CONNECTION OF THE PARAŚUKUNḍA WITH PARAŚURAMA LEGEND

The Paraśukunda is held as one of the holiest places on earth by the Hindus. The Paraśukunda is located 13 miles north east of Tezu, the district headquarters of Lohit district of the present day Arunachal Pradesh. It is a growing town, famous for its scenic beauty. Thousands of pilgrims visit this place from all parts of India every year during Paraśurāma-mēla held in the month of January. The Paraśukunda temple is situated on the banks of the mighty Lohit river, where it enters the plains on the Arunachal-Assam border.

The Paraśukunda finds its mention in many purānic texts in different ways. However, it is believed by all and sundry in the entire north east India, that Paraśurāma was born to saint Jamadagni and Renukā in the Tretā age. One day, Renukā after her bath in the Gangā was on her way back to the Āśrama. Therein she saw the Gandharva king named Chitraratha playing with the celestial nymphs. She felt drawn to the king and lost the track of time. When she returned with wet cloths, frightened and absent minded, it was already time for the mid day worship in the
Asrama. Jamadagni, who was worried over the delay of her return from her bath, could perceive the reason of her being late. Then Jamadagni became very much furious for this unusual conduct of Renuka and lost his self control. He asked his sons to kill her. None of the six sons except Paraśurāma could oblige. He immediately beheaded his mother. The handle of the axe which he used, clung to his hand. Pleased with his son, Jamadagni commanded Paraśurāma to ask for a boon. Paraśurāma asked for six boons and one was the immediate recovery of his mother. However, this did not wipeout his sins. He was told that the only way to wash off his sins was by taking a dip in the Brahmakūṇḍa. Only then the axe stuck to his hand would drop. He took a dip in the holy water of the Kūṇḍa and the axe immediately got unstuck and fell down from his hand. With a big sigh of relief and venting anger on the axe, he picked it up and threw it as far as he could into the mountains. The axe split the mountains and the spot where it had fallen became the source of the river called the Lohit. It was thus that this Kūṇḍa came to be known as the Paraśurāmakūṇḍa. Now it is one of the many revered holy spots in the country.

The three sides of the Brahmakūṇḍa are surrounded with high mountains, only by the north-east side, the mighty river Brahmaputra is flowing. According to some people there is no difference between the
Paraśukunda and the Brahmakunda. But this opinion is not accepted by others. Because regarding the original place of the Brahmakunda, the history of this land is totally silent. With the help of his axe, Paraśurāma made two holes in the mountain and created Paraśukunda by bringing the water from the Brahmakunda. The invoking mantras of the Brahmaputra are the proof of it.¹ But in Arunachal Pradesh, the Brahmaputra is known as the Lauhitya only.² Even today also this name is used equivalently.

The Paraśurāmakunda is most important place for river Brahmaputra as like as Haridvāra which is most important for river Gangā. Water falling in kunda from the Brahmakunda, gets extracted from two four hand distant holes and concords in a seven hand distant space. That united stream flowing over 30 hand Extent Mountain getting divided into two branches falls in the kunda from above ¾ hand space in three divisions. Although the water of the kunda is very cold, people can feel that after putting the body under hot spring. That is why, water of the kunda is said to be hot spring (usṇa prasravana).

1. brahmaputra madaśreṣṭha jāmadagnyāvatārita
   paraśunā dattamārgena aāgaccha varado bhava /
2. brahmaputra mahābhāga sāntanoḥ kulanandanaḥ /
   āmoghāgarbhasambhūta pāpam lauhitya me hara //
In the 18th century a sādhu (monk) re-established the site of Parasukunda. The sādhu who came through Chowkham, as the story goes, was driven out from his village as he was looked upon as a swindler. The villagers thereafter were afflicted with some unknown diseases. Meanwhile the sādhu, had hidden himself in a cave around the kunda to protect himself from the wrath of the villagers. The villagers came in search of him and offered him flowers and fruits and begged him forgiveness. The site of the kunda as established by the sadhu was in existence till 1950 when the old site was completely devastated by the earthquake that shook the whole of the North-East and the kunda was completely covered. A very strong current is now flowing over the original site but massive boulders have in a mysterious way embedded themselves in a circular formation in the river bed thus forming another kunda in place of the old one.

The Lohit district is the home to the Michimi, Singhpou and Khāmpti tribes. Roing (district headquarters of Dibang valley) is 56 km away from the kunda, wherein the original inhabitants belonged to Idu Michimi tribal community. Close to Roing is also the home of Rukminī, Lord Kṛṣṇa’s wife, at the archaeological remains at Bhīṣmoknagar. According to folk belief, Parasurāma established many Brāhmanaṇas in this place. They were starting to live with the people of the hilly area and
afterwards they came to be known as Dvijamisra. These people are always ready to help the pilgrims who come to take a dip in the kunda in spite of the biting cold and wind on the Makarasamkrânti day of the month of Pausa which normally falls in mid-January every year. Though there is scarcity of accommodation, pilgrims bear the Lordships bravely and spend night around the temple, wherever they can find space to rest their tired bodies. They spend the night in the company of Sâdhus of different sects from as far off as the hills of Uttar Pradesh. They remain at the kunda for two consecutive nights after their holy bath, singing devotional songs. From the data available, it is clear that regular approach routs to the kunda were in existence for centuries but in 1826 when the British Administration took over this area and introduced inner line regulations, pilgrims could not move into the interior at liberty. Even today one has to obtain entry permit to cross the inner line check posts. The office of the Deputy Commissioner of Lohit district, issues these permits for pilgrims on the occasion of Makarasamânti. The entry permits are issued at Dirak and Sunpura check posts.

CONNECTION OF THE BRAHMAPUTRA WITH PARAŚURÂMA LEGEND

Brahmaputra River originates from the Mânasasarovara near Kailâśh (Kailâśa) range and in also known as Mahânada. From its origin in south-western Tibet as the Yarlung Tsagpo River, it flows across
southern Tibet to break through the Himalayas in great gorges and into Arunachal Pradesh where it is known as Dihang. It flows south-west through the Assam Valley as Brahmaputra and south through Bangladesh as the Padmā. There it merges with the Ganges to form a vast delta, the Sundarbans. About 1,800 miles (2,900 km) long, the river is an important source for irrigation and transportation. Its upper course was long unknown, and its identity with the Yarlung Tsangpo was only established by exploration in 1884-86. This river is often called Tsangpo-Brahmaputra River. The average depth of the river is 124 feet (38 m) and maximum depth is 380 feet (120 m). In Bangladesh the river merges with the Ganges and splits into two: the Padmā and the Meghnā river. Most rivers on the Indian subcontinent have female names. But this river has a male name because this is the largest river in India. According to legends, Brahmaputra is the son of Lord Brahmā. It is said that Śāntanu, a famous ancient sage began a long meditation in a āśram in this area along with his beautiful wife Āmoghā. Āmoghā was so beautiful that Lord Brahmā himself became delighted by the beauty of Āmoghā and requested her to make love with him. But she refused to accept the proposal of Brahmā. However, by that time Lord Brahmā had become so excited that his semen discharged at that place. When Śāntanu came to know about it, he inseminated Brahma’s semen in Āmoghā’s womb. As a result, Āmoghā
delivered to a son, who was known as the Brahmaputra. The tank near the ashram of Śāntanu is known as the *Brahmakunda*.

According to another legend, the rivers gestation was in the womb of Āmoghā, the beautiful wife of Śāntanu. After she had imbibed the semen of Brahmā, she delivered aqueous forms at the place called Yugandhara. Śāntanu placed this form in *Brahmakunda*, in the middle of four mountains viz. Kaliāśa, Gandhamādana, Jarudhi and Samwartaka. Thereafter it grew into a lake, swelling up to 40 miles and sage Parasurāma, after sometime cleaved the bank of *Brahmakunda* to make the Brahmaputra. Such narrations are available in the *Mārkaṇḍeypurāṇa* (Ch. 58) and in the *Padmapurāṇa* (Srṣṭikhanda).

3. \[ \text{prāgyotişah salauhityāḥ sāmudrāḥ purusadakāḥ} / \]
\[ \text{pūrṇotkato bhadrāaurastathodayagirirdvija} // \]
\[ \text{kaśayo mekhalāmustātamraliptaikapādāḥ} / \]
\[ \text{vardhamānāḥ kośalāḥ ca mukhe kūrmasya samsthitāḥ} // \]
\[ \text{Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa, 58, 13, 14} \]

4. \[ \text{tatastu merusābarni brahmasūrnumanuḥ smartaḥ} / \]
\[ \text{rbhuḥ ca ṛtudhāmā ca bisvakṣeṇo manustathā} // \]
\[ \text{Padmapurāṇa, Srṣṭikhaṇḍam, 112} \]