

# TOWARDS FRESH WOODS AND PASTURES NEW – THE CASE OF INDIAN GEOGRAPHY

*Nina Singh*

## ABSTRACT

Geographers often undertake critical reappraisal of their discipline- of its contents, its philosophy, its methodology, and its relationship with other academic disciplines and with the outside world. Presidential addresses during geography conferences have played an important role in influencing, or responding to, new directions in geography. The geographers acknowledge that the nature of geographic knowledge today is very different from what it was fifty years ago. It has evolved from phenomenal (declarative) to intellectual (primed by cognitive demands). Several questions arise. Are we engaged in identifying the current concerns confronting the mankind? How do we engage with them? Is there any correspondence between theory and practice? What do the various universities offer to the students by way of course design? What does geography have to offer in orientation towards depth vs. breadth? Most challenging task before us is how to think, do and research geographically? The success of a discipline will depend on how far is our research useful in relation to contemporary social issues, its ability to capture the imagination of the researchers, the role of the key individuals within the discipline promoting its use and development, the formation of a 'critical mass' of proponents and so on- all of which have to be understood in relation to the shifting institutional cultures of higher education or the political- economic climate.

## Introduction

Geographers often undertake critical reappraisal of their discipline- of its contents, its philosophy, its methodology, and its relationship with other academic disciplines and with the outside world. Needless to say that academic discipline exists to maintain, further and promote knowledge. They are our creations, given a *raison d'être* by individuals and their sponsors. They exist and flourish, are created and recreated with changes in societies, as consequences of individual reactions to

current concerns. These assertions are not new. The observation that researchers do not operate in a vacuum, that the research enterprise reflects personal experience and values, societal concerns, disciplinary trends, and the like appears in contemporary contexts are not new, in fact, these issues have been raised earlier (Mills, 1959).

Several questions arise. Are we engaged in identifying the current concerns confronting the mankind? How do we engage with them? Is there any correspondence between theory and practice? What do the

various universities offer to the students by way of course design? What does geography have to offer in orientation towards depth vs. breadth? Most challenging task before us is how to think, do and research geographically?

**What is to be researched?**

What is to be researched and how are geographers engaged in voicing their concerns? I have chosen to illustrate the same by exploring the Annals of the NAGI, India at two levels:

- Concerns voiced in Presidential Addresses in NAGI, India since inception till date. Each address has been read to highlight the underlying message, and
- Identifying the approach adopted in articles published since turn of the century.

The Presidential addresses appearing in Annals of the NAGI only, the first issue of which was published in 1981, are taken since the idea is to be indicative. The choice of the journal was made as its spread is over diverse terrains with a substantial number of life members in addition to associate, annual and institutional members. Its Presidents have hailed from different regions. These addresses in a way define the *Zeitgeist* and identify ideas that are most useful to progress. Therefore, the addresses delivered by the doyens of geography can be seen to be giving direction could well form the agenda of research. These and perhaps many more are to be internalized for any meaningful theoretical deliberation. However, how many of these recommendations have been weaved/ couched in different philosophical and methodological moulds/matrix/framework? Alternatively, do these serve the purpose of research? Some insight into the Messages of the Presidents’ Voice in Annals of the NAGI, India is summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1 An insight into the Messages of the Presidents’ Voice in Annals of the NAGI, India.**

President/in year	Title of the Speech	Articulation
G.S. Gosal 1980, January	Frontiers of Geographic Teaching and Research in India	Study problems of spatial organisation within their local areas & make prescriptive recommendations; both empirical-inductive and theoretical-deductive approach need to be encouraged simultaneously; secondary data supplemented with primary information collected in the field to be integral part of geographic methodology; develop the theme ‘People, Resources, Government’ in the sphere of ‘Geography of Development’; comprehensive knowledge of the spatial disparities at local, regional & national levels in all their dimensions.
H.P. Das 1980, January	The Problem of Immigration in Assam	Attend burning social issues like integration of immigrants into the mainstream and the issue of illegal foreign migrants in Assam valley, India.

	Neglected Frontiers of Indian Geography	Generate 'good' & 'useful' geography in education (schools, colleges, and university), training and research; the history and evolution of Indian geographical thought is an unexplored frontier.
Moonis Raza 1981	Untitled	Regional inequities in the development process, philosophical and methodological issues in Indian geography-Indian geography is sunken deep in blind and directionless empiricism; there is absence of theory building on the basis of indigenous experience; realize that while statistical methods are positivistic and value neutral, the premises underlying them are not. The indicators chosen and the sophisticated techniques used should be rooted in theory.
N.B.K. Reddy 1982	Perspectives on Indian Geography	Geography and its role in nation building.
M.Shafi 1983	Geographer and the Society with special reference to India	Land as the ultimate asset of the nation and systematic development of land is the need of hour. Geographers to engage in studies on land use, conservation, management, and development of land resources.
C. R. Pathak 1985	Geography, Regional	Reach the society for direct social action through people's planning.
K.N. Singh 1985	Voluntary Agencies: Their Role In Rural Development in India	Role of the people's organizations in rural transformation.
S.M. Alam 1987	Untitled	Introduce research oriented courses in post-graduate classes-courses in cognate disciplines far more advanced at the undergraduate level; New challenges require interdisciplinary focus, in-depth analysis of key urban issues.
	Whither Indian Geography	Making the discipline of geography more professional.
	Untitled	Using geography in the service of common man, deconstructing the common myths.
M. Raza 1989	Regional Development as Eco-Development	Develop the concept of Regional development as eco-development, both epistemologically as a model of the universe and methodologically as an analytical tool.
V.L.S.Prakasa Rao 1990	In Search of Unexplored Themes	Natural regionalisation, human settlements & viability of an administrative unit.

L.N. Ram 1991	Delivered the Lecture Extempore	
P.D. Mahadev 1992	Sustaining our Heritage	Sustainable heritage
S.L. Kayastha 1993	Environment, Development & Quality of Life	Quality of life of people; work on a new kind of development model –human, sustainable and shared.
P.Dayal 1994	The Agenda for Indian Geography	Prepare various kinds of specialised maps for planning purposes, national & regional resource inventories, provide a regional framework for planning; adopt ecosystem approach to regional development, the emphasis on sustainable development; adoption of information technology more vigorously in geography; strike a balance between human geography and physical geography.
L.S. Bhat 1995	Geographical Perspectives & the Problem of Inequality	Micro-regional surveys should precede the studies on District and Block-level planning; prepare resource inventory which is basic to District Development Plan; interdisciplinary studies on the problem of inequality, poverty, rural urban integration in a regional framework.
R.P. Misra 1996	Emerging Challenges & Opportunities	Geography should be taught as a separate subject at school level; core issue as spatial sustainability- look at new paradigm of thinking & doing; focus on area approach for development planning.
A. Ahmad 1997	Fifty years of Geography in India & Abroad	Rediscover in the post-modernist idiom a spatialised ontology with spatialisation (the organization of space as a social product) emerging as the programme for reconstruction.
K.V. Sundram 1998	Sub-national Development and	Focus on area studies at the village, block and district levels- construct 'area profiles' for all levels of planning; incorporate 'Area Development' as a compulsory branch of our discipline; Adopt a new paradigm of planning in tune with the 73 <sup>rd</sup> Amendment of the Constitution.
G.B. Singh 1999	Green Revolution in India: Gains & Pains	Need to make a critical inquiry into the pros & cons of green revolution.
Gopal Krishan 2000	Development, Environment & Decentralized Planning	Recast the administrative map of the country to meet the requirements of development planning. Deconstruct untenable myths on the development discourse in India, designing of appropriate spatial organisations for development administration, generate appropriate indicators for green accounting, designing of location specific development projects, make in-depth analysis by areas of the challenges facing India.

R.S. Dubey 2001	A Biopsy of Indian Geography	Philosophical and methodological issues should be rooted in indigenous paradigm; more focus on field work.
B. Thakur 2002	Coping with Natural Hazards: a Geographer's Agenda	Assess the spatial extent of hazard areas using satellite imagery and GIS, develop disaster impact databases and advocate sustained land use change in the catchment areas
Jagdish Singh 2003	Indian Geography- Vision 2020	Spatial causation of the socio-economic upheavals and spatial expressions of socio-cultural transformations, using GIS build Geographical Knowledge System (GKS) carving out regional 'roadmaps', revealing alternative policy routes; postmodernism is the most appropriate approach for geographical study.
P.S. Tewari 2004	Regional Development- Vision 2020	Identify Five-tier planning structure for formulation and implementation of regional plans.
Sudesh Nangia 2005	Women's Empowerment & Gender Equity	Explore the theme of women empowerment & gender equity-an extended branch of Population geography for further teaching and research.
M.K. Bandopadhyay 2006	Tourism Environment and Development	Prepare eco-friendly sustainable tourism development plan.
H.S. Sharma 2007	Repositioning Geographical Research - Environment, Development, and Sustainability	Geographers to reclaim the lost ground and opportunities in public & private sector jobs by rigorous training in technology, methodology and theoretical advances; Emphasise on courses dealing with project evaluation techniques & environmental impact assessment; situate modern geographic research in relation to the challenges of sustainable development using latest tools like GPS, GIS & geomatics.
K.R. Dikshit 2008	Tending the Planet Earth: the Key to Human Survival	Produce a unifying, all inclusive blueprint for the restoration of the planet' health embroiled in conflicting socio-economic, political interests.
M.H. Qureshi 2009	Environment, Culture and Development	Focus on the environmental, cultural costs of development; evaluate the govt. launched programmes to understand their success & failures; understand the role of spatial distribution of resources & search for markets as source for the introduction of violence.
R.K. Rai 2010	The Indian Disaster Scenario & its Mitigation	Evolve research projects on hazards & disasters & provide solutions for minimizing their impact; prepare a comprehensive landslide inventory for landslide prone areas of the country.

Y.G. Joshi 2011	Resources &Development: A View from Central Tribal Belt of India	Subject to be more relevant to the contemporary policy issues and particularly the problems of underprivileged and marginal areas and the marginalised sections of the society. NAGI to work out a model of 'Group Research' to tap the talent of young geographers.
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Presidential addresses have played an important role in influencing, or responding to, new directions in geography. The sharpened messages in the present century are evoking hope for the subject to be more responsive to the changing social, economic and political landscape. The call made by these scholars relate to reframing of research questions of development related issues, invoke rigorous training in information technology, methodology and understanding of theory, situate modern geographic research in indigenous paradigm and make geography as the intellectual and integrative driving force behind vulnerability science. The goal and thus grand challenge is to improve our public policies to lessen the vulnerability of our own children and the world's children, all of whom deserve and demand the right to a healthy environment and a peaceful future. If our science and practice can achieve this, then we will have truly made a difference. Singh (2009) in her article on 'Social Sciences in India Revisited' has also highlighted some emerging social issues in the contemporary context. Like Alvin Tofler had conceptualised a "global village" when wrote his book 'The Third Wave: The Classic Study of Tomorrow' in 1984, which has become a reality now. In the same vein what kind of geographers, attributes and what qualities do we foresee in the future? It remains to be seen to what extent the issues raised from time to time have been addressed and translated into serious research.

These messages also express serious concerns on the status of research in India. Geographic studies suffer from certain obvious deficiencies and imbalances. .... the further you explore the question the more disgusting the exercise becomes. Two extreme situations occur: on the one hand there is evidence of weak links in geographic training in Indian university..... cannot do advanced farming with primitive implements and technology (Gosal,1980) while on the other there are symptoms of adolescence in its waywardness and rash zeal for concepts and techniques anew (Arunachalam,1980). The evolved scene of Indian Geography resembles a polycyclic landscape.....the best and the rest go together (Krishan, 2000). Excessive dependence on western methodologies, philosophies and secondary data sources for highlighting spatial issues and linguistic constraints in accessing good source materials are some of the issues noted quite often. Geography in India.....dimensions and characteristics of a dinosaur: a huge body, a long tail, and a tiny little head (Raza, 1981). A continuity in assertions cannot be denied.

Added to all this is the current sense of crisis faced by social sciences, of which the discipline of geography is a part, in India. The sense of crisis emanates from the change in the orientation of the world economy. Ever since India entered into the fray of liberalized economy in 1991, social science disciplines within a narrow and

perverse logic of utility increasingly came to be seen as of ‘non-utility’. There is also visible some kind of incongruity between the status of social sciences’ institutions which are in a state of crises and decline and that of good cutting –edge social science which thrives outside institutions.

A look at the focus of some of the presidential addresses in the *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* (a globally reputed Centennial journal) at the close of the last century and beginning of the present one would place the whole issue in larger perspective. The geographers in the West acknowledge that the nature of geographic knowledge today is very different from what it was fifty years ago. It has evolved from phenomenal (declarative) to intellectual (primed by cognitive demands). Geographers today are better poised to ask more socially relevant and innovative questions and provide important leadership about the human–environmental system (Golledge, 2002), by utilizing geospatial technologies with more integrative research approaches. At the same time, through new infospheres, cybergeography, and sensitivity to new attitudes in learning by millineals, future geographies are created that demand more geographic management systems (Nellis, 2005).

Since many of the world’s important problems involve interactions between people and environments, geographers are encouraged to turn their attention to this core area of the discipline (Harden, 2012) through reframing human–environment research questions. Concern with the environment has led to the demand for a more synthetic perspective, one that identifies linkages among the cultural, social, political, economic, physical, biological,

chemical, and geological systems that govern our world. Geography has a historic opportunity to position itself at the nexus of the natural sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities, and to lead the search for synthesis and develop a disciplinary culture that values both specialized analytical research and broader integrative research (Gober, 2000). Geography’s traditions of regional study, fieldwork, and synthesis give us a historic opportunity to position ourselves as institutional leaders in defining internationalization. To do so, we need to build on the strong international foundation of our curriculum and its content and begin to embrace the breadth of international practices (Pandit, 2009).

Geography itself is inherently interdisciplinary. It builds on major emphases in spatial analysis, human–environment interaction, and place-based and regional analyses to encourage communication and interaction with myriad other disciplines. Geographers should continue to show interdisciplinary leadership by embracing different perspectives, by supporting institutional arrangements that foster interdisciplinary activity, and by seeking the knowledge and techniques other fields can share at the same time they contribute geographic perspectives, approaches, and insights to the collective effort (Baerwald, 2010).

Even though many geographers work on topics of great societal import, geography is largely missing from wider debates on political and social matters. This state of affairs reflects the historical marginalization of the discipline and the paucity of visible studies linking geographical scholarship to the major concerns of the day. Geographers need to grapple more frequently with

larger-scale questions, foster more in-depth understanding of different parts of the world, enhance interactions between discrete parts of the discipline, and make explicit the implications of geographical work for the discussions that are shaping public and intellectual agendas. (Murphy, 2006).

Care is a more pressing concern. We attend to the ways in which historical and institutional relationships produce the need for care (extension of market relations; famine, unnatural disasters, environmental and cultural destruction), and that we take up social responsibility in our professional practices (Lawson, 2007). Likewise, Cutter (2003) stressed on the need for more integrative approaches in understanding and responding to environmental hazards (vulnerability science). One challenge we face is to produce the next generation of researchers who will further advance the development of new conceptual models, tools, and techniques for understanding vulnerability. It is imperative that we move beyond the hazard du jour approach to an all-hazards approach to vulnerability science. The discipline of geography is at the core of vulnerability science, and we should not be bashful about this claim.

### **Elements of research**

As far as the element of research is concerned, partly it has its roots in our moorings. There is a tendency to imitate conceptual frameworks and methods of research of the West giving little thought to the applicability and relevance of these frameworks of enquiry and analysis to homeland. The debate between indigenous vs. western paradigm has ever been going on.

Arunachalam (1980) in his presidential address had remarked “the initial impetus to Indian Geography has come through the testing of the western models in the Indian context, though this exercise at times has been carried too far”. Raza (1981) made a similar argument when he pointed out that in the absence of theory-building on the basis of indigenous experience, there is a continual tendency to fill the conceptual vacuum by importing ready-made goods from the glittering departmental stores of the developed world, particularly of its English-speaking segment. Mukerji (1991) had emphasized that Indian geography must become human and humane, must become Indian in character. In saying so he perhaps meant that instead of aping the west it should bank on its own instinct of perceiving the Indian reality with the Indian eyes. Akhtar (1998) observes that Indian Geography has been the greatest borrower of ideas from the west. Dubey (2001) too had stressed that issues should be rooted in indigenous paradigm. Are we intellectually dependent?- Indigenous vs. Western Paradigm.

The debate with regard to indigenization of social science research, away from the clutches of western thought to understand our socio-economic and political scene is gaining ground. ‘Positionality’ is as central to academic life as to all other areas of society. Individual academics are schooled in particular approaches to overall goal of understanding and changing society, within their own context-their own ‘place’ (Massey et al., 1999). What philosophy, approach or perspective, or research method should guide the conduct of research in India? An effort is made to illuminate some ideas on this thought for further contemplation.

Indigenization refers to transformation, or changing to suite a local culture (found on <http://www.wordinfo.info/words/index/inf>). There are three types of indigenization-structural, substantive and theoretical (Kumar, 1981). Here theoretic indigenization is being referred to indicating a condition in which the social scientists of a nation are involved in constructing distinctive conceptual frameworks and meta- theories, which reflect their world views, social and cultural experiences and the perceived goals. This does not mean that social scientists repudiate the implicit and explicit premises of social science paradigms, theories and concepts with reference to their distinctive settings and commitments.

Of the other two, structural indigenization relates to the institutional and organizational capabilities of a nation for the production and diffusion of social science knowledge. Such capabilities include educational and research institutions, a community of indigenous scholars and locally produced social science literature. A nation which does not possess these capabilities can be considered to be structurally dependent in social sciences (Lamy 1976).

Finally, substantive indigenization can be conceptualized with reference to the content focus of the social science. The focus on indigenous subject matter is not identical with the construction of new conceptual approaches and perspectives. Empirical data can be collected and interpreted on the basis of theories which have greater applicability to the conditions of industrialized rather than developing nations. Parsonian pattern variables, for example, can be used for the analysis of modernization processes in India or Inkeles and Smith's (1974) scale of individual modernity of farmers

and peasants. In both cases, the content of research is indigenous but not the underlying theorizing, which seems to reflect biases inherent in the theory and does violence to the social reality.

Why indigenize? Historically, the Social sciences originated in Western Europe with reference to challenges faced by them in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Their concepts carry imprints of their historical and social milieus because human thought does not occur in a vacuum, but is inextricably bound to its historical, social and cultural settings (Kumar, 1981). Indigenization does not mean retreat of the social science into national shells. It is aimed primarily at a redefinition of focus, emancipation of mind and on improving the quality of professional praxis rather than blindly imitating 'others'. This would enable to develop dynamic perspectives on national problems and critical issues of public policy.

It is imperative that perspectives are rooted in corpus of indigenous thought relating to the country's cultural history and socio-economic and political processes. It would provide correctives to some of the tragic twisting of perspective. For instance, "in a culture-conscious country like India, social anthropologists would not reject tradition and history only because Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown emphasized the historical character of the discipline, and return to them with zest only when Louis Dumont vigorously pleads for gorging meaningful links between ideology on the one hand and sociology and anthropology on the other"(Dube,1983).

In working according to set ways of thought the critical ability to identify larger issues of public policy is lost. It also leads to distortion of perspectives and falsification

of generalizations. All this led to stunted growth of the social sciences as the native social scientists operated within parameters set by others and could not see the challenges and opportunities inherent in their social situation. Social science without insight and perspective cannot service nation-building. In the absence of imagination and creativity, the contributions of the social sciences can neither enrich theory in any significant way nor do they prove powerful aids to social transformation. Social sciences have not been functioning in India, transplanted as they are, because our tradition is different from the concerns of the western social sciences (Saberwal, 1982).

Paul Brass (1998:25) has rightly opined that Indian social science carries the burdens of colonial past which are so great that it will take time to extricate out of it. Indian social scientists like Singh (1986) are reported to complain that the British studied the various aspects of Indian social structure, customs and traditions with definitive ideological biases, but we seem to display the same bias while studying India's own marginalized peoples-the peoples without history (Debnath, 1999:3).

It would be desirable if certain degree of detachment is maintained from the global mainstream as far as social sciences are concerned. It is important for Indian social science to stay informed of the theoretical developments elsewhere we may not be bogged down by the currents of social sciences as practiced in the West today because our conditions are materially different the economic theory and econometrics coming out of the west. Balakrishnan (2008:31) has very fittingly put it as "seeking to explain every turn in

India's recent experience in terms of the economic theory currently dominant in the West today is rather like sighting Lenin in South Arcot in Tamil Nadu, being the project of establishing a universal applicability for The Development of Capitalism in Russia, a pastime for some in the India of the late 1970s but not particularly helpful to an understanding of its agriculture. We want first to wean away from this exotic theory".

Apart from indigenous vs. western paradigm issue, it is observed that Indian research students are not trained to think originally in this country. Usually the research supervisors determine the research topics for their students. This hinders the ability of the student to think creatively and identify researchable questions. Improvement in doctoral researches would also serve an important socio-political goal. Social scientists would be able to extricate themselves of the Western dominance on our thinking process and will enable to come out of such moulds in India's research arena.

Some other pondering issues include indiscriminate increase in the number of journals at the cost of quality, fashion of writing edited books, which in many cases are poor in quality, weak undergraduate syllabi, callously and indifferently written textbooks, archaic doctoral works etc. etc. At its worse, teachers who know nothing of geography teach geography. It seems to be more a case of supply than demand. The achilles heel could be poor delivery.

A close perusal of the articles appearing in the journal shows that a large majority of them are based on empirical/analytical approach in the terminology of Habermas (1978).

**Table 2 Annals of National Association of Geographers India: Articles published from 2000-2010 (sampled)**

Themes/Approaches		Marxism	Post-modernism	Descriptive/ Narrative
India			1	4
Physical-Fluvial Geomorphology, Climatology, Soil geog. Biogeography, Environment, disasters	13			
Himalayan region	6			
Population & Settlement-population geog. urban geog./history	34	2		2
Economic-Agricultural, Industrial, Resource	20			
Regional Development	8			4
Political geography, Administrative geog.	1			1
Social, Cultural, Historical and human geog.	6		1	3
Philosophy and use of advance cartographic techniques in geography	10			2

Source: author

Table 2 reveals that a large number of articles are done in positivistic approach. Even those put in the category of critical have not worked to devise a suitable methodology for the same. Perhaps the understanding to actually operationalise these approaches in geographic perspective may not be known. Vaidyanadhan (1987) makes a critical observation in his Presidential address “..... sometimes perusing through the papers in Indian geography journals one is apt to wonder if some of the articles in Indian geography journals are geographical at all”. These concerns have been eloquently spelt out in the ‘Voice of Concern’ (Kapur, 2002).

The moot question is: How to do that? How do we interpret the social reality meaningfully? Which approach

or combination of approaches could best serve the purpose keeping in view the fact that geography is an integrating and interdisciplinary science, identified more on the basis of approach than content. Its contribution can be meaningful in the event of focus on convergence and blurring of inter-disciplinary boundaries to handle social problems arising at times.

In addition, an idea of the focus of contributions and mode of publication was obtained on scanning through edited ‘country reports’ for the period 1992-2012. Every four years a comprehensive stock of the publications made in the diverse fields of geography is undertaken to be presented at International Geographical Congress. This edited country report highlights ‘Progress

in Indian Geography’ and is published by Indian National Science Academy, by the same name. Most if not all, sections in the reports indicate gaps in research, recommendations and future course of action. A total of 3577 writings have appeared in the form of articles in journals, books, edited books, articles in edited books,

reports, etc. It is certainly not claimed that it is an exhaustive list. Doctoral work is largely excluded. 2236 articles comprising nearly 62.5% have been published in research journals. 486 articles have appeared in edited books. Besides, 301 books and 145 edited books have been written during this period (Table 3).

**Table 3 Contributions reported in ‘Progress in Indian Geography’, 1992-2012 (Number)**

Field of Specialization	Articles in Journals	Books	Books (edited)	Articles in edited books	Others	Total
Social, Cultural & Historical	432	135	38	237	140	982
Population & Settlement	539	40	18	54	47	698
Economic Geography	414	33	9	32	38	526
Environment & Regional Development	226	49	50	35	40	400
Physical Geography	254	10	2	67	29	362
Methodological Issues	234	15	15	24	48	336
Political Geography	83	13	1	16	30	143
Indian Geography: Development and Future	49	3	0	16	20	88
A Geographical Mosaic of Incredible India	5	3	12	5	17	42
<b>Total</b>	<b>2236</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>486</b>	<b>409</b>	<b>3577</b>
<b>% distribution</b>	<b>62.5</b>	<b>8.4</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>13.6</b>	<b>11.4</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: ‘Progress in Indian Geography’, Various Reports, 1992-2012

In the aggregated form social, cultural and historical is the most favoured followed by population and settlement, both together claiming more than 45% of the total contribution made during 1992- 2012. From a neglected field, almost untouched by geographers (Reddy, 1982), the former has acquired a prominence in the number of publications. Physical geography and environmental issues claim only about 20%. Within methodological issues, the thrust is largely on RS and GIS per se and only 1.5% of the contribution is in the form of Research Methods, Computer Applications & Cartography and 2.5% on Indian Geography: Development and Future. In the 2008-12 report many researchers have established new frontiers in the field of

Geography and explored the unexplored territories enriching the discipline with new experiences and knowledge. An in-depth analysis is required to cull information on the nature of research being pursued, changes and continuity in the treatment of topics, the spatial scale and the areas or regions focussed.

Universities are in the process of redesigning their coursework at M.Phil/ Ph.D. level in the light of UGC's concern for bringing about qualitative change in the research programme. The component on 'Philosophy of Geography' is delivered in the following manner in some of the Universities for which the information could be procured (Table 4).

**Table 4 M.Phil/PrePh.D syllabus of selected University departments containing component on 'Philosophy of Geography'**

University	Focus of Course Design
NEHU, Shillong	Modern Era, Enlightenment and Modern Science; Place of Geography among sciences; Nature of Geography as a Science Development and Progress in Modern Science; Paradigmatic Progress of Science (Kuhn), Critical Theory (Habermas) and the Frankfurt School Research Agenda in contemporary physical geography; Contemporary human geography; Neo-Environmentalism Scientific Research and the problem of explanation, Hypothesis, Law, Theory in Geography; Logical Positivism
University of Pune, Pune	Introduction to research in geography : Geographic Research – Procedure of Scientific research – Deductive and Inductive approach, Geography as Spatial Science- concepts and models in geography, Evolution of contemporary geographic thoughts and concepts, Logical and scientific thinking in geography, Systems approach in geography Overview of recent research trends in geography.
Panjab University, Chandigarh	History of Geography: Methodological issues and approaches Theory and Geography Quantification and the Development of Theory in Human Geography Revival and Restructuring of Ecological Studies in Geography Revival and Restructuring of Regional Geography General Systems Theory and Geography Post- modernism and Geography Feminism and gender issues in Geography Geography's research frontiers

Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra	Transformation of Geography from ideographic to nomothetic science Routes and forms of explanations Empiricism and positivism Laws, theories and models. System Analysis and General Systems Theory. Critical revolution and qualitative analysis. Humanistic traditions and behavioral explanations. Marxist and Feminist perspectives Postmodernism New regional geography – place and locality studies.
M.D. University, Rohtak	Ontology, Epistemology and Research Paradigms- geographic research and choice of approaches Modes of scientific explanation- inductive and deductive reasoning History and philosophical systems of the discipline of geography: physical sciences, social sciences and humanistic traditions
CSR, JNU	No course/ component in any paper on Philosophy of geography

Whereas in M.D. University, University of Pune, and NEHU, it is taught as part of ‘Research Methodology’ paper; in Kurukshetra University and Panjab University it is serviced as a separate paper on ‘Explanation in Geographic Research’ and ‘Recent Issues in Geographic Thought’, respectively.

It is a fresh endeavour to revamp research activity and quality. The gap between teaching/delivery and practice/ research needs to be bridged. How the world around us is theorized from a geographic perspective? In other words there is a need to sensitize on thinking, writing or doing geographically. The questions raised or tools selected should display geographical spirit. It is hoped that Indian geographers would no longer be content to be only ‘hewers of wood and drawers of water’ in the field of research. The method of delivery could be through citing concrete geographical examples and hands on training.

### **Broad based vs. Depth**

It is a strange paradox. The level of specialization within any discipline is steadily

increasing while the world into which the students move after graduation is demanding ever more generalist and integrating skills (Haggett, 1990:180). The theme of the advantage of being unspecialized was one of the favourites of Carl Sauer and he had expanded on it at length in his presidential address to the Association of American Geographers in 1956 on ‘The education of a geographer’: “We professionals exist not because we have discovered a line of inquiry or even own a special technique but because men have always needed, gathered and classified geographic knowledge..... In a time of exceedingly great increase of knowledge and of techniques we remain in a measure undelimited and unreduced to a specific discipline. This, I think, is our nature and our destiny, this present weakness and potential strength..... We welcome whatever work is competent from whatever source, and claim no proprietary rights. In the history of life, the less specialized forms have tended to survive and flourish, whereas the functionally self-limiting types have become fossils” (Sauer, 1956: 294-6). Further, ‘if we shrink the limits of geography, the greater field will still exist: it will be only

- Address, *3rd Indian Geography Congress*, Bombay.
- Baerwald, Thomas J. (2010): Prospects for Geography as an Interdisciplinary Discipline. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol.100 :3, 493-501.
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**Dr. (Mrs.) Nina Singh**

Professor of Geography

M.D. University, Rohtak-124001

([ninasingh99@gmail.com](mailto:ninasingh99@gmail.com))