CHAPTER IX

Vāstuvidyā and Bhūgolaparikālpanā in Skanda Purāṇa
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VĀSTUVIDYA AND BHāGOLAPARIKALPANĀ IN SKANDA PURĀNA

F., contains, amidst its vast material, references to 'Vāstuvidyā' i.e., Architecture, Iconography and wall paintings, in its different Khandas. The construction of buildings, particularly the temples has been an important aspect of Indian socio-cultural tradition nourished by the patronage of kings and rich families on the one hand, the skills and the efforts of the various artisans on the other hand. Hence an account of the 'vāstuvidyā' as delineated in the various Purānas and other works on the subject, has been given in the present chapter. The material in Sk.P., has been presented in the context of that material under different heads.

There is another fund of material in Sk.P., which could not come as a part of the material presented in the previous chapters and that is the material connected with Bhūgola (Geography). Sk.P. falls in line with the other Purānas in speaking about the conceptions of the Earth, the seven dvipas on the Earth, the worlds above the Earth and those below the Earth etc. This material is interesting from the point of view of the geographical features of the Nārata Varga (the greater India) coming as a part of Āmbūdīpa, which represents the ancient Asian continent. The study of this has cultural significance in as much as it brings into perspective the extent of human life and
civilisation. The conception of 'Śhōrata Varsa' as an important geographical region with cultural links with other geographical regions, is brought out. Hence the study of Bhūgola in Sk.P. forms the second part of this chapter. It is necessary to mention here that A.B.L. Awasthi, has made a detailed study of the geographical material in Sk.P., in his work 'Studies in Skandarpuraṇa pt.I.' Hence a brief account of his findings has been given along with the new material that is traced during the present study.

1. VAŚTUVIḌYĀ

The history of 'Vaśtuvidyā' is based on oral tradition. In Sk.P., this tradition is recorded in a story referring to the origin of 'Vaśtuvidyā'. According to the story, 'Vaśtu' was a demon. He performed penance and obtained the grace of Lord Śiva. He started eating the gods one by one and drank the blood of Andhakāsura. But his thirst and hunger were not satisfied. The three worlds submerged in him. Seeing this the bewildered gods, demons, dānavas, asuras attacked him and knocked him down. They did not allow him to get up. Each god pressed down one of his limbs, so that he could not get up. As the gods and men dwelt on him like this, he became known as 'vaśtu'. Brahma gave him a boon that anyone before starting a building should perform a 'sacrifice' in the

2. Ibid.
'vaśtvaditī yasmāc ca tasmād vaśtu bhavisyati' 38(b).
name of 'Vāstu' (i.e., Vāstu Homā). This sacrifice itself is the food of demon vāstu. If there is any mistake on the part of the architect or designer, of a building if he worships 'vāstu' will overcome it and gain success.\(^3\)

In the Vedas, there are traces of this science called 'vāstu śāstra'. In Ṛgveda, we have a hymn on 'vāstospati'.\(^4\) Sāyana defines 'Vāstospati' as 'Grha-pālayitr devatā' i.e., a god protecting a building.\(^5\) Brāhmaṇa texts speak of 'Dāksinātya vāstusāstra, i.e., Southern architecture.\(^6\) Visvakarma, Maya, Nagnajit, Nārada, Purandara, Garga, Sukra, Brhaspati are considered to be the progenitors of vāstuvidyā. It is said that each of them composed a 'śāstra'. 'Visvakarma Prakāśa' is considered an authority in North India and 'Mayamata' is considered an authority in South India. Brhatsaṁhitā of Varāhamihira, another important work dealing with 'Vāstusāstra' belongs to 6th Century A.D.

Broadly, 'Vāstuvidyā', is classified under three heads - (1) Vāstusāstra, (2) Śilpaśāstra and (3) Chitra-sutra.\(^7\)

1. Vāstusāstra:

Construction of buildings comes under this. It

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4. R.V., 7.54.1.
5. Sāyana, Ṛgvedabhināya, 7.54.1.
building materials, preparing ground plan, fixing the
door, building of mantaps and towers, examining bricks,
making concrete, city plan etc. Sk.P. describes the
worship of Visvakarma (the ancient divine architect) in
the form of a Liṅga, known as 'Visvakarmesvara'. Sk.P.
refers to various types of constructions like the con-
struction of a sacrificial site (Yājna Vāṭa), a sacrifi-
cial pendal (Yajnamandapa), destitute homes (anātha
mandapa). Different kinds of multi-storied buildings
(Prāśādas), cattle houses (ajā grha), fun-houses
(ramya-grha), bungalows (bhavanas), are also mentioned.
The description of cities (Purīvarṇana) with palatial
buildings, parks, avenues and tanks are found in Sk.P.
For example, Arunapura Varṇana, Devī Paṭṭana Varṇana,
Kāśi Purī Varṇana, Vītihotra Purī Varṇana, Naiṛta Purī
Varṇana, Pāsuspatavana (near Prabhāsa), Mahākālavana
(near Mahākāla temple in Avanti) etc.

2. Silpaśāstra:
The idols to be established in the temples,
temple walls, temple towers and temple halls, come under
this.

9. Ibid., I/1/2.
10. Ibid., I/1/5.
11. Ibid., II/1/173-179.
12. Ibid., V/1/37, VI/73; 102.
13. Ibid., VI/133.
15. Ibid., III/1/11/11/16.
16. Ibid., III/1/6.

17. Ibid., IV/1/2.
18. Ibid., IV/1/10.
19. Ibid., 12.
20. Ibid., 13.
21. Ibid., V/1/45.
22. Ibid., VI/1/69.
3. Citrasūtra

It is concerned with painting on the temple walls. In describing the event of Śiva’s marriage, Sk.P. states that the gods like Viṣṇu, Brahma were painted on the walls. Sk.P. refers to these three branches of Vāstu Sastra while stating about the different branches of knowledge.

It is in connection with building temples and consecrating idols in it that the science of architecture grew in India. Of these two, the first can be studied as temple architecture and the second as Iconography.

A. Temple Architecture:

It is difficult to state whether there was any conception of a temple in the Vedic samhitā period. But certainly the conception of Vedic sacrifices and construction of Vedic altars (Vedikā) in various geometrical shapes, pre-supposes knowledge of architecture during the time. There are references to mud houses in circular shape being built for dead people, in Rgveda. In Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, there are references to 'Yūpas' and 'Śmaśānas' being built. In Mahābhārata and Rāmāyana, we have references to prāsāda, vimāna, harmya, saudha, sabhās (council halls), devatayātanās (temples), caityaḥ, etc.

25. Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa III.64.1.
In Kautilya's Arthasastra, Vāstu refers to houses, parks, dams and other such constructions.

It seems that by the time of Brahatsamhitā (i.e., 6th Century A.D.) the temple architecture had reached a fully developed stage. It mentions as many as twenty types of temples, such as Meru, Mandara, Kailāsa, Nandana, vimanācchādana, Garuḍa, Kumāra etc.27 Sk.P. does not refer to these different kinds of temples. But it refers to the area of a temple in terms of Yojanas27(a) and the different idols established in the temples like Mahākāla temple at Ujjaini,28 Mallikārjuna temple at Śrīśaila,29 Aruṇācal temple at Aruṇācala,30 Somanātha temple at Prabhāsa,31 Puri temple,32 Venkaṭa temple,33 etc. Sk.P. refers to the ideas about temple building while describing the jīrṇoddhāra (renovation) of a temple in Dharmāranya.34 It refers to the drawing of a śtandila, construction of Bahiśālā and Ārhasālā, Brahmasālā etc.

28. Ibid., V/i/24, 26, 39, 41.
29. Ibid., I/iii/i/2.
30. Ibid., I/iii/i/4.
31. Ibid., VII/i/
32. Ibid., II/ii/10.
33. Ibid., 1/27.
34. Ibid., III/ii/33. 23-27.

"Śtandilam pūrvatah kṛtvā mahāgiri samam subham;
Tasyopari bahiśālā ārhasālā hyane kasah." 24.
The temple proper:

A temple will be in the name of a particular god like Śiva or Viṣṇu. The place where the image of the god is consecrated is called the 'garbhagrha'. Generally, the walls inside this will be empty. In a Śiva temple, to the east of Garbhagrha, there will be Nandikesvara; to the West, Lord Viṣṇu, Lord Brahma to the North and Dakṣināmūrti to the South. In the ardhamanṭapa, in front of the Garbhagrha, image of Lord Gāṇeśa is to be established and that of the Kaṭetrapāla to the North-east.

A vimāna to be constructed above the Garbhagrha should be beautiful. According to Pāncarātrāgamana a Vimāna should consist of seven stories.

The prakāra, surrounding the garbhagrha and Ardhamanṭapa in a Śiva temple, should have the images of Vṛṣabha (Nandi), Ganapati, Brahma, Saptamātrka, Subrahmanya, Viṣṇu, Aryā and Candikesvara according to Mayacarya.

In the South Indian temples, at the entrance, high gopurams are built which add a charm to the whole temple structure. On the entrance, the images of door guards and other gods are found. Images of different gods and sages like Agni, Agastya, Śrīdevi, Durgā, Devendra, Visvakarma, Dakṣa, Gaṅgā, Yamunā, Rudrānil, Vaiśnave, Manmatha-Kati, Varuna, Nandikesvara, Nāgarāja, etc., are found on the gopurams. In Sk.P., this general outlay of a Śiva temple
s generally followed in describing the famous Siva temples at Arunācal, Kāśi, Avanti, Ramśvara, Camatkārapura, rabhāsa etc. 35

**Image worship/Iconography:**

In any worship, the worshipper (Pūjaka), the god to be worshipped (Pūjya) and the method of worship (Pūjana) are important. Different types of worships are found described in Sk.P. 36 It is not possible to state when exactly the image worship started, but it has a long history in India. Although in the Vedic samhitās, there is no direct reference to image worship, there are traces of some concrete symbol being used to worship a god. The sacrificial altars and their different geometrical shapes hint at it. In fact Agni is described as Saptajihvā, kāpardi, śitikantha etc., which indicate the anthropomorphic representation of gods. In one of the Ṛgvedic hymns Agni is described as a tied up roaring bull having four horns, three legs, two heads, seven hands. Interestingly, Sk.P. describes the using of this mantra in Śiva worship. The earliest references to some form of divine images is found in Astādhyāyi of Pāṇini (C.600 B.C.). Pāṇini refers to images (pratikṛtis) unworthy of sale. Yāska mentions about images having human form or considered living. Patañjali (Century 200 B.C.) refers to the images of Śiva, Skanda, Viśākha in his Mahābhāṣya.

35. Sk.P., I/111/11, IV/1/11, V/1, III/1, VI/7, VII/1/11/111.
36. Ibid., III/111/2,3, II/ix.25.67. See also Chapter V, Religious cults in Sk.P.
Among the earliest images found is the image of Śiva in Liṅga form. Śiva images in Liṅga form are unique as they have both the characteristics of manifest and unmanifest (Vyakatāvyakata). Sk.P. refers to the worship of Śiva both in human and Liṅga form. In the earlier stages, people used to worship many gods in the form of different images. But knowing that all gods are the manifestations of one supreme energy, people started worshipping only one god viz., Śiva or Viśnu or Brahma. In the purānic age, the worship was moulded into the 'paṇcāyatana' form being influenced by Tantras and also from the point of view of social and religious harmony. The five gods whose images are worshipped were Sūrya (Sun), Ganesa, Śiva, Viśnu and Devī. The Paṇcāyatana order is mentioned from the desired god; e.g., Śivapaṇcāyatana, Ganesa Paṇcāyatana, etc. Sk.P. refers to different Iconic forms of these 'Paṇcāyatana' gods and goddesses.

Various types of images are spoken of in connection with a temple. But important among them are two types viz., moveable (cala) and immoveable (acala). Mostly the acala images were made of stone and cala from different metals. An image may be of eight different kinds (1) wood, (2) stone, (3) metal, (4) concrete, (5) painted, (6) mental, ________________________________

37. Sk.P., I/1/6; VI/1/69.
38. Ibid., V/1/2; I/1/40; (Siva) II/IV/1.39; (Viśnu), V/II/146,116; (Trimūrti VIII/II/37 (Sakti); I/II/43,73 (Sūrya); VI/131.50; IV/II/57 (Ganeśa).
(7) sandy. (8) crystals. Siva images are especially made of sand and glued by an adhesive. Sk.P. frequently refers to Saikata Liṅga (Liṅga made by sand).

**Images and Rewards by their worship:**

Varāhamihira in his Brhatsāṁhitā states that different kinds of images bring different kinds of benefits. Thus by worshipping a divine image made of wood or mud, one gets longevity, prosperity, victory and strength; the worship of an iron image brings 'nourishment', of a silver one, proficiency in games, of a copper one, children and stone-made ones give land. In Sk.P., the worship of Liṅgas is prescribed for bringing the desired reward. For instance, it is stated that by worshipping a Liṅga, one is relieved of all fear (Sarvadābhayatva). A woman is described to have worshipped a Liṅga to get a devoted husband (ekapatilābhāyaliṅgasthāpana), Trisāṅku, is described to have worshipped a Liṅga to get rid of his Candālatva. It is also stated that different images made of metals like gold, silver, copper and bronze respectively have to be worshipped in the four yugas vi:., Satya, Tretā, Dvāpara and Kali. An image sculpted by a sculptor has to be beautiful, so that it attracts the heart and mind of the devotee. In sculpturing an image, it is the prayer

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40. Varāhamihira, Brhatsāṁhitā, 6.33; Sk.P., I/1/12.  
42. Ibid., IV/1/50.  
43. Ibid., VI/1/65, VI/4.
verses (Dhyāna ślokas) which were in the mind of Sculptor. In Sk.P., it is stated -

Silpi garbhaṇi līṅgāṇī līṅgagarbhaṇī silpiṇah,
Silpirūpam tu tadṛūpam no bhedaḥ sruṇu pārvati.  

The Līṅga is in the sculptor and the sculptor is in the Līṅga, there is no difference between the two. In Sk.P., there are many dhyāna ślokas (coming in the beginning of a Khaṇḍa or its part thereof), stotras (prayers), aṣṭottara or Sahasranāmas addressed to Śiva (or other gods) which bring about the iconographical and other features of Śiva (or other gods). The Śivakavaca section of Sk.P. deserves mention in this regard.

"Om namō bhagavate sadāsivāya .... susānka
sekharāya .... Kapālamālādhara .... Khaṭvāṅga,
carma, pāsā, aikuśa, damarū, sūla, cāpa, bana,
gadā, sakti, bhindipāla, tomara, musala, mudga,
patti, parasu, parigha, bhusūndi, sataghnī,
cakrādi ayudha bhīsanakarasahasra, Nagendraḥāra,
Nagendra valaya, Nagendra kundala .... Vṛṣabha
vāhana ...."  

This gives the description of the popular image of Śiva as having crescent moon upon his head, wearing the garland of skulls, holding different weapons like Khaṭvāṅga, Carma etc riding a bull and having the ear rings, necklace and bracelets of serpents. This is obviously a description of

44. Sk.P., V/iii/167.
45. For a list of Śivastotras, see Appendices.
47. Ibid., III/iii/13.
some ferocious image of Śiva. What is interesting here is the list of all possible weapons that are described as having been held by the different gods in the Śilpāgamas.

Other aspects of Śiva Iconography:

The Liṅga is the most unique of all the iconographical representations of Śiva. Probably the conception of Liṅga, had connection with the Vedic conception of Vṛksa or tree. Many of the ancient Śiva Liṅgas are either stone pillars or wooden poles. That is why Śiva is called 'Sthānu'. Śiva is also called 'Visālākṣa'. A tree with its branches spreading is also 'visālākṣa'. In Bhuvanesvar in the origina Liṅgarāja temple, the Śiva Liṅga is a stone-pillar. There are images of Śiva having human figures in the body of the Liṅga. Such Liṅgas are called Liṅgodbhava mūrtis. In Sk.P., there are many instances wherein Śiva appears before his devotees from a Liṅga established in a certain temple or holy place. There is an Ekapāda murti - one footed image, showing its 'tree' as well as serpentine connection. Śiva has connection with mountains and mountains are represented as Śiva e.g., Aruṇāclesvara. Probably objects connected with mountains, e.g., stone pieces, were taken as representations of Śiva. Even grave-mounds (yards) are also taken as representations of Śiva and Kāśi is called a 'Mahāmāsāna' in Sk.P. Probably in ancient times, it indicated a high place of meditation, where ascetics left their bodies and

49. Ibid., I/11/40.
50. Ibid., I/111/1/1; VII/1/32.5.
51. Ibid., IV/1/7; IV/11/32.
were engraved. But this gave rise to a conception of unholiness of Śiva as a god of the dead and dweller in grave yard. Metaphorically taken, the word Linga means where everything merges - this Linga is the smasāna or grave yard of all beings on earth. The most exalted conception of Linga in Sk.P., is when it says that Ākāśa is the Linga and the earth is its Pithika (pedestal). This is the conception of the Linga in the form of the universe itself. Sk.P. considered that Śiva was worshipped in a different form before being worshipped in the Linga form. Yet in Sk.P., the worship of Śiva is mainly advocated in the form of Linga. Many images of goddesses are carved holding Lingas in their hands, upon their heads or as hanging down from their necks. In Sk.P., it is stated that, Demons Mahisā and Tāraka wore a Linga upon their head, by seeing which Devī and Śiva repented for having killed a Śiva-devotee. Later they both sought expiation from the sin. It is also said that Śiva wears an 'Ātma-Linga'. Rāvaṇa carried an Ātma-Linga where he went. Because of its hump resembling the Linga, the bull, the vehicle of Śiva, is considered Śiva himself.

Types of Lingas:

Lingas are further classified as (1) Svayambhū, (2) Divya, (3) Manahsila, (4) Ārāṇa, (5) Rākṣasa, (6) Daivika

52. Sk.P., I/1/7. ‘Ākāśam Lingamityāhun prthvī tasya pithikā’
53. Ibid., I/11/24. ‘Kotiṣo Linga sthāpanā’.
54. Ibid., II/111/11/20; I/11/33.
55. Ibid., I/1/8.
56. Ibid., II/11/30/18(b).
and (7) Bāna. In Gandakī river, six types of Lingas are available viz., (1) Śivanābha, (2) Aghora, (3) Sadyojāta, (4) Vāmadeva, (5) Tatpurusa. In Narmada river, three kinds of Lingas are available. They are (1) Budbudākāra (foam like), (2) Andasannibha (egg like) and (3) Vṛṣabha Skandhasadṛśa (humble). These are called Svayambhu Lingas. In the Lingas, the difference depends on the quality or colour of the stone also. (1) White stone (marble) Linga (Sphāṭika) is for emancipation; (2) red stone Linga (Ratnasila), for victory; (3) yellow Linga (Pitavarnam), for wealth and (4) black stone Linga, for realisation of all desires. All these types of Lingas are referred to in the Satarudriya section of Sk.Ś.57

In the Lingas, three major differences are spoken of (1) Dhruva (2) Cāla and (3) Cālācala. In the southern region, the texts speak of Līlāmūrtis i.e., the human form of Śiva taken out in processions, festivals etc. Naṭarāja, Ekāmbresā, Kadambavanesā, Gaṅgā Jaṭadhāresvāra, Unamāhesvāra, Rāmanātha, Vālmīkeshvāra, - these Śiva Lingas are referred to in Sk.Ś. as being worshipped then in different places of India.

The Naṭarāja figure, having Śiva in the dancing pose, is very popular in the South. It seems to have become popular

57. Sk.Ś., I/11/13. For a list, see Appendices. 10
58. Ibid., VI/256.
59. Ibid., I/111/1/4.
60. Ibid., V/11/63.
61. Ibid., IV/1/34.
62. Ibid., III/111/8, 18.
63. Ibid., III/1/43.
by 6th Century A.D., as Tirumalar of 6th Century A.D. has praised the 'Tillainataraja' of Chidambaram. In Kangāmūrti, seven dance poses of Siva are described. They are Ananda Tāndava, Sandhyā Tāndava, Umā Tāndava, Gaurī Tāndava, Kālikā Tāndava, Tripura Tāndava, and Samhara Tāndava. Sk.P. refers to the Natarāja form of Siva and its symbolic significance, i.e., creative process. 64

**Daksināmūrti:**

In all Siva temples, in a room to the South of Garbhagṛha, there should be an image of Daksināmūrti. In the East, door guards and Nandi to the West - Viṣṇu and to the North, Brahma are found. Daksināmūrti represents the benevolent aspects of Siva. He is the repository of knowledge. Lakulī Daksināmūrti, Medhā Daksināmūrti, Samhāra Daksināmūrti, Yajna Daksināmūrti, Viṇādhara Daksināmūrti, Sāmba Daksināmūrti are some of the types of Daksināmūrti images. In all these, he bears Vyākhyaśāstra and holds a book and aksamāla. In the background, there will be a banyan tree (Viṣamulavāsine). In Sk.P., many Daksināmūrti are referred to, not with these specific names, but generally. Interestingly, Sk.P. gives an ingenious explanation for the word 'Daksināmūrti'. It states that as the Lord went in the Southern direction to find out the merits that accrue from good deeds, as laid down by the religious texts, he was named

64. Sk.P., VI/256.
65. Ibid., II/1/32, 39.
Daksināmūrthya'.

"Dharmasāstresu rāvanti dharmakarmāṇi santivai
Tanisarmacāni sandraṣṭum vrajantam daksināmukham."

Bhairava:

Bhairava image is another image of Śiva. In this, Śiva holds a Kāpāla, Danda and a snake as a thread. He is known as Kṣetrapāla in this form. There are various forms of Bhairava viz., Tripurānta Bhairava, Ugra Bhairava, Karāla Bhairava, Aṃśujāva Bhairava, Bhūmarupa Bhairava, Kūla Bhairava, Bhūrupa Bhairava, Svarṇa Bhairava, Śaradātilaka tantra speaks of Śātvika, Rājasika and Tāmasika Bhairavas.

In the Śātvika image, Śiva will be two handed, nude and smiling. The Rājasika image of Śiva will have four hands and in Tāmasika, Śiva wears a skull-garland, has eight hands, serpent ornament and incisors. These Bhairavas are described in Sk.P., in different contexts and there is 'Bhairavāṣṭaka' describing Śiva in this form. A mention may be made here about the 'Pancamukha' form of Śiva and Hari-hara form of Śiva, to which Sk.P. makes a reference.

Vir.

Virabhadra one of Śiva's prominent ganas appears prominently in the form of images in Śiva temples. Ugra, Ati-Krūra, Sarvadūṣīmbarānana, Karāla-hasta, Gella-muṣṭihasta are some of the popular image forms of Virabhadra.

67. Ibid., III/1/47; VII/1/37 (Kaṅkāla-Bhairava); IV/1/37; V/1/64.
67(a). Ibid., 7/1/6.
sk.P. speaks of Viśrabhadresvara being worshipped in the form of a Liṅga in Avanti. 68

Ardhanārīśvara:

The Ardhanārīśvara images are another kind of popular Śiva images. Somaskanda mūrti, Umāmahesvara mūrti, Liṅgana mūrti, Visakanta mūrti, Ardhanārīśvara mūrti are some of the types. Sk.P. refers to these kinds of Śiva figures in its different Khandas. 69

Candesa:

Candesa is one of the anugraha mūrtis of Śiva. Candesa has special place in Śiva temples. He will be in standing or sitting position, holding an axe with folded hands or in the standing pose, or holding an axe in one hand and the other resting in the sitting pose. Different types of Candesa worship are alluded to in Sk.P. 70 The material available in Sk.P. regarding Vāstuśāstra and Śilpaśāstra show that by the time of Sk.P., the two had become a part of the general fields of knowledge. Sk.P. shows a practical use of different ideas connected with Vāstu Vidyā. Although Sk.P. deals with the temples and images of gods like Viṣṇu, Śiva, Śakti, Ganeśa, Sūrya, Brahma, etc., the different aspects of temple architecture and iconography connected with Śiva, is emphasised in this chapter, as they are referred to in as many as six Khandas of Sk.P.

69. Ibid., V/2.26, I/1/3; I/1/7.
70. Ibid., VII/1/306; 340.
II. BHŪGOLA:

Purāṇas form an important source of Indian culture and heritage. Knowledge about the different regions of earth formed a part of the daily prayers in Smṛti and purānic texts. Thus giving an indication to their interest in studying Bhūgola as part of their religious culture. Keeping this in view, they give a list of dvīpas, pradesas, janapadas etc. Such lists are found in Vāyu, Matsya, Mārkandeya and other purānas. The list found in Vāyu, Matsya, Mārkandeya is a long one. The list in Viṣṇu is very short. The longest list is however found in Skanda, Brahmanda and Vāyu Purāṇas. The Chapter 57 of Mārkandeya Purāṇa has a section called 'Kūrma Vibhāga' containing a list of countries and peoples of India arranged according to the position of the country conceived as a tortoise as it lies on water resting upon Viṣṇu and looking eastward. Agni Purāṇa contains several chapters dealing with Geography. Vāmana and Kūrmapurāṇas throw light on the topography of Kurudeśa. Bhāgavata Purāṇa contains a fairly long list of territories, laying down the principles of geographical treatment based on the description of earth, its special features, extent, form and nature. Skanda and other Purāṇas also throw interesting light on ancient Indian Cartography. Sk.P. gives many new geographical names. It has two important lists viz., Kumārikā Khand list of

seventytwo pradesas and the Arunācala list comprising mostly of the riverside regions of the country.

Apart from these valuable lists we have ample information about ancient Indian Geography in Sk.P. In fact the seven Khandas in it deal with the North, East, West and south India.

The Kadāra Khand and Badarikāsrama Mahātmya throw light on the Himalayan region, which is also mentioned in the Arunācala Mahātmya. Kāśī Khand and Ayodhyā Mahātmya are important for the topography of Uttar Pradesh. Purushottama Ksetra Mahātmya is associated with East, the Prācyadesa, particularly Kalinga. Āvantya Khand is important for the geography of Mālva, Gujarat and Rajasthan. The Nagara and Prabhāsa Khandas are important for the topography of Western India. Setu and Venkaṭācal Mahātmya present the picture of South India. 72 Sk.P. gives us a grand picture of ancient Bhārata Khand with its rivers, mountains, cities, villages, janapadas and vanas, aranyas and āśramas.

The Kumārikā Khand refers to the extent of our sea coast along with seventy two Pradesas in Chapters 37, 38 and 39 of Kumārikā Khand. The three chapters deal with Bhūsaṃstithi, Lokasaṃstithi and Bhārata Khand. It starts with the creation of the universe, its division into lokas, the division of the earth into seven dvīpas. The sub-division of Jambudvīpa into vāras, description of the vāras,

72. A.B.L. Awāsthi, St. Sk.P., Pt.I. p.3.
the account of Bhārata Khandas, along with the Kulaparvatas are also found. All these will be briefly dealt with now.

**THE SPIRIT OF NATIONALISM AND THE CONCEPTION OF EARTH AND ITS SURROUNDING**

Purānas describe any cosmic or geographical event as connected with India. This is particularly seen in their description of the five classical topics viz., Sarga, Pratisarga, Manvantara etc. The first two topics of these five topics are Sarga (creation) and Pratisarga (destruction) the primary and secondary levels of creation and destruction. The Purāṇas speak of the creation of the Bramhāṇḍa (universe) by the Supreme Brahman and then the origin of earth from the Hiranyagarbha form of the Supreme Brahman. They also discuss about the age of the earth, its destruction, its shape, situation, extent and geographical divisions. Sk.P. also deals with all these ideas in its different Khandas.

1. **The Origin of Earth**

It is stated in Sk.P. that this world was in an unmanifest state in the beginning. The two unborn viz., Pradhāna and Purusa came together. Then by the seeing of Prakṛti, who in turn was instigated by Svabhāva and Kāla (Nature and time) the principle of 'Mahat' the first evolute came into being. The other twentytwo evolutes like Ahaṅkaras, pancatanmatra etc., came into being from Mahat. These twenty four tatvas when seen by Sadāsiva, the Purusa,
assumed the shape of bubbles and an egg came out. And this egg was divided into three viz., the upper, middle and lower regions. In the upper region, Gods reside, in the middle, human beings and Nagas, daityas and in the lower regions (patala). And these three regions were further divided into seven dvipas.

Sk.P. states that the earth is the middle region of the Brahmāṇḍa and is inhabited by the human beings. It also states that elsewhere beyond this region, there is no sign of life. (Aṣya bāhye tamoghoram dūṣpreksyam jīva varjitaṁ). It takes earth as the centre of all activity. This has an obvious purpose of emphasising the central role of earth in the world order and eulogising the birth as a human being on such an earth, as a boon. The reason being that outside earth there is no sign of human beings. This Purānic view may be disputed by the scientists but cannot be disproved as the existence of human life outside earth is yet to be proved by them.

2. The destructive

The destruction of the earth takes place at the time of Atyantika Pralaya (the ultimate destruction). When Śiva desires to withdraw the creation, from his middle face is born Rudra, who with the help of Kālarātri destroys all

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"Caturvimśatatvānā jātānīti puṣāviduḥ; sadāśiva vai pūneś tāni drṣṭāni bhūrataḥ; Budbhūdā- Kāratām ca brahmāṇḍamidamucyate".

74. Ibid., I/11/37. 26(a).
the creation. By the withdrawing of Śadāśiva the Guṇas turn to the state of equilibrium and then the seven lokas are withdrawn and then the Anda is withdrawn and the twenty-two tattvas return back (or merge) in Mahat, which merges in prakṛti. Prakṛti merges in the ultimate abode of Śiva and a 'vast ocean' comes into being. 75 This conception of destruction has close parallel with the concept of nemesis and quantum field theory of creation and destruction. The conception of 'Ekāṅkava'- 'one ocean of possibilities'- and its disturbance by nature of things (Svābhāva-internal structure) and time (Kāla) have their own importance in understanding the secrets of the cosmos.

3. The age of the Earth:

The purāṇas through their theory of yugas and Brahmamāna calculate the age of the earth. In Sk.P., it is stated that the four yugas vis., Krta, Tretā, Dwāpara and Kali constitute a total of 43,20,000 years. 71 Caturyugas constitute a manvantara which amounts to 30,67,20,000 human years. A day of Brahma has 14 such manvantaras so also a night of Brahma, which amounts to 12,09,60,000 human years. A day and night Brahma is called a Kalpa. And twenty-eight such kalpas constitute a month of Brahma. Twelve such months of Brahma constitute a Brahma year. At present, Brahma is said to have completed his fifty years of divine life. 76 Approximately calculating the age of the earth

76. Ibid., I/11/37.
as per the puranic calculations we can arrive at the following 15 digit figures (upto 1983 A.D.), i.e., 197,19,61,563,00,000 years. This is very close to the modern conception of the age of the earth as 200 billion years.

4. The concept of Manvantaras and Human Evolution on Earth

The concept of Manvantaras to which Sk.P. and other Puranas refer to, is also interesting. The concept posits a kind of cosmic order in the creation of human beings. The balances and imbalances of a particular age are connected with religion and ethics as propogated by the ruling Manu. Sk.P. refers to the fourteen Manus, but does not go into the details of it.

The conception of Manvantara considers the appearing of man on earth to a much ancient period of earth's history. We will here refer to only one of the fourteen Manus viz., the first Manu called 'Svayambhuva Manu'. The literal meaning of this name is 'self-born Manu'. This indicates that human birth was not bi-sexual but asexual or unisexual. In scientific terminology the origin of human species on earth is traced to a unicellular organism by name 'Amoeba'.

5. Shape of the Earth and its situation:

The very word 'Ahugola' which is used to explain the geographical aspects concerned with earth, shows that

the ancients had thought about the shape of earth. Two other ideas connected with the shape of the earth as referring to the land mass on it, are also noteworthy, viz., (1) Padmasamsthāna and (2) Kūrmasamsthāna.

According to the first view, the earth is of the shape of 'padma' Lotus. Probably this refers to the longitudinal lines drawn which appear like the petals of a lotus.

According to the second view, the earth is of the shape of a tortoise. This probably refers to the stretch of the land on earth from an aerial view.

6. The Meru Mountain:

It is stated that at the centre of this earth is the 'Meru' mountain. This Meru is considered to be the navel of the unborn Brahman (Nābhibandhana sambhūto brhamano-avyaktajanmanah). To the East of Meru Mountain, Mandara is situated; to the West, Vipula; to the South, Gandhamadana and to the North, Supārśva. The description of Meru mountain found in the Purāṇas shows that it is not a mythical mountain but some mountain range of high importance. Some attempts have been made to locate the Meru mountain. It has been identified with 'Palmir' mountain. Dr. Harse has identified it with Altaic mountains in the Western Siberien and Mongol regions. It is said in the purāṇas that in between Himālaya and Meru there are two mountains viz., Himakūta

78. Sk.P., VII/11-12(b);
79. Ibid., 16 - 28.
80. Matsya Purāṇa 1/2/14.
and Nisadha. In the Asian map, there are two mountains 'Kudanlun' and 'Thainshan' which seem to be the present day names of Hemakūṭa and Nisadha mountains. Meru is considered a golden mountain by the purānic and epic thinkers. The world Altaic, which is homologian word (Altain-ula) means a 'golden mountain'. From this, it is clear that Meru was a mountain situated to the North of Himalayan mountains and probably it refers to the Altaic mountains in Western Siberia.

7. Extent and Geographical Divisions of the Earth:

The extent of the earth is always mentioned in Purāṇas as consisting of four or seven dvipas. Sk. P. speaks of Saptadvīpa Vasumati i.e., the earth surrounded by seven dvīpas (islands). But the conception of earth surrounded by four dvipas seems to be earlier, which later might have given rise to the clearer conception of the seven dvīpas. Sk. P. mentions four dvīpas as four Khandas. In Vāyu Purāṇa, it is stated that Meru is the Central point of the earth (Karnikāśamasthānah) and from this central point we have dvīpas, viz., 'Bhadraśva' to the East, Jambū to the South, Ketumāla to the West and Uttarakuru to the North. This seems to be the broad four fold division of the earth having Meru as the centre. The Bhadrāśva can be identified with the greater China. The Jambūdvīpa can be identified with the Asian Continent.

82. Viṣṇupurāṇa. 34/45-46, 56-57, Matsyapurāṇa 112/43,44.
including the Indian Peninsula. Ketumāla can be identified with Amudaria and Sirdaria regions of Iran and Uttara Kuru is the vast region spreading from Altaic mountain to the North Sea. It is interesting note that Sk.P. mentions a mountain, a river, a lake, a tree and a form of god as specialities of these regions. The Saptadvipas mentioned in Sk.P. are:

a) Jambūdvīpa (surrounded by salt sea.)
b) Plakṣa (Gomedaka) dvīpa (Sugarcane sea).
c) Śālmaliḍvīpa (Surāsamudra).
d) Kuśadvīpa (Ghee sea).
e) Krauncadvīpa (Curd sea).
f) Śakadvīpa (milky sea).
g) Puṣkaradvīpa (sweet sea).

Among these seven dvīpas, Jambu is considered to be the centre from which all others are considered. Among these seven dvīpas, the Purāṇas describe Kuśa and Śakadvīpa with an intimacy which indicates the cultural and commercial contacts which the ancient Indians had developed with the inhabitants of these dvīpas.

a) Kuśadvīpa:

It is stated in Sk.P. that it is called 'Kusadvīpa' because it possesses (Kuśa stamba) (bunches of grass) for thousands of yojanas. Here the Lord is praised by the sons of Priyavrata in the form of fire (Jātavedasam).

The name of 'Kusa' country and its inhabitants are found in many Persian rock edicts. In Darius's 'Hamadan inscription', the borders of his kingdom are mentioned as follows: 'Starting from Sogdoyana (Bukhara) the Saka region up to the Kusa region and starting from Sindhu up to Svarda (Asia minor). Here the name Kusa is directly mentioned. Some identify this Kuśadvīpa with Ethiopia and others with Egypt. Probably the puranic Kuśadvīpa falls between North-Eastern region of Africa and Egypt.

b) Kuśadvīpa:

It is called 'Kuśadvīpa because it has 'Sāka' (vegetation) of thousands of Yojanas. Sk.P. mentions Kuśadvīpa in connection with Śūrya worship and also Brahmins of Kuśadvīpa, viz., Magas who were brought to India by Śāmba, the son of Kṛṣṇa. The region starting from the Danube river of Eurasia and extending up to the Tanshan in the Altaic mountain region is the 'Kuśadvīpa' of the Purāṇas. This is the old Kuśadvīpa known to be on the shore of Caspian Sea (Kasyapa Samudra). In the Iranian,

This is called 'Sakanambija' (Sakanambija-Sakasthana). The
new Sakastan is the modern seistan in East Iran.

It is said that Sakadvipa is surrounded by
Kalirasagara' (Milky ocean). This appears to be unrealistic.
but linguistically this has been resolved. In Iran, there is
a river by name 'Shiri' and a river flowing from this region
down to Russia is known by the name 'mo-lo-ko', the meaning
of this word is 'milk' and the word is phonetically nearer to
the English word 'Milk'. This milky ocean refers to the
Caspian Sea. It is stated that, in the Pliostocene Ice Age
Caspian flowed over the steppes that stretch away to North
and was probably connected with black sea. After the great
ice cap has thawed the Caspian sea, it began to shrink in
area and simultaneously its connections with the black sea
and the sea of Aral were severed. It seems that the
Caspian Sea was called 'Siravani' as referred to by Marco
Polo, as it was covered with Ice. The Puranic reference to
the sea as 'Kalirasagara' has this linguistic affinity.

Jambudvipa:

Jambudvipa is that part of Earth which contains
the Indian peninsula. In its earlier phase, it referred to
greater India. Jambudvipa consisted of the following Varsas
(regions): (1) Uttara Kuru (having Srngiparvata)

87. A.B.L.Avashti., St. Sk.P., p.15. He identifies
'Kalirasagara' with the Indian Ocean, which is
obviously misplaced.
(2) Hiranmaya (Śvetaparvata). (3) Ramyaka (Nīla Parvata),
(4) Katumāla (Sumeru parvata). (5) Iśāvṛta, (6) Medráśva,
(7) Harivarṣa (Miśadhaparvata), (8) Kimpuruṣavarsa (Himākūta)
and (9) Bhārata Varṣa (Himālaya parvata). Obviously, this
does not mean that these were parts of India, but only
locating India in relation to these countries. Thus
Jumbūdvīpa refers to the Asian Continent.

8. The upper regions of the Earth:

Sk.P. describes the upper regions of the earth in
the context of seven Īrdhva Loka, connected with Brahmā. It states that the distance between the orb of the Sun and Earth is a lakh of yojanas. It also states that the Sun
neither rises or sets, it is only the seeing and not seeing
of the sun consequential to the movement of the earth which
cause such a feeling. It mentions about the two solistices
viz., the Southern and Northern ones. It also states about
the movement of the planets, Moon and other celestial
objects. The stars are said to be more than twenty crores
in number. It refers to the 'Bigbear' (Saptarṣi Mandala)
and North Star (Dhruva). The region between the earth and
sun is the 'Bhuvar Loka'. The region between 'Sun' and
'Dhruva' is 'Suvār Loka'. Higher than the Dhruva is 'Mahar
Loka'. The Jana Loka is 2 crore yojanas upper than this.
The Tapoloka is six times (24 yojanas) away from 'Tapoloka'.

The three lokas viz., Bhuḥ, Bhuvah and Svāh are known as
'kṛtaka Lokas'. The janaḥ, tapaḥ and satya lokas are known

as 'akṛtaka loka'. The Mahar Loka is in between 'Kṛtaka' and 'akṛtaka' lokas. This conception of the upper regions has close parallels with several spheres of the earth viz. stratosphere, Troposphere, Ionosphere, Troposphere etc., a conceived in modern Astronomy. It is stated in Sk.P. that the upper regions can be reached (seun) by means of sacrifice, by Charity, Vratas, Tīrthas, etc., as laid down by Vedas etc., or by other means also.

9. The lower regions of the Earth: Patalas: America:

The lower regions of the earth which are referred to generally as 'Pātalalokas' as mentioned in Sk.P. are as following: (1) Atala, (2) Vitala, (3) Nitala, (4) Rasatala, (5) Talātala, (6) Sutala and (7) Patāla. Sk.P. give a rosy picture of these regions. It states that the lands in these regions are Black, White, Red, Yellow, Sugar, Rocky or Golden in colour. They are filled with storeyed buildings (vara prāśada sambhitān). In these lands Deityas, Danavas, Nagas live in thousands. These regions are seen to be more beautiful than the Svarloka (Heaven). The serpents here have many gems. There is no heat, no cold, no rains, no misery here, only enjoyment (fun-time) is found with different eatables. Who will not wish to enjoy the pāṇāla even though he is emancipated. 89 Below these regions are the 'Narakaas'. Thus the description of seven under regions show that they are some affluent countries situated below India probably referring to some countries and not mystical

accounts of some unidentifiable regions filled with un-fathomable darkness. 90

These regions may be taken as referring to some of the countries of the North and South American continents, which are below India in the Western hemisphere. 91 In the purāṇas like Sk.P. and Bhāgavatapurāṇa, it is said that an Asura by name 'Maya' lived in Atala one of the Adholokas. Maya was considered a great engineer. He is said to have built a lake in Hastināvatī as per Mahābhārata. In Central America, the capital city, viz., Mexico is connected with the 'ancient Mayan civilisation'. Even today the people follow this civilisation in Central America. In Mexico, Peru and other cities, ancient and magnificent of architectural monuments are many. It is said that this Mayan civilisation was very affluent and treasure hunting was done in this region. This treasure hunting is being done even today. It is said that climatic condition of Central America is temperate. This corresponds to the Purānic description of the said region. In the History of Spain, there is a legend stating that, their ancestors belonged to the 'Inca' civilisation hailing from Central America. This Inca civilisation is connected with Mayan civilisation.


91. Contrary to the opinion that Columbus discovered America, the American historians themselves state that it was the Indians who first discovered America. c.f., Hewitt. Primitive traditional History, p.83. "Those who first arrived in the continent, later to be known America, were groups of men driven by that mighty current that set out from India towards the East."
In a region where a part of present day Peru, Ecuador, Chili and Argentina are found, there was a king by name 'Atahu alpa'. His ancestors belonged to the 'Inca' clan. In his kingdom, the streets and walls were studded with gold. It was the belief that this Inca King was sent to earth by the sun god. A Spanish soldier 'Pizzaro' kept this Inca king in captivity. Even after getting gold from the Inca captive, he did not release but killed the Mayan Monarch. Pizzaro returned to Spain with huge amount of gold. He established the capital of his kingdom in the deep forest. The capital was known by the name 'Bilkabamba'. He kept the huge treasure and bound them by a magic known as 'Talisman'. Sk.P. states that at 'Mātākesvara' a Linga was established in Pātāla, which probably refers to this historical event in a mythical way.

In the Purāṇas, the Patālaloka is connected with Nāgas. Agū Vāsuki, Dhrtarastra, Dhanañjaya, Sankhacūda are mentioned to be its Lords. The American civilisation also speaks of snake race that ruled there. Mackenyc in his book - "Myths of pre-Columbian America" says thus: "Votan was the first historian of his people and wrote a book on the origin of the race in which he declares himself a snake (Naga), a descendant of Imos, of the line of Chan, of the race of Chivim. The interesting fact emerges that there was a snake people of America as there are Naga people in India."
The last ruler of Mexico was known by the name 'Aztec' who was a worshipper of snakes. This name is phonetically nearer to sage 'Āstika' who saved the Nāgas in the Sarpayajña conducted by King Janamejaya.94

B. BHĀRATAVARSA:

Bhārata-Varsa got its name because of 'Bharata' who ruled over it. Bharata was Rsabha's son whose father was Nābhi. It is a confirmed concept of the ancient Indian thinkers that the human race had its origin in Bhāratavarsa and it later spread to other places. It is stated that it is here one can achieve the four-fold aims of life viz., Dharma, Artha, Kāma and Mokṣa. Other regions are considered to be lands of luxury and material wealth (Anyatra Bhoga-bhūmisca). It is true that other regions of the earth are looking towards India for spiritual enlightenment. One another aspect in the Purāṇas is the spirit of Nationalism shown in this regard. Manu states that:

"Etadādesa prasūtasya sakāsādagrajamannah, svamsvam caṣtrim siksētarak prthivyām sarvamānāvah"95

that all human beings on earth should learn from the first born ones of this country. It is stated in Sk.P. that Bhāratavarsa is the seed of all (Sarvabījam) it is a Karmabhūmi (land of action) and in other lands merit and sin cannot be experienced.96 It is stated in Viṣṇupurāṇa

95. Manusmrti.
also that Bhāratavarsa is the best of the nine varsas of Jambūdvīpa because it is a land of action (Karṇabhūresā) while others are of enjoyment (Anyā bhogabhūmayaḥ). 97

1) The Nava Khandas of Bhāratavarsa or India:

In Sk.P., it is stated that the Bhāratavarsa was divided into Nava Khandas viz., (1) Indradvīpa, (2) Kaseru, (3) Tāmraparṇa, (4) Gabhasīmā, (5) Nāgadvīpa, (6) Saumya, (7) Gandharva, (8) Varuṇa and (9) Kumārika. 98 This probably refers to the islands nearer India with which trade and cultural links were established then, through the sea route. Some of these have been identified - (1) Indradvīpa (Indradvīma-Andaman tapu), (2) Nāgadvīpa (Nāgadvīma-Nicobar), (3) Tāmraparṇī (Lanka), (4) Varuṇadvīpa (Borneo island), (5) Kaseru (Malayan islands). Sk.P. also mentions the mountain ranges and rivers of these dvīpas which have been mostly identified.

2) Territorial divisions of Bhārata in Sk.P:

Sk.P. divides Bhāratavarsa into 5 regions, viz., Prācī (East), Yāmī (South), Pāscima (West), Uttara (North) and Madhya (the middle). It is said that King Jaya established his five sons viz., Subhā, Satrumārdana, Jaya, Vijaya and Vikrānta respectively in the five regions referred to above. This corresponds with the divisions of made by Rājaśekhara in his Kāvyamīmāṃsa. 99

97. Viṣṇupurāṇa, 2/3/22.
98. Šk.P., Vī/i/11.7.
Mahābhārata, Matsyapurāṇa, and Vāyu-purāṇa adhere to the main divisions, but they mention also the sub-divisions in these main-divisions e.g., they add Parvata Khanda (hill region), Vindhya Pradesa (Vindhya valley region), Antarmadā (Narmadā valley) and Sahyā-Godāvari region. Sk.P. refers to the entire Bhārata Khanda as Āryadesa.

Sk.P. refers to Āryāvarta, Madhyadesa, Antarvedī, Brahmapurāṇa, Uttarāpatha and Vindhya Pradesas also.

Āryāvarta is the word used for the upper region of India. It is stated that this land is marked by Himalayas, the Vindhyas, the Eastern Sea and the Western Sea.

3) Janapadas in Sk.P.: Sk.P. mentions various countries situated in the divisions and sub-divisions mentioned above. They may be taken up for a brief study.

(a) Parvatīya-Pradesas: Sk.P. mentions the following Hilly regions of the North viz., (1) Kirāta-desa, (2) Kailāsa-mānasas-desa, (3) Kāśmīra, (4) Nepāla Viśaya, (5) Brahmapura.

(b) Madhya Desa: In this region, the following Janapadas are mentioned: (1) Kurudesa, (2) Śrīkanthadesa, (3) Mācīpur;


Antara Narmada: In this region, Sk.P. refers to the following places viz., Bhrgukaccha, Maheya and Sāravata. 109

Vidhyānta Desas: Sk.P. mentions many of the Janapadas at the foot of Vindhyā mountain ranges. Important countries...

106. Sk.P., I/1/40; II/vi/10; V/1/57, 59; IV/1/13.
107. Ibid., I/1/39; VII/1/290; VI/90; I/1/46.
108. Ibid., VII/IV/24; III/i/15; VI/64, 199; VII/11/3.
109. Ibid., I/1/13; V/i/1/76.

(h) Dakśināpatha:

In Sk. P., the countries to the South of Narmada are mentioned as Dakśināpatha Janapadas. The following are mentioned: Pratisthāna desa, Tamradvīpa, (South of Coorg), Sahyadrivisaya, Vidarbha (Maharashtra), Koṅkana, Kārṇāṭaka, desa, Andhala, Tundira Mandalā, Drāvida, Cola, Pândya, Kerāla, Setu and Kumārika Khanda (Cape Comorin).111

4. Cities and Towns:

Sk. P. refers to many ancient and modern cities and towns of India. As many as 205 cities and towns are mentioned. The puras, nagaras, Pattanas are mentioned with their commercial importance also.112

5. Villages:

In the Navabheda section, Sk. P. mentions the number of villages in each of the desas concerned. Sk. P. also mentions a few of them independently by name. They are Attaḷaja, Bāskalagrama, Gayatrada grama, Phullagra, Kusasthali grama, Kalāpā grama, Hohata grama, Mandala grama, Medhuvāsanaka grama, Nandi grama, Sambhu grama, Sulagrama.

110. Sk. P., I/1/17; I/11/13; V/1/39; III/iii/4; VI/19b; V/11/11.
111. Ibid., I/iii/11/2; II/vii/14; III/1/61.
112. Ibid., II/vii/1; for details see A. B. L. Awasthi, St. Sk. P., p.106-130.
Among these, Sūlagrāma and Kalāpāgrāma beyond Nepūla desa, are hailed to be siddhakṣetras of Siva. In Sk.P., it is stated that the Brahmins who were Pāṣupatas were invited by Siva to Prabhāsa from Nepala Viṣaya and they came in an atomic form as they were adept in Siddha Vidyas like animā, garimā, etc.114

6. Mountain ranges in Sk.P.

Saivism had its association with the mountain ranges as Siva is known to be a dweller in Kailāsa mountain. Siva's spouse Pārvatī, is Himavān's daughter. Thus mountain ranges acquire importance in the history of Saivism. Sk.P. asserts the great importance of the mountains. Sk.P. classifies the mountains into Viṣkambha, Kesarācalas, Māryādē parvatas, Varsaparvatas, Kula parvatas and Kṣudraparvata i.e., hillocks.

It is stated that, Meru is the centre of all these parvatas. It is situated in the centre of Jambudvipa. Mountains called Lokāloka, Garbhoda, Kaṭāha are also found in Jambū. On the four sides of Meru are found the Viskambha Mountains viz., Mandara, Gandhamādana, Vipula and Supārsva Kesarācalas also surround the Meru.115

114. Ibid., VII/1/76.
115. Ibid., I/11/37.
(a) Maryādā Parvatas:

Nisadha, Hemakūta and Himavān are placed to the south of Meru, Nīla, Śveta and Śrīngivān to the North, Śalyavan to the East and Gandhamādana to the West, are known as Maryada Parvatas, as they form the boundaries between the different regions of the earth.\textsuperscript{116}

In another section, Sk.P. gives the following list of mountains, viz., Sahya, Vindhya, Maināka, Gandhamādana, Śalyavan, Malayā, Mahendra, Meru, Śveta, Nīlādri, Udayātri, Śrīnga, Āsvēcāla, Mānasādri, Kailāsa and Lokāloka.\textsuperscript{117} These mountains are mentioned as the relation of Himādri.

(b) Kula Parvatas:

There are three lists of Kulaparvatas in Sk.P. combining all of them, we can say that the following are the Kula Parvatas: (1) Mahendra, (2) Malayā, (3) Sahya, (4) Śuktiman, (5) Rksa, (6) Vindhya, (7) Pāriyātra, (8) Hemakūta, (9) Malayāvan, (10) Śrīngi, (11) Himavān and (12) Gandhamādana.\textsuperscript{118}

(c) Uḍīva Parvatas:

The following mountain ranges belonging to North-eastern region are mentioned in Sk.P. Kailāsa, the abode of Śiva, Mānasādri, Mānasottara, Narāvāsa, Nārāyaṇāvara, Kedāra, Sataśrṅga, Maināka, Mandāra, Anjana, Dronādri, Kraunca, Śūlagrama, Trikūṭa, Varāhagiri and Goparvata.\textsuperscript{119}

\textsuperscript{16} Sk.P., 25.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., I/1/23,14.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., I/11.39; VI/268.
In the Madhya Desa, the mountains viz., Govardhana, Sails, Citrakūta, Kalanjara and Gopayāmagiri are mentioned.

(d) Pāścima Pārvatas:

Arbuda, Vijayanta, Raivataka, Kṛtasamara, Kubha, Kuṣkigiri are the mountains mentioned as related to this region.

(e) Daksīṇapatha Pārvatas:

In the southern region, the following Pārvatas are referred to (1) Amarkantaka, (2) Rayamūka-giri, 
(3) Kiskindha Pārvata, (4) Tryambaka, (5) Gokarna, 
(6) Aruṇacala, (7) Māṭakagiri, (8) Veṅkatādri, (9) Śrīśaila, 
(10) Suvela (Marinda).

(f) Prācyā Pārvatas:

In the East, Udayagiri (Udayana), Kāmarūpa, Nepāla, Nilādri and Purusottama-giri are mentioned.

7. Rivers in Sk.P.:

Sk.P. is a mega lith of the various pilgrim centres of ancient and post-medieval India. Sk.P. notes the association of Śivaksetras with the rivers and has mentioned the same. Purāṇas divide the rivers either from the source mountains or on the basis of the regions to which they belong.

120. Sk.P., VII/1/120.
121. Ibid., I/1/2, VII/1/1.
122. Ibid., V/11/18.
123. Ibid., III/1/44; VI/271.
124. Ibid., I/111/1/3; II/1/32.
Sk.P. refers to (a) Pāriyātrodbhavanadyāḥ, (b) Vindhyād-vinirgātāh, (c) Rkṣaparvatasambhavāḥ, (d) Ś. ktrimatpāda
sambhavāḥ, (e) Sakhāpāda sambhavāḥ, (f) Mālyodbhavāḥ,
(g) Mahendra Prabhaṇavāḥ, (h) Himavat Prabhavāḥ. Sk. P.
refers to Gaṅgā of the Northern India and Narmadā of the
south. Narmadā is referred to as Dakṣīṇagangā.125

Sk.P. refers to Pancanadyāḥ viz., Vitastā (Jhelum), Chandrabhaṅga ( Chenab), Irāvati ( Ravi), Saṭadru
(Sutlej), Vipāśa (Beas) and Kuhu (Kabul) rivers of the
ancient Punjab. Special mention is to be made of Sarasvati
to which Sk.P. refers to in detail. Now she is taken to be
'unseen'. Sk.P. states that Sarasvati issued from the
pitcher of Brahma. She flows downwards from Alaka mountain
on the Himalayan range and passing through Kedāra. She
turns Westward where she conceals Vidasā, Parā, Vedasmṛtī,
Gambhīrā and Lauhitya in herself.126

In the Brahmaputra river system rivers like
Brahmaputra, Karatoya, Vṛddhagangā and Padma are mentioned

Rivers Kaśiprā ( Siprā), Kaśata, Gambhīrā, Mahī, an
Jambūnāḍī are mentioned as belonging to Siprā-Mahi group.

Coming Westwards, Sābhramati, Svarnarekha, Gomati
Mahesvarī, Raitya, Bhadrā are the rivers mentioned which
have association with the Sābhramati group.127

126. Ibid., 1/11/39.
127. Ibid., V/111/22.
Among the rivers belonging to Southern peninsula, rivers Revē (Narmada), Kapilē, Nāveri, Tāpi, Payosē, Pūrṇā, Nirvindhyā, Vidarbēhā, Mahānādī, Chitrotphalā, Raikūlya, Kumārī, Svarnarekhā, Vaitarini, Godavāri, Venā, Upavēnī, Kranā, Svarnamukharī, Kaḷirnādī, Kampā, vegavatī, Pīnākinī, Kṛtīnālī, Tāmrprāparī, Murālī128 are mentioned.

There are other rivers mentioned in Sk.P., which are not to be associated with any region or Parvata. But they may be noted. They are Aparājitā, Atrisambhāvā, Bhairavī, Bhogavatī, Caṇḍapāpaha, Citrāpathā, Haimavatī, Jāmbatī, Kumbhanadī, Kumudvatī, Satarudrā, Salakūṭī, Suralopā, Vindhyā and Viyadgāṅga.129

3. Aranyas and Āśramas mentioned in Sk.P.:

The ancient Indian culture was closely associated with Aranyas (forests) and Āśramas (Hermitages) wherein Rais and Jñānis assembled and thought about the welfare of the world. Sk.P. refers to various such Aranyas and Āśramas therein. They are: 1. Arbudāranyā, 2. Saindhavāranyā,
anya, 7. Pracīvāna, 8. Marujāṅgala, 9. Dharmāranyā,
ana, 14. Kurujāṅgala, 15. Sthānuvāna, 16. Dvaitavaṇa,

128 Sk.P., V/111/21, 103, 227.
129 Ibid., I/111/11/2, V/111/2, 22.
9. The 72 Pradesas:

These are described in stanzas 127 - 162 of the 39th chapter of Kumārikā Khandā. The list contains actually seventy-five pradesas. Many of the pradesas which cannot be now identified probably belonged to the dvīpāntara regions of Bhāratavarsa, which were formerly integral part of Bhāratavarsa. The Sk.P. list describes the pradesas with the number of villages in them. The entire list is given in the appendix but here only a few important ones are discussed.

With regard to the pradesas there are certain differences between the different editions of Sk.P. The Gurumandala edition, contains seventy-five pradesas. The N.K. Text contains only sixty-three pradesas.

5. Kacchamandala, 6. Aksapada, 7. Sūryamukha, 8. Ekabhu,
Vijayojayaḥ and 14. Vidarbha mentioned in the S.V.Text are not mentioned in the N.K.Edition. All these have been

130. Sk.P.,II/viii/1; VII/1/36; IV/11/57; I/111/11/2.
131. For a list of these desas, see Appendix. W. p.547.
shown to exist. Hence their inclusion in S.V. Edition, Gurumandal and Nagasharan, editions are not spurious.

1. Venudesa, 2. Dravida desa, 3. Cirāyusa are found only in N.K.List. It is interesting to note that Sk.P. mentions Lankādesa and Simhaladesa separately. In the list, Lankādesa is the 51st one. It is described thus:

"SattrimSat Sahasrāni Lankādesah Prakīritah"

i.e., Lankādesa contains 36 lakh villages. Simhaladesa is mentioned as the 66th one. It is described thus....

"Sahasrādāsakam cāpi simhala dvīpamucyate."

It is specifically stated that Simhala is a dvīpa. It contains 10,000 villages. Thus according to Sk.P., Lankādesa is bigger than Simhaladesa. It is interesting to note that Sk.P. mentions Simhaladvīpa as a part of India. As opined by Dr. Sircar, we can say that the above Purānic section suffers from errors. But there is epigraphic support in favour of some of the traditional members of gramas quoted in the list. Thus the Śākambara or Śākambarī country is actually known to have been otherwise Sapādalakṣa or one which has a quarter lakh of villages.

Cunningham in his book Ancient Geography of India says that, "at the time of Heuintsang’s visit to India in the 7th Century. India was divided into 80 kingdom."
Probably assigning the number of villages or fixing the number of villages in a pradesa was an ancient method of country-planning and administration, as they are found corroborated in the inscriptions.

The above discussion makes it clear that Sk.P. is a valuable source of Ancient India Geography. The details about Indian Topography given in Sk.P. is far in advance of that contained in the Bhuvana Kośa. The 39th Chapter of Sk.P. containing a list of countries (not people) is important from the point of view of Indian History also as it gives us pretty accurate information about the political situation during 9th Century A.D. The Geographical horizon of Sk.P. as referring to India is far more extensive than we meet elsewhere in the Purānas. A vast stretch of land extending from Uttara Samudra in the North to Daksīna Samudra in the South covering the entire Indian peninsula and even beyond its physical features is described to be the land mass called 'Bhāratadesa'.

Thus the conception of earth and its surrounding environment (bhūgola parikalpaṇa) as found described in Sk.P. and other Purānas sheds light on the attempts of the ancient Indian thinkers in the study of geography of earth from different points of view, as connected with India. The relation between India and the far flung countries can be seen in the 'Caturdvīpa' (Khanda) conception. In the

'sapta Dvīpa' conception the relation between the India and Euro-asian countries is seen. In the conception of Jambudvīpa and its varsas, the relation between India and other Asian countries is seen. In the 'Bharatanava-khanda' conception, the relation between India and the neighbouring islands and the countries connected with sea routes are seen. The Purānic Atlas of the world includes also the American continents in its Patāla conception, which are stated to be difficult to reach because of their long distance. But the affluence of these countries, the importance and their influence on the civilisation of India is noted. If for any reason, the geographical locations are altered it is to suit the main purpose of the Paurānikas to fit it into their framework of explaining them as connected with India. The spirit of nationalism underlying this deserves appreciation.

Thus the aspects connected with 'Vāstuvidyā' and 'Bhūgolaparikalpanā', as represented in Sk.P., have socio-cultural significance, as they bring into focus the extent of progress in human life and civilisation, discernible at the age of Sk.P.