INTRODUCTION: The Problem

Scope and plan of the study

The study of the agricultural resources of a region is an important discipline of geography. In India where over 70 percent of the total population depend on agriculture for their livelihood, agriculture occupies an unique place in the country's economy. Agriculture is an occupation which has a long tradition. The people of India are deeply attached to this culture, which not only provides food, but raw materials for a variety of industries and also valuable cattle feeds for the livestock. In addition, agriculture supports the transport sector which carries seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, agricultural implements etc to the farms and transport agricultural produce to the consumer markets, raw materials for the industries and finished products from the industries to the markets. Inevitably, in India, "agriculture, employing 70 per cent of the population, forms a large part of the market for industrial products." ¹ Besides, the agricultural sector earns valuable foreign exchange for the import of machinery, other important inputs such as petroleum, metals,

1. Shenoi, P.V., Agricultural Development in India - A New Strategy in Management, 1975, New Delhi, p.9
fertilisers and technical knowhow needed both by the agricultural and industrial sectors.\(^2\)

The field of agricultural geography is wide, for agriculture is influenced by a wide variety of factors such as physical, socio-economic and sometimes political. The influence of climate, soil, topography, market, labour, capital, transport facilities, land tenurial system, level of scientific and technological development, government policy on the agriculture of a region is already well known. It may not be necessary to elaborate those factors here. But, the important fact is that, as human population is increasing in number, the amount of land available per capita for cultivation has been declining. The consequence is that there has been fragmentation of holdings, perhaps beyond the economic size of sustaining a family. The number of agricultural labourers has been increasing steadily, and the problem of unemployment, both seasonal and disguised has tended to become acute. The problem of rural unemployed labour force has increased stealthily in the countryside. These people very often migrate to the urban centres creating severe problems of congestion,\(^3\) sanitation, unemployment and several others which are a bane for the society.

2. ibid.

In the context of the present agricultural situation in India, it becomes necessary to formulate suitable strategies for tackling the problems connected with agriculture. As such, in the present study attempt has been made to study the agricultural resources of the Brahmaputra valley with a plan and management approach. Admittedly, the study of agricultural resources considers man at the focus of all activities. The present study takes into account the population engaged in agriculture as the central theme. It also considers land as an important aspect of the study, obviously because, land is the main support of all human activities on this earth and its importance to agriculture need not be overemphasized. Flood in this part is considered to be a colossal problem. However, flood may be considered as the omnipresent situation inseparable from agricultural management in the Brahmaputra valley.

An assessment of the potentialities of the agricultural resources of the Brahmaputra valley constitutes an important aspect in planning for agricultural development. Inevitably, agriculture and industry are so inter-related that they act in such a manner that makes them mutually dependent. In fact, the development of any one of these sectors stimulates development in the other. The study of agricultural planning with considerable emphasis on management practices may help in harnessing the untapped
potentials of the region, and at the same time, may contribute, towards rapid industrialisation of the region based on indigenous resources and human skill. This may form the base for promoting balanced regional development of the Brahmaputra valley.

Source material

The data used for this study is obtained primarily from the secondary sources. These sources are the Statistical Handbooks of Assam, Basic Agricultural Statistics of Assam, World Agricultural Census, Assam (1970-71), Basic Statistics of the North Eastern Region and Indian Agriculture in Brief. Some of the conclusions have been arrived at from the field surveys carried out in the region. The base map for this study is obtained from the Surveyor General of India, Government of India copyright 1971. The other maps have been drawn from the base map, with the relevant aspects being inserted in them.

Methodology

In the present study a correlative interpretation between the agricultural resources and the manpower resources will be a major theme. Simple percentage figures will form an important part in this study. In addition, several techniques used in agricultural studies such as crop combination technique, intensity of cropping, agricultural efficiency, crop concentration, agricultural productivity and input-output analysis comprise an important project in
Besides, other statistical techniques viz. standard deviation, correlation coefficient, test of significance, location coefficient etc have been used in the relevant topics. In an overall context, it is felt that plan and management oriented studies are few and far between. Therefore, the evaluation of the agricultural resources of the Brahmaputra valley focussed on suitable management practices, and planning for meeting the regional economic needs may help in spelling out suitable strategies for enhancing the agricultural and industrial base of the region, with the object of improving the socio-economic conditions of the population of the valley.