

Ancient Prabhāsa region: A Geographical Study of Sanskrit Texts

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ABSTRACT

The geographical knowledge preserved within ancient Sanskrit literature provides invaluable insights into the evolution of landscapes, geological processes, human settlements, and cultural practices across time. This paper explores such geographical information as presented within the *Prabhāsa khaṇḍa* of the *Skanda Purāṇa* text. A systematic analysis is conducted, focusing specifically on the geographical information pertaining to the Prabhāsa region as provided in the *Prabhāsa-kṣetra-māhātmya* and the *Vastrāpatha-kṣetra-māhātmya*, the first two books of *Prabhāsa khaṇḍa*. The cryptic details embedded within the verses are interpreted and elucidated from both geographical and geological perspectives. Furthermore, through meticulous research and analysis, the precise locational coordinates of various geographical sites have been identified and subsequently mapped, providing a visual representation of their spatial distribution. Through this comprehensive study, previously unknown aspects of the geography of Prabhāsa region in Saurāṣṭra, from antiquity to the period before the 8th century CE, are brought to light, significantly contributing to our understanding of the region's historical geography.

Keywords: *Somanātha*, *Prabhāsa*, *Saurāṣṭra*, Impact craters, *Skanda Purāṇa*, *Sarasvatī* River.

Introduction

The enduring cultural continuity of India, spanning from antiquity to the present day, is a globally recognized phenomenon. Sanskrit literature from ancient to pre-medieval times has preserved extensive amounts of knowledge pertaining to both culture and science. Deciphering and interpreting this knowledge is crucial for a comprehensive understanding of the history of people and places. Texts such as the Mahabharata, Ramayana, and Puranas contain a wealth of geographical information concerning diverse regions within the Indian subcontinent and beyond. The Skanda Purāṇa, the largest of the eighteen major Puranas, comprising over 81,000 verses, is divided into seven parts called khandas. The Prabhāsa khaṇḍa, one of these seven parts is further subdivided into four books: *Prabhāsa-kṣetra-māhātmya*, *Vastrāpatha-kṣetra-māhātmya*, *Arbuda-khaṇḍa* and *Dvārakā-māhātmya*. The study focuses primarily on the first two books, *Prabhāsa-kṣetra-māhātmya* (PKM) and *Vastrāpatha-kṣetra-māhātmya* (VKM), which describe the broader Prabhāsa region, with its features like rivers, mountains, sacred sites, towns, and cities. Scholarly consensus dates the composition of the Skanda Purāṇa

This paper first undertakes a sequential analysis of prominent sites within the PKM and VKM texts in separate sections to highlight the important geographical details corresponding to those sites. Thereafter, these details are then utilized to identify the corresponding locations and features on contemporary maps, achieved through a comparative analysis of the distances and spatial relationships narrated in the texts. Finally, a detailed analysis and interpretation of the key geological aspects within these texts is presented before concluding.

to between the 4th century CE and 8th century CE (Mann, 2011). The primary source for the present study is the Sanskrit Skanda Purāṇa text published by Chaukhamba Sanskrit Series (Skanda Purāṇa, 2003) and its English translation by G. V. Tagare (Tagare, 1993).

An earlier study on Prabhāsa khaṇḍa by RN Iyengar provided a glimpse of the fascinating geological aspects within the text (Iyengar, 2004). This current study aims to provide a systematic and comprehensive analysis of the text, revealing valuable and previously unknown details. The Prabhāsa khaṇḍa presents geographical information both explicitly and implicitly through legends and narratives involving deities, sages, and common people. Although the modern geographical extent of Prabhāsa is confined to the town of Somnath in Gujarat, the texts reveal that the region historically encompassed a significantly broader area within Saurāṣṭra. The texts also provide a detailed account of the region's boundaries, divisions, and associated narratives. Composed in classical Sanskrit, these texts are presented as a dialogue between God Śiva and Goddess Pārvatī, incorporating nested narratives characteristic of Purāṇic literature.

1) Prabhāsa-Kṣetra-Māhātmya

The *Prabhāsa-kṣetra-māhātmya* (PKM), the first

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book of the *Prabhāsa khaṇḍa* within the *Skanda Purāṇa*,

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comprises 366 chapters. These chapters describe the sites within and surrounding the *Prabhāsa kṣetra*, interweaving mythological legends with geographical and historical descriptions of specific religious site, river and mountains in the region. The text maintains internal consistency in the structure and geographical content. Based on the distances provided, a Yojana in PKM is found to be around 9.6 kilometers.

1.1. Prabhāsa Kṣetra

Prabhāsa is the region in Saurāṣṭra, centered around the town of Somanath. Its boundaries and features are explained in the form of a conversation between Śiva and Pārvatī. Śiva at multiple instances emphasizes that among all the holy places on the earth, Prabhāsa is the one dearest to him (PKM: 3.130, 3.148, 4.9). The etymology of the name 'Prabhāsa' is presented through two distinct narratives: firstly, the region illuminated by the refulgence of the Sun (PKM: 13.21), and secondly, the place where the Moon regained his lost radiance came to be known as Prabhāsa (PKM: 22.114). The legends narrating the association of Sun (Arka) and the Moon (Soma) deities with Prabhāsa is elaborated in the subsequent sections. Numerous holy sites of varying sizes are described as existing in Prabhāsa kṣetra, at such a high density that even a space of one-eighth of an Aṅguli (finger width) is difficult to find without a tīrtha (PKM: 10.47).

The fourth chapter of PKM provides a detailed delineation of Prabhāsa's boundaries and divisions, which are categorized into three concentric zones: Kṣetra, Pīṭha and Garbhagrha. The Kṣetra (region) spans 12 yojanas east to west and north to south, bordered by Taptodakasvāmī in the east, Mādhava in the west, the Bhadra River in the north, and the ocean in the south. The Pīṭha (podium), within the Kṣetra, measures five yojanas in length and breadth, bounded by Nyaṅkumatī River in the east, the Vajriṅī River in the west, Māheśvarī River in north, and ocean in the south. The Garbhagrha (sanctum sanctorum), at the Pīṭha's center, extends one Gavyūti (2.4 km), bordered by Kauraveśvarī in the north, the ocean in the south, Gomukha in the east, and Āśvamedhika in the west (PKM: 4.12-20). These three divisions are visually depicted on the map in Fig. 1.

These geographical sites and features are identified on modern maps through a comprehensive analysis of the locations and distances described in the text. Taptodakasvāmī is identified with the Taptodaka hot water spring and Mādhava with the present-day coastal village of Madhavpur. The Bhadrā River is situated north of Girnar hills, while the Vajriṅī River is identified with the modern Vrajmi River, also known by the name Meghal. The Nyaṅkumatī River corresponds to the present-day Shinghoda River, which flows through Kodinar town. The Māheśvarī River is very likely the Madhuvanti River, which

flows through Mendarda town. The boundaries of the Garbhagrha approximately align with the modern Prabhas Patan locality in Somnath town. This Garbhagrha section is considered the most sacred and is more dear to Śiva than Kailāsa (PKM: 4.20). The modern location coordinates of all these geographical features are detailed in Table 1. These rivers and sites will be discussed in further detail in subsequent sections.

The length of Yojana varies across different texts. In the Prabhāsa-kṣetra-māhātmya, the yojana is approximately six miles, or 9.6 kilometers, consistent with other Sanskrit texts such as Rājatarāṅgiṅī (Stein, 1900). The twelve yojana distance between Taptodaka and Madhavpur equates to 115.2km (12 * 9.6 km) this closely matches the actual distance of approximately 112.6km measured on modern maps. Similarly, the actual distance between Bhadra River and the ocean is around 112 kilometers. The modern distance between the Vajriṅī and Nyaṅkumatī (Shinghoda) Rivers is approximately 50 km, aligning with the textual reference of five yojana, which is 48 kilometers (5 * 9.6 km). The actual distance between Māheśvarī (Madhuvanti) River and ocean is approximately 48.2 kilometers.

The text also presents an alternative way of dividing the Prabhāsa region in chapters 4 and 321. According to these descriptions, Prabhāsa is divided into three parts (bhāga): Rudra-bhāga, Brahma-bhāga and Viṣṇu-bhāga. Brahmā is stationed in the Brahma-bhāga on the banks of the Ṛṣitoyā River. Rudra is worshipped in the Rudra-bhāga, encompassing the region surrounding Somanātha and Agniṭīrtha. In the Viṣṇu-bhāga, Hari (Viṣṇu) is worshipped as Dāmodara on the Raivataka mountain (PKM: 321.6-7). The Ṛṣitoyā River is identified with Machundri River near Una city and Raivataka Mountain is located in the Girnar hills near Junagadh.

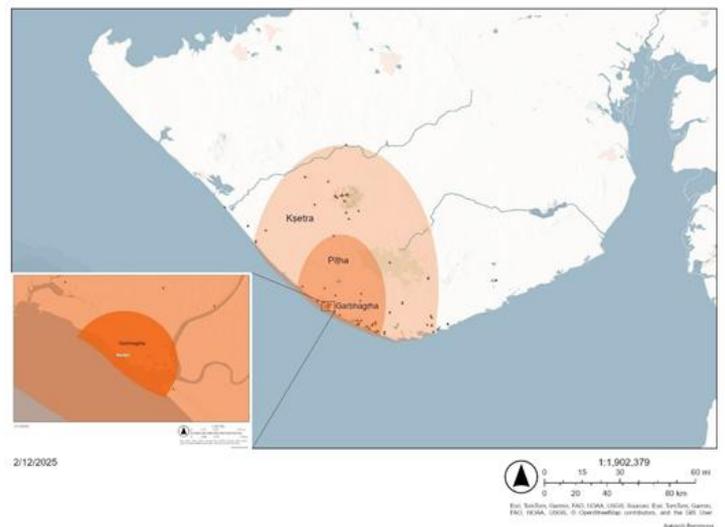


Fig. 1: Map showing the Kṣetra, Pīṭha and Garbhagrha divisions of Prabhāsa.

1.2 Someśvara

Someśvara, situated at the geographical center of Prabhāsa, is revered as the region's preeminent sacred site. Here Rudra (Śiva) resides in the form of a Liṅga of great power. A Liṅga is a symbolic representation of God Śiva, worshipped by Hindus across the world. Śiva narrates to Goddess Pārvatī that his self-manifested supreme form is stationed near the ocean, in the western quarter, three hundred dhanus (a dhanu is approximately 1.2 meters) west of Kṛtasmara hill. This Someśvara liṅga is the present-day Somanath liṅga (shown in Fig. 3). Adjacent to Someśvara liṅga is a Karṇikā (circular crater), described as being two hundred dhanus in extent and is dear to Śiva (PKM: 7.65-7.68). Chapter four enumerates the various names by which the Someśvara liṅga is extolled, these are Kālāgnirudra, Bhairava, Agnimīḍe and Agni-iśāna. It is stated that Agni (fire) burned continuously at this location for a period of four yugas, and at this place the Liṅga came into existence (PKM: 4.63-73). This Liṅga is described as possessing the brightness of ten million suns and burning like the fire at the time of Pralaya (cosmic dissolution), hence it was called Kālāgni Rudra (PKM: 8.28-29).

The origin of the name Somanātha and the association of Soma (moon god) with Prabhāsa is detailed in the chapters 21 to 24. Soma, having been cursed by Dakṣa, comes to Prabhāsa to propitiate Śiva, who is present there in the form of a Sparśa Liṅga (a Liṅga known by touch) that has come up there by itself. This Liṅga is described as being the size of a hen's egg, processing the luster of the Sun, and adorned with a serpentine girdle. Nearby, within the ocean at a distance of three hundred dhanus, is another Liṅga that fell into the ocean during the first Kalpa due to the curse of the great sages. Śiva instructs Soma to retrieve this Liṅga from within the ocean and to install it near the Sparśa Liṅga, performing all the necessary rituals with the assistance of Brahmā, the leading sages and Visvakarma (PKM: 22.107-112). As Soma regained his radiance at this place, the region became known as Prabhāsa, and the Liṅga installed by him was named Somanātha (24.18-19).

1.3 Kṛtasmara Hill

Kṛtasmara is a sacred hill that is vividly described in multiple chapters of PKM. It is stated to be three hundred dhanus (360 meters) east of the Somanātha liṅga (PKM: 11.42), adorned with a variety of beautiful trees full of flowers and fruits. The hill resonated with the chirping sounds of numerous kinds of birds and was graced by divine sages and esteemed Brāhmaṇas (PKM: 22.3-19). It is said that formerly Kṛtasmara was Kāmadeva, who was burned to ashes by the wrath of Śiva (PKM: 200.24). Furthermore, as narrated in chapter thirty-three, Kṛtasmara was completely burned upon contact with

Vāḍava fire, which was being carried to the ocean by the river goddess Sarasvatī (PKM: 22.24).

Although there are no hills near Somnath town today, a close examination of historical satellite imagery reveals remnants of a rocky hill about 400 meters east of Somanātha Temple at around 20°53'18"N 70°24'31"E. Rocky outcrops and large boulders can be identified scattered across an area stretching around 500 meters in the satellite images (see Fig. 2). The PKM text itself provides an explanation for Kṛtasmara's disappearance: when Kṛtasmara seized the Vāḍava fire handed over by Sarasvatī, the hill was instantly reduced to a heap of ashes. Subsequently, all the rocks on that hill became soft and were being taken by artisans for use in building houses and temples (PKM: 33.89-90). This indicated that the rocks from Kṛtasmara were being quarried and utilized for construction at the time of the text's composition, more than 1200 years ago. Continued extraction of rock from this relatively small hill over the centuries likely resulted in its eventual obliteration.

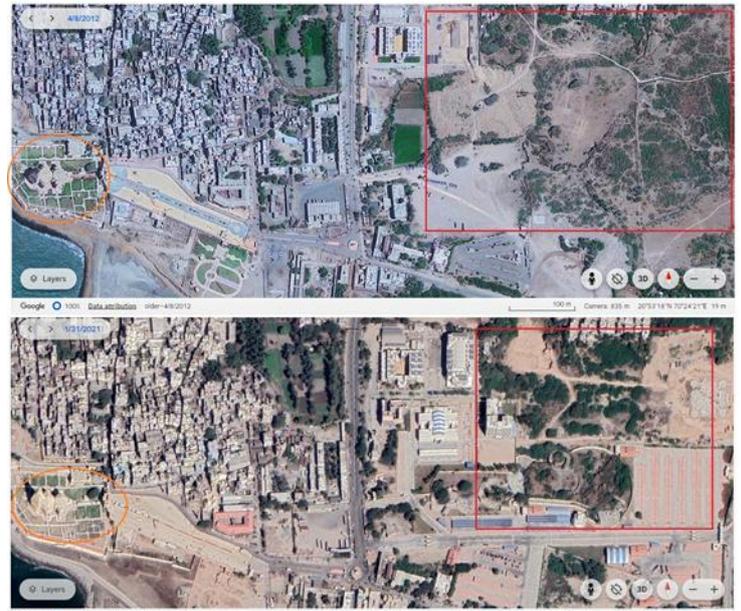


Fig. 2: Satellite Maps from the 2012 (above) and 2021 (below) showing rocky outcrops & boulders (in red rectangle) indicating the former location of Kṛtasmara hill. Somanātha temple is shown in the west (orange circle). [Courtesy: Google Maps]

1.4 Arkasthala

Arkasthala, located in Prabhāsa, is the site where the Sun god manifested himself. Chapters 11 and 13 of the text narrate how Viśvakarma fixed the sun on a lathe in a place called Śāka-dvīpa and filed him for more than a hundred years. While the Sun began to whirl, the entire universe became extremely chaotic: oceans became agitated, earth became shaky, and the Moon, planets and stars, including Dhruva (the pole star), began to fall, being pulled by the Sun. Rivers overflowed, and mountain peaks were broken. The portion of the Sun that fell in Prabhāsa

took the shape of a Sthala (land) called Arkasthala (PKM: 13.6).

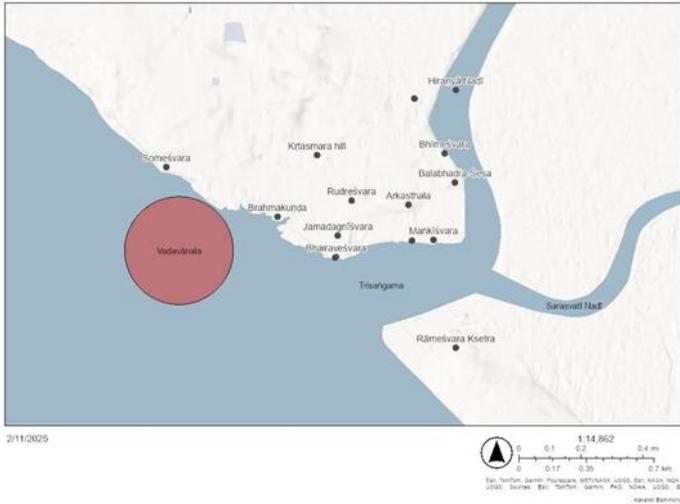


Fig. 3: Map showing Someśvara, Arkasthala, Vāḍavānala and other sites in present-day Prabhāsa Patan.

The fiery particles created by the Sun’s energy spread over five yojanas from the Māheśvarī River in north up to the ocean in the south, from Nyāṅkumatī River in the east up to Kṛtasmara in the west. This area was completely covered by particles of fiery splendor. The solar radiance emitted from this spot spread over twelve yojanas in the north-south direction. Therefore, this area extending to twelve yojanas was rendered sacred (PKM: 13.12-18). This description provides the reason for setting the boundaries of the Prabhāsa region up to twelve yojanas.

The text locates Arkasthala to the east of Kṛtasmara hill, which can be identified with the Sun temple that stands today at 20°53’09.6”N 70°24’47.5”E (shown in Fig. 3). This temple is currently in a ruined state, without any idol in the sanctum sanctorum. It stands on an elevated rocky ground that has caves and crevasses interspersed with houses built in modern times. The formation of these numerous craters and crevasses is further explained in chapter sixteen as follows:

Slipping down from the sky they fell like the planets with dwindling merit. Dhūmra surrounded by the Rākṣasas falling from the sky, shone like a half ripe Tāla fruit surrounded by monkeys. They fell automatically like stones released from a machine. Thereafter, they fell further, dislodged and carried off by the wind. After reaching Prabhāsa Kṣetra, they pierced through the earth and went to the nether worlds. It is there that Lord Arkasthala (Sun God), the bestower of all Siddhis, is present and the great Pātāla crater is in its vicinity. There were millions of other crevasses, but they have become lost now. Beginning with Kṛtasmara and ending with Arkasthala with

the Sun as the deity in between these two, is the holy place of Sūrya. (PKM: 16.10-15)

These elaborate details very likely describe a catastrophic natural event, most probably a cluster of meteorite impacts, that occurred in the region in the distant past. Ancient Peoples would have keenly observed this spectacular phenomenon and preserved its memory in the form of legends within the texts.

1.5 Sarasvatī River

The Sarasvatī River associated with Prabhāsa is a perennial river in Saurāṣṭra, currently flowing from the Gir forest hills to the ocean near Prabhas Patan. Chapters 33 to 35 narrate the legend of Sarasvatī River carrying the Vāḍava fire to the ocean at the request of the gods. The Sarasvatī’s course is described as originating in the Himalayan mountains, traversing the Kurukṣetra region, the city of Virāṭa, Arbudāraṇya (Mt. Abu) and Tara Taraṅga (Taranga hills). From Siddheśvara, the river flowed westwards towards the ocean, disappearing underground multiple times and reappearing at different locations along its course. Upon reaching the Prabhāsa region, the river flowed in five channels namely, Hariṅī, Vajriṅī, Nyāṅku, Kapilā and Sarasvatī. Approaching the ocean, she encountered the Kṛtasmara hill standing in her path as an obstacle stopping her speeding waters (PKM: 33.64-66). After burning Kṛtasmara, the river goddess Sarasvatī retrieved Vāḍava and stood in the vicinity of the ocean, delighted. Then Sarasvatī entered deep into the salty sea, carrying the Vāḍava fire and released it into the ocean. (PKM: 35.95-96)

The Sarasvatī River described in this text is not geologically connected to the greater Sarasvatī River revered in Vedic texts, which previously flowed (now dried-up) in western regions of the Indian subcontinent, originating from the Himalayas, traversing through the Thar desert and ending at the ocean near the Rann-of-Kutch (Danino, 2010). However, the current text portrays the Sarasvatī flowing in Prabhāsa as being the same Himalayan Sarasvatī River. Geological and literary evidence indicates a past disruption in the flow of the Vedic Sarasvatī River at a place called Vināsana in the Thar desert (Danino, 2010). This disappearance and reappearance of the river were likely interpreted as the inherent nature of the river by people; hence she was known by the name Guptagāmini (she who flows without being seen). It is likely that there was a cultural belief among the ancient people that the Sarasvatī River continued flowing underground and overground on her southward course even after reaching the sea near the Rann-of-Kutch. This belief is reflected in the text, where the river is stated to flows through the Mt. Abu region, Siddheśvara, and reappear in Saurāṣṭra in five channels before merging into the ocean near Somanath. This belief is further supported by the existence of two smaller rivers

named Sarasvatī today: one flowing through the city of Siddhpur in northern Gujarat and the other in Saurāṣṭra, which is of interest in this study. Although not geologically connected, these three Sarasvatī rivers were culturally regarded as the same. These rivers are depicted on the map in Fig. 4.



Fig. 4 Map showing the Vedic Sarasvatī River, Sarasvatī in northern Gujarat and Sarasvatī in Prabhāsa region of Saurāṣṭra.

1.6 Vaḍavānala

The legend of Vaḍavānala (Vāḍava), a fire in the form of a horse (mare) without thighs, is rooted in the story of sage Pippalāda (PKM: 32.110). According to the narrative, Sage Pippalāda sought revenge against the gods for whose sake his father, the eminent sage Dadhīci, had to lose his life. To exact his revenge, Pippalāda brought forth the Vāḍava fire from his left thigh and ordered it to eat away all the gods. However, Viṣṇu convinces Vāḍava to consume the gods one-by-one starting with Water, since water was the first to be created among the gods (PKM: 33.3). Vāḍava agrees to this condition on the premise that he would go to the ocean only by holding the hand of a maiden. Viṣṇu asks all the rivers, starting with Gaṅgā to carry the Vāḍava to the ocean but all of them refuse citing the terrific nature of the fire. Finally, Sarasvatī agrees to carry out the task as per the request of her father Brahmā.

The river goddess Sarasvatī carried Vāḍava from the Himalayas while staying underground at several sections of her course, until eventually reaching the ocean. Vāḍava, delighted to reach the ocean, offered Sarasvatī a boon. She requests him to transform into Sūcīmukha, possessing a needle-like mouth and drink the ocean's waters (PKM: 33.100). Following this, Sarasvatī

releases the fire into the ocean. However, a slightly alternative account is presented in another chapter where, instead of acquiring a needle-like mouth, Vāḍava was asked to wear Sarasvatī's bangle around his mouth, limiting his ability to consume water, thereby preventing the sea from drying up (PKM: 35.99-100). This Vāḍava fire, born into the lineage of Dadhīci, occurred in the Cākṣuṣa Manvantara. In the Vaivasvata Manvantara, he was born as Aurva, a great Brāhmaṇa of the Bhārgava family (PKM: 34.35).

1.7 Agnitīrtha

The place within the ocean where the Vāḍava fire stationed himself was called Agnitīrtha. Chapter 29 of the text provides elaborate details on the location and auspiciousness of this tīrtha, stating that ritual bathing at Agnitīrtha absolves pilgrims of all sins. Its location is specified as being hundred Dhanus (120 m) to the south of Someśvara (PKM: 29.1-3). A detailed description of Vaḍavānala's form and dimensions within the sea at Agnitīrtha is provided as follows:

Thus, the saline ocean acquired sacredness and the status of a Tīrtha. Five crores Liṅgas are present within the ocean, though they are not visible in this Manvantara. There itself exists the Agnikuṇḍa and Padmaka lake. Everything in the center is concealed in this Manvantara. Located between the Cakra and Maināka, in the southern quarter, is a golden pot extending ten thousand Dhanus. At the center of that pot resides Vaḍavānala (submarine fire), characterized by a pointed needle like mouth, a huge body and its perpetual water consumption. Hence, it is called Agni Tīrtha. The Vāḍava fire possessing great power, resides within it, with a face resembling that of a mare. It is positioned to the south of Śrīsomeśa, at a distance of a hundred Dhanus, and to the east of northern Mānasa, extending up to Kṛtasmarā. (PKM: 29.92-97)

These vivid details allude to Vāḍava being a geological structure in the form of a crater with a diameter of few hundred meters, situated in the sea south of Somanātha temple and extending up to Kṛtasmarā (shown in Fig. 3). The text indicates that this feature was visible only in the distant past, with its memory passed down until the time of composition of the text.

1.8 Daityasūdana

The Daityasūdana temple, dedicated to Viṣṇu, is highly revered as one of the most sacred sites dedicated to the deity in Prabhāsa. This sacred site, shaped like a Yava (barley), is situated east of Someśvara and west of Brahmakuṇḍa (PKM: 81.8, 147.23). Viṣṇu acquired the epithet Daityasūdana after vanquishing the Daityas who were tormenting the Devas, thereby restoring order to the universe for the Devas, Brāhmaṇas, and ascetics (PKM: 81.32-34). This Daityasūdana temple is identifiable with

the present-day Lakshmi-Narayan temple at 20°53'11.8"N 70°24'20.7"E.

1.9 Cyavana āśrama

Cyavana, son of the esteemed sage Bṛghu, is the subject of legends detailed in chapters 279 to 284, which describe his āśrama (hermitage) and the surrounding sacred sites. This location corresponds to the present-day town of Sutrapada. A temple dedicated to the Sun god, known as Cyavanārka, is stated to have been established by Cyavana himself (PKM: 279.1) and can be located at 20°50'18.2"N 70°29'01"E. The Cyavaneśvara Liṅga, also situated there, is identifiable at 20°50'21.7"N 70°29'05.7"E. It was here that king Śaryāti's daughter, Sukanyā, was wed to the aged sage Cyavana (PKM: 280.2).

Subsequent chapters narrate Cyavana's transformation into a youthful and handsome figure, assisted by the twin Aśvin gods through a ritual bath in a pond presently known as Cyavana Kund. Furthermore, the text recounts Cyavana's creation of a demon named Mada, of a hideous face, to coerce Indra into granting the Aśvin gods the right to partake in Soma offerings (Somapāyins) (PKM: 283.1-3).

1.10 Nyaṅkumatī River

The Nyaṅkumatī River, situated east of Someśvara, is identified with the modern Shinghoda River, which originates in the Gir forests in the north and flows southward to the ocean. The PKM text details numerous sacred sites along this river, including Kubera-Sthāna, Goṣpada Tīrtha, Nārāyaṇa-Gṛha, and a Tīrtha called Śaṅkhodaka, from which the river derives its present day name, 'Shinghoda'. In chapter 261, Śiva informs Pārvatī that he brought the Nyaṅkumatī River to delineate one of the eastern boundaries of Prabhāsa (PKM: 261.1).

1.11 Nārāyaṇa-Gṛha

Nārāyaṇa-gṛha is a temple dedicated to Nārāyaṇa, located south of Goṣpada on the seashore near the confluence of the Nyaṅkumatī River and the ocean. It is stated that Keśava (Krishna) resided at this place to rest after vanquishing the Daityas. He has dwelt in this house since the previous Kalpa for the redemption of Pitṛs in this Kali age; hence it became known as 'Nārāyaṇa-gṛha' (the home of Nārāyaṇa) (PKM: 337.1-4). This temple can be identified with the present-day Dwarkadhish temple in Mul-Dwarka village at 20°45'33.5"N 70°39'40.8"E (shown in Fig. 5)



Fig. 5: Map showing the locations of sites near the Nyaṅkumatī River.

1.12 Ṛṣitoyā Nadi

The Ṛṣitoyā River marks the easternmost boundary of Prabhāsa Kṣetra and is identifiable with the present-day Machundri River. Chapter 297 of the text narrates the story of Brahmā releasing the combined waters of all the holy rivers from his Kamaṇḍalu (water-pot) at the request of the sages to facilitate their ablutions. These waters formed the Ṛṣitoyā River, flowing from the Devadāru forest (Gir forest) in Prabhāsa to the ocean. This sacred river, believed to absolve sins, became a favorite of sages and thus known as Ṛṣitoyā (PKM: 297.24-26). The current name of the river, Machundri, likely derives from the Mūlacanḍīśa temple situated on its bank.

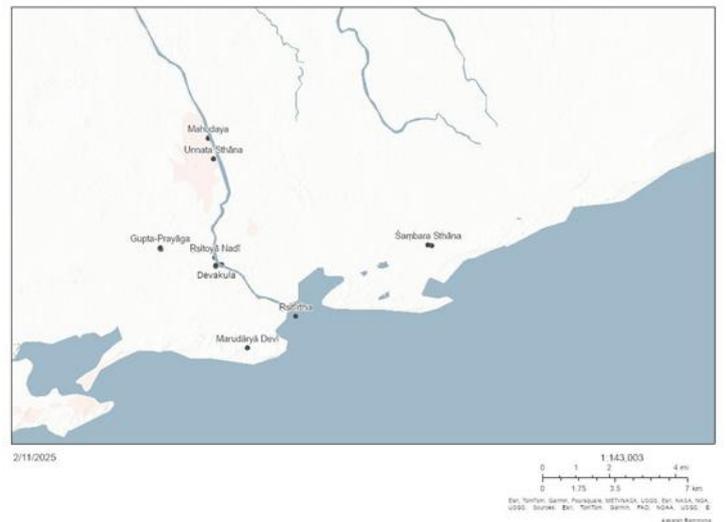


Fig. 6 Map showing the locations of sites near the Ṛṣitoyā River.

1.13 Unnata Sthāna

Unnata Sthāna, located on the banks of the Ṛṣitoyā River north of Devakūḷa (depicted in Fig. 6), serves as the eastern gateway to the Prabhāsa Kṣetra. Unnata Sthāna

is identified today with the city of Una. The city's origin is described in chapter 319, wherein Īśvara asked Viśvakarma to construct a city for the Brāhmaṇas. As Devakula, the site where the Liṅga fell down, was deemed suitable only for Ascetics to live, Viśvakarma built the city on the elevated bank of the Ṛṣitoyā River, hence the name 'Unnata; (elevated) (PKM: 319.38-45).

The region surrounding Unnata Sthāna, encompassing an area of eight yojanas in length and breadth, from Nyaṅkumatī in west, to Śāṅkarī in the east, and from Kanakanandā in the north to the ocean in the south, is known as Nagnahara. This name derives from the belief that Hara (Śiva) roamed this land freely in a state of nudity (PKM: 319.47-49). Śāṅkarī is identified with the Shankheshwari Mata temple located at 21°02'27.1"N 71°26'32.3"E in the town of Rajula. Kanakanandā is identifiable with the Kankai Mata temple situated at 21°08'36.2"N 70°47'16.2"E in the Gir forest.

1.14 Taptodaka

Taptodaka is the site of hot water springs situated three yojanas (28.8 km) north of Unnata Sthāna. Adjacent to these springs is the Viṣṇu temple known as Talasvāmī. It is believed that Viṣṇu vanquished a Daitya king named Tala at this site, hence the name Talasvāmī (PKM: 330). This temple is identified with the present-day Tulsishyam temple at 21°03'05.2"N 71°01'30.1"E. To the east of the Talasvāmī Viṣṇu temple stands the protector of that Kṣetra in the form of a Liṅga called Kālamegha (PKM: 331), this can today be identified with the Shyameshwar Mahadev temple.



Fig. 7: Map showing the locations of all the identified sites from Prabhāsa-kṣetra-māhātmya. Refer Table 1 for site details.

After a systematic analysis of the geographical details present in all 366 chapters of Prabhāsa-kṣetra-māhātmya, more than 80 sites and features were identified with high confidence on modern maps. The precise location coordinates of these identified sites are

tabulated, along with the chapter reference from the PKM text in Table 1 and are visually represented in Fig. 7

Table 1 Location coordinates of all the identified sites from PKM with the chapter reference and modern names.

#	Site name in PKM	Location coordinates	Chapter reference	Modern name
1	Someśvara	20°53'17"N 70°24'4.5"E	6,7,8,21,22,23	Somanātha
2	Taptodaka	21°03'03"N 71°01'30.5"E	330, 334	Taptodak kund
3	Mādhava	21°15'24"N 69°57'53"E	4.15	Madhavpur-village
4	Bhadra Nadi	21°48'48"N 70°31'24"E	4.16	Bhadra River
5	Vajriṇī Nadi	21°00'18"N 70°15'08"E	4.18,	Vrajmi or Meghal River
6	Nyaṅkumatī Nadi	20°46'35"N 70°40'51"E	4.18, 261	Shinghoda River
7	Māheśvarī Nadi	21°17'32"N 70°26'49"E	4.18	Madhuwanti River
8	Kṛtasmara hill	20°53'18"N 70°24'31"E	11.42, 22.3	
9	Rukmiṇī (West)	21°15'44.9"N 69°57'57.7"E	13.6	Rukshmani in Madhavpur
10	Rukmiṇī (East)	21°03'03"N 71°01'39.1"E	332	Rukmani in Tulsishyam
11	Arkasthala	20°53'09.6"N 70°24'47.5"E	13	Surya Mandir
12	Maṅkīśvara	20°53'3.7"N 70°24'52"E	203	Mankeshwar Mahadev
13	Devamātr	20°53'0.7"N 70°24'34.3"E	185	Mahakali Mandir
14	Brahmakunḍa	20°53'07.6"N 70°24'23.9"E	147	Brahma kund
15	Cyavanārka	20°50'18.2"N 70°29'01"E	279	Surya Mandir in Sutrapada
16	Cyavaneśvara	20°50'21.7"N 70°29'05.7"E	280	Chyavan kund temple
17	Kubera-Somanātha	20°47'40.7"N 70°42'01.3"E	290	Somant temple in Kodinar
18	Kubereshwara	20°47'11.4"N 70°41'18.3"E	290	Kubereshwar Mahadev
19	Koṭīśvara in Koṭinagara	20°47'20.8"N 70°42'07.4"E	358	Koteshwar Mahadev
20	Goṣpada Tīrtha	20°46'12"N 70°39'14"E	336	
21	Pretaśilā	20°46'10"N 70°38'43"E	336.219	

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22	Nārāyaṇa-Gr̥ha	20°45'33.5"N 70°39'40.8"E	337	Dwarkadish, Mul-Dwarka
23	Gaṅgeśvara	20°44'20.7"N 70°42'14.8"E	285	Gangnath Mahadev
24	Bālārka	20°44'38.9"N 70°42'52.2"E	286	Balnath Temple
25	Ajāpāleśvarī	20°44'35.8"N 70°43'05.4"E	287	Aja Bhavani Mata
26	Devakula	20°46'33.5"N 71°02'52.4"E	308	Delvada town
27	R̥ṣītīrtha	20°45'15"N 71°05'05"E	314	Machundri River-Sea confluence
28	Marudāryā Devī	20°44'25.5"N 71°03'43.8"E	315	Mariya devi temple
29	Śāṅkarī	21°02'27.1"N 71°26'32.3"E	319.49	Shankheshwari temple
30	Kanakanandā	21°08'36.2"N 70°47'16.2"E	265	Kankai Mata Temple
31	Mahodaya	20°49'55"N 71°02'39.2"E	327	Modeshwar Mahadev
32	Talasvāmī	21°03'05.2"N 71°01'30.1"E	330, 334	Tusishyam
33	Kālamegha Liṅga	21°03'08"N 71°01'33.5"E	331	Shyameshwar Mahadev
34	Bhairaveśvara	20°53'0.8"N 70°24'34.4"E	41	Bhairav Mandir
35	Jamadagnīśvara	20°53'04.4"N 70°24'34.7"E	197	Parshuram Mandir
36	Balabhadra- Śeṣa	20°53'13.4"N 70°24'55.8"E	241	Balram Mandir
37	Bhīmeśvara	20°53'18.2"N 70°24'53.9"E	40	Bhimnath Mahadev
38	Gupteśvara	20°53'27.5"N 70°24'48.6"E	355	Gupteshwar Mahadev
39	Hiraṇyā Nadī	20°53'29"N 70°24'56"E	238	Hiran River
40	Nāgarārka	20°54'06.3"N 70°25'38.3"E	239	Surya Mandir
41	Kaṅṭakaśodhinī	20°54'23.8"N 70°24'45.5"E	102	Kankai Mata
42	Mārkaṅṭeśvara	20°57'00"N 70°27'22.2"E	361	Markandeshwar Mahadev
43	Kardamāla- Varāha	20°51'11.3"N 70°26'57.8"E	354	Varah temple in Kadvar
44	Cyavana- āśrama	20°50'21.7"N 70°29'06"E	281	Chyavan ashram in Sutrapada
45	Prāci Tīrtha	20°55'17.1"N 70°36'31.6"E	36	Prachi Tirth
46	Prācīneśvara	20°55'18.9"N 70°36'31.2"E	35	Prahineshwar Mahadev

47	Parṇāditya	20°57'41.2"N 70°36'45.7"E	259	Surya Mandir
48	Śr̥ṅgāreśvara	20°48'34.4"N 70°36'53.8"E	360	Singeshwar Mahadev
49	Jaradgaveśvara	20°47'30"N 70°35'51.6"E	344	
50	Naleśvara	20°47'28.5"N 70°35'58.8"E	345	Naleshvar Mahadev
51	Hāṭakeśvara	20°47'40.5"N 70°36'14.5"E	347	
52	Kapileśvara	20°47'03.4"N 70°35'45"E	343	
53	Kapiladhārā Nadī	20°46'58"N 70°35'21"E	343	
54	Aṃśumatī Nadī	20°48'21"N 70°35'36"E	344	
55	Agastya āśrama	20°44'35"N 70°42'54"E	285	Chhara village
56	Puṣkara	20°51'05"N 70°47'26"E	294	
57	Ajogandheśvara	20°51'05.2"N 70°47'26.8"E	294	Adinath Manadev
58	Indreśvara	20°54'20.8"N 70°51'57.5"E	295	Chandreshvar Mahadev
59	Candrasaras lake	20°54'31"N 70°52'00"E	295	Bhangeshwar Talav
60	R̥ṣitoṃyā Nadī	20°46'48"N 71°02'50"E	296	Machundri River
61	Mūlacanḍīśa	20°46'34"N 71°02'51.6"E	308	
62	Kaṅṭakaśoṣaṇī	20°46'35.1"N 71°02'50.6"E	317	Kankai Mataji
63	Brahmeśvara	20°46'36.1"N 71°03'01.5"E	318	Taraneshwar Mahadev
64	Unnata Sthāna	20°49'22"N 71°02'48"E	319	Una city
65	Gupta-Prayāga	20°47'02.2"N 71°01'19"E	298	Gupt Prayag
66	Mādhava	20°46'59.8"N 71°01'19.2"E	299	Vishnu temple
67	Saṅgāleśvara	20°47'01.5"N 71°01'18.4"E	300	Gupt Prayag temple
68	Kṣemāditya	20°47'06.5"N 71°08'52.3"E	316	Surya Mandir
69	Śaṃbara Sthāna	20°47'07"N 71°08'46"E	316	Simar village
70	Rudreśvara	20°53'10.3"N 70°24'37.3"E	188	Rudreshwar Mahadev
71	Nāgasthāna	20°53'03.5"N 70°24'48"E	186	

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72	Rāmeśvara Ksetra	20°52'45.5"N 70°24'56"E	202	Rameshvar Mahadev
73	Suparnelā Bhairavī	20°54'29.6"N 70°23'03.8"E	352	Bhavani Mataji
74	Bhalla Tīrtha	20°54'42.5"N 70°23'01.5"E	353	Bhalka Tīrtha
75	Devikā Nadī	20°55'08"N 70°20'50"E	338	Devka River
76	Jāleśvara	20°54'59.3"N 70°20'40.8"E	338	Jaaleshwar Mandir
77	Huṃkāra Kūpa	20°59'33.4"N 70°23'24.5"E	339	Omnath Mahadev Kup
78	Caṇḍīśvara	20°59'33.4"N 70°23'23.8"E	340	Omnath Mahadev
79	Madhumatī	21°19'38"N 70°01'30"E	333.7	Madhuwanti River
80	Khaṇḍaghaṭa	21°21'05.1"N 69°55'0.5"E	333.7	Kandhali Maa in Kadachh
81	Bhadra Sangama	21°27'37"N 69°46'34.5"E	333.1	Bhadra River-Ocean confluence
82	Bālāditya	20°43'42.7"N 70°45'21.6"E	288	Balnath Temple
83	Sapāṭikā	20°44'28"N 70°45'17"E	288	Sarakhadi village
84	Daityasūdāna	20°53'11.8"N 70°24'20.7"E	81	Lakshmi Narayan Mandir
85	Trisaṅgama	20°52'58"N 70°24'42"E	183	Triveni Sangam
86	Sarasvatī Nadī	20°53'28"N 70°27'26"E	33, 34	Sarasvatī or Kapila River

extent is defined as one krośa (~3.62 km); this closely fits the extent of the bowl-shaped valley around the Bhavnath locality (VKM: 1.106). Subsequently, in the third chapter, the kṣetra's extent is stated as five Gavyūti ($5 * 3.62 = 18.1$ km) (VKM: 3.6); this neatly fits the diameter of the circular Girnar hill range. Finally, in chapter 11, the expanse of the Vastrāpatha region is mentioned as four yojanas ($14.5 * 4 = 58$ km), extending from the Bhadra River in the north to the Ujjayanti River near Bali's city in the south (VKM: 11.16). The Vastrāpatha region is further describes as a central sacred place within Prabhāsa kṣetra (VKM: 2.1), a point reiterated in the nineteenth chapter of VKM, which affirms the Vastrāpatha region being a part of Prabhāsa (VKM: 19.35).

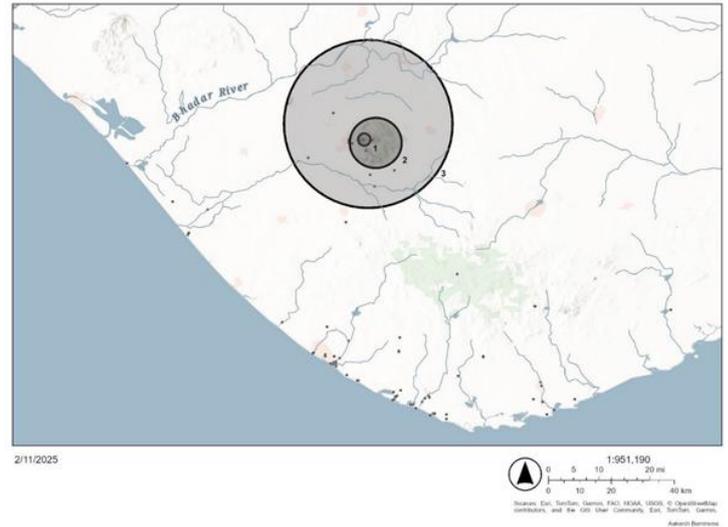


Fig. 8: Map showing the three divisions of Vastrāpatha kṣetra.

2. Vastrāpatha-kṣetra-māhātmya

The Vastrāpatha-kṣetra-māhātmya (VKM), the second book of the Prabhāsa khaṇḍa within the Skanda Purāṇa, comprises 19 chapters that describe the sites within the Vastrāpatha-kṣetra. While the contents of this text bear similarities to the PKM, the geographical descriptions are comparatively sparse and dispersed across multiple chapters. Based on the distances provided, a yojana in VKM is found to be around 14.5 kilometers.

2.1 Vastrāpatha Kṣetra

The text identifies Vastrāpatha kṣetra as the region centered around the temple of Bhava (Śiva) near Raivatāka mountain. This temple is identifiable with the present-day Bhavnath temple, located at 21°31'38.7"N 70°30'06.6"E within a valley in the Girnar hills of Saurāṣṭra. The text narrates that Śiva's garment (vastrā) fell at this location; hence the region came to be known as 'Vastrāpatha' (VKM: 11.13).

The geographical extent of the Vastrāpatha region is described variably in three distinct passages within the text (illustrated in Fig. 8). In the initial chapter, the region's

2.2 Raivatāka and Ujjayanta Mountains

Raivatāka, a prominent mountain in near Vastrāpatha kṣetra in the Saurāshtra region (VKM: 10.11), is situated on the western edge of the Girnar hill range (VKM: 1.68). The text states that initially, this mountain was known as Kumuda; it was renamed Raivatāka after the constellation Revatī fell upon it (VKM: 17.142) (shown in Fig. 9).

Nārāyaṇa (Viṣṇu) is said to have resided on this charming Raivatāka mountain from the beginning of the Yuga. He remained there for many yugas and, having vanquished the demons, rejoiced on the mountain until the universal deluge. Prṛthu named the Lord of gods as 'Dāmodara' after adorning his neck with a japamālā (VKM: 9.223-228). The Suvarṇarekhā River flows near the Dāmodara temple, its name derived from its golden hue (VKM: 1.3, 9.219). In proximity to the Suvarṇarekhā River lie the sacred pools of Dāmodara-kuṇḍa, Brahma-kuṇḍa, and Revatī-kuṇḍa (VKM: 3.2, 17.149).

The mountain Ujjayanta, son of Himavān (Himālaya) and brother of Maināka travelled to the Saurāshtra region and has stood there since the

beginning of the Yuga. Accompanied by other mountains, it is adorned with stones and trees (VKM: 16.19-20). The association of Raivataka and Ujjayanta mountains is explained in the form of story within chapter 17 as follows:

The mountain reached the Surāṣṭra country and fell on an auspicious ground. The great mountain Ujjayanta, the son of Himālaya, formed friendship mutually with Kumuda (Raivataka). "I shall certainly stay wherever you will stay." (VKM: 17.139-140)

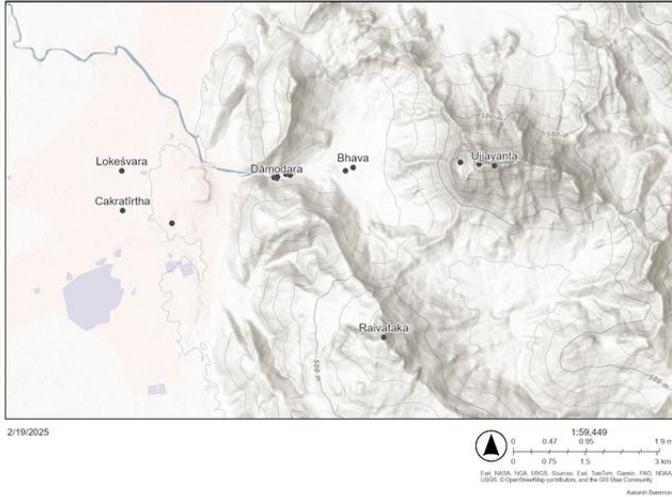


Fig. 9: Map showing Damodara, Bhava, Raivataka and Ujjayanta mountains.

Goddess Bhavānī, the mother of Skanda, dwells atop Ujjayanta mountain. Skanda addresses her as "Ambā" (mother), and therefore, all the deities, humans, and serpents in the netherworld refer to her as such. She is thus widely known as Ambā and is worshipped on the mountain's summit (VKM: 16.35). Ujjayanta is said to have been trampled by the feet of Airāvata, thereby exuding pure water from the Gajapāda (elephants' feet) imprint (VKM: 11.11). The central area of Vastrāpatha corresponds to the space between the Raivataka and Ujjayanta mountains (VKM: 16.72-73).

Raivataka mountain is identified with the present-day Datar hill within the Girnar hills. The Dāmodara temple is located near Raivataka at 21°31'31.2"N 70°29'11.3"E, adjacent to the Suvarṇarekhā River, Dāmodara-kuṇḍa, and Revatī-kuṇḍa. Ujjayanta mountain corresponds to the central hill of Girnar, situated at 21°31'39.5"N 70°31'49"E (shown in Fig. 9). The Ambā Bhavānī temple on top of Ujjayanta mountain can be identified with the present-day Ambaji temple.

2.3 Dunnāvilla-hṛdgiri

The Dunnāvilla hill is described as being situated one yojana west of a place named Maṅgala. According to the text, Bhima subdued Dunnaka here, throwing him on the hill. The spot where Dunnaka fell created a deep fissure leading to the Pātāla realm. The hill is noted for its many Liṅga shrines (VKM: 4.1-3).

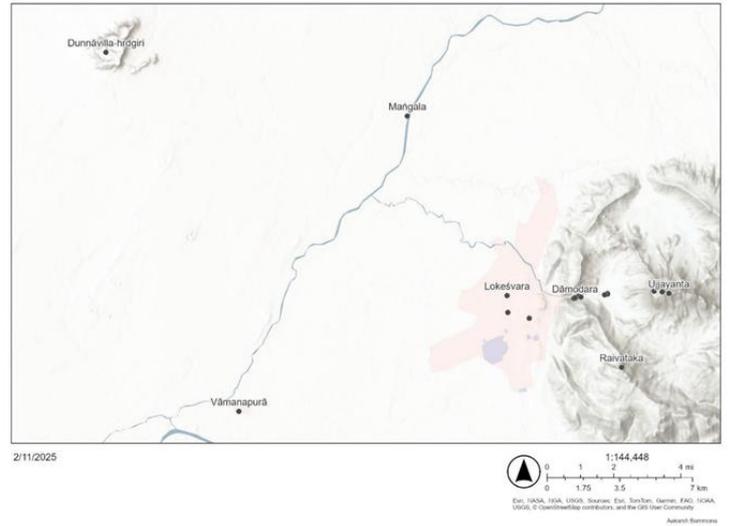


Fig. 10: Map showing Dunnāvilla hill, Vāmanapurā and other sites.

The Dunnāvilla hill identifiable with the Osam hill, is located northwest of Junagadh. The Jains refer to Osam as Dhankagiri, likely a variant pronunciation of 'Dunnaka'. The Svetambar Jain source Prabandhakosa (1390 CE) gives an account of a Jain alchemist Nagarjuna, who was born the son of the snake Vasuki and a human princess Bhopala from Mount Dhanka (Wainer, 2018a). Modern maps occasionally label it as 'Dhak giri'. Maṅgala is likely situated within the modern town of Majevali, located at 21°36'17.4"N 70°24'31.3"E (Fig. 10).

The isolated hill of Osam rises abruptly from the surrounding plains and consists of a dissected plateau. On the top of the hill are several temples, including the Bhimnath temple dedicated to Śiva in the southwestern sector. Adjacent to this temple is a deep fissure in the ground filled with water, known as Bhim-kund, located at 21°37'57.2"N 70°16'06.4"E. This Bhim-kund is highly likely the Dunnaka fissure mentioned in the text. Near the temple are the ruins of a very old fort known locally as 'Bhim no Kotho', within which the foundations of several temples are discernible (Wainer, 2018a).

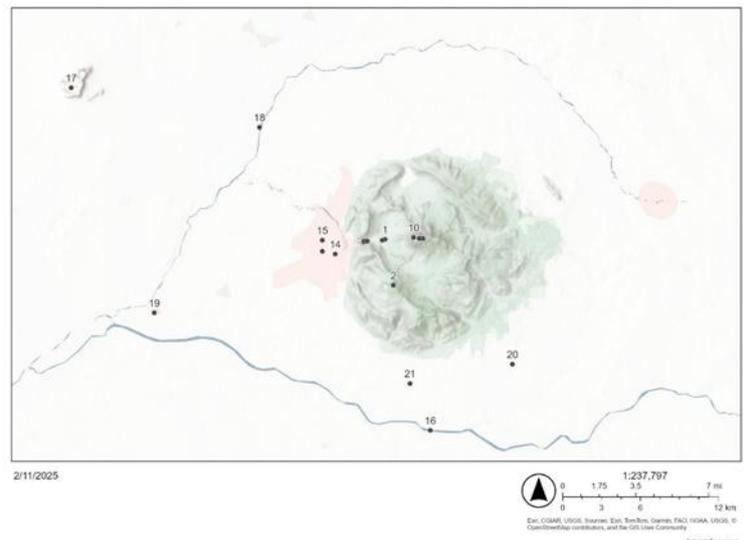


Fig. 11 Map showing the locations of all the identified sites in Vastrāpatha kṣetra. Refer Table 2 for site details.

The geographical details present in all 19 chapters of Vastrāpatha-kṣetra-māhātmya were analyzed, and more than 20 sites and features were identified with high confidence on the modern maps. The location coordinates of these identified sites are tabulated along with the chapter reference from the VKM text in Table 2 and are visually represented in Fig. 11.

Table 2 Location coordinates of all the identified sites from VKM with the chapter reference and modern names.

#	Site name in VKM	Location coordinates	Chapter reference	Modern name
1	Bhava	21°31'38.7"N 70°30'06.6"E	1.2, 9.220,	Bhavnath
2	Raivataka	21°29'43"N 70°30'29.1"E	1.2, 9.229, 16.73	Datar hill
3	Dāmodara	21°31'31.2"N 70°29'11.3"E	1.3	Damodar temple
4	Suvarṇarekhā River	21°31'33"N 70°29'21"E	1.3	Sonrekha River
5	Dāmodara-kunda	21°31'32.3"N 70°29'11.5"E	3.2	Damodar kund
6	Revatī-kuṇḍa	21°31'31.4"N 70°29'9.4"E	1.98, 17.149	Revati kund
7	Mrgī-kuṇḍa	21°31'38.3"N 70°30'06.4"E	1.4, 6.5	Mrigi kund
8	Ujjayanta	21°31'39.5"N 70°31'49"E	11.11, 10.12, 16.73	Girnar hill
9	Ambā Bhavānī	21°31'41"N 70°31'38"E	9.212, 9.229	Ambaji
10	Gajapāda	21°31'42.1"N 70°31'24.4"E	16.89, 11.11	Gajapad kund
11	Brahmeśvara	21°31'34"N 70°29'17.6"E	3.2	Brahmeshwar Mahadev
12	Somanātha	21°31'36.3"N 70°30'0.8"E	14.7	Somnath Mahadev
13	Cakratīrtha	21°31'09"N 70°27'19"E	6.2	Narsinh Mehta Lake
14	Siddheśvara	21°31'0.3"N 70°27'54.7"E	6.1	Siddheshvar Mahadev
15	Lokeśvara	21°31'35.9"N 70°27'18.5"E	6.2	Indreshwar Mahadev
16	Ujjayanti River	21°23'39"N 70°32'09"E	11.5	Ozat River
17	Dunnāvilla-hrdgiri	21°37'57.2"N 70°16'06.4"E	4.1	Osam hill
18	Maṅgala	21°36'17.4"N 70°24'31.3"E	4.1	Majejadi
19	Vāmanapurā	21°28'33.6"N 70°19'49.6"E	11.15	Vanthli
20	Balipurā	21°26'25"N 70°35'48"E	11.5	Bilkha
21	Balipurā?	21°25'36"N 70°31'13"E	11.5	Khadiya
22	Indra linga	21°33'1.1"N 70°28'50.3"E	16.46	Indreshwar Mahadev
23	Kubera linga	21°33'15.5"N 70°29'07.4"E	16.48	Aatmeshwar Mahadev

3 Geological Perspective

3.1 Probable Impact Craters

An analysis of the Prabhāsa-kṣetra-māhātmya (PKM) and Vastrāpatha-kṣetra-māhātmya (VKM) texts reveals significant geological information pertaining to ancient events in Saurāṣṭra. The descriptions of rivers, hills, general topography, and the ocean can be analyzed and compared with the contemporary geological features in the region to elucidate geological and natural phenomena of the distant past. Notably, the texts contain multiple accounts of objects falling from the sky, which strongly suggest meteorite or cometary impacts at various locations within Saurāṣṭra. These locations include the vicinity of modern Prabhas Patan in Somnath, where multiple craters, crevasses and pits are described, along with associated temple sites. Similarly, accounts of falling objects causing ground upheaval are found near the localities of Una and Delvada. Descriptions of falling celestial objects are also associated with the present-day Bhavnath region in the Girnar hill range and on the nearby Osam hill. These objects are variously described as a Śiva Liṅga, Sun, Stars, Solar particles, Rākṣasas, the Garment of Śiva, and others. In addition to objects impacting the ground, the texts also record numerous instances of objects falling into the ocean.

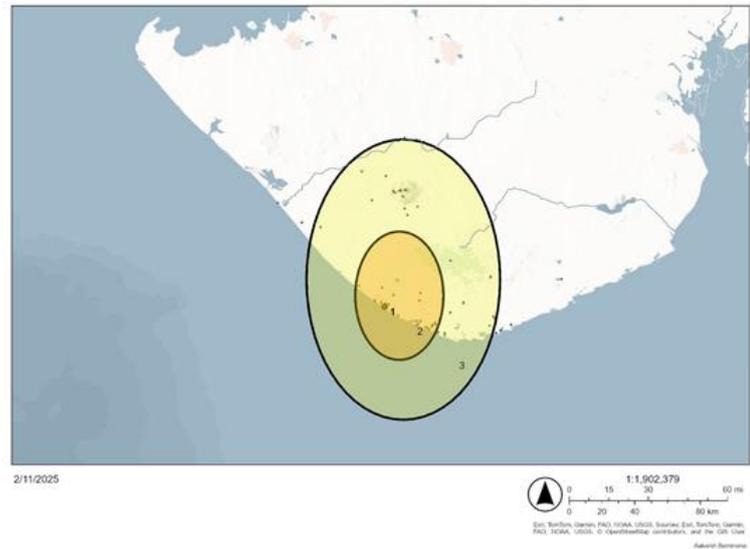


Fig. 12: Map showing the Ejecta fallout zones of a probable impact crater.

The specified dimensions of Prabhāsa, twelve yojanas in length and breadth, are not arbitrary. The text indicates that the reasoning behind the extent of the Kṣetra, Pīṭha and Garbhagrha being twelve yojana, five yojana and one Gavyūti respectively, is based on the extent of the dispersal of particles and radiance of the Sun. This strongly suggests a description of the dispersal of impact crater ejecta particles. Following an extraterrestrial impact, the surrounding area is covered by material ejected from the ground due to the impact's force.

The dispersal and appearance of ejecta particles are influenced by the geology of the impacted surface, as well as the size, velocity, and angle of the impacting object. The region closest to the crater rim, known as the ejecta blanket, typically contains a thick layer of diverse material, including large rock fragments and impact melt.

The region further from the crater contains finer particles called distal ejecta, which usually consist of small rock fragments and dust (Melosh, 1988; Grieve & Theriault, 2012). Seismic waves and radiance could propagate across significantly larger distances. This impact crater phenomenon aligns with the description provided in chapter thirteen of PKM (verses 13.12 to 13.18), wherein the core of impact area corresponds to the Garbhagrha, the area of dispersal of the fiery particles corresponds to the Pīṭha, and the area of spread of radiance corresponds to the Kṣetra. Extending this area symmetrically southwards into the ocean provides a complete picture of the ejecta fallout zones, reminiscent of a potential meteorite impact event. This can be visually represented as depicted in the Fig. 12.

3.2 Shift in course of Sarasvatī river

Another observed geological phenomenon is the shifting of the Sarasvatī River, resulting in a change in the location of Trisaṅgama. The text indicates that the flow of the Sarasvatī River was impeded by the Kṛtasmarā hill (PKM: 33.64-66), suggesting that the river's course was westward compared to its present-day trajectory. Rāmeśvara is also described as being east of Sarasvatī (PKM: 202.1), while today the river is observed to the north of this location. Furthermore, the Trisaṅgama confluence is stated to have been west of Maṅkīśvara and east of Kṛtasmarā; however, Trisaṅgama is today located south of Maṅkīśvara. These descriptions strongly suggest a shift in the river's course since the text's composition.

3.3 Geological Aspects of Vaḍavānala

Vaḍavānala is described as being at the center of a pot-like structure within the ocean, likely representing a large underwater crater. The form is further elucidated in the verse 33.101, where Vāḍava is compared to a Ghaṭikā yantra, a cup-shaped water clock that fills with water over time. Similarly, Vaḍavānala is described as consuming ocean water through his needle-faced mouth; this is likely a narrow, eroded opening in the bedrock near the crater's rim through which water enters. In ancient times, the crater's rim may have been above the sea level, enabling people to view the spectacle of Vāḍava's consumption of seawater. The shifts in Sarasvatī River and structure of Vaḍavānala are visually represented in Fig. 13.

There is no evidence of igneous volcanism in Saurāṣṭra region in the recent geological period. However, mud volcanoes along the Makran coast of Baluchistan are known to emit flammable natural gases (Delisle, 2005). Natural gas deposits are also documented

in the Cambay basin near Saurāṣṭra ((Mohan, Sharma, & Barnal, 2006). The potential for an extraterrestrial impact to trigger the seepage and combustion of these submarine natural gas deposits warrants further investigation, as it could explain the origins of the Vāḍava submarine fire.

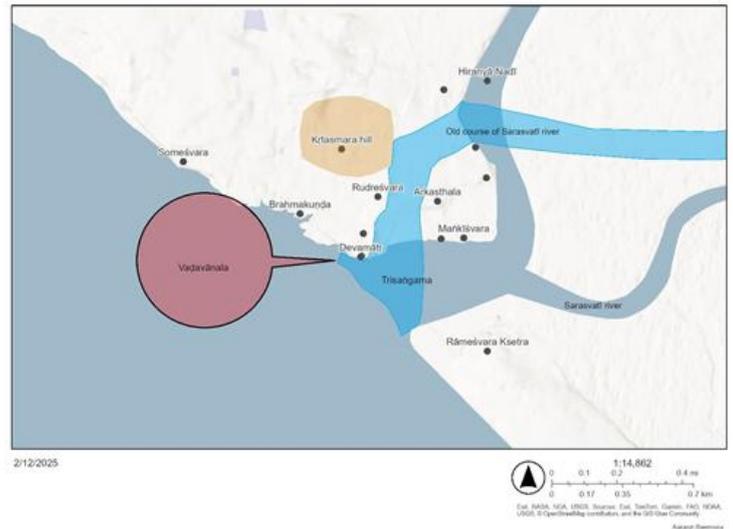


Fig. 13 Map showing the likely former course of the Sarasvatī River and the probable appearance of Vaḍavānala in the Sea.

Conclusion

An in-depth analysis of the Prabhāsa-kṣetra-māhātmya and the Vastrāpatha-kṣetra-māhātmya texts within Skanda Purāṇa have revealed significant insights into the ancient landscape of Prabhāsa region. The primary findings of this research are outlined below:

1. The Prabhāsa-kṣetra-māhātmya, consisting of 366 chapters provides descriptions of over 300 geographical sites that include temples, sacred ponds, rivers, hills and other natural landmarks within and around the Prabhāsa region. Of these, around 86 sites have been conclusively identified, and plausible locations of a further hundred or more sites that no longer survive can be estimated.
2. The Vastrāpatha-kṣetra-māhātmya, containing 19 chapters, describes more than 40 geographical sites, 22 of these were definitively identified.
3. The study also delves into the etymological aspects of the names given to various regions, rivers, hills, religious sites, towns, and villages.
4. Numerous structures of high cultural and historical importance described in the texts, likely have not survived to the present-day due to events such as foreign invasions, natural calamities, or modern developmental activities.
5. Descriptions in the texts indicate that the modern town of Somanath was once home to a significant concentration of religious sites, more than 150 in number.

6. Alongside the prevalence of temples dedicated to Śiva in high density, the broader Prabhāsa region also contained a relatively high concentration of Surya (Sun) temples compared to other parts of India.
7. The connection between the greater Vedic Sarasvatī River and the Sarasvatī River in Prabhāsa region was analyzed and explained based on the Guptagāmini nature of the river as described in the texts. This analysis was further supported by comparison with the geographical distribution of multiple rivers bearing the name Sarasvatī in western parts of India today.
8. This research endeavored to provide a clearer interpretation of natural phenomena that were cryptically illustrated in the texts through a comprehensive analysis. The information relating to potential impact craters, which is of considerable geological significance, was investigated and explained along with visual representations.

A comparative analysis can further be conducted based on existing data regarding geological formations such as the Luna crater in the Kutch region (K.S. Sajinkumar et al., 2024). The geological aspects explored in this study necessitate additional investigation through field surveys to augment our understanding of the region's geological history.

Numerous archaeological sites have been identified in Saurāṣṭra, notably along the southern coastline and Girnar hills region (P. Ajithprasad et al., 2011). These include the sites of the Harappan civilization. However, the historical and cultural aspects of these sites remain largely obscure. A more thorough understanding of the region's geographical history, facilitated by further examination of ancient literature, is essential to uncover valuable insights. Archaeological excavations at the sites identified in this research should lead to interesting new discoveries.

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