CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

What is Srimala Purana:

Srimala Purana is called Srimala Mahatmya by its author and he says that Srimalamahatmya is described in the eighty one thousand samhitās in the third Paricheda of Brahmavibhaga of the Skandapurāṇa. It is a part of Skandapurāṇa and describes Srimala nagara with its tirthas and castes. There is no description of the said Purāṇa in "The Studies in the Upapurāṇa" by R.C.Hazra. While writing introduction to Mallapurāṇa Professors Sandesara and Mehta R.N. have mentioned its name in foot note to identify it as a caste purāṇa. Dr.Awasthi, (studies in Skanda Purāṇa), mentioned the city Srimala, but he is silent about its Mahatmya. No doubt it is a caste-purāṇa which tells about the Srimala castes like Dharmaṇya for Modh Brahmanas, Nāgarkhanda for Nāgaras and Vēyu Purāṇa for Vēydas, but Srimala Purāṇa not only tells about the castes but it also describes the geographical situation of ancient Srimala with its culture and social functions.

Aims of study of Srimala Purāṇa:

The aims to study Srimala Purāṇa are summarised below:

1 Dr. Sandesara B.J. and Dr. Mehta R.N., Mallapurāṇa, p. 2
2 Dr. Awasthi A.B.L., Studies in Skanda Purāṇa, part I pp. 89, 127
1. To know the myths about the origin of Srimala brahmans, Banias, Sunars and other castes.
2. To study the Puranic story about the construction of the city.
3. To identify the ancient Srimala city if possible through the study of its tirthas.
4. To study social and cultural significance of Srimala and its influence over West Rajasthan and North Gujarat.
5. To know the gotrtha with their Devtās and avatankas of Srimala castes, Srimala-purāṇa is-tha-suny-goṭrthas.
6. To collect the ancient customs, ceremonies and functions of Srimala nagara and the Srimala.
7. To examine religious conflicts as known to have taken place in West India as noted in the Srimala Purāṇa.
8. The study is helpful to know the cultural history of the said area.

Method of Study:

The text of Srimala purāṇa was prepared with the help of other manuscripts of Srimala purāṇa and studied. On the basis of this the method employed to study Kaumarikā Khanda was adopted in this study.

The field work was conducted to study the places noted in the Srimala Purāṇa with a view to understand the present condition and its past formation. This would result in, it was presumed, the identification of the tirthas and give valuable information on chronological and cultural aspects.

1 Dr. Mehta R.N., "Kaumarikā Khanda - a Study", Journal of M.S. University, Baroda, Vol. XIV, No. 1, 1965
The text of Śrīmāla Purāṇa is edited with the help of a printed text and four manuscripts. The printed text was published in Samvat 1955 (1899 A.D.) at 'Vijaya Pravartaka' press Ahmedabad, by Gujarat Arya Osadhasala, Richi Road, Ahmedabad. It was prepared with Gujarati translation by Jatashankara Liladhara and Kesaaji Visvanatha. It contains 75 chapters.

An effort is made in the present work to collate it for a critical study by using available manuscripts.

The following manuscripts are used in this work:

Manuscript A: The printed text noted above is referred to as 'A'.
Manuscript B: The place of deposit:

The Rajasthan Oriental Institute, Jodhpur.

Account No. 10608
Title.... Śrīmāla Mahātmya
Author.... Unknown
Age.... Samvat 1877
Language.... Sanskrit
Script.... Devanagri
Material.... Rough Yellowish paper
Style.... Written in one uniform hand writing but at places it has been corrected and letters are written in small size.
Size.... 29 c.m. x 13 c.m.
Folios.... 113 (folios 79 to 82 missing)
Extent.... 1 to 75 Adhyāya (missing adhyāya 39 to 42)
No. of lines in each folio.... 14
Manuscript C: The Place of Deposit

The Rajasthan Oriental Institute, Jodhpur

Account No.10489

Title.... Skanda Purana (Srimala Mahatmya)
Author.... Unknown
Age.... Not mentioned but Paleography suggests circa 16th century
Language.... Sanskrit
Script.... Devanagri
Material.... Rough Yellowish paper
Style.... Written in good and uniform hand writing world quite legible
Size.... 29.9 c.m. x 13 c.m.
Folios.... 152 (folios from 1 to 17 missing)

No. of lines in each folio.... 9 lines
No. of letters in each line.... 43 to 45
Margin to each folio....
  Left side margin 3 c.m.
  Right side margin 3 c.m.
  Upper margin 2.5 c.m.
  Lower margin 2.9 c.m.

All the slokas are not numbered at many places, numbering of Adhyayans is missing. Dialogues are marked with Kumkum.
Manuscript D: The Place of Deposit:

The Rajasthan Oriental Institute, Jodhpur.

Account No.: Copy of Srimala Mahatmya Number 69

Title: Srimala Mahatmya, a part of Skanda Purana

Author: Unknown

Age: January 1960 collated under Munishri Jinvijaya

Language: Sanskrit

Script: Devanagri

Material: Paper

Style: Written in good hand writing

Size: 33.5 cm x 21 cm

Folios: 460 folios - divided in two volumes

No. of lines in each folio: 20 to 23

No. of letters in each line: 13 to 45

Copyist: Sri Madan Sarma, an official from Oriental Institute,

It was an incomplete work as Sri Sarma left office and work was suspended.

Manuscript E: The Place of Deposit:

Sri Chaganlalji Maharaja, Raja Jyotishi, Jalore

Title: Srimala Purana

Author: Unknown

Age: Not mentioned but seems to be 300 years old

Language: Sanskrit

Script: Devanagri

Material: Yellowish paper

Style: Written in good hand writing. Some lines are written with different hand.

Size: 31.5 cm x 12 cm

Folios: 84 (1 to 60) in good condition; 61 to 84 damaged
Chronology of Śrīmāla Purāṇa:

The Puranic literature is usually anonymous and hence the chronology of its composition remains doubtful. Śrīmāla Purāṇa is no exception to this general trend, therefore, it is necessary to fix its chronology. A.M.T. Jackson writing in Gazetteer of Bombay Presidency, Volume I, notes that it was written about four hundred years back, but does not give
any arguments to support his view. It is, therefore, necessary to study the extent text and other corroborative evidence to discover the period of its writing. Fortunately the present text indicates that the author of the *Srimala Purana* had good information of the political conditions of the 12th century A.D. This he has given in Chapter LXXV, under the guise that the *Idfosai* of *Srimala* went to *Patan*. Evidently this incident refers to the conquest of *Bhimtal* by the Chaulukyas of *Patan* in 12th Century A.D. At this time Jains were powerful at *Patan* and their power also seem to be reflected in the stories about the spread of *Jainism* in *Bhimtal*.

From this evidence it could be inferred that the author of the *Srimala Purana* flourished in or after 12th Century A.D. Thus one can reasonably assign the *Srimala Purana* to a period after 12th Century A.D.

The manuscripts so far available indicate that the earliest is ascribed to the 16th Century of Paleographic grounds. If this is true then the *Srimala Purana* must have been composed before 16th Century A.D.

Thus the internal evidence of the text and the external evidence of the manuscript indicate that the work is composed

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1 Manuscript 'C', The place of deposit, Rajasthan Oriental Institute, Jodhpur; Account No. 10489
after 12th century A.D. and before 16th century A.D.

The study of the language indicate that the Sanskrit is mixed up with local language and some of the words have taken the modern form. This fact seem to point out that the Śrimāla Purāṇa might probably have been composed towards 14th/15th century A.D. A perusal of Jain Prabandhas of this age indicates also a mixture of words and phrases as is the case here. These facts seem to lend support to this possibility. Some of the stories from Śrimāla Purāṇa are based on misunderstanding of images or on the worship of broken images. This is also a phenomenon that could take place after the images were lying for a long time or the broken images were once more taken up for worship. The Varāh image seem to belong to circa 12/13th

1 Manuscript 'C' numbered 19489 in the records of Oriental Institute, Jodhpur

2 Sanskrit Words  Sanskrit word mixed in local form  Present language

A. Ahaliya  Ahilya  Hindi (XLIX)
B. Ojha  Ojha  Gujarati (LXIX)
C. Josi  Josi  Gujarati (LXIX)
D. Ṣodasa  Ṣodasa  Gujarati (LXIX)
            Dave  Gujarati (LXIX)
            Vorā  Gujarati (LXIX)
            Bohrā  Hindi (LXIX)
            Thakura  Hindi (LXIX)
            Travadi  Gujarati (LXIX)
            Faneamoriya  Gujarati (LXIX)

All the gotras of Brahmanas and Vanikas are of local
direct either from Gujarati, West Marwari or Hindi.
century on stylistic affinity. It could easily take about two or three centuries for making its snout to become a *kāktunda* in Folk literature.¹ If such a phenomenon is considered carefully, one can ascribe the work to about 2 or 3 centuries after 12th century A.D. Thus it seems that this evidence converges on 14th/15th century A.D. This is in line with the internal evidence of the text as well as that of the manuscripts. The broken image of Varunavi Devi is worshipped in broken form as mentioned in the same form in Śrīmāla Purāṇa. It shows that the Purāṇa is written after its destruction.²

The social picture of the town specially built for Brāhmaṇas indicate that the authors probably did not know the rule this town has played in the past.³ They, therefore, seem to follow the line of thought that is seen in Nāgarkhanda,⁴ Dharmaranya and such other texts composed in the period after 13th century A.D.

¹ *Śrīmāla Purāṇa*, XVI
² *Ibid.*, *Varunāvi Mahātmya*
³ Incidentally it may be noted that Red and Black ware, Roman Amphora, Red-Polished Ware and such other antiquites were obtained from Bhinmal indicating that it is an old town established probably before the Christian era.
The Chapter LXIX and LXX of the gotras and avatankas clarified the fact that Śrīmālī brāhmaṇas and vanikas were divided in many sub-castes and their avatankas. The names of avatankas are influenced by the language Marwari and Gujarati which prevailed in 15th century. So the work of Śrīmāla Purāṇa is not earlier than 15th century A.D.

The above fact is confirmed when we do not find any references of the temples of Mahēsvara Mahadeva and Nilkantha Mahādeva. These are the important tirthas of present Bhīnmal. There is no reference of the construction of the gate and walls of the temple of Candinātha Mahādeva. The inscription on the gate of Candinātha Mahādeva temple is of 17th century A.D. so the work of Śrīmāla Mahātmya lies before this date. It may be concluded that Śrīmāla Purāṇa was written after 12th century A.D. and before 16th century A.D.
Illustration No. 2

Kāka Varāha

Śrīmāla Purāṇa, XVI

Kṛṣṇa Sarovara, Phimnāl