From the Agamas: Urban Planning According to Agamas
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From the Agamas

Urban Planning According to Agamas

Exploring one of the earthy sections of the Kamika Agama: town design

The following text is from the Kriya Pada of Kamika Agama, chapter 30, entitled "Directions for ascertaining appropriate locations for those who live in the villages and other settlements." It is part of a long section on architecture which discusses with the construction of temples, Deities and types of buildings.

Now I will explicitly tell you the appropriate dwelling place for those who maintain their livelihood in the major divisions and the minor divisions of villages and such other settlements. The knowers of the divine forms (daivajna), astrologers, physicians hailing from the medical tradition, traditional barbers, dispensers of medicines, poison-removers, blacksmiths and other metal workers, soothsayers well versed in astrology--these are the eight kinds of people eligible to occupy the major divisions of the village. Oil merchants, potters, barbers, flower merchants, musical instrument dealers, those who keep the cows and beasts of burden, those who live by carts, wheels and such other tools, traditional traders, weavers, laborers, washermen, those who belong to the lowest jati (a community following a hereditary occupation)--these are the twelve kinds of people who are entitled to live in the minor divisions of the villages and other settlements.

Oil merchants are to be in the west, or alternatively in the east. Potters are to be in the northeast, north or east; barbers to the southeast or the east. It is recommended flower sellers be in the northeast. Those dealing in musical instruments and their accessories should be in the north. For those who live by making use of animals and other beings, the location should be either in the west, northwest or southwest. Those who maintain their life by making use of carts, wheels and such tools, should be in the south and north. It is declared in the Sivagama that the location for the traders by jati is to be in the northwest. The location in the south is fit for the weavers.

The exact location is to be determined by reasoning, according to the situation and according to the superiority of jati denominations. The location for the superior classes should be near the central region of the town, and the location for the inferior classes should be at a considerable distance from the central region. For the artisans and the washermen, the exact location is to be in the southeast or in the northeast, at a distance of at least 100 poles (1,100 feet) outside the boundary. The location for the lowest jati is to be allocated in the east or in the four corners of the village. The huts for the lowest jati are to be built at a distance of one krosa (2.1 miles).

If there is a river either in the northeast or in the northwest, or in the east or north of the village, then the cremation ground should be formed near the river bank.

The authorities concerned should construct tanks and wells either in the east, west, northwest, northeast or north side of the village. They should avoid other directions.

The cow shed is to be in the southern area, and the flower garden should be in the north. Alternately, the ponds, wells and tanks may be constructed in all the directions around the village.

An alternative dwelling place for the trading community may be in all directions around the village. That for the shudra (agricultural) community is to be in the southwest. The dwelling place for the people of lowest jati, chandalas, and for hired laborers is to be in the north side of the cremation ground.

There are some specific activities to nullify the defects that may have occurred in the process of allocation and to expedite the growth in the major parts of the village. Similarly there are some specific activities to be performed for the perfection of the roads which lead to the shrines of the Gods and the houses of the people.

In order to maintain the purity of those roads and paths which seem to have defects and impurity, the concerned authorities should plant the recommended

trees in the empty spaces available around the village. Sleshamataka (large sebesten), vata (banyan), kataka (soap nut), udumbara (cluster fig), aragvata (konrai), asvattha (peepal), nimba (neem), plaksha (wavy-leaved fig)--all these eight trees are to be planted in the eight directions, starting from the northeast and moving in a clockwise direction. All these trees are to be outside the boundary line of the village, and each should be provided with a raised platform at the bottom. Specifically, it is declared in the scriptures that such recommended trees are capable of nullifying the defects of the village and other settlements.

A village [normally 10,000-12,000 residents] in which more than 1,000 brahmins live does not get affected by defects or irregularities, because of the vitalizing spiritual power of the brahmins.

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