

CHAPTER VII

DHARMĀRANYA:

ORIGIN, GEOGRAPHY AND ANTIQUITY.

"The most important contribution of the Purāṇas to the history and archaeology of Ancient India is geographical information found in the Bhuvana-Kośa sections as well as in the numerous mähātmyas of sacred regions and other stories dealing with pilgrimages or other religious and social episodes."¹

Dharmāranya Purāṇa is no less important as a source of ancient geography. It throws some light on the geography of the region of Northern Gujarat, in particular, and the geography of India in general.

The geographical names included in this chapter are those of the places situated in or around Modhera

¹•Awasthi A.B.L., Studies in Skanda Purāṇa, Part I, p.1.

within the radius of not more than 15 miles. The identifications of these places have been done by field-study as far as possible, coupled with the related available literature. The names of places which are outside the limit mentioned above are, included in Appendix II on geographical data. Some of the places within the above-mentioned limit have been identified at their relevant places in different chapters, hence, their discussion is not included here.

Moheraka : It is identified with modern Modhera. It had different names in different yugas viz. Dharmāranya in Kṛtayuga, Satyamandira in Tretāyuga, Devabhuvana in Dvāparayuga and Moheraka in Kaliyuga. (V.51). This may indicate the alternate rise and fall of the city of Modhera in different periods and its antiquity.

We have no authentic information as to when Modhera was founded but it may be inferred that its founding might have taken place in second century B.C. It was, once, one of the prosperous sea-ports on the edge of the sea.²

²•Trivedi P.R., "Dharmāranyakṣetra : Modhera", Sūryamandira Viśeṣāṅka ed. by Sompura K.P., p.97.

A.K.Forbes also writes, "The town of Modheyra is situated on a low hill or mound formed of the debris of brick buildings, and rising out of a level plain. The character of the country near it and the presence of the salt water creeks carried up from the Runn, suggest the probability of its having at a former time stood very near the edge of the sea, which once covered that tract. It is known in Jain legends as Modherpoor, or Modhbunk Puttun, and it gave its name to the caste of Brahmins called Modh."³ Modhera had lost its importance as a sea port after an earthquake and heavy down-pour in the eight century A.D. which resulted in the disappearance of the sea between Saurashtra, once an island, and the main land and the joining of the main land and the island. Its importance from the view-point of military strategy rose again in the period of the Solankī dynasty of Anhilwad Patan.⁴

It is said in one place that Dharmāranya is in Āryāvarta⁵(V.17), in another place in Brahmāvarta, the-

³•Forbes A.K., Rāsa Mālā, Vol.I, p.104.

⁴•Trivedi P.R., Op. cit., p.98.

⁵•The extent of Āryāvarta shifted from period to period; for the discussion see Kane P.V., HDS., Vol.II, pp.11 ff.

the tract between the rivers Sarasvatī and Dr̥ṣadvatī on the southern bank of the Sarasvatī, and that the river Suvarṇā is not far from it. (XXVIII. 17-19).⁶ The assignment of Dharmāranya to Brahmāvarta appears to be a case of transplantation of the region mentioned in the Manusmṛti which describes it as situated in north-western part of India,⁷ to northern Gujarat, as it is clearly said that Dharmāranya is on the southern bank of the Sarasvatī (XXVIII.18), which points to the present location of Dharmāranya or modern Modhera. Thus this Sarasvatī is by no means the Sarasvatī of the R̥gvedic fame which is said to form the western boundary of Brahmāvarta⁸ but the Sarasvatī of Gujarat. The situation of Dharmāranya to the south of the river Sarasvatī of Gujarat is indicated by the fact that Vanarāja, after leaving Dharmāranya, took his abode on the northern bank of the river, 10 krosās away from Dharmāranya, and subsequently he founded Paṭṭanapura (modern Patan) on the southern bank of the river (LXVI. 74-75, 83). Modhera is at present about 18 miles south of Patan. The river Suvarṇā (modern Pusmavatī)

⁶ Cf.

⁶ M.S. II.17.

⁷ Vide Law B.C. HGAI, pp. 30-31.

⁸ Law B.C., Ibid., p.31.

which is said to have flowed near Dharmāranya is also to the south of the Sarasvatī of Gujarat. (Photo. No. 18)

Viñjola-sara (IX.70 ff.) : It was a pond constructed following the boon granted to Urvaśī by Dharmarāja (see the complete story in chapter VI under "Yama"). This pond may be identified with the pond currently known as "Veñjholiyum talav" adjoining the present Modheśvarī temple, to its north. (Photos. Nos. 19, 20)

Dharmesvara (X.55 ff.) : The tīrtha designated "Dharmesvara" came into existence at Moherakapura on account of Yama's penance which pleased Śiva, who thus consented to reside there to consecrate the place as requested by Yama (see the story in ch. VI under "Yama"). (Photos. Nos. 21, 22)

It may be identified with the Dharmesvara Mahādeva temple behind the temple of Bhaṭṭarikā (see below).⁹

Dharmakūpa (XI 2 ff.) : Dharmakūpa is also known as Gaṅgākūpa and Dharmavāpī. The following story was associated with the origin of the kūpa : -

⁹•Patel Shivabhai, Modhera Darśan (Guj.), p.62.

When Lord Śiva, who was pleased with Dharmarāja's penance, appeared before him and the latter thought of worshipping him, so he remembered Gaṅgā who came at once at the feet of the god. Dharmarāja washed Śiva's feet with the water of the Gaṅgā. At the end of the pūjā Gaṅgā expressed her desire to leave but Dharmarāja requested her to stay in Dharmakūpa. Because the kūpa held the water of the Gaṅgā, it is known also as Gaṅgākūpa. It was deemed very sacred. It is said to be equal in efficacy with Gayā and Vārāṇasī.

Dharmakūpa of the DP. may be identified with the present Dharmēśvarī vav near the temple of the goddess Bhaṭṭārikā at Modhera.¹⁰

Bhaṭṭārikā or Śrīmātā (XIX. 1 ff.) : The goddess is said to have been created by Brahmā to protect the Brahmins. She was situated at the back of the fort on the bank of the Suvarṇā. She is described as having four hands, riding on a swan, carrying a child on her left lap keeping plenty of grains on her right one, dressed in blue, yellow etc. garments, and wearing bejewelled ear-rings.

¹⁰. Vide Patel Shivabhai, Ibid., p.61.

The Purāṇic Bhaṭṭārikā or Śrīmātā and her location may be identified with the present temple of the goddess Bhaṭṭārikā at Modhera which is said to have been renovated from the old temple of Bhaṭṭārikā.¹¹ (Photos. Nos. 23, 24)

It should be noted that the worship of the goddess of the same name existed in the times of the kings Yogarāja of Cāvaḍā dynasty and Siddharāja Jayasimha of the Solankī dynasty. Yogarāja (C. 806 - 841 A.D.) is said to have built a temple of the goddess Bhaṭṭārikā Yogesvarī,¹² but the site of the temple is not mentioned. The inscription dated 1137 A.D. discovered at Gala (in Dhangadhara State, Kathiawad) refers to the goddess Bhaṭṭārikā Śrī Devatā and a small temple of Gaṇapati in Drumatīrtha Kham.¹³

Satyamandira: Gods and demons installed the image of Saṃjñā in the form of Rājñī on the spot where Saṃjñā practised penance for 55 years, the image of Sūrya called Bakulārka and that of Aśvins near Bakulārka (XVII. 31-33).

¹¹ Patel Śivabhai, Ibid., p. 61.

¹² Parikh R.C. (ed.), Kāvyaṇuśāsana by Hemachandra, Vol. II, Intro. P. CXV.

¹³ Ibid., Vol. II, Intro. p. LXXVII.

Elsewhere it is said that Sūrya, after having married Saṁjñā, told Brahmins of Moherakapura that the images of him and his wife in the beautiful temple constructed by Viśvakarman should be worshipped. (XVII. 57-60). He is said to have taken his abode in Satyamandira with Rājñī (XVII.65).

At Modhera there is only one Sūrya-temple¹⁴ which is situated to the west of the village. It was built in eleventh century. The back wall of the shrine bears an inscription which reads upside down, Vikram Samvat, i.e. 1026-27 A.D. This may refer to the time of the temple. The temple thus belongs to the reign of Bhīma I (1022-63 A.D.).¹⁵

The Satyamandira of the DP. may be identified with this temple as there is no other temple at Modhera which is dedicated to the Sun god except this one (Photo. No. 25). There is no cult-image found in the shrine but

¹⁴. For the description of the temple vide Sankalia H.D., The Archaeology of Gujarat, p. 91; Gazetteer of the Baroda State, Vol. II, pp. 597 ff; Gaudani H.R., "Sūryopāsana āne Gujarat", Sūryamandira Viśeṣaṅka ed. by K.P. Sompura, pp. 70 ff.

¹⁵. Sankalia H.D., Op. cit., p. 84.

there is a seat for the image made of black stone. From this it may be surmised that the image would have been of about fourteen feet high. Some, however, believe that there are two images - one in the cellar and another in the Garbhagrha.¹⁶

Sūrya Kunda : A big tank came into existence as a result of a scratch with the right front hoof of Sūrya disguised as a horse. This comes to be known as Sūrya-kunda. It is filled with the water of the Ganges at Kāśīkunda.(XVII. 27-29).

This tank may be identified with Sūryakunda which is under the east face of the Sabhā-Mandapa of the Sun temple of Modhera (Photo.No. 26).¹⁷ It is also mistakenly called Rāma kunda, which might have been due to the strong influence of Rāma-cult in later period. "The tank at Modhera is called Rāma-kunda but it is really a Sūrya-kunda, attached as it is to the Sun-temple on its east side. It is rectangular and measures 176 feet from north

¹⁶.Gaudani H.R., Op. cit., p. 71.

¹⁷.For its description vide Gazetteer of the Baroda State, Vol. II, pp. 601-2.

to south, by 120 feet from east to west. On the outside, the margin wall is paved with stones all round.....

The date of Modhera Kunda must be the same as that of the Sun temple, about 11th century A.D.¹⁸

Devasarovara (XV. 14 ff.) : It came into existence at the spot where gods gathered near Lord Viṣṇu in meditation at Dharmāranya (Moherakapura). It was constructed by the gods who filled it with the water of celestial Gaṅgā. The episode of Hayagrīva-Viṣṇu is said to have been associated with the genesis of the Devasarovara (see ch.VI.).

The DP. is not clear as to its location; hence, it is difficult to identify the place on the basis of the Purāṇa.

On the west side of the present village Modhera not far distanced to the east of the Sun temple there is a large pond known as "Deva Talav". At one time it was surrounded by steps and perhaps also with shrines; but the stones have been carried off since long.¹⁹

In the absence of other pieces of evidence one cannot do better than identify this pond with Devasarovara of the Purāṇa. (Photo. No. 27)

¹⁸. Sankalia H.D. Op. cit., p.70.

¹⁹. ASWI, IX. p.71; Patel Shivabhai, Modhera Darshan (Guj.), p.65.

Mokṣeśvara or Mukteśa : It is a Sivaliṅga erected by gods and Brahmā on the spot where Hayagrīva-Viṣṇu practised penance for three hundred years till he obtained his original head back. (XV.29 ff.).

This Mokṣeśvara may be identified with the Śiva temple, on the northern side of the Sun temple, which is known as "Nilakanṭheśvara or Mukteśvara" temple.²⁰ Can it be surmised that it was built on the old site of the original Mokṣeśvara, as it wears a modern look ? (Photo. No. 28)

Nāgakūpa ²¹(XXIV. 1-2, 72-73). It was the abode of a five-hooded nāga situated near the pond, "Utkata" by name. Elsewhere, it is said that the king Prthu had furnished the land near Nāgakūpa, at the southern portion of the "sthāna", with nine kinds of store houses. The word "sthāna" here refers to either Dharmēśvara which was the landmark of Moherakapura or the city itself. The word "Utkata" literally means "large", which indicates the size of the pond. To the south of Modheśvarī temple, about one kilometer away, there is a village tank (gām talav) of large size holding water even in summer, whereas other tanks there

²⁰. Patel Shivabhai, Op. cit., p.67.

²¹. For the story accounting for the origin of Nāgakūpa see chapter V under "Serpent-worship."

dry up in that season. This pond may be identified with Utkaṭa pond of the DP. near which Nāgakūpa was situated. However, there are no remains of ancient structure to confirm this identification. (Photo. No. 29)

Jayantesvara²² (XXV. 42 ff.) : It is a Śivaliṅga erected following the boon granted to Indra by Śiva who was pleased with his (Indra's) penance at a place a krośa and a half to the north of the "sthāna". A kuṇḍa called "Gaṅgākūṇḍa" was also constructed there by Viśvakarman.

The temple of Jayantesvara can be placed somewhere in or near the village Vijāpurdā which lies to the north north-east of Modhera at the distance of about three kilometers, the approximate equivalent of a krośa and a half.

To the north of the village Vijāpurdā, there is a big tank, on the western bank of which stand remains of an old temple (Photos. Nos. 30, 31). It faces west. The cult-image is not found in the dilapidated sanctum, but from its orientation, this may be a Śiva temple. Hence, this temple

²². For the story accounting for the origin of the tīrtha see chapter VI under "Indra and Ahalyā."

may be the Jayanteśvara temple referred to in the Purāṇa and the village tank mentioned above may be the Gaṅgākunda of the Purāṇa.

Dhārāksetra (XXVI) : To the south of the city of Moheraka there is Dhārāksetra, once a battle-field between gods and demons. The account of its origin is as follows :-

Once upon a time cows were taken away by demons, which resulted in subsequent fighting between Brahmins, cowherds, Brahmins' servants (Vaṇiks) on one side and the demons on the other side. During the fighting the former invoked Śrīmātā, on account of which they emerged victorious. They washed their blood-stained swords in a pond, on account of which it became a sacred place known as Dhārāksetra. To the south of it were installed Śambhu, a host of gaṇas and ksetrapālas.

About one kilometre to the south of Modhera village there is a shallow pond. The local people know it as "Dharai" which could be the corrupted ^{of} form of Dhārāksetra. A little distance to the south of this pond stands Modheśvara Mahādeva temple which wears a modern look. Besides a Śivaliṅga a small statue of Sūrya of old period was installed. Two stone figures of Nandi with their heads broken off were found not far away from the temple. They appear

to belong to an old period. Near the temple a pit was dug, and a large quantity of bricks of considerable size (about 1' 2" x 10") was found. These bricks seem to form the foundation of an old building. On the basis of the DP. it may be conjectured that Modheśvara-Mahādeva temple was built on a ruin of the temple of Śambhu Mahādeva of the Purāṇa. Archaeological excavation may reveal more evidence. (Photos. Nos. 32, 33, 34, 35)

Devamajjanaka tank (XXVII) : The tank called Devamajjanaka is to the south of Moheraka (XXVII.81). The tank came into existence at the spot where Śiva fell to the ground unconscious by the influence of the mantras accomplished by Pārvatī. It contains perspiration trickling out from Śiva's body. The distance between the tank and the city ^{of} Moheraka is not mentioned by the DP. It is, therefore, difficult to locate the tank. About one kilometre to the south of Modhera and about half a kilometre to the east of Modheśvara-Mahādeva temple there is an old tank nearly filled up, known locally as "Baṭūpura". The DP. mentions that a man, who takes a bath in the Devamajjanaka tank and then worships Śiva will be relieved from distress and obtain happiness. This suggests that there was a temple of Śiva near the tank. Bricks of old period littered everywhere near the tank, may indicate that at one time there were buildings, probably temples. Devamajjanaka may be tentatively identified with this tank.

Suvarnā river : The DP. describes that the river called Suvarnā with golden coloured water flows past the northern portion of Dharmasthāna (=Dharmesvara or Moheraka). ~~The (= Dharmesvara or Moheraka).~~ The river looks like a strip of gold therefore it is known also as Suvarṇarekhā. It descended (from heaven) in the early yuga (XXVIII. 1-2).

The river may be identified with the modern Pusmavati which flows past the western side of the Sun temple then pursues its south-westerly course to join the Rupen at about one and a half kilometre south-west of Modhera.

Rupyā river : It is to the south of Dhārātīrtha. It derived its name from the fact that it has silvery water (XXVIII. 21-22).

This river may be identified with the river Rupen, about 3 kms. to the south of Modhera. It falls into the little Rann.²³

Gambhīra tank : It is a deep and sacred tank full of water of the Ganges. It is seven krośas east of Moherakapura.

²³•Dikshit K.R., Geography of Gujarat, p.24.

In the neighbourhood of the tank are the residences of Brahmins and the temples of the goddess Kṣemalābhā, Jambukēśvara and Kubera (XXVIII. 29-31, 38-39).

The place of considerable note to the east of Modhera at a distance of seven krośas or the approximate equivalent of 10 to 12 miles, can be placed at Dhinoj²⁴ village which is about eight miles from Mehsana and five miles from Manund.²⁵ There are remains of buildings, tanks, and stepwells of former times around Dhinoj, which speak of its antiquity.

To the south of Dhinoj is situated an old tank which may be identified with Gambhīra tank of the DP. Gambhīra tank is associated with the origin of Dhinoja Modha Brahmins.²⁶ The sages Vasiṣṭha, Sanaka, Bālakṛiṣṇa etc. are said to have practised penance at the Gambhira tank (xxix.59) and on the southern bank of the old tank mentioned above is situated the temple of Saptarṣi. These ṛṣis probably represent those mentioned by the DP. All this goes to support the identification.

²⁴ Also Dhenuj (ASWI. IX. p. 110)

²⁵ Gazetteer of Baroda, Vol. II, p. 610; ASWI., IX, p. 110.

²⁶ See Ch. II, Under "Dhinoja Modha Brahmins".

On the southern bank of the old tank there is an old temple of Vyāgr^hśvarī goddess whose vehicle is the tiger.²⁷ This goddess is probably identified with Kṣemalābhā of the DP. At present the temple is known as "Śrīkhamalāyamātā" temple. I was told by Mahārāj Devaprasad K. Nanak that the original name of the goddess was Kṣemakalyāṇī. According to D.B.Patel, the sarpanch of the village Khamalāyamātā was originally known as "Kṣemalābhā". Hence, it is probable that the name "Kṣemalābhā" is corrupted to "Khamalāya". We have no substantial evidence to identify the temples of Jambukeśvara and Kubera. (Photos. Nos. 36, 37, 38)

Origin of Kṣemalābhā (XXIX) :

The demon named Markaṭākṣa who acquired a boon from Brahmā and thus became powerful troubled the Brahmins by forcing them to worship him with sacrifices. The Brahmins resorted to a pray to the goddess Śrīmātā and Dharmesvara to get rid of the demon. In the first place, Śiva came and fought with the demon for 18 days but could not slay him. He then urged Śrīmātā to do the job. She created from her body a śakti who was given the name "Kṣemalābhā" by Śrīmātā and subsequently Kṣemalābhā slew

²⁷. ASWI., IX, p.110; G.B., Vol. II, p.610; ~~see photo No.~~

Markaṭākṣa. She asked Śiva that she should be worshipped near the Gambhīra tank and that Śiva as Jambukeśvara and Kubera should be worshipped there too. Śiva granted the boon to her.

The legend may be interpreted as a struggle between the non-Aryan tribes and the Brahmins.²⁸ It may further be noted that the theme of creating a Śakti or Śaktis from the chief goddess is found in the Saptasati portion of the MKP.

Bahucarī : Five krośas to the west of Moherakapura is situated Bahucarī-Śakti.(XXIX.63). Here the DP. may refer to the temple of Bechraji²⁹ which lies to the west south-west of Modhera at a distance of about five miles (8 kms.). (Photo.No.39)

The DP. seems to explain the word "bahucarī" as meaning "consuming a large quantity of offerings consisting of flesh after having drunk intoxicating drinks."³⁰ It should

²⁸.Cf. Kaṇṭāṭākṣa, Ch. VI.

²⁹.For accounts of the origin of Bechraji vide Gazetteer of Baroda State, Vol. II, pp. 604 ff; Forbes A.K., Rāsmālā, Vol. II, pp.95 ff. ^

³⁰.Cf. Bahavaḥ carāḥ yasyāḥ sā
bahucarā; bahucaratīti
bahucarā; bhakṣayantī cara
raṇe tad uṇṇān
mahāsurān; bahūn
(rākṣasān) carati bhakṣatīti

(contd..)

be noted that in the worship of Bahucarī, the flesh of goats, swines, rabbits, deers, buffalos and cocks is offered (XXIX. 79-80). Besides, intoxicating drinks also are used in the worship (XXIX. 67-68, 78-79). This indicates that elements of tantrism had penetrated into the cult. According to the Tantra Śāstra, pañcatattva or pañcamakāra viz. madya (alcohol), māṁsa (meat), matsya (fish), and maithuna (sexual intercourse) is prescribed for worshipping the śakti.³¹ In former times flesh and liquor were acceptable to the Devī, and, as long as the worship remained with the Rajputs, Kamalias and similar non-Brahmanical classes, were among the daily offerings. These were the only officiating worshippers, it is said, till Samvat 1915 (A.D. 1859).³² Buffalos and goats were offered even in recent times on some special occasions.³³

bahucarī bahucarā; barhiṇā
 caratīti barhicarī;
 carantīti carāḥ barhinah
 carāḥ yasyāḥ sã barhicarā.

(Śrī Bahucarāji devasthān Saṁsthā's publication
 "Śrī Bālātripurā Sundarī Bahucarāmbā.", pp. 13-14)

31. Vide Max Weber, The Religion of India, p.295; Woodroffe John, Introduction to Tantra Sastra, p.114 ff.

32. G.B. Vol. II, p.606.

33. G.B. Vol. II, p. 608 ff.

The Bechraji-worship is as old as 1152 A.D.

"There are three temples to the goddess, of which two are termed adyasthan, the original places, and the middle temple or madyasthan. The first of these encloses the varkhadi tree whence the goddess first issued. The tiny temple, 15 feet by 191 was built in Samvat 1208 (A.D. 1152) by Sankhal Raj, after whom the neighbouring village is named."³⁴

Legend related to Bahucarī (XXIX.63 ff.) :

In Satyayuga the area where Bahucarī is situated was a jungle. There the goddess Mātangī was worshipped with strong liquor. One day the goddess Pārvatī disguised herself as an old woman came there and asked for liquor to drink from house to house but nobody gave her. She was angry and therefore caused the containers of liquor in every house to break. Because of this strange phenomenon, the Brahmin worshippers believed that the old woman was a powerful person. The breaking of the liquor-containers is taken to be the drinking of liquor by 999 śaktis.

³⁴. Ibid. p. 603. (Photo No. 40)

The Purānakāra seems to narrate the whole story to explain the derivation of the word "bahucarī," i.e. "drinking and eating heavily."

The goddess Limbajā : She has already been identified in in chapter II.

Dadhisthala : For its identification, see chapter VI footnote 48.

We have no enough evidences to identify the following goddesses. They are, therefore, left for future identifications.

(1) Tārīṇī : She is said to be situated on the eastern portion of the lake (XXIII.43).

(2) Mahābalādevī (XXIII.45)

(3) Bharādī (XXIII.49)

(4) Vindhyavāsīnī : She is to be situated at the distance of seven krośas to the south of Moherakapura (XXIII.50).

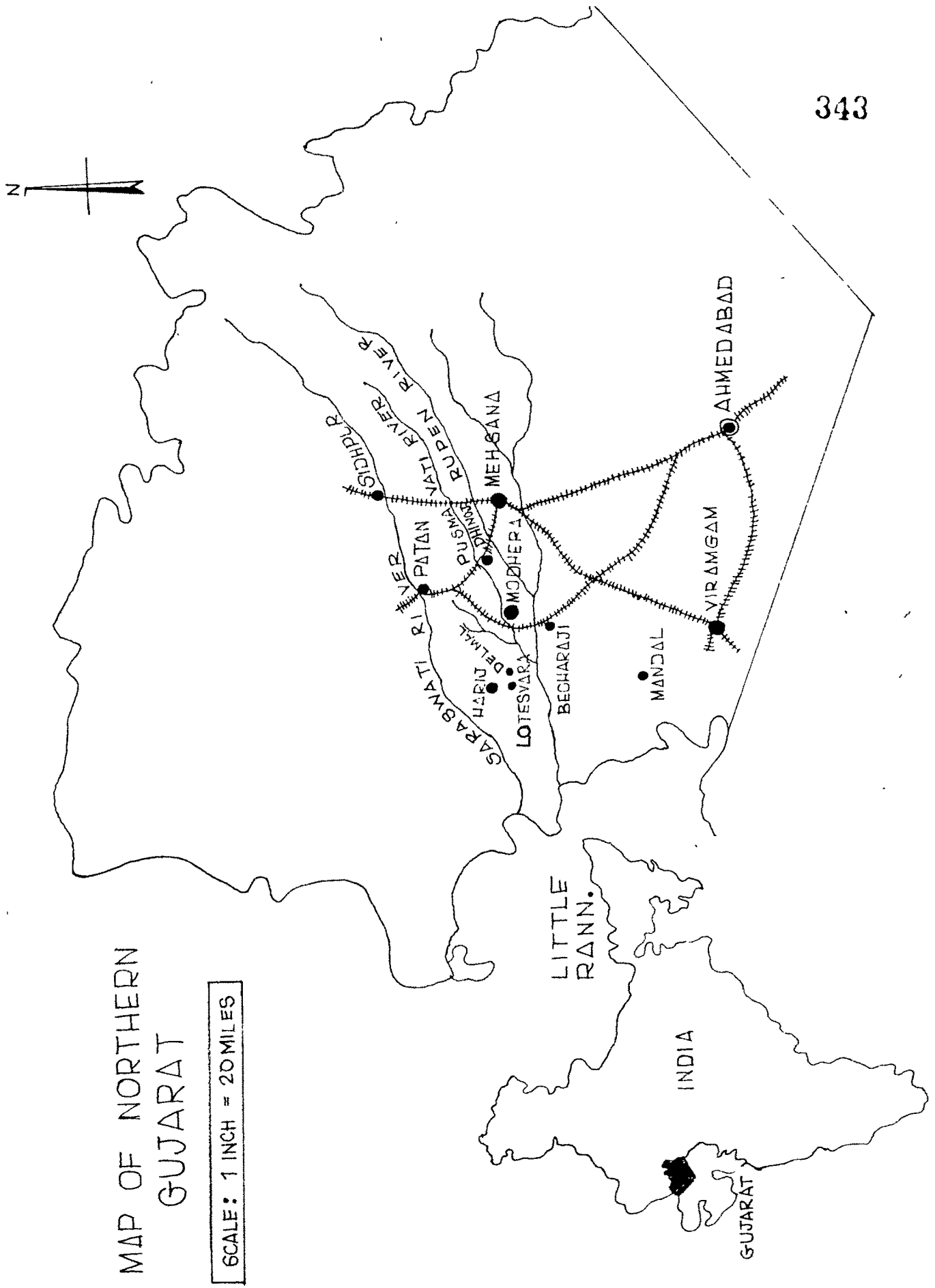
(5) Bahusuvarṇā : She is to the north of Moherakapura. (XXIII.52).

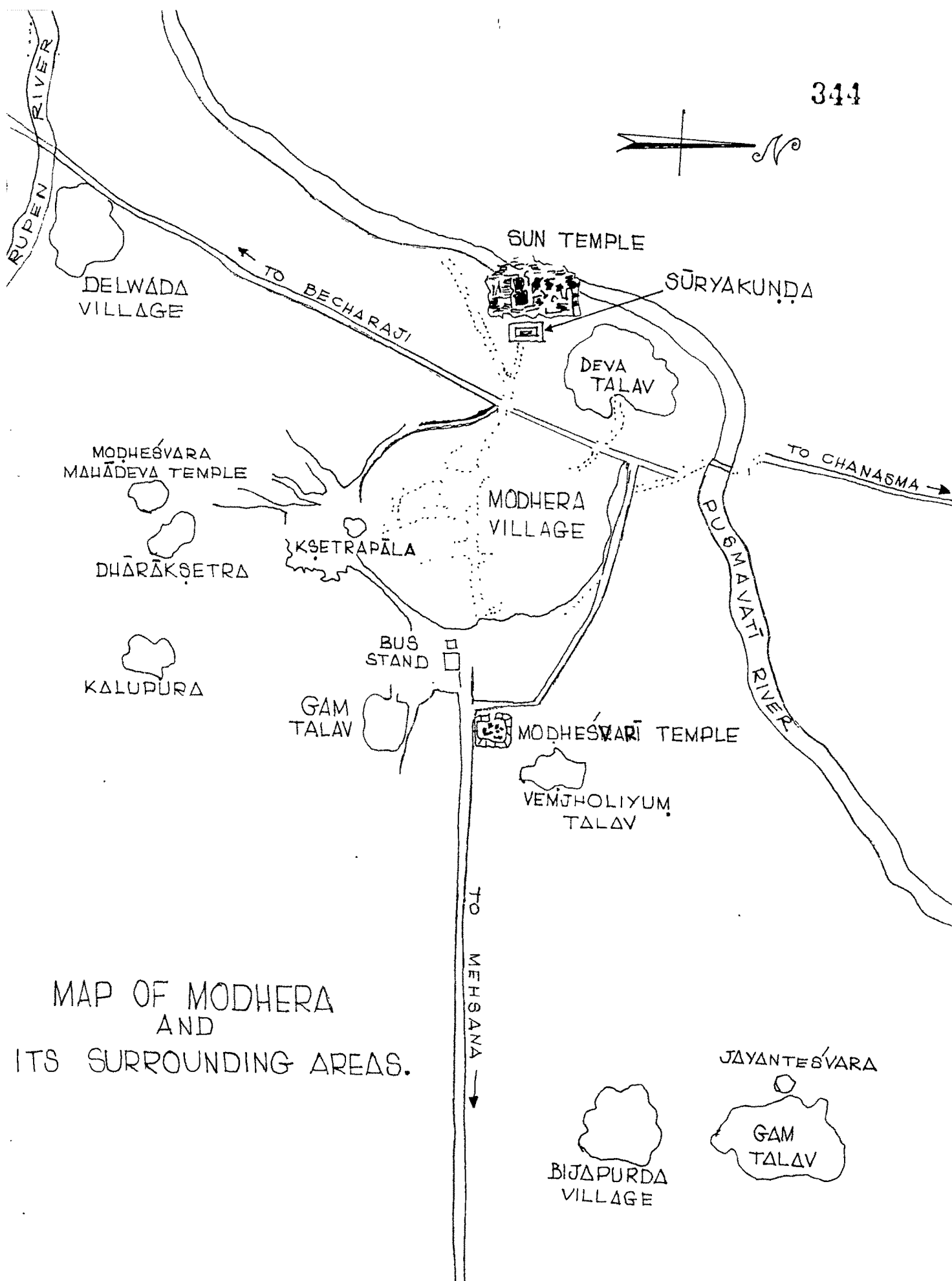
(6) Chatradharā : She is at the distance of one krośa to north-west of Moherakapura (XXIII.53).

(7) Karṇikā : She is at the distance of one krośa to the east of the city (of Moheraka). (XXIII.54).

(8) The goddesses of waters of various names to the south-west of Moheraka, on the bank of the Suvarṇā (XXIII.55).

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MAP OF MODHERA
AND
ITS SURROUNDING AREAS.