

Qualification for a Sthapaty as per Silpa Sastras

K.P. Umapathy Acharya
Hereditary Architect and Sculptor
www.temple-architecture.com

The term Sthapaty is one of the surnames of Viswakarma community, other surnames being Acharya, Viswakarma, and Oja etc. However, in these days, it is used to refer persons who are engaged in the civil engineering works of Hindu temples. In Rig Veda and Atharva Veda, the term has been used to denote the 'chief' or 'viceroy'. There are four important ranks: Sthapati, Sutragrahin, Vardhaki, and Taksaka in the hierarchy of architect-sculptors in which Sthapaty is the chief among them.

Sthapati: He must be born in the family of Viswakarma. He is the chief architect-sculptor.

Sutragrahin: He should be a disciple or son of Sthapati, Vedic scholar and an expert surveyor.

Vardhaki: He should be an accurate measurer and sculptor. He must be under the control of Sutragrahin.

Taksaka: He should be a builder, carpenter and under the control of Vardhaki.

The sthapati at the highest position in the hierarchy, and before one could attain this status; he has to pass through the stages of Taksaka, Vardhaki, and Sutragrahin in that order. One can begin work as Taksaka, only if one has been the disciple of Sthapaty.

Essential Qualifications for a Sthapaty:

He must be well versed in Vedas.

He must be well versed in Silpa Sastras.

He must be well versed in Puranas and Epics.

He must be an expert in the following subjects:

1. Animal behavior and language
2. Astrology
3. Astronomy
4. Calligraphy
5. Civil Engineering
6. Culture of different countries
7. Economics
8. Epigraphy
9. Etymology

10. Geography of different countries
11. Geology
12. History of different countries
13. Knowledge management
14. Material management
15. Mathematics
16. Mechanical Engineering
17. Military Engineering
18. Music
19. Optics and Light engineering
20. Painting
21. Philosophy of different religions or sect
22. Phonetics
23. Process of fluency
24. Prosody
25. Quality management
26. Sculpture
27. Sound engineering
28. Surveying
29. Town Planning

He must have the following Personal Qualities:

1. Always Speak truth
2. Charitable in giving food to others
3. Compassionate
4. Faithful to his friends
5. Firm in decision-making
6. Good reputation
7. Happy in mind
8. Self control
9. Should not be greedy
10. Soft spoken
11. Sweet tongued
12. Should be free from
 - a. Addiction to liquor
 - b. Addiction to women
13. He should not resort to Black mailing
14. He should not indulge in Day dreaming, Gambling, and Hunting
15. He should be always curious and eager to learn other sciences.
16. He should always try to learn from others.

The Rishis and Seers had codified these qualifications of the Viswakarma (Hereditary Architect and Sculptor) in the Silpa Sastras. They arrived at these qualifications as the result of their prolonged psychological experiment and profound internal experiences.

In the absences of these qualifications as laid down by Rishis the mind become impure and the senses become confused. This results in misunderstanding, misinterpretation, and therefore misapplication of the Sastra.

The Sastras have hinted as two kinds of knowledge such as lower and higher level of understanding. The lower level is the pure intellectual understating. The higher level of understanding is not intelligence but vision. The Indian systems of learning and education are always insisted the significance and magnitude of the power of vision “drsti”.

Drsti consists of two dimensions such as internal vision\ and, internal experience. Internal vision is not thought process but a sort of light in the soul by which things unseen become evident and real to it. Rig Veda and Mayamata talk about the drsti of the Muni and Rishi. Internal experience is pure psychological experience from which a Sthapaty is capable of creating symbols, which represent not only ordinary operations of external life around them but also the external processes and operations of the mind and the soul.

One may wonder whether Sthapaty in the past had these prescribed qualifications, and if so, whether there proof for this. The proof is available in the form of temple inscriptions about individual Viswakarmas.

The following are two such 11th century CE inscriptions in Karnataka, India.

1. An Inscription from Channarayana patnam about the architect Viswanatha:

“Born in the family of Viswakarma, the architect of the three worlds, Viswanatha, son of Basavaacharya, who was the son of Vodeyappa considered being the Jagat-Guru.

Epi.Carnataka.Vol.V.Part.I.No.187.Tr.P.2

07

2. An inscription about Sri Sarvasiddhi Achary, the chief architect of world famous Viruppaksha Temple at Pattadakal:

Hail! Sri Sarvasiddhi Acharya, the asylum of all virtuous qualities, the Pithamaha i.e. the creator, the maker of many cities and houses: he whose Conversation is entirely perfect and refined; he who for jeweled crown and crest-jewel the houses and palaces and vehicles and seats and couches that he has constructed, the most eminent Sutragrahin of the Southern country.

Old Canarese

Inscription.No.100

K.P.Umapathy Acharya

E-mail: sastra1000@yahoo.com

www.temple-architecture.com