

Ancient Geography of Northern India as reflected in the *Tīrtha Kaumudī*

Bhagyasree Sarma

Research Scholar, Department of Sanskrit, Gauhati University

Guwahati, Assam, India.

Abstract:

The Ancient Indian Geography is represented through some areas along with rivers, mountains and forests and it helps in the growth of civilization of a country. The Sanskrit Literature contains evidences and sources of ancient Indian geographical facts. The Vedas, purāṇas and epics bear a great geographical value. Moreover, different *Dharmasūtras*, *Dharmaśāstras*, *Smṛtiśāstras*, *Smṛti* digests etc. gives a great contribution to know and understand the Ancient Indian Geography. The *Tīrtha Kaumudī* of Pītāmbara Siddhāntavāgīśa Bhaṭṭācārya also has a great account of geographical information. Though the work *Tīrtha Kaumudī* is a work on pilgrimage and contains the subject matters about the rules, regulations, glory and so many topics related to pilgrimage, yet side by side, a clear picture of ancient Indian geography of medieval period is reflected here. So, here in this present paper attempt has been made to highlight Ancient Geography of Northern India as reflected in the *Tīrtha Kaumudī*.

Key Words: Geography, Northern, India, *Tīrtha Kaumudī*.

Methodology: This paper is basically based on the Primary sources as well as Secondary sources. In this present paper the texts of *Tīrtha Kaumudī* is used for Primary datas. References are put as foot notes. The Name of the books and original Sanskrit words and quotations are italicized in main body. The quotations mentioned as endnotes are not italicized.

I. Introduction:

The ancient Indian Geography can be renovated through the help of Vedic literature, Puranic literature, Epics, *Dharmasūtras*, *Dharmaśāstras* or *Smṛtiśāstras* etc. These great treatises include some chapters which give a huge amount of information and data regarding the geography of Ancient India. These works establish not only the accurate account of different territorial divisions of India, but also talk about the mountains, rivers, forests, deserts, towns, countries and

peoples of ancient India. The geographical accounts found in different purāṇas are matching.¹ Different purāṇas viz. *Padmapurāṇa*, *Matsyapurāṇa*, *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa*, *Skandapurāṇa*, *Bhaviṣyapurāṇa*, *Mārkaṇḍeya* etc. contain the list of places of ancient India.

Tīrtha Kaumudī is a smṛti digest composed by Pītāmbara Siddhāntavāgīśa Bhaṭṭācārya. This work is a compilation of numerous quotations. These collected are from different reliable sources like Purāṇas, epics, Smṛti Śāstras, Smṛti digests etc. In respect of those quotations, the author Pītāmbara Siddhāntavāgīśa gives some explanatory notes and *saṃkalpavākya*s. Due to the amalgamation of knowledge and information of different sources, specially from the purāṇas we can able to find a clear picture of ancient Indian geography of medieval period in this work. The quotations of so many verses from different purāṇas where we find the names of the mountains, rivers, places, pilgrimage sites of ancient India gives us a brief knowledge about the ancient geography of ancient India.

II. The Northern Geography of Ancient India:

The Northern Geography of India apparently includes the regions consisting of Northern division of India. The Northern region of India includes the states viz. Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Uttarakhand, Haryana, Delhi, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and UT. The Northern Geography of Ancient India as reflected in the work *Tīrtha Kaumudī* is discussed here.

Ayodhya: Ayodhya is a very popular pilgrimage site for Hindus which is well known as the birth place of Sri Rama. It is adjacent to Faizabad city of Uttar Pradesh state of India. In ancient period, this place was one *yojana* in extend in the east, one *yojana* in the west, one *yojana* from the Sarayu in the south, and one *yojana* from Tamasa in the north.² *Yogana* is a measure of distance used in ancient India which denotes approximately eight to twelve kilometers.

Candrabhaga: In the *Ancient geography of India* Anundoram Barooah states that the river Indumati probably means the Candrabhaga or Candra. The Candrabhaga or Chenab appears to flow just above Kishtvar as a confluence of two hill-streams and from Kishtvar to Rishtvar its

¹Law, Bimala Churn, *Historical geography of ancient India*, p.1

² Law, Bimala Churn, *Historical geography of ancient India*, p. 67

course is southerly.³ It flows past Jammu, wherefrom it flows in a south-westerly direction forming a doab between it and the Vitasta (Jhelum).⁴

Citrakuta: Citrakuta denotes the beautiful mountain which finds its place among the holy places. *Padmapurāṇa* also talks about it.⁵ It is the modern Citrakuta, a famous hill, lying 65 miles west south west of Allahabad.⁶

Drisvadvati: In the *Ṛg Veda* (III, 23, 4) it is stated that the river Drisvadvati is the southern and eastern boundary of India. In ancient time it was known as Brahmavarta. The confluence of Drisvadvati and Kaushiki was of peculiar sanctity.⁷ This river has been identified with the name Citrang and it runs parallel to the Sarasvati.⁸

Gomati: It is a river of Northern India which is probably the present day's Gomti River, a western tributary of the Indus.⁹ The River Gomati or Gomti on the west of Ayodhyā was also known as *Vasisthi* or sacred to the sage Vashistha.¹⁰ It rises in the Shahjahanpur district of Uttar Pradesh, passes Lucknow and Jaunpur and flows into the Gaṅgā about half way between Varanasi and Gazipur.¹¹

Govardhana: The name of the Govardhana hill is famous from the legend of Purāṇa where the story of lifting of Govardhana hill by Lord Kṛṣṇa with his little figure is found. It is located 18 miles from Brindaban in the Mathura District of Uttar Pradesh.

³Law, Bimala Churn, *Historical geography of ancient India*, p.73.

⁴Law, Bimala Churn, *Historical geography of ancient India*, p.85.

⁵Kapoor, Subodh (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Ancient Indian Geography*, p. 213

⁶Kapoor, Subodh (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Ancient Indian Geography*, p.

⁷Law, Bimala Churn, *Historical geography of ancient India*, p. 75.

⁸Law, Bimala Churn, *Historical geography of ancient India*, p. 78

⁹Law, Bimala Churn, *Historical geography of ancient India*, p. 80

¹⁰Barooah, Anundoram, *Ancient geography of India*, p. 52

¹¹Law, Bimala Churn, *Historical geography of ancient India*, p. 80

Gandaki or Gandak: According to the Bhāgavatpurāṇa (X.79, 11; V.7, 10) the river Gandaki is also known as Cakranadi. It is a great upper tributary of the Ganges. It has its origin in the hill in south Tibet and the upper tributary of Gandak. It joins as a place to the north-west of Nayakot in Nepal on its right side and the lower tributary called Rapti joins it just above the district of Camparan.¹² The main stream flows into the Ganges between Sonpur in the Sara district and Hajipur in the district of Muzaffarpur.¹³

Ganga or Ganges: The River Ganga or Ganges is regarded as the most sacred river in India. Other names of this River are Alakānandā¹⁴ or Dyudhuni.¹⁵

Jalandhara: Jalandhara includes the state of Chamba on the north, Mandi and Sukhet on the east and Satadru on the south-east.¹⁶ The length of this land was 1000 li or 167 miles from east to west and the breadth is 800 li or 133 miles from north to south.¹⁷

Kanakhala: Kanakhala is a sacred place situated in the Haridwar district of Uttarakhanda state of Northern India. The name of Kanakhala is also mentioned in *Mahabharata*, *Vāyu purāṇa*, *Meghaduta* etc.

Kalanjar: In modern age Kalanjar is named as Kaalinjar.¹⁸ It is located in Banda District of Uttar Pradesh.

Kanchi: Kanchi is famous pilgrimage site of Hindus and it is also included in the list of 18 *Mahājanapadas*.¹⁹ It is situated 80 miles below Allahabad on the north bank of Ganges.²⁰

¹²Law, Bimala Churn, *Historical geography of ancient India*, pp. 75-76

¹³ Law, Bimala Churn, *Historical geography of ancient India*, p. 76

¹⁴ *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, III.23.39

¹⁵ *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, III. 23.39

¹⁶ Law, Bimala Churn, *Historical geography of ancient India*, p.86

¹⁷ Law, Bimala Churn, *Historical geography of ancient India*, p. 86

¹⁸ Apte, Vaman Shivram, *The student's Sanskrit English Dictionary*, p.147

¹⁹ Kapoor, Subodh (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Ancient Indian Geography*, p. 365

Kedar: Kedar or Kedarnath temple of Lord Siva is a famous Hindu temple situated at Uttarakhand state of India. It is located at the bank of the river Mandakini.

Kurukshetra: Though the Kurukshetra is famous for the war between *Kauravas* and *Pāṇḍavas* of *Mahābhārata*, yet now it is regarded as a famous holy place. It is also known as Dharmaksetra i.e. the place of justice. It is situated in the Hariyana state of India.

Prabhosa: Pabhosa is the modern name of the village which represents the ancient Prabhasa. The village is situated on a cliff which is situated in tehsil Manjhanpur, thirty two miles south west of Allahabad. The hill of Prabhasa or Prabhasa is the only rock in the *Antarvedī* i.e. the Doab between the Ganges and the Jumna. It is situated three miles to the north west of the great fort of Kosam- Khiraj, the ancient Kaushambi, where some inscriptions were discovered.²¹

Prayaga: Prayaga is a celebrated place of pilgrimage at the confluence of the river Ganges and Yamuna near the modern Allahabad.²²

Praci: It is a temple of Lord Siva situated at the southern bank of river Sarasvati in the Pehowa town of district Kurukshetra.

Sarasvati: Sarasvati is a holy river situated in Kurukshetra in the Hariyana state of India. The name of this river is also mentioned in Vedic texts.

Praci and river Sarasvati both are the famous pilgrimage sites in Kurukshetra and it is mentioned by Pītāmbara Siddhāntavāgīśa in *Tīrtha Kaumudī as- prācī sarasvatī kurukṣetre*²³

Vadarikasrama: Vadarikasrama or Badrikasrama (Badrinath) is a most sacred place situated at Chamoli district of Uttarakhand. This temple is dedicated to the Lord Viṣṇu. It is located at the bank of the river Alakananda

²⁰ Kapoor, Subodh (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Ancient Indian Geography*, p. 365

²¹ Law, Bimala Churn, *Historical geography of ancient India*, p. 117.

²² Apte, Vaman Shivram, *The student's Sanskrit English Dictionary*, p. 366.

²³ *Tīrtha Kaumudī*, Siddhāntavāgīśa, Pītāmbara, Shastri, Biswanarayan (ed.), p. 4.

Varanasi: Varanasi or Banaras is regarded as a sacred city situated at the bank of the river Ganges in the Uttar Pradesh state of North India. Actually there are approximately eighty eight Ghats i.e. river pier in Varanasi and in most of the ghats are used for bathing and ritual ceremonies. Moreover a few are used as cremation sites.

Vetravati: In the M.R Kale edition of the *Meghadūta* of Kalidasa, we find a map of those places of India which are mentioned in *Meghadūta*. There clearly stated that in modern days the Vetravati River is known as Betwa River. The River Betwa or Vetravati is a tributary of Yamuna River.

Vindhya: Vindhya or Vindhyaachala is near Mirzapur on the top of which stands the celebrated temple of Binduvasini.²⁴ The town of Vindhyaacala is also known as Pampapura.²⁵

Vipasa: The Vipasa River is known as Beas River in modern age. The river Beas has its source at Beas Kund. Beas Kund is situated near the southern face of the Rohtang pass in Kullu. Through this region, it flows for a few kilometers and then cuts through the Dhauladhar Range in a deep gorge near Koti and Larji.²⁶

III. Conclusion:

From the above discussion it can be concluded that the *Tīrtha Kaumudī* of Siddhāntavāgīśa bears a great geographical importance. The ancient geography of India is beautifully portrayed here. It is a noteworthy fact that most of the places, hills, rivers etc of all over India are still remained same and some of them are changed by their name. But it is true that, we do not able to get the existence of some locations in present geography of India. The reason might be some are ruined in course of time or they were must be imaginary.

²⁴ Law, Bimala Churn, *Historical geography of ancient India*, p. 13

²⁵ *Kālikāpurāṇa*, 58.37

²⁶ Hussain, Majid, *Geography of India*, p. 3.13

IV. Bibliography:

1. Pītāmbara Siddhāntavāgīśa, *Tīrtha Kaumudī*. Ed. Dr. Biswanarayan Shastri. Rajaduar, North Guwahatī 781030, Assam, published by Dr. Prafulla Mahanta, Director, Anundoram Borooh Institute of Language, Art & Culture, 1st edition, 1998.
2. *Kālikā Purāṇa*. Trans. Devendra Nath Bhattacharya. Mahendra Mohan Choudhury Bhavan, Hedayetpur, Ghy-3, published by Utpal Hazarika, Vani Mandir, 1st edition, 2008
3. Swain, Brajakishor. *The Dharmaśāstra: An introductory analysis*. M.G. house 2, Community Centre, Wazirpur Industrial Area, Delhi- 110052; Harish Chandra for Akshaya Prakashan, December 2004. 1st published, ISBN: 81-88643-13-0
4. Law, Bimala, Churn. *Historical geography of ancient India*. Ashok Vihar, Delhi-110052; published by Mrs. Sheel Sethi, Ess Publications, 1st rpt. 1976.
5. Borooh, Anundoram. *Ancient geography of India*. Assam Guwahati-3; Published by C.P. Saikia, Secretary, Publication board Assam, rpt. 1971 (1st rpt. 1877)
6. Sircar, D.C. *Studies in the geography of ancient and medieval India*. Bungalow road, Delhi-07; Motilal Banarsidass, 2nd edn. 1971, ISBN- 81-208-0690-5
7. Kapoor, Subodh (ed.) Vol-1, Ansari Road, Darya Ganj, New Dehi- 110002; Cosmo Publication, 1st published 2002, ISBN: 81-7755-297
8. Apte, Vaman Shivram. *The student's Sanskrit English Dictionary*. Bungalow road, Delhi-07; Motilal Banarsidass publishers, 13th reprint 2012, ISBN: 978-81-208-0045-8.
8. Williams Monier M.. *A Sanskrit English Dictionary*, Bungalow road, Delhi-07; Motilal Banarsidas publishers, 2011.