

Sri VaikhAnasa Bhagavad SAstram

(An Introduction)



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CONTENTS

prArthanA slokam	1
Introduction	3
VaikhAnasam	4
VaikhAnasas and SrI VikhAnasa Maharishi	16
VaikhAnasa ideology	26
VaikhAnasa Kalpa sUtra	29
SrI VishNu - Supreme godhead of VaikhAnasas	33
Atma sUktam	39
SrI VaikhAnasa Bhagavad SAstram	49
VaikhAnasa Literature	61
Divya desams following VaikhAnasa Aagamam	80
nigamanam	82
Appendices	83
Appendix 1 - Reference Books	85
Appendix 2 - Bibliography	89
Appendix 3 - Divya desa details	91



VaikhAnasa gruha archa mUrthys at SrI Ramakrishna Deekshitulu's guham





श्रीः

श्रीमते श्रीलक्ष्मीनृसिंह परब्रह्मणे नमः

श्रीमते श्रीश्रीनिवास परब्रह्मणे नमः

श्रीमते वैखानस महागुरुवे नमः

श्रीमते रामानुजाय नमः

श्रीमते वेदान्त गुरुवे नमः



prArthana slokams

SRI SRINIVASAR :

nirupama gunasindhurnityalakshmi sametO
niKhilanigamavEdayE nistulO venkatEsa: |
nijacharaNasamarchasaktubhaktauGharakshI
nivasatu hrudaye me svAnghribhaktim vitanvan||

VIKHANASACHARYAN:

srI lakshmi vallabhArambhAm viKhanO muni madhyamAm |
asmadAchArya paryantAm vandE guru paramparAm ||
nArAyaNam sakamalam sakalAmarEndram |
vaiKhAnasam mama gurum nigamAgamEndram ||
bhrigvatrikASyapamarIchirmuKhAn munIndrAn |
sarvAnaham kulagurum praNamAmi mUrdhnA ||





SrI VikhAnasa on kUrmAsanam at Thirumala
(Thanks: SrI Ramakrishna Deekshitulu archakam)



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श्रीमते श्रीलक्ष्मीनृसिंह परब्रह्मणे नमः

श्रीमते श्रीश्रीनिवास परब्रह्मणे नमः

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Sri VaikhAnasa Bhagavad SAstram An Introduction



There are two Agamams to worship the Lord (**VishNu archanam**). One is VaikhAnasam and the other is PaancharAtram. We will be following closely the essay by the great VaikhAnasa Bhattar, Sri U.Ve. KadakkaLUR Sthala Sayana BhattAchAr and draw the essential points from there for this introductory essay on VaikhAnasam and add a few references at the end for your additional studies. There are centers of research on the two VaishNavite Agamams at Melkote, Kaanchipuram, Thirumala and Srirangam that one can access for additional information. There are also university departments of Sanskrit and Eastern Religions in Europe (Norway, Austria, France and Germany) that have scholars doing research on these two Agmaams.

Swamy NammAzhwAr has instructed us to serve the Lord through blemishless Kaimkaryams all our lives as His archakAs (**Ozhivil kAlamellAm udanAi manni vazhuvilA adimai seyya vENDum**). The last of the AzhwArs, Thirumangai Mannan has also reminded us that the nitya Kaimkaryam to Sriman Narayanan is our birth right (**toNDE seythu yenRum thozhuthu vazhi ozhuha paNDE Paraman PaNitta PaNi**). Agamams speak with the same voice, when they say that the devout Archanam of VishNu is the easiest way for us to gain the Lord's anugraham.

For the benefit of human beings, Sages like AsvalAyanar, Aapastambar, DhrAyAyanar and Vikhanasar used appropriate Vedams to create Kalpa sUtrams for the observance of their samskArams from garbha dhAnam to





antima kAryam. Sage Vikhanasar stands out among the creators of gruhya sUtrams in that he has included AarAdhanam for Archa Moorthys and the construction of Temples and the consecration of Archa Moorthys at these temples in his kalpa sUtrams. A famous VaikhAnasa scholar states it is for these reasons that the Thirunakshatram of Sage Vikhanasar is being celebrated by the VaikhAnasa community of archakAs. There is no celebration of other gruhya sUtra kartAs such as Sage Aapastambhar, who blessed Yajur Vedins with their kalpa sutras.

VAIKHANASAM

Amongst the Indian Communities of Priests, committed to the promotion of temple-culture, the Vaikhanasas occupy a significant position. The oldest of such priestly communities, they even to this day largely function as temple priests. They find mention in Vedic corpus, the epics (Mahabharatha and Ramayana), the puranas (like Bhagavatham) and the Smriti literature. They are described as ascetics, hermits, devoted to contemplation on Godhead, and engaged in Vedic sacrificial rituals. They were sages closely associated with the celebrated Valakhilyas of Rigvedam, and dear to Indra (Vishnu). So we read in Tandyamaha-brahmana (14.4.7)

vaikhAnasA vA rushayA indrasya priyA Asan||

They had their scriptural lore, named after their own designation, rooted in the Vedic corpus, containing the essence of Vedic wisdom, and given entirely to the worship of Vishnu as the supreme spirit of the Vedic canon. Sage Marichi's Vimanarchana Kalpam (patala 96), one of the earliest of Agama works, has this to say:

vaikhAnasam mahAshAstram sarvavEdEshUdrutham sarvavEdArthasAram

apratarkya aninditam vaidikairUpasEvitam vishnOrAradhanam|

sarvabhUthahitArdAya shAbdam pramAnamavalambya vishnunAm vikhanasa





uktham, vikhanasa bhrugvAdInAmuktham....

It may be noted that this scriptural lore aligned itself firmly and uncompromisingly to the Vedic wisdom (more specifically to the Aukheya-Taittiriya branch of Krishna-yajurveda) and was therefore described as 'vaidika' in contradistinction to the other approaches which incorporated the tantrika or folk practices. Even now, the Vaikhanasa priests, at home and in the temple, insist on first performing the fire-ritual prescribed in the Vedas, and then worshipping Vishnu, as the supreme spirit:

tasmAdagnau nityahOmAnthE vishnurnithyArchA gruhe dEvAyatane bhaktyA
bhagavantam nArAyanamarchayEditi vignAyate|

This is prescribed by the Vaikhanasa-srauta-sutra. In fact, the Vaikhanasa is the only group among temple-priests to have a kalpa-sutra of their own. They translate in to practice the Vedic dictum that Agni is the lowest of the gods (in the sense being visible to the human eye) and Vishnu, the highest and that therefore the worship of these two effectively means the coverage of the worship of all the gods in whom the Lord is the indweller (Sarva dEva NamaskAram Kesavam pratigacchathy):

agnirvai dEvAnAmave vishnu: paramastadantarEna sarvai anya dEvathA: iti
brAhmanam|

vishnO: nitya dEvArchA sarvadEvArchAbhavathi|

The worship of the Godhead assumes two forms:

- aniconic (amurta) and
- iconic (samurta).

Worship of Agni in the sacrificial ritual (agni-hutam) illustrates the former and worship of Vishnu in an icon, duly installed at home or in the temple represents the latter. Agni and Vishnu thus constitute the two conceptual limits or





polarities of the Godhead. The worship thus consists of:

1. fire ritual (**homa**),
2. iconic worship (**archana**),
3. recitation of sacred mantras (**japa**) and
4. contemplation on the abstract significance of the iconic form (**dhyana**).



Fire-ritual (homa)

This is perfect accord with the ancient view (mentioned in Yaska's Nirukta) that Veda has three interpretations:

- adhi-yajna,
- adhi-daiva and



- adhyatma.

Further, the worship of Agni (**homa-puja**) which is the focus of attention in the Vedic corpus has been faithfully translated into the worship of Vishnu in the iconic form (**bera-puja**). In the context of the three-fold sacrificial fire (**trEtAgnipaksha**):

- the primary immobile image (**dhruva-bera**) in the sanctum of a temple represents the **gArhapatya-agni**,



Dhruva beram of SrI SrInivAsa PerumAL (Tirupathi)

- the image for routine worship (**kautuka-bera**) represents **Ahavaniya-agni**, and

- the processional image (autsava-bera) the dakshinagni.



Kautuka beram at Tirupathi

In the context of the five-fold fire (panchAgni-paksha), two other icons, the icon for receiving the daily bath (snapana-bera) and the icon to receive daily offerings of food (bali-bera) represent the sabhyagni and the avasathya agnis respectively.

Thus the Vedic sacrificial ritual (srautagni) corresponds in spirit to the Vaikhanasa worship of the image of Vishnu in the temple (bera-puja), three times during day (savana). In the Vaikhanasa shrine, the important concepts in a Vedic sacrifice (yagna) are to be found (dIksha, adhvaryU, ritvik, hautra-prasamsa, havis, pUrnaHuti, avabhrita, trishavana, prAyaschitta and so on). The



worship sequences strictly follow the Vedic prescriptions and Veda mantras are recited in every sequence exclusively. Like a Vedic sacrifice, worship in a Vaikhanasa shrine is designed to secure the good of all living creatures and is based on Veda (vishnOrAradhanam sarvabhUthahitArdAya shAbdam pramAnamavalambya). Hence worship here is termed 'dEva-yajana' in Marichi's definitive treatise of Vimanarchana Kalpam and the worship is meant to secure the welfare of the state (rAshtra), the administrators (rAja) and the entire cadre of devout chieftains of administration (yajamAna). Marichi's words are:

ata dEvayajanam vyAkhyAsyAma:|

grihOtrEna labhatE svargamityAhu:|

sangati dEvapujAnAm yagnA iti surayO vadanti|

yagnEshvEtEshu dEvayAgO vishishyatE|

yajamAna bhavEpi bhuvI shashvatam tishtati|

tasmAdragnO rAshtrasya yajamAnavamsasyAbhivruddi:||

This is in fact the special, and also essential, feature of the Vaikhanasa mode of worship. It is rooted in the Vedic tradition, and is a continuation of the Vedic approach. It is a direct successor to the yagnA ideology of the Vedic corpus in the context of Agama. When Bhagavatha (11.27.7) enumerates three distinct kinds of worship (makha) and designates them as:

1. 'vaidika' (worship through fire-rituals like agnishtOmA prescribed in the Vedic corpus),
2. †Antrika (worship with flower offerings and folk practices) and
3. misra (a combination of the two kinds mentioned above),

the first form of worship is clearly Vaikhanasa. The commentator Vijayadvaja (pAda-ratnAvali) explains that the three modes of worship take the form of





"agnishtOmadih", "pushpAnjalyAdih" and "nAma-sankIrtanAdih". Viswanantha chakravarthi (parArtha-darsini) mentions specifically that Vaidika mode of worship employs only Veda mantras (like purusha-suktha) during worship. And this is precisely what is done in the Vaikhanasa-worship. Mahabharatha (Anugita, Asvamedhika-parvan 122,26) also refers to the Vaikhanasa mode of worship as prevalent in those times:

vEdOtKEnaiva mArgEna sarvabhUthahridistitham mAmarchayanthi|

yE viprA matsAyuujyam vrajanti te||

An ancient smriti text Vridda-hArIta-samhitha (chapter 11) mentions not only three systems of worship:

1. **srauta** (based on veda),
2. **smarta** (based on smriti texts, secondary to the Vedas) and
3. **agama** (based on agama texts, later in date),

but identifies the first with the Vaikhanasas. It was the Vaikhanasas who transformed the Vedic yajna ideology (**amUrtarchana**) into iconic worship in the temples (**samUrtarchana**). Worship thereafter became three-fold:

- mental (mAnasi, including japa, dhyana, nama-sankirtana),
- fire-ritual (homa) and
- worship of idols treated like a sovereign or honored guest (bera):

mAnasI hOmapUjA cha bErapUjEti sA tridhA||

Marichi significantly states that the proper method of worship assumes four modes (**charita kriya jnana yogEshu chaturshi pUjAmArgEshu**):

1. correct conduct indicated by the smriti and Kalpa texts (**charita**),





2. performance of Vedic rituals and iconic worship (**kriya**),
3. development of transcendental wisdom (**jnana**) and
4. practice of yoga.

The first of these modes (Sruti based/Srouta) provides justification for the presence and prevalence of an elaborate Vaikhanasa-Kalpasutra in four parts **smarta** (for grihya), **dharma** and **srauta** (including **pravara-prasna**). This augments the equally elaborate Vaikhanasa-bhagavachchastra, which deals with temple-culture exclusively and exhaustively.

The VaikhAnasa literature comprises texts amounting to four lakhs of grantha in a total of 128 books, ascribed to four sages:

1. Bhrighu,
2. Atri,
3. Marichi and
4. Kasyapa,

who were all inspired by the primeval sage Vikhanasa. This represents Vaishnava-agama in an avowedly Vedic context. It deals with the construction of temples, making of icons, installations, consecrations, daily worship in the temple, occasional festivities (**utsavam**), and necessary purifications and equations for the lapses (**prAyaschittam**).

Worship in a Vaikhanasa shrine presupposes the adoption of the Vaikhanasa-Kalpasutra supplemented by the Agama texts (known collectively as Daivika-sutra). In a very large number of Vishnu temples in Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, this mode of worship continues uninterrupted for great stretches of time. The most celebrated among these, however, is the **Tirumala-Tirupati temple**, where Vaikhanasa worship has been conducted all through its recorded history. It has also been a rallying point for the Vaikhanasa





community, for here it was that the great scholar, Srinivasa-makhin (Srinivasa Dikshitulu) wrote his works elucidating the Vaikhanasa-ideology.

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The golden vimanam over SrI SrInivAsa PerumAl sannidhi at Tirupathi





In this ideology, devotion (**bhakti**) is means to liberation (**moksha**) only when accompanied by worship of Godhead in an iconic form (**aradhana**). The concept of co-operation between devotion and worship (**upasana** or **yajna**) is highlighted in the Vaikhanasa philosophy. This is also the Vedic outlook: yajna as a means for the fulfillment of human aspirations combines devotion with ritualistic activity. Worship-activities (**kriya-yoga**, **upasana**, **yajana**) are in fact superior to devotion which one feels immediately and as a passing mood; they gradually render one eligible to the highest of benefits, namely liberation from worldly ills. It is only gradually that one attending on the Supreme Spirit in the iconic form (**saguna-brahma**) reaches or knows the supreme spirit beyond names and forms (**nirguna-brahma**) and obtains emancipation. It is a ladder like path (**sopana-mArga**). Iconic worship is an important and indispensable ingredient in this path. This makes the movement of the devotees firm and progressive.

The word 'Vaikhanasa' etymologically signifies digging deep in to the Godhead (by earnest contemplation assisted by worship) that is enshrined in one's ownself (**vishEshEna khanati| khanitvA chAtmAnAtmAnam| khaNanashabdEna dhyAnamuktam bhavati| dhyana mAvishya yOgEna|**). Iconic worship done according to the prescriptions laid down in the Vaikhanasa texts is itself an act of digging (**khanana**) into the Supreme Spirit in one's own being. Hence the significance of '**atma-suktha**' in Vaikhanasa worship.

It is true that the highest form of worship is mental (**manasa**). The supreme spirit really dwells in the heart of the devotee and must be reached by mental processes. Direct cognizance of the presence and power of Godhead is worship proper. But knowledge and devotion do not render iconic worship superfluous or unnecessary. For the formless Godhead in the heart needs to be visualized in an iconic form for being worshipped. Bhrigu makes an interesting observation (Prakirnadhikara, 36, 286-287):

yatra mAnasArChA syAt tachcha mAnasikam bhavEt|

antaryAmi ya evAste hrudayE nishkalE hari:||





eva sakalE bhUtvA bimBE yatsannidhApita:|

tasmAtsakalapUjAyAm naiva kuryAd vyatikramam||

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iconic worship - SrI Malayappa Swamy - Tirupathi

When the worship is mental, the object of worship is also mental. The Godhead resides in one's own heart, devoid of attributes like name, and form, (nishkala, nirguna) and as the inner controller (antaryami) of the living being. However, it





is this Godhead that is projected and installed in the idol for receiving worship. Albeit devoid of form, the Godhead assumes a form (becomes **sakala**) for facilitating worship. If HE is in the mind, HE is only thought of. And thoughts being what they are cannot be expected to result in proper worship.

The activities involved in worship are in reality approaches to the Godhead; hence they are called kriya-yoga. The activities are accompanied by appropriate Vedic mantras recited, and by having an idol properly installed for offering worship. There is also contemplation and further a feeling of devotion. Thus the Vaikhanasa worship is a pentad (**panchaka**) of recitation of Vedic mantras, activities like in a yajna, utilization of proper and consecrated substances like the idol, contemplation and devotion. Marichi (**Ananda-Samhitha**) says that this is the proper approach to Godhead in the present age. In the first of the aeons, Krita-yuga, God was worshipped only in the mind; in the next age, Treta, sacrifices were the proper approach; in Dvapara age idol worship was commended and in the present Kali age, contemplation is the best approach. But the special features of worship in each of the four ages must be combined in the present age to give the best results.

krutE tu mAnasam srEshtam trEtAyAm yajanam param|

dvAparE pratimArchA cha kalau chintanamuttamam||

chaturshvapi yugEshvevam vishEshastu yugE yugE|

mantOchchara kriyA dravyadhyAna bhAvAngapanchakam||

The five details mentioned above are but 'limbs' (**angas**) of worship as an effective approach to Godhead for the sake of securing emancipation. Worship (**aradhana**) primarily means only idol worship (**archana**), for which the details are necessary limbs. That this kind of worship is the supreme expedient (**paramopaya**) and is the guiding principle of Vaikhanasa worship. The idol representation is in the essence the Godhead's own manifestation for facilitating worship (hence known as **archavathara**). IT symbolizes the Supreme



Spirit in all its glory and in its immanent as well as transcendental aspects (viz, the Brahman of Vedanta). It is in this sense that the self-manifest image of Vishnu (the Vedic God of gods) on the Vengadam hills (Tirumala) is hailed with the words 'Venkata-brahmane-namah'. (It may be noted in the passing that there is a mantra in Rigveda (10.155.1) which can be considered as a reference to this hill. The antiquity and vaibhavam of Tirumala goes back thus to the Vedic age:

arAyi kAnE vikate girim gachhasadAnve sirimbithasya satvabhi:|

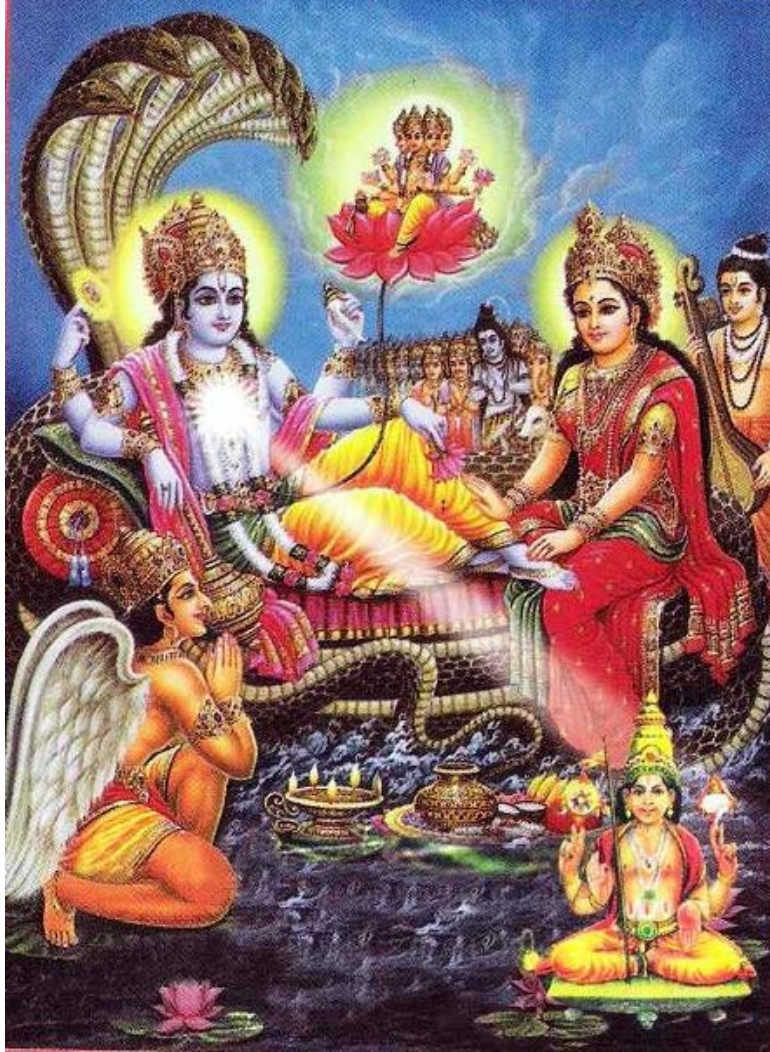
tEbhishtvA chAtayAmasi||

The person, devoid of wealth and vision, is implored to go to the hill which burns up all evil (vikata for Venkata) and drives away all obstacles to peace and prosperity. The call of the rishi Sirimbitha has obviously not gone in vain.

VAIKHANASAS AND VIKHANASA MAHARSHI

It is believed that Sage Vikhanasar was created from the mind (Maanaseeka Utbhavar) of Sriman NarayaNan, when many sages were reluctant to engage in the performance of AarAdhanam for Him in bhU IOkam because they were unsure of doing the right kind of ArAdhanam. They had no clue. Sriman NarAyaNa through viSEsha khaanam (digging) created a new sage, named him VikhAnasar and empowered him to perform ArAdhanams for Him in His Vibhava and archAvatArams thru upadEsams on Veda, VedAntams and initiation into Gayatri/Saavitri mantrams. Sage Vikhanasar arrived at NaimisAraNyam, where the Lord is present as a Forest. He arrived there with his Nine sishyAs, Atri, Brughu, Mareechi, Kasyapa, Vasishta, Pulaha, Pulashtya Krathu and Angiras in the time of Swayambhuva (The 1st one) Manvantaram, Sukla Paksham, SrAvana Pournami, Monday, Simhalagnam with star of Sravanam according to Sage MarIchI's Ananda SamhitA. Among them four sishyas Atri, Bhrigu, Marichi and KAsyapa has written the major portion of Sri Vaikhanasa Bhagavachhastram based on the teachings of Vikhanasa Maharshi. Sage Vikhanasa blessed the world with one and half crores of

PramAnams in his Aagamam. The four sishyAs condensed these vast numbers of PramAnams to a smaller subset of four Lakhs of grantams to make it simpler for the human beings to follow for the worship of the Lord thru VaikhAnasa Aagamam (sUtram VikhanasA prOkTam saardhakODi pramANakam, chaturlaksha pramANEna samkshipya prOchyatE adhuna).



Maanaseeka Utbhavam of Sage VikhAnasar from SrIman NARayaNa!

The Vaikhanasas as a community are temple priests. They regard themselves as ordained by birth to be temple priests and they are enjoined not to follow other avocation in life. Vishnu himself is said to have declared that those who follow the Vaikhanasa Sutra are dearer to him. A verse in Varaha Purana puts in



to the mouth of the Vishnu the view that the Aswatha Tree, the Red Cows, the tulasi plant and the sage Vikhanasa (the ancestor of the community) are the four things that are dear to him, and that among the four, Sage Vikhanasa is the dearest. Ananda Samhitha (Marichi) states that the Sage Vikhanasa who prepared the Vaikhanasa Sutra according to a branch of Yajurveda was Brahma himself.

AdikAlEtU bhagavAn brahmA tu viKhanA muni: |

Yaju: shAKhAnusArE chakrE sUtra mahattaram ||

Kriyadhikara (Bhrigu) identifies Vikhanasa with Vishnu or with the first sage who appeared as an aspect of Vishnu (viz, Brahma), and says that the Sutra was taught by this sage.

viKhanAvai vishNu: tajjA vaiKhAnsA smritA: |

vishNuvamsajaSva viKhAnA munInAm prathamO muni: |

tEnOpadishta yatsUtram tatsUtrEshUttamam smritam |

Brahma, the creator, who was the offspring of Vishnu, was called the first sage, and was called Vikhanasa, because he dug into his own mind (*manasAh KhananAt*) for creating the scriptural lore.

viKhanA iti prOkthO manasa: KhananAt suta: |

brahmaNA: suvisEshENa munInA prathamO muni: ||

Digging up into (Khanana) appears to be in the background of the expression Vikhanasa. Several shades of meaning have been projected. Ananda Samhita speaks of Vishnu 'digging up' the essential import of the Upanishads before he gave the scriptural lore of the Vaikhanasas.

vEdAntatattvamImAmsAKhananam krutavan hari: |

nAmnA viKhanasam chakrE tatpadAnvarthayOgata: ||





Digging into the meaning of Veda or intense inquiry into the thrust of the Vedic corpus was said to have been accomplished by the first sage, who was therefore called as Vikhanasa.

KhananAdvikhanA muni: |

Khananam tatvamImAmsEtyAhu |

nigamArthAnAm KhananAditi na: Srutam |

Digging out the hidden meaning of Vedas and revealing them to the human beings, according to Ananda Samhita, were the tasks that Vishnu accomplished and therefore he became known as Vikhanasa, and his offspring who was the progenitor of all was known as Vaikhanasa.

antarhitAnAm KhananAdvEdAnAm tu visEshata: |

sa vibhu: prOchyatE sarvairviKhanA brahmavAdibhi: ||

vaiKhanasaSva bhagavAn prOchyatE sa pithAmaha: ||

When the word Vikhanasa, in the background expression, is interpreted as referring to Brahma, the creator, a distinction is made in Nrisimha Purana, between the older Brahma (Agraja), who was born out of Vishnu's mind with only one head and who became the author of the Sutras, and the younger Brahma (Anuja), who was born out of Vishnu's navel, with four faces, for producing the worlds and denizens in them. Vikhanasa, who was the 'older' Brahma, became the 'younger' Brahma after six incarnations (incarnation meaning 'Manvantharam' and now it's the 7th Manvantharam). The sages Bhrigu, Atri, Marichi and Kasyapa are said to have received the cult of Vishnu from the first Vikhanasa (viz., the older Brahma in Svayambhuva Manvantharam).

The approach of the Vaikhanasa worship is described as peaceful (soumya). Thus, the expression Vikhanas (with its derived form Vaikhanasa) has many





shades of meaning:

- the great god Vishnu himself,
- the creator Brahma who appeared from his navel-lotus,
- the great sage who was mind born and who was instructed by Vishnu himself in the matter of worship,
- the sage who was the progenitor of the lines of the Vaikhanasa devotees,
- the divine author of the sutras known after him, and
- the hermit who was in the third stage of life.

It is probable that the Vaikhanasa community was so called because of the involvement in all of these aspects. More importantly, Vaikhanasas are distinguished by their uncompromising adoption of the Vaikhanasa-Sutra, which is devoted in all its parts to Vishnu and which was initially communicated by Vishnu himself to the sage Vikhanasa.

AdikAlEtU bhagavAn brahmA tu viKhanA muni: |

Yaju: SAKhAnusArENa chakrE sUtram mahattaram |

tatsUtravidhyanushtAnAt smritA vaiKhAnasAstu tE |

yatsUtrAdyantamadhyEshu bhagavAn vishNuravyaya: ||

(from Atri's Pura-Tantram)

The sage Vikhanas (or the primordial Vikhanasa) is adored by the community in its daily prayer as one who is sustained by Vishnu (*achyutagam-srayAya*), who is engaged in severe austerities (*tapOgra-nishta*), and who is the knower of the highest principle (*brahma-darsin*). He is described as an expert in the worship of Vishnu (*Vishnu-pUjA-visArada*), as four armed and seated upon a tortoise seat holding in his hands, the sacred water pot, rosary and ascetic's staff. He



is worshipped as present on the right side of Vishnu's main idol 'Dhruva-bera'.

He is also described as having Vishnu as his father and Lakshmi as his mother, and sages like Bhrigu as his disciples:

nArAyaNa: pithA yasya mA tA chApi hari priyA |

bhrugvAdi munaya: SishyAstasmai viKhaNasE nama: ||



"Vishnu-pUjA-visArada" - Sage VikhAnasa - Tirupati

Atri Maharshi gives the story of how the Brahma obtained from Vishnu the Vaikhanasa sutra. At the beginning of creation, Vishnu taught the creator Brahma, the method of worship according to the Vedic corpus. This teaching was a thousand crore of verses in extent ('sahasra-kOtibhis slokaih sAnKhyatAm bahu vistAram'). But this elaborate worship manual disappeared in course of time. Then Brahma went to Naimisa forest as an ascetic with matted hair on the head, and began to perform severe penance. He meditated for long years on Vishnu and by the power of penance perceived the Agama (scripture explaining the worship procedure) elaborately as it was once taught by Vishnu



(apasyAd Vishnuktam Agamam vistArat tada). He was now known as Vikhanas or great sage. He abridged the elaborate teachings, retaining the most essential aspects (samkshipya sAram AdAya) and taught this version, which was like a well-carved gem (sanolliKhita-ratnAvat), to his sons, Marichi and others, who were hermits. This version was one and half crore of verses in extent.

dhAtA viKhanasO nAma marIchyAdistutAnmunIn |

abOdhayadidam ShAstram sArthakOti pramANata: ||

The sages who received this abridged teaching were four in number; and as they were the offsprings of Vikhanas, they came to be recognized as Vaikhanasas: Marichi, Bhrigu, Atri and Kasyapa. They recast and further condensed the teaching in four lakhs of verses ('chAturlaksheshu granthEsu samkshipya samhita'). And they were responsible for the formation of the Vaikhansa community.

According to Marichi, the arrival of Vikhanasa Maharshi in the Naimisa forest was on a Monday, when there was full moon and lagna was simha, during the bright half of the Sravana month, in the era which began with Swayambhuva Manu.

sravanE srAvanE sukla pourNimA sOmavAsarE |

simha lagnEcha samyuktE bhajE naimisamAgatam ||

'Kriyadhikara' by Sage Bhrigu provides a more elaborative description on how the Vaikhanasa mode of worship was instituted. When Vishnu at the beginning of the Kalpa was absorbed in meditational slumber (yoga-nidra) upon the milky ocean, Brahma appeared, in the lotus, which sprang forth from Vishnu's navel. Brahma, four faced, contemplated upon Vishnu as soon as he appeared, whereupon Vishnu directed him to create all the worlds and all the creatures in them, and gave him the Veda mantrAs to help him in the creation. Brahma created all things, all beings and all the gods, and worshipped Vishnu with the



Vedic hymns. However, he became proud of his ability to create and became arrogant. Vishnu, in order to correct him, brought forth, two demons, Madhu and Kaitabha, who assaulted Brahma and snatched from him the VedAs, which they hid in the depths of the ocean.

Brahma with his power (Vedic Corpus) gone, became grief-stricken, and wondered how he should worship Vishnu now that the Vedic hymns were no longer available to him. Vishnu advised him to worship him for five days with the repetition of the twelve-lettered and eight-lettered mantras - dvAdasAksharam and ashtAksharam. This became what is known as the **Pancha-rathra** method of worship. Then Vishnu decided to fight, and diving deep into the ocean killed the demons Madhu and Kaitabha. He brought the Vedas up and gave them to Brahma, who was overjoyed and began worshipping Vishnu again with the Vedic hymns (viz., in the Vaikhanasa way).



SrI Lakshmi Hayagrivar

Arrogance entered Brahma's mind a second time, and Vishnu, in order to correct him, created the demon Somaka, who attacked Brahma and took away the Vedas from him. Distraught, Brahma again approached Vishnu and asked him how he should be worshipped, now the Vedas having again gone out of his possession. Vishnu advised him to worship without any mantras and in accordance with the Tantrik procedure. This is known as the **Agneya** mode of worship. Vishnu assumed the form of a great fish (Matsya), and killed the demon Somakasura with his great power. He brought back the Vedas and gave them to Brahma. Brahma was happy and he began again worshipping Vishnu with the Vedic hymns. Thus the Vaikhanasa mode of worship came to stay.



Matsya Avatar

The Vaikhanasas, tracing as they do their descent from Vishnu himself, regard themselves as Vishnu-devotees from their very birth (**garbha-vaishnava-**