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Worshipping Viṣṇu's Twelve Manifestations: A Glimpse into Early Medieval Vaiṣṇava Lay Practice*

SUMMARY: The paper traces the history of religious practices devoted to a particular set of the twelve manifestations of Viṣṇu. These practices are mostly monthly observances (*vrata*), which were widely known and implemented as evident from their description in various textual sources such as the Baudhāyana Sūtras, Varāhamihira's *Brhatsaṃhitā*, the *Ṛgvidhāna*, the *Viṣṇudharma*, and appendix passages of the *Mahābhārata*. They were highly influential even beyond the sectarian borders of Vaiṣṇavism, since they served as a model for the composition of a full calendrical scheme in the *Niśvāsamukha*, which belongs to the earliest extant Śaiva *tantra*, the *Niśvāsātattvasaṃhitā*.

KEYWORDS: *vrata*, Vaiṣṇava lay practice

Introduction

Early medieval Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva lay practice is yet almost unexplored. The first steps in this research have, however, been undertaken. Important textual sources, such as the *Viṣṇudharma* for Vaiṣṇava traditions or the *Śivadharmasāstra* and the *Niśvāsamukha* for Śaiva traditions, but also passages in Purāṇas and the epics—for example, the so-called *Vaiṣṇavadharmasāstra* (see below, p. 181)—were identified and edited

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or are presently being edited.¹ Several studies were undertaken,² and international conferences hosted two panels organised by Florinda De Simini and Nina Mirnig, in which scholars working in this field could exchange and discuss their research results with an interested academic audience.³

The investigations so far demonstrated that developments in the lay practices of Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva traditions have often had a mutual influence upon each other. Sometimes they also ran parallel or were responses to each other. For our understanding of these historical processes, it is therefore often necessary to take both streams of the traditions into consideration.

It will become evident below that this is true also for the chosen subject of the case study presented in this paper. The paper, however, also aims to address another issue relevant to our studies, namely, the difficulties in ascertaining the historical development of practices as long as it remains unknown when the textual sources describing them were composed or how they are chronologically related.

¹ For the *Viṣṇudharma*, see Grünendahl 1983–1989. The critical edition of the sixth chapter of the *Śivadharmasāstra* has recently been published by Bisschop (Bisschop 2018), chapters 1–5 and 7–9 are presently being critically edited by Nina Mirnig in the frame of a research project funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF, P 27838-G15). Further chapters of the text are or will be critically edited by Peter Bisschop, Florinda De Simini, Nirajan Kafle, Timothy Lubin, and Nina Mirnig. A critical edition and translation of the *Niśvāsamukha* has been prepared by Nirajan Kafle (Kafle forthcoming). Bisschop also points to the importance of “the work done in the framework of the critical edition of the *Skandapurāṇa*” for our present knowledge of Śaiva lay practice (Bisschop 2018: 2, n. 2). See also De Simini 2016b: 235f. for recent developments in this field of research.

² A few recent examples are De Simini 2016b, Goodall 2011, Kafle 2013, Mirnig forthcoming, Schwartz 2012.

³ “The Viṣṇudharma and Śivadharmasāstra: points of influence and divergence” at the 33. Deutscher Orientalistentag, 18–22 September 2017, in Jena (Germany). For the other panels see n. *.

The texts we must deal with for our purpose are of composite nature. They were often compiled by taking text passages from various sources of different age and frequently reworked by adding or deleting sections. It is usually impossible to give dates of composition for the entirety of these works, and the dating of particular sections is often difficult as well.

Therefore, the examinations undertaken in this paper attempt another approach towards ascertaining the history of texts by tracking the development of specific religious concepts. This paper represents an effort in this direction by investigating the religious practices devoted to a particular set of twelve manifestations of Viṣṇu. These twelve deities are Keśava, Nārāyaṇa, Mādhava, Govinda, Viṣṇu, Madhusūdana, Vāmana, Trivikrama, Śrīdhara, Hṛṣīkeśa, Padmanābha, and Dāmodara. They are often known as the “lords of the months” (*māseśa*) and have been incorporated into the theology of the Vaiṣṇava Pāñcarātra tradition as the so-called Vyūhāntaras.⁴

In the Vaiṣṇava Dharmaśāstra sources presented below, this set of twelve deities appears in the context of observances (*vrata*) related to the months of the year. Starting from around the second half of the first millennium, the observance of *vratas* was a popular and widespread religious practice (Davis 2018: 327). As we will see, the text passages presented in this paper were perhaps composed at an early stage of this development. Observances were an important part especially of lay practice, as they were accessible to a wide segment of people (*ibid.*). Due to this aspect, they may have served as a medium for the dissemination of concepts related to them, such as the set of the twelve deities, even beyond sectarian borders.

Early sources

To my knowledge, the earliest mention of the twelve deities is found in Sūtras of the Vedic branches of the Baudhāyanas and the Vaikhānasas.

⁴ For these deities in the Pāñcarātra tradition see Gupta 1992 and Rastelli 2006: 348–361.

Among these, the earliest source seems to be the *Baudhāyanagr̥hyasūtra*.⁵ In the section on the prenatal life-cycle rituals (*saṃskāra*), the *Baudhāyanagr̥hyasūtra* describes the so-called *viṣṇubali* that is to be performed in the eighth month of pregnancy. In the context of this ritual, libations (*tarpaṇa*) of water are offered to the twelve deities:

Then he quenches [the deities] with water: “I quench Keśava, I quench Nārāyaṇa, Mādhava, Govinda, Viṣṇu, Madhusūdana, Trivikrama, Vāmana, Śrīdhara, Hṛṣīkeśa, Padmanābha [and] Dāmodara.”⁶

Libations of water for these twelve deities are also prescribed in the *Baudhāyanadharmasūtra*, which Patrick Olivelle dates to the middle of the 2nd century BC at the earliest. The passage which mentions the twelve deities belongs to the earliest part of the text,

⁵ Dating the Vedic Sūtras is a difficult task, as they are composite works and often contain interpolations and additions. We can take Einoo’s statement as a rule of thumb: “It is hardly possible, however, to date each śrauta- and gr̥hyasūtra exactly, but compositions of the śrautasūtras are roughly assigned to several centuries before the middle of the first millennium B.C. and the gr̥hyasūtras are usually regarded as later than the śrautasūtras.” (Einoo 2005b: 100; see also Gonda 1977: 476–486). For arguments concerning the date of the Baudhāyana gr̥hya corpus (including, beside the *Baudhāyanagr̥hyasūtra* proper, the appendices *Baudhāyanagr̥hyaparibhāṣāsūtra* and the *Baudhāyanagr̥hyasūtra*) see Lubin 2016b, who concludes “that the BGS [*Baudhāyanagr̥hyasūtra*] proper acquired its final form relatively late” (ibid.: 331) but does not go so far to state an approximate absolute date.

⁶ BaudhGr̥Sū 1.11.7: *athādbhis tarpayati—‘keśavaṃ tarpayāmi nārāyaṇaṃ mādhavaṃ govindaṃ viṣṇuṃ madhusūdanaṃ trivikramaṃ vāmanaṃ śrīdharaṃ hṛṣīkeśaṃ padmanābhaṃ* (corr., ed. *dadmanābhaṃ*) *dāmodaraṃ tarpayāmi’ iti*. In BaudhGr̥Sū 1.11.11, the twelve deities are collectively mentioned again. For the *viṣṇubali* see also Krick 1977: 90f., for a translation of BaudhGr̥Sū 1.11 and a comparison with the translation of *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* 3.13 see Hüsken 2009: 82–89. For the Vaikhānasa tradition see also below.

called “Proto-Baudhāyana” by Olivelle. This earliest part consists of Book 1 and the first sixteen chapters of Book 2, although, as Olivelle emphasises, even this part may contain interpolations.⁷

The passage mentioning the twelve deities may indeed be interpolated. The context of this passage is the regulations for *sandhyā* worship, the “twilight rites” performed in the morning, the evening and sometimes also at noon. These regulations, given in BaudhDhSū 2.7, were identified as belonging to a “further developed, enlarged state” of *sandhyā* worship by Shingo Einoo. Thus, they form a part of the “level of the Gṛhyapariśiṣṭa texts,” as Einoo calls a certain group of Sūtras that are clearly post-Vedic and probably were composed between the latest Gṛhyasūtras and the end of the 5th century CE.⁸

In the context of this *sandhyā* worship, libations (*tarpaṇa*) of water are offered to various groups of gods. Among these, the set of twelve deities appears together with four goddesses and other attendants of Viṣṇu:

OM I quench Keśava. OM I quench Nārāyaṇa. OM I quench Mādhava. OM I quench Govinda. OM I quench Viṣṇu. OM I quench Madhusūdana. OM I quench Trivikrama. OM I quench Vāmana. OM I quench Śrīdhara. OM I quench Hṛṣīkeśa. OM I quench Padmanābha. OM I quench Dāmodara. OM I quench the goddess Śrī. OM I quench the goddess Sarasvatī. OM I quench Puṣṭi. OM I quench Tuṣṭi. OM I quench Garutmat, OM I quench Viṣṇu's male attendants. OM I quench Viṣṇu's female attendants.⁹

A text which relates to the *Baudhāyanadharmasūtra* and also belongs to the Gṛhyapariśiṣṭa level is the *Baudhāyanagrhyasēṣasūtra* or

⁷ Olivelle 2000: 10 and 191.

⁸ Einoo 1993: 62f., Einoo 2005a: 7–13.

⁹ BaudhDhSū 2.9.10: *om keśavaṃ tarpayāmi. om nārāyaṇaṃ tarpayāmi. om mādhavaṃ tarpayāmi. om govindaṃ tarpayāmi. om viṣṇuṃ tarpayāmi. om madhusūdanaṃ tarpayāmi. om trivikramaṃ tarpayāmi. om vāmanaṃ tarpayāmi. om śrīdharaṃ tarpayāmi. om hṛṣīkeśaṃ tarpayāmi. om padmanābhaṃ tarpayāmi. om dāmodaraṃ tarpayāmi. om śriyaṃ devīm tarpayāmi. om sarasvatīm devīm tarpayāmi. om puṣṭim tarpayāmi. om tuṣṭim tarpayāmi. om garutmantaṃ tarpayāmi. om viṣṇupārśadāṃs tarpayāmi. om viṣṇupārśadīś ca tarpayāmi.* Translation by Olivelle 2000: 275.

Baudhāyanagrhyapariśiṣṭasūtra.¹⁰ This text features early prescriptions for *pūjās*, installations (*pratiṣṭhā*) and other rituals for various deities such as Rudra and Viṣṇu. In the rituals related to Viṣṇu, libations of water and offerings of flowers are given to the set of twelve deities. In the prescriptions for the daily worship of Viṣṇu, two manuscripts (B, Be)¹¹ used by Harting for his edition of the *Baudhāyanagrhyapariśiṣṭasūtra* give the twelve names in full words.¹² In other manuscripts and in other passages of the text, the twelve deities are mentioned only collectively by using expressions such as: “Then he should offer flowers [while reciting] the names of the twelve.”¹³

The Baudhāyana prescriptions for the installation of Rudra run parallel to that of the installation of Viṣṇu, as demonstrated by Lubin (Lubin 2016c: 153–157). It is interesting to note that in this case twelve deities related to Rudra are worshipped, namely, Śiva, Śaṅkara, Sahamāna, Śitikanṭha, Kapardin, Tāmra, Aruṇa, Apaguramāṇa, Hiraṇyabāhu, Saspīṅjara, Babhrūśa and Hiraṇya.¹⁴ This specific set of twelve Śaiva deities

¹⁰ See also Lubin 2016a: 592, who thinks that “the various chapters of the Śeṣa probably were added well into the middle of the first millennium CE.”

¹¹ Manuscript B is described as “MS Bühler 33 in the India Office Library”, manuscript Be as “A transcript of a MS in Benares made for Prof. Caland”. Both manuscripts are written in Devanāgarī script (see BaudhGrPSū_H, p. I–II).

¹² BaudhGrPSū_H 2.14 (p. 4, l. 14–18): *athādbhis tarpayati keśavam tarpayāmi nārāyaṇaṃ tarpayāmi mādhaveṣu tarpayāmi govindaṃ tarpayāmi viṣṇuṃ tarpayāmi madhusūdanaṃ tarpayāmi trivikramaṃ tarpayāmi vāmanaṃ* (corr., ed. *vāmadevaṃ*) *tarpayāmi śrīdharaṃ tarpayāmi hr̥ṣīkeśaṃ tarpayāmi padmanābhaṃ tarpayāmi dāmodaraṃ tarpayāmīti*. Note that this formulation is very similar to BaudhGrSū 1.11.7 (see n. 6).

¹³ BaudhGrPSū_H 2.13 (p. 3, l. 14f.): *atha dvādaśanāmabhiḥ puṣpāni dadyāt*. The expression *dvādaśanāmabhiḥ* appears again in l. 22 of p. 3. The context of these two passages is the installation of Viṣṇu (*viṣṇupratiṣṭhā*). Another occasion for offerings to the twelve deities related to Viṣṇu is the ritual called *nārāyaṇabali*. Here, they are also only mentioned collectively (BaudhGrPSū 3.20.5 and 7). For the *nārāyaṇabali* see Krick 1977, especially pp. 81–85.

¹⁴ BaudhGrPSū_H 2.16, p. 9, l. 13–15.

does not appear in any other Śaiva text.¹⁵ Thus it seems that in this case the prescriptions for the installation of Rudra follow the model of the installation of Viṣṇu by substituting twelve Śaiva deities—which as a group gained no further importance in Śaiva history—for the set of the twelve Vaiṣṇava deities.

Several of the rituals prescribed by the Baudhāyana Sūtras mentioned above, namely, the installation (*pratiṣṭhā*), the *viṣṇubali* and the *nārāyaṇabali*, were compared with their counterparts enjoined by the Vaikhānasa Gṛhya- and Dharmasūtras, collectively known as the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra*.¹⁶ These comparisons have shown that with regard to these rituals the Vaikhānasa Sūtras, which are probably from a slightly later period¹⁷ and have a stronger Vaiṣṇava orientation, are closely related to the Baudhāyana Sūtras. Accordingly, in the *viṣṇubali* and the *nārāyaṇabali* rituals of the Vaikhānasas, we also find the set of twelve deities.¹⁸ In the latter ritual, the *nārāyaṇabali*, twelve Brahmins are invited¹⁹ and worshipped as representations of the twelve deities:

He should wash the feet of the Brahmins, give them new garments, upper garments and ornaments, and worship them with flowers, etc. While visualising them as the twelve manifestations (*dvādaśamūrti*), he should feed them with white food together with relish, ghee, treacle, sour milk and fruits, and according to ability give them gold as donation. Having praised them with the *sahasraśīrṣa*²⁰ and other [*mantras*], he should bow down before them while [reciting] the names of the twelve [manifestations].²¹

¹⁵ I thank Dominic Goodall for this information provided in an email dated 12/7/2018.

¹⁶ For a comparison of the installation rituals see Colas 1994; for the *viṣṇubali* ceremonies see Hüskén 2009: 82–89; and for the *nārāyaṇabali* prescriptions see Krick 1977 (who also takes into account the *Āgñiveśyagr̥hyasūtra*).

¹⁷ See Colas 1994: 513.

¹⁸ VaikhSmSū 3.13 and 10.10.

¹⁹ See VaikhSmSū 10.9 (p. 139,14f.): “On the previous day he should invite twelve Brahmins.” (*pūrve ’hani dvādaśa brāhmaṇān nimantrayet.*)

²⁰ This is the *Puruṣasūkta* (RV X.90).

²¹ VaikhSmSū 10.10 (pp. 140,13–141,1): *brāhmaṇān pādaḥ prakṣālyā navāni vastrottarīyābharaṇāni dattvā puspādyaḥ pūjāyitvā dvādaśamūrtim*

We will observe a similar identification of Brahmins with the twelve deities also in some of the other passages presented in this paper.

Hertha Krick and Timothy Lubin believe that the rituals in which the set of the twelve deities occur, such as the *viṣṇubali*, the *pūjās* or the installation of images, did not originate from the Baudhāyana or Vaikhānasa traditions, but that they were rather borrowed from another culture in contact with the Vedic priesthood.²² If we were to accept this as a working hypothesis, although difficult to prove, it would be possible that also our twelve deities were borrowed from another religious tradition.

Varāhamihira's *Bṛhatsaṃhitā*

No worship of the twelve deities in the frame of an observance (*vrata*) occurs in the texts discussed above. This is unsurprising if one knows, as Davis writes (Davis 2018: 326f.), that *vrata* does not feature as an important term in the Gṛhyasūtras and Dharmasūtras and that *vrata* in the later meaning of observance hardly occurs in the early Dharmaśāstra texts. Only in the period between the composition of these works and the 12th century CE, when the digests of Dharma such as Lakṣmīdhara's *Kṛtyakalpataru* were composed, did *vrata* practices proliferate and become extremely popular, with the effect that the number of recorded varieties rapidly expanded. The textual dissemination of these practices occurred in the second half of the first millennium mainly in the Purāṇas and not in the early Dharmaśāstra texts (ibid.).

There are, however, texts which probably were composed before that time and which describe *vratas* in general as well as a *vrata* related to the set of twelve deities discussed in this paper.

The perhaps earliest reference to a monthly observance related to the worship of the twelve deities is found in Varāhamihira's *Bṛhatsaṃhitā*.

dhyāyann upadamśaghrtaguḍadadhiphalayuktam śvetam annam bhojayitvā yathāśakti suvarṇan dakṣiṇām dadāti. sahasraśīrṣādyaiḥ stutvā dvādaśanā-mabhiḥ praṇamed. Note that according to BaudhGrPSū 3.20, which is an earlier version of the ritual, Brahmins are also invited and worshipped, but neither is their number defined nor are they considered to represent particular deities.

²² See Krick 1977: 87–90, Lubin 2016c: 144 and 158f.

This work was composed in the 6th century CE.²³ Of course, we cannot be sure that the passage referring to the twelve deities belongs to the original part of Varāhamihira's text, since it could also have been added later. The location of the passage, namely at the end of the chapter preceding the closing chapter, would be an ideal place for later additions. The passage was, however, already part of the text when Bhaṭṭotpala wrote his commentary on it in Kashmir in 967,²⁴ and we will see evidence for a strong probability that this passage was even part of the original work.

The passage runs as follows:

Starting with Mṛgaśīrṣa, Keśava, Nārāyaṇa, Mādhava, Govinda, the two [deities] called Viṣṇu and Madhusūdana, Trivikrama, Vāmana, the one called Śrīdhara, thereafter Hṛṣīkeśa, Padmanābha and Śrīdhara, these are known as [manifestations of] the months respectively. A man who fasts with regard to the name [of the deity] of the month²⁵

²³ Pingree 1981: 11.

²⁴ Pingree 1981: 74.

²⁵ The expression *māsanāma*, literally “name of the month,” which is also used in RgVi 3.142 quoted below (p. 178), does not mean the names “Mārgaśīrṣa, etc.” but the names of the deities manifesting the months. It is unlikely that a man fasts with regard to the name of a month, he does so rather with regard to the deity of the month. In the case of RgVi 3.142, it is unlikely that Viṣṇu is worshipped with the names of the months, rather being worshipped with those of the deities, which are considered manifestations of the months.

A passage from the *Revākhaṇḍa* supports this interpretation (on the complex relationship between the various versions of the *Revākhaṇḍa* attributed to the *Skandapurāṇa* and the *Vāyupurāṇa* see Neuss 2012: 37–46). Chapter 149 of this text contains a Māhātmya of a sacred place (*tīrtha*) at the river Narmadā, called *liṅgeśvara*, where Viṣṇu manifested as Varāha, the boar (interestingly, he is present there as a *liṅga* [!], see *Revākhaṇḍa* 149.20). This chapter prescribes the same practice which is the subject of this paper, namely, worship of Viṣṇu in form of the twelve deities Keśava, etc. in the twelve months of the year. The prescription concludes with statements of praise, such as: “Reciting the names [of the deities] of the months for Viṣṇu, who is the commander of the months, is a remedy even for a person in the greatest misfortune.” (*Revākhaṇḍa* 149.14: *paramāpadgatasyaṅpi jantor eṣā pratikriyā | yan māsādhipater viṣṇor*

on the twelfth [*tithis*²⁶], praising and worshipping Keśava [or the respective other deities] according to rule, reaches the abode of the [respective deity], in which there is no distress caused by birth at all.²⁷

The manuscripts B, D and N, which are closely related to each other,²⁸ add a few lines after these verses:

A king should worship twice-born men with incense, garlands, lamps, etc., [and] food. He should please [them] with plenty of donations while [reciting] their names²⁹ in due order. If [he] constantly remembers their names, [he will receive the results equal to that of] a horse sacrifice (*aśvamedha*),³⁰

māsanāmānukīrtanam ||). It is unlikely that this refers to the recitation of the names of the months, referring rather to the recitation of the names of the deities.

²⁶ Einoo's clear explanation of this term (Einoo 2005b: 101) aids a proper understanding: "There is a unit of time called *tithi* or the lunar day. This corresponds to one-thirtieth of a lunar month or one-fifteenth of a half lunar month. One month is divided into two fortnights, the bright fortnight (*śuklapakṣa*) or the half month of the waxing moon and the dark fortnight (*kṛṣṇapakṣa*) or the half month of the waning moon. Each fortnight is further divided into fifteen *tithis*. The first *tithis* of both fortnights are usually called *pratipad* or the beginning day. The fifteenth *tithi* of the bright fortnight is *pūrṇimā* or the day of full moon and that of the dark fortnight is *amāvāsyā* or the day of new moon. The rest of the thirteen *tithis* are named with the ordinal numbers like the second (*dviṭyā*), the third (*trītyā*) etc."

²⁷ BS 105.14–16: *mṛgaśīrṣādyāḥ keśavanārāyaṇamādhavāḥ sagovindāḥ | viṣṇumadhusūdanākhyau trivikramo vāmanaś caiva || 14 śrīdharanāmā tasmāt sahr̥ṣīkeśaś ca padmanābhaś ca | dāmodara ity ete māsāḥ proktā yathāsankhyaṃ || 15 māsanāmasamupoṣīto naro dvādaśīṣu vidhivat prakīrtayan | keśavam samabhipūjya tatpadaṃ yāti yatra na hi janmajam bhayam || 16.*

²⁸ B corresponds to ms. no. 851 kept in the Library of Berlin (Chambers 291), D to ms. no. 2294 kept in the India Office Library, and N to a ms. at the Benares College Library (no number given). On the relationships between them, see the introduction of the edition of the BS, pp. 62–63.

²⁹ I.e. the names of the deities, with which the Brahmins are identified. This is the reading of ms. N.

³⁰ For a short description of this ritual see Hillebrandt 1897: 149–153. This paper does not address the details of the Śrauta and Gṛhya sacrifices

a royal consecration (*rājasūya*),³¹ a *vājapeya*, an *atirātra*, an *ukthya*, an *agniṣṭoma*,³² a “course of the cows” (*gavām ayana*),³³ a human sacrifice (*puruṣamedha*),³⁴ a beer offering (*sautrāmaṇi*),³⁵ the five sacrifices,³⁶ an offering of gold and hundred thousand cows (*hemagolakṣa*),³⁷ and finally [he will receive] all pleasures.³⁸

mentioned in the presented text passages. For detailed bibliographical references to studies on these various rituals see Parpola 2016.

³¹ See Hillebrandt 1897: 143–147.

³² These four rituals are four of the seven forms of the *jyotiṣṭoma* ritual. See Parpola 2016: “*Jyotiṣṭoma* is a *soma* rite containing just one day of *soma* offerings. The ancient ritualists have chosen the *jyotiṣṭoma* (praise of light) as the model (*prakṛti*) for a day during which *soma* juice is pressed out of the stems of the *soma* plant and sacrificed. A *jyotiṣṭoma* is divided into seven forms of different duration, the shortest being *agniṣṭoma*, which is an abbreviation for *agniṣṭomasamisthaḥ jyotiṣṭomaḥ* (*jyotiṣṭoma* ending with the *agniṣṭoma*, i.e., the laud of the fire god Agni, the twelfth of such lauds [*stotra*] sung by the chanter priests). The longest form, *aptoryāma*, continues until the dawn of the following morning and contains thirty-three lauds. [...] The other six forms of the *jyotiṣṭoma*, each longer than the preceding one, are *atyagniṣṭoma* (with 13 lauds), *ukthya* (15 lauds), *ṣoḍaśin* (16 lauds), *vājapeya* (17 lauds), *atirātra* (28 or 29 lauds depending on whether it has the *ṣoḍaśin* laud or not), and *aptoryāma* (33 lauds).”

³³ This ritual lasts for a whole year, see Hillebrandt 1897: 157f.

³⁴ See Hillebrandt 1897: 153.

³⁵ See Hillebrandt 1897: 159–161.

³⁶ These are probably the so-called “five great sacrifices” (*pañca mahāyajñāḥ*), which are part of the daily Gṛhya ritual. These five sacrifices are offerings for the gods (*devayajña*), for the creatures (*bhūtayajña*), for the ancestors (*pitṛyajña*), study (*brahmayajña*) and offerings for “human beings,” i.e., for guests (*nṛyajña*). See, e.g., Hillebrandt 1897: 74f. and Kane ²1974: 696ff.

³⁷ This is probably not a Vedic sacrifice but a ritual donation, just as the donation of “a thousand cows” (*gosahasra*) mentioned in passages from the *Mahābhārata* presented below (see p. 190 and n. 64).

³⁸ BS, “Various Readings”, p. 76: *dhūpasragdīpādyair bhūpaḥ saṃpūjayed dvijān annaiḥ | saṃpūrnadakṣiṇābhiḥ svanāmabhiḥ* (ms. N; B *sumanābhiḥ*, D *sunāmibhiḥ*, ed. *sumanobhiḥ*) *prīṇayet kramaśaḥ ||*

This passage states that a king should worship twice-born men with incense, garlands, lamps, food and more, and that he should please them with donations and “with their names,” that is, with the recitation of “their names.” Against the background of the passage from the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* quoted above (p. 171), it seems natural to interpret the expression *svanāmabhiḥ prīṇayet*, literally “pleasing [the Brahmins] with their names,” as addressing the Brahmins with the names of the deities with which they are identified. It seems highly implausible that the names of the Brahmins should be recited.

The reward of this observance is similar to that of particular Vedic rituals, mainly Śrauta sacrifices such as the horse sacrifice (*aśvamedha*), the *vājapeya*, etc. The promise that the performance of observances leads to rewards that can otherwise only be obtained by complicated and expensive Vedic sacrifices is quite common in the epics and Purāṇas. We will encounter this also in other passages presented in this paper, where we will return to this topic.

Ṛgvidhāna

The worship of the twelve deities in relation to the twelve months of the year is described in a section of the *Ṛgvidhāna*. According to M.S. Bhat, who has published a critical edition and study of this text, this section of RgVi 3.134–230 was added to it in the 9th century CE at the earliest (Bhat 1987: 151f.). Bhat considers this entire section to be a text called *Puruṣavidhāna*, which Viṣṇukumāra composed by borrowing from a work of Nārada.³⁹ Parallel versions

pratimāsam aśvamedho nṛpasūyo vājapeyam atirātram | ukthyam agniṣṭomo gavām ayanam puruṣamedhas ca || sautrāmaṇis tato 'nyaḥ sapamcayajñah sahemagolakṣah (N sahemalāṅgūlah) sarvasukhāny apy aṃte nityasmaraṇāc ca tannāmnah ||.

³⁹ Viṣṇukumāra and Nārada are mentioned in RgVi 3.230 (“In this way, [a man] called Viṣṇukumāra has taught the injunctions for the worship of Viṣṇu, who is the *puruṣa*, in order to give instructions on the single path to liberation, after examining the injunctions taught by Nārada in this matter.”, *ity evam uktaḥ puruṣasya viṣṇor arcāvidhir viṣṇukumāranāmnā |*

of the *Ṛgvidhāna* in *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* 2.123–124 and *Agnipurāṇa* 259⁴⁰ do not contain this section, and there are manuscripts which transmit the *Puruṣavidhāna* independently (Bhat 1987: 151). Thus the *Puruṣavidhāna* clearly does not belong to an early version of the *Ṛgvidhāna*.

It seems, however, that the actual *Puruṣavidhāna* starts only with verse 3.155 and the words:

Oh long-armed Lord Nārāyaṇa, listen attentively. I will expound the injunctions of the *Puruṣasūkta* for the worship, the fire ritual, the procedure of recitation and a good eulogy.⁴¹

The *Puruṣasūkta*, which is related to the *Puruṣavidhāna*, is already mentioned in the passage before this line (*ṚgVi* 3.134–154). This is perhaps the reason for Bhat to consider it as also belonging to the *Puruṣavidhāna*.

Meyer on the other hand, considered the passage *ṚgVi* 3.134–154 as a composition of Ṛṣyaśṛṅga (Meyer 1878: V), who is referred to in *ṚgVi* 3.142 and 148.⁴² Ṛṣyaśṛṅga was a Dharmasāstra author, who

muktyaikamārgapratibodhanāya dr̥ṣṭvā vidhānam tv iha nāradoktam ||). The *Smṛticandrikā*, a Dharmasāstra Nibandha work from the 12th century CE, contains quotations of the work of Nārada. Bhat's comparison of these passages with this section of the *ṚgVi* (Bhat 1987: 193–195) shows that Viṣṇukumāra had indeed borrowed from that work. For this quotation in the *Smṛticandrikā*, see also Kane 1930: 199f. Interestingly, the *Puruṣavidhāna* seems to have a certain relation to the Baudhāyana tradition; see Colas 1994: 524f.

⁴⁰ For a comparison of these passages, see Bhat 1987: 164ff. The version of the *Agnipurāṇa* is a further abridgement of the version of the *Viṣṇudharmottara*; see Bhat 1987: 181.

⁴¹ *ṚgVi* 3.155–156b: *nārāyaṇa mahābāho śṛṇuṣvaikamanāḥ prabho | vakṣye puruṣasūktasya vidhānam tv arcanam prati || 155 agnikāryam japa-vidhiṃ stotram caiva sadātmakam |*.

⁴² *ṚgVi* 3.148: “[A woman] without a son or whose son has died and who gives birth to a daughter will soon bear a son, as Ṛṣyaśṛṅga has taught.” (*aputrā mṛtaputrā vā yā ca kanyāṃ prasūyate | kṣipram sā janayet putram ṛṣyaśṛṅgo yathābravīt ||*). For *ṚgVi* 3.142, see below. Krick (Krick 1977: 88) also

is frequently quoted in Dharmaśāstra commentaries and Nibandhas.⁴³ It has to be stated that this passage too is of composite nature,⁴⁴ but since Ṛṣyaśṛṅga is mentioned twice, it is probably based at least among others on his work, just as the following passage is based on that of Nārada. For certainty about the actual beginning of the *Puruṣavidhāna*, the independent manuscripts of the *Puruṣavidhāna* mentioned by Bhat would need to be consulted. In any case, the comparison with the parallel version in the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* makes clear that the passage ṚgVi 3.134–154 is a later addition as well.

The passage that relates the set of twelve deities to the twelve months of the year is explicitly ascribed to Ṛṣyaśṛṅga. It does not give details about the ritual procedures that should be conducted each month, and also its results are not very specific, but worth striving for, namely, the fulfillment of all wishes:

Keśava is declared for [the month] of Mārgaśīrṣa, Nārāyaṇa for [the month] of Pauṣa, Mādhava for the month of Māgha, and Govinda for [the month] of Phālguna, Viṣṇu for [the month] of Caitra, and Madhusūdana for [the month] of Vaiśākha. One should know [that] Trivikrama [is declared] for [the month] of Jyeṣṭha. [Sages] know [that] Vāmana [is declared] for [the month] of Āṣāḍha. One should know [that] Śrīdhara [is declared] for [the month] of Śrāvaṇa, and Hṛṣīkeśa for the next [month], Padmanābha for [the month] of Āśvina, and Dāmodara for [the month] of Kārtika. The sage Ṛṣyaśṛṅga has taught these twelve names. [If] one worships [god] with the names [of the deities] of the months,⁴⁵ one accomplishes all wishes.⁴⁶

considers the passage under consideration as an interpolation into the *Puruṣavidhāna*, and she mentions that it is assigned to Ṛṣyaśṛṅga.

⁴³ See Kane 1930: 223.

⁴⁴ Bhat notes that ṚgVi 3.143 is almost identical with *Manusmṛti* 3.263 (Bhat 1987: 375). It is also striking that the verses ṚgVi 3.134–136 deal with a rite that should be performed when one desires a son, then several other rituals are described, and the topic of a ritual bestowing a son is resumed again in ṚgVi 3.144–148. The passage in between seems to have been inserted subsequently.

⁴⁵ See n. 25.

⁴⁶ ṚgVi 3.139–142: *keśavaṃ mārgaśīrṣe tu pauṣe nārāyaṇaṃ smṛtam | mādhavaṃ māghamāse tu govindaṃ phālgune tathā || 139 caitre caiva tathā*

Viṣṇudharma

This passage inserted into the *Ṛgvidhāna* is found almost literally also in the *Viṣṇudharma*. The *Viṣṇudharma* is a compiled work devoted to various kinds of Vaiṣṇava practices. Dating is difficult also in this case. The earliest extant manuscripts are from Nepal and date to the 11th century CE.⁴⁷

The passage of interest regarding our topic appears in a section that consists of a collection of various kinds of fasts connected to the worship of particular manifestations of Viṣṇu.⁴⁸ It runs as follows:

Dālbhya spoke: “Father, I would like to hear how human beings easily travel the way to Yama, which is very difficult to go; tell me this.” (19) Pulastya spoke: “A man who, having fasted, having bathed in due manner and having worshipped Janārdana, pronounces these twelve names of Kṛṣṇa each month, goes to [Yama] very easily. (20) Then (i.e., following the performance of the rites just mentioned) he should give a jar with water, a donation, sandals, a pair of garments, a parasol and gold to a Brahmin. (21) Moreover, being friendly disposed to him, he should address [him] with the name connected to the [specific] month. And at the end of the year or every month, by means of gifts such as a jar with water, a clever man should make all Brahmins recite in due order. (22) Praising the lord of the chiefs of the gods as Keśava in [the month] of Mārgaśīrṣa, as Nārāyaṇa in [the month] of Pauṣa, as Mādhava in the month of Māgha, as Govinda in [the month] of Phālguna, as Viṣṇu in [the month] of Caitra, as Madhusūdana

viṣṇuṃ vaiśākhē madhusūdanam | jyeṣṭhē trivikramaṃ vidyād āṣāḍhē vāmanaṃ viduḥ || 140 śrāvaṇē śrīdharam vidyād hṛṣīkeśam tataḥ pare | āśvīnē padmanābham tu dāmodaram ca kārtike || 141 dvādasaitāni nāmāni ṛṣyaśṛṅgo ’bravīn muniḥ | pūjāyē māsanāmabhiḥ sarvān kāmānt samaśnute || 142.

⁴⁷ On the date of the *Viṣṇudharma* see Grünendahl 1983: 71–73. The earliest manuscripts used by Grünendahl are designated as N3 and N6 in his edition of the *Viṣṇudharma*. N3 corresponds to Kathmandu National Archives, ms. no. I–1002 kha., NGMPP (Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project), reel-no. B 5/7, dated 10 May 1090 CE (Grünendahl 1983: 10). N6 corresponds to Kathmandu National Archives, ms. no. I–1002 ka., NGMPP, reel-no. B 5/8, dated 24 September 1046 CE (Grünendahl 1983: 14).

⁴⁸ This section is *Viṣṇudharma* 4–20. For a summary of its contents, see Grünendahl 1983: 31–41.

in [the month] of Vaiśākha, as god Trivikrama in [the month] of Jyēṣṭha, as Vāmana in [the month] of Āṣāḍha, as Śrīdhara in the month of Śrāvaṇa—and the name Hṛṣīkeśa is sung as the next one by those who long for religious merit (*puṇya*) in the month of Bhādrapada—as Padmanābha in [the month] of Āsvayuj, and after that as Dāmodara in [the month] of Kārttika, he crosses over the difficult passage. (23–26)⁴⁹ Having obtained well-being in this world and then having remembered [these names] when dying,⁵⁰ he prospers in the celestial world without being distressed by Yama. (27) Thereafter, when he reaches a human state, he is free from pain and affliction and deserves a birth in a virtuous family that is rich and possesses money and grain.” (28)⁵¹

⁴⁹ This passage, *Viṣṇudharma* 5.23–26b, is the one which is almost similar to ṚgVi 3.139–141. The main difference is the line inserted in *Viṣṇudharma* 5.25cd, which explains the name of the month of Hṛṣīkeśa, which remains unmentioned in the *Ṛgvidhāna*. This line does not fit into the syntactical structure of the passage, and thus it gives the impression of being a later addition to the original text, with the intention to clarify it. Another parallel passage of this passage is *Bhaviṣyapurāṇa* 4.104.17c–20 (the entire chapter *Bhaviṣyapurāṇa* 4.104 is a parallel version of *Viṣṇudharma* 5).

⁵⁰ The expression *marāṇe smaraṇaṃ tataḥ* in this sentence is incorrect Sanskrit since it lacks a verb, but its meaning is easily understood.

⁵¹ VDh 5.19–28: *dālbhya uvāca: śrotum icchāmy ahaṃ tāta yamamārgaṃ sudurgamam | yathā sukhena saṃyānti mānavās tad vadasva me || 19 pulastya uvāca: pratimāsaṃ tu nāmāni kṛṣṇasyaitāni dvādaśa | kṛtopavāsah susnātaḥ pūjayitvā janārdanam | uccārayan naro ‘bhyeti susukhenaiva tatpatham || 20 tato viprāya vai dadyād udakumbhaṃ sadakṣiṇaṃ | upānadvastrayugmaṃ ca chatraṃ kanakam eva ca || 21 yad vai māsagataṃ nāma tatprītiś cāpi saṃvadet | saṃvatsarānte ‘py athavā pratimāsaṃ dvijān budhaḥ | vācayed udakumbhādyaair dānāiḥ sarvān anukramāt || 22 keśavaṃ mārgaśīrṣe tu pauṣe nārāyaṇaṃ tathā | mādhaṃ māghamāse tu govindaṃ phālgune tathā || 23 viṣṇuṃ caitre ‘tha vaiśākhe tathāiva madhusūdanaṃ | jyēṣṭhe trivikramaṃ devam āṣāḍhe vāmanaṃ tathā || 24 śrīdharaṃ śrāvaṇe māse hṛṣīkeśeti cāparam | nāma bhādrapade māsi gīyate puṇyakāṅkṣibhiḥ || 25 padmanābhaṃ cāsvayuje dāmodaram ataḥ param | kārttike devadeveśaṃ stuvāms tarati durgatim || 26 iha vai svasthatāṃ prāpya marāṇe smaraṇaṃ tataḥ | yāmyakleśam asamprāpya svargaloke mahīyate || 27 tato mānuṣyam āsādyā nirātāṅko gatajvaraḥ | dhanadhānyavati sphīte janma sādrukule ‘rhati || 28.*

Here the main concern of the observance related to our twelve deities is the afterlife, the way to Yama after death and the nature of the next life—a concern that is characteristic of the Vaiṣṇava Dharmaśāstra texts. Abidance in heaven for a certain while is promised, after which one is reborn in a prosperous family. The observance itself consists of fasting, bathing, and worshipping Viṣṇu while pronouncing each of the names of the twelve deities in the respective month. Then a donation and various gifts are given to a Brahmin, and the Brahmin is addressed with the name of the deity that is worshipped in the respective month.

Here we observe again the identification of Brahmins with the twelve deities, just as in the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* and the probably interpolated passage in the *Brhatsamhitā*. In this respect, there seems to be a ritual relation between the passages in the *Viṣṇudharma*, the *Brhatsamhitā* and the Vaikhānasa tradition.

Mahābhārata

Two passages that describe a monthly observance connected with the set of twelve deities are found in the appendices of the critical edition of the *Mahābhārata*.

One passage belongs to the so-called *Vaiṣṇavadharmaśāstra*. This is a text of approximately 1.700 *ślokas* in length. It is found in all Southern manuscripts used for the critical edition of the *Mahābhārata* at the end of the *Āśvamedhikaparvan* (MBh 14, app. I, No. 4). In addition, as Reinhold Grünendahl has ascertained, there is also a Northern testimony of this text, namely, in a unique Nepalese palm-leaf manuscript from the 11th century CE, in which the text is transmitted independently from the MBh.⁵² My colleague Nina Mirnig assisted me in a cursory investigation of this manuscript, for which I would like to thank her very much. Our impression after the first examination is that the text in the Nepalese manuscript is not exactly identical

⁵² This manuscript is kept in the Kathmandu National Archives, ms. no. 1/1321, NGMPP, reel no. A 27/2; see Grünendahl 1984: 52–54. For the date of the manuscript see *ibid.*: 53, n. 5.

with the *Vaiṣṇavadharmaśāstra* of the Southern manuscripts, but that it is rather another version of the text. The discussed topics seem more or less the same, but only a few verses are literally identical.⁵³ Further examinations are necessary to say more about this text. Unfortunately, the folio (no. 67) probably containing the passage important to our context here is missing. Therefore, the manuscript could not be taken into further consideration for the present purpose.

The other passage is found in all Northern manuscripts used for the critical edition of the *Mahābhārata* in the *Anuśāsanaparvan* (MBh 13, app. I, No. 12, inserted after 13.111; in one ms. after 13.110). It is striking that in both the Southern and the Northern transmission of the *Mahābhārata* this observance was considered sufficiently important to include it into the epic. There is deviation only in terms of the place of its inclusion.

The passage in the *Vaiṣṇavadharmaśāstra* is preceded by two chapters which describe two other observances connected with fasting, namely, the *cāndrāyaṇavidhi*, a fast in which food is diminished and increased according to the moon's waning and waxing (lines 2749–2848), and the *ekabhuktividhi*, the observance of eating only once a day for one month (lines 2849–2982). The chapter following the passage discussed below is no longer devoted to observances, but it discusses various other topics, such as specific donations and a *prāyaścitta* rite that destroys all evil deeds (*pāpa*).

Fasting is also the main context of the other passage that belongs to the *Anuśāsanaparvan*. The three preceding chapters are devoted to the observance of eating only once a day for one month (MBh 13.109), the results that can be achieved by fasting (MBh 13.110) and different kinds of purity (*śauca*, MBh 13.111). After the passage, a few Northern manuscripts contain a section describing a rite in which the various parts of the body are identified with the lunar mansions (*nakṣatra*, MBh 13, app. I, No. 12A). The next chapter, MBh 13.112, deals with topics related to the afterlife.

⁵³ See also Grünendahl's assessment of this recension in 1984: 53, n. 4.

Both passages, that from MBh 14 and that from MBh 13, are related, as already evident from their introductions:

MBh 14, app. I, No. 4

yudhiṣṭhira uvāca
sarveṣāṃ upavāsānām yac chreyaḥ sumahat
phalam | 2983
yac ca niḥśreyasaṃ loke tad bhavān vaktum
arhati | 2984
bhagavān uvāca
śṛṇu rājan yathāpūrvam yathā gītām tu
nārada | 2985
tathā te kathayiṣyāmi madbhaktāya yudhi-
ṣṭhira | 2986

Yudhiṣṭhira spoke:

Please tell about that which is the most excellent among all fasts and which [leads to] liberation in [this] world as an abundant reward. (2983–2984)

The Venerable One spoke:

Listen, oh king, as before. I will tell you, who are my devotee, how [I] have sung to Nārada, oh Yudhiṣṭhira. (2985–2986)

MBh 13, app. I, No. 12

yudhiṣṭhirah
sarveṣāṃ upavāsānām yac chreyaḥ sumahat
phalam | 1
yac cāpy asaṃśayaṃ loke tan me tvaṃ vak-
tum arhasi | 2
bhīṣmah
śṛṇu rājan yathā gītām svayam eva svayaṃ-
bhuvā | 3
yat kṛtvā nirvṛto bhūyāt puruṣo nātra saṃ-
śayaḥ | 4

Yudhiṣṭhira:

Please tell me about that which is the most excellent among all fasts and which [leads to] abundant reward in [this] world with certainty. (1–2)

Bhīṣma:

Listen, oh king, how the Self-existing One himself has sung. If a man performs [this practice], he will become liberated, there is no doubt. (3–4)

The two passages start with an identical line and the structure of the introduction is the same as well. In both passages, Yudhiṣṭhira is the inquiring interlocutor asking about the best of fasts. The reply is given by Venerable Viṣṇu himself in the case of the *Vaiṣṇavadharmaśāstra*, and by Bhīṣma in MBh 13 according to the narrative frame of this part of the epic. The replies begin with the information that this fast has already been taught in the past, namely, by Viṣṇu himself.⁵⁴ The *Vaiṣṇavadharmaśāstra* informs also about the original recipient of the teaching, namely, Nārada.

⁵⁴ That Viṣṇu is meant also in case of MBh 13 can be seen in the last line of this passage, MBh 13, app. I, No. 12, l. 34: “The venerable Viṣṇu himself has taught [this] ancient [prescription].” (*uvāca bhagavān viṣṇuḥ svayam eva purātanam* |).

An essential distinction of the two passages is found in the second lines: While MBh 13 promises abundant reward in this world, according to the *Vaiṣṇavadharmaśāstra* these prescriptions leads to liberation in this world. However, liberation from transmigration is promised also in line 4 in the passage from MBh 13.

The *Vaiṣṇavadharmaśāstra* adds a passage that is not found in the section of MBh 13, which expounds the merits of practising this fast at a particular time. However, its precise interpretation is problematic.

The Venerable One spoke:

(...) One who, after having become pure, devotionally keeps the observance of fasting on my fifth [*tithi*], oh lord of men, while worshipping me three times [a day], receives the result of all kinds of sacrifices and is highly honoured in my world. (2987–2989)

Yudhiṣṭhira spoke:

Oh Venerable One, lord of the gods of gods, pray, what is your fifth [*tithi*]? I want to hear about it, tell me, oh Imperishable One. (2990–2991)

The Venerable One spoke:

On the twelfth [*tithi*] of the two half-months, on which [the moon passes through the lunar mansion (*nakṣatra*) of] *śravaṇa*,⁵⁵ oh lord of men, this is known as the “fifth one” that especially pleases me. (2992–2993) Therefore the best Brahmins, whose mind is directed to me, should fast in order to please me [at this time], oh Yudhiṣṭhira. (2994–2995) Alternatively, one who is not able [to do so] should fast just on [any] twelfth [*tithi*]. Through this I will be eminently pleased, oh chief among men. (2996–2997)⁵⁶

⁵⁵ *parvadvayam* and *śravaṇam* are interpreted as accusatives of time.

⁵⁶ MBh 14, app. I, No. 4, 2987–2997: *bhagavān uvāca*: [...] *yas tu bhaktyā śucir bhūtvā pañcamyām me narādhipa | 2987 upavāsavratam kuryāt trikālam cārcayaṃs tu mām | 2988 sarvakratuphalam labdhvā mama loke mahīyate | 2989 yudhiṣṭhira uvāca: bhagavan devadeveśa pañcamī nāma kā tava | 2990 tām ahaṃ śrotum icchāmi kathayasva mamācyuta | 2991 bhagavān uvāca: parvadvayam ca dvādaśyām śravaṇam ca narādhipa | 2992 tat pañcamīti vikhyātā matpriyā ca viśeṣataḥ | 2993 tasmāt tu brāhmaṇaśreṣṭhair manniveśitabuddhibhiḥ | 2994 upavāsas tu kartavyo matpriyārtham yudhiṣṭhira | 2995 dvādaśyām eva vā kuryād upavāsam aśaknuvan | 2996 tenāham paramām prītiṃ yāsyāmi narapuṅgava | 2997.*

The interpretation of *pañcamī*, “the fifth one,” in this context is difficult, and the translation presented here is provisional. It takes the definition of the term *pañcamī* given in lines 2992–2993 literally and thus understands the designation *pañcamī* as referring to the twelfth *tithi* of any half of the month when the moon passes through the lunar mansion *śravaṇa*. This day is usually called *śravaṇadvādaśī* and considered a specifically auspicious day.⁵⁷ The issue that remains is why this day should be called “the fifth one” or even “the fifth [*tithi*],” as the feminine ending of the term would imply. This question remains unanswered and thus this interpretation is unsatisfactory.

Several Pāñcarātra Saṃhitās mention the term *viṣṇupañcamī*.⁵⁸ This expression could be a synonym of the *pañcamī* referred to in our passage, because here it is called “my fifth one” (*pañcamyāṃ me*, line 2987) and “your fifth one” (*pañcamī ... tava*, line 2990), the possessive pronouns “my” and “your” referring to Viṣṇu. In these Pāñcarātra Saṃhitās, *viṣṇupañcamī* refers to a specific day, but it is not explained

⁵⁷ See, for example, the passages quoted in the *Samayaprakāśa* of Mitramiśra's *Vīramitrodaya* under the heading *atha śravaṇadvādaśī-nirṇayaḥ*, pp. 75–77. Examples of these passages are the one attributed to the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*: “Oh Rāma, that expert of *dharma* who fasts, bathes and worships Janārdana on that great twelfth [*tithi*] that is furnished with the [lunar mansion of] *śravaṇa* easily obtains the twelvefold result [of such a practice on an ordinary] twelfth [*tithi*].” (SamP 75,19–21: *yā rāma! śravaṇopetā dvādaśī mahatī tu sā | tasyāṃ upoṣitaḥ snātaḥ pūjayitvā janārdanam || prāpnoty ayatnād dharmajño dvādaśadvādaśīphalam* |) and the one attributed to the *Matsyapurāṇa*, which proves that the combination of the moon passing through the lunar mansion *śravaṇa* and the twelfth *tithi* is meant: “When [the moon passes through the] lunar mansion of *śravaṇa* on the twelfth [*tithi*] of the light half of a month, one should fast during the eleventh [*tithi*] and worship Hari on the twelfth [*tithi*].” (SamP 76,21f.: *dvādaśyāṃ śuklapakṣe tu nakṣatraṃ śravaṇaṃ yadi | upoṣyaikādaśīm tatra dvādaśyāṃ pūjayed dharim* ||).

⁵⁸ SanS *śivarātra* 7.40, *indrarātra* 1.53, *ṛsirātra* 4.15, 8.17, 8.41, ViṣṇuS 20.86, KapS 29.2.

to which one. The term itself would imply that it is the fifth *tithi* or a specific fifth *tithi* (for example, of a specific month or when the moon passes through a particular lunar mansion), but this does not fit the passage quoted above.

The descriptions of the monthly observances follow this passage. The text of the two passages runs parallel but is not literally identical.

MBh 14, app. I, No. 4

*ahorātreṇa dvādaśyāṃ mārgaśīrṣe tu keśa-
vam* | 2998

*upoṣya pūjayed yo mām so 'śvamedha-
phalaṃ labhet* | 2999

*dvādaśyāṃ puṣyamāse tu nāmnā nārā-
yaṇaṃ tu mām* | 3000

*upoṣya pūjayed yo mām vājapeyaphalaṃ
labhet* | 3001

*dvādaśyāṃ māghamāse tu mām upoṣya tu
mādhavam* | 3002

*pūjayed yaḥ samāpnoti rājasūyaphalaṃ
labhet* | 3003

*dvādaśyāṃ phālgune māsi govindākhyam
upoṣya mām* | 3004

*arcayed yaḥ samāpnoti hy atirātraphalaṃ
nrpa* | 3005

*dvādaśyāṃ māsi caitre tu mām viṣṇuṃ
samupoṣya yaḥ* | 3006

*pūjayams tad avāpnoti paunḍarikasya yat
phalam* | 3007

*dvādaśyāṃ māsi vaiśākhe madhusūdana-
samjñitam* | 3008

*upoṣya pūjayed yo mām so 'gniṣṭomaphalaṃ
labhet* (ms. T G₃; ed. 'gniṣṭomasya
pāṇḍava) | 3009

*dvādaśyāṃ jyeṣṭhamāse tu mām upoṣya
trivikramam* | 3010

*arcayed yaḥ samāpnoti gavāṃ medha-
phalaṃ nrpa* | 3011

MBh 13, app. I, No. 12

*dvādaśyāṃ mārgaśīrṣe tu ahorātreṇa keśa-
vam* | 5

*arcyāśvamedham āpnoti duṣkṛtaṃ cāsya
naśyati* | 6

*tathaiva pauṣamāse tu pūjya nārāyaṇeti
ca* | 7

*vājapeyam avāpnoti siddhiṃ ca paramāṃ
vrajat* | 8

*ahorātreṇa dvādaśyāṃ māghamāse tu
mādhavam* | 9

*rājasūyam avāpnoti kulaṃ caiva samud-
dharet* | 10

tathaiva phālgune māsi govindeti ca pūjayed | 11

atirātram avāpnoti somalokaṃ ca gacchati | 12

*ahorātreṇa dvādaśyāṃ caitre viṣṇur iti smar-
an* | 13

*paunḍarikam avāpnoti devalokaṃ ca gac-
chati* | 14

*vaiśākhamāse dvādaśyāṃ pūjayan madhu-
sūdanam* | 15

*agniṣṭomam avāpnoti somalokaṃ ca gac-
chati* | 16

*ahorātreṇa dvādaśyāṃ jyeṣṭhe māsi tri-
vikramam* | 17

*gavāṃ ayam avāpnoti apsarobhiś ca moda-
te* | 18

MBh 14, app. I, No. 4

*āṣāḍhe vāmanākhyam mām dvādaśyām
samupoṣya ca* | 3012

*narmedhasya sa phalaṃ prāpnoti bhārata-
rṣabha* | 3013

*dvādaśyām śrāvane māsi śrīdharākhyam
upoṣya mām* | 3014

*pūjayed yaḥ samāpnoti pañcayajñaphalaṃ
nṛpa* | 3015

*māse bhādrapade yo mām hr̥ṣīkeśākhyam
arcayet* | 3016

*upoṣya sa samāpnoti sautrāmaṇiphalaṃ
nṛpa* | 3017

*dvādaśyām āsvayujīmāse padmanābham
upoṣya mām* | 3018

*arcayed yaḥ samāpnoti gosahasraphalaṃ
nṛpa* | 3019

*dvādaśyām kārttike māsi mām dāmodara-
samjñitam* | 3020

*upoṣya pūjayed yas tu sarvakratuphalaṃ
labhet* | 3021

*kevalenopavāsena dvādaśyām pāṇḍun-
andana* | 3022

*yat phalaṃ pūrvam uddiṣṭaṃ tasyārdham
labhate phalam* | 3023

*śrāvane 'py evam evaṃ mām yo 'rcayed
bhaktimān naraḥ* | 3024

*mama sālोकyam āpnoti nātra kāryā vicāra-
nā* | 3025

*māse māse samabhyarcya kramaśo mām
atandritaḥ* | 3026

*pūrṇe saṃvatsare kuryāt punaḥ saṃvatsar-
ārcanam* | 3027

*evaṃ dvādaśavarṣam yo madbhakto mat-
parāyaṇaḥ* | 3028

*aviḡhnam arcayānas tu mama sālोकyam
āpnuyāt* | 3029

*arcayet prītimān yo mām dvādaśyām veda-
samhitām* | 3030

MBh 13, app. I, No. 12

*āṣāḍhe māsi dvādaśyām vāmaneti ca pūja-
yet* | 19

*narmedham avāpnoti puṇyam ca labhate
mahat* | 20

*ahorātreṇa dvādaśyām śrāvane māsi śrī-
dharam* | 21

*pañcayajñān avāpnoti vimānasthaḥ sa
modate* | 22

tathā bhādrapade māsi hr̥ṣīkeṣeti pūjayan | 23

*sautrāmaṇim avāpnoti pūtātām bhavate ca
hi* | 24

*dvādaśyām āsvine māsi padmanābheti cārca-
yan* | 25

*gosahasraphalaṃ puṇyam prāpnuyān nātra
saṃśayaḥ* | 26

*dvādaśyām kārttike māsi pūjya dāmodareti
ca* | 27

*gavām yajñam avāpnoti pumān strī vā na
saṃśayaḥ* | 28

*abhyarcya puṇḍarikākṣam evaṃ saṃvatsa-
raṃ tu yaḥ* | 29

*jātismaratvaṃ prāpnoti vindyād bahu-
suvarṇakam* | 30

*ahany ahani tadbhāvam upendraṃ yo 'dhi-
gacchati* | 31

*samāpte bhojayed viprān atha vā dāpayed
ghṛtam* | 32

ataḥparaṃ nopavāso bhavātīti viniścayaḥ | 33

MBh 14, app. I, No. 4

*sa pūrvoktaphalaṃ rājaṃ labhate nātra
saṃśayaḥ* | 3031

*gandhaṃ puṣpaṃ phalaṃ toyaṃ patraṃ vā
phalaṃ eva vā* | 3032

*dvādaśyāṃ mama yo dadyāt tato nānyo 'sti
matpriyaḥ* | 3033

*etena vidhinā sarve devāḥ śakrapurogam-
āḥ* | 3034

*madbhaktā naraśārdūla svargabhogāṃs tu
bhūñjate* | 3035

vaiśampāyana uvāca |

evaṃ vadati deveśe keśave [...]

MBh 13, app. I, No. 12

*uvāca bhagavān viṣṇuḥ svayam eva
purātanam* | 34

MBh 14, app. I, No. 4

One who fasts and worships Keśava day and night on the twelfth [*tithi*] in Mārgaśīrṣa receives the result of a horse sacrifice.⁵⁹ (2998–2999)

One who fasts and worships me⁶⁰ by the name of Nārāyaṇa on the twelfth [*tithi*] in the month of Puṣya receives the result of a *vājapeya* [sacrifice]. (3000–3001)

One who fasts and worships me as Mādhava on the twelfth [*tithi*] in the month of Māgha obtains the result of a royal consecration (*rājasūya*).⁶¹ (3002–3003)

MBh 13, app. I, No. 12

Having worshipped Keśava day and night on the twelfth [*tithi*] in Mārgaśīrṣa, one receives [the result of] a horse sacrifice, and [one's] evil actions disappear. (5–6)

Having worshipped the one called Nārāyaṇa in the same way in the month of Pauṣa, one receives [the result of] a *vājapeya* [sacrifice], and one obtains supreme perfection. (7–8)

[Having worshipped] Mādhava day and night on the twelfth [*tithi*] in the month of Māgha, one receives [the result of] a royal consecration (*rājasūya*), and one rescues [one's] family. (9–10)

⁵⁹ Several of the Vedic sacrifices mentioned in these passages are also mentioned in the passage probably interpolated into the *Bṛhatsamhitā*; see nn. 30ff.

⁶⁰ The pronoun *mām* erroneously appears twice in this Sanskrit sentence.

⁶¹ Line 3003 contains two finite verbs in the meaning of “to obtain, receive”, namely, *samāpnoti* and *labhet*. Only one of them is translated here. It is possible that *labhet* at the end of the line should actually be a noun in the vocative.

MBh 14, app. I, No. 4

One who fasts and worships me by the name of Govinda on the twelfth [*tithi*] in the month of Phalguna certainly obtains the result of an *atirātra* [sacrifice], oh king. (3004–3005)

One who fasts and worships me as Viṣṇu on the twelfth [*tithi*] in the month of Caitra obtains what is the result of a *pauṇḍarīka* [sacrifice].⁶² (3006–3007)

One who fasts and worships me by the name of Madhusūdana on the twelfth [*tithi*] in the month of Vaiśākha receives the result of an *agniṣṭoma* [sacrifice] (3008–3009)

One who fasts and worships me as Trivikrama on the twelfth [*tithi*] in the month of Jyeṣṭha receives the result of a cow sacrifice (*gavām medhaphalam*),⁵ oh king. (3010–3011)

And having fasted [and worshipped] me by the name of Vāmana on the twelfth [*tithi*] in Āṣāḍha, one receives the result of a human sacrifice, oh bull among the Bharatas. (3012–3013)

One who fasts and worships me by the name of Śrīdhara on the twelfth [*tithi*] in the month of Śravaṇa receives the result of the five sacrifices, oh king. (3014–3015)

MBh 13, app. I, No. 12

[If] one worships the one called Govinda in the month of Phalguna in the same way, one receives [the result of] an *atirātra* [sacrifice], and one goes to the world of Soma. (11–12)

One who remembers the one called Viṣṇu day and night on the twelfth [*tithi*] in Caitra receives [the result of] a *pauṇḍarīka* [sacrifice] and goes to the world of the gods. (13–14)

One who worships Madhusūdana on the twelfth [*tithi*] in the month of Vaiśākha receives [the result of] an *agniṣṭoma* [sacrifice] and goes to the world of Soma. (15–16)

[Having worshipped] Trivikrama day and night on the twelfth [*tithi*] in the month of Jyeṣṭha, one receives [the result of] “a course of the cows” [sacrifice] (*gavām ayam*) and rejoices in Apsaras. (17–18)

[If] one worships the one called Vāmana on the twelfth [*tithi*] in the month of Āṣāḍha, one receives [the result of] a human sacrifice, and one obtains great merit. (19–20)

[Having worshipped] Śrīdhara day and night on the twelfth [*tithi*] in the month of Śravaṇa, one receives [the result of] the five sacrifices, [and] one rejoices standing on a [celestial] car. (21–22)

⁶² A *pauṇḍarīka* is a Soma sacrifice lasting eleven days; see, for example, *Baudhāyanaśrautasūtra* 16.32.

⁶³ Perhaps the sacrifice called *gavām aya(na)* is indicated here as well, just like in the parallel passage of MBh 13. The list of the passage probably interpolated into the *Brhatsaṃhitā* also gives *gavām ayana* in this place of the list (see above, pp. 174ff). In the context of the *gavām ayana*, cows are offered (Kane ²1974: 1245). Thus, it is possible to understand it maybe as a cow sacrifice.

MBh 14, app. I, No. 4

One who fasts and worships me by the name of Hṛṣīkeśa in the month of Bhādrapada receives the result of a *sautrāmaṇi* [sacrifice], oh king. (3016–3017)

One who fasts and worships me as Padmanābha on the twelfth [tithi] in the month of Āsvayuj receives the result of [donating] a thousand cows (*gosahasra*),⁶⁴ oh king. (3018–3019)

One who fasts and worships me by the name of Dāmodara on the twelfth [tithi] in the month of Kārttika receives the result of all sacrifices (*sarvakratu*).⁶⁵ (3020–3021)

By means of mere fasting on the twelfth [tithi], oh son of Pāṇḍu, one receives the half of the results that were mentioned before. (3022–3023)

A devoted man who worships me also when [the moon passes through the lunar mansion of] *śravaṇa* in such and such manner obtains residence in the same heaven with me; there should be no doubt with regard to this. (3024–3025)

MBh 13, app. I, No. 12

One who worships the one called Hṛṣīkeśa in the month of Bhādrapada in the same way receives [the result] of a *sautrāmaṇi* [sacrifice], and he becomes pure-minded. (23–24)

One who worships the one called Padmanābha on the twelfth [tithi] in the month of Āśvina receives the auspicious result of [donating] a thousand cows (*gosahasra*); there is no doubt. (25–26)

Having worshipped the one called Dāmodara on the twelfth [tithi] in the month of Kārttika, a man or a woman receives [the result of] a cow sacrifice (*goyajña*),⁶⁶ [there] is no doubt. (27–28)

Having worshipped Puṇḍarikākṣa for a year in this way, one receives recollection of former existences [and] one will find a lot of gold. (29–30)

If one approaches the younger brother of Indra (i.e. Viṣṇu) in the state of these [deities] on a daily basis [and], when it is completed, feeds Brahmīns or causes to donate ghee, further on, there is no [other] fast [necessary]; this is certain. (31–33)

⁶⁴ The *gosahasra* is a specific gift that is described already in the *Atharvavedapariśiṣṭas* (*Atharvavedapariśiṣṭa* 16, Schmiedchen 2006: 146). It is mentioned among the so-called “great gifts” (*mahādāna*) in Purāṇas (Kane ²1974: 869 and 874) and in inscriptions, for example, in Śālaṅkāyana and Viṣṇukunḍin inscriptions from the 4th to the 6th centuries CE (Schmiedchen 2006: 152) and in the Candrāvati plate of Vikramasaṃvat 1156 (1100 CE) of King Candradeva (see Mishra 1973: 70 and EI 14: 197–209).

⁶⁵ Cf. n. 80.

⁶⁶ Hillebrandt mentions a *goyajña* for the purpose of prosperity (Hillebrandt 1897: 83). In this ritual, among offerings to several deities, a bull is worshipped and fed. However, considering the fact that this passage also mentions a horse sacrifice and a human sacrifice, it is not improbable that the sacrifice of a cow is meant. Since these rituals are only objects of comparison, of course

MBh 14, app. I, No. 4

Having diligently worshipped [me] in due order in each month for an entire year, he should perform the worship for a year again. (3026–3027)

One who is my devotee, who is wholly devoted to me and uninterruptedly worships⁶⁷ [me] in this way for twelve years obtains residence in the same heaven with me. (3028–3029)

One who worships me with pleasure as the entire Veda (*vedasamhitā*) on the twelfth [*tithi*] receives the result mentioned above; there is no doubt. (3030–3031)

No other is dearer to me than the one who offers me incense, flowers, fruits, water, leaves or fruits⁶⁸ on the twelfth [*tithi*].

By this prescription all deities led by Śakra, who are my devotees, enjoy pleasures in heaven, oh tiger among men.

Vaiśampāyana said: When Keśava, the lord of the deities, has spoken in this way, (...)

MBh 13, app. I, No. 12

The Venerable Viṣṇu Himself has taught [this] ancient [prescription]. (34)

Both texts prescribe that each of the twelve deities should be worshipped on the twelfth *tithi* of each month of the year, starting with Keśava and Mārgaśīrṣa. The *Vaiṣṇavadharmaśāstra* also mentions that one should fast on that day.

The promised results are again those of particular Vedic sacrifices, such as the horse sacrifice, etc. The lists⁶⁹ given here have only a few variations

this does not mean that the sacrifice of horses, human beings, or cows are in fact prescribed here.

⁶⁷ For this form of the present participle, which is common in the epics, see Whitney 1924⁵: 382.

⁶⁸ The text as given in the critical edition mentions *phalam* twice. The few variants of this passage are, however, not more satisfying.

⁶⁹ If we interpret *gavāṃ medha*^o in line 3011 of MBh 14, app. I, No. 4, in the sense of *gavāṃ aya(na)* (see n. 63), the two lists from the MBh differ only in one place: The passage in MBh 13 promises the result of all sacrifices

compared to that of the probably interpolated passage in the *Brhatsamhitā* (see the table below, where the variations are given in bold letters). MBh 13 promises a second reward for each month, except the last two.⁷⁰ While this is related to the afterlife, such as the obtainment of the world of the deities, the rewards of the Vedic sacrifices are probably worldly ones. It should also be noted that although the promise of rewards similar to those of the great Vedic sacrifices is quite common in the epics and Purāṇas, I could not yet identify a passage in these sources that would give a concrete description of what these rewards actually are. Therefore, it remains unclear what people actually thought they would gain.

Worship of	BrhatS interp. passage	MBh 13	MBh 14
Keśava	<i>aśvamedha</i>	<i>aśvamedha</i> +	<i>aśvamedha</i>
Nārāyaṇa	<i>nṛpasūya</i>	<i>vājapeya</i> +	<i>vājapeya</i>
Mādhava	<i>vājapeya</i>	<i>rājasūya</i> +	<i>rājasūya</i>
Govinda	<i>atirātra</i>	<i>atirātra</i> +	<i>atirātra</i>
Viṣṇu	<i>ukthya</i>	<i>pauṇḍarīka</i> +	<i>pauṇḍarīka</i>
Madhusūdana	<i>agniṣṭoma</i>	<i>agniṣṭoma</i> +	<i>agniṣṭoma</i>
Vāmana	<i>gavāmayana</i>	<i>gavāmaya</i> +	<i>gavāṃ medha</i>
Trivikrama	<i>puruṣamedha</i>	<i>naramedha</i> +	<i>naramedha</i>
Śrīdhara	<i>sautrāmaṇi</i>	<i>pañcayajña</i> +	<i>pañcayajña</i>
Hṛṣīkeśa	<i>pañcayajña</i>	<i>sautrāmaṇi</i> +	<i>sautrāmaṇi</i>
Padmanābha	<i>hemagolakṣa</i>	<i>gosahasra</i>	<i>gosahasra</i>
Dāmodara	<i>sarvasukhāni</i>	<i>goyajña</i>	<i>sarvakratu</i>

The concluding parts of the two sections differ. The passage from MBh 13 closes with the results of practising the observance for an entire year. Interestingly, these are not results that are similar to that of Vedic sacrifices but quite worldly ones, namely recollection of former existences and gold (lines 29–30). Finally, the passage from MBh 13 adds

for the worship of Dāmodara (line 3021), while in the passage in MBh 14 it is the result of a cow sacrifice (line 28).

⁷⁰ It remains unclear why no second reward is mentioned for the last two months. If line 29 would be deleted, two additional results for these two months would be mentioned, but this reading is not supported by any manuscript used for the critical edition of the MBh.

that at the end of the observance Brahmins should be fed and provided with ghee (lines 31–32).

On the contrary, the concluding passage from MBh 14 mentions a few alternatives to the observance in the way just described. The first alternative is mere fasting, which obviously means fasting without worshipping Viṣṇu as a month deity. It is striking that this is not explicitly forbidden as one would expect from a Vaiṣṇava text. However, the fact that one receives only half of the results compared to the observance that also includes worship should probably rather be read as a warning than as an invitation. The second alternative is practising the observance also when the moon passes the lunar mansion of *śravaṇa*, i.e., in addition to the practice on the twelfth *tithi*. This alternative leads to residence in the same heaven with Viṣṇu (lines 3022–3025). Then the text speaks of keeping the observance for an entire year, but instead of promising a desirable result as in the passage from MBh 13, it simply states that it should be performed for yet another year. Only after practising the observance for twelve years, one can obtain residence in the same heaven with Viṣṇu—a result that could more efficiently be achieved by performing it when the moon passes the lunar mansion of *śravaṇa* in addition to the normal practice of the observance, as we have just seen (lines 3026–3029).

Then, in lines 3030–3031, the text offers another alternative with the same results as already mentioned. This alternative seems to be to worship Viṣṇu in the form of the Vedas. In the given context, this probably means that instead of worshipping Viṣṇu in the form of the deities of the months, he should be worshipped in the form of the Vedas which are considered his manifestation. There is evidence of ritual worship of the four Vedas represented by icons, similar to the very common worship of deities represented by icons.⁷¹ It is possible that this kind of ritual worship is meant here, thus including it into Vaiṣṇava lay practice in an inclusivistic manner.

⁷¹ These rituals are attested by works such as the *Devīpurāṇa*, passages attributed to the *Garuḍapurāṇa* and the *Matsyapurāṇa* as quoted by the digester Hemādri in his *Dānakhaṇḍa*. For a detailed examination of these rituals and their textual sources see De Simini 2016a: 305–315.

The very last lines (3032–3035) explicitly explain which substances should be offered to Viṣṇu when worshipping him, and finally pleasures in heaven are promised.

This concluding passage from MBh 14 appears to be very heterogeneous. Several sentences which are loosely connected to the main topic are put together in an order that is not entirely logical. It is quite possible that several of these sentences were interpolated into the text at different points of time.

Niśvāsamukha

The last example that is presented in this paper is from a Śaiva text, namely, the *Niśvāsamukha*. This text is part of the earliest extant Śaiva *tantra*, the *Niśvāsatattvasaṃhitā*. This *tantra* is transmitted in a Nepalese palm-leaf manuscript from the 9th century CE.⁷² Its various parts are of different age. The earliest part (the *Mūlasūtra*) probably dates to 450–550 CE, the *Niśvāsamukha* probably to the end of the 7th century.⁷³

Although part of a Śaiva *tantra*, the *Niśvāsamukha* itself is devoted to non-tantric traditions and thus an important source of information about Śaiva lay religion.⁷⁴ In its third chapter, the *Niśvāsamukha* describes monthly observances that mainly consist of worship of a particular deity on a particular *tithi* in each month of the year, thereby presenting a full calendrical scheme as given in the following table. The deities assigned to each *tithi*, which are known also from other sources,⁷⁵ can be seen in the second column of the table. With two exceptions (that is, the Nāgas and the ancestors [*pitṛ*], who are—strictly speaking—no deities), each of these deities is worshipped in a particular form in each month. These forms are given in the other columns of the table; the figures in the first line refer to the months starting with Mārgaśīrṣa.

⁷² Kathmandu National Archives ms. no. I-277/vi Śaivatantra 103, NGMPP, reel-no. A41/4, see also Goodall 2015: 103–108.

⁷³ Goodall 2015: 35.

⁷⁴ As already mentioned above, Nirajan Kafle is currently preparing a publication on this text together with a critical edition and translation (Kafle forthcoming). I would like to thank him for allowing me to use his material. Furthermore, a forthcoming paper of Peter Bisschop will also deal with the passage presented here.

⁷⁵ See Einoo 2005b.

The reward that can be obtained by this practice is often related to the nature of the deity worshipped. For example, by worshipping Agni one will obtain the world of fire, and by worshipping Yama one will not experience sorrows in hell and obtain an excellent rebirth. These rewards are often the same, regardless of which of the twelve manifestations of the particular deity is worshipped. However, different rewards for each different manifestation worshipped in the respective months are given for three deities, namely, for Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva. These rewards are again results similar to that which can be gained by performing particular Śrauta and Gṛhya sacrifices,⁷⁶ but their allocation to the months differs from the three other sources examined above:

Niśvāsamukha 3				BṛhatS interp. passage	MBh 13	MBh 14
months	Brahmā	Śaṅkara	Viṣṇu			
1	<i>aśvamedha</i>	<i>atirātra</i>	<i>agniṣṭoma</i>	<i>aśvamedha</i>	<i>aśvamedha</i>	<i>aśvamedha</i>
2	<i>rājasūya</i>	<i>vājapeya</i>	<i>atyagni-ṣṭoma</i> ⁷⁷	<i>nṛpasūya</i>	<i>vājapeya</i>	<i>vājapeya</i>
3	<i>sauvarṇa</i> ⁷⁸	<i>aśva-medha</i>	<i>ukthya-medha</i>	<i>vājapeya</i>	<i>rājasūya</i>	<i>rājasūya</i>
4	<i>gavāmaya</i>	<i>naramedha</i>	<i>ṣoḍaśī</i>	<i>atirātra</i>	<i>atirātra</i>	<i>atirātra</i>
5	<i>agniṣṭoma</i> ⁷⁹	<i>rājasūya</i>	<i>vājapeya</i>	<i>ukthya</i>	<i>pauṇḍarika</i>	<i>pauṇḍarika</i>

⁷⁶ The most striking but unsurprising exceptions are the rewards of reaching the world of Rudra (*rudraloka*) and becoming a chief of attendants (*gāṇāpatya*) in the case of the worship of two Śaiva deities. These are typical Śaiva goals; see also nn. 82 and 84.

⁷⁷ This is based on a conjecture proposed by Kafle (forthcoming, note on the translation of this passage, *Niśvāsamukha* 3.128a): *phalaṃ cātyagniṣṭomasya*. The text reads: *phalañ caivāgniṣṭomasya*. The result of this conjecture is that the text mentions all seven forms of the *jyotiṣṭoma* (see n. 32) instead of reduplicating *agniṣṭoma* and lacking *atyagniṣṭoma*.

⁷⁸ *sauvarṇa* (“gold” or “golden, consisting of gold”) could be a synonym of *bahusuvarṇa*, see n. 85.

⁷⁹ The seven rituals from *agniṣṭoma* up to *aptoryāma* in this row of the table are the seven forms of the *jyotiṣṭoma* (see n. 32). The *Niśvāsamukha*

Niśvāsamukha 3				Br̥hatS interp. passage	MBh 13	MBh 14
6	<i>atyagniṣṭoma</i>	<i>sautrāmaṇi</i>	<i>atirātra</i>	<i>agniṣṭoma</i>	<i>agniṣṭoma</i>	<i>agniṣṭoma</i>
7	<i>ukthya</i>	<i>sarvayajña</i> ⁸⁰	<i>aptoryāma</i>	<i>gavāmayana</i>	<i>gavāmaya</i>	<i>gavāṃmedha</i>
8	<i>ṣoḍaśi</i>	<i>gomedha</i>	<i>aśvamedha</i>	<i>puruṣamedha</i>	<i>naramedha</i>	<i>naramedha</i>
9	<i>vājapeya</i>	<i>kanyādāna</i> ⁸¹	<i>rājasūya</i>	<i>sautrāmaṇi</i>	<i>pañcayajña</i>	<i>pañcayajña</i>
10	<i>atirātra</i>	<i>rudraloka</i> ⁸²	<i>gavāmaya</i>	<i>pañcayajña</i>	<i>sautrāmaṇi</i>	<i>sautrāmaṇi</i>
11	<i>aptoryāma</i>	<i>bahurugma</i> ⁸³	<i>naramedha</i>	<i>hemagolakṣa</i>	<i>gosahasra</i>	<i>gosahasra</i>
12	<i>naramedha</i>	<i>gāṇāpatya</i> ⁸⁴	<i>bahusuvarṇa</i> ⁸⁵	<i>sarvasukhāni</i>	<i>goyajña</i>	<i>sarvakratu</i>

(3.63) does not list them separately but uses the expression *sapta somasaṃstha*, the “seven Soma sacrifices.”

⁸⁰ This is a synonym of *sarvakratu* (“all sacrifices”) mentioned in MBh 14, app. I, No. 4, line 3021. I do not think that the Vedic sacrifice called *sarvamedha* (“all-sacrifice,” see Hillebrandt 1867: 154) is meant here, since so far I have not found any evidence that the expressions *sarvakratu* or *sarvayajña* were used for *sarvamedha*.

⁸¹ The term *kanyādāna* (“gift of a girl”) usually designates a sub-rite of the marriage (see, e.g., Kane 21974: 533), but this is not what is meant here. It is rather the donation of a girl (who has been bought from her parents) to a Brahmin (for a description of this donation rite see *Liṅgapurāṇa* 2.40).

⁸² Reaching the world of Rudra (*rudraloka*), a kind of paradise, is a typical goal of Śaiva lays, see, for example, Sanderson 2013: 212.

⁸³ The *Niśvāsattattvasaṃhitā* spells the term *rugma* instead of *rukma* (“gold”) also in other passages, see Kaffle’s remark on the translation of *Niśvāsamukha* 3.103. *bahurugma* is probably by a synonym of *sauvarṇa* and *bahusuvarṇa*, see n. 85.

⁸⁴ “Becoming a chief of attendants” (*gāṇāpatya* [the majority of the mss. used by Kaffle spell the term *gāṇāpatya* instead of the regular form *gāṇapatyā*]), i.e., receiving the position of the chief of Śiva’s divine attendants (*gaṇa*), is also a specific goal of Śaiva “*paurāṇika* religion,” as it is called in Watson, Goodall and Sarma 2013: 250, n. 167. For details of this kind of liberation see *ibid.*: 249–251.

⁸⁵ A ritual called *bahusuvarṇa* (lit. “much gold”) also appears in similar lists of Vedic sacrifices in the *Mahābhārata* (9.49.29c–37, 13.99.10–17, 13.110.5ff.) and is mentioned in inscriptions, for example, in the Bādāmī

We see that in this scheme of the *Niśvāsamukha*, the focus is on the three main deities Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva.⁸⁶ The other deities seem to have been filled in just to complete the picture. I do not think that all these sets of various manifestations of the several lords of the *tithis* refer to actual religious traditions extant at the time of the composition of the *Niśvāsamukha*. Some of these sets may have been designed by the author of the *Niśvāsamukha*, but even the particular sets belonging to Brahmā and Śiva seem to occur in no other text. The only set for which there is plenty of other evidence is that belonging to Viṣṇu.

Here again, just as in the *Baudhāyanagṛhyaparīśiṣṭasūtra* mentioned above (pp. 170ff), the Vaiṣṇava observance connected to the worship of the twelve manifestations of Viṣṇu may have served as a model for the composition of this full calendrical scheme centering around the three main deities, with a focus on Śiva who is worshipped on two days of the half-month.

Conclusions

If this observation is correct and the Vaiṣṇava observance really was the model for the *Niśvāsamukha*, we can draw conclusions about the age of the practice.

6th-century cave inscription (Colas 2003: 232, Sivaramamurti 1948: 204–206). Probably it is a donation of a large amount of gold.

⁸⁶ Śiva is mentioned even a second time, namely, apart from the eighth *tithi* also for the fourteenth *tithi*. The rewards gained by worshipping Śiva on the fourteenth *tithi* do not differ by month. They may, however, be the most desirable ones for lay Śaivas, the main target audience of the *Niśvāsamukha*: “And [if one worships Śiva in this way] on both fortnights, one will accomplish all wishes. [If one worships him] for a year with a concentrated mind [and] without any desire, one will become a [divine] attendant [of Śiva]. [If one worships him] as long as one lives, one [will attain] union with [him]; a sinner will be freed from his faults.” (*Niśvāsamukha* 3.149c–150: *ubhayoḥ pakṣayoś caiva sarvakāmān āpnuyāt* || 149 *saṃvatsareṇa yuktātmā niṣkāmas tu gaṇo bhavet | yāvajjīvena sāyojyaṃ pāpī mucyati kilbiṣāt* || 150). The fourteenth *tithi* is perhaps more often assigned to Śiva than the eighth *tithi* and thus his main *tithi*. This is at least suggested by Einoo’s list of attributions of deities to *tithis* collected in Purāṇas (Einoo 2005b: 105f.). However, Einoo is well aware of the fact that this list is not representative (he calls it an “artificial list”).

We can conclude that by the 7th century the monthly observance devoted to the twelve Vaiṣṇava deities has gained such an importance that the Śaivas wished to have not only a similar Śaiva observance, but also a complete calendrical scheme that included as many deities and thus as many religious traditions as possible, that is, a scheme that incorporated all these religious traditions into their own by means of a model that was actually Vaiṣṇava.

Theoretically this could mean that all the text passages presented in this paper were composed before the 7th century. It is possible that the passage given in all manuscripts of the *Bṛhatsamhitā* indeed belongs to the original form of this text and thus was composed in the 6th century. However, it is not probable that the observance was widespread for very long before that time, at least not in the Brahmanical culture. As mentioned above (p. 172), the early Dharmaśāstras, for example, do not provide much information about observances in general.

Yet, if we know that the observance presented in this paper was popular from the 6th century onward, we still do not know when the text passages presented here were composed. Looking at the content of these passages, however, may allow us to at least speculate about the chronology of these passages (for the following see also the diagram, p. 201).

Among the examined passages, there are two groups that are textually related: the *Viṣṇudharma* and the *Rgvidhāna* on the one hand and the two appendix passages from the MBh on the other.

In both the *Viṣṇudharma* and the *Rgvidhāna*, the relevant passages seem to be text blocks that have been taken from another source. Probably it was not the case that one of the two texts borrowed from the other, but rather that they borrowed the passage independently from each other from another source or other sources. Thus, we cannot ascertain a clear chronological relation between these two passages.

The two appendix passages from the MBh contain similar introductions and thus are clearly related. The statement in these introductions that the observance were taught by Viṣṇu to Nārada perhaps refers to a particular textual work. Both of the two appendix passages could

be based on this common source and not one on the other. The content of the passages is not exactly the same, and if they were to be arranged chronologically it is perhaps more probable that the later one is the passage belonging to MBh 13, which promises two different rewards for each month instead of only one.

The passage that was probably interpolated into the *Bṛhatsaṃhitā*, which lists nearly equal rewards as the passages from the MBh, could have been formulated against the background of these MBh passages, since they could have been widely proliferated in the course of the proliferation of the epic itself. The list of rewards of the *Niśvāsamukha* does not correspond to that from the MBh. Perhaps at the time of the composition of the *Niśvāsamukha* the list of rewards either was not yet fixed or the author of this part of the *Niśvāsamukha* was not well-informed about Vaiṣṇava practices and/or literature.

Finally, I would like to point out again the ritual feature that is described in the *Viṣṇudharma*, the *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* and the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra*, namely, the identification of attendant Brahmins with the deities of the months. Here we do not see any textual relation, but there could be a relation in terms of religious tradition.

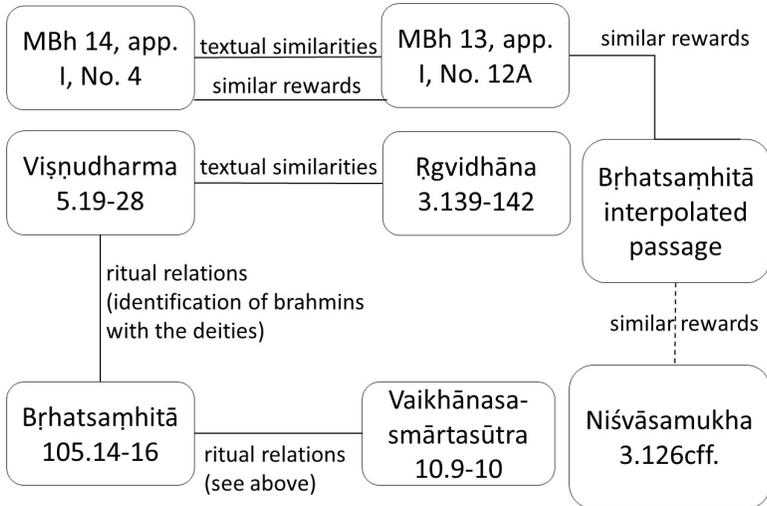
Taken as a whole, the examination of passages dealing with the set of twelve Vaiṣṇava deities conveys an impression that seems to be paradoxical at first glance. On the one hand, this set of deities was widely known and observances devoted to them were widespread—to the extent that the Śaivas also aimed to design similar groups of deities and observances.

On the other hand, if we consider all these passages presented in this paper, we gain the impression that these twelve deities are nowhere at home in these works: In the Sūtras of the Baudhāyana and the Vaikhānasa traditions, the twelve deities appear in rituals that were possibly borrowed from another religious tradition. In the *Bṛhatsaṃhitā*, the *Rgvidhāna*, the *Viṣṇudharma* and in the appendices of MBh 13 and 14, the observances connected with the twelve deities all appear in sections that compile prescriptions for various worship practices and fasts. And in the *Niśvāsamukha*, it is obvious that this observance was

taken from another context. Thus, we get the impression that in all these texts the prescriptions for this observance originate from another source, that this observance and the twelve deities connected with it are not an integral part of the ritualistic or theological system of the respective text. From this we could conclude that this set of twelve deities originates from outside of the Brahmanical sphere. Their successful career thus would be all the more remarkable.

Admittedly, this paper was unable to present hard facts about the chronology of the relevant text passages and the actual historical development of the observance. However, if we take it as a preliminary result of one among several case studies that are necessary for our research topic, it can perhaps nevertheless contribute towards obtaining a fuller picture of the historical developments in early Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva lay practice.

Interrelations of text passages



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