

ANCIENT GEOGRAPHY OF INDIA

ANUNDORAM BOROAH

PUBLICATION BOARD, ASSAM

ANUNDORAM BOROAH

classics

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INTRODUCTION TO THIS EDITION

Several factors have weighed with the Publication Board, Assam, in undertaking to reprint the priceless works of the great Sanskrit scholar, Anundoram Borooah, which were first published about a hundred years ago. Our prime consideration has been the fact that Anundoram Borooah belonged to that pioneering and noble band of Indian scholars who had addressed themselves to the task of rehabilitating the glory and greatness of the Sanskrit language, Sanskrit literature and Sanskrit education. Secondly, the brilliance and profundity of the commentaries and criticisms written by him on a number of important Sanskrit books are almost without parallel in the whole range of Sanskrit literature. Thirdly, by reprinting his works we aspire to rediscover for lovers of Sanskrit all over the world a fund of literary treasures which is now almost forgotten. Finally, we do hope that our endeavour will enable present generations of Indians to become acquainted with the achievements of one of the most eminent scholars of Assam and of the country as a whole who died at the early age of thirty-nine.

People of today cannot but marvel at Anundoram Borooah's stupendous creative genius which found its fulfilment within the span of a short life and which refused to be bogged down in the day-to-day problems of administration that he had to tackle in the capacity of a high official in the civil service of the British Government. The short biography included in the book would help readers to have an idea of the richness and vitality of his wonderful mind. In those days few Indians could aspire to a fame that extended beyond the frontiers of the country, and this was true especially for a man belonging to this remote corner of India. But Anundoram's deep devotion to literature and his great erudition had won for him the appreciation and admiration of scholars from all over the world. The truth of this is amply borne out by

the tributes which are included in the appendix of this book. Anundoram was the first graduate from Assam and the first and the only member of Indian Civil Service from this State.

Anundoram Borooah's entire life was dedicated to literary pursuits. In fact, the story of his brief life may be said to be a story of the love and devotion which inspired his studies of Sanskrit literature. Only a few others can rival him in the zeal that he brought to bear upon his efforts to restore Sanskrit literature to its rightful pre-eminent position. The noble faith that informed his pursuit of Sanskrit literature is clearly expressed in the following words quoted from the book, *Mahāvīracharita*: "To me, Sanskrit is dearer than any other language. Its music has charms which no words can express. Its capability of representing every form of human thought in most appropriate language is probably not rivalled, certainly not surpassed, by any other language. Most touching scenes have been drawn in heart-rending words. Most noble images have been clothed in most sublime language. Most terrific pictures have been couched in terror-producing expressions; and among the foremost to elevate the language and enrich the literature of ancient India stands the name of our poet Vaśyavāk Kāśyapa Bhavabhūti Śrikanṭha. His plays have been all translated into English, two by more than one writer, and it can be confidently predicted that before another hundred years, they will be rendered into almost every language of civilized Europe. May we hope that with the diffusion of Sanskrit, he will be as appreciated in the farthest corners of the world as he is on the banks of the Śiprā and near the ruins of Vijayanagara."

Anundoram Borooah had never published his *Ancient Geography of India* separately: it was incorporated with the third volume of his *English-Sanskrit Dictionary* (1880) as its long preface. This reprint of the valuable contribution by a great Indian will, we have no doubt, promote research work in the field of our country's ancient geography and greatly inspire the lovers of Sanskrit learning.

Prof. Max Müller, the great German Orientalist, said about Anundoram's work in the *Academy* of 13 August, 1881, "Mr. Borooah had added to the third volume of his *English-Sanskrit Dictionary* a long and important contribution on the ancient geography of India, and an Appendix of geographical names rendered in Sanskrit, both of which will be gratefully received by Sanskrit scholars in Europe." Prof. Cecil Bendall had also remarked in *Trubner's Record* in 1889, "Not content with commencing such a *magnum opus* as a dictionary (*English-Sanskrit Dictionary*), he (Anundoram) added to its second and third volumes two new and original works, viz., his *Higher Sanskrit Grammar* and a list of Sanskrit geographical names illustrated by a valuable prefatory essay. Both are thoroughly original works, and rather suffer by being united with the dictionary. The latter is, I believe, still a unique contribution to Indian research."

Dr. S. K. Bhuyan, the eminent historian of Assam, wrote in his biography of Anundoram in Assamese about the book, "Along with Sir Alexander Cunningham's monumental work on the subject, Anundoram's is regarded as the most valuable; and I have seen editors and commentators of Sanskrit texts quote Sri Borooah's authority in tracing the identity of places mentioned in our ancient classics. The well-known editor of Sanskrit classics, Rai Bahadur Bibhubhusan Goswami, has inserted a summary of Sri Borooah's *Ancient Geography of India* in his excellent edition of Kālidāsa's *Meghadūtam*." Dr. Bhuyan had regretted the omission of Anundoram's great work by Surendranath Majumdar Sastri in the *Indian Antiquary* of February, 1919, which was a bibliography on the ancient geography of India.

The chief object of the Publication Board, Assam, established in 1959, has been to publish and reprint the best works in different languages and thus help the enrichment of our language, literature and culture through contact with all that is best in world literature. It is this object that has inspired this Board to reprint the works of Anundoram

Borooah. We are confident that our efforts will have goodwill and support of all who sympathise with our aims.

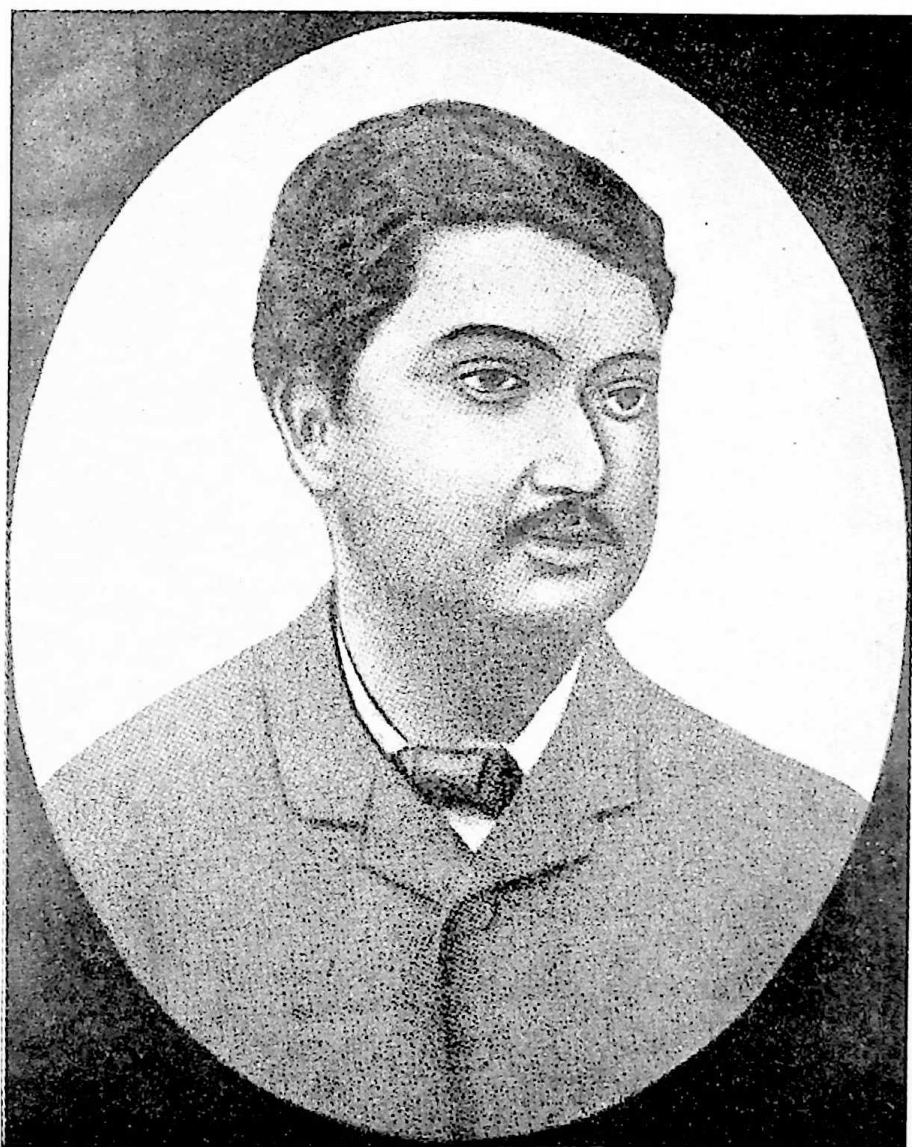
We must acknowledge here our debt of gratitude to that famous scholar and historian of Assam, the late Dr. Surya Kumar Bhuyan, who more than anybody else, was responsible for acquainting the present generation with the genius and achievements of Anundoram Borooah. In this connection, we refer to Dr. Bhuyan's memorable biography of Anundoram written in Assamese. The biographical sketch included in this book and the note on Anundoram in the Appendix have been reproduced from Dr. Bhuyan's book. We offer our grateful thanks to Srijuta Laksheswari Bhuyan, wife of Dr. Bhuyan, and the publishers of the book, the Lawyer's Book Stall, Gauhati, for kindly permitting us to use the material.

With this national enterprise will also remain associated the names of our ex-Chief Minister, the late Sri Bimala Prasad Chaliha, and Sri Mahendra Mohan Chaudhury, the present Chief Minister and Chairman of this Board, who took a keen interest in the publication of the books by Anundoram Borooah. We owe also a debt of gratitude to the Principal, Sanskrit College of Calcutta, for lending us the third volume of Anundoram's *English-Sanskrit Dictionary* for preparing the manuscript of this work. But for his help this volume could not have been published.

Finally, a word of thanks is also due to Prof. Rajanikanta Dev Sarma, who carefully and conscientiously corrected the proofs including errors of misprint of the original.

Gauhati-3
Assam
July 1, 1971

CHANDRA PRASAD SAIKIA
Secretary
Publication Board, Assam



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