

NATURE OF GEOGRAPHY

The term geography has been coined from two Greek words “**Geo**” meaning the earth and “**Graphé**” meaning to write or describe. Thus geography literally means the description of the earth. The word geographia was first used by a Greek scholar Erastotenes in 3rd century B.C. The literal meaning of the term geography is very general in nature and does not specify what is to be written or described about the earth which is full of innumerable things of the diverse nature. It

Geography has a longer genealogy than any science. The earliest records of man's interest in nature of the physical world around him contain observations and speculations of geographical type. In the ancient period geography grew out of explorations, mapping of areas known and the speculation about the material collected. It is difficult to trace the development, diffusion and spread of geographical knowledge during the prehistoric periods. Although geography began as a modern discipline only during the 19th century, there is a consensus that all civilizations contributed to the development of geographical concepts. Greeks and Romans, the pioneers of prehistoric ideas followed two distinct traditions in their geographical work. One was the mathematical tradition and the other was the literary tradition. The fall of the Roman Empire marked the decline of interest in geographical knowledge. No science including geography could flourish during this Dark Age. At this stage geographical knowledge passed on to the Arabs who were then leading trading nations and recorded far and wide. Many of the Greek works were translated into Arabic and thus the Greek tradition was also kept alive.

The Arab scholars and travelers paved the path for future explorations, discoveries and scientific inventions which energized the adventurous people to know more about the world. During the 17th century there arose the need for specialization and division of knowledge into separate fields. Since geography was the integrated study of both man and physical environment, under such a scenario it faced a crisis of identity. The period after the passing away of great modern geographers (**Ritter and Humboldt 1859**) was a period of great disciplinary confusion. Many pleaded that geography should focus on

study of man where as others maintained that geography should concentrate exclusively on study of physical earth. It was only in 1880s by the innovative visions of **Ratzel, Richtofin, and later Blache**. According to them the domain of geography encompasses both natural as well as social phenomena in spatial context. In this process geography had under taken the task of bridging the gap between the natural and social sciences by studying the man and his environment in totality.

After Second World War geography experienced a number of conceptual changes. In the immediate post war period a major shift occurred in the form of **quantitative revolution**. It focused on mathematical precision in geographical description and analysis. Thus post war

eriod was in geography was transformed into the science of special analysis of social and economic phenomena, leading to progressive decline in focus on the study of physical environment. By the 2nd half of 1960s, there was general shift from spatial patterns to behavioural processes that had generated these patterns. This new turn into geographical study is called as “**Behavioural revolution**”. It emphasized the role of cognitive (learning though knowing).

This philosophy was soon encountered by lying emphasis on the central and active role played by human agency, human awareness, consciousness and creativity in the process of man –environment interaction. Emphasis was laid on the understanding of meaning, values and human significance of life events. This gave rise to “**Humanistic geography**”. This philosophy emphasized the logical mode of inference rather than statistical one.

In 1970s radical approach developed in geography which was against locational analysis of quantitative revolution. It concentrated on the issues of social of social relevance like inequality, racism, sexism, crime, discrimination against blacks and females, exploitation of environmental resources etc. the social relevance research focused to introduce the concept of social justice and clear political terms in favour of less privileged sections of society, while as the earlier quantitative approach focused on

the use of science and technology with a view to increase efficiency in exploitation of resources and there by contributing to economic prosperity of developed nations.

The first modernist geography of 1990s stands out as a unified discipline that combines the best of every tradition- Regional, Systematic, Idiographic, Nomothetic, Marxist, and Humanistic. The current generation of geographers has almost reached the consensus that what where appearing as conflicting perspectives in the past, represent only different ways of looking at the totality life in the world and each perspective has something valuable to contribute towards the better comprehension of the man environment system and thus equip the researcher with better tools of research in the service of society.

With such a broad perspective one cannot confine the subject to the description of the earth only. Geography is the discipline concerned with the systematic description and interpretation of special patterns and regional associations of all those phenomena which influence human life on the earth's surface, it helps us to adapt to the changing circumstances and how to live harmoniously with nature and let others live. In this context it is well said that geography is the base of humanity.

Questions:

Q1. Define geography. Describe nature of geography?

Q2. Geography has longer genealogy than any sciences explain?

References:

Dikshit, R.D. (2008): Geographical thought: A contextual History of Ideas; PHI Learning Private Ltd., New Delhi.

Husain. M.: Evolution of Geographical Thought. Rawat Publications Jaipur 2007.

James, P.E.: All Possible Worlds - A history of Geographical Ideas. Sachin Publication Jaipur 1980.

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Contribution of Arabs to Geography

The collapse of the Roman empire and decline of scientific studies in the European region saw the emergence of an interest in geography in the Arab world during the medieval period. During the early medieval period, the geographical works were based on description of voyages and journeys. Their aim was more to astound and amuse the readers rather than instruct the scholars of this period tried to give pictorial form to their conception of the universe, but in doing so they worked exclusively from a basis of faith and not reason. Their outlook was purely theological.

The Arabs were great contributors in the field of mathematical, physical and regional geography. The Greek science was the starting point of studies of the Arab geographers. The works of Aristotle and Ptolemy were translated and studied most assiduously. Their achievements in climatology, oceanography, geomorphology, linear measurements, determination of cardinal points, limits of habitable world, sprawl of continents and oceans are highly appreciable.

Al-Masudi

Al-Masudi was an important scholar from Bagdad. He was a geographer, a historian, a world traveller and a prolific writer. He wrote on diverse themes and his important works include *Mehraj-al-Duhab*, *KitabulAswat*, *Kitab-Akhbar-Zaman*.

Al-Masudi described the weather conditions of the places he visited or sailed through and also pointed out that the salt in the seas comes from the land. In the field of study of landforms he appreciated the role of process of erosion and adjustment of streams to structure in the evolution of landforms. He had a clear idea of the spherical shape of the earth. In the field of human geography he tried to study the relationship between human beings and the environment and explained the impact of environment on the mode of life and attitude of people. He divided the world into seven regions on the basis of language.

Al-Biruni

Al Buruni was a Tajik by race and a Persian by culture .His main interests include astronomy,mathamitices,chronology,physics,medicine and history.He was a prolific writer his more books include Kitabul-al-hind,Al-Qanuan-Almasudi,Tarikul Hindetc.

In his astronomical writings he discussed and approved the earth's theory of rotation on its axis and correctly calculated the latitudes and longitudes of many places. He provided his views on the origin of universe in his book Al-Tahidi.He explained thephenomena of solar ad lunar eclipses .He also attempt to measure the longest and the shortest distance of the moon and the sun from the earth. He studied the relationship of tides with the phases of moon.

In geomorphology he compared the fossils discovered in the plans of Arabia ,Jurjanand Khwarizmi along the Caspian sea and suggested the occurrence of sea at these places in the earlier times.

Al-Biruni visited India and wrote extensively about India. He mentioned that the distribution of rainfall in the peninsular region is controlled by the eastern and western Ghats. He provided detailed information about the source of Indus and explained the phenomena of floods in its basin. He gave the description of the city of Qannauj.He has provided an accurate account of the seasons of India describing the nature of monsoons. He was also aware of the large mountain range known in India as HIMAVAT [the Himalayas]. He had also studied Indian culture and Hindu beliefs.

Al idrisi

Al idrisi was a leading scholar of the 12th century. His most important and famous book was Amusements for Him Who Desire to Travel Around the World. His world map is considered the most important contribution to geography. His map was based on a rough rectangular projection. He had studied Ptolemy's work. His description of sicily is perhaps the most detailed one and it is of great historical importance. His influence on European cartography and exploration of Africa influenced maps of marino Saunto and Pietro Vesconts.

Al Idrisi travelled over a great part of world including Spain, France, England, Sicily, morocco, Asia minor and interior parts of Africa. He described the course of many rivers including the Danube and Niger with precision. However in his works the maps were based upon the texts and not the text on the maps.

Ibn Battuta

He was the greatest Muslim traveler of his time. He spent 28 years in travel and crossed a distance of more than 75000 miles. His primary interest was in people though he has described the physical conditions of various regions that he visited. His description of house types and building materials in deserts is very interesting and informative. Through his experience he labels Morocco as the best of countries. His book Rihlah provides an insight into the soils, agriculture, economy and political history of the then Muslim world . He came to Delhi on an invitation of Mohd. Tughluk and served as a Qazi of Delhi.

Ibn khaldun

Ibn Khaldun was basically a historian but his writings also have been important as works based on travel. His most important work is known as Muqaddimah. In his writings, Ibn Khaldun has maintained that the northern hemisphere is more densely populated than the southern. He stated that the population along the equator is sparse, but there is an increasing concentration away from it up to 64⁰. Further away there is little or no population. He emphasized the role of fertile land in the origin of settlements. He has argued that the origin of the large cities have always been in the form of small settlements. Ibn Khaldun is considered as one of the early environmental determinists as he tried to correlate man and his environment in a scientific way.

Long answer type questions

- 1) Give briefly the contribution of Arab geographers in the field of geography.
- 2) Al Masudi and Al Biruni were great Arab geographers. Discuss

Short answer type questions

- 1) Give the contribution of Al Biruni in the field of astronomical geography.
- 2) What was the contribution of Al Idrisi towards geography ?

Geography objectives and relevance

Geography is a subject with longer genealogy than any other subject. Geography literally means description of earth's surface, a place where all life forms including human beings live and all human activities take place in combination with physical processes. The surface of the earth is a dynamic entity it changes constantly. Some of these changes are slow and imperceptible while others are rapid and perceptible. The goal of Geography is to study the origin of these phenomena, the processes that change them and have brought them to the present state and arranged them in the space in the way they exist. Besides that it also studies implications of their location and arrangement of these phenomena for human beings. Being spatial science geography studies the surface features of earth and their association with one another and derives meaningful spatial and regional patterns. It is apposite to mention that some of the surface features are not visible like education etc. however geographers have over a period of time devised appropriate method to construct their social topographies. The fundamental objectives of geography are:

1. What are the natural and cultural features on the surface of the earth?
2. How have they come into being?
3. How are they distributed and why?
4. How are they associated with each other?
5. Are the existing patterns of distribution conducive to human welfare?
6. What can be done to modify them?

7. What are the implications of the proposed changes?

Geography as a science that deals with the spatial arrangement of things on the surface of the earth resulting from a dynamic interaction between humans and nature .Geography uses information generated by other subjects to analyse the emerging patterns and structures of the earth's surface and their implications for human beings. Therelevance of Geography lies in the fact that with the new emerging trends new problems are surfaced and these challenges are to be answered geographically.

Expected questions

Long Answer Type Questions

1. Discuss relevance of Geography in context of present environmental problems?
2. Geographical studies are relevant from agricultural point of view. Discuss?
3. Enlist different challenges facing humanity today from geographical point of view. Suggest remedies for overcoming them?

Short Answer Type Questions

1. What are the objectives of studying geography?
2. Why spatial integration is soul of geography?

Suggested readings

- *Dikshit.R.D, Geographical Thought: A Contextual History of Ideas*
- *James.P.E, All Possible World-A History of Geographical Ideas*
- *Jenenson, Geography Its History and Concepts*
- *Hartshrone.R. Nature of Geography*

➤ *Hartshorne.R.Perspectives on nature of Geography*

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Branches of Human Geography

Traditionally Geography is divided into two main branch's physical and human geography.

Physical geography deals with the physical features of the earth while as human geography deals with the human aspect of the earth's surface. Physical Geography provides a stage for human activities these together constitute the whole gamut of geographical studies.

Definition of Human Geography: Finch and Trewartha defined it as follows: *"this human imprint, these features of material culture, associated with agriculture, manufacturing, trade, mining and the other economies-houses, fields, roads, factories domesticated animals etc. become the immediate interest and object of study of human geography.*

Human geography studies human aspects of the earth's surface under number of branch's as;

1. **Economic Geography:** This branch of geography deals with the economic aspect of human societies under;

A. **Resource Geography:** That branch of economic geography that focuses o the study of resources their distribution, production, utilisation and conservation.

B. Agricultural Geography: It studies spatial variations in agricultural activity-the cultivation of soil in order to grow crops and rear livestock.

C. Industrial Geography: It is the study of spatial variations in industrial activity on the earth's surface.

D. Transport Geography: It studies the mobility of goods and transport.

2. Social and cultural Geography: It studies the social phenomena and occupation of social space, the development of human cultures etc.

1. Political Geography: It studies political phenomena in spatial aspect

A. Population GeographyIt is the study population dynamics like Mortality rates, fertility rates, migration etc.

B. Medial Geography: It is the study of spatial aspect of disease distribution.

C. Settlement Geography: It studies the spatial extent of human settlements their origin and evolution.

D. Urban Geography: It studies the spatial extent of urban areas their distribution evolution growth and development etc.

E. Anthro-Geography: It studies the origin and evolution of human species.

Expected Questions

Q.No. 1 Define geography .Discuss various branches of human geography?

Q.No.2 Define Human geography?

DUALISM AND DICHOTOMY IN GEOGRAPHY

Dualism may be defined as the ideological drift which changes the basic philosophy as well as methodology of the subject. In simplest of the terms, dualism means division of subject into two branches, whereby the philosophical viewpoints governing the nature of study in such branches are different from each other. However if the philosophy and methodology adopted in the study of subject in such branches are contradictive of each other, then such dualism attains the status of dichotomy. So dichotomy is said to exist in the subject, if the two branches are mutually contradictive of each other.

Geographers throughout the history of geographical thought have been confronted with the methodological problems of dualism and dichotomy. Dualism existed in geography even in its pre-historical period, although in an obscure and vague manner. For example, Herodotus laid emphasis on the tribes and nations and their physical surroundings, Strabo concentrated on regional description. Al-Masudi, Ibn-Khaldoom, Aristotle, Hippocrates and others tried to interpret the influence of physical environment on the life styles of various people. However, dualistic thinking in geography became more conspicuous during the post-renaissance period in Europe. Since then a number of dichotomies appeared on the scene and with the passage of time, many more are likely to appear. Some of the most prominent among them are;

- 1. General geography versus Regional geography.*
- 2. Physical geography versus Human geography.*
- 3. Historical geography versus Contemporary geography.*

PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY VERSUS HUMAN GEOGRAPHY;

Geography is study of both the physical and social phenomenon. Physical geography is the study of physical or natural environment of earth. Its subject matter and methodology is similar to those of other natural sciences like physics, geology etc. Physical geography indeed is study of unification of a number of earth sciences which gives us a general insight into the nature of man's environment. Human geography on the other hand is concerned with the study of spatial patterns of human occupation of the earth and human activities in various parts of the earth. The interaction between human beings and their physical environment is a very important component of the subject matter of Human geography.

While one section of geographers considers geography as a physical science with no place in it for man, the other section emphasizes that man is an essential and integral part of the subject matter of geography. As regards the dichotomy of Physical geography versus Human geography, the Greeks were probably the first, who started the branching of the discipline. Hecataeus gave more weightage to physical geography while Herodotus and Strabo emphasized the human aspect. In the study of natural phenomenon including climatology, meteorology, oceanography etc. it is possible to use the methods of natural sciences and to draw conclusions with a large measure of scientific precision. The methods of natural sciences however do not lend themselves very well to the study of social and cultural phenomenon.

Vernier was one of the first scholars to suggest these essential differences in the characteristics of physical and human geography. Immanuel Kant delivered lectures on physical geography at the University of Konigsburg. Humboldt was primarily interested in physical geography. On the other hand, Ritter was more inclined towards the human aspect. Reclus laid emphasis on systematic physical geography. Darwin gave importance to physical aspect of the discipline while postulating the concepts of Struggle and Survival. In the 2nd half of the 19th century, geographers concerned themselves more and more with physical geography. Geographers like Koppen, Davis, Martonne, Mill, Jafferson, Dokuchaev and Huntington gave greater emphasis on landforms and climate as the major component of study. Ratzel and Semple also gave great importance to physical environment which determines the life styles of people.

On the other hand a large section of geographers gave more emphasis on the human aspect of the phenomenon. Ritter and Ratzel were among the first who considered man as an agent who brings change in the landscape. In geography, according to Febvre, we deal with

man's work, man's calculations, man's environment, the perpetual ebb and flow of humanity; man not the soil or the climate- is ever in the forefront." It was Vidal de Lablache who founded the school of Human geography. He gave relatively less importance to the elements of physical environment as the major determinants of cultural landscape of a region. Vidal had a clear insight into the weakness of physical geography and the deterministic argument. According to Vidal, it is unreasonable to draw boundaries between natural and cultural phenomenon; they should be regarded as united and inseparable. Jean Brunhes prepared himself for the conceptual framework of Human geography. In America, Mark Jefferson brought the idea of central places, the primate city and the civilizing rails in the field of human and urban geography.

The basic philosophy of the followers of human geography was to establish a man-nature mutualistic relationship in which each of the two is dependent on the other. All geographical studies are aimed at developing an understanding of the earth surface and its physical and social phenomenon both as spatially varying entities unique in their own way as well as components in a mutually interacting system.

It is evident from above discussion that the dichotomy of physical geography versus human geography is artificial. The dualism is the result of historical development of the discipline. In brief geography does not fall into two groups i.e. physical and human; these two are just the two extremes of a continuum.

HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY VERSUS CONTEMPORARY GEOGRAPHY

The dichotomy of historical geography versus contemporary geography has attracted the attention of historians, geographers and other social scientists. Historical geography deals with the geography of an area, region or world as it had been in the past. For example, if we could ascertain the cropping patterns and settlement distributions in India during the medieval period, it would be an aspect of historical geography. S.M. Ali attempted to construct the geography of India in his monumental work- The Geography of Puranas. Historical geography, however, does not fit within the framework of geography as we know it but stands side by side with the geography of present times. Contemporary geography on the other hand deals with the existing patterns of spatial differentiation of the phenomenon. Contemporary geography will become

historical geography with the passage of time. Contemporary geography and historical geography are mutually exclusive and must logically exist as supporting each other.

In the 2nd half of the 19th century, historical geography was conceived as a branch of geography which should be concerned with the interrelationship of phenomenon in space in a particular period or with the geography of the past period, and the influence of geographical factors on history. Whittlesey and East asserted that geographical factor in history means reconstructing the geography of a past period as part of the necessary context within which the flow of historical events may be better understood. Some geographers are of the opinion that historical geography should be the study of changing cultural landscape. The most orthodox view of historical geography is that it should be concerned with the reconstruction of geographies of past times. There can be numerous types of historical geographies e.g., agricultural geography, urban geography, industrial geography, social geography and regional geography.

Geographical thought at any point of time is a manifestation of the interaction between the prevailing philosophical view points and the major methodological approaches. Because of the diversity of viewpoints with regard to both philosophy and methodology, there has been a constant extension and even a shift in the focus of the discipline in contemporary times. The 1970s may be termed as a turning point in the writing of modern geography. It was during this period that a number of important works advocating different philosophical departures were published. Positivism, pragmatism and functionalism were redefined; while idealism, existentialism, Marxism, radicalism, humanism and behaviouralism were inducted in geographical researches as humanistic approaches.

However, we must again reiterate that historical geography and contemporary geography are one and the same. The present geography will become historical geography in due course of the time. Thus, Mackinder wrote that historical geography is the study of historical present. The geographer has to try and to put himself back into the present that existed, let us say one thousand or two thousand years ago; he has got to try and restore it.”

Regional and systematic Geography:-

With the revolution of dualism 17th century, the subject of geography had been sub branched into regional vs systematic. The issue of regional vs systematic geography has been most probably raised by a systematic geographer, Bernhard Varenius. After various , the leading philosopher, Homboldt made the difference between regional and systematic geography.Ritter stressed the need for a study of natural phenomena as a whole in parts.

Regional geography is defined as the study of areas in their totality or complexity. On the other hand, systematic geo.Deals with the universal laws and general concepts. It is essentially analytical and makes use of the general concepts while regional geo.is necessarily a synthesis and deals with the unique situations and their peculiarities.

Systematic geography deals with the whole world as a unit e.g., if , we take the distribution pattern of minerals, crops or population and examine them at the world level or continent wise, it would be a case of systematic geography,. In contrast to it , if we study the landforms, climate variations, soils, vegetation's, minerals etc. and compare them, it would be a case of regional or special geography.

Systematic geography can be defined as a branch of geography in which the laws are formulated while as in regional geography, these laws are tested and applied. Thus, the procedure and approach of regional geography is different from that of the systematic geography. However, to most geographers these between two branches of geography are complementary just like the two different parts of the same job.

The difference between regional & systematic geography can be better understood by the following fig-

Asia	Europe	N.America	S.America	Africa	Australia
Climat e	////////////////////				
Soil	////////////////////	//////////////////// /	//////////////////// /	//////////////////// /	//////////////////// /
Relief	//////////////////// /				
Rainfal	////////////////////				

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Regional study

Systematic study

The figure reveals that the rows show the approach of study of systematic geography & the columns shown the approach of study of regional geography. I.e. if we study the soil in various continents it is an example of systematic geography while if we take a particular continent or region and super impose all the physical and socio- economic variables it would highlight the peculiarities of that region. The geographers study a particular region under various headings along the vertical order e.g. geological relief, climate, vegetation, soils, population etc, this type of studies is called regional geography, when we study only one condition say climatic condition in various regions such as America , N.America, Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia & Antarctica, this is called systematic geography.

In short we can conclude that the regional geography are not different approaches but are just like the two extremes of a continuous geographical study. We cannot study the regional geography without the study of systematic geography. As the two are complementary with each other and one serves the purpose of the other.

Long Answer type questions

Q.No.1 Dualism and dichotomies are fundamental to geography-Discuss?

Q.No.2 Discuss Human vs. physical dichotomy in context of geography.

Q.No.3 Discuss Regional vs. Systematic Dichotomy in geography?

Short Answer Type questions

Q.No.1 what is difference between dualism and Dichotomy?

Q.No. 2 what is the role of Bernhard Varineus in formation of physical vs. Human Dichotomy?

Q. No.3 Define dualism? Enlist different types of dualism and dichotomies found in Geography?

