PART I

INTRODUCTION
CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCING THE PROBLEM

Electoral geography is the study of geographical aspects of the organization, conduct and result of elections. In other words, it is the study of the spatial voting patterns / behaviour or the study of the spatial distribution of political phenomena of voting. In all democratic countries with multi-party political systems, the electoral battle is the first step in the process of coming to power. From this perspective the geography of elections would forms the first stage in the study of the electoral geography in all modern democracies. Geographical study of elections is primarily oriented towards the study and analysis of spatial aspects of how politicians at different levels of authority - local, state and central, obtain, manipulate and maintain power. Voting remains the top basic priority in the democratic system of governance. A sound system of election is the backbone of a democracy. In modern times election is the only known means of securing representation. To this extend representation is effective; the government become more truly responsible. So, electoral engineering is therefore of utmost significance to the nature and health of Country’s politics. It consists party of the choice of right technology. The sociology of election is also important for the success of a democratic polity.

Voting involves struggle of political parties against each other. In sociological sense, it is a group versus group competition. Political competition is an ecological process. Ecology of politics deal with the interactions of territory with political process. Every area has a long established political tradition. Some areas may be traditionally stronghold for one political party and some other area may be traditionally stronghold for another political party. Political tradition leads the political trend and trends gives out a pattern. The pattern can be defined as geometrical arrangements of various phenomena. Similarly politics may be defined as “the making of decisions by public means in contrast to the making of personal decisions privately by individuals”. The election system is a component part of the whole political structure of a country. The operation of the election system, therefore, is influence by a variety of economic a well as social and political forces. In order to analyse electoral politics and voting behaviour in a state, one should
have a clear idea of the geographical, economic, socio-cultural and political aspects of the election. Electoral politics have dealt with a wide variety of factors while influence the voter's mind in the exercise of their right to vote. Besides the standard socio-economic status, ideas and aspiration of the voter, the values he cherishes and the political consideration he makes final expression in his decision to cast vote for a particular candidate. The researcher will concentrate his study on Assam which is significant for its physical, economic and population aspects.

It is in the above perspectives the present research problem "ELECTORAL POLITICS AND VOTING BEHAVIOUR IN ASSAM LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS, 1952-2001" high-lights increasing or decreasing trend of voting, voting behaviour and their areal intensity in different Assembly constituencies in different Legislative Assembly elections. In the present study before examining the socio-economical factors as determinants of voting behaviour, researcher propose to examine if political factors, like candidate orientation, issue orientation and party identification of the voters had influenced their voting preferences in the different Legislative Assembly elections. Researcher will also examine what type of geographical factors responsible for creating certain electoral patterns and how these patterns reflect the politico-geographical variation in the state of Assam.

THE STUDY AREA

Assam is situated at the North-Eastern Himalayan sub-region of India. The state is bounded by Bangladesh on the west and south and is very near to Myanmar on the east and to Bhutan and China in the north. Internally the state has a common boundary with Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh and West Bengal. Assam is the most important state of the North-Eastern Region of India. Her relative location with reference to other political areas of India's north-east and above mentioned foreign countries, possesses immense geopolitical significance.

In recent years, administrative setup in the state was reorganized to make it more effective. Thus, there at present 23 districts and 49 sub-divisions in Assam. All the districts of Assam subdivided into some Legislative Assembly and Parliamentary Constituencies. At present, there are 126 Legislative Assembly Constituencies in Assam, out of them 14 constituencies are reserved for Scheduled tribes population and 7
constituencies are reserved for Scheduled caste population. For the house of people 14 seats were provided - one seat being reserved for Scheduled caste and two for Scheduled tribes.

THE FOCUS OF THE STUDY

The present work will have three basic thrusts:

First, it will analyse the electoral politics of the party organizations, bargaining about power with reference to the various linkages of state politicization.

Secondly, the study will analyse the state Legislative Assembly elections and voting behaviour of the electorates including the correlates of electoral choice. The study of voting behaviour is highly promising in three ways. First, the act of voting itself is considered as an overt form of political participation and objective manifestation of the political makeup of the voters Each voter projects his ideology, political orientation, judgement and attitude. Second, the account of the election results objectively shows the numerical strength of the various political parties struggling for power and dominance in the state Third and final, the voting preference can be used as a check against the "hiding of truth" tendency among the respondents while reporting their ideologies and political attitudes.

Thirdly, the study will focus light on the political profile of the electorates To analysis the political profile of the electorates will be made on the basis of the variables like sex, rural-urban residence, age, religion, language, occupation, caste, literacy, and other socio-economic status of voters.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The geographical analysis of “The electoral politics and voting behaviour in Assam Legislative Assembly elections, 1952 – 2001” is an important task. The main emphasis of this work is on the voting patterns /behaviours Therefore, the specific objectives of the study are:

1 to study the geopolitical settings of Assam;
2 to examine the spatial organization of election with particular reference to Legislative Assembly constituencies /districts,
to find out the spatial variation in voting patterns and the relationship between these and other socio-economic characteristics of population;

4. to find out the most important determinants of voting behaviour in the Indian setting,

5. comparative study of voting behaviour in different Legislative Assembly elections and trend of voting;

6. to find out the important issues taken by the Regional and National political parties in different Legislative Assembly elections;

7. to study the influence of environment and geographical influences in voting; and

8. to examine the foreign national problems in the state and their impact on electoral politics.

HYPOTHESES

In order to achieve the above objectives, the following hypotheses have been specifically examined.

1. It is generally held that the minority religious group, more particularly the Muslims, vote en bloc in favour of the Indian National Congress.

2. (a) there is positive relationship between the vote returns for the candidate and the community of the voters.
   (b) Muslim voters of Assam were more likely to vote than Hindu voters.
   (c) the constituencies with homogeneous population registers relatively higher voter participation than those which have heterogeneous population.
   (d) the monopoly of constituency can be attributed either to the nature of constituency or the personality of winning candidates. In Assam, especially the Muslim dominated constituency monopoly is well-marked. They returned the Muslim candidate every time.

3. It has been conceived that urban voters were politically aware and therefore, they are expected to behave a manner unlike that of his rural counterpart.
4. Most of the rural people traditionally participate in the elections

5. Lack of education leads the Tea Community to be politically unconscious.

6. There is a positive relationship between the voting patterns and some socio-economic variables (such as rural-urban population composition, literate population, occupational composition, SC and ST population etc.).

DATA BASE AND METHODOLOGY

Necessary secondary data for the present study covering the study region are taken from the different publications of census of India volumes and other relevant government publications of the Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Janasanyog, etc from the periods 1951-2001 in general and 1991-2001 in particular. Secondary data relating to electoral geography like Assembly constituency wise total number of voters, number of male and female voters, percentage of voting, party wise voting, percentage of valid votes, total rejected votes, margin of winning candidates etc. for the periods 1952-2001 are taken from the State Election Commission Report and other reliable sources. For other base materials, relevant literature and various reports have been consulted.

As the study area, the Assam, is considerably large, the Legislative Assembly constituencies (numbering 126) are considered as suitable spatial units of investigation for the present study. Again due to non-availability of certain data like population structure (religious group, linguistic group, caste structure, growth of population etc.) at constituency level, the analysis in such cases has been made only at the district level.

In the second stage, in order to check the validity of the findings derived on the basis of secondary data and to examine the location-specific factors behind the occurrence of various pattern, necessary first hand primary data are collected through sample survey in the field by canvassing an interview schedule and questionnaire prepared for the purpose. Four Legislative Assembly constituencies of varied population structure are selected purposively to study the political consciousness and socio-economic status of electorates just before the 2001 Legislative Assembly election.

The data so obtained are processed and analysed with the help of suitable and meaningful quantitative techniques. The socio-economic data, election data etc. standardized,
order and grouped. Graphical models, charts, tables are derived for better understanding of 
the various data and variables under consideration. Data have been cross checked and 
analysed as thoroughly as possible. Attempts have been made to find out whether or not 
there exits any relationship between some socio-economic variables and voting patterns by 
“correlation-regression model”. Areal Association model, voter participation probability 
model and other cartographic and statistical techniques such as measures of central 
tendency and dispersion also employed to decide different phenomenon. The analysis of 
the problem is also supplemented by a number of maps and diagrams for giving a clear 
exposition of the voting patterns.

Out of the 126 total Legislative Assembly Constituencies of Assam, 4 
constituencies from two districts of different voters’ compositions (General caste voter 
dominated – 42 No Patacharkuchi LAC, mixed voter dominated – 41 No. Bhabanipur LAC, 
Muslim voter - dominated- 44 No. Jonia LAC and tea community voter dominated 125 No 
Doom Dooma LAC) have been selected for stratified random sample survey for collection 
of primary data. Just of these sample constituencies had been selected mainly on purposive 
basis , an optimum number of 200 respondents were selected in each of the constituencies 
on purposive basis as the basic units of observation. So, randomization in strict sense 
could not be followed. The questionnaire and the interview schedules prepared for the 
pre-poll survey were meant to interview a particular set of voters After the completion of. 
the interviews, reply to each question was tabulated in the form of coding. For this purpose
a consolidated coding sheet was prepared in which all the replies of a respondent were put 
in the form of codes in one line of the sheet. This method made it possible to have a 
clear picture of voting behaviour of the respondents at a glance. Conclusions of the study 
are made on the basis of results derived from data analysis, previous works and personal 
experiences in the field.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

If success can be measured by the quality of production, then electoral 
geography is the success story of modern political geography In the last two decades 
there have been hundreds of studies on the geography of elections, voting behaviour, 
political consciousness of voters in different parts of India. But in Assam, research works
on electoral politics and voting behaviour are highly limited. Whatever is available, they are of piece-meal nature and that too mostly from sociological perspective. Such studies hardly focus on the spatial dimension of electoral politics. Therefore, the present study, which attempts to focus the electoral politics, political profile of the electorates in geographical perspective. The present study helps in understanding the voting pattern, voting behaviour, trends of voting in different Legislative Assembly elections in Assam since the first Assembly election (1952) and also helps for further study in electoral geography of Assam. In addition, the study would be highly meaningful and helpful to the politicians, planners and administrators who are involved in the formulation of development plans and programmes for the people of the state. The study thus is expected to have academic and political values.

ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

The work is broadly consists of three parts: Introduction, Analysis of the problem and synthesis.

The part one comprising the first two chapters deals with introduction of the problem and the study area. In chapter 1, the nature of the problem, location of study area, focus of the study etc., objectives, hypothesis, database & methodology and significance of the study are discussed. A brief review of some relevant works is also made here to have a theoretical background of the problem. Chapter 2 contains the physical, geo-political, socio-economic bases of the study area and electoral landscape of Assam. The physical background incorporates the physical settings, climate, soil and natural vegetation.

The part two consists of five chapters which form the main analytical text. Here in the chapter 3, an analysis of the demographic characteristics of population is made. Chapter 4 contains an analysis of historical perspective of poll verdicts. Chapter 5 deals with the distributional patterns of political parties and voting patterns since 1952 Assam Legislative Assembly elections to 2001 Assam Legislative Assembly elections. Here in chapter 6 contains an analysis of voting behaviour of electorates in Assam as a whole and presents the picture of socio-economic characteristics of the sample constituencies and their political behaviour. Finally chapter 7 presents the picture of politics of influx in
A BRIEF REVIEW OF SOME RELEVANT WORKS

Studies pertaining to electoral politics and voting behaviour have assumed great importance during the last four decades throughout the world specifically in America and Europe. In political geography serious studies and research on specific issues concerning election have been a recent phenomena. However, thoughts and contributing works in this field as initiated by the political scientists and sociologists have been quite significant. It is a fact that, although studies in this area in disaggregated form from the early part of 20th century, a systematic problem oriented study and research have began only from 1960. After 1960's there have been more and more methodological innovations in the study of electoral geography and some older methodologies were refined to suit the needs of the situation.

It is important to note that the systematic research works on electoral geography are very limited. The professional interest of geography in the study of elections is now more than nine decades old. One of the earliest works on the geographical study of election was made by the French geographer Andre Siegfried in 1913, when his book "Tableau politique de la France de l'ouest" was published. It marked the beginning of the geographical study of elections. Substantial geographical research on elections were however made only in France under leadership of Andre Siegfried who has rightly been called the "father of electoral geography", because of his method of mapping election results and comparing them with maps of possible explanatory factors. Siegfried's book (1949) on the geography of elections of the Andeche region of France is a classic of this type. As the same time Carl Sauer (1918) was contributing to the perennial American debate on how to define congressional districts. As the founder of American cultural-regional school of geography it is perhaps not surprising that his solution involved representation by geographical region. In 1916, Edward Krehbiel published an article in the Geographical Review in which Krehbiel attempted to analysed the changed in the spatial variation in voting in Great Britain from 1885-1910. In the article Krehbiel tried to associate the voting results with the environmental factors, such as social and economic
condition. A correspondence or association was found between the spatial variation in voting and spatial variation in the environmental factors. Krehbiel, infect, set forth the paradigm of "Areal Association" in geographical study of elections.

Stuart Rice offered a new dimension to the geographical study of elections, when his book "Quantitative Methods in Politics" published in 1928. Stuart Rice concentrated on the problem-solving approach in which a hypothesis is stated and then tested through statistical analysis. He used the primary data for analysis and discussed regionalism in voting pattern and diffusion of political attitude. C.O Paullin prepared a series of historical map of voting results in his book "Atlas of the Historical Geography" of the United States, which sought to indicate regional trends of voting pattern over period of time. In 1932, J.K Wright published an article on "Voting Habits in the United States". In his article Wright published large number maps to illustrate the results of presidential elections over the period of 1876-1928. In a 1935 study of voting in Chicago, Harold Gosnell and Norman Gill used both correlation and factor analysis - the two complex statistical techniques.

Francois Goguel (1951) and Lancelot (1968) published an impressive number of electoral studies, the best known of which "Geographie des elections francaises de 1890 & 1951." All these studies were in the old man-land relationships tradition. Traditionally, electoral geographers such as Siegfried, Krehbiel, Wright, Goguel, Hugonnier and Burghardt explained voting patterns according to a simple plan. They made the basic assumption that people will vote according to what they perceive to be their best interest. They, then explored the characteristics of voters which might give to clue to the nature of their self-interest. The areal variations in social and economic class, religion, nationality and race were among the prime factors considered. Using such methods, political geographers seemed to explain the foundations of voting patterns, for whole countries or large sections of a country and be able to predict how patterns would change as the franchise altered or migration occurred.

Geographical analysis of voting behaviour began to increase in both quality & quantity during 1950's largely as a result of the theoretical positivist revolution in Geographical studies. The traditional approach under attack by a new school of electoral geographers by K.B Cox, Archer, Reynolds and Brown. They considered the traditional
approach to have two main defects. Firstly, the correlation of aggregate data such as votes and economic status does not allow any difference or prediction to be made about individual behaviour (Cox, 1968, 58; Cox, 1969; 109; and Reynolds and Archer, 1968, 2). Secondly, it is argued that since the traditional approach is used by political scientists, it is not distinctively geographical. These defects leads these geographers to recommend an approach and which focuses an spatial processes such as contagion and contextual influences (Cox, 1968; Cox, 1969, 112-3; Reynolds and Archer, 1969, 31). With the rumblings of the quantitative-explanatory revolution in the social science, the traditional approach soon lost following though it was not immediately replaced by an alternative approach to the study of elections, mainly owing to the late arrival of the “Quantitative Revolution” in political geography (Dikshit, 1977) Only in the early 1960’s did electoral studies become an important theme in political geography and by the middle of the 1970’s many had began to think that they comprised “the most actively developing aspect of “Political Geography” and that electoral geography was now one of the main sources of fresh insights into the general field in human geography (Busteed, 1975). The popularity of elections as a theme for politico-geographical study was evidenced by the publication of a popular monograph in 1975 (Busteed), which has since been followed by a detailed penguin back on the geography of elections (Taylor and Johnston, 1979).

Edward Milles Studied New York Politics in 1959, Trenton Kostbade studied geography and politics in Missouri in 1959; and Lloyd Haring analysed voting patterns in Tennesse in 1959. In 1961, Kasperson analysed the spatial aspects that influenced decision-making in Chicago. Pierce Lewis analysed the impact of Negro migration on the electoral geography of Flint in 1965. A.F. Burghardt examined the spatial patterns of voting behaviour and sought to determine the underlying factors that influenced the voting pattern. The use of one of several techniques of quantitative analysis of voting pattern was done by Robert and Rumage, dealing with leftist voting in urban areas of England and Wales. K.R. Cox in 1968, studied the spatial contrasts in voting behaviour in the city of London, comparing the sub-urbs and the Central city in terms of voter turn out and party preference. In his article he made use of the factor analysis and correlations techniques. In 1970, Robert Norris analysed the effect of migration on voting behaviour. It was perhaps the first geographical study to use survey research method.
There were three aspects of the new quantitative approach which were applied to electoral geography. The most commonly it can be termed "Standard Statistical Analysis; which was widely used to study the geography of voting"; geographical influence in elections; and "geography of representation". This trio-logy of electoral geography studies was first identified by Mc Phail (1971) and subsequently used by Busteed (1975) and Taylor and Johnston (1979). Taylor and Johnston (1979) attempted to overcome the fundamental deficiency by introducing the work of Stein Rokkan (1970) into electoral geography to provide a framework in which geographies of voting could be interpreted. Cox (1968) has discussed some of the significant features of the movement from central urban areas to peri-urban districts of London city, which is so common in many cities of the world. Cox interpreted the election issues will also be important in explaining new alignments of party support. Rowley (1969) defining characteristic of recent developments within electoral geography as in geography as a whole, is not simply its empiricism but its concern for theory and a process oriented geographical perspective i.e. involved in the study of elections, is highly conductive to achieving the objectives.

Most works and studies in electoral geography have been descriptive of various aspects of the conduct of elections and the pattern of voting. Taylor in 1978 has pointed out, the function of an election is to allocate power so that if the inputs (the pattern of voting) and the through puts (the trans of votes into seats) have clear spatial components, so too should be out puts. This was also taken up by Johnston in 1980. A most distinguished contribution to the ecological - cartographic tradition was made by Lewis (1965) in his study of Flint (Michigan) in which he cartographically analysed the relationship between income and Republican voting and between Negro population and Democratic voting. This was an essentially non-quantitative study and the methodology consisted of map comparison, but the maps drawn was highly sophisticated. This cartographic techniques has since been successfully used by O'Loughlin and Berg (1977) in their study of elections of Black mayors in the United States The method developed by Lewis Praise from many students of electoral geography. Roberts and Rummage (1965), Birdsall (1969), Cox (1968), Brown et al (1969) and McPhail (1970) use factor analysis in the electoral studies.
It is true that work on electoral geography, electoral politics and voting behaviour are still quite limited. It is worth nothing, however, that although a good number of studies have been done mainly by the political scientist in India and they are mostly based on historical and descriptive analysis and lack spatial perspectives on the problems. Among them Ali Sadig (1959), Babul Fadia (1984), R.L. Gupta (1988), Sucheela Kaushik (1982), Rajni Kothari (1989), K.L. Kamal (1990), Surinder Sure (1962) may be considered worth mentioning. Systematic research works carried out in India by the political geographers on electoral geography or on the geography of elections are very limited. In India, some people like Amani, R.D. Dikshit (1982), S.K. Singh (1982) and M. Hussain (1994) have contributed to the electoral geographic studies. Their works were mostly based on the western models. However, the application of the western model to the Indian situation did not yield any positive fruitful results. But in a research work had done by B.L. Sukhwal interestingly analysed the “distributional patterns of political parties in India since the first General election of India” in his book Modern Political Geography in India (1985). This book is written on the basic thought “the areal differences and similarities which are political in character.” Thus this book attempts to associate spatial pattern with various forces affecting the changing patterns of political parties and voting patterns.

In North-East India also studies on electoral geography or geography of elections are still embryonic stage. However, some meso and micro level works on socio-economic status of electorates and their role on electoral politics in North-East India, especially in Assam carried out by researcher Deka, Das, Ahmed, Lahon, Choube, Rao, Hazarika, Medhi, Bhattacharyya are worth mentioning. But as mentioned earlier most of these works are based on descriptive analysis of the problems of electorate in historical, socio-economical and sociological perspective and a few works contain empirical data. Again all these studies lack spatial perspective in the analysis. In Assam Bhattacharyya has been trying to established the foundation of electoral research in political geography since the 1980’s.

Thus the foregoing review of available literature apparently reflects that works on electoral geography covering the North-East India / Assam are still extremely limited. Thus the present work on the “Electoral Politics And Voting Behaviour in Assam Legislative Assembly Elections, 1952-2001” encompassing the above aspects certainly bear immense significance.
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