The Mandalas and Realization
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From the Agamas

The Mandalas and Realization

Mystic knowledge of God is imparted to the qualified disciple

Paushkara Samhita is a third-century scripture of the Vaishnvava Pancharatra philosophical system. It guides the worship of some Vishnu temples. This excerpt from the first chapter of Dr. P. P. Apte's translation, in the form of a discourse between Lord Vishnu and Sage Paushkara, expounds on mandalas, the guru, the disciple and life's ultimate goal, the realization of God.

Lord vishnu said: indeed, the ocean of worldly life is impossible to be crossed over by any means other than mandala worship. He is truly remembered as a guru, who, infused with compassion and expecting nothing in return, safely leads an aspirant over to the other shore, the object of knowledge, by helping him board the boat in the form of the mandala. He is a guru to be placed on par with Me who recognizes a devotee immersed helplessly in the ocean of grief and uplifts him with a helping hand in the form of mandala worship.

A glance upon these mandalas brings the same blessings as pilgrimage to the holy fords, to the holy places inhabited by realized souls, to the temples of Gods who are adored and worshiped with flowers, clothes and ornaments, and to the hermitages of great sages where oblations are offered to the holy fire along with the chanting of the Vedic hymns. At the same time, any evil temptation, evil thought, perverse thinking, bad intention, bad motivation, infidelity or heresy present in a person is destroyed forever.

Due to the influence of God, feelings of faith and devotion arise instantly. Unquestionably, such feelings arise in those who have already attained faith. Hence, a disciple should be recognized as one endowed with a host of good qualities, totally absorbed in Him, permanently affiliated to Him and free from any doubts. He may be a brahmin, a kshatriya, a vaishya or a sudra, who is poised on the path of the Self. He may be a bachelor, a householder, a mendicant subsisting

on alms or a woman, who has attained discrimination about the Truth. The disciple should be gallant, pure and self-contented, with an ardent desire for realization of the Truth. He should be energetic and resolute, and he should have renounced all family ties.

Having obtained such a worthy disciple and initiated him into the path of mandala worship, the preceptor should commit all the disciple's worldly bonds--past, current and future--into the sacred fire. On annihilation of the host of bonds, the identity with the ultimate truth would commence. The devotee would reach the state of equanimity on attainment of realization of the Lord, who is omnipresent, omniscient and beyond perception; who is characterized by pure knowledge, truth and bliss; who is free from the states of visibility and invisibility; who is non-attached, like the sky; who is situated in the heart of the heart of the aspirant; and who is reflected in his intellect.

The preceptor should impart to his disciple, who is so eligible, the knowledge of the Self. Seeing that the disciple has fulfilled his duties, he should then apply him to the ultimate principle and instruct him to impart the same to those who are scared of the fear of the worldly life in flux, after having continuously and unwaveringly pondered the principles of knowledge. The teacher is advised to desert his mortal body only after he has transferred the knowledge of the Self to a worthy disciple. By that continuity of tradition, the ultimate sacred knowledge which dispels the darkness of ignorance, which destroys the seed of rebirth and which is the embryonic essence of the universe, does not disappear or lapse.

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The Vedas and Agamas are the divinely revealed and most revered scriptures, shruti, of Hinduism, likened to the Torah (1200 bce), Bible New Testament (100 ce), Koran (630 ce) or Zend Avesta (600 bce). There are two principal Vaishnavite Agamas, the Pancharatra and Vaikhanasa. The Paushkara dates to 300 ce.