

TANTRIC HIEROGLYPHICS - II

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Vaisnavism

The worship of Visnu is of Vedic origin as has been amply proved by the nature of the *yajnas* and the *-yajnika* basis of *Matsya*, *Varaha*, and *Vamana* puranas has been generally accepted. The discrepancies in the puranas regarding the order of the *avatars* and also the numerous variants of the stories regarding Narasimha, etc. can be reconciled only in the light of sacrificial ritual and symbolism. The Vedic Visnu had also some tantric features as proved by the names Sipavista, Vamana-Trivikrama, and from such passages as "*Visnur yonim kalpayatu.*" The *Vaikhanasa* and the *Pancaratra* tantras insist on their Vedic origin in spite of some objectionable doctrines as accepted by Ramanuja and others. The *Vaikhanasa* is specially insistent on its Vedic basis. The *Atri Samhita* (*Samurtar canadhikarana*) says that Bramha (*Vaikhana*) having learnt from Visnu taught the tantra to Atri, Marici, Bhrigu, and Kasyapa. The *Vaikhanasa* of worship is Vedic because it says that the worship of Visnu in *amurta* form is nothing but the Vedic fire worship and in the ritual the priests have the same names and functions as in the *yajnas* - Hotr, Adhvaryu, etc. The five forms of Visnu in the *Vaikhanasa* are represented by the Vedic five fires - Visnu is the *Garhapatya*, *Purusha-Ahavaniya*, *Satya-Daksinagni*, *Acyuta-Anvaharya*, and *Aniruddha-Sabhyagni*. The *amurta* worship is not for ordinary individuals.

Devarcanam dvidha proktam amurtam ca samurtakam

Amurtam garhapatyadi sarvagnisu hutam murtam

Tasyadhanadikam sarvam sutre Vikhanasoditam.

Samurtalaya bimbo nityam vidhivadarcanam

Agnyadhanam prathistha syat istih parvarcanadhika

Yagascavabhrtantah syad utsavas tadvidhanatah

Visnor etat samurtam yah pujanam bhaktitas caret

Samurtyarcana Adhikarana, 27 .1-2.

*Agneyam Pancaratram tu diksayuktam ca tantrikam
Avaidikatvat tat tantram tato Vaikhanasena tu,
Saumyena vaidikenaiva devadevam samarcayet.*

The *Pancaratra agama* has been opposed to the Vedas by Sri Samkaracarya in his *Bhasya* on the *Vedanta Sutrās* (2.2, 42-45). Sri Ramanuja in his *Sri Bhasya* tries to prove the Vedic basis of *Pancaratra* quoting the *Pauskara Samhita* and the *Satvata Samhita*, admitting that the theory of the *jivas* having a birth, according to the *Parama Samhita* (?) is opposed to the Vedas, but it is also opposed to the *Pancaratra*. *Sandilya's* denigration of the Vedas is explained away as "*Nahi ninda nyaya*." He relies on the *Pancarata* section of the *Santiparvan* of the *Mahabharata*. "*Vakta Narayanas avayam*." To Madhvacarya, *Pancaratra*, *Bharata*, *Mula Ramayana* and the *Brahma Sutrās* are as authoritative as the Vedas themselves (*Mahabharata Tatparya Nirnaya*, I, St. 31). Yamunacarya in his *Agama Pramanya* and *Vedanta Desika* in *Pancaratra Raksa* have adduced evidence to prove that *Ekayana sakha* is not a mere *kalpana*.

The theories of some modern scholars that Narayana is probably a Dravidian god of the Sea with which only the Dravidians and not the Aryans were familiar is without any foundation. The attempts to connect some of the *Avataras* - *Matsya*, *Kurma*, *Varaha*, *Vamana*, *Narasimha*, etc. with aboriginal totemistic worship have not been convincing.

The three major works of *Pancaratra* are *Satvata*, *Pauskara*, and *Jaya Samhitas*. The *Satvata* was taught to *Narada* by *Samkarsana*. The *Jaya* was also taught to *Narada* whose disciple *Sandilya* made it popular. The *Pauskara Samhita* was taught to *Puskara* (Brahma) by *Visnu* himself.

In the *Sandilya smrti* it is asserted that *Sandilya* taught the *Ekayana Sastra* to the *Rsis* on the *Totadri* hill.

*Srimat Totagirer murdhni srimatyayatane Harih
Sandilyam rsim asinam pranamya munayo'bruvan.
.....Srimad Ekayanam sastramarutam guhyam sanatanam
Jnanam sarva vedanam anantasaram idam tviti.
Nirvrttam vaidikam karam yat proktam bhava bhesajam.
Panca kalatmakam jnanam tacca Brahmaika daivatam, etc.*

Sakti Worship

The Mother-goddess worship in India is firmly rooted in the Vedic tradition. The theory that the Aryans worshipped only male sky-ward and sun-ward deities and that the Mother goddess worship is alien to the spirit of Indo-European peoples has no foundation in the Vedic literature. Aditi, Raka, Sinivali, Kuhu, Gungu, Ratri, Agnayi, Varunani, Aranyani, the divine rivers, Indrani, etc. are as important as Indra, Rudra and other male deities. Aditi as the sacrificial altar represented the earth and the oceans. Agni on the altar is Jatadevas and the proto-type of Jata Vedase Devi.

Jatavedase sunuvama somam aratiyato nidahati vedah

Sanah parsad atidurgani visva naveva sindhum duritatyagnih.

(Tai.Ar IV-20-2).

Sri is also an aspect of Agni. Hence *Srividya* appropriately arose from the *Cid Agni kunda*. The *Sri Sukta* is a supplement to the *Rgveda* V-58. The *Brhad Devata* (V.91) says that in this hymn Agni as the bestower of riches is incidentally praised (*nipata bhaja*). *Sri Vidyarnava Tantra* (II. p. 186) and Samkara's *Prapancasara* (Ch.XII) give the method of worship of *Laksmi* as Sri. The flames of the fire are named Kali, Karali, Manojava, Sulohita, Sudhumravarna, Sphulingini, Visvarupa Devi, in the *Mundukopanisad*. The word Sri itself means the three Vedas (*Tai. Br. II. 27*). The terms *Asvakranta*, *Visnukranta* and *Rathakranta* are derived from the Vedic sacrificial ritual. In the *Agnyadheya*, the *yajamana* imitates the foot-steps of Visnu. He takes steps from the south-western corner of the altar, first to the east with his right foot, the succeeding steps covering the ground up to the north-east corner. The importance of the *Visnukranta* strides in the Vedic marriage ritual and elsewhere is well recognised. Seven and in the Atharvan ritual eight or ten steps have not only a cosmic but a sexual significance also. The *Rathakrantha* refers to the rolling of the chariot wheel following the *Asvakranta* or the foot-steps of the horse in the *Agnyadheya*. The *Vamadevyia Sama* should be chanted following the horse when the Ahavaniya fire is being transferred from the *Garhapatya*. The *Vamadevyia* is deeply associated with sex symbolism. The cart wheel is made to revolve in three rounds and the *Ahavaniya* is finally established on the hoof-mark of the horse (or of a bull according to the *Paingi Brahmana*) which is called "*kamandalu*." In the *Asvamedha* ritual the roaming of the horse is for ten or eleven

months and the depositing of an oblation on every foot-print of the horse is also *Asvakranta*.

The sex symbolism of the horse is clear in the *Asvamedha*,

*To va asvasya medhasya pada veda, asvaisaiva medhyasya
pade pade juhoti.*

Darsapurnamasau va esvanya medhyasya pade

*Yad darsapurnamasau yajate asvasivamedhyasaya
pade juhoti.*

*Etad anukrti ha sma vai pura, asvasya medhyasya pade
pade juhoti*

(Tai. Br. III. 9.23).

As Burnell has pointed out the endowing of feminine attributes is at the root of Sakti worship which was possible only in the Aryan language, since in the Dravidian languages inanimate things are always in the neuter gender and have no masculine or feminine forms of names as in the Aryan language. The primitive aboriginal mother-goddess worship is therefore based only on the Vedic sacrificial ritual. Every *tantric* term and detail of ritual has Vedic analogies and symbolic significance. The *tantras* and *agamas* have preserved a continuous Vedic tradition and shaped the present Hindu religion.

(To be continued in Tantric Hieroglyphics – III)