

CHAPTER V

SOCIO-ECONOMIC (ECONOMIC) CONDITIONS IN
SRIMĀLA PURĀNA

The Srimāla Purāna has referred to the existence of many professions and economic activities in different chapters. These incidental references are studied to trace the economic activities of the region.¹

The Srimāla Purāna has mentioned many castes conducting a variety of economic activities. These are described here.

Professions of the Brahmanas:

The most important group described by the Srimāla Purāna is the Brahmanas.

These professions were traced through the help of the study of the Avatankas of their gotras and other sources.

The main profession of the Brahmanas was to learn the Vedas, Sāstras, Upanisadas and acquire knowledge and teach them to their disciples. They were to perform the Yajnas.²

1 G.S.Ghury, Castes and Class in India

2 Srimāla Purāna, LXXII 5, 9, VII 42

The Srimāla Purāna gives the number of these Vedasalas as four thousands. This may be considered an exaggerated figure. As we learn from the account of Jackson,¹ The schools run by the brāhmanas were called Brahmesalas. They existed near the present Government rest house to the East of Vakpati-sarovara, the present Jāgnath temple. The Dharmasastras, Vedas, grammar and Jyotish (astrology) were studied. These are already indicated by the study of the gotras, avatankas and cakris of the Srimāli brāhmanas.

Study of the Vedas:

Vedas were studied as a source of income also. Daves are considered expert in two Vedas, while Trivadis are considered master of three Vedas. 2

The Srimāla Purāna mentions that there were (1) Rig Vēdi brāhmanas 7,000 (2) Yujurvedi brāhmanas 4,000 (3) Sāma Vēdi brāhmanas 22,000 (4) Atharvedi brāhmanas 4,000, out of 45,000 brāhmanas.² But the study of their Avatankas indicate that the brāhmanas were experts in two or three Vedas.

Other professions are also traced below:

- 1 Vyās had the Kathās and wrote Tikas for their earning
- 2 Yajnas were performed by Awasthis and Agnihotries to earn their livelihood.
- 3 Sālyas ran the schools and earned their livelihood by

1 A.M.T.Jackson, Gazetteer of Bombay Presidency, Vol.I

2 Srimāla Purāna, LXXII 7 to 12

giving education to students. There were 4,000 Brāhma-sālas.¹

- 4 The Jōsis did the work of Jyotisis and earned money
- 5 Ojhas read sastras and gave lectures and got the Daksina
- 6 Bohras (Vora) did business and lent money to others. They were cultivators of land also and grew rice in Srīmāla Ksetra. Gautama himself was a good cultivator.²

They had four lacs cows and the milk and ghee were a source of income to meet their financial needs.³

These professions indicate that brāhmanas were carrying on a variety of economic activities including trade, agriculture, study of various subjects, teaching and performing religious duties.

Vanikas:

The second important caste recorded in Srīmāla Purāna was of the Vanikas. They were supposed to carry on trade and business and do cultivation.⁴ Following the traditional pattern, their origin is traced to be the thigh of Visnu.⁵

Their occupations also have been traced through the study of their avatankas given in the Adhiyāya LXX of the Srīmāla Purāna.

1 Srīmāla Purāna, LXXII 5

2 Ibid. LXXIII 38-43, 49-61

3 Ibid. XI 74-75

4 Ibid. XIII 16-19

5 Ibid. XIII 16-27

The main occupations of these Vanikas were as follows:

- 1 Sarāfa - Had the shops of gold and silver
- 2 Kupaliyā - Sold the Kupa (Pot) made of Camel and other skins
- 3 Patva - Cloth merchants (A seller of Pata)
- 4 Gāndhī - Merchants in perfumed oils and scents
- 5 Parekha - Worked as Sarāfa
- 6 Javerā/Javerī - Merchant of Jewels
- 7 Kapadiyā - Cloth merchant sold all types of cloth
- 8 Cavadiyā - Seller of baskets
- 9 Modi - Merchant selling groceries
- 10 Vorā or Bohra - Money lender
- 11 Bada Sala Vachadiyā - A person having a patasālā that is a cloth mill.

It shows that the Vanikas of Srīmālā were good traders and they were wealthy persons who carried the business of Jewels, Gold and Silver. They had mills of cloth and earned a good income.

Sunārs:

The Sunārs came out of the Varuna eight pattled Padama.
Sunār prepared ornaments of gold and silver for the Srīmālīs.¹

1 Srīmālā Purāna, XIII 1-15

The other castes and their occupations:

The Srimāla Purāna in Adhiyaya LXXII named as Ksetra Prasansa, the number of castes with their total number and occupation is given. It seemed to be exaggerated when compared to the list given in the Appendix III, on Rhinmal by A.M.T. Jackson in the Gazetteer of Bombay Presidency, p.450, Vol. I. Both these lists are compared below:

List of Gazetteer numbered in houses with their occupations

1. Brahmanas

- A. Srimālis 200 houses
- B. Shevaks (Maga Brahmanas the worshipper of Sun) 35 houses
- C. Sadha (Beggars) 10 houses
- D. Shamia (Alike beggars) 10 houses
- E. Deshantris (Saturday oil begger) 1 house
- F. Acharyas or funeral brahmanas 1 house
- G. Garodas-Priests of Bhambbias Leather workers 2 houses

2. Vanikas Mahajan, chiefly oswals of many sub-divisions 475 houses

List given in number in Srimāla Purāna with occupations (S.P.LXXII, 6-22)

1. Brahmanas 45,000 of 84 Avatankas, Veda Pātha, Yajñas, Vratas and Katha were their occupations.

- A. Rigvedic brahmanas 7,000
- B. Yujurvedi brahmanas 12,000
- C. Sāmavedi brahmanas 22,000
- D. Atharvedi brahmanas 4,000

Total Brāhmanas: 45,000

2.A. Vanikas of thirty gotras - 90,000

B. Vanikas Dhanotakatas of eighteen gotras 18,064

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| 3. <u>Kasāras</u> or <u>Brass Smith</u> -
4 houses | 3. <u>Kansāras</u> - 2,000
ra
<u>Naganāyakas</u> |
| 4. <u>Patrias</u> (Dancing girls) -
30 houses | 4. (<u>Ganikās</u>) (Dancing Girls) -
9,000 |
| 5. <u>Bhumias</u> that is <u>Solanki</u>
<u>Jagirdars</u> - 15 houses | 5. <u>Kastriyas</u> - 36,000 |
| 6. A. <u>Rangrez</u> (Dyers) - 2 houses
B. <u>Bandāras</u> (Calico Printers) -
35 houses | 6. <u>Rangakās</u> - <u>Rangaras</u> (Dyers) -
5,000 |
| 7. <u>Kariās</u> or <u>Salavats</u> (Masons) -
6 houses | 7. <u>Sompā</u> (Masons) - 5,000 |
| 8. Not given in the list | 8. <u>Sutradharas</u> mentioned in
<u>Gujarati</u> - translation
as <u>Natas</u> - 3,000 |
| 9. A. <u>Nais</u> or <u>Barbers</u> - 7 houses
B. <u>Khavās</u> (Bhumias servants) -
12 houses | 9. <u>Ksorkāras</u> (Barbers) - 1,000 |
| 10. Not given in the list | 10. <u>Rajakānatas</u> mentioned in
<u>Gujarati</u> - translation as
<u>Dhobis</u> - 1,000 |
| 11. <u>Mālis</u> (Gardeners) - 25 houses | 11. <u>Vanamālis</u> - 4,000 |
| 12. <u>Mahājans</u> chiefly <u>Oswal</u> -
475 houses
(Other castes of <u>Vanikas</u> are not mentioned) | 12. <u>Vanikas</u> of other castes -
5,000 |
| 13. A. <u>Bhills</u> - 120 houses | 13. <u>Sudras</u> - 2,500 |
| B. <u>Trigars</u> or Arrow makers - 5 houses | |
| C. <u>Bhambias</u> leather workers - 40 houses | |
| D. <u>Waghria</u> castrator - 1 houses | |
| E. <u>Mirāsīs</u> (Muskman Drummers) - 8 houses | |
| F. <u>Dholis</u> or Drum beaters - 12 houses | |
| G. <u>Sargarās</u> (Bhil messengers) - 1 house | |
| H. <u>Jatīyas</u> or Tanners - 17 houses | |
| I. <u>Khātīk</u> or Butchers - working as tanners - 1 house | |
| J. <u>Mochis</u> or shoe makers - 30 houses | |
| K. <u>Mehtars</u> or sweepers - 1 house | |

14. Sunars - 30 houses

14. Kaladgs mentioned in Gujarati translation as Sunars (Gold smith) - 8,064

15. Kumbhars - 12 houses

15. (Prajapatis) (S.P.XIII, 12) Kumbhakars (Potters) (S.P.LXXII 6-22) - 5,000

Other castes not given in Srimala Purana:

1. Ganchis or Oilpressers - 30 houses

2. Khatis or wood workers - 12 houses

3. Bhats - 120 houses including 80 houses Gunas or grain carriers

4. Rajbhats or Brahmbhats, genealogists - 40 houses

5. Rehbaris or Herdsmen - 70 houses

6. Lohar or black smiths - 3 houses

7. Darjis or Tailors - 12 houses

8. Jats (cultivators) - 2 houses

9. Castes of Musalamans:

i) Musalman potters (Mohilas) - 4 houses

ii) Kotwala or Pinjaras - 15 houses

iii) Visyata Muslamans, Padlock maker - Locksmiths - 1 house

iv) Turki Vohras that is memons - 2 houses

v) Churigars Musalman - Ivory bangle makers - 2 houses,

Mirasis - 8 houses, Rangrej - 2 houses, and Kariās

salavats - 6 houses, given in the list of Bombay

Gazetteer are also Musalmans. The total number of

houses was 1,400 only.

These study of lists would indicate that the Puranakar has taken into consideration most of the professions noted by Jackson.

This study points out that the Puranakara has given a fairly good idea of the economic activities of the region.

Trade and Commerce:

Srīmāla was constructed by Visvakarmā¹ and the city was compared to Kāsi, Alkāpuri, Lanka and Amrāvati² seemed to be exaggerated one. It has fort-walls and a big and deep canal around it.³ Jackson and Finch Kerr and Ufflet identified the same.⁴ It had many gates and doorkeepers.⁵ There was an innerfort also where only specified persons⁵ were allowed to go⁶. The city was more beautiful than heaven⁷ and had the houses with ivory pillars⁸, garlands of Manis which lighted in the place of lamps in night⁹. The number of the buildings was given seven lacs¹⁰ and many had Savaran Kalāśas and flags over their tops¹¹, which denoted the buildings of the most wealthy persons.

1. Srīmāla Purāna, IX 1

2. Ibid. IX 20

3. Ibid. IX 23

4. Gazetteer of Bombay Presidency, Vol. I (History of Gujarat) App. III, Bhinmal, VI pp. 450-451

5. Srīmāla Purāna, XIX 8

6. Ibid. XIX 8

7. Ibid. X 54

8. Ibid. X 55

9. Ibid. X 57

10. Ibid. LXXII 23

11. Ibid. X 56, 57

The city had 18,000 cohatas (Business and trade centres), two lac shops¹ all lined and crossed on cohatas. The number of the ghates was 84² (eighty four) and it was constructed within five kos³ and its area covered five Yojanas.⁴ ^{from Goutamasarovara} It extended in North to Trambakesvarovara in East and then to Bakasarovara in South.

It was a big centre of commerce and business. The figures given above seem to be exaggerated, when compared to the list of the Gazetteer of Bombay Presidency, the number was only 1,400 inhabited houses.⁶

The businessmen dealt mostly in cloth prepared in Patāsālās,⁷ gold, Jewels, scent, gold and silver ware and groceries.⁸

There were other craftsmen also like Kanasāras (brass smiths), potters, barbars, gardners, washermen and masons⁹.

Singing and dancing was also enjoyed by the people and Natas enacted their plays.¹⁰

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1. Srimāla Purāna, LXXII 23
 2. Ibid. XIX 56
 3. Ibid. VIII 14
 4. Ibid. LXXII 24
 5. Ibid. IX 51, VIII 13
 6. Gazetteer of Bombay Presidency, Vol. I p.450
 7. Srimāla Purāna, LXXII 12-23; IX 11
 8. Ibid. LXXII 12-23
 9. Ibid. LXXII 12-22
 10. Ibid. LXXII 12-22

Currency of Srīmāla:

Dinnār was used as the coin in Srīmāla, Bhil Jinjar sold his flowers in 10 dinnars.¹ Niska was the gold coin. The Vanika Sunanda gave nine lac Nisakas and took Laksamī to Pātan.²

Ratanas were also used in Srīmāla. Naga Taksaka bribed Kasyapa with them and later returned to Srīmālanagara.³

Ratanas could be achieved by digging in Ratnamala that is Srīmāla said the goddess Laksamī.⁴

Drama which was the coin of Srīmāla was not mentioned in Purana.⁵ Dr.B.J.Sandesara is of the opinion that this coin was operated by the famous King Varmalāta in Srīmāla.⁶ It was ~~used upto thirteenth century~~ used upto thirteenth century. Bombay Gazetteer says that it was a Boar coin and was known to Indosassanian.

1 Srīmāla Purāna, XIX 7

2 Ibid. LXXV 4-18

3 Ibid. LXVI 15, 22, 24

4 Ibid. LXII 80

5 Jain Grantha 'Nisitha Curni' writes the Drama was the coin of Bhinmal,

it is also in Upkalsa Gaca Patavali, Braht Kalpa Bhasiya Tika, Part II p.574 and Lekha Padhati, pp.20,33,35, Brahata Kalpasutra by Acharya Ksemkirtani, Part II, pp.574

6 B.J.Sandesara, Jain Āgam Sahityamā Gujarat, srimala (Bhinmal),

The indistinct image of a fire temple on a coin was wrongly imagined to be an ass-head and this error led to the coining of the term 'Gadhia Paisa'.¹ It was used in Iran and West India.

Subsidiary means:

- I Agriculture: The majority of the population were cultivators. The land of Srimāla has been called 'Sajalāmaidani' in Srimāla Purāna and it grew crops like rice in abundance which could feed the persons for seven years in famine.²
- II Herdsmanship and Pasture resources: The bank of the river Sravanti as pasture resources and as the list of Bombay Gazetteer in Appendix III in Rhinmal mentioned the number of houses of Rehbaris or herdsmen 70, denoted that sheep³ and goats were also a means of income.
- III Animal husbandary: Visnu gave four lac cows to the Brahmanas which fed in the pastures of Sravanti,⁴ shows that animal husbandary was also a source of income.

1 Bombay Presidency Gazetteer, ^{Vol. I} p.468

2 Srimāla Purāna, LXXIII 47-48

3 A.M.T.Jackson, Bombay Presidency Gazetteer, Vol.I B.450

4 Srimāla Purāna, XI 5 74,75

It shows that Srimāla was based socio-economically on sound footings and its society was self-sufficient.

Forests and their resources:

Srimāla had forests called Namiṣarānya¹ and Varuna Kānana² where the trees like Saga, Tadi, Tamāla, Punaga, Coconut, date-palm, Bakula, Kovidāraka, Jamuna, Pipala were grown. These were a great source of income for the people of Srimāla.³

The beautiful furniture, Toranas⁴, images⁵ and pillars⁶ of houses were prepared from the wood of Srimāla Ksetra.

From the above description of Srimalaksetra we gather that it was blessed with an abundance of natural resources which led to economic prosperity of its people. Moreover, the economic resources were of such nature that the society of the town could lead an economically self-sufficient life.

1 Srimāla Purāna, LXIII 26

2 Ibid. LXIV 19, III 21-23

3 Ibid. IV 3-4

4 Ibid. XLIII 91 -Torana of Sun temple was of wood

5 Dr. B. J. Sandesara says the images of Laksamī and Sun brought from Srimāla to Patana are of wood. There are two images of Laksamis on the temple of Sundhamāta, Sogandhika and Srimāla Purāna, LXXV 9-18

6 Srimāla Purāna, IX 4-8