"Tīrtha" (neuter) is a Rgvedic word which acquires different shades of meaning during the successive stages of Sanskrit literature. It is derived from the root tr (tar) having the primary sense "to cross over or to carry through." Like other Rgvedic words such as 'ni-tha', 'yū-tha', 'rik-tha', 'uk-tha' and 'ar-tha' it is formed with the suffix 'tha'.

In Rgveda, we notice eleven different instances of the use of the word 'tīrtha'. In other Vedic texts like Taittirīya Samhitā, Vājasaneyi Samhitā, Satapatha Brāhmaṇa and Gopatha Brāhmaṇa, the use of the word is somewhat much less.

Grassmann, the noted Vedic scholar interprets the word as (i) Weg zur Tränke (way to the place of water), Tränke (place of water), (ii) Furt des flusses (ford of the stream).

1. RV.1.46.8 - "aritram vām divas-prthu tīrthe sindhūnām rathah" euer Wagen (steht) am Landungsplatz der Flusse.

2. RV.1.169.6 - "tīrtheṁ nāryah paumasyāni tastuhḥ." ihre breitspurigen Antilopen Halt gemacht haben wie die (Streit) kräfte eines Machthabers an einer Flumstränke!

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2. Hermann Grassmann, Wörterbuch zum Rigveda p.537

3. Śāyāna explains 'tīrthe' as yuddhamārge or rājavīthiyām.
3. RV. I.173.11 - "tīrthe nācchā tātrsānam - oko" Denn jedwede Anbetung, x x x x bringt, wie den Durstigen zur Tränke den Indra.


5. RV. VIII.19.37 "Śvāstvā adhi tugvani". Und an der Furt der Śvāstu war der Braune des prayiyu.

6. RV. VIII.47.11 "sutīrtham-arvato yathānu no neṣathā sugam - Führet uns auf den guten Weg wie Rosse zu guter Tränke!

7. RV. VIII.72.7 "duhanti saptai kāmupa dvā paṇca sṛjataḥ tīrthe sindhoradhi svare." Melken die sieben (Priester) die eine (Kuh) zwei (Hände) lassen die fünft (Finger) zu, am Ufer des Flusses unter Schall.

8. RV. IX.97.53 - "uta na ena pavayā pavasvādhī śrute śravāyyasya tīrthe" Und läutere diese durch deine Lauterung uns zu an der berühmten Furt des Śr̥yāyya (Ruhmbringenden ?)

9. RV. X.31.3 - "tīrthe na dasmamupa yantyūmāḥ" Zueinem Meister kommen die Helfer wie zu einer Tränke.

10. RV. X.40.13 - "krtam tīrtham suprapāṇam Śubhāspati." Schaffet eine Furt mit guter Tränke, ihr Gatten der Schonheit.

11. RV. X.114.7 - "āpāṇānām tīrtham ka iha provocat." Wer kann hier den Āpāṇa - zugang nennen, den Weg, auf dem sie vom Somavortrinken ?
In the later phases of Vedic literature, the idea of sanctity comes to be associated with the original sense of the word 'tīrtha'. In the Taittirīya Samhitā (VI.1.1.1-2) we see that in order to perform the Agnistoma sacrifice the sacrificer shaves his head and lives on a restricted diet, before entering into the hall of sacrifice he takes a dip in the tīrtha which in all probability means a holy place of water, may be a river, a lake or a pond. In T.S.IV.5.11.1-2 and Vājasaneyi Samhitā (Rudrādhyāya 16.61) the Rudras armed with weapons (srkāvanto, nīsaṅginah) are said to be prowling in the tīrthas. Further such reference to 'tīrtha' is found in V.S. 16.42.30.16 and Ch.Up.3.15.1.

Tīrtha also means the way between the utkara (mound of earth) and cātvāla (trench). It is path or passage leading to the altar or sacrificial ground called 'vihāra'. In the period of Brāhmaṇas and Śrautasūtras tīrtha has been used in this sense. Examples of it may be cited from S.B. 12.2.1.1. and G.B.1.5.2.6


In Rgveda waters are referred to as holy and they are deified. In RV. VII.49 the refrain of all four mantras is 'may the divine waters protect me' (ta āpo devīr - iha māmavantu). In RV. VII.49.1 waters are spoken of as purifying (punānā yantyanivisamānāḥ - 'may the waters flow cleansing and never resting'). There are different hymns in the Rgveda (VII.47, X.9, X.30) where the Vedic seers have conceived the waters as divinities. In these hymns we notice the seers praying to the waters not just for physical cleansing but for cleansing all the heart and soul. The Taittirīya Samhitā II.6.9.3 asserts that all the deities are centred in waters (āpo vai sarvā devātāḥ). In the Atharvaveda 1.33.1 waters are described as holy, purifying and are invoked to confer happiness.

The Rgveda VIII.6.28 appears to hold that the valleys of mountains and the confluences of rivers are sacred.

7. Idam āpah pravahata yat kim ca duritam mayi/
Yadvāham abhidudroha yad vā sepa utānrtam //
RV.X.9.8

8. Hiranyavarnāḥ sucayah pāvakā yāsu jātah savitā yāsvaṃnīḥ /
Yā āgnim garbham dadhīre suvarṇastā na āpah sam syonā bhavantu//
AV.I.33.1
Mountains have been held by most ancient people to be the abode of gods. Mount Parnassus north of Delphi was one of the most sacred mountains in ancient Greece and Olympus was supposed to be the home of the gods. Likewise the entire Himalayan range is pure and holy, holy is the river Ganges wherever it flows; not only the river Ganges but all the rivers falling into the sea are holy and all the seas and oceans are holy as well (Vāyu II. Uttarārdha Ch.15.117; Kūrma Purāṇa II. 36.46). The Padma Purāṇa (Bhūmikhandā 39.46-47) says: whether flowing through a village or a forest, a river is sacred and in the absence of a specific name for a tīrtha on a river, the tīrtha should go by name - "Visnu tīrtha." In Kumāra-Sambhava (1.1) Kālidāsa speaks of

9. Sarvam punyam Himavato Gāṅgā punyā ca sarvatah /
   Samudraśca sarve punyā samantatah//
   Vāyu II. Uttarārdha Ch.15.117

Sarvatra Himavān punyo Gāṅgā punyā samantatah /
Nadyah samudraśca viśeśatah//
Kūrma II.36.46

10. Grāme vā yadi vā'raṇye nadyaḥ sarvatra pāvanāḥ /
   Tatra tatra prakarttavyāḥ snānadānādikāh kriyāḥ//
   Yādā na jñāyate nāma tāśām tīrthasya sattama /
   Nama caiva prakarttavyam Visnu tīrthamidam nṛpa//
   Padma (A.S.S.),
   Bhūmikhandā Ch.39.46-47.
the Himalayas as glorified by the presence of gods (devatātman).

In Brahmāṇḍa I.16.13-23 the holy mountains are twenty six in number and in the Bhāgavata V.19.16 the number is twenty seven. The grandeur and sublimity of snow-capped mountains, great life-sustaining rivers and wide and extensive forests easily impress the minds of all people and induce them to think that there is something divine about them. These rivers, forests and mountains appear to the sages and seers as personification of the Supreme Spirit. In Kurukṣetra the Vāmana Purāṇa (Saromāhātmya Ch.13.3-5) and Nāradīya Purāṇa (II.65.4-7) speak of the seven holy forests whose sight dispels all types of sin. They are: Kāmyaka, Aditivana, Vyāsavana, Phalakīvana, Sūryavana, Madhuvana and Puṇyaśītavāna (Sitāvāna). Besides both Varāha (Ch.151.31-43 and 159.6-7) and Nāradīya (II.79.10-13) mention twelve forests near Mathurā viz., Madhu, Tāla, Kunda (Kumuda), Kāmyaka, Bahula, Bhadra, Khadira, Mahāvana, Lohajaṅgha, Bilva, Bhāndīra and Vrṇḍāvana.

A particular limb or limbs are comparatively more auspicious and favourable in contrast to other limbs of the body. In our popular uses the right arm is regarded as auspicious. Likewise some localities on the earth are held to be holy and sacred whereas others are despised and decried. Generally there are three different reasons for which a tīrtha is regarded as holy or sacred. It may be that the locality is endowed with some natural scenic beauty or
it may be due to the pure and placid waters of the spring or rivulet nearby, or the place sanctified by the presence of sages and seers might have attained a sacred character. Thus a tirtha has come to mean a spot or a locality or an expanse of water by resorting to which a person acquires religious merit. The Skanda Purāṇa I.2.13.10 says that the main purpose of visiting a tirtha is to be associated with holy men whereas the pilgrimage is of secondary importance.

The Purānas have gone a step further in elaborating the concept of tirtha. Besides the tirthas existing on this earth (bhauma), the texts refer to the tirthas on a spiritual plane. The Purānakāras were conscious of the sinners taking a dip in the Ganges and feeling glorified. Therefore there developed the idea of inner purity. And

11. Yathā sārīrasyoddesāḥ kecit medhyatamāḥ smṛtāḥ
Tathā prthivyāṃ uḍdesāḥ kecit punyatamāḥ smṛtāḥ
Prabhāvād abhūtāt bhūmeh salilasya ca tejasā
Parigrāhāt munīnām ca tīrthānām punyatā smṛtā

Padma (A.S.S.) Uttarākhandha Ch.237.25-27;
Skanda IV. Kāśikhandha Ch.6.43-44;
Nārādiya II.62.46-47.

12. Mukhyā purusayātrā hi tīrthayātrānusāṅgatah /
Sadbhih sāmāśrito bhūpa bhūmibhāgastathocaye//

Skanda I.2.13.10
with this inner purity in mind the texts developed the concept of "mānasa" tīrthas (mental tīrthas) in contrast to the "bhaumā" tīrthas (tīrthas on the earth). A man is endowed with qualities both divine and demoniacal. In Bhagavad Gītā Lord Kṛṣṇa has given a full exposition of the brutal qualities that defile a man. Naturally with a view to leading the people to a righteous path, the ancient texts have emphasized the importance of the golden qualities which differentiate a man from a brute. Side by side glorifying the lovely spots of the earth, they have referred to the lovely qualities of the head and the heart. And these lovely qualities are time and again spoken of as "mānasa" tīrthas. The Padma Purāṇa (A.S.S.) Uttarakhanda 237.16-17 rightly says:

Na jalāplutadehasya snānam itya bhidhiyate /
Sa snātah yo damasnātah śucisnigdhamanā matah/

- cleansing of the dirt with waters cannot be called a bath, this is a true bath where there is cleansing of the despicable qualities like greed, avarice etc., and a person rests contented and pacified (damasnātah). Acquatic animals are born and die in the waters. But does it lead them to heaven? Too much attachment to sense-objects is the dirt of the mind. There arises purity only when one is detached from the worldly objects. And this purity of mind is the proper bath of a man. In delineating these "mānasa" tīrthas:
the Purānas allude to a number of qualities which make the life of a mortal divine. In order to make the life of a man whole and full-fledged, in comparison with "bhaumā" tīrthas the "mānasa" tīrthas have greater utility. Truthfulness, forbearance, restraint of the senses, compassion for all beings, straightforwardness, charity, self-control, contentment, celibacy, sweet speech, knowledge, patience, and austerity - all these have been proclaimed to be the mānasa tīrthas and of all the mānasa-tīrthas purity of mind is the foremost (Tīrthānām uttamam tīrtham visuddhiḥ manasah punah - Padma, Uttarākhanda Ch.237.16; Tīrthānām api tat tīrtham visuddhiḥ manasah paraŚkanda IV.6.32).

In Smṛti-texts of Manu and Yājñavalkya tīrthas do not occupy a prominent position. But in the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas they are highly lauded and are placed even above

13. Satyam tīrtham keśamātīrtham tīrtham indriyanigrahab /
   Śarvabhūta-dateīrtham tīrtham ārjavameva ca //
   Dānam tīrtham damas tīrtham santoṣas tīrtham ucyate /
   Brahmacaryam param tīrtham ... ... ...//
   Jñāna tīrtham dhrtis tīrtham ... ... ... and so on.

Padma (A.S.S.), Uttarākhanda Ch.237.12-24,
Skanda IV. Kāśikhaṇḍa, Ch.6.30-42, see also Matsya 22.30
the sacrifice. In Vanaparvan the author makes a comparison between pilgrimage and sacrifice in honour of the gods. Sacrifice requires numerous ingredients, the co-operation of priests and the presence of the wife. So they can be performed only by house-holders or men of affluence. For the paupers and destitutes it is a dream to think of a sacrifice. The religious merit that one attains by visiting holy places cannot be secured by performing sacrifices like Agnistoma etc., which entails payment of bounteous gifts. Therefore visiting holy places is definitely superior to sacrifice. The Padma Purāṇa IV.80.9 testifies to it that the present age - Kali Yuga is not congenial for sacrifices, vratas, tapas or dāna. On the other hand it is far more easy and simple to have a dip in the river Ganges or to utter the name of Hari. The Viṣṇudharmottara(III.273.7 and 9)

14. Bhūpakaranā yajñāh nānāsambhāravistaraḥ
Prāpyante pārthivair ete samrddhair vā narai kvacit

15. Yajñavrata tapodānam saṃjām naiva Kalau yuge /
Gangāsnānam Harer nāma nirapāyamidām dvayam //
succinatly puts this point: "By resorting to a tīrtha the sinner is cleansed of his sins and the righteous adds to his religious merit. For all classes of people irrespective of class, creed or colour, visit of tīrthas has a reward in effect.\textsuperscript{16}

At a later stage tīrthas attain such glory and importance that numerous stories and anecdotes come to be associated with them. The Purānakāras go to the extent of saying that by merely residing in Kāśī not only does a man become free from the great sin of Brahmin murder but from the unending cycle of births and deaths.\textsuperscript{17} Of all the tīrthas the sacred character of Kāśī has been emphasized to the utmost. And Agni (112.3) and Kūrna (I.29.35)\textsuperscript{18} proclaim: after visiting Kāśī one should get oneself amputated so that one may be

\begin{verbatim}
16. Pāpanāṁ pāpaśamanam dharmavrddhiṣṭathā satām
  Vijñeyam sevītam tīrtham tasmāt tīrthaparo bhavet/
  Sarveṣāṁ eva varṇāṇāṁ sarvāśrama nivāsināṁ /
  Tīrtham phalapradram jñeyam nātra kāryā vicāraṇā/
  Visnudh. p.III.273.7,9

17. Matsya 181.16-17, Skanda IV. Kāśīkhandā 25.67.

18. Āśmanā caranau hatvā vaset Kāśīnna hi tyajet - Agni 112.3
    Āśmanā caranau hatvā Vāranasyāṁ vaset narah - Kūrna I.29.35
See also Matsya Ch.180.23.
\end{verbatim}
forced to live there without the least inclination for other tīrthas. The redactors of different Purāṇas have gone a long way in attributing supernatural character to certain tīrthas with the sole purpose of glorifying them. Varāha Purāṇa (Ch.133.12-13) relates: 'In course of a dispute among the urchins over the possession of a wagtail (Khaṇjariṇa) the poor bird accidentally falls in the Āditya tīrtha, a particular spot in the river Ganges. And in consequence released from the life of a bird it takes a human birth in a wealthy Vaisya family. Likewise a fish and a female kite attacked by a 'lubdhaka' and a 'mṛgavyādha' accidentally fall to the ground of Kokāmukha tīrtha and are consequently blessed with human birth. The fish is born as the son of some Śaka king whereas the female kite takes birth as a princess in the kingdom of Candrapura (Varāha Purāṇa Ch.121. 19-26). Many other stories and anecdotes of the type can be cited from Purāṇas like Padma, Brahma and Skanda.

Visit of the tīrthas not only rewards a man with religious merit, but physical defects are also removed. A Brahmin charged with unpardonable sin of Brahmin murder has blood dripping from his arms, the moment he takes a dip in the Vaikuṇṭha tīrtha, there is immediate cessation of the flow of blood and he is freed from the heinous sin (Varāha Ch.161.1-11).
Thus since very old days numerous tīrthas and shrines have attained their eminence. According to Brahma Purāṇa the number of tīrthas and shrines is too large to be enumerated in detail. With the idea of visit of tīrthas becoming more and more popular, gradually their number got multiplied and new tīrthas came to be added to the list. Local priests who used to be greatly benefited by the pilgrims kept themselves busy in propagating the glory of the tīrthas with a view to attracting more and more pilgrims. And in consequence there came to be written various māhātmya-texts like Gayāmāhātmya (Garuda I Chs. 82-86), Vārānasīmāhātmya (Matsya Chs. 179-184), Narmādā-māhātmya (Matsya Chs. 185-193), Arunācala-māhātmya (Skanda I.3), Venkatācala-māhātmya (Skanda 2. Vaiśṇavakhaṇḍa I Chs. 1-40), Purusottama-ksetra-māhātmya (Skanda 2. Vaiśṇavakhaṇḍa II. Chs. 1-60), Badarikāśrama-māhātmya (Skanda 2. Vaiśṇavakhaṇḍa III. Chs. 1-3), Dharmāraṇya-māhātmya (Skanda 3. Brahmakhaṇḍa II), Avantiksetra-māhātmya (Skanda 5. Avantīkhaṇḍa I), Revā-māhātmya (Skanda 5. Avantīkhaṇḍa III) and so on.
Following the tradition of Mahāpurāṇas Narasimha Purāṇa has given brief reference to eighty one tīrthas. Of them older texts give detailed account of sixty tīrthas. The old texts speak about the location, the event or events leading to the origin of the tīrtha, the unique sanctity of the place because of the sages and seers resorting to it or the type of religious merit that one attains.

Though the Narasimha Purāṇa gives a brief resume of all the eighty one tīrthas, it refers to some twenty one tīrthas which we notice for the first time in our text. They are:- Mālyodapāna (65.8), Pāndusahya, Vasurūdhā, Valīvaṭa (Ch.65.9), Kubjāgāra, Gandhadvāra, Sakala, Sāyaka (65.11), Dhrstadyumna, Trāṇabinduvana (65.13), Kaserāta (65.14), Halāṅgara, Devasālā, Daśapura (65.15), Liṅgakūṭa (65.19), Ādhyā (65.20) and Keralaka (65.22), Kundikā (66.25), Pindasthāna (66.29-30), Dhanuhpāta and Sarabindu (66.33-34). Besides in the chapter 66 the Narasimha enumerates the names of some famous rivers like Ganges, Yamunā, Gomati, Sarayū, Sarasvatī, Candrabhāga, Carmanavatī, Narmadā, Tāpi, Godavari, Tungabhadra etc., as holy and sacred ones and in Ch.67.1-3 in the line of Mahāpurāṇas it gives an account of human qualities like truthfulness, compassion, self-restraint etc., as constituting the mental tīrthas.
(1) **KOKAMUKHA**

As a tīrtha Kokāmukha has been highly extolled in *Varāha Purāṇa* Ch.140. It is five yojanas in extent. Lord Viśnu declares: "Kokāmukhasamam kṣetram na bhūtam na bhavisyati" — a sacred place like Kokāmukha did not exist before nor will appear again in future (140.12). In this Kokāmukha tīrtha facing the south Lord Viśnu remains in the form of a male boar (*Var.P. Ch.140.92^b, 93^b*). Brahma Purāṇa Ch.219 refers to the anecdote as to why the particular place is so called. Due to the curse of Soma, his daughter Urjā or Svadhā turns into a river called Kokā and the Pitṛs fall into it. At the prayer of Pitṛs Lord Viśnu assumes the form of a boar and recovers all of them submerged under the waters. Kūrma Purāṇa states that after one's death at this place one is absolved of all one's sins and is merged in Viśnu. The Narasimha text refers to the adoration of Boar incarnation of Lord Viśnu in Kokāmukha tīrtha (Ch.65.7).

(2) **MANDARA**

According to *Viśnu Purāṇa* II.2.16 it is situated to the east of Meru (purvena Mandaro nāma). Liṅga speaks of Mandara

1. *Tasmin Kokāmukhe ramye tisthāmi daksināmukhah* - 92^b
   *Vārāham rūpāmādaya tisthāmi puruṣākṛtiḥ* - 93^b

2. *Mṛtoṭra pātakaiḥ mukto Viśnu sārūpyamāpnyāt*  
   *K.P. II.34.36^b*
as endowed with charming caves (Mandaram ēruckandaram 93.7). Tormented and tortured by the demon Andhaka the gods are said to have resorted to the mount Mandara. Matsya (13.28) states that the goddess on the top of mount Mandara is known as Kāmacārini (Mandare Kāmacārini). Naradīya Purāṇa (II.3.7-13) describes it as the churning stick which was once used by Lord Hari in churning the ocean. Besides it is the treasure of jewels and playground of gods. The Narasimha Purāṇa refers to the adoration of Lord Madhusūdana (the slayer of Madhu) on the summit Mandara.

(3) KAPILADVĪPA

Mbh. III.81.33 refers to Kapilātīrtha. According to Mārkandeya Purāṇa Ch.53.25-26 Kapiladvīpa is the seventh division of Kuśadvīpa and it was ruled over by Kapila, the seventh son of Jyotismat. The Narasimha Purāṇa (65.7) only refers to the worship of Ananta in Kapiladvīpa.

3. Vādhitāstādita vaddha pātitaśtena te surāḥ /
   Vīvīśuḥ Mandaram bhītā Nārāyaṇapurojaśmāḥ //
   L.P. 93.6

4. Kapilātīrthasaśādya Brahmacārī samāhitāḥ /
   Tatra snātvarcayitvā ca daivatāni pitṛṇstathā /
   Kapilānāṁ sahasrasya phalam vindati mānavaḥ //

Mbh. III.81.33
(4) **PRABHĀSA**

In Saurāstra Kane locates Prabhāsa near the sea where there was a famous temple of Somanātha.⁵ Mbh.III. Vanaparvan 86.17 holds that there is Prabhāsa tīrtha near the sea (Prabhāsaṃ codadhau tīrtham). According to Naradiya II. Ch.70.2-5 Prabhāsa mandala covers an area of twelve yojanas; and it is a tīrtha where there is situated the Somanātha temple. Kūrma Purāna (II.34.16-17) takes it as an excellent place of pilgrimage which is said to be the dwelling of Siddhas and Lord Bhava. By taking a dip, practising penance, offering 'Srāddha' and adoring the Brahmins in this holy tīrtha, one attains the eternal and imperishable abode of Brahmā. In Varāha Purāna (Ch.147.33) Lord Viśnu proclaims, if one dies there in Prabhāsaksetra, free from sins and all attachment he goes to His realm.⁶ The Narasimha Purāna refers to the worship of Ravinandana in Prabhāsa tīrtha (Prabhāse Ravinandanam - 65.7).

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⁵ Kane, H.D. Vol.IV., p.791.

⁶ Ṭha cet municete prāñān Prabhāse gatakilvisah /
   Sarva saṅgam parityajya mama lokāya gacchati //

Var.P. Ch.147.33
(5) MĀLYODAPĀNA

There is reference to Udapāna in Mbh. III.32.103 and Padma I.38.27. The Narasimha text speaks of the worship of Vaikuntha in Mālyodapāna tirtha (Mālyodapāne Vaikuntham - 65.3).

(6) MAHENDRA

According to most of the Purāṇas it is one of the seven principal mountains of India. Among so many rivers and mountains Bhāgavata V.19.16 refers to the existence of Mahendra in India. Rāmāyana IV.66.37-38 states that while jumping off towards Laṅkā Hanumat used it as a springing board. Kane says that in the Ganjam district there is a peak called Mahendra-grīra about 5000 feet high. It also finds mention in Allahabad stone pillar inscription of Samudragupta.

7. Tatrodapāno dharmajñā sarvapāpapramocanaḥ
Samudrāstatra catvārah kūpe sannihitāḥ sadā
tatopapṛṣya rājendra na dūrajatimavāpnyāt

Mbh. III.32.103

Tatrodapāno dharmajñā triṣu lokeṣu viśrutas ।
Tatrābhisekam kuryāta vājimadham avāpnyāt //

Padma (A.S.S.) I.38.27

8. Mahendro Malayah Saḥyaḥ Suktimān Rkṣaparvataḥ ।
Vindhyāśca Pāriyātraśca saptātra kulaparvataḥ //

Visnu II.3.3, K.P.I.45.22, Vām.P.13.14,
Var.P.35.L.6-3.

Vāmana 63.10-11 mentions that generally in the Mahendra mountain, Somapithin (a form of Lord that drinks Soma) is adored, but in its southern and northern parts Ardhanārīśvara and Gopāla forms of the Lord are worshipped respectively. The Narasimha text speaks of 'Nṛpātmaja' as worshipped on the top of Mahendra mountain.

(7) RSABHA TīRTHA

As an important place of pilgrimage it has been referred to in Agni 109.21 (atharṣabhaṁ param) and Padma I.37.3 (tīrtham caivā'ṛṣabhaṁ param) Mbh. III. Vanapravan 83.10 and Padma I.39.10 hold that the pilgrim who fasts for three days at Rṣabhatīrtha, secures the fruits of instituting a Vājapeya or Vājimedha sacrifice. The Narasimha text refers to the worship of Mahāviṣṇu at this place (Rṣabhe tu Mahāviṣṇum - 65.3).

(8) DVĀRAKA

It is the same as Dvārāvatī or Kuṣasthāla. The name of this holy city does not find mention in the Vedic literature,

10. Rṣabham tīrtham āsādyā Kośalāyām narādhipa /
Vājapeyam avāṇnoti trirātropoṣito naraḥ //
Mbh. III Vana.83.10
Rṣabham tīrtham āsādyā Kośalāyāṁ narādhipa /
Vājimedham avāṇnoti trirātropoṣito naraḥ //
Padma (A.S.S.) I.39.10
but references to it in the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas are available in plenty. According to Mbh. II. Sabhaparvan 13.49-55 on account of constant raid and attack of Jarasandha Lord Kṛṣṇa leaves Mathurā and induces the Yādavas to settle up in Dvārakā. Brahma Purāṇa (14.54-56) says that through fear of Kālayavana the Vṛṣnis and Andhakas desert Mathurā, take counsel with Kṛṣṇa and build up Dvārakā. Both Visnu (V.23.13-15) and Brahma (Ch.196.13-15) mention that Kṛṣṇa begs of the ocean a strip of twelve yojanas, builds Dvārakā with strong walls, mansions, large parks and establishes the people of Mathurā there. Nāradiya (I.27.35) speaks of Dvārāvatī as one of the seven famous cities granting liberation to human beings. Mbh. III. Vanaparvan 86.21 says, holy is the city Dvārāvatī where resides Lord Madhusūdana, the slayer of Madhu. And following the tradition of Mahāpurāṇas the Narasimha refers to the worship of Bhūpati Śrīkṛṣṇa in Dvārakā (Dvārakāyām tu Bhūpatim - 65.3).

11. Ayodhyā Mathurā Māyā Kāśi Kāncī hy Avantikā /
Purī Dvārāvatī jñeyā saptaitā mokṣadāyikā //
Nār.P. I.27.35

12. Puṇyā Dvārāvatī tatra yatr āste Madhusūdanah /
Mbh. III.96.21
(9) **CITRAKUTA**

It is a hill 65 miles south-west of Prayāga in Banda district of Bundelkhand and a railway station on Jhānsi-Manikpur branch. It is this famous hill where Śrī Rāma, Laksmana and Śīta are said to have taken up their abode after crossing the hermitage of Bharadvāja (Rāmāyaṇa II.50.13-14, Agni Purāṇa Ch.6.34-35, Narādiya I.79.18-19). In his commentary on Meghadūta Mallinatha identifies Rāmagiri with Citrakūṭa. Varāha 12.2 holds that in Citrakūṭa mountain Śrī Rāma is always regarded as Lord Viṣṇu (Citrakūṭe girau Viṣṇuh sada Rametī kirtytate). In keeping with this Purānic tradition the Narasimha text speaks of 'Narādhīpa Rāma' as worshipped in this mountain(Citrakūṭe narādhipam - 65.9).

(10) **NAIMISA**

There is Naimisa round Nimsār on the river Gomati 45 miles from Lucknow. In the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas it is very often mentioned. Mahābhārata III Vanapravam (32.59-64) holds that all tīrthas on the earth are centred in Naimiṣa (Prthivyāṁ yāni tīrthāṁ Naimiṣe tāṁ bhārata). Both Vāyu (I.2.7b-3a) and Brahmāṇda (I.2.8b-9a) locate Naimisa on the bank of the river Gomati. According to Agni (I.09.24) Naimīsa is the most holy

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13. Karmanā tena vikhyātam Naimīṣam munipūjitam /
       Yatra sā Gomati punyā siddhacāraṇa sevita /
    Vāyu I.2.7b-3a, Bd.P.I.2.8b-9a
on the earth and according to Kurma (II.41.1.9) it is very dear to Mahādeva. Matsya (Ch.22.14-15) states, because of the falling of the discus of Visnu Naimiṣāraṇya is so called. In Vāmana Ch.63.9 Lord Himself declares that in Naimiṣa His form is Pitavāsas (Naimiṣe Pitavāsasam). In keeping with this the Purānic tradition Narasimha too refers to the worship of Pitavāsas (yellow-robed Lord Visnu) in Naimiṣa.

(11) GOKULA

Gokula and Vraja are the same. In his early childhood Kṛṣṇa was brought up here by Nanda-gopa, who, afraid of Kamsa shifted his residence from Gokula to Vrndāvana. Both Padma (A.S.S.) IV.69.18 and Bhāgavata II.7.31 refer to Gokula. In the Narasimha Purāṇa the line "gavāṁ niśkramane Harim" (65.10) means nothing other than Vraja or Gokula where the worship of Hari has been alluded to.

(12) ŚALAGRĀMA

It is a sacred place near the source of Gandakī river. Both Mbh. III.82.106 and Padma (A.S.S.) I.33.39-41 speak of it as a place where Lord Visnu permanently takes up His abode.

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14. Netum Haricakrasya śīrṇā yatṝḥbhavat purā /
   Tadetat Naimiṣāraṇyaḥ sarvatīrtha niśevitam /
M.P. 22.14-15
Sadā sannihito yatra harir vasati bhārata / 
Sālagrāma iti khyāto Viṣṇor adbhuta varmanah //

After having apportioned the kingdom among his sons king Agnidhra resorted to Śālagrāma for penance (Viṣṇu II.1.24). It is said that even though a king, Bharata with his mind centred on Lord Viṣṇu continued to reside at Śālagrāma (Viṣṇu II.13.4). Uma is regarded as Mahādevī in Śālagrāma (Matsya 13.33). Varāha Ch.144 narrates an interesting story as to how the sage Sāṅkalāyana with the sole purpose of getting a son practised severe austerities under a ‘Sāl’ tree; he could have the vision of Lord Viṣṇu there and the spot named Śālagrāma came into existence. Naradīya I.48.9 states that Śālagrāma is a great ksetra resorted to by people desirous of liberation (Śālagrāmam mahāksetram mumukṣu janasevitam). The Narasimha text speaks of the worship of Tapovāsa at this place (Śālagrāme Tapovāsām - 65.10).

(13) GANDHAMĀDAŅA

According to Viṣṇu II.2.16 Gandhamadana is situated to the south of Meru. Again Viṣṇu V.24.5 locates Naranārāyanāśrama on this mountain. Matsya 13.27 states, goddess Kāmākṣi is worshipped here (Kāmākṣi Gandhamadane). Resorted to by the Siddhas this particular mountain is also the dwelling place and of Kimpurusas/Čāranas (tataḥ kimpurusāvāsam Siddhacārana-sevitam...parvatoḥ Gandhamadanaṁ - Mbh. III.155.34) Skanda
Purāṇa 2. Vaisnava Khanda 3 Badarikāśrama māhātmya Ch.4.3 holds, Badrināth is situated on the Gandhamādana mountain. The celestial bird Garuda practised penance on its peak in order to become the vehicle of Lord Viṣṇu.\textsuperscript{15}

It is mentioned as one of the important mountains of north India (Skanda 2. Vaisnava Khanda, I. Veṅkaṭācala māhātmya Ch.1.40-42). It is on this mountain (Skanda I. Māheśvara Khanda, I. Kedarakhanda 17.93-94) that the demon Vṛtra practised austere penance in order to receive the grace of Lord Śiva. The forest known as Citrarathavana which is named after the king Citraratha stands before this mountain.\textsuperscript{16} Without giving any information about Gandhamādana the Narasimha Purāṇa speaks of the adoration of Acintya on this mountain (Acintya Gandhamādana - 65.10).

\textsuperscript{15} Vadaryā daksīnebhāge Gandhamādana śṛṅgake /
\textsuperscript{16} Vṛtro hy ayam mahātejā daiteyas tapasā purā /

\textsuperscript{15} Garudās tapa āstepe Harivāhanakāmyayā //
\textsuperscript{16} Śivam prasādyāmāsā parvate Gandhamādana // 93

\textsuperscript{15} Sk. P.2. Vaisnava Khanda 3. Badarikāśrama māhātmya Ch.4.3
\textsuperscript{16} Namā Citraratho rājā vanam Citrarathasya tat /

Etat ānīhi bho Indra Śivapuryān samipataḥ // 94

\textsuperscript{15} Sk. P.I. Māheśvarakhanda, I. Kedarakhanda, 17.93-94
(14) **VRANDAVANA**

Of the twelve forests of Mathura it is the last one. It is mentioned in the Matsya (13.33), Padma A.S.S. (IV.69.8-9), Bhāgavata (X.11.28, X.21.10) and Varāha (Ch.151.48-49).

The Padma (IV.69.8-9) speaks of Vṛndāvana as a part of Vaikunṭha on the earth. Matsya (Ch.13.33) says, Radhā is the goddess adored in the Vṛndāvana forest (Radhā Vṛndāvanē vane).

In Varāha Purāṇa Ch.151.48-49 it is mentioned that Vṛndāvana is very dear to the Lord, it is destructive of all sins, those who behold Govinda in Vṛndāvana, never go to the abode of Yama.17 Without giving any information as regards Vṛndāvana, the Narasimha text only speaks of Gopāla as worshipped in this holy forest.

(15) **MATHURA**

This is a renowned place of pilgrimage situated on the bank of the holy river Yamunā. It is otherwise known as Madhupuri (imam Madhupurīm ramyām - Rāmāyaṇa VII.62.5).

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17. Vṛndāvanam dvādasamam Vṛndayā pariraksitam /
Mama caiva priyam bhūme sarvapātaka nāsānām //
Vṛndāvane ca Govindaṃ ye pasyanti vasundhare /
Na te yamapurāṃ yānti yānti pūnyakṛtām gatim //

Var.P. Ch.151.49-49
The Mahābhāṣya of Patanjali refers to it several times. The Rāmāyana, Uttarakanda (Chs. 61-62) states that Śatrughna, the brother of Rāma killed the demon Lavana and established the city of Mathura. It also informs that Śatrughna took twelve years to make Mathura a fine and prosperous city (VII, 62.9). In Varāha Purāṇa (Ch. 150.2) Lord Viṣṇu proclaims, Mathura is his birth place and it is his famous kṣetra. According to Viṣṇu Purāṇa VI, 3.33–34, fasting in the city of Mathura if a person takes a dip in the waters of the Yamunā on the 12th day of the bright fortnight of the month of Jyestha and worships the eternal and imperishable Lord, he receives the fruit of instituting an Āsvamedha sacrifice.

The Narasimha only refers to the worship of 'Svayambhu' in Mathura (Mathurayām Svayambhuvam - 65.12).


19. Mathureti ca vikhyātām asti kṣetraṁ param mama /
Suramya ca prastastā ca janmabhūmiḥ priyā mama //
Var. P. Ch. 150.2

20. Yamunāsalile snātah puruṣo munisattama /
Jyeṣṭhāmule site pakṣe dvādaśyām samupositah //
Samabhyaarcy Ācyutam samyam Mathurayām samahitah/
Āsvamedhasya vajñasya prāpanty avikalam phalam//
Viṣṇu VI, Ch.3.33–34
(16) KEDARA

It is one of the eight Śiva-tīrthas in Banaras according to Matsya (Ch.130.29) and Agni (Ch.112.5). Mbh. III. Vana. Ch.85.19, Linga (I.92.7, 134) and Varāha (Ch.96.17, Ch.121.13) refer to it. Kūrma II.36.5 takes it to be the abode of high-souled Sambhu (...sthānam Sambhoṣ mahātmanaḥ Kedāram iti vikhyātam....)

Vāmana Ch.34.1-10 relates the incident as to how Kedāra, a holy place of great sanctity was created (jātas tīrthavaraḥ puṇyaḥ Kedāra iti viśrutah). Vām.P., saromāhātmya Ch.15.26-27 regards Kedāra as a great tīrtha which destroys all sins. Besides a dip in this tīrtha enables a man to acquire the merit of all the gifts.21 Similarly Kūrma states, by offering libations of water to the manes after taking dip here, one attains all one's desires (K.P.II.39.7). According to Mādhavacārya's Śamkaradīgviṣaya it is at this holy place that Ācārya Śamkara is said to have breathed his last.22 Both Vāmana (Ch.63.3) and Narasimha (Ch.65.12) refer to the worship of Lord Mādhava at Kedāra tīrtha (Kedāre Mādhavam).

21. Kedāram ca mahātīrtham sarvakalmaṇaṇāṇam /
Tatra snātva tu puruṣah sarvādānapalāḥ labheth //
Vām.P. Saromāhātmya Ch.15.26-27

22. Baladeva Upādhyāya, Śrīśamkaradīgviṣaya (Mādhavacārya-viracita) Ch.16.
In several Puranas Varanasi or Kasi has been lauded and described at great length. Matsya Ch. 179-184, Kurma I. Chs. 29-33, Liña I. 92, Agni Ch. 112, Padma (A.S.S.) Adikhanda Chs. 33-37 and Naradlya II. Chs. 48-51 describe its glory and greatness. The Kasi khanda of Skanda Purana is the most extensive of all which devotes about ninety five chapters to the glorification of this holy place. Varanasi bears different names and in the Purana texts these different names have been justified. Kasi is derived from the root 'kasi' to shine. Skanda Purana IV. 26. 67 says, the city of Kasi is famous by that name because it sheds light i.e., Lord Siva shines forth there. In several Puranas the name Varanasi is derived from the names of two rivers - Varan and Asi which form the northern and southern boundaries of the modern city.

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23. Kasiatre yato jyotis tadana khhyeyam Isvarah / Ato nam aparancastu Kasi prathitam vibho // Sk. P. IV. Kasi khanda Ch. 26. 67

24. Varana ca nasdi caisi madhye Varanasi tayoh / Agni 112. 6

Asista Varan yatra ksetraraksha krtau krt / Vara nasiti vikhyata tadabhyya mahamate / Asesta Varanayasca sanjamam prapya Kasika // Sk. P. IV. Kasi khanda Ch. 30. 69-70

See also Vam. P. 3. 27-28; Padma (A.S.S.) V. 14. 91
It is also called Avimukta as it is never deserted by Lord Śiva. Both Vāmana (63.15) and Narasimha (65.12) refer to the worship of Keśava in Vārānasī (Vārāṇasyaṁ tu Keśavam).

(18) PUSKARA

It is a place of pilgrimage six miles from Ajmer. According to Mahābhārata (III.30.46) it is the permanent abode of Lord Brahmā. Just as Lord Visnu (the slayer of Madhu) is regarded as the foremost of all divinities, so Puskara is the holiest of all tīrthas (Mbh.,III.30.55). Padma Purāṇa (A.S.S.) V.15.63,32 explains how this place is called Puskara from the lotus (puskara) that Brahmā cast here. Vāmana 23.20 states that of the five Vedis of Brahmā Puskara is the western Vedi provided with three kundas (pratīcī Puskara Vedatribhīḥ kundair alamkṛta - 23.20). Both Padma (V.23.53) and Nāradiya (II.71.12) speak of these kundas as Jyestha, Madhyama and Kanistha. Besides Nāradiya describes

25. Vimuktaṁ na mayā yasmaṁ mokṣyate va kadaścana / Mahat kṣetram idam tasmāt Avimuktaṁ iti smṛtam // M.P. Ch.179.54


27. Kundatrayam ādītormadhye jyesthamadhya kanisthakam / Padma (A.S.S.) V.23.53.

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it as a place where Brahmā is said to have performed a number of sacrifices. According to Skanda 6 Nāgarakhandā Ch.1.4–5, Puskarakṣayā is situated in Hātakṣavarakṣetra. It was established by Brahmā. It is one yojana in extent. It is placed to the north of Candrabhāga and co-extensive with the river Sarasvatī. It is also to the south of Karatoyā. Without giving any detailed information about the origin of Puskarakṣetra, the Narasimha text only speaks of Lord Puskarakṣa as worshipped in this holy place (Ch.65.13).

(19) SINDHUSĀGARA

It is the confluence of the Indus and the sea. Both Mahābhārata (III.30.35–36) and Padma (I.24.16–17) hold that one who takes a dip at Sindhusāgarasamgama and offers libations of water to the gods, manes and sages, goes to the world of Varuna. Matsya (Ch.109.1–3) and Nāradya (II.63.43)

Cont’d.

Trīṇi śrīgāṇi subhrāṇi trīṇi prasravanāṇi ca / Jyestha madhyā kanisthāṇi trīṇi tatra sarāmsi ca // Nar.P.II.71.12

29. Sāgarasya ca Sindhoṣca samgamaṃ prāpya bhārata / Tīrthe salilarājasya snātvā prayatamānasaḥ // Tarpayitvā pitrāṇ devān rṣīṃsca bharatarṣabha / Prāpnoti Varuṇaṃ lokāṃ dipamāṇaḥ svatejasā //

Mbh.III Vanaparvan 30.35–36, Padma (A.S.S.) I.Ādikṣānda Ch.24.16
enumerate Sindhusāgara as one of the tīrthas under Prayāja. Varāha (98.49) also refers to it. The Narasimha text only speaks of the worship of Asoka at Sindhusāgara (65.13).

(20) TAIJASA

According to Padma I.27.52-53 it is situated to the west of Kuruksetra. It is here that Skanda is said to have been crowned as the commander of gods by Lord Brahmā, sages and ascetics.\(^{29}\) The Narasimha text refers to the worship of Lord Amrta in Taijasa forest (Amṛtam Taijase vane - 65.14).

(21) VISĀKHAYŪPA

Mahābhārata III Vanaparvan 88.12 says, in the days of yore Indra, Varuṇa and many other divinities practised penance here; and that is how it has become a holy place.\(^{30}\) According to Vanaparvan 174.16-17 it is a forest where Pāṇḍavas are said to have dwelt for full one year. In Vāmana - 63.6 Lord

29. Taijasasya Tāraṁ tīrthāṁ dīpyate śvena tejasā /
Yatra Brahmādibhiḥ devaiḥ ūśibhiṣca tapodhanaiḥ //
Saināpatye ca devānām abhisikto Guhastada /
Taijasasya tu pūrveṇa Kurutīrtha kuruvaha //
Padma (A.S.S.) I.27.52-53

30. Sametya bahuṣo devaiḥ sendraḥ savaruṇaḥ pūrā /
Viśākhayūpe 'tapyanta tasmāt pugyatamah sa vai //
Mbh. III Vanaparvana 88.12
Himself declares, that in Viṣakhayūpa He is worshipped as Ajita. The Narasimha speaks of Viśvesa as worshipped in Viśvāsayaūpa (Ch.65.14).

(22) MAHĀVANA

The Varāha and the Nārādīya mention it as the eighth forest under Mathurā. Kane identifies it with Vraja. Kane says that the modern Mahāvana town is near the left bank of the river Yamunā. Lord Kṛṣṇa spent his childhood here (Kane, H.D. Vol.IV.p.777). In Varāha 151.43 and Nārādīya II.79.14 it is said that Mahāvana is very dear to Lord Viṣṇu. A person paying a visit to that place is honoured and adored in the world of Indra.31 The Narasimha text refers to the existence of Lord Nṛsimha at Mahāvana (65.14).

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31. Mahāvanaṁ cāṣṭamāṁ tu sadaiva tu mama priyam /
   Tasmin gatvā tu manuja Indraloke mahīyate //
   Var.P.151.43

Mahāvanaṁ cāṣṭamāṁ tu sadaiva Harivallabhāṁ /
   Tad dṛṣṭvā manujo bhaktyā śakraloke mahīyate //
   Nār.P. II.79.14
(23) KUBJAKA

Garuda (I.31.10) speaks Śrīdhara Hari as worshipped in Kubjaka (Kubjake Śrīdhara Hariḥ). According to Nāradīya (II.60.25) it is under Purusottama. Vāmana 25.53 alludes to it. The Narasimha text refers to Vāmana, the dwarf incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu which is adored here (Kubjake Vāmanam viduh - 65.15).

(24) VITASTA

There is river Vitasta in Kāśmīra now known as Jhelum. According to Varāha 35.L.16-21, it emerges from the foot of the Himalayas. Kurma Purāṇa II.42.4 speaks of it as "tīrthānām paramatīrtham" and it is destroyer of all sins. Vāmana 63.7 says, on the bank of Vitasta Lord Viṣṇu is worshipped in the form of Kumārila. The Narasimha text alludes to the worship of Vidyādhara on its bank (Vidyādharam Vitastayām 65.16).

(25) VARĀHA TĪRTHA

It is a famous Viṣṇu tīrtha. Padma (A.S.S.) VI.165.9-10 relates as to how Lord Viṣṇu in the form of a Boar lifted up the Earth submerged under the waters and the holy place named Vārāha came into existence. Kurma II.40.13 says, Lord Janaūrdana is present there and it endows a person with the power of going to Viṣṇuloka (Viṣṇulokagatipradām). According to Vāmana 63.4 Viṣṇu seated on Garuda is generally worshipped in Vārāha tīrtha (Vārāhe Garudāsanām). In Varāha Purāṇa
Lord Varaha declares, on the fourteenth and twelfth lunar days of the month, he assumes four forms each made of gold and abides in the Varaha tirtha at Mathura. Both Padma (A.S.S.) I.20.71 and Matsya 192.76 hold that in Varaha tirtha the great Lord Visnu is adored and worshipped in the form of a boar. In keeping with the Puranic tradition the Narasimha refers to the worship of Visnu as upholding the Earth at Varaha tirtha (Varaha dharaṇidharam 65.16). Besides the Narasimha also refers to it as a sub-tirtha under Sahyamalaka (66.34).

(26) DEVADĀRUVANA

Kane says that Devadāruvana is the same as Dāruvana.32 Kūrma II.37.99 refers to its location on the auspicious peak of Himavat (śrīge Himavataḥ subhe Devadāruvanam). Again the same text states, the sacred Devadāru forest is inhabited by Siddhas and Gandharvas (II.36.49); resorted to by Mahēdeva it is also worth visiting by the Brahmins (II.36.56). According to Matsya(13.47) the goddess worshipped in Devadāruvana is called Pusti. Among all other tirthas Padma(A.S.S. VI.129.27) refers to Devadāruvana as a holy and sacred place. The redactor of Narasimha speaks of the adoration of 'Guhyā' in this holy forest (Devadāruvane Guhyām 65.16).

(27) **Káverí**

Káverí is one of the rivers of Deccan. According to Kúrma (I.45.35), Vámana (13.30) and Varáha (35.L.34) along with the rivers Godávari, Bhiráthi, Krsna, Tungabhadrá and Súprayogá etc., Káverí issues forth from the Sahya mountain. The holiness and sanctity of this river has been maintained in the Purána texts. Kúrma affirms that Káverí is a big sacred river full of pure and placid water; it is destroyer of all sins, with due observance of fast either for one night or three nights if a person offers libations of water to the manes after taking a dip in this river, he is absolved of all his sins (II.36.16, II.38.40). The Narasimha refers to the worship of Lord Visnú sleeping on the bed of serpent (Ananta) on the bank of the river Káverí (Káverâyám nájasâyinam 65.16).

(28) **Prayağá**

The greatness of Prayağá has been dealt with in the Mahábhárata (III. Vanaparvan 83.65-80, 85.13-14, XIII.

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33. Pavitra-salilā pujyá Káverí vipulā nadi /
Tasyāṁ snātvodakam kṛtvā mucyate sarvapātakain /
Triratropo-sitenātha ekaratrośitena vā //
K.P. II.36.16

Káverí nāma vipulā nadi kalmaśanāśini /
K.P. II.33.40
Anusissna 26.35-36) and in Purāna-texts like the Matsya (Chs.102-111), Kurma (I.Chs.34-37), Padma (A.S.S. I.Chs. 40-49) and Skanda (IV. Kāśīkhandā Ch.7.45-65). Prayāja is called 'tīrtharāja' in Matsya (108.15) and Skanda (IV. Kāśī Ch.7.45). Padma VI.23.27-35 refers to this holy place where the refrain at the end of each verse is "sa tīrtharājo jayati Prayājah". Both Matsya (Ch.103.5, 110.14) and Kurma (I.34.20) proclaim that it is the sacred ksetra of Prajāpati; a dip in this holy place enables people to attain heaven and death here prevents them from re-birth.

The word 'Prayāja' has been derived in many ways. Mahābhārata (III Vanaparvan 85.14) suggests that it is derived from the root 'yaj'. It says: Pitāmaha Brahma formerly performed a sacrifice here; therefore it came to be known as Prayāja. Skanda Purāna takes two parts - 'pra' and 'yāga' separately and explains that it is called Prayāja since it is superior to all sacrifices, (prakrstam sarvayāgebhyaḥ Prayāgamiti gīyate Sk.P.IV, Kāśī Ch.7.49). Mahābhārata (III.33.74) and Matsya (Ch.109.11) hold that because it prevails far more in contrast to all other tīrthas, it is

34. Etat Prajāpateh kṣetraṁ triṣu lokeṣu viśrutam /
Atra snatva divam yānti ye mṛtaste'punarbhavah //
M.P. 103.5, K.P.I.34.20
called Prayāga. Vāmana 63.14 speaks of yogāśāyin form of Lord Visnu at Prayāga. The Narasimha refers to the worship of 'Yoāmūrti' at this holy place (65.17).

(29) PAYOŚṆI

According to the texts such as Matsya (Ch.113.27-28), Brahma (Ch.27.33-34), Kūrma (I.45.33-34), Vāmana (13.28-29) and Varāha (85,L,30) along with the rivers Tāpi, Kumudvatī, Vaitaranī etc., Payosṇi issues out of the foot of Vindhya range; full of holy and pure waters it is sacred and auspicious. Vāmana 63.7 refers to the adoration of Akhanda form of Lord Visnu on the bank of the river Payosṇi. And the Narasimha too speaks of the worship of Lord Sudarśana on its bank (Payosṇyaṁ Sudarśanam-65.17).

(30) KUMARA

Padma (A.S.S.) I, Ādiṇḍaka 38.61 alludes to it. Brahmanda II,13.36 says, by taking a dip in Kumāratartha

35. Prayāgah sarva tīrthebhyaḥ prabhavati adhikam vibho /

Mbh. III.33.74

Prabhavat sarva tīrthebhyaḥ prabhavati adhikam vibho /

M.P. 109.11
one attains heaven. Vāmana refers to the adoration of 
Kārtikeya image in Kumāradhāra (Ch.57.46, Ch.63.16). The 
Narasimha speaks of Kaumāra as worshipped in Kumāratīrtha 
(Kumāratīrthe Kaumāram - 65.17).

(31) LOHITA

Lohita is identified with the river Brahmaputra. Mbh.XIII 
Anuśāsana parvan 151.16 refers to Lohitya (Lohityasyaśca 
mahānadaḥ). Kūrma (I.45.28) Vāmana (13,22) and Varāha 
(85,L.20)uniformly maintain that along with the rivers Gomati, 
Dhūtapāpā, Kauśīkī and Drśadvatī the river Lohitā issues out 
of the foot of Himalayas. The Narasimha refers to the 
adoration of Hayagrīva in the region around Lohita (Lohite 
Hayasīrṣakam - 65.17).

(32) UJJAYINI

This is modern Ujjaini in Madhya Pradesh. Ujeni finds 
mention in the Dhaulī first separate Rock Edict of Asoka 
(C.I.I. Vol.I.,p.93). It is famous for the shrine of 
Mahākāla, one of the twelve jyotir-līñgas and is situated

36. Kaumāram ca sarah punyam nāgabhogābhiraksitam / 
Kumāratīrthe snātvā tu tridivaṃ yāti mānavaḥ //

Bd.P. II.13.86
on the bank of the river Siprā. Kālidāsa immortalises it in the Meghadūta and Rāghuvamsā (VI.32-35). The Narasimha speaks of the worship of Lord Trivikrama at Ujjayinī (65.18).

(33) BHADRĀ

According to Viṣṇu (II. 2.34), Kūrma (I.44.29), Varāha (82.L.8) and Bhāgavata (V.17.5) the river Ganges issuing from the feet of Viṣṇu is divided into four streams and Bhadrā is one of them the other three being Sītā, Alakānandā, Caksu or Sucaksu. Vāmana (25.52) refers to it. Varāha (83.L.19) refers to the river Bhadrā. The Narasimha text speaks of the worship of Harihara on the bank of river Bhadrā.

(34) KURUKŚETRA

Kurukśetra is 25 miles east of Ambala. Cunningham notes that Kurukśetra was 30 miles to the south of Ambala and 40 miles to the north of Panipat (Vide A.S., R. Vol.XIV, p.86-106). According to Vāmana Purāṇa (Ch.23.24-25, 27,33) when king Kuru, the son of Saṃvarana ploughed the land there with the help of a golden plough, it was known by the name of Kurukśetra. Kuru is said to have asked of Lord Viṣṇu the boon that the territory he ploughed might be called Dharmakśetra and those who may take a dip or die there, may
attain high religious merit. \textsuperscript{37} Visnu Purāṇa (IV.19.75-77) testifies to it. \textsuperscript{38} Nāradeśa Purāṇa (II.64.6-7) speaks of Kurukṣetra known as Brahmāvarta which lies in between the rivers Sarasvatī and Dravadvatī. It is here at this spot that the great Bhārata war between Kurus and Pāдвās was fought. In the introductory verse of the Bhagavad-Gītā it is spoken of as 'Dharmakṣetra'. Without giving any information about Kurukṣetra the Narasimha text only speaks of the particular divinity - Visvarūpa as worshipped here (65.19).

(35) \textbf{MANIKUNDA}

In course of describing Śūtasvāmin tīrtha Varāha (146.52-55) refers to another secret but famous place called Manikunda. Here gems (manayo) are found hoarded in many an abode. The lake is fathomless, it is difficult of access for the gods. The very wonder of the place is that when some gems are mobile, others are stationary (manayāsc ca calācalāḥ -53). By taking a dip here, endowed with royal characteristics

\begin{verbatim}
37. Yāvad etat maya kaśtam dharmakṣetram tadastu ca /
   Snātānāṁ mṛtānāṁ ca mahāpuniyaphalam tviha //
   Vām.P.23.33

38. Tasya samvaranah/75/Samvaranat Kuruh/76/
   Ya idam dharmakṣetram Kurukṣetram cakāra/77/
   Visnu IV.19.75-77
\end{verbatim}
a person becomes the recipient of gems. Besides devoted to the worship of Lord if somebody gives up his life here, free from the fetters of samsāra he goes to the abode of Lord. Without giving any information as regards Manikunda, the redactor of Narasimha speaks of only Halāyudha as worshipped here {65,19).

(36) **AYODHYĀ**

The A.V. (X.2.31) and T.A. (I.27.3) refer to it. According to Mbh. III 57.22-23, 68.2-3 it was the capital of king Rtuparna. Rāmāyana(I Balakāṇḍa Ch.5,5-7) states, in the principality of Kośala there was the world-renowned city Ayodhyā founded by Manu, the ruler of mankind. That great and glorious city is twelve 'yojanas' long and three 'yojanas' wide. Skanda Purāṇa(II Vaisṇavakhaṇḍa 8. Ayodhyāmahātmya) deals with Ayodhyā in ten chapters. It is meant for the glorification of the city of Ayodhyā. It is situated on the bank of the holy river Sarayū (Ayodhyāmahātmya Ch.I.30-31). The three letters 'a', 'ya' and 'dha' of Ayodhyā symbolise Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Rudra respectively. According to Skanda IV. Kāṣīkhaṇḍa 6.68, 23.7 and Naradiya I.27.35(referred to earlier p.316Footnote 11).

39. 'a'kāra Brahma ca proktam 'ya'kāra Viṣṇur ucyate /
'dha'kāra Rudrarūpasca 'Ayodhyā' nāma rājate //

Sk.P.II, Vaisṇavakhaṇḍa 8
Ayodhyāmahātmya 1.60
Ayodhyā is one of the seven ancient holy cities which provide salvation to the world. The Narasimha refers to the worship of Lokanātha at Ayodhyā (65.19).

(37) KUNĐINA

In Vāmana 57,57 there is reference to Prahlāda's visit to Kundina tīrtha (tatasca Kundinām gatvā sampūjya prānātṛptidam). Vāmana 63,24 also mentions that in Kundina tīrtha there is worshipped Ghrānatarpana form of the Lord (Kundinē Ghrānatarpanam). The Narasimha text speaks of the adoration of Kundinēsvara in Kundina tīrtha (Kundinē Kundinēsvaram - 65.19).

(33) BHĀNDĪRĀ

According to Varāha (151.46–47) and Naradiya (II.79.17) this is one of the twelve forests in Mathurā. Varāha 154.3–4

40. Kāśī Kāntī ca Māyākhya tv Ayodhyā Dvāravatyapi /
Mathur Āvantikā caitāh saptapuraś'tra mokṣadāh //
Sk.P. IV. Kāśikhandā 6.68

Kāncy Āvantī Dvāravati Kāsy Ayodhyā ca paṁcamī /
Māyāpurī ca Mathurā puryāḥ sapta vimuktidāh //
Sk.P.IV. Kāśikhandā 23.7

Kane identifies Māya or Māyāpurī with Haridvāra, Āvantikā with Ujjayānī and Kāntī stands for Kancī (vide H.D. Vol.IV. p.673).
provides lovely description about this forest. It is full of teak and palm trees, it abounds in Tamāla, Arjuna, In̄guda, Piluka and Karīra trees laden with red flowers. In holiness Bhāndīra is equal to Kuruksetra (Varāha 166.13). If somebody visits this excellent forest and beholds Lord Vāsudeva there, he does not suffer from the pains of rebirth (Varāha 151.47). The redactor of Narasimha only refers to the adoration of Vāsudeva at Bhāndāra tīrtha (Bhāndāre Vāsudevaṁ tu 65.20).

(39) CAKRA TĪRTHA

Varāha Purāṇa (Ch.137.19-20) speaks of Cakra tīrtha as the place where the wheel (of Lord Viṣṇu) has been stationed. According to Brahma (Ch.109.2) Cakra tīrtha is so called because Lord Viṣṇu propitiated Lord Śiva here and got back his discus. Another version of Brahma (Ch.134) relates a story that when the seven sages like Vāsiśṭha and others were engaged in performing a sacrifice, some ferocious demons put obstacles in their undertaking. In consequence

41. Bhāndīraya samanupṛṣṭya vaṇānaṁ vaṇaṁ uttamaṁ //
   Vāsudevaṁ tato drṣṭvā punar janma na vidyate //

   Var. P. 151.47

42. Cakra tīrtham mahābhāge yatra cakram pratiśthitam /
the seers took refuge with Visnu who killed the demons with his discus and saved them. From that time onwards the place is known as Cakra tirtha (tatāh prabhṛti tat tirtham cakratirtham udāhṛtam - 15). Vām. P. refers to Cakra tirtha several times (7.37, Saromāhātmya 21.5, Saromāhātmya 22.11, 31.89 and 55.3). The Narasimha speaks of the adoration of a particular divinity—Sudarśana at Cakra tirtha (65.20).

(40) SŪKARA

The Pādma (VI 121.6-14) refers to a tīrtha called Sūkara. The Nār. P. (II.40.31) places Saukara tīrtha under Gaṅgā and mentions that Acyuta (Visnu) formerly appeared there in the form of Varāha. Nār. P. II.60.22 refers to a Sūkara tīrtha under Purusottama. It appears that this Sūkara tīrtha is the same as Saukaratirtha. Reference to Sūkara tīrtha is found in Varāha 174.69-70. Saukaraka also finds mention in Varāha 150.22. Vāmana 63.19 says, Lord Visnu in the form of upholding the earth is worshipped on the Sūkara mountain (ksmādharam Sūkarācāla). The Narasimha alludes to the worship of Lord Sūkara at Sūkara tīrtha (65.20).

43. Tīrthaṇca Saukaram nāma mahāpunyam śubhe śrnu / Yasmin āvirbhūtapuryam Vārāhāktir Acyutah //

Nār. P. II.40.31
critical

44. K. Damodaran Nambiar - Nārada Purāṇa - A/study, p.450.
(41) MĀNASA

According to Brahmanda (I.18.15) and Matsya (120.16-17) it is Mānasarovara in the Himalayas. It is resorted to by the Siddhas. Mbh. III, Vana 30.12 refers to it. Matsya 106.2 says, on the northern bank of river Ganges there lies the sacred Mānasa tīrtha where by observing a three days' fast a person attains all his desires. In speaking of the origin of Mānasa tīrtha Varāha 152.20-21 mentions, to the west of Mathurā lies a celebrated tīrtha, ever honoured by the sages and created mentally by Brahmā at the time of creation. It is called Mānasa. Those who take a dip there, attain heaven while those who die there are free from rebirth.

In Vāmana 63.1 Lord Himself declares that His first appearance is Matsya which exists in the Mānasa lake (ādyam Mātsyām)

45. Mānasam nāma tat tīrtham Gaṇgāya uttare taṭe //
Trirātropāśito bhūtvā sarva kāmān avāpnyāt //
M.P.106.2

46. Mathurā paścime pārśve satatam ṛṣipūjitam /
Brahmana śṛṣṭikāle tu manasa nirmitam purā //
Mānasam nāma tīrtham tu ................. /
Tatra snātva divaṃ yānti ye mṛtās te'punarbhava //
Var. P. 152.20-21
mahadrūpam samśhitam Mānase hrade). Without going to the
details of Mānasa tīrtha. The Narasimha speaks of the adora-
tion of a particular divinity-Brahmesa here (Brahmesa
Mānase tīrthe - 65.21).

(42) DANDAKA

Rāmāyana(VII.72) and Padma (A.S.S. V.34.5-59) refer to
the origin of Dandaka forest. Once in the hermitage of sage
Sukra-cārya king Danda (the youngest son of Iksvāku of Solar
race) felt passionate at the sight of her daughter Arajā
and forcibly seduced her. The sage cursed the king and within
a period of seven days the whole of his kingdom along with its
army and retinue got ruined. From that time onwards the
kingdom of Danda stretching from Vindhya range to Śaivala
mountain is known as Dandakāranya. Varāha(71.10-11) says,
in Dandaka forest sage Gautama practised very rigorous
penance and secured boons from Lord Brahmā. Nārada (I.79.17)
states that Lord Śrī Rāma visited this forest. According to

47. Tasyāsaṁ Daṇḍavisayoc Vindhyo Śaivala sānuṣu /
Sapto Brahmāśiṁa tena purā vaidharmake kṛte //
Tataḥ prabhṛti kākutstha Daṇḍakāraṇyaṁ ucyate /

Rām. VII.72.17-18
Padma, A.S.S. V.34.53-59
Vāmana, Saromāhātmya 14.45 a mere sight of Dandaka forest sanctifies the devotees. The Narasimha refers to the worship of Śyāmala in Dandaka forest (65.21).

(43) TRIKŪṬA

Padma (A.S.S.) VI. Uttarakhanda 129.16 refers to the temple of Viṣṇu on the mount Trikūṭa (Trikūṭe Viṣṇumandiram). Bhāgavata(VIII.2.1–2) describes Trikūṭa as a great and splendid mountain encircled by the milk-ocean. It shines with its three peaks of silver, iron and gold. It is ten thousand yojanaś high and has a diameter of same length. Kane says that the mountain Trikūṭa as depicted in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa seems to be mythical (H.D. Vol. IV, p.313). According to Vāmana(58.4) Trikūṭa is the son of Sumeru, the king of mountains. Besides Vāmana also refers to Cakrapāṇi and Iśvara forms of Lord Viṣṇu as existent on the peak of Trikūṭa (Trikūṭa śikhare..Cakrapānim Iśvaram - 63.29).

The Narasimha speaks of the worship of Nāgamokṣa on the summit Trikūṭa (Trikūṭe Nāgamokṣam - 65.21).

48. Punāti darśanād eva Daṇḍakām ca dvijottamaḥ / 
Vām.P., Saromāhātmya 14.45

49. Sarvaratnamayaḥ śrīman Trikūṭo nāma parvataḥ / 
Sutaḥ parvatarājasya Sumeror bhāskaradyuteḥ // 
Vām.58.4
In chapter IV dealing with Puranic cosmography Meru has been discussed vividly (pp. 289-292). According to most of the Puranas, the golden mount Meru stands in the centre of Jambudvipa. On the surface of earth it is 84,000 yojanas high, the depth is 16,000 yojanas, the diameter on the surface of the earth is 16,000 and the diameter on the summit is 32,000 yojanas. Including the city of Brahmā the Puranas make a mention of nine cities in and around the mount Meru. The Narasimha Purāṇa gives a similar account about the position of mount Meru and location of cities on it (Ch. 30). Besides the same chapter of the Narasimha speaks of three peaks on the summit Meru where twenty one heavens are said to have existed.

Apart from this geographic reference to mount Meru Nāradīya (II.67.69) alludes to a tīrtha called Meru under Badarī where worship of Dhanurdhara is considered auspicious. In Ch. 65.21 the Narasimha refers to the adoration of Bhāskara on the summit of Meru (Meruprśthē tu Bhāskaram).


52. Merutīrtham ca tatāṃsti yatra dṛṣṭvā Dhanurdharam / Snātvā ca labhate sofpi 'subhe sarvān manorathān // Nar.P.II.67.69
According to Varāha 51.2 and 97.5 on the northern ridge of the Himalayas there flows the sacred river Puṣpabhadrā on the bank of which there is the splendid rock named Citraśilā. Bhāgavata (XII.3.17 and XII.9.10) refers to the hermitage of famous sage Mārkandeya on the bank of river Puṣpabhadrā where he is said to have been deeply engaged in penance. The Narasimha text speaks of the worship of Viraja on the river-bank of Puṣpabhadrā (Virajam Puṣpabhadrāyām - 65.22).

This is modern river Beas in Punjab (Kane, H.D.IV.p.821). According to Kūrma (I.45.27-29) and Varāha (85.1.17-19) Viṃśā has its origin from the foot of the Himalayas. There is a story as to why this river is called Viṃśā. Once Vasistha very much grief-stricken due to loss of his sons bound him with ropes and threw him into it, but instead of dying there he rose from the waters with ropes rent asunder (vi-pāśa). The Hirukta IX.26 explaining RV.X.75.5 refers to it. Mbh.Cr. Edn. too refers to it several times.53 Varāha 13.48 says,


śrī rāmāṃ Viṃśā ca nadiḥ parama pāvani /
Atraiva putraśokena Vasistho bhagavān rṣi /

Cont'd.
all evils are warded off if one devotedly worships after taking a dip in Vipāśā. Vāmana 63.4 holds that Dvījapriya form of Lord Viṣṇu is adored in the vicinity of river Vipāśā. Without giving any information about this river the Narasimha refers to the worship of Yaśaskara on its bank (Yaśaskaram Vipāśāyām 65.22).

(47) MĀHISMATI

The most important place on the bank of the river Narmadā is Māhismatī about whose exact location scholars have differed. The general opinion is that Māhismatī is to be identified with Omkāra Māndhātā, an island in the Narmadā about 40 miles south of Indore. It has a long history. In Buddhist works during the reign of Asoka (about 247 B.C.) Mogaliputta Tissa

Cont'd.

Baddhva Ātmānaṁ nipatito vipāśa punar utthitah //

Mbh. III Vana, 130.3-9

Tathaiva ... baddhva Vasisthaḥ salile puraḥ /

Ātmānaṁ majjayamāsa vipāśaḥ punar utthitah /

Tadā prabhṛti punyā hi vipāś ābhūn mahānadi /

Mbh. XIII Anuśāsana, 3.12-13

is said to have sent missionaries to several countries, one of whom was sent to Mahisamandala. In his paper "Mahisamandala and Mahismatī" Dr. Fleet puts forth cogent reasons for identifying Mahisamandala with Mahismatī (J.R.A.S. 1910, pp.425-447). Mahismatī is known to Mahābhāṣya of Patañjali. The Rāghuvaṃsa VI.43 speaks of Mahismatī as the capital of Anjōpa on the bank of the Revā (i.e., Narmadā). Mahismatī is mentioned as situated on the bank of the Narmadā or Revā in Mbh. V. Udyoga-19.23, 163.4; Bhāg. P. X.79.21 and Padma (A.S.S.) II.92.32. Vāmana (39.137) and Varāha (94.4) refer also to the city of Mahismatī. Without giving any information as regards Mahismatī the Narasimha speaks of the worship of 'hutāsana' (Fire-god) in this city (65.22).

(43) KŚĪRĀBDHĪ

In describing the geography of the earth the Purāṇa-texts refer to 'KŚīrābdhī' or the milk-ocean. It is one of the seven oceans, the other six being the ocean of salt-water (lavana), of sugar-cane-juice (ikṣu), of wine (sūra), of clarified butter (sarpis), of curds (dadhi), of fresh and pure water (svāduda). The Purāṇas generally speak of

Lord Visnu withdrawing the whole universe into Himself at the time of dissolution and taking to 'yogādāra' on the couch of serpent Ananta in the midst of vast limitless milk-ocean. There from the navel of the Lord thus absorbed in 'yogādāra' springs out a lotus from which the four-faced Brahmā takes his birth. In giving an account of Lord's guhya names and the respective abodes, the Narasimha (65.23) refers to the adoration of 'Padmanābha' (the lotus-navelled god) in the milk-ocean. No doubt the milk-ocean is holy and auspicious because it is connected with Lord Visnu. But it is not a place of pilgrimage like Prabhāsā, Prayāga, Kuruksetra or Kokāmyukha whose existence is attested to in the different texts. So it is difficult to give credence to ksirābdi though the Narasimha text enumerates it along with Mathurā, Dvārakā and etc.

(49) VIMALA

According to Mbh. (III.80.103-104) and Padma (I.24.35-36) Vimala is a holy place where even today silver and golden coloured fish are found. A person taking his dip there is

cleansed of all sins and gets the fruit of instituting a Vājapeya sacrifice. Kane says that it is a famous spring near Martanda temple in Kāśmīra (H.D. Vol. IV, p.321). The Narasimha text alludes to the worship of Sanātana at this place (Vimale tu Sanātana - 65.23).

(50) SIVANADI

Varāha (173.11) refers to Śivanadī and Kūrma (I.47.21) refers to river Śiva. Vāmana (13.23-29) says, Śiva is an auspicious river of holy water. It has its origin from the Vindhya range. The Narasimha text refers to the worship of Lord Śiva on the bank of the river Śiva (Sivanadyām Śivakaram - 65.23).

(51) GAYA

In Indian religious history Gayā is a unique place of pilgrimage. Hundreds of pages have been written about its

59. Tato gaccheta dharmajñā Vimalam tīrtham uttamam /
   Adyāni yatra drīyante masyāḥ sauvarṇa rājataḥ //
   Tatra snātvā naraśrestha Vājapeyam avānuyāt /
   Sarvapāpa visūddhātmā gacchecca paramām gatim //

Mbh. III. Vana, 30.103-104;
Padma (A.S.S.,) I. Ādihānda 24.35-36.
antiquities. A good number of Purāṇas contain Gayā-māhātmya 59, but the Gayā-māhātmya of Vāyu Purāṇa consisting of 8 chapters (II. Uttarārddha Chs.43-50) is the most important of all. Vāyu II,43 gives a short summary of Gayāsura legend and Ch.44 treats this topic in detail: "Gayāsura practised severe austerities for thousands of years on the mountain Kolāhala. Tormented by his austerities the gods approached Brahmā, Śiva and Viṣṇu one after another for help. Lastly with the advice of Viṣṇu all of them went to Gayāsura and asked the demon to seek a boon. Gayāsura solicited that his body might be rendered extremely pure and everybody should be released just by merely seeing him or touching his body. The gods assented to his prayer and left for the heaven. Now all people who saw or touched Gayāsura’s holy body attained the celestial abode. The kingdom of Yama became deserted and so he went to Brahmā who took him to Viṣṇu. Viṣṇu asked Brahmā to request Gayāsura to give his pure body for the purpose of a sacrifice. Gayāsura agreed and lay upon the earth. Brahmā collected materials and performed a sacrifice on the body of Gayāsura. That body however was not stable but was moving. With the mace (gada) of Hari the demon was made stable and from that time onwards Hari was called 'Ādijadādhara’ there. The gods further

asked Gayāsura to choose another boon of his choice. Gayāsura prayed that the sacred spot would be named after him and all the divinities including Brahmā, Visnū and Śiva should perpetually reside there. "Thus the holy place called Gayā came into existence.

Both Agni (Ch.114) and Garuda (I,Ch.82) too allude to the legend of Gaya. In Vamana (Ch.63,9) Lord Himself proclaims that Gopati Gadāpani is His form that exists in Gayā. Without giving any account of Gayāsura the Narasimha text simply speaks of the adoration of Gadādhara in Gayā (Gayāyām ca Gadādharam - 65,23).

(52) ARBUDA

This is mount Abu in the Aravali range in the Sirohi State. It is one of the five sacred hills of the Jainas, the other four being Satrunjaya, Samet, Sikhara, Girnar and Candraśīvī. 61 Agni 109.10 and Matsya 22.33 refer to it.


According to MBH, III, Vana, 30.74-75 and Padma (A,S,S.,) I.24.4-5 there was the hermitage of sage Vasistha in the vicinity of Arbuda, by staying there for a night only the devotee acquires the fruit of making a gift of hundred cows. In Ch.66.3 along with other places of importance the Narasimha enumerates it as a holy place of pilgrimage.

(53) BRAHMAGIRI

There is reference to Brahmagiri in Brahma (94.2). In speaking of the origin of mountain Brahmagiri Brahma (74.22-27) further says: once when there was no rain continuously for twelve years, except the hermitage of sage Gautama the whole universe consisting of both animate and inanimate beings got destroyed. At this Brahma desirous of creating performed a sacrifice on the mountain Devayajana and from that time onwards that holy mountain came to be known as Brahmagiri. Gautama continued to live there in his hermitage in the vicinity of Brahmagiri and no fear of drought or famine, poverty or privation disease or pestilence
affected him. According to Padma (A.S.S. VI. 176,58-61) this is mountain Brahmagiri from which issues forth river Godāvari. Sāne Gautama has his hermitage adjacent to it. By taking a dip in the river Godāvari and drinking its water a person is released from the sin of Brahmin-murder (tatra snātvā ca pitvā ca brahmahatyā vilīyate - 176,60). Besides just at the sight of Brahmagiri with all its numerous holy places people free from all worldly sufferings attain liberation. The Narasimha 66.4 simply refers to the existence of many sacred spots on the slopes of Brahmagiri.

(54) VIRAJĀ TīRTHA

It is situated on the bank of the river Vaitaranī in Orissa. This tīrtha is named after the goddess Virajā, the presiding deity of the place. The earliest reference to it is found in the Āraṇyaka Parvan of the Mahābhārata. In course of enumerating the different sacred places, the redactor of Mahābhārata refers to the river Vaitaranī and the Viraja tīrtha on its bank. In the later part of Vāyu (II. Uttarārdha 43.22,41;44.35) along with Nābhikūpa (presently called Nābhigayā) Viraja tīrtha and the river


64. Tato Vaitarānīṃ gatvā nadīṃ pāpa-nirmocanīṃ / Virajām tīrtham āsādyā virajāti yathā sāṣī //

Mbh. III. Vana 33.6, Cf. Padma I, Ādi 39.6.
Vaitaranī too find mention. The Brahmanda (II.13.57), Padma (A.S.S. I. 45,28-29) and Vāmana (57.9) refer to Viraja tīrtha. Padma speaks of it as an ēditya tīrtha. The Brahma Purāṇa (Ch.42.1-12) gives a glowing description of Viraja tīrtha, river Vaitaranī and the goddess Virajā. A devotee paying a visit to goddess Virajā in this tīrtha, purifies himself along with seven generations of his dead ancestors. Vāmana further holds, Virajā is the southern Vedi of Brahma capable of conferring limitless merit on the devotee (Virajā daksinā Vedi anantaphalāyini - 23.19). Without giving any such details the Narasimha only refers to Viraja tīrtha as one that destroys all sins (Virajam ca tathā tīrtham sarvapāpakṣayamkaram - 66.5).

(55) ŚAṆKHATĪRTHA

Varāha 144.63 refers to Śaṅkhaprabha tīrtha where at midnight of the twelfth lunar day, there is heard a loud sound of the conch-shell. Vāmana 63.31 alludes to the

65. Virajē Virajā mātā brahmāṇī sampratisthita
Yasyāḥ samādarsanat martyah punātyāsotaman kulaṃ
Br. P. 42.1

66. Tatra Śaṅkhaprabham nāma guhya kṣetram param mama/
Śaṅkhasābdam śrṇod bhīma mama rātre tu dvādaśīṃ
Var. P. 144.63
worship of Śaṅkhin form of Lord Visnu at Śaṅkhoddhāra tīrtha. Nārādīya (II.76.15) says, by taking a dip in Śaṅkhātīrtha a person avoids all misfortunes. According to Narasimha 66.23 a dip in Śaṅkhā tīrtha endows a person with the fruits of performing a Vaijapeya sacrifice.

(56) R Namocana Tīrtha

The concept of three debts has an important place in Hindu mythology. During one's life-time one has to pay off three debts: debt to gods, debt to sages and debt to manes. According to the scriptures by the performance of sacrifices (yajñena), by study of the Vedas (brahmacaryena) and by producing the offsprings (prajayā) a person becomes free from these debts.

When the idea of tīrthas attained prominence, the redactors of Purāṇas conceived the idea of a Rnamocana tīrtha (a holy or sacred place for paying off the debt).

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67. Śaṅkhātīrthe tu sāmsnāto na naro dvāratīp vrajet/

Nār. P. II.76.15

68. Rnamocanam āsādyā tīrtham...

Rnair mukto bhaven nityam devarśiptrsambhavaih

Vām. P. Saromāhātmya 20.6

Rṇātīrtham tato gacchet sa rṇāt mucyate dhruvam /

K.P. II.39.19

Rṇatrayāt vimucyante yatra snātā narottamāh /

Tīrtham viṣuddhijanakam tad etat Rṇamocanam //

Sk.P. IV. Kaśīkhanda Ch.33.117
Rnamocana (also Rnapramocana) tīrtha has been referred to in Purāṇa-texts in different contexts. Both Matsya (106.20-21) and Kurma (I.36.14-15) locate this tīrtha in the north of the river Yamunā and in the south of sacred Prayāga. People who stay there for a night and take a dip in this holy place, become free from the debts and attain heaven or the region of the Sun. The Narasimha (66.23-29a) too repeats the same idea when it states that by staying for three nights and taking a dip in Rnamocana tīrtha, one is sure to be released from the three debts.

(57) PĀPAMOCANA TĪRTHA

According to Varāha (140.57) it is a holy place under Kokāmukha. Agni (116.8) and Nāradīya (II.47.79) call it Pāpamoksa whereas Padma (A.S.S.I.31.15) and Brahma (Ch.92) take it to be Pāpapraṇāśana tīrtha. Padma refers to Pāpapraṇāśana tīrtha on the banks of river Yamunā. Brahma narrates as to how a mother and her son without recognising each other in course of their secret love commit sins and they are released from their heinous crime in consequence of their bath in the river Gautami. Thence that particular

69. Br. P. Ch.99; M. P. Ch.22.67; Nār. P. II.63,98-99
spot is known as Dhautapāpa or Pāpapraṇāšana. In speaking of Pāpa-vināśana tīrtha Nārada (II.76.7b-8a) says: by taking a dip in this holy tīrtha a person becomes absolved of all his (or her) sins and he (or she) is adored in the heaven.70 The Narasimha (67.31) too repeats the same idea when it says that by staying there for five nights and taking dip on the respective days a person, free from sins rejoices in the world of Viṣṇu.

(58) ĀKĀŚAGANgó

Agni (116.5) and Nārada (II.47.22) place it under Gaya. Both these texts describe it as a place fit for Śrāddha. Narasimha (66.35) takes it to be a sub-tīrtha of Āmalaka on the peak of mountain Sahya.

(59) KURUJĀNGALA

According to Kurma (II.36.34) Kurujāṅgala is a holy place inhabited by the Brahmins. By making gifts there in the prescribed manner one is adored in the world of Brahmā.71

70. Tatāh samprāpya śubhage tīrtham Pāpa-vināśanam //
Snātva nirdhūta pāpo' sau narah svarge mahīyate //
Nār. P. II. 76.7b-8a

71. Tīrtham dvijātibhirjūṣtaṁ nāmnā vai Kurujāṅgalam /
Dattvā tu dānam vidhivad Brahmaloke mahīyate //

K. P. II. 36.34
Both Matsya (21.9,28) and Bhājavata (III.1.24, X.86.20) allude to Kurujāṅgala country. Vāmana (57.40-42) states that after visiting Kotītīrtha Prahlāda proceeds to Kurujāṅgala tīrtha where he worships the great Lord Śiva, the consort of Pārvatī. Vāmana further holds, stāṇu form of the Lord is adored in Kurujāṅgala tīrtha (Sthānagala - 63.17). In speaking of various forms and abodes of the Lord, the Narasimha refers to Kurujāṅgala only as a holy and sacred place(44.44).

(60) SAHYA

In describing the geography of the earth the Purāṇa-texts refer to seven principal mountain ranges of India (kula-parvatāḥ). Sahya is one of them the other six being Mahendra, Malaya, Suktimat, Rksa, Vindhya and Pāriyātra. In keeping with this tradition of the Mahāpurāṇas the Narasimha (30.3) too repeats the same idea. On the other hand the Purāṇa-texts also speak of Sahya as an important place of pilgrimage and its holiness is attested to by them. According to Matsya (13.40) the goddess worshipped on the Sahyādri is known as Ekavīrā. Brahmāṇda (II.56.22), Agni (109.21) and

72. A.P. II13.2-3; G.P. I.55.6; K.P. I.45.22; Br.P.19.3; Viṣṇu II. 3.3; S.P. V. Umāsamhitā 13.3.
Brahma (161.2) allude to it. In the same way Ch.66 (10ff.) of Narasimha glorifies Sahya mountain and refers to the presence of a number of tīrthas all over it. Many holy streams and rivers issue forth from Sahya and some twelve holy spots are found out particularly in the village Āmalaka situated on this mountain. They are namely Cakratīrtha, Saṅkhatīrtha, Kundikātīrtha, Ākāsa-gāmbī and so on. A devotee daily going on a pilgrimage to the holy Sahya mountain and taking a dip there in any of these tīrthas is cleansed of all his sins (Sahyādriṃ gatavān nityam snātvā pāṇāt pramucyate - 66.38). Besides he who daily takes a dip there and devotedly offers flowers etc. in honour of Visnu, cleansed of all sins in absorbed in the Lord (66.39).