

Revisiting the dispute over the first under-graduate department of geography in India

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Abstract

Widespread confusion persists within the geography community on questions of 'when and where was the first under-graduate department of geography established in India?' A majority of Indian and foreign geographers who have worked on the history of geography in South Asia, consider that the first under-graduate department of geography was established in a college affiliated to Punjab University, Lahore in 1920. The present article contests the above claim by questioning the reliability of its sources by examining available literary sources on the history of geography in South Asia as well as by applying historical reasoning. The article establishes that, contrary to commonly held views, the first independent and full-fledged under-graduate department of geography in erstwhile British India was established in 1924 at Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh.

Keywords: *Geography department, teaching of geography, intermediate college, history of geography*

Introduction

Teaching of modern geography started in erstwhile British India (henceforth India) with the establishment of under-graduate departments¹ of geography in many universities of the region in the first half of the 20th Century. However, the origin of teaching of modern geography can be further traced back to the second half of the 19th Century when the subject was introduced in schools (for details, see Kumar, Krishna, 2005). But, compared to most sister disciplines, independent and full-fledged under-graduate

departments of geography were established in institutions of higher learning in India rather late (Kapur, 2002). One of the reasons for this could be that, during the early days, the claim of geography as a college-level subject was not taken seriously by university authorities (Garrett and Abdul, 1964: 183). M. L. Renjen (1942: 44) was of the view that popular perception of geography purely as a school subject was one of the reasons for this reluctance to consider the subject for its rightful place at under-graduate level.

¹ For a limited purpose, the article does not differentiate between a college and a university.

Not surprisingly, the entry of under-graduate departments of geography in Indian universities could materialize only by the second decade of the 20th Century². By the end of British rule in India, a number of colleges and a few universities had made provisions to teach geography. But despite its recent origin, considerable confusions have prevailed among geographers on issues of the exact year and place (college or university) of the establishment of the first-ever under-graduate department of geography in India. This article attempts to delve into literature on the institutional history of geography in erstwhile British India so as to find answers to these questions. Here, ‘under-graduate geography departments’ refers to geography departments of either under-graduate or post-graduate colleges or universities with a mandate to teach geography to students as a degree course with geography as the main discipline or pass course with geography as one of the two main disciplines. A modest aim of the paper is to remove some of these recurring errors with the help of literary evidence and historical reasoning.

While reading literature on the history of geography in India, it is common to encounter scholars mentioning different dates and places of the establishment of the first-ever under-graduate department of geography in erstwhile India. The very

mentioning of different years and different universities/colleges (when and where was the first under-graduate department of geography was established?) is enough to create confusion among students and teachers. Most importantly, correct historical facts, regardless of how trivial they may be, are always better than the wrong ones.

Entry of geography in colleges and universities

The beginning of modern higher education in India owes its origin to the establishment of the first three modern universities in India in 1857 in the presidency cities of Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras on the recommendations of the Woods Dispatch of 1854. However, these universities were different from the contemporary conventional teaching universities as they mainly acted as examining, evaluating, and affiliating bodies. The teaching works were mostly carried out in their affiliate colleges. Some evidence indicates that geography was taught in some of the affiliate colleges during the second half of the nineteenth century and early decades of twentieth century by some self-trained and motivated teachers with a deep love for this subject. In particular, Physiography (equivalent to Physical Geography) paper was offered in a few colleges and was taught by geologists. Geography was taught in

² Honours degrees in geography in British universities, upon which early geography departments in most Indian universities were modeled, were introduced very late. According to Edmund W. Gilbert (1972: 22), British Honours degrees in geography were only introduced as recently as in 1917. As a result, none of the pioneers of modern British Geography, such as Halford Mackinder (1861-1947), Andrew John Herbertson (1865-1915), Percy Maude Roxby (1880-1947), and Vaughan Cornish (1862-1948), possessed academic qualifications in geography. A similar trend could be seen in India. Early pioneers of geography departments in India were either without a graduate degree in geography [e.g. Harbans Lal Chhibber (1901-1955), R. N. Dubey (1897-1960), Satya Charan Chatterjee (1905-1978)]; or had Ph.D. in geography from outside [e.g. Ibadur Rahman Khan (1899-1950), S. M. Tahir Rizvi (1901-1981), and S. P. Chatterjee (1903-1989)].

combination with other subjects; and papers like Economic Geography, Commercial Geography, and Historical Geography were fairly popular. These papers were taught by professors of Economics, Commerce, Statistics, and History.³

During this time, geography was taught in teacher training colleges to prepare specialist teachers of geography for primary and secondary schools. These colleges offered a Diploma in Geography, a two years course after matriculation. Some of the well-known Teachers' Training Colleges for the training of prospective geography teachers were Teacher Training College, Agra; Basic Training College, Allahabad; Central Training College, Lahore; Lady MacLagan Training College for Women, Lahore; Sohan Lal Training College, Lahore; Queen Mary's College, Madras; Meston Training College, Royapettah, Madras; Teachers' Training College, Saidapet, Madras; and Teachers' Training Department, Calcutta. At the same time, geography made an entry in some universities as a subject of diploma course. The one-year diploma course in geography was open for graduates of science and humanities.⁴

Summarizing, geography was taught as following four courses during the second half of the nineteenth century and first two

decades of the twentieth. First, some aspects of geography lessons were imparted in under-graduate colleges by self-trained non-geographers. Second, geography was taught as a subject in teacher training colleges for awarding teaching diploma degrees. Third, geography was a mandatory subject in secondary schools and finally, the subject was offered as an optional paper in some intermediate colleges. Thus, the major focus of geography teaching during this period was restricted to school teaching and training of geography teachers for those schools.

Establishment of geography departments

This tentativeness is enough to create some confusion regarding the exact year of establishment of the first under-graduate department of geography in a university or in a college in India. Anu Kapur (2002: 4) notes that "ambiguity obstructs the beginning of geographical studies in India. Some rush to claim that the first under-graduate department was started in Lahore, now in Pakistan in 1920. Others say that in divided India, the first department of geography was inaugurated in the University of Aligarh {Aligarh Muslim University} in 1924". A survey of literature to find out the name of the college/university where the first-ever geography department was started in India

3 For example, Gangashankar Baldevshankar Pandya was a professor of Administration and Geography; Manindra Dasgupta was a professor of Commercial Geography and Economics; Dewan Bahadur Hiralal Lallubhai Kaji was a Professor of Geography and Statistics. Kaji was an accomplished writer and wrote some interesting papers and geography books (e.g. "Geography, the Basis of National Education"; Principles of General Geography (1938), Land Beyond the Borders (1939) and Atlas of the Indian Empire (for details, see Kaji, Dewan Bahadur, 1939). He was also one of the founders of Bombay Geographical Association and a member of the Board of Studies in Geography of the University of Bombay for a number of years and played an important role in the development of geography in the city of Bombay (now Mumbai). H. L. Chhibber and Rajnath were professors of both Geology and Geography in the Department of Geology of Banaras Hindu University during the 1940's.

4 For example, geography entered Madras University as a diploma subject in July 1932. In Calcutta University, it was offered as a diploma course in 1937 for the training school teachers (UGC, 1968).

singles out two universities as the contenders for this distinction, i.e. Punjab University (Lahore) and Aligarh Muslim University. The place of Rangoon University in the development of geography in erstwhile India as an early pioneer is well known, even though it is hardly mentioned by geographers. Patna College is also considered as one of the earliest pioneers in under-graduate geography teaching.

The disagreement is not only over the place but also the date of starting the first-ever under-graduate department of geography in India. A survey of available literature on the subject reveals 1920, 1923, 1924, 1927, and 1928 as the contending years for the subject's recognition. The following authorities consider 1920 as the establishment of the first-ever Department of Geography in South Asia: the UGC (1968: 7; 2001: 6), P. P. Karan (1992: 181), R. L. Singh and Rana P. B. Singh (1992: 1), P. Dayal (1998: 41)⁵, B. Thakur (1994: 68), L. R. Singh (1996: 1), S. Subbaih (1998: 1), A. Kapur (2002: 12), Allen Noble (2004: 15), Rana P. B. Singh (2009: 50), Lalita Rana (2010: 13), Ravi S. Singh (2011: 3), and B. P. Subedi and P.C. Poudel (2005: 107). On the other hand, Khin Zaw et al (1961: 2017: 4)⁶ consider that the first-ever department of geography and geology of erstwhile British India was founded in 1923 in Rangoon College. A good number of geographers, such as George B. Cressey (1945: 489), S. M. Tahir Rizvi (1958: 79), Kazi S. Ahmad (1967: 116), A. Kapur

(1998: 1), P. S. Tiwari (1999: 72), Sachinder Singh (2009: 109) and M. H. Qureshi (2012: 13) consider that the first UG Department of geography was established in 1924. In this regard, D. D. Gupta (1952: 39) considers that the first-ever geography department in South Asia was came into existence in 1925, whereas according to B. Banerjee (2006: 283) it began in 1928.

A similar controversy also surrounds the place (college/university) where the first geography department started in South Asia. Most authorities consider that the first department of geography was established in a college of Punjab University in Lahore [e.g., UGC, (1968: 7; 2001: 6), P. P. Karan, (1992: 181), P. Dayal, (1994: 41), B. Thakur, (1994: 68), L. R. Singh (1996: 1), (S. Subbaih (1998: 1), M. H. Qureshi (2012: 13), R. L. Singh and Rana P. B. Singh (1992: 1), Rana P. B. Singh (2009: 50), Ravi S. Singh (2011: 3), A. Kapur (2002: 12), Allen Noble (2004: 15), B. P. Subedi and P. C. Poudel (2005: 107), and Lalita Rana (2010: 13)]. On the other hand, many others [e.g. S. M. Tahir Rizvi, (1958: 79), Kazi S. Ahmad (1967: 116), Sachinder Singh (2009: 109), A. Kapur (1998: 1), and P. S. Tiwari (1999: 72)] are of the opinion that the first undergraduate department of Geography in South Asia was established at Aligarh Muslim University. The following sections examine these claims of the foundation of first-ever undergraduate department of geography in South Asia.

5 The Queen Mary's College websites, however, mentions that B.A. course in geography was started in 1941 and converted to B.Sc. in 1949; (Source: www.queenmarycollege.edu.in; accessed on April 11, 2020). In 1927, geography was introduced as an optional subject in the intermediate class in this college.

6 The University of Rangoon was founded in 1920; shortly afterwards, in 1923, the Department of Geology and Geography was established with Dr L D Stamp, who had worked previously as an oil geologist in Burma, as Professor and Head of the department (Zaw, Khin, Swe, Win, Barber, A. J., Crow, M. J. and Nwe, Yin Yin, 2017: 4). Also see, Stamp, L. D. (1961).

Table 1: Year of establishment of UG department of geography in a college of Punjab University, Lahore

<i>Year of establishment</i>	<i>Author/Source</i>
1920	U. G. C. (1968: 7, 2001: 6), Karan, P. P. (1992: 181), Singh, R. L. and Singh, Rana P. B. (1992: 1), Dayal, P. (1994: 41), Thakur, B. (1994: 68), Singh, L. R. (1996: 1), Subbaih, S. (1998: 1); Kapur, A. (2002: 12), Noble, Allen (2004: 15), Singh, Rana P. B. (2009: 50), Rana, Lalita (2010: 13) Singh, Ravi S. (2011: 3)
1924	Qureshi, M. H. (2012: 13)
1928	Banerjee, B. (2006: 283)
1934-35	Ranjan, M. L. (1942: 45)

Sources: Compiled by the author from various sources

Punjab University: Punjab University was established in 1920 in Lahore. It was the 4th oldest University of erstwhile India. Punjab University began geography teaching at the college level during the 1930s and 1940s. By 1942 as many as eight colleges affiliated to Punjab University, were offering under-graduate courses in geography (for details, see Renjen, M. L., 1942: 44-45). No other university in India in this period had as many colleges with under-graduate departments of geography.

Most geographers believe that the first-ever under-graduate geography department in India was established in a college of Punjab University (Table 1). However, except P. Dayal (1994: 41), who identifies Government College, Lahore, no other geographer mentions this college where a geography department was first started in 1920. Further, most geographers consider 1920 as the

starting year of the first-ever under-graduate geography department in a college of this university. However, the claim is sans any documentary proof. The most popular and reliable literature in support of this claim seems to be the Report of the University Grants Commission Review Committee on Geography in Indian Universities published in 1968.

The website of Punjab University College (earlier known as University Oriental College) claims that the teaching of geography in the college started in 1870⁷. But these claims are not valid since at that time, Intermediate Arts (I.A.)/Higher Secondary Schools/Junior Colleges which were then known as F.A. (First Examination in Arts), were an integral part of colleges/universities in India. Even secondary schools were integral parts of some of the colleges. However, in due course of time, intermediate colleges were separated

⁷ The University Oriental College or Punjab University College was established in 1870. At that time, in addition to oriental learning, western knowledge was also imparted. Classical languages - Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit - and oriental indigenous languages - Urdu, Hindi, Punjabi and Pashto - were taught. Other fields included, engineering, mathematics, medicine, history, geography (italics mine), Muhammadan Law, Dharam Shaster, Tibb Unani and Vedak, economics, philosophy, logic and photography, etc (University Oriental College, 2020).

from some of the colleges and universities.⁸ In all probability, the teaching of geography at Forman College⁹ of Punjab University in 1875 started at the school level¹⁰. By applying the same logic, one can refute the claim of the Punjab University College that the teaching of geography started in this college in 1870. The teaching of geography must have started in schools attached to the Punjab University College.

The factuality of above claims can be refuted by citing works of M. L. Renjen published in *The Panjab Geographical Review* way back in 1942 which clearly indicates that in Punjab province the teaching of geography first began at the intermediate level in Forman Christian College, Lahore in the year 1924.

It was in the year 1924, that mainly through the efforts of Prof. E. T. Dean, of Forman Christian College that Geography was introduced for the first time in the Punjab (Punjab) University as a college subject. Forman College was the first to introduce the teaching of Geography to Intermediate Classes. In 1924, the Forman College admitted the first batch of 9 students to the First Year Class offering Geography and sent up this batch for the University Examination in 1926 (Renjen, 1942: 44).¹¹

A peep into the institutional history of geography in India would convince us about the claim of Government College, Lahore (Punjab University) as one of the pioneer geography departments. But, a careful examination of the existing literature rules out the claim of this college as the first institution to start the under-graduate department of geography in India.

It would be pertinent to look into the development of geography in this college during the third and the fourth decade of the 20th Century. Renjen (1942: 45) has emphasized the role of two geographers-Mohammad Nazir¹² and E. T. Dean, and the Principal of Government College of Lahore, Prof. Herbert Leonard Offley Garrett¹³, in the advancement of geography teaching in the Punjab province. Prof. Garrett was principal of the Government College from 1927-1936 and the teaching of geography started in the college during his tenure.¹⁴ This means that there is absolutely no possibility of the beginning of the under-graduate teaching of geography in this college (neither in 1920 nor in 1924).

8 In Aligarh Muslim University, for example, a separate Intermediate College was started in 1921 on the recommendations of the Calcutta University. Before that, it was a part of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College (MAO College). Major E. W. Dann (M. A. Oxford, FRGS), the famous geographer and founder of Butler Geography Department at Aligarh Muslim University, was the first Principal of this College (1921-1924).

9 Forman College or Forman Christian College was founded in 1864 in the erstwhile Indian city of Lahore. It was affiliated with Punjab University. Presently, the college has been accorded the status of a Chartered University.

10 According to M. L. Renjen (1942: 44), Forman College was the first college in Punjab Province to introduce the teaching of Geography to Intermediate classes in 1924. The B.A. teaching in the college was introduced in 1938.

11 It should be pointed out that during this time, in many cases Intermediate classes were held in colleges and universities.

12 Mohammad Nazir was the head of the Department of Geography from 1936 to 1942. He was succeeded by A.N. Kapur (1942-1947).

13 Herbert Leonard Offley Garrett (1881-1941) was a well-known historian who wrote a number of books on the history of India (e.g. *A First History of India*; *Mughal Rule in India*; *European Adventurers of North India, 1785-1849*). Interestingly, he was the author of *A History of Government College, Lahore, 1864-1914*.

14 According to H. L. O. Garrett, and Abdul Hamid, (1964: 183), "Geography, a compulsory subject of study in the Army class was introduced at Intermediate level [1931-32]. But it was not taken very seriously by the University authorities who placed it under the guardianship of the Board of Studies in History. However, it was upgraded to the status of a degree subject as soon as it had been included in the syllabi of other competitive examinations [1936]. The Government College being the only Lahore College to provide instruction in this subject, allowed a limited number of students from other colleges to attend our Geography classes". Very soon, geography became a very popular subject and started attracting a large number of students (Garrett, H. L. O. and Hamid, Abdul, 1964: 185).

Table 2: Year of establishment of UG department of geography in a college of Patna University

<i>Year of establishment</i>	<i>Author/Source</i>
1924	Singh, R. L. and Singh, Rana P. B. (1992)
1927	UGC (1968: 7, 2001: 6), Karan, P. P. (1992: 181), Thakur, B. (1994), Singh, L. R. (1996: 1), Dayal, P. (1998), Subbiah, S. (1998), Kapur, A. (2002), Singh, Rana P. B. (2009), Rana, Lalita (2010), Singh, Ravi S. (2011)
1928	Official website of Department of Geography, Patna University
1934	Sarkar, Jagdish Narayan and Jha, Jagdish Chandra (1963)

Sources: Compiled by the author from various sources

Renjen (1942) goes on to further elaborate the second phase of the development of geography in colleges in the Punjab province when the subject was introduced in the B.A. classes which “was done in the year 1934-35 mainly through the concerted efforts of Messrs. M. Nazir of Government College and E. T. Dean. In this connection the name of Principal H. L. O. Garret [Garrett], the then Principal of Government College, Lahore, needs special mention for his whole-hearted support of Mr. Nazir’s plans...the Government College, Lahore, admitted its first batch of B.A. students with Geography in 1936” (Renjen, 1942: 45).

Interestingly, a limited number of students from other colleges of Lahore were allowed to attend Geography classes in the Government College in the initial period when geography was taught only in this college.¹⁵ However, very soon the teaching of geography at B. A. level started at Forman College as well (Renjen, 1942: 45).

In this context, another doubtful claim is made by the Geography Department of Lahore College for Women (presently). The

website of this college claims that geography is one of the oldest departments in Lahore College for Women University. As a subject, it was introduced in 1922 at intermediate and in 1925 at the graduate level. Even though it claims that geography was first introduced at the B.A. level in 1925, but it is not at all clear whether a Department of Geography was established at under-graduate level or geography was offered as an optional subject. Moreover, the authenticity of this claim cannot be verified from other sources. As a matter of fact, Renjen (1942) points out that an under-graduate geography department at this college was established only after 1939.

Evidently Geography Department of Government College, Lahore, which according to most geographers is the first under-graduate department of geography in India, for having been established in 1920, was actually established a decade and a half later, in 1934-35.

Patna University: Amongst the colleges of eastern India, Patna College was the first to start geography teaching. This was in spite of the fact that this region had some of the oldest

¹⁵ It is important to note that the website of the college (source: <https://www.gcu.edu.pk/Geography.htm>; accessed on 15/3/2020) also gives the same date of the establishment of geography Department in the college: “The Department of Geography can be traced back to 1931-32 when Geography was introduced as a subject. The department was formally established in 1936.” Prof. Muhammad Nazir was the founder head of the Department (1936-1942). He was succeeded by Amar Nath Kapur (1942-1947). Amar Nath Kapur left this college after the partition of India in 1947 and joined the Department of Geography at the Government College, Ludhiana which was affiliated to East Punjab University in March 1948 (Sethi, R. R. 1968: 234). East Punjab University is now called Punjab University, Chandigarh.

and well-known colleges in India. Some well-known scholars such as S C Majumdar¹⁶, S C Chatterjee¹⁷ and S Z Ahsan¹⁸ were associated with this department in the early years of its foundation. Patna College was also one of the earliest colleges to start an under-graduate department of geography.

Most geographers believe that Patna University was the third to start teaching geography at under-graduate level, having started in 1927 (Table 2). However, according to the authors of History of Patna University, Jagdish Narayan Sarkar and Jagdish Chandra Jha (1963: 146), teaching of geography in Patna College at Intermediate stage was started in 1920 but soon discontinued to revive in 1927. They also mention that in 1932-33 the college was affiliated in this subject and in 1934 the B.A. teaching in geography began. Interestingly, the official website of the Geography Department of Patna University shows that Geography was first introduced in 1928 in the Science Block of the college as a new academic programme. Similarly, on the wall-board of the Department of Geography of Patna College, SC Majumdar served as the head of the geography department from 1927 to 1928. Thus, given the differences in dates of

establishment of under-graduate Department of Geography in a college of Patna University (Table 4), it would be only reasonable to agree with findings of Jagdish Narayan Sarkar and Jagdish Chandra Jha (1963) that the regular teaching of geography started in Patna College at the intermediate level in 1927 and at B.A. level in 1934. Rameshwar Gauntia¹⁹ (1991), former professor and head of the Geography Department of Patna University, also supports this contention.

Rangoon College, Rangoon: The history of the discipline of geography in Rangoon College, Rangoon University, Myanmar (erstwhile Burma) is somewhat different from other universities of South Asia in the sense that in the beginning it attracted a number of well-known geographers/geologists as its faculty members notably L. D. Stamp, E. C. Stamp, H. L. Chhibber, G. B. Beasley, S. P. Chatterjee, R. Ramamirtham, O. H. K. Spate and L. W. Trueblood. Here, a joint under-graduate programme of Geology and Geography was started as early as 1923²⁰ (1924 according to the University of Rangoon website). Named as the Department of Geography and Geology, it was established by L. Dudley Stamp.²¹ In 1924, he was

16 Sarat Chandra Mazumdar was a Professor of Physics. He worked under renowned physicist Sir Jagdish Chandra Bose (1858-1937).

17 Satya Charan Chatterjee (1905-1978), FRGS, was a geologist by training. Before joining Patna College, he was a teacher in Zila School Ranchi. He was first to obtain D.Sc. in Geology from Calcutta University in 1936. He served as Lecturer, Assistant Professor, and Professor at the Department of Geography of Patna College from 1929 to 1949.

He also served as Professor of Geology (1949-1952) in Patna Science College and J. N. Tata Professor of Geology and Head of Geology Department, Patna University (1952-1961). He was elected F.N.I. in 1948.

18 After the partition of India in 1947, Syed Zaheer Hassan left Patna University to join as Inspector of Colleges in Pakistan. Later on, he joined the Department of Geography, Karachi University, and retired as a Professor of Geography from the same university. For some time, he served as the head of the Geography Department, Karachi University, and editor of the journal *Geographia*.

19 In most cases, intermediate teaching, and in some cases even school teaching was conducted as a part of a college or even university. So much so, those passing degrees of matriculation and intermediate certificates were issued by universities. However, there is a tendency among geographers to equate intermediate teaching with under-graduate. This type of confusion also prevails in the case of Punjab University College, Forman College, and Lahore College of Women University, Lahore.

20 The Name of the Department was later changed from Department of Geology and Geography to Department of Geography and Geology due to the popularity of Geography (for details. see Zaw, Khin, Swe, Win, Barber, A. J., Crow, M. J. and Nwe, Yin Yin, 2017).

21 The website of the university claims that: The Department of Geography is one of the oldest departments in the University of Yangon. Although it was planned at the University's foundation in 1920, the teaching of geography in the University of Yangon only started in 1924 (Source: Department of Geography, University of Rangoon, <https://www.u.edu.mm/geography/>).

Table 3: Year of establishment of UG Department of Geography at Aligarh Muslim University

<i>Year of establishment</i>	<i>Author/Source</i>
1924	Cressey, George B. (1945), Rizvi, S. M. Tahir (1958), Ahmad, Kazi S. (1964: 27), Karan, P.P. (1992: 181), Singh, R.L. and Singh, R.P.B. (1992), Singh, L.R. (1996: 1), Dayal, P. (1998), Kapur, A. (1998, 2002), Singh, Sachinder (2009), Singh, Rana, P.B. (2009), Rana, Lalita (2010), Singh, Ravi S. (2011)
1925	Gupta, D. D. (1952)
1927	Sharma, H. N. (2000: 142), Qureshi, M.H. (2012: 13)
1927-28	UGC (2001)
1928	UGC (1968), Thakur, B. (1994), Subbaih, S. (1998)

Sources: Compiled by the author from various sources

joined by his wife E.C. Stamp (who had major in Geography) and Dr. H. L. Chhibber²² (Masters in Geology) and the teaching of geography began in the same year. However, an independent Department of Geography in Rangoon University was started as late as in 1948 by Prof. S. P. Chatterjee.²³

Aligarh Muslim University: The history of geography at Aligarh Muslim University is as old as the inception of this institution itself. The teaching of geography began at the secondary school level since the very inception of this institution as *Madrasat-ul-Ulum Musalmanan-e-Hind* in 1875²⁴. When the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental (MAO) College was established, the school remained an integral part. Later on in 1921, a separate

intermediate college was started comprising of class IX, X, XI, and XII in the university on the recommendations of the Calcutta University Commission²⁵. Geography was an optional subject in this college and was taught by Qazi Jalaluddin. Interestingly, the founder principal of this college, Major E. W. Dann, was the founder of the under-graduate Department of Geography in the University.²⁶

Different authorities have given different dates of establishment of the under-graduate department in this university (Table 3). The official website of the Geography Department of Aligarh Muslim University clearly mentions its date of establishment as 1924 imparting under-graduate courses only. Initially, there were only two teaching staffs

22 On the invitation of L. D. Stamp, H. L. Chhibber joined the Department of Geology and Geography in 1924 and became the second head of the Department (1926-1928) after L. D. Stamp left for England. Prior to this, he was an Assistant Professor of Geology in the College of Science at Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi.

23 S. P. Chatterjee (1903-1989) served as a Lecturer in the Department of Geology and Geography, Rangoon University from 1928 to 1932. Further, in 1947 when Geography was separated from Geology Department, Prof. S.P. Chatterjee was invited to head this newly developed Post Graduate Department of Geography. He remained there till 1949 (Mookerjee, Sitanshu, 1998). However, the dates of his joining and leaving the Rangoon University have been incorrectly printed as 1957 and 1959, respectively in the bio-bibliography of S. P. Chatterjee by Sitanshu Mookerjee (1998).

24 The school started on June 1, 1875. Seven teachers were appointed to give instructions in various subjects with H.G.I. Siddons (a graduate of Oxford University) as the headmaster. Initially, teaching started for the ninth class with 11 students on roll. It was proposed to start instructions in Arabic, Persian, English, mathematics, History, and Geography (For details, see Bhatnagar, S. K. 1969: 47).

25 For details, see Karwaan-e-Aligarh, 2007.

26 On the recommendation of the Calcutta University Commission, a separate Intermediate College was started comprising of class IX, X, XI, and XII. Major E. W. Dann was appointed its Principal in 1921. Later on, Prof. Abdul Majeed Qureshi (also written as Kureishy) was appointed as its Principal in 1924, and Major Dann was requested to establish the Department of Geography.

with Major Dann as professor and chairman of the Department and Qazi Jalaluddin²⁷ as a lecturer. In 1926/27, Kazi Saeduddin Ahmad was appointed as a lecturer. In this way, Major Dann had the distinction of being the founder of the first ever under-graduate Department of Geography in South Asia. This fact is substantiated by the officially-sponsored book on the history of this university²⁸ as well as by the professional historians who have written history of the university²⁹. What is more, two distinguished students from the very first postgraduate batch of this Department, who later joined this Department as members of teaching faculty - Kazi S. Ahmad³⁰ and Syed Mohammad Tahir Rizvi³¹ have also mentioned 1924 as the foundation year of the Under-graduate Department of Geography at Aligarh Muslim University. The first batch had 7 students and they passed out in 1927.³²

Sources of error

Perhaps the most important source of error could be due to the tendency of geographers, writing on this issue, to consider intermediate classes and B.A./B.Sc. classes as a single unit. Of course, there used to be a single administration of intermediate and B.A.

/ B.Sc. in many colleges of India during the colonial times. Moreover, the same teaching staff used to teach their subjects at both the levels. Interestingly, in the early phases, geography was offered as a subject at intermediate level only and the teaching of geography at B.A./B.Sc. stage was introduced much later. For example, Geography was introduced at the intermediate level in Patna College in 1927; and the under-graduate department of geography could start only in 1934. The second reason could be due to prevailing confusion on issues of the start of the teaching of geography and the establishment of the under-graduate geography department. In many colleges, geography was offered as an optional subject at B.A. level but under-graduate geography departments were established some years later (as was the case with Punjab University and Patna University). Geographers, who reproduced these 'errors', did so by merely rephrasing the original statements without bothering to verify them with other sources.

Conclusion

The foregoing analysis of the establishment of the first-ever under-graduate department

27 Qazi Jalaluddin, FRGS, started his career as a geography teacher in the school of the MAO College/Aligarh Muslim University. When the Under-graduate Department of Geography was established in the university in 1924, he joined as a lecturer. He has the distinction of preparing the first ever-relief map of India in 1910 – famously known as the “The Rees Model” – which was named after J. C. Rees, the Head Master of the Collegiate School of Mohammad Anglo-Oriental College from 1903 to 1910 (Bhatnagar, S. K., 1969: 283-84). He used to write popular articles on different subjects of knowledge in the Urdu language. This work was published in 12 volumes under the title ‘Urdu Encyclopedia’ (Shafi, Mohammad, 1958).

28 The Department of Geography also came into existence in 1924 and Major E. W. Daun [Dann], who was principal of the Intermediate College, was transferred as chairman of the department. In Geographical studies, Aligarh must be regarded as the pioneer, as it was the first University in the sub-continent to give the subject due to the importance in its curricula (Qureshi, Ishrat Ali, 1992: 95).

29 Geography was the second science subject to have been started in the MAO College. It was first taught by an Englishman, Major E. W. Dann, an M.A. from Oxford, in 1924 in the corner rooms of the Osmania Hostel [of Sir Syed Hall] (Siddiqi, Ather H. and Rahman, Syed Zillur, 2000: 756-757).

30 Kazi Saeduddin Ahmad (1904-1970) completed his M.A.\LL.B. from the Department of Geography, Aligarh Muslim University in 1926. In 1927, he was appointed as a teacher of Geography Department where he taught first as a Lecturer and then as a Reader before shifting to establish the Geography Department at Punjab University, Lahore on December 8, 1944.

31 S. M. Tahir Rizvi (1901-1981) was B.A. (Hons.) from the University of London. He did his M.A.\LL.B. from Aligarh Muslim University in 1926 and Ph. D. from the University of London. He was twice the Head of Department of Geography from 1940 to 1947 and 1956 to 1962.

32 The names of seven students of the first batch in alphabetical order are Bhagwan Swarup Gupta, Ch. Jafar Hasan Khan, Maqbul Ilahi, Mohd Ali Alvi, Mohd Hafizullah Khan, Syed Ahmad Ibban, and Syed Izharul Hasan. They were awarded B.A. (Hons) degree in Geography in 1927.

of geography in Indian universities/colleges takes us to the following conclusions.

First, during the early days of its development, geography as a college subject was not taken seriously by most universities due to the prevailing notion of its unsuitability as a discipline of higher education. Second, teaching of geography at the under-graduate level (mainly, but not exclusively, in teacher training colleges) started in the second half of the 19th Century, but the first-ever under-graduate department of geography was established much later, at the end of the first quarter of the 20th Century. During this time, the teaching of geography was performed by non-geographers. But the under-graduate geography departments were established by trained geographers as well as by non-geographers.

Third, the first-ever under-graduate department of geography in erstwhile British India was neither established in a college of Punjab University nor was it established in 1920. On the contrary, the first under-graduate department of geography in India was established in 1924 in Aligarh Muslim University by Major E. W. Dann- a British citizen and an Oxford graduate assisted by Qazi Jalaluddin, the first Indian to be appointed as a lecturer in the department. Thus, Aligarh Muslim University has the distinction of being the first-ever institution of higher learning (college or university) to start the under-graduate department of geography.

Fourth, there is little evidence to support the claim that under-graduate teaching of geography started at Patna College in 1927. In fact regular teaching of geography at the intermediate level was re-started at Patna College in this year. Reliable evidences

support the contention that under-graduate teaching department in geography at Patna College was established in 1934.

Fifth, there is now increasing evidence to support the view that the Government College, Lahore, admitted its first batch of B.A. students with Geography in the year 1936 after it had started at Patna College in 1934 and Agra College in 1935. This makes Patna College the first college to start an under-graduate department of geography in India.

Sixth, there is little truth to the assertion that the teaching of geography was introduced for the first time in a college of Punjab University and that it started in the year 1924. Some courses of Geography were taught (e.g. Physiography, Economic and Commercial Geography, etc) in colleges affiliated to Presidency universities during the second half of the 19th Century. Similarly, during the first half of the 20th Century, geography was also taught in (Teachers) Training Colleges located in many cities of India. The training colleges imparted training to prospective as well as working school teachers of geography.

Finally, it is true that the under-graduate department of geography was started at Rangoon University in 1923, a year ahead of Aligarh Muslim University. But it was not an independent geography department. Rather, it was a combined Department of Geology and Geography. An independent department of geography in the university came into being in 1947.

Continued reproduction of wrong time and place of the beginning of the first-ever under-graduate department of geography in India in books and journals of geography persists since 1950s. It is time that the

controversy is laid to rest. In this context, Preston E James (1967: 2) has rightly advised: “What is important is that useless error be minimized, that the same errors should not be repeated, and that error, once identified, should not be allowed to persist.” It is hoped that the present effort would help in removing the errors discussed above.

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