

CHAPTER-1

Human Geography -*Nature and Scope*

Physical geography studies physical environment and human geography studies “the relationship between the physical/natural and the human worlds, the spatial distributions of human phenomena and how they come about, the social and economic differences between different parts of the world”.¹

Geography as a discipline is to understand the earth as home of human beings and to study all those elements which have sustained them. Thus, emphasis is on study of nature and human beings.

Phenomena are described in metaphors using symbols from the human anatomy.

‘Face’ of the earth,

‘Eye’ of the storm,

‘Mouth’ of the river,

‘Snout’ (nose) of the glacier,

‘Neck’ of the isthmus

‘profile’ of the soil

. Similarly regions, villages, towns have been described as ‘organisms’. German geographers describe the ‘state/country’ as a ‘living organism’. Networks of road, railways and water ways have often been described as “arteries of circulation

Human Geography Definition

“Human geography is the synthetic study of relationship between human societies and earth’s surface”.- **Ratzel**

“Human geography is the study of “the changing relationship between the unresting man and the unstable earth.”

Ellen C. Semple

“Conception resulting from a more synthetic knowledge of the physical laws governing our earth and of the relations between the living beings which inhabit it”.

Paul Vidal de la Blache

NATURE OF HUMAN GEOGRAPHY

Human geography studies the inter-relationship between the physical environment and socio-cultural environment created by human beings through mutual interaction with each other.

Naturalisation of Humans and Humanisation of Nature

Human beings interact with their physical environment with the help of technology. It is not important what human beings produce and create but it is extremely important ‘with the help of what tools and techniques do they produce and create’.

Technology indicates the level of cultural development of society. Human beings were able to develop technology after they developed better understanding of natural laws.. This is so because the level of technology was very low and the stage of human social development was also primitive. This type of interaction between primitive human society and strong forces of nature was termed as **environmental determinism**

Possibilism.

The people begin to understand their environment and the forces of nature with the passage of time. With social and cultural development, humans develop better and more efficient technology. They move from a state of necessity to a state of freedom. They create possibilities with the resources obtained from the environment. The human activities create cultural landscape. The imprints of human activities are created everywhere; health resorts on highlands, huge urban sprawls, fields, orchards and pastures in plains and rolling hills, ports on the coasts, oceanic routes on the oceanic surface and satellites in the space. The earlier scholars termed this as **possibilism**. Nature provides opportunities and human being make use of these and slowly nature gets humanized and starts bearing the imprints of human endeavour.

Neodeterminism or stop and go determinism

A geographer, Griffith Taylor introduced another concept which reflects a middle path (Madhyam Marg) between the two ideas of environmental determinism and possibilism. He termed it as Neodeterminism or stop and go determinism. The concept shows that neither is there a situation of absolute necessity (environmental determinism) nor is there a condition of absolute freedom (possibilism). It means that human beings can conquer nature by obeying it.

Human Geography through the Corridors of Time

The process of adaptation, adjustment with and modification of the environment started with the appearance of human beings over the surface of the earth in different ecological niches. Thus, if we imagine the beginning of human geography with the interaction of environment and human beings, it has its roots deep in history. Thus, the concerns of human geography have a long temporal continuum though the approaches to articulate them have changed over time.

- Welfare or humanistic school of thought in human geography was mainly concerned with the different aspects of social well-being of the people..
- Radical school of thought employed Marxian theory to explain the basic cause of poverty, deprivation and social inequality. Contemporary social problems were related to the development of capitalism.
- Behavioural school of thought laid great emphasis on lived experience and also on the perception of space by social categories based on ethnicity, race and religion, etc.

Fields and Sub-fields of Human Geography

Human geography, as you have seen, attempts to explain the relationship between all elements of human life and the space they occur over. Thus, human geography assumes a highly inter-disciplinary nature. It develops close

Broad Stages and Thrust of Human Geography

<i>Period</i>	<i>Approaches</i>	<i>Broad Features</i>
Colonial period	Exploration and description	Imperial and trade interests prompted the discovery and exploration of new areas. An encyclopaedic description of the area formed an important aspect of the geographer's account.
Colonial period	Regional analysis	Elaborate description of all aspects of a region were undertaken. The idea was that all the regions were part of a whole, ie (the earth); so, understanding the parts in totality would lead to an understanding of the whole.
1930s through the inter-War period	Areal differentiation	The focus was on identifying the uniqueness of any region and understanding how and why it was different from others.
Late 1950s to the late 1960s	Spatial organisation	Marked by the use of computers and sophisticated statistical tools. Laws of physics were often applied to map and analyse human phenomena. This phase was called the quantitative revolution. The main objective was to identify mappable patterns for different human activities.
1970s	Emergence of humanistic, radical and behavioural schools	Discontentment with the quantitative revolution and its dehumanised manner of doing geography led to the emergence of three new schools of thought of human geography in the 1970s. Human geography was made more

		relevant to the socio-political reality by the emergence of these schools of thought. Consult the box below to know a little bit more about these schools of thought.
1990s	Post-modernism in geography	The grand generalisations and the applicability of universal theories to explain the human conditions were questioned. The importance of understanding each local context in its own right was emphasised.

<i>Fields of Human Geography</i>	<i>Sub-fields</i>	<i>Interface with Sister Disciplines of Social Sciences</i>
Social Geography	—	Social Sciences – Sociology
	Behavioural Geography	Psychology
	Geography of Social Well-being	Welfare Economics
	Geography of Leisure	Sociology
	Cultural Geography	Anthropology
	Gender Geography	Sociology, Anthropology, Women's Studies
	Historical Geography	History
	Medical Geography	Epidemiology
Urban Geography	—	Urban Studies and Planning

Political	—	Political Science
Geography	Electoral Geography	Psephology
	Military Geography	Military Science
Population Geography	—	Demography
Settlement Geography	—	Urban/Rural Planning
Economic	—	Economics
Geography	Geography of Resources	Resource Economics
	Geography of Agriculture	Agricultural Sciences
	Geography of Industries	Industrial Economics
	Geography of Marketing	Business Studies, Economics, Commerce
	Geography of Tourism	Tourism and Travel Management
	Geography of International Trade	International Trade