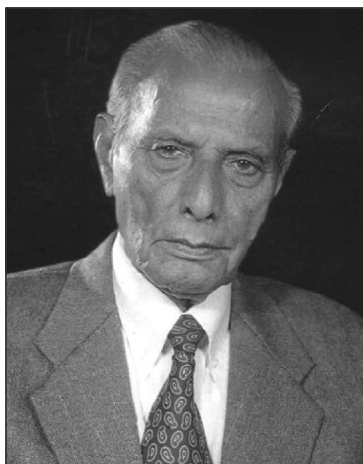


Obituary

Professor Mohammed Taher



(1931 - 2015)

In the untimely and sad demise of Professor Mohammed Taher, popularly known as “Taher Sir” among the educated people of Assam, on 25th February, 2015, the geography fraternity of the North- East in particular and the country in general, has lost a veteran teacher and a reputed geographer, who pioneered the process of propagating geography education in the country’s north-eastern region. He joined the Department of Geography, Gauhati University, Assam in 1958 and continued his teaching and research till his retirement from the University in 1991. He was loved and respected by his students and colleagues and also the people of Assam at large because of his unassuming personality, commitment to the Assamese society and culture and his extraordinary scholarship.

Born on 21 April, 1931 in a village called Khutakatiya near Lakhimpur town

of upper Assam, Professor Taher had his higher education in Cotton College, Guwahati and Calcutta University, Kolkata. Post-graduated in geography from Calcutta University in 1958, he first joined the National Atlas Organization (now NATMO) as a Research Fellow for a short period and then moved to Gauhati University to serve as a lecturer in geography. In 1963, he proceeded to New Zealand as a Commonwealth Fellow to join a doctoral research programme in the University of Auckland under the supervision of Professor K. B. Cumberland. He completed his doctoral thesis on Asians in New Zealand: A Geographical Interpretation in 1965 and came back to his nascent parent department in order to strengthen it both academically and organizationally. In fact, he was one of the initial “tripod” to raise the department to a visible level, the other two being none

other than Professor H.P.Das (expired in 2003) and Professor M. Barthakur. Professor Taher was the most able and reliable right hand of Professor Das, who served and headed the department for a period of 35 years (1949- 1984).

Professor Taher was a great teacher and a popular writer. He wrote a number of geography textbooks from school to university level. He composed more than thirty books both in Assamese and English in addition to a large number of popular articles in local magazines and newspapers, besides more than sixty research papers in reputed journals and edited books. His areas of interest included social geography, historical geography, regional geography and geomorphology. He extensively wrote on the social groups, particularly on the tribals of North-East, their distribution and socio-cultural change.

He was regularly involved in curriculum development in geography and examination reform for schools and colleges of Assam. Because of his special interest and proficiency in secondary education system and also appreciable efficiency in academic administration, the Government of Assam

came forward to appoint him Chairman of the Board of Secondary Education, Assam in 1991 just after his retirement from the University service. He also served some other universities of the North-East and the country academically in different capacities.

Professor Taher was undoubtedly a highly impressive teacher, a serious researcher and an orator of great repute. He was richly endowed with certain admirable human qualities—simplicity, sincerity, honesty and decency in public life. These rare and endearing qualities in him spontaneously brought his students, followers and friends closer and thus he could carve out a position of his own in the society to inspire a generation. His untimely departure has, no doubt, created a void which will probably take years to make up. We pay respectful homage to our great teacher and pray for eternal peace of his noble soul.

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