CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION
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"Ancient Sanskrit literature, coming down to us, surpasses all the extant ancient literatures of the world in its vastness and also in its being a rich and valuable heritage for humanity in the field of the Philosophical, religious and ethical thoughts, contributing most to the evolution of the well cherished human values. Sruti and Smrīti are the two main branches of the religious Sanskrit literature and purāṇas are included in the Smrīti-literature. But the Purāṇas are considered even more important than the Sruti on account of their contribution to the all round building of the Hindu-society, not only in India but also in the other adjoining countries of Greater-India. Purāṇas were not only for the learned scholars of the upper strata of the Hindu-society but also for the common man for whom they were specially composed and then redacted severally times in order to make them up to date according to the changing times and changed social and political condition of the society. So that they may serve as the permanent religious and cultural guides for the society in general."

According to M.M. F.V. Kane, most of the Mahāpurāṇas were composed in the period from the 5th or 6th century A.D. to the 9th century A.D. The up-purāṇas began to be complied

from about 7th or 8th century A.D. and their number went on increasing till about 13th century or even letter."

The tradition of writing the purāṇas and its study are very old and are continuous almost up to the present century. This has resulted into the development of the vast literature under the titles of jñāti-purāṇas, Sthala-purāṇa, etc.

Some of their examples are as follows:

1. **Dharmāranya - Purāṇa** - for the Modha-Brahmanas and Banias.
2. **Srimāla-Purāṇa** - for Srimāli Brahmānas and Banias.
3. **Nāgara-Khanda** - for Nāgaras Brahmānas
4. **Vāyu-Purāṇa** - for Vāyadas Brahmānas and Banias
5. **Kālikā-Purāṇa** - for coppersmiths
6. **Malla-Purāṇa** - for Modhas - who took to Wrestling as a profession.

"Though the puranic tradition is very old, all the literary compositions do not belong to the high antiquity to which the tradition reaches. This is natural. No body accepts all forms of literature to be as old as the tradition of literature but in that tradition, works of different periods exist. They are studied for their times and place contexts, when the Purāṇas are also given the same type of treatment and carefully placed in their spatio-temporal context by puranic Archaeology they furnish a rich wealth of informations on the long Indian tradition as interpreted in different times and at different places. And thus they form a mine of information for local, regional as well as pan-Indic studies."
The Kaumarika-khanda as it is called by the author narrates the activities of the Cambay region (Gujarat-State) with its cultural activities. It mentions a number of holy places of this area.

The area covered by the tīrtha-māhātmya is that near the confluence of the Mahī with the Gulf of Cambay. The present area of the chowk of Cambay is the centre around which the major tīrthas are situated within an area of about 200 x 200 meters. The other important tīrthas are further to the north in the environs of the village of Nagarā. In the west the tīrthas are seen in the area of Lunej.

The author of Kaumarika-khanda had concentrated his activities in the area around Cambay. The further limit of this Tīrtha-Māhātmya is—

The cremation ground and the Kotī-tīrtha of Nagarā in the north, the Smaśāna and Bahūdaka in the east, and the confluence of the sea and Mahī in the South, and Lunej in the west. This geographical data indicated on map that the actual Kaumarika-ksetra as mentioned in the Kaumarika-khanda is a very small area of the about a 100 sq. kilometers.

Geography:— Within this Kaumarika-khanda many tīrthas belonging to Śiva Viṣṇu, Brāhma and other gods and goddesses are described. They are identified on the basis of tradition, and further studies on the field. From this study it is observed that the author of Kaumarika-khanda, knows some minute details of customs and hydrology of this area. The references of salty water, Construction and repairs of wells, Kundas (water-reservoirs) and the story of
(2) **Caste-Structure:**

The caste of Naradiya-Brahmanas, their origin and present position have been also well narrated by the *Āurāṇa*.

(3) **Social Customs:**

The pattern of social groups of *Kaumārika-khanda*, with their customs and ceremonial functions of marriage and death are recorded in the *Āurāṇa*. The social structure and the tradition prevailing at the time of the writing of the *Kaumārika-khanda* are ably recorded.

(4) **Religion:**

The religions prevailing at the time of *Kaumārika-khanda* have been traced out and it is found that along with Siva worship, people of the time also believed in other gods and goddesses. The descriptions of Saura Sākta and Vaishnava worship are noted with great details. The analysis of the religious picture of *Kaumārika-khanda* clearly establishes that it is not a highly sectarian work but follows the Śaṅkara traditions of respecting, not only to the 'trinity' of Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesā but also it has a distinct leaning towards the Sāiva worship.

The analysis of the method of Siva-worship, indicates that the Sodagopacāra paddhati is followed in this work. This system of worships is a fairly well known Indian phenomenon that finds its reflections in the work.

(5) **Economy:**

The socio-economic basis of the society of *Kaumārika-khanda* is traced and it is found that society was based on sound
footing. It was interpreted on the traditional model of Varna. The agriculture, and animal Husbandary and forest resources have been known through the study and craftsmanship and other activities like building of ships, Banking, trade in and across the country, shoe-making, cloth weaving etc. were well-known at the time of composition of the Purāṇa.

The Kaumārīka-khanda is a religious work, so a description of the political situation was not the aim of the author. To study one Kaumarīka-khanda which is sthala-mahatmya, a special method and archaeological study was necessary. The method adopted by Dr. R.N. Mehta and Dr. S.G. Kantawala in the study of work - 'Purāṇa project' (The U.G.C. Scheme) was beneficial under which various puranic studies have been taken-up such as Nāgara Khanda - Dharmaranya, Kaumārīkākhanda and Śrīmāl-purāṇa. It helped in the study of Kaumārīkākhanda.

The purāṇas have always served as the real encyclopaedia of the Hindu religion and as such they have been revised from time to time, adding and incorporating in them whatever new or additional materials could be available to the compilers and revisors of the purāṇas in a particular period and place. This study of Kaumārīka-khanda discloses the fact that the work on Purāṇa and up-purāṇa is not still over but it requires further study to unearth the Indian cultural data consisted in it. Dr. R.C. Hazara and H.H. Wilson rightly say that "the work done by scholars on up-purāṇas is very meagre."
The correlation of the Purānic data with archaeological ones, now available and the interpretation there of are likely to give better results than those based on earlier methods. Textual Criticism based on paleographical and epigraphical ground. But special efforts to work on the field to search the archaeological social, economical and political base of Sthala-purāna and jnāti purāna, is essential.

Purāṇas are the religious and cultural records of Brāhmaṇical (Hindu) religion. The Kaumārika-khanda is also not an exception. It is found after the reading of Kaumārika-khanda that Puranakeśa has written it in a systematic way.

The first thirteen chapters describe the location of Mahi-sagara-sangama and the establishment of Naradiya-Brāhmaṇas. Next twenty chapters give a brief history of Purānic story of Tāraka-Vedha, birth of Kārtikeya and establishment of a few Śaivite temples on the Mahi-sagara-sangama tirtha. In succeeding chapters the story of Kumārika and explanation of the name of Kaumārika-khanda are noted. The tirtha Mahatmya starts from chapter 32 and it is continuing up to 58th chapter. Bhimesvara and some places of Śākta worship are noted in the last eight chapters.

As noted earlier the author of Kaumārika-khanda, along with Śiva, describes Viṣṇu, Sūrya Brahmā, Ganesa and other gods and goddesses. The religious duty of Brāhmaṇas, social customs, marriage, Yaṁopavita, Śrācha and other rites are studied with the help of purāṇa. Past and festivals of the region are also traced out from the study of Kaumārika-khanda.
One may conclude that while writing the whole purāṇa, the author has kept in view the geographical, social and religious practices of this area. The Purānakāra has also used the stories of folk lore to explain the importance and origin of different tīrthas.

We can hardly conclude this work without narrating something about the purāṇa and its social, and religious influences on Indians. For this Dr. R.N. Mehta rightly views that

* "Purana is a class of literature that deal with a variety of subject matter of the bygone time. But the presentations of the bygone times is based on the poly-cyclic pattern, this pattern takes a cyclical view of time and therefore it often considers the past as one positive period without a distinct beginning or a distinct end."

He further writes - "Purānas were being composed and read in different periods of Indian History. A question naturally arises about the raison d'être of the purāṇa. At the sites noted by the purāṇas these are regularly read and recited often in the monsoon - this recitation had a profound influence on local population. They became the carriers of tradition and culture and gave the people a sense of belonging and actual strength in the times of trouble as well as accommodate a change of cultural tradition."

* Mehta R.N. Purana J.M.S.U. Uni. Baroda vol.XX No.1
Summing up the above discussion one may say that Tirtha-Mahatmyas or Sthala-Purāṇas like Kaumārīkā-khanda are the works for the people of the area connected with it. Interestingly it is found that, people of the Cambay region, read, recite and worship Kaumārīkā-khanda during the periods of holy days of religious importance. (Ekādaśi, Śrāvana and Adhikamāsa etc.)

This study, thus indicates that the chief aim of the author of the Mahatmya is to give purānic antiquity and dignity to the local deities. It helps to understand the religious phenomena and cultural history of the Cambay region.