CHAPTER VII
DHARMĀRANYA:
ORIGIN, GEOGRAPHY AND ANTIQUITY.

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

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

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

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

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

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

A.K. Forbes also writes, "The town of Modheyra is situated on a low hill or mound formed of the debris of brick buildings, and rising out of a level plain. The character of the country near it and the presence of the salt water creeks carried up from the Runn, suggest the probability of its having at a former time stood very near the edge of the sea, which once covered that tract. It is known in Jain legends as Modherpoor, or Modhbunk Puttun, and it gave its name to the caste of Brahmins called Modh."  

Modhera had lost its importance as a sea port after an earthquake and heavy down-pour in the eight century A.D. which resulted in the disappearance of the sea between Saurashtra, once an island, and the main land and the joining of the main land and the island. Its importance from the view-point of military strategy rose again in the period of the Solahkî dynasty of Anhilwad Patan.

It is said in one place that Dharmaranya is in Ṛṛyāvarta⁵(V.17), in another place in Brahmāvarta, the-

---

⁵The extent of Ṛṛyāvarta shifted from period to period; for the discussion see Kane P.V., HDS., Vol.II, pp.11 ff.
the tract between the rivers Sarasvatī and Drśadvatī on the southern bank of the Sarasvatī, and that the river Suvarṇā is not far from it. (XXVIII. 17-19). The assignment of Dharmāraṇya to Brahmāvarta appears to be a case of transplantation of the region mentioned in the Manusmṛti which describes it as situated in north-western part of India, to northern Gujarat, as it is clearly said that Dharmāraṇya is on the southern bank of the Sarasvatī (XXVIII. 18), which points to the present location of Dharmāraṇya or modern Modhera. Thus this Sarasvatī is by no means the Sarasvatī of the Rgvedic fame which is said to form the western boundary of Brahmāvarta but the Sarasvatī of Gujarat. The situation of Dharmāraṇya to the south of the river Sarasvatī of Gujarat is indicated by the fact that Vanarāja, after leaving Dharmāraṇya, took his abode on the northern bank of the river, 10 krosas away from Dharmāraṇya, and subsequently he founded Paṭṭanapura (modern Patan) on the southern bank of the river (LXVI. 74-75, 83). Modhera is at present about 18 miles south of Patan. The river Suvarṇā (modern Pusmavatī)

6 CF. M.S. II. 17.
7 Vide Law B.C. HGAI, pp. 30-31.
8 Law B.C., Ibid., p. 31.
which is said to have flowed near Dharmāranya is also to the south of the Sarasvati of Gujarat. (Photo. No. 18)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

10 Vide Patel Shivabhai, Ibid., p.61.
The Puranic Bhattarikā or Srīmātā and her location may be identified with the present temple of the goddess Bhattarikā at Modhera which is said to have been renovated from the old temple of Bhattarikā.\textsuperscript{11}(Photos Nos. 13, 27)

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

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

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{11} Patel Šivabhai, \textit{Ibid.}, p.61.
\item\textsuperscript{12} Parikh R.C. (ed.), \textit{Kāvyānuśāsana} by Hemachandra, Vol. II, Intro. P. CXV.
\item\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Ibid.}, Vol. II, Intro. p. LXXVII.
\end{itemize}
Elsewhere it is said that Sūrya, after having married Samjñā, told Brahmins of Moherakapura that the images of him and his wife in the beautiful temple constructed by Viśvakarman should be worshipped. (XVII. 57-60). He is said to have taken his abode in Satyamandira with Rājñī (XVII. 65).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

19 ASWI, IX. p. 71; Patel Shivabhai, Modhera Darshan (Guj.), p. 65.
Mokṣēśvara or Mukteśa: It is a Sivalinga erected by gods and Brahmā on the spot where Hayagrīva-Visnu practised penance for three hundred years till he obtained his original head back. (XV.29 ff.).

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

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

21 For the story accounting for the origin of Nāgakūpa see chapter V under "Serpent-worship."
dry up in that season. This pond may be identified with Utkata pond of the DP. near which Nāgakūpa was situated. However, there are no remains of ancient structure to confirm this identification. (Ph. No. 29)

Jayantēśvara22 (XXV. 42 ff.) : It is a Śivalīṅga erected following the boon granted to Indra by Śiva who was pleased with his (Indra's) penance at a place a krośa and a half to the north of the "sthāna". A kūnda called "Gāṁgākūnda" was also constructed there by Viśvākarma.

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

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

22. For the story accounting for the origin of the tīrtha see chapter VI under "Indra and Ahalyā."
may be the Jayanteśvara temple referred to in the Purāṇa and the village tank mentioned above may be the Gāṅgākunda of the Purāṇa.

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

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

About one kilometre to the south of Modhera village there is a shallow pond. The local people know it as "Dharai" which could be the corrupted form of Dhārākṣetra. A little distance to the south of this pond stands Modheśvara Mahādeva temple which wears a modern look. Besides a Śivalinga a small statue of Sūrya of old period was installed. Two stone figures of Nandi with their heads broken off were found not far away from the temple. They appear
to belong to an old period. Near the temple a pit was dug, and a large quantity of bricks of considerable size (about 1' 2" x 10") was found. These bricks seem to form the foundation of an old building. On the basis of the DP, it may be conjectured that Modhesvara-Mahadeva temple was built on a ruin of the temple of Sambhu Mahadeva of the Purana. Archaeological excavation may reveal more evidence. (Photos Ns. 32, 35, 34, 35)

Devamajjanaka tank (XXVII): The tank called Devamajjanaka is to the south of Moheraka (XXVII, 81). The tank came into existence at the spot where Siva fell to the ground unconscious by the influence of the mantras accomplished by ParvatI. It contains perspiration trickling out from Siva's body. The distance between the tank and the city Moheraka is not mentioned by the DP. It is, therefore, difficult to locate the tank. About one kilometre to the south of Modhera and about half a kilometre to the east of Modhesvara-Mahadeva temple there is an old tank nearly filled up, known locally as "BaUpurea". The DP. mentions that a man, who takes a bath in the Devamajjanaka tank and then worships Siva will be relieved from distress and obtain happiness. This suggests that there was a temple of Siva near the tank. Bricks of old period littered everywhere near the tank, may indicate that at one time there were buildings, probably temples. Devamajjanaka may be tentatively identified with this tank.
Suvarṇā river: The DP. describes that the river called Suvarṇā with golden coloured water flows past the northern portion of Dharmasthāna (=Dharmesvara or Moheraka). The river looks like a strip of gold therefore it is known also as Suvarṇarekha. It descended (from heaven) in the early yuga (XXVIII. 1-2).

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

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

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

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

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

The place of considerable note to the east of Modhera at a distance of seven krośas or the approximate equipment of 10 to 12 miles, can be placed at Dhinoj\textsuperscript{24} village which is about eight miles from Mehsana and five miles from Manund.\textsuperscript{25} There are remains of buildings, tanks, and step-wells of former times around Dhinoj, which speak of its antiquity.

To the south of Dhinoj is situated an old tank which may be identified with Gambhīra tank of the DP. Gambhīra tank is associated with the origin of Dhīnoja Moḍha Brahmins.\textsuperscript{26} The sages Vasiṣṭha, Sanaka, Bālakīya etc. are said to have practised penance at the Gambhīra tank and on the southern bank of the old tank mentioned above is situated the temple of Saptarṣi. These ṛṣis probably represent those mentioned by the DP. All this goes to support the identification.

\textsuperscript{24} Also Dhenuj (ASWI. IX. p.110)
\textsuperscript{25} Gazetteer of Baroda, Vol.II, p.610; ASWI., IX, p.110.
\textsuperscript{26} See Ch.II, Under "Dhinoja Moḍha Brahmins".
On the southern bank of the old tank there is an old temple ofVyāgṛesvarī goddess whose vehicle is the tiger. This goddess is probably identified with Kṣemalābhā of the DP. At present the temple is known as "Śrīkhamalāyamātā" temple. I was told by Mahārāj Devaprasad K. Nanak that the original name of the goddess was Kṣemakalyāṇī. According to D.B. Patel, the sarpanch of the village Khamalāyamātā was originally known as "Kṣemalābhā". Hence, it is probable that the name "Kṣemalābhā" is corrupted to "Khamalāya. We have no substantial evidence to identify the temples of Jambukesvara and Kubera. (Photos Nos. 36, 37, 38)

Origin of Kṣemalābhā (XXIX):

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

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

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

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

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

28 Cf. Karnatāksa, Ch. VI.
30 Cf. Bahavah caṛāḥ yasyāḥ sā bahucarī; bahucaritī bahucarā; bhaksayantī cara ṛāge tad uḍpannān mahāsurāṇ; bahūn (rākṣasāṇ) carati bhaksatīti (contd..)
be noted that in the worship of Bahucari, the flesh of goats, swines, rabbits, deers, buffalos and cocks is offered (XXIX. 79-80). Besides, intoxicating drinks also are used in the worship (XXIX. 67-68, 78-79). This indicates that elements of tantrism had penetrated into the cult. According to the Tantra Sāstra, pāñcātattva or pāñcāmākāra viz. madya (alcohol), māmsa (meat), mātsya (fish), and maithuna (sexual intercourse) is prescribed for worshipping the sakti. In former times flesh and liquor were acceptable to the Devī, and, as long as the worship remained with the Rajputs, Kamalias and similar non-Brahmanical classes, were among the daily offerings. These were the only officiating worshippers, it is said, till Samvat 1915 (A.D. 1859). Buffalos and goats were offered even in recent times on some special occasions.

The Bechraj worship is as old as 1152 A.D.

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

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

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

34. Ibid. p. 603. (Photo No. 40)
The Purānakāra seems to narrate the whole story to explain the derivation of the word "bahucarī," i.e. "drinking and eating heavily."

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

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

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

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

(2) Mahābalādevī (XXIII.45)

(3) Bharādī (XXIII.49)

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

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

(6) Chatradharā: She is at the distance of one kroṣa to north-west of Moherakapura (XXIII.53).
(7) Karna\(\text{k}a\) : She is at the distance of one krosa to the east of the city (of Moheraka). (XXIII.54).

(8) The goddesses of waters of various names to the south-west of Moheraka, on the bank of the Suvarn\(\text{a}\) (XXIII.55).

......
MAP OF MODHERA AND ITS SURROUNDING AREAS.