

## Cultural and Critical Study of 'Srimala Purana

### SYNOPSIS

The thesis deals with the critical and cultural study of Srimala Purana and tackles the problems regarding the Social Practices of Srimali Brahmanas, Vanikas and other castes originated from Srimala.

The Srimala Purana is not only the purana in the accepted sense of the term but it is also a Tirtha Mahatmya and as such it describes many Tirthas which are connected with Srimala in some way or other. An effort was made to find out all the Tirthas, identify them and fix their Chronology. For this purpose it was essential to prepare a collated text and then study it. For such a study the present work is divided into nine chapters.

#### Chapter I - Introduction to Srimala Purana:

It is an introductory chapter which tries to explain the nature of Srimala Purana and its critical apparatus that is used. Srimala Purana is a Jnati Purana and Tirtha Mahatmya. The aims of study and method of study of Srimala Purana through internal and external evidences is noted.

An attempt to fix the date of Srimala Purana is made in this chapter.

## Chapter II - Summary of Srimāla Purāna:

It gives the summary of the seventy-five adhyāyas of Srimāla Purāna.

## Chapter III - The Sources of Srimāla Purāna:

In this chapter sources of each adhyāya are traced and influence of these sources on Srimāla Purāna have been traced.

Some of these sources are as follows:

- i) The Mahābhārata
- ii) The Rāmāyana
- iii) The Purānas and Upapurānas
- iv) Jain Granthas
- v) Local myth and legends
- vi) Local Geography
- vii) Social Practices of Srimālis

## Chapter IV - Geographical data in Srimāla Purāna:

The geographical features of Bhinmāla have been given under the following headings:

Location, Topography, Climate, Geological and Lithological conditions, water resources, the physiography, natural vegetation and cultivation.

The animal husbandary, wild-life, snakes, locust and other natural hazards like Andhi (sandy waves) are recorded. Some of them that are noted in Srimāla Purāna are compared.

Chapter V - Socio-Economic (Economic) Conditions in  
Srimāla Purāna:

Some Socio-Economic conditions and means of commerce are studied and means of commerce are studied and compared with the time when Srimāla Purāna was composed. The character of society is divided as:

- i) The house-hold
- ii) The occupations
- iii) The Animal husbandary
- iv) The subsidiary means
- v) Farm forestries and local industries
- vi) The trade, commerce and currency of Srimāla.

Chapter VI - Socio-Economic Structure (Castes and Social Practices) in Srimāla Purāna:

The castes mentioned in Srimāla Purāna are described with the history as noted in the Purāna. The castes are:

- i) Srimālī Brahmanas
- ii) Puskarna Brahmanas
- iii) Srimālī Vanikas
- iv) Srimālī Sunars
- v) Bhils
- vi) Deval Rajputs
- vii) Patolias and Halvai.

## Chapter VII - Religious Conditions in Srimāla Purāna:

In this chapter the religious conditions the Gods, Goddesses, Vratas, Tirtha Mahatmya and the religious conflicts are discussed.

## Chapter VIII - Administration and Polity in Srimāla Purāna:

The political conditions of the time are described briefly keeping in view the date of writing of the Srimāla Purāna.

## Chapter IX - Conclusion;

It is the concluding chapter evaluating the study of caste purānas.

### STATEMENT I

#### Regarding study of the new facts

This thesis is undertaken to prepare a collated text of Srimāla Purāna with a view to study the cultural and social conditions noted there in. It has brought to light the following facts:

1. Srimāla Purāna is a valuable source to study Jnati and know the significant features of Srimāli caste.

2. The method adopted for the study of Kaumarika Khanda of Skanda Purana by Dr.R.N.Mehta, was adopted. It was as follows:

"(1) The detailed examination of the style and subject-matter of the text. The subject matter is obviously a tirtha mahatmya of region.

(2) Field study of the tirthas. They were visited for gathering the archaeological evidences. This method gave a first hand information of the tirthas treated in the work and it also gave independent chronological frame work for this text. Besides, this study incidentally gave some details for tracing the growth of the town of Cambay".

It was observed that the above method was equally effective in the study of the Srimala Purana also.

3. To study the beliefs about the ancient cities of the Western India, the study of such Purana is very useful.

4. The Jnati Puranas and tirtha mahatmya throw valuable light on the important tirthas of the Ksetra from which the Jnati emnated.

5. Many cultural traits and social customs of Srimali caste could be understood by the study of Srimala Purana.

6. The importance of the tirthas of Srimāla, their Gods and the way of their worship are also understood by this study.
7. To compare and contrast the post-customs of Srimāli caste with those of the present day is made easy by the study of this purāna.
8. The geography and situation of ancient Srimāla Nagara can be studied with the help of Srimāla Purāna.
9. The identification of the tirthas noted in Srimāla Purāna with the help of site-study helped in understanding the paurānic mythology of Srimāla Purāna.
10. The influence of the local language on sanskrit can be seen by the study of Srimāla Purāna.

The study has indicated that similar Jnāti-Purāna and Tirtha Mahātmya require careful study to understand social practices of the castes and the stories about the place to which they belong. This throws light on mediaeval concepts about social practice and belief about the past as well as the chronology of such Purānas or parts thereof.

#### STATEMENT II

Statement showing the sources of information to the extent to which this work is based on the work of others and original portion of the thesis

Sources of information:

For this thesis all the published works relating to

Srimala Purana, Srimala Nagar and Srimala Ksetra which is included in the present Bhinmal city and Bhinmal sub-division of Jalore district of Rajasthan State, have been consulted and studied. They are as follows:

1. The Gazetteer of Bombay Presidency, Part I (History of Gujarat), 1896
2. Gazetteer, Geographiya of Marwar
3. The Rajasthan circle report of 1901
4. Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan by James Tod
5. Marwar census report of 1891, Part III
6. Sirohi Ka Itibas by Pandit Gorishankar Hirachand Ojha
7. Glorious Rathores by V.N.Rav
8. Geographical distionary by N.L.Dey
9. The studies regarding Purānas and Upapurānas, by F.C.Hazra
10. Muhnot Nainsi Ki Khyat, Part I, translated and edited by Ramnarayan Dugada, Samvata 1982, published by Kasi-Nagri-prasarni Sabha
11. Chronology of Gujarat, Historical and Cultural - General Editor M.R.Majmudar.
12. History and Culture of Indian people classical age, Vol.III
13. The statistical report of Jalore district, published by the Statistical Department of Rajasthan, from 1962 to 1967
14. "Chinese accounts of India" translated from the Chinese Hiouen Thsang, Vol.IV, Samuel Beal.
15. Survey report of Aridzone, published by the National Research Institute, Jodhpur, 1967.
16. Cadstral Maps, Survey of India

17. An Introduction on Kavyānusāsana, of Hemachandra
18. Gujarāt-ni-Rajdhaniyā, by R.C.Parikh
19. Gujarāt-no Sanskritika Itihās by Ratanmani Rav Bhim Rav Jhote.
20. Sraman Bhagwan Mahavir by Munikalyanvijai
21. Hindu Jnati<sup>aur</sup> Mata, by Pandit Yogendra Bhattacharya, M.A., D.L.
22. Srimāli Sidhanta (Amarmāla), by Pandit Nand Ram Trivedi of Jodhpur
23. Puskarnā Jnati ka itihās by Mitha Lal Viyas of Jodhpur
24. Gujarāt Nu Murtividhāna by Kanyalal Dave
25. "Prasād Mandan" by Sutradhar Mandan, a Vastusāstra, edited by Pandit Bhagwandas Jain
26. Articles published by M.S.University by Dr.R.N.Mehta:  
Journals:  
a) Mehta R.N., "Kumarika Khanda - a Study", Journal of the Maharaja Sayajirao University, Baroda, Vol.XIV, No.1, 1965  
b) Mehta R.N., "Kumarika Khanda and Khambhat", Svadyaya - Book II, Part IV, Janmastmi Anka 1965-66 a publication of Gujarati research institution  
c) Mehta R.N., "Valbhi of the Maitrakas", Journal of the Oriental Institute, Baroda, Vol.XIII, No.3, March 1964  
d) Mehta R.N., "Nagara", published in Svadhiyaya the Gujarati research quarterly, Vol.IV, 1966-67
27. Jain Āgam Sahitya Ma Gujarāt, by Dr.B.J.Sandesara



28. The ceilings in the temples of Gujarat, by J.M.Nanavati and M.A.Dhanki, 1965
29. "The Hindu temple" by Stella Karmrisc, Professor of University of Calcutta, 1946

The extent to which this work is based on the  
work of others

All the works noted above were consulted. The opinions of the authors noted thereof are the parts of the work which depend on the sources already noted. The identification of the tirthas was based on the information received from the field-work. Thus many parts of the work are based on the previous works and local traditions that were collected.

Original portion of this thesis

This thesis is based on new discoveries revealed by the study of Srimāla Purāna. These are summed up as follows:

1. Original map of the town of Rhinamāl and its sub-division is prepared and the Tirthas of Srimāla Purāna have been pointed out with their actual locations.
2. Origin and history of the castes of Srimālīs with their beliefs have been discovered with their customs and social trends through the study of Srimāla Purāna.

3. The area of Bhinamal and its geography with flora and fauna, annual rain-fall, and climate, wild-life, agricultural products, animal husbandary, society and its occupation have been studied and compared to the conditions mentioned in the Srimāla Purāna.
4. Ancient commerce and industries and currency used in Srimāla have been studied.
5. The causes of down-fall of Bhinmal and rise of Patan have been studied as viewed in Srimāla Purāna and as known through history.
6. The conflict of religion specially in Jains and Brahmana have been noted with its actual position in mediaeval period in Western India specially in North Gujarat and West Rajasthan.
7. The influence of local language on Srimāla Purāna have been studied through the study of the language of Srimāla Purāna.
8. Collation work of the Manuscripts of Srimāla Purāna with text published have been done.
9. Effort to fix the age of the Srimāla Purāna has been undertaken through internal and external evidences.
10. The Tirthas of Srimāla Purāna have been studied through the exploration work and inongographical study of the images of-the was made. The Tirthas were examined archaeologically.
11. The ancient city Bhinamal have been studied and compared with details of Srimāla Purāna.

12. The castes that migrated from Srimala have been studied and their beliefs about their origin have been analysed.

The study discovered the major fact that:

- i) The study of Caste-Puranas is very essential in order to know the history of castes existing in Indian society.
- ii) The religious conflicts may be gleaned through the study of Caste Puranas.
- iii) The Puranas give the actual data which could be helpful in identifying the Tirthas in old city with its surroundings and the social status prevailing at the time of their writing or the traditions that were preserved at that time.

It is of interest to know that the study of Caste Puranas should be undertaken for getting a better picture of society. Without their study it is very difficult to get the actual picture of a particular caste. To get cultural data of Indian Social Life, the study of Caste Puranas is essential and of vital importance.





Illustration

No.1

K A M A L A  
(Devi 'SRĪ of 'Srimāla)

'Srimāla Purāna, LXII

G a j a l a k s a m ī in Mahalakṣami Temple  
Rhinmal