Assessment and Conclusions
CHAPTER XI

ASSESSMENT AND CONCLUSIONS

In the foregoing study in ten chapters, the divergent elements of the ancient socio-cultural tradition of India as presented in Sk.P., have been presented in their proper perspective. Attention is focussed on the ideas concerning Religion, Philosophy, Social Organisation and Administration in their historical perspective to focus the attempts of Sk.P. in harmonising the divergent elements.

In the first chapter, a discussion regarding the textual complexity of Sk.P. is made. The date of Sk.P. is discussed with reference to the complexity of the material in it and also its textual varieties. Stating that the methodology of the study is typological, an attempt is made to trace the history of myth making in India, since the time of the Vedas upto the Purānic days. The study is set in the context of myths which symbolically resolve many contradictions and ambivalences of a long tradition. Taking into view the studies already made in the field, the attention is mainly focused on the material available in Sk.P. to rebuild the history of the Saiva Tradition from the Vedic times upto the time of Sk.P. and also to study the other socio-cultural ideas concerning Religion, Philosophy, Social Organisation etc.
In the second chapter, the study of the religious-philosophical traditions other than the Śaiva tradition viz., those connected with Viṣṇu, Brahma, Sūrya, Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, is presented with their salient features. The spirit of devotion to God and a sense of social commitment on the part of a religious person, are pin-pointed through a few examples from the discussions presented in Sk.P. The aspect of religious tolerance as the basis of such a tradition is underlined.

In the third chapter, an account of the history and development of the concept of Siva is given with a view to studying the Śaiva religious tradition in all its aspects. Important Śaiva myths like Dakṣa Myth, Liṅga Myth, Amrtamanthana Myth, Andhaka Myth, Tripura Myth and Gajāsura Myth are made by way of revealing the socio-cultural elements reflected in them. All the myths highlight the virtues of religious tolerance and social responsibilities of a man in society.

In the fourth chapter, various aspects of Śiva worship in respect of forms and methods are presented on the lines of the material available in Sk.P., which reveals the antiquity of Śaiva tradition and Śiva worship in the form of Liṅga. The tendency of Sk.P. in the direction of liberalising the religious practices and making them open for all the members of the society irrespective of caste and creed is noted. In the dialogues
of the Śiva-bhaktas, the very fundamentals of religious faith are put to test. But it is asserted that Dharma, by all means, is the trusted and safest path of life.

In the fifth chapter, a review of the ideas presented in Sk.P. with regard to Śaiva cults like pāsupata, Līṅgadharī, Kāpālikā, Kālāmukha, Devī, Skanda and Ganesa are presented first. Next an assessment of the other popular religious cults connected with these Śaiva cults like serpent cult, Yaksça cult, mountain cult, tree cult and Manes cult, is made with a view to showing the universal theism of Sk.P. in line with the ancient vedic religious tradition.

The sixth chapter presents an account of the different philosophical problems of cosmology, the path of liberation and the nature of liberation, as found in Sk.P. The practical approach towards philosophy is underlined. A review of the material in Sk.P. with regard to the Śaiva Philosophical schools like Śaiva Siddhānta, Kāśmir School and Sākta school is made highlighting the attempt of Sk.P. in presenting a synthetic view of all schools as absorbed into the main tradition by the time of Sk.P.

The seventh chapter presents a critical review of the material available in Sk.P. with regard to the then society in the background of the ancient Varna and Āśrama system. The role of Sk.P. in giving a message to
the people to unite and fight both the external aggression and internal discrimination, in the event of national interest is underlined. The social, religious and economic life of the Brâhmanas as presented in Sk.P. is specially made to pinpoint the changing trends in a developing society. Different aspects of education and economic life are also discussed, noting the tendency towards liberalisation and consolidation. The bedrock of social development is shown to be consisting in the principles of social ethics and social justice based on the universal elements of the ancient tradition.

In the eighth chapter, a critical review of the administrative set up reflected in Sk.P. is made, highlighting the integrated approach towards solving the problems of administration. The basic ideas concerning effective state administration as in the ancient texts and as they are presented in Sk.P. are given in a critical perspective. Historical material available in Sk.P. from the ancient times of Śaka to the days of feudal Kings of north and south India is analysed. A glimpse of the rural and urban administration as reflected in Sk.P. is also given. As a part of the administration, the ideas connected with education, economic life etc., are considered, highlighting the harmonising tendency of Sk.P.
The ninth chapter discusses the practical application of the principles of Vāstuvidyā and Bhūgolaparikalpanā as found in the different Khandas of Sk.P. The general aspects connected with temple architecture as presented in Sk.P. are noted. Dealing with the material available in Sk.P. about Iconography as relating to Śiva, Vishnu, Devī, Brahma and other gods and goddesses, the importance of the material relating to Śiva Iconography is highlighted. Then a survey of the material available with regard to the Bhāratavarsa as an important geographical region with cultural and commercial links with other geographical regions is made. The spirit of nationalism underlying this is noted.

The tenth chapter presents a study of Sk.P. from the literary point of view. The merits of Sk.P. as a poetic composition are shown by assessing the role of legends in Sk.P., in inculcating the religious culture among the masses. Through some examples of alankaras like upama, etc., and rasas like Adbhuta, Srīgāra, etc., the poetic merits of the Sk.P. are highlighted. The question of the predominance of Bhakti rasa is considered and it is stated that inspite of the different Rasas delineated, it is Śānta that is the predominant rasa in Sk.P.

Thus a brief account of the different chapters of the thesis is given as a background to the assessment and conclusions that are presented below.
1. THE TEXTUAL PROBLEM AND DATE OF SK.P.

In the problem of the textual complexity of Sk.P., as discussed in the first chapter, it is stated that the present Sk.P. has two formidable divisions, viz., Samhitātmaka and Khandātmaka. It is the Khandātmaka Sk.P. that is taken up for study here. In order to show the popularity of Sk.P., the citations from Sk.P. in the Nibandha works belonging to 10th Century A.D. and afterwards are noted. Then a general discussion is made on the date of Sk.P. The existence of an old Ms. of Sk.P. dating back to 7th Century A.D. is noted. It is stated that the date of Sk.P. coincides with ending of the Gupta period of ancient Indian history (i.e., 6th Century A.D.) and the beginning of the medieval era corresponding with the rule of imperial Kanauj (12th Century A.D.)

There are different editions of Sk.P. and there is still a need for a critical edition. If we take the contents of Sk.P., into account, it becomes evident that the Sk.P. is encyclopaedic in nature and is of Pan-Indian importance. It is an ancient Gazeteer of India. The attempts of Sk.P. in harmonising the divergent elements in the different religious denominations by the medium of different myths is noteworthy.

Taking into view the studies already made in the field, the present study focusses its attention on
the growth and development of Śaiva tradition from the typological perspective, having the background of the other material in Sk.P.

2. THE HISTORY OF MYTH-MAKING:

As the material in Sk.P. is to be studied in the context of the activities of myth-making, the genesis of the activity of myth-making in India is traced from the time of the Vedas down to the Purānic times.

In the Vedic age, myths came into vogue to broaden the base of the Vedic rituals. The role of Arthavāda, Nirukti, Itihāsa, Vamsa, Nārāsamsi, Gatha, etc., in the conceptualisation of a Purānic genre in the Vedic age, is outstanding.

In the Sūtras and Smṛtis, the myths were traced to the ancestors and a whole system of daily rituals from birth to death were enjoined by them. The epics ushered upon the scions of solar or lunar races the responsibility of upholding the mythical tradition, thus founded. The epics became popular with the masses and took the name of the fifth Veda.

In the Purāṇas, an independent tradition, viz., Sūta tradition was developed to preserve the identity of the myth proper. The Vedic, Brāhmaṇic, Upanisadic and Epic myths containing materials on Geography, Cosmology,
philosophy, Theology, etc., were brought into the fabric of myths and this made the Purāṇas to grow in bulk.

The myths in the Purāṇas show a deep understanding of the mysteries of man and the universe. They are statements of a primordial, greater and more relevant reality, by which the present life, facts and activities of mankind are influenced.

3. MYTHS IN SK.P.

In Sk.P., mountains, rivers, ksetras, tīrthas, temples, kundas, trees, plants, ghosts, animals and birds are brought into the fold of the myths by symbolic communication between these and the divinities like Brahma, Viṣṇu, Śiva, Devī, Skanda, Gāndā and others and thus the compass of myths was further broadened.

The criterion to select a myth for a study, is based on a content pattern consisting of supernatural origin, portents at birth, perils during infancy, initiation, a boundary, a magical context, a trial, a last scene, accident or mysterious death and resurrection or ascension. In the myths taken for study a unity of design is seen. The liminal medium gives the myths a status in which anything can happen.

In these myths, in which the divinity is experienced and invented, the logic of oppositions and correlations, excursions and inclusions, compatibility and
imcompatibility of the social, cultural, psychological or spiritual ideas get combined to give a synthesised picture. It is the happy and harmonious expression of the divergent elements in the ancient Indian Socio-cultural tradition that is represented by the Saiva, Vaishnava and other traditions in the Sk.P.

4. RELIGIO-PHILOSOPHICAL TRADITIONS OTHER THAN SAIVA:

The survey of the religio-philosophical traditions other than the Saiva tradition represented in the second chapter, an attempt is made to give their salient features. The worship of the different gods blossomed into different cults as a further development of the Vedic tradition. This was due to the inclusion of the Tantric elements in the Purānas. The Sk.P. gives an account of some of these cults as a deviation from the hard and fast Vedic ritualism and study of the Vedāntasāstra. The main element emphasised in these different cults is devotion to different gods and the attainment of Muktī, the final emancipation, through devotion. This attempt of Sk. P. is aimed at popularising the different religious cults and making them broad-based and simple, so that they should appeal to the masses.

The account of the dialogues between Sukha and Vyāsa and that between Yama and Śivaśarman, exhibit this tendency in a striking manner. The first dialogue represents the questions that haunt the people at large.
Śuka argues that salvation cannot be got merely by samskāras, Brahmacarya (calibacy), gārhaṇya (householder-ship), Sanyāsa (renunciation) or putra-prāpti (getting of a son). What is required is the social commitment on the part of an individual in society. The second dialogue epitomises the spirit of Sk.P. It emphasises the sense of social consciousness and commitment on the part of an individual in society. A person who is engaged in religious worship should not be bogged down by bookish knowledge or scholarship. Sivasarman states that worshipping gods, performing sacrifices, treating guests hospitably, planting of trees like asvattha giving charity and digging wells for the benefit of the people is more important than mere study of the Vedas and Śāstras and acquiring property.

5. THE SPIRIT OF RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE:

Sk.P. advocates "Pancāyatana worship" i.e., the worship of five gods viz., Viṣṇu, Śiva, Skanda, Ganesa and Devī with equal veneration. This highlights the aspect of religious tolerance. It is from this viewpoint that the worship of Brahma, Viṣṇu, Sūrya, Rāma and Kṛṣṇa is presented in the different Khaṇḍas. Sk.P. states that one may choose the divinity of one's choice and it is the most important means to the attainment of emancipation. To emphasise the continuity of this spirit of tolerance even in the philosophical tradition, the philosophical traditions of
Śāṅgava and Rāmānuja are presented in Sk.P. In the worship of Rāma and Kṛśna, the emphasis is laid on devotion instead of Vedic Karma or knowledge, for the attainment of Muktī (emancipation). Thus the spirit of social awareness and religious harmony are re-emphasised in the different religious traditions, other than the Śaiva tradition.

6. THE HISTORY OF THE CONCEPT OF ŚIVA:

In the third chapter, an attempt is made to trace the history and development of the concept of Śiva and Śaiva tradition as the backdrop of Śaiva myths like Dakṣa myth, Liṅga myth, etc., as presented in Sk.P.

The genesis of the concept of Śiva is of utmost importance in the development of Śaiva tradition. Two views are found regarding the concept of Śiva. The first view states that the concept of Śiva can be traced to non-Aryan sources. The second view traces it to the Aryan sources. The first view is held by R.G.Bhandarkar and the second view is held by R.K.Siddhanta Shastree. A study of epithets like Pāṣupati, Bhūtapatī, etc., applied to Śiva in the Vedas, Epics and Purāṇas, shows that tracing of the concept of Śiva to non-Aryan sources and to some tradition of phallic worship is not tenable. The epithets of Rudra taken by the advocates of the first view as referring to the malevolent aspects of Rudra are not really used in that light in the Vedas, Brāhmaṇas, Upanisads, etc. From
the Purānic sources the concept of Śiva as a benevolent Almighty emerges, which is a but a continuity of the Vedic conception of Rudra.

7. SK.P. AND SAIVA MYTHS:

(1) Dakṣa Myth:

In Sk.P., this aspect of the development of the concept of Rudra-Śiva as a benevolent Almighty is presented in the different Śaiva myths like Dakṣa myth, Liṅga myth, etc.

The Dakṣa myth is a very popular myth found in the epics and purāṇas. The myth in Sk.P., as compared with the variations of the myth in other sources, marks further stages of its development. The myth is interpreted by R.C.Hazra, K.A.N.Sastry, H.H.Wilson, D.D.Shulman and R.K. Siddhanta Shastree in different ways. The important question that is raised in the Dakṣa myth is that of Śiva's relation to the sacrificial tradition. Generally it is argued that Śiva was not connected with the Vedic sacrifice. But this view is not tenable as numerous Vedic references go against the view. Scholars like H.H.Wilson trace the genesis of Dakṣa myth to the rivalry between the Śaiva and Vaishnava traditions. But the Dakṣa myth in Sk.P. aims at creating an atmosphere of religious tolerance with popular awareness and social harmony. The message of Sk.P. through Dakṣa myth is that, lack of culture in insulting the worthy
and respecting the unworthy would lead to great loss both at the personal level and social level.

(11) Liṅga Myth:

The Liṅga myth in Sk.P. has been the source of different theories by R.G. Bhandarkar, P. Banerjea and R.K. Siddhanta Shastree. It has many variations in other Purāṇas such as Śiva, Liṅga and Kālikā. These variations are also taken into account by the scholars.

R.G. Bhandarkar traces the Liṅga form of worship to the phallus worshippers known as 'Sisnadevās' in Rgvedic times, who were the enemies of Vedic-Aryans. He is of the opinion that Liṅga-worship had not come into vogue at the time of Patanjali. Then how can we say that Phallus worshippers existed at the time of Rgveda? The term 'Sisnadevāh' cannot be interpreted in the way in which the scholar has taken it. The word may be metaphorically taken to refer to those who indulged in unholy practices. The word cannot be associated with Rudra worshippers of Rgvedic times. Further Rudra is described as 'Vajrabāhu' in Rgveda and as 'Sahasrākṣa' in Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda. This establishes the identity between Indra and Rudra. If we interpret the word 'Sisnadeva' in Rgveda as phallus worshippers, can any one imagine that solicitations were made to Lord Indra, with whom Rudra was identified, for destroying a people who worshipped his own symbol?
R.K. Siddhanta Shastree dissociates the Liṅga myth from phallus worship and tries to give an alluogorical interpretation to the myth. The view of the scholar is that Siva Liṅga represents the cosmic form of the Almighty. This is borne out from the Liṅga myth in Sk.P. also. The conclusion drawn by the scholar from this is that it indicates Siva's Aryanness and the idea originated in the sacred land of India.

The Liṅga myth in Sk.P. when compared with the version of the myth in other Purāṇas, has certain peculiarity of its own. The scene is set in Dāruvana and the wandering Siva is described as dejected after the death of Dākṣāyani, his beloved wife. He visits the hermitages and in the absence of the sages, their wives follow him, out of compassion. The sages learning the causes of mass-following of Siva by their wives, curse Siva that his phallus should fall. But the phallus as soon as it touches the earth grows into huge proportions covering the entire universe. Visnu and Brahma are asked to find the bottom and top of the Liṅga. Visnu returns failing in his attempt. But Brahma returns and tells a lie that he saw its top. Brahma is cursed by the sages and the sages are cursed by Siva. Siva himself splits the Liṅga into many pieces and establishes them in different parts of the world. Nandi was the first to worship the Liṅga. Gods, demons and sages worship this Liṅga from times immemorial.
The Līṅga myth in Sk.P. has the following elements:
(1) the element of dejection, (2) the element of nudity,
(3) the element of emasculiation, (4) the element of fear and
wonder, (5) the element of untruth, (6) the element of curse
and (7) the element of universal and eternal worship. These
elements have been incorporated into the myth so as to fulfil
the structural necessity of the Purāṇa, to establish a conti-
nuity among the events of Sāti's death, Śiva's emasculiation,
his marriage with Pārvatī and birth of Skanda. In a sense,
from the structural point of view the Dakṣa myth, the Līṅga
myth and the Skanda myth are the three episodes of a single
myth in 'Bandhuta style' of the Brāhmaṇas. The Līṅga myth
is seen to be an attempt of the ancients to explain a certain
cosmic phenomenon of blazing fires engulfing the terra firma
and the sky. And this blazing fire came to be associated
with Rudra as he represented the cosmic form of Agni.

In the Līṅga myth of Sk.P., the term Līṅga has been
interpreted in such a way as to establish it as the source
of the universe and as the receptacle into which the universe
is absorbed:

"Yasmāllīnam jagat sarvam tasmāllīṅge mahātmanah;
Layanāt Līṅga mityevam pravadantī manīṣinah.

It is implied from this that the universe has emerged from
the Līṅga. The expansion of the mass of effulgence in the
form of Līṅga as described in the Purāṇas represents the
transformation of this Līṅga into a cosmic form. The
reference to the miniature Liṅga represents the seed of the universe. This brings the Liṅga myth in close association with the 'Nāsadiya Sūkta' wherein the origin of the universe is portrayed. The desire to create was 'the first seed of the mind'. In the Liṅga myth, the origin of the universe is traced to the seed in the form of the Liṅga. Therefore the purāṇic myth of the Liṅga has its Vedic and Upanisadic sources in representing the Liṅga as the Brahman, the cause of the creation, sustenance and annihilation of the world. This is the conception of Siva as the Liṅga through the influence of the Upanisads like Śvetāsvatara. It is with this background we have to take the description of Siva as a Bhikṣu in Dāruvana, as coming in Sk.P:

"Digambaro muktajñākalāpo vedāntavedyo bhuvanaikabhortic Sa Ṣivaro brahmakapaladhāri Yogisvarānam paramah parasca. Anantarīyan mahato mahīyān mahāyūbhāvoby bhuvanādhipo mahān; Sa Ṣivaro bhikṣurūpo mahātmar bhikṣatānam dāruvane cakāra."

- Kedāra Khaṇḍa (in Māheśvara Khaṇḍa) 6.34.

The naked mendicant exhibiting his free matted hair as none but the Ṣivara, sole sustainer of the universe and known through Vedānta only. He holds all the creators of different creations within his own self and can be represented as the greatest of the great yogis, though in fact he is superior to them. The Lord is the minutest of the minutest and the greatest of the greatest ones in the manifest world. He is the greatest of all and a source of supreme energy. This very Lord appeared in the form of beggar in Dāruvana.
(iii) Samudramanthana Myth:

The Samudramanthana myth speaks of the coalescence between Saiva mythology and Indra mythology. It focuses the attention on the protective aspect of Siva and emphasizes the salutary effect of devotion towards Siva.

(iv) Tripura Myth:

The Tripura myth is also a fine example of the coalescence of Saiva mythology and Indra mythology. Indra is known as 'Purabhid' and 'Valabhid'. As Indra releases water from the clutches of asura Vṛtra, Siva releases the world from the clutches of an oppressor.

(v) Andhaka Myth:

The Andhaka myth is popular in both Saiva and Vaisnava traditions. Andhaka could not be killed by Visnu as he was a staunch devotee of Siva. The immunity to death caused by deep devotion towards God is highly stressed in this myth. Siva at the request of Andhaka accepts him as one of the Gaṇas. The myth has an allusion to the 'blood motif'. From the drops of blood falling from the body of Andhaka many Dānavas were born. This is a unique mythical motif. Probably this hints at the relation of blood with fertility. This partially explains the Hindu custom of wearing 'red sindhūra' (kunkuma) on the forehead, especially by married women.

(vi) Gajasura Myth:

The Gajasura myth, which accounts for the elephant-
hide as the lower garment of Siva, can be shown as philosophically representing the eradication of the wild elephants in the form of Maaka, Mahaka, etc., in the mind of a devotee through the power of his devotion towards Lord Siva.

**Common Message of the Myths:**

It is worthwhile to note that all the myths have certain common points highlighted in them. Lack of culture and the ego resulting from it are shown as leading to distress and destruction of Daksha in the Daksha myth, of Bharb and Brhaspati in the Linga myth, of Indra in the Samudra Manthana myth, of Andhaka, Tripura and Gajasura in the other myths. Finally they are freed from their disastrous plight through devotion to Siva. All the myths highlight the ideal of religious tolerance and social responsibilities of a man in society.

8. **THE ANTIQUITY OF THE WORSHIP OF SIVA AS LINGA:**

The various aspects of Siva worship in respect of forms and methods as presented in the fourth chapter of the thesis on the lines of the material available in the Sk.P., reveals the antiquity of Saiva tradition and Siva worship in the form of Linga. The different Khandas of Sk.P. refer to worship of Siva Linga called by different names in the different 'Siva Ksetras' found in every nook and corner of India.
The antiquity of Śiva worship in the form of Liṅga has received the attention of many a scholar. The views of R.G. Bhandarkar, P. Banerjea and R.K. Siddhanta Shastree are to be considered here. R.G. Bhandarkar does not accept the prevalence of Liṅga worship before Patanjali. P. Banerjea traces it to the earliest form of image worship as phallus-worship and considers it as pre-Aryan associating it with Mohenjodaro times. R.K. Siddhanta Shastree shows that Liṅga worship was prevalent even before Patanjali and does not agree with the view that 'Śisnadeva' in Ṛgveda refers to phallus worship. The conclusion that can be drawn from all these is that the Liṅga worship could be as old as Ṭhārvāvṛtveda, because there are references in it to the eight forms of Rudra.

Śk.P. gives an account of the tradition of Liṅga worship from the ancient times in the Avimuktesvara Liṅga myth. This myth is found in Kāśī Khanda. It is stated here that Avimuktesvara Liṅga was the earliest one established at Vārānasi during the reign of Divodāsa. This original Liṅga was taken to Mandara mountain. Several Liṅgas brought from different regions of India were established at Kāśī in the place of the original Liṅga. The Avimuktesvara Liṅga was the Ādi Liṅga and several Liṅgas were later established in Kāśī. This shows that the installation and the worship of the Liṅgas were very ancient practices throughout the length and breadth of India.
Historical records about Kāśī state that Kāśī was exposed frequently to various Muslim and other foreign invasions, when many of its ancient shrines were destroyed and that they were later established by the later rulers of Kāśī.

Sk.P. gives various graphic accounts of the method of Śiva Linga worship. Sacred ablution and worship of the Linga three times a day are prescribed for a devotee.

The worship of Navagraha Lingas and the worship of Rudra-Siva in his eight and eleven forms shows that Purānic conception of Rudra-Siva was a continuation of the conception of Rudra-Siva. Linga worship in this form was prevalent all over India. Further the Śivaganas and their worship in the form of Linga right from very ancient times. It is interesting to note that Ṛakī, Bhadrakali, the sixty-four yoginis were recognised as the female Śivaganas. This led to worship of these as the mother goddesses by the people. Thus in different ways, Sk.P. highlights Śiva worship as a means of inculcating socio-cultural ideals in the minds of the people without making any discrimination based on sex or creed.

9. THE EMBLEMS OF SAIVA FAITH:

In the process of Linga worship, Pancaśasara- (Sadaksara) Japa, Rudrāksadhārana and Tripundra-dhārana are highlighted as the invariable aspects of Śiva worship.
They are the special marks of a devotee of Śiva. The application of Tripundra, the wearing of Rudrāksas and the meditation on the Pancākṣara - (Sadākṣara) mantra are regarded as the emblems of faith and as a means of liberation. Sk. P. refers to the fact that the Pancākṣara-Japa was open to women and Śūdras unlike the other Vedic mantras. This is in keeping with the tendency of Sk. P. in the direction of liberalising the religious practices and throwing them open for all the members of the society, irrespective of caste and creed. As regards the method of Tripundra dhārana in particular, Sk. P. gives a method which has undergone a change in later times. This was the result of simplification. The method of first applying a horizontal line with the thumb and then applying two more lines with the index and the ring fingers, is replaced later by the method of applying three lines with the three middle fingers.

**FESTIVALS AND VOWS DEDICATED TO ŚIVA:**

The account of the festivals and vows (vratas) relating to Śiva such as Śivarātri, Pradosa Vrata, Somavāra Vrata with several legends demonstrating their efficacy, establishes the fact that by the time of Sk. P., these were considered as popular festivals and vows by the people. These festivals and vows helped the people to develop a spirit of sacrifice. Sk. P. gives these as the elements nourishing the popular faith of the people in Śiva worship.
Similarly an account of the pilgrim centres of Siva such as Kedāra, Kāśi, Ujjayinī, Prabhāsa, Vaidyanātha and Ramesvara is given in Sk.P. As dealt with in Sk.P., these are shown to be the centres of Siva worship and culture, affording opportunities for the devotees of all classes and creeds to visit and render worship. They also serve as the centres of socio-cultural meetings of the people to enlighten and get enlightened in religious and philosophical tenets of the Saiva tradition. The account of these is in keeping with the idea of socio-cultural education of the masses.

12. THE DIALOGUES OF SIVABHAKTAS:

The dialogues of Sivabhaktas presented later are also meant to educate the people in socio-cultural tenets, religious etiquettes and moral teachings to be followed for preserving and propagating the faith of their choice.

Kalabhīti and Siva:

The dialogue between Kalabhīti and Siva (in the guise of a low born), drives home the message that steadfastness in the practice of religious etiquette inspires one's faith in the ancient code of conduct. It is this that one achieves with strict adherence to Dharma as based on Śrutī and Smṛti. Otherwise the transgression of the etiquette would lead to further deterioration of wantonness.
Thus the spirit of the dialogue is the preservation of the purity of religious tradition. This is what we find when Kālabhītī agrees with the logic of social equality, raised by Śiva in disguise, yet does not swerve from the etiquette he was following. This is a message for the society to maintain the order of religious tradition in such a way as to avoid tussle with the spirit of social equality.

Karandhama and Mahākāla:

The conversation between King Karandhama and Mahākāla is much more thought-provoking. It reflects the argumentation about an ordinary level of existence and a higher level of existence. The skeptic attitude towards certain practices of religion is inspired by an ordinary level of understanding. The questions raised by the King are about certain things which are obvious. Ordinarily one cannot demonstrate how the manes and gods receive the offerings made. Yet there are certain subtle levels of existence which cannot be perceived by a skeptic. Mahākāla's reply to the questions of the King reveal these subtler levels of existence. The libation, etc., offered through mantras are deemed to be the media of developing a spiritual contact with those levels of existence, represented by manes and gods. This has social implications, in as much as it warns the skeptics not to tread on the ground which is not known to them. The practices can be denounced but cannot be replaced. Without them, the possibility of spiritual
Contact with higher and subtler levels of existence would be completely ruled out.

Nandabhadra and Satyavrata

The dialogue between Nandabhadra and Satyavrata is one between an orthodox man and a heretic. The orthodoxy of Nandabhadra is with a difference, as he reveals a very healthy outlook towards religion. According to him, the outward manifestations of purity and devotion are not religion. Religion in his view is the culture of the mind. The performance of sacrifices, visit to holy places, taking bath in holy rivers, etc., without the basic religious culture involving purity of mind, action and speech, do not make any one religious. He reveals the core of religion when he says that every home with men of pure conduct and genuine devotion could be a holy place and that the water in such a house is nothing short of a 'tīrtha'. Satyavrata, a heretic, chooses the moment of utter sorrow on the part of Nandabhadra, when his son and wife had passed away, to attack his religious feelings. But Nandabhadra maintains the efficacy of religious practices against the onslaughts of the heretic. He points out that the incidence of sorrow or despair have nothing to do with religion. It is better, he says, to be a religious man than a heretic, because the sympathy of the people is with the former. The dialogue has its social and cultural implications. It emphasises that religion and culture of the mind should go together in society. The
stability of a society depends upon a healthy outlook towards religion. Dharma is always congenial to prosperity. The incidences of sorrow in one's life should not deter one from religion. One has to be devoted towards the religions practices, rather than throwing aspersions on them. Nothing is achieved by a heretic attitude except hatred, disharmony and enmity.

Sākaṭāyana and Soma:

The dialogue between Sākaṭāyana and Soma is that between a ghost of a heretic and a religious Brahmin. The worst that can happen to a heretic is highlighted here. The lack of religious culture and pious way of life makes man a ghost, which symbolically, represents the eccentric and destructive mind of a heretic. The insistence of religion is from the point of view of stability in society. Religion is a way of life for every individual in society. It creates harmony and understanding which go a long way in fostering a stable society.

13. RELIGIOUS CULTS OF SK.P:

An account of the different religious cults, especially those of Śaiva and allied cults, reflected in Sk.P., as presented in the fifth chapter, reveals that they are rooted in the Vedic tradition. The external forms of religious practices got established by the advent of Tantrism. A general framework of religious worship was provided by the Tantras. This paved the way for many
religious practices to assume the form of different cults. The most conspicuous development of divine worship in the Purāṇas was that of the trinity and the mother Goddesses. This had the background of sacrificial cult of the Veda involving the worship and offering of oblations to the different gods. The spirit of these Vedic gods crystallised into the conception of Brahma, Viṣṇu and Śiva as the Trinity and into the mother Goddesses (Devi) who were consorts of these gods forming the trinity and of the other gods like Skanda, Ganesa, etc., who come under them. Besides this, there was the development of a trend pertaining to the worship of the other objects, animals and inanimate objects such as trees, serpents, rivers, mountains, etc. This trend has been inspired by the Vedic conception of the presiding deities (Adhipātṛa) of the objects such as Gṛhadhi, Kaurā, etc. That is why in the Purāṇas the religious practices that developed into cults cover a vast range of objects of worship including the serpents, trees, rivers, manes, etc. Sk.P. contains details about all these cults and presents a harmonised view of all these cults. Thus the religious tradition of Sk.P. is very vast and deep-rooted. The religious atmosphere is one of freedom and openness. Inspite of advocating the worship of a single god like Śiva or Viṣṇu, Devi or Sakti, Gaṇapati or Skanda, it narrates with a spirit of universal divinity all objects in the world, a river, a tree, a cloud, a bird, a goblin, a pond, a monkey, a stone, as worthy of worship. Thus in a sense, Sk.P. comes back to the
vedic pantheism wherein all forces of nature were deified. But it goes a step further in acknowledging the divinity of any object if the devotee feels so. The bridge between the profane and the sage, holy and unholy, touchable, untouchable, sentient and insentient collapses and all merge into the peaceful ocean of divinity. The necessity of a such a unified theory of religion was the result of the socio-religious and political atmosphere prevalent during Sk.P. times, which is corroborated by the accounts of foreign travellers of the time.

Saiva Cults:

Sk.P. refers to many of the major and minor Saiva. It refers to Māheśvaras, Pāsupatas, Kāpālikas, Kālāmukhas, Vīra-Māheśvaras, Gandharvas, etc. The Pāsupata yoga is stated to be a different kind of Yoga which requires hard practice and austere penance. Sk.P. states that Pāsupata system was there even before Lakulīśa. Sages like Kapila, Savarni, Aghora and others had attained Siddhi through the observance of 'Pāsupata Yoga'. The metaphysics of the Pāsupatas was influenced by Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika Metaphysics. Lakulīśa taught his disciples Nyāya Vaiśeṣika Siddhānta along with Pāsupata yoga. Sk.P. does not treat Lakulīśa as the founder of Pāsupata cult.

Sk.P. refers to the Liṅgadhārī cult while giving an account of sage Samvarta. It refers to them as Vīra-māheśvaras, who wore Liṅga on their bodies. This is a unique
practice of the Vīrāsaivas of South India, whose predecessors seem to be the Pāsupatas, who are referred to in Sk.P. as Vīrāmāhesvaras.

Sk.P. refers to the Kāpālikas and Kālāmukhas as those who were outside the Vedic sacrifice, who were cursed and rejected by Vedic people, who were engaged in heretic arguments and who were bereft of the practices of the elites. The worship of Śiva in the form of Kapēlesvara and Bhairavesvara to which Sk.P. frequently refers, shows that these two Saiva systems were absorbed into the main stream of the Saiva tradition by the time of Sk.P.

Skanda, Ganesa and Devī cults:

The account in Sk.P. regarding the worship of Skanda, Ganesa and Devī shows that they had become independent cults. Sk.P. refers to the different facets of these cults.

Sk.P. is named after Skanda. When the different accounts in Sk.P. regarding Skanda are assessed from the comparative point of view, the entire history of Skanda Kārtikeya from the early Vedic age to the beginning of the medieval period appears to be repeated as it were. The five accounts about Skanda in Kadāra Khanda, Kaumārika Khanda, Kāśi Khanda and Nāgara Khanda of Sk.P. put together stand as a single episode enshrining the important ideas concerning Skanda found in the different Vedic, Epic and Purānic sources.
The Mahābhārata and the Kāśyapa accounts combined with Vāyu-Purāṇa and Matsya-Purāṇa accounts are restated in the Sk.P. accounts, so as to suit the structural necessity.

Sk.P. refers to the different facets of Ganesha worship. It refers to the birth of Ganesha in two places, viz., Kedara Khanda and Nāgara Khanda. It also refers to different forms of Ganesha like Dehalī Vināyaka, Dūndhi Vināyaka etc., which have to be assessed from the point of view of understanding the social implications of these. The origin of Ganesha is associated with dirt of Parvati, his mother. Dirt is matter out of place. Individuals move in and out across the threshold, but it is essential for our moral reunitv that this does not lead to confusion about the difference between inside and outside. Threshold is a point of entry and thus has both social and psychological significance. Ganesha was beheaded and his head is replaced by the head of an elephant. This involves an act of violence. What does this indicate? This indicates a break-point, a threshold a point of entry. Physical mutations of Sanskaras mark this. Biologically there is no discontinuity. This can be expressed in the form of an equation viz., clean / dirty = impotence / potency. Ganesha as he was created by the dirt of Parvati becomes divinely potent. When the transition from dirt to cleanliness was over, a break-point was needed, hence, Ganesha was beheaded and his head was replaced by the head of an elephant. The reappearance of
'dirt' heralded the incarnation of potency and power and
Ganana becomes the destroyer of all sins and harbinger of
all success.

Sk.P. describes the different facets of Devi, viz,
Devi as Pārvatī, Devi as the mother, Devi as Kālī, Devi as
Candī, Devi as Bhūtamātā, Devi as Srīmāta, etc.

One aspect which appears and reappears in Sk.P.,
is that of Pārvatī getting Siva's hands through tapas and
latter getting rid of her black colour through tapas. These
mythical motifs have certain socio-ethical implications.
Sociologically speaking a woman joins a local lineage group
as an alien. She is intrinsically evil, a foreign object,
a sexual object, dirty. But in due course she becomes the
mother of new members of the family lineage. In this second
capacity as the mother, she is intrinsically good, the very
criterion of virtue and cleanliness, the antithesis of a
sexual object. This moral polarity may be shown to involve
the following equivalents:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wife</th>
<th>Sexual</th>
<th>Dirty</th>
<th>Sinful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Asexual</td>
<td>Clean</td>
<td>Sinless</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

That is why whenever Pārvatī thinks herself as a
wife she becomes sexual, dirty and sinful. She is made to
undertake tapas. By this, she turns a mother, becomes asexual
and sinless. Pārvatī when she is treated as the mother is
the Prakṛti, the material cause of this world and in this
from she is the supreme power of the universe (Parāsakti).
The further development of this concept of Devī as mother, is seen in the concept of Devī as the mother of spirits and diseases, as a protector of a place and as a tree Goddess. Sk.P. speaks of Tailamātaraḥ, Paulamātaraḥ, Sitalamātah and Sakambārī - a vegetation Goddess.

Other Cults:

The cults of the common people like Serpent, cult, River cult, Mountain cult, Yakṣa cult, Tree cult, Fire cult and Manes cult had their development in the Purāṇas.

Serpent cult is a form of animal worship. A serpent is regarded as bringer of wealth and good fortune. Śiva is regarded as the best of physicians. This explains the connection between serpents and Śiva. In Atharvaveda serpents are called 'Devajana'. Of the eleven forms of Rudra - 'Abhibudhnya' the beneficial serpent - is one, which seems to have developed in contrast to the Ahi-Vṛtra concept.

Rivers are the cradles of many ancient and modern civilisations. In Sk.P., it is stated that all the rivers are born from Rudra (Rudrasambhavāḥ). It emphasises the sacredness of the rivers. The worship accorded to them is an expression of gratefulness of society for the benefits derived from them.

Mountains are treated as divinities. Meru is the centre of Indian geographical conceptions. Mountains like Kailāsa, Vaikuntha, Puṣkara, Vindhyā, Kasyasrnga are mythically and historically well-known. Venkatācala in Tirupati,
Arunācala in South India and Arbudācala in Rajasthan are the modern mountains which have developed into pilgrim centres.

Plants like Tulasī, Bilva, Pañcāla, Asvattha, Vata are considered as divinities (drumādevatā). They were worshipped and nourished from ancient times in India as representatives of different Gods and Goddesses like Viṣṇu, Śiva, Pārvatī and others, because of their medicinal and environmental values.

Yakṣa worship got prominence by the advent of Tantricism and Śaṅktaic influence. A number of clay idolings of the Gupta period found in the excavations at Raigahat, the site of ancient Vārānasi, are inscribed with Yakṣa figures and numerous Śiva Lingas which are referred to in the Kauśā Khaṇḍa of Sk.P. The Yakṣas gained prominence as the presiding genii of a city, district, lake or a well. With this background the Yakṣa cult developed as an all-oral cult as Vaiṣṇavī and other cults.

The worship of fire in the form of sacrificial fire is an ancient form of religious worship in India. During Vedic time, it grew with the ascendancy of Agni as a God of pre-eminence along with Indra, the war god. The traces of Agni mythology could be seen in Viṣṇu mythology and Śiva mythology.

The worship of manes known as Śraddha, is a means of communicating with the ancestors in the deceased level
through the divine level, by the agency of the deities invoked in their places. Various kinds of śrūddās—Nityasraddha, Pārvanasraddha, Vṛddhisraddha, ekoddista sapindikarana, described in the Smṛti texts, Sk.P. and other Purāṇas, when performed in holy places like Gaya, Kāśi, Setū Rāmesvara, are deemed to bring Muktī.

14. PHILOSOPHICAL TRADITIONS IN SK.P:

The philosophical ideas contained in Sk.P., concerning the problems like cosmological speculation, the philosophical systems, the path of liberation and nature of liberation, are highlighted in the sixth chapter. Regarding cosmological speculation, the ideas reflected in Sk.P. are all taken from the Vedic and Upanisadic sources with the grafting of the Sankhya cosmology and with Śaiva orientation given to them. The Purāṇic conception of cosmology breathes a new spirit. The conflicts between the theological and the cosmological concepts which the scientists and philosophers could not solve, are solved by the Purāṇic thinkers through the media of myth. This is not running away from the problem but realising it and solving it as it should be. What the modern scientists think in terms of mystery, is represented in terms of divine power in Sk.P. and other Purāṇas. This is in turn a line of thinking which has come to the Purāṇas from the ancient tradition of the Vedas.
Cosmological Speculation:
The bone of contention among the philosophers is in the direction of defining and determining the causal nature of God. The question is - Is God the material cause or the instrumental cause or both? The different philosophical systems have held different views on this question. Apart from the Sankhya view which has wielded influence on almost all the systems of philosophy, the Nyāya-Vaiṣeṣika view of holding the material cause as different from the instrumental cause, has persisted in some Vedānta systems, as well as other schools. The Śaiva systems like Pāsupata, Miśra-Rudra, Gānapatya, Saura, Sākta, Māhesvaras consider that Siva is only the efficient cause of the universe and not the material cause. The Dvaita system holds the view that Brahman is the instrumental cause and Prakṛti is the material cause of the universe. This line of thinking is followed by Pūrāṇas including the Sk.P. According to Śaṅkarācārya, Brahman is the 'Vivartopādankarāṇa' and his sāguna aspect as Īśvara is the Nīmittkarāṇa of the universe. Rāmānuja holds that, Brahman is both the material and the instrumental cause of the world. Śrīkantha and Śripati give a Śaiva orientation and say that Parasiva Brahman is the material as well as the instrumental cause. In Śrīkanṭhabhāṣya, it is stated that Śiva is both the material cause and instrumental cause. There is a reference made here to some Tāntric followers of Śaiva school, who consider God as only the efficient cause. This might have later led to the classification of Śaiva schools
is Vedic and non-Vedic. The schools which held the view that God is both the material and instrumental cause were Vedic and those which held the view that God is only the instrumental cause were non-Vedic. Sk.P. brings forth a compromise between them as it states that Śiva is the material cause of the Universe and that it is not Śiva who transforms but it is His Śakti, which undergoes transformation. Śiva inseparable with Śakti has to be understood with the help of different Āgamas as the material and efficient cause of the universe.

Śaiva philosophical systems:

The different Śaiva Philosophical schools like Śaiva Siddhanta, Kāśmir Śaivism, Viśvaśaivism and the Śākta school had developed by the time of Sk.P. Sk.P. presents a co-ordinated view of all these schools. All these schools accept the authority of Āgamas. Sk.P. asserts that Śiva is to be realised by the help of different Āgamas (Āgamaevividhairbodhyah). The view of these schools that it is the grace (arul-Śaktipata) of Lord Śiva which is the cause of Mukti is well represented by Sk.P., when it states that by Śiva's grace anybody, even a heretic, a sinner or an out caste can achieve liberation. The Śāktas further developed this spirit of liberalisation in philosophy in as much as they state that even Sudrās, Adharmis or women are eligible for liberation. Sk.P. states that by means of jñāna all these receive the grace of Lord
Siva and are thus liberated. It asserts the oneness and immutability of Lord Siva as 'Para Brahman' and it asserts Siva's transcendental nature (tisthāmi tattvataḥ). This shows a definite tilt towards the Kāśmir Śaivism. But the overall view is independent of all these schools in as much as it presents a synthetic view of the schools in keeping with the puranic ideology of the essential unity of spirit.

Paths to Mokṣa: A synthetic approach:

To understand this basic unity of spirit many paths are advocated. They are Jñānamārga (path of knowledge), Karma-mārga (path of actions) Bhakti-mārga (path of devotion) Sanyāsa-mārga (the path of renunciation), Tapo-mārga (the path of austerity), Yoga-mārga (path of Yoga), Samatva-mārga (the path of equanimity of mind), Svadharma-mārga (the path of duty), Virakti-mārga (the path of detachment) and Ātmaupāmya-mārga (the path of fellow-feeling). These different paths had their development from the times of the Vedas upto the Purānic times. Although these different paths lead to Mokṣa they were kept away from the lower order in society. It is the Purāṇas and Tantras which opened the gates of Mukti even to the down-trodden by devotion towards god with an attitude of sincere service (sevā). Sk.P. warns that the extremism in logic is hindrance to the realisation of spiritual truth. It is Bhakti, pure and simple,
which is the surest and safest means to achieve liberation irrespective of caste, creed or sex. Actions (religious rites) through Bhakti produce grace and gratification of Śiva, which is the ultimate cause of Mokṣa (liberation), the highest goal of human life.

Visit to Holy Places:

Although the different paths to mokṣa have been advocated in the Purāṇas, one path which is emphasised time and again is that of visiting holy places and worshipping their presiding deities. Many a time while discussing the glory of a Tīrtha or Ksetra, a question is asked: Which is the way to get Mokṣa (liberation)/without acquiring any kind of (special) knowledge (i.e., the study of śāstras)? The answer given is that a visit to a Tīrtha or Ksetra and worshipping god with devotion, is such a means of acquiring Mokṣa. It may be observed here that either action (Karma) or knowledge (jñāna) can lead to Mokṣa. How a mere visit to a holy place can bring Mokṣa? It may be noted that the attainment of divine grace is behind the emphasis on visiting holy places as a means to emancipation. The attraction towards the holy places on the part of the masses lies in the fact that it inculcates an indigenous culture which aims at emancipation of man. From another point of view, the socio-cultural atmosphere prevalent in the holy places is so edifying as to guard the masses against foreign cultures and foreign religious
influences. In advocating the path to Moksa in the form of visit to holy places there is a double objective of creating an awareness of god in the hearts of the masses and of guarding them against external influences.

15. SOCIAL VALUES AND SOCIAL JUSTICE IN SK.P:

The ideas of social values and social justice reflected in Sk.P., as presented in the seventh chapter, show an all-encompassing concept of 'Dharma' and its allied value system. They further show as to how religion can play a vital role in the development of human culture and civilisation.

A Critique of the view of Sociologists:

But sociologists like Max Weber and Kapp hold the view that Vedic and Puranic concepts like Dharma, āropakāra, Tyāga, Māya, Moksa, Karma, Yoga, Tapas, etc., are hindrances to the socio-economic development of modern India.

The above view of the sociologists is lopsided in the sense that it tried to undervalue the very basis of the Indian cultural tradition handed to us through the Purāṇas. The view is prompted by the narrow outlook created by the pseudo-religious values that are obtaining today in the Indian society due to many influences foreign to it and making it blind to the real basis of Indian socio-cultural tradition hailing from the time of the Vedas and continuing down to the time of foreign occupation.
of India. The Purāṇas imbibed the spirit of this great tradition and brought it within the reach of common people. The falsity of the ground on which this view of the sociologists stands, is revealed. When we study the Purāṇas in general and Sk.P. in particular from the point of view of finding the social values and social justice highlighted through myths and legends connected with Tīrthas. Sk.P., more than any other Purāṇa, exhibits social awareness and social commitment in analysing any event. In it, there is an attempt to associate any and every event with a Tīrtha or Ksetra in which Dharma, Sadācāra, Tapas, Dāna, Paropakāra, Vrata or Vṛtta, would bring the intended rewards to the individual and society. This was prompted by the socio-political background prevalent in India during the period between 8th Century A.D. and 13th Century A.D. There was the necessity of a society which would learn on its past and rebuild itself on the basis of good conduct, common friendship and goodwill and a culture which would be based on the principles of philanthropy and social necessity. Such a base was found in the 'Purānic religion' centring round in various Tīrthas and Ksetras. Sk.P. refers to such a socio-cultural and religious complex, wedded to social values and social justice, within the basic framework of the socio-ethical system of Vāṇa and Āsramas.
The Varna and Āśrama system:

The socio-ethical system reflected in the Sk.P. is mainly based on the Mahābhārata and the Smṛti texts like Manusmṛti, Yājñavalkya smṛti, Nārīta smṛti, etc. The Varna system which was originally based on work (class), had degenerated into a system of Jāti (caste), with divisions and sub-divisions in them. Associating great value to the spirit behind the Varna system, the Sk.P. refers to the salient features of the four Varnas.

Similarly it mentions and describes the salient features of the Āśrama Vyavastha (the four stages of life). These were enjoined for the full development of the individual. In essence, they are the social and ethical codes which sustain a society and allow for its harmonious development. An individual is properly disciplined following the regulation of these four Āśramas in order to take up his social duties and responsibilities. Gārhasṭhyā or the stage of a house-holder is considered as the bed-rock of the social system upon which the followers of the other three Āśramas depended. Thus Sk.P. describes the stage of a householder as a stage of life meant for stability and welfare at the social as well as the individual level.

The Social Evils:

The Sk.P. reveals the diseases that plague the society. The evils of caste ridden society are severely
exposed. It reveals the social imbalances created by the criss-crossing of the vocations and professions in a caste-ridden society. The lack of understanding, the basic spirit of the social-system, by the higher ups in society, causes the feeling of intolerance. This leads to the absence of co-ordination and perpetuation of atrocities in the name of caste and creed. Sk.P. attributes the cause of such social evils to the forces of the age, i.e., the Kali age which is the present age. The Kali age is one in which there will be excess of injustice and untruth, natural and physical calamities increase.

The Sk.P., particularly comes down heavily upon the Brāhmaṇas who swerved from the path of virtue. It calls them Brahma-bandhus i.e., Pseudo-Brahmins. It also strongly criticises one caste exploiting the other on the basis of birth and other factors. These social evils lead to inner divisions and sub-divisions based on caste-division (jati-bhedāḥ), social evils (dosāh) and corruptions (Vyabhicārādayaḥ), all these further leading to the decadence of society.

Such a lack of co-ordination between the different sections of society lead to an occasion for the intrusion of the foreign invaders. This problem is discussed in Sk.P., in the manner of a modern legislature or parliament. The sages assemble in a sabha to find out the causes that led to the occupation of the country by the foreign invaders. The causes referred to are (1) the
internal warfare among the Ksatriyas and (2) their fight for political supremacy. This shows the sorry state of putting up meekly with the unruly behaviour of the invaders and neighbouring tribes and reveals the extreme danger to which the society of Sk.P. times was subjected to on account of its inbuilt evils and degenerating forces. This was the danger due to the total cleavage between the theory and practice of the ideals of Varna and Asrama system. Besides, stating these evils of the system, Sk.P. sets forth its views about desirable social system on the principles of equality and mutual understanding.

Message of Social Harmony:

The causes of social values and social justice are best served in the event of social harmony, based on the principles of equality and goodwill. This is possible in a society which is free from evils and forces of social disharmony. It is here that we find the significance of the social outlook of the Sk.P. envisaging a society free from disunity, division and inequality of status. Considering society as an organism, the Sk.P., significantly refers to the 'AngikIrstti' of the four Varnas. It says that the four Varnas born of the same parents are like the four sons of the same father. All the four limbs are essentially equal and are mutually interdependent. Such a society wedded to the principles of harmony, mutual goodwill and equality of status is
necessary for an individual to develop and contribute his share to the total progress of that society. In one of the anecdotes in Sk.P., Yudhīṣṭhira argues that, an individual is the master to make or mar his or her life. But Markandeya argues that this individualistic theory is not tenable as it would lead to social isolation. In the absence of a social order binding individual, the net result would be anarchy.

The value concepts that bind society:

The social order or Maryāda safeguards the interests of all the individuals. Individual stability depends upon such an unwritten covenant which forms the basis of society. The basis for such a maryāda is the emotional integration among its members effected by certain value concepts like Dharma, Dāna, Tapas, Paropakāra, Sadācāra, Tīrtha and Vrata. These value concepts are deemed to be the effective means for inculcating social, culture and social awareness among the people. These sustain all that is good and beneficient to the society. These concepts are brought to the fore-front as the preservers of the Indian social institutions by the Sk.P., particularly at a time when the society was on the verge of shambles due to inbuilt vices of people and the external forces of deterioration such as foreign invasions and influences.
The Family System: Marriage and other Samaskāras:

Sk.P. upholds the importance of the family system based on good understanding and mutual co-operation among the members of a family. It stresses the social aspect of the institution of marriage as a contractual obligation (Pānigrahanadharma) and as a process of regularisation of that contract (Vivāha vidhāna). Sk.P. abhors the practice of dowry or exploitation in the institution of marriage. It also emphasises the role played by Samaskāras in refining an individual. The Samaskāras form an important aspect of the social value system in Sk.P., a scheme of ethico-religious cadre for the uplift of the individual. In the social system of Sk.P., women are highly venerated and it is that they have to be cared for by the society in the interest of its stability and also the stability of family life. It ordains a strict life on women. It is because of the socio-political condition created by internal social evils and foreign invasions. Thus the picture of society given in Sk.P. is that of society which was open to the external pressures, but was committed to the past ideals. The evils in the name of caste and creed are exposed. It is shown that these were influenced by human follies arising out of arrogance, greed and desire for self-aggrandisement in the name of caste and creed. The message is that a spirit of social commitment and equality in shouldering the
social responsibilities has to be developed for the good of the society. This is based on the treatment accorded to women and Sudras, the two vital limbs of society. Women have to be regarded with dignity. They are to be considered a part and parcel of the progress in society. They should be given opportunities for liberal education as well as training in fine arts. Likewise the Sudras have to be looked upon with dignity. They should have opportunities for higher education.

Thus Sk.P., true to its spirit, has highlighted the most acceptable social values and has shown its awareness of social justice.

16. POLITICAL TRADITIONS REFLECTED IN SK.P:

Sk.P. is rich in its material pertaining to socio-cultural matters as inherited from ancient times and presented in the light of the situations obtaining in the period in which they are set. It is in this context only that the historical and political traditions reflected in the Sk.P., can be considered. The Sk.P. has taken into its compass the accounts of a number of kings and kingdoms reaching back to pre-historic times. Besides his legendary material, we come across certain accounts of historical kings whose dates are recorded in terms of the Kali Age. These accounts provide a background to the historical study of some of the royal dynasties that rule over different parts of India. These historical traditio
reveal the socio-cultural ideals represented by the kings of the different dynasties. With this background of the historical tradition, the Sk.P. highlights the traditional values of political administration in various aspects. The political tradition reflected in the Sk.P. has imbibed the different concepts found in Smrtis epics and the treatises on Indian polity such as Kautilya's Arthasastra, Sukraniti, etc. It is to be noted that the Sk.P. does not give this material in a connected manner. Yet the material culled from the different sections of this Purana can be presented under the different topics pertaining to the historical and political traditions.

Vedic Rta, Dharma and Rajadharma:

In India, the conception of some external agency controlling the society was developed in the Vedas through the concept of Rta. In the Vedas, Rta was assumed to control both the natural order and the moral order. The protecting and nurturing of the social and moral order which was based on Rta was gradually taken over by the institution of 'Dharma' by the time of the Sutras. The concept of Dharma had various ramifications and it had to different aspects. On the religious level, it expanded into the concept of 'Lila' the divine play of creation and destruction. On the ritual level, it was followed as a divine ordinance by sages, god-men and others who played succour to the divine intentions. On the cosmic level it signified the creation and the creative processes.
In the social level on it meant social institutions and values and in the political level the rulers who were considered as the dimunitive divinities on earth depended on it. This integrated force called 'Dharma' enabled the state to tackle the problems of social anarchy caused by the imbalance of the social and moral order. This was a integrated approach in solving the problems of administration rather than merely passing the onus on the state machinery. The integrated approach towards the state, takes into account not merely the chronologically correct genealogies but even the 'Kalpa theory', 'Yuga theory', 'Sr̥sti' (creation), Pralaya (destruction), Avatāra (incarnation), Gotra (clan), Pravaras (Kinship), Manvantar (Manu cycles), Vamsānucarita (lineage) Varnāsrama dharma etc., also as having a bearing on the matters connected with the administrative set up. From this point of view, a state is a link in the chain of corrective forces of the social and moral order.

A picture of administration:

The accounts of kings described in Sk.P. gives picture of the administration from the times of Yore to the age of Sk.P. In the instances of Ripunjaya, Pratīpa, Sahasrānīka, it is shown that some external agency, the divine one in the present context, takes control over the ideal aspirations of the state. In the aspect of pulling down the administration by the forces that set it up, it
is shown that a change, however good it may be, has to come to an end so that the feeling of complacency should not be self-destructive. Sieving out the mythical touches, we can say that according to Sk.P., a good ideal administration does come to an end because of natural calamities and a platonic state is not in keeping with the revolutionary forces of natural selection. Change in the religious attitudes have the socio-economic background and unless and until a change, whether political, religious, social or cultural, is brought out in phases, it may recoil. That is why Sk.P. refers to the four yugas viz., Kṛta, Treta, Dvāpara and Kali.

The idea of cyclical ages (yugas) is often misunderstood, as an interpretation of the fundamentalists who do not wish to see any kind of change. But for a curious mind these observations become valuable for their boldness in analysing the past and predicting the future. They do not say that all that is past is glory, all that is future will be rosy and all that the present stands for is gory. What they say is that present events have to be interpreted in the light of the past so as to forecast the future. The ills of the present have their root in the past and they contribute to the future ills. This theory is against any attempt to pinpoint the wrongs on any single agency and nailing that particular agency to the wall. A change in the system can be brought about
not by changing one part of the whole but in attempting to bring out change in all the parts. When the whole changes other things automatically change. The many modern attempts of socio-political forces attempting to bring about change by total revolution do have their parallel in this.

**Historical material in Sk.P:**

The material available in Sk.P. with regard to the reconstruction of Ancient Indian History is of immense importance as it refers to Sudraka, Vikramaditya, Nandaraja, Buddha and Pramiti covering roughly a period of about eleven centuries from 3rd Century B.C. to 11th Century A.D. It gives valuable information about some of the Northern and Central Indian rulers belonging to Kanyakubja, an extensive empire covering Oudh, the Gangetic valley, part of Punjab and Gwalior territory and the valley of Jumna and of particularly Pratiharas like Ama and Bhoja and Gadhavala King KasiRaja Candradeva and others.

Sk.P. traces the pre-history of Kanya Kubja kings to Kausika dynasty. Kausika dynasty comprised of Gadihi, his son Visvamitra and grand son Visvasaha.

Sk.P. refers to South Indian peninsula as Daksinapatha. A mythico-historical account of South India and South Indian Kings is given. Sage Agastya is specially
hailed as a great sage of the South advocating Āśrama.
Rāma's visit to Setu is mentioned. The visit of
Parasurama and the Pandavas' pilgrimage to South is also
mentioned.

The socio-political Scenario in Sk.P:

Historians visualise the period between 6th
Century A.D. and 13th Century A.D. as a period of turbu-
ence and socio-religious and political changes. The
Western Sea Coast near Thana (Maharashtra) was invaded
about 636 A.D., when Pulakesin-V was ruling over Doccna.
The Musalmans were successful in conquering Sind, under
the youthful leadership of Mohammed-bin-Tajikas, Turushkas
and Mlecchas. But the Turkish invaded North India through
Kabul and Kasmira and thus there was a puzzling, almost
baffling, collapse of Northern India. The causes for such
a catastrophe have been discussed by R.C.Dutta, R.C.
Mujumdar, K.M.Panikkar, A.L.Srivastava, D.Sharma, Dr.A.B.L.
Awasthi and others. Sk.P. discusses the problem seriously
and sets forth the causes that led to the foundation of
Muslim rule in India as mainly two (1) the inherited
qualities of the Kṣatriyas to fight for the kingdom as
their duty and (2) the ideal of Digvijaya establishing
ambitious supremacy. (Cakravartitva). This was further
strengthened by feudalistic tendencies of the various
chieftains and their narrow outlook.
**Sk.P. on Dandānīti:**

Dandānīti was regarded as one of the four branches of knowledge. Sk.P. mentions several persons who were well-versed in the science of government (Dandānītav pravīṇakāh). Among the ancient exponents of polity, Manu, Brhaspati and Śukra figure prominently in Sk.P. Many ideas correspond with the ideas described in Mahābhārata, for instance, Bhīṣma's exposition of political philosophy. Sk.P. refers to the existence of many Arthāśāstras.

Sk.P. refers to many ancient law givers and political philosophers. It also refers to the political philosophy of some of the above thinkers by name. Views of Manu on the King's duty of protecting people (Prajāpālana) and those of Vasīṣṭha on the character of a king and his obligations to Dharma and his people are found in Sk.P. Śākalya, a Vedic Scholar, speaks of the duties of the people towards their king. Narada is specially associated with the foreign policies of a king and he is associated in Sk.P. with a digest of political thought. The political tradition of Sk.P. is mainly influenced by Smṛti writers. Thus the ideas connected with ancient Indian polity, as described in Smṛti works like the origin of State, the duties of a king, the seven limbs of administration (Saptāṅgam), the duties of ministers, kosa (treasury), administration etc., are found referred to in Sk.P. in its various Khandas.
Sk.P. advocates a federal type of government where voluntarily all other things subdue themselves to a single king. The Sk.P. holds forth this ideal in view of squabbles of the kings during its period which caused the division of Hindu society while being attacked by foreign invaders.

SAPTĀNGA: (The seven limbs of state):

For the effective administration of justice, a state is conceived to be having seven limbs. The reference to these as 'aṅgas'—limbs is significant in as much as they are the parts of a whole and have to work smoothly for the effective functioning of the whole. This also suggests an organic theory of state.

Svāmi:

Sk.P. enumerates twenty-six guṇas which a king must possess. A king should be an abode of qualities like good character (Sausūlyam), uprightness (ārjavam), compassion (Jayā), liberality (audārya), fortitude (dhairya) and dignity (gabhīryam). He should also be pious (dhārmikah), eloquent (Vadānyah), disciplined (vinīta), learned (Vidyābdi pāradrśvā), sweet in speech (madhurālāpaḥ) and endowed with purity, truthfulness and self-control.

Sk.P. refers to an ocean of vices like violence (himsā), egoism (ahaṅkāra), lust (kāma), insolence (māda)
etc., by which a king is destroyed. Sk.P. states that even rains, droughts, disaster and disease depend on the character and conduct of a king. The primary duties of such a king are protection of earth (Dharāpālana), state and people (prajāpālana). Among these Prajāpālana is the most important duty of kings. That is why it is said that a king is called a king because he keeps the people pleased and happy. (ranjanāt rājeti Sabdyate). He was also the protector of Cāturvarnya and hence styled dandadhara. But the safety of the king, the chief limb of the state, is equally important as the happiness of the people depended on the security of the king.

Mantri Parisat (Ministry):

The observations of Sk.P. that the ministers accompany the king from cradle to cremation sums up well the relation between a king and his ministers.

Sk.P. refers to taxes as the main source of revenue. They have to be collected by a king smoothly in order to develop the army and treasury. But Sk.P. states that in Kali age, kings indulge in heavy taxation (Karaḍāna parānityam).

Rāstra:

In the Sk.P., an ideal 'deśa' is described as having learned men, fertile fields, agricultural produce,
fodder, virtuous and healthy people, beautiful markets, temples, parks, gardens, trees laden with fruits, beautiful ponds, people free from lust, passion and arrogance, royal people free from tyranny and injustice. Sk.P. concludes thus:

"Ityādi guṇavaddāse tvayī rājyam prasāsati;
Dharmena rajadharmajñā saundaryam gunasālīni".

If any king rules over such a country following the principles of polity (rajadharma) that country will be a fine and prosperous country.

**Mitra:**

In the maintenance of foreign policy, Sk.P., like other ancient political treatises advocates the use of four policies (Upayas) viz., Sāma, dāna, bheda and danda. Sk.P., quoting Brhaspati, observes that the four fold policy based on Sāma etc., brings success.

Thus the ideas connected with the seven limbs of administration and the various other policies to be adopted by a king as described in Sk.P. show that, the salient features of state administration as advocated by the ancient thinkers were suitably absorbed by Sk.P. But the emphasis is always on the care to be taken to face the external aggression squarely, minimising the internal squabble. That is why we find that many ideas of the ancients are not merely stated in Sk.P., but they are sometimes changed to suit the crisis-situation. Thus the
political tradition of Sk.P. reflects the age of crisis both internal and external. The means advocated to overcome them are rooted in tradition, but are suited to the situation on hand.

Rural and Urban Administration in Sk.P.

Cities and villages had to be administered by the people themselves. In Sk.P., we have a brief but methodical presentation of the glimpses of the rural and urban administration prevalent in these days. In Sk.P., there are instances of the effective working of a village council. The town administration was under the control of an officer who was called Paṣupāla or Nagarasyagopta (Mayor). He was assisted by eight other officers (aṣṭau pramāṇapurusāḥ paurāṇāṁ kāryadarsinaḥ). These paurapalas, i.e., city guardians protected the people like quarter elephants (diggajas). They were well-versed in law-books and ethical codes (Smṛtyācāra). They kept vigil over the activities of the citizens.

Thus the historical and political traditions presented in Sk.P. are unique for their awareness of the period in which they are set. All the essential ideas represented above, show that Sk.P. is an important source of information regarding the historical and political situation of the period of covers.
Teaching was considered as a service to society and not as a means of making money. The story of Gautama and Uttañka exemplifies this. The words of Gautama addressed to Uttañka are worth considering here:

"Na grahyam ca mayā putra santustah sevayāsmyaham; Necchāmi dhanam tvattaḥ sukham yaccha grahaṁ prati".

Sanctity and austerity were considered the bedrocks of a good studentship. Service to the teacher (guru) and to society were the two essential virtues of an ideal student. It is stated in Sk.P. that Lord Śiva himself was a student and he served one Viṣṇuwarman to acquire knowledge.

With such an ideal set up of Education, Sk.P. considers Vedic study to be the basis of all Vidyās and Kalās.

Sk.P. mentions many Vidyās and Kalās as subjects of study. The Vidyās are stated to be either eighteen or fourteen. The eighteen Vidyās included Mīmāṁsā, Tarka Śāstra, Purāṇa, Dharmaśāstra, Śruti and Upaniṣads.
It also mentions Arthasastra, Yuddhavidyā, Ayurveda, Jyotisastra, Sāmudra (Palmistry) as branches of learning.

18. ASPECTS OF ECONOMIC LIFE IN SK.P:

Artha or wealth is considered as one of the four fold aims of life. Acquisition of wealth based on ethical principles was never discouraged. But the goal of wealth was religious rites and not mere material enjoyment. SK.P. says that Vṛtta (conduct) has to be preserved inspite of the loss of vitta (wealth). On the ethical grounds, SK.P. divides wealth into three categories, viz., good, ordinary and bad. SK.P. refers to different means of livelihood like agriculture, cattle rearing, trade and commerce, various kinds of industries and trade guilds (śreṇīs).

Water sources:

Agriculture depends on good water sources. That is why SK.P. feels the necessity of good water resources for agriculture to survive. (Sujalādharitrī sasyasālinī). It refers to some kind of irrigation and mentions about a drought which lasted for a period of twelve years.

Further it speaks of migration of people to other places in search of land and shelter. In fact SK.P. characterizes Kali age by such natural disasters like famine and overflowing. That is why SK.P. refers to canal irrigation (Kulyāsecana) for a good harvest.
The cyclic co-operation between Sun, Earth and Water is needed. This fact is noted in Sk.P. It also speaks about the relation between plant growth and moon-light. All this requires the preservation of earth and its environments, which in turn depends on forest wealth. The earth is rightly conceived as 'Vasundharā' the holder of all wealth.

All agricultural operations depend on forest wealth (Vanaśrī) which is specially mentioned and various measures to protect them are also stated in Sk.P. Particularly interesting from this point of view are the various trees mentioned in Sk.P. like Arjuna, Lodhra, Bakula, Nāgakesara, Nārikela, Priyāla, Saralā, Devadāru, Dhava, Khadira, Bilva, Panasa, Nicula, Rasala, Kadamba, Nimba, Nāga, Pārijāta, etc.

Various kinds of cereals and grains:

Agriculture with good water sources and environment leads to the cultivation of various seasonal crops. Sk.P. mentions about cultivated cereals like rice (vrihi), barley (yava), wheat (dhuma), etc., and uncultivated cereals like Priyaṅgu, Śyāmaka, Nīvūra, etc.

Trade and Commerce:

Good yield and cattle wealth leads to prosperity which expands trade and commerce. The episode of Nandabhadra, a pious vādyya, epitomises well the concept of fair trade and commerce as a means of livelihood.
Although Vānijya was a chief source of livelihood of Nandabhadra, a Vaiśya, he never indulged in unfair practices. He bought and sold things without any dishonesty or fraud.

In trade and commerce, Sk.P. refers to inland and foreign trade, sea trade, exports, imports, various kinds of currency money lending, various kinds of industries etc. But here a special consideration is to be made as regards the co-operative trade guilds mentioned in Sk.P.

Thus an account of the aspects of education and economic life is given in brief as a part of the political tradition in the Sk.P. It may be observed here that the political tradition reflected in the Sk.P. is a version of political tradition described and upheld in the smṛtis and other Purāṇas. The social awareness of the Sk.P. is evident in the importance given to the Śūdras in the matter of education and economic activities. The status of women in society is reflected in the importance given to their education and participation in social activities. The Śarada episode which we have referred to has a garbed sanction of widow re-marriage. It is also interesting to note that women participated in the judicial enquiry of Śāradā. The account of the ideals of education and fair trade and commerce as reflected in the Sk.P. shows how this Purāṇa applies itself
to the task of educating the society in all the ideals of good life. This is the socio-cultural objective which Sk.P. accomplishes through stories and anecdotes in its various Khandas. The historical material and the ideas of political tradition are of such importance as to attract a historian and a political thinker to find his sources for their study of Indian history and political thought.

19. Vāstuvidyā in Sk.P:

Sk.P. 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 Purāṇas 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.

Architecture:

The history of Vāstuvidyā is based on oral tradition. In Sk.P., this tradition is recorded in a story referring to the origin of 'Vāstuvidyā'.
astottara or sahasranāmas addressed to Śiva or other gods, which bring about the iconographical and other features of Śiva, etc. The one coming in the Śiva-kavaca section of Sk.P. deserves consideration here. The passage describes the popular image of Śiva as having a crescent moon upon his head, wearing the garland of skulls, holding different weapons like Khatvāṅga, Carma, etc., riding a bull and having the ear-rings, necklace and bracelets of serpents. This is obviously a description of some ferocious image of Śiva. What is interesting here is the list of all possible weapons as having been held by the different gods. In sculpturing an image, the sculptor should cherish a 'dhyāna' of the god. Sk.P. states:

"Silpigarbhaṇī līṅgāṇi līṅgagarbhāṇi śilpinah; śilpirūpaṇi tu tadrūpaṇi no bhvaḥ śrṇu pārvati".

Siva's Iconographical representation : The Līṅga:

The Līṅga is the most unique of all the iconographical representations of Śiva. Probably the conception of Līṅga had its connection with the Vedic conception of Vṛkṣa or tree. Many of the ancient Śiva Līṅgas are either stone pillars or wooden poles. That is why Śiva is called Sthānu. There are images of Śiva having human figures in the body of the Līṅga. Such Līṅgas are called Līṅgodbhava murtis. In Sk.P., there are many instances wherein Śiva appears before his devotees from a Līṅga established in a certain temple or holy place, e.g., Mahākāla appeared
represented as Śiva. E.g., Arunācalasvāra and Kāśī Ksetra (Mahāsmasāna). Metaphorically the world Liṅga means that in which everything merges. The most exalted conception of Liṅga in Sk.P. is that Akāśa is the Liṅga and the earth is its pīṭhikā (pedestal). This is the conception of the Liṅga in the form of the universe itself. In Sk.P. it is stated that Demons Ṭhīsa and Tāraka wore Liṅga upon their head. Śiva is said to have worn an Ātmaliṅga. Kāvanja carried an Ātmaliṅga wherever he went. This corresponds with many images of gods and goddesses which are carried as bearing Liṅga in their hands, upon their heads or as hanging down from their necks. They are known as 'Bhūtabhūta' images. Liṅgas are further classified as (1) Svayambhū, (2) Divya, (3) Bāna, (4) Aghura, (5) Sadyojāta, (6) Vāmudeva, (7) Sphāṭika, (8) Pīta, (9) Ratnasila, etc. All these and various other types of Liṅgas are referred to in the Satarudrīya section of Sk.P. Śiva images referred to in Sk.P., as being worshipped then in different places of India include Daksināmūrti, Bhairava, Vīrabhadra, Ardhanārīśvara, Caṇḍesa, Natarāja, Rāmanātha, Umāmahesvara, Ekāmbresvā, etc.

20. BHŪGOLA PARIKALPANĀ

Knowledge about the different regions of earth formed a part of the religious culture of Ancient India. SK.P. has two important lists viz., Kumārikā Khanda list and
Arunācalā Khanda list containing valuable information regarding ancient Indian Geography. The seven Khanda of Sk.P. deal with the North, East, West and South India. The Kedāra Khanda and Badarikāśrama māhātmya throw light on the Himalayan region, Kāśī Khanda and Ayodhyā māhātmya are important for the topography of Uttar Pradesh. Purusottamaksetramahātmya is associated with East, particularly Kalinga. Āvantya Khanda is important for the Geography of Mālva, Gujarat and Rajasthan. The Nāyaka Khanda and the Prabhāsa Khanda are important for the topography of Western India. Setumāhātmya and Venkatācalā māhātmya present the picture of South India. Sk.P. gives a grand picture of Bhārata Khanda comprising the above said regions with their rivers, mountains, cities, villages, janapads, vanas, aranyas and Asramas. The Kumārikā Khanda refers to the extent of our sea coast.

The Earth:

Regarding the origin of the earth and its inhabitants, Sk.P. states that earth is the middle region of the Brahmāṇḍa and is inhabited by human beings. It also states that elsewhere beyond this region, there is no sign of life. 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 conception of manvantara takes the origination of man on earth to a much ancient period of earth's history. The conception of 'Svāyambhūva Manu', self-born Manu, has close parallel with the scientific conception of tracing the origin and evolution of the human species on earth to unicellular organism called 'Ameoba'.

**Conception of Saptadvīpas:**

Sk.P. speaks of the extent of the earth as surrounded by Saptadvīpas. The seven dvīpas are: (1) Jambū dvīpa, (2) Plaksa dvīpa, (3) Śālmali dvīpa, (4) Kusa dvīpa, (5) Kraunca dvīpa, (6) Saka dvīpa, and (7) Puṣkara dvīpa. Among these, Jambū dvīpa, is considered to be the centre from which all others are taken into account. Among these dvīpas, Sk.P. and other Purāṇas describe Kusa dvīpa and Saka dvīpas with an intimacy indicative of the cultural and commercial contacts which the ancient Indians had developed with the inhabitants of those 'dvīpas'. Thus, Sk.P. says that Kusa dvīpa is so called because it possesses 'Kusa stamba' (bunches of grass) for thousands of yojanas. The worship of god in the form of fire is described here. Kulisa, Koida, Abhiyukta and Kulaka are the four varṇas of Kuśadvīpa. The inhabitants of this dvīpa possess hairs which are golden in colour. The Purānic Kusa dvīpa is said to fall in some North Eastern region lying between modern Africa and Egypt.
Regarding Śākadvīpa, Sk.P. states that it is so called because it possesses Śāka (vegetation) for thousands of Yojanas. It is said that Śāka dvīpa is surrounded by Ksīrasāgara. This dvīpa is famous for the Masa Brahmins, who are known for their sun worship. The Śākadvīpa of the Purāṇas is said to be the region extending from the Danube river of Eurasia to the Taushan in the Altaic mountain region. The Ksīrasāgara, milky ocean, surrounding this dvīpa is deemed to be river 'Shiri' flowing down to Russia from Iran. In Russian the river is called 'mo-lo-xo' which is phonetically cognate with the English word 'Mol'. Later the river Shiri flows to the Caspian sea which is identified as the Ksīrasāgara of the Purāṇas. It is interesting to note that Marcopolo calls the Caspian sea as 'Siravani' as it was covered with ice.

The Jambūdvīpa of the Purāṇas is the modern Asian continent and the Bhāratavarsa is the greater India and Bhārata Khanda is the Indian subcontinent.

Conception of Pātālalokas:

The Purāṇas generally refer to the lower regions of the earth as Pātālalokas. Sk.P. gives a rosy picture of these regions. It states that the lands in these regions are Black, White, Red, Yellow, Sugarlike, Rocklike and golden in colour. They are filled with many storied buildings. In these lands, the Daityās, Dānavas, Nāgas etc., live in thousands. These regions are more beautiful
than heaven (svarga). In these regions, the atmosphere is very pleasant. There is no heat, no cold, no rains, no misery. Only enjoyment is found here. This indicates that these regions refer not to the regions inside the earth, but to some affluent countries situated below India with whom the contact was very difficult to be established. These regions may be taken as some of the civilisations and countries of the North and South American continents. In Sk.P., and other Purānas, it is said that an Asura by name Maya lived in Atala, one of the Adhalokas. Maya was considered a great engineer and architect. He is said to have built a lake in Hastināvatī. In Central America, the capital city is connected with the ancient Mayan civilisation. In Mexico, Peru and other cities, there are many ancient and magnificent architectural monuments. It is said that this Mayan civilisation was very affluent and treasure hunting was done in this region. It is also said that the climatic condition of Central America is very temperate. All this corresponds with the purānic description of 'Patala-loka'. There is an opinion that Columbus discovered America. But contrary to this opinion, Hewitt says: "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."

**Bhārata Khandai**

It is stated in Sk.P. that Bhūata varṣa is the seed of all (sarvabījam), it is, the karmabhūni (land of a
nd in other lands merit and sin cannot be experienced. His shows the nationalistic spirit of Sk. P. which refers to the entire Bhārata Khaṇḍa as Aryadesa. It is stated that his land is marked by the Himalayas in the North, the Vindhyas in the Centre and the Eastern and the Western Sea.

Sk. P. also refers to many ancient and modern critics and towns of India. It also mentions about the villages that constituted the core of Indian life during those days. It mentions about the different mountain ranges, riverine regions, Aranyakas and Āśramas in the cradle of which Indian culture and civilisation grew and spread far and wide.

The above discussion makes it clear that Sk. P. is a valuable source of Ancient Indian geography. The details about Indian topography given in Sk. P. is far in advance of that contained in the Bhuvana Kosa. It is also more extensive than that which we meet elsewhere in the Purāṇas.

The conception of Earth and the surrounding environment as described in Sk. P. throws 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. In the Caturāvīpa, conception, the relation between India and the far flung countries
can be seen. In the Sapta dvīpa conception the relation between India and Euro-Asian countries is traced. The relation between India and other Asian Countries is discerned in the conception of Jambū dvīpa and its varsas. In the Bharatā Nava Khanda conception the relation between India and the neighbouring islands and the countries connected with sea routes are seen. The Sk.P. Atlas of the world includes also the American continents in its Pātāla conception, which are stated to be difficult to reach because of their long distance.

21. SK.P.: A LITERARY APPRECIATION:

The Sk.P., which is one of the Mahāpurāṇas is megalithic in its proportions and comparable to the epics Mahābhārata and Rāmāyāna. The language used is very lucid and effective. Inspite of structural diversity, the narrative curiosity is sustained. The Upamās used in Sk.P. deserve a special mention because of their charm. The Vṛtti of Sk.P. is closer to the Sātvatī Vṛtti as defined by Visvanātha. The sentiments of Adbhuta, Vīra, Sṛngāra, Bhayānaka, etc., are delineated. Seasons like Saradṛtu, Varsaṛtu are described. Mountains, Vanas, rivers, etc., are described. The 'Vastu' is Prakhyāta as the gods take part in it. Thus Sk.P. has all the mould of a Mahākavya. While mentioning about the salient
features that distinguish an Ārṣeya Kāvya from Paurusaya Kāvya, Sk.P. refers to many of the aspects of Kāvya. It refers to Pancasandhis, Sadālaṅkāras, Aṣṭarásas, Nava-


guṇas, Dasadosas, etc. These aspects of a Kāvya are well illustrated in the different Khandas of Sk.P. The legends dealing with Vedic subjects, Trinity of gods, Devī, Skanda, Ganesa, rivers, mountains, Tīrthas, epic stories, sages, etc., form the basis of the literary attainments of Sk.P. These legends exhibit the richness of the socio-cultural tradition found in Sk.P.

The study of Sk.P. from the Literary point of view is only to highlight the poetic manner in which the intended socio-cultural message is given to the people. The main objective of the Purāṇa is to incul-
cate a religious culture conducive to faith and devotion towards gods, the holy places, the elders and the spirit of patriotism. This being the objective of Sk.P., the question of the predominance of Bhakti rasa can be considered. All other Rasas are subservient to this purpose. This is from the point of view of those who accept Bhakti as a separate Rasa. According to the conventional Ālaṅkārikas, the element of Bhakti can be portrayed as a part of Śanta-rasa itself.
22. FINAL APPRAISAL:

The above "Study of the Sk.P. from the Cultural and Sociological Point of View" has brought out the following salient aspects of the Sk.P. as a valuable source-book of ancient Indian culture and society hailing from the Vedic times and assuming newer forms and proportions through the ages:

(i) Religious tolerance as a mode of approach to the different cults of worship.

(ii) The broader objective of catering to the religious, cultural and social needs of the masses.

(iii) The social awareness and social commitment in delineating the duties and obligations under the Varna and Áśrama system in a new perspective.

(iv) Practical approach to the analysis of social evils in the caste-ridden society and the elucidation of the concepts of social justice and socio-ethical values of Dharm, Dāna, Paropakāra, etc. The dignity of status, provision for education and recognition of service to society accorded to women and Śūdras are the cases in point.
(v) Synthetic approach to the theological, cosmological and philosophical problems obtaining from times immemorial in the context of the socio-political conditions prevailing in its span of time.

(vi) Integral approach to state administration having in view the past, present and future in a spirit of fulfilling. The religious, social and economic aspirations of the people.

(vii) The development of holy places (Tirthas and Ksetras) as the centres for fostering the spirit of religious fellow-feeling and inculcating socio-cultural education of the masses.

All these approaches reflected in the SK.P., are in the direction of imbuing a spirit of nationalism in the minds of the people and make them stand firm against the challenges posed by the internal forces of disintegration and the external forces of aggression and foreign influences of any dimension. It is in this respect the cultural and social ideals reflected in SK.P. have a great contemporary relevance.

****