CHAPTER III

Geography of Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa and Puṇḍravardhana:

Reference to Prāgjyotiṣa, Kāmarūpa and Brahmaputra or Lauhitya is not noticed in the Vedas which were supposed to be composed before 9th-10th century B.C. As we know so far Aryans were the composer of the Vedas. There was a great confusion regarding the identity of the Aryans as whether they were indegeneous people or they were Aryans from abroad. When they came to India through North-Western sides, initially they have settled in Indus Valley and grew the civilization in that same region. Gradually, the Aryan people spread out in the whole of India and a branch came to eastern India. They developed the Aryan culture in different parts of eastern India. Aryan culture was refined and civilised with the knowledge of various sāstras.

Concerning the spread of Aryan culture in Eastern India the legend of Videgha Māthava can be referred to. It was found in Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa where the episode of Agni and Videgha Māthava is supposed to indicate the early Aryanisation in Assam. The story, as narrated in Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, found as the 1. vide, The Inscription of Ancient Assam, Introduction, page 1, para 2
king Videgha Māthava of the region of the river Saraswatī has been holding Agni (Fire) in his mouth. It is stated that the fire-god had burnt along this earth from the Saraswatī towards the east followed by Māthava and his priest Gotama Rahugaṇa till he came to the river Sadānīrā which flows from the northern Himalaya mountain and which he did not burn over.

King Māthava was instructed by Agni to settle down to the east of the river Sadānīrā. Since then the land to the east of the river came to be known as Videha and the same land was also used to be called as Māthava.

Being untouched by Agni the river Sadānīrā came to be known as impure and no Brāhmaṇa of the period even crossed it from the western side, i.e. Videha thinking that it has not been burnt by Agni Vaiśvānara. Subsequently, the Brāhmaṇas gradually proceeded to the east of the river, which was formerly uncultivated and swampy and sanctified the land (lying to the east also) with the performance of the sacrifice. The legend stands important as it speaks of the colonization process of the Aryans. In the advancement of Agni burning up the earth, it is noticed not only the gradual clearing of jungle and waste land by burn-

ing as migrating groups of warrior and peasants who founded new settlements.

The text *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* further tells that Sadānirā stands as the boundary of Videha and Kośala.⁶

But from the comments of Sāyaṇa on the *Śatapatha Brhmaṇa*, on the relevant portion, quoting the lexicon (*Nighaṇṭu*) identified the river Sadānirā as Karatoya, referring to *Amarkoṣa* “tatha ca nighaṇṭuḥ karatoṣa sadānirā bahuda saitavāhiniḥ.”

River Karatoya is referred to by the old text of *Kālikāpurāṇa* and *Yoginītantra* as the western boundary of Kāmarūpa. Hence it may be assessed that the present episode of *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* was supposed to have hinted on the extension of Aryan culture to Kāmarūpa lying to the east of Karatoya.

We could perhaps take the river Sadānirā as the common eastern boundary of both Kośala and Videha. So, as to make the western boundary of Kāmarūpa.

It appears from the legend, as opined by Dr. Mukunda Madhav Sharma, that so far Sāyaṇa is concerned, “the land lying to the east of Sadānirā in which Videhga Māthava settled at the instance of Agni came to be known as Māthava and that is identical with Videhadeśa.”

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⁶. Dr. Mukunda Madhava Sharma, *Inscriptions of Ancient Assam*, p. 01 (Introduction); (*saiṣapyetan hi kośala videhānāṁ maryāda*, IV. 1.17)
But, from the legend it appears that initially the Aryans did not dare to settle in the east by crossing the river Sadānīrā, but during later period the Aryans occupied and settled by crossing the Sadānīrā. In the first phase the Aryans settled in Videha with the march of Agni upto Sadānīrā and the subsequent march of the leader Videhga Māthava after whose name the land was called Videha; further eastern march took place subsequently. Before his arrival no Aryan crossed the river, because the purifying fire-god had not burnt the land in its eastern bank, but Agni instructed Māthava to carry forward. The legend is important because it was the very significant account and information of the colonisation of the area Videha and further east.\(^7\)

The kingdom of Videha is a pioneering state by the influence of Aryan culture in the east and north-east. Videha got mentioned for the first time in the Samhitas of Ṭayurveda.\(^8\) It roughly corresponds to the modern Tirhut in North Bihar. According to Pargiter\(^9\) “Videha comprised the country from Gorakhpur on the Rāpti to Darbhanga with Kośala on the west and Aṅga on the east. On the north it approached the hills, and on the south it was bounded by the small kingdom of Vaiśāli.”

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7. A. L. Basham, The Wonder that was India, p. 40
8. Vedic Index, II, p. 298
9. JASB, 1897, 89.
It was separated from Kośala by the river Sadānīrā, usually identified with the modern Gaṅḍak which originated in Nepal and flows into the Ganges opposite Patna. But the Mahābhārata distinguished Gaṇḍaki from Sadānīrā. “gaūḍa kinca mahāsonam sadānīrām tathaivaca.” Pargiter, therefore, identified Sadānīrā with Rāptī.

The Vedic text shows a king Nāmi Sāpya as the king of Videha but he is nowhere represented as the founder of the dynasty of Mithila. On the contrary, a story as found in Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa indicate that the king of Videha was originated from Videgha Māthava. He was the torch bearer of the Aryan civilization by his move for expansion not only in Videha but also in the areas further east beyond Sadānīrā. Videgha Māthava started his march from the Sarasvatī. The principal adviser of Māthava in this respect was his priest Gotama ‘Rahugaṇa.’ He followed the fire-god, Agni, towards the east. They pursued Agni till the latter came to the river Sadānīrā which flow from the northern Himalayias mountain and which he did not burn over. No

11. Sadānīrā may be the Burhi Gaṅḍak which is distinguished from the Gaṅḍak proper. JASB, 1895. cf. Map
12. Vedic Index, I, 436
13. Vedic Index, II, 298
Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, I. 4.1
Macdonell, Sanskrit Literature, pp. 214-15
Brāhmaṇa crossed the stream as the other side was not burnt by Agni Vaiśvānara. During that time, the land to the eastward was marshy\textsuperscript{14} and not cultivated.

With the arrival of Māthava Brāhmaṇas crossed the river and went there and the area got cultivated, as the Brāhmaṇas made Agni, the fire-god, to taste the areas through sacrifice. Agni, the fire god, directed Videgha Māthava to settle in the east of the river. Thus the river Sadānīrā stands between Kośala and Videha. The second king Mithi Videha, in the epics and in the purāṇic list, is but the corroboration of Māthava Videgha.

According to Sāyaṇa, Sadānīrā was another name of Karatoya, the modern Kurattas. It is suggested by Dikshitar\textsuperscript{15} that the Aryanisation of Eastern India had begun in the age of the Rgveda and the credit for this achievement goes to Māthava of the Videha country and to his celebreated purohita Gotama. Between the composition of the Rgveda Samhitā and of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, there was a slow infiltration of the Aryan ideas and ideals beyond the river Sadānīrā. By the time of the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, the movement towards the east gained further impetus with its richness in wood and some plants in the hilly tract of

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\textsuperscript{14} Mahābhārata refers the area to ‘Jalodbhava,’ i.e. reclaimed from swamp. Mahābhārata, II, 304

\textsuperscript{15} Aryanisation of India (Assam) by V. R. Ramchandra Dikshitar, IHO. XXI, pp. 29 ff.
Kāmarūpa. Assam attracted members of the Brāhmaṇa community in large numbers and it came to be known as the land of sacrifice.\(^\text{16}\) Thus, Assam came to be Aryanised. Further, with the death of Naraka in the hand of Kṛṣṇa, Brāhmaṇa settlement further extended in Kāmarūpa. Thus, Aryanisation of Assam appears to have been properly set during the early centuries of Christian era.

The gradual advance of the Aryans into eastern India is described in vedic and classical Sanskrit works. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa records the advancement of the Aryans up to Sadānīrā identified with Karatoyā.\(^\text{17}\)

The Aitareya Brāhmaṇa traces its extension unto Kāmarūpa and Gopatha Brāhmaṇa records a tradition of the origin of the name of this country.\(^\text{18}\) The Sānkhyāyana Grhyasūtra mentions Prāgjyotisā as the land of sunrise.

The passage of ‘prācyam vaidiśidevaḥ somman rājānam akṛṇam tasmāt prācyam diśi kriyate,’ of the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa (1.3.7) is supposed to indicate the very early Aryan settlement in ancient Assam. The passage supplies the information of the relation of the Aryans and the tribals to the extent that by barter and

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\item \textit{prācyam vai diśi soman rājānam-akṛṇam prācyam diśi kriyate}, \textit{AB}, I. 3.7f.
\item Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, I. IV. I. 14-15
\item Bloomfield, \textit{JAOS}, XIX, pp. 11
\end{itemize}
by purchase the Brāhmaṇas who had already settled in Kāmarūpa managed to get *soma* for sacrifices from the tribals who were the hilly inhabitants of Kāmarūpa.19 There is no reference of Kāmarūpa in the Buddhist canonical literature. The *Dīghanikāya*20 and the *Samyuttanikāya*,21 however, contain the episode of a *Lohicco Brāhmaṇa*. Dr. Mukunda Madhav Sharma opines that if the word *Lohicco* (= Sanskrit *Lauhitya*) means the region of the river Brahmaputra then in these scriptures there is evidence of an early prevalence of the Brāhmaṇical culture in Assam. So far the early Buddhist canonical literature is concerned, there is no definite reference to Kāmarūpa or Prāgjyotiṣa or *Lohicco* in *Dīgha Nikāya*. Aryanisation during this period was a settled fact. Aryanisation was started before Naraka who only nourished and ruled. The great epics, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* also refer to the Aryanisation of Prāgjyotiṣa by Naraka as one of the legendary stories tells that Naraka was the adopted son of Janaka of Mithilā, who was given all the knowledge of the Vedas and other śāstrās; he was able to Aryanise this region by establishing Āryadharma by dispelling the darkness of this region.

The earliest easternmost settlement was the country of Videha or Mithilā (North Bihār) from where Aryan culture gradually spread over the adjoining country of Vasudeva of Puṇḍra (North Bengal) and of Jarāsandha of Magadha (South Bihar) as well as through Puṇḍra over the land of Prāgjyotīṣa (Assam). These three names entered into the early tradition of the Mahābhārata (11. 16-23, 29 of 118, 11, XIV-75-76) pointing to the semi-Aryanised condition of these countries. The name of Prāgjyotīṣa is also mentioned as the Aryanised kingdom during that time.

Neither Pāṇini nor the Aśokan relics refer to the existence of eastern countries. Neither the Aṣṭādhyāyi of Pāṇini nor the inscriptions refer to Kāmarūpa directly. Next comes the Buddhist literature of India, Cylone, Nepal, Burma and China which also do not refer to the kingdom of Kāmarūpa. The Jātaka stories although refer to Kāmarūpa and Prāgjyotīṣa, but scholars like Aśvaghoṣa, Nāgarjuna, Bhāsa, Patañjali did not refer to Kāmarūpa and Prāgjyotīṣa in their writings. Even in the Yavana literature reference to Kāmarūpa and Prāgjyotīṣa are absent. It indicates that there was no such place noteworthy that might have existed beyond Gaṅgāridae.

We find some reference of eastern countries in the writings of Cāṇakya’s Kauṭilīya, Vātsāyana, Kālidāsa, the Brhat Samhitā
of Guṇādhya and in the *Manusmrti*. Kāmarūpa and Prāgjyotiṣa along with the other places of eastern India find reference to the writings of the above scholars.

In the *Arthasastra*\(^{22}\) of Kauṭilya there is reference of Lauhitya and Kāmarūpa regarding trade and commerce in connection with the gems and other products, brought from Magadha. The products of different countries along with Kāmarūpa were referred to in the *Arthasastra*. The source of products are Parāsa-Mudraka, Sauvarṇa-kuḍyakā, Pāra-Lauhitya, Joṅgakā, Antaravāya, Pūrṇadvipaka, Toṅgakā etc.\(^{23}\)

Sauvarṇa-kuḍyakā has been identified by K. L. Barua\(^{24}\) with village Soṅkuḍiyā which is situated in the present district of Kāmarūpa. There is reference to the identification of Pāra-Lauhitya, as quoted by N. N. Dasgupta, in Kāmarūpa and the Kauṭilya\(^{25}\) that in Śrīmūla commentary pt. Gaṇapati Shāstri explains as ‘pāralauhityakam kāmarūpa lauhityākhyā-nada-pārabhavam.’ It clearly shows that Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa was always associated with Pāra-Lauhitya.

In the *Rāmāyana* at Kiṅkindhyākāṇḍa (Ch. 42) the city of Prāg- jyotiṣa and Naraka is referred to in the context of the search

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22. *Arthasastra*, Bk. II, Ch. II., R. Shāmāsāstry, in 3rd Edn., 1929, p. 75
24. *JARS*, VII. I. p. 29
25. *JARS*, VII., I., p. 27
for Sītā. Sugrīva, the king of Kiśkindhāyā asked Suṣeṇa to start searching Sītā in the west. Sugrīva narrated the various places to be traversed by Suṣeṇa for the search. In that context he referred to Prāgjyotīṣa which was situated on the Varāha mountain surrounded by the deep see (agādhe varaṇālaye) and inhabited by the people of Naraka. The city of Prāgjyotīṣa has been shown in the west and in the deep sea. Here it may be mentioned that the deep sea may be the vast watery portion beyond south of the present Meghalaya that existed during that time in the region of East Bengal over the region of Maimansing-Sylhet and the adjacent region, which existed on the Varāha mountain. But the reference to the west has been totally vague. But it may be taken to be granted that the story is of Naraka’s association with the Varāha mountain as Naraka was born of the Boar incarnation of Viṣṇu.

So far as the epics were concerned, both the epics refer to the story of Naraka. The narrator of the Mahābhārata seems more familiar with the inhabitants surrounding and geography and the situation of ancient Assam. Although the story of Naraka is a bit confusing but the heroic details of his son Bhagadatta and his sons in the epic is in more details and contain historical materias and value.
The *Rāmāyaṇa* (Ch. 35), refers to the name of the founder of the city of Prāgjyotiṣa, Amūrtarāja. This fact is found in the book ‘*Gauder Itiḥāsa*’ compiled by Rajani Kanta Chakravarty. But Mukunda Madhav Sharma cited its difference with the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vangaṇvāsi edition (at Bhūmikā, p -2) and also with the Bombay edition with the Tilaka-Commentary where there is no mention of Prāgjyotiṣa and its founder as Asūrtarāja (and not Amūrtarāja). He is credited with the establishment of Dharmāraṇya and not Prāgjyotiṣa.

The reference of the eastern kings and kingdoms were somewhat rampant in the Purāṇas and Upa-Purāṇas alongwith the Epics and in the Upaniṣads, e.g. the *Chāndyogya*, the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka, Sāṅkhya-yāya-Grhyasūtra* and *Srautasūtras* and in the *Viṣṇudharmottara*. The purāṇas were not composed before 6th century A. D. Thus, we reach to the period of Bāṇabhaṭṭa who in his *Harṣacarita* referred to Kāmarūpa and its king Kumāra. Hiuen Tsāng also referred to Kāmarūpa in his *Si-yu-ki*. For the first time Kāmarūpa is mentioned in the Allahabad Pillar *praśasti* of Samudragupta. Later on Kāmarūpa is found in *Rāja- taranginī* of Kalhāṇa and subsequently in the *Kālikāpurāṇa* and in *Yoginītantra*. 
Alexander Cunningham in his book, the *Ancient Geography of India* the Buddhist period including campaigns of Alexander and the travels of Hiuen Tsâng, in the introduction page X11 refers ‘in paper entitled Western Prâgjyotiśa published in the *Indian Museum Bulletin*, Calcutta, (Vol. V. No. 11). The present writer has pointed out that Prâgjyotiśa of the two epics is totally different from eastern Prâgjyotiśa. In that paper attention is drawn to the fact that there existed in 2nd millenium B. C. a city called Prâgjyotiśa in western India and not far from Ānartta country. The present writer (Cunninghum) had pointed out that the *Mahâbhârata* does not clearly mention Prâgjyotiśa of East. The *Râmâyana* distinctly locates Prâgjyotiśa in western direction.26 According to the *Mahâbhârata* Prâgjyotiśa was destroyed by Vâsudeva Krṣṇa.

The later Prâgjyotiśa of Eastern India appears only in the literature of the post-Maurya period. It was certainly named after the Prâgjyotiśa of Western India. Kings like Naraka and Bhagadatta obviously belonged to the eastern Prâgjyotiśa although post-Gupta kings of Assam believing them to be kings of Prâgjyotiśa of the epics claimed as descent of them. The practice of designating a city or country after the name of an earlier

one was not uncommon in ancient India. The Rājagṛha and Girivraja, the capital of Magadha was named after Girivraja of Rāmāyana, the capital of the famous Kekayas of the Rāmāyana under Aśvapati.

In this regard we must refer to the identical name of Prāɡjyotiṣa and Kāmarūpa as referred to by Kālidāsa in Raghuvamśa. Although earliest reference to Prāɡjyotiṣa is found in the epics and the name also exists in Parāśara Tantra of the 1st century A. D. Association of solar cult with the name of Navagraha and Udayācala of the Samhitās may be surmised as the significant aspect of the name of Prāɡjyotiṣa.

Other sources also mentioned in many early classical literature Prāɡjyotiṣa and Lauhitya. Prāɡjyotiṣa was referred to as Prācyya Janapada27 and further make reference to a city called Vijaya on a hill of Kāmarūpa of the East (prācyā).28 There is also reference to a forest named ‘Guru-Visāla’29 situated in a mountain in Kāmarūpa country reputed for Sun worship. The Brahmapurāṇa (Ch. 27) mentions Prāɡjyotiṣa as a kingdom. The Garuḍapurāṇa (81-160) mentions Kāmarūpa along with Kāmākhyā located as a great centre of pilgrimage.30

27. Pargiter, Dynasties of Kali Age, p. 331
28. ibid, p. 411
29. ibid, p. 581
30. ‘kāmarūpa mahātūrtham kāmākhyā yatra tisthīnā tātāya’//’
The Geographical area of Kāmarūpa and Puṇḍravardhana is a very interesting chapter of the history of Prāgjyotiśa-Kāmarūpa. It is initially related with the Aryan expansion in the Eastern India and in the North-Eastern India. Not only that the history of geographical area of both Kāmarūpa and Puṇḍravardhana are the integral part of the history of extension of Kāmarūpa.