

Status of Social Sciences in the Vernacular Languages in North East India

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Editors

J.P. SINGH • D.R. SYIEMLIH • C.J. THOMAS

It is hoped that the Status of Social Sciences in the Vernacular Languages of North East India, a companion volume of the *Trends in Social Sciences and Humanities in North East India* (Delhi, 1998) will be received well by the scholarly world. Both these volumes will go a long way and will complement and supplement each other. It is also hoped that social scientists and researchers from the North East will take note and attempt to remove the deficiencies in the languages concerned.

The book is divided into four sections as under:

Section I: Assam ✧ Geographic Literature in Assamese ✧ Assamese Historical Writing in the Post-Independence Period: Their Extent and Scope ✧ Numismatic Studies in Assamese ✧ Folklore Studies on North-East India in Bengali Language (1947-97)

Section II: Meghalaya ✧ Status of Garo Language ✧ Status of Historical Writing in Khasi ✧ Writings in Khasi Vernacular Pertaining to Socio-Political Issues: A Review

Section III: Mizoram ✧ Social Sciences in Mizo

Section IV: Nagaland ✧ Development of Teyyidie: A Focus on Social Sciences

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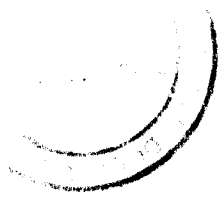
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Chapter I

GEOGRAPHIC LITERATURE IN ASSAMESE

Mohammed Taher

Introduction

With the introduction of formal modern education in India in 1835 as per recommendation of Macaulay's Minutes, there occurred a sea-change in the approach to education in the country. It became necessary to publish textbooks in printed form conforming to modern secular and scientific education in the Indian vernacular languages, which had been nurtured mainly by the Christian missionaries of Europe and America since the later part of the 18th century. In the case of Assam, which was from 1826 (the year of annexation of the Brahmaputra Valley) to 1874 (the year of constitution of a separate province) a part of Bengal Presidency of British India, Bengali was introduced as the medium of instruction in the Brahmaputra Valley, where Assamese was the mother tongue of a vast majority of the indigenous population. This step was consistently opposed by the Christian missionaries, who started their evangelical work among the Assamese mass through Assamese language since about 1838. The persistent efforts of the missionaries like Miles Bronson, coupled with the representations submitted by local people like Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, could ultimately convince the British rulers and Assamese was restored as medium of instruction in the

Brahmaputra Valley as per resolution of the General Department (Education) dated 12 April, 1873. It should, however, be noted that, although Bengali was introduced as a medium of instruction in the government sponsored schools, Assamese was retained in the missionary schools started in 1838. The American Baptist Mission, in fact, brought out an Assamese monthly paper entitled *Orunodoi* 'devoted to religion, science and general intelligence' from January, 1846. This paper and the missionary schools opened up a new vista to the western scientific education and discourses to the Assamese mass. From this initial stage, if one follows the growth and development of geographic literature in Assamese, one can discern three phases. The first phase started from 1846, with the publication of the *Orunodoi* and it continued for about a century till 1939, when the medium of Matriculation examination remained English and geography remained an optional subject. This was followed by a short period of about two decades, when the medium became Assamese and geography was raised to a compulsory subject at Matriculation level (with a paper of 50 marks from 1940 to 1950 and that of 100 marks from 1951 to 1975). Besides, this was also the period (from 1949) when geography was introduced at college level in Assam. These curricular changes necessarily resulted in writing higher level textbooks and carrying out discourses on various geographic aspects in Assamese. This, in its turn, facilitated the dawn of the third phase since about 1962, when efforts began to be made to publish geographic articles in Assamese science journals on the one hand, and coin relevant terminology in the language.

I

The publication of the *Orunodoi* from January, 1846 heralded the dawn of geographic literature in Assamese, *albeit* at an elementary level. In fact, the second issue of the *Orunodoi* (February 1846) brought out two articles, one on the solar system (*Grahar Bibaran*) and the other on the size of the earth (*Prithibir Akarar Bishoi*). The first article was an illustrated one with the relative positions of seven planets (Neptune and Pluto missing) and their sizes. The second article was on the

discovery of America and spherical shape of the earth, which was substantiated with proofs. Starting with these the paper consistently brought out articles on general geography, dealing with physical and regional aspects separately. During the first year of its publication the paper published as many as seven articles covering geographical description of the northern hemisphere, Bhutan, Egypt, the Cape route, etc. Besides, some of these were devoted to economic aspects, such as iron ore as a resource and physical aspects eg. as to how rainfall is caused.

In the second year of publication, the *Orunodoi* continued to unveil the geographic facts, phenomena and events scientifically to the Assamese readers as before. Human geography was brought in by then with regional geography of Europe and the way of life of the American Indians, Chinese and Pacific islanders. This volume also introduced an ethnographic study of the Garos near home.

The third year issues in 1848 had six articles on geographic themes that dealt with lunar eclipse, mineral resources of Russia, the countries and capitals of Europe, British colonies and their individual populations, etc. besides having ethnographic studies on Naga, Khamti, Singpho, Mishmi, Adi, Hill Miri and Nishis and their relation with the plainsmen.

In the fourth year of its publication, the *Orunodoi* brought out articles on the area and population of the countries of the world, including that of the Pacific Islands. Some of these issues also published articles from a book, named *Asomiya Lorar Mitra* (The Friend of Young Assam), authored by Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, containing geographic treatment of the countries of the world, including their political systems, economy, trade and commerce and customs and traditions of their peoples. The author amazingly analysed the spatial variation of the natural conditions and their impact on human life.

The *Orunodoi* continued to bring out geographic articles delving deeper and deeper into the subject's contents throughout the eighteen fifties, sixties and seventies until it went out of publication in 1882. An examination of the articles published in this magazine reveals that the discourses were meant not only for the school students, but also for general public, who were expected to imbibe a scientific geographic

temperament. The *Orunodoi* did not normally publish the names of the authors and it can be surmised that these articles were compiled and translated from relevant English books and encyclopaedias. These included not only descriptions but also laws and theories of physical geography. Some of the articles even described with illustration common climatic instruments. Thus, the magazine established a viable tradition of geographic literature in Assamese.

While the *Orunodoi* continued to be published till 1882, some other Assamese magazines started being published by the local editors from 1872. Many of these were short-lived but these also brought out geographic articles occasionally. For example, Gunabhiram Baruah brought out *Asom Bandhu* (Friend of Assam) in 1885 which contained articles on climatology (*Bari bignan*) and Earthquake (*Bhumikampa*). In the following year (1886) another serious magazine *Mou* (the Bee) produced by an England educated engineer, Balinarayan Borah and edited by his brother Haranarayan Borah, was first published. In its first issue (December 1886) it discussed the shape of the earth citing even proofs for its 'spheroidal' shape. The second issue (January 1887) dealt with the motions of the earth, earth's crust, the heat zones, latitudes and longitudes and their functions, etc. While discussing about the epirogenic movement, one article pointed out the way in which water bodies and landmasses are distributed on the surface of the earth. The fourth issue in an article dealt with landforms and their evolution, influence of topography on climate, besides the causes of genesis of mountains. Next to this magazine, there came out *Jonaki* (the Firefly) in 1889, which also bore an article on Earthquake and its useful influences.

While geographic literature began to grow through these magazines, a few textbooks of school level also came out during the last century. In fact, a book entitled *Bhugolar Sikshak* (The Teacher of Geography) came out as far back as 1809. It was authored by 'A Missionary'. This was followed by *Asamiya Lorar Mitra*, Vol. 3, mentioned above, which came out part by part in *Orunodoi* from 1849. Eliza Brown brought out the third Assamese geography book, entitled *Bhugolar Bibaran* (Geographic Description) in 1851. This was followed by *Bhugolar Beej* (Seeds of Geography, 1873) by Ambika Charan

Ghosh, *Asamiya Lorar Bhugol*, (Geography for Assamese students, 1879) by Hemchandra Baruah *Prakrit Bhugol* (Physical Geography, 1884) by Ishananda Bharali, *Bhugol Siksa* (Lessons of Geography, 1895) by Kanaklal Baruah, *Assamiya Lorar Bhugol* (Geography of Assamese students, 1895) by Panindra Nath Gogoi, *Asamiya Lorar Bhugol Path* (Geography Lessons for Assamese students, 1896) by Krishna Prasad Agarwala, *Bhugol Darpan* (Geographic Mirror) by Padmanath Gohain Baruah and *Prakrit Bhugol* (Physical Geography) by Lambodhar Datta. The last two books perhaps came out in the first decade of this century.

The seriousness with which the tradition of geographic literature was sought to be set up can be realised from the fact that the writers and editors coined many new terms in Assamese for geographical features, events and phenomena, hitherto unknown in Assamese language. These included among others the terminology for Auaora, China, coal, compass, crater, gulf, lava, Mediterranean sea, navigator, railway, tide, United States of America, etc. The tradition of terminology coining continued from the *Orunodoi* through other magazines like *Assam Bilasini*, *Assam Bandhu*, *Mau*, *Jonaki*, and others.

With the turn of the century when the number of people receiving western education increased, a few books with specific geographic themes began to come out. The important among them were *Akash Rahasya* (1915) by Satyanath Bora on astronomy and solar system, *Parahasalirpara Biswabrahmandaloi* (From Primary School to the Universe, 1930's) by Durgadhar Barkataki, *Prakriti Darpan* (The Mirror of Nature, 1939) and *Manab Sabhyata* (Human Civilization, 1942) both by Raghunath Chaudhury. Of these books, the one by Barkataki dealt with physical and human geography almost exhaustively.

II

The introduction of geography as a compulsory course at the Matriculation level in 1940 that also in the medium of mother tongue, posed a great challenge to the academic community for there were no vernacular books of the required level. Heramba Kanta Barpujari, a professor of history, came forward

to write out a textbook, *Bhugol Prabeshika*, (Matriculation Geography) in the early nineteen forties with the help of the series of *School Geography* by Dudley Stamp. It was an onerous task and the book turned out to be exhaustive for the required level and popular among all. This was followed by *Prabesika Bhugol Path* (Lessons on Matriculation Geography) of Dulal Barhakur, a school teacher, published in 1946. About the same time (1940's) Harinarayan Dutta Baruah, an eminent educationist, brought out *Bhugol Prabesh* (Matriculation Geography). It was in the nineteen fifties that a series of textbooks, covering the whole school syllabi from class VII to the Matriculation level, were brought out by a professional geographer, viz. Hariprasana Das, in collaboration with Kalicharan Das, another geography teacher. These textbooks not only popularised geography among the common Assamese readers, but also opened up avenues for discourses on a higher level in Assamese.

Apart from the textbooks, there came out only a few books written for intellectual public on various geographic themes. However, a few that came out include *Prithivir Katha* (About the Earth, 1950) by Baikuntha Barbara which discusses the origin of the earth, life on earth and evolution of man. The second book brought out by Axom Xahitya Xabha in 1958 entitled, *Simantar Sambad* (News from the Frontier) provides an anthropological account of the then NEFA, now Arunachal Pradesh. Mohammad Taher, a geography teacher, authored the third book '*Yatayat Aru Parivahan*' (The Means of transport) portraying the evolution of various means of transport. During three years between 1960 and 1962 there came out four more books, viz., *Prithibir Nana Desh* (Countries of the World - 1960) by Bhaben Baruah with lucid geographical treatment of important countries of the world, *Noir Sadhu* (Tales of Rivers, 1961) by Biswanarayan Shastri, highlighting the origin and course of the rivers and their activities, *Avishkarar Kahini* (The Stories of Discoveries—1961) by H.P. Das, a geographer, describing the important geographical explorations and discoveries and *Prithivir Purani Katha* (Stories of Ancient Earth—1969), authored by Jawaharlal Nehru and translated by Anu Baruah, containing the origin of the earth, life on earth and evolution of man. Although almost all of these books were of

popular level, they can be taken as the spadework for discourses of professional nature that were to follow in the next phase.

III

The third or the contemporary phase of geographic writings in Assamese may be said to have started from 1962, with the publication of *Bijnan Jeuti*, the Assamese journal of the Assam Science Society. The Society side by side brought out lists and books containing Assamese version of scientific terminology and this paved the path for expressing geographical ideas and concepts in Assamese. It is seen that a geographical article, though written by a non-geographer (Baruah, H.P., *Banpani aru Garakhahania*) on flood and bank erosion in Assam started appearing in the second issue and ran through the fourth issue. The journal carried about 13 articles covering mainly physical aspects of geography. By 1970, the University of Gauhati set up the committee to bring out college level books in Assamese. This was subsequently followed by Dibrugarh University. The Gauhati University committee also brought out a voluminous glossary of science terminology in Assamese which carried about 4200 geographic terms. Within about 20 years from 1970, the Gauhati University Committee brought out about 32 books, 9 of them of higher secondary level and 23 of the graduation level, which covered all the aspects of college geography, including practicals and quantitative methods. Dibrugarh University brought out 2 higher secondary and 2 degree level books. Besides these, about 15 college level textbooks, written by college teachers, were published by private publishers after the medium switch-over. All these contributed to the growth of geographic discourses in Assamese at a much higher level. This trend was augmented by the setting up of the North East India Geographical Society which hold annual conferences, seminars and Symposia regularly.

The geographic literature of some standard in Assamese which has developed only in the last 35 years can be divided into the following sub-disciplines:

1. Geographic Thought and Philosophy

Geography being a relatively new discipline in the higher academic level, there has been still doubt among the public about its mooring and efficacy, therefore, several articles are devoted to consolidate the position of geography as a subject of intellectual and utilitarian import and make public realise that it no longer deals with 'where' and 'what is where' alone, but also probes more important themes relating to man, environment and spatial differentiation. Bhagabati (1992), Bora (1992-93) and Bhagabati (again in 1998) lucidly deliberated upon changing philosophy and content of geography, its relationship with socio-economic development and environmental protection. The decision of the Board of Secondary Education, Assam, to replace geography by Social Studies (in 1973) at School Leaving Certificate Examination Level has disturbed the academic circle, for they are afraid of its dire consequences on the basic knowledge of the future generation. Deka (1988), Sarma (1992-93) and Das (1995) published articles against this decision with forceful arguments. Apart from dealing with the above preoccupations, there have come out deliberations on growing epistemic plurality in geography as can be seen in the writings of Bhagabati (1979), Sharma (1986), Taher (1986), Gogoi (1991 and 1993) and several others. Some writers again, are found to study the development and growth of geographic thought as reflected in the articles of Das (1988), Talukdar (1989-90 and 1996), Gogoi (1992-93) and Taher (1998).

2. Methodology and Cartographic Technique

As methods and techniques of analysis and interpretation of geographic facts and data are an unavoidable part of the subject, some writers have devoted to this aspect also. While Das (1986), Kar (1988), Sarma (1994) and Kar (1996) deal 'with various quantitative methods of data analysis, Bhagabati (1981) introduces the application of the principle of gravity model, and Borah (1989-90) and Kar (1995) explain the growing importance of remote sensing to area studies. Kar (1996) further discusses the growing use of computer technology, including digital cartography, G.I.S. and automated

cartography and mapping and other visual expressions of geographic data analysis. A few others, including Talukdar (1989-90, 1995 and 1995-96) and Das (1991) lucidly deal with the history of development of cartography. Bhagabati (*Saphura*, Vol. 5 and Vol. 9, 1992) initiated a new series of discussion on the study of local geography through conscious observation.

3. General Geographic Themes

Origin and history of the earth, geographic treatment of some regions, countries, continents and oceans, and themes related to oceanography have found a wide reading. Gayan (1964), Borgohain (1978-79) and Sarma (1983) elaborately deal with the origin of the earth. Borgohain lucidly describes the Big Bang Theory of the origin of the Universe. Goswami (1969, 1972, 1973 and 1974) does a commendable job by translating *Gamow* on the origin and history of the earth. It is interesting to note that there have come out several articles on the origin, bottom configuration, resources and life in the oceans. Prominent among them are the writings of Bhagabati (1985-86, 1986 and 1992) and Das (1998) which highlight the bottom configuration, resources and strategic importance of the oceans. As for regional treatment, Bhattacharyya (1974), Barman (1983) and Phukan's (1992) analysis of the Antarctica and Bhagabati's (1983) Tundra provide interesting reading. Besides, there are regional analyses by Bhagabati (1986 and 1986) of Iran and Iraq, Das (1987) of Majuli island, Saikia (1995) of Goalpara and Taher (1997) of Lakhimpur, which turn out to be in-depth studies.

4. Geomorphology

North-East India is geomorphologically an interesting region for many reasons. It not only largely supports the Brahmaputra drainage system, but also is an area having Pre-Cambrian, Himalayan and Indo-Gangetic-Brahmaputra structures mixed up closely. Several papers therefore, are found to be devoted to the local geomorphology. In fact, floods and erosion caused by the Brahmaputra and its tributaries have become a pre-occupation of a large number of researches.

Baruah (1962 in two issues), Barman (1986), Das (1991), Goswami (1992), Borah (1995), Taher (1997) and Borah again (1998) deal with fluvial characteristics of the Brahmaputra and its tributaries, causes of flood and bank-erosion and measures needed to be taken to mitigate the devastating impact of these hazards. Some scholars are found to deal with numerous 'beels' or swamps, and ox-bow lakes that abound the limited plains of the region. Under this broad theme, Patra (1991) deals with the locational aspects of these lakelets, while Barman (1996-97) and Boro (1996-96) study Kapla Beel and Depar Beel respectively, bringing out their present status under the interference of ever increasing population. Two articles, based on research, show the microgeomorphology of the middle Kapili basin (Saikia, 1986) and process of sedimentation, silting and scouring in the Jia Bharali channel (Bora, 1990). Other articles deal with historical geomorphology (Sarma, 1989-90), characteristics of the earth crust, fluvial processes (Patra, 1994), glacial processes (Hazarika, 1994) and evolution of geomorphological features against temporal dimension (Saikia, 1995).

5. Climatology

Climatological deliberations are relatively few in Assamese. Barthakur (1962) introduces to the science readers the history and development of climatology. He also writes (1967) on the keen relationship between weather and agriculture with special reference to that in Assam. While Pegu (1977) discusses the elements and structure of the atmosphere in a general way, Sarma (1977-78) deals with the origin and distribution of cyclones on the earth with special reference to those in the Indian Ocean, which often affect our weather. Borah (1985) elaborates in a lucid manner, the use of weather satellites in forecasts, which have increasingly become perfect and useful to common people in India.

6. Historical and Political Geography

Historical geography has become popular in Assam in that many geographers and non-geographers, especially the

historians and linguists, have been trying to reconstruct physical and socio-cultural milieu of this region in the past. Among the geographers, Sarma (1984) examines the socio-cultural evolution of Nagaon district, while Ahmed deals with iron and steel industry in ancient India (1991) cottage industry of ancient Assam (1994) and growth and expansion of railways in North East India. Taher has systematically dealt with the historical geography of Goalpara (1994), Kamrup (1995) and Darrang (1996-97) districts in the nineteenth century, when the foundation of modern Assam was laid. Similarly, Sut Baruah (1992-93) and Deka (1996-97) write detailed socio-economic backgrounds of Dhakuakhana region and Goalpara District.

Although North East India has great strategic and geopolitical importance, the political geographic aspects have escaped the attention of the geographers. The only important discourse on this theme is that of Bhattacharyya and Lahkar (1990), which tries to delve into the causes of insurgency in the region. Bhattacharyya (1989-90) also deals with the then divided Berlin city, which was at the vortex of East and West European Geo-politics. Hazarika (1992-93), while pointing out the growing regionalism the world over, pleads for increasing emphasis on the study of political geography.

7. Population and Social Geography

The plural composition of the society in North East India, with its colourful variety and associated problems, has drawn the attention of many scholars of the region, especially in the last one decade. Dutta (1986) analyses the socio-economic backwardness of the tea-tribes of Assam. Bhagabati (1987) examines the tribes of Assam in their geographical backdrop and finds that they mostly live in economically less productive areas. Sarma (1990) also examines the tribes of Assam from locational point of view. Lahkar (1988), as a part of his M.Phil. research, examines the livelihood pattern of the slum-dwellers of Guwahati and finds them only marginally employed. Sarma (1988) and Kalita (1994) provide ethnographic study of the Tai-Khamti and Karbi communities respectively. Barman (1994-95) in a lengthy article, systematically deals with the

evolution of society and culture in Assam in the existing geographical environment. Bhattacharyya (1995) examines Vaishnab Satra institutions of Majuli and points out their waning influence in social transformation. Majumdar (1996-97) examines the process of formation of Assamese nationality and points out the necessity to review its regionalism that harms the body-politics of itself. Taher (1991) analyses evolution of religion and impact of geographical conditions on religious ethos and practices.

Immigration and very high population growth are the burning problems of the region. Das (1979, 80) discusses in detail the problem of immigration in Assam. Kar (1992-93 and 1995), in a series of articles, analyses the trend of growth and associated problems and socio-economic structure of the population of Assam. He further examines the growth pattern of population of the state in comparison to that of other states of India in the recent decades to assess the degree of growth in the former objectively.

8. Economic Geography

Approaches to the study of economic geography have shifted much from the traditional ones. However, in Assamese, it started with the study of resources in general, as can be seen in the works of Bhattacharjee (1967), who studies the mineral resources, Chaudhury (1970) and Barkataki (1973) and Barthakur (1977) who deal with marine resources and underground water. Das later (1982) goes a step further and introduces the concept of Ocean Thermal Energy Conversion (OTEC) to the Assamese readers. Ahmed (1987) discusses the mining methods in North East India in the ancient period. There is also an illustrated discourse on geo-thermal energy by Das (1982). There came out quite a number of articles on the resource potentiality of Assam, as found in the works of Barua (1973), Das (1976), Mahanta (1981), Taher (1990) and Phukan and Mahanta (1991). Specific items of resource potentiality have also been elaborately discussed by Hazarika (Rubber industry: 1986), Borah (Brahmaputra water resource: 1995), Pathak (water resource potentiality: 1998) and Das (Cement, 1987).

9. Agricultural Geography

Agricultural geography has attracted the attention of only a few scholars. Hannan (1969) describes the problems of suitable soil and adequate supply of water and manure for agriculture in India as a whole. Land-use in North East India attracted the attention of Barthakur (1987), Das (1991) and Sarma (1995), who write on abuse and under-use of land, as also lack of effort to develop land for adequate use. Bhagabati (1986) examines the distribution of jhum cultivation in North-East India and relates its socio-economic implications on the one hand, and environmental merits and demerits on the other. The main thrust in agricultural geography has been found to be laid on various problems. Das has been pointing out (1970, 1972, 1990 and 1992) through various journals and periodicals the structural, institutional, physical and socio-economic problems of agriculture in Assam. Bhagabati (1992 and 1992) also has, through detailed study in smaller regions, mentioned about the problems of small farms and the potentiality they hold out, once the problems are addressed.

10. Settlement Geography

Settlement geography is an area, which has also escaped the attention of geographers in Assam. There have come out only a few articles in the themes under it, and those also deal only with urban geography, Bhagabati (1979-80) discusses the trend of urbanisation in Assam till 1971. He has also (1982) discussed the climate of the cities as tampered by man with his industrial, residential and transport activities intensified in such locations. Bhagabati (1986) further describes the evolution of Tezpur town since prehistoric period. Borah (1993), who visited China and made an excursion to the Peking Man Site at Dragon Bone Hill in Zhoukoudian in northern China, describes the habitat and the studies carried out there since 1921.

11. Biogeography

Like settlement geography, biogeography also has not received due coverage in Assamese. Das (1969) deals with ecology of

the forests of Assam and classifies the major plant species that abound the forests and finally shows their distribution with maps. Sarma (1972) gives a vivid account of the ecology of the deserts and describes the animal life therein. Baishya (1983) deals with the life in Antarctica. The primate life, in which North East India is very rich, finds a systematic study in the discourse of Chaudhury, Tr. by Devi (1990), where the status of monkeys in Assam with special reference to Slow Loris, Pig tailed Macaque, Capped Langur, Hoolock Gibbon and such other endangered varieties.

12. Medical Geography

Medical geography is perhaps the least discussed geographical theme in Assamese. Only one article by M. Gopal Singh (1991), dealing with the causes and geographic locations of some diseases could be found. This article, however, attempts to show the influence of geographic factors on the occurrence of various diseases.

13. Regional Development and Planning

Regional development and planning is a new introduction to geography that has come to its ambit following paradigmatic shift of geography in the recent past. However, it has gained popularity among the Indian geographers for obvious reasons. The techniques of planning, which have to be geo-economic, are often discussed in the journals and papers of Assam. Bhattacharyya (1971) employing geographical criteria divides North East India into planning regions. He also (in 3 issues in 1975) discusses the economy of Mizoram, which he argues as a glaring example of regional economic disparity; Bhagabati (1988) stresses the necessity of geographic study in understanding regional economic imbalance. Das (1996-96) casts thoughts on sustainable development aimed at eco-friendly planning of land use.

14. Geography of Environment

Like development and planning, geography of environment, embodying new approach of study, is a new introduction. The sub-discipline is found to be discussed from several points of view. Pathak (1979-80) discusses the influence of climate on civilization. Kalita (1984) comes down to a more practical field while pointing out the influence of climate on housetype. In an illustrated article he even shows the degree of slope of the roofs in relation to the speed of the prevailing wind. Chaudhury (1986) discusses the influence of forest on environment. Patra (1987) and Barman (1990) clearly show the impact of environment on life. On the other hand, a few writers have highlighted the effects of human interference on environment. Bhattacharyya (1979-80) discusses the impact of immigrant settlement on the flood-plains of the Brahmaputra valley and Sarma (1985) points out the deteriorating status of environment due to growing number and impact of human population. Environmental pollution and its impact have been deliberated on by Bora (1985), Bora (1987) and Goswami (1990). Goswami (1980) elaborately discusses the phenomenon of green house effect. Taher (1989-90) in an illustrated discourse describes the concept of eco-system, while Bhattacharyya (1996-97) deals with the potentiality of eco-tourism in Assam.

Conclusion

Geographic literature in Assamese is yet in its infancy. Apart from some textbooks and a few stray books by free-lance writers, no serious work on geographic themes came out till 1962. The medium imbroglio and non-inclusion of Geography as a compulsory subject in the high school final examination level till 1939 deterred and delayed the growth of geographic literature to a great extent.

The *Bhougolika* and the *Bijnan Jeuti*, the Assamese journals of North East India Geographical Society and Assam Science Society respectively, apart from the local magazines and papers, have helped the growth of geographic literature in Assamese. Although a large number of articles have so far

come out, only a few books (other than textbooks) based on specific geographic themes, authored or edited, have seen the light of the day.

A sub-disciplinewise examination of the available literature shows that while the number of discourses is more in each of Geographic thought and philosophy, general geography, geomorphology, population and social geography, economic geography and geography and environment, it is few and far between in case of climatology, agricultural geography, settlement geography, biogeography and regional development and planning. Medical geography has been found to have discussed only once. This transpires a lesser degree of deliberations in the relatively new sub-disciplines, except Geography of Environment, which has caught the imagination of the geographers in the last one decade.

As for the qualitative aspect, while some of the discourses are of preliminary nature, quite a few reveal in-depth study and deep insight of the writers. The methodology employed in the works has been found to be satisfactory in many cases, but not so in their presentation, as can be seen from a large number of articles coming out without even requisite cartographic support.

The deliberations on the application of new techniques like remote sensing, digital cartography, GIS, etc. have been introduced. Similarly, discussions on epistemological plurality and paradigm - shift have also found place in Assamese. Apart from these, what is necessary is a social commitment to make geography yield benefit. If geography is to serve the society holistically, geographers of Assam must view the burning problems of the region, such as unusual growth of population, lingering ethnic troubles, frequent natural hazards, rapid destruction of environment, geographic isolation etc. and must now determine priorities. Such a concerted effort and purposeful theoretical basis alone will result in a positive feedback in, and enrichment of, geographic literature in Assamese.

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