THE SHRINES OF SITAKUND.
THE

SHRINES OF SITAKUND

IN THE DISTRICT OF

CHITTAGONG IN BENGAL

BY

ADHARLAL SEN, B. A.

DEPUTY COLLECTOR OF CALCUTTA, FORMERLY OF CHITTAGONG. LATE SCHOLAR, PRESIDENCY COLLEGE; MEMBER OF THE ASIATIC SOCIETY OF BENGAL; AUTHOR OF "LALITA SUNDARI," "MENAKA," "NALINI," "KUSUM KANAN," AND "LYTTONIANA;" FELLOW OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALCUTTA.

CALCUTTA: INDIA.

THACKER, SPINK & CO.

Publishers to the University.

1884.
CALCUTTA:

PRINTED BY J. W. THOMAS,

BAPTIST MISSION PRESS, 24 LOWER CIRCULAR ROAD.
TO

Charles H. Tawney, Esq., M. A.

Principal of the Presidency College;

Vice-President of the Asiatic Society of Bengal; and

Registrar of the Calcutta University

Who has been more than a father to me.

These pages are dedicated

As a token of my gratefulness, and of my reverence for his genius and learning.

Central Archaeological Library, New Delhi.
PREFACE.

I visited Sitakund in 1880, during the Siva-Chaturdasi festival. From the notes then recorded by me, I wrote a paper on the Shrines of the place, which was read before the Asiatic Society of Bengal on the 2nd March, 1881. This paper, with some additions and alterations, is now presented before the public.

It was owing to the kindness of the late Pandit Bhairava Chandra Nyayaratna of Chittagong, that I was able to obtain copies of some of the sacred writings to which reference is made in the following pages. To my old and revered tutor, Pandit Haris Chandra Kaviratna, of the Presidency College, my thanks are also due for his kindly going through the proofsheets, and helping me with his suggestions.

A. S.

Calcutta, June 15th, 1884.
Sitakund is an outpost in the Police circle of Kumiria attached to the Sudder Subdivision of the district of Chittagong in Bengal. It is bounded on the east by the Sitakund range, on the west by the Bay of Bengal, on the north and south by the Kumiria and Merkaserai thanas respectively, the population by the last Census being 36,581 souls.

The city of the same name (lat. 22° 37' 55"; long. 91° 43' 40''), which is at a distance of 24 miles to the north of the Sudder Station, is not mentioned by name in the Ayeen Akbery; but it appears to have been a place of considerable importance at the time when Chittagong first came into the possession of the English. Mr. Harry Verelst, the first Chief of Chittagong, who afterwards succeeded Mr. Vansittart in the Governorship of Bengal, reported his arrival from this place on the 3rd January, 1761.* Lord

* Mr. Cotton's Memorandum on the Revenue History of Chittagong, page 5.
Teignmouth visited it in 1778,* and Sir William Jones in 1786.† It was also inspected and described by Captain Pogson in 1831,‡ and Sir Joseph Hooker in 1854.§ Sitakund still continues to hold its position as a place of note in the district. It has a moonsifès of its own, which, though still going by its name, has, however, been recently removed to an adjacent place. The trade of Sitakund is not inconsiderable, lying as it does on the Grand Trunk Road between Dacca and Chittagong, which is always fit for wheeled traffic, and being accessible within a short distance by boats throughout the year. There is not certainly a more beautiful place on earth. Nature has adorned it with all that is sublime and beautiful in creation. It is a meet residence for gods. The grand mountains, the beautiful waterfalls, the volcanic springs, the clear streams, the thick forests, and their conflagrations at night, the numberless odorous flowers, the fragrant breeze and the sweet song of birds,—these no one can forget, who has once been there.

† Ibid. Letter from Sir William Jones to Mr. Justice Hyde.
‡ Pogson’s Narrative during a Tour to Chateegaom, p. 204. The date of Pogson’s visit to Sitakund, as given by the late Dr. Oldham, quoting Corbyn, in his paper on the Thermal Springs of India edited by his son, is 1778. (Vide p. 58, Part II, Vol. XIX. Memoirs of the Geological Survey of India.) But this is not correct, as will be seen from Captain Pogson’s own Narrative. It was Lord Teignmouth who visited the place in 1778.
It is, however, from a religious point of view, that the place is held in the greatest esteem. In Eastern Bengal, which is condemned by the orthodox as the Mleccha country, not visited by the Pándavas (पाञ्चवंशीत्रेष्ठ), there is no place so renowned as Sitakund. It is one of the 51 sacred Pithas (पीठ),* on which fell scattered the limbs of Sati, the consort of Siva, whose dead body was cut to pieces by the discus of Vishnu. “On Chandrasekhara in Chittagong in Eastern Bengal,” says the Adipurána,† “there is a place of great sanctity, which

*

व दशवाल्मीकृप भिवभरखः।
वारकर्पा भगवती भवानी तच स्वतः।।
रति नन्दवागमश्रिय विवपायक्षवायेऽ
एकप्रभाषहित्रुवायली पीविनिवृष्टः।


चउपादे भानिन्तक अर्थ अनुभव।
भवानी सेरत चन्द्रशेखर भैरव।।

भारतचंद्र राजेर अनन्दमंगल।
श्रीरामचंद्र वन निषा पाला।।

Date of composition of Annadāmangala, S. 1674–1753 A. D.

बेद जये धर्मि रुपे रुप निरुपिल।
सेई शके एই गीत भारत रचिल।।

† देवाभिचारितं स्वरं भगवान्कं भाविक वीशाले।
असिगुण्य सहिष्णुं चढ़ीं चयननिर्देशे।।

Adipurána, Vide, p. 105 Chandrasekhara Māhātmya by Uma Charan Mookerjee.
is the favourite and secret resort of the gods.” “We have heard before,” the Rishis said in the Devípurána,* “of Sitakund situate on the mount of Chandrasekhara, a spring known throughout India, which is the purifier of the three worlds”. “Ayodhya, Muttra, Maya (Hurdwar), Benares, Kánchi (Conjeveram), Avanti (Ojjein), and Dwárakhá—these seven places are the dispensers of salvation. In Benares, Maináka, Ekámravana (Bhubanesvara), Kailás and Sumeru, Síva constantly dwells. During the Kali Yuga,” says Vishnu to his consort, in the Váráhi Tantra,† “Chittagong is the habitation of the gods.” So again Síva said in the Linga Purána,‡ “I shall dwell with thee, O

[* कीताकुष्ण ग्रां पुरूष्चैताक्षणापाने।
चन्द्रेश्वरस्थानं भारताक्ष्मापमनिवनम्।
दृति च चौदेवीपुराणे चाचाचार्यसुधिकारसेवे मिवरध्य
कथये श्रीकीताकुष्णेश्वरप्रसिद्धादिधे भाय।]

[† श्रीधाम महुर्ता माया कामी काष्ठि च्यविनक।
पुरी हरावली चौ वहलता मुरिताधिक।।
कारादिका च मैताक एकाशवनसेव च।
कैशारवतालिष्ट सर्वार्द्रिकपूषक।।
स्तेवु षड्कले नित्य बर्षितेष्विषित।।
कादी खानयु सन्धया देवाण सबली मुनि।।
दृति श्रीवारासीलने श्रीरामनारायणीर्ष्णवादे
हेति: पद्धव।]

[‡ कीफलाम प्रिताळीय यथाक्रमे पनुष्पकरे।
काला यत समिश्वासि यतं सत्यं वराने।।

Lingga Purana, Veda, p. 105, Chandrasekhara Máhátmya by Uma Charan Mookerjea.
fair-faced one, on Chandrasekhara in Bengal for the
good of men." The sanctity of the shrines of Sitakund is a favourite theme with the writers of the
Puranas and Tantras, and passages bearing on the
subject need not be multiplied. The shrines attract
pilgrims from all parts of Bengal, Behar, and Orissa,
as also from the North-Western Provinces. The Siva-
Chaturdasi festival, according to Dr. Hunter,* is at-
tended by ten to twenty thousand pilgrims. The mi-
nor gatherings, at the eclipses of the sun and moon,
and at like occasions, number from two to four thou-
sand devotees.

The leading works which treat of these shrines are (1) Devi purana, (2) Varahi Tantra, (3) Chinna-
mastā Tantra. Passing mention of them may also be
found in the following works: Adi purana, Linga
Purana, A’di Brahma Purana, Churāmani Tantra,
Yogini Tantra, Vāyu Purana, Bhavishya Purana,
Tantrasāra, and Kālmāhātmya. A passage “श्रुत्वाः
यदुदास्यायनमिश्रणपल्लिते” is generally referred to the Amara-
kosha. In Colebrooke’s excellent edition of the Dic-
tionary, I searched for the passage in vain, but
have succeeded in tracing it to the Mahālingesvara
Tantra in the prayer of a hundred names addressed
to Siva. The exact age, in which the aforesaid
Tantras and Puranas were written, cannot be ascer-
tained. According to Dr. Monier Williams, “if the
oldest known Purana is not older than the sixth or

* Vide Hunter’s Statistical Account of Chittagong, p. 232.
seventh century, an earlier date can scarcely be attributed to the oldest known Tantra."* There is no mention of Chittagong, or of the shrines of Sitakund, either in the Rāmāyana, or in the Mahābhārata. According to Dr. Hunter,† there is mention in the latter epic of Trilochana, a powerful king of Tipperah, who is supposed to have been contemporary with Yudhishthira; but I have failed to trace it, though I came across two passages which speak of the conquest of that kingdom by Sahadeva and Karṇa.‡ We also know that the early kings of Tipperah were staunch Sivaites, and that a portion of the expenses of the Sitakund shrines is still defrayed by the Tipperah Raj.§ Dr. Hunter|| has also informed us, that "in 1512 the Tipperah General conquered Chittagong." But when these shrines, now so cele-

---

* Dr. Monier Williams’s Indian Wisdom, page 504.
† Hunter’s Statistical Account of Hill Tipperah, page 464.
‡ चिपुरां खब्रि्से कब्ला राजान्तस्मितिज्ञसम्।
   निजपात्म सचायकाधस पौरबेल्लम्॥ ५ ॥
   दति सभापर्शविषि दिग्विजयपर्षविषि सचदेवदिग्विजिे
   एकदेशमार्शमायः।

मोर्चन पत्तनश्रीवेचिपुरां कौशलां तथा।
एतान्त रघुविनितिकं करसदाय खवेन।॥ ५ ॥
द्रविष्णां दिस्मान्नमधकं कर्णं जिला सचारायाम्।
बधकायं दारिष्णायें धेर्धकाम्र मुृतस:॥ १० ॥
रत्नःरणके पवेशं लोहाबःचारपवेशं कर्णंदिग्विजिे
   विपधाशदक्षसिद्धमार्शमायः।

§ Baboo Kailas Chandia Sinha’s Chronicles of Tipperah, p. 5.
brated, were first established, has not yet been determined. It is remarkable that they were not visited by Hwen Thsang, the Chinese traveller, nor even by the great Chaitanya who is known to have made a pilgrimage to all the known shrines of his time. There can, however, be no doubt as to their recent establishment. Most of the shrines are supposed to have become endowed with morit, only in the Kali Yuga. Among the springs mentioned by Captain Pogson in 1831, is Chandur or Chandra Kund, "said to have appeared within the last four months."* In a list of objects of antiquarian interest issued by the Government of Bengal, it is said that the temple of Sambhunath was built about 450 years ago, and that of Bárabakunda about 400 years ago, but on what evidence I cannot say.†

Sitakund (Spring of Sita) derives its name from a spring consecrated to Sita, the deified heroine of the Rámayana. The spring, however, is no longer in existence. A tradition prevails, that there was at one time a dispute between the followers of Vishnu and Siva about the possession of the spring, and that the dispute was referred for arbitration to one Kali Charan Roy, a zemindar and dewan in the

* Captain Pogson’s Narrative during a Tour to Chategaon, p. 204.
† A List of the Objects of Antiquarian Interest in the Lower Provinces of Bengal compiled at the Bengal Secretariat under the orders of the Government of India, 1879.
local Collectorate,* who, it is said, caused the spring
to be filled up to terminate the difference. According to another account, the destruction of the spring
was effected by the then Mohunta of Sitakund. The present Mohunta informed me that he had
made several attempts to restore the sacred place,
but that, though he had dug deep all around the
site indicated by the sacred books, he could find
no trace of the spring. His belief was, that there
had been at the place no such spring as is described
in the sacred books, and he told me as a reason for
this belief, that the place in question was found
devoid of all trace of bitumen which was found by
him in the adjacent hot springs.†

* Kali Charan Roy was dewan of the Chittagong Collectorate
from 1785 to 1790. He was one of the farmers with whom Mr. God-
win concluded the Settlement in 1774. On the 5th January, 1786, Mr.
Crofts, who at that time was Collector of Chittagong, sold his right,
title, and interest in the island of Moiscal, for Rs. 40,000 to Kali
Charan Roy. The latter was succeeded in the property by his widow
Probhabaty, who did not die till 1826. She had no children of her
own, but adopted one Chundy Churn, who died in 1820, leaving a
son, Shorut Chunder. Shorut being a minor, the estate came, on
Probhabaty’s death, under the Court of Wards. Shorut Chunder
died recently, and the present zamindar is his son, Kollash Chun-
der. Vide Mr. Cotton’s Memorandum on the Revenue History of
Chittagong, pages 165-6, and page 223.

† When this paper was read before the Asiatic Society of Bengal,
Mr. V. Ball remarked that though it may be true that there never
was a hot spring in the locality mentioned, the absence of any trace
of bitumen was no proof of its non-existence. Vide Proceedings of
the Asiatic Society of Bengal for March, 1881, page 51.
Captain Pogson described Sitakund* as "of pure limpid water," though Barabakunda is the only spring he actually visited. He, however, subsequently obtained information of the other springs, and sent a careful person to bring a description and some bottles of water from each. The following account quoted by Captain Pogson from a Gazetteer is noteworthy:† "About twenty miles to the north of Islamabad is a remarkable hot well (named Seetacoond), the surface of which may be inflamed by the application of fire. Like all other remarkable phenomena of nature, it is esteemed sacred by the Hindoos, as is likewise another hot spring near to Monghir." As will presently be seen, the spring of Sitakund is described in the Devipurana as hot-watered and igneous, which agrees with the above extract from the Gazetteer. But as Sitakund is also the name of the outpost containing all the groups of springs and shrines at the locality, I think it is unsafe to conclude, that the specific spring Sitakund existed at the time when the passages above referred to were written.‡

* Captain Pogson's Narrative during a Tour to Chategoan, p 204.
† Ibid, page 99.
‡ The popular belief is, that the spring of Sitakund is still in existence. In his clever novel, called Chandramath after the god on the Chandrasekhara hill, the second edition of which appeared last year, Baboo Khettra Pal Chakravarti makes the hero visit Sitakund (p. 203) in 1286 B. S., that is, about 25 years ago. All old persons, however, who have visited the place, agree in saying that the spring has not been in existence for a much longer time. Bababa-
spring existed in 1831, at the time when Captain Pogson wrote his Narrative, it must have been destroyed in recent times. But the destruction of a spring, held in such an esteem by the Hindoos, would not have failed to attract the notice of the authorities. I am not aware of any official report regarding the destruction of the spring.

The following account is given in the Devipurana* of the shrine, and of its destruction:

40-41.—The Rishis said: We have heard before of Sitakund, situate on the mount of Chandrasekhara, a spring known throughout India, which is the purifier of the three worlds. If thou hast any kindness for us, O sun of knowledge, do thou tell us of it, and thereby dispel our ignorance; for about this people ask of us.

42-3.—The Suta replied: For the performance of kunda, and not Sitakund, is about 20 miles to the north of Chittagong.

* ख्रष्ण जन्: |
कीर्त्याकालदासुषं रूपं पूर्वं चित्तलोचनानामय: |
चन्द्रसेषरमयधु: भारताष्टाष्टमय: || ॥ ॥

div ेरेख रापा नाय तदद ज्ञानान्मीर |
अक्षाकल्मान्नम् चर लोके हृद्धा यदीहरः || ॥ ॥

d सत स्वाधी |
कीर्त्यायानविधानारेँ कीर्त्यानासु पावनाय वे: |
सचाचुङ्ख मक्षामं तस्मु कुशलानु विनिसिद्धिदम् || ॥ ॥
साक्षात्तृत्तिविसिद्धम् निग्रहर्योदूरोऽद्विजः: |
अत्सपशावितं दीमि: स्वाधीनस्यरितिम् || ॥ ॥
Sita’s ablution, O twice-born ones, and for the purification of men, was made that spring, the most secret and beautiful, volcanic, deep, hot-watered, surrounded by trees as by an umbrella, forming one continuous grove.

44.—In that lake bathed Sita, born of the Earth, with her husband and brother-in-law, and devoutly offered oblations to her favourite deity.

45.—There also bathed the lions among the twice-born, as also the chiefs of sages and Munis, who have attained perfection, dwelling to the north of it.

46.—What account shall I give of this spring, the most sanctifying of all? I shall only recount its merits: listen to me, O most excellent of the twice-born.

47.—When Rama, debarred from accession to his father’s throne, had gone to the hermitage of Sarabhanga, he went, in accordance with his direction, to a city lying towards the north-east.

रष शीत श्रीविजया शामिलि देवरेण्य वै।
शामा तव चरे देवभिर्मुं चन्द्यये यथा: || 88 ||
शांच चन्द्रः दिजबाग्रः मुनित्यन्तराकाशः।
विशा सङ्खयः चतुर्भर्म निवासिनः || 89 ||
किं बल्येः कुष्ठिकर्म सत्त्वपुष्पविधाशकम्।
वच्चासिष्य तस्मा मात्रास्मा श्रुण्येः दिजमुः।|| 90 ||
राज्यसार्वेऽत्त्व रामः महामोक्षवस्य यथे।
तदुपदेशं चलव तु पूर्वत्तरपुर्विचारतु।|| 90 ||
48.9.—In that city he saw a revered sage, versed in the knowledge of Tirthas, a veritable ocean of knowledge, long-armed, clad in yellow garments, and with matted hair. As soon as he saw him, he reverently saluted him with a meek heart, and enquired of him, "Why dost thou, O Lord, live here alone, besmeared with ashes?"

50.51.—That sage, whose whole body was besmeared with ashes, then opening his eyes, saw Rama, the holy, the eternal, the best of men, accompanied by Sita and Lakshmana, and thus addressed him:

52.—"I have heard that thou hast taken thy birth in the line of kings, only for our liberation from the dire bonds of the world.

53.4.—"How great is thy fortune, who art followed

पश्चिमोत्तर मन्दिरालं ज्वालामुखिश्चारिणम्
पीतवल्क्षपरिधाने तीर्थंज्ञे श्मशानगमस् प्रवेशं
हस्ता नल च प्रत्यक्षम ब्रह्मा विनयसङ्गठणः
कथमाच द्वितीयेन देवसत्ताति विष्णुपतमानम्
२५॥
तत्तथाचुरुवस्वरूपी देवठार रामवल्क्षमानम्
आज्ञकालवशापन्न यथिविक्षेपितसमानम्
५.०॥
स्वेच्छात च प्रतिष्ठानं मुलयिस्थितिधरम्
नुरं राजन्यमर्मे तु जन्मावसप्रविष्टितम्
५.१॥
स्वाभावान् पविचकार्ये धारणं सार्वभूतिनाम्
भावज्ञानं सत्त्वं कुलश्रृंगा विलक्षे जनम प्रकाशितम्
५.२॥
हरे वीर्याण्विनिविशिष्टि जनमं प्रविष्टितानि
हुरं राज्यमा नृत्याक्षों स्वरूपग्राहिणि
५.३॥
सुभाषिकानि कं मक्खी तस्म भार्ये प्रविष्टितानि
चंदुरंगाचरे तीरं भारताख्यासमन्विते
५.४॥
by this Sita, born of the Earth, with her hair unbound, the dispenser of salvation, worshipped even by Siva.

55.—"On the north side of the Indian Sea, there is a spring bearing her name, well known throughout India, which is the purifier of the three worlds. Know her not merely as thy wife. Verily she is Yoganidrā herself.

56.—"Deeds unaccomplishable by thee can easily be achieved by her; she is destined by the Fates to humiliate thy pride (to eclipse thy glory).

57-60.—"It is through my good fortune alone, O Rama, that thou hast come here with her. On the mount of Chandrashekharā, southwest of this country, was built by Siva, a spring of her name. Behold that spring, Sitakund, glowing with fire, situate on the west of Sambhunath, south of the Vayu hills, north of
Nábhigangá, west of the Phalgu, below Jyotirmaya. That Sita is thy cheering consort."

61-3.—Thus speaking, the excellent sage fixed his eyes on them. Greatly wondering, Rama passed the night there with his wife and brother, and at dawn visited Chandrasekhara in the company of the well-wishing Muni who, on arriving there, went into the spring, and facing the sun chanted the two-lettered mantra.

64-66.—Then, leaving Rama at the place, there stepped into the spring Sita, the primitive energy, the revealer of the seat of Brahma, adored by Ananta and other gods, blue as a cloud, ever complacent, three-eyed, red-lipped and fair-haired, her form glowing with fire, adorned with eight hands, and surround- ed with banner and chámará (yak-tail).

\[
\text{रत्नुक्षा तं मुनिवरः परस्यर्वं विलेकङ्गेत्।}
\text{विव्रिा रजनीमेका रामचन्द्रे।क्षितिविश्रृः।} \| ६१ \|
\text{प्रभातायानु मर्दिवायु भाटुजायासमिति।} \|
\text{यथौ चीचन्द्रेशंखरं मुनिना परमेष्टिना।} \| ६२ \|
\text{गळाम सुमिनरसच कुण्डमेये ववखित।} \|
\text{कुर्यामिश्रमास्माय अपनंसर्वं झुचरसं।} \| ६३ \|
\text{रामं विद्याय घा चीता कुण्डमेये ववखित।} \|
\text{नीक्षाजीमृतस्माय सुमजाधपरिचिदिता।} \| ६४ \|
\text{केसारजिब्बी देवी ऋषभाधरसंज्ञि।} \|
\text{कीर्षनवर्षुक्षमं भज्जायासर्वं।} \| ६५ \|
\text{अवन्दियदिढिराधाय अर्ज्जनीशक्तिमका।} \| ६६ \|
\text{अहिदिश्यं दुस्पच्छा सवायालेक्षणी।} \| ६७ \|
\]
67.—Standing on the margin, Rama saw Sita immersed in the spring. Believing the spring to have destroyed her, dear to him as life, he addressed these words to the Munji:

68-9.—“This spring shall remain in existence for the first four thousand years of the Kali age, and shall after that time vanish from the sight of man. Whoever out of devotion will drink the water, shall obtain the same fruit as may be got by immersion, and shall not live any longer upon earth.”

70-71.—Saying this, the foe of Rāvana went to the Mani hill. Having viewed the linga and bathed in the Lavanākhya, he gratified the sage with humble and respectful words, and then returned to Chandra-sekhara.

"नठखो राजयं प्रशहस्त्रिती विषुवऽ विषुवऽ विषुवऽ कुष्ट्वियाणातः॥
सम प्राणन्तः कुष्ट्वित्रि विषुवऽ रघुवऽश्रुण्यः॥ ६७॥
सम्प्राणो च सुनिवर्लिदं कथनमलख्वीतः॥
कलीचतुष्ठ: सत्यक्षीति वर्त्त्वाणि खचनायतमः॥ ६८॥
खिंगन्तु कुष्ट्वि गुप्तसाहीतं मानवाण्डेन्तं भवेतु॥
भस्तिः हला ताघोताया: तथा कवित्वा जस्से पिर्वैः॥ ६४॥
कुष्ट्वित्रि सुषमापत्तं प्राण्य न पुनर्वैति पूवमः॥
दत्तुकाहीरावणार्सिद्धिप्रदेयसम्भविः॥ ६५॥
गला हद्दुः सालक्षिकः लक्षणाम्बो निष्णायणौ॥
प्राणय चन्द्रशेखरं प्रसादो सुनिवातरः॥ ६५॥
प्रभाष्य कुष्ट्वित्रि रासायपि विषुवऽ विषुवऽ॥ ६६॥
72.—Then Rama, delighted, started with Sita and his brother, for the banks of the Godāvari.

According to the above account, Rama, having visited the hermitage of Sarabhanga, by his direction turned towards a north-eastern city, where another sage informed him, that on the south-west of that city, there was a sacred spring of the name of his consort Sita (Sitakund), who, he was informed to his surprise, was no other than Yoganidra herself. Rama is then said to have visited this spring in the company of his wife and brother and the learned sage. Finding Sita immersed in the spring, whither she had gone to bathe without his knowledge, Rama thought she had been drowned, and cursed the spring as the destroyer of the princess. According to the malediction which, be it observed, is not to have immediate effect, the spring would cease to be visible to human eyes, at the end of four thousand years of the fourth age. The Chinnamastā Tantra is, however, ready with another explanation of the origin of the shrine and of its disappearance.* It

शीतानाभिषेक कुष्ठ पातालं कुष्ठमुम्बम्॥
शीतापरीक्षार्थाय समुद्गोऽर्जति च ॥
तत्: भ्राप्ति श्रीता परीक्षार्थार्थिनिः॥

* शीतानाभिषेक कुष्ठ पातालं कुष्ठमुम्बम्॥
शीतापरीक्षार्थाय समुद्गोऽर्जति च ॥
तत्: भ्राप्ति श्रीता परीक्षार्थार्थिनिः॥
relates that the spring was the scene of the ordeal by fire of Sita, that it was excavated by the hand of the great Hanummat, and that it was cursed by Sita herself as the site of her sufferings. The explanation itself is, however, less important than the manner of its narration. Sita is not described there merely as Yoganidrā herself, or the Primeval Sakti or Energy, and Rama the divine hero who would curb the pride of the Rakshasas. They are the veritable Supreme Duaḍ, the spiritual guides of Siva and his consort who came over to the shrine to offer their oblations. The spiritual guide, according to Hindoo ideas, it is well known, is the embodiment of the Deity itself on earth. The recognition accordingly of Rama and Sita as the spiritual guides of Siva and his consort is significant. A tradition has been mentioned above, which attributes the filling up of the spring to a dispute between the Sivaites and Vishnuvites. It would therefore seem, that this second legend was probably written at a period of Vishnuvite supremacy.
However it may have been, apart from the contradictory nature of the two accounts which in itself furnishes a strong argument against their authenticity, both of them—internally incoherent and contradictory as they are—have not the impress of the high authority of Valmiki, the most ancient writer on the life and deeds of Rama, and perhaps the one, who in consequence describes them with the nearest approach to truth. It is true that a few places in the Chittagong Division bear the name of Rama, so that it might apparently seem that the prince had something or other to do with them. There is, for instance, Ramoo, where it is said Rama commenced the Setubandha bridge, but, preferring not to enter by the postern gate the capital of Ravana (to which the bridge would have led him, had he gone that way), he turned round, and constructed a separate bridge at Ramesvara to lead him to the front gate of the metropolis of Ceylon. In the Pāṭāl Puri (lit. the nether world), in a cavern in the hill of Chandranath to which reference will presently be made, a huge stone is pointed out as the cooking utensil of Sita. Similarly, a place or two in the adjoining districts of Noakhally and the Hill Tracts, may be mentioned as bearing the name of Rama and his wife. This reason, however, does not commend itself as very conclusive. For it is a fact that may be well established by numerous instances, that the Brahmins took delight in associating shrines
with renowned names in their religious history, in order to ensure and enhance their sanctity.* Regarding Rama alone, thus we read of the Doobrajapore rocks far off in the district of Beerbhoom, consisting of stones that fell off from his aerial chariot on his return from the Himalayas, when he had gone up there to fetch stones for the construction of his bridge to Ceylon. Adjacent places are shown, as where his wife Sita sat and bathed. A boulder in the neighbourhood is also pointed out, as having been caused by Ravana's attending a call of nature.† In the same way, Rama's advent is also claimed for the province of Orissa, (wrongly identifying it with Kishkindhyā mentioned in the Ramayana), where the Rajah of Cuttack up to this time wears a tail in all public receptions, more as a testimony to his descent from the monkey allies of the great hero, than by way of vindication of Mr. Darwin's theory. There are

* "The hot springs of India have attracted the notice of many observers. In the majority of instances these remarkable outbursts of water, at a temperature considerably above that of the waters, or even of the atmosphere in the neighbourhood, often charged with various gases and emitting strong colours, have been endowed by the superstitions and ignorant with wondrous virtues, or have been supposed to be the result of some miraculous interposition of divine energy." Dr Oldham on the Thermal Springs of India, page 1, Part II, Vol. XIX Memons of the Geological Survey of India.

† A List of the Objects of Antiquarian Interest in the Lower Provinces of Bengal, compiled at the Bengal Secretariat under the orders of the Government of India, pages 4-6.
several places bearing the name of King Bālí, the brother of Sugrīva, who was treacherously killed by Rama; Bālikāti, a river; Bālikānta, also a river; Bālisahi, a village. There is also a festival called Bāli Játrā. The Sabdakalpadruma also mentions a hill at the place called Kishkindhya.* Against this identification—plausible as it is—is the unfortunate situation of the river Pampá (in Mysore) which Rama is said to have visited, before entering Kishkindhyá the kingdom of the monkeys which, it would seem, coincided nearly with the present kingdom of Mysore.

It is not improbable, therefore, that the above legends of Sitakund are another of those religio-historical forgeries so common all over India. Certain it is, that Rama's journey southwards was made through the middle of the Deccan and not through Orissa and the Coasts, much less through Chittagong and Sitakund; the following being the most important places in the hero's itinerary as described by Valmiki: the Tamasá, the Vedasruti, the Gomati, the Ganges, Batsyadesa; Prayága, Chitrakuta, the Mandákini, Dandaka, the Godavari, Krauncha, the Pampa, Rushyamuka, Kishkindhya, and Ceylon. There is absolutely no mention, in the great epic of Valmiki, of Rama having gone so far north-eastward as Chittagong, after having visited the hermitage of Sarabhangá.

* किकील्न्या पुं खेमुढैश्वयम्भेतिविषेषः | Sabdakalpadruma, p. 679, Vol. I.
The narrative of this visit is contained in Canto V of Book III. When Rama was about to enter the hermitage of this sage, he saw with the Rishi, Indra the Dreaded Thunderer, in all the paraphernalia of his high office, who disappeared on Rama's nearer approach. Replying to Rama's question, the Muni said that the lord of heaven had been to his hermitage to escort him to heaven, but that the Muni could not comply with his request and leave the earth, before seeing Rama, to whom he offered all the merits of his long penance so that the prince by virtue of them might ascend to heaven. Rama, of course, declined the gift, and requested the sage to point out a meet place for his home. The following is his reply:

"Sutikshna's woodland home is near,
A glorious saint of life austere,
True to the path of duty; he
With highest bliss will prosper thee.
Against the stream thy course must be
Of this fair brook Mandakiní,
Whereon light rafts like blossoms glide;
Then to his cottage turn aside.
There lies thy path, but, ere thou go,
Look on me, dear one, till I throw
Aside this mould that girds me in
As cast the snake his withered skin."

On the sage giving up the ghost, the holy men who dwelt around flocked to Rama, and solicited his protection against the Rakshasas, which he readily granted. We now come to the Seventh Canto in which Rama is then made to visit this hermitage of Sutikshna. After the exchange of proper greeting, Rama said:

"But now O saint, I pray thee tell
Where I within this wood may dwell,
For I by Sarabhanga old
The son of Gotama, was told
That thou in every lore art wise
And seest all with thy loving eyes."*

In reply to this, the sage begged Rama to take up his abode at his hermitage. Rama passed the night there. On the following morning he asked leave of the sage, and prayed for his permission to explore the Dandaka. The sage answered as follows:

"Go with thy brother, Rama, go,
Pursue thy path untouched by woe:
Go with thy faithful Sita, she
Still like a shadow follows thee.
Roam Dandak wood observing well
The pleasant homes where hermits dwell,
Pure saints whose ordered souls adhere
To penance rites and vows austere."†

Thus it is clear, that there is no mention whatever in the Ramayana, of Rama having passed through Chittagong on his way downwards to the Deccan. The geographical position itself of Chittagong and of the Godavari (to the banks of which Rama in the above legend is said to have bent his way on leaving Chittagong), renders it quite improbable. The attribution of the ordeal by fire of Sita to a hotspring is not a new idea. * The Sitakund of Monghyr is similarly credited with being the scene of the same ordeal, which, it is scarcely necessary to say, really took place at Ceylon, if the father of Aryan poetry is to be believed. The principle of human nature which led to this religious fabrication, is not, however, inexplicable. "I think it is in Macedon," reasoned Fluellen, † "where Alexander is born. I tell you captain,—if you look in the maps of the world, I warrant, you shall find in the comparisons between Macedon and Monmouth, that the situations, look you, is noth like. There is a river in Macedon; and there is also moreover a river at Monmouth;"

* In p. 209, Part I, Vol. XVII of the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, General Cunningham mentions a spring called Sitakund in Kelat, which is nine miles from Dwara, and five from Monali. In Mr. Duncan's account of the Travels in Ceylon, of a Fakooor named Prann Poory (p. 89, Vol. V of the Asiatic Researches), it is stated that "our traveller states that leaving this tank, he proceeded on to a station called Seetakund, where Rama placed his wife Seeta on the occasion of his war with her ravisher Ravan."

† Shakespearo, King Henry V, Act IV, Scene VII.
it is called Wye at Monmouth; put it is out of my prains, what is the name of the other river; put it is all one, 'tis alike as my fingers is to my fingers, and there is salmons in both."

It is not a little remarkable, that Sitakund, the name of a spring which, no matter whether it exist-ed or not, now exists no longer, should (lucus a non lucendo) give its name to the outpost, and surpass the surrounding shrines in fame. Perhaps during a period of temporary Vishnuvite supremacy, it may have been indiscriminately used for, and may have eventually supplanted, *Panchakrośa* which, according to the sacred books, contain all the holy shrines of the place. Like the *Panchakrośī* of Benares, it stretches over 5 krosses (or 10 miles) round the village of Sitakund, being bounded* on the east by the Mandakini, on the west by Vyasakunda, on the south by Bārabakunda and on the north, by the Champaka Forest. "This land called Panchakrośa," said Vishnu,† "is the cause of the holy Nirvana. Many a

* पश्चिमे वाःसुकुष्णा पूर्वः संदाकिनी छला।
उत्तरे घन्त्याकाशों दृश्येण बानुवारंगः।
नतः बेचे मया मृत्युं पश्चिमोऽभ पञ्चक्रोऽः।
इति वाराणीवत्ते वाराणीवत्ते वस्तूपानं च भन्नेकरः।
वर्षना नाम पत्रः पत्रः।

† पश्चिमशिरः प्राङ्ख शिवनिवाग्नाकारण।
नतः वाराणारे सत्ता कुष्ठायमानम् स्वते।
हुःश्राविनि प्रयाले मम प्रातिकारिणि च।

*Ibíd.*
spring is contained in it, most sacred and delightful to me." By far the most frequented of these shrines are Vyásakunda, Bárabakunda, Lavanákhya, and the temples of Chandranath and Sambhunath.

The following account is given in the Devipurana* of the origin of the shrines of Chandranath and of Vyásakunda.

26-27.—"Do thou tell us, O chief of the Brahmīns," said the Rishis, "why Siva, forsaking Kasi and Kailas, resides here in secrecy? Why he said, 'I shall dwell on the mount of Chandrasekhara in the Kali Yuga,' and why thy preceptor remains there, abandoning all else?"

28-29.—"In days of yore," the Suta replied, "seeing the three worlds animate and inanimate, pervaded by the sea of curd, and immersed in the waters of causation, the three-eyed lordly spirit created Brahmá and Vishnu for the purposes of creation.

* कहय भाषः।

बद्व विप्रेर्न्द्र तथ्यते कथ गूढ़लभागतः।

विचार कार्तिकै कैलाश कस्मात श्रीचन्द्रभूमिः। ४५।।

कस्मौ तिर्थाति द्वापेश्वर स्वयमेश्वरे नामे।

कथनो गुप्तमिथ्य चालोक्याय एकं स्वयम्। ४६।।

छुट जनाच।

पुरा दत्तिक्षलेन याप विशुय भर।

कारकश्चिति मद्य भलामेव सचराचरम्। ५५।।

हेतु तथा विद्य घरं भववान् भूतभावन।

वर्जितो भवविश्व च घरथे चालकः षडव्यः। ५५।।
30-31.—“Thus created, they, infatuated with vanity, considered themselves supreme, and genitor even of the womb from which they themselves had sprung. Even in his very presence they spoke slightly of him. Then the god, disappearing, became an image of light.

32-35.—“From the sky he then addressed the ignorant gods thus: ‘O lotus-born, of the thirteen lingas planted in Kāśi and other places, I have spoken to you of twelve. Only one I have concealed from thee. During the Kali Yuga, O lotus-born, I shall dwell there with Pārvatī. There is no doubt of this. Do thou follow us thither with the never-dying gods.’ Thus saying, Siva with Umā vanished from their sight, and went to that place.

भूला तौ तस्म नित्य विचित्रप्रस्तारिण विमोचितो।
हतमनीं खम्बधेश खम्बतीरी तौ बसूरुधः। ॥ २० ॥
अयायनीं तस्म प्रमुखे ततः शेषपि न दह्येते।
खम्बधेशिबा तदा शेषपि भोमितिवेष्ठी तदाभवत्। ॥ २१ ॥
खम्बधेशनी तत् तौ च तवाच मगनिस्त। ॥
शेष शेष च खम्बनियु सजिदं खम्बित पता। ॥ २२ ॥
चायादशविभागे काश्यादियु च पद्मा।
हादृशं काविर्त तुम्भं खम्बनेकं ज्ञाग्यं च। ॥ २३ ॥
कल्य निहासित काविल यात्र यात्र संग्रहः।
बूंदं गज्वनं तेष्वनं गमिष्योऽनु तत्च च। ॥ २४ ॥
गमिष्यशं तत: पचादसरेखङ्ग पद्मा।
हस्यकावितिवेष्तं: शुभं सात्वागाद उसया स्वच च। ॥ २५ ॥
36-37.—Even now the linga may be seen there, called Haragauri. The sinless place remained very secret in the first three ages. For the weal of men, the bull-drawn god dwells in the Kali Yuga in that sacred place with the never-dying ones.”

Having thus premised the presence in the sacred place, of Siva and his consort, of Brahmá, Vishnu, and other gods, the story then runs as follows:

38.—Once on a time Vyasa, the son of Parás'ara, the subduer of his passions, began to practise asceticism in the company of the wise residents of Kasi (Benares), full of beatitude, knowing the Supreme Spirit, and wearing matted hair.

39-42.—Seeing him the son of Matsyagandhá, of unknown lineage, caste, and character, seated with
themselves on the same seat, and dwelling in the 
same holy place, although he was very wise, the 
ornament of the sages, like unto Vishnu himself, the 
ire of the holy dwellers was roused against Vyasa.

43-44.—Full of jealousy, Bhrigu addressed to him 
the following words: "Who art thou? Whence dost 
thou come? Whose son and of what family art 
thou? Where didst thou formerly dwell? Speak 
the truth."

45-46.—Vyasa replied: "I am the son of Parasa-
ra by Matsyagandhá. I have come here to see you, 
and to worship the god Visvanath. I would dwell 
with you, O sages of good actions. Let a seat 
amongst you be granted to me."

47-48.—While he was thus speaking, Vyasa was 
interrupted by Bhrigu with these angry and unseemly 
words: "Hear, O ye Munis, the account of his
birth, and thou too, the son of Matsyagandhá, the
disgrace of thy family, listen to my words.

49-53.—“While thy mother, begotten of a fish and
with a fishy smell, was a ferry-woman in the
Jumna, Parasara one day came to the bank of the
river and entered her boat. To the Muni’s sight
she immediately appeared to be endowed with beauty
and grace, breathing perfume, a soul-ravishing maid
of sixteen. Seeing her, the Muni became full of
desire. Thou art the offspring of this union, and
art neither a Kunda, nor a Golaka. How canst
thou presume to practise asceticism with us? Go
to thy own proper place. Thou shouldst not tarry
here for a moment.”

54-56.—Hearing these insulting words, Vyasa, the
son of Satyavati and Parasara, being irate, thought
of sacrificing himself to Siva (thus making Siva

शदा ने ज्ञानी चाचियों वह श्रावणी च चार्चियों।
भीमाः भाविक निवलीत तरवाहिकों नृती। || ५५ ||
देवाः पराशरस्वत चागल युक्तकोट।
श्रावणी तरवाहिकों तस्मातुः सुनि देवगत: चवाहः || ५५ ||
धुर्गाः धुर्गाः नागी वात्स्तिन्यं नारायणोऽस्माः।
धुर्गाः धुर्गाः पशुपतिश्वरस्वरुपाः || ५१ ||
हत्रा नां सह कामायी रतिस्तिन्यं: कहनकाः।
तवोद्वेषस्वेति ह: प्रातं: न कुष्ठ: न च गोलकः || ५१ ||
श्रावणीौः तप: कर्त्तृस्व मनोत्सिन्य कष्टमन: च।
गनायकं तत्र लक्ष्मीं न सैः कष्टसम् च || ५५ ||
शुका पराशरस्वती वचनादात्मनिन्दकम्।
बर्धं मश्वाय दास्याः सेवीदामस्व विभाया च || ५५ ||
guilty of his death), and said, “O vile and false Siva, holder of the trident, blue-throated, and hide-
ermented, why dost thou appear Asiva or in-
auspicious to me? Why dost thou harass me so
often? This very day I will leave this place.”

57.—When he the subduer of his passions was so
minded, the bull-drawn and blue-throated god
made himself manifest to him the chief of the wise
men, and spoke as follows:

58-60.—“Certes thou art a portion of mine, O sub-
duer of thy passions, and learned in the cause of
things. There is a seat of mine on Mount Chandra-
sekhara, very secret, and unattainable even by the
gods. There in Chandrasekhara I will always reside
in the Kali Yuga with Uma.
61-68.—“Know, O Sage, that Chandrasekhara surpasses all other sacred places. It is covered on all sides with branches of trees, which protect it from the sun and rain. The kokilas sing there with sweet voice. In the recesses of the forest dwell the sages, their looks probing the Inmost Cause of the universe; Brahmá and other gods bathe there day and night; and in the hermitages dwell the Rishis, Yakshas, Gandharvas, and Bhairavas. In that forest are trees with flowers and fruits of the six seasons. The forest itself is in one place very deep and secret, and in another place rocky, like the moon half-eclipsed. On the south-west of the forest, O subduer of thy passions, is the Sindhu (the Ocean), the King of all tirthas, to whose embrace the sacred
Ganga offers herself, led by Bhagiratha. As the Himalaya is dear to me, so is Chandrasekhara. There shall I, O Muni, dwell with the gods.”

Thus instructing Vyasa, the god then made himself manifest to him in his own proper form which is described at length in the text.

74-78.—“In his own form, O Munis, he then said to Vyasa: “Go there, O most excellent of sages, subduer of thy passions, where I shall dwell with Uma. Thou shalt attain all thy desires; have no doubt about thy success. That seat of mine is the giver of health and wealth, and after death, of salvation. There also dwells the rice-giving Annapurna, delighting in rice and nectar. In this seat of perfection shall I dwell, the lord of Parvati.” Saying this to the Muni, the god disappeared.
79-81.—As Náradá had ascended the Srisaila hill, even so went Vyasa, the son of Satyavati, to Chandra sekha, hearing these words of Siva. There he began to practise asceticism, his mind always concentrated in meditation, repeating the five-lettered mantra, sometimes covered with snow, sometimes near a fire, sometimes fasting altogether, absorbed in Pránayáma, all his thoughts devoted to the meditation on god.

82.—Pleased at seeing him so devoted, the Self-created then appeared to him. "Ask for a boon," he said, "O subduer of thy passions."

83-85.—Having heard this, Vyasa then replied with folded hands—"When the Munis residing at Kasi spoke scornfully to me, it was by thy command O Lord, that I came here. Dwell thou here, as was thy command while in Kasi. This is the dear boon that I ask of thee."

ततः सतेवतीत्स्नः शुला वाक्यं चरर्क्यं तुः
यथि श्रीश्रीमेष्वरेऽश्रीमाये नारदे यथा || ७५ ||
गुर्जः तपः गसारेभं चतुर्व च अन्नातुः
विश्वास्ततः ब्राह्मणस्मिष्टे || ७६ ||
विशारदः कदा चेते तद्वाक्ष्वमाणवः
प्राणायाममतः चाचित्त पश्चिचरमाः जापनः || ७७ ||
हत्तर्त तपेरत्तश्चैव सदन्धोद्दवसागः
भुजः प्रयासवदत चरं म्या परक्यम || ७८ ||
ततः शुला भगवान् व्यासः कतादिलिप्तोदवीता
गर्भितः से चतुः तृः सुनिभिः कामिवाहिभिः || ७९ ||
सदापदेश्यासः मण्यमार्तिके सत्या पिपोभ || ८० ||
सत्यापदेश्यासः मण्यमार्तिके सत्या विभो || ८१ ||
करतः पदोपदेशं से कामिवाहिम सत्याश्नः || ८२ ||
86-87.—"Do thou, O sage," the god answered, "remain on the mount Chandrasekhara near the ocean, as the guardian deity of this holy place, and make thyself the saviour of the three worlds by planting over it all the tirthas, such as Gaya and others, that exist on the face of the earth. May all thy desires be successful."

88-89.—With these words, the god, while yet in the presence of Vyasa, pierced the earth with his trident. Then there arose a spring full of water, with igneous brilliance in the interior, and covered with smoke.

90-93.—Delighted at this sight, Vyasa assumed the
form of stone, and became absorbed in meditation on its west side. Even now he may be seen there, two-handed, wearing the sacred thread, and clotted hair, clothed in deer-skin, the expositor of virtue and vice, who, churning the ocean of Vedic literature with the rod of his knowledge, for the first time explained the whole universe according to the dictum of the Vedas. Let him purify the world."

Such was the origin of the shrine of Chandranatha and of Vyasakunda. As in the legend of Sitakund the spring is to vanish from human sight at the end of four thousand years of the Kali Yuga, so in this legend also the shrines are to be manifest to human eyes at the commencement of the same Yuga. In both cases, great names in history have been brought forward to father the foundation of the shrines. Rama, it is known, is the deified hero of the Ramayana. Vyasa, according to the late Mr. Sherring,* has two or three temples dedicated to him in Benares; but he is not generally considered to be a deified hero. Nevertheless, no name is so distinguished in the whole field of Indian history as the name of this sage. To him is ascribed the compilation of the Vedas and Puranas. To him is attributed the fatherhood of the fathers of the Kauravas and the Pándavas. It is no wonder, therefore, that the sage should have been made to

* Sherring's Sacred City of the Hindas, p, 118.
play the part that he has been made to play in the foregoing passage. This, however, is not the first time, that he has been credited with the ambition of founding a shrine. The Annadāmangala relates a like attempt on his part. Expelled by Siva from Kaśi (Benares), Vyasa began to practise extremely mortifying austerities, in the hope of raising a shrine that would, in every respect, surpass the Kaśi of Siva. He had well nigh succeeded in his object, when Uma, Siva's consort, one day appeared before him in the guise of an old, deaf, and decrepit woman, and asked him what merit a man would acquire by dying at his tīrtha. Vyasa replied that the man would obtain salvation. But still the old woman pretended not to have heard his answer, and repeated the question again and again. Vexed at this, Vyasa said that the man would become an ass, who died there. Siva's consort, then assuming her own form, said "so be it," and vanished from the place.* The later attempt of Vyasa to found a tīrtha in Chittagong appears to have been more successful. He not only succeeds in conciliating Siva, but also obtains from him the much-desired boon. "Do thou, O sage," the god is made to have said, "remain on

* ডাঙ্কিয়া কাহিলা ক্রোধে কাঢ়ের কুহরে।
গদারী হইবে রূপী এখানে যে মরে।
বুঝিনু বুঝিনু বলি করে ঢাকি কাণ।
তথায় বলিয়া দেবী কীলা অস্থর্য্য।

Annadāmangala, p 158. This legend is based on the Kasikhandā of the Skanda Purāṇa.
the mount Chandrasekhara near the ocean, as the guardian deity of this holy place, and make thyself the saviour of the three worlds by planting over it all the tirthas, such as Gaya and others, that exist on the face of the earth. May all thy desires be successful."

The pilgrim to the shrines of Sitakund generally takes up his quarters at the lodging-houses of the Adhikáris, a class of Brahmans, who send out emissaries called Pándás to almost every district of the Lower Provinces, in order to persuade people to undertake a pilgrimage to these shrines. These Pándás serve as guides to the pilgrims, and, in the shape of remuneration, get from the Adhikaris their passage-money as well as a portion, generally the fourth part, of their eventual gain; for the Adhikaris, besides the rent of the lodging-houses, also receive whatever the pilgrim offers to the gods, clothes, cows, horses, palkis, silver and gold ornaments,—the kar or the visiting cess, which consists of eight annas only under the District Magistrate's orders, being paid to the Mohunta for the maintenance of the shrines. The earnings of the Adhikaris average Rs. 5,000, and sometimes rise to Rs. 10,000. They have now-a-days found competitors in people of other castes, who also have set up lodging-houses of their own. The most opulent Adhikaris are Ramahari Adhikari, Chandrasekhara Adhikari, Gopinath Adhikari, and Akhil Chandra Adhikari. Hinduism is, however, at a discount in Chittagong.
The few Brahmins that may be found there, are certainly not the ornaments of the learned class. Some excellent rules were framed by Mr. Kirkwood, lately Magistrate of Chittagong, for the construction and ventilation of the lodging-houses. These, together with a hospital erected near the local bazar, have served to prevent the spread of disease which, in former days, used to originate and spread around, from the large concourse of people that assembled at the melas. The Adhikaris have now to take out licenses from the Magistrate to lodge pilgrims, which are refused, if their lodging-houses do not conform with the prescribed rules.

Settling himself in one of these lodging-houses, the pilgrim proceeds to bathe in the Vyāskunda referred to above. This is a small tank, 120 x 90 hands, full of mud and shrubs, the water being so impure that one would abhor the touch of it. I was informed that, small as the tank was, it was believed that no one could swim across it, or throw a stone from one side of it to the other. After bathing in the Kunda which, however, does not indicate any signs of being of an igneous nature as related in the legend translated above, the pilgrim makes offerings to the Bata (Ficus Indica) tree, underneath which Vyasa is said to have performed the Asvamedha sacrifice.* This tree
represents the primeval Bata tree, under which the
great Vishnu rested before the creation. It serves as
the veritable “door-keeper” of the god Chandranath,
and is the presiding deity of the plain below.* It is
said never to grow old, and to flower in all seasons
for the worship of the god. The pilgrim throws upon
the tree-deity clods of earth, of which it is said to
be very fond, and circumambulates it. The temple
of Vyasa is pointed out, lying on the margin of the
spring in a very dilapidated state.

Thence the pilgrim proceeds to the temple of
S'ambhunáth, or Swayambhunáth, the Self-created
Lord. As you proceed, the mount Chandrasekhara
appears before you in full majesty. You feel a
presence. No wonder that they said that the gods
resided there. Are the Munis still meditating there
on God, under the tall pine-trees? Are the gods and
nympha memorable no longer themselves on the hillocks? All
the old Hindu associations force themselves on you
despite your Western education. The feeling, how-
ever, fades away, when you come to the site of the
Sítákund mentioned above. According to the Varáhi
Tantra† there are five Kundas at this place called

* संहिता: अतिदृश्य नन्दीश्चाचेतनाय:।
विविधाः कुश देवम: पशुसङ्ग्ठिप्रयः: सदा॥
वर्णांब्रो सच्चाह: रंगचार्यपत्ती॥

† हस्त: यूर्यवाह्या वायुपवेष्टस्विधी।
समीपे विश्वदेवस्क भव्योमेव पार्थिवे॥
Sitákunda, Rámakunda, Lakshmanakunda, Brisha-
kunda and Nábhidkunda. Sitákund, as related above, is no longer in existence. Small holes are, however, pointed out as the other Kundas. Near them, in an old temple are the images of Ráma, Sitá, and Lakshmana. These are stone figures, very awkwardly done, unlike the graceful idols of Calcutta.

Jyotirmaya consists of flickering tongues of volcanic flames in the right side of the ascent to the temple of Sambhunath. The flames, it is said, disappear altogether at the touch of the impious. When we visited Jyotirmaya, we found that it had been completely put out; and it was not till the Mohunta of Sitakund, who was acting as our cicerone, brought another light in contact with it, that the tongues could be lighted again. It is said that the flames move about from place to place, sometimes appearing in the temple of Sambhunath, sometimes in other places, and at times burn a whole forest.

रक्षुकुष्ठान्निविं खानां परमेश्वरायकसु ||
द्विकुष्ठे परं वष्क्ष प्रागोत्तिब्रह्मादिकसु ||
ततः ब्रजाद्वा जुरा निम्नं निगद्विं चानन्दे ||
पानाहासिविता देवी गजः नमः पुष्वतेऽः क्रियः ||
नरानं शर्मणादिशि शर्पापभम् सङ्ख्यते ||
तस्थितरे शिष्यं नाभकुष्ठे सन्धरमसु ||
तस्थितरसस्मुर्जवः (॥) रामकुष्ठे सन्धरमसु ||
ज्ञानवश्य प्रेमाकर्षणां सीतायाः कुष्ठुमासु ||

दूति श्रीवराहोत्तरं श्रीनारायणार्यवेती-
हवाँ चतुर्थं पतंजः ||
The Mohunta told us that, on one occasion when he was coming down from the temple of Chandranath, he was overtaken and scorched by the flames which suddenly appeared in great force, on the way between him and the temple of S'ambhunath. When we visited Chandrasekhara, we found that a considerable portion of the forest on both sides of our way, had been recently burnt down by the fire. Some portion or other of the range of mountains always exhibits traces of the flames. At night, we witnessed an extensive conflagration on a distant hillock. Lord Teignmouth was probably referring to Jyotirmaya, when he wrote the following: "On the side of a hill distant about three miles from the burning well (Barabakunda), there is a spot of ground, of a few feet only in dimensions, from which flashes of fire burst on stamping strongly with the foot. The appearance of this spot resembled that of earth on which a fire had been kindled. I do not recollect whether it was hot to the touch."

The linga S'ambhunath, the self-created lord, is said to form part of the body of the hill. A tradition is told that one of the kings of Tipperah made great endeavours to dig it out from the shrine, in order to carry it over to his capital, but without success. He was directed, it is added, by the god to content himself with the goddess Tripurasundari, whom he accordingly took over to his kingdom.

In the history of Tipperah written by Baboo Kailas Chandra Sinha,* we certainly read of king Kumâra having gone to visit a linga in Syâmalanagar, which the historian considers to be identical with Chittagong. We also read of his grandson king Taksharao, who was a devout worshipper of Siva, but had failed to obtain a son through the influence of the god, having wounded the god in his feet. Offended at this treatment, the god is said to have left Tipperah. But it is also related that king Taksharao then propitiated the irate god with a human sacrifice, and got two sons by his influence. It is not impossible, that this statement may have connexion with the attempt to transplant the linga Sambhunâth; but an old officer belonging to the Chittagong Collectorate informed me, that the belief that the linga formed part of the body of the mount was groundless,—it being a movable stone having artificially imprinted on it in wax the marks of natural lingahood†—and that the temple was purposely kept dark to avoid detection. Mr. Caspersz, the Assistant Magistrate, who was deputed in 1879 to superintend the Siva Chaturdasi mela, proposed

* Baboo Kailas Chandra Sinha's Chronicles of Tipperah, p. 5.
† नानाश्चित्रस्रव्यायेः नानावृषैश्चाविन्दस्य
    षड्यून्मुखू वेशिता सर्बं थोकांभविहृष्टे।
    निर्देशनासंवृत्तस्याः प्रात्यायुक्तस्य
    रूति सिहानामेकरः।

Vide p. 257 of the Prânatoshini.
to the District Magistrate the opening of an aperture in the dome, to serve as a skylight which would prevent people from looking in, as well as give light and air. The well-meant suggestion could not, I believe, be carried out, as it was necessary to avoid what might have been misunderstood as uncalled for interference on the part of Government. The temple of Śambhunāth was erected down below in the plateau of the hill, as the ascent to that of Chandranath is not practicable throughout the year, especially in the rainy season which is somewhat long in that part of the country, owing to its being hilly. It consists of two apartments. In the outer apartment are the Bhairava, Rama, Sita, Lakshmana, Hanumat, Annapurnā and others. The presiding deity is in the inner apartment, and is of course, very superior. "The sight of the face of Kramadīsa (another name of Śambhunāth) saves one from future birth."* The linga is of a cylindrical form, about four inches in diameter, and rising about five inches from a cone, the base of which has been walled around.

In the court-yard of the main temple of Śambhunāth are many minor shrines crumbling to decay. There is a temple of Kāli, the dread consort of

* आसदीशसुखं हष्ठा पुनर्जीवनं न विद्याते।
इति श्रीयाराधिते नारायणीनारायणसंवादि
चन्द्रशेषरवर्षना नाम चढ़ पठलः।
Siva; a mandir of Jagannāth, and Rādhā Krishna; and mount Govardhana so well known in Brindāvana. Close by are the eight Bhairavas, and the burial places of some of the Mohuntas of Sitakund. On the left, after passing S’ambhunāth, is a sacred spring with pucca sides called Gyākunda,—which is considered equal in merit to the famous shrine at Gaya,—where the pilgrim shaves and bathes, and offers oblations to the manes of his ancestors. Proceeding upwards, the path becomes a mere track, with no attempt at being a regular road such as leads up to S’ambhunāth. We now come to the base of mount Chandra-sekhara. The grand staircase—consisting of about 575 steps, and generally supposed to have been built by one of the kings of Tipperah,—which brings the pilgrim to the temple of Chandranāth at the top of the Chandrasekhara hill, is giving way a little here and there; and unless repaired in time, will render the ascent more difficult in future than in the days before their construction. Chandrasekhara* is the highest peak in Chittagong, being 1155 feet in height, and is situate in the centre of the Sitakund range which, commencing from the

* Chandranāth is the name of the god. The peak is called Chandrasekhara. It is also sometimes called Chandranāth. Dr. Hunter also calls it Chandnath. Although Chandnath is another name of Siva, I have never heard the hill called by that name. It is, however, usual to use Chandranath and Sitakund as synonymous terms.
northern end of the Sudder station of the district, runs without interruption to Tipperah, parallel to the Grand Trunk Road. In the *Nirvāṇa-tantra* it is mentioned as one of the *Kulaparvatas* or principal mountains of India. Wilson in his Dictionary erroneously places it in Arracan. "In the hill of Sitakund there is a stone of two descriptions, one apparently of volcanic formation, and porous, the other solid containing iron." The hill is "formed of a stratum inclined at an angle of 30° north-east and south-west, of hard clay in places; and in others of sandstone. The surface is generally covered with loam, but on the southern slopes of all the outskirting hills, it is red sandstone or sand." The original temple on this peak, built by a king of Tipperah, fell down in the cyclone of 1848, when the present structure, which is of smaller dimensions, was erected by Ram Sundar Sen, a rich merchant, who has since fallen from his high estate. The temple has little pretensions to artistic beauty. But the view around the peak was exceedingly beautiful. A ship that was sailing far off in the Bay of Bengal, appeared like a bird slowly flying on the horizon. The

† **Statistics of the Lower Provinces of Bengal for 1868-69, p. 25**
ascent of the hill itself, it is said, gives salvation.* The god, however, is an ordinary linga. Sitakund was, as stated before, visited by Sir Joseph Hooker. The following is an extract from the account given by him in page 352 of Vol. II of his Himalayan Journals: "The road to the top of Seetakund leads along a most beautiful valley, and then winds up a cliff that is in many places almost precipitous, the ascent being partly by steps cut in the rock of which there are 560 (?). The mountain is very sacred, and there is a large Brahmin temple on its flank; and near the base a perpetual flame bursts out of the rock. This we were anxious to examine, and were extremely disappointed to find it a small vertical hole in a slaty rock, with a lateral one below for a draught, and that it is daily supplied by pious pilgrims and Brahmins with such enormous quantities of ghee (liquid butter), that it is to all intents and purposes an artificial lamp; no trace of natural phenomena being discoverable." I do not know to what flame Dr. Hooker thus alludes. Jyotirmaya is at the foot of the hill, and is also visited by pious pilgrims. But there can be no doubt that it is a natural phenomenon.

In order to visit Virupāksha, a phallic symbol of

---

*Śrīcandraśekharaṇiḥ स्विल्लमण्लिनि सामवे ||

दति ्Śrīcandraशीतकले नारायणीनारायणस्ववादे

चन्द्रशेखरचण्डा नाम यहः पद्भुः ||
Siva (similar to Chandranath and Sambhunath, mentioned above), in a temple situated midway down the descent from Chandrasekhara, the pilgrim descends by a north-east route. Many proceed to Chandranath after visiting Virupáksha. The ascent to this temple from the foot of the mountain is not a pleasant affair. Sometimes you have to take a long leap, holding in your hand the frail root of an old tree. If it gives way, you are at once precipitated into the abyss below, which seems unfathomable. On his way to Chandranath from Virupaksha, the pilgrim visits Unakoti Sivalinga in a picturesque spot called Pátála Puri, or the nether world, covered with green foliage, and full of the beauties of nature. The undulations in the rocky surface of the cave, drenched with water issuing from the sides of it, are pointed out as Unakotí or 99 lacs of Sivas.

What Mr. Sherring said of its prototype in Benares applies to this: "The actual number cut out on the superfcies of the stone is not more than a few hundred; but the Hinduos are not particular in their definition of numbers."* Descending from Virupáksha, we meet the former road again at the Índakini. This stream is considered to be identical with the river in heaven of the same name. It is said that the Ganges on starting from the Himalaya divided itself into three streams, one running through heaven called Mandakini, another

* Sherring's Sacred City of the Hindus, p. 100.
flowing on earth called Gangā, and the third Bhogavati, which is in the nether world. The water of the stream is certainly very clear, cool, and sweet.

Of the other shrines, Bárabákunda is a volcanic well. It is about three miles’ journey southwards from the Sitakund village, and is situated in the same range of hills. Báraba fire, according to ancient mythology,* originated from the anger of the Muni Auvra, whose mother’s womb was about to be ripped open by the Kshatriyas. It was deposited in the bed of the sea, to prevent it from burning the three worlds. It is stated in the Varahi Tantra† that Baraba is the veritable fire which sprang from the third eye of Siva and destroyed Káma, and that it is to burn down the three worlds at the final annihilation. The same Tantra also relates that the springs are four cubits square, with tepid water, and that the

---

* Tamas Svarupaodbhavante Vitthala Vaisnava
Anandaharmam Dvija Prashagna Maha Deva
Ahitabhumika Bhuta Yathrikarantam Vidi

† Tamasiksharanam Adbhutam Pivaryapena Mahādevī

Devī Bhāratvadīpa Kāma Thitamahārājasastra

Vāraṇāsī śastra: Pratiksha.
fire consists of seven flames.* The following account of the spring is given by Lord Teignmouth:†

"The burning well is situated about twenty-two miles from Chatigan, at the termination of a valley surrounded by hills. I visited it in 1778, and, from recollection, am enabled to give the following account of it:—the shape of the well, or rather reservoir, is oblong, about six feet by four, and the depth does not exceed twelve feet. The water, which is always cold, is supplied by a spring, and there is a conduit for carrying off the superfluity; a part of the surface of the well, about a fourth, is covered with brick-work, which is nearly ignited by the flames, which flash without intermission from the surface of the water. It would appear that an inflammable vapour escapes through the water, which takes fire on contact with the external air; the perpetuity of the flame is occasioned by the ignited brick-work as, without this, much of the vapour would escape without conflagration. This was proved by taking away the covering of brick-work after the extinction of the heat, by throwing upon it the water of

* तथा द्विप्रथे दैवि कृष्णे वाङ्करण्नकोषम्
श्राणे विश्वाते कुष्म चारुर्ग्वं दुग्मोभनम्॥
चारायानका वसिं सुचिकीयखितमिधिषे
स्त्राजालेपड़णे सचायिष्यः शिवहृषपिष्यः (२)॥

the well. The flames still continued to burst forth from the surface, but with momentary intermissions and the vapour was always immediately kindled by holding a candle at a small distance from the surface of the water. A piece of silver placed in the conduit for carrying off the superfluous water, was discoloured in a few minutes, and an infusion of tea gave a dark tinge to the water."

Compare with the above, Captain Pogson's description of the spring—"In front is a building about thirty feet square, over the spring; the descent to it, by a flight of steps, is about fifteen feet; the rising heat was like that of a hot bath. Flames, in successive flashes, were playing on the surface of the water, which, from a column of perpetually rising bubbles, appeared to be boiling. The air they contained, ignited as it came in contact with an oven-like furnace, which the flames fed, and rendered, on one side red-hot. The heat of this self-ignited furnace rendered the surface of the water tepid, but it is naturally cold. In order to condense, and thereby perpetuate, the flames, about one-half of the spring is built over, with an aperture in the centre of the arch, through which, looking from the terrace above, the flames are seen playing on the water. Persons bathing, took in their hands and on their clothes the water with the flame burning on it. The uncovered part is a square of less than five feet, and the covered part about the same di-
mensions. The water is brackish, sulphureous, and chalybeate. A servant drank as much of it as he could hold in both hands united, twice filled, and was so severely purged, that he remained behind, and laid down until its effects went off .......... The water of the Balwa koond has an exhilarating effect, occasions a slight headache, and a sensation of fulness, which soon go off. Its effects are diuretic, slightly aperient, and creative of hunger."

The well outside the Kunda, formed by water issuing from the spring, is called Básikunda. Here the devotee first bathes and purifies himself. He then bathes in the Bárabakunda itself inside, and offers bel leaves and flowers to the flames to appease the burning god. It is said that at each offer of the bel leaves and flowers, the god roars louder to express his satisfaction. Close by are Dadhíbhairava; the temple of Jvalakálī; and the spring of Kumárt.

At a nearly similar distance and similarly situated is Lavanálkhyā, the Nuolukka of Captain Pogson and the Naldala Khya of Statistical Report of 1868-9, which differs from Barabakunda in the weakness of its flame and in the increased saltiness of its water. The salt-water is used for cooking purposes, though it is said that the salt cannot be eliminated from the water. A tradition prevails that this was tested

* Captain Pogson's Narrative during a Tour to Chategaon, p. 203.
by Mr. Harvey* when he was Collector of Chittagong, and that he accordingly discharged some persons arrested for illicit manufacture of salt. The water, it is said, cures goitre. Around Lavanákhya are the following: Dadhikunda, a small well fed by the stream issuing from Lavanákhya; Gurusdhvani, another Jyotirlinga; Brahma Kunda, a hot spring on the top of a small hill, east of Lavanákhya; Suryakunda, a phenomenon similar to Lavanákhya and Bárabakunda.† Near Lavanákhya a place is shown as where the right arm of Sati, the consort of Siva, fell, cut by the discus of Vishnu. But no idol is seen there, and it is not held in the same veneration as Kálibhat, Kámakhyá, and similar places.

Dr. Oldham thus epitomizes Captain Pogson: “There are seven other springs within a circle of

* Mr. John Inglis Harvey was Collector of Chittagong from 1881 to 1887, with short intermissions, during which he acted as Commissioner of the Division. Vide Mr. Colton’s Memorandum on the Revenue History of Chittagong, pp. 118-121.

† There are Mohuntas at the temple of Sambhu Nath, Bárabakunda, and Lavanákhya. Of those, the Mohunta of Sambhu Nath is the richest and the most well-known. He is generally called the Mohunta of Sitakund. The present Mohunta of Sitakund, whose name is Kis, or Ban, is a young gentleman of excellent manners, and of good education. He is also the Mohunta of Káinath, in the island of Mois Caldwell. Of this god the same story is told as of that at Vaidyanath, near Deoghar. The Mohuntas have to take a vow of celibacy, and are succeeded by their principal disciples.
six miles, called Nuolukka (Lavanákhya), Kooaree (Kumári Kund), Dadhee (Dadhi), Burma (Brahma), Suruj (Súrya), Chandur (Chandra), and Seeta (Sítá). Nuolukka is warm, vapour ignites on the application of flame, saline; Kooaree is hot, saline, sulphureous, and chalybeate; vapour ignites. Dadhee, water is cold, salt. Burma (Brahma?) very hot and saltish, slightly chalybeate, vapour ignites. Chandur or Chander is on a hill, salt and exceedingly hot (‘said to have appeared within the last four months’) ignites; Seeta is pure and limpid.*

From Lavanákhya the pilgrim proceeds to Sahasradhárá, a cataract. The water falls beautifully in thin streams, so as to form a natural shower-bath, from a height of about 400 feet. This is by far the most picturesque and romantic of all the various and wonderful sights of Sitakund. It is customary for pilgrims to stand under it. The water of Sahasradhárá is considered to be Siva himself. One cannot forget the bath at Sahasradhárá. It is said, that on the words “bom bom,” which are peculiar to Siva, being pronounced, the water falls with gradually increasing force.

The places noted before are those generally visited by pilgrims. There are many others, for the locale of which the curious and the religious will refer to the Váráhi Tantra, the Bradshaw of the shrines of

Sitakund. From what has been said above, the reader who has had patience to follow us to the end of this book, will, it is trusted, be convinced of the recent character of these shrines. There is a sustained effort to plant on this place all the tirthas which are held in esteem by the Hindoos. For the most famous shrines of Benares, of Gaya, of Brindavan, of Puri, and other places, miniature tirthas are pointed out in Sitakund.* The remarkable phenomena which nature presents in the place, have aided the fabrication of superstitious interpolations and forgeries. The sacred writings, which have been quoted before, bear evident indications of the alternate supremacy of the Sivaites and the Vishnuvites, and of the gradual multiplication of the shrines esteemed by each sect. But the belief in their sacredness is firm, deep-rooted, and universal. A man who holds a different opinion, is looked upon as irreligious and sacrilegious, even in Chittagong, where Hindooism is at a discount. Whether on account of their recent establishment, or from any other cause, the shrines have not received attention at the hands of the antiquarian and the scien-

* There seems to be no end of places called Sitakund. In p. 23 ante and footnote, it has already been stated that there are three more Sitakunds, besides the Sitakund in Chittagong, viz., those at Monghyr, Kolat, and Ceylon. In pages 22 and 35 of Vol. XVI of Cunningham's Archeological Report, there is mention of another Sitakund situate on the River Gandak in Tirhut.
tist. In these pages they have been described by a layman. But the antiquarian and the scientist will be able to ascertain the time when these shrines were first established, and how they gradually expanded. They will be able to ascertain the effect of the waters of the several springs, and analyze the medicinal virtues, which they are believed to possess. They will be able to ascertain the extent of the Hindoo occupation of the district, and of its conquest by the king of Tipperah. They will, in short, be able to complete the ancient history of Chittagong, which is now so meagre and unsatisfactory.