

Education System in Vaikhanasa Tradition

Journal of Development Economics and Management Research Studies (JDMS) A Peer Reviewed Open Access International Journal

ISSN: 2582 5119 (Online)



Crossref Prefix No: 10.53422

09(12), 16-20, April-June, 2022

@Center for Development Economic Studies (CDES)

Reprints and permissions

<https://www.cdes.org.in/>

<https://www.cdes.org.in/about-journal/>

Education System in Vaikhanasa Tradition

Dr.S.Muthu¹

Abstract

Vishnu began in public temples even before the Christian era. 'Bhitargaon' and the 'Deogarh' monumental temples in the North are dedicated to Vishnu built during Gupta period in the 4th or 5th Century AD. Many temples have been built in subsequent periods by Kings and Vishnu tradition followers. Daily worship is done to him from the Vedic period. Temple worship took the Vedas as its principles, and was followed in two divisions known as Vaishnava and Saiva. Advaita, Dvaita, Visistadvaita, Idol worship were practiced. Saiva Agamas and Vaishnava Agamas are being followed in almost all the places in our country. As per Vaikhanasa sutra, those who are well versed with all the samskaras are eligible to do the pooja in Vaikhanasa Agama temples. Agama is based on Vedic mantras and one becomes eligible to read the Agama only after getting Upanayana Samskara. Further, the learner should attain at least a minimum of 9 years to have a good grasp of Agama Sastras and communicate the significance of Agama sastras to others. This study attempt to discuss the education system in Vaikhanasa Tradition

Keywords: Vaikhanasa Tradition, Vishnu, gr̥hya karma and yajnās, agamas, Vedic mantras, Mahendra Varman-I, samprokshanam.

Introduction

The worship of Vishnu in public temples started before the Christian era (there are epigraphic evidences). The earlier monumental temples in India like the 'Bhitargaon' and the 'Deogarh' temples in the North are dedicated to Vishnu. It was built during Gupta period in the 4th or 5th Century AD. The cult of devotion i.e., Bhakti which, in fact, occasioned the temple culture in our country was the consequence of the Bhāgavata movement with its emphasis on the worship of

¹ Associate Professor, Department of Sanskrit, Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda College, Chennai-4.

Vishnu. The earliest inscriptional reference of Vishnu in South India as a Vedic God worthy of worship is found in the 'Nanaghat' inscription of Naganika, queen of the Satavahana monarch Satakarni II in South India around 184-125 BC. It contains eulogy of Sankar Shana and Vasudeva among other Gods like Indra and other lokapalas. It is well known that in the Bhāgavata ideology Sankarshana and Vasudeva are the adorable 'vyuha' forms of the great God who is hailed as Bhagavat and that they represent the hero-brother of the 'vṛshni' family, Balarama and Krishna. The Vaishnava movement in South India gathered momentum when the Pallavas crossed the Vindhyas and came down to the South to establish a great empire here. The "Talagunda" inscription mentions that the 'Kadamba ruler Mayura Sarma' went to Kanchipuram, the Pallava capital, to study the whole of the sacred lore. The same inscription mentions a temple for Mahadeva in Talagunda. The Kadamba Kings, like the Pallavas, were fervent supporters of Vedic culture and also encouraged the building of temples. The Pallava king, Mahendra Varman-I, claimed the title of 'builder of temples' and built temples in Chingleput, North and South Arcots, and Tiruchirappalli districts. Kings spent a lot of money for construction of beautiful temples for people to worship the Lord.

Generally, this daily worship is being witnessed from the Vedic period. At the end of the "grhya karmā" & "yajñās" Lord Vishṇu and all Gods are worshiped, and they derived the full benefits of such yajñās. "अथाग्नौ नित्यहोमान्ते विष्णोर्नित्यार्चा सर्व देवार्चा भवति।" Temple worship can be divided into 1) praying for oneself, 2) praying for others and for the welfare of the universe. "स्वार्थो गृहार्चा प्रोक्तः परार्थस्त्वाल्यार्चनम्" for oneself takes place in individual homes. Praying for others takes place in public temples. This, form of temple worship took the Vedas as its principles, and was followed in two divisions known as Vaishnava and Saiva. Following the principles of Vedas, different systems came into practice - Advaita, Dvaita, Visistadvaita, Idol worship were practiced in all these systems in the beginning. Adisankara systematized six religious ways and they are शैवम्, वैष्णवम्, गाणापत्यम्, सौरम्, कौमारम्, शाक्तम्।

In India, Saiva Agamas and Vaishnava Agamas are being followed in almost all the places. The other agamas are being followed in a few places only. It requires priests well versed in the Agamas to look after the day-to-day needs, special needs, constructions etc, Great sacred lore grew around these activities and consequently a formal way of teaching and imparting became the need of the hour. This paper will be able through light on how education system is adopted in Vaikhanasa tradition.

Vaishnava agamas are divided into two major divisions - 1. Vaikhanasa, 2. Pancharatra. In these agamas there are four sections namely i) Kriyapada, ii) Cariyapada, iii) Yogapada, and iv) Jnanapada. The first and second deal with learning process and applications. The Third section deals with controlling the mind and sense organs, and the final section deals with attaining liberation (Moksha).

1. PANCARATRA AGAMA - Pancharatra agama takes recourse to the ritual practices (tantras). These agamas were taught by Lord Narayana to Narada, and then they spread over the entire earth. A man trained in Pancharatra has to get Diksa to enter Vishnu temple, after obtaining certain qualifications i.e. he has to do Gayatri Japa, Aṣṭaksaram regularly, get samasrayana, he has to establish himself as a noble man, must have read Ramayana, Mahabharata, Gita, Srimad Bhagavata and then obtain Diksa from a great teacher (Acarya), and become worthy of worshipping God, and can later become a priest. The teacher (Acarya) has to follow the agama in giving Diksa to the deserving person (gruhastha). After getting diksa, they have to learn Pancharatra agamas from the

same Guru, and then only can offer services to Lord in the temple, become eligible to conduct the festivals also. This Agama has 108 samhitas. Each samhita has its own individual features. In a temple, if one samhita is being followed, the practice should not be changed to another samhita later. If there is a need to change the samhita, it can be done only after Samprokshanam, and then the authorities can adopt the new samhitas. The people, who obtain the Diksa in a proper manner, are eligible to do poojas in the temple. In this agama, festivals are conducted under the guidance of Guru and after gaining a sound experience by practice, one is allowed to perform the festivals individually. It is mentioned that to have sufficient training and practice, one must go with great priests, learn the procedures to do pooja and conduct the festivals.

2. VAIKHANASA AGAMA - Vaikhanasa Agama also explains the methods of worship of Vishnu. The Vaikhanasa agama adopts fundamentally Vedic mantras as its principles. This Agama was given by Lord Narayana to Vikhanas Muni (sage), in the form of sastras. If a man wants to know Vaikhanasa Agama he has to be a Vaikhanasa by birth itself. The Vikhanas muni had many disciples like Atri, Marici, Kasyapa, Pulstya, Pulaka etc. Of these Bhrgu, Atri, Marici and Kasyapa were the four main disciples. These main disciples spread the temple form of worship to the people.

QUALIFICATION FOR LEARNING THE AGAMAS

According to Vaikhanasa sutra, those who are well versed with all the samskaras are eligible to do the pooja in Vaikhanasa Agama temples. One who has known the Brahman, learnt the Vedas, has good conduct, and always meditates on Lord Vishnu, has good thoughts, has eagerness to learn temple mantras, does Samidadhana/Aupasana daily, is highly learned pandit/scholar, is fit to do Samprokshana and such a person alone can be selected by Guru.

वैखानससूत्रेण निषेकादि संस्कार क्रियायुक्तान् विप्रान् वेदविदः शुद्धान् शुद्धित्रयोपेतान् वैष्णवान् वयस्संपन्नान् सुमनस्कान् अर्चनादि सर्वप्रयोगज्ञान् मन्त्रकल्पविदः श्रोत्रियान् अग्निसंपन्नान् आहूय तेषु ज्ञानोत्कटं शुभदर्शनं श्रुतवृत्तशीलं संपन्नं गुरुं वरयेत्। (विमानार्चनकल्पः Chapter 27).

PRIESTSHIP FOR SAMPROKSHANAM

One who keeps himself clean, has clean and good habits, taking bath daily, doesn't commit any sin, does svādhyaya, Japa three times daily, learns 'dvādasākṣara japa' follows prājāpatya fastings, eats 'havis' one time a day, redeem sin, eats only havis till the end of samprokshanam, sleeps on mat, does not speak to women, takes bath three times a day, has control over his senses is eligible to become a samprokshana priest.

सर्वे सुलुप्तकेशश्मश्रुकेशनखाः शुद्धदन्ताः स्नात्वा अघमर्षणं कृत्वा सावित्रीपूर्वं द्वादशसूक्तानि जप्त्वा प्राजापत्यं, पादकृच्छ्रम्, एकाहं वा अपोष्य पापं सर्वं सदह्य यावत्प्रतिष्ठान्तं तावद्भविष्यभोजो दर्भास्तरण शायिनः स्त्रीशूद्रादि संभाषणपरिवेषणान्वर्जयित्वा त्रिषवणस्नायिनो जितेन्द्रिया भवेयुरिति विज्ञायते । (विमानार्चनकल्पः Chapter 27).

TIME OF OBTAINING AGAMA SASTRA

As the Agama is based on Vedic mantras, one becomes eligible to read the Agama only after getting Upanayana Samskara. The Upanayana should be performed during Vasantarutu i.e., April to June in accordance with the age mentioned in the vikhanaskalpa sutra. The prescribed age is 5 yrs from conceiving for getting brahma-varcas, 8 yrs for longevity (ayuskama), and 9-16 yrs for

materialistic wealth (srikama) in every year. अथ गर्भाधानादि वर्षे पञ्चमे ब्रह्मवर्चसकामम् आयुष्काममष्टमे नवमे वा श्रीकामं वसन्ते ब्राह्मणमुपनयीत। (वै.गृह्यसूत्रम्).

In Bodhayana sutra, 8 yrs from womb is materialistic (kamyā), 7 yrs for brahmavarcas, 8 yrs for longevity (ayuskama), 9 yrs for tejaskama, 10 yrs for annadhyakama, 11 yrs for indriyakama, 12 yrs for pasukama, 13 yrs for medhakama, 14 yrs for pustikama, 15 yrs for bratrvyavanta and 16 yrs for sarvakama.

अथातो गर्भाष्टमे ब्राह्मणमुपनयीत इत्यारभ्य अथापि काम्यानि भवन्ति सप्तमे ब्रह्मवर्चसकाममष्टमे आयुष्कामं नवमे तेजस्कामं दशमे अन्नाद्यकामं एकादशे इन्द्रियकामं द्वादशे पशुकामं त्रयोदशे मेधाकामं चतुर्दशे पुष्टिकामं पञ्चदशे भ्रातृव्यवन्तं षोडशे सर्वकामम् इति (वैखानस बोधायन गृह्यसूत्र).

If a person misses the age to get Upanayana samskara to be undergo the uddhalaka prayachchitta. Hence the age for upanayana is very important to learn Vedas and Agama. After getting the upanayana samskara the person is eligible to join the agama education stream. In general, the Agama Sastra starts with "ऋषिप्रश्नोत्तरम्" i.e., some of the sages ask some doubts, then the senior most sage clear the doubts, In this manner the Agama sastra developed step by step and has been expanded.

Eg. ऋषयो धर्मसंसक्ताः समागम्य प्रणम्य च ॥
अभिपूज्य यथान्यायमिदं वचनमब्रुवन्।
भगवन् सर्ववित् त्वं हि तस्मात्पृच्छामहे वयम्॥
आश्रमे सम्यगासीनमृषिं सर्वहितोद्यतम्। ऋषयोऽभ्यागतास्सर्वे प्रणिपत्येदमब्रुवन् ॥
(वैखानस-समूर्तार्चनाधिकरणम्)

Then the sage starts answering –

भृगुरुवाच - युष्माभिः परिपृष्टं यत्तत्सर्वमृषिसत्तमाः। वक्ष्यामि सावधानेन शृणुध्वं मत्प्रबोधितम् ॥ (वैखानस-समूर्तार्चनाधिकरणम्)

In Marici's Vimanarcanakalpa starts with the questions, whom to worship? how to worship? the system of worship, benefit of the worship in the temple etc.

भगवन् केनमार्गेण कैर्मन्त्रैः कं देवमर्चयन्तः कान् लोकान् गमिष्यति?

Sage Marici then replied - मरीचिरुवाच - सुप्रसन्नं परमात्मानं नारायणं ध्यात्वा अभिवन्द्य श्रुत्यनुकूलेन मार्गेण चतुर्वेदोद्भवैः मन्त्रैः तमर्चयन्तः श्रुतिभिरभिहितं शाश्वतम् अतीन्द्रियं देवैरनभिलक्ष्यं तद्विष्णोः परमं पदं गच्छेयुः (प्राप्तुवन्ति) इति। (विमानार्चनाकल्पः Chapter I).

After answering to these questions, the explanation of the system of worship according to their specific ways are taken up in the agamas.

TRADITIONAL SYLLABUS OF AGAMA SASTRA COURSE FOLLOWED IN THE PATHASALAS

This is a 9-year course and the students are admitted at the age of 7. Most of the pathasalas are of gurukula type with board and lodging facilities. The course is generally taught as follows:

1st year – Sandhyavandana, Samidadhanam, Nitya-veda-parayanam, Grantha alphabets, Reading and writing skills, Sanskrit prose and poetry, usage of nouns and verbs, (Sabdamanjari, Dhatumanjari & Amarakosa), suktas etc.

2nd year - Special suktas, Daily pooja (procedures and mantra), Sahasranamas for different deities, Stotras, Sanskrit dramas, pasurams from Divya Prabhandam.

3rd year – Special pooja procedures, Ashtottara satanamavalis of deities, starting to perform special yajnam.

4th year - Revision of first three-year lessons, Samprokshana mantras with meaning. 5th year - Performance explanation of different types of festivals in temples and their explanation.

6th year-Santi homas and Prayacchitta homas and Divyaprabandha pasurams.

7th year -Purva and Aparā kriyas with mantras, temple visits to get a personal knowledge and experience of the procedures adopted there.

8th year –Sharpening of the knowledge and tools and visesavidhis 9th year – One year practical's and regular parayanams etc.

Conclusion

In India, in many ancient temples, their own traditions and rituals are being followed till date. Sastras have to be learnt under the guidance of a Guru at least for a minimum of 8 years. While learning the sastras the disciple has to go with his Guru and must strive to learn the different traditions followed in various temples to acquire a practical knowledge. He has to spend at least one year with his Guru, on such yatras to temples who may be going there to conduct Samprokshanams, special festivals, yajas etc. So, it takes at least a minimum of 9 years for a student to have a good grasp of Agama Sastras and communicate the significance of Agama sastras to others.

Mangalani Bhavantu
