

## CHAPTER VIII

ADMINISTRATION AND POLITY IN 'SRĪMĀLA PURĀNA'

The 'Srimāla Purāna is purely a sthala Mahātmya and had nothing to do with political affairs. The Puranakara has not mentioned the political or administrative system directly any where. The city of 'Srimāla was constructed for brāhmanas and given to them by Lord Visnu. It shows that 'Srimāla was a Janpada and administered by brāhmanas<sup>1</sup> themselves. Dr.A.B. L.Awasthi confirms the fact in his studies in Skand Purāna.<sup>2</sup>

The study regarding political affairs the narration in Purāna include certain features that indicate that some form of polity was known to 'Srimāla Purāna. It records the reference to a number of Kings who came for tīrtha yātrā and built temples.

The presence of the Kings in 'Srimāla Purāna discloses the fact that Janapada gradually changed into Kingship. The names of the Kings who came to 'Srimāla are recorded below. One of them named 'Sripunja became the King of 'Srimāla and reconstructed the city and tirthas. The Kings are as under:

(1) Satrujita<sup>1</sup> of candravanśa came to Mountain Saugandhika to worship the Lord Hurbhveśvara Mahādeva when Risi Vasistha also came with seven sages.

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1 'Srimāla Purāna, IX to XI

2 A.B.L.Awasthi, Studies in Skanda Purana I, p.89

3 'Srimāla Purāna, I 33

- (2) King Ksemdurti<sup>1</sup> came on tirth yatra to visit Srimāla and was saved from the curse of Risi Durvasa by Sidhi-vināyaka.
- (3) Satadhanu was the King who talked with a Pakhandhi and became a crow.<sup>2</sup>
- (4) Srimāla Purāna records that Sripunja became the King of deserted Srimāla<sup>3</sup>. He repopulated it by inviting the brahmanas who had left Srimāla 164 years before from Mount Abu.

#### Administration:

City: City administration is also traced as follows:

The city had two fortwalls and a fort in the centre of the city. Only specified persons were allowed to enter the inner fortwall as it was seen that Jinjara could not go in and was prevented by the gate man (Dvārpala)<sup>4</sup>.

The fortwall had eighty four (84) gates<sup>5</sup> (this figure seems exaggerated) and on the East, near the 10th gate Jainasrama was constructed.<sup>6</sup>

A canal full of water ran round the fortwall. The water of Sravanti flowed in it.

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1 Srimāla Purāna, XXXIX 2

2 Ibid. XVI 10, 11, 18

3 Ibid. XXXVII 2-16, 37-39

4 Ibid. XIX 1-8

5 Ibid. LXXII 24

6 Ibid. LXXIV 50

The city was constructed by Visvakarma at the order of Visnu<sup>1</sup>. It had many magnificent buildings painted with figures of Laksami<sup>2</sup>. The number of buildings was seven lacs<sup>3</sup>, which is also exaggerated. The city had straight roads crossing at right angles having Chouhātas numbering 18,000<sup>4</sup> which is an exaggerated figure. It was surrounded by Sarovaras for water resources and used as swimming pools, many assembly halls, gardens for the public, asramas, shops numbering two lacs and inns<sup>5</sup> for travellers.

Other Administration affairs: The King Sripunja had an army to safeguard the city<sup>6</sup>.

It saved the city from all dangers. At times the King himself would go to save his public. This was seen when Brahmana Kanya was kidnapped by Sarika.<sup>7</sup>

The King had his Dutas (messengers) who brought the Brahmanas from Arbudācala<sup>8</sup> to Srimala. He was fond of hunting and was a good marksman.<sup>9</sup>

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1 Srimala Purana, IX 23, IX 1

2 Ibid. IX 1-10

3 Ibid. LXXII 23

4 Ibid. LXXII 1-5

5 Ibid. LXXII 23

6 Ibid. XXXVII 37-38

7 Ibid. XXXVIII

8 Ibid. XXXVIII

9 Ibid. XXXVIII

The arrow, tridant (Trisula), sword<sup>1</sup>, axe and mugdals (clubs) were the weapons used by the army.

Disturbances to the City: The city Srimāla built at the request of Devi Sri was named in succession as Puspamāla, Ratnamāla and Bhinmāl. It shows that the city was deserted many times.

There is one such Puranic narration named Sārikopakhyaṇa which shows that the people of Sindh used to kidnap the marriageable girls from Srimāla ksetra. Due to this danger people left the city and went to Abu. This suggests that the danger from West was the main cause of the fall and destruction of Srimāla time and again. Due to the fear of Sārikā the city was depopulated and it was repopulated by Sripunja after 164 years. This account confirms the above fact.<sup>2</sup>

It was observed that after Vikrama Samvata 1203 Vaisaka Sukla asthami Sri of Srimāla left the city turning it into Bhinmāl<sup>3</sup> and Lakṣmi came to Patan the capital of Gurjaradesa. This shows the change in political status of the city after the above date.

1 Srimāla Purāṇa, XXXVIII, XXXVI

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid. LXXV

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 F.M.T. Jackson (Bombay Gazetteer, Vol. I, History of Gujarat 1896 Appendix III, Bhinmal, p.463) gives the dates of the destruction of Srimāla city as follows:

- (1) S.V. 265 - 209 A.D.
- (2) S.V. 494 - 438 A.D. reconstructed in S.V. 700 (643 A.D.)
- (3) S.V. 900 - 844 A.D. reconstructed in S.V. 955 (896 A.D.)
- (4) New construction began after 14th century A.D.