels should be placed between the thighs.³⁶ BPS III.3.12, in addition, prescribed to place the *pr̥ṣadājyagrahaṇī* on the left hand, the bunches of *erakā* grass on the mouth and the *āśvinakapāla* on the eyes. The description found in HPS XXVIII.2.26-49, another vedic ritual text on funerary rites of the *Taittirīya śākhā*, is also almost identical with to the BhPS and BPS. The only differences in the description are that the HPS prescribed the *pr̥ṣadājyasthālī* (vessel for yoghurt and clarified butter), in addition to the *ājyasthālī* to be placed on the navel. In difference with the BhPS and BPS, it said that the *asmān* (another name for *vr̥ṣārava*) should be placed on the penis.³⁷ A similar description is also narrated in ĀgGS III.4.2, a late ritual text on funerary rites of this *śākhā*. However, in addition to the BPS, BhPS and HPS, it prescribed to place the *upaveṣa* (stick for stirring fire) on the chest and. It prescribed to place the *iḍāpātra* near the hair tuft like the BPS.

The description for the arrangement of sacrificial implements in the Śuklayajurvedic *śrautasūtra* text KŚS XXV.7.21-33 is almost similar to the ŚBM, with minor differences. It mentioned that, according to some authority, the *kapālas* should be placed on the head. Differing from the ŚBM, it prescribed to place the *araṇīs* on the scrotum. This text also instructed to place all sacrificial implements not specified by this text between the thighs of the deceased. The vessels made of earth and stone should be thrown away in a water body and the utensils made of copper may be given away to a Brāhmaṇ.³⁸

The procedure for the arrangement of the sacrificial implements found in the late Kṛṣṇayajurvedic ritual text of the *Taittirīya śākhā*, VkhGS V.4 is substantially different from the earlier texts of this *śākhā*. According to this text, the performer (son of the deceased) should throw on the mouth of the corpse a mixture of sesame seeds, un-husked rice-grains, yoghurt, honey and *kṣīra* (sweet milk) according to their availability. Touching the mouth of the deceased, he should murmur twice the *caturhotṛmantras*. Then, he should similarly murmur the *daśahotṛmantras* over the nostrils, the *ṣaḍhotṛmantras* over the eyes, the *pañcahotṛmantras* over the ears and the *saptahotṛmantras* over the breast-bones of the corpse. He should make ready the sacrificial vessels behind the pyre, on the southward-pointed *darbha* grass and sprinkle the vessels, the corpse and the pyre with water prepared for this purpose. He should pour clarified butter (with a *sruva*) in the *juhū*, yoghurt in the *upabhṛt*, honey in the *dhruvā* and *kṣīra* (sweet milk) in the *agnihotrahavaṇī* or clarified butter in all. Having removed the sesame seeds, un-husked rice-grains and other items in the similar way, he should bring near the corpse all the sacrificial implements used by the deceased during his lifetime for the *darśapūrṇamāsa* (the new moon and the full moon) sacrifices. Next, he should arrange the sacrificial implements on the corpse, which is almost similar to the arrangement described in the BPS, BhPS, HPS and ĀgGS with minor differences. According to this text, the *ājyasthālī* should be placed on the throat of the deceased. This text is silent on placement of any sacrificial implement on penis.³⁹

The description of the arrangement of the sacrificial implements in MŚS 8.19.15 seems to be a late one. Unlike most of the vedic ritual texts, it prescribed to place the *juhū* and the *upabhṛt* on the right and left shoulders respectively. Interestingly, this text prescribed to place a *puroḍāśa* (pancake made of barley flour) along with a piece of gold on the mouth of the corpse.

In *Gr̥hyapañcikā*, a medieval commentary on the KGS belonging to the *Kāṭhaka śākhā*, a partial description is available. According to this text, the *dr̥ṣads* should be placed on the scrotum, the

ulūkhala and the *musala* on the penis and the *kapālas* and the *upayāmaḥ* on or at the head.⁴⁰

The late *dharmaśāstra* text, PDh V.19-22 provided the description of arranging sacrificial implements on an effigy, as an element of the rite of cremation of the effigy. According to this text, the *samyā* should be placed on the penis and the *araṇīs* should be placed on the scrotum. The *juhū* should be placed on the right hand of the corpse and the *upabhṛt* on the left hand. The *ulūkhala* should be placed near the ears (in some printed editions, “on his back”) and the *musala* must be placed on his back. The *dr̥ṣad* should be placed on the chest and the rice-grains, clarified butter and sesame seeds should be placed on the mouth. The *prokṣaṇī* (vessel for sanctified water) must be placed near the ears and the *ājyasthālī* should be placed on the eyes. The pieces of gold should to be placed on the ears, eyes, nostrils and mouth. Then all other implements for *agnihotra* sacrifice should also be deposited on the effigy.⁴¹

9.4.1.2.3 *Anustaraṇī* sacrifice and offering oblations of clarified butter

Several vedic ritual texts, continuing the tradition found in the JBr, prescribed the elements of sacrifice of the *anustaraṇī* animal and subsequent offering of oblations of clarified butter into the sacrificial fire after the element of *Pātracayana*.

One of the early descriptions is found in KŚS XXV.7.34-37. After the *Pātracayana*, it instructed to kill the *anustaraṇī* animal by striking behind its ears and its two kidneys should be placed in the two hands of the corpse. It mentioned that, according to Jātūkarnya, an earlier authority, the limbs of the animal should be deposited on the corresponding limbs of the corpse. However, this text prohibited this practice due to reason that, this will create confusion in identifying the bones of the deceased (during *Asthisamcayana*). Finally, the face of the corpse should be covered with the *vapā* (omentum) of the *anustaraṇī* animal.⁴² Both the Sāmavedic *śrautasūtra* texts, LŚS 8.8.22 and DŚS 23.4.22 also prescribed to cover the face of the deceased with the omentum of the *anustaraṇī* animal.

According to ĀGS IV.3.19-26, after the element of *Pātracayana*, the son of the deceased should take out the *vapā* (omentum) of the *anustaraṇī* and cover the head and mouth of the deceased with it, while reciting a *mantra* (RV X.16.7). Two kidneys of the *anustaraṇī* should be taken out and the right kidney should be placed in the right hand and the left kidney in the left hand with another *mantra* beginning with, “[O deceased,] escape the two hounds, the sons of Saramā, [each having four eyes].” (RV X.14.10) should be recited. The heart of the *anustaraṇī* should also be taken out and put on the chest of the deceased near the location of the heart. Alternately, two lumps of flour or rice can also be placed. After depositing the whole animal limb by limb on corresponding limbs of the corpse, the corpse should be covered with the hide of the animal. Next to this element, the son of the deceased should bend his left knee and offer four oblations of clarified butter into the *dakṣiṇa* fire with the *mantras*, “To Agni; *svāhā*.”; “To Kāma; *svāhā*.”; “To the Loka (world); *svāhā*.” and “To Anumati; *svāhā*.” Next, he should offer the fifth oblation on the chest of the deceased, with the *mantra*, “You [Agni] have been born from of this [man], let him be born from you; for this so and so (name of the deceased) be in the *svarga loka* (heavenly world); *svāhā*.”⁴³

The descriptions of the sacrifice of the *anustaraṇī* animal followed by offering oblations on the chest of the corpse and to the sacrificial fires are also found in KauśS 81.20-32. It prescribed that a *mantra* from the AVŚ (XVIII.3.34) to be recited over the *jaghanyā* (*anustaraṇī*) cow, while she is being led around the funeral pyre in the reverse direction (from right to left, with the left side of the animal towards the pyre). She should be killed in the south-western direction. Her kidneys should be taken out from behind and should be placed in the hands of the deceased; left kidney in the left hand and the right kidney in the right hand with the *mantra* beginning with, “[O deceased,] escape the two hounds, the sons of Saramā” (AVŚ XVIII.2.11, similar to RV X.14.10). The heart of the animal should be placed on the chest of the corpse near location of the heart. The face of the

deceased should be covered with the *vapā* (omentum) of the animal having seven fissures with the *mantra* (AVŚ XVIII.2.58, similar to RV X.16.7). The limbs of the animal should be placed on the corresponding limbs of the deceased; the right limbs on the right ones and the left limbs on the left ones. A goat should be tied to the south of the pyre with certain *mantras* (AVŚ XVIII.2.8 and XVIII.2.22).⁴⁴ Next, the son of the deceased should offer oblation on the chest of the corpse with a *mantra* and then he should offer oblations into the sacrificial fires with the *mantras*, “To Agni; *svāhā*.”; “To Kāma; *svāhā*.” and “To the Loka; *svāhā*.” This text also mentioned that according to some authority, the oblations should be offered into the *dakṣiṇa* fire only.

An early account of the sacrifice of the *rājagavī* is found in BPS I.6.6, I.7.1-6. BPS I.10.2 prescribed that in case this animal is not sacrificed, it should be either released or it should be gifted to the Brāhmaṇs and donating the cow is the better option. The ritual for the release of the cow is described in BPS I.10.3-5. The later ritual texts of the *Taittirīya śākhā*, BhPS I.4.7, ĀpPS XXXI.2.6 and HPS XXVIII.2.7 also prescribed that the *rājagavī* may be either slaughtered or released. The ritual for its release is mentioned in BhPS I.4.8, ĀpPS XXXI.2.7 and HPS XXVIII.2.8. The ritual for its sacrifice is mentioned in BhPS I.5.1-5, ĀpPS XXXI.2.8-12 and HPS XXVIII.2.9-13. BhPS I.5.1-5 prescribed that the *adhvaryu* (priest) should instruct to slaughter the cow. The cow should be laid down with its head towards the west and the feet towards the south and its face should be covered before killing. While, the cow is being slaughtered, all the relatives of the deceased should bend their left knees any throw dust on their bodies. Next, the cow should be dissected after the instruction from the priest, its heart, kidneys, omentum, fat, skin should be segregated from its flesh, and then its flesh should be cooked. The ritual for the sacrifice of the *anustaraṇī* cow is described in ĀgGS III.5.6 is almost identical to the description in the BPS. In almost similar way as the BPS, ĀgGS III.5.8 also prescribed that in case the *anustaraṇī* is not sacrificed, it should be either released or gifted to the Brāhmaṇs. If the cow is chosen to be released, hairs from the ears of the cow should be pulled out and placed in the hands of the corpse.⁴⁵ The hairs from the right ear should be placed in the right hand of the corpse and the hairs from the left ear should be placed in the left hand; both acts should be with the *mantra*, “For Śyāma and Śabaḷa (two hounds of Yama).” Then, the cow should be released with the *mantra*, “(This cow is) the mother of the Rudras, the daughter of the Vasus, the sister of the Ādityas and the navel of the immortality. I solemnly say to all wise men, do not kill this *aditi* (inviolable) guiltless cow. Let her drink water and eat grass. *Om*, I let her loose.” (TĀ VI.12.1).⁴⁶ A brief description of depositing the limbs of the slaughtered cow on the corpse is found in BPS I.9.8, I.10.1. Uniquely, it prescribed to deposit the tongue of the cow on the face of the deceased. The account in BhPS I.6.22-26, 7.1 and HPS XXVIII.2.51-54 is an elaborate one. It prescribed that, after the element of *Pātracayana*, the *adhvaryu* (priest) should place the heart of the *anustaraṇī* on the chest of the corpse near the heart, the right kidney should be placed on the right palm and the left kidney on the left palm, some *āmikṣā* (a mixture of coagulated milk and fresh hot milk) on both the palms. He should cover the face of the corpse with the omentum of the slaughtered cow and the head of the corpse with its fat. At the end, he should cover the corpse with hide of the cow, together with its limbs and tail. Similar to the KauśS, BPS I.11.4, BhPS I.7.5 and HPS XXVIII.2.61-62 also prescribed to tie a goat with a feeble cord at the rear of the pyre and when the goat escapes (after the cord is burnt during cremation) from the spot, these texts instructed the priest to recite a *mantra* (TĀ VI.1.4).

Later, during the early medieval period, with the change of eschatology, the perception of *anustaraṇī* cow was replaced by the perception of *vaitaraṇī* cow. Like the *anustaraṇī* cow in the late vedic ritual texts, the *vaitaraṇī* cow was also gifted to the Brāhmaṇs, sometimes before death.

9.4.1.2.4 Setting the pyre on fire and departure from *śmaśāna*

The final elements of the cremation rite narrated in the vedic ritual texts are setting the pyre on fire and the departure of the relatives from the cremation spot.

ĀGS IV.4.1-9 mentioned that, after offering five oblations, the son of the deceased should pronounce the order to light the fire and all three sacrificial fires should be lit together. While the corpse is burning, he should recite a *mantra* beginning with, “Go forth, go forth on those ancient paths” (RV X.14.7). The son of the deceased should also dig a knee-deep pit to the north-east of the *Āhavanīya* fire and place a water plant into it. This pit was believed as the resting place for the deceased before undertaking the journey towards the heavenly world along with the smokes. After cremation, the son of the deceased should recite another *mantra* beginning with, “These living ones have separated from the dead” (RV X.18.3). Then, all the relatives should turn around from right to left and go away without looking back.⁴⁷

KauśS 81.33 prescribed that the youngest son should set the pyre on fire with certain *mantras* from the AVŚ (XVIII.2.4 [according to the medieval scholiast Keśava, 2.4-7] and 36; 3.71 [according to Keśava, 3.71-73] and II.34.5). The description of the sacrifice performed by the son of the deceased by offering oblations of clarified butter on the pyre, while it is ablaze is found in KauśS 81.34-45. According to this text, the sacrifice should begin with the *Yāmahoma* (sacrifice to Yama) by offering eleven oblations to Yama, each with a *mantra* from the AVŚ (XVIII.1.49-50; 58-61; 2.1-3; 3.13 and 2.49). It should be followed by the *Sārvasvatā* (sacrifice to Sarasvatī) by offering oblations with *mantras* from the AVŚ (XVIII.1.41-43; VII.68.1-2 and VIII.3.25). According to KauśS 81.46-47 after the completion of the sacrifice, the performer (son of the deceased) should wash his hands with a *mantra* (AVŚ XVIII.3.12) and sip water with another *mantra* (AVŚ XVIII.3.10). KauśS 82.2-3 prescribed that the seven *śarkarās* (pebbles) should be placed into the hands of all mourners present in the cremation spot. Scattering the *śarkarās* one by one from the downward palm of the left hand, they should go away after cremation without looking back.

BPS I.11.13-14 and 12.1-3, BhPS I.7.11 and 12.1-3 and HPS XXVIII.2.67-70 prescribed to dig three trenches on the rear side of the cremation spot. These trenches should be surrounded by stones and sand and filled with water. At the rear end of these furrows, two *palāśa* or *śamī* branches should be perched on the ground and joined by a cord made of *darbha* grass. After the cremation, all relatives should pass between these two twigs and the last person should throw away these branches.

9.4.1.2.5 Cremation of effigy

It seems that the cremation of the effigy of a person, who died away from his home on a journey, along with his sacrificial implements was a very ancient practice. An early description of the rite of cremation of effigy is found in ŚBM XII.5.1.13-14. This text prescribed that in case a person dies away from his home, after cremating him in the distant land, his bones should to be brought back home. There, his effigy should be made on a black antelope skin and it should be cremated after covering it by wool and clarified butter.⁴⁸ Later KŚS XXV.8.14-15, following the same tradition, prescribed the same cremation rite for the person whose bones are brought back but it added that if the bones are not found, an effigy of the person should be made on a black antelope skin with three hundred and sixty *palāśa* leafstalks and the cremation rite should be performed.⁴⁹

The earliest description of making an effigy of a person whose bones could not be found after death can be traced to an early *Brāhmaṇa* text, ABr XXXI.2. It prescribed that if the bones of a deceased could not be found then three hundred and sixty leaf stalks to be gathered, a human figure should be made with them and when the bones are ultimately found, the leafstalks should be mingled with them and removed together.⁵⁰ The number, 360 signifies the ancient belief that every human skeleton has 360 bones. ŚŚS IV.15.9-22, following the same R̥gvedic tradition, described in details the rite for the cremation of the effigy of a person, whose bones could not be found. This text prescribed to form an effigy with three hundred and sixty *palāśa* leafstalks in the shape of a human being. Forty leafstalks should form the head, ten should form the neck, a hundred should form the

shoulders and arms, thirty should form the chest, twenty should form the abdomen, six should form the scrotum, four should form the penis, another hundred should form the thighs, thirty should form the upper legs, lower legs and knees and twenty should form the toes of the feet. According to this text, this effigy should be tied with woollen threads (representing muscles), pasted over with barley flour mixed with water (representing flesh) and anointed with clarified butter before cremation. Similar descriptions for the cremation of effigy are found in KauṣGS V.6.3-5 and JGS II.4. In the description of the KauṣGS, ten leafstalks should form the fingers and ten should form the toes. In the description of the JGS, the only difference with the KauṣGS is that it prescribed ten leaves for forming the penis and none for the scrotum.

The distributions of *palāśa* petioles mentioned in the vedic ritual texts of the *Taittirīya śākhā* are almost similar and different from the ŚŚS and the KauṣGS. BPS III.8.1 mentioned the rite for cremation of effigy for an *āhitāgni*, who died abroad as *Punaḥ Saṃskāra*. BPS III.7.4 prescribed that, in case the bones could not be found, an effigy of the person should be formed on a black antelope skin with 360 *palāśa* petioles and the cremation should be performed. According to BPS III.8.1, forty leafstalks should form the head, ten should form the neck, twenty should form the chest and thirty should form the abdomen, fifty should form each arm, out of which five should be used for forming the fingers of each hand, eight should form the penis, twelve should form the scrotum. Seventy petioles should form each leg, out of which five should form the toes of each leg.⁵¹ Distribution of *palāśa* petioles mentioned in BhPS II.12.2, HPS XXIX.4.39 and ĀgGS III.10.5 (also described this rite as *Punaḥ Saṃskāra*) is exactly same as the BPS. BhPS II.12.5-6 added that in case *palāśa* petioles are not available, the effigy should be made of young *darbha* blades or petioles of any tree, which is used for the sacrifice. In case those are also not available, then the effigy should be made by collecting the dust from the ground and mixing it with honey or clarified butter. GPS II.I.1-14 described this rite as *Punaḥ Dahana* and prescribed an almost similar distribution of *palāśa* petioles.

VkhGS V.12 described this rite as *Akṛtidahana* (literally, “burning an effigy”) and prescribed this rite for every deceased person, even if the corpse is not lost. According to this text, this rite may be performed either one month or one year after death. It prescribed to make the effigy on a black antelope skin by binding together three hundred and sixty *palāśa* leafstalks along with the leaves and the *darbha* grass stalks. The VkhGS prescribed that, forty leafstalks should represent the head, ten should represent the neck, a hundred should represent the arms, ten should represent the fingers, thirty should represent the chest, twenty should represent the abdomen, seven should represent the frenulum of prepuce of penis and the scrotum, three should represent the penis, another hundred should represent the thighs, ten should represent the knees, twenty should represent the legs and ten should represent the toes.⁵² VasDh IV.37 and KP III.4.2-3 described this rite very briefly.

A late *dharmaśāstra* text, PDh V.14-18 prescribed a completely different distribution for the *palāśa* leafstalks, in its description of the cremation of the effigy for a person who died abroad. According to this text, a hide of black antelope should be spread and a *puruṣākṛti* (effigy) with *kuśa* grass should be made over it and 700 *palāśa* leafstalks should be placed on it. Out of these, 40 leaves should be placed on the head, 10 on the neck, 100 on the two arms, 10 on the fingers, 100 on the hip, 200 on the abdomen, 8 on the scrotum, 5 on the penis, 21 on the two thighs, 200 on the knees and calves and 6 on the toes of the feet. According to the PDh, this element should be followed by the arrangement of the sacrificial implements on the effigy and its cremation.⁵³ These same verses are cited in ŚudP as of the MDh. An early medieval Śuklayajurvedic *pariśiṣṭa* (supplementary) text, *Yajñapārśva* 2.184-190 also provided an account of this rite.

9.4.1.3 Udakakarma: Offering water to the deceased

The post-cremation rite of libations of water for the deceased known as *Udakakarma*, *Udakakriyā*

or *Udakadāna*, is described in several vedic ritual texts and the YDh (as well as the *Mahābhārata*). The underlying belief for this rite was to satiate the thirst of the deceased, who has suffered from the severe heat during cremation.

An early description of this rite found in ĀGS IV.4.10-13. It prescribed that, after the cremation, when the relatives of the deceased reach a place, where there is standing water, they should submerge themselves into it once and raise their heads out of it. Next, they should pour a handful of water pronouncing the *gotra* and the name of the deceased and come out of the water. After putting on another set of garments and wringing out wet garments, they should lay them away with their skirts towards the north. Then, they should sit down and wait for entering the village either until the appearance of the stars or they may enter the village when only the sun's disk is visible above the horizon. While entering the village, the youths should enter first, the aged people should enter last. When they have reached their houses, they should touch a stone, the fire, cow dung, unhusked grains, sesame seeds and water.

PGS III.10.13-24 prescribed that, after the cremation of the deceased, all agnate relatives of the deceased up to the seventh or the tenth degree and those who living in the same village and can trace any relationship with the deceased should perform the rite of *Udakakarma*, which literally means, "the rite of (offering) water (to the deceased)." At the beginning of the rite of water libations, the performers should ask for the permission of a person who is related to the dead by blood or by marriage by saying, "Shall we perform the libation?" and he should reply if the deceased is less than hundred years old as, "Do so now, and never again." In case the deceased is a centenarian, he should reply, "Do so." Next, all performers should enter the water, wearing only one garment, dressed as *prācīnāvītin* and with the ring finger of the left hand they should spirt away water, reciting a *mantra*, "May he drive evil away from us with his splendour" (VSM XXXV.6b). Then, facing the south, they should plunge in to the water and pour out with joined hands a libation of water to the deceased with the words, "Named so and so, this water is for you." When they come out of the water, and sit on a pure spot covered with grass, the *itihāsa* of yore should be narrated to them. After, the completion of the rite, the performers should return to the village, in a row, without looking back, the younger persons walking in front. At the doors of their houses, they should chew *picumanda* (*Azadirachta indica*) leaves; sip water; touch water, fire, cow-dung, *gaurasarṣapa* (seeds of white mustard) and oil; tread up on a stone and then enter their houses. According to PGS III.10.35-36, if the cremation has taken place in the daytime, those who have touched the corpse, should not enter the village until the stars appear. If the cremation has taken place in night, they should not enter the village before sunrise. This rite, according to this text, should not be performed in case of the death of a child below two years, for whom burial is performed (PGS III.10.5 and 7). It is optional for a person if the deceased was a *ṛtvik* (officiating priest), father-in-law, a friend, of distant relations, *mātula* (maternal uncle), *bhāgineya* (sister's son) or the married female relations (PGS III.10.46-47).⁵⁴

Description of this rite is found in BPS III.4.16-20. BhPS I.8.4-8 described a similar rite. It prescribed that after the cremation the relatives should enter the water without looking back with the *mantra*, "May Dhātṛ purify us with the heat of the fire; may Savitṛ purify us with the splendour of the sun." (TĀ VI.3.8) Then they should loosen their hair, throw dust on their heads and wearing a single garment, they should submerge themselves in the water once facing south, come out and sit down. This act should be performed thrice. Then, they should pour out an *añjali* (handful) of water for the deceased in such a way that the deceased recognizes it. On every successive day up to the eleventh day after death, the number of *añjalis* should be increased by one. They should return to the village without looking back and perform whatever the rituals the female members of the family ask them to do. HPS XXVIII.2.71-72 also described a similar rite. In addition to the BhPS, it prescribed that after coming out from the water body, the relatives should bend their left knee,

squeeze out their wet garments (this act is known as offering *vāsodaka*) and sit down. Next, a handful of water mixed with sesame seeds should be offered thrice after pronouncing the *gotra* and name of the deceased. ĀgGS III.4.4 furnished a more detailed account of this rite. In addition to the HPS, it prescribed that at the entrance of their houses, the relatives of the deceased should chew margosa leaves, sip water, touch cow-dung, gold, water, fire, mustard seeds and sesame seeds and step up on a stone before entering inside.

Curiously, the description of this rite for the followers of the Āpastamba is not mentioned in the *pitṛmedhasūtra* of this *śākhā*, but it is found in their *dharmasūtra*. ĀpDh II.6.15.7-9 prescribed that the relatives of the deceased should loosen their hair and throw dust on their heads. Wearing a single garment, facing east, they should submerge themselves once in the water, come out and sit down. This act should be performed three times. Then, they should pour out water for the deceased in such a way that the deceased recognizes it, return to the village without looking back and perform whatever the rituals the female members of the family ask them to do.

The description found in GPS I.4.7-11 is also similar. It prescribed that after coming out from the water, the relatives of the deceased should sip water, bend their left knees and squeeze out their wet clothes to offer the *vāsodaka* (*vāsa udaka*, literally, “garment water”) to the deceased three times with a *mantra*. Then, they should offer *añjalis* (handfuls) of water mixed with sesame seeds to the deceased with the *mantra*, “I give water mixed with sesame seeds to the so and so (name of the deceased) *preta* of so and so *gotra*”. This should continue for eleven days and on each successive day, the number of *añjalis* should be increased by one.

VkhGS V.6 prescribed that after the cremation, the relatives of the deceased should leave the cremation spot, turning back in counter-clockwise direction, not looking backward. They should return to the village looking downward, following the customary practices of the village. On their way from the *śmaśāna*, at a solitary location, one of them should stretch forward a rope made of *darbha* grass and ward them off with a *mantra*, “Do you not descend?” and all other should pass under the rope, reciting the *mantra*, “We shall not descend.” After, casting away the rope, the rest should follow him. In the same way, the brother of the wife of the deceased or an agnate of the deceased or a prince, on a solitary location, when they move towards the water body, should stretch out a branch of *udumbara* tree and ward them off. After all the recitations of the *mantras* are over, all of them facing towards the south should loosen their hair and enter the water. Having, once submerged themselves into the water, they should come out of the water and sip water. With their faces turned towards the south, wearing the sacrificial thread in *prācīnāvītīn* (under the left arm and over the right shoulder) style, all relatives of the deceased should pour out handful of water mixed with sesame seeds thrice on southwardly pointed *darbha* grass stalks, *udumbara* leaves, sesame seeds and unhusked grains. While offering water, they should say, “Here is the water for you” and mention the *gotra* and name of the deceased before these words. Having returned from the cremation spot with wet garments, they should do whatever the female members of the family asked them to do.

BDh I.11.24 prescribed that when a death occurs, the relatives should wear their *yajñopavīta* over their right shoulders and under their left arms. Placing the younger relatives in front, they should go down to a *tīrtha* (bathing place). They should submerge themselves in water, rise up, climb up to the bank, sip some water, offer a libation of water to the deceased, and repeat the whole sequence three times. Finally, they should climb up to the bank, sip some water, touch coal and water at the door of the house, and remain seated there on mats for ten days and eat food without alkali (spices) or salt.⁵⁵

GDh XIV.34 mentioned this rite as *Udakadāna*. GDh XIV.34-43 instructed that this rite of water libations must be performed for the deceased whose *Jaṭākarāṇa* (*Cūḍākarāṇa*) rite has been

performed and for his wives. After the death, all relatives should sleep and sit on the floor, remain chaste, should not wash themselves and should not eat flesh till the oblations are offered. They should perform *Udakakriyā* on the first, third, fifth, seventh and ninth day after death. The garments worn should be discarded after the performance of the rite, except the last day. On the last day, the garment should be gifted to an *Antyaja*. Only the parents should offer the libations of water for a child who died after the eruption of teeth.

VasDh IV.9 and IV.11-13 described this rite as *Udakakriyā*. It instructed that after cremation, the relatives of the deceased should enter a place of water without looking back (at the cremation spot). On the uneven days (first, third, fifth, seventh and ninth day after death, according to its commentary written in 1859 by Kṛṣṇapaṇḍita Dharmādhikārī), they should pour libations of water with both hands facing the south as south is the direction of the *pitṛs*.⁵⁶

YDh III.3, 5, 7-14 prescribed that within the seventh or tenth day, the relatives of the deceased with their faces turned towards direction of the *pitṛs* (south), should enter the water for water libations with the *mantra* beginning with, “May [Agni] remove our evil” (RV I.97.1, AVŚ IV.33.1 and VSM XXXV.21). They should pour the water pronouncing the name and *gotra* of the deceased. Having offered libations of water, bathed, they should come out of the water and sit on soft grass. The elders should console them with the *itihāsa* of yore and tell them that, if a human body composed of the five elements, by the fruits of the deeds of one’s own person, reverts to the five elements, there should be nothing to repent for. Having listened well, they should go back to their houses, the youths in front. They should chew margosa leaves at the entrance of their houses and then enter the house after sipping water and touching fire, water, cow dung and *gaurasarsapa* (seeds of white mustard) and placing their feet over a stone. According to this text, the rituals before entering the house must be performed by all those who have touched the corpse.

A late Sāmavedic ritual text, KP III.3.1-10 also described this rite in details. In its description, it cited YDh 8-11 without reference. It prescribed that after cremation, all those who have touched the corpse should leave the cremation spot without looking back, go to a water body, take a bath without removing the clothes, sip water and offer libations of water mixed with sesame seeds to the deceased with the words, “I satiate”, pronouncing the name and *gotra* of the deceased. After offering the libations of water to the deceased, the relatives of the deceased should again take a bath, sip water and sit on a ground covered with green grass. There, they should console themselves by reciting certain verses (from the YDh) and then, they should return to their homes.

Another late vedic ritual text, ViṣDh XIX.6-8 stated that after cremation, the relatives of the deceased should take a dip into the water without removing their clothes. Then, they should offer libations of water, followed by placing a *piṇḍa* on a mat of *kuśa* grass. Having changed their garments, they should chew margosa leaves and place their feet on a stone before entering their houses.

9.4.1.4 *Asthisamcayana*: The rite of collection of the charred bones

Asthisamcayana (literally, “collection of bones”), the post-cremation rite of collection of the charred bones of the deceased from the funeral pyre and their disposal is described in several vedic ritual texts.

An early description of this rite is available in ŚŚS IV.15.6-8, which mentioned this rite as *Samcayana*. ĀGS IV.5.1-8 described this rite as *Asthisamcayana*. It prescribed that, after the tenth day from cremation of the dead during the fortnight of the waxing moon on an uneven *tithi* (lunar day), the charred bones should be collected. The bones of a male should be collected in an urn without any protuberances and the bones of a female should be collected in an urn with protuberances but with no marks. The bones should be collected by the aged persons odd in numbers, but men and women separately. The performers should circumambulate the spot of the

funeral pyre thrice, with his left towards the funeral pyre and sprinkle milk mixed with water with a *śamī* branch, reciting a *mantra* (RV X.16.14). With the thumb and the ring finger, all bones should be collected and put in to the urn after the ashes attached to them being removed with a winnowing basket. The bones should be placed in an urn with a lid. The lid of the urn must be closed with a *mantra* (RV X.18.13); the urn should be buried in a pit with a *mantra* beginning with, “Approach this mother earth” (RV X.18.10) and the pit should be covered up with earth with the next *mantra* from the RV (X.18.11). After the completion of the burial of the urn, the *mantra* from the RV (X.18.12), which followed the earlier one, should be recited. Then, without looking back, the performers should return to their houses and take a plunge in water.

According to KauśS 82.21, on the second day after death, a *sthālīpāka* (mess of cooked food) should be offered to the fire at the funeral pyre with a *mantra* (AVŚ XVIII.2.20b). KauśS 82.26-28 prescribed that on the fourth day after death, the charred bones should be sprinkled with *kṣīra* (sweet milk) for a Brāhmaṇ, honey for a Kṣatriya and water for a Vaiśya with the recitation of two *mantras*, “Down from the sky to the reeds of the rivers, lower yourself; O Agni, you are indeed the gall of the water” (AVŚ XVIII.3.5) and “Let the mist be generous to you, let the frost fall down as generous to you; make cool, you who is possessed with coolness; make fresh, you who possessed with freshness; may you be happy with the female frog in the water, kindly pacify this fire” (AVŚ XVIII.3.60) (the medieval scholiast Keśava added another *mantra*, “Cool, Agni, and refresh the spot which you had scorched and burned; let *kyāmbu*, *śāṇḍadūrvā* and *vyalkaśā* plants grow here” (AVŚ XVIII.3.6) for this element). Then, the bones should be consecrated with a *mantra* (AVŚ XVIII.2.10). Next, KauśS 82.29-33 instructed to collect the charred bones with two *mantras* (AVŚ XVIII.2.24 and 26), consign it to an urn, scatter fragrant powders over it, raise the urn with the *Utthāpanī* verses (AVŚ XVIII.1.54, 61; XVIII.2.48-49, 53; XVIII.3.8-9; XVIII.4.44), carry it with the *Hariṇī* verses (AVŚ XVIII.2.11-18) and after digging a pit at the root of a tree with a *mantra* (AVŚ XVIII.2.25), “May the tree not injure you all round, may not the wide goddess Earth also injure you.”, place the urn in the pit with another *mantra* (AVŚ XVIII.2.19).

BPS I.14.1-9, 15.1-2 mentioned this rite as *Samcayana* and a brief account is provided here. Another very brief account of this rite is found in BPS III.10.1-3. BhPS I.9.1-14 and HPS XXVIII.3.1-14 also mentioned this rite as *Samcayana*. These texts prescribed to collect the charred bones on the next day after cremation or on the third, fifth or seventh day. According to these texts, this rite should begin with the sprinkling of *kṣīra* (sweet milk) mixed with water over the bones with an *udumbara* twig with five *mantras*, beginning with, “The fire, which we have churned has cooked you as a bull; we pacify that fire with milk and water.”; “Cool, Agni, and refresh the spot which you had scorched and burned; let *kyāmbu*, *pākadūrvā* and *vyalkaśā* plants grow here”; “Make cool, you who is possessed with coolness; make fresh, you who possessed with freshness; you unite him with the water rich in frogs, kindly pacify this fire”; “May the water belonging to the desert be generous to you; may the water belonging to the moist region be generous to you; may the water belonging to the oceans be generous to you and may the water belonging to the rains be generous to you” and “May the flowing water be generous to your body; may the water belonging to a well be generous to you; may the mist sprinkled on you be generous, may the frost fall down as generous to you.” (TĀ VI.4.1). The charred bones should be collected by the female relatives, odd in number (five or above), or other females (in the absence of female relatives) after sprinkling them well with the water from an odd number of pitchers. A female, who is not likely to bear any child in future, should tie in her left hand a *bṛhatī* fruit with two threads blue and red in colour. She should step on a stone with her left foot; collect the bones, first from the teeth or head with the *mantra* (TĀ VI.4.2) beginning with, “Arise [from here]” and deposit them on a cloth or an urn. Then, a second female of same type should collect bones from the shoulders or the arms, a third female from the sides or hips, a fourth from the thighs or legs and a fifth from the feet. They or more females should collect the bones completely. The urn should be deposited at the root of a *śamī* or *palāśa* tree.⁵⁷ At the end, all

should take a bath. Both of these texts mentioned that according to some authority, the performers should bathe with dust.

ĀgGS III.4.5 prescribed to perform the rite of *Asthisamcayana* on the second day, third day, fifth day or seventh day after cremation. VkhGS V.7 prescribed to collect the charred bones on the fourth day after cremation.

JGS II.5 prescribed that on the next day after the cremation the performer should mix milk and water, go to the cremation spot and sprinkle this mixture on the charred bones by means of a horn of the goat, a horn of the cow or an earthen vessel. On the third day, he should mix fragrant substances and herbs with water; sprinkle this mixture on the charred bones by means of a *śamī* or *palāśa* twig and put the bones in to an urn without making any sound. If the deceased is a female, the bones should be collected in a female urn (an urn with protuberances). Having passed a crossroad or a big tree or a river, the urn should be buried at fordable place in the river.⁵⁸

A brief description of this rite is found in KP III.4.9-13. It prescribed to perform the rite of collection of bones on the next day after cremation or on the third day. It instructed that at the beginning, the performer, after taking bath, should silently sprinkle cow's milk on the charred bones. Next, he should separate the bones from the ashes with a *śamī* or *palāśa* twig, besmear the bones with clarified butter and then he should sprinkle water mixed with fragrant substances over them. The bones should be kept inside an earthen vessel, another earthen vessel should be placed over it and both the vessels should be fastened with a thread. These vessels should be deposited in a pit facing south and the pit should be filled with the lumps of mud mixed with green moss.

In the description of *Asthisamcayana* of a late *dharmasūtra* text, ViṣDh XIX.10-12, it is observed that the practice of urn burial was no more in vogue. It prescribed to collect the charred bones on the fourth day after cremation and to throw them in the waters of the Gaṅgā, as it is believed that as many bones of the deceased remain in the waters of the Gaṅgā, the deceased resides in the heaven for so many thousands of years.⁵⁹ Further later, YS 87-88 prescribed that the relatives of the deceased should perform the rite of *Asthisamcayana* on the first, second, third or fourth day after the death (for a Brāhmaṇ). It also instructed that this rite should be performed on the fourth, fifth, seventh and ninth day after death for a Brāhmaṇ, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya and Śūdra respectively.

9.4.1.5 *Punardahana*: The rite of re-cremation of the charred bones

Punardahana or *Punardāha* (literally, “burning again”), the ancient rite for re-cremation of the charred bones collected during the rite of *Asthisamcayana* is mentioned only in the ritual texts of the *Taittirīya śākhā*. BPS II.3.2 instructed that for the persons, who had performed the *Somayajñas*, the charred bones should be re-cremated. BhPS I.12.13 and HPS XXVIII.4.28 also mentioned this passage as the opinion of some authority.

Description of this rite is found in BPS I.16.1-5, BhPS I.10.4-8 and ĀgGS III.6.4. These texts instructed that in case it has been decided that the rite of *Punardahana* to be performed for a corpse, the *juhū* (the BPS and the ĀgGS) or the *agnihotrahaṇī* (the BhPS only), the pieces of *araṇi* (the BPS and the ĀgGS), the *kṛṣṇājina* (black antelope skin), the *śamyā* (yoke-pin), the *drṣad* and the *upalā* (lower and upper millstones) should not be offered into the funeral pyre during cremation. According to these texts, this rite of re-cremation should begin with taking out the jar containing the charred bones buried at the time of *Asthisamcayana*. Then, the black antelope skin should be spread over the southwardly pointed *darbha* grass stalks (the BPS and BhPS) to the rear of the fire kindled and the *śamyā* (yoke-pin) should be placed over it. The charred bones should be crushed into powder with the *drṣad* and the *upalā* (lower and upper millstones) placed over the *śamyā* (yoke-pin). Next, according to BPS I.16.2 and ĀgGS III.6.4, the fire should be churned out from the woods of *aśvattha*. But, BhPS I.10.5 prescribed that the priest should take out a coal from the

southern end of the funeral pyre at the time of cremation, keep that fire enkindled for three nights, select a spot similar to one for cremation and enkindle the fire at that place and strew round the fire. The powdered bones should be mixed with clarified butter (inside a pitcher filled with clarified butter according to the BhPS) and offered to the fire by means of a *juhū* (the BPS and the ĀGS) or an *agnihotrahavaṇī* (the BhPS only) with the *mantra*, “You are born from of this [man], let him again be born from you; To Agni, Vaiśvānara, for [this deceased be in] the *suvarga loka* (heaven); *svāhā*” (TĀ VI.4.2). At the end, all sacrificial implements should be thrown in the fire. The rite of *Śmaśāna* should not be performed for the deceased for whom this rite has been performed.

9.4.1.6 *Śāntikarma* or *Paridhikarma*: The pacification rites

The ancient rite of *Śāntikarma* (literally, “expiatory rite”) or *Paridhikarma* (literally, “rite of the (three) enclosing wooden sticks”) was performed for the welfare of the members of the family of the deceased. This rite is described as *Śāntikarma* in ĀGS IV.6.1-18, BhPS I.11.1-15, HPS XXVIII.4.1-23 and as *Paridhikarma* in ŚŚS IV.16.1-11 and KauṣGS V.8.1-10.

According to ĀGS IV.6.1, this rite should be performed by the persons who have lost their *guru* or afflicted with any other mishap on a new moon day. ĀGS IV.6.2-18 prescribed that, on the day of performance, before sunrise, the performers should carry their fire together with its ashes and its receptacle to the south, reciting the hemistich, “I send the Kravyāda (flesh-devouring) Agni far away” (RV X.16.9a). Having thrown that fire at a crossroad or somewhere else, they should circumambulate it three times, with their left sides turned towards it, beating their left thighs with their left hands. Next, they should return without looking back, take a bath, have a haircut, shave the beard and the hair of the body and trim their nails. Then, they should provide themselves with new jars, pots, vessels for rinsing the mouth, garlands of *śamī* flowers, two pieces of *śamī* wood for producing fire, the *paridhis* for enclosing the sacrificial fire, cow dung and a bull’s hide, fresh butter, a piece of stone and as many *kuśapiñjula* (bunches of *kuśa* grass) as there are young females in the family. At the time of *Agnihotra*, the performer of the rite should kindle a new fire by the attrition of two new kindling sticks, reciting the hemistich, “Here may this other Jātavedā, bear the offerings to the deities” (RV X.16.9b). Keeping that fire burning, they should sit till the silence of the night, repeating the tales of the long-lived ones, and listening to the stories of auspicious contents, *Itihāsa* and the *Purāṇas*. When all sounds have subsided, or when other people have gone to their house or resting-place, the performer of the rite should pour out an uninterrupted stream of water, beginning at the southern side of the door, with the *mantra*, “Spinning the thread, follow the light of the aerial space” (RV X.53.6) and go round the house in such a manner that the stream ends at the northern side of the door. Having established the sacrificial fire at its proper place and having spread to its west a bull’s hide with its neck towards the east and its hairs upward, he should make the relatives to step on that hide, reciting a *mantra*, “Arise to long life choosing old age” (RV X.18.6). Next, he should lay the *paridhis* around the sacrificial fire with a *mantra*, “This I lay round the living” (RV X.18.4). With the words, “They shall place a mountain between themselves and death”, he should place a piece of stone on the north of the sacrificial fire. Then, he should offer four oblations with four *mantras* (RV X.18.1-4) and look at the relatives of the deceased with a *mantra* (RV X.18.5). Next, the young female relatives should anoint their eyes with fresh butter by means of young *darbha* blades held in the thumbs and the ring fingers separately and after anointing, they should throw away the *darbha* blades behind them without looking back. While they are anointing the eyes, the performer of the rite should look at them with the *mantra*, “Let these females, who are not widows, who have good husbands, applying butter to anoint their eyes; without tears and without disease, worthy of every attention, let these females ascend the house.” (RV X.18.7). Next, he should touch the piece of stone, reciting a *mantra* (RV X.53.8). Sitting to the northeast to the sacrificial fire, the performer of the rite should recite a *mantra* (RV X.155.5), while the relatives of the deceased should circumambulate the sacrificial fire, holding fire and a bull’s

dung in their hands and pouring an uninterrupted stream of water, reciting three *mantras* (RV X.9.1-3). This text mentioned that, according to some authority on rituals, the performer of the rite should lead a tawny-coloured bull round the fire. Having put on the *ahata* garments, they should wakefully sit at a comfortable place till sunrise. After sunrise, he should recite the hymns sacred to Sūrya and the auspicious hymns; prepare food and offer oblations into the sacrificial fire with a *sūkta* (RV I.97). The rite should end with serving food to the Brāhmaṇs and causing them to utter auspicious words. A cow, an *ahata* garment and a metal cup is given as the sacrificial fee.⁶⁰

The description of *Paridhikarma* in KauṣGS V.8.1-10 is different from the ĀGS. It prescribed that the performer of the rite should sit on the west of the sacrificial fire on the hide of a red bull spread with its neck towards the east or north and its hairy side turned upwards. The relatives of deceased should sit on the north of the sacrificial fire and a piece of stone should be placed between them and the performer. First, he should lay the *paridhis* of *śamī* wood around the sacrificial fire. Next, while they touch him, the performer should offer twelve oblations of clarified butter reciting certain *mantras*. Then, he should mix *añjana* (eye-salve) with clarified butter and anoint the eyes of the female relatives with it by means of the *darbhapiñjula* (bunches of *darbha* grass), once with the *mantra* beginning with, “[Let] these females” (RV X.18.7) and twice silently. The rite should end with the recitation of a *mantra* (RV I.40.1) by the performer towards the relatives, when they stand up after touching the arm of Brāhmaṇ or the tail of a bull. An ox, an *ahata* garment and a metal cup is given as the sacrificial fee.⁶¹

BhPS I.11.1-15, 12.1-7 prescribed that at the dawn of the ninth night (viz., the tenth day) after cremation, the performer of the rite should kindle the sacrificial fire between the village and the cremation spot, strew *darbha* grass around it, spread a hide of a red bull to the west of the sacrificial fire with its neck towards the east and its hairy side turned upwards. He should cause the relatives of the deceased to stand on the hide with the *mantra* beginning with, “Ascend” (TĀ VI.10.1). He should offer oblations of clarified butter into the sacrificial fire with a *sruva* (small spoon) made of *varaṇa* wood, with the beak turned towards him. After each offering, he should pour the remnants in a vessel. To the north of the sacrificial fire, a red bull should be made to stand facing the east. The relatives of the deceased should touch it with a *mantra* beginning with, “We touch the bull” (TĀ VI.10.1). Next, the performer should pour down the remnants of clarified butter in the joined hands of the female relatives with a *mantra* beginning with, “[Let] these females” (TĀ VI.10.2) and they should anoint their faces with these remnants. Next, these females should anoint their eyes with the *traikakuda* (found in the *Trikakuda* Mountains) eye-salve with a *mantra* beginning with, “The *traikakuda* eye-salve” (TĀ VI.10.2). If the *traikakuda* eye-salve is not available, any other eye-salve can be used. The description of HPS XXVIII.4.1-17 is almost similar, but it added that at the end, the performer of the rite should plant a stalk of the plant with a *mantra* beginning with, “Just as you” (TĀ VI.10.2). After returning home, the relatives should cook goat flesh and boil barley grains and consume the goat flesh with a *mantra* beginning with, “You are goat” (TĀ VI.10.2) and barley grains with *mantra* beginning with, “You are barley” (TĀ VI.10.2). Then they should ascend *āsandī* (couches) and *talpa* (cot). They should also shave the head and the beard and trim the nails.⁶²

9.4.1.7 *Loṣṭaciti* or *Śmaśāna*: The construction of sepulchral monument

Description of *Loṣṭaciti* (literally, “a mound made with clods”) or *Śmaśāna*, the ancient rite of building a mound with clods of earth or unburnt bricks over the charred bones of the deceased collected during *Asthisaṃcayana* is found in KŚS XXI.3.1-4.24 and several *pitṛmedhasūtras*, including BPS I.17-20, BhPS II.2-5, HPS XXIX.1.3-81 and ĀpPS XXXI.5. This rite is mentioned BPS I.18.1 as *Śmaśānakaraṇa* (literally, “preparation of burial mound”).

KSS XXI.3.1-5 prescribed to perform this rite when the death anniversary is no more remembered, or one year after the death or when a single-starred constellation appears in the east or it may be

performed in summer or autumn or in the (lunar) month of *Māgha*.⁶³ According to BhPS II.2.1-3, this rite should be performed after an odd number of days, fortnights or seasons after the death. If the exact date of the death is known, then one should perform this rite whenever he wishes to do so. This rite should be performed on the new moon day following the full moon day of the (lunar) months of *Māgha*, *Phālguna*, *Caitra* (March-April), *Vaiśākha* (April-May) or *Nidāgha* (May-June).⁶⁴

At the beginning of this rite, which should commence in the afternoon, the urn of charred bones should be taken out from the pit for the purification; clods of earth, bricks and the plants to be fixed on the mound should be arranged. The clods of earth should be dug from the area at north of the cremation spot. The area for the *loṣṭaciti* should be marked on the south of the cremation spot and the area should be sprinkled with water to move away all living creatures. According to BhPS II.2.7 and HPS XXIX.1.5-6, the area of the base for the *loṣṭaciti* should be of square shape with all sides of five *prakrama* (1.14 m). However, these texts also mentioned that according to some (authority), the shape should be trapezoidal, with the eastern side of six *prakrama*. A shed should be built on the spot.⁶⁵

According to the BhPS and the HPS, the next element should be the ritual fanning of the charred bones including an ancient ritual known as *dhuvana* (literally, “shaking [during sexual intercourse]”). It was a ritual dialogue between the *mukhyatamā* (senior-most) widow of the deceased and a *Śūdra* (according to HPS, a person whose mother is a *Śūdra*) or a *brahmabandhu* (unworthy son of a *Brāhman*), specially called for this ritual about an imaginary sexual intercourse. It could continue for three days or more, depending on the period decided for the ritual fanning. For the first two days, the person called for this ritual should ask for having a sexual intercourse and the widow should reply in negative. From the third day onwards, she should reply positively. While the widow of the deceased is uttering the reply, the *adhvaryu* (Yajurvedic priest) should deposit the charred bones at the bottom of a three-pronged *palāśa* peg and place a jar with a hundred holes at its bottom between the prongs and above the bones. The mouth of this jar should be covered with a hide and *kuśa* grass. Then, according to BhPS II.3.13-14, *ĀpPS* XXXI.5.21-22 and HPS XXIX.1.24-25, the jar should be filled with *vājina* (scum of the curdled milk) with the *mantra* beginning with, “I offer *Vaiśvānara* this oblation” (TĀ VI.6.1a) and when the liquid starts oozing from the jar to the charred bones, two *mantras* (TĀ VI.6.1b,c) should be recited. Next, four *brahmacārī* should fan the charred bones with the fringes of their garments, while going around the peg and strike their left thighs and the hide wound around the jar. Following them, the male and female relatives should also fan the charred bones. During the ritual, the *vīṇā* (lute) and *tūnava* (flute) should be played, the conch-shells and *nālī* (pipe) should be blown and the *paṇava* (small drum) should be beaten. Dancing and singing also should be performed during the rite. According to BPS I.17.8, female dancers should perform during the rite. Food and valuable items should be gifted during this rite depending on one’s capacity.⁶⁶ KŚS XXI.3.10-11 prescribed to distribute plenty of food on the day of performance of this rite and dancing, singing and playing of musical instruments should be performed on this day. According to BhPS II.3.22-23 and HPS XXIX.1.31, this ritual of *dhuvana* may continue for three, five, seven, nine, eleven days, half-a-month, a month or a year.

The last element of this rite after *dhuvana* is the actual building of the burial mound. According to BhPS II.4.1-5.21, initially the area should be ritually swept with a twig of *palāśa* or *śamī* with a *mantra*, “Go away, go asunder, move away from here, who are old and who are new. May Yama grant for him a home.” (TĀ VI.6.1d). Then the area should be dug by a plough to which six, twelve or twenty-four oxen were yoked. According to BhPS II.5.8-11, the height of the mound should be two *aṅgulas*, three *aṅgulas*, four *aṅgulas*, one *pradeśa*, one *vitasti*, knee-high, thigh-high or hip-high. The height of the mound should reduce from two *aṅgulas* on the western side to ground level

on eastern side. BhPS II.4.4-6 prescribed that only unburnt bricks should be used. The area of the flat (square) sides of the bricks should be of one-twenty-fourth size of the area of the *śmaśānaciti* (burial mound). Some bricks should also be prepared with their flat sides of one-fourth of the area of the normal bricks. The wooden implements used should be made of *varaṇa* (*Crataeva Roxburghii*) wood. Finally, the performers should enclose the *śmaśānaciti* with pebbles, place a blade of reed grass at the middle of the *śmaśānaciti*, satiate the charred bones with old clarified butter and pour it on a layer of *darbha* grass. Next, they should break the jar, cover the charred bones placed in it with a worn out garment, sprinkle them with water with a twig of *udumbara* and lay the bricks over it. BhPS II.5.21 mentioned that according to some authority, the performers should bathe with the dust at the end.⁶⁷

According to KŚS XXI.3.26, a *tejanī* (bamboo pole with a bundle of grass tied to its top) should be carried to the burial ground and it should be held by a person to the north of the ground while the burial rite is performed. After the burial, it should be brought back to the house of the deceased and kept raised there.⁶⁸

The *Baudhāyanaśulbasūtra* XIX.1-11 provided the measurements of the *śmaśānaciti*. However, in this text, *śmaśānaciti* means a fire altar built in the shape of a burial mound.

9.4.1.8 *Ekoddiṣṭa Śrāddha*: The rite for feeding the deceased

The post-cremation *śrāddha* rites for the deceased, which are known as *Ekoddiṣṭa* (literally, “the rite for only one [ancestor]”) were probably originated from the more ancient rituals of ‘feeding’ the dead, which are observed in many ancient cultures.

An early description of the post-cremation ‘feeding’ rites, which later became known as *Ekoddiṣṭa Śrāddha* rites are found in the Śuklayajurvedic ritual text PGS III.10.25-34, 48-55. According to this text, through a period of three nights after the death, all relatives of the deceased should remain chaste, sleep on the ground, do no work, and charge nobody for doing it for them. They should eat food, which they have bought or received from the others. They should eat it only in the daytime and they should not eat meat. They should offer the *piṇḍa* to *preta* (deceased), addressing his name during the ablution (before offering the *piṇḍa*), at the time of offering (of the *piṇḍa*), and during the second ablution (after offering the *piṇḍa*). Every night, they should put milk and water in an earthen vessel into the open air with the *mantra*, “*Preta*, bathe here!” This text was of opinion that the *śāvamāśauca* (literally, “impurity caused by a corpse”, period of impurity caused by the death of a relative) lasts for three nights, but also mentioned that according to some authority, it lasts for ten nights. It prescribed that on the eleventh day an uneven number of Brāhmaṇs should be fed with a meal, where meat is served. It also mentioned that some authority prescribed to kill a cow in honour of the deceased. When the son of the deceased offers *piṇḍas* to the *pitṛs* (ancestors), the *preta* (his father) should be offered the *piṇḍa* for the first (of the three) *pitṛ* and the fourth *piṇḍa* should be excluded (probably, this element was later evolved as another post-cremation rite, *Sapiṇḍīkaraṇa*). It prescribed to offer food to the deceased every day for a year and if the deceased is a Brāhmaṇ, he should be offered a vessel of water too. This text mentioned that some authority prescribed to offer the *piṇḍa* to his father separately for one year. Some even prescribed to offer a *piṇḍa* every day.

A systematic description of this rite is narrated only in a later text of this *śākhā*, the *Śrāddhasūtra* ascribed to Kātyāyana. It prescribed in its fourth *kaṇḍikā* that, in an *Ekoddiṣṭa* (*Śrāddha*), only one *arghya* should be offered, one *pavitra* (strainer, made of *darbha* grass strands) should be used and only one *piṇḍa* should be offered. There should be no *āvāhana* (invitation of the Brāhmaṇs), no *agnaukaraṇa* (pouring a part of the food to be offered to the Brāhmaṇs into the fire) and no Brāhmaṇs should be invited to represent the Viśvedevāḥ. The question to confirm satisfaction should be “*Svāditam?*” and the reply should be “*Susvāditam* (It had excellent taste).” Instead of saying, “*Akṣayya* (May it be inexhaustible)”, “*Uptiṣṭhatām* (May it approach the deceased person)”

should be uttered. At the time of *visarga* (sending the Brāhmaṇs away), the performer should say, “*Abhiramyatām* (Be satisfied)” and the Brāhmaṇs should reply, “*Abhiratā sma* (Satisfied)”⁶⁹

Among the ritual texts of the Ṛgvedic *śākhās*, ĀGS IV.5.8 prescribed to perform a *Śrāddha* on the day of performance of *Samcayana* rite, which the medieval scholiast Nārāyaṇa construed as the *Ekoddiṣṭa Śrāddha*. ĀGS IV.7.1 mentioned about this rite, but detailed description is not available in this text. The narrative on this rite in ŚGS IV.2.1-8 is very brief. It prescribed to perform the rite of *Ekoddiṣṭa* once in every month, for one year after the death.⁷⁰ Enumerating the differences between the ancestor veneration rite of *Pārvaṇa Śrāddha* and this post-cremation rite, this text stated that, during the performance of this rite, only one *arghya* should be offered, one *pavitra* (strainer, made of *darbha* grass blades) should be used and only one *piṇḍa* should be offered. During performance of this rite, no *āvāhana* should be there, no *agnaukaraṇa* should take place and no Brāhmaṇ should be invited to represent the Viśvedevāḥ (a group of vedic deities). After the meal, the Brāhmaṇs present should be asked by the performer, “*Svaditam?* (Did it taste well?)” and the Brāhmaṇs should reply, “*Susvaditam* (It had excellent taste).” Instead of saying, “*Akṣayya* (May it be inexhaustible)”, “*Uptiṣṭhatām* (May it approach the deceased person)” should be uttered. At the time of *visarga* (sending the Brāhmaṇs away), the performer should say, “*Abhiramyatām* (Be satisfied).”⁷¹ A similar but shorter account of this rite is found in KauṣGS III.14.11-18.

An early Yajurvedic ritual text of the *Taittirīya śākhā*, BGS III.12.6 prescribed that in the *Ekoddiṣṭa Śrāddha*, there should be no *agnaukaraṇa*, no *abhiśrāvaṇa* (repetition of vedic *mantras*), no prior invitation (of the Brāhmaṇs), no *deva* (Brāhmaṇ should be invited to represent the gods), no incense or lamp (should be offered), no *svadhā* (benediction used while offering oblations to ancestors), no *namaskāra* (paying homage to ancestors with, “*namaḥ*”) and no *apūpa* (cake of barley flour offered to the Brāhmaṇs).⁷² A later text of this *śākhā*, ĀgGS III.11.2 also described this rite.

A comparatively late Sāmavedic ritual text, *Gobhīlīyaśrāddhakalpa* 3.1-10 described very briefly about this rite. It stated that in this rite, only one *pavitra* should be used, one *arghya* should be offered, and only one *piṇḍa* should be offered. There should not be any *āvāhana*, no *agnaukaraṇa* should take place and no Brāhmaṇ should be invited to represent the Viśvedevāḥ. The question to confirm satisfaction should be “*Svaditam?* (Did it taste well?)” and instead of stating “*Akṣayya* (May it be inexhaustible)”, “*Uptiṣṭhatām* (May it approach the deceased person)” must be stated. At the time of *visarga* (sending the Brāhmaṇs away), the performer should say, “*Abhiramyatām* (Be satisfied).” A more detailed description of this rite is found another late Sāmavedic ritual text, *Gautamaśrāddhakalpa* 6.1-17. In addition to the *Gobhīlīyaśrāddhakalpa*, it stated that in this rite, there should not be any *deva* (Brāhmaṇs invited to represent the gods); incense or lamp should not be offered to the deceased; no ‘*svadhā*’ or ‘*namaskāra*’. It prescribed a bull and a cow as the sacrificial fee.

Among the early *dharmaśāstras*, YDh I.251-252 and 256 described about this rite. YDh I.256 prescribed to perform the *ādyā* (first) *Ekoddiṣṭa Śrāddha* on the eleventh day (after the death). Then it should be performed on the day of the death every (lunar) month till the completion of one year and thereafter every year.⁷³ MDh III.247 prescribed that till *Sapiṇḍīkriyā*, one should perform the *Śrāddhas* for a recently deceased ‘twice-born’ without feeding the deities (i.e., the Brāhmaṇs representing them) and offering only one *piṇḍa*. The medieval scholiast Medhātithi, while explaining MDh III.247, stated that *Śrāddhas* mentioned in this injunction is *Ekoddiṣṭa Śrāddha*.

The detailed instructions for offering the *piṇḍas* (balls of rice) in the *Ekoddiṣṭa Śrāddha* found in a late text, the ViṣDh are possibly influenced by the local customary practices of the followers of the *Kāthaka śākhā*. ViṣDh XX.32-33 stated that as long as the relatives remain impure, the *preta* (deceased) finds no rest and returns to visit the relatives. It is the duty of the relatives to offer the *piṇḍa* (ball of rice) and water to the *preta*. Until the *Sapiṇḍīkaraṇa*, the deceased remains a *preta*

and for the deceased food and a jar filled with water should be offered. ViṣDh XXII.1-4 stated that the period of impurity caused by the birth or death of any agnate is ten days for a Brāhmaṇ, twelve days for a Kṣatriya, fifteen days for a Vaiśya and one month for a Śūdra. ViṣDh XXI.1-11 prescribed that, on the day of expiry of the period of impurity, the performer (son of the deceased) should bathe properly, wash his hands and feet properly and sip water properly. He should invite the Brāhmaṇs, as many as possible. They should also cleanse themselves in the same way and (sit down) facing north. The performer should pay respect to them with the presents of fragrant substances, garlands, garments, ornaments and other items and serve food to them. He should alter the *mantras* (for the *Pārvaṇa Śrāddha*) for utilizing in the *Ekoddiṣṭa Śrāddha* in such a way that these *mantras* refer to the one person (the deceased). At a place close to the *ucchiṣṭa* (literally, “leftovers”; food left by the Brāhmaṇs), he should offer a *piṇḍa* calling (the deceased) by his name and *gotra*. Having served the food to the Brāhmaṇs, honoured them with the gifts and having offered *akṣata* (unhusked grains) and water to the *preta* (deceased) stating his name and *gotra*, the performer should dig three *karṣūs* (trenches), each of 1 *vitasti* (22.9 cm) in length, 4 *aṅgula* (7.6 cm) in width and depth and their distance from each other should also be 4 *aṅgula* (7.6 cm). He should kindle three sacrificial fires near the trenches and offer three oblations into each sacrificial fire with three *mantras*, “Reverence to Soma accompanied by the *pitṛs*; *svadhā*”; “Reverence to Agni, *Kavyavāhana* (one who carries oblations to the *pitṛs*); *svadhā*” and “Reverence to Yama *Āṅgiras*; *svadhā*.” Then he should offer three *piṇḍa* on the three mounds of earth (adjacent to three trenches). Having filled three trenches with boiled rice, yoghurt, clarified butter, honey and meat, he should murmur a *mantra* beginning with, “This is for you” (KāS IX.6). The same ceremony should be performed every month, on the day of death.⁷⁴

A late vedic ancillary text, the *Śrāddhavidhiḥ* (*Atharvavedapariśiṣṭa* 44) 1.7, 12 prescribed to perform *Ekoddiṣṭa Śrāddhas* silently from (the day of) collection of charred bones till (the day of) performance of *Sapiṇḍīkaraṇa* rite.⁷⁵

9.4.1.9 *Sapiṇḍīkaraṇa*: The rite of veneration of the deceased as an ancestor

The rite of *Sapiṇḍīkaraṇa* is the last post-cremation rite performed for a deceased in Hinduism to change the status from the *preta* (recently deceased) to the *pitṛ* (deceased ancestor). *Sapiṇḍīkaraṇa* literally means, “[the rite] to change the status of a deceased to *sapiṇḍī*”. All deceased entitled to receive the same *piṇḍa* as the other deceased ancestors are known as *sapiṇḍī*.⁷⁶ This rite was also known as *Sapiṇḍana*. It is the rite of reception of the *preta* (deceased) on the occasion of the admission to the realm of the *pitṛs* (deceased ancestors), for whom, the *piṇḍas* (balls of flour or rice) are offered during the *Śrāddha* rites for ancestor veneration (like *Ābhyudayika* and *Pārvaṇa*).

Several vedic ritual texts described this rite. ŚGS IV.3.1-8 prescribed to perform *Sapiṇḍīkaraṇa* after the lapse of one year or three fortnights from the death and narrated a very brief ceremony. According to this text, the performer should fill four water-pots with sesame seeds, perfumes and water. Three of them should be for the *pitṛs* and the fourth one for the *preta*. During the performance, the performer should pour the water from the pot assigned to the *preta* to the other three pots assigned to the *pitṛs*, with the *mantras* from the VSM (XIX.45-46). In the same way he should distribute the *piṇḍa* belonging to the *preta* on the other three *piṇḍas* belonging to the *pitṛs*.⁷⁷ Another description of this rite is found in ŚGS V.9.1-6, but it seems to be a later addition. In this second description, the *mantras* used are different, which include the *mantras* from the RV (X.191.3-4).

The descriptions of *Sapiṇḍīkaraṇa* are also found BhGS III.17, KGS 66.6-8, ĀgGS III.11.3 and VkhGS V.14. MDh III.247-248 mentioned this rite as *Sapiṇḍīkriyā*.

YDh I.253-254 prescribed that, for *Sapiṇḍīkaraṇa*, four vessels should be filled with fragrant substances, water and sesame seeds for *arghya*. Then, the water from the vessel for the *preta* should

be poured into the vessels for the *pitṛs* with two *mantras* from the VSM (19.45-46). Rest of the rite should be performed as other *Śrāddha* rites. The rites of *Sapīṇḍīkaraṇa* and *Ekoddiṣṭa Śrāddha* should be performed for the females also. YDh I.255 instructed that even if the *Sapīṇḍīkaraṇa* might have been performed before the completion of one year, still a ‘twice-born’ should be offered food and a pitcher of water for the whole year.⁷⁸

In its description, ViṣDh XXI.12-23 mentioned that *Sapīṇḍīkaraṇa* for a ‘twice-born’ must be performed either after completion of one year after death, or on the thirteenth day after performing a *Māsika Śrāddha* on the twelfth day. For a Śūdra, it should be performed on the twelfth day, without any *mantra*. *Sapīṇḍīkaraṇa* for a female should be performed in the similar way. At the beginning of the rite, the Brāhmaṇs must be served food, after offering the deities, in the honour of the *preta* (the deceased) and of his father, grandfather and great-grandfather. The elements of *agnaukaraṇa*, *āvāhana* and *pādya* (offering of water for washing feet) should be performed during this rite. The performer should pour water from *pretapādya-pātra* (the pot containing water for washing feet of the *preta*) into the three *pitṛpādya-pātra* (the pots containing water for washing feet of the *pitṛ*) with the *mantras* beginning with, “May earth unite you” (KGS 66.7) and “United your minds” (RV X.191.4). According to the scholiast Nandapaṇḍita, the *mantras* are to be murmured while pouring water from the pots containing *pādya* (water for washing feet) and *arghya* (water for libation) for the *preta* to the corresponding three pots containing *pādya* and *arghya* for the *pitṛ* respectively. Near the *ucchiṣṭa* (leavings), he should prepare (and place) four *piṇḍas*. Next, the Brāhmaṇs should be shown out after they have sipped water properly and have been presented with the sacrificial fee. Then, he should knead together the *piṇḍa* for the *preta* with the other three *piṇḍas* for the *pitṛs* in the same way as the water for washing feet (and *arghya* according to Nandapaṇḍita) was mixed up by him earlier. He should do the same with the *piṇḍas* placed near the three trenches. Even if the *Sapīṇḍīkaraṇa* has been performed before the completion of one year, still a ‘twice-born’ should be offered food and a pitcher of water every day for the whole year.⁷⁹

9.4.1.10 *Nārāyaṇabali*: The rite of offering to *Nārāyaṇa* for expiation

It seems that the rite of *Nārāyaṇabali* was developed as an alternative to the cremation and post-cremation rites prescribed by the later vedic ritual texts for the deceased, who were perceived as ineligible for receiving such rites due to pollution. A comparatively early text, BPS II.8.1-6 prescribed several expiation rites for the ‘twice-born’ persons died of unnatural death, but *Nārāyaṇabali* rite was not mentioned. One of the early descriptions of the rite of *Nārāyaṇabali* (literally, “offering food to Narayana”) performed for the persons died of unnatural death is found in VkhDh III.9-10 (X.9-10). It prescribed to perform this rite for one who committed suicide or met an unnatural death by rope, weapons, drowning in water, lightning strike, carnivorous animals, cow, snakebite and those persons for whom the cremation rite is not allowed; this rite also should be performed for an ascetic. According to this text, this rite should be performed on the eleventh day after death. However, for those persons who committed one of the five types of most heinous crimes, this rite should be performed after the lapse of twelve years. If this rite is performed in place of *Sapīṇḍīkaraṇa*, then it should be performed on the 12th *tithi* in the fortnight of the waning moon, when the moon is in the *nakṣatra* of Śravaṇa.

BGŚS III.20 and 21 prescribed two different procedures for the rite of *Nārāyaṇabali* for the persons who died of abnormal death and the description in BGŚS III.21 seems to be a later addition. BGŚS III.21.1 mentioned that this rite should be performed for the persons who succumbed to an unnatural death by a Caṇḍāla, drowning in water, snakebite, a Brāhmaṇ, lightning strike, fanged animals, poison, weapons, rope and stones, the persons who committed sins and the persons who died abroad. It also instructed for the persons who are cursed, alcoholic, who committed suicide or killed a ‘twice-born’, this rite should be performed after the lapse of twelve years, three years or one year at the spot of death.

A late *dharmasāstra* text, *Brhatparāśarasamhitā* VII.303-305 stated that persons who dies by a fanged animal, horned animal, poison, snakebite, water, fire, bondage, lightning strike, falling from a tree, a Brāhmaṇ, committing suicide, sepsis of a wound, a Mleccha (infidel) or committing a sin cannot reach a pure destination after death. For such a person, the rite of *Nārāyaṇabali* should be performed after the completion of six months after death or one year, according to some authority. The procedure for this rite described in *Brhatparāśarasamhitā* VII.306-320 is same as the description found in *Mitā* on YDh III.6, which the latter mentioned as prescribed in the Viṣṭ.

9.4.2 Funeral rites for children

The descriptions of the funeral rites for the children are not found in the early vedic texts. Only a few vedic ritual texts which mentioned about them, prescribed burial for the children. PGS III.10.2, 5, 7 prescribed burial for a child who died before reaching the age of two years⁸⁰ and its *Udakakarma* (literally, “offering libations of water”) should not be performed. This text (III.10.8-9) also stated if a child dies after the reaching the age of two years, all relatives of the child should follow the corpse, singing the *yamaḡāthā* (RV X.123.6) and reciting the *yamasūkta* (RV X.14).⁸¹ BPS II.3.10 and III.6.1 prescribed inhumation for a child who died before the performance of *Caula* rite. VkhGS V.11 prescribed burial for a child died before of the eruption of teeth or before the performance of the rite of *Cauḡaka*. It also prescribed burial for a male child who died before completion of the fifth year and for a female child who died before completion of the seventh year.⁸²

BPS III.6.1 prescribed cremation without the *Pitrmedha* rituals for a child, who died after the rite of *Caula* and before the rite of *Upanayana*. A brief description of the burial rites for a child who died before the rite of *Caula* is found in BPS III.6.3-9. It prescribed two different rites – burial of a child, who died before the eruption of teeth with only *praṇava* (‘om’) *mantra* and cremation of a child, who died after the eruption of the teeth with the *vyāhṛti* (‘bhūh’, ‘bhuvah’ and ‘suvaḡ’) *mantras*. In both the cases, it prescribed to adorn the corpse with the ornaments available in the village and carry it to the *śmaśāna*. For the second rite, the fire should be generated by churning (by friction, with the help of the fire-drill and the kindling woods). The oblations should be offered into the fire with the *mantras*, “To Prajāpati; *svāhā*” and “To so and so *preta* (name of the deceased) and to Yama, son of Vivasvāna (Sūrya); *svāhā*”. The pyre should be lit after thinking the *mantra*, “*Bhūh*” mentally. Then, while the pyre is burning, the fire should be adored with the *mantra*, “*Bhuvah*” and after the cremation, the mourners should submerge themselves into the water, come out and offer a handful of water with the *mantra*, “*Suvaḡ*”. This text also prescribed that, the post-cremation rites of *Śmaśāna* (building sepulchral mound) and *Udakakriyā* (offering libations of water) on the stone should not be performed for the deceased. Instead, after an uneven number of days, one, three, five or seven Brāhmaṇs should be fed.

A detailed description of the burial rite for a child is available in VkhGS V.10. It prescribed that when a child dies, the corpse should be adorned, covered with a cloth of leaves and should be carried in an *ādhāra* (container) by the relatives. At the *śmaśāna*, an *avaḡāhika* (pit) should be dug as long as the corpse in the north-south direction. The pit should be sprinkled with *kṣīra* and clarified butter and sesame seeds and *darbha* grass with southwardly pointed tips should be strewn in the pit. Then, the corpse together with the container should be laid down in the pit. The mouth of the corpse should be filled with the sesame seeds and either *lājas* (roasted grains) or *akṣata* (unhusked grains) mixed with clarified butter and the pit should be covered with earth. Before leaving the spot, *kṣīra* and clarified butter should be sprinkled over the pit or an offering of *bali* should be made. The rite of *Udakadāna* should not be performed for the child, only a *bali* should be offered for the three consecutive days.⁸³

BDh I.11.4 prescribed that if a child dies before the completion of three years or before the eruption

of deciduous teeth, neither any *piṇḍa* should be offered for the deceased, nor the *Udakakriyā* should be performed and it should not be cremated.

MDh V.68-69 stated that if a child dies before the completion of its second year, its *Agni saṃskāra* (cremation) should not be performed. The relatives should deck the child with flowers, carry it out of the village and bury it in a pure ground and its *Asthisamçayana* should not be performed. The child should be left like a (log of) wood in the forest and its *Udakakriyā* should not be performed.⁸⁴ YDh III.1-2 also instructed to bury the child who died before the completion of two years. Yama, an authority, quoted by Vijñāneśvara (early 12th century) in his commentary *Mitā*, while explaining YDh III.1 prescribed to anoint the child who died before two years with clarified butter before burial and its relatives should bury the child outside the village, while singing the *yamaḡāthā* and reciting the *yamasūkta*.⁸⁵

9.4.3 Funeral rites for ascetics

The socio-economic changes in the last centuries before the Common Era resulted in the acceptance of the asceticism in the Brahmanical social order. While, the early vedic texts and vedic ritual texts prescribed only the life-cycle rites for the householders, but with the changed social context, the late vedic ritual texts, BPS III.11.1-2, ĀgGS III.10.4, VkhGS V.8 and VkhDh III.8 described the burial rites for the ascetics. *Āśramavāsikaparva* 26.32-33 of the *Mahābhārata* also mentioned that Vidura was buried, as he became a *yati* (ascetic) before his death.

VkhGS V.8 prescribed the inhumation rite for the *yatis*, *yogīs* and *saṃnyāsīs*. It prescribed that the corpse of an ascetic should be carried between two pieces of wood and fastened with a rope, without touching it. It should be carried to a river flowing into the sea and a hole should be dug on a sandy spot. The corpse should be laid down in the hole in the sitting posture and the hole should be covered with sand.⁸⁶ VkhDh III.8 (X.8) prescribed two different funeral rites for a *saṃnyāsī*; a burial rite for an *anāhitāgni* and a cremation rite for an *āhitāgni*. It prescribed that, if the deceased was an *anāhitāgni* before renunciation, then his corpse should be deposited on the grass stalks by his son or others. The deceased should be carried by the pure Brāhmaṇs or by a *yantra* (support). It should be laid down to a place near a river flowing into the sea or on the bank of it. A pit should be dug there so deep that the corpse could not be touched by the jackals or similar animals. The corpse should be washed with the recitation of the *Gāyatrī mantra* (RV III.62.10) and it should be laid down in the pit with this same *mantra*, in either lying or sitting posture. Next, his *tridaṇḍa* (triple staff) should be placed in his right hand with the *Vaiṣṇava mantras* (*Vaikhānasa mantrapraśnaḥ* I.27 similar to RV I.22.16-21) and his *śikya* (strings) and *pavitra* (water strainer) should be placed in his left hand with a *mantra* beginning with, “The bright light, born beyond this firmament” (TS IV.2.5.2). His begging bowl should be placed on his abdomen with the *Sāvitrī* and his *kāṣāya* (saffron) coloured garment, *mṛdgrahaṇī* (pot for collecting clay) and *kamaṇḍalu* should be placed on his genitals with the *mantra* beginning with, “Earth has gone to earth” (BDh I.6.7). Then the corpse should be covered (with the river sand). This text mentioned the belief that in case the corpse is touched by a jackal or a similar animal, the performer of the rite would be the sinner. If he was an *āhitāgni* before renunciation and at the time of renunciation, he made the sacrificial fires ascend into himself, then his corpse should be washed with the recitation of the *Gāyatrī mantra* and it should be carried in the similar way as an *anāhitāgni* and laid down on a pure spot. At this pure spot, the sacrificial fires should be again made to descend in the *Laukika* fire with the *mantra* beginning with, “Ascend, O Jātavedā” (TB II.5.8.8). Then, *kṣīra* and clarified butter should be poured in the mouth of the corpse with the *mantras*, the first of which begins with, “The *pavitra* (water strainer) for you.” Next, his *tridaṇḍa* and other implements should be placed on the corpse in the similar way as an *anāhitāgni*. Then, the corpse should be burned according to the procedures of *Brahmamedha* or *Pitrmedha*, reciting the *mantras* used for an *āhitāgni*. For both types of *saṃnyāsīs*, there should not be any period of impurity for his relatives, the rite of *Udaka* (libation of

water) should not be performed for him, no *piṇḍa* should be offered to him and no *Ekoddiṣṭa Śrāddha* should be performed for him. Only the rite of *Nārāyaṇabali* (literally, “offering food to Nārāyaṇa”) should be performed.⁸⁷

The late portion of the BPS (III.11.1-2) also prescribed inhumation for a *parivrājaka* (the wandering mendicant).⁸⁸ This text prescribed that the corpse should be laid in a ditch and the begging bowl should be placed on his abdomen with the appropriate *mantras*. Then his *kamaṇḍalu* should be filled with water and put on his right hand. Next, the ditch should be covered with earth and a mound should be raised on it to save the corpse from the carnivorous animals like jackals, dogs and crows. MDh V.89 instructed not to perform the rite of *Udakakriyā* for the ascetics.

BGŚS IV.27.1-16 also described two different funeral rites for the ascetics, which are similar to the descriptions found in VkhDh III.8. For an ascetic, who was *āhitāgni* before renunciation, it prescribed that on a pure spot, the corpse should be washed with the *Sāvitrī* and then it should be sprinkled with perfumes and adorned with a garland, each time with the *Gāyatrī*. The sacrificial fires should be again made to descend in this spot with the *mantra* beginning with, “Ascend, O Jātavedā” (TB II.5.8.8). The spot should be swept silently, oblations should be offered into the fire with the *Vyāhṛtis* seven times and the pieces of wood should be placed on the corpse with the *mantra*, “O Viṣṇu, guard the offering” (TS I.1.3.1). Next, his *jalapavitraka* (water strainer) should be placed on his mouth with the *mantra*, “The *pavitra* (water strainer) for you”, his *tridaṇḍa* (triple staff) should be placed in his right hand after worshipping Viṣṇu, his begging bowl should be placed on his abdomen with the *Sāvitrī*, his *śikya* (strings) should be placed in his left hand with a *mantra* beginning with, “The bright light, born beyond this firmament” (TS IV.2.5.2) and his *kamaṇḍalu* should be placed on his genitals with the *mantra* beginning with, “Earth has gone to earth”. The corpse should be burned according to the procedure of *Pitṛmedha*. There should not be any period of impurity for his relatives and the rite of *Udakakriyā* should not be performed for him. *Ekoddiṣṭa Śrāddha* should not be performed for him, only *Pārvaṇa Śrāddha* should be performed for him on the eleventh day after death. The rite of *Nārāyaṇabali* should be performed on the twelfth day or on an auspicious day. For an ascetic, who was *anāhitāgni* before renunciation, this text prescribed to dig a pit as deep as the length of the *daṇḍa* (staff) of the ascetic with the *Vyāhṛtis*. Then, the corpse and his *tridaṇḍa* and other implements should be laid down in the pit with the *mantras* and the pit should be covered in such a way that the corpse could not be touched by a jackal or other carnivorous animals.

9.5 Descriptions of cremation rite in the *Rāmāyaṇa*

In the *Yuddhakāṇḍa* 111(or 114 in some editions):102-121 of the southern recension of the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki, a detailed description of the obsequies performed for the corpse of Rāvaṇa is found (but this description is not found in the corresponding 99th *sarga* of the critical edition). The description found in this text is as follows:⁸⁹

After the death of Rāvaṇa, Rāma convinced his younger brother Vibhīṣaṇa to proceed with the obsequies for Rāvaṇa. Then, Vibhīṣaṇa went back to his capital Laṅkā and collected the sacrificial fires for the *agnihotra* sacrifice established by Rāvaṇa. From Laṅkā, Vibhīṣaṇa collected a *śakaṭa*, three sacrificial fires, wooden sacrificial vessels and the officiating priests. He also assembled logs of sandalwood, various types of firewood, pieces of fragrant *agaru* (*Aquilaria malaccensis*) wood, odorous perfumes, as well as gems, pearls and corals. Soon, he returned back accompanied by his grandfather Mālyavāna and surrounded by other *rākṣasas* and commenced the obsequies. Having placed the corpse of Rāvaṇa wrapped in linen cloths on a celestial golden *śibikā* (bier), the ‘twice-born’ males with Vibhīṣaṇa in front, raised his bier decorated with many colourful flags and fragrant flowers, to the sound of numerous musical instruments and *stuvās* (praising songs). Next, they took up the pieces of wood, which were distributed among them and went towards the south. Then, the

three sacrificial fires were kindled and the *adhvaryus* (Yajurvedic priests), bearing the sacrificial fires in the earthen pots led the procession with the body. All women of the gynaeceum, weeping and stumbling, followed them with quick paces. The corpse of Rāvaṇa was placed on a consecrated place. A great pyre was piled up with logs of sandalwood, *padmaka* (*Prunus cerasoides*) wood and (fragrant) *uśīra* (*Vetiveria zizanioides*) grass roots and it was covered with the skin of black antelopes (on which the corpse was placed). Then, they proceeded to perform the *Pitrmedha* in accordance with the Vedas. They constructed a *vedi* (fire altar) in the south-east to the funeral pile and placed the sacrificial fire (this is known as *Āhavanīya* fire) in its proper place. Next, they placed *sruvas* filled with *pr̥ṣadājya* on the shoulders of the corpse, a *śakaṭa* at his feet and an *ulūkhala* at his thighs. Having placed all the *dārupātras* (wooden vessel used for sacrifice, also known as *iḍācamasa*), the *araṇi* (the lower piece of the kindling woods), the *uttarāraṇi* (the upper piece of the kindling woods), the *musala* and other sacrificial implements at their proper locations, they circled around the funeral pyre. Then, as prescribed by the *maharṣis* (eminent ancient sages) and in accordance to the rules viewed in the Vedas, an animal was killed there and its limbs, smeared with clarified butter were spread over the corpse of Rāvaṇa. Next, the corpse of Rāvaṇa was decked with perfumes, garlands and various kinds of clothes and the *rākṣasas* along with Vibhīṣaṇa, poured *lājān* (roasted rice grains) on it. Then, Vibhīṣaṇa set fire to the corpse of Rāvaṇa according to the rules. After cremation, he took a bath and offered *tarpaṇa*, while in wet clothes, according to the rules, with water mingled with sesame seeds and *darbha* grass blades. He offered obeisance to Rāvaṇa by bowing his head. Later, Vibhīṣaṇa requested all Rāvaṇa's consorts to return home and consoled them repeatedly. Finally, everybody returned to the city.

From the description, it can be inferred that, Rāvaṇa was considered as an *anāhitāgni* Brāhmaṇ and the cremation rite was described accordingly. The mention of placement of sacrificial implements on the corpse and sacrifice of *anustaraṇī* animal definitely indicates an early date for the composition of this portion.

A similar but comparatively brief description of the obsequies performed for the corpse of Daśaratha is found in the *Ayodhyākāṇḍa* 76.12-23 of the southern recension. According to this text, first, the sacrificial fires were brought out of the fire-hall and kindled by the priests according to the rules. Then the corpse of Daśaratha was carried by his servants in a *śibikā* (bier) for cremation.⁹⁰

9.6 Descriptions of cremation rite in the *Mahābhārata*

In the *Mahābhārata*, the cremation rite for Pāṇḍu was described in the *Ādiparva* 127.5-32. This text described that the corpse was carried in a *śibikā* covered on all sides. Musical instruments, the royal parasol and the whisks were carried in the procession and wealth was distributed to the mendicants. The funeral procession ended at a sylvan spot on the bank of the Gaṅgā, the corpse was cleaned by the water brought in golden jars and sandalwood paste was applied to it. After the cremation, Bhīṣma, Vidura, Dhṛtarāṣṭra, the Pāṇḍavas and the *Kuru* females performed the rite of *Udakakriyā*. The cremation rite for Droṇa was described in the *Strīparva* 23.38-42. During his cremation, three *sāmans* were sung. After the cremation, his pupils with Droṇa's wife Kṛpī in front, did the circumambulation of the funeral pyre and went to the Gaṅgā after cremation. The cremation rite for Bhīṣma was described in the *Anuśāsanaparva* 169.10-19. According to this text, fragrant resins were used on the pyre. The corpse was covered with fine clothes and flowers, a parasol and the whisks were held over the body. Kaurava females fanned the deceased with fans and *sāmans* were sung. The cremation rite for Vasudeva was described in the *Mauśalaparva* 7.19-25, the cremation rites for the soldiers killed in the Kurukṣetra War were described in the *Strīparva* 26.28-43. It mentioned that for some of the illustrious personalities, the *pitrmedha* rites were performed. The cremation and post-cremation rites for Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Gāndhārī and Kuntī were described in the *Āśramavāsikaparva* 39.10-26.⁹¹

9.7 A *śmaśāna* of ca. 3rd – 2nd century BCE

In 1938, when the remains of a *śmaśāna* of ca. 3rd – 2nd century BCE was discovered during the excavation of Kumhar Tekri near Ujjain city in present day Madhya Pradesh, we came to know about the actual customary practices for the disposal of the dead when these vedic ritual texts were being composed.

In the season of 1938-39, a team from the Archaeological department of Gwalior state led by M.B. Garde carried out a trial excavation at Kumhar Tekri, a longish mound about 220 ft. long, half as wide and 15 ft. high. The mound was known as 'Kumhar Tekri' because of the abundance of potshreds at the surface layer. The mound was found as an ancient burial-cum-cremation ground. On the basis of the cast copper coins unearthed from a stratum just above the skeletons, the latest date assigned to this *śmaśāna* was ca. 3rd – 2nd century BCE, but it might have been in use since a few centuries before.

The excavation of the upper stratum, which was 2-3 ft. in depth, exposed forty-two skeletons. They were in various positions. Most of them were laid north-south, with their head towards the north (similar to the descriptions of the vedic ritual texts), the head of one of them laid towards south and the heads of two others were pointed towards the south-west. The skeletons found in the northern part of the mound were laid on their bellies, while those on the southern part were laid on their back. Faces of many were turned to the west, of some to the east, and of others upwards to the sky. The poses of a few skeletons were quite unusual for ordinary burial. Two of these skeletons had the knees bent and raised up. One of them was in a seated posture with the trunk folded and the head bent forward. Another again had the trunk twisted to the right, the knees bent, and legs folded to left. Still another was seated in a meditating posture like Buddhist or Jaina monks. A few of the skeletons, based on their shorter stature and the development of pelvic cavity appeared to be of females, while few others distinctly represented youngsters. A number of earrings made of shell were found near the heads of some of the skeletons. One skeleton yielded a large number of small shell beads sufficient to be strung together in to a necklace. The teeth of one skeleton, probably of a female were found to be painted red. One large urn, with the neck broken off, another small urn complete, and pieces of two or three large urns were found buried in the midst of skeletons. The large urn contained a few bones, ashes and smaller pottery mostly cups and dishes. The contents of the small urn consisted of ashes and bones. A large stone mortar and quite a number of stone pedestals were found in association with the burials. In some cases, cups and dishes were found laid regularly around the skeletons, some in the right position and others topsy-turvy. Innumerable fragments of large and small jars, cups and dishes with which the mound is literally made up can be easily explained by this custom of burying a large number of earthen vessels and cups along with the dead body. Signs of cremation were also unearthed along the lower stratum reaching down to 4-5 feet below the surface of the mound. Thus, the customary practices of cremation, post cremation partial burial, and simple and complete burial were probably in vogue almost simultaneously during the period to which this *śmaśāna* was in use.⁹²

9.8 Funeral rites in the *Purāṇas*

Hindu funeral rites are described in several *Purāṇas* and they reflect the evolution and variations of these rites from the ancient period till the late medieval period. The early descriptions of the funeral rites are available in the AgnP, which have been discussed in this section. But, most elaborate descriptions of these rites are found in the GarūdP, which have been discussed separately in the next section. The descriptions in the other *Purāṇas* also provide valuable insights about the performance of these rites in different regions of the Indian sub-continent.

The GarūdP codified most of the divergent traditions for the funeral rites prevalent in the early medieval period. Since the late medieval period, except perhaps a few small Brāhmaṇ social groups

(mostly in the far south), who are still adhered to the ancient practices prescribed in the vedic ritual texts, most of the Hindu social groups irrespective of their social class, are following the funerary practices believed as based on the instructions in the GaruḍP.

A large number of verses from a lost text, the *Ādipurāna* on the preparation of the corpse, the cremation rite, the cremation of effigy and some of the post-cremation rites has been cited by Aparārka, Aniruddhabhaṭṭa in *Hāralatā*, Devaṅṅabhaṭṭa in SmC, Raghunandana in ŚudT and Govindānanda in *Śuddhikaumudī*.⁹³ It seems that like the GaruḍP, this text also comprised extensive descriptions on the Hindu funeral rites.

9.8.1 Cremation rite in the *Varāhapurāna*

A unique description of the cremation rite is narrated in the *Varāhapurāna* 185.109-114. It prescribed that after the death, the corpse should be placed on the funeral pyre with its head towards the south. Taking the fire (stick) in the hand, the funeral pyre should be set to fire with two *mantras*, “After doing both the easy and difficult actions, knowingly or unknowingly, this person was reduced to the five elements when the time of death came.” and “With the consumption in fire of this whole body, which was the seat of righteousness, impiety, greed and stupefaction, go to the heavenly world.” After recitation of these *mantras*, a quick circumambulation should be done and the fire should be placed on the head of the corpse. This text, instead of the vedic *mantras* (like VSM XXXV.22), prescribed the puranic *mantras* for the cremation rite and emphatically stated that it is common for all four *varṇas*.⁹⁴ These verses of the *Varāhapurāna* are also cited in ŚudP and *Śuddhikaumudī* with minor variations.

9.8.2 Post-cremation rites in the *Purāṇas*

The descriptions in different *Purāṇas* are mostly centred on the post-cremation rites. From very brief to moderately elaborate descriptions of the *Ekoddiṣṭa Śrāddhas* and the *Sapiṇḍīkaraṇa* are found in a number of *Purāṇa* texts.

The descriptions of the *Ekoddiṣṭa Śrāddha* and *Sapiṇḍīkaraṇa* are found in ViṣP III.13.23-40, MatsP 18.1-29, MārP 30.8-24, the *Śṛṣṭikhaṇḍa* 10.23-24 of the *Padmapurāna*, the *Pūrvabhāga* II.51.134b-140a of the *NārP* and the *Brahmapurāna* 220.60-74.

The descriptions of the cremation rite and several post-cremation rites are found in VDhP II.76.1-23, which included the descriptions of *Asthisamcayana* and *Nārāyaṇabali*. The descriptions of the *Ekoddiṣṭa Śrāddha* and *Sapiṇḍīkaraṇa* are found in VDhP II.77.1-16.

The *Vāmanapurāna* 15.42-43 prescribed that the corpse must be cremated outside (the village). Then, the relatives belonging to the same *gotra* should offer libations of water for the *preta* and perform the rite of *Asthisamcayana* on the first, fourth or seventh day after the death. After the rite of *Asthisamcayana* it instructed them to touch their limbs. *Vāmanapurāna* 15.47-48 instructed to perform the rite of *Ekoddiṣṭa Śrāddha* for a *preta* on completion of 10 days, 12 days, 15 days and 30 days after death of a Brāhmaṇ, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya and Śūdra respectively. It instructed to perform the rite of *Sapiṇḍīkaraṇa* on completion of one year after death.⁹⁵

The *Kūrmapurāna* II.23.69-78 prescribed that the relatives of the deceased should offer the libations of water pronouncing the name and *gotra* of the deceased and should perform the *Śrāddha* rites for ten days in wet clothes, exercising restraint over their speech. Every day (for ten days), in the morning and the evening, the *piṇḍa* (ball of rice) should offered at the gateway of the house and the fourth day food should be served to the Brāhmaṇs. On the second day, the rite of shaving (head and beard) must be performed by all relatives. On the fourth day the rite of *Asthisamcayana* should be performed. An even number of Brāhmaṇs should be made to sit down facing east and food should be served to them with reverence. On the fifth, ninth and eleventh day after death, food

should be served to an even number of Brāhmaṇs, which is known as *Navaśrāddha*. On the eleventh, twelfth or ninth day the (*Ekoddiṣṭa*) *Śrāddha* should be performed for the *preta* (deceased). Only one *pavitra* (water strainer) and one *piṇḍapātra* (the vessel for offering *piṇḍa*) should be used and one *argha* should be offered. This rite should be performed every month on the day of death till one year. The rite performed after the completion of one year is known as *Sapiṇḍīkaraṇa*. For this rite, four vessels should be assigned to four *pitṛs* (ancestors) from the deceased onward and the water should be poured from the vessel assigned to the deceased to the vessels assigned to the other ancestors. With the two *mantras* beginning with, “[The *pitṛs*,] who are same in form [and mind, live in the realm of Yama]” (VSM XIX.45-46) the *piṇḍas* should be joined together. Before the performance of this rite, a *Śrāddha* should be performed for the gods, then the *pitṛs* should be invoked and finally the *preta* should be mentioned. The son of the deceased should offer *piṇḍa* for one year and every day (during this period), he should offer food and a pot filled with water to the deceased.

In the *Skandapurāṇa*, *Nāgarakhaṇḍa* 225.2-14 described the procedure for the *Ekoddiṣṭa Śrāddha*. It stated that three *Ekoddiṣṭa Śrāddhas* should be performed till the rite of *Samcayana*. The first should be performed at the spot of the death, the second at the place of rest on the way to the *śmaśāna* and the third at the place of performance of *Samcayana*. These three *Śrāddhas* and the six *Śrāddhas* performed on the first, second, fifth, seventh, ninth and tenth day are together known as the *Navaśrāddha* (but, in the corresponding verse of the *Nāgarakhaṇḍa* cited in ŚudP, the six *Śrāddhas* performed on the fifth, seventh, eighth, ninth, tenth and eleventh day are enumerated for the *Navaśrāddha*, which is same as the GarūdP). *Nāgarakhaṇḍa* 225.15-29 described the procedure for the *Sapiṇḍīkaraṇa*. It prescribed to perform this rite only after the completion of one year but it can be performed before the stipulated period if one wants to perform the *Vṛddhiśrāddha* (as it is not possible till the performance of *Sapiṇḍīkaraṇa*). *Nāgarakhaṇḍa* 226.1 stated that if the rite of *Sapiṇḍīkaraṇa* is not performed for a deceased, he remains in the state of *preta*. *Nāgarakhaṇḍa* 226.12 prescribed the rite of *Nārāyaṇabali* as a rite of exorcism. It prescribed to perform this rite to liberate a deceased, deprived of the funerary rites, from the state of *preta*.

9.8.3 Funeral rites in the *Agnipurāṇa*

The comparatively early descriptions of the cremation rite and several post-cremation rites are found in the AgnP. AgnP 158.50-59 prescribed to wash the corpse after death, worship with flowers before cremation. It instructed that a corpse should never be cremated naked but a part of the body should be left uncovered. This text prescribed that only the relatives belonging to the same *gotra* should only carry the corpse and place it on the funeral pyre. An *āhitāgni* should be cremated with proper procedures with the three sacrificial fires. An *anāhitāgni* should be cremated with the *Laukika* fire. The son should place the fire (stick) on the face of the deceased with the *mantra*, “You [Agni] are born from of this [man], let him again born from you; for this so and so (name of the deceased) be in the *svarga loka* (heavenly world).” (VSM XXXV.22) After the cremation, the relatives should pour water once uttering the name and *gotra* of the deceased. This text named this rite as *Udakakriyā*. After cremation all the mourners has been instructed to chew the margosa leaves, control their emotions and sip water at the doorway of their houses. After touching cowdung, *gaurasarṣapa* (seeds of white mustard) and placing the foot slowly on a stone they should enter their houses. During the period of impurity, pungent and saline food should not be consumed, meat should not be eaten and all should sleep on the floor. After taking the bath, the food purchased from outside should be eaten. The son of the deceased should offer libations of water for the deceased for the ten days after the death with the *mantra* beginning with, “May [Agni] remove our evil” (RV I.97.1, VSM XXXV.21, TĀ VI.11.1). At the death of a Brāhmaṇ, ten *piṇḍas* (balls of food) should be offered; twelve in case of a Kṣatriya, fifteen for a Vaiśya and thirty for a Śūdra. In the absence of any son, the daughter or the others may offer the *piṇḍas* to the deceased. The person,

who has performed the rites of offering *piṇḍas* and libations of water, should perform these rites for ten days. In his absence, a *brahmacārī* should perform the rites of offering *piṇḍas* and libations of water. AgnP 158.18 prescribed that the rite of *Asthisamcayana* (and immersion of them in the waters of the Gaṅgā) should be performed on the fourth, fifth, seventh and ninth day after the death for the persons belonging to the *varṇas* of Brāhmaṇ, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya and Śūdra respectively. AgnP 159.1-4 stated that the *preta* (deceased) receives redemption if the charred bones are immersed in the waters of the Gaṅgā. It also reiterated the belief that the subtle body of a person remains in the heaven as long as the charred bones remain in the waters of the Gaṅgā. It also instructed for a person who committed suicide and the *patitas* (fallen from the righteousness), no cremation rite should be performed. For the *patitas*, the rite of *Nārāyaṇabali* should be performed out of compassion. Immersing the charred bones in the waters of the Gaṅgā is also beneficial for them. AgnP 157.40-41 prescribed that neither the cremation rite nor the rite of *Udakakriyā* should be performed for a child died before the eruption of the teeth.

AgnP 157.15-24 described a *Śrāddha* rite after the expiry of the period of impurity, which is similar to the description of the ViṣDh XXI.1-11. It prescribed the period of impurity for the agnates of the deceased as ten days, twelve days, fifteen days and one month after the death of a Brāhmaṇ, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya and Śūdra respectively. At a place close to the food left by the Brāhmaṇs, the performer should offer a *piṇḍa* declaring the name and *gotra* of the deceased. After serving the food to the most excellent Brāhmaṇs, honouring them with the wealth and offering *akṣata* (unhusked grains) and water to the *preta* (deceased) reciting his name and *gotra*, the performer should dig three trenches, each of 1 *vitasti* (22.9 cm) in length, 4 *aṅgula* (7.6 cm) in width and depth and their distance from each other should also be 4 *aṅgula* (7.6 cm). He should kindle three sacrificial fires near the trenches and offer four or three oblations into each of the three sacrificial fires to Soma, Agni and Yama. The *piṇḍas* should be offered to each of the three deities separately. Then the pits should be filled with boiled rice, yoghurt, honey and meat. (This *Śrāddha* rite should be performed every month till the completion of one year and) if one intercalary month occurs, an additional *Śrāddha* rite should be performed. Alternately, all rites (i.e., 12 *Śrāddha* rites) may be completed on the twelfth day after death. But, if there is an intercalary month within one year, one additional *Śrāddha* should be performed on the twelfth day also. After the completion of one year, the *Śrāddha* should be performed like a (*Pārvaṇa*) *Śrāddha*. AgnP 163.24-25 described the general rules for the *Ekoddiṣṭa Śrāddha*.

AgnP 157.25-28 provided a brief description of the *Sapiṇḍīkaraṇa*. It prescribed that four *piṇḍas* should be offered to the deceased and the ancestors of the past three generations of the deceased. After worshipping and offering the *piṇḍa* with the *mantras* beginning, “The earth is your vessel” (ĀpMP II.20.1) and “[The *pitṛs*.] who are same in form [and mind, live in the realm of Yama]” (VSM XIX.45-46), the *piṇḍa* offered to the deceased should be united with the *piṇḍas* offered to the others. In the similar way, the vessel for the deceased should be united with the vessels for the other three ancestors, one by one. This text instructed that a Śūdra should perform this rite without any *mantra*. AgnP 157.29 prescribed to offer a jar (of water) and boiled rice to the deceased for one year and then to perform the *Śrāddha* rite for the deceased every year. AgnP 163.26-27 described the general rules for the *Sapiṇḍīkaraṇa*. AgnP 163.28 prescribed if the rite of *Sapiṇḍīkaraṇa* has been performed before the completion of one year after death, a jar of water and the food should be given to a Brāhmaṇ the whole year.

9.9 Funeral rites in the *Garūḍapurāṇa*

The most detailed descriptions on the Hindu funeral rites are found in the *GarūḍP*. An early detailed description of *Sapiṇḍīkaraṇa* rite is found in the *Ācārakāṇḍa* 220.1-10 of the *GarūḍP*. The *Pretakāṇḍa* (also known as *Pretakalpa*, *Dharmakāṇḍa* and *Uttarakhaṇḍa*) of the *GarūḍP* is mostly known for its descriptions of the funeral rites and the eschatology. Several versions of this section

are found in the printed editions of the GarūḍP, comprising 35, 45 and 49 chapters. In this study, the Venkaṭeśvara Press edition (and its translation in to English) consisting 49 chapters has been referred to. In 2.7-12; 4.40-87,104-154; 5.1-80; 15.6-15, 30-68; 29.1-33; 34.8-145; 35.1-47 and 40.4-64 of the *Pretakāṇḍa*, the detailed instructions for the cremation rite and several post-cremation rites are found. Instructions are also found in several other chapters in scattered form. But, the instructions in the *Pretakāṇḍa* are not very systematic like the vedic ritual texts, often repetitive and heavily influenced by the late medieval practices including the barbaric practice of widow burning (4.88-100). In comparison to the GarūḍP, the instructions in GarūḍSār (early 18th century) are more systematic and in this study, the descriptions in GarūḍSār are also mentioned for the purpose of comparison.

9.9.1 Cremation rite

9.9.1.1 Preparation of the corpse

The cremation rite is described more than once in the *Pretakāṇḍa* of the GarūḍP. According to this text, immediately after the death, the corpse should be laid on the ground within an area besmeared with cow-dung and strewn with *darbha* grass and sesame seeds and after removal of the corpse, these bunches of *darbha* grass should be thrown away. Even if that portion of the ground was besmeared before, it should be besmeared again. According to this text, it is believed that if the corpse is not placed on a ground besmeared with cow-dung, then the corpse may be possessed by the evil spirits like *yātudhāna*, *piśāca* and *rākṣasa* (2.7-11, 29; 29.6-8). A *maṇḍala* (mystical diagram) should be drawn around the corpse (2.12, 29.12). A piece of gold (15.7) and five jewels (29.6) should be put into his mouth. In addition, the pieces of gold should be placed on both of his nostrils, eyes and ears, on his penis and rectum. Holy basil leaves should be placed on both of his hands and neck (15.7-10). GarūḍSār 9.9 prescribed to place a holy basil leaf in the mouth of the deceased.

The GarūḍP prescribed that, after the confirmation of death, a son of deceased should take a bath and wash the corpse with pure water, besmear the body with sandalwood-paste and cover it with an *ahata* cloth (4.41-42). GarūḍSār 10.4-6 instructed that the son and other relatives should shave immediately but they should not shave their armpits or clip the nails. After shaving, everybody should take a bath and put on clean clothes. Elsewhere in the GarūḍP (15.11), it is prescribed that the deceased should be covered with two pieces of cloth, *kuṅkuma* (saffron) and *akṣata* (unhusked rice grains) should be strewn, the corpse should be decked with garlands and taken out through the rear door. The first *Ekoddiṣṭa Śrāddha* for the deceased should be performed at the same spot where he died by his son immediately after the death. In this *Ekoddiṣṭa Śrāddha*, the elements of *āvāhana*, *arcana*, *pātrāmbhana* and *avaḡāhana* should not be performed, a *piṇḍa* must be offered and the *saṅkalpa* can be made. During performance of this rite, the libations of water should only take place without the three (elements) *svadhāvācana*, *āśīrvāda* and *tilaka*. The element of *piṇḍacālana* should be performed but without *praccchādana*, *visarga* and *svastivācana*. The Brāhmaṇs should be gifted a vessel full of mustard and iron (4.42-47, 15.30). Another five *Ekoddiṣṭa Śrāddha* must be performed in the similar way at the door of the house, at the crossroads (or in the courtyard), at the place where the funeral procession rests on the way (or halfway between the house and the *śmaśāna*), on the funeral pyre and at the time of *Asthisamcayana* (4.48-49, 15.30-31, 15.40). GarūḍSār 10.7-11 prescribed to deck the corpse with sandalwood-paste, garlands and clay from (the banks of) the Gaṅgā by his son. Then, he should put the sacrificial thread on his right shoulder and offer the *piṇḍas* at place of death and at the doorway. Next, the daughter-in-law and other relatives should circumambulate the corpse and worship it.

9.9.1.2 Funeral procession

According to the GarūḍP, after taking the corpse out of the house, the relatives of the deceased

should accompany the corpse and it should be taken to a forest in southern direction. The mourners should recite the *yamagāthā* or the *yamasūkta*, viz, the *mantra* beginning with, “Apeta” (RV X.14.9) in the funeral procession. During the journey, another two *Ekoddiṣṭa Śrāddha* must be performed (at the crossroads and at the resting place) (4.54-55). The hands and feet of the corpse together with the covering cloth should be tied to the *śibikā* (bier). The corpse should not be left unattended. No one in the village should eat or drink till the corpse is taken out of the village (35.41-44). GarūdSār 10.11-14 instructed that the son of the deceased and his other relatives should carry the bier to the *śmaśāna* on their shoulders. Halfway to the *śmaśāna*, after cleaning and sprinkling the funeral procession should halt and after washing the corpse, another offering of the *piṇḍa* should be made by the son of the deceased.

9.9.1.3 Cremation

The GarūdP prescribed that at the cremation site, the corpse should be laid lightly on the earth with its head towards the south, another *Ekoddiṣṭa Śrāddha* should be performed and the sons of the deceased should fetch dry grass, dry pieces of wood and sesame seeds. This text, reflecting the contemporary perception, had debarred the Śūdras from fetching wood if the deceased is a Brāhmaṇ. The performer (son of the deceased) should wear the sacrificial thread on the right shoulder and sit along with other mourners facing the south. An altar should be made according to the rules after digging up the area, smearing (with cow-dung) and sprinkling water on it. The cloth for the corpse should be torn in to two equal pieces. The corpse to be covered with one of the pieces and the other piece should be spread on the earth. The *piṇḍa* (for the *Ekoddiṣṭa Śrāddha* mentioned earlier) should be placed in the hand of the deceased and the corpse should be besmeared with clarified butter. The altar should be besmeared with cow-dung and the sacrificial fires should be lit on it. Next, Kravyāda (Agni) should be worshipped with flowers and rice, reciting the *mantra*, “You are the creator of the creatures, birthplace of the world and protector of the people. Please therefore, consume the corpse and carry the soul to heaven”. Then, the performer should light the fire on the pyre, according to the prescriptions of the *śruti*, but should avoid the *caṇḍālāgni*, *citāgni* and *patitāgni*. When the corpse was half-burnt, a certain quantity of clarified butter with sesame seeds should be poured on it with the *mantra*, “You [Agni] are born from of this [man], let him again born from you; for this so and so (name of the deceased) be in the *svarga loka* (heaven); *svāhā*.” (VSM XXXV.22). This *mantra* should be recited by mentioning the name of the deceased, while the relatives are weeping loudly. Oblations of clarified butter should be offered into the fire with the *mantras* beginning with, “*lomabhyaḥ svāhā*” (VSM XXXIX.10) and “*Yamāya svāhā, antakāya svāhā* (VSM XXXIX.13).” The performer (the son) should also weep at this juncture. After the cremation, the charred bones should be collected and a *piṇḍa* must be offered. The relatives of the deceased should circumambulate the pyre casting a mournful look at it and go for taking the bath, murmuring the *sūkta*, the youths walking in front (4.56-60, 62-70 and 15.43-52). Elsewhere, the GarūdP prescribed that the females should go ahead and the males should follow (34.23).

GarūdSār 10.16 prescribed to place the corpse with its head towards the north. GarūdSār 10.20-22 instructed to prepare the funeral pyre with the sandalwood, holy basil, *palāśa* and *aśvattha* wood. After placing the deceased on the pyre, the son should offer two *piṇḍas* and place them on the both hands of the corpse. GarūdSār 10.56-57 prescribed that when the corpse is half or fully burnt, his skull should be split open, with a piece of wood for a *grhastha* (householder) and with a coconut for a *yati* (ascetic), as it is believed that cracking the skull results in opening the *brahmarandhra* (literally, “the hole of Brahma”, believed as the residence of *ātman* in the body), so that the soul of the deceased (may leave the body and) attain the *pitṛ loka* (world of the manes).

9.9.2 Rite of water libation

According to the GarūdP, the mourners from the cremation site should proceed to the water

(reservoir or the river). They should wash their clothes in the water and wear the same clothes. Then, they should address the deceased to inform their resolve for water libation. Next, all mourners, wearing a single piece of cloth, with shaven heads and wearing the sacrificial thread on their right shoulders should silently enter water. The water should not be agitated while taking bath. After taking the bath, the mourners should come out of water on the bank. After tying their *śikhā* (hair tuft), they should take a bunch of *kuśa* grass, some water and sesame seeds in their right hand and offer them in southern direction, pouring it from the *pitṛtīrtha* (literally, “the path of the ancestors”, the part of the hand between the thumb and the forefinger) on earth once, thrice or ten times. They should perform the rite of water libation with the *mantra*, “Be gratified, be gratified with this water mixed with sesame seeds, O *preta* of such and such name and such and such *gotra*. Let this water reach you.” It is instructed in this text that, nobody should weep or cough while offering water libations. After offering water libations, they should cleanse their teeth. After coming out of water, they should wear the same cloth they wore before bath, rinse the wet clothes, spread them over clean earth for drying and sit quietly. While the mourners are sitting quietly on the courtyard of the *śmaśāna* on soft grass, a learned person well versed in the *Purāṇas* should alleviate their sorrow through a discourse on temporality of time, the unsubstantial nature of the universe and transient nature of life. After hearing the discourse, the mourners should return home, the youths walking in front. At the door of the house, they should chew the margosa leaves and rinse their mouth with water. After touching cow-dung, sesame seeds, *dūrvā* grass, coral, bull or any other auspicious thing and keeping their feet lightly on a stone, they should enter their houses (4.71-87). Elsewhere, it is prescribed that after the water libation, the female mourners should proceed ahead and on the way, the margosa leaves should be chewed and rinse their mouth while sitting on a stone. It is stated that, after entering the house, the period of impurity begins for the sons and relatives of the deceased, which ends after tenth night (5.1-3).

GarūḍSār 10.60-63 prescribed that after cremation, the females should bathe first, then the sons of the deceased. It should be followed by the libations of water mixed with the sesame seeds, chewing margosa leaves by the mourners and recounting the virtues of the deceased. After reaching house, a cow should be fed and food should be eaten from a leaf. After cleaning the spot of death, a lamp should be placed there turning towards the south and lit. It should be kept burning up to the twelfth day.

9.9.3 Cremation of effigy

Pretakāṇḍa 4.135-154 and 40.44-64 described the rite of cremation of effigy as an additional element of the rite of *Nārāyaṇabali*. In *Pretakāṇḍa* 4.102-103, we find that after being asked by Garūḍa, Śrīkrṣṇa is about to narrate the funeral rite for a deceased who died abroad and the bones could not be found. Later, in *Pretakāṇḍa* 4.168, the related rite mentioned as the cremation of the effigy. But, in the next portion of 4.104-134, Śrīkrṣṇa narrated another rite, *Nārāyaṇabali* and its associated rite *Sarpabali* and finally the narration of cremation of effigy commenced from 4.135 as an additional element of *Nārāyaṇabali*. It seems that whole portion of 4.104-134 was inserted later, when the cremation of effigy was incorporated as an element of *Nārāyaṇabali*.

In its narration for the cremation of *puttalaka* (effigy), *Pretakāṇḍa* 4.135-154 prescribed to make the effigy with *kuśa* grass and to place it on a black antelope skin. It prescribed to spread 360 *palāśa* leafstalks over the limbs of the effigy, and their distribution is similar to the descriptions of the vedic ritual texts. According to this text, forty leafstalks should be spread on the head, ten should be spread on the neck, twenty should be spread on the chest and another twenty should be spread on the abdomen. A hundred leafstalks, according to this text, should be spread on the both the arms, twenty should be spread on the waist, a hundred should be spread on the thighs and thirty should be spread on the lower legs; four should be spread on the penis, six should be spread on the scrotum and ten must be spread on the toes.

In addition to these *palāśa* leafstalks, it also prescribed to place several other *oṣadhis* (Ayurvedic medicines) at different parts of the body of the effigy to represent the corresponding parts of the body. According to this text, a coconut should be placed to represent the head, a gourd to represent the palate, five jewels to represent the mouth, a banana to represent the tongue, the lotus stems to represent the intestine, sand and *śatapatra* (*Phyllanthus emblica*) leaves to represent nose, (lumps of) earth, *haritāla* (orpiment, As_2S_3) and *manaḥśilā* (realgar, As_2S_2) to represent fat, (a few drops of) mercury to represent semen, (a lump of) brass to represent faeces, (lumps of) *manaḥśilā* to represent the limbs, cooked sesame seeds to represent the joints, barley flour paste to represent flesh, honey to represent blood, *jaṭājuṭa* to represent hair, deer-skin to represent skin, palm-leaves to represent ears, to represent nose, lotus to represent navel, *guñja* berries (*Abrus precatorius*) and pearls to represent nipples, two aubergines to represent scrotum, a *grñjana* (carrot) to represent penis, and a (piece of) tin to represent the loin-cloth. Then, clarified butter should be poured on navel of the effigy, *kunkuma* (saffron), camphor, *agaru* and incense should be smeared on the forehead, perfumed garlands to be placed on the neck, silk-threads on the chest to represent garments, *rddhi* (*Habenaria intermedia*) and *vṛddhi* (*Platanthera edgeworthii*) to be placed on two arms, cowries on the eyes, pomegranate seeds on teeth, *campaka* (*Magnolia champaca*) flowers on fingers, vermilion on the corners of the eyes and a betel leaf to be placed as gift (to the deceased). Next, water purified by bringing in contact of the *śālagrāmaśilā* (ammonite fossils, representing Hindu deity Nārāyaṇa) should be sprinkled on it with a *mantra* (RV I.25.19). Finally, the effigy should be cremated as prescribed for the cremation of the corpse.

GarūḍSār 10.88-90 prescribed that in case a person dies away from home, in a forest or by the thieves and his body could not be recovered, then on the day the news of his death is heard, an effigy made of *darbha* grass should be burned as prescribed for a corpse. The ashes should be collected and immersed into the waters of the Gaṅgā. The rites for the tenth day should be performed on the same day and this date should be noted for the performance of the annual *Śrāddha*.

9.9.4 Post-cremation rites

Both the *Pretakāṇḍa* of the GarūḍP and GarūḍSār had prescribed several post cremation rites including *Asthisamcayana*, a series of *Śrāddha* rites and the rite of *Vṛṣotsarga* (literally, “release of a bull”). GarūḍSār 11.1 prescribed the *Śrāddha* rites for the first ten days after death as the rite of *Daśagātravidhi* (literally, “rite for the [formation of subtle] body [of the deceased in] ten days”).

9.9.4.1 Asthisamcayana

The *Pretakāṇḍa* prescribed the first, third, seventh or the ninth day after the death for the rite of *Asthisamcayana* (rite of collecting charred bones) by the relatives of the deceased. While collecting the charred bones, it prescribed that the relatives should touch each other (5.15-16). Elsewhere, it instructed that milk or water should be offered for the deceased in an unbaked earthen pot for three days after the death, which should be kept at the crossroads, over the sloping roof or courtyard on three pieces of wooden stick tied together and the rite of *Asthisamcayana* should be performed on the fourth day by the son of the deceased along with other relatives (15.59, 34.12-14).

GarūḍSār 10.64-67 prescribed that for three days after death, at sunset, at the *śmaśāna* or at the crossroads, the son of the deceased should offer milk and water to the deceased in an unbaked earthen pot bound with three pieces of wooden stick. Holding the pot, he should recite the *mantra*, “You have been burned in the fire of the *śmaśāna* and abandoned by your relatives. Here are the milk and water for you. Bathe and drink.” On the fourth day, the *samcaya* (rite of collecting charred bones) should be performed for both a *sāgnika* (one who maintained the sacrificial fires) and a *niragnika*. According to GarūḍSār 10.68-78 the son of the deceased should go to the *śmaśāna* and having bathed and having cleansed himself, he should put on a woollen sacrificial thread and the

pavitri (sacred ring of kuśa grass). Then, he should offer the oblations of grains to the *śmaśānavāsīs* (literally, “inhabitants of the *śmaśāna*”, the ghosts, who live in the *śmaśāna*) and circumambulate [the funeral pyre] three times with the *mantra* beginning with, “*yamāya tvā*” (VSM XXXVII.11). Having sprinkled milk over the spot of cremation pyre, he should sprinkle water over the charred bones and begin to pick up them. Next, he should place the charred bones on the *palāśa* leaves, sprinkle milk and water over them and having put them in an earthen pot, should perform a *Śrāddha* as prescribed. Having prepared a triangular shaped *sthaṇḍila* and besmeared it with cow-dung, he facing south, should offer three *piṇḍas* in three directions. Having collected the ashes from the pyre (on the *sthaṇḍila*), he should take a three-legged stool and place on it, a jar with its mouth uncovered, containing water. Then, he should offer an oblation of boiled rice with yoghurt, clarified butter, water and sweetmeats, as prescribed. He should take fifteen steps in the northerly direction from the cremation spot, dig a hole there and place the jar of bones. He should offer a *piṇḍa* over it, take out the jar from the hole and carry it to a water reservoir. There, he should again sprinkle milk and water over them and worship with sandalwood paste and saffron. Finally, the charred bones should be placed in a *samputaka* (leaf-box). Having touched with it his head and chest, he should walk around it and salute. Then it should be immersed into the Gaṅgā. GarūḍSār 10.79-80 mentioned the beliefs that the soul of the person whose charred bones are sank in the waters of the Gaṅgā within ten days after death never return from the *brahma loka* (the world of Brahmā) for another birth and as long as the bones of the deceased remain in the waters of the Gaṅgā, for so many thousands of years his soul remains in the *svarga loka* (heavenly world).

9.9.4.2 Rites of the first ten days

According to *Pretakāṇḍa* 5.17-20, from the first to the ninth day after the death, everyday a *piṇḍa* for the *preta* must be offered outside the house, leaving aside the area covered by grass. It prescribed that only a son of the deceased should perform this rite. The performer, after taking bath should calmly prepare the *caru* (boiled rice, vegetables or barley) and offer it on the north-eastern direction. For nine days he should keep a *piṇḍa* on the ground for the *asamskrta* (un-purified *preta*) and on *kuśa* grass for the *samskrta* (purified *preta*). This text instructed that whatever food items (rice, vegetables or barley paste) is offered on the first day, same food items should be offered for the ten days. *Pretakāṇḍa* 5.21-26 prescribed to offer libation of minimum an *añjali* (handful) of water daily along with the *piṇḍa* during the period of impurity; the maximum total number of the *añjalis* may be a hundred in ten days. *Pretakāṇḍa* 5.27-29 prescribed that on the tenth day all relatives of the deceased should take a bath outside the village and leave their old garments. A Brāhmaṇ should become pure after touching water, a Kṣatriya by touching a vehicle, a Vaiśya by touching a *pratoda* (long whip) and a Śūdra by touching a *yaṣṭi* (stick). Then, those relatives who are younger than the deceased should shave their heads, beards and clip their nails. After offering the tenth *piṇḍa* on the tenth day, the period of impurity ends for the relatives at the completion of the tenth night. The *piṇḍa* should be offered silently with flowers and incense. *Pretakāṇḍa* 15-72-73 prescribed that the *piṇḍa* offered on the tenth day must accompany flesh, as it is believed that the hunger cannot be satiated without flesh.

Pretakāṇḍa 5.33-37, 15.69-71 and 34.48-51 mentioned the eschatological belief behind offering ten *piṇḍas* (later known as *pūraka piṇḍas*) is that they generate the *piṇḍaja* (literally, “made from *piṇḍa*,” subtle) body for the *preta*. *Pretakāṇḍa* 5.31-32 and 15.65-66 mentioned that each *piṇḍa* offered for the first ten days to the *preta* automatically gets divided into four parts. Two parts of it generate the *piṇḍaja* body, third part of it goes to the servants (or messengers) of Yama and the fourth part of it satiates the *preta*. According to *Pretakāṇḍa* 5.33-37, the first *piṇḍa* generates the head, the second generates the ears, eyes and nose (neck and shoulders according to 15.70), the third generates neck, shoulder, arms and chest (chest according to 15.70, cheeks, mouth and neck according to 34.49), the fourth generates navel, genital organs and anus (back according to 15.70,

heart, stomach and abdomen according to 34.49), the fifth generates upper legs, knees and lower legs (navel according to 15.70, waist, back and anus according to 34.50), the sixth generates internal organs (waist according to 15.71, thighs according to 34.50), the seventh generates the nerves (genital organs according to 15.71, ankles according to 34.50), the eighth generates teeth and hair (thighs according to 15.71, lower legs according to 34.51) and the ninth generates semen (palate and feet according to 15.71, feet according to 34.51). The tenth *piṇḍa* generates the completeness of the subtle body and it also provides satiation of hunger.

The rite of *Daśagātravidhi* prescribed by GarūḍSār 11.25-39 probably based on the same belief. GarūḍSār 11.22 prescribed that the eldest son of the deceased should perform this rite. According to this text, the eldest son of the deceased should go to a well, a water reservoir, a garden, a *tīrtha* or a shrine in the *madhyama yāma* (between 9:00 am and 12:00 noon) and take a bath without reciting any *mantra*. Being purified, he should sit facing south at the root of a tree and make a *vedi* (altar) and besmear it with cow-dung. On the *vedi*, over the leaves, he should place of an effigy of the 'twice-born' (the deceased) made with *darbha* and *kuśa* grasses, worship it with water for the feet and other things and salute it with the *mantra*, "There is no reason for fear for those who salute to Govinda, clad in yellow coloured garments and [whose complexion is blue] like that of an *atasī* (*Linum usitatissimum*) flower." (*Śāntiparva* 47.60 of the *Mahābhārata*). He should spread a mat of *kuśa* grass in front of it and place a *piṇḍa* made of boiled rice or barley paste over it, prepared in the name and *gotra* of the deceased. He should offer *uśīra* grass roots, sandalwood paste, *bhr̥ṅgarāja* (*Eclipta prostrata*) flowers, incense, lamp, *naivedya* (food items), mouth fresheners and gifts. He should feed the crows with two vessels of *pāyasa* (milk and water) and castor oil with the words, "May all these, given by me to so and so (name of the deceased) *preta* persist." For nine days, nine *piṇḍas* should be offered in the same way. On the ninth day, all *sapiṇḍa* (agnate) relatives of the deceased should besmear themselves with oil and with the prayer for the deceased for attaining the heaven, bathe outside (the village). Then, they should proceed to the residence of the deceased, with female members in front, holding *dūrvā* grass and unhusked grains in their hands and leave them at the residence of the deceased, saying, "May his family grow like *dūrvā* grass and radiate like unhusked grains". On the tenth day, a *piṇḍa* of flesh should be offered or alternately, a *piṇḍa* of *māṣa* (beans) should be offered as flesh is believed as forbidden in the *Kaliyuga* (the current mythical epoch). At the end of the *Śrāddha* each day, the son of the deceased should take a bath, go home and eat only after giving food to a cow. On the tenth day, son of the deceased and other relatives must shave their heads and beards. During these ten days, a 'twice-born' should be entertained with sweetmeats every day. GarūḍSār 12.5 prescribed to perform the *Śrāddha* on the tenth day by pronouncing the name and *gotra* of the deceased but without any *mantra*.

9.9.4.3 Rites of the eleventh day

Pretakāṇḍa 34.38-39 prescribed that the *Śrāddha* on the eleventh day is common for all 'varṇas'. On the eleventh day, the performer (son of the deceased) having taken a bath, should donate a bed to a Brāhmaṇ. *Pretakāṇḍa* 34.73-77 and 81-82 instructed that the bedstead should be made of high quality wood, ornamentally inlaid and engraved. The bolts and crossbars should be golden. It should be covered with a red velvet cloth. The pillow should be nice and exquisite. It should be fumigated with incense and fragrant substances. The golden images of Hari and Lakṣmī should be placed on the sides. A vessel filled with clarified butter, betel leaves, saffron powder, camphor and sandalwood paste should be placed nearby. A lamp, a pair of sandals, a parasol, a whisk, a vessel and seven kinds of grains should also be placed near the bed. A drinking pot and a mirror should be kept ready. The bedframe should be decorated with a covering of five colours. The bed (along with the accessories) should be gifted to the Brāhmaṇ after duly worshipping him, with the *mantra*, "As your bed, O Kṛṣṇa is never without Sāgarakanyā (Lakṣmī), similarly let my bed be never empty in all [future] births." GarūḍSār 12.2-20 described a rite of the eleventh day (after death) in details. It

prescribed that on the eleventh day, the performer (son of the deceased) should go to a water reservoir in the early morning and perform all *Aurdhvadehika kriyā* (literally, “funeral rites”) with due diligence. He should invite the Brāhmanṣ, well conversant in the *Vedas* and the *śāstras*, and bow to them with the folded hands for the release of the *preta*. He should offer the *piṇḍa* to the *mantra* on the eleventh day. He should make a golden image of Viṣṇu, a silver image of Brahmā, a copper image of Rudra and an iron image of Yama. A pot filled with the water of the Gaṅgā should be placed on the west for Viṣṇu and (the image of) Viṣṇu covered with a yellow cloth should be placed on it. A pot filled with *kṣīra* and water should be placed on the east for Brahmā and (the image of) Brahmā, covered with a white cloth should be placed on it. Similarly, a pot filled with honey and clarified butter should be placed on the north for Rudra and (the image of) Rudra covered with a red cloth should be placed on it and a pot filled with rain water should be placed on the south for Yama and (the image of) Yama covered with a black cloth should be placed on it. Then the son of the deceased should draw a *maṇḍala* at the centre and place a *kauśika* (literally, “an effigy [of the ‘twice-born’] made with *kuśa* grass”, the effigy of the deceased) there. Next, he should offer libations of water, facing southward with his sacrificial thread on the right shoulder. The libations of water should be offered to Viṣṇu, Vidhi (Brahmā), Śiva and Dharma (Yama) with the recitation of the vedic *mantras*. Then, a *homa* should be performed, followed by the performance of *Śrāddha* of the eleventh day. Next, he should gift a cow with the *mantra*, “O Mādhava, may this cow gifted by me please you.” The clothes, ornaments and vehicles used by the deceased, a brass vessel filled with clarified butter, seven different grains, sesame seeds and the other eight great gifts should be given during this rite. Having washed the feet of a Brāhman, the son of the deceased should honour him with clothes, cooked food, *modaka* (sweetmeats), flour cakes and sweet milk. Then, he should place a golden image of Puruṣa (the deceased) on a bed and after worshipping a Brāhman, gift the bed to him with the *mantra*, “I am giving this bed for the deceased to you, along with the image of the *preta* and all other accessories.”

9.9.4.4 The *Navaśrāddha* and the *Ṣoḍaśī Śrāddhas*

The *Pretakāṇḍa* of the GarūḍP prescribed several conflicting versions of the *Navaśrāddha* (literally, “nine *śrāddhas*”) and the *Ṣoḍaśī Śrāddha* (literally, “sixteen *śrāddhas*”), two major groups of post-cremation *Śrāddha* rites. Probably, this confusion is the result of the attempts made to incorporate different traditions together by this text. But, GarūḍSār provided a single version for the both groups.

Three different versions of six *Ekoddiṣṭa Śrāddhas* are prescribed in the *Pretakāṇḍa* as the part of bigger groups of *Navaśrāddha* (literally, “nine *śrāddhas*”) and *Malina Ṣoḍaśī* (unclean sixteen) *Śrāddha*. The first version is found in *Pretakāṇḍa* 4.48-49, which mentioned that these six are performed at the place of death, at the doorway, at the crossroads, at the place of rest, on the funeral pile and at the time of *Asthisamcayana*. The second version is found in *Pretakāṇḍa* 15.30-31, which mentioned that these six are performed at the place of death, at the door, at the courtyard, at the place of rest, on the funeral pile and at the time of *Asthisamcayana*. The third version is found in *Pretakāṇḍa* 35.33-34, which mentioned that the first one is performed at the place of death, the second at the doorway, the third at the midway to *śmaśāna*, the fourth on the funeral pyre in the hands of the corpse, the fifth one is the offering of *prativeśyaka piṇḍa* to the *śmaśānavāsī bhūtas* (ghosts who live in the *śmaśāna*) and the sixth one is performed during *Asthisamcayana*. According to this text, these six and the ten *Śrāddhas*, performed by offering ten *piṇḍas* for the ten days after the death together form the first group of *Ṣoḍaśī* (sixteen) *Śrāddha* known as *Malina Ṣoḍaśī* (unclean sixteen) or *Pūrvaṣoḍaśaka*. A similar version is found in GarūḍSār 12.58-59, which mentioned that the first group of *Ṣoḍaśī Śrāddha* known as *Malina* comprises six *Śrāddhas* performed at the place of death, at the doorway, at the midway to *śmaśāna*, (two) on the funeral pyre in the hands of the corpse and at the time of *Asthisamcayana* added together with the ten

Śrāddhas, performed by offering ten *piṇḍas* for the ten days after the death.

The first version of *Navaśrāddha* is narrated in *Pretakāṇḍa* 5.67-69. It mentioned that the three *Śrāddhas* performed at the place of death, at the place of rest on the way, at the time of *Asthisamcayana* and another six performed on the fifth, seventh, eighth, ninth, tenth and eleventh day after death respectively are together form the *Navaśrāddha*. The second version is found immediately after the first in *Pretakāṇḍa* 5.71-72. It mentioned that the *Śrāddhas* performed on the first, third, fifth, seventh, ninth and eleventh day after death are also known as *Navaśrāddha*. Although, these *Śrāddhas* are performed in six days, but the number of *Śrāddhas* performed in each day may be enhanced to make it nine. It also mentioned that two different enumerations are stated because the sages have different opinions about it. The third version of *Navaśrāddha* narrated in *Pretakāṇḍa* 34.36 is similar to the second version. It said that the *Śrāddhas* performed on the uneven days after the death, viz, the first, third, fifth, seventh, ninth and eleventh, are together known as *Navakaśrāddha*. In *Pretakāṇḍa* 34.28 mentioned that this *Navakaśrāddha* (comprising six *Śrāddhas*) and the *piṇḍas* offered in the first ten days together form *Ṣoḍaśaśrāddha*.

Two versions of the second group of *Ṣoḍaśī* (sixteen) *Śrāddha* known as *Madhya Ṣoḍaśī* (middle sixteen) performed on the eleventh day are found in the GaruḍP. *Pretakāṇḍa* 35.35-36 mentioned that, the performances of eleven *Śrāddhas* followed by five *Śrāddhas* offered for Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva and other deities (Yama and Puruṣa) are together known as *Madhya Ṣoḍaśī*. *Pretakāṇḍa* 5.38 mentioned that eleven *Śrāddhas* beginning with one offered for Viṣṇu and also ending with one offered for him, followed by five *Śrāddhas* offered for five other deities together form the second group of *Ṣoḍaśī* (sixteen) *Śrāddha* known as *Madhya Ṣoḍaśī*. The version of GaruḍSār 12.60-64 for *Madhya Ṣoḍaśaka* is same as this second version of the GaruḍP. According to the GaruḍSār, the first *piṇḍa* should be offered to Viṣṇu, the second *piṇḍa* to Śiva, the third *piṇḍa* to the retinue of Yama, the fourth *piṇḍa* to the king Soma, the fifth *piṇḍa* to Agni Havyavāhana, the sixth *piṇḍa* to Agni Kavyavāhana, the seventh *piṇḍa* to Kāla, the eighth *piṇḍa* to Rudra, the ninth *piṇḍa* to Puruṣa, the tenth *piṇḍa* to *preta* and the eleventh *piṇḍa* again to Viṣṇu. The twelfth, thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth *piṇḍas* should be offered to Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva, Yama and Puruṣa respectively.

The first version the third group of *Ṣoḍaśī* (sixteen) *Śrāddha* known as *Uttama Ṣoḍaśī* (Best Sixteen) is found in *Pretakāṇḍa* 5.48-49a. It said that the twelve *Śrāddhas* performed every lunar month (for one year on the *tithi* of death), the *Ādya Śrāddha* ((according to *Pretakāṇḍa* 5.51, this *Śrāddha* is performed on the eleventh day or the twelfth day after the death), two *Ṣāṇmāsika Śrāddhas* (or *Ūṣāṇmāsika Śrāddha*, performed on the previous days to the completion of the sixth month and one year) and *Sapiṇḍīkaraṇa* together form this third group of *Ṣoḍaśī*. The second version is found in *Pretakāṇḍa* 5.49b-50. It mentioned that this third group of *Ṣoḍaśī* (sixteen) *Śrāddha* comprises the one performed on the twelfth day, the one performed on the completion of the third fortnight, the twelve performed on the *tithi* of death in every lunar month for one year and the two performed on the previous days to the completion of the sixth month and one year. The third version is mentioned in *Pretakāṇḍa* 34.53 and 35.37, which stated that the third group of *Ṣoḍaśī* comprises the twelve *Śrāddhas* performed in every lunar month, the one performed on the eleventh day, the one performed on the completion of the third fortnight and the two *Ṣāṇmāsika Śrāddhas* (performed on the *riktā* days). A similar version is found in *Pretakāṇḍa* 27.30. GaruḍSār 12.65-66 provided another version for the third group of *Ṣoḍaśī*. According to this text, it comprises the twelve *Śrāddhas* performed in every lunar month, the two *Śrāddhas* performed after the first fortnight and the third fortnight and the *Ūṣāṇmāsika* (performed on the previous day to the completion of the sixth month) and *Ūnābdika* (performed on the previous day to the completion of the one year) *Śrāddhas*.

9.9.4.5 Vṛṣotsarga

Pretakāṇḍa 5.40-46 prescribed to perform *Vṛṣotsarga* as a post-cremation rite and *Pretakāṇḍa* 5.40 stated that if a bull is not released for a *preta* (deceased) on the eleventh day after death, the deceased will remain in the state of *preta* even if a hundred *Śrāddhā* rites are performed. *Vṛṣotsarga* is essentially the rite of ritual release of a decorated bull along with four heifers. The *Pretakāṇḍa* instructed that, in case an actual bull is not available, the effigy of a bull should be made of *darbha* grass and flour-paste and the same should be released. Even, this is also not possible, then an effigy of a bull made of clay and *darbha* grass should be released. According to *Pretakāṇḍa* 14.35-36, the bull calf should be marked with a *cakra* (discus) on the left side, a *triśūla* (trident) on the right side and a garland should be placed on its neck before release.

Perhaps, in order to distinguish this post-cremation rite performed on the eleventh day after death with the ancient domestic rite of *Vṛṣotsarga* prescribed in the *gṛhyasūtras*, *Pretakāṇḍa* 6.15 and 14.16 mentioned the ancient rite as *Vṛṣayajña* and *Pretakāṇḍa* 6.18 prescribed to perform *Vṛṣayajña* on the full-moon day of the lunar month of *Kārttika*, *Māgha* or *Vaisākha*. A detailed description of *Vṛṣayajña* is found in *Pretakāṇḍa* 14.19-30, which is similar to the ancient domestic rite. *GarūḍSār* 12.1 also prescribed that the rite of *Vṛṣotsarga* should be performed during the *Śrāddha* rite on the eleventh day. An elaborate description of this rite is found in *GarūḍSār* 12.38-42. It prescribed that a bull calf and a heifer should be brought together and bound together with a *kañkaṇa* (marriage string) in accordance with the marriage rites. Then, they should be tied to a post. Next, the bull calf and the heifer should be bathed from the water from the pot for Rudra (used for the rites of the eleventh day). Having worshipped them with the fragrant substances and the garlands, the performer (son of the deceased) should circumambulate them. He should mark the right side of the bull with a *triśūla* (trident) and the left side with a *cakra* (discus) and having released the bull, he should recite the *mantra* with the hands folded, “You are Dharma in the form of a bull. You were created by Brahmā at the beginning. On account of your being released, help to cross this *bhavārṇava* (ocean of worldly existence).” Having honoured it thus, he should release the bull calf and the heifer.

9.9.4.6 Sapiṇḍīkaraṇa

An early description of the rite of *Sapiṇḍīkaraṇa* is found in the *Ācārakāṇḍa* 220.1-10 of the *GarūḍP*. It prescribed to perform this rite in the afternoon of the on the day of first anniversary of the death. Four Brāhmaṇs are invited to represent *pitṛ* (father, the deceased), grandfather, great-grandfather and great-great-grandfather. Another Brāhmaṇ is invited to represent Viśvedevāḥ. According to *Ācārakāṇḍa* 220.6, *piṇḍa* for the *pitṛ* should be divided into two parts with the two *mantras* (VSM XIX.45-46) and put in the vessels of the grandfather and great-great-grandfather. *Pretakāṇḍa* 5.48-49 and 53b-54a prescribed to perform the rite of *Sapiṇḍīkaraṇa* on the twelfth day after death or after the third fortnight or after completion of six months or one year. But *Pretakāṇḍa* 5.55 and 26.13 stated that it is preferable to perform this rite on the twelfth day after death. *Pretakāṇḍa* 26.14 prescribed that *Sapiṇḍīkaraṇa* should be performed on the twelfth day after death for both the *sāgnika* and the *niragnika*. But, *Pretakāṇḍa* 26.15 (same as *GarūḍSār* 13.28) said that the knowledgeable sages have prescribed to perform the rite of *Sapiṇḍīkaraṇa* on the twelfth day after death or after the third fortnight or after completion of six months or one year. *Pretakāṇḍa* 34.110 prescribed to perform the rite after completion of one year. According to *Pretakāṇḍa* 5.56-59, before the performance of this rite, four vessels filled with water, sesame seeds and fragrant substances should be made ready. Three of them are meant for the *pitṛs* and the fourth one for the *preta*. During the performance, the performer should sprinkle water from the vessel assigned to the *preta* to the other three pots assigned to the *pitṛs*. Next, he should offer four *piṇḍas* and libations of water. *Pretakāṇḍa* 5.64 stated that in case, the *Sapiṇḍīkaraṇa* rite for the deceased has been performed before the completion of one year, then every month a jar of water should be offered to

the deceased till the completion of one year. *Pretakāṇḍa* 5.79 prescribed that for one year, a lamp must be lit every day outside the door of the house.

GarūḍSār 13.28-30 stated that the knowledgeable sages have prescribed to perform the rite of *Sapiṇḍīkaraṇa* on the twelfth day after death or after the third fortnight or after completion of six months or one year. But the Godhead, based on the normative texts, has prescribed its performance only on the twelfth day after the death for all four *varṇas*. Detailed description of this rite is mentioned in GarūḍSār 13.35-39. It prescribed that the son of the deceased after the bath and smearing the spot of death with cow-dung should perform the rite following the instructions in the normative texts. Then, he should worship Viśvedevāḥ with *pāḍya* (water for washing feet), *arghya* (flowers, darbha grass, rice and water) and *ācamanīya* (water to sip). Then, having offered *piṇḍa* to other deceased ancestors, he should sip water. He should offer three *piṇḍas*; the first one to his grandfather, the second one to the great-grandfather and the third one to the great-great-grandfather in the forms of Vasu, Rudra and Arka respectively. The fourth *piṇḍa* should be offered to the deceased. He should worship with sandalwood paste, holy basil leaves, incense, lamp, good quality foods, mouth fresheners, good quality clothes and presents. Having divided the *piṇḍa* for the *preta* into three parts with a *śalāka* (thin bar) of gold, he should mix these three parts separately with the three *piṇḍas* offered to his grandfather and others. GarūḍSār 13.52-55 prescribed that after *Sapiṇḍīkaraṇa*, he should honour the feet of a Brāhmaṇ with sandalwood paste and unhusked rice and give him a gift. He should gift his *ācārya* the subsistence for a year, clarified butter, food, gold, silver, a good cow, a horse, an elephant, a chariot and a plot of land. He should worship the nine planets, Devī and Vināyaka with saffron, unhusked rice grains and *naivedya* (food items), reciting *mantras* after uttering the benediction. At the end, the *ācārya* should sprinkle water with the *mantras*, tie a thread on the hand of the performer (the son of the deceased) and give him some unhusked rice grains, already consecrated with the *mantras*. GarūḍSār 13.58 prescribed for gifting a bed during *Sapiṇḍīkaraṇa*.

9.9.4.7 Padadāna

GarūḍSār 13.82-86 prescribed for performance of the rite of *Padadāna* (literally, “the gift of items”) after rite of gifting a bed on the twelfth day during the rite of *Sapiṇḍīkaraṇa*. It prescribed to gift seven items, namely, a parasol, a pair of sandals, the garments, a *mudrikā* (signet-ring), a *kamaṇḍalu* (water pot), a mat and a set of five vessels. According to this text, the *Padadāna* becomes complete with the addition of another six items: a *daṇḍa*, a copper vessel, uncooked rice, food, *arghya* (valuables) and a *yajñopavīta*. These thirteen items should be given to thirteen Brāhmaṇs. It mentioned the belief that *Padadāna* brings comfort to the deceased while travelling on the way to Yama.

9.9.4.8 Nārāyaṇabali

Three lists of *durmaraṇa* (unnatural deaths) and other reasons for which the rite of *Nārāyaṇabali* is needed to be performed for a deceased are found in *Pretakāṇḍa* 4.104-109, 40.4-9 and 44.1-3. The unnatural deaths listed in *Pretakāṇḍa* 4.104-109 are death by fasting, fanged animals, strangulation, arson, poison, fire, a bull, a Brāhmaṇ, cholera, committing suicide, falling from a height, in bondage, drowning in water, snakebite, a tiger, horned animals, falling from a hill or a tree, lightning strike, nails, iron, in firmament, falling from a cot, falling from sky, thieves, a Caṇḍāla and wounds by a weapon on the horseback. This rite is instructed to be performed also for those males who died while being adorned (during a sexual intercourse) by a female in her menses, a Śunakī (Caṇḍāla female), a Śūdra (female) or a Rajaka (female) and those persons whose upper lip, lower lip or both became *ucchiṣṭa* (impure) before death. In the list in *Pretakāṇḍa* 40.4-9 for *Nārāyaṇabali* rite, the persons who met death by a Mleccha, great ailments or due to sexual relations with a female of bad character and one who is defiled by the dogs, jackals or other

animals, whose corpse is not cremated or died of sepsis were added and several other cases were deleted.

Pretakāṇḍa 4.110-116 instructed that for the persons who died of a *durmaraṇa*, the rites of cremation, and the post-cremation rites of *Udakakriyā* and offering of the *piṇḍas* should not be performed. The sons, grandsons and the relatives, in order to avoid censor by the community, should perform only the rite of *Nārāyaṇabali* for him. According to Yama (an authority on *smṛti*), only by performing this rite, the relatives can become pure. This rite should be performed at a proper *tīrtha* (sacred place) by the Brāhmaṇs, preferable in a shrine of Kṛṣṇa for the sake of purification. *Pretakāṇḍa* 40.10-15 also instructed not to perform the cremation rite, the rite of *Udakakriyā* for such persons and no period of impurity should be there for the relatives. Only the rite of *Nārāyaṇabali* should be performed for the deceased and it should be performed within six months for a Brāhmaṇ, within three months for a Kṣatriya, within one and a half month for a Vaiśya and immediately for a Śūdra. It instructed to perform this rite in Gaṅgā, Yamunā, Naimiṣa or Puṣkara or near a tank filled with water, an eddy of clean water or in a cowshed or a house or in a shrine in front of the image of Kṛṣṇa.

Two different procedures for *Nārāyaṇabali* rite are prescribed in *Pretakāṇḍa* 4.116-131 and *Pretakāṇḍa* 40.16-64. Both *Pretakāṇḍa* 4.135-154 and *Pretakāṇḍa* 40.44-64 prescribed an additional element of cremation of an effigy after the main rite, which has been discussed earlier.

Pretakāṇḍa 44.4 instructed that no *Navaśrāddha*, *Ṣoḍaśa Śrāddha* and *Sapiṇḍīkaraṇa* should be performed for the persons mentioned in its list. Instead, *Pretakāṇḍa* 44.6-9 prescribed that after the completion of one year after death, his relatives should worship Viṣṇu and Yama on the 11th *tithi* in the fortnight of the waxing moon with fragrant substances, flowers and unhusked grains. Ten *piṇḍas* soaked with clarified butter and mixed with honey and sesame seeds should be offered on *darbha* grass. The performer should perform this rite silently, facing south, wearing the sacrificial thread and meditating upon Viṣṇu and Yama. After the completion of the rite, he should take the *piṇḍas* together and throw them into the water, murmuring the name and *gotra* of the deceased. The same procedure is described in *Mitā* on YDh III.6 as the procedure prescribed by the Viṣṇu for the performance of *Nārāyaṇabali*.

Pretakāṇḍa 4.132-134 prescribed that for the person died of snakebite, the rite of *Sarpabali* should be performed, which comprises preparation of a golden snake of one *bhāra* (74 kilograms) and gift it along with a cow to a Brāhmaṇ.

Pretakāṇḍa 27.42-60 described a rite of *Nārāyaṇa*, which should be performed for the release of a *preta*, who is in the permanent state of *piśāca* due to certain evil deeds in the past life. This rite is different from the rite of *Nārāyaṇabali* and more of a rite of exorcism in nature.

9.9.5 Funeral rites for children and ascetics

Pretakāṇḍa 24.37-38 prescribed that if a child dies before the rite of *Cūḍākarāṇa*, the corpse must be buried and milk and food should be distributed to the children of the neighbourhood, according to one's capacity. Elsewhere, it (5.7) prescribed to bury the corpse of a child till the completion of the second year. *GarūḍSār* 10.92-93 prescribed that if a child dies on the bank of the Gaṅgā, the corpse should be simply immersed into the Gaṅgā. If the child dies within the age of 27 months in any other place, the corpse should be buried. If a child dies after the completion of 27 months, the corpse should be burned and its bones should be strewn on the Gaṅgā. A water pot should be gifted and food should be served to some children.

GarūḍSār 10.102-107 prescribed that for the *yatis* (ascetics), no cremation, *Udakakriyā* or *Daśagātravidhi* should be performed by their sons after their death; only *Tīrthaśrāddha* (literally, “*Śrāddha* at the sacred place”) and *Gayāśrāddha* (literally, “*Śrāddha* at Gayā”) should be

performed for them. If the Gaṅgā or any other great rivers are located nearby, their corpse should be thrown into them. Otherwise, the corpse should be buried in the earth.

9.10 Descriptions in the commentaries and the *nibandhas*

Two classes of textual sources are available for the information about the funeral rites followed by the Hindus since the medieval period. While, the commentaries on the vedic ritual texts and the digests on general topics as well as on the *śuddhi* (literally, “purification”) and the *śrāddha* provide the general data, the specialized *paddhati* and *prayoga* texts for performing the cremation and post-cremation rites provide an insight about their actual performances. Many of these digests for cremation and post-cremation rites are typically named as *Antyeṣṭipaddhati*, *Aurdhvadehikapaddhati* and *Aurdhvadehikaprayoga*. The texts of Nārāyaṇabhaṭṭa and Harihara are styled as *Antyeṣṭipaddhati*, the texts of Kamalākarabhaṭṭa and Viśvanātha are styled as *Aurdhvadehikapaddhati* and the texts of Īśvaraśāstrin and Kṛṣṇadīkṣita are styled as *Aurdhvadehikaprayoga*. Descriptions of these texts portray significant variations in the funerary practices, probably reflecting the actual variations in the practices followed in different parts of South Asia during the medieval period. The significant additions found in these texts are the descriptions of elaborate rites for a *mumūrṣu* (dying person) and the detailed instructions for performance of post-cremation *Śrāddhā* rites at a *tīrtha* (sacred place).

9.10.1 Cremation rite

9.10.1.1 Cremation of corpse

Most of the medieval digests on *śuddhi* and the *paddhati* texts on *Antyeṣṭi* described the cremation rite in details. *Hāralatā*, *Śuddhitattva*, *Śuddhikaumudī* and *Śuddhiprakāśa* provided significant information on the cremation rite.

Aniruddhabhaṭṭa (2nd half of 12th century) in his *Hāralatā* cited the verses from the *Ādipurāṇa*, which prescribed that the corpse should be washed, decked with flowers, scented with fragrant substances and a piece of gold, bell metal, gem or coral should be placed in its mouth. While the corpse is carried to the cremation spot, a huge noise should be created by playing four types of musical instruments. The corpse should be placed on the funeral pile by the relatives belonging to the same *gotra*, with its feet turned towards south. In case of a male, it should be placed with its face downwards and the corpse of a female should be placed on its back. A ‘*sapiṇḍa*’ (agnate) or a friend should set the fire. When the corpse is mostly consumed by fire and only a small portion of it remained unburnt, the person who set the fire, should take in his hand seven pieces of fuel (sticks) of prescribed length and go around the funeral pile seven times and throw each piece of fuel (stick) in to fire after every circumambulation is completed. He, as well as each of his companions, then, with an axe, should give seven strokes to the pieces of burning wood with the *mantra* beginning with, “Kṛavyāda, reverence to you.” Next, all of them should enter the adjoining river, without looking back at the funeral pile.⁹⁶

The cremation rite prescribed in *Antyeṣṭipaddhati* (2nd half of the 16th century) of Nārāyaṇabhaṭṭa was followed by the R̥gvedic priests of Western India till recently. According to this text, the corpse should be washed, decked with a *tilaka* (auspicious mark) on the forehead, clothed in a garment, covered with a paste of *jatāmāmsī* and a garland of *nalada* flowers placed round its neck. Then the performer of the rite should wash his feet, seep water and perform *prāṇāyāma* without *mantra*. Next he should make a *saṅkalpa*. He should wear his sacrificial thread in *prācīnāvītin* (under the left arm and over the right shoulder) style and pray to Bhūmi with a *mantra* (RV X.18.10). He should circumambulate the place dug up for cremation three times and each time sprinkle water with a branch of *śamī* after reciting a *mantra* (RV X.14.9). Next, he should draw three lines on the ground with a piece of iron or *kuśa* grass roots, while saying that these lines are being drawn for the lords

of cremation, Yama, Kāla and Mṛtyu respectively. Then, he was instructed to throw pieces of gold, sesame seeds and water mixed with sesame seeds in the centre of the dug up place for Yama, to the north for Kāla and to the south for Mṛtyu. This text prescribed to place some sesame seeds in the mouth of the corpse and prepare the funeral pile sufficient for burning the body by means of wood used for sacrifices brought by the persons belonging to the same caste of the deceased. On the pile, *kuśa* grass bunches should be spread and an antelope skin should be placed over it with the hairs outside. Then, the corpse should be carried to the north of the fire and should be placed on the funeral pile with the head to the south. To the north of the corpse, he should make the wife of the deceased to sit down and the husband's brother, pupil or an aged servant should make her get with a *mantra* (RV X.18.8). The performer should put pieces of gold or drops of clarified butter in the seven orifices of the body of the deceased and throw sesame seeds mixed with clarified butter on the corpse. Then, he should perform *parisamūhana* (wiping with the wet hand) of the sacrificial fire, followed by *paristarana* (strewing *darbha* grass) round the fire (together with funeral pile) and *paryukṣaṇa* (sprinkling of water). Next, the sacrificial utensils, which include the *prokṣaṇī*, the *sruva*, the *camasa* and the vessel containing clarified butter should be brought to the south of the fire, the performer should put water in the *camasa*, cover it with *darbha* grass and invoke it with a *mantra* (RV X.16.8). Then the performer should make a *saṅkalpa* that he would wait upon (or worship) the dead, take two fuel sticks and offer them to fire and perform worship of Agni, Kāma, Loka and Anumati by offering clarified butter with appropriate *mantra*. Next, he should offer on the chest of deceased clarified butter (or *prṣadājya*). Then, the performer should prepare five *apūpas* (cakes) with barley flour, mix them with *prṣadājya* and place the cakes at five parts of the deceased: forehead, mouth, two arms and chest with the *mantras* from the RV. Then, he should make the fire flame up with a *mantra* (RV X.16.9), towards the head for a male and towards the feet for a female. While, the body burning, he should repeat certain *mantras* from the RV and throw sesame seeds on the corpse. Next, the performer should take a jar (filled with water) on his left shoulder and make a hole on it on the back of the jar with a broken but smooth piece of stone. He should circumambulate the corpse thrice, with his left towards the dead body, starting from the spot where the feet of the corpse lie and recite certain *mantras*. The jar should be struck thrice. All relatives of the deceased belong to his *gotra* should also circumambulate. The jar should be completely broken near the spot where the head of the corpse lie. The relatives, without looking back should turn to the left and come out of the cremation place with the younger members first, while the performer should recite the *mantra* (RV X.18.3), “These living ones have separated from the dead”. The relatives should repair to a spot where water is flowing, wearing only one garment and hair dishevelled, facing the south, plunge in to the water once and sip water. They should place on the bank the piece of stone with which holes were made in to the jar, offer water mixed with sesame seeds on that stone and pray with folded hands, “O departed, of such a *gotra* and such name. May this water mixed with sesame seeds reach you.” At the end, the performer should offer water with his *uttarīya* (upper garment) for allaying thirst of the departed due to burning.⁹⁷

9.10.1.2 Cremation of effigy

Descriptions of cremation of effigy for a person who died away from home are found in the medieval texts also. Bhaṭṭakumārilasvāmī (11th century) in his *Āśvalāyanagr̥hyakārika* described this rite as *Pālāśavidhi*. It prescribed that in case the corpse is not found, an effigy should be made with the *pālāśa* petioles. 40 petioles should be provided for the head and 10 for the neck; 30 should be provided for the chest and 20 for the abdomen; 100 should be provided for the arms and 10 for the fingers; 6 should be provided for the scrotum and 4 for the penis; 100 should be provided for the thighs, 30 for the knees and lower legs and 10 for the toes. The effigy should be tied with a woollen thread, washed, decked and cremated.⁹⁸

Aparārka (early 12th century) quoted a *smṛti* of an unspecified authority, which prescribed that for a

deceased person, if only the charred bones are found, same should be washed with *kṣīra* (sweet milk) and cremated. In case the bones are also not found, a *pratirūpaka* (effigy) should be formed with 362 *palāśa* leafstalks, it should be tied around with a woollen thread, besmeared with the barley flour paste and cremated according to the procedure. For forming the effigy, 32 leafstalks should be used for the head, 60 for the neck, 80 for the chest, 20 for each hip, 20 for each arm, 10 for the fingers, 6 for the scrotum, 4 for the penis, 60 for both the thighs, 20 for the knees, 20 for the lower legs and 10 for the toes.⁹⁹

Hāralatā quoted the verses from the *Ādipurāṇa*, which said that for a person, who went abroad and died there, in the absence of bones, a *parṇanara* (effigy) should be made of 360 *palāśa* leaves and *śarapatra* (reeds). It should be covered with a black antelope skin, tied with a woollen thread, besmeared with finely powdered barley mixed with water and burnt by the relatives with the *mantra*, “For this so and so (name of the deceased) be in the *svarga loka* (heavenly world); *svāhā*.” (VSM XXXV.22).¹⁰⁰

ŚudT (16th century) cited the ĀGP, which prescribed that in case of a deceased, the bones are not found, a *puruṣa pratikṛti* (effigy) of the *preta* (deceased) should be formed with 360 *palāśa* leafstalks, it should be tied with a woollen thread and besmeared with the barley flour paste. For forming the effigy, 40 leafstalks should be used, 10 for the neck, 30 for the chest, 20 for the abdomen, 100 for the arms, 10 for the fingers, 6 for the scrotum, 4 for the penis, 100 for the thighs, 30 for the knees and lower legs and 10 for the toes. Citing the same verses from the *Ādipurāṇa* as the *Hāralatā*, it prescribed that the effigy should be made of *śarapatra* (reeds) as it is a more suitable material for preparing the effigy and the *palāśa* leafstalks should only be placed over it at its head and other parts of the body as prescribed.¹⁰¹

In ca. 1590, Abu'l Fazl in his *Ain-i-Akbari*, probably based on the information supplied to him, mentioned that, if the corpse could not be found, its effigy was made with flour and leaves of *palāśa* and reeds, covered with the deer-skin and a cocoanut serving for the head. Over this effigy, prayers were said and then it was burnt.¹⁰²

9.10.2 Post-cremation rites

9.10.2.1 *Asthisaṃcayana* and *Asthikṣepa*

Aparārka (early 12th century) while commenting on YDh III.16, quoted a long passage from the *Brahmapurāṇa* on *Asthisaṃcayana* rite, which stated that charred bones of a cremated person should be collected in an urn and deposited at the root of a tree or cast in the Gaṅgā, the place of cremation should be purified with cow-dung and water. To provide a cover on it, a *puṣkaraka* tree should be planted there or an *eḍūka*¹⁰³ (monument) should be built over it.¹⁰⁴

According to the instruction found in *Antyeṣṭipaddhati* of Nārāyaṇabhaṭṭa, followed by the *Rgvedic* priests, after the tenth day from cremation of the dead, the charred bones should be collected by the aged persons odd in numbers and the dust attached to them to be removed with a winnowing basket. These bones should be placed in an urn with a lid. The urn must be buried in a pit and covered up with earth.¹⁰⁵

Antyeṣṭipaddhati of Harihara, followed by the *Kṛṣṇayajurvedic* priests prescribed that immediately after the cremation, the chief mourner should put the remains in a small earthen pot and throw them in to the water, if there be any nearby, or if not, into some lonely place or desert.¹⁰⁶

Antyeṣṭidīpikā of Subrahmaṇyavidvān, followed by the *Sāmavedic* priests prescribed to perform the rite of on the second or third day after death. It instructed the performer (son of the deceased) to go to the cremation spot, carrying with him the items required for the rite, namely, clarified butter prepared from cow-milk, cow-dung, branches of *śamī* or *palāśa*, a pot of water mixed with sandalwood paste and other fragrant substances and two earthen pots tied with a thread. Before the

performance of the rite, he should take a bath, sit down at the cremation spot facing south with his sacrificial thread in the *prācīnāvītīn* fashion. At the beginning of the rite, he should make the *saṅkalpa* that he is performing this rite of *Asthisaṃcayana* for the liberation of the *preta* (deceased) of so and so (name of the deceased) *gotra* from its (present) state of *preta* and to cool it from the heat generated during the cremation and sprinkle *kṣīra* made from cow-milk over the charred bones. After *saṅkalpa*, he should separate the charred bones from the ashes (in the funeral pyre) by means of the branches of *śamī* or *palāśa*, besmear it with clarified butter prepared from cow-milk and sprinkle the water mixed with sandalwood paste and other fragrant substances over them. Next, he should place the charred bones in an unused earthen pot, place another earthen pot over it and fasten them with a thread. Then, he should dig a pit at a pure spot, place the pots in the pit, place a lump of mud mixed with green moss over the pots and finally fill up the pit with earth. At the end, he should throw the (remaining) ashes from the funeral pyre into water and besmear the spot with cow-dung.¹⁰⁷

In the late medieval period, most of the authors of *nibandhas* prescribed to immerse the charred bones in water, mostly in the Gaṅgā and this rite became known as *Asthikṣepa*. Yama, cited in the ŚudT stated that, if the charred bones of a deceased are submerged in the Gaṅgā within ten days after cremation, he gets the same merit as dying on (the bank of) the Gaṅgā.¹⁰⁸

From the following description of Al-Biruni (1030), it can be safely assumed that the practices prescribed in these *nibandha* texts were in vogue since the early medieval period:¹⁰⁹

According to the Hindus, the body of the dead has the claim upon his heirs that they are to wash, embalm, wrap it in a shroud, and then to burn it with as much sandal and other wood as they can get. Part of his burned bones are brought to the Ganges and thrown into it, that the Ganges should flow over them, as it has flowed over the burned bones of the children of Sagara, thereby forcing them from hell and bringing them into paradise. The remainder of the ashes is thrown into some brook or running water. On the spot where the body has been burned they raise a monument similar to a milestone, plastered with gypsum.

9.10.2.2 *Navaśrāddha*, *Ṣoḍaśa Śrāddha* and *Sapiṇḍikaraṇa*

The late medieval digests on *Śrāddha* rites are numerous. Their descriptions on the post-cremation *Śrāddha* rites are mostly centred on the rite of *Sapiṇḍikaraṇa* (funerary rite performed on the completion of one year after death) and the two groups of funerary rites, performed according to the procedure prescribed for *Ekoddiṣṭa Śrāddha* rites in the ancient period – *Navaśrāddha* (funerary rites up to the tenth or eleventh day after death) and *Ṣoḍaśa* (sixteen) *Śrāddha* (funerary rites from the eleventh day or twelfth day till the completion of one year). However, Aparārka, while explaining YDh I.250-251, mentioned a different classification for the funerary rites, which are performed according to the procedure prescribed for *Ekoddiṣṭa Śrāddha* rites, comprising three groups – *Nava* (*Śrāddhas* up to eleventh day after death), *Miśra* (*Śrāddhas* performed beyond eleventh day every month till one year) and *Purāṇa* (*Śrāddhas* performed beyond one year).¹¹⁰

Early references to the *Navaśrāddha* are found in the BGS III.12.13 and BPS II.10.6. The latter text prescribed five *Navaśrāddha*: on the 1st, 4th, 5th, 9th and 11th day after death. A description of the *Navaśrāddha* (literally, “new *śrāddhas*”) is found in an early medieval vedic ritual text, ĀGP (of Nārāyaṇa) III.6, which said that the *Śrāddhas* performed on the uneven days during the period of first ten days (viz 1st, 3rd, 5th, 7th and 9th) with uncooked food after death are the *Navaśrāddha* (or *Viśamaśrāddha*).¹¹¹ Mitā, while explaining YDh I.252, cited a verse of unknown authority to describe the *Navaśrāddha* as, “The (*Śrāddha*) performed on the first, third, fifth, seventh, ninth and eleventh day (after the death) is known as the *Navaśrāddha*.”¹¹² A late *smṛti* text, *Vṛddha-Vasiṣṭhasmṛti*, cited in ŚudP mentioned that the six *Śrāddhas* performed on the first, third, fifth, seventh, ninth and eleventh day after death are together known as the *Navaśrāddha* and unless this

Navaśrāddha is performed, a deceased is not liberated from its state of *preta*.¹¹³ Late medieval digests are not unanimous whether the *Śrāddha* performed on the eleventh day should be included in the *Navaśrāddha* group or not.

From early medieval period, a number of texts started prescribing to perform *Ṣoḍaśa* (sixteen) *Śrāddhas* for a *preta* (deceased) to liberate his *ātivāhika* (subtle body) from the state of a *piśāca* (ghoul). While some of the texts included *Sapiṇḍīkaraṇa* in their enumeration, others excluded it. Probably, earliest enumeration of sixteen *Śrāddhas* is found in the early medieval ritual text, KP III.5.8-9. Its list of sixteen *Śrāddhas* comprises twelve monthly *Ekoddiṣṭa Śrāddhas* performed on the *tithi* of the death, the *Ādyaśrāddha* (literally, “the first *Śrāddha* (after the end of period of impurity)”), the *Ekoddiṣṭa Śrāddha* performed on the eleventh day, two *Ekoddiṣṭa Śrāddhas* performed one or three days before the completion of the sixth lunar month and one year from the *tithi* of the death respectively and the *Sapiṇḍīkaraṇa*. Aparārka, quoting *Brahmapurāṇa* stated that the *Śrāddhas* performed on the fourth, fifth, ninth and eleventh day after the death and twelve monthly *Śrāddhas* performed on the *tithi* of the death are the sixteen *Śrāddhas* (prescribed by the authorities).¹¹⁴

Since the pre-modern period, all sixteen *Ekoddiṣṭa Śrāddhas* and the *Sapiṇḍīkaraṇa* are being performed on the eleventh day after death.¹¹⁵ An additional element of offering the *piṇḍa* to a crow after the performance of the *Śrāddha* rite, known as *Kākabali* (literally, “offering food to a crow”) is found codified in some of the late medieval texts like *Śuddhikaumudī* (1535) of Govindānanda.¹¹⁶

9.10.2.3 *Vṛṣotsarga*

Originally, *Vṛṣotsarga* was an ancient domestic rite for ritual release of a bull and four heifers which was performed on the full-moon day of the lunar month of *Kārttika* (October-November) or on a day in the lunar month of *Āśvayuja* (*Āśvina*; September-October) when the moon is in *Revatī nakṣatra*. The performance of the rite of *Vṛṣotsarga* as a post-cremation rite on the eleventh day after death became popular only in the late medieval period. The early descriptions of this rite are found in ŚGS III.11.1-16, KauṣGS III.6.1-11, PGS III.9.1-10, KGS 59.1-6 and a *pariṣiṣṭa* (18c) of the *Atharvaveda*. A brief description of this rite is also found in KauṣS 24.19-13. But, these vedic ancillary texts did not mention it either as a funerary rite or as a rite for the veneration of the ancestors. Rather, from their descriptions, it seems to be an ancient fertility rite. It can be also inferred from the *mantra* mentioned in these texts for recitation at the time of the release of the bull and heifers, “This young [bull] I give you as your husband; roam about sporting with him as your lover. Do not desert us, being joined [with us] from your birth. May we rejoice in increase of wealth, in food; *svāhā*” (ŚGS III.11.14; similar to PGS III.9.9). Even, in an inscription of the Raṣṭrakūṭa king Govinda IV (reigned 930-935) dated 10th May, 930, engraved in three copper plated found from Khambhat in the present-day Gujarat, the rite of *Vṛṣotsarga* was mentioned as a vedic rite along with *sattra* and others, not as a post-cremation rite.

A change is observed in an elaborate narrative of this rite is provided in a late *dharmaśāstra* text, ViṣDh LXXXVI.1-20. Linking this rite with the veneration of the ancestors, it stated (LXXXVI.19-20) that any water reservoir from which the bull drinks water after his release, that entire reservoir will refresh the *pitṛs* of the performer. The earth, wherever is dug up by the bull exulting in his strength, is converted into delicious food and drink to satisfy the *pitṛs*. ViṣDh LXXXV.67 cited a *gāthā* believed as sung by the *pitṛs*, which stated that one should desire to have a number of sons, since even one [of his sons] go to Gayā [to perform *Gayāśrāddha*] or perform the solemn rite of *Āśvamedha* or the rite of releasing a *nīla* (dark coloured) bull, [the *pitṛs* will be satisfied]. Probably, this *gāthā* is a modified version of the *gāthā* found in the *Anuśāsanaparva* 88.14 of the *Mahābhārata*, which only mentioned about the performance of *Gayāśrāddha* under the *Akṣayabaṭa* tree. This *gāthā* or its variants are found in several late *dharmaśāstra* texts – *Atrisamhitā* 55,

Bṛhaspatismṛti 21 and *Laghu-Śaṅkhasmṛti* 10 as well as several *Purāṇas*, viz., MatsP 22.6, *Brahmapurāṇa* 220.32b-33a, *Vāyupurāṇa* 83.11-12, *Śṛṅṅikhaṇḍa* 11.66 of the *Padmapurāṇa*, *Upodghātapāda* 19.11 of the *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa* and VDhP I.144.3 and I.146.58.¹¹⁷ MatsP 204.13 mentioned a similar *gāthā* sung by the *pitṛs* expressing the desire that someone should be there in their progeny, who would perform the rite of releasing a bull of white or dark colour (for their satisfaction). However, these texts mentioned this rite as an ancestor veneration rite and remained silent about its performance as a post-cremation rite. Even, the medieval scholiasts Devapāla and Ādityadarśana, while explaining KGS 59.1 mentioned the rite of *Vṛṣotsarga* as a rite for the benefit of the *pitṛs* and cited a verse from the *Ācārakāṇḍa* (84.34) of the GarūḍP in support of their view, which is identical to the *gāthā* mentioned earlier.

Probably the earliest reference to this rite as an explicitly post-cremation rite is found in *Laghu-Āś* XX.26-27. It narrated that the liberation of a *preta* is not at all possible without *Vṛṣotsarga*. Even for a female, this rite must be performed on the eleventh day after death. For every male and every female, irrespective of her husband is alive or dead, if the rite of *Vṛṣotsarga* is not performed after death, the *preta* (deceased) will never get rid of the state of *piśāca*.¹¹⁸ ŚudP and several other late medieval digests cited a very late *smṛti* text, the *Ṣaṭtrimśanmata*, which also stated that, if a bull is not released for a *preta* (deceased) on the eleventh day after his death, he will remain as a *piśāca* (ghoul), even if a hundred *Śrāddhas* are performed for him (almost similar to *Pretakāṇḍa* 5.40 of the GarūḍP).¹¹⁹ Another very late *smṛti* text, YS 89 stated that if for a *preta* (deceased), the rite of *Vṛṣotsarga* is performed on the eleventh day after death, that *preta* will not go the *preta loka* (the realm of the *pretas*); he will be honoured in the *svarga loka* (heaven).

In the late medieval *nibandha* texts like ŚudT and ŚudP, this rite is described as an exclusively post-cremation rite. The elements of this rite described in the *nibandha* texts remained similar to the ancient texts, the procedure mentioned in these texts is almost similar to the GarūḍP and the GarūḍSār mentioned earlier. In its description, ŚudP cited several verses from the late *Purāṇas* similar to *Pretakāṇḍa* 14.36 including one from the *Devīpurāṇa*, which stated that, before release, the bull should be marked with a *cakra* (discus) on the left side and a *śūla* (trident) on the right side with a hot golden, silver or iron rod.¹²⁰

Later, in Rāḍha (present-day West Bengal), an element of reading the *Virāṭaparva* of the *Mahābhārata* was added to this rite and ŚudT mentioned about this practice.¹²¹

9.10.2.4 Śrāddhas for the Ascetics

The medieval authors of the digests are not unanimous about the performance of the *Śrāddha* rites for a deceased ascetic. Mitā, while explaining YDh I.255, cited a verse of Uśanas, which said that for the *yatis* (ascetics), *Ekoddiṣṭa* should never be performed. (Instead,) on the arrival of eleventh day after the death, the *Pārvaṇa Śrāddha* is prescribed (for them). The rite of *Sapiṇḍikaraṇa* (also) should not be performed by their sons or other relatives as by holding the *tridaṇḍa* (the three fold staff, a must for an ascetic) they never enter the condition of the *preta*.¹²² This text, while explaining YDh I.256 cited a verse of Pracetā, which also prescribed that *Ekoddiṣṭa* should not be performed for a *yati*, since he has held the *tridaṇḍa*. Because there is no *Sapiṇḍikaraṇa* (also) for him, always the *Pārvaṇa* should be performed for him. Vijñāneśvara, based on this verse, gave his verdict that for a *saṃnyāsī* (renouncer) only the *Pārvaṇa Śrāddha* should be performed on the day of death (every year in the dark half of the month of *Bhādrapada*) by his son.¹²³

9.10.2.5 Nārāyaṇabali

In the medieval digests, the rite of *Nārāyaṇabali* is prescribed as the only post-cremation rite for the persons who died unnatural death, which can remove their impurity and make them eligible to receive other post-cremation rites. This rite is also prescribed for the ascetics and the persons who

performed *Jīvacchārdha*, as their post-cremation rites have already been performed once before.

A detailed discussion on *Nārāyaṇabali* is found in Mitā (early 12th century) on YDh III.6. It cited two late authorities, Vṛddhayājñavalkya and Chāgaleya, who instructed that for a person, who commits suicide in a manner that is not sanctioned by the *śāstras*, the *Śrāddhas* and other post-cremation rites cannot be performed. For such a person, to avoid the censor by the community, the relatives should perform the rite of *Nārāyaṇabali*. Thus, such a person becomes pure and then the rites of offering food and gifts can be performed for him. Mitā further stated that by the performance of the rite of *Nārāyaṇabali*, a *preta* (deceased) becomes pure and eligible to receive the *Śrāddhas* and other post-cremation rites. Mitā, citing a verse from a late *dharmaśāstra* text, the *Ṣaṭtriṃśanmata*, which instructed to perform the post-cremation rites for a person who was killed by a cow or a Brāhmaṇ or for a *patita* (literally, “fallen”, one who is downgraded from the caste he originally belonged to) after the lapse of one year, prescribed to perform *Nārāyaṇabali* after the lapse of one year. Mitā provided two different but similar procedures for performance of this rite and the second procedure was mentioned as prescribed in the Viṣṇu. In difference with the vedic ritual texts, Mitā limited the performance of the rite of *Nārāyaṇabali* to only for those who committed suicide and killed by snakebite. To prove that *Nārāyaṇabali* is only meant of the persons who committed suicide, it invented a new explanation of a popular verse of an anonymous authority (similar to BGŚS III.21.1 and *Pretakāṇḍa* 40.8b-9a of the GarūḍP), which listed the unnatural deaths requiring the performance of *Nārāyaṇabali* for the deceased. He explained that the causes of all unnatural deaths mentioned in this verse like killing by a Caṇḍāla or fanged animals are undoubtedly the results of voluntary acts, since the person killed by a Caṇḍāla or a fanged animal went to kill the Caṇḍāla or catch the fanged animal voluntarily impelled by his ego. Therefore, these unnatural deaths are cases of suicide only. For the persons killed in snakebite, it prescribed that for one year after the death, Nāga (snake deity) should be worshipped on the fifth *tithi* (of the fortnight of the waxing moon) in every lunar month, following the procedure mentioned in the *Purāṇas*. After the completion of the year, *Nārāyaṇabali* should be performed the deceased and a golden snake and a cow should also be gifted. Other post-cremation rites should be performed thereafter. It also cited a passage of *Bhaviṣyatpurāṇa*, where Sumantu prescribed to make a golden snake of 1 *bhāra* (74 kilograms) and gift it along with a cow.¹²⁴ The description of *Nārāyaṇabali* in *Smṛtyārthasāra* (late 12th century) seems to be copied from the first procedure of Mitā verbatim. For the persons died of snakebite it prescribed two procedures to perform the rite of *Nāgavrata* for one year. After the completion of one year, either the food should be served to the eminent Brāhmaṇs or *Nārāyaṇabali* should be performed. This should be followed by giving a golden snake and a cow as gifts and *Śrāddha* rites.

The verses of Chāgaleya cited in *Hāralatā* (2nd half of 12th century) about *Nārāyaṇabali* are almost similar to the verses cited in Mitā. It prescribed not to perform the *Śrāddha* rites for the persons who succumbed to death by snakebite, a Brāhmaṇ, horned animals, fanged animals or reptiles and committed suicide. For such a person, to avoid of being censored by the community, the relatives should perform the rite of *Nārāyaṇabali*. However, as *Hāralatā* also supported the view that *Nārāyaṇabali* should be performed only for those who committed suicide, he explained these verses with the support of two other citations from Vyāsa and another anonymous authority, that they prescribed *Nārāyaṇabali* rite for a *patita* only. For the rest of the cases, the gift of jars filled with water should be given. Again, citing a verse of Viṣṇu, which prescribed the *Nārāyaṇabali* rite for the persons who have been killed by a cow or a Brāhmaṇ and the *patitas*, it explained that usage of this verse is restricted to certain region only. It also cited a long passage of Vyāsa for the description of this rite.¹²⁵

NirS began its description of this rite with the ritual procedures mentioned by Hemādri and the GarūḍP. Next, it described the procedure for the *yatis* (ascetics) on the 12th day after death along

with the *Pārvaṇa Śrāddha* as prescribed by Baudhāyana. Then, it described the ritual procedure according to Śaunaka, who prescribed this rite for the persons who died by a Caṇḍāla, drowning in water, snakebite, a Brāhmaṇ, lightning strike, fanged animals, rope, weapons, poison or stones, who died abroad or who already performed *Jīvacchārdha* rite (discussed in 9.10.4) while he was alive and for the *yatis*, *yogīs* and the seekers of liberation (ascetics). NirS added the persons killed in war in this list and instructed not to perform *Sapīṇḍīkaraṇa* and other post-cremation rites for the persons who already performed *Jīvacchārdha*. For the persons died of snakebite, he cited the procedures mentioned in *Antyeṣṭipaddhati*.¹²⁶

In *SṃR* and *Samskārapaddhati* (19th century) of Bhāskaraśāstrī Abhyankar, the rites of *Nārāyaṇabali* and *Nāgabali* have been described as the rites of exorcism. It mentioned that if the foetus is not formed even after the performance of *Garbhādhāna* rite in the prescribed manner, it is to be believed that some evil spirits are preventing it. According to *SṃR*, in such a condition, these two rites should be performed to release these evil spirits from their stage of *preta*. It prescribed the performance of this rite according to the procedure mentioned in the BGŚS.¹²⁷

9.10.3 Funeral rites for children

A celebrated medieval scholiast, Vijñāneśvara (early 12th century) in his *Mitā* on YDh III.1-2 prescribed that if a child dies before the completion of its second year, it should be buried not cremated. The corpse should be decked with fragrant substances, garland and sandalwood paste and smeared with clarified butter. It should be buried in a pure ground outside the village but not in a *śmaśāna* (cremation ground). The relatives of the child should sing *yamagāthā* during funeral procession. But it is not mandatory for the relatives to accompany the corpse up to the *śmaśāna*. After burial, its relatives should be indifferent to the performance of *udaka* (offering libations of water), *dāna* (gifts to priests) and other *aurdhvadehika* (funerary) rites for the *preta* (deceased) and these rites should not be performed. Its *Asthinicya* (collection of bones) also should not be performed.¹²⁸ A very late medieval text, *Antyeṣṭidīpikā* of Subrahmaṇyavidvān prescribed a general rule that a child who dies before the performance of *Cūḍākaraṇa* rite should be buried and one who dies after the performance of this rite should be cremated.¹²⁹

9.10.4 Jīvacchārdha

The rite of *Jīvacchārdha* (literally, “the *Śrāddha* rite, which is performed when one is still alive”) or *Jīva Śrāddha* is not a life-cycle rite in true sense. This anticipatory funerary rite in for one’s self before death became a popular practice in early medieval period. The early descriptions of this very peculiar rite found in two late vedic ritual texts BGŚS III.19.1-20 and HGŚS I.8.4 are same. Another early description of this rite, different in contents from these vedic ritual texts is found in the *Uttarabhāga* 45.1-94 of the *Liṅgapurāṇa*. Both the descriptions of the BGŚS and the *Liṅgapurāṇa* are found in *Śrāddhaprakāśa* of Mitramiśra.¹³⁰ *Pretakāṇḍa* 8.10-33 of the *GarūḍP* also provided a description of *Jīvacchārdha* rite, but this description is again different from the other extant descriptions. This rite is also described several late medieval commentaries and *nibandhas*. It is described in details by Nārāyaṇabhaṭṭa in his *Jīvacchārdhaprayoga*. In this text, this rite has been prescribed to be performed by a person who has no son or doubtful about the proper performance of cremation and post-cremation rites after his death. During the performance of this rite, the performer was represented by his effigy, and the performances of the usual ceremonies were carried out.¹³¹ Another late medieval digest, *Śrāddhamayūkha* of Nīlakaṇṭha also provided an elaborate description of this rite.

9.11 Epilogue

In 1953, the first electric crematorium in India was introduced at Chandanwadi in Bombay, now known as Mumbai. Presently, most of the Indian cities have such electric crematoriums. The

introduction of electric crematoriums in the Indian cities has metamorphosed the Hindu cremation rites for the common people. In electric crematoriums, Hindu cremation rite for the corpse is performed before placing it in the electrical furnace and the collection of charred bones from the furnace takes place immediately after the cremation. However, the cremation of most of the eminent Hindu personalities as well as the common people in a large part of the urban areas is still being performed in the traditional way, in the funeral pyres made of woods.

Another new development has emerged since the independence of India. Several modern monuments have been constructed at the cremation spots of the eminent personalities at various parts of India. A new word, *samādhi* (instead of ancient '*edūka*' or medieval '*samādhimandira*') has been coined in the modern Indic languages to explain such modern monuments.

Table 7a: *Pātracayana* (arrangement of sacrificial implements on the corpse) in the early texts

Implements	Parts of the body								
	ŚBM (XXII.5.2)	BPS (I.8.11ff)	KŚS (25.7.21ff)	JBr (I.48)	DŚS (23.4.18ff)	LŚS (8.8.18ff)	ŚSS (IV.14.18ff)	ĀGS (IV.3.2ff)	KauśS (81.4ff)
<i>juhū</i>	Right hand	Right hand	Right hand	Right hand	Right hand	Right hand	Right hand	Right hand	Right hand
<i>upabhṛt</i>	Left hand	Left hand	Left hand	Left hand	Left hand	Left hand	Left hand	Left hand	Left hand
<i>mekṣaṇa</i>	-	Right shoulder	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>piṣṭodvapanī</i>	-	Left Shoulder	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>dhruvā</i>	Chest	Chest	Chest	Chest	Chest	Chest	Chest	Chest	Throat
<i>agnihotrahavaṇī</i>	Mouth	Mouth	Mouth	Mouth	Mouth	Mouth	Throat	Left side	Mouth
<i>sruvaḥ</i>	Nostrils	Nostrils	Nostrils	Nostrils	Nostrils	Nostrils	Nostrils	Nostrils	Nostrils
<i>prāśitraharaṇa</i>	Ears	Ears	Ears	Ears	Forehead	Forehead	Right ear	Ears	Forehead
<i>camasa</i>	Head (<i>camasa</i> used for <i>praṇītā-praṇayana</i>)	Head (<i>camasa</i> used for <i>praṇītā-praṇayana</i>) Abdomen (<i>camasas</i> used as <i>sāmnāyā-pidhdhānī</i> and for <i>iḍopahavana</i>)	Head (<i>camasa</i> used for <i>praṇītā-praṇayana</i>)	Head (<i>camasa</i> used for <i>iḍopahavana</i>)	Head (<i>camasa</i> used for <i>samoṭpadhāna</i>)	Head (<i>camasa</i> used for <i>samoṭpadhāna</i>)	Left ear (<i>camasa</i> used for <i>praṇītā-praṇayana</i>)	Abdomen (<i>camasa</i> used for <i>samavattadhāna</i>)	Head (<i>iḍācamasa</i>)
<i>kapālāni</i>	-	Head	Head	-	Head	Head	Head	Head	-
<i>grāvāṇaḥ</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	Teeth	Teeth	-
<i>pātrī</i>	Abdomen (<i>pātrī</i> used as <i>samavattadhānī</i>)	Abdomen (<i>dārupātrī</i>)	Abdomen (<i>pātrī</i> used as <i>samavattadhānī</i>)	Abdomen (<i>pātrī</i> used as <i>samavattadhānī</i>)	Abdomen	Abdomen	Abdomen (<i>samavattadhānī</i>), Both sides (<i>pātryau</i>)	Abdomen	Abdomen
<i>dr̥ṣadupalā</i>	-	Scrotum	-	Scrotum	Between thighs	Between thighs	-	Given away to son	<i>dr̥ṣad</i> given away to son
<i>śamyā</i>	Penis	Penis	Penis	Penis	Between thighs	Between thighs	-	Pudenda	-
<i>vṛṣārava</i>	Scrotum	Penis	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>kṛṣṇājina</i>	-	-	-	Pudenda	Pudenda	Pudenda	Left side	-	-

Table 7a: *Pātracayana* (arrangement of sacrificial implements on the corpse) in the early texts

Implements	Parts of the body								
	ŚBM (XXII.5.2)	BPS (I.8.11ff)	KŚS (25.7.21ff)	JBr (I.48)	DŚS (23.4.18ff)	LŚS (8.8.18ff)	SŚS (IV.14.18ff)	ĀGS (IV.3.2ff)	KauśS (81.4ff)
<i>araṇi</i>	-	Chest	Scrotum	-	-	-	Pudenda	Thighs	-
<i>sphya</i>	Right hand	Back	Right hand	Back	Both sides	-	Right side	Right side	Right side
<i>upaveṣa</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Left side
<i>ulūkhala</i> and <i>musala</i>	Scrotum	Thighs	-	-	-	-	Knees	Lower legs	Knees
<i>musala</i>	-	-	-	Both sides	Along thighs	Along thighs	-	-	-
<i>ulūkhala</i>	-	-	-	Feet	To the right of the right upper leg	To the right of the right upper leg	-	-	-
<i>śūrpa</i> and <i>śakata</i>	-	-	-	-	Feet	-	Feet	Feet	-
<i>śūrpa</i>	Both sides	Both sides	Both sides	Both sides	-	Feet	-	Feet	Feet
<i>śakata</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Hips
<i>puroḍāśa</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Chest
<i>sāmnāyya- kumbhyau</i>	-	Groins	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>anvāhāryasthālī</i> and <i>carusthālī</i>	-	Hips	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>agnihotrasthālī</i> and <i>ājyasthālī</i>	-	Feet	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>upasādanīyaḥ</i> (<i>kūrcaḥ</i>)	-	Head	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>upāvaharaṇīyaḥ</i> (<i>kūrcaḥ</i>)	-	Feet	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Table 7b: <i>Pātracayana</i> (arrangement of sacrificial implements on the corpse) in the later texts									
Implements	Parts of the body								
	BhPS (1.5.16 ff)	HPS (2.27ff)	BPS (III.3.12)	ĀgGS (III.4.2)	VkhGS (V.4)	MSS (8.19.15)	GPS (II.7.12ff)	KauṣGS (V.3.7ff)	PDh (V.19ff)
<i>juhū</i>	Right hand	Right hand	Right hand	Right hand	Right hand	Right shoulder	Right hand	Right hand	Right hand
<i>upabhṛt</i>	Left hand	Left hand	Left hand	Left hand	Left hand	Left shoulder	Left hand	Left hand	Left hand
<i>dhruvā</i>	Chest	Chest	Chest	Chest	Chest	Chest	Chest	Chest	-
<i>agnihotra-havaṇī</i>	Mouth	Mouth	Mouth	Mouth	Mouth	Mouth	Mouth	Throat	-
<i>sruvaḥ</i>	Nostrils	Nostrils	Nostrils	Nostrils	Nostrils	Nostrils	Nostrils or Ears	Nostrils	-
<i>prāṣitraharaṇa</i>	Ears	Ears	Ears	Ears	Ears	Forehead	Forehead	Right ear	-
<i>camasa</i>	Middle	Middle	Hair tuft (<i>camasa</i> used for <i>praṇītā-praṇayana</i>)	-	-	-	Head (<i>camasa</i> used for <i>samavatta-dhāna</i>)	Left ear (<i>camasa</i> used for <i>praṇītā-praṇayana</i>)	-
<i>kapālāni</i>	Head	Head	Head	Head	Head	Head	Head	Head	-
<i>ekakapāla</i>	Forehead	Forehead	Forehead	Forehead	Forehead	-	-	-	-
<i>grāvāṇaḥ</i>	Teeth	Teeth	Teeth	Teeth	Teeth	-	-	Teeth	-
<i>pātrī</i>	Abdomen (<i>pātrī</i> used as <i>piṣṭa-saṃyavanī</i>)	Abdomen (<i>pātrī</i> used as <i>piṣṭa-saṃyamanī</i>)	Abdomen (<i>pātrī</i> used as <i>piṣṭo-dvapānī</i> and <i>dārupātrī</i>)	Abdomen (<i>pātrī</i> used as <i>piṣṭa-saṃyavani</i>)	Abdomen (<i>pātrī</i> used as <i>piṣṭa-saṃyavanī</i>)	Abdomen (<i>iḍāpātrī</i>)	Abdomen	Abdomen (<i>samavatta-dhānī</i>), Both sides (<i>pātryau</i>)	-
<i>ājyasthālī</i>	Navel	Navel (also <i>prṣadājyasthālī</i>)	Navel	Navel	Throat	-	-	-	Eyes
<i>agnihotrasthālī</i> and <i>anvāhāryasthālī</i>	Buttocks	Buttocks	Buttocks	Buttocks	Buttocks	-	-	-	-
<i>dr̥ṣadupalā</i>	Scrotum	Scrotum	Scrotum	Scrotum	Scrotum	-	Between thighs	-	<i>dr̥ṣad</i> on chest
<i>śamyā</i>	Penis	Penis	Penis	Penis	Penis	Groins	Between thighs	-	Penis
<i>vṛṣārava/aśmān</i>	Penis (<i>vṛṣārava</i>)	Penis (<i>aśmān</i>)	Penis (<i>vṛṣārava</i>)	Penis (<i>vṛṣārava</i>)	-	-	-	-	-
<i>kṛṣṇājina</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	Pudenda	Left side	-
<i>araṇi</i>	Chest	Chest	Chest	Chest	Chest	Pudenda		Pudenda	Scrotum

Table 7b: <i>Pātracayana</i> (arrangement of sacrificial implements on the corpse) in the later texts									
Implements	Parts of the body								
	BhPS (1.5.16 ff)	HPS (2.27ff)	BPS (III.3.12)	ĀgGS (III.4.2)	VkhGS (V.4)	MSS (8.19.15)	GPS (II.7.12ff)	KauṣGS (V.3.7ff)	PDh (V.19ff)
<i>sphya</i>	Right hand	Right hand	Right hand	Right hand	Right hand	Right side	Right side	Right side	-
<i>upaveṣa</i>	-	-	-	Chest	-	Left side	Left side	-	-
<i>ulūkhala and musala</i>	Jaws	Jaws	Thighs	Jaws	Jaws	Thighs	-	Knees	-
<i>ulūkhala</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	To the right of the right upper leg	-	Ears
<i>śūrpa and śakaṭa</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	Feet	-	-
<i>śūrpa</i>	Both sides	Both sides	Both sides	Both sides	Both sides	-	-	-	-
<i>śakaṭa</i>	-	-	-	-	-	Feet	-	-	-
<i>puroḍāśa</i>	-	-	-	-	-	Head	-	-	-
<i>vedaḥ (kūrcaḥ)</i>	Tuft of hair	Tuft of hair	Tuft of hair	Tuft of hair	Tuft of hair	Head	-	-	-
<i>sāmnāyya vessels</i>	Groins (sāmnāyya-kumbhyau)	Groins (sāmnāyya-kumbhyau)	Groins (sāmnāyya-kumbhyau)	Nose (sāmnāyya-kumbhyau)	Groins (sāmnāyya-kumbhyau)	Abdomen (sāmnāyya-dhānyau)	-	-	-
<i>ājyadhānī</i>	-	-	-	-	-	Head	-	-	-
<i>upāva haraṇīyah (kūrcaḥ)</i>	Feet	Feet	Feet	Feet	Feet	-	-	-	-
<i>upasādanīyah (kūrcaḥ)</i>	Head	Head	Head	Head	Head	-	-	-	-
<i>idāpātra</i>	Head	Head	Hair tuft	Hair tuft	Head	-	-	-	-
<i>prśadājya-grahaṇī</i>	-	-	Left hand	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>erakā</i>	-	-	Mouth	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>āśvinakapāla</i>	-	-	Eyes	-	-	-	-	-	-

Table 8b: Distribution of *palāśa* petioles to form the effigy for cremation in the later texts

Forming the body part	Number of petioles								
	PDh V.14-18	GarūdP II.4.135-154	ĀGK of Kumāriḷa	ĀGP (of Nārāyaṇa) III.14	ĀGP (of unknown) XIX	Yajñapārśva 2.185-187	A <i>smṛti</i> cited in Aparārka	Manu in ŚudP	Hārīta in ŚudP
Head	40	40	40	40	40	40	32	40	40
Neck	10	10	10	10	10	10	60	10	10
Arms	100	100	100	100	100	100	20+20=40	100	100
Fingers	10	-	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
Chest	-	20	30	30	30	20	80	-	30
Abdomen	200	20	20	20	20	30	-	200	20
Hip	100	-	-	-	-	-	20+20=40	100	-
Waist	-	20	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Penis	5	4	4	-	4	4	4	5	5
Scrotum	8	6	6	-	6	6	6	8	8
Thighs	21	100	100	-	100	100	60	21	100
Knees	See below	-	-	-	See below	-	20	See below	See below
Legs	200 (Knees and Lower legs)	30 (Lower legs)	30	-	30 (Knees and Lower legs)	30 (Knees and Lower legs)	20 (Lower legs)	200 (Knees and Lower legs)	30 (Knees and Lower legs)
Toes	6	10	10	-	10	10	10	6	10
Total	700	360	360	210 (incomplete description)	360	360	362	700	363

Table 9: Ancient/Medieval Indian units of measurement

Ancient units of length			in inches	in centimetres
1 <i>aṅgula</i> = 8 <i>yavamadhya</i>			0.75	1.9
1 <i>pradeśa</i> = 12 <i>aṅgula</i> (later 8 or 10 <i>aṅgula</i>)			9.0	22.9
1 <i>vitasti</i> = 12 <i>aṅgula</i>			9.0	22.9
1 <i>hasta</i> = 2 <i>vitasti</i> = 24 <i>aṅgula</i>			18.0	45.7
1 <i>pada</i> = 15 <i>aṅgula</i>			11.25	28.6
1 <i>ratni</i> = 21 <i>aṅgula</i>			15.75	40.0
1 <i>aratni</i> = 2 <i>pradeśa</i> = 24 <i>aṅgula</i>			18.0	45.8
1 <i>prakrama</i> = 2 <i>pada</i> (later 3 <i>pada</i>) = 30 <i>aṅgula</i>			22.5	57.2
1 <i>jānu</i> = 32 <i>aṅgula</i>			24.0	60.8
1 <i>vyāma</i> = 5 <i>aratni</i> = 120 <i>aṅgula</i>			90.0	228.6
1 <i>yuga</i> = 86 <i>aṅgula</i>			64.5	163.4
1 <i>daṇḍa</i> = 1 <i>dhanus</i> = 4 <i>hasta</i> = 96 <i>aṅgula</i>			72.0	182.9
1 <i>yojana</i> = 8000 <i>dhanus</i>			9.09 miles	14.63 kilometres
Ancient units of area			in sq. ft.	in sq. m.
1 <i>āsana</i> = 1 <i>hasta</i> x 1 <i>hasta</i>			2.25	0.21
1 <i>gocarma</i> = 16 <i>āsana</i>			36	3.34
Ancient/medieval units of time		in hours, minutes and seconds		
1 <i>vipala</i>		0.4 second		
1 <i>pala</i> = 60 <i>vipala</i>		24 seconds		
1 <i>kalā</i> = 2 <i>pala</i> = 30 <i>kāṣṭhā</i>		48 seconds		
1 <i>ghaṭikā</i> = 30 <i>kalā</i> = 60 <i>pala</i>		24 minutes		
1 <i>muhūrta</i> = 2 <i>ghaṭikā</i> = 2 <i>nāḍikā</i>		48 minutes		
1 <i>pahr</i> (1 <i>prahara</i> or <i>yāma</i>) = 3 ³ / ₄ <i>muhūrta</i>		3 hours		
8 <i>prahara</i> or <i>yāma</i> = 30 <i>muhūrta</i> = 1 <i>ahorātra</i>		24 hours		
60 <i>ghaṭikā</i> = 1 <i>divasa</i>		24 hours		
Seasons and months of the ancient Indian calendars			Months of Gregorian calendar	
Seasons	Months in the Yajurvedic texts	Months in other vedic and later texts		
<i>Vasanta</i>	<i>Madhu</i>	<i>Caitra</i>		March-April
	<i>Mādhava</i>	<i>Vaiśākha</i>		April-May
<i>Grīṣma</i> (or <i>Nidāgha</i>)	<i>Śukra</i>	<i>Jyaiṣṭha</i> (or <i>Jyeṣṭhamūlīya</i>)		May-June
	<i>Śuci</i>	<i>Āṣāḍha</i>		June-July
<i>Varṣā</i>	<i>Nabhas</i>	<i>Śrāvaṇa</i>		July-August
	<i>Nabhasya</i>	<i>Prauṣṭhapada</i> (or <i>Bhādrapada</i>)		August-September
<i>Śarad</i>	<i>Iṣa</i>	<i>Āśvayuja</i> (or <i>Āśvina</i>)		September-October
	<i>Ūrja</i>	<i>Kārttika</i>		October-November
<i>Hemanta</i>	<i>Sahas</i>	<i>Mārgaśīrṣa</i> (or <i>Agrahāyana</i>)		November-December
	<i>Sahasya</i>	<i>Taiṣa</i> (or <i>Pauṣa</i>)		December-January
<i>Śiśira</i>	<i>Tapas</i>	<i>Māgha</i>		January-February
	<i>Tapasya</i>	<i>Phālguna</i>		February-March

Notes

Chapter 1: *Saṃskārāḥ*: Hindu rites of passage

1. Van Gennep 1960: 11
2. Literally, “remembrance”, the *smṛti* texts are believed as composed by the ancient sages from remembrance and these texts prescribe the proper practices based on tradition. This genre comprises a large body of texts on customary rituals and laws.
3. Literally, “the last born”; it is a derogatory term used in the Hindu normative texts to denote a member of the communities forcibly kept outside the hierarchical social order known as *varṇāśrama*.
4. Pandey 1962: 391
5. Five such texts are known. The *Baudhāyanīyapitṛ-medhasūtra*, the *Bhāradvājapitṛmedhikasūtra*, the *Hiraṇyakeśīpitrmedhasūtra* and the *Āpastambapitṛ-medhasūtra* belonged to the *Taittirīya śākhā* of Kṛṣṇayajurveda and the *Gautamapitṛmedhasūtra* belonged to the Sāmaveda (Gonda 1977: 617-618, 620).
6. Apte 1940: 250
7. Gopal 1959: 21-22
8. Caland 1922: iv
9. Gopal 1959: 25
10. Gonda 1977: 603
11. Mahādeva (mid-17th century) in his *Prayogavaijyanṭī*, the commentary of *Satyāśāḍha (Hiraṇyakeśī) Śrautasūtra*, provided a relative chronology of the six vedic ritual texts of the *Taittirīya śākhā*. According to him, the *Baudhāyanakalpa* is the earliest text. Other vedic ritual texts were composed in the following chronological sequence: the *Bhāradvāja-kalpa*, the *Āpastambīyakalpa*, the *Hiraṇyakeśīkalpa*, the *Vādhūlakalpa* (composed in Kerala) and the *Vaikhānasakalpa*.
12. Gopal 1959: 26-32
13. Gopal 1959: 32
14. Lingat 1973: 106
15. McGee 2004: 334
16. Kane 1930: 195-196
17. The text is styled as *Aparārka-Yājñavalkīyadharmasāstra-Nibandha*
18. Gonda 1977: 656
19. Lingat 1973: 107
20. Pandey 1969: 11
21. Kane 1930: 166
22. Rocher 1986: 134
23. Kane 1953: 519
24. Rocher 1986: 177-178
25. Sen 1956: 86-89
26. Banerji 1922: 19-25
27. Epigraphia Indica 4 (1898): 60
28. Bhattacharya 1931: 79
29. Epigraphia Indica 4 (1898): 127
30. Epigraphia Carnatica Vol.5, Part I (1902): 191-192
31. Kane 1941: 300
32. Olivelle 2008: 30-31
33. Upadhyaya 1947: 320-323
34. Upadhyaya 1947: 282
35. Shastri 1969: 186, 203
36. Kale 1966: 6, 13
37. *Avantisundarī*: 160, 204
38. Kane 1941: 239
39. Cowell 1897: 158-160,164
40. Kane 1941: 266
41. Kane 1941: 403
42. Olivelle 2000: 137-139
43. *Agnipurāṇa*: 41-42, 218
44. Joshi 1959: 58
45. *Saṃskāraratnamālā*: 3-4
46. Gopal 1959: 255-256
47. *Smṛticandrikā* I: 34; Harihara: 318
48. *Saṃskāraprakāśa* I: 140
49. Olivelle 2004: 24
50. Pandey 1969: 21-22
51. Olivelle 1992: 171, 173
52. Pandey 1969: 23
53. De 1940: 279
54. *Mahānirvāṇatantra*: 226

Chapter 2: Origin of the Hindu life-cycle rites

1. Kane 1941: xi
2. Gopal 1959: 19
3. Gonda 1977: 468
4. The *Kalpa* or the *Kalpasūtras* (literally “procedural aphorisms”) are a group of texts classified as one of the six Vedāṅgas (literally, “limbs of the Vedas”) and each group of texts was traditionally attached to one of the vedic *śākhās* (literally, “branches”, the schools of vedic study). Gonda (1977: 467) defined *Kalpa* as, “the various ceremonial guides or didactic manuals on ritual practice”.
5. Pandey 1969: 11-12
6. Olivelle 2006: 176-177,177ff
7. Kane 1941: 193
8. Joshi 1959: 58
9. Kane 1941: 193
10. Sen 1978: 135
11. Pandey 1969: 11
12. Pandey 1962: 392
13. When this text was composed, Kumāra was believed as a demon responsible for diseases of children.
14. Oldenberg 1886: 297
15. Pandey 1969: 76
16. Gopal 1959:270-271
17. Kane 1941: 235
18. *Smṛtitattva* I: 649
19. Gonda 1975:186
20. Pandey 1969: 15-17
21. Gopal 1959: 255
22. Pandey 1969: 234
23. *Mahābhārata* V: 327
24. Pandey 1969: 17-18
25. Pandey 1969: 18
26. Bühler 1886: 33

27. Olivelle 2004: 25
28. Chatterjee Sastri 1967: 10
29. Kane 1941: 192
30. *Śaṃskāraratnamālā*: 6
31. Aparārka: 25
32. *Śaṃskāraprakāśa* I: 136

Chapter 3: Historical evolution of the life-cycle rites in India

1. Olivelle 2000: 369
2. Joshi 1959: 55
3. Pandey 1969: 33
4. Sarup 1967: 42
5. Kane 1941: 46
6. Sharma 1990: 296
7. Kane 1941: 45
8. Mukhopadhyaya 1960: 19
9. *Sanatkumārasaṃhitā*: 8-9
10. *Mahānirvāṇatantra*: 68-69
11. *Mahānirvāṇatantra*: 18
12. *Anuloma* (literally, “with the hair”) is a category of the *varṇasaṅkara* castes believed by the authorities of *smṛti* as the descendants of a male child born out of a hypergamous marriage between a male belonging to a *varṇa* of higher social status and a female belonging to a *varṇa* of comparatively lower social status, so that the male always belongs to one of three ‘twice-born’ *varṇas*. Therefore, the number of such castes possible is six.
13. Kane 1941: 299
14. Kane 1941: 198
15. *Bṛhaspatismṛti*: 246
16. *Smṛtīnām Samuccayaḥ*: 117
17. Joshi 1959: 28
18. Kane 1941:198
19. Sharma 1990: 299
20. *Mahānirvāṇatantra*: 227
21. Kane 1941: 259
22. Pandey 1969: 11
23. Kane 1941: 405
24. Kane 1941: 265
25. Kane 1953: 524
26. Jha 1924: 78
27. Renou: 100
28. Bronkhorst 2011: 112
29. Sur 1986: 71-72
30. O’Malley 1908: 70-71
31. Singh 2008: 609
32. Jha 1978: 235-252
33. Kane 1941: 199-200
34. Kane 1941: 199
35. Pandey 1969: 280
7. Hüskén 2009: 73
8. Caland 1929a: 79-80
9. Kane 1941: 201-202
10. *Gṛhyasaṃgraha*: 3,5
11. Gopal 1959: 256
12. Kane 1941:195-196
13. Kane 1941:202-203
14. Deshpande 1936: 17-18
15. Gopal 1959: 246, 247
16. Sumant 2007: 299-309, 315-317
17. Caland 1929a: 80-81
18. Kane 1941:204
19. Tarkaratna 1889: 407
20. Pandey 1969: 51
21. Sachau 1910: 156
22. *Mahānirvāṇatantra*: 241-248
23. Kane 1941: 218
24. Pandey 1969: 60
25. Bhise 1995: 117
26. Lubotsky 2002: 64-67
27. Adhikari 1999: 113-114
28. Gopal 1959: 258-259
29. Gopal 1959: 258
30. Kane 1941: 219
31. Gopal 1959: 258
32. Caland 1922: 10
33. Gopal 1959: 259
34. *Carakasamhitā*: 1121-1125, 1129-1131
35. *Mānasollāsa* II: 107
36. Oldenberg:1886, 179-80
37. Kane 1941: 220-221
38. Gopal 1959: 260
39. Kane 1941: 222-226
40. Pandey 1969: 64
41. Deshpande 1936: 45
42. Caland 1922: 11-12
43. *Smṛticandrikā* I: 44
44. Caland 1922: 11-12
45. Gopal 1959: 263-264
46. Gopal 1959: 263
47. Gopal 1959: 262
48. Gopal 1959: 262
49. Gonda 1975:188
50. *Mānasollāsa* II: 108
51. McGee 2004: 341
52. Pāṇini, in his *Aṣṭādhyāyī* IV.1.173 mentioned about the Sālvās. Haradatta, in his *Anākulā vṛtti*, while commenting on ĀpGS VI.14.5 mentioned that Sālvadeśa was located on the bank of the Yamunā and the Vaiśyas formed the majority of its population.
53. Gopal 1959: 262-263
54. Kane 1941: 226-227
55. Hüskén 2009: 78-79
56. Kane 1941: 227
57. *Sanatkumārasaṃhitā*: 7
58. Gopal 1959: 264
59. *Smṛtitattva* I: 619
60. *Mahānirvāṇatantra*: 250
61. Kane 1941: 196

Chapter 4: Pregnancy and childbirth rites

1. Pandey 1969: 56
2. *Matsyapurāṇa*: 561
3. Caland 1929a: 154-155
4. Gonda 1980: 20-21
5. Kane 1941: 205-206
6. Kane 1941: 195, 195f

62. *Śaṃskāraprakāśa* I: 139
63. Doniger 2000: 187
64. Kane 1941: 227-228
65. Gopal 1959: 265
66. Gopal 1959: 265-266
67. Kane 1941: 228

Chapter 5: Birth and childhood rites

1. Kane 1941: 228-229
2. Eggeling 1900: 129-130
3. Kane 1941: 228f
4. Pandey 1969: 73
5. Kane 1941: 236
6. *Mānasollāsa* II: 108
7. *Smṛtitattva* I: 307
8. *Parāśaramādhava* I: 440
9. Aparārka: 26
10. Mādhavānanda 1950: 944-945
11. Kane 1941: 231
12. Gopal 1959: 268-269
13. Gopal 1959: 269
14. Gopal 1959: 266
15. Kane 1941: 233
16. *Kṛtyakalpataru* I: 87
17. Kane 1941: 233
18. Kane 1941: 233-234
19. Caland 1922: 12-13
20. Gopal 1959: 270
21. Gopal 1959: 267-268
22. Gopal 1959: 269-270
23. Gopal 1959: 266
24. Caland 1922: 13
25. Kale 1924: 99, 103
26. *Smṛtitattva* I: 648
27. Joshi 1925: 274-275
28. Rice 1937: 166-169
29. Gopal 1959: 271-272
30. Kane 1941: 237-238
31. Sachau 1910: 156-157
32. Jarrett 1948: 348
33. *Śaṃskāraratnamālā*: 870-871
34. Pandey 1969: 79
35. Deshpande 1936: 100-105
36. Caland 1922: 14
37. *Śaṃskāraratnamālā*: 861-864
38. Aparārka: 26
39. Pandey 1969: 84-85
40. *Smṛtitattva* I: 917
41. *Mānasollāsa* II: 108
42. Kielhorn 1897: 126-128
43. Aparārka: 26-27
44. Kane 1941: 240
45. Kane 1941: 196
46. Bühler 1886: 36
47. Pandey 1969: 86
48. Gopal 1959: 277
49. *Smṛticandrikā* I: 55-56
50. Gopal 1959: 276-277
51. Pandey 1969: 87
52. Deshpande 1936: 109-111

53. Pandey 1969: 87
54. Jarrett 1948: 349
55. Gadādhara: 285
56. Gopal 1959: 277-278
57. Kane 1941: 196
58. Pandey 1969: 102
59. Gopal 1959: 278
60. Kane 1941: 254-255
61. Pandey 1969: 102-103
62. *Mānasollāsa* II: 108
63. Jarrett 1948: 349
64. Gopal 1959: 278
65. Pandey 1969: 104
66. Pandey 1969: 105
67. *Bṛhaspatismṛti*: 246
68. Aparārka: 28
69. *Mānasollāsa* II: 108
70. Kane 1941: 257
71. Gopal 1959: 279
72. Gopal 1959: 280
73. Gopal 1959: 280
74. Kane 1941: 257
75. Aparārka: 28
76. Jarrett 1948: 349
77. Sen 1978: 131
78. Kane 1941: 259-260
79. Kane 1941: 260-261
80. Gopal 1959: 280
81. Pandey 1969: 96
82. Kane 1941: 260
83. Pandey 1969: 96
84. *Mānasollāsa* II: 110
85. Jarrett 1948: 349
86. Kane 1941: 261-262
87. Caland 1922: 15-17

Chapter 6: Coming of age and educational rites

1. Kane 1941: 266
2. *Bṛhaspatismṛti*: 253
3. *Mānasollāsa* II: 110
4. Scharfe 2002: 75-76
5. Hazra 1940: 266
6. Aparārka: 30-31; *Smṛticandrikā* I: 66-67; *Parāśaramādhava* I: 445
7. *Smṛtitattva* I: 656-657
8. *Śaṃskāraprakāśa* I: 321-325
9. *Śaṃskāraratnamālā*: 904-907
10. *Śaṃskāraratnamālā*: 905
11. Pandey 1969: 4-5
12. Gopal 1959: 291
13. *Kāṭhakaḡrhyasūtra*: 160
14. Kane 1941: 276
15. Gopal 1959: 36
16. Kane 1941: 297
17. Kane 1941: 299
18. Max Müller 1860: 207f
19. Pandey 1969: 117
20. Gopal 1959: 293
21. Olivelle 2004: 26
22. Gopal 1959: 292

23. Kane 1941: 272
24. Singh 2008: 42
25. Aparārka: 25
26. Gopal 1959:292
27. Olivelle 2004: 26
28. *Mānasollāsa* II: 110
29. Pandey 1969: 127-128
30. Gopal 1959: 294
31. Olivelle 2004: 26
32. Gopal 1959: 294
33. Kane 1941: 281
34. Olivelle 2004: 26
35. *Smṛticandrikā* I: 77
36. Kane 1941: 279
37. Gopal 1959: 295
38. Olivelle 2004: 26-27
39. *Smṛticandrikā* I: 77
40. Kane 1941: 281-282
41. Kane 1941: 285
42. Kane 1941: 282-283
43. Kane 1941: 283
44. KP I.1.11-12 and HGSS I.3.5 named fourteen Mātṛkā goddesses: Gaurī, Padmā, Śacī, Medhā, Sāvitrī, Vijayā, Jayā, Devasenā, Svadhā, Svāhā, Dhṛti, Puṣṭi, Tuṣṭi and one's *ātmadevatā* (own tutelary goddess). In the later lists of sixteen Mātṛkā goddesses, the names of Śānti and Kṣamā are added.
45. *Hiranyakeśīgrhyaśeṣasūtra*: 20-28
46. Kane 1941: 286-287
47. *Śaṃskāraratnamālā*: 197-201
48. Pandey 1969:128
49. Kane 1941: 287-291
50. Gopal 1959: 317-318
51. Kane 1941: 292
52. Kane 1941: 284
53. Kane 1941: 305-306
54. *Āpastambagrhyasūtra*: 153
55. Pandey 1969: 142
56. Pandey 1969: 143
57. Gopal 1959: 307
58. Pandey 1969: 144
59. Kane 1941: 402-403, 405
60. Kane 1941: 404
61. Kane 1941: 404
62. Kane 1941: 405
63. *Mānasollāsa* II: 112
64. Gopal 1959: 312
65. Kane 1941: 408-409
66. According to the *vṛtti* (commentary) of Nārāyaṇa on ĀGS III.8.8, *ekaklītaka* is the seed of the *karañja* (*Milletia pinnata*) tree (Kane 1941: 409f).
67. Kane 1941: 409-410
68. Kane 1941: 411
69. Gopal 1959: 312
70. Abbott 1932: x
71. Pandey 1969: 139
72. Kane 1941: 197
73. Kane 1941: 807
74. Kane 1941: 810
75. Gopal 1959: 302-303
76. Kane 1941: 811-812
77. Gopal 1959: 303-304
78. Apte 1954: 186
79. Caland 1922: 23-25
80. Gopal 1959: 302
81. According to the tradition of the *Ārṣeyapātha* divisions of the *Taittirīya śākhā*, *Yājñīkī*, *Sāṃhitī* and *Varuṇī* are the three Upaniṣads, parts of the TĀ. The *Sāṃhitī Upaniṣad* is the 7th *prapāṭhaka* of the TĀ, also known as the *Śīkṣāvallī* of the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*; the *Vāruṇī Upaniṣad* comprises the 8th and the 9th *prapāṭhakas* of the TĀ, also known as the *Ānandavallī* and the *Bhṛguvallī* of the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* respectively and the *Yājñīkī Upaniṣad* is the 10th *prapāṭhaka* of the TĀ, also known as the *Mahānārāyaṇa Upaniṣad*.
82. Caland 1929a: 56-57
83. Gopal 1959: 302
84. Kane 1941: 813
85. Kane 1941: 817
86. Kane 1941: 197
87. Gopal 1959: 304
88. Kane 1941: 816
89. Kane 1941: 817
90. Gopal 1959: 305
91. Kane 1941: 816
92. Caland 1922: 25
93. Kane 1941: 816
94. Gopal 1959: 305-306
95. Shastri 1950: 817
96. *Nirṇayasindhu*: 255
97. Altekar 1944: 293

Chapter 7: Coming of age rites for young women

1. Kane 1941: 293-295
2. Bhattacharyya 1960: 22
3. Gopal 1959: 223-224
4. Gopal 1959: 224
5. Bose 1881: 86-87

Chapter 8: Betrothal and marriage rites

1. Kane 1941: 531-532
2. Kane 1941: 532
3. *Śaṃskāraprakāśa* II: 810
4. Pandey 1969: 208-209
5. Gadādhara: 160-161
6. *Śaṃskāraratnamālā*: 530-532
7. Pandey 1969: 153
8. Sumant 2007: 173-174
9. Bhattacharji 2000: 241
10. Kane 1941: 555
11. Pandey 1969: 201
12. Pandey 1969: 201
13. Pandey 1969: 200
14. Pandey 1969: 201
15. Pandey 1969: 202
16. Kane 1941: 516
17. Pandey 1969: 159
18. Kane 1941: 516

19. *Kṛtyakalpataru* II: 71
20. Kane 1941: 433-434
21. *Kāmasūtra*: 195-196
22. Sharma 1977: 139
23. Gonda 1980: 386
24. Kane 1941: 512-513
25. Kane 1941: 513
26. Shastri 1969: 204f
27. Shastri 1950: 829
28. Gopal 1959: 222-223
29. *Agnipurāṇa*: 204
30. Shastri 1969: 203-204
31. Gopal 1959: 222-223
32. Gonda 1977: 569
33. *Gṛhyasaṃgraha*: 71-72
34. Gopal 1959: 223
35. Gopal 1959: 224
36. Gopal 1959: 225
37. *Pāraskaragrhyasūtram*: 48, 49, 51, 53, 56
38. Kale 1922: 155
39. Kane 1941: 532-533
40. Gopal 1959: 227
41. Gopal 1959: 227
42. Gopal 1959: 228
43. Gopal 1959: 228
44. Sumant 2010: 725
45. Gopal 1959: 226
46. *Kāthakagrhyasūtra*: 62
47. Kane 1941: 533
48. Kane 1941: 533
49. Gopal 1959: 229
50. Gopal 1959: 231
51. Gopal 1959: 232
52. Gopal 1959: 233
53. Ludvik 1998: 347-353
54. Ludvik 2007: 80-81
55. Caland 1929b: 307, 310
56. Caland 1922: 37
57. Upadhyaya 1954: 249
58. Gopal 1959: 237
59. Kane 1941: 539
60. Gopal 1959: 239
61. Gopal 1959: 241
62. Gopal 1959: 242
63. Gopal 1959: 242
64. Caland 1922: 40
65. Gopal 1959: 245-246
66. Deshpande 1936: 17-18
67. Doniger and Kakar 2003: 78
68. *Kṛtyakalpataru* II: 100-101
69. Pillai 1958: 27
70. Gonda 1977: 594
71. Gopal 1959: 245
72. Caland 1929a: 74
73. Pandey 1969: 205-207
74. *Āpastambagrhyasūtra*: 38
75. *Varṇaratnākara*: 64-65
76. *Saṃskāraprakāśa* II: 817
77. Pandey 1969: 209-210

78. Pandey 1969: 210
79. *Saṃskāraratnamālā*: 535-536
80. Kane 1941: 536
81. Sur 1986: 88
82. Joshi 1925: 416
83. *Saṃskāraprakāśa* II: 830
84. Pandey 1969: 206-207
85. *Smṛticandrikā* I: 5
86. *Saṃskāraratnamālā*: 555-556
87. Kale 1922: 158
88. Kane 1941: 536
89. *Saṃskāraratnamālā*: 557
90. Kane 1941: 537, 537f
91. McGee 2004: 351
92. *Saṃskāraprakāśa* II: 829
93. Gadādhara: 135
94. *Kāthakagrhyasūtra*: 92
95. Harihara: 150
96. Pandey 1969: 220
97. Kane 1941: 537-538
98. *Saṃskāraratnamālā*: 580-581

Chapter 9: Funeral rites

1. Pandey 1969: 243-245
2. Eggeling 1900: 197-205
3. Bodewitz 1973: 140-141
4. Eggeling 1900: 421f
5. Macdonnel and Keith 1912b: 397
6. Eggeling 1900: 421f
7. Eggeling 1900: 422-424, 430
8. *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* I: 405
9. Kashikar 1964b: 483-491
10. Singh 2008: 211-212
11. Mishra and Arora 2006: 81-82
12. Rhys Davids 1910: 155-156, 180, 185
13. Kane: 1953, 233-234
14. Kane 1953: 190f
15. Kane 1953: 352
16. Kane 1953: 202-204
17. Gopal 1959: 353
18. Kane 1953: 204
19. Ranade 1978: 625-626
20. Kane 1953: 202
21. Kane 1953: 204
22. Gopal 1959: 355
23. Kane 1953: 204-206
24. Bühler 1886: 187
25. Singh 2008: 334
26. Aparārka: 870
27. Pandey 1969: 249
28. Bhattacharji 2000: 80
29. Gopal 1959: 356
30. Chattopadhyay 2002: 363
31. Kane 1953: 206-207
32. Kane 1953: 208f
33. *Kauśītakagrhyasūtra*: 178-181
34. Kane 1953: 207-208
35. Gopal 1959: 359
36. Kashikar 1964b: 467-468
37. *Hiraṇyakeśīpitṛmedhasūtra*: 247-249

38. Ranade 1978: 626-627
 39. Caland 1929a: 130-133
 40. Bodewitz 1973: 135
 41. Tarkaratna 1889: 363
 42. Ranade 1978: 627
 43. Kane 1953: 208-209
 44. Gopal 1959: 360
 45. Gopal 1959: 361
 46. *Āgniveśyagrhyasūtra*: 147
 47. Kane 1953: 209
 48. Kane 1953: 223
 49. Kane 1953: 223-224
 50. Keith 1920: 290-291
 51. *Baudhāyanapitṛmedhasūtra*, II and III: 35-36
 52. Caland 1929a: 144
 53. Bhattacharyya 1887: 25
 54. Gopal 1959: 363-364
 55. Olivelle 2000: 221
 56. Olivelle 2000: 370-371
 57. Kane 1953: 241-242
 58. Gopal 1959: 367
 59. Jolly 1880: 76
 60. Gopal 1959: 367-369
 61. Gopal 1959: 369
 62. Kashikar 1964b: 475-478
 63. Ranade 1978: 552
 64. Kashikar 1964b: 482
 65. Kashikar 1964b: 482
 66. Kane 1953: 251-253
 67. Kashikar 1964b: 484-491
 68. Kane 1953: 204f-205f
 69. *Pāraskaragrhyasūtram*: 486
 70. Gopal 1959: 369, 370
 71. Kane 1953: 516
 72. Gonda 1980: 442
 73. *Mitākṣarā*: 83
 74. Jolly 1880: 83-85
 75. Gonda 1980: 441,442
 76. Gonda 1980: 442-443
 77. Gopal 1959: 369-370
 78. Kane 1953: 521
 79. Jolly 1880: 85-87
 80. Gopal 1959: 367
 81. Oldenberg 1886: 355
 82. Kane 1953: 228
 83. Caland 1929a: 143
 84. Bühler 1886: 180
 85. Kane 1953: 227, 227f
 86. Caland 1929a: 140
 87. Caland 1929a: 220-221
 88. Pandey 1969: 271
 89. *Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa*: 937-938
 90. *Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa*: 277
 91. Kane 1953: 223
 92. Garde 1940: 15-17
 93. Hazra 1958: 295-298
 94. *Varāhapurāṇa* II: 1058
 95. Gupta 1968: 83-84
 96. *Hāralatā*: 126, 130, 143
 97. Kane 1953: 212-214
 98. *Āśvalāyanagrhyakārika*: 219-220
 99. Aparārka: 545-546
 100. *Hāralatā*: 142-143
 101. *Smṛtitattva* II: 309-310
 102. Jarrett 1948: 356
 103. In the Sanskrit lexicon *Amarakoṣa* 2.2.4, the *eḍūka* is defined as (a wall) where in charred bones are placed.
 104. Kane 1953: 255
 105. Kane 1953: 242-243
 106. Pandey 1969: 261
 107. *Antyeṣṭidīpikā*: 8-9
 108. *Smṛtitattva* II: 308
 109. Sachau 1910: 169
 110. Aparārka: 521
 111. Kane 1953: 262-263
 112. *Mitākṣarā*: 78
 113. *Śuddhiprakāśa*: 214
 114. Aparārka: 523
 115. Kane 1953: 520
 116. Kane 1953: 264, 264f
 117. Kane 1953: 539, 539f
 118. *Laghu-Āśvalāyanasmṛti*: 1742
 119. *Śuddhiprakāśa*: 225
 120. *Śuddhiprakāśa*: 228
 121. *Smṛtitattva* II: 382
 122. *Mitākṣarā*: 82
 123. *Mitākṣarā*: 84-85
 124. *Mitākṣarā*: 298-300
 125. *Hāralatā*: 207-212
 126. *Nirṇayasindhu*: 523-526
 127. *Samskāraratnamālā*: 696
 128. *Mitākṣarā*: 294-295
 129. *Antyeṣṭidīpikā*: 4
 130. Kane 1953: 542-545
 131. Pandey 1969: 272-27
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Jayanta Bhattacharya (born on 25 November 1963 in Kolkata), was graduated in Mechanical Engineering. Presently, he is working as an executive in the field of aircraft maintenance in Mumbai, India. But, ever since his early youth, he has pursued a keen interest in studying the works on South Asian history and culture. The profound urge to contribute in the field of cultural history has led him to pen this work.

In this work, the first published work of his life, an effort has been made to present an overview of the Hindu rites of passage in a historical perspective. Based on the data put together from the works of the eminent scholars like P.V. Kane, Rajbali Pandey, Ram Gopal, Willem Caland and Jan Gonda along with the ancient and medieval works, a humble presentation has been prepared to bring forward an outline of the history of performance of the life cycle rites of passage by the Hindus in South Asia since the time immemorial.

This study has made an attempt to take note of a significant spectrum of the Hindu normative texts on the rites of passage, written over last two and a half millenniums. But, as the numerous texts have been composed on this subject, only a small fraction of these texts has been covered in this study. Certainly, there are still huge room for improvement and addition of information. Therefore, the author is looking forward for the feedback from the learned readers in this respect. The author can be contacted at jbhattacharya1963@gmail.com.