CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE PROBLEM OF RESEARCH

Every subject develops over time. This is also true for a dynamic subject like Geography. For the development of the subject, it is necessary to study the past and present periodically. Unfortunately to ascertain the status of Geography on an all India or national basis, the studies have been rare.

This becomes the problem of research tackled here for the development of the subject. This study is done from a student's 'point of view' ("the position from which one looks at anything, literally or figuratively – From Chambers dictionary), or in other words, observed and thought by a student of Geography (Research Scholar himself).

Here the word 'status' is to be taken as meaning – situation, the state of affairs, the scene, the stage etc.; a time to pause, to look back to, to look at the situation today and to look up to the future to ascertain that status.
1.2 THE TOPIC – ITS MEANING

This study is titled ‘THE STUDY OF GEOGRAPHY IN INDIAN UNIVERSITIES: PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE.’

Every word in the title has its specific meaning. These meanings are the dimensions, boundaries and the limits of this study. The title can be divided into 5 segments.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>THE STUDY</td>
<td>OF</td>
<td>GEOGRAPHY</td>
<td>IN INDIAN UNIVERSITIES:</td>
<td>PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE.</td>
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</table>

The detailed dimensions of each segment and the inter relationships between them are as follow: (*From Chambers dictionary)

1. THE STUDY – *To apply the mind to, in order to acquire knowledge, to scrutinise, to look contemplatively at, to take into consideration, to think out.

   This answers the geographical query of ‘What?’

2. OF – *With respect to, owing to, with, concerning.

3. GEOGRAPHY – *The study of the surface of the earth and its inhabitants i.e. the subject of Geography.

   This answers the geographical query of ‘Of What?’
4. IN INDIAN UNIVERSITIES: - *An institution of higher learning with power to grant degrees.

This answers the geographical query of ‘Where’ – the dimension of space- the Republic of India, providing the spatial dimension.

5. PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE. – The tenses of time.

These answer the geographical query of ‘When’ – the dimension of time or, in other words, the temporal changes.

The title covers the characteristic questions of the study of Geography – What, Where, When and How (Explained in the methodology), Why (Explained in the rationale). The title is self explanatory and geographical in nature.

In plain terms, one can say that this is the study of the situation or the status of the subject of Geography in Indian universities.

1.3 RATIONALE FOR STUDY

A study of this sort at this juncture has various obvious reasons. The rationale for this study is:

1. Such a study was not reported from any Indian Geographer, keeping the viewpoint of a student of Geography.
2. Though certain studies at the highest levels like the UGC, ICSSR or Projects by eminent Geographers did focus on certain aspects of this study, these studies were conducted way back in the past and have not been updated.

3. On preliminary observations, though Geography subject seems to be progressing, the question of its status of existence at the highest level of learning in India is left unanswered.

4. There appears no definite effort to find out the perceptions about the status of the subject at various levels of Geographers.

5. There appears to be a need to have a look at the direction in which the subject is moving at the highest level of learning.

1.4 OBJECTIVES

1. To attempt to put forward a student's viewpoint about the subject.

2. To study the latest status of the subject of Geography.

3. To answer the vital question of the status of existence of the subject at the highest level of learning.
4. To understand the complexities of the real situation by an on the spot investigation.

5. To find out the perceptions of various levels of Geographers regarding the status of Geography as a subject.

6. To find out the temporal change in the status of the subject of Geography.

7. To investigate the direction in which the subject of Geography is moving at the highest level of learning in India.

1.5 ASSUMPTIONS

This study is both exploratory and remedial in nature. It was based on the following simple basic assumptions:

1. Study regarding the status of the subject of Geography at the university level has been totally neglected in India.

2. Geography as a subject is facing a major identity crisis due to its dual placement simultaneously in the Arts and Science streams.
3. In the opinion of the general public, students, teachers, Heads of the Departments and even the employers, there is a conspicuous discrimination in Geography between Science and Arts.

4. Geography as a subject is not doing well in the present set-up and time.

5. The future of students of Geography in the present day circumstances is extremely gloomy on all fronts.

6. There is no agenda for the future of Geography in India.

7. The subject of Geography is facing a crisis of survival in India as regards to public and students' attitude towards Geography, Intake, dual placement, working problems like lack of infrastructure, funds, applicability, employment opportunities etc.

In a nutshell, one could say, this study is a quest to find the real situation of the subject of Geography at the Indian universities, from a student's point of view, judging by the past and present trends and looking ahead to the future.

1.6 THE STUDY AREA

The study area covers the entire Republic of India (08°04'N – 37°06'N and 68°07'E – 97°25'E) comprising 25 States, 6 Union Territories and 1 National Capital Territory (Fig. 1.1).
THE STUDY UNIVERSE -
THE REPUBLIC OF INDIA

Fig. 1-1
According to the Universities Handbook, December 1997 of the Association of Indian Universities, the number of recognised universities in India totalled to 237. This consisted of 229 Regular Indian Universities (including 39 Deemed Universities) and 08 Open Universities. India also has 151 Conventional Institutions, 34 Agricultural Universities, 21 Technical Institutions, 15 Medical Institutions recognised by the UGC. The subject of Geography is a part of universities only in the Regular and Open categories.

Out of the Regular 229 Indian universities (including 39 Deemed universities), the subject of Geography is taught and studied in 97 universities, while out of 08 Open universities, the subject of Geography is taught and studied at 01 university. So the final figure tallies to 98 universities out of 237 (41.35%).

25 University departments of Geography, constituting 25.51% of the national total were selected as samples for this study. The reason behind the selection of only the University departments of Geography for this study lies in the fact that, in India, the policy making body regarding the syllabus, conducting of examination, research and other developmental policies for all the departments of Geography within the jurisdiction of an university is the University department of Geography. Hence a study of that department explains the situation in the entire jurisdiction area of the university. These 25 university departments represent all the
geographical segments of the country with their uniqueness and their reflection in the development of the subject of Geography at their locations.

1.7 METHODOLOGY

1) The study universe:

The universe of study consisted of the 98 University departments of Geography. The size of the sample for actual study was fixed at 25 keeping in mind the logistics involved in terms of time, money and manpower.

The selection of these 25 University departments of Geography was based on 3 step criteria:

(1) Areal coverage:

It was attempted to provide representation of the university departments from every nook and corner of the country. Almost every major state or at least a smaller state in the vicinity of a major one has been covered so as to obtain an unbiased picture.

(2) Age of the University department of Geography:

Effort was made to cover the university departments set up at different time periods. Both old and new and even the most recent university departments of Geography were selected to get feedback on the basis of a temporal frame. Older departments at Aligarh &
Calcutta were selected along with the second-generation post independence departments at Pune and Vadodara as well as the youngest representatives like the Jamia Milia.

(3) Reputation and contribution of the University department of Geography:
The university departments with active involvement in the development of Geography were considered i.e. those university departments which have had a say on Geography education in India were given preference.

Based on these major criteria, the country was firstly divided into 4 zones – North, South, East and the West. Efforts were made to have an equal representation statistically from all the zones so as to arrive at the correct picture. Approximately one-third number of universities from each zone were considered. Unfortunately certain university departments (especially in the Eastern zone) did not respond to repeated requests for information. Surveying other university departments of the Far East had dangers of security due to uncertain socio political situations. Therefore there was a danger of the analysis being lopsided in favour of some zones due to higher numbers. Hence except for a very few aspects of the analysis, the overall national percentage of university departments for obtaining a significant sample size was taken into consideration.
The selected departments were (Fig. 1.2):

1. Department of Geography. Gujarat University. AHMADABAD, Gujarat.
2. Department of Geography. Aligarh Muslim University. ALIGARH, Uttar Pradesh.
5. Department of Geography. Utkal University. BHUVANESHWAR, Orissa.
7. Department of Geography. Panjab University. CHANDIGARH, Chandigarh.
10. Department of Geography. Osmania University. HYDERABAD, Andhra Pradesh.
13. Department of Geography. University of Mumbai. MUMBAI.
Maharashtra.

14. Department of Geography. University of Mysore. MYSORE.
Karnataka.


16. Centre for the study of Regional Development. Jawaharlal Nehru University. NEW DELHI. Delhi.


18. Department of Geography. Ranchi University. RANCHI. Bihar.

SAGAR. Madhya Pradesh.

20. Department of Geography. Northeastern Hill University. SHILLONG.
Meghalaya.


22. Department of Geography. University of Kerala. TRIVENDRUM.
Kerala.

23. Department of Geography. Mohanlal Sukhadia University. UDAIPUR.
Rajasthan.

24. Department of Geography. The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda. VADODARA. Gujarat.

25. Department of Geography. Banaras Hindu University. VARANASI.
Uttar Pradesh.
2) Source of data:

The sources of data were both primary and secondary.

(1) Primary sources:

Questionnaire survey of Early Geographers, Present Heads of the University Departments, Teachers, Research Scholars, Students of Geography, personal observations backed up by photography.

(2) Secondary sources:

Research papers, lists of M.Phil. Dissertations, list of Ph. D. & D.Litt. /D. Sc. theses, Research project reports, books, M.Phil. Dissertations, Ph.D. theses, syllabuses, annual reports etc.

3) Method of data collection:

The data were collected at 2 levels.

(1) University departments of Geography:

Information collected directly from the university departments forms a major part of the data. This was done by 2 methods:

i) Collecting information regarding the syllabus and its changes, list of M.Phil. Dissertations, Ph.D. and D.Litt. /D.Sc. theses completed at that department, information about the history and development of the department, views of Early Geographers, present Heads of the university departments, Teachers, Research Scholars and Students through questionnaires.
This method of data collection was used for 10 University departments of Geography viz. Aligarh, Bangalore, Calcutta, Chandigarh, Chennai, Delhi, Jaipur, JNU New Delhi, Pune and Vadodara.

ii) Collecting information regarding the syllabus and its changes, list of M.Phil. Dissertations, Ph.D. and D.Litt. /D.Sc. theses completed at that department, information about the history and development of the department, views of only the Early Geographers and the present Heads of the university departments through a questionnaire.

This method of data collection was used for 15 University departments of Geography viz. Ahmadabad, Allahabad, Bhuvaneshwar, Hyderabad, Jodhpur, Mumbai, Mysore, Jamia Milia New Delhi, Ranchi, Sagar, Shillong, Srinagar, Trivendrum, Udaipur and Varanasi.

iii) Other Sources:

The other sources included published data regarding universities and the subject of Geography obtained from the UGC, ICSSR, AIU as well as the libraries of those universities visited.

4) The data processing:

The data processing and interpretation on all aspects, were done in the following manner:
(1) The study universe and the sample:

Out of the 25 university departments of Geography selected as the study sample, 21 were visited in person between 01 October 1997 to 26 January 1999 – a span of 01 year and nearly 03 months. The remaining 04 university departments of Geography were requested to mail their responses. Only 01 out of the 04 responded. Hence there was no information from 03 departments despite repeated requisitions.

Hence, finally the data obtained for study and processing consisted of 22 university departments of Geography.

The entire data ranging from 1997 to 1999 was brought to a uniform common cutout date upto 01 January 1998 for clear analysis.

Though most of the aspects of this study were analysed directly for the national scenario, certain aspects of this study were also analysed on individual, zonal and then the national level.

The zonation of the study sample was done as follows:
The country was divided into 4 zones according to the states and the union territories and the sample university departments in them.
Table 1.1: The Study sample – Zonewise division

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ZONE</th>
<th>STATES, UTs &amp; NCT</th>
<th>DEPARTMENTS STUDIED</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NORTH</td>
<td>Jammu &amp; Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi and Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>Srinagar, Chandigarh, Delhi, Jamia Milia New Delhi, JNU New Delhi, Aligarh, Allahabad and Varanasi (Total – 08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAST</td>
<td>Bihar, West Bengal, Sikkim, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Manipur, Tripura and Orissa.</td>
<td>Shillong*, Ranchi*, Calcutta and Bhuvaneshwar* (Total – 04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOUTH</td>
<td>Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamilnadu, Kerala, Andaman Nicobar Islands, Lakshwadeep and Pondicherry</td>
<td>Hyderabad, Bangalore, Chennai, Mysore and Trivendrum (Total – 05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEST</td>
<td>Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Dadra Nagar Haveli and Daman &amp; Diu.</td>
<td>Jaipur, Jodhpur, Udaipur, Sagar, Ahmadabad, Vadodara, Mumbai and Pune (Total – 08)</td>
</tr>
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</table>

* Did not respond. UT – Union Territory, NCT – National Capital Territory.

(2) Information about the department:

An information brochure about any of the departments of Geography was seldom available. Hence the sources of information included - a) Souvenirs published on the occasion of the latest conferences organised by the department. b) Proposals of various 5-year plans of the UGC grants. c) Annual reports of the entire university or the department. All these were scrutinised for the relevant information.

(3) Syllabus:

The syllabuses collected span nearly 50 years from 1950-1951 to 1997-1998. For analysis, the syllabuses were grouped into 5 equal cohorts of a decade each and analysed in terms of changes and developments on the entire national level only.
(4) Research:
15 out of the 22 departments supplied the research list at the M.Phil., Ph.D., D.Litt., D.Sc., and Post Doctoral research as the case may be at the department.

For analysis, the research was considered up to the situation on the date of 01 January 1998.

Trends and thrust areas in research were determined after designating every research into various branches of Geography — divided broadly into the categories of Physical Geography, Human Geography and ‘Others’ — miscellaneous. Local, zonal and national trends were observed and interpreted.

(5) The Opinion survey:
An extensive survey was carried out to get the views and opinions of various personnel associated with the university set-up of the subject of Geography in India. This was done by a questionnaire — mixed with both open and closed questions, personally handed over and collected along with informal and formal discussions. The responses went on to become the ‘National Opinion Poll.’ These were analysed at three basic levels of replies — Yes, No, Can’t Say. Almost all the responses were either converted to this format or to the Positive, Negative, Can’t say format. All individual responses have been aggregated to maintain confidentiality of the data. Few specific and outstanding comments have been highlighted at all levels. Though the responses were
analysed at the local and zonal level, the interpretation was done directly at the national level only.

The respondents consisted of 20 Early Geographers, 20 Heads of the departments, 59 Teachers, 65 Research Scholars and 452 Students (both Graduation UG + Post Graduation PG level) of the university departments of Geography – a total of 616 at 5 different levels.

(6) Statistical methods and representation:

Common statistical tools like ranking, mean, certain ratios were devised and used for the analysis of the data.

The representation consisted of simple bar graphs, columnar graphs, pictorial diagrams and maps.

(7) Others:

Salient features of all the departments visited were photographed and appear as photo plates in this thesis.

1.8 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The study, as clear from the objectives, methodology and chapterisation, covers a variety of aspects all related to the status of the subject of Geography in the Indian universities.
An observation regarding the previous work done on the status of Geography subject shows an international concern about the status of the subject of Geography, while Indian Geographers have been missing this point, as is apparent from the literature survey (Fig. 1.3).

A detailed assessment of the various aspects of Geography teaching and study at the university level in the erstwhile Soviet Union was done by Howe (1958). Apart from dealing with the intake and syllabus, various significant facts have been highlighted, which include – majority of the universities had a Faculty of Geography comprising the departments of Geography, Mathematics etc., the division of the Faculty into Regional and Systematic Geography, rigorous training on similar grounds as defence training in various branches of Physical Geography with compulsory lengthy field work, future scope of opportunities, based on research done, at the centralised Institute of Geography or the armed forces.

British Geographers have been preparing the status reports of the subject of Geography in United Kingdom on the occasions of the International Geographical Congress of the International Geographical Union for various years, critically reviewing the developments as regards to research trends, new ideologies, methodologies, its impact on the society, employment etc. leading to an intellectual vigour and public debate on it for the future of the subject (Edwards & Crone 1960;
Fig. 1.3

Legend:
- Botswana
- Bulgaria
- Cambodia
- China
- Colombia
- Cuba
- Hong Kong
- India
- Indonesia
- Italy
- Japan
- Jordan
- Kenya
- Malaysia
- Mexico
- Myanmar
- Nepal
- Pakistan
- Peru
- Philippines
- Singapore
- South Korea
- Soviet Union (Kremlin)
- Sri Lanka
- Tanzania
- Thailand
- United Kingdom (Gt. Brit.)
- Uruguay
- Vietnam
- Zimbabwe

Scale 1 : 120 000 000

WORLD - COUNTRIES WITH STUDIES ON UNIVERSITY STATUS OF GEOGRAPHY

A comprehensive survey of the status of the subject of Geography in various nations on aspects of curriculum, intake, study, working, infrastructure, research output etc. was done in Myanmar, Cambodia, China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Srilanka, Thailand and Vietnam (Editors: Fuchs & Street, 1979).

Survey of the status of the subject of Geography at the university level on the aspects ranging from the intake to despatch into employment was done in detail in India by Deshpande (1979).

An insight into the state of Geography in the universities revealed that the subject in Gujarat State, India was not making any significant mark. (Kulkarni, 1982).

Review of 20 years of Geography education as regards intake, syllabus, teaching, research and application of Geography for national development was done in Zimbabwe (Zinyama, 1988).

Review of 16 years of the development of Geography, from its start to change of name to 'Environmental Science' in 1976, to employment
playing an active role in demonstrating the practical value of the subject of Geography, was done in a developing country of Botswana (McKim, 1988).

Assessment of Geographers for the overall development of a nation, right from their training at the university, to research, to participating in the national planning process and thus popularising the subject, was done in Tanzania (Mashalla, 1988).

An insight into the role of Geographers handling national problems like resource scarcity, increasing population through training of the Geographer to the application of knowledge was done in the status report from Kenya (Sindiga & Burnett, 1988).

Geography as a bonafide profession has been gaining momentum with new Geographers trained entirely within the country beginning to assume new roles; such a study on these lines was done in Colombia (Rucinque, 1989).

A status report on the eve of a conference on aspects of increasing awareness and assessment at the university and the geographical societies level was done in Peru (Yacher, 1989).
Evolution of professional Geography over the years and the identification of developing areas during the redemocratisation with a view on the syllabuses, research and modernisation like computerisation were done in Uruguay (Lopez & Scarpaci, 1989).

The changes in the various aspects of the subject of Geography including research in Physical Geography at the Institute of Geography and the use of Geography for the development of the nation and future prospects of external co-operation and exchange opportunities were studied in the erstwhile Soviet Union (Adams, 1990).

Study of the development of the subject of Geography, with respect to research, application in national level planning and the infrastructure facilities available was done in Vietnam and Cambodia (Meade, 1990).

Development of the subject of Geography over the years with a weak school base and unbalanced university Geography education, heavily foreign influenced research with a grim employment situation other than planning were studied in Italy revealing an optimistic future (Caldo, 1990).

The development of the subject of Geography in the last two decades, research opportunities and need of application orientation and strengthening of the faculty structure along with a professional
association of Geographers at the university level were studied in Jordan (Najjar & Samawi, 1990).

The transition of the discipline of Geography over time from a predominantly theoretical subject to a subject actively involved in national planning and ecological conservation and research in university as well as at the Institute of Geography followed by its overall professional development was studied in Bulgaria (Isserman & Abler, 1990).

The development of a relatively young Geography subject with young Geographers, with an academic isolation, heavy influence of national needs on research using Automated Cartography and GIS, influencing planning was studied in Cuba (Palm, 1990).

A study of the location of Geography institutions, their intake, research on physical, social and economic aspects of Geography, journals and libraries with an increased interest in environmental problems was done in Mexico (Schofer, Levi, Villada & Zeronski, 1990).

Assessment of the historical development from 1928 to present set up status, research paradigms in physical, humanistic and recent ecological aspects, future with modern GIS technology, Remote sensing and global studies were done in Singapore (Teo & Wong, 1990).
Studies of contribution of Geography subject in a span of 50 years in terms of research at the students' level, effect of JNU on the research on social aspects and the curriculum, a shift from physical aspects of the syllabuses to human and social ones, major thrust of local issues on research with future suggestions like need for techniques for better representation were done in the Northeast region of India (Mohapatra, 1998).

Study of what was required to build a future for the subject of Geography at the university level, discussing the imprints from the past, an account on the present setting and the future trends, based on the applied role of Geography in the arena of public policy and impact of the information technology in shaping the future of Geography was done in India (Kapur, 1998).

1.9 THE PLACE OF GEOGRAPHY IN ANCIENT INDIA

Both India and the subject of Geography have grown together. Since the dawn of civilisation in India, the subject of Geography has been developing by leaps and bounds. The statement that the subject of Geography in India has been brought by the concepts from the Arabs and Greeks due to invasions on India is not true.
Various studies of specialised branches in Geography like Geographical Thought, Literary Geography, Cultural Geography, Geography of Religion, Geography of Pilgrimages, Historical Geography etc., have proved that Indians in the ancient times were geographically literate, were geographically aware and had the foresight of using Geography for various innovations. These are apparent from the geographical interpretations of laws of Hindu mythology and philosophy, the epics of Hinduism, history and the sacred laws. Chronologically, the Vaidikas, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, works of Buddhists and Jains and the Puranas were the main sources of ancient Indian geographical concepts. Indians were known to have knowledge of the concepts of Cosmology, Cosmography and various continents called the Dwipas. The term Bhugol (Geography) was used first in Suryasidhanta by Aryabhata. There is a clear demarcation between Bhugol (Geography), Khagol (Science of space) and Jyotishshastra (Astrology) in the Puranas.

There were clear views about the origin of the universe called the Brahmand and known to be geocentric in nature. There were concepts about phenomena like eclipses called Grahnas. The Earth called Pruthvi, was proposed to be spherical in shape by the Aitreya Brahmana. There were dimensions of the earth, very close to the facts today. There were concepts of latitudes (Akshansa) and longitudes (Dashtantras), placing of present day Sri Lanka on the equator and cardinal points with as many as 10 directions. There was a calculation of local times too. There were
concepts like the composition of the earth, earthquakes called *Bhukamps*, Seasons called *Ritu* and so on (Husain, 1984).

Epics like the *Ramayana* demonstrate the awareness of Indians in aspects of Climatology with a correct knowledge and use of the concepts of atmosphere, genesis of climate, atmospheric layers, temperature conditions in different seasons, characteristics of the winds and the clouds, rainfall conditions, descriptions of other phenomena like lightning, thunderbolts, mist, hail, snowfall, dust storm and even weather forecasting (Shukla, 1991). Similar interpretation was done from the *Yajurveda* (Mukherji, 1968).

The ancient concepts of the field of *Vastushastra* or *Shilpa Shastra* were also based on the knowledge of Geography as is evident from the geographical interpretation of the construction of cities and parks in ancient India apparent from the excavation sites at Gaya, Patliputra (today's Patna), Varanasi, Mathura, Rajgir, Vijaynagar etc (Singh, 1974).

Geography also influenced literature and poetry of ancient India. The best example is the geographical description of the route of the cloud messenger in Kalidasa's *Meghduta*. This route coincides with the advance of the Southwest Indian monsoon. The description of Himalayas in Kalidasa’s *Kumarsambhava* is another illustration (Zonneveld, 1983).
The various wars and battles were fought with the strategies and defence set-up based on geography. Aspects like trade routes, irrigation schemes, agriculture in ancient India were also based on Geography.

Thus Geography in ancient India was one of the most developed subjects and had an important place in the society.

REFERENCES


