During medieval period, *asthisuddhi* or *asthiproksepa* emerged as a funeral rite. The procedure of performing *asthisuddhi* (a rite performed for the purification of the charred bones) of a deceased has been mentioned in a manuscript of the *Saunaka Kārikā* (MSK) which has been cited in NS (appendix-III). NS (loc. cit) designates this rite as *asthikṣepta* (final disposal of the charred bones). It cites the authorities of Gautama and Yama and the texts of the *Brahmāṇa Purāṇa* and *Brahma Purāṇa* which mentions that these bones are to be dropped into the Ganges. According to it Vṛddhamanu mentions that the merit of passing away in (the holy water of) the Ganges is attained if these bones are dropped within the ten days of death. As regards the performer, it cites the Brahma Purāṇa which mentions the best one among the sons or the son of a daughter or one's own brother should drop the bones. If the performer is not related from either the paternal side or maternal side, he should perform Cāndrayan vrata after performing this rite.

According to MSK (loc. cit) the performer at the outset should go out of this village, take bath together with his clothes (and proceed to the spot where these bones are deposited) and becoming reverently disposed to the earth should recite the mantra beginning with *upasarpa* (RV 10.18-10) and sprinkle *pañcagavya* on the very spot. NS mentions that he should recite the Gāyatri mantra (RV 3.62.10) and other mantras while sprinkling Pañcagavya on the spot.
MSK further mentions that digging out the soil and taking out the bones he, himself, bath each time with each of the ten items viz. cow's urine, cow's dung, cow's milk, curd, clarified butter, water in which kuśas ae dropped, ashes (of the sacrificial fire), clay, honey, consecrated water. He should sprinkle water on the bones with the help of the kuśas reciting the mantras beginning with "ato devā" (RV 1.22.16) "eto'nvindra" (RV 8.95.7). "sucī" (RV 7.56.12), the Pāvamanī mantras (RV 10.126.1-10), the hymn beginning with "mamāgneh" (RV 10.119.1-13) and the Rudra hymn (RV 10.128.1-9). While performing asthiśuddhi for the parents the son should perform hemaśrauddha and offer the pīnda. He should also offer libation with sesamum seeds. According to NS (loc. cit) this libation is subsidiary to the rite of asthikṣepa (i.e. asthiśuddhi).

MSK mentions seven specified items in which these bones are tied. These are poritons of Ajina (deerskin), woolen blanket, Darbha, hair of the cows, strands of Sanaplant, leaves of Bhuja and palm tree. He performs a sacrifice offering oblations of clarified butter and sesamum for one hundred and eight times reciting the hymn beginning with "udiratām" (RV 10.15). The bones are thrown (in the water) at a tīrtha. Rites are recommended here to avoid sparṣadoṣa (blemishes arising out of touching the bones). It is desirable that after attending call of nature and before touching the cows, the performer should sip water.

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NOTES:


2. See KANE, HDS, 4 pp. 134-138

3. Milk, coagulated milk, butter, liquid and solid excreta of the cow.

4. In hemaśrāddha (or hiranyaśrāddha) at least fourtimes (the cost of grains required to feed person is offered to the Brāhmaṇas) See NS p. 700. KANE, HDS. 4, p. 515.

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प्राचीनस्वालीकारिकायम्मशुद्विविधिः ३ पाः

शौनककोः प्रवेशार्मि अथाष्टिशुद्विविधिः ५ क्रमात् ।
आदी ग्रामाविहिंगत्वा स्नानं कुवांतः सर्चितकम् ।
प्रक्षेतभावणं भुवं मन्तवेवविवक्षणः ।
उपसार्दिकन्त्रं।" पार्थेन खननं तथा ।

मूर्तिकोडरणं चाचिप्रणं ६ च यथाक्रमं ।
स्नातवात्मस्यशुद्वि कुवांतं एतो निव्वित्रित। सूक्तत: ।

दरासनानांत: कुवांतं तद्यवेवविवक्षणः ।
गोम्यं गोमयं श्च द्विं दर्शिं । कुषोदकम् ।

भस्ममुद्वारिणी मन्त्रस्नानं दरासंतमः ।
कुर्षी।" । सम्पन्नापेशश्च्यथयो देवभित॥ सन्नत: ।

एतो निवंद्र।६६ शुचितः । त नमः ॥६४ इतीति।। ।
पावलानां।६६ ममाम्ये।। च रूद्यक्तं यथाक्रमम् ।

हेमशार्दं ततः कुवांतं पित्वसुविरय यलनं: ।
पिण्डदानं । पञ्चवेव तत्कां । तिलतापयम् ।

सप्तभिषेण्टं कुवांतं तद्यवेवविवक्षणः ।
अभिः कमला दभि गोकेशा: । श्राण्यवेष च ।

भूपतेन तारपत्र सप्तां स्वतं बेठतं स्मृतम् ।

हैम च।। । भौविकः रौऽ व्राक्षः नीलकं यथा ।
निक्षेपेयकिमः तु शुद्दिभक्ति नायिका ।

ततो हौमें । पञ्चवेव तिलादायनं विवक्षणः ।
उदीरतः।। सूक्ष्मेन हुमेदशेयां शतम् ।

ततो ताल्या शम्हेतारः स्पर्धायो । न विद्यते ।
मून्नुप्रत्याचमनं ॥५ कुवांतंश्चविति भाषयेत् ।

II इति शौनककारिकायाम्मशुद्विविधिः ।

(221)
NOTES:

1. MSK fo.
2. NS pp.894-895 श्रेष्ठ
3. Ibid - कृत्वा
4. Ibid - पूर्व मन्त्राविचारणेः, MSK loc. cit.-तत्त्वमात्रविचारणेः:
5. RV 10.18.10
6. NS loc. cit - चारणां प्रहणम्
7. RV 8.95.7
8. MSK loc. cit - The portion from ऐलोकिन्द्र to दरासानाननि is not mentioned.
9. NS loc. cit - मन्त्रव्यसनानि वै दशा
10. MSK loc. cit कुशो
11. RV 1.22.16
12. RV 8.95.7
13. MSK loc. cit - शुची वो, RV 7.56.12
14. MSK loc. cit - न तस्मान्, RV 10.126.1-10
15. MSK loc. cit -दूरितमिति, RV 10.119.1-10
16. RV 9.1.1-10
17. MSK loc. cit - यमायंयम् RV 10.128.1-9
18. MSK loc. cit श्रद्धापूर्वकं क्रमे यतेः, RV 1.43.1-9
19. MSK loc. cit - The portion from सावधि to विचारणः is not mentioned
20. MSK loc. cit हेम
21. MSK loc. cit - उद्दीरतामिति, RV 10.15
22. NS loc. cit - मुख्य पूर्वाध्यक्षमनम्
23. MS loc. cit - The portion from हति to विधि: is not mentioned.