

Jambudvipa, Centre of the Earth, and Origin of Life:

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Introduction

Indian puranic tradition speaks of seven primordial islands: Jambudvipa, Plakshyadvipa, Pushkaradvipa, Sakadvipa, Kusadvipa, Salmalidvipa and Krounchadvipa. These islands were initially thought of as imaginary islands. Ptolemy's Map of Jambudvipa which gives a real picture of the geographical situation of the 'inhabited world' dispels this idea. After discovery of this particular map's geographical identity through its four nodal points: Siddhapura(North), Lanka(South), Jumukote or Yamakoti(East) and Roomuck(West) near the Sun Temple at Konark on the southern seacoast of India, scientific ideas on this oval-shaped land as land of origin of life opens up new ground for varied researches on all areas of human knowledge.

While Map of Jambudvipa represents the peripheral map of the 'inhabited world', other maps of Ptolemy identify different regions locked within the four nodal points of this Map. He has drawn his maps in a systematic way to identify different ancient countries, their tribes, and their holy places and royal palaces from different angles. Without locating the geographical situation of Jambudvipa, scholars adopted various other maps of Ptolemy as representing different nations of the world, Eleven maps have been adopted as Asiae Maps; ten Maps represent ancient Europe (Europa); four maps for ancient Africa(Africanus) and the 12th Map for ancient Ceylon(Taprobane).

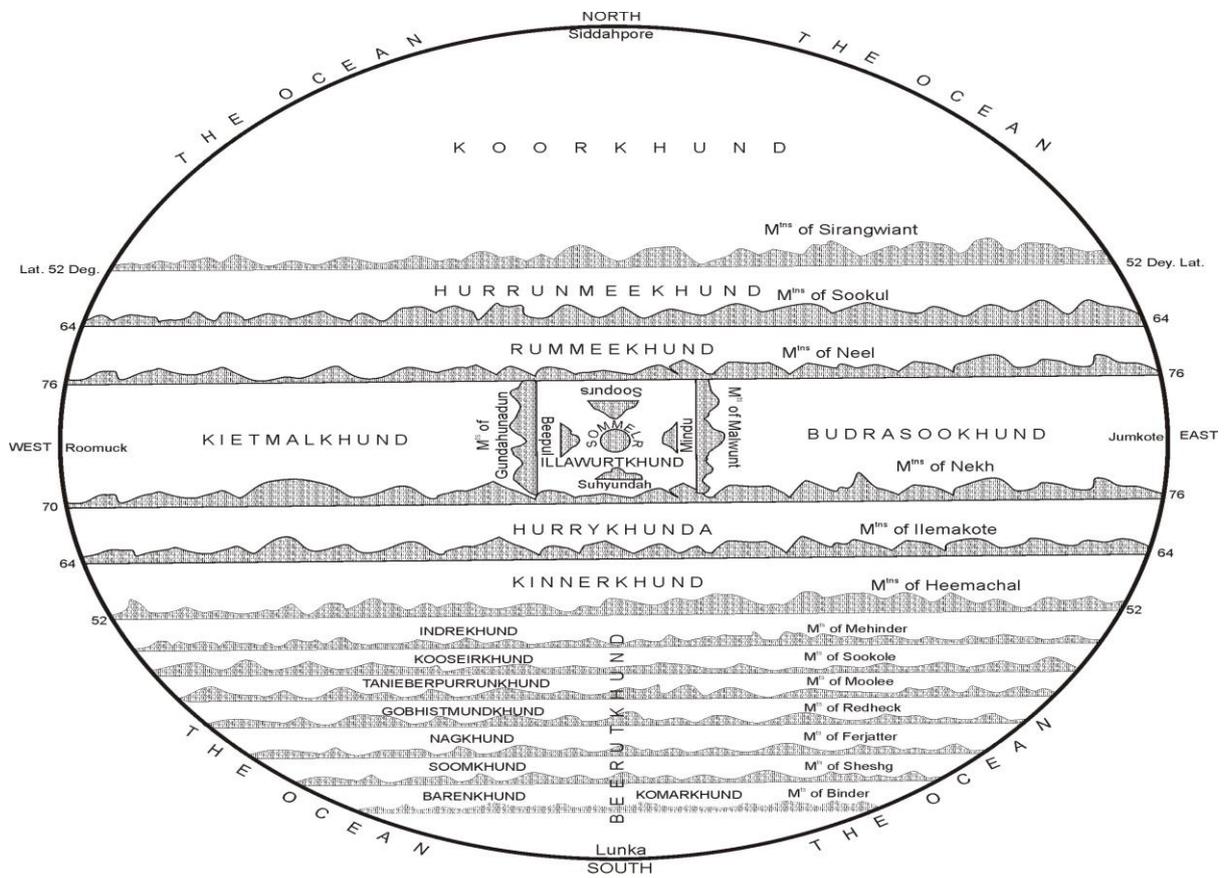
Map of Jummoodeep

Jummoodeep or Jambudvipa finds its description in most of the puranic literature because the 'inhabited world' was confined only to this part of the world, and beyond this was the 'unknown world'.

Map of Jambudvipa¹ provides an insight into the primordial shape and geography of the land of Jambudvipa which is identified with Jambu Tree, also called Naga Tree

Asoka's Minor Rock Edict 1 reads he was emperor of Jambudvipa. He put some of his Minor Rock Edicts² at places which are seen in the Map of Jambudvipa as its border countries.

While describing the movement of the sun, Alberuni³ quotes names of the four places-- Siddhapura, Lanka, Yamakoti, and the region of Greeks--which themselves define the geographical boundaries of Jambudvipa.



Map of Jumodeep or Jambudvipa

Siddahpore (Northern boundary)

Siddahpore⁴ or Siddhasrama's name is very vibrant in Indian puranic tradition. It was here that Vamana Avatara of Vishnu happened. It was situated on the bank of the river Saraswati. Fa-hsien visited Kapila⁵(Kapitha—Sankisa), other name of Siddhapura.

Asoka's Minor Rock Edict⁶ identifies Sidda(-pur) within the geographical limits of his empire.

Lanka(Southern boundary)

Alberuni's India finds Lanka as 'cupola of the earth'⁷.

Lan-po of Chinese pilgrims is identified with Lanka. Its Sanskrit name Lampaka identifies its inhabitants as Lambakannas⁸(Lambatai of Ptolemy).

Roomuck(Western boundary)

It is Ramanaka varsha⁹ of Indian puranas ; It was to the south of Mt Sweta, and to the north of Mt Nilachala ; .

This describes the region of Mt Nilachala¹⁰ with the presence of Nygrodha Tree.; Varaha Mihira places Romaka 90⁰ west of Lanka¹¹.

Jumukote(Eastern boundary):

Going north-east from Samatata to the border of the ocean, pilgrim Hiouen Tsiang came to the kingdom of Srikshetra¹². Further on to the south-east, on the border of the ocean, he reached the country of Kamalanka(Kia-mo-lang-kia); still to the east was the country of Dwarapati(To-lo-po-ti), and to the east the country of Isanapura(I-shang-na-pu-lo); still to the east the country of Mahachampa¹³(Mo-ha-chen-po) which is same as Lin-i ; Next to the southwest was a country called Yamanadvipa. The 'six countries' were so hemmed in by mountains and rivers that they were inaccessible. From Samatata, the pilgrim went Tamralipti.

The 'six countries' of the pilgrim identifies the region of Yamakote or Jumukote.

Koorkhund:

According to Vayu purana¹⁴, Jambudvipa consists of four great islands, i.e., Uttarakuru(Ottorokorrhas of Ptolemy, between 169⁰36' and 176⁰38'), Ketumala, Bhadrasva varsha and Bharatavarsha.

To the north of Mt Jarudhira was Uttarakuru ; River Bhadrasima which was flowing in this country also indicates the geography of Bhadraswa country(or Budrasookhund of the Map).

Hurrunmeekhund is Hiranmaya varsha¹⁵ of Indian puranas ; It was to north of Mt Sweta, and south of Mt Srungaban;

Rummeekkhund comes next to Hiranmaya country. Mt Neel was a part of this geography. Rummeek refers to Ramanaka country and Rumkuni deity , and Mt Neel is identified with Mt Nila(also Nilanchala) of Indian puranas which was a part of Ramyaka varsha.

Hurrikkhund and Kinnerkkhund are identified with countries of the Hurrites¹⁶ and Kinnerrites¹⁷ of ancient texts.

Kietmalkhund represents Ketumala varsha¹⁸ and Budrasookhund is identified with Bhadrasva varsha¹⁹ of Indian puranas. Between these two countries was Ilabruta varsha.

Behrutkhund or Bharata varsha:

Behrukkhund in the Map represents Bharata varsha²⁰ of puranic literature.

Indrekkhund(with Mt Mehinder) is same as Indradvipa; Koosirkhund(with Mt Sookole) – same as Kaserudvipa ; Tanieberpurrunkhund(with Mt Moolee)–same as Tamraparnidvipa ; Gobhistmundkkhund (with Mt Redheck = Mt Rikshya) – same as Gandharvadvipa ; Nagkkhund(with Mt Ferjatter or Paripatra) – same as Nagadvipa ; Soomkkhund(with Mt Sheshen) -- same as Saumyadvipa ; Barenkkhund represents Varana and Komarkhund(with Mt Binder) is same as Kommadvipa of Indian puranas.

‘Bairat’ of the Bairat No.2 Rock Edicts of Asoka²¹ is identified with Behrut or Bharata (poetically called Bhrata khanda).

Ilabruta desha:

This country was situated between Kietmalkhund and Budrasookhund; Ilaburta country is identified with the geography of Mt Alborg of the Avesta, Arbela of Alexander, and Alaba of

Ptolemy; Alavi, Alsanda²², and Uruvela of Buddhist literature; they collectively describe the geography of this country.

Soopars(north of Ilabruta)

A sea-port during the time of *Periplus*²³(2nd AD); it was then known as Suppara.

Suhyundah(south of Ilabruta)

Sundara and Sunandavati region of Pali literature²⁴ is synonymous with Suhyundah of Ptolemy. Near it was Mrigasira or Deer Park where the Buddha preached his First Sermon.

Mundi (east of Ilabruta):

This place was at the foot of the Mt Malwunt as seen in the Map of Jambudvipa; But Pali sources²⁵ put it on the slope of the Mt Vindhya.

Vepulla(west of Ilabruta, Mt Gundahmadan):

It was highest of the five mountains surrounding Rajagraha, capital of ancient Magadha. It was called Supassa²⁶, same as Soopars, during the time of Kasyapa Buddha.

Mt Sommeir

Quoting Patanjali, Alberuni in his *India*²⁷ demarcated the four sides of the Meru -- on the east were the mountain Malava and the ocean, and between them were the kingdoms of Bhadrasha; on the north were Nila, Sita, Sringadri and the ocean, and between them the kingdoms Ramyaka, Hiranmaya, and Kuru ; on the west was mountain Gandhamardan and the ocean, and between them the kingdom Ketumala ; on the south were Mravarta, Nisadha, Hemakuta, Himagiri, and the ocean, and between them the kingdoms Bharatavarsha, Kimpurusha, and Harivarsha.

Mt Meru was near Badarika-asrama²⁸; it was a mountain in Saka-dvipa.

It was Sangala²⁹ of Alexander's historians; Alexander arrived at the city of Nysa³⁰ with his soldiers, situated at the foot of this mountain. His soldiers scaled this mountain which was then filled with vineyards.

Mt Sumeru existed up to the time of Hiouen Tsiang's visit to 'ancient India'; He calls this mountain Tsung-ling³¹ in his report. It is sane as Sangala of Alexander's historians.

Centre of the Earth:

Varahamihira sees Lanka, Ujjain (not Ujjain of Madhya Pradesh), Mt Meru and Taneshar(Sthaneswar) same as Uttara Kuru, standing on a straight line³². Mt Meru was at 90° from all the four nodal points of the Map of Jambudvipa.

This Map could not be identified regarding its geographical situations for centuries, and thus, remained away from scientific investigations of the nature of its land which according to ancient texts is at the 'centre of the earth'. Homer's epics named some of the places like Lemnos(last port of call) which then situated at the 'end of the earth'. Bible speaks of 'ancient Rom' similarly as being situated at the 'end of the world'. According to *Alberuni's India*, Mt Girinagara³³ was at the 'centre of the earth'. Alberuni quoting *Vishnu purana* mentions name of seven mountains which were situated in the Middle Earth.³⁴ *Bhagavata purana* says Ilabruta country as 'Nabhi-desha'³⁵ or standing at the 'navel of the universe'.

Greek Classics treated the four-part world system pointing to Thule at the 'Edge of the World'. Odysseus' voyages and islands outside the Pillars of Heracles speak of their primordial positions within the region of this Jambudvipa island only.

Chinese pilgrims' accounts and Alexander's India invasion history like Indian epics and mythologies, mark Madhyadesha or Majjhimadesha³⁶(not Cunningham's Mid-India), a landmass whose name suggests it being situated at the 'middle of the earth'. Seat of enlightenment of the Buddhas which remains unchanged irrespective to their different times of arrival on earth, is situated in this country³⁷. A Buddha never takes his birth outside the Madhyadesha.

Origin of Life:

All ancient literature –astronomy, philosophy, traveller's tales, epics and religious texts etc- put this particular region in their respective narratives where every recorded things of the ancient world happened.

Bible's Ball deity is same as Balakhilya yogi of Indian puranas. They were the one-fingered-height deities³⁸ of the ancient texts. They were also called pigmies by some ancient literature. Pliny like Photius' gives an account of the *Cynocephalus*, a dog-headed tribe, and Indian puranas mention them as inhabitants of Kukura or Dog country. A star in this name i.e Dog Star has also been mentioned in the *Periplus* which first rises in this country. Pali texts

mention different Trees³⁹ associated with enlightenment of different Buddhas. This signifies the 'land' where origin of plant life first took roots. Stories on Bodhisatvas found them to have taken different life-forms⁴⁰ in their previous births before they become a Buddha.

The 'land' which is responsible for 'Origin of Life' also remains at the 'Centre of the Creation' stories. Every recorded thing of the ancient world happened in one and the same primordial geography only; and this is represented by Ptolemy's Map of Jambudvipa.

Conclusion:

All maps of Ptolemy have preserved in them one and the same geography of the landmass where 'life on earth first appeared'. The deified nature of Jambudvipa comes from the fact that it is situated at the 'centre of the universe', and thus, needs immediate scientific attention and also attention of all branches of human knowledge to verify the facts that this land is the laboratory of life system on earth, and holds the secret keys to its unproven and unseen nature of its centrality on earth-system; and nature of its providing and supporting mechanism to the life system on earth needs integrated study. Nature of its position near the seacoast also seems to have some sort of hidden influence on future of life on earth. Natural calamities and climatic changes which this land faced forced people of the 'first land' to migrate to 'unknown world' of Ptolemy.

Although islandic shape and its description as versified in puranic literature have been completely lost, and although its huge mountains and rivers have suffered from complete disappearance, the 'land' still maintains its natural equilibrium which it needs to protect itself and its identity after repeated deluge. Because of this link of this land with birthplace of gods and deities and with their seat of worship, identity of the land is well protected with times.

Endnotes:

1. Ptolemy's Map of Jambudvipa marks a small patch of landmass at Sun Temple, Konark on the southern seacoast of India in Odisha. This land stretches around eighty miles from Sun Temple to Siddhapura(Hanspala) towards north, and around one hundred miles from Chilika Lake to Astaranga in a east-south-east divide on the seacoast. Lanka is represented by Lambuapada on the banks of the river Daya(river Indus of ancient texts) is in Pipili block near Bhubaneswar(Dhauri). Jumukote identifies Jamantala and Jamadharm near Konark. It is ancient Jerusalem; Roomuck

refers to ancient Ramanaka or Saketa, and is represented by Bhubaneswar itself. This refers to oval shape of the land with four sides on seas.

2. Ptolemais of the Greek is represented by Plakhsyadvipa of Indian puranas. Ptolemy was born in a Greek settlement of Jambudvipa, at Tolla village. He was linked with Alexandria(combination of two names: Alikea and Sundara) and is represented by Alsanda in Puri Sadar block.
3. Mt Meru is identified by villages Naisa and Bahardasi-gaon in Satyabadi block of Puri district.

References

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2. Mookerji Radhakumud., *Asoka*, Delhi, 1954, p. 109(Siddap for Siddhapur); also see pp.4n, 24, 64, 105, 110, 112n
3. Sachau, E.C Dr , *Alberuni's India*, New Delhi, 2012, p.259..
4. Dey Nandolal, *The Geographical Dictionary of Ancient and Medieval India*, New Delhi,1979, pp.1, 185 ; Dasa Jagannatha, *Bhagavata purana trans.* (Odiya), Cuttack, 3rd sk.,33rd .ch, p.113, Siddhasrama on the bank of the river Saraswati.
5. Giles HA., Cambridge University Press, 1923, p. 24 ; Beal, S., *Si-Yu-Ki, Buddhist Records of the Western World*, London, 1884, I, p.xxvii) ; Hermitage of Kapila Muni in a forest called Siddha ; R.C. Panda.,Dr. *Prachinadira Ayitihaska Bibhaba*(Odiya), Bhubaneswar,1991, p.17; See, Rockhill, W.W., *The Life of the Buddha, and the Early History of His Order*, New Delhi, 2004 for Siddha-thaggama town, p.250, App.
6. Mookerji R., *Asoka*, , ch.VII, p. 109,ftn.3; and ch.VIII,p.215,ftn.1.
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9. Gargabatu R., *Vayu purana*, Sri Radharamana Pustakalaya, Cutttack, 2nd pt, p.14(Mt Ramya in Kesari country) .

10. Beal, *Si-Yu-Ki, Buddhist Records*, II, p.126 ; Nilanchala refers to Nilanjana(Ni-len-shan-na); Beal, II, pp.112n,138n.
11. Varaha Mihira, *Surya Sidhanta*, XII,39.
12. Beal, *Si-Yu-Ki, Buddhist Records*, II, pp.199-200.
13. Beal, II, p.200; Malasekera, DPPN, I, p.526. Kamboj as Champa('k' for 'c'; and 'b' for 'p'); also see, I, pp. 855-57 for Campa.
14. Gargabatu, *Vayu purana*, 1st pt, *Jambudvipa barnana*(description of Jambudvipa), (trans., Odiya), pp.124-29(see p.127).
15. Ibid. p.126.
16. Jerome, 2:140 ; 6:11 ; 11: 15 ; Malasekera, DPPN, II, p.1321(Harayo) ; Dey, Nandolal, *The Geographical Dic.* p.74(Hairvarsha for Hurrites) .
17. Jerome, 5:47 ; 8:9 ; 11: 16, 29 ; Schoff, WH., *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea*, New Delhi, 1974, p.22(Cana's inhabitants as Kenites).
18. Gargabatu, *Vayu* 1st pt, pp.123,127.
19. Ibid. ; also see Dey Nandolal, *The Geogl. Dic.* pp.196-7.
20. Ibid.
21. Mookerji R's *Asoka*, Ch.VIII, II(B), pp.217-8,
22. Malasekera, DPPN, I, p.187; capital of king Milinda; also see Alavi at pp.295-6.
23. Schoff, *Periplus*, pp.43, n145, n197 ; Surparaka in Dey Nandolal's *The Geographical Dic.*, pp.197-98 ; see Suppara in Malasekera, DPPN, II, pp.1222-23.
24. Malasekera, DPPN, II, pp.1209, 1213.
25. Ibid., II, p.641 ; Mundanigama here represents Mundi, also name of a tribe.
26. Ibid., II, pp.926-7
27. Sachau Dr., *Alberuni's India*, p.239.
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31. Beal. *Si-Yu-Ki*, I, intro, pp.14,15,27 etc; also see Sachau Dr., *Alberuni India* ch.34,234-241.
32. Sachau Dr., ch.30, pp.299.

33.Ibid, p,240,

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35.Dasa Jagannatha, *Bhagavata purana*,(trans, Odiya) 5th sk.,ch.16th .p.191,

36.Malalasekera, DPPN, II,pp.418-19; also see Beal. *Si-Yu-Ki*, I, intro.p.37.

37.Ibid,

38.Gargabatu, *Skanda purana*, Nagara kh(trans, Odiya)., pp.172-4 and pp.457-65.

39.Malalasekera, DPPN, II,pp.319-322.

40. Ibid,II,pp.322-329.