

Concepts of Indian Traditional Aesthetics and Fine Arts as Gleaned From Major Śaivāgamic Texts in Hindu Religion

M. Balakailasanathasarma¹

Historically, Indians have applied aesthetic principles even in religious rituals. The Indus valley people worshiped their deities with music and dance. Vedic fire altars were constructed according to aesthetic norms. Śaivāgamic texts are also to be accepted to contain the earliest art – tradition in India so far as the arts of architecture and sculpture are concerned. The aim of this study is to identify the elements and influence of religious and ritualistic aspects of Śaivāgamic texts in Indian traditional aesthetics and Fine Arts.

Using the descriptive research method, this study has been made to with special reference to major Śaivāgamas in which texts contain agamic injunctions prescribing the deities and rituals with aesthetic aspects and Fine Arts. This investigation revealed the fact that Arṇuśumadāgama, Kāmikāgama, Kāraṇāgama, Vaikhanasagam, Suprabhedāgama, Makutāgama and Kumaratantra are the major Āgamas, which give details of religious rituals with aesthetic elements such as pratima vijnāna. The Kriyapadas of major saivagamas deal with the technique of building temples and sculpturing images on less than with that of constructing dwellings of different types. In Kāmikāgama, we find that no less than sixty chapters are developed to architectural matters, such as testing and preparation of soil, selection of sites, etc.

Āgamic works on Śaivism contain wonderfully rich and beautiful descriptions of different Āgamic deities. It is indeed difficult to find any Āgamic deity who does not possess some powerful aesthetic charm for the devotee. The Śaivāgamas prescribe the procedure of the installation of such an image, and also give the details relating to its construction.

The aesthetic value of objects to be offered during the worship of these deities is such an important aspect of the Āgamas that some otherwise prohibited offering and rituals have been freely prescribed. The major Śaivāgamas describe Śiva as the great artist who creates the world of experience by his sheer will, out of himself, without recourse to any other stuff.

Keywords: Śaivagamic Texts, Aesthetics, Fine Arts, Rituals

1. Senior Lecturer, Department of Sanskrit, Faculty of Arts, University of Jaffna