



Part A: Fundamentals of Human Geography
UNIT 1: Human Geography: Nature and Scope

The core concern of geography as a discipline is **to understand the earth as home of human beings and to study all those elements which have sustained them.** It emphasis is on study of nature and human beings. It studies each and every event on the earth over the space and time.

There are two approaches of geography:

- a. Systematic approach and
- b. Regional approach.

Human Geography: Human geography is a branch of systematic geography. The relationship between man and his environment is the main theme of human geography. Human geography **studies the inter-relationship between the physical environment and socio-cultural environment created by human beings.**

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

According to **Miss Ellen C. Semple**, “Human geography is the study of the changing relationship between unresting man and the unstable earth.”

According to **Vidal de la Blache**, human geography offers a “Conception resulting from a more synthetic knowledge of the physical laws governing our earth and of the relations between the living things which inhabit it.”

Nature of Human Geography:

- Human geography studies the inter relationship between the physical environment and socio-cultural environment created by man through mutual interactions with each other.
- Elements of physical environment are land, water, soil, climate, vegetation, diverse flora and fauna.
- Elements of cultural environment are transport and communication, settlements, industries, ports, farms, items of daily use and all other elements of material culture.

Naturalisation of Humans – Environmental Determinism:

- Man interacts with nature with the help of technology.
- It is not important what he creates but with what tools and techniques does he produce and create.
- Technology indicates the level of cultural development of society.
- Better understanding of the nature helps to develop technology.



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Examples:

- i) Understanding of concepts of friction and heat helped to discover fire.
- ii) Understanding of the secrets of DNA and genetics helped to eradicate diseases.
- iii) Laws of thermodynamics helped to develop faster planes.

Thus, knowledge about nature is extremely important to develop technology and technology loosens the shackles of environment on human beings. This interaction between primitive society and nature is called “**Environmental Determinism**”. It is a stage when technology development was low and hence, naturalized human listened to Nature and was afraid of its fury and worshipped it.

Humanisations of Nature – Possibilism:

- With social and cultural development, humans develop better and more efficient technology.
- They move from a state of necessity to state of freedom and possibilities.
- Human activities created cultural landscapes.
- This is “**Possibilism**”. Nature provides opportunities and human beings make use of these and slowly nature gets humanised and starts bearing the imprints of human endeavour.

Non-determinism/ Stop and go Determinism:

- Developed by Griffith Taylor.
- It is a middle path between environmental determinism and possibilism.
- The concept shows that neither is there a situation of absolute necessity (environmental determinism) nor is there a condition of absolute freedom (possibilism).
- **Sustainable development is the main aim.**
- The Neo determinism maintains balance between development and nature.

Human Geography Through Corridors of Time:

The concerns of human geography have a long temporal continuum though the approaches to articulate them have changed over time. This dynamism in approaches and thrusts shows the vibrant nature of the discipline.

PERIOD	APPROACHES	BROAD FEATURES
Colonial	Exploration & description	Imperialism and trade lead to discover many lands



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Colonial	Regional analysis	Understanding of parts in totality would lead to understand the whole
1930 – inter-war period	Aerial differentiation	Find the reasons for the uniqueness of a region
1950-1960	Spatial organization	Apply technology to study geography
1970s	Emergence of humanistic, radical and behavioural school	Emergence of socio-political reality with the help of schools
1990s	Post-modernism in geography	Generalization and apply of universal laws to understand geography

Figure: Broad stages and thrust of Human Geography

Over these periods, **three schools of thought** emerged with respect to the study of human geography.

- Welfare or Humanistic School of Thought:** It was mainly concerned with the different **aspects of social well-being** of the people. These included aspects such as housing, health and education etc.
- Radical School of Thought:** This school employed **Marxian theory** to explain the basic cause of poverty, deprivation and social inequality. Contemporary social problems were linked to the development of capitalism.
- Behavioural School of Thought:** It 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 assumes a highly inter-disciplinary nature. New sub-fields have emerged with the expansion of knowledge. The boundaries between these sub-fields are often found to be overlapped.

- Social geography:** Its sub-fields are behavioural geography, geography of social well-being, geography of leisure, cultural geography, gender geography, historical geography and medical geography.
- Urban geography:** It includes the study of cities and urban processes.
- Political geography:** Its sub-fields are electoral geography and military geography.
- Population geography:** It is the study of the ways in which spatial variations in the distribution, composition, migration and growth of populations are related to the nature of the place.
- Settlement geography:** It investigates the parts of earth's surface settled by humans.



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vi) **Economic geography:** Its sub-fields are geography of resources, geography of agriculture, geography of industries, geography of marketing, geography of tourism and geography of international trade.

