

Concept Of Vrata In The Light Of The Garudapurāṇa

Dr Jumli Nath

Email id jumlinath770@gmail.com

Abstract

In the *Garudapurāṇa*, the concept of *vrata* and its importance have been vividly discussed. *Vrata* involves abstaining from the satisfaction of the senses or indulgence in worldly pleasures. A man undertaking fast should avoid committing sin and evil. There are some rules and regulations of *vrata* guiding the whole process in order to protect and preserve the sanctity of the ritual system. When a *vrata* is started, it should never be left unfinished, nor a new one started before completing it. When and in which month a *vrata* should be performed is clearly stated. The *Garudapurāṇa* devotes several chapters to the treatment of various vratas which are associated with particular dates, months; tithis, nakṣatras, seasons etc.

Key words

*anaṅga trayodaśī vrata, akhaṇḍa dvādaśī vrata, agastyatṛtīyā vrata, cāturmāsya vrata
rambhā tṛtīyā vrata etc.*

Introduction

The *Garudapurāṇa* is one of the most important *Sāttvika Purāṇa* which continues to be a perpetual source of inspiration, awakening the intellect of the human society and thereby exert influence on the religion of the people. Puranic literature carries perennial message for the welfare of the mankind. It closely deals with all kinds of ethical values viz., *vrata, dāna, ācāra, vyāvahāra, prāyaścitta, āsauca* etc. *Vrata* is one of the most widely used words in the Hindu religious and ritualistic literature. From ancient time *vrata* plays a significant role in Hindu religion and society and it continues to be practised by a number of Hindus. Etymologically *vrata* signifies religious vow or promise because it chooses. The

Garuḍapurāṇa says “*vrata* is that rule and regulation of śāstras which is performed by the devotee¹”. The *Nirukta* also says “*annamapi vratamucyate*²”. The term *vrata* denotes a religious practice to carry out certain obligations with a view to achieve divine blessing for fulfilment of one or several desires. The doors of the *vratas* are open to one and all especially the lower castes and women. *Vrata* has great significance in almost all the Purāṇas because the Purāṇas have discussed several types of *vratas* which are important source of Hindu religion and society. The fasting constitutes an important item in the observation of *vrata*.

Vrata involves abstaining from the satisfaction of the senses or indulgence in worldly pleasures. A man undertaking fast should avoid committing sin and evil. There are some rules and regulations of *vrata* guiding the whole process in order to protect and preserve the sanctity of the ritual system. These rules are summarized in chapter number 128 of the *Garuḍa Purāṇa*. According to these rules a man should not take bell metal, potherbs, honey, grain, *koradūṣaka*, nor chew any beetle leaf, not take meals in other’s house³ and he should avoid flowers, perfumes, unguents, collieries, use of toothbrushes, new cloth or ornament and such like things of luxury while fasting⁴. Besides these he should control his mind and senses, and renounces all kinds of talk with women, śudras and degraded persons⁵. The fasting may be destroyed by gambling, by sleeping in day time, by having sexual intercourse with woman or by frequent drinking water⁶. Forbearance, truth, clemency, charity, cleanliness of body and mind, control of the senses, worship of divine god, making oblation to fire, happiness and home celebration are the ten general virtues in all *vratas*⁷.

When a *vrata* is started, it should never be left unfinished, nor a new one started before completing it. But a *vrata* may be broken through anger, greed or incontinence, and then it should be atoned for by three days fast and a clean shave of the head⁸. In case of a *brāhmaṇa* swooning away in course of a *vrata*, he should be enlivened with milk and cold applications⁹.

Importance of performing vratas

Garuḍapurāṇa deals with the concept of *vrata* along with its importance very vividly. When and in which month a *vrata* should be performed is clearly stated. On the first day of the lunar fortnight (*pratipada*) one may fast and pray for the god *Kubera* and *Vaiśvānara* for prosperity. On the second day of lunar fortnight (*dviṭyā*) one prays to *Yama*, *Lakṣmī* and

Viṣṇu for wealth. On *trītiyā Śiva* and *Pārvatī* are worshiped and on *pañcami* Lord *Viṣṇu* is worshiped. On *ṣaṣṭhī*, one prays to *Kārtikeya* and *Sūrya* and on *Saptamī* to *Sūrya* only. On the tenth day of the lunar fortnight (*daśamī*) is worshipped *Yama* and *Candra* and *ekādaśī* is allocated for praying to the sages. On *dvādaśī* Lord *Viṣṇu* is worshiped. On the thirteenth and fourteenth lunar days the god of love and Lord *Śiva* are worshipped respectively. The fifteenth day of the lunar fortnight (*pañcadaśī*) is earmarked for *Brahmā* and the pitṛs for wealth and on *amāvasyā*, Sun and other *nakṣatra* are worshipped for the fulfilment of all desires¹⁰.

Different types of vratas

The *Garuḍapurāṇa* devotes several chapters to the treatment of various vratas which are associated with particular dates, months; tithis, nakṣatras, seasons etc. as discussed below:

- (a) *Anaṅga trayodaśī vrata*- The *Anaṅga trayodaśī vrata* should be performed on the *trayodaśī* tithi in the month of *Mārgaśīrṣa*. By performing this *vrata* for a whole year, the performer attains a good wife, good children, good health and good luck¹¹.
- (b) *Akhaṇḍa dvādaśī vrata*- The *Akhaṇḍa dvādaśī vrata* should be practised on the twelve day of the moon's increase in the month of *Mārgaśīrṣa* to the worship of the God *Viṣṇu*. The vow is practised by the five products which are obtained from cows. It consists of cow's milk, curd, clarified butter, cow's urine and cow dung. Gifts of alms to the brāhmaṇas should be made at the close of this *vrata*. One, who performs this *vrata* for a year, enjoys pleasure of fatherhood and an elevated status in heaven in the life next¹².
- (c) *Agastyatrītyā vrata*- This *vrata* should be celebrated on the three days immediately before the Sun passes into the sign of Virgo. The man who observes this *vrata* enjoys all wishes of life¹³.
- (d) *Rambhā trītyā vrata*- A man attains good luck, opulence and pleasure of fatherhood by practising the *Rambhā trītyā vrata* which should be undertaken on the third lunar day of the month of *Mārgaśīrṣa*¹⁴.
- (e) *Cāturmāsya vrata*- The *Cāturmāsya vrata* should be performed on the eleventh lunar day in the month of *Āṣāḍha* by worshipping God *Viṣṇu*. The devotee who practices this vow shall attain to the region of *Viṣṇu*¹⁵.

- (f) Māsopavāsākhya vrata- This *vrata* is imperatively obligatory for women, anchorites and forest dwelling hermits. The performer shall undertake this *vrata*, first on the day of the eleventh phase of the moon's increase in the month of *Āśvina* and which is to be continued for the next consecutive thirty days. By performing this *vrata* one can enjoy happiness of life and residence in heaven in the next¹⁶.
- (g) Bhīṣmapañcaka vrata- Another well-known *vrata* is *Bhīṣmapañcaka vrata*. The *Bhīṣmapañcaka vrata* should be performed in the month of *Kārtika*, on *ekādaśī tithi* in *śuklapakṣa* to worship the ancestors and God *Viṣṇu*. The prayers continue from *ekādaśī* to *puṇṇimā*. On the first day the feet of the divine image (*Viṣṇu*) should be worshipped with lotus flowers, the second on his thighs, the third day on his navel, the fourth day on his shoulders and the fifth day on his head. During the entire term the devotee has to sleep on the ground. He eats cow dung on the first day. Cow's urine is drunk on the second day. Milk is partaken on the third day, curd on the fourth and *pañcagavya* on the fifth. If a devotee successfully completes this *vrata*, all his desires are satisfied¹⁷.
- (h) Śivarātri vrata – *Śivarātri vrata* is the most famous of all *vratas*. This *vrata* should be undertaken on the fourteenth lunar day in the dark fortnight in between *Māgha* and *Phālguna*. By performing this *vrata*, one attains all pleasures of life and the liberation of self as well¹⁸.
- (i) Ekādaśī vrata- The *Ekādaśī vrata* should be observed on the eleventh lunar day in both the fortnights. This involves simple fasting. One who practises this *vrata* would be able to get all the good things of life and can ascend to heaven after death¹⁹.
- (j) Bhaimī Ekādaśī vrata- The renowned *Bhīmasena* fasted on the eleventh lunar day marked by asterism *Hastā* in the month of *Māgha* and he was instantly exonerated from his obligations to the pitṛs in consequence. So, this *vrata* is called *Bhaimī Ekādaśī vrata*²⁰.
- (k) Pratipadādi vrata- The *pratipada vrata* should be practised on the day of the moon in different months of the year. The performer gets different benefits according to the months²¹.
- (l) Saptamī vrata- To please the Sun god one should be performed a *vrata* on the seventh lunar day by reciting this *mantra* “*om khakholkāyāmṛtatvaṃ priya saṃgamo bhava sadā svāhā*”. This *vrata* is also called *Mārica saptamī vrata*. By performing this *vrata*

the performer enjoys all objects of life. Other *Saptamī* vratas like *Phalasaptamī*, *Anoudasaptamī* are also mentioned in this chapter of the *Purāna*²².

- (m) *Rohiṇī aṣṭamī vrata*- The *Rohiṇī aṣṭamī vrata* should be observed on the eighth lunar day marked by the asterism *Rohiṇī* in the month of *Bhādra* to worship Lord *Kriṣṇa*. The performance of the *vrata* absolves its performer from the sins of his three previous rebirths²³.
- (n) *Budhāstamī vrata*- This *vrata* is observed on *Aṣṭamī tithi* if the day also happens to be a Wednesday. The performer enjoys endless prosperity through the *vrata*²⁴.
- (o) *Aśokāstamī vrata*- The *Aśokāṣṭamī vrata* is also performed on the eighth lunar day in the month of *Caitra* marked by the asterism *Punarvasu* with reciting a *mantra*. One who perform this *vrata* and eats eight buds of *aśoka* flowers he does not suffer any bereavement in life²⁵.
- (p) *Mahānavamī vrata*- The *Garuḍapurāṇa* states that the *Navamī vrata* is observed on the ninth lunar day marked by the asterism *Uttarāṣāḍa* in the month of *Āśvina*. Goddess *Durgā* is worshipped in the *vrata* by reciting this *mantra* “*durge durge rakṣiṇi svāhā*”. The goddess *Durgā* should be worshipped as possessed of eight, ten or sixteen hands. Similarly the different manifestations of the goddess such as *Ugracaṇḍā*, *Pracaṇḍā*, *Caṇḍogrā*, *Caṇḍanāyikā*, *Caṇḍā*, *Caṇḍavatī*, *Candarūpā* and *Aticaṇḍikā* should be successfully worshipped. The result of such worship is the attainment of pleasure in this life and that of salvation in the life next²⁶.
- (q) *Vira Navamī vrata*- This *vrata* is performed by the performer having fasted on the ninth lunar day in the month of *Āśvina*, should worship the goddess *Durgā* and the brāhmaṇas, and mentally recite a hundred thousand times the *mantra* which is held as principally sacred to her²⁷.
- (r) *Damanākhya Navamī vrata*- The *Damanākhya Navamī vrata* should be performed on the ninth lunar day in the month of *Caitra* to worship the goddess *Durgā* by offering *damanaka* flowers. By performing this *vrata* a man acquires enough merit to be all desires, sufferings and defeats in life²⁸.
- (s) *Digdaśamī vrata*- In this *vrata*, a votary should worship the goddess *Durgā* on the tenth lunar day in the month of *Āśvina*. One who practises this *vrata* gets suzerainty of the universe²⁹.

- (t) Śrāvanādvādaśī vrata- A devotee gets worldly enjoyment and salvation as well by performing the Śrāvanādvādaśī vrata on the twelvth lunar days.³⁰

Conclusion

Vrata is the supreme path to get the blessings from the Almighty. From the religious point of view through *vrata* people seek happiness, good sons, wealth, a health, long life, kingdom etc. From the social point of view it can be said that each and every *vrata* is depicted with utmost care for the society. Through *sankalpa* of *vrata* one not only start his *vrata* but he also rope himself with all good things and stay away from all bad things. Fast is a way of gaining internal purity which refreshes one's body. The *Garuḍapurāṇa* has depicted various *vratas* systematically. In our observation the *vrata* has a very special place among the religious rites which a Hindu must obey throughout his life. It is a very simple or easy way to satisfy religious and spiritual desires of people. The doors of *vrata* are open to all, because it is a process of communicating religious and cultural tradition from one generation to another. Our society is undergoing modernisation every day. Even then, this particular kind of religious practices has a very important role to play as for the spiritual upliftment of the society is concerned From the religious point of view

FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCE :

1. *Garuḍapurāṇa*, 1. 128.1
2. *Niruktam*, 2. 13
3. *Garuḍapurāṇa*, 1.128. 5
4. *Ibid.* 1. 128. 6
5. *Ibid.* 1. 128. 3
6. *Ibid.* 1. 128. 7(b). 8(a)
7. *Ibid.* 1. 128. 8(b). 9
8. *Ibid.*1. 128. 19
9. *Ibid.*1 128. 20
10. *Ibid.* 1.16. 1-8
11. *Ibid.* 1. 117. P.291-293
12. *Ibid.*1.118. 1-5

13. Ibid. 1. 119. 1-6

14. Ibid. 1. 120. 1-11

15. idaṁ vrataṁ mayā deva grhītaṁ purastastava//

nirvighnaṁ siddhimāpnotu prasanne keśava//

grhīte'sminvrate deva yady apūrṇe mriyāmy aham//

tanme bhavatu sampūrṇa tvatprasādājjanārdana/ Ibid. 1. 121. 1-9

16. Ibid. 1. 122. 1-7

17. Ibid. 1. 123. 1-15

18. Ibid. 1. 124. 1-23

19. Ibid. 1. 125. 1-7

20. Ibid. 1. 127. 1-20

21. Ibid. 1. 129. 1-32

22. Ibid. 1. 130. 1-8

23. Ibid. 1. 131. 1-21

24. Ibid. 1. 132. 1-21

25. tvāmaśoka! harābhīṣṭa! madhumāśasamudbhava/

pivāmi śokasantapto māmaśokaṁ sadā kuru//

G.P, 1.133.2

26. Ibid. 1. 133. 3-18, and 134. 1-6

27. Ibid. 1. 135. 1

28. Ibid. 1. 135. 2

29. Ibid. 1. 135. 3

30. Ibid. 1. 134. 8

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. ORIGINAL WORKS

1. *Śrīmadbhāgavatamahāpurāṇam*, Eng. tr. by Manmatha Nath Dutt, Eastern Book Linkers, Delhi, 2009.

2. *Śrīmadbhāgavata - Mahāpurāṇam* with Śrīdhara Swāmi's commentary, ed. by Pandit Ramtej Pandey a, Delhi, 2011.
3. *Bhāgavata Purāṇam*, ed. by Jagadishlal Sastri, Matilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1983
4. *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*, ed. by Jagadishlal Sastri, Matilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1987
5. *Garuḍa Purāṇa*, ed. by Acharya Pañchānan Tarkaratna, Nababharat Publishers' Reprint, Kolkata, 1416
6. *Garuḍa Purāṇa*, ed. by R.N. Sharma, Nag Publisher's, 3rd edit. Delhi, 2004
7. *Garuḍa Purāṇa- A Study* by N. Gangadharan, All India Kashiraj Trust, Varanasi, 1972
8. *Garuḍa Purāṇam, Ancient Indian Tradition and Mythology, Vol-12, Part-1* Matilal Banārsidāss, Delhi, 1978
9. *Manusāṃhitā*, tr. by Kiran Sarma, Veda Vidyalaya, Guwahati, Asom, 1998
10. *Padmapurāṇa- A Study* by Asoka Chatterjee. Published by- The Principal, Sanskrit College, Bankim Chatterjee street. Calcutta 1967.
11. *Padma Purāṇa, (Sṛṣṭi, Bhūmi, Svarga, Brahma, Pātāla, Uttara and Kriyāyogakhaṇḍa)* ed. by Panchanan Tarkaratna, Calcutta, Nababharat Publishers, 1396 B.S.
12. *Padma Purāṇa, (Uttara Khaṇḍa)*, Calcutta, Gurumandal Series, 1959.

B. MODERN WORKS

1. Acharya, K. Tripathi, *Paurāṇika Viśayānukramanikā*, Chowkhamba Surabharati Prakashan, 1ST edit. Varanasi, 1980
2. Banerjee, S.C. *Studies in the Mahāpurāṇas*, Punthi Pustak, Kolkata, 1991
3. Banerjee, M. *Invitation to Hinduism*, Arnold-Heimann publishers, New Delhi, 1978
4. Bernard, Theos, *Hindu Philosophy*, Delhi, Matilal Banarsidass, 1999

5. Bhagavati, Ghana Kanta, *The Bhāgavata Purāṇa- A Socio-Cultural Study*, Vohra Publishers & Distributors, Allahabad, 1988
6. Bhattacharyya, Narendra Nath, *History of Indian Cosmological Ideas*, Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi, 1971
7. Bhattacharya, Siddhesvara, *The Philosophy of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavata*, Vol-I, Visva-Bharati Santiniketan, Calcutta, 1960
8. Chennakesavan Sarasvati, *A Critical Study of Hinduism* Motilal Banarsidass, 1974
9. Dange, Sadasiva Ambadas, *Encyclopaedia of Puranic Beliefs and Practices*, Vol-I(A-CO, Navarang, New Delhi, 1986.
10. Goyal, S.R. *A Religious History of Ancient India* Kusumanjali Prakashan, Meerut, 1986
11. Hazra, R.C. *Studies in the Purāṇic Records on Hindu Rites and Customs*, Matilal Banarsidass, 2nd edit., Delhi, 1975
12. Kanal S. P *The Philosophy of Religion* Lotus Publishers, New Delhi, 1984
13. Kane, Pandurang Vaman *History of Dharmaśāstra* Vol. ii, Part ii, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona, 1974
14. Layle, P.G. *Studies in Devi Bhāgavata*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1973
15. Macdonell, Arthur A. *History of Sanskrit literature*, Appleton, New York, 1900
16. Prasad, Ramanuj, *Know the Purāṇas*, Pustak Mahal, Delhi, 2009
17. Pruthi, Rajkumar, *An Introduction to Purāṇas*, UBS Publications Distributors Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 2005
18. Rukmani, T.S. *A Critical Study of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, Varanasi, 1970
19. Pandey Rajbali, *Hindu Saṁskāras*, By Motilal Banarsidass, 1969

10. P. Vora Dhairyabala, . *Evolution of Morals in the Epic* , Lamington Road, Bombay - 7, 1960
11. Sastri Haragovinda,(ed. By) *Amarakoṣa* of Amarasimha, Pt Chowhamba Sanskrit Series (CSS), Varanasi, 1970.
12. Shastri, Puspendra, *Introduction to Purāṇas*, Rāstriya Sanskrit Sansthān, New Delhi, 1995
13. Singh, Nag Sharan, *An Introduction to Purāṇas*, Nag Publishers, 1st edit., Delhi, 1985
14. Vaidya, C.V. *History of Sanskrit Literature*, (3 Vols Set) Parimal Publication, Delhi, 2005
15. Vyas, Ramnarayan, *The Synthetic Philosophy of the Bhāgavata*, Meharchand Lachmandas, Daryaganj, Delhi, 1974
16. Winternitz, M. *A History of Indian literature*, Vol. I, Matilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1981

C. ENCYCLOPAEDIA, DICTIONARIES AND JOURNALS

1. *A Sanskrit Dictionary*, Monier Williams, Delhi, Matilal Banarsidass, 2002
2. *Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. IV. G.J. Lardon, R. Bhattacharya & K.H. Potter, Delhi, Matilal Banarsidass, 2010
3. *Encyclopedia Religion and Ethics*, Vol. IV, VI, VIII, X, James Hastings, Edinburgh: T& T Clark, 1908
4. *Purāṇic Encyclopedia*, Vettam Moni, Delhi. Matilal Banarsidass, Reprint 1984

5. *The Cultural Heritage Of India*, Vol. II, ed. by S.K. De, U.N. Gosh, A.D. Pusalkar and R.C. Hazra, Calcutta, Ramkrishna Mission of Culture, 2000
6. *Sanskrit English Dictionary*, Vaman Shivram Apte, Delhi, Matilal Banarsidass, 1970