

## **Paurāṇic Elements on Anundoram Borooh's Geographical Idea of Ancient India**

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### **Abstract:**

Anundoram Borooh, a noble scholar of India has contributed a lot to the field of Sanskrit Literature. Out of his compositions, five works are lexical. The first lexical work is *A Practical English-Sanskrit Dictionary* of which three volumes are found. First volume is titled as *A Practical English-Sanskrit Dictionary*. Borooh named the second volume as *Higher Sanskrit grammar* which is published separately by him. The third volume titled as *On the Ancient Geography of India: Geographical Names Rendered in Sanskrit*. Later on it is reissued by the Publication Board, Assam as an independent book under the title *Ancient Geography of India*. In this book, Anundoram Borooh gives an exhaustive geographical idea of ancient India. He discusses the origin of the word India, derivations and divisions of it. This genius scholar presents a vast description of the places of ancient India in the light of historical and geographical significance. In the delineation of the origins of places names, mountains names, rivers names etc. Anundoram Borooh has given many references from Purāṇas. He uses most of places, rivers, mountains found in the *Viṣṇupurāṇa*, *Matsyapurāṇa* and *Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa*. For example, Borooh refers the names of seven principal mountains as found in the *Viṣṇupurāṇa*, *Matsyapurāṇa* and *Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa*. Again some rivers and their places are also mentioned by Anundoram Borooh with paurāṇic references. So his *Ancient Geography of India* is an

important work for the treasure of indological study. The aim of this paper is to give a threadbare discussion on paurāṇic elements on Anundoram Borooah's geographical idea of ancient India.

## **Introduction:**

Anundoram Borooah is one of the pioneer scholars of India. The fame of Borooah along with his motherland Assam is spread also in all over world. Borooah was the first Assamese graduate, civilian and Barrister-at-law. Again he was the fifth civilian among the Indian civilians. This prolific scholar of India has contributed a lot to the field of Sanskrit Literature. He composes thirteen books. Out of his compositions, five works are lexical. Among those, first lexical work is *A Practical English-Sanskrit Dictionary* of which three volumes are found. First volume is titled as *A Practical English-Sanskrit Dictionary*. Borooah named the second volume as *Higher Sanskrit grammar* which is published separately by him. The third volume titled as *On the Ancient Geography of India: Geographical Names Rendered in Sanskrit*. Later on, it is reissued by the Publication Board, Assam as an independent book under the title *Ancient Geography of India*.

In this book, Anundoram Borooah gives an exhaustive geographical idea of ancient India. He discusses the origin of the word India, its derivations, divisions along with a vast description of the places, mountains, rivers etc. of ancient India in the light of historical and geographical significance. In this connection Borooah has given many references from Purāṇas. In this present paper, specifically the mountains and the rivers of India are going to discuss, in which Borooah projects lots of Paurāṇic sources. The number of reference varies in different recension. So, the verse is taken in this paper as the source. So the aim of this paper is to show how Paurāṇic sources are reflected in the geographical idea of Anundoram Borooah.

## **Objectives:**

In this present paper, specifically the mountains and the rivers of India are going to discuss, in which Borooah projects lots of Paurāṇic sources. The number of reference varies in different recension. So, the verse is taken in this paper as the source. The aims and objectives of this paper are to give a threadbare discussion on paurāṇic elements on Anundoram Borooah's geographical idea about ancient India.

## **Methodology:**

The methodology used in this present paper is descriptive, comparative and analytical. The relevant information has been gathered through the works done by Borooah particularly in respect of ancient India.

## **Paurāṇic Elements on Anundoram Borooah's Geographical Idea of Ancient India:**

Borooah first represents the word India with various derivations from various sources. According to *R̥gveda*, the name of India comes from the word Sindhu which means flowing<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> *pratyāyam̐ sindhumāvan*, vide., I, 11.6

Kālidāsa mentions Sindhu<sup>2</sup> as a river in his *Raghuvamśa*. Greek writers call it Sindhu Deśa. But in the *Viṣṇupurāṇa*, it is called as Bhārata Varṣa<sup>3</sup>, the country to the north of the sea and to the south of the Himālaya and where Bhāratī gives birth to her children. Though Borooah has given various above derivations of the word India, ultimately he accepts the definition of *Viṣṇupurāṇa* in this write up<sup>4</sup>.

In connection with the divisions of India, Anundoram Borooah presents a description of principal chains of mountains of ancient India. He discusses the seven principal mountains in addition to Himālaya like Mahendra, Malaya, Sahya, Śuktimat, Ṛkṣa or Ṛkṣavat, Vindhya and Paripātra or Pāriyātra which are already described in the *Viṣṇupurāṇa*<sup>5</sup>, *Matsyapurāṇa*<sup>6</sup> and *Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa*<sup>7</sup>. He mentions that the mountain Mahendra includes the eastern ghāts between Mahānadī and Godāvarī<sup>8</sup> in this write up. Again, some sources of ancient rivers are placed in this mountain. The rivers are Tribhāgā, Ṛsikulyā, Ikṣudā, Tridivā, Lāngūlinī, Mūlī, Saravā and Vimalā. Also in the Purāṇas, this series of names are found to be raised from mountain Mahendra. But some of these names are seen different like Tribhāgā is Trisāmā in *Viṣṇupurāṇa*<sup>9</sup>. According to *Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa*<sup>10</sup>, the names of rivers are Piṭṛsomā, Ṛsikulyā, Ikṣukā, Tridivācayā, Lāngūlinī and Vaṃśakarī (Mūlī). Saravā and Vimalā are not in this *purāṇa*. Again, in the *Matsyapurāṇa*, Lāngūlinī is mentioned as Tāmraparṇī. Except this, other seven

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<sup>2</sup> *pibatyasau pāyayate ca sindhuḥ*, vide., XIII.9

<sup>3</sup> *uttaram yat samudrasya himādreścaiva dakṣiṇam /*

*varṣam tad Bhārataṃ nāma Bhāratī yatra santatiḥ //* vide II, 3.1

<sup>4</sup> *Ancient Geography of India*, para 6

<sup>5</sup> vide., II, 3.3

<sup>6</sup> *sapta cāsmiṃ mahāvarṣe viśrutāḥ kulaparvataḥ /*

*mahendro malayaḥ sahyaḥ śaktimāṅṛkṣavānapi //*

*vindhyaśca pāriyātraśca ityete kulaparvataḥ /*

*teṣāṃ sahasraśaścānye parvvatāstu samīpata ḥ//* vide., 114. 17-18

<sup>7</sup> vide., V. 10-11

<sup>8</sup> vide., para 9

<sup>9</sup> vide., II, 3. 12

<sup>10</sup> *piṭṛsomāṅṛsikulyā ca ikṣukā tridivā ca yā //*

*Lāngūlinī vaṃśakarā mahendraprabhāvāḥ smṛtāḥ /* vide., 54. 28-29

names of rivers are same in this *purāṇa* and found to be raised from the mountain Mahendra<sup>11</sup>. But Anundoram Borooh clearly states these differentiations of the names of rivers in references and accepts these names - Tribhāgā, Ṛsikulyā, Ikṣudā, Tridivā, Lāngūlinī, Mūlī, Saravā and Vimalā<sup>12</sup> in his work. As a perfect geographer, he also gives a detail description of the places of these rivers.

In this write up, Anundoram Borooh describes the next mountain Malaya along with the rivers surrounding it. According to him, Malaya is identified with the southern ghāts, which are running from the south of Mysore<sup>13</sup>. Again, Borooh mentions the reference from the *Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa* that the Malaya and the Dardura mountains are mentioned in one connection<sup>14</sup>. So, his view on Dardura is that it is identified with that portion of ghāts which form the south-eastern boundary of Mysore<sup>15</sup>. This chain of mountain is the source of four rivers. Kṛtamāla, Tāmraparṇī, Puṣpajā and Utpalāvātī are found to be raised from Malaya. In this connection, Borooh accepts the names of these rivers as mentioned in the *Matsyapurāṇa*<sup>16</sup>. Of these rivers Tāmraparṇī is most celebrated. Though he does not mention about *Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa*, these names<sup>17</sup> are also seen in it.

Sahya comes to the next in the series of mountains as mentioned by Anundoram Borooh in his present work. Sahya is known as Siyadree among Hindus. Nine rivers are found to be placed in this chain of mountain. Borooh gives the names of these rivers by collecting the

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<sup>11</sup> *tribhāgā ṛsikulyā ca ikṣudā tridivācalā /  
tāmraparṇī tathā mūlī śaravā vimalā tathā/  
mahendratanyah sarvvaḥ prakhyātāḥ śubhagāminīḥ // vide., 114. 31*

<sup>12</sup> vide., para 9

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., para 10

<sup>14</sup> *mahendramalayādrau ca dardure ca vasanti ye / vide., 58. 21*

<sup>15</sup> *Ancient Geography of India*, para 11

<sup>16</sup> *kṛtamālā tāmraparṇī puṣpajā cotpalāvātī /  
malayaprasūtā nadyaḥ sarvvāḥ śītajalā śubhāḥ // vide., 114. 30*

<sup>17</sup> *kṛtamālā tāmraparṇī puṣpajā sūtpalāvātī /  
malayādrisamudbhūta nadyaḥ śītajalāstvimāḥ // vide., 54. 27-28*

references from purāṇas. In the *Matsyapurāṇa*, Godāvarī, Bhīmarathī, Kṛṣṇaveṇī, Vanjulā, Tungabhadrā, Suprayogā, Bāhyā and Kāberī are placed in the slopes of the Sahya Mountain<sup>18</sup>. *Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa* also shows that these noble rivers issue from the slopes of Sahya<sup>19</sup>. But in this *purāṇa*, Vanjulā is not found. Instead of it, Kṛṣṇaveṇī is divided into two names of rivers viz. Kṛṣṇā and Veṇyā and Bhīmarathī is mentioned as Bhīmarathā. In the both purāṇas, eight rivers are mentioned. But Borooah amalgamated the names of the rivers and nine rivers are said to take rise in Sahya Mountain. These are Godāvarī, Bhīmarathī (thā), Kṛṣṇā, Veṇnā, Vanjulā or Manjulā, Tungabhadrā, Suprayogā, Bāhyā and Cāberī<sup>20</sup>. After this, Borooah also gives a vast geographical location of these rivers.

About the position of the Śuktimat Mountain, Anundoram Borooah has no such clear information. He mentions from *Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa* that five rivers are placed in this mountain. Ṛṣikulyā, Kumārī, Mandagā, Kṛpā and Palāśinī are said to rise in this mountain<sup>21</sup>. But Borooah cannot identify any of these rivers. Because, according to him, the sources of which rivers are in this chain of mountain, none of which names concurred with the names of *Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa*.

Ṛkṣa or Ṛkṣavat or Ṛkṣavān is the next in the series of mountains. In the position of Ṛkṣa or Ṛkṣavat, Anundoram Borooah accepts the description of Vana Parva in this write up. According to it, this mountain means the southerly or Satpura Mountains dividing the valley of the Tāpī from the valley of the Narmadā<sup>22</sup>. Regarding the names of rivers as placed in this chain of mountain, Borooah accepts *Viṣṇupurāṇa*. According to this *purāṇa*, Tāpī, Payoṣṇī and

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<sup>18</sup> *godāvarī bhīmarathī kṛṣṇaveṇī ca vanjulā /  
tungabhadrā suprayogā bāhyā kāberī caiva tu /  
dakṣiṇāpathanadyastāḥ sahyapādādviniḥsṛtāḥ // vide., 114. 29*

<sup>19</sup> *godāvarī bhīmarathā kṛṣṇā veṇyā tathāparā /  
tungabhadrā suprayogā bāhyā kāberyathāpagā //  
sahyapādaviniskrāntā ityetāḥ sariduttamāḥ // vide., 54. 26-27*

<sup>20</sup> *Ancient Geography of India*, para 12

<sup>21</sup> *ṛṣikulyā kumārī ca mandagā mandavāhinī /  
kṛpā palāśinī caiva śuktimatprabhavāḥ smṛtāḥ // Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa, 54. 29-30*

<sup>22</sup> *Ancient Geography of India*, para 19

Nirvindhya rise in this chain<sup>23</sup>. He identifies the river Payoṣṇī with the Pūrṇā, a feeder of the Tāpti<sup>24</sup>. Regarding the position of Nirvindhya, Borooah is in doubt. In different sources, Nirvindhya is found to be raised from Vindhya Mountain. In some purāṇas, he finds that Nirvindhya is said to flow from the Vindhya, not the Rkṣa. So he identifies the Nirvindhya with the western Pārvaṭī<sup>25</sup> in this write up.

According to Anundoram Borooah, the Mountain Vindhya is well known to readers. He does not describe much about it in his work. Again, the list of rivers surrounding in this mountain as found in the purāṇas, is not correct according to his opinion. He clears it in this write up that the name of Vindhya was applied as at present to the basin of Gangā<sup>26</sup>.

The last of the mountain series is Pāriyātra. Our ancestors did not state clearly about this mountain<sup>27</sup>. After mentioning different sources, Anundoram Borooah identifies the Pāriyātra Mountain with the Sewalik Chain which run parallel to the Himālaya and guard the Gangetic Doab on the North-east in this geographical writing. Again he declares about the rivers of this chain of mountain that in the Purāṇas, the names of rivers of Pāriyātra Mountain are same with those rivers which rise in Vindhya Mountain. It is found in the *Viṣṇupurāṇa* that only Vedasmṛti, the principal river and some rivers are rise in this Pāriyātra Mountain<sup>28</sup>. Again, the inhabitants of Pāriyātra are mentioned with the Kāruṣas and Mālavas in this *Purāṇa*<sup>29</sup>. Therefore, Borooah accepts that the inhabitants of Pāriyātra are the people of the ancient kingdom of Prasthala and the Mountain Pāriyātra is placed in central India<sup>30</sup>.

## **Conclusion:**

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<sup>23</sup> *tāpīpayoṣṇīnirvindhyaḥpramukhā rṁkṣasambhavāḥ* , II. 3.11

<sup>24</sup> vide., para 19

<sup>25</sup> ibid., para 20

<sup>26</sup> vide., para 21

<sup>27</sup> *Ancient Geography of India*, para 22

<sup>28</sup> *vedasmṛtimukhyādyāśca pāriyātrodbhavā mune* / vide., II. 3.10

<sup>29</sup> *kāruṣā mālavāścaiva pāriyātranivāsinaḥ* / ibid., II. 3.16

<sup>30</sup> *Ancient Geography of India*, para 22

From the above discussion on the Paurāṇic Elements on Anundoram Borooh's Geographical Idea of Ancient India, we can conceive the idea that before going to compose this geographical work of ancient India, Anundoram Borooh has studied all the Purāṇas exhaustively. His work is full of Paurāṇic Elements. He amalgamated the references of the Purāṇas and as a perfect geographer gives his own idea. Borooh skilfully discusses the sources. In this write up, with the help of the Paurāṇic references, Anundoram Borooh has successfully presented the geographical position of ancient India in a vivid manner. This way the scholarly son of Assam has made Paurāṇic references useful in even in modern days. This is to be remembered here though he accepts the idea from Purāṇas, somewhere he criticises the idea of Purāṇas also. It proves the famous saying of Kālidāsa - *purāṇam ityeva na sādhu sarvam/*

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