

CIVIL WORK AND TOWN PLANNING IN ŚAIVA INSCRIPTIONS OF ANCIENT INDIA

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The sources of knowledge of ancient Indian science and technology are very varied. There is still much to be explored. However, inscriptions are one of the sources that is not much explored in connection with the references to the civil works, town planning etc. We know of human welfare activities of the great king Asoka from his rock edicts or pillar inscriptions. The Hathigumpha inscription of Kharvela is another much quoted source. It describes about the repair of a water reservoir built earlier. When we travel down the history further, the study of civil works, architecture gets limited to the texts, such as the Arthashastra, Mansara or Samaranganasutradhar. But the inscriptions from the 500 AD – 1200 AD also need careful research. Since there are more evidences of religious architecture in comparison to the secular architecture, it limits the scope of research. The present paper focuses on the study of inscriptions from the post Gupta period reaching up to early medieval period of Indian history. Here is an attempt to extract information on the civil works, town planning, architecture, processes, construction materials etc., undertaken by the Śaivacharyas, in particular. The paper is also reflecting upon the inter-relation between the State and the religious sects. We must remember that the Indian tradition does not restrict the knowledge, its practice and a societal section. One of the examples is the Sirpur inscription of the time of Balarjun. The record opens with the stanza in praise of Sugar (Buddha). It then records the construction of a monastery by a bhikshu named Añandaprabha as well as establishment of a Sattrra for the monks residing in the monastery. A white rice field was donated for the upkeep of the monastery. The field is said to have been purchased from the Samgha and given together with the supplementary crops grown in it. King Balarjun is considered to be a brahmin. The Isanasivagurupaddhati of Isanasiva contains all details of temple architecture, such as the temple plans, height of the temple and measurements etc. We cannot limit the contribution of Isanasiva just to temple architecture, rather he may have been a scholar of distinction.

Keywords: Civil works, Town planning, Construction materials, Inscriptions, Śaivacharyas

Introduction

Temples are the most studied monuments. And why not? We hardly have any remains of secular architecture available and what we have are the magnificent temples with elaborate architectural features, both based on the norms as described in the texts and the regional variations attempted.

We must understand that deep inside, the Indian tradition does not set any dichotomy between the religious and secular and the Self. This is a fact well reflected in the

temples which were the pivot of both, the religious expression and also the secular utility. The “Human Body” has the same **Pañcha** Tattvas that make the “Universe”; the architecture is based on “**Vastu Purūṣa**” which has the same physical features as human body. So, on the higher philosophical plane this was the common thread.

The expression of the above philosophical idea was transported into the human plane through temple plans. The presence of **Naṭ Mañdir**, **Bhog Mañdir**, etc., and the grants for running the **Añña Sattrra** prove the utilitarian

function. These architectural features or the services provided by them actually allowed the communities to gather on special occasions, such as celebration of an annual festival. Almost all ancient texts, the Epics or **Purāṇas**, that originally were records of genealogies, over the period of time, transformed themselves. They incorporated chapters on architecture, town planning, polity, society, iconography, philosophy etc. Thus, this transformation of the scriptures widened their reach and the monopoly of few was challenged.

Research Methods

Through this paper, the intention is not to question the researches and works of practitioners, seniors and contemporary, as there is lot yet to be discovered and shared on a larger, diverse platform. The present paper is an effort to draw attention towards “inscriptions” as important sources of information with respect to architecture/ civil works/ town planning. To me the inscriptions are rich sources that provide glimpses of “Śāstra” being put to “practice”. The very fact that they are inscribed on stones, in itself is an example of the art of ‘**takṣhaṇ**’, described in the text.

Although there are very limited examples as of now and this paves way for a systematic examination of inscriptions and research in the direction. Yet, even the available data at our disposal is interesting to establish our theory.

We examine the sources on two aspects: the role of the Śaiva ascetics in civil constructions and other skilled persons involved, second, the information on town planning.

The Details

To begin with the **Chandrahé** inscription of **Prabodhaśiva** (972-73 AD) is particularly important in the context of this paper.

The record is incised on two slabs of stone, into the back wall of the front verandah of the monastery. After *sating* the genealogy of the **Mattamayūra** clan of śaiv ascetic, the record states, “**Prabhāvaśiva** was followed by **Prasantaśiva**, who built an incomparable and quiet hermitage at the foot of the Bhramara hill, covered with the forest of **priyāla** trees and situated at the confluence of Sonaⁱ. His disciple was **Prabodhaśiva**”.

The verse thirteenⁱⁱ is important as it mentions the methods of civil engineering. It says, “He, by the process of excavating, breaking and ramming heaps of large stones, has constructed a wonderful way through mountain and across rivers and streams, and also through forests and thickets, as **Rāghava** across the ocean. A great deed of the mighty proclaims wonder in the world”. The Sanskrit word **विधि** means method. The methods employed were **उत्खनन**, **दलन** and **ध्वंस**.

Verse sixteenⁱⁱⁱ has, “Near the temple built by his preceptor, the tranquil **Prabodhaśiva** caused to be erected this lofty and spacious monastery (**विशाल**), which is, as it were, his own fame resembling white clouds”.

ⁱSa śoṇandasamgamé bhramaraśailmūlétulam priyālavanasāṅkulé phalmṛṇālakañḍāśanāha/ Chakāra viditām janairamunisakṣah pra śātāsraṁsvapādapadapaṅktibhiḥ pavitabhūtaḥ yah kṛti//

ⁱⁱGurugrāvavotakhananadldhvnsa vidhinā mahighrēghavānaṁ yo vyadhita jaladhau raghāva iv/ Sartasrotah svēvamvipingahnēṣḍbhtkaraṁ jagatyāścharyam hi prthayati mahatkarm mahatām//

ⁱⁱⁱGurukṛtasurāgarakṣādhamuṁ mathmunīnataṁ svakamiv yashaha śubhrābhrāmaṁ vishālamachīkarat/ Anugirmatho sindhuprakhyam tadāgamachikhanamantprachursalilam kūpaṁ chāttra prabodhaśivah śamim//

Thereafter he caused to be excavated a sea-like lake, by the side of the mountains, and also a well having copious water (सिन्धु प्रख्यात तडाग मचिखनन प्रचुर सलिल कूप).

In verse seventeen^{iv} we read, “On account of devotion to his preceptor he caused to be re-built with a wonderful masonry of large stones (विचित्र शिला रचना) and then re-excavated very deep the well, which had been dug by the illustrious *Prasāntaśiva* at this place but which had become dilapidated (शीर्ण पतित खिल दारू मचिखनन) and full of wood fallen into it, in course of time.

From the *Bilharī* stone inscription^v of *Yuvarājadéva II*, we get to know about the town planning, though not in direct manner. In the third part of the inscription, it refers to the taxes which the manufacturers and traders of the town of *Bilharī* had to be pay, either in cash or kind, for the benefit and the support of the *Nuhaleśwara* monastery, of which the *Śaiva* ascetic *Aghoraśiva* was made the in-charge, by his guru *Hṛdyaśiva*. Thus, the verses 79–82 say, “In the *Maṇḍapikā* of the town, there shall be paid a *śodaśikā* (coin) on every *khaṇḍikā* of salt and also one *śodaśikā* for every oil-mill per month, and a *paura* for a couple of yugas per day. In the case of betel-nuts, black pepper, dried ginger and other merchandise, a *paura* shall be paid by every measure; a *kapardī* shall be paid for every *vīthi* and *dyūtakapardas* for vegetables and egg plants.

In the case of dealers in liquids, the tax should be in the form of bundles of grass, *dhīrmara* and whatever else may be possible. An elephant offered for sale should be taxed four *pauras* and a horse two *pauras*. Similarly, whatever other gift and whatever reward for scholarship may be made by them the religious merit, wealth and fame are obtained.

After having described *Aghoraśiva*, the in-charge of the monastery, the inscription mentions “The inhabitants of famous Tripurī, *Saubhāgyapura*, *Lavaṇnagar*, *Durlabhpur*, *Vimānpura* shall bring guarded to the monastery the bull made of beautiful wood every day at the fair of God for the performance of the religious rites”. These references to “*pura*” and “*nagar*” are important to understand the existence of towns around Tripurī, the capital city of Kalchuris.

The *Maṇḍapikā*^{vi} has been identified as a place where goods are bought for assessment and payment of taxes. *Vīthi* has been translated as “shop”, by Mirashi. But most scholars consider “*Vīthi*” as an “alley” and “*Vīthikā*” as “shop”. Whichever translation we consider, both are important from the perspective of the present paper. So, these must have been an integral part of the town planning, at least of such towns that were active trade centres, as this one. We say so because of the fact of the source mentions *puras* and *nagaras* whose merchants were supposed to pay taxes. So, does it mean that while planning, a major

^{iv}Śrīmatpraśāntaśivakāritamattra kūpaṃ kalēna śirṇṇapatitākhiladarūpūram/ Bhaktyāgurorgurūśilārachnā vichitrtaṃ sochīkarattadanu dūramachikhanachchha//

^vPattanmaṇḍapikāyām lavaṇasya khaṇḍikāyām śodaśika ghāṇakēcha śodaśodaśikā/ Tailasya māsi māsē dynamo cha yugaāyugē cha pauraṣṭu // 79// Pūgaphalmarichaśuśaṣṭhīprabhṛtiṣu bhāṇḍēṣu bhārakpaurastu/ Vīthīm cha prati cha kaparddīm dhyutkaparddāstu śakavārtākam// 80// Rasvañijāmādāyastṛṇapūlakadhīrmarādi yatkiñchat/ Dattē karī chatuṣṭayamaṅg turaṅgo dyayantu pauraṇām// 81// Ydvahadnyaddnam kimapi cha vidhyābhanantdudīṣṭam/ yatttra... da puṇyaṣṛī kīṭayē pravartantē// 82//

^{vi}Maṇḍpikā was also called as śulka-maṇḍapikā, Bhavnagar Sanskrit and prakrit Inscriptions, pg. 159, cited in fn. 2 by Mirashi, VV, CII

trade centre was developed keeping in mind the surrounding towns.

The **Gurgī** inscription of Kokalldéva II is where we find **Prabhāvaśiva**, the **Śaiva** ascetic. It says that **Yuvarājadéva** I made **Prabhāvaśiva** accept a monastery constructed at an enormous expense^{vii} Verse 11^{viii} of the record mentions that **Praśantaśiva**, disciple of **Prabhāvaśiva**, erected a temple dedicated to Siva. The temple so built is compared to **Mount Sumerū** in altitude.

So, if a temple is so huge, it must have employed the best of skilled artisans and **Praśantaśiva** must have supervised the entire process. Hence, if someone who could supervise the site, must have himself possessed a thorough knowledge and understanding the nitty gritty of the various phases of construction and the technical aspects involved. The same ascetic also caused the construction of an abode for the **Siddhas**^{ix}.

Īśānaśambhū, the next in lineage of **Śaiva** ascetics, was followed by **Prabodhaśiva**. He built a monastery near the temple which was built by his teacher. The important fact, worthnoting in this inscription is the verse 41^x. Here it is stated that the king granted “the whole city crowded with citizens”. Here, there is some hint of town planning and the population. It gives rise to some questions such as, “What was the location of the monastery in the town plan?” “Was it located within the crowded city?”

Dutt^{xi}, while discussing the “traffic management” in ancient India quotes the **Dēvi Purāṇa**. The Purana states that the junctions of roads were utilised for erection of monumental buildings, such as, a collage, a shrine or a monastery. The principal four streets radiated from this central place and they terminated at the four city gates surmounted by arches and turrets. The picturesque gardens of these buildings enhanced the vista of the city. Those wending the streets could not fail to be impressed by the delightful panorama revealed before eyes.

An evidence of town planning is also known from the **Kāman** inscription^{xii}. It records the gift of two plots of land situated inside the **Koṭṭa** (fort). The first plot was bonded on the east by the house of **Kṛṣṇak**, on the north by a small well and on the west and north by an old royal road. The second plot of land which was situated in the eastern part of the fort was bonded in the east and the south by a royal road and in the other directions, i.e., west and the north, by the land of the **sthāna** (temple) and a small habitation. The gifts were made in favour of **Kāmyakeśvara**, the **Śiva**. Further information about town planning is known from the subsistence plan for the temple. Thus, it is stated that the guild of potters living in **Kāmyak**, in consideration of a sum of money received in advance, stipulated to pay a permanent cess. Every potter was, without any exception, to pay one **paṇa** per wheel every month (**Kāman** stone

^{vii} Āṇiya yaṁ sahaṇvāsanayā nayajā sīrṇiṃgudhatuṅgatanayo yuvarājadévaḥ/Sattvopakārabhavduttamkirtihetorgrāhayanmaṭhmanant dhanpratṣṭham// 7//

^{viii} Yen sṛīyuvarājakāritasatkailāśaṅrangopamaprā sādattarataḥ sumēruśkharasparidhiṁ prasiddhambhuvi/Saddhasthāpitamiśvarasya sakaltrailālōkyavismāpakam yatsvargam vrajasttdiyayaśaḥ sopānamargāyate//11//

^{ix} Dāhottirṇasuvuṇṇadānśamitdravyārthiśārthasprīhah siddhasthānamachikarattadaparam yāḥ śoṇatirōpari/Yasminyogajūṣaḥ pravi śyaniyamdhvathantarāyāghayah śāntāha siddhasamadhayoachchhamatayōgachchhanti mukatahēh padam// 13//

^x Tīrthasthānaniśēvaṇōddhatadhiyāmatyantvīṣṭāyē yastkāritavānamuni surasarittirē tapahsthānakam/Yatsaṁśēvyā maheśvarāchrachnaratā vārāṇasivāsinō manyantē bhavsāgarām gurūmapi kṣhiṇam yathā gōspadam//14//

^{xi} Binod Bihari Dutt, Town Planning in Ancient India, Pg.3

^{xii} Mirashi, V.V, CII

inscription -Document 3). More information of town planning is known from the Document 8 of the **Kāman** inscription wherein there is a mention of a **Śamkhika** (a worker on conch shell) , named Bhadra, who donated two **āvāris** (enclosures), facing the west and situated outside the fort. The Document 8 records that some drammas were formerly made by one **Bhojdeva** to **Pramāṇaraśī**, which the latter gave to **Chāmuṇḍak**. After the death of the **āchārya**, that is **Pramāṇaraśī**, **Chāmuṇḍak**, seems to have paid the amount to the **Góṣṭhikā**. The latter purchased 2 **āvārikas** with those drammas. The **vīthīs** or shops in the **āvārikās** were situated facing the south of the **Kambalihaṭṭa**, which seems to mean a part of town where a cattle market was held. The rent of these **vīthīs** was to be utilised by the **Góṣṭhikās** in meeting the expenses of whitewashing, vermilion and lights for the temples.

From the Bargaon Temple inscription^{xiii} of **Śabara** we get to know about the existence of threshing floor and a granary in the town as the cess on these was given as gift to some ascetic who resided in the temple in the settlement of brahmins.

While the **Arthaśāstra** writes, “temples and shrines were everywhere; in the centre of the city for the guardian deity and for the family deity of the king”^{xiv}, in the **Matsya Purāṇa**^{xv}, describing the Pur, we read that in the Pur should be four really wide **vīthīs**. At the front of one of the **vīthī**, there should be a temple dedicated to a God, at the front of the second

vīthī, king’s residence should be built, at the front of the third, should be residence of the **dharmādhikārī** (the officer of the religious matters) and the main entrance of the fort should be at the front of the fourth **vīthī**.

Hence, it is very likely that the above mentioned monastery occupied the centre of a crowded city. Elsewhere we have noticed that the **Śaiva** monasteries were also constructed at the foot hills and on the river banks. This could imply the function expected of the monastery. If it was purely for secluded life of the ascetics where they can focus on study and perform penance or if it served as the spot for social interactions.

Of equal importance are the details that are about the roles of various officials in inscribing the said inscription. It is said that the **praśasti** was composed by the poet **Dhamsata**, the son of **Jeika** and **Amarika** and grandson of the **Dīkshita Méhuka**. It was written by **Damodara**, the son of **Lakshmīdhar** and youngest brother of **Vāsudev**, and incised by **Nīlkañṭha** by the command of the **Sūtradhāra Suraka**.

The role of ascetics establishes the very core of Indian life that of convergence of the religious and secular. The “people” centric administration was established and all, with their specialised skills, participated in it. They were not only masters of **Śāstras**, but also had good hands at art, administration etc.

In the **Téwar** inscription of **Gayakarna** (AD), we discover names, personal attributes and works of two **Śaiva** ascetics, **Bhāvtéjas** and his

^{xiii} Epigraphia Indica, XXV, Pg. 278

^{xiv} L. N. Rangarajan, The Arthaśāstra, pg. 54; Raghunath Singh, Kautiliyam Arthashastram, Aparājitaṭṭhatijayantakōṣṭhān śvavaishrāvaṇās iṣaśrīmadirāgrhāṇi cha pur madhye kāryēta/ 2.4.17

^{xv} Matsya Purāṇa, II, chapter 217, Hindi sathitya Sammelan publication, “Chatstrascha tathā tatra kāryāstvāyatvīthayeh/ Ekasmastatra vīthyagrē dévvesma bhavēddrdham// Vīthyagrēch dvitīyē cha rājesma vidhiyātē/ Dharmādhikaranam kārya vīthyagrē cha tritīyakē chaturthē tvatha vīthyagrē gopuram cha vidhiyātē/ Āyatam chaturstram vāvritam vā kāyētpuram//

disciple **Bhāvabrahma**. Both are described as being masters of various **Śāstras** and Yoga. The latter is said to have adorned the world of **Gahuṇḍa** (identified as **Śiva** by Kielhorn) with processions of chariot and worship of **Śiva**, festivity and also with encircling walls, temples and monasteries. The verse 14 of the inscription states that he, **Bhāvabrahma**, caused the construction of the temple with the wealth acquired by begging^{xvi}.

In the inscription, the name **Mahidhara**, who is described, in verse 17 as, “that **Mahidhara**, who understands the teaching and the practical work of science invented by **Viśvakarmā**, has incised this commendable **praśasti**^{xvii}”, is important in the context of this paper as it throws light on the skills and a continuity of the mythological tradition and its roots in the society. Indian society knows that **Viśvakarmā** is the “architect of gods”.

^{xvi}Bhikṣhādhānēna tēnēdaṁ māṇḍiraṁ kāmavidvīṣaṁ / Kāritaṁ muktayē bhaktyā kīrtayē cha kṛtātamanāṁ //

^{xvii}Viśvakarmamākṛtāṁ śāstraṁ vētti yōrthēna karmmaṇā / Utkīṇṇvānimaṁ śāstāṁ praśasti sa mahidharah //

^{xviii}Sthapati:

- Sthapatiḥ tu Sva-turyebhyas trivys (for trisrinya) gururiti smritah Sutragrahi gurur dvyabhyam. Takshakasya gurur nama Vardhakiti prakirtitah. (M. II. 19–22.) Sthapitiḥ sarva-sastrajnah; Veda-vich chhastra paragah; Acharya-lakshanair yuktah; Sthapitiḥ sthapanayarah; Sthapanadhipatir yasmat tasmāt sthapatir uchyate. (M. II, 19–30.)
- Sthapitiḥ sthapanarah syat Sarva sastra-visaradah II, (Vaatu Vidya Vol. I, p. 12.) Na hinango 'tiritango dharmikas tu dayaparah II. 'Amatsaryo' anasuyas' cha tantrikastv abhijatavan II Ganitajnah puranajnah anandotma pyalubdhakah II Chitrajnah, sarva-desajnah satyovadi jitendriyah II Arogi chapramadi cha sapta vyasana-vajritah II Sunama dridha-vandhuscha vastu-vidyabdhiparagah II (Vastu Vidya, Vol. I, pp. 12–17) Here tantra implies stringed musical instrument, compare Vitruvius quoted below. Usually 'dharmika' is taken to mean 'pious' or dutiful, but here, in view of the sense suggested by Vitruvius, it may be taken to mean 'proficient in law.'
- Achara-vinaya-vidya pratishtha-tirthadarsanam I Nishtha sastis tapo danam navadha kulalakshanam II
- Prajna medhavo danta dakshah sura bahu-sruta I Kulina sattva-sampanna yuktah sarveshu karmashu II (Mahabharata, Vol. XII, pp. 3244; see also Vol. XIII, pp. 5073–74, and Vol. XIV, pp. 2520–24).
- Karmantikah sthapatayah purusha yankrakovidat I Tatha vardhakayas chaiva margino vriksha takshakah II (Rjunayana, Vol. II, pp. 80–3.)
- Vastu vidnajno laghu hasto jita sramah I Dirgha-darsicha surascha sthapatih parikirtitah II (Matsya Purana, see Pet. Diet.)

Sutragrahin:

- Various etymological meanings of the term have been suggested, eg., sntragrahiṭi sutra-dhrist. (M, Vol. II, p. 23)
- Sutra-graha, yah sutrani grihṇati nata dharayati. Sutra-graha, yah sutrani grihṇati dharayati cha. (Vartika of Katyayana on Panini.)

Vardhaki

- Vardhaki implies both carpenter and sculptor (Karle Cave Inscriptions No. 6, Ep. Ind., Vol. VII, p. 53.)

Stratajnah sutragrahi cha rekhajnah sastra-vit-tamah. (M, Vol. 11, p. 31)

Sthapatyajnānūsari cha sama-karmavisaradah II Sutra-danda-pramanajno raanonmanapramana vit II (Vastuvidya, Vol. I, dp. 16 and 17.)

Vardhaki is stated to be one who advances the scheme and follows sutragrahin implicitly;

Vridhhi krit vardhakih proktah sutragrahyānugah sada II (M., Vol. II, p. 18.)

In the Mahabharata (Vol. p. 256–266) Vardhaki is called Takshana (—ka) not however in the sense of care enter, but to imply executioner.

Vicharajnah Srutajnascha Chitra-karmajno vardhakih Vardhakir mana kormajnah (M, Vol. II, pp. 32, 24)

Takshaka

- Etymologically the term implies the cutter of timber for building purposes :— Takshanat takshaka sraritah (M., Vol. II, p. 24.) Takshanat sthula sukahmanam takshakah sa tu kirtitah (Vastu Vidya. Vol. I, p. 13)
- Takshakah karma-vidyas cha bala-bandhudayaparah (M., Vol. II, p. 33.) Mrit-karmajno guni saktah Sarva-karma svatantrakah I Guru bhaktah sada nishthah Sthapatyady-anugah sada II (Vastu Vidya. Vol. I, p. 19.) Susilas chatur dakshah Sastrajno lobha-varjitah I Kshamavanasya (-nsyat) dvijas chaiva Sutra dharah sa uchyate II (Silpa-dipaka. Vol. I, p. 3.) Karmantikah sthapatayah Purusha yantra kovidad I Tatha vardhakayas chaiva Margino vriksha takshakah II (Ramayana. Vol. M, p. 2, 80.) Mrit-karmajno guni saktah Sarva-karma svatantrakah I Guru bhaktah sada nishthah Sthapatyady-anugah sada II (Vastu Vidya. Vol. I, p. 19.) Susilas chatur dakshah Sastrajno lobha-varjitah I Kshamavanasya (-nsyat) dvijas chaiva Sutra dharah sa uchyate II (Silpa-dipaka. Vol. I, p. 3.) Karmantikah sthapatayah Purusha yantra kovidad I Tatha vardhakayas chaiva Margino vriksha takshakah II (Ramayana. Vol. M, p. 2, 80.)

Mahidhara's knowledge of teachings and the practical work of the science of architect were the qualities that **Bhāvbrahma** must have employed him. We know that a person can only employ and extract the best works from the qualified and tested workers if he/she himself/herself possesses knowledge and is focused of the aim, for construction of those buildings.

The mythical genealogy mentioned in the architectural treatises, to which the Indian artists draw their origins, tells us that they originated from *Brahma*, the creator. The, sage **Mānsāra**, the author of the treatise of same name, gives us the following genealogy of the four heavenly architects as, "From the four faces of Brahma, originated, in order, the **Viśvakarmā**, **Maya**, **Tvashtar**, and **Manu**. Their four sons are called respectively **Sthāpati**, **Sūtragrahin**, **Vardhaki**, and **Takshaka**, each skilled and expert in his own department. The texts detail out the essential qualities of these experts^{xviii}.

Interestingly, if we look at the words ascribed to the four sons, they suggest a particular skill and also the four classes of artisans of the science of architecture. Thus, **Sthāpati** is in rank the director-general and the consulting architect, **Sūtragrahin** is the guide (guru) of the other two, and **Vardhaki** is the instructor of **Takshaka**.

So, did the **Śaiva** ascetics acted as one of these artisans or at least knew the art or profession really well? If so, then here is a reflection of vast academic specialisations they possessed.

More interesting facts about the role of **Śaiva** ascetics are mentioned in the **Bherāghāt** inscription (907 AD). In this inscription the generous queen **Alhandēvī**, mother of illustrious, **Narsimhadēva**, is said to have constructed a temple dedicated to *Siva* under the name of **Vaidyanāth**, together with a **maṭh** of wonderful storeys^{xix}. She then caused her people to construct a lecture hall, a continuous line of gardens, as well as two rows of rooms attached to the temple of **Śambhu**^{xx}.

Still more information can be gathered from the following verse (29). The verse states that the queen donated to the God, named **Vaidyanātha**, for his beautiful decoration, the village named **Nāmauṇḍī** situated in the **Jāulipattalā**, with all the income^{xxi}. She also gave another village, **Makarpāṭaka**, situated on the right bank of the river **Narmadā** and in the land near the foot of the hills^{xxii}. Gifting of the village actually meant rights over all the taxes or not, is a matter of debate and needs more probe. But, here it is important from the point of view of town planning and its upkeep, which probably must have come from the income of the gifted village.

Further, the queen entrusted the management of the whole establishment to a **Pāśupat** ascetic, **Rudrarāśī**^{xxiii}. Here we have further elaboration of the role of **Śaiva** ascetics. If the entire management of the establishments was given to **Rudrarāśī**, we may assume that it must have also included the timely upkeep, repair of the monuments

^{xix}Akārayaṇmaṇḍirindumauléridammathēnādbhutabhūmiken/ Sahāmunā śrīnarsimhadēvaprasūrasāvalhaṇḍaivyudārā// 27//

^{xx}Vyakhyānāsālamuddhānamālāvikalāmamūm/ Akārayatsvaya' śāmbhuprāsādālidvyannajai// 28//

^{xxi}Dēvayāsmāi vaidyanāthābhīdhāya prādādēvī jāulipattalāyām/ Grāmānāmānā nāmuṇḍīti svrvvādāyēssārdham chāruchchāprasiddhayē// 29//

^{xxii}Narmadādakṣiṇē kulē pavratōpatyakāśrayē/ Tathāparmadādagrāmānāmānā makarpāṭakam// 30//

^{xxiii}Lātānvayah rakṣhāvidhimasya tāvaddhāvanimamitē bhuvanāni śāmbhuha// 31//

and other aspects of the civil works, for which collection of taxes was a crucial responsibility. We are told that the buildings were designed by the architect, **Pithé**, who is described as conversant with the science taught by **Viśvakaramā**. He planned all construction as **Prithu** did the Earth^{xxiv}. The inscription has clearly mentioned the architect besides the family of engravers.

The Jabalpur stone inscription of **Vimalśiva**, the spiritual preceptor of Kalachuri rulers, is described as “proficient in fine arts”, the one who “by his counsel even made the most distant people pay taxes” and “he is always employed by the king for many suitable, he nowhere shows slackness in the performance of obligatory and occasional rites”^{xxv}.

This inscription is of particular interest not only because it furnishes the lineage of **Śaiva** ascetics, but it throws light on the various aspects of town planning.

It records the construction of a temple of **Siva** by **Vimalśiva**, named as **Kīrtīśvara** after his **guru**, **Kīrtīśiva**. Eighteen verses of the inscription refer to **Vimalśiva**. After having learned and liberal and exercised great vigilance in looking after all affairs of the king. The Earth being adorned with gardens, tanks, charitable houses, temples and dwellings for brahmins constructed by him, is said to have vied with heaven in splendor^{xxvi}.

Further down the history we have the **Ābu inscription** of **Bhīmdēva II** (1208 AD) that mentions **Śaiva** ascetic **Kédārarāśī** and his sister, **Mokéśheśvarī**’s building operations in the **tīrtha** of **Kankhal** in **Achalgarh**. Verse 9 of the record says, “He who out of faith made an extensive renovation of the temple of **Koteśwara**, the **gurū** of **Tridēvapati** and in the whole of **Kankhal** a broad pavement of stone slabs, by whom the fort of this place was built, which perhaps may arrest the chariot of the sun in the sky by its high walls, and which is a snare, terrifying the bird-like movable mind of **Kālī**”^{xxvii}.

Second, he repaired the old home of **Atulnāth** and built two new solid, large temples of **Śūlpāni**, in front of **Kankhalnāth**^{xxviii}.

Thirdly, **Kédārarāśī**, in verse 12 of the inscription is said to have erected in the **Mañḍapa** of the temple of **Kankhalśambhū**, a row of pillars of pure black stone that were shaped like sacrificial posts^{xxix}.

Thus, building temples needed different skill set, such as planning, employing the best of artisans or supervising the works etc., his understanding of the affairs of civil works is known from other important tasks he accomplished in the **tīrtha**. Here is an extension of knowledge possessed by the **Śaivāchārya- Kédārarāśī**. It is at one side his influence that he exercised in the community.

^{xxiv} Ā sūtrayadidam sravva viśvakarmavidhānvit/ Pīthēsamabhiḡah sūtradhārah prthvīmprithurayathā//36//

^{xxv} Sakalṇṛpatikṛtyapratyavēkṣhāsudākshyam samdhikamadhi...jarayadhuryé/ Dvijapatirapi pūrṇa komalābhīh kalyati valalīlām yori...//39// Yo mantrahai karvartinh samakarollēkānaparēbhyaha parān.jajjyasimhadēvanripatirbhaktyātinamropi san/ Sa śrīmānvimalēśvarah kalimalprakṣhālānaikakṣhāmān kīrtidēva nadīmiv tribhuvanē vistāryēnāmānām//44//

^{xxvi} Achikarachchhamdramaulairmmaṇḍiramādarāt/ Guroh kīrtīśivasyaitatkīrtayē sukrītāya cha//45//

^{xxvii} Jīrṇodvāraṁ viśālanṛtridivapatiguroratra koteśvarasya vyudham chottānapaṭṭaṁ sakalkanakhalēśhraddhāyashakāra/ Atyuch-chairabhittibhaḡgairdivi divasapatispaṇḍanām van vighuḡyana yēnēhākāri koṭah kalivihagchalchhittavivitrāsapāsaḡ//9//

^{xxviii} Abhinavanijīkīrtēmūrattiruchchhairivādah sadanamtulnāthasyiddhuttaṁ yēnjīrṇṇm/ Iha kanakhalanāthasyāgrato yēn chakré navanivīdaviśāślēsadhani śūlapāṇēh//10//

^{xxix} Prathamavihitakīrtipraudhayañākrīyāsu pratikritimiv navyām maṇḍapē yūparūpām/ Iha kankhalśambhoh saddhani stambhamālāmmalakṣanapāṣāṇasya sa vyātātāna//12//

The technical aspect of civil works is known from the inputs like “paving” and “renovation” and application of large stone slabs and the black stone for pillars. Here incidentally we get information about the building materials also.

Like the other sources under study here, we find the name of the mason in the last verses as **Pālhaṇ** who engraved (**uttakīrṇṇa**) the inscription.

In the *Ranod* inscription of **Vyomaśiva**^{xxx} is stated to have resorted to Ranipadra its last glory and beautified the math thereby building in its vicinity a magnificent tank, a temple, a garden and shrines with images of **Śiva**, **Umā**, **Natyēswara**, and **Vināyaka**. Here again is a reflection of a **Śaivāchārya**'s contribution to town planning. Well, the important aspect known from the record is the verse 65^{xxxii}. This verse forbids “the planting of trees near the tank”. Here the reflection of an understanding that obviously if the trees are planted near the tank, they will, over a period of time, destroy the entire construction.

In the *Lodhia Plates* of **Mahāśivagupta**, we are informed that the king makes a donation of a village to a temple of **Śiva** under the name of **Īśānēśvara**, on request of a certain Śaiva ascetic, a disciple of **Pramathāchārya** whose preceptor hailed from the **Pañchajyāna Tapovan** in the *Dvaitvana* forest^{xxxiii}. The donation was made for the offerings to and worship, with music, dancing and feeding of God *siva* **Īśānēśvara** enshrined in the temple.

In another source, the *Rānipur Jharial*

inscriptions (**Mahādev** Temple Inscription 10th –11th cent), it is stated that the object of the inscription is to record the construction of a temple by **Gaganśiva**, an immigrant from Uttar **Terambagriha**. The temple contained images of **Som**, **Swamī**, **Siddheśwar** and **Lakshmi**.

Both these inscriptions, rather all the inscriptions discussed in this paper are examples of veneration and influence exercised by **Śaivāchāryas**, even if they were immigrants or belonged to a clan in another region, so much so that impacted the civil works or the town planning. In the *Bilhari* inscription we are told that **Lakṣahmaṇrāja** II invited **Hṛidayaśiva** to the **Chedi** country, from **Mālwa**, showing his devotion to him by sending presents. The presents are said to have been sent through the “well-conducted messenger”. This throws light on two points— one, the glory and name of the **Śaiva** ascetic, second the attention the State paid towards inclusion of a specialist person for establishing a monastery.

Results and Discussion

The present paper, though an attempt to understand the contribution of **Śaiva Gurūs**, can be applied to study the role of other prominent sections of the ancient Indian society, but establishes that inscriptions are a rich source of information. A systematic study of these to comprehend the socio-cultural and socio-economic milieu of ancient India can decode several myths. Inscriptions included in this paper have brought to light the combined contribution

^{xxx}Epigraphia Indica, 31

^{xxxii}Epigraphia Indica, 1, “*Sthirā saishā vāpi gaganaśaśimauterbhagavato bhavatvāchāndrārkamprathitapsobhūyaśaśaḥ/ Yadūye bhāṭiyam śardakamalachaṇḍrāṇśudhavalā surāṇām sadmātivikaṭaṭpṛaṭhe śikhariṇī//*”

^{xxxiii}Epigraphia Indica, 31

of each section of the society. Thus, the rulers extended their patronage and a “political will”, the traders ensured that the activities of social welfare, such as running the *añña sattra*, upgradation of the structures, construction of tanks, roads, continues unabated, the gifts and grants were the administrative arrangements to ensure sustenance of a system around the monastery or temple. Above all, the inscriptions have provided us with the technical aspects of town planning, science and knowledge of techniques applied during civil works, the materials used and various classes of artisans who were the service providers, such as the composers and engravers etc.

Conclusion

The inscriptions discussed above establish that the inscriptions are a rich source of information of various kinds in the ancient Indian context, such as the city administration, town planning and placement of religious architecture within the social stratification, role of each section of the society, the science of civil work and techniques of construction, the role of *Śaivāchāryas*, the coordination between the State, society and religious leaders. It re establishes our legacy of a unified world, physical or philosophical, human plane or beyond. Therefore, inscriptions should be referred and studied with a wider perspective, as in the present paper.