

Phela Sthāpana : The Scientific and Spiritual Essence of Vaikhanasa Temple Construction

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Abstract : This article explores phelasthāpana a pivotal ritual in the Vaikhanasa Agama Shastra, integral to temple construction. As a core component of panchavidhapratishtha [five types of installations], phelasthāpana sanctifies the garbhālaya [sanctum sanctorum], infusing the temple with divine energy. Drawing from authoritative Vaikhanasa texts, the study details the phela's [sacred box] construction, the precise placement of sacred items (soils, gems, metals, and symbols), and the astrologically determined timing and locations for installation. The ritual's scientific precision, rooted in measurements and Vedic mantras, complements its spiritual significance, fostering prosperity, societal growth, and environmental harmony. By elucidating the ritual's methodology and benefits, this article underscores its role as a cornerstone of Vaikhanasa temple architecture, offering valuable insights for scholars, architects, and practitioners seeking to preserve India's spiritual heritage.

Keywords : Garbhaprakshapanam, Phelasthāpana, Māna, Unmāna, Pramāna, Dhruvasamsthapanam, garbhālaya, Bali, Sacrificial, Dwarapalaka, sasyābhivridhi, Gajadanta.

Introduction - आगमोक्तविधानेन कलौ देवान्यजेत्सुधीः

The above verse from the Bruhath tantra sara (39 sloka) informs us that to worship the Supreme Being in the form of a vigraha [idol], one must adhere to the principles of the Āgama Shastras. According to the Agama Shastra's, by constructing temples following precise measurements such as मान [māna], उन्मान [unmāna], and प्रमाण [pramāna], installing the vigraha [idol] in a consecrated manner, and performing archana [worship], one can attain liberation (moksha). The Āgama Shastras encompass a wide array of subjects, including temple construction, vigraha [idol] crafting, vigraha [idol] installation (pratishtha), archana [worship], स्नपन [snapana, ritual bathing], उत्सव [utsava, festivals], prāyashchitta [atonement rituals], tattva jnana [philosophical knowledge], and ashtanga yoga [eight-fold path of yoga]. These scriptures are categorized into various traditions such as Shaiva, Vaishnava, and Shakteya. Among the Vaishnava Āgamas, the Sri Vaikhanasa Āgama stands out as the most prominent and ancient. The Vaikhanasa Āgama was taught by the great sage Vikhanasa, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, to his four disciples: Bhrugu, Marichi, Atri, and Kashyapa. Within this scripture, temple installation (ālayapratishtha) is a crucial aspect. Generally, when we think of pratishtha, we associate it with the installation of the vigraha [idol] in the

garbhālaya [sanctum sanctorum]. However, according to the VaikhanasaShastra, for a temple to attain complete sanctity, five types of installations (pratishthas) must be performed. Only then is the temple considered fully consecrated. Among these five types of installations, one is the PhelaSthāpana Before delving into the details of these five types of installations; let us first explore the meaning and significance of pratishtha itself. What is Pratishtha? Kashyapa Maharshi says in his Jnana Kanda as follows

अथविष्णोर्देवेशस्यप्रतिष्ठाविधिं व्याख्यास्यामिसोऽव्ययः सर्वव्याप्याकाशोपमः, निष्कलः,
परमात्माज्ञानेन भक्त्याचयुक्तस्यान्तस्सन्निहितो भवति। “आत्मागुहायानिहितोऽस्यजन्तो” रिति श्रुतिः
‘तस्माद्भक्तिमतातेन सकलं सङ्कल्प्य भक्त्या मन्त्रैश्च प्रतिष्ठापिते बिम्बे भक्तानुक्रमया सकलः तद्भिम्बे समाविष्टः

देवः प्रतिष्ठितो भवेत्। अव्यक्तं शाश्वतं अनादिमध्यान्तमतीन्द्रियदेवैरप्यनभिलक्ष्यं यद्वैष्णवं पदं तत्राप्तिफलं तददर्शनं तस्य मूलं प्रतिष्ठा’ इति (kashyapajnanakanda page 27) Through these verses, the formless and all-pervading Paramatma is conceptualized as having a form with true devotion, invoked into a divine and auspicious vigraha [idol], and worshipped through archana [worship]. Such archana [worship] can lead to liberation (moksha). Thus, the process fundamental to archana [worship], which is the primary means to attain moksha, is called pratishtha. This is the meaning of the term pratishtha as expounded by the Maharshi The Five Types of Pratishtha In the Vaikhanasa Shastra, the process of pratishtha encompasses five distinct types of installations, collectively known as पञ्चविधप्रतिष्ठा [Panchavidha Pratishtha]. These are described as follows:

आद्येष्टकानां विन्यासो गर्भप्रक्षेपणं तथा।
मूर्धेष्टकाख्यां न्यासं च ध्रुवसंस्थापनं तथा।
महाप्रतिष्ठाश्रेष्ठा च प्रतिष्ठापञ्चधा स्मृता॥ (samurtaarchanadhikaram, chapter, 29)

आद्येष्टकान्यासः [Adyeshtakanayasa] This refers to the placement of the first brick, also known as प्रथमशिलेष्टकान्यासः [Prathama Shileshtakanayasa]. It is a ritual performed at the commencement of temple construction. गर्भप्रक्षेपणम् [Garbhaprakshepanam] This involves the installation of the phela [sacred box] in the garbhālaya [sanctum sanctorum]. It is the central focus of this article. मूर्धेष्टकान्यासः [Murdheshtakanayasa] This is the placement of the final brick at the completion of the vimana shikhara [temple spire]. It is also referred to as समाप्येष्टकान्यासः [Samaptyeshtakanayasa] or अन्त्येष्टकान्यासः [Antyeshtakanayasa]. ध्रुवसंस्थापनम् [Dhruvasamsthapanam] After the construction of the vimana shikhara [temple spire], the deity is installed in the garbhālaya [sanctum sanctorum] as an immovable vigraha [idol], known as achalabera. This vigraha [idol] is crafted from materials such as clay, wood, metal, or stone and is established in forms representing yoga, bhoga, vira, or viraha in the brahma, daivika, or mānusha positions. महाप्रतिष्ठा [Mahapratishtha] After the temple is fully constructed, this process involves the installation of various deities, including kautuka, उत्सव [utsava, festival], स्नपन [snapana, ritual bathing], and बलि [bali, sacrificial] forms, along with द्वारपालक [dwarapalaka, door guardians], vimana palakas [spire guardians], and other attendant deities throughout the temple. Thus, these five types of pratishtha are prescribed in the scriptures to be performed methodically in a temple.

Among these पञ्चविधप्रतिष्ठा [Panchavidha Pratishtha], phelasthāpanaholds significant importance.

The Significance of PhelaSthāpana : Among the five types of installations described earlier, one is गर्भप्रक्षेपणम्[Garbhaprakshapanam], which is also referred to by names such as GarbhanyasaGarbhabhajana [sacred vessel], Garbhaphela and PhelaSthāpana This procedure is clearly delineated in the Vaikhanasa, Panchārātra, and Shaiva Āgamas as a mandatory ritual to be performed with precision. In this article, the method as prescribed in the texts of the Vaikhanasa Shastra is elaborated in detail. Why is this procedure called Garbhanyasa? The phelasthāpana is performed in the garbhālaya[sanctum sanctorum], which is considered the vital core of the temple located at the center of the village. Hence, it is named Garbhanyasa[installation of the sacred core]. Kashyapa Maharshi's statement is as follows:

सगर्भापृथ्वीसूतेविगर्भाशस्यनाशनी।

तस्मात्सर्वप्रयत्नेनगर्भसंस्थाप्यैवनिवेशयेत्॥(kashyapajnanakanda page 29)

Through this verse, it is conveyed that garbhanyasa sanctifies the land. Furthermore, it fosters the prosperity of crops (sasyābhivridhi), the growth of the site (sthalābhivridhi), and the development of the place (sthānābhivridhi) in the village. Conversely, failure to perform this ritual leads to their destruction. Therefore, the Maharshi emphasizes that phelasthāpana must be diligently performed.

Characteristics of the Phela

पेलायामविशालं त्रिपञ्चसप्तनवैकादशत्रयोदशपञ्चदशसप्तदशैकोनविंशति एकविंशति त्रयोविंशति पञ्चविंशत्यङ्गुलं यथाक्रमेणैकतलादिद्वादशतलान्तविमानानां गर्भभाजनंतद्वित्युच्चंत द्विस्तारसममष्टांशो नष्टभागो न पञ्चभागो न वातस्य बाहुल्यमेकद्वित्रिचतुर्वनवकोष्ठयुतामच्छद्रां रम्यां फेलां कारयति। कोष्ठे भित्तुच्चं विस्तारार्धं त्रिभागैकभागं पिधानं यथोचितमर्धाङ्गुलं भित्तुच्चं निर्व्रणं वृत्तं चतुरश्रं वा शुद्धेन ताम्रेण कारयेदथ वा तत्प्रसादविष्कम्भंतदष्टांशो नंतत्पादविहीनं वा फेलायामविशालं पूर्ववच्छुभे कर्तुं नुकूलेन क्षत्रे अनुकूलराशौ शुभोदये गर्भन्यासं कारयेत्।

(vimanarchanakalpampage 52)

The above comprehensive statement by Marichi Maharshi elaborates the measurements of the phela [sacred box] in detail. It should be constructed as a square with a length and width of either 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, or 25 inches, depending on the scale. Alternatively, it may be made equal to the width of the vimana [temple spire] wall or proportional to 8, 6, or 5 parts of the wall's width. The phela [sacred box] should be crafted from gold, silver, or copper, though most texts prescribe copper as the preferred metal.

The interior of the phela [sacred box] should be designed with nine compartments, each measuring 4 yavas [2 cm], to accommodate precious items such as gems, diamonds, and valuable metals. A lid must also be provided for the box. Let us now examine how the construction of this phela[sacred box] is described in various texts, noting some differences.

According to Atri Maharshi in the SamurtaArchanadhikaram (Chapter 10, Verse 39), the phela [sacred box] should be made of copper, measuring 8 inches in length and width, 4 inches in height, with a lid, and divided into nine compartments, each measuring 3 yavas [1.5 cm]. Bhrigu Maharshi, in the Yajñadhikaram (Chapter 7), instructs that the phela [sacred box] should be constructed from gold, silver, or copper, in an octagonal or circular shape, with dimensions not less than 4 or 8 parts of the garbhālaya [sanctum sanctorum] wall's measurement. Kashyapa Maharshi, in the Kashyapa Jnana Kanda (PAGE 29),

specifies that the phela [sacred box] should be square, measuring 8 inches in length and width, 2 inches in height, with a lid, and divided into compartments measuring 6 or 4 yavas [3 cm or 2 cm]. In the Khiladhikaram, Bhṛigu Maharshi(5TH CHAPTER,9 while aligning with the methods of other samhitas, emphasizes that the interior should ideally have 25 compartments, with an internal length of 96 yavas [48 cm] and a width of 64 yavas [32 cm] for optimal construction. What Should Be Placed in the Phela? The phela [sacred box] is not only meant to contain precious gems and valuable items but also a variety of other materials. Each item is associated with specific beneficial outcomes, as prescribed. Let us examine these in detail.

Eight Types of Soil (अष्टमृत्तिका: [Ashtamrittikah]) The following eight types of soil must be placed in the phela [sacred box]: समुद्र, पर्वत, नदीतीर, सस्यक्षेत्र, वल्मीक, कुलीरवास, गजदन्त, वृषविशाणोधृता। समुद्र [Samudra]: Soil from the ocean. पर्वत [Parvata]: Soil from a mountain. नदीतीर [Nadeeteera]: Soil from a riverbank. सस्यक्षेत्र [Sasyakshetra]: Soil from a fertile agricultural field. वल्मीक [Valmeeka]: Soil from an anthill. कुलीरवास [Kuleeravasa]: Soil from a place inhabited by crabs गजदन्त [Gajadanta]: Soil from a place touched by an elephant's tusk. वृषविशाणोधृता [Vrishavishanodhrita]: Soil lifted by a bull's horn. **Gems** The following superior gems must be placed in the phela [sacred box]: vajra [diamond], vaidurya [cat's eye], mauktika [pearl], sphatika [crystal], pushyakanta [yellow sapphire], chandrakanta [moonstone], neelashankha [blue sapphire], and brahmamani [a sacred gem]. **Minerals** The following minerals must be included: manashshila [realgar], anjana [collyrium], haritala [orpiment], shyama [black mineral], shitasaurashtra [cool Saurashtra clay], gorochana [cow bile pigment], gairika [red ochre], and padarasa [mercury].

Grains : The following grains should be crafted from metals such as gold, silver, copper, brass, or lead and placed in the phela [sacred box]: shali [rice], neevara [wild rice], masha [black gram], kuluddha [horse gram], nishpava [flat bean], tila [sesame], mudga [green gram], and yava [barley].

Flower Shapes Shapes of the following flowers, made of gold, must be placed in the phela [sacred box]: padma [lotus], utpala [blue lotus], kumuda [white water lily], neelotpala [blue water lily], and kalhara [white lotus]. **Symbols of the Four Varnas** Symbols representing the four varnas [social classes], crafted in gold, must be placed in the phela [sacred box]. For Brahmana: srik, sruva, kamandalu [water pot], juhu, upajuhu [sacrificial ladles]. For Kshatriya: chatra [umbrella], chamara [fly-whisk], ankusha [goad], dhvaja [flag]. For Vaishya: tula [balance], toda [measuring rod]. For Shudra: yuga langala [yoke and plough, used for tilling fields]. **Animal Forms and Vishnu's Weapons** Forms of gaja [elephant], garuda [eagle], and kachchapa [tortoise], along with Vishnu's five weapons (panchayudha)—chakra [discus], shankha [conch], gada [mace], sharanga [bow], and Asi [sword]—must be crafted in gold and placed in the phela [sacred box]. **Auspicious Symbols** The eight auspicious symbols (ashtamangala), including shrivatsa [sacred mark], poornakumbha [full pot], bheri [drum], adarsha [mirror], matsyayugma [pair of fish], ankusha [goad], shankhaavartam [conch spirals], must be made of gold and placed in the nine compartments of the phela [sacred box]. (vimanarchanakalpam page 52)

In the SamurtaArchanadhikaram (Chapter 10), Atri Maharshi additionally mentions shilajam [a type of clay] as a soil to be included. In the Yajñadhikaram (Chapter 7) by Bhrigu Maharshi and the Kashyapa Jnana Kanda (page 29) by Kashyapa Maharshi, it is specifically prescribed that musical instruments, bark of sacred trees, and waters from holy rivers (punya tirthas) should also be placed in the phela [sacred box]. In the Khiladhikaram (Chapter 5), Bhrigu Maharshi elaborates on the items representing the varna symbols, including: For Brahmana: yajñopavita [sacred thread], maunji [sacred girdle], danda [staff], kundika [water pot], veda [scriptures], kurcha [sacred grass], sruva [ladle], ajyasthali [ghee pot], and other sacrificial vessels. For Kshatriya: haara [necklace], makuta [crown], kundala [earrings], angada [armlet], valaya [bracelet], hasta bandha [wristband], mekhala [girdle], dhanuh [bow], shankha [conch], chakra [discus], gada [mace], pasha [noose], ratha [chariot], turaga [horse], bheri [drum], shankhu [conch], pratoda [goat], chatra [umbrella], pataka [banner], ashtamangala [eight auspicious symbols], sauvarna [golden forms], kurmarupa [tortoise form], vajra [thunderbolt], ashani [lightning]. For Vaishya: tula [balance], toda [measuring rod]. For others: yuga, langali [plough]. Thus, the Vaikhanasa Shastra elaborately prescribes the various materials to be placed in the phela [sacred box].

Placement of Items in the Nine Compartments of the Phela The nine compartments of the phela [sacred box] are designated as follows: the central compartment represents Brahma, surrounded by eight compartments corresponding to the ashtadikpalakas [guardians of the eight directions], starting with Indra. Thus, the central compartment is the Brahma sthāna [MID position], the eastern compartment is the Indra sthāna [Indra's position], and so forth. When placing items in these compartments, the Vedic mantras of Brahma and the ashtadikpalakas [guardians of the eight directions], which signify their grandeur, are chanted. The items should be placed in the following order: first, the soils (mr̥ttika), followed by gems (ratna), then minerals (dhatu), seeds (beeja), and finally the symbols of the varnas [social classes]. The panchayudha [five weapons of Vishnu] should be placed in the central compartment and the four cardinal directions. The four flowers, such as padma [lotus], should be placed in the four cardinal directions. The forms of gaja [elephant], garuda [eagle], and kurma [tortoise] should be placed in the Brahma sthāna [Brahma's position]. The ashtamangala [eight auspicious symbols] should be placed in the eight directional compartments. (Vimanarchanakalpam PAGE 52)

In the SamurtaArchanadhikaram, (10TH CHAPTEER) Atri Maharshi elaborates this procedure in great detail. According to his statements: In the east (purva): Soil from a mountain (parvatamrit). In the south (dakshinamu): Soil from the ocean (samudra). In the west (pashchimamu): Soil from a river (nadee). In the north (uttaramu): Soil from a lake (tataka). In the southeast (āgneyamu): Soil from a crab-inhabited place (kuleeravasa). In the southwest (nairriti): Soil from an anthill (valmeeka). In the northwest (vāyavyamu): Soil from a fertile field (sasyakshetra). In the northeast (eishānyamu): Soil touched by an elephant's tusk (gajadantodhrita). In the Brahma sthāna [Brahma's position]: Soil lifted by the southern horn of a bull (vrishadakshinashringaudhrita). The flowers padma [lotus], utpala [blue lotus], kumuda [white water lily], and kalhara [white lotus] should be placed in the four cardinal directions. Gems (ratna), minerals (dhatu), seeds (beeja), and waters (jala) should be placed in the intermediate directions (vidikku).

Additionally, gold should be placed in the Brahma sthāna [Brahma's position], silver in the Indra sthāna [Indra's position], copper in the south, iron in the west, and bronze in the north. The forms of garuda [eagle], kurma [tortoise], shankha [conch], chakra [discus], as well as dhanuh[bow], danda [staff], gada [mace], and other varna [social class] items, should be placed in the Brahma sthāna [Brahma's position]. The ashtamangala [eight auspicious symbols] should be placed in the eight directional compartments. In the Kashyapa Jnana Kanda (PAGE 29), Kashyapa Maharshi specifies that the soil from the ocean (samudramrittika) should be placed in the central compartment, and the eight types of soil (ashtamrittika) in the eight directional compartments. In the central compartment, mrunala [the fibrous root of a lotus plant] should be placed, and in the four cardinal directions, the flowers kumuda [white water lily], utpala [blue lotus], kalhara [white lotus], and kasera [a type of lotus] should be placed. In the intermediate directions, the bark of plaksha [fig tree], audumbara [cluster fig], ashvattha [sacred fig], and vata [banyan tree] should be placed. The waters from eight sacred sources (samudradiashtatirtha) should be placed in the eight directional compartments. Gems (ratna), minerals (dhatu), and seeds (beeja) should be placed in the eight directional compartments, while the varna [social class] symbols should be placed in the central compartment. Specifically, in the Khiladhikaram (Chapter 21), Bhrigu Maharshi describes the phela [sacred box] as having 25 internal compartments. In this configuration: In the Brahma sthāna [Brahma's position]: brahmamani [sacred gem]. In the Indra sthāna [Indra's position]: vajramani [diamond]. In the southeast (āgneyamu): mauktika [pearl]. In the south (yāmyamu): vaidurya [cat's eye]. In the southwest (nairriti): shankhaja [conch-born gem]. In the west (vārunamu): sphatika [crystal]. In the northwest (vāyavyamu): pushyakanta [yellow sapphire]. In the north (uttaramu): chandrakantamani [moonstone]. In the northeast (eishānyamu): neela [blue sapphire]. In the 16 outer compartments: In the east (aindramu): suvarna [gold]. In the east-southeast (purvaāgneyamu): haritala [orpiment]. In the southeast (āgneyamu): shuktiya [pearl oyster]. In the south-southeast (yāmyāgneyamu): manishshila [realgar]. In the south (yāmyamu): ayasa [iron]. In the south-southwest (dakshinnairriti): parada [mercury]. In the southwest (nairriti): amritashmaka [a sacred stone]. In the west-southwest (pashchimairriti): shyāmaka [black mineral]. In the west (pashchimamu): rajata [silver]. In the west-northwest (pashchimavāyavyamu): anjana [collyrium]. In the northwest (vāyavyamu): pushyakanta [yellow sapphire]. In the north-northwest (uttaravāyavyamu): kurvinda [ruby]. In the north (uttaramu): tamraka [copper]. In the north-northeast (uttaraeishānyamu): saurashtra [Saurashtra clay]. In the northeast (eishānyamu): vimala [a pure gem]. In the east-northeast (prāgeishānyamu): gorochana [cow bile pigment]. Sixteen types of grains should be placed in the 16 outer compartments. The eight types of soil (ashtamrittika) should be placed in the eight directions starting from the northeast (eishānyamu). Bulbous roots (kandamula) should be placed in the four cardinal directions, and the varna [social class] symbols should be placed in the Brahma sthāna [Brahma's position]. Where Should the Phela Be Placed? Consideration of the Phela's Location

(फेलास्थानविचारः) Details of place where should be PHELA(sacred box) placed

गर्भालयाभ्यन्तरे, द्वारदक्षिणेस्तम्भसमीपे, यजमानोब्राह्मणश्चेत्पट्टिकोपरि,

क्षत्रियश्चेत्कुमुदोपरि, वैश्यश्चेत्जगत्युपरि, शूद्रश्चेत्पादुकोपरिन्यसेत्।

(vimanarchanakalpam52)

he above verse from VimānārcanaKalpam (PAGE 52) states that the phela [sacred box] should be placed inside the garbhālaya [sanctum sanctorum], near the southern pillar of the door. If the patron (yajamāna) is a Brahmana, it should be placed on a pattika[platform]; if a Kshatriya, on a kumuda [base molding]; if a Vaishya, on a jagati [plinth]; and if a others, on a pāduka [base]. In the SamurtaArchanadhikaram, Atri Maharshi specifies that the width of the wall at the southern door pillar of the vimāna [temple spire] should be divided into eight parts, with five parts extending outward and three parts inward, and the phelasthāna [location of the sacred box] should be positioned in the middle. In the Yajñadhikaram (PAGE 29) and Kriyadhikaram (PAGE 5), Bhrigu Maharshi states that for Brahmanas, the phela [sacred box] should be placed in a location within the vimāna [temple spire] called pattika [platform], and for Kshatriyas, in a location called upānama [base]. In the Khiladhikaram (Chapter 5), Bhrigu Maharshi elaborates that phelasthāpana can be performed not only in a temple but also in the center of a village. It may also be specially performed in places such as villages (grāma), cities (nagara), towns (pattana), small settlements (kharvata), huts (kutika), military camps (dandaka), army outposts (senāmkha), assembly halls(sabhāsthāna), bridges (setubandha), halls (shālā), gardens (ārāma), agricultural fields (sasyakshetra), lakes (tatāka), and riverbanks (nadeeteera).Primarily, within a temple, there are eight key locations for phelasthāpana [installation of the sacred box], referred to as garbhābhājanam[sacred vessel]:In the garbhālaya [sanctum sanctorum], at the center of the ground.On the pattika [platform], mastaka [pinnacle], kūtakoshtha [niche], prākāra [enclosure], gopura [tower], pākālaya [kitchen], and snapanālayawhich are parts of the [temple spire]. Additionally, phelasthāpana [installation of the sacred box] is prescribed in the central part of agraharas [Brahmin settlements], villages (grāma), towns (pattana), huts (kutika), military camps (danda), army outposts(senāmkha), assembly halls (sabhāsthāna), bridges (setubandha), halls (shālā), gardens (ārāma), and lakes (tatāka). In cities and small settlements (nagara and kurvatamu), it should be placed in the western part. In agricultural fields (sasyakshetra) and riverbanks (nadeeteera), the phelasthāpana [installation of the sacred box], referred to as garbhābhājanam [sacred vessel], should be performed at an enchanting location. Consideration of the Timing for Installation

(स्थापनकालविचारः [SthāpanakālaVichārah]) The day for phelasthāpana [installation of the sacred box] should be chosen based on astrological compatibility (jyotisha shastra) for both the village and the patron (yajamāna). The installation should be performed when the moon is in a favourable position in one of the following constellations (nakshatras): Uttara [Uttara Phalguni], Uttarāshāda [UttaraAshadha], Uttarābhādra [Uttara Bhadrapada], Rohini, Swāti, Punarvasu, Chitra, Mrigashira, Anurādhā, or Hasta. It should be conducted during a fixed zodiac sign (sthira-rāshi) ascendant (lagna), as stated by Bhrigu Maharshi in the Khiladhikaram.

पूर्ववत्कर्तुं नुकूलं नक्षत्रे, राशौ, शुभोदये गर्भन्यासं कारयेत्।

शुभकर्तुं नुकूलं नक्षत्रे स्थिरराशौ विशेषतः (Vimanarchanakalpam PAGE 52)

उक्ततिथिवारऋक्षांशकलग्नेषुस्थिरराशयंशकेस्थितेचन्द्रे, अनुकूलराशिवृज्जगेषुशेषु, शुभेक्षेतेषुग्रहेषु, आयुर्ग्रहवर्जितंस्थिरराशौशर्वयार्गभूमसंस्थापयेत्।

(KASYAPAJNANAKANDA,PAGE,29)

` (yagnadhikaranam 7TH CHAPTER)

The above verse from Kashyapa Jnana Kanda (PAGE 27) states that the phelasthāpana [installation of the sacred box], referred to as garbhanyāsa [installation of the sacred core], should be performed during a night (sharvarya) when the moon is positioned in a favorable segment of a fixed zodiac sign (sthira-rāshi). This should occur on an auspicious day (tithi), weekday (vāra), constellation (riksha), and ascendant (lagna), with the remaining zodiac signs and planets in favorable positions, free from malefic planetary influences (āyurgrahavarjitam), and specifically in a fixed zodiac sign (sthira-rāshi). Rituals to Be Performed During the Time of PhelaSthāpanayāgashālā should be constructed facing the temple or in the southern direction, adorned with arches (torana) and other decorations. An elevated platform of grains (dhānyavedi) should be prepared, and to its east, a pit for the Āhavanīyaagni [sacred fire] should be established. On the day of the auspicious moment (shubhamuhūrta), in the evening, a cloth should be spread facing the deity (swāmi), and the phela [sacred box] should be placed on it. The prescribed items (dravya) should be deposited in the phela [sacred box], and it should be covered with a cloth. A Vāstuhoma [ritual offering for the site] should be performed, followed by panchagavyaprokshana [sprinkling with the five products of the cow]. The agni-pratishtha [consecration of the fire] should be performed in the Āhavanīyaagni [sacred fire]. The phela [sacred box] should be placed on the grain platform (dhānyapītha) in the yāgashālā [sacrificial hall] for shayanādhivāsa [resting ritual]. The deity NāgendraSwāmi should be meditated upon as the presiding deity (adhidevata) of the phela [sacred box], and the dikpālakas [guardians of the directions] should be invoked around it. The Āhavanīya ritual should be performed, and the night should be left to pass. In the morning, the utthāpana [lifting ritual] should be conducted, followed by the udaya homa [morning offering] and sāyam homa [evening offering]. At the auspicious moment (sumuhūrta) during the night, the phelasthāpana [installation of the sacred box] should be performed at the prescribed location. Subsequently, a homa [fire offering] should be conducted in the Āhavanīyaagni [sacred fire] with the mantras specific to phelasthāpana [installation of the sacred box]. Thereafter, the pūrnāhuti [final offering] should be performed. This is prescribed by Bhrigu Maharshi in the Khiladhikaram (Chapter 5). The Maharshi also states that, while a single Āhavanīyaagni [sacred fire] is sufficient, it is considered superior to establish five fires (pañchāgni) and perform the homa [fire offering]. Benefits of PhelaSthāpana The phelasthāpana [installation of the sacred box] is said to bring the following benefits to the patron (yajamāna): prosperity in wealth and grains (dhana-dhānyasamridhi), progeny (santati), elevation of the lineage (kulonnati), success in travel (yāna), vehicles (vāhana), land (bhūmi), and growth in family, including wife, children, servants, and cattle (patnī, putra, bhritya, pashuvridhi). It also contributes to the prosperity of the state (rāshtraabhivridhi) and strengthens the ruler (rājubalavardhanam). According to the Khiladhikaram (Chapter 5), the location where the phela [sacred box] is installed will experience growth and prosperity (sthānaabhivridhi). In the Kashyapa Jnana Kanda (PAGE 29), it is stated that performing phelasthāpana [installation of the sacred box] in places such as cities (nagara), temples (devāgāra), sacred trees (chaitya vriksha), or at the left side of the entrance (dwāravāma) brings well-being (shreyas) to the children of the village. If performed in locations associated

with vehicles or weapons (vāhana- āyudhasthāna), it enhances strength (balavridhhi), bestows all forms of wealth (sarvasampatkara), and grants merit (punya prada), as stated by the Maharshi. विगर्भासस्यविनाशायभविष्यति।(KashyapajnanakandaPAGE 29)Through this verse, Kashyapa Maharshi conveys that a site without garbhanyāsa [installation of the sacred core] or with FIELD(sashaya) will lead to destruction (vināshāya). This underscores the significance of phelasthāpana [installation of the sacred box].

Conclusion : Phelasthāpana [installation of the sacred box] stands as a profoundly sacred and scientifically precise ritual in the Vaikhanasa Agama Shastra. Through this garbhanyāsa [installation of the sacred core], the garbhālaya[sanctum sanctorum], the vital core of the temple, attains sanctity. As one of the five types of pratishtha [installations], phelasthāpana imparts spiritual energy and stability to the temple. The construction of the phela[sacred box], the items placed within it, and the designated location and timing all adhere to meticulous scriptural guidelines. The Vaikhanasa texts elaborately detail this process, highlighting its spiritual and societal importance. Phelasthāpana yields benefits such as prosperity in wealth and progeny, lineage elevation, and personal growth for the patron (yajamāna). It also contributes to the development of the village and the state. By diligently performing this sacred ritual, the temple becomes enriched with divine energy. This scientific tradition of the Vaikhanasa Agama continues to guide temple architects in modern times. Phelasthāpana [installation of the sacred box], as a cornerstone of temple culture, enriches India's spiritual heritage.

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