

## Context: Practice of Geography in Indigenous Language

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Apart from the place, time and society, the evolution practice of History includes archaeological, geological linguistic, political, economical, scientific, philosophical, literary, geographical and sociological changes over time. Although all these subjects are different but the history of their evolution, their ups and downs and the exchange of their flow have been included in History<sup>1</sup>. For instance, archaeology focuses upon the history of evolution. Literature focuses upon the entire history of evolution, starting from *Shruti* to the formation of language, invention of writing, style of literature, choosing proper words for a particular purpose etc. On the other hand, with the changing of place, time and society, the entire scenario of Geography and the map get changed. It expresses the marking of the continents, sub-continents and even the countries. Therefore, it cannot be denied that they have profound relationship between them and they have enriched one another. Marwick wrote that practice of History can be considered as the significant part of History<sup>2</sup>. Michelet wrote in his French History book that History is built upon Geography. In the introduction of the second edition of his book, which was published in 1869, Michelet wrote:

*“Without a Geographical basis, the people, the makers of History, seem to be walking on air, as in those Chinese pictures where the ground is wanting. The soil, too, must not be looked upon only as the scene of action. Its influence appears in a hundred ways, such as food, climate etc.”*

About the geographical context of History, Lucien Fabre and Marc Bloch also opined the same and these have been expressed in their writings. Bloch, observing Michelet's theory, wrote:

*“In certain of its fundamental features, our rural landscape, as has been previously mentioned, dates from a very remote epoch. However, in order to interpret the rare documents which permit us to fathom its misty beginning, in order to ask the right question, even in order to know what we were talking about, it was necessary to fulfil a primary condition: that of observing and analysing our present landscape. For it alone furnished those comprehensive vistas without which it was impossible to begin.”*

In the writing of Fernand Braudel, the most important example of use of Geography in description of History is found:

*“The most massively impressive demonstration of the use of Geography in historical writing occurs in Fernand Braudel's 'La Me'diterranne'e et le mediterranea a lepo de Philipp II (Paris, 1949) .... The first part is a real tour de force of Geographical description and analysis, which is absolutely fundamental to the social analyst Political narrative which follow-though curiously to include any maps. Braudel, as might be guessed, was an important figure in the Annales school.”*

The culture of Science in Bengali language has been proceeded take two different ways. One is through text books and other is through the periodicals, magazines, journals etc<sup>3</sup>. It can be mentioned here that environment and Geography have frequently been used in literature. If we read '*Manasa Mangal*' written by Ketakadas Khemananda, we will notice that while

describing the path which *Behula* crossed, the prior course of the river *Damodar* has been delineated. This description gives account of the previous course of the river and has a great historical value<sup>4</sup>. Again in '*Chandi Mangal*' written by Mukundaram Chakrabarty, the environment or the geography becomes revived through the statement of Phullora<sup>5</sup>:

*“Verendar thamer nirbhare kutir boishakher jhare nityo bhange  
Mas moddhe marg shirsho apni vagoban.  
Hate mathe grihe gothe sabakar dhan  
Udar bhoria bhakkho dilo bidhi Jodi.  
Jam saho shit tahe niromilo bidhi  
.....”*

The initialisation of culture of science got started with the arrival of British in our country in 18<sup>th</sup> century<sup>6</sup>. At that period, a popular book, which used to be read frequently in India is 'An easy introduction to Astronomy for Young Persons'<sup>7</sup> by William Yeats. Although the book was about Astronomy, but it had a detail discussion of Physical Geography. It had a vast content with ten chapters. John Clerk Marshman and William Hopkins Pears were the first, who introduced text book of Geography in Bengali language. They maintained the Western procedure of making books to create the book. '*Jyotish O Goladhyay*' by John Clerk Marshman was published from Serampore. There is a very small account of Geography and Astronomy in this book. William Hopkins Pears also wrote a book of '*Bhugol Brityanto*'<sup>8</sup> like John Clerk Marshman. It was published in 1819 from Calcutta School Book Society. Basically the few Europeans who contributed to the cause of producing text books in Bengali Language, John Clerk Marshman and William Hopkins Pears were the pioneer of them all. '*Bhugol Brityanto*' was divided in six parts. Another extremely popular book was written by William Hopkins Pears<sup>9</sup>. In this book, there was interesting conversation regarding Geography and Astronomy. This was also divided in six parts. But the author had given stress upon the Political Geography in this book. During this period, a Bengali text book on Geography was also published with the initiative of Hindu College. This book was named '*Shishu Sebadhi Bhugolsutra*'<sup>10</sup> and possessed simple and easy language. An endeavour of giving a complete idea of Physical and Political Geography had been made in this book. Khetramohan Dutta also wrote a Geography book in 1840 for the *Pathshala* of Hindu College<sup>11</sup>. But one point must be added here that no science book had been written in this era with the support of Physical Geography. All the above mentioned Geography books in Bengali language mainly discussed Political Geography. Practically, this way the study of Geography in Bengali language got started. '*Bangala Shiksha Grantha*' by Radhakanto Dev was published in 1821, in which, discussion had been made regarding Mathematics and Geography along with the other subjects<sup>12</sup>. '*Padarthavidyasar*'<sup>13</sup> written by William Yeats had discussion about Geography. This book contains a conversation between a master and his disciple<sup>14</sup>. Calcutta School Book Society has a great contribution in the field of gaining knowledge in Bengali language. The Calcutta School Book Society wrote a report regarding the knowledge of the Indians in Geography:

“.....the ideas they contain of the Geography of their own country and still more of the world, being always vague and often erroneous.”<sup>15</sup>

In 1825, E. S. Montague wrote the first atlas in Bengali and it was published in Calcutta School Book Society. Montague prepared the maps for the Geography book written by Pears too<sup>16</sup>.

The Bengali periodicals also have an important role in practising Geography in mother language. So the mention of these magazines in case of practise of science through Geography cannot be denied. The first instance of geographical information provided in a periodical is in the first Bengali printed magazine '*Digdarshan*'<sup>17</sup>. In different instalments of this magazine in the year 1918, the accounts of the division of the earth, the mountain Vesuvius, the information about the mines of England are obtained. Another magazine '*Vidya Darshan*' also played an important role in it. In 1842, this magazine gave information about the Himalayan Mountain Range, the seas and about the different fields of Geography in its different issues. '*Samachar Darpan*' was another important magazine of that time. The volume of 6<sup>th</sup> June 1818 and 30<sup>th</sup> July 1831, reveals the information of the border of Hindusthan and the size of the earth respectively, although the data of these articles were depending upon the *Shastra*<sup>18</sup>. In some of the volumes, the description of the earth is also been found. In the volume of 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1820, the incomplete information of the geographical position of Burma had been given. *Tatwabodhini* by Akshay Kumar Dutta also published many articles on Geography<sup>19</sup>. The practical beginning of Geographical discussion got started through the writing of Rajendralal Mitra. He wrote '*Bibidhartha Sangraha*' in a magazine which was following the trail of Penny Magazine. The Geographical description of different countries and some articles on Geographical studies were found in this magazine<sup>20</sup>.

Although the magazine edited by Rajendralal Mitra did not publish much informative documents about physical geography but it consisted of a treatise concerning the characteristic feature of the condition of the land before rain. A geography-related discussion is also obtained from Rishi Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay edited magazine. '*Aryadarshan*' magazine did not have any article comprising of a complete discussion on Geography but in it, we find a Geographical description of Kabul. On the other hand Dwijendranath Tagore edited magazine, '*Bharati*' also contained some articles on Geography. On that age there was a famous Geography-related magazine named '*Bamabodhini*'. In the volume of the Bengali month of Agrahayan and Pous, the magazine published an important document on mountains. No contemporary magazine is found publishing articles on physical Geography saving '*Bamabodhini*'. In the magazine '*Sakha*' edited by Pramadacharan Sen, there were two articles on Geography written by Manmathanath Mukhopadhyay and Bhuban Mohan Ray. In the magazine '*Sangbad Purnochandradaya*', some articles on Economic Geography also found along with physical Geography. There was a magazine, used to be published from Dhaka and was edited by Kali Prasanna Ghosh. In that magazine also some articles on Geography had been found<sup>21</sup>. Mention can be made here of the article on '*Geography described in Mythology*' published in the Bengali year 1285 in this magazine. In spite of this topic, the article bears with it the author's modern view of Geography. Apart from all the magazines mentioned below, many articles on Geography and earth had been published in the magazines like '*Gyanankur*', '*Vijyan Darpan Sahitya Parishad Patrika*'<sup>22</sup>.

Geography had become the part of many Bengali literary works too. Madhusudan Dutta, the father of '*Amitrakshar*' rhythm in Bengali poetry, wrote the following lines to depict the mountain Himalaya<sup>23</sup>:

*“Dhabal namete giri himadri shire-  
Abhrabhedi, detatma, bhisana darshan,  
.....”*

On other side, the novelist Dinabandhu Mitra gave the following speech at the lip of drunkard Nimchand:

*“So sweet was ne'er so fatal, I must weep- But they are cruel tears- Karon ami akhon mone kochchi ar khabo na, kintu seta mone kara matro – Prithibi ta ghore na Surjo ghore? Prithibi Ghore – Surjo ghore na? – Na – Akon rat hoechhe – Surjo mama rojar par sandhya bela chatti khete gechhen, akhon Prithibita banban kore ghurche – Prithibi ghore ghuruk. ---”<sup>24</sup>*

The novel ‘Palamou’ is an interesting one although about travel. It was written by Sanjib Chandra Chattopadhyay, the elder brother of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay. Its lyrical style brings splendour and becomes enjoyable to read:

*“Palamou parganay pahar asangkhyia, paharer par pahar, ...; Jeno bicholito nodir sankhyateeto tarango. Abar bodh hoy jeno, abonir antaragni akdinei sei tarango tuliyachhilo.”<sup>25</sup>*

Practically such assimilation of poetry and Geography probably has no peer in any literature.

Upendranath Das (Durgadas Das), the father of crime thriller, play in Bengali literature held Geography in some other was in his play ‘Sharat Sarojini’ :

*‘Bigyanlok Bistani Sabhar sabhyo Haridas Babu gabeshanar jonyo sekhane fossil khujite ele kulira mati khnure bhugarbha theke Sharat ke uddhar korlo.’<sup>26</sup>*

Geography had found its way in the writing of Rabindranath Tagore too. He wrote in his novel ‘Sheser Kabita’ :

*“Amit Shilong pahare jakhon bhabchhe palai, pahar beye neme giye paye hnete Silet Shilcharer vitor diye jekhane khushi, amon samaye Asar elo pahare pahare, bone bone tar sajal ghanachchhayar chador lutiye. Khabor pawa gelo Cherapunjir girishringo nabobarshar megh daler punjito akroman buk diye thekiyechhe, eibar Ghana barshane giri nirjharini guloke khepiye kul chhara korbe.”<sup>27</sup>*

We find Geography in Bibhutibhusan Bandyopadhyay’s writing too. In his celebrated novels like ‘Chader Pahar’, ‘Aparajito’ etc. Geography had become a part and parcel.

In ‘Padma Nadir Majhi’, Manik Bandyopadhyay gave an account of circulation of the seasons.

Sukumar Ray used Geography in the funny way in his following lines<sup>28</sup>:

*“Prithibir chapta matha , kano se kahar doshe?  
Eso bhai chinta kori dujone chhayay bose.”*

In the writings of Maitreyee Devi, Satyajit Ray, Samaresh Bose, Sunil Gangopadhyay, Atin Bandyopadhyay etc. Geography has been used.

In the articles of the scientists, the allusions of Geography have been given. Ramendra Sundar Trivedi wrote:<sup>29</sup>

“There would have been no storm, cloud and rain if there was no dust. Therefore, the life would not have survived. The trifle material like dust particle serves a lot for the human life. Manob, how much you roam about the world of knowledge, you will come to learn so many such like things.”

The above extract from Ramendra Sundar reminds the poem ‘The Cloud’ written by the British poet, P. B. Shelley:<sup>30</sup>

*“I bring fresh showers for the thirsting flowers  
From the seas and streams  
I bear light shade for the leaves when laid  
In their noonday dreams.”*

In fact, the diversified form we experience in scientific literary writing at the present time is the consequence of the periodic endeavour of our literary genius for the last two hundred years. In the beginning these kinds of writing got started to give education to the common mass in indigenous language. These were started to be published in different books and magazines for the same reason. But all the credit of popularizing scientific literary texts in the literary court goes to Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay. The scientific writing as literary text gradually became established through different activities. At last, science has been started to be used in everyday life. Student of our country devoted themselves to science and open new horizon in this field. To quote our beloved poet Rabindranath Tagore:

*“Kato ajanare janaile tumi  
Kato ghare dile thai  
Dur ke korile nikat bandhu  
Par ke korile bhai.”*

Therefore, it is extremely necessary to know the History of the culture of science in indigenous language because it is the revelation of human civilisation and culture. We must step ahead to maintain to flow of culture of science in our own language.

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