CONCLUSION
From the early days of human civilization man has become curious to know what happens to a person after his death. This is indicated in the expression of Nachiketa in the *Kathopanisad*. In *RV* the deceased is advised to follow the path of those who have died earlier to him (10.14.06, AGS 4.4.6). Down the ages people continue to speculate and some beliefs get recorded and generally accepted.

The study of rites recommended for the deceased reveal the belief and practice of the householders belonging to Asvalāyana school (0.4). As regards the apprehension of death, Sūtrakāra believes that the śrauta fires maintained by an Āhitagni indeed help him avoid death. He suggests that when an Āhitāgni becomes critically ill, he should be taken out of the village. The śrauta fires longing for the oblations to be offered by the person want to come back to his residence and thereby cure him from his illness (AGS,4.1.1-4).

The direction of the departure of the deceased as well as the future of his family members seem to be indicated by the first approach of either of the three fires (*āhavanīya, gārhapatya, daksīṇa*) separately or collectively (1.15.1). It is believed that when three fires approach the corpse simultaneously, the phenomena indicates the liberation of the soul. When the corpse is burnt, the deceased assumes a subtle form and goes up with smoke (1.15).
According to AGS when the oblation of cooked food is offered in the hands of the Brāhmaṇas who are invited to represent the fathers, it is believed that actually the fathers regale the food (3.9.1.4.15). Further after sapinḍikaraṇa ekoddiṣṭa-śrāddha is discontinued (2.16). If one offers a single pīṇḍa to the deceased after sapinḍikaraṇa it will mean that the performer kills the fathers and himself goes to hale. It is believed that the deceased gets entry into the group of fathers consisting of himself, his father and his grand-father (2.12). In tila-śrāddha, specifically black Brāhmaṇas are invited. Because they symbolize Yama (5.2.3-4). Pitṛs remain thirsty and follow a vipra to receive water offered in tarpana (libation, 6.2). In pārvana-śrāddha, it is believed that the pot containing the water flowing from the hands of the Brāhmaṇas to whom it is offered as arghya really gives shelter to the Pitṛs who remain hidden in the water (3.7.5). It is advised that the pot should not be touched or displaced till the end of the śrāddha apprehending that if it is touched or displaced, the fathers get angry and immediately leave the spot without accepting what has been offered to them (3.7.6).

In sarpa-saṁskāra eight Brāhmaṇas are invited to represent the eight legendary personalities assuming the form of snakes like Ananta, Sesa etc (5.1.6)

Details mentioned by the text attempts to specify the procedure of performing different rites related to the deceased. About the specification, Sutrakāra is silent. Perhaps he had no intention to specify. But latter authors with a zeal to shape the rituals according to their satisfaction introduce the specifications.
As regards the burning of the corpse, Nārāyaṇa mentions that while bending the left knee, the performer should not raise his back (1.14.1)

Devasvāmī maintains that stone, fire, cow-dung, fried-barley, sesame seeds and water should be touched specifically in the order mentioned, when the members return to the house after funeral (1.1.7.1)

Jayanta in VM mentions that on return from funerals, participants are to be offered water along with a piece of grass and sesame seeds on a spot inclined to the south (1.15.3)

Haradatta is of the view that one should not take food in the house of a deceased upto a period of ten days counted from the day of death (aśauca, 1.17.4).

Nārāyaṇa mentions distinguishing aspects of different śrāddhas as well as their common aspects so as to establish on the one hand that they had their separate identity and on the other, they belong to the very group (2.3).

AP is of the view that in sapindikaraṇa the first pinda, which belongs to the great-grand-father, is to be divided into three pots and mingle with the pindas for the grand-father, father and the deceased (2.14)

LAS mentions the details to be performed for the person who dies at a distant place (1.3)
GP specifies the number of libations to be offered to the deceased till ten days after the death (1.17.3)

In \( \text{pa}r\text{rva}na-\text{sr}\text{ā}ddha \), Haradatta specifies that the pot for the father should be of silver, stone for the grand-father and earth for the great-grand-father (3.7.1)

GP maintains that the person who becomes the performer at the funeral should continue to offer libation to the deceased till ten days and should not hand over the charge to anyone within that period. (1.17.3). During \( m\text{alamā}sa \), \( a\text{stakā} \) must not be celebrated (5.2.4.1).

While specifying the details, the authors also consider the capacity of the performer and the reality. The word \text{anādye} \) has been explained by different commentators differently to accommodate the performance of \( \text{pa}r\text{rva}na-\text{sr}\text{ā}ddha \) during adverse condition etc. or when the performer is poor. (3.4.1)

Latter authors introduce various details of the \( \text{sr}\ddha \) rites in the school of \( \text{A}s\text{valāyana} \) which had already become popular being commonly practised in the Hindu society and most of them got the sanction of the \text{Smṛti} \) texts and \text{Pūrṇa}nas which become the source of \text{Sa}ṅ\text{ā}tana \text{dharma} during the post vedic period.

During medieval period the centre of religious activities was gradually shifted from the house to the temples. Hence for \( n\text{ār\text{ā}ya}\text{ṇa}bali \), the temples are stated as the venue (5.3.2.2)
GP wants that after the funeral is over the participants should chew neem leaves on their arrival at home and then sip water. (1.17) Viśvanātha in PS wants that ābhuydayika- śrāddha should be performed by a person who enters into vānaprastha or sānyāsa. (4.2.1)

In pārvanā-śrāddha, Nārāyaṇa and Haradatta want that along with pitrya Brāhmaṇas two daiva Brāhmaṇas should also be invited (3.4.1). In sapindikaraṇa, GP specifies that two Daiva Brāhmaṇas, three pitrya Brāhmaṇas and one representing the Preta taking the total number to six should be invited for the purpose(2.13).

Funeral rites of snakes have also been mentioned along with expiatory rites for a person who kills a snake which indicates the importance of snake worship in the Hindu religion (5.1.6). Similarly, the procedure of jīva-śrāddha is prescribed to enable a person to get the merit of having his own śrāddha even before his death (5.2.3).

Puranic description of tirthas perhaps remain the basis of īlas while discussing śrāddha rites. According to it wherever a person performs a śrāddha, he should consider that he is at Gayā. Before performing the śrāddha he should contemplate Gadādhara. The episode of Gaya described in details in Vāyu Purāṇa eologises śrāddha practices at Gayā tirtha(3.1).

In vṛṣotsarga before the performer sets the bull free, the left side of the animal is marked with cakra and the right side with trident
signifying the two dominant sects of Hinduism during the medieval period viz. Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism (5.3.3.2).

With the progress of organisation in the Indian peninsula which already had developed cultural diversity over the years, some regional differences seem to have emerged in the medieval period that was unknown to the Śūtrakāra.

In difference with the practice of the Śāmavedins in the Gauda country, Vipra Mishra in Orissa cites the authority of AP in deciding which one of the four pīṇḍas is to be distributed among the other three (meant for the father, grand-father and great-grand-father) pīṇḍas (2.14).

Nārāyaṇa refers to the practices of Baudhāyana (5.2.4.5). Devasvāmi maintains that in difference with the Śāmkhāyaniyas the Āśvalāyaniyas should perform āstakas four times a year and not three times like the former (5.2.4.1).

According to Nārāyaṇa, when food is offered to the Brāhmaṇas in their hand in the pārvaṇa-śrāddhas, those of Āśvalāyana school belonging to the Southern region partake it and sip water before they partake the food prepared specifically to feed them. But those in the north just insert their fingers into it and sip water when the food (specifically prepared to feed them) is served, they mix with it the portion of food that has been offered in their hands earlier and then they take the mixed food (3.10.1)
As it is observed, the Sūtra text is the earliest record of description relating to the rites for the deceased performed in the Āśvalāyana school. The text has come down through the ages almost in tact. However few variant readings (1.11,1.20.10,3.7) have been noticed and among these the reading of the word kartā in place of garta (1.11) relates to procedural difference. Extension of the comments of Saunaka as noticed in pārvaṇa- śrāddha (3.7.) seems to have occurred at a time in between 1100AD to 1360AD. All these points manifest the attempt of modifying the Sūtra text to accommodate the procedures of rituals.

Observing the trend of their own times, latter commentators at least in one place gloss over the sutra displaying their ignorance. Haradatta and Anandarāyamakhi do not mention the sutra relating to the immolation of animal on the occasion of anvāṣṭakya (5.2.4.6) perhaps for the reason that killing of animals in vedic rituals was becoming rare to be discontinued. The commentators have their own methodology of introducing the details and perhaps by doing it they try to read more in the Sūtra text. They resort to Vartika of Katyāyana on Āstādhyāyī to drive home the point that one must perform aṣṭakā for four times a year (5.2.4.1). From the etymological derivation of the ceremonies, they offer clue to their performance e.g. Devasvāmi's view on anvāṣṭakya to be performed in manner similarly with aṣṭakā (5.2.5.2). Rites continue to be performed but their purport undergoes changes. During the age of Samhitās, aṣṭakā was a new year celebration but during the age of Sūtras, it came to be connected with the rites directed to the deceased ancestors (5.2.4).

The descriptions given on the Sūtra texts sometimes remain
silent on various aspects of the rites particularly, those relating to the death of a woman during her period, a pregnant woman or a person dying at a distant place. Latter authors lay down the exact procedure of performing the rites on these occasions (5.1.4, 5.1.5).

ACA mentions the manner of spreading the parts of *anustaranī* before the corpse is consigned to fire (1.13.3). Attempt is also made to derive the meaning of the word *anādyey* from linguistic standpoint (3.4.1).

Latter authors attempt at explaining different rites by mentioning their purpose. DCA cites from YS (1.225) which mentions that invited Brahmans in a *pārvanā-śrāddha* represent the āhavanīya fire of a śrauta sacrifice (3.3).

Despite attempt to systematize the rites from very early times, difference of views ascribed to Taulvalī, Gānagārī, Gautama etc. (in *pindapitryajña*) seems to have emerged even during the Sūtra period (5.3.1.3.)

Divergence of views is also noticed in deciding the period of *asāuca* and the manner of observing the same (1.17.4). While throwing the sacrificial implements into the funeral pyre at the time of burning the corpse, some maintain that the offerings are to be made in the sacrificial fire with the same śr̥va which was used by the performer in his life time. Here others are of the opinion that the śr̥va of the deceased should be thrown into the fire and should not be used in the sacrifice of antyesti.
For that purpose another srva should be used (1.14.1).

Latter authors discontinued the practice of anustaraṇī in the funeral rites (1.10). They also recommend the garland of japā to be offered to the deceased in place of nalada (1.6.1). Similarly cutting off of entrails of the corpse and filling it with prṣādājya is discontinued in the latter period (1.8.1). Taking out the corpse to the cemetery by a cart drawn by cows as recommended by the Sūtrakāra is replaced by the practice of using either bullock cart or sivikā in the subsequent period (1.9.3).

It is rightly observed by S. A. DANGE (loc. cit.) that symbolism plays a major role in the formulation procedures relating to the funeral rites. The bones of a male person are collected in a jar which differs from that of a female having protuberance (1.19.2). The pitchers in jīva-śrāddha represent a person's dead body who is still alive and wants to perform his own śrāddha. Palāśa sticks are similarly used to represent the body of a deceased person not available for funeral (5.2.3.4.).

Performers of other schools display their knowledge on various other texts like Dharmaśāstras, Ākhyātas, Nītiśāstras, Purāṇas, Itiḥāsas, Khilas(pārvanā-śrāddha). The earliest commentator Devasvāmī cites from MS. In the ābhyaudyāyika-śrāddha, it is stated that Chhāndogas(Sāmavedins) do not perform the śrāddha in sōsyanti karma (4.2.1). All these display the knowledge of the latter authors regarding the practice of other schools and also about the texts.

Indian society as revealed from the earliest record of the Sūtra
text till the latest belong to the eighteenth century envisages joint family system In mourning during śāntikarman and pārvaṇa- śrāddha all the members of family take part (1.20,3.11). Elders ahead the procession to the cemetery and youngers ahead on return (1.10.2,1.16.1). The eldest of the sons of the deceased becomes the performer and on special circumstances the least of sequence of the performers has also been furnished by the latter authors (1.2). ACA clarifies that those, who take food prepared in the family in common with the deceased are expected to observe aśauca (1.17).

During Sūtra period it appears that women used to go to cemetery (1.9.1) for it is mentioned that they offer libation to the deceased after the corpse is being burnt (1.15.3). From the description of śrāddha rites (5.2.5.4) and tarpana (6.2), it appears that householders used to marry more than one wives to whom pīṇḍas and libations are offered.

Study of Veda and preservation of vedic tradition characterised the Sūtra period. Enormous effort was made to preserve the tradition and to pass it on to the next generation through chain of teachership and studentship. Therefore when a teacher dies, mourning has been recommended. The greater the eminence of the teacher, the longer is the duration of the mourning (1.17.4).

Hence the rites for the ancestors as narrated in the Āśvalāyana school reveal their potential to adjust and proliferate under changed circumstances. Perhaps for this reason they have continued to survive through the ages.