



WOODEN ARTS AND CARVINGS BASED ON SILPARATNA

Divya V.O.
Research scholar
Department of Sanskrit Sahitya
Kadav.

silparatna is an important Kerala classic on traditional Indian architecture written in Sanskrit. The author of *silparatna* is *arikamaran* Nambootiri, belonged to Bhirgavagotra. Srikamaran was in the court of King Devaniriga, a (Periala Tirumil Tampuran of Campaka&eri of South Kerala) who was the patron of Melpattar Niriga, a Bhairavari, (the famous author of Niriga, iya, Prakrityasarvasva, Dhrtakivga and a lot of Champa prabandhas). Thus we can assign *arikamaran* to the 17th century A.D. It is assumed that the birth place of the author is Ciramelkita or Ciramanemkita (Set&rdhakinana& is the Sanskritized form) near Kannankulam, Thalappilly Taluk, in Thrissur district. *arikamaran* is a later medieval author on the *silpa* and his work shows fully of acquaintances with the later developments of Indian architecture especially the different traditions of temple building art.¹

The complete text is divided in to two parts, the first part dealing with temple architecture 46- chapters and 2480 verses. The second part deals with sculpture- Iconography and it has 35 chapters include 2150 verses. Mural Painting is treated in the last chapter of the first part, avowedly in relation to the *Vimanas* and *Goparas* to be decorated with painting of all kinds.²

Evam sarvavimani goparidani vi pava

Manoharakar& karyimnicitairivicit&.

The first part deals with architecture and painting. 1st to 13th chapter deals with preliminary sections of architecture. The 14th chapter is devoted to the different substances of which a temple is made Stone, Bricks, Lime, Wood, or Timber, Clay and Metals. 15th chapter discussed *igilak&*, a is one of the fundamentals of an Indian building construction. The 16th chapter defines *Prisida* in a quite new manner.

Devindim nar&, am ca ge& ramgataya ciram

*Manimsi ca prasidanti prisidistena kirt&.*³

This chapter also defines in its own manner the three main styles of temple architecture *Nagara*, *Vesara* and *Dravida*.

¹ Indian scientific tradition, p- 288

² Vastusastra, vol- 1, p- 171

³ Silparatna, 46-1, p- 244

⁴ *Ibid.*, 16-1, p-78

The 17th chapter deals with *Adhīśhīna*, the base of the temple and it is very aptly defined. It also deals with component parts of the temple, the Pillar, Base, Pedestal etc.

Ōttaropīnagormadhyan pīdamīnamītī smṛtāḥ.
Trīkaradgangalīāḥkṛtāḥ vardhamīnam tatastatāḥ.⁵
Yathīśobham yathīgyogam pīdamīnam karotū vī.
Vīstare, a samam pīdamīnamītyagayāte budhāiḥ.⁶

Then the next chapter delineates up on the different limbs of *Ōpa-pṛṣṭha* in its manifold varieties of *Vedībhadra*, *pratībhadra*, etc. Then is taken up the *Adhīśhīna* proper which is of fourteen types⁷

The 19th chapter, there is other details as well intermixed with some foreign details like *gṛhīrambha*. The 20th discussed the *Nīla Channels* through which water has to pass. The next is very important chapter deals with *Walls*, *Vedīka* and *Columns*. Fivefold Wall those made of *ātilīmaya*, *Īśhīkamaya*, *Śīlakamaya*, *Phalakamaya* and *Mṛṇmayā*. Four varieties of *Vedīka* are developed in *āilparatna- Paśpakhīnda*, *Cītrakhīnda*, *āivīla*, *Cītraśāivīla* and their decorative motifs. Further details comprise of the treatment on pillars *Brahmakhīntā*, *Vīśhākīntā*, *Skantākīntā*, *Candrakīntā*, *Īśhākīntā*, *Rudrakīntā*, their shapes, moldings and other decorative along with their *Kuśhās* (the pichers) *āikara*, *Candrakīntā*, *Saumakhya*, and *prīgadarāna*.

Cetvetīyadhīśhīnamīhīnarūpam samāḥ talīkṛtīya śīlīpratīnamāḥ
Vebhājīya garbhīntārahībhīttīm tannadhyanīdīm racayed yathīśhīnam.⁸
Pratīyatarīntīrvīracayā bhīttīm tatāḥ samavītī sudṛṣṭābhī śīlīdgaīh
Tīm bhīśhāged vedīkagīnghrīmīleśhādīrdhvatāsojīvalapancarīdgaīḥ⁹
Vṛtīśced dā -apīdīkhyo mēlāśhōkhalīsavaḥ (?)
Malavīśe tū sapīdīmśe śtambhīnīvatīhavi pūnāḥ¹⁰

The next chapter is on doors in details of relative dimensions and component parts like *Kavas* (of fourfold varieties- *Yaga*, *Agaya*, *Sambhīra* and *Dhavana* etc.) along with their manifold accessories, decorations etc. In the end of the stairs (*Sopīna*) in relation to the doors have been delineated up on¹¹.

Vjīśe garbhānīkedānasya dābhānīdvīrametrīmsīte
lingadvīrasamucchrayam vīśamagīd dvīrīśhācandīmsakāiḥ
tasmīn dvīra samucchrayeśhā nayānītyaśhīśhāśhīlāmīte
tātēvīśhīramīnāboragaśhāragīgīgīśhī kramīte kalpāged.¹²
āilpībhīśhīśhīrasamguktām cītrākīraīḥ karotū vī
Kīrye ca suśhīre vṛtīte hīdīgāśhīśhīrabhīḥ pade.¹³
Ardhāvṛtītam tū vī pṛāśhānāśhāśhīram cīra kīrāged.

⁵ Śīlparatnam, vol-1,17-14 p-92

⁶ *Ibid.*, 17-15 p-93

⁷ Vastusāstra, vol-1 p-175

⁸ Śīlparatnam, vol-1, 21-1, p-113

⁹ *Ibid.*, p-115

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 21-73, p-121

¹¹ Vastusāstra, vol-1 p-175

¹² Śīlparatnam, vol-1, 22-2, p-126

¹³ *Ibid.*, 22-64, p-132

The 23rd chapter deals with three types of arches. *Pītra-tōra*, *a*, *Makara-tōra*, *a* and *Cītra-tōra*, *a*.
Prisīdamadhye kartavyam mā -ape bhittibhigake
Hīrisa valabbēmadhye pramī, am bhavanebhi vī.
Tōra, am tatsabhīdīm dvīre vī talipeṣṭhavi
Pīdoce pañcaśāṣṭabhīge vī toranīgrakam¹⁴

The 24th chapter deals with the details of *Alaka* and screened window. Next chapter discussed about *KṣṭakoĀṭīdi*, the top rooms, *Paṅṅara*, Cage 26th, in great details *Vāṭṭaspaṅṅita*, an ornament 27th, *Kambhalata* another ornament 28, *Uṭṭara* 29th another decorative motif in relation to the pillars *Prastara*. 30 the entablature of the pillars. 31st *Gala*, the Neck (of the *Vimīna* proper) 32nd *āikbara* the spherical roof, the top most superstructure. 33rd the sloping roof *MardhaneĀṭaka* 34th the top most ornament *Misika* 35th the vestibule along with the *Mēṭīngīsa* the installation of images on the body of the *Prisīda* or *Vimīna* and *Sēpika* 36th the dome along with its Picher, the *Kalaṭa* 37th and 38th refers to the details of shape and proportions of measurements etc. in relation to *Prisīda* architecture. 39th devoted to *Mā -apas*, their characteristic architecture, their different classes- *Makhama -apa*, *Arcamīna -apan*, *Adhivīsama -apan* and *Nītyama -apan*.

Harṃgātīrīrdhamīnam tu kaṃṃasam makhama -apan
Harṃgātīrīrdhamīnam dīreĀṅam trīpīdam madhyamam pañcā¹⁵
Antarma -alato vyaṭītya karamītram prīrcamīna -apan
Turyaṭram samasṭrakam nijamukhīgīmasya vī madhyata¹⁶
Prisīdasgīgrato vaiṭe soamye vī gīmgagocare
NavīĀṅasapṭaṅṅapancastam vī mā -apan tata¹⁷
Tadīgīmasamam tīram samataryīṭrameva hī¹⁷
Paryante pratīgōmbhījī bahīrṭdhye vottarasyaṭhavi
Madhya(sētra?) sṭhe dalīte tato vibhājīte samyak catarvargakath
Syadamsa¹⁸ padakīgatīsta vīṭatīrdvībhīgīm padībhyīm gūtam
TacchīĀṅī tāṭīraṭṭaram natamadhīmno dvīṭrisankhyam matam¹⁸

The 40th chapter takes up *Prakaras* in the style of the *Mīnasīra* the fivefold types *Antarma -ala*, *Antarhīra*, *Madhyahīra*, *Vībhahīra*, and *Margīda* or *Mahīmargīda* and their varied and rich details. 41st chapter is occupied in the delineation of *Gopura* architecture.

Pratīvapram tu kartavyam dvīre dvīre tu gopuram
Klādīrīpamadhyaṃkhyīm gī -gīīm svapramī -ata¹⁹

The next chapter is preserved as is usual with sister texts like *Mīnasīra* and *Mayamata*, for *Parivīra* *vidhīna* from 8 to 32 *Parivīra* deities their locations etc. The subsequent two chapters are on *Balī-pīṅṅha* and *Dvāja* respectively. Then the following chapter on *Sandhī* and the last chapter are on painting²⁰

Part two includes 35 chapters. The first chapter known as *Bīmbasīdhamavidhī* second chapter based on *Liṅgalakā -am*, third known as *Lakā -oddhīra* *vidhī*, the fourth discussed on *pratīmo* *sadhavidhī*. The chapters fifth to fifteenth are discussed on the measurements

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 23-2,3,p-138

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 39-2, p-195

¹⁶ *Sīlparatnam*, vol-1,39, p-197

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 39-41,42,p-200

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 39-60, p-201

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 41-1, p- 213

²⁰ *Vastuśāstra*,p-177

(Mlapramī, a for the idols) Daśatīla and Navatīla each one mainly divided into Ūttama, Madhyama and Adhama, Aḷḷatīla, Sapṭatīla, Saṅgī tīla, Paṅcatīla, and Catuḷtīla.²¹

The content of the sixteenth chapter is the construction of crown, ear-ring, necklaces, bracelet, upper- arm-let, and mudrakas. 17th chapter describes of Darts of various gods and goddesses. 18th known as Rajjabandhalakḷā am (means binding and string). Nineteenth chapter discusses about anointment over the image prepared from the clay. Chapter 20 defined with the description of the goddesses of the kamara (Sabhama, ya) and details of their measurements. The measurements of the construction of God's vehicles like Ox, Horse and elephant is described in the next chapter. The chapters 22nd to 25th deal with the meditation form of Śiva Viḷ, a āktī and Indra other gods. The chapter 26 defines the icons Bimba doḥas. The next chapter contains the description of the seats and posture. The rules and regulations of the image installation are presented the 28th chapter. 29th chapter deals with the construction of temporary shrine and the 30th chapter described Liṅgaprāsīdakara am.

The last five chapters are discuss by the continuation of the first part with human dwelling (Manuḷḷilaya (31st), the problem of the well (32nd), the house hold furniture and useful machines (Ēsamīdiparicchada lakḷā am) are included in 33rd chapter. Next chapter deals with the knowledge of the value of laborers wage and the last chapter is discusses the construction of the weapons, mainly bow (Dhanus).²²

Arts and carving

The Indian arts, both in theory (āstra) and practice (Prayoga) are branches of a single living tree of Indian culture. They cannot be understood in isolation from other dimension of thought and science, myth and ritual, spiritual and secular traditions. The term āilpa designates any kind of arts and crafts in the Indian tradition, and its in one sense or the other involves dexterity of hand or mind or both. In arts āilpa as a cognate of-Gītra legitimates the identity of an object by its Anukṛti by including into it the –Lakḷama – Sadrḷya or – Pramī, a of the original. In this manner, it differentiates – Rḷpa or Nīma- rḷpa²³.

Kerala's sacred architecture is through the study of domestic buildings like *Mlakkeḷḷa*, *Eḷḷakkeḷḷa*, and *Patīnirakkeḷḷa* houses of local Nair community. These are made according to Vīstāśīstra rules of Mud-rock, Stone, Wood, Thatch or Tiles, and in this they relate to temple. The temple is essentially sacred house made to shelter one or more divine inhabitanee. Structural methods are continuous for both building types and their overall organization of space is very much the same²⁴.

The house is built mainly of wood on a foundation of stone and its wooden superstructure is covered with baked clay tiles. The doors are made of wood.

Directions for the proper construction of houses are given in treatises such as the Vīstāśīdya, the āilparatna and others so that, even though the ideal is probably never fully realized, institutionalized measures of correctness and quality are recognized throughout Kerala. They are continues with requirements of the Tāntrasamuccaya and other works on temple architecture.

The canonical texts are preferred materials for construction is Teak, Rose-wood, Jack-wood and Ebony. Of these, Teak is superior for all kind of building and carving.

Varjīśta taravah pērvam vakḷyante ye sakoḷarīḷ
Savallīki latīśīlīḷḷāḷ kīḷḷajalīḷḷah saka, ḷḷakīḷ
Sata(ṭa)paḷpaphalīdhya vī nṛdevīśīśīca ye

²¹ Indian scientific tradition,p-293

²² Vastuśāstra, vol-1, p-171

²³ Kalatātvaḷosa, vol-2 p-145

²⁴ Temple arts of Kerala, p-

Bahapakāi mṃgairjuaḷḷiḷcaityamīrgaḷmaḷīnajaḷ²⁵

Among the kinds of trees that are rejected in the āilparatna for building purposes are those that are attacked by insects, have creepers or bear thorn. Lumber should not be taken from trees that are used for worship by Brihma, as, always bear fruit, are roosted in by animals and birds or located in temple precincts. Also to be avoided are trees that are standing at road sides or located in burning ‘Ghat’ areas. Also undesirable are trees that are curved, dry, broken, occupied by Serpents or Goblins, Oozing water, producing milky Sap, up rooted by wind or damaged by fire. Similarly, trees are unacceptable if they have been pierced by the tusks of elephants or struck by lightning. They should not be taken from temple sites or locations that are meeting places of rivers with the sea. Trees growing in lakes or wells are recognized as obstacles to happiness if they are used to build houses. Rather surprising is the fact that several restricted types, including trees with milky sap, may be used to construct temples.²⁶

Ekaḷḷḷi dvijḷḷi vī trijḷḷi vī mahirabī

Kīragenma, diram rījī ḷriḷgamīcchan mahigasim²⁷

Khadīrah sīlo madhakah sabakastatthaiva simsapascaiva

Tattharjama, au (?) kīri, ī ca pḷmacandanau vṃkḷaa²⁸

Mixing any woods together in a structure is never desirable, and a king wishes to be victorious in battle is urged to build his palace of one, two or three varieties only of all available types, the āilparatna lists following as especially suited to dwelling āika, (Tectona grandis) Ēsana (terminalia, termentosa), Madhaka (Bassia latifolia) āila (Artocarpus lacucha) Sarja (Vatica rubusta), Candana (Santalum myristicifolium), Panasa (Jack tree or Artocarpus integrifolia) and Devadīra (Avaria longifolia)

Kinds of wood.

The rules for bringing wood from the forest at an auspicious time, from the trees, in the manner together with the other allied matters of examination of trees, their selection of trees, with certain rights and devices, the mode of cutting and suitability for specific operations. All important ancient treatises of architecture have treated of bringing timber from the forest for the use of temple and house construction.

The general criterion in the selection of fit trees the structures and superstructures of the building as most of the wooden architecture related to pillars, beams and lintels, Doors frames and roofing too, were done by wood. The following common trees on the basis criterion are recommended:-

- 1, Khidīra 2, Bījaka 3, āila
- 4, Madhaka 5, āika 6, āimḷḷḷpa
- 7, Sarja 8, Arjama 9, Aḷḷjama
- 10, Aḷoka 11, Kedīra 12, Rohī, ī
- 13, Vikantaka 14, Devadīra 15, Sripār, ī

The āilparatna is described the varieties of doors. The first point to note is the different limbs of the door space. The door called Dvīra, Praveḷana, Nirgamana etc. is constituted if the Ūdambara- the lintel under which the door is placed, this lintel and the space between the two walls for the entrance is called Dehali.

²⁵ Silparatnam, vol-1,14-76,77, p- 65

²⁶ Temple arts of Kerala, p-

²⁷ Silparatnam, vol-1, 14-90, p-66

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 14-93, p- 67

Āilparatna is a highly useful work on Iconography and is very comprehensive dealing with architecture. The āilparatna from the point of view the historical development of art and it is the Southern or Dravidian style of architecture and Sculpture. The two parts of the āilparatna presented the wooden works and carvings in the chapter of first parts 21, 22, 23, and 32. The second parts also deal with the iconography. Icons made by the material of wood. āilparatna is the great text of Sanskrit, History, and Literature.

Reference books:-

- *Silparatna of Srikamara Vol-1, Ed T. Ganapati Sastri C. B. H Publications Trivandrum Sanskrit Series 1922*
- *Silparatna of Srikamara Vol- 2, Ed. K Sambasiva Sastri C. B. H Publications Trivandrum Sanskrit Series 1922*
- *Indian Scientific Tradition, Ed Dr. M. V. P. Unnikrishnan, Publication Division, University of Calicut 2003*
- *Natyasastra of Bharatamuni Ed. Dr. Visvanath Sarma, Parimal Publications Delhi third edition 1994*
- *Temple arts of Kerala. Ronald M. Bernier S. Chand & Company LTD. Ramnagar New Delhi 1982*
- *Bhasa Silparatnam, Prakasam vykhyanam, Thattakattu Nambudiri Devi Book stall Kodangallur 2009*
- *Chitralaksanam K.K Variar D.C Books Kottayam 2011*
- *Vastusashtra Vol- 1&2 D. N. Sakla Manshiram Manoharal Publishers Pvt Ltd 2003.*