

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

What is Srīmāla Purāna:

Srīmāla Purāna is called Srīmāla Mahātmya by its author and he says that Srīmalamahātmya is described in the eighty one thousand samhitās in the third Paricheda of Brahmavibhāga of the Skandapurāna. It is <sup>claimed to be</sup> a part of Skandapurāna and <sup>it</sup> describes Srīmāla nagara with its tirthas and castes. There is no description of the said Purāna in "The Studies in the Upapurāna" by R.C.Hazra. While writing introduction to Mallapurāna Professors Sandesara and Mehta R.N. have mentioned its name in foot note to identify it as a caste purāna.<sup>1</sup> Dr.Awasthi, (studies in Skanda Purāna<sup>2</sup>), mentioned the city 'Srīmāla', but he is silent about its Mahātmya. No doubt it is a caste-purāna which tells about the 'Srīmāli' castes like Dharmārya for Modh Brahmanas, Nagārkhandā for Nagars and Vāyu Purāna for Vāydas, but Srīmāla Purāna not only tells about the castes but it also describes ~~identifies~~ the geographical situation of ancient Srīmāla with its culture and social functions.

Aims of study of Srīmāla Purāna:

The aims to study Srīmāla Purāna are summarised below:

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1 Dr.Sandesara B.J. and Dr.Mehta R.N., Mallapurāna, p.2

2 Dr.Awasthi A.B.L., Studies in Skanda Purāna, part I pp.89,127

1. To know the myths about the origin of Srimali brahmans, Baniās, Sunars and other castes.
2. To study the Puranic story about the construction of the city.
3. To identify the ancient Srimāla city if possible through the study of its tirthas.
4. To study social and cultural significance of Srimāla and its influence over West Rajasthan and North Gujarat.
5. To know the gotras with their Devās and avatankas of Srimali castes, Srimāla-purāna-is-the-only-source.
6. To collect the ancient customs, ceremonies and functions of Srimāla nagara and the Srimalis.
7. To examine religious conflicts as known to have taken place in West India as noted in the Srimāla Purāna.
8. The study is helpful to know the cultural history of the said area.

#### Method of Study:

The text of Srimāla purāna was prepared with the help of other manuscripts of Srimāla purāna and studied. On the basis of this the method employed to study Kaumarika Khanda<sup>1</sup> was adopted in this study.

The field work was conducted to study the places noted in the Srimāla Purāna with a view to understand the present condition and its past formation. This would result in, it was presumed, the identification of the tirthas and give valuable information on chronological and cultural aspects.

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1 Dr.Mehta R.N., "Kaumarika Khanda - a Study", Journal of M.S.University, Baroda, Vol.XIV, No.1, 1965

The text of Srīmāla Purāna:

The text of Srīmāla Purāna is edited with the help of a printed text and four manuscripts. The printed text was published in Samvat 1955 (1899 A.D.) at 'Vijaya Pravartaka' press Ahmedabad, by Gujarat Arya Osadhasala, Richi Road, Ahmedabad. It was prepared with Gujarati translation by Jata-sankara Liladhara and Kesavaji Visvanatha. It contains 75 chapters.

An effort is made in the present work to collate it for a critical study by using available manuscripts.

The following printed work and manuscripts are used in this work:

Manuscript A: The Printed text noted above is referred to is 'A'

Manuscript B: The Place of Deposit:

The Rajasthan Oriental Institute, Jodhpur.

Account No. 10608

Title....	<u>Srīmāla Mahātmya</u>
Author....	Unknown
Age....	Samvat 1877
Language....	Sanskrit
Script....	Devanagri
Material....	Rough Yellowish paper
Style....	Written in one uniform hand writing but at places it has been corrected and letters are written in small size.
Size....	29 c.m. x 13 c.m.
Folios....	113 (folios 79 to 82 missing)
Extent....	1 to 75 <u>Adhiyāya</u> (missing <u>adhiyāya</u> 39 to 42)
No. of lines in each folio....	14

No. of letters in  
each line.... from 33 to 39

Copyist.... Puṣakarna Brāhmaṇa Boda Ganesh Dās

Margin to each folio.... Right side margin 3.5 c.m.  
Left side margin 3.5 c.m.  
Upper margin 2 c.m.  
Lower margin 2.3 c.m.

Manuscript C: The Place of Deposit:

The Rajasthan Oriental Institute, Jodhpur

Account No. 10489

Title.... Skanda Purāṇa (Śrīmāla Māhātmya)

Author.... Unknown

Age.... Not mentioned but Paleography suggests circa  
16th century

Language.... Sanskrit

Script.... Devanagiri

Material.... Rough Yellowish paper

Style.... Written in good and uniform hand writing world  
quite legible

Size.... 29.9 c.m. x 13 c.m.

Folios.... 152 (folios from 1 to 17 missing)

No. of lines in  
each folio.... 9 lines

No. of letters in  
each line.... 43 to 45

Margin to each  
folio.... Left side margin 3 c.m.  
Right side margin 3 c.m.  
Upper margin 2.5 c.m.  
Lower margin 2.9 c.m.

All the slokas are not numbered at many places, numbering  
of Adhiyāyas is missing. Dialogues are marked with Kumkum.

Manuscript D: The Place of Deposit:

The Rajasthan Oriental Institute, Jodhpur.

Account No. Copy of Srimāla Mahātmya Number 69

Title.... Srimāla Mahātmya a part of Skanda Purāna  
 Author.... Unknown  
 Age.... January 1960 collated under Munishri Jinvijaya  
 Language.... Sanskrit  
 Script.... Devanagri  
 Material.... Paper  
 Style.... Written in good hand writing  
 Size.... 33.5 c.m. x 21 c.m.  
 Folios.... 460 folios - divided in two volumes  
 No. of lines in  
 each folio.... 20 to 23  
 No. of letters  
 in each line... 13 to 45  
 Copyist.... Sri Madan Sarma an official from Oriental Institute,  
 It was an incomplete work as Sri Sarma left Office  
 and work was suspended.

Manuscript E: The Place of Deposit:

Sri Chaganlalji Maharaja, Raja Jyotishi, Jalor

Title.... Srimāla Purāna  
 Author.... Unknown  
 Age.... Not mentioned but seems to be 300 years old  
 Language.... Sanskrit  
 Script.... Devanagri  
 Material.... Yellowish paper  
 Style.... Written in good hand writing. Some lines are  
 written with different hand.  
 Size.... 31.5 c.m. x 12 c.m.  
 Folios.... 84 ( 1 to 60 ) in good condition; 61 to 84  
 damaged

No. of lines in each folio....	12 to 17 lines; on folio 7, only ten lines								
No. of letters in each line....	42 to 46 letters; on folio No. 7, 30 letters in each line								
Margin to each folio....	<table> <tr> <td>Margin to left</td><td>4 c.m.</td></tr> <tr> <td>Margin to Right</td><td>4 c.m.</td></tr> <tr> <td>Upper margin</td><td>1.3 c.m.</td></tr> <tr> <td>Lower margin</td><td>1.5 c.m.</td></tr> </table>	Margin to left	4 c.m.	Margin to Right	4 c.m.	Upper margin	1.3 c.m.	Lower margin	1.5 c.m.
Margin to left	4 c.m.								
Margin to Right	4 c.m.								
Upper margin	1.3 c.m.								
Lower margin	1.5 c.m.								

#### Chronology of Srimāla Purāna:

The Puranic literature is usually anonymous and hence the chronology of its composition remains doubtful. Srimāla Purāna is no exception to this general trend, therefore, it is necessary to fix its chronology. A.M.T. Jackson writing in Gazetteer of Bombay Presidency, Volume I,<sup>1</sup> notes that it was written about four hundred years back, but does not give

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1 Jackson A.M.T., Gazetteer of Bombay Presidency, Volume I Part I (History of Gujarat) under Government orders, Printed at Government Press, Bombay 1896. Appendix III Bhinnmal by Mr. A.M.T. Jackson, I.C.S. pp. 449-499

"The legends of Bhinnmal are collected in the Srimāla Mahātmya of Skanda Purāna, a work supposed to be about 400 years old. pp. 461. I roughly give the date of composing of the Srimāla Purāna at about 1896-400=1496 A.D.

any arguments to support his view. It is, therefore, necessary to study the extent text and other corroborative evidence to discover the period of its writing. Fortunately the present text indicates that the author of the 'Srīmāla Purāna' had good information of the political conditions of the 12th century A.D. This he has given in Chapter LXXV, under the guise that the <sup>Lakṣanī</sup>~~Lakṣanī~~ of 'Srīmāla' went to Pātan. Evidently this incident refers to the conquest of Bhinmāl by the Chaulukyas of Pātan in 12th Century A.D. At this time Jains were powerful at Pātan and their power also seem to be reflected in the stories about the spread of Jainism in Bhinmāl.

From this evidence it could be inferred that the author of the 'Srīmāla Purāna' flourished in or after 12th Century A.D. Thus one can reasonably assign the 'Srīmāla Purāna' to a period after 12th Century A.D.

The manuscripts so far available indicate that the earliest is ascribed to the 16th Century of Paleographic grounds.<sup>1</sup> If this is true then the 'Srīmāla Purāna' must have been composed before 16th Century A.D.

Thus the internal evidence of the text and the external evidence of the manuscript indicate that the work is composed

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1 Manuscript 'C', The place of deposit, Rajasthan Oriental Institute, Jodhpur; Account No.10489

after 12th century A.D. and before 16th century A.D.<sup>1</sup>

The study of the language indicate that the Sanskrit is mixed up with local language and some of the words have taken the modern form.<sup>2</sup> This fact seem to point out that the Srimāla Purāna might probably have been composed towards 14th/15th century A.D. A perusal of Jain Prabandhas of this age also <sup>indicates</sup> a mixture of words and phrases as is the case here. These facts seem to lend support to this possibility. Some of the stories from Srimāla Purāna are based on misunderstanding of images or on the worship of broken images. This is also a phenomenon that could take place after the images were lying for a long time or the broken images were once more taken up for worship. The Varah image seem to belong to circa 12/13th

1 Manuscript 'C' numbered .10489 in the records of Oriental Institute, Jodhpur

2	<u>Sanskrit Words</u>	<u>Sanskrit word mixed in local form</u>	<u>Present language</u>
A.	Ahaliya	Ahilya	Hindi (XLIX)
B.		Ojha	Gujarati (LXIX)
C.	Ṣodasa	Ṣodasa	Gujarati (LXIX)
D.		Josi	Hindi & Gujarati (LXIX)
		Dave	Gujarati (LXIX)
		Vora	Gujarati (LXIX)
		Bohra	Hindi (LXIX)
		Thakura	Hindi (LXIX)
		Travadi	Gujarati (LXIX)
		Panesneriya campanehia	Gujarati (LXIX)

All the gotras of Brahmanas and Vanikas are of local direct either from Gujarati, West Marwari or Hindi.



century on stylistic affinity. It could easily take about two or three centuries for making its snout to become a Kāk-tunda in Folk literature.<sup>1</sup> If such a phenomenon is considered carefully, one can ascribe the work to about 2 or 3 centuries after 12th century A.D. Thus it seems that this evidence converges on 14th/15th century A.D. This is in line with the internal evidence of the text as well as that of the manuscripts. The broken image of Varunavi Devi is worshipped in broken form as mentioned in the same form in Srimāla Purāna. It shows that the Purāna is written after its destruction.<sup>2</sup>

The social picture of the town specially built for Brahmanas indicate that the authors probably did not know the rule this town has played in the past.<sup>3</sup> They, therefore, seem to follow the line of thought that is seen in Nāgarkhanda,<sup>4</sup> Dharmāranya and such other texts composed in the period after 13th century A.D.

1 Srimāla Purāna, XVI

2 Ibid. Varunāvi Mahātmya

3 Incidentally it may be noted that Red and Black ware, Roman Amphora, Red-Polished Ware and such other antiquites were obtained from Ehimmal indicating that it is an old town established probably before the Christian era.

The above material with the coins of Srimāla Ksetra are kept safe in the museum of the Archaeological Department of the M.S. University, Baroda.

4 Mehta R.N., Nāgarkhanda, a study, Journal of M.S. University of Baroda, Vol XIV, No 2, 1965

The Chapter LXIX and LXX of the gotras and avatankas clarified the fact that Srimāli brāhmanas and vanikas were divided in many sub-castes and their avatankas.<sup>1</sup> The names of avatankas are influenced by the language Marwari and Gujarati which prevailed in 15th century. So the work of Srimāla Purāna is not earlier than 15th century A.D.

The above fact is confirmed when we do not find any references of the temples of Mahesvara Mahādeva and Nilkantha Mahādeva. These are the important tirthas of present Rhinmal. There is no reference of the construction of the gate and walls of the temple of Candinātha Mahādeva. The inscription on the gate of Candinātha Mahādeva temple is of 17th century A.D. so the work of Srimāla Mahātmya lies before this date. It may be concluded that Srimāla Purāna was written after 12th century A.D. and before 16th century A.D.

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1 Srimāla Purāna, Gotras and avatankas of Srimālis and Vanikas - LXIX and LXX



Illustration  
No. 2

KĀKA VĀRĀHA

Srimāla Purāṇa, XVI

Krisana Sarovara, Bhinmal