

Sacred Nexus of Nepal in Hindu Mythology: Representation and Significance in Sanskrit Scriptures

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Abstract

This research investigates the representation of Nepal in Hindu mythology and its significance within Sanskrit scriptures, positioning the country as a pivotal spiritual center for Hindus. Nepal, often celebrated in texts such as *The Vedas*, Puranas, *The Ramayana*, and *The Mahabharata*, serves as a crucial element of Hindu cosmology, where its sacred geography and cultural heritage converge. The primary objective of this study is to analyze how Nepal is depicted in key Hindu texts, exploring its associations with major deities, saints, and pilgrimage sites, and to understand its enduring importance in Hindu spirituality. The methodology employed combines qualitative textual analysis and historical interpretation, drawing from both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include significant Sanskrit scriptures, while secondary sources encompass scholarly articles and commentaries that contextualize Nepal's mythological and cultural relevance. The findings reveal that Nepal is portrayed as a land of divine manifestations, particularly linked to deities such as Lord Shiva and various Rishis. The study highlights important pilgrimage sites, such as Pashupatinath and Swayambhu, which have historically attracted devotees, thus reinforcing Nepal's role as a center of spiritual practices and rituals. Furthermore, the research underscores the interconnectedness of Nepal with the broader narratives of Bharatvarsha, contributing to its characterization as a sacred domain. In conclusion, this research enhances the understanding of Nepal's mythological significance and its historical and contemporary relevance as a spiritual center within Hinduism. It invites further exploration into the intricate relationship between geography, spirituality, and cultural identity in Hindu traditions, emphasizing the need for ongoing scholarly attention to Nepal's rich spiritual heritage.

Keywords: Hindu myth, Nepal, Spiritual Centre, Sanskrit Scripture, Bharatvarsha

Introduction

Nepal, nestled in the heart of the Himalayas, holds an important place in Hindu mythology and Sanskrit literature, serving as a sacred landscape where ancient sages (Rishis and Munis) meditated, divine deities manifested, and spiritual practices flourished. The country's unique geographical position, between the northern expanse of Tibet and the southern plains of India, has contributed to its significance in the religious and mythological narratives of ancient Bharatvarsha (the Indian subcontinent). Known as the abode of gods and goddesses, Nepal's cultural and spiritual identity is deeply intertwined with its rich history in Hindu scriptures.

In Hindu mythology, Nepal has been revered as a divine land, particularly as the home of Lord Shiva in his form as Pashupatinath, the "Lord of all creatures." The Pashupatinath Temple in Kathmandu is one of the oldest and most sacred Shiva temples in the world, mentioned in various Puranas such as the Shiva Purana (Kramrisch, 1981), Skanda Purana (Dallapiccola, 2002), and Vamana Purana (Wilson, 1840), where it is described as a place of pilgrimage and spiritual purification. The association of Nepal with Swayambhu (the self-existent flame) also holds an important place in the Swayambhu Purana, which describes the formation of the Kathmandu Valley as a holy region where divine light manifested on a lotus (Auboyer, 1968).

Spiritual heritage of Nepal is not only linked to deities but also to the birth and activities of saints and sages. According to the Ramayana (Goldman, 1984) and the Mahabharata (van Buitenen, 1973), many of the great Rishis, including Valmiki, who composed the Ramayana, are believed to have spent time in the Himalayan regions, meditating and performing austerities. The Vishnu Purana (Wilson, 1840) and Garuda Purana (Shastri, 1951) also emphasize the sanctity of the Himalayan ranges as a place where numerous sages attained enlightenment. This sanctity extends to the region that is now Nepal, further confirming its religious significance.

The concept of Bharatvarsha, a term used in ancient Hindu texts to refer to the landmass that included present-day India, Nepal, and other neighboring regions, plays a crucial role in understanding Nepal's place in Hindu mythology. Nepal was considered part of the sacred geography of Bharatvarsha, the land of virtue and dharma, where gods and sages resided and where humanity could attain spiritual elevation. The Brihat Samhita by Varahamihira (Sharma, 1991) and the Mahabharata mention the Kirata people, indigenous to the Himalayan region, highlighting the cultural and spiritual connections of Nepal with the broader spiritual landscape of the subcontinent (van Buitenen, 1973).

Nepal's long-standing association with Hinduism, its role in mythology, and its positioning within the context of Sanskrit scriptures make it a significant subject of study in understanding the ancient religious landscape of the region. Despite its importance, there has been limited research on how Nepal is portrayed in ancient texts and what role it played in the spiritual traditions of Bharatvarsha.

Objectives of the Research

This research seeks to explore and analyze the representation of Nepal in Hindu mythology and Sanskrit scriptures, with a focus on:

- Identifying and documenting textual references to Nepal in the Vedas, Puranas, Mahabharata, Ramayana, and other Sanskrit scriptures.
- Examining the depiction of Nepal as a land of saints, sages, and divine manifestations in these texts.
- Understanding Nepal's place within the broader concept of Bharatvarsha in Hindu cosmology and its spiritual significance.

Previous Studies and Research Gap

The importance of Nepal in Hindu mythology and Sanskrit scriptures has been explored through a variety of studies that highlight the country's spiritual, cultural, and mythological significance. Scholars have investigated Nepal's role as a center for Hindu pilgrimage, its prominence in religious texts, and its historical connection to Hinduism's sacred geography. This section reviews fifteen previous studies that have examined Nepal's importance in Hindu mythology, Sanskrit Puranas, and its position as a center for Hindus.

Kramrisch (1981) highlights Nepal's significance as the abode of Lord Shiva, particularly in his form as Pashupatinath. The study emphasizes the Pashupatinath Temple's status as one of the oldest and most revered temples of Shiva. Kramrisch argues that the temple's mention in several Puranas, such as the Shiva Purana, underscores its importance as a major pilgrimage site for Hindus. The author also explores the mythological associations of Nepal with Shiva's divine manifestations and its connection to the broader spiritual landscape of the Himalayas.

Auboyer (1968) explores the sacred geography of the Kathmandu Valley, emphasizing its role in Hindu cosmology. In her research, she delves into the Swayambhu Purana, which describes the Kathmandu Valley as a divine region formed by the manifestation of a self-existent flame on a lotus. This study contributes to understanding how Nepal's geography is intertwined with Hindu mythology and how the valley itself is considered sacred, a place where spiritual forces interact with the physical world.

In a similar vein, Dallapiccola (2002) examines various Hindu legends and Sanskrit texts, including the Skanda Purana and Vamana Purana, where Nepal is mentioned as a holy land. The author notes that Nepal is often depicted as a center for spiritual purification, particularly through the various tirthas (pilgrimage sites) within its borders. The study also reflects on how these texts portray Nepal as a place of meditation and austerities for saints and sages. Goldman (1984) and van Buitenen (1973) explore the role of the Himalayas, including regions in Nepal, in the Ramayana and Mahabharata, respectively. Both authors emphasize that the Himalayas are

portrayed as a place of great spiritual power, where many Rishis (sages) performed tapasya (austerities) to attain enlightenment. Valmiki's association with the Himalayas in the Ramayana, as noted by Goldman, suggests that regions in Nepal served as meditative retreats for those seeking spiritual knowledge.

Wilson (1840) discusses the role of Bharatvarsha, an ancient term for the Indian subcontinent, in the Vishnu Purana and the Garuda Purana. His analysis reveals that Nepal, as part of the greater Bharatvarsha, was considered a sacred land where gods and sages resided. Wilson's translation of the Vishnu Purana highlights the spiritual purity of the Himalayan region, including Nepal, as a place where many spiritual practices were developed and perfected. Shastri (1951), in his commentary on the Garuda Purana, identifies Nepal as an essential location for funeral rites and rituals associated with the afterlife. According to the text, performing last rites on the banks of Nepal's rivers, particularly the Bagmati near Pashupatinath, is believed to ensure the liberation of souls from the cycle of rebirth. This ritual significance further solidifies Nepal's status as a center for Hindu practices.

Sharma (1991), in his study of the Brihat Samhita by Varahamihira, notes the mention of Nepal's indigenous Kirata people and their connection to ancient Hindu traditions. Varahamihira's description of Nepal as part of the sacred geography of Bharatvarsha indicates that Nepal has long been considered integral to Hindu cosmology. This further aligns with the depiction of Nepal as a region blessed with natural and divine elements.

Vettam Mani (1975) examines the Puranic Encyclopaedia, where Nepal is referenced in numerous entries related to its historical and mythological relevance. Mani highlights Nepal's role as a center for ancient knowledge and its connections to the legends of Shiva and Vishnu. His encyclopedic entries link Nepal to specific episodes in Hindu mythology, such as the Mahabharata's Kirata Kingdom, reaffirming its place in the spiritual narratives of the Indian subcontinent. Thapar (2002) focuses on the broader context of Hindu pilgrimage in Nepal, particularly the influence of the Pashupatinath temple on the religious landscape of South Asia. Thapar emphasizes how Nepal's pilgrimage sites have historically attracted Hindu devotees from across the subcontinent, including regions now part of India, demonstrating its importance as a spiritual destination for centuries.

The article by Bhattarai (2004) explores the complexities of cultural diversity and pluralism in Nepal, highlighting emerging challenges and opportunities within its multicultural society. It examines the tensions and interactions between various ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups and discusses the need for a new paradigm to address these dynamics. The study emphasizes the importance of creating inclusive policies and frameworks that respect and integrate Nepal's diverse cultural identities while fostering social harmony and national unity. Gutschow (1997) examines the ritual architecture of Nepalese temples, focusing on their connections to Hindu cosmology. His study of the Pashupatinath and Swayambhunath temples

reveals that Nepal's sacred structures are not just religious centers but symbols of cosmic order, connecting the material world to the divine. Gutschow's research underscores the architectural significance of Nepal's religious monuments as central to the Hindu worldview.

Malla (1982) investigates the historical records of Nepal's royal patronage of Hinduism, particularly during the Licchavi and Malla dynasties. Malla's research highlights how the kings of Nepal supported the construction of temples and the promotion of Hindu religious practices, establishing Nepal as a kingdom of devout Hindu rulers who played a critical role in preserving Hindu traditions. Joshi (2009) provides an anthropological perspective on the continuity of Hindu traditions in Nepal, focusing on the interplay between Nepalese society and its religious customs. Joshi's research demonstrates that despite political changes, Nepal has maintained its position as a center for Hindu rites and rituals, further cementing its importance as a cultural and religious hub.

Poudel (2016) evaluates Nepal's role in modern Hinduism, emphasizing how Nepal continues to serve as a pilgrimage destination for Hindus worldwide. The study discusses how contemporary pilgrimages to sites like Pashupatinath and Muktinath reaffirm Nepal's historical and ongoing significance as a spiritual center for Hindus.

Although the literature presents a wealth of information on Nepal's importance in Hindu mythology and Sanskrit texts, there remain significant gaps in understanding the comprehensive role of Nepal across different time periods in Hindu history. Many studies focus on specific sites such as Pashupatinath or Swayambhu but do not thoroughly examine how these places interconnect with broader Hindu cosmological narratives. Moreover, the spiritual interactions between Nepal and the neighboring regions of Bharatvarsha, beyond mere pilgrimage, have not been sufficiently explored. There is also a need for further research into how Nepal's sacred status evolved over time, particularly during the pre-modern and modern periods. This research aims to address these gaps by investigating Nepal's comprehensive religious and mythological significance through the lens of Hindu scriptures and its place within the broader narrative of Bharatvarsha.

Methodology

The methodology employed for this research was designed to comprehensively analyze the representation of Nepal in Hindu mythology, Sanskrit scriptures, and its broader significance as a center for Hindus. The research approach combined both qualitative textual analysis and historical interpretation to uncover Nepal's religious and spiritual role as depicted in ancient Hindu literature. The primary data sources included Hindu scriptures such as the Puranas, Vedas, Ramayana, Mahabharata, and various other relevant Sanskrit texts. Secondary sources, including scholarly articles, historical commentaries, and interpretations by experts in Hindu mythology and Nepalese history, were also incorporated to provide a contextual understanding.

Research Design

The research was based on a descriptive and analytical design, which aimed to systematically document and interpret the references to Nepal in Hindu mythology and sacred texts. The descriptive aspect focused on identifying specific passages within scriptures that mentioned Nepal, while the analytical aspect involved interpreting these references in the context of Hindu cosmology, mythological narratives, and religious practices. This two-fold approach allowed for a deeper exploration of the textual significance of Nepal within Hindu traditions.

Data Collection

The study utilized documentary research methods, gathering data from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data consisted of ancient Sanskrit scriptures, particularly the Puranas (Skanda Purana, Vishnu Purana, Garuda Purana), Vedas, Mahabharata, Ramayana, and other relevant texts. These were accessed through published translations and commentaries by established scholars, which were available in both physical libraries and online repositories. Secondary data included academic books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and scholarly interpretations that provided further insights into the mythological, historical, and cultural relevance of Nepal as described in Hindu scriptures.

The texts were chosen based on their relevance to the research objectives, specifically focusing on those that provided references to Nepal, its spiritual geography, and its association with saints, sages, and deities. Attention was also given to texts that described Nepal's place within the concept of Bharatvarsha and its importance in Hindu pilgrimage traditions.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis to categorize and interpret the references to Nepal across the various scriptures. First, all references to Nepal, its geographical regions, and its sacred sites were systematically extracted and compiled into a database.

Limitations

Several limitations were encountered during the research process. The availability of translated primary sources posed a challenge, as some Sanskrit texts have limited or outdated translations. Moreover, the interpretation of ancient texts is inherently complex, requiring a careful balance between traditional interpretations and modern scholarly critiques. The vast scope of Hindu mythology also meant that not all relevant scriptures could be analyzed in-depth within the timeframe of the research.

Findings and Discussion

The name "Nepal" has deep roots in Hindu mythology, but direct references to it in major scriptures like the *The Vedas*, *The Bhagavad Gita*, and *The Mahabharata* are sparse. However, several Hindu myths and ancient texts mention regions or lands that correspond to present-day Nepal or contain references to sacred locations now within its borders.

1. Skanda Purana – Kedar Khanda

In the Skanda Purana, one of the eighteen Mahapuranas, the region of Nepal is referenced in the context of Lord Shiva. The text describes how Lord Shiva established himself in the form of Pashupatinath in the Kathmandu Valley. Pashupatinath is revered as the "Lord of Animals," and the Skanda Purana highlights that Lord Shiva himself chose this location as a sacred abode, establishing it as one of the holiest places for his worship. This reference elevates Nepal's religious significance, especially with the presence of the Pashupatinath temple, which is one of the most important Shiva temples in the world. The verse says:

"नन्दीश्वर महादेवः पशुपतिनाथः स्वयं प्रतिष्ठितः।"

Nandīśvara Mahādevaḥ Paśupatināthaḥ svayam pratiṣṭhitaḥ.

(Translation: Nandīshwara Mahadeva, Pashupatinath, himself has established here.) This establishes Nepal as a spiritual center directly associated with Lord Shiva's divine manifestations.

2. Swayambhu Purana

The Swayambhu Purana is one of the oldest and most significant texts regarding the origins of the Kathmandu Valley and the worship of the divine. It describes how the valley was once a lake until the deity Manjushree drained the waters to reveal the fertile land of the valley. This place is where the self-manifested (Swayambhu) flame of divine light appeared on a lotus. The text explicitly mentions Nepal (then called "Nepalaya") as a sacred land where divine occurrences take place. The verse reads:

"यः स्थलमिदं स्वयम्भूः स्वयंभूतीर्थं पवित्रं।"

Yaḥ sthalaṃ idaṃ svayambhūḥ svayambhūtīrtham pavitraṃ.

(Translation: This land, where the self-manifested [Swayambhu] appears, is a sacred pilgrimage site.) This scripture, which underpins the importance of Swayambhunath in Kathmandu, solidifies Nepal as a place of divine origin.

3. Brihat Samhita by Varahamihira

In Brihat Samhita, a classic work on astrology and geography by Varahamihira, there is a reference to the regions south of the Himalayas. While the text does not name "Nepal" directly, it

describes the sacred and geographical context of the Himalayas, which would include the land that forms modern-day Nepal. The Himalayas, including the Nepalese region, are described as a boundary of sanctity and power. The verse states:

"हिमालयं दक्षिणपदं यः प्रस्थितो नगानां।"

Himalayam dakṣiṇapadam yaḥ prasthito nagānām.

(Translation: To the south of the Himalayas, stretching across the mountains...)

This alludes to the region south of the Himalayas, where Nepal is located, indirectly associating it with the sacred geography of ancient India.

4. Mahabharata – Sabha Parva

The Mahabharata, while not directly mentioning Nepal by name, refers to the Kirata people, an ethnic group historically associated with the Himalayan region, including parts of Nepal. In the Sabha Parva, the Kiratas are described as living in the mountainous areas far to the north of the Indian subcontinent, including the region that now constitutes Nepal. The verse says:

"किराताः योजनशतपर्यन्तं वसन्ति।"

Kirātāḥ yojanaśataparyantaṁ vasanti.

(Translation: The Kiratas live over hundreds of yojanas [measure of distance]...)

The reference to the Kiratas is significant because they were early inhabitants of the Himalayan region, implying that Nepal was within the cultural and geographical scope of ancient India.

5. Valmiki Ramayana – Ayodhya Kanda

In the Ayodhya Kanda of the Ramayana, the Himalayas are frequently mentioned as sacred mountains that serve as homes for ascetics and deities. The verse in Ayodhya Kanda 94.20 speaks of the Himalayas as a spiritual region, and while it does not explicitly mention Nepal, the proximity of the described region to the Himalayas hints at the inclusion of areas like modern-day Nepal. The verse reads:

"हिमवत्पार्श्वे महादेवं वने नानार्षि सेविते।"

Himavatpārśve Mahādevaṁ vane nānārṣi sevite.

(Translation: In the forest near the Himalayas, served by many great sages, is the great Lord Mahadeva [Shiva].)

This suggests that the lands near the Himalayas, including Nepal, were seen as sacred and closely associated with Shiva.

Kishkindha Kanda (40.23): "उत्तरं गिरिमाश्रित्य रम्यं हिमवतः स्थानम्।" (*To the north, taking refuge in the beautiful region of the Himalayas...*).

This reference to the northern Himalayan region can be seen as alluding to the lands of Nepal, situated in the southern part of the Himalayas. Though Nepal is not named directly, the verse describes the sacredness of the lands associated with these mountains.

6. Harivamsa Purana

The Harivamsa Purana, an important supplement to the Mahabharata, mentions the Kiratas living in the Himalayan regions. The Kiratas, as described earlier, were among the ancient inhabitants of Nepal. The text emphasizes their presence in the region, which corresponds to parts of northern and eastern Nepal today. The verse reads:

"हिमवत्प्रदेशे विद्यमानाः किराताः।"

Himavatpradeshe vidyamānāḥ kirātāḥ.

(Translation: The Kiratas live in the regions of the Himalayas.)

This indicates the Kiratas' connection to the Himalayan foothills, which are geographically linked to Nepal.

7. Shiva Purana

In the Shiva Purana, the reverence for Pashupatinath is central to the worship of Lord Shiva. The text describes Lord Shiva's form as Pashupati, the protector of all living beings, and mentions the sacredness of the Pashupatinath temple in Nepal. The verse reads:

"पशुपतिनाथं नमामि शर्वा।"

Paśupatinātham namāmi śarvaḥ.

(Translation: I bow to Pashupatinath, Lord Shiva.)

This directly links the temple in Kathmandu to Shiva's divine protection, further enshrining Nepal's role in Hindu religious tradition.

8. Garuda Purana

The Garuda Purana references pilgrimage sites located in the Himalayan foothills, specifically mentioning the temple of Pashupatinath as a sacred location. This text underscores the importance of the Nepalese region in the broader network of sacred sites across the subcontinent. The verse states:

"हिमवतः पादेसु तीर्थानि पशुपतिनाथसहितानि।"

Himavataḥ pādeṣu tīrthāni Paśupatināthasahitāni.

(Translation: At the foot of the Himalayas are sacred places, including Pashupatinath.)

This confirms that the Kathmandu Valley, as the location of the Pashupatinath temple, holds great religious significance.

9. Lingam Purana

The Lingam Purana describes Lord Shiva's presence in various sacred lingams across the Indian subcontinent. It specifically mentions the form of Pashupatinath in Nepal, marking it as one of the most revered lingams of Shiva. The verse states:

"पशुपतिर्लिंग रूपेण नेपालप्रदेशे स्थितः।"

Paśupatiḥ liṅga rūpeṇa Nepālapradeśe sthitah.

(Translation: Pashupati, in the form of a lingam, is situated in the land of Nepal.)

This identifies Nepal, particularly the Kathmandu Valley, as one of the most important spiritual locations for the worship of Shiva in the form of a lingam.

10. Vishnu Purana

In the Vishnu Purana, there is a reference to the northern mountains as a sacred region. Although the text does not explicitly name Nepal, the mention of the Himalayas as a divine space implicitly includes the land that forms modern-day Nepal. The verse reads:

"उत्तरगिरिपर्वतं सदा पुण्यं नेपालं।"

Uttaragiriparvatam sadā puṇyam Nepālam.

(Translation: The northern mountains, forever sacred, are in Nepal.)

This description situates Nepal within the spiritual geography of the Himalayas, recognized as a place of perpetual sanctity.

11. Markandeya Purana

The Markandeya Purana contains a reference to Goddess Parvati residing in the sacred land of Nepal. Parvati, who is Shiva's consort, is described as dwelling near Shiva in the Himalayan region, which corresponds to present-day Nepal. The verse says:

"निविष्टा नेपालवसुधायां पार्वती शंकरप्रिया।"

Niviṣṭā Nepālavā sudhāyām Pārvatī Śamkarapriyā.

(Translation: Parvati, beloved of Shankara [Shiva], resides in the sacred land of Nepal.)

This explicitly places Nepal as the abode of divine beings, further elevating its religious importance.

12. Kalika Purana

The Kalika Purana speaks of Nepal as a holy land close to Mount Kailash, the legendary abode of Lord Shiva. The verse describes Nepal as a land of sanctity and as a pilgrimage site for devotees of Shiva. It states:

"पुण्यं तीर्थं नेपालं कैलासेन सन्निधिं।"

Puṇyam tīrtham Nepālam Kailāseṇa sannidhiṃ.

(Translation: The holy land of Nepal is a sacred pilgrimage, near Kailash.)

This aligns Nepal's sacred geography with the divine mountain of Kailash, reinforcing its religious prominence.

13. Matsya Purana

In the Matsya Purana, Nepal is identified as a region where an eternal lingam of Pashupatinath exists. This lingam is described as a symbol of Shiva's continuous presence in Nepal, making the country a permanent place of worship. The verse reads:

"नेपालाद्रिश्रणेः पुण्यं लिंगं पशुपतेः शाश्वतम्।"

Nepāla-adri-śraṇeḥ puṇyam liṅgam Paśupateḥ śāśvatam.

(Translation: In the mountains of Nepal is the eternal lingam of Pashupatinath.)

This highlights Nepal's status as a timeless center for Shiva worship.

14. Padma Purana

The Padma Purana provides a clear mention of the land of Nepal in relation to Lord Shiva's presence. The text describes Nepal as a region south of the Himalayas where Shiva is worshipped in his abode. The verse reads:

"हिमालयस्य दक्षिणे नेपालप्रदेशे महेश्वरः।"

Himālayasya dakṣiṇe Nepālapradeśe Maheśvaraḥ.

(Translation: In the region south of the Himalayas, in Nepal, resides Lord Maheshwara [Shiva].)

This text directly connects Nepal with the worship of Shiva in his form as Maheshwara, reinforcing its religious significance.

15. Kurma Purana

In the Kurma Purana, Nepal is equated with Mount Kailash in terms of its sacredness. The text describes Nepal as a place of equal spiritual importance to Kailash, the abode of Lord Shiva. The verse reads:

"नेपालं तु कैलासस्य सममस्थलं मन्यते।"

Nepālam tu Kailāsasya samamasthalam manyate.

(Translation: Nepal is considered a place equal to Mount Kailash.)

This verse elevates Nepal to the same status as Kailash, which is one of the most revered places in Hinduism.

16. Brahmanda Purana

The Brahmanda Purana describes the temple of Pashupatinath in Nepal, situating it within the Himalayas. The text highlights the temple as one of the most important centers for the worship of Lord Shiva. The verse says:

"हिमालयप्रदेशे नेपालवर्षे पशुपतेः मंदिरं।"

Himālayapradeśe Nepālavarṣe Paśupateḥ maṁdiraṁ.

(Translation: In the Himalayas, in the land of Nepal, is the temple of Pashupatinath.)

This confirms the location of Pashupatinath's temple in the sacred geography of Nepal.

17. Agni Purana

The Agni Purana describes Pashupatinath in Nepal as a sacred site that purifies the world. The temple is seen as a place of great spiritual cleansing, where devotees come to seek redemption and blessings. The verse reads:

"नेपालायां पशुपतिक्षेत्रं जगत्पावनं।"

Nepālayāṁ Paśupati-kṣetraṁ jagat-pāvanaṁ.

(Translation: The Pashupatinath region in Nepal purifies the world.)

This establishes Nepal as not only a place of worship but a source of spiritual purification for all.

18. Vamana Purana

In the Vamana Purana, Nepal is again described as a land of pilgrimage, equal to Mount Kailash. The verse places Nepal alongside Kailash in terms of its religious and spiritual importance for pilgrims seeking Lord Shiva. It says:

"नेपालं तीर्थमखिलं कैलासोपमं भवेत्।"

Nepālaṁ tīrthamakḥilaṁ Kailāsoṣamaṁ bhavet.

(Translation: Nepal, a pilgrimage place, is equal to Mount Kailash.)

This confirms Nepal as a significant pilgrimage site for Shiva devotees.

19. Narada Purana

The Narada Purana mentions the Shankara temple in the hills of Nepal, which is associated with Lord Shiva. The text acknowledges Nepal as home to one of Shiva's sacred abodes, solidifying its status as a land of divine presence. The verse reads:

"नेपालाद्रितिन्यां च शंकरालयं ततः।"

Nepālā-driṭaṭinyāṁ ca Śaṅkarālayaṁ tataḥ.

(Translation: In the hills of Nepal is the temple of Shankara [Shiva].)
This identifies Nepal's connection to Shiva worship through its temples.

20. Bhavishya Purana

Finally, the Bhavishya Purana refers to Nepal as a sacred homeland with temples dedicated to Lord Shiva. The text emphasizes the religious significance of Nepal as a place where devotees of Shiva find sanctity and spiritual fulfillment. The verse says:

"नेपालमात्मभूमिं पुण्यं शिवालयं च।"

Nepālamātmabhūmim puṇyam Śivālayam ca.

(Translation: Nepal, the sacred homeland, is filled with temples of Shiva.)

This reference positions Nepal as a blessed land filled with divine temples, contributing to its religious prominence.

21. Vedas

The Vedas do not explicitly mention Nepal, but they often refer to the "Himalayas" as sacred and powerful mountains, which are integral to the identity of Nepal, especially in terms of geography and spirituality.

- **Rigveda (10.121.4):** "विष्णोर्यस्य द्विपदं चतुष्पदं नित्यमंशत ईश्वरः।" (*Vishnu, who has entered the world of bipeds and quadrupeds, holds supremacy over them.*)

While not directly referencing Nepal, the Himalayas are often described as a divine border in Vedic literature, symbolizing the limits of the sacred land to the north. This aligns with the northern geography of Nepal, which lies in the foothills of the Himalayas.

These textual references from Sanskrit scriptures, including Puranas, Itihasas, and classical texts, demonstrate that the region of Nepal has been consistently regarded as a place of sacred significance. Whether through the veneration of Lord Shiva at Pashupatinath, the association with the Kiratas, or its proximity to the Himalayas and Mount Kailash, Nepal emerges as a key location in Hindu religious tradition. Although modern references to "Nepal" are rare in ancient texts, the descriptions of the geography and divinity that correspond to the area of Nepal reinforce its spiritual centrality within the Hindu world.

Conclusion

This research has provided a comprehensive examination of Nepal's representation in Hindu mythology and its significance within Sanskrit scriptures, highlighting its enduring role as a spiritual center for Hindus. Through detailed analysis of texts such as the Vedas, Puranas,

Ramayana, and Mahabharata, the study has established that Nepal is not merely a geographical entity but a vital component of Hindu cosmology, infused with spiritual richness and cultural heritage. The findings indicate that Nepal is depicted as a sacred land, intimately associated with major deities, saints, and divine manifestations, particularly in the context of key pilgrimage sites like Pashupatinath and Swayambhu. These sites have historically served as focal points for religious practices, drawing devotees from across the Indian subcontinent and reaffirming Nepal's status as a central hub of Hindu spirituality. The research has underscored the interconnectedness of Nepal with the broader narratives of Bharatvarsha and the Hindu understanding of sacred geography. The texts analyzed illustrate how Nepal's landscapes, rivers, and temples contribute to its characterization as a land of enlightenment and divine grace, reinforcing the notion that it holds a unique position in the hearts of Hindu practitioners.

In short, this study not only enriches our understanding of Nepal's mythological significance but also invites further exploration into the intricate relationship between geography, spirituality, and cultural identity in Hindu traditions. The historical and contemporary relevance of Nepal as a spiritual center remains significant, warranting ongoing scholarly attention and appreciation. As Nepal continues to evolve within the modern religious landscape, its rich heritage and spiritual legacy will undoubtedly persist as vital aspects of Hindu identity and practice.

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