Meaning and Scope of Human Geography

Meaning

- It is always difficult to define a subject. With a passage of time, as knowledge grows and cultures advances, the definition of subject also change. Therefore, none of definition of human geography is universally acceptable.
- Geography looks at the earth’s surface from two different but interrelated perspectives, known as systematic and regional. Accordingly, it has two broad branches: systematic geography and regional geography. Human geography is a branch of systematic geography.
- Human geography as second major branch of geography focuses on the study of people and their social groups, cultures, economies, and interactions with the environment by studying their relations in spatiotemporal perspective. Human geographers describe and explain the human patterns of social interaction, as well as spatial level interdependencies, and how they influence or affect the earth's environment. Human geography is the study of the interrelationships between people, place, and environment, and how these vary spatially and temporally across and between locations. Human geographers focus on the spatial organization and processes shaping the lives and activities of people, and their interactions with places and environment.
- The study of the interrelationships between people, place, and environment, and how these vary spatially and temporally across and between locations.
- Its nature is interdisciplinary and integrative. Human geography is more allied with the social sciences and humanities, sharing their philosophical approaches and methods.

Human Geography is a Human Ecology

- Concept was put forward by - H.H. Barrows (believed in social Darwinism) – American 1923
- CL White and GT Remmner also supported
- Followers tried to establish an interactive relationship between man and his biotic and abiotic elements of environment.
- Survival of fittest. Those survived are better fitted to environment than their competitors.
- Superior survives and inferior eliminated.
- Central idea- man, like plant and animal has to struggle in his physical environment and in this process of struggle the weaker gets eliminated.
- Ratzel, Davis, E. C. Semple, Huntington, Taylor, Lamarckian supported the concept.
- Criticized - Man is far superior to other animal and plant. Man can change the harsh climate of physical world

Human Geography is the study of man and his adjustment to Natural Environment

- Widely accepted definition – HG is the study of man and his adjustment to his natural environment.
Greek, Roman and Arab scholar supported – Aristotle, Darwin has same view
Example of man adjustment to natural environment – there are numerous racial and ethnic groups in the world, their geo-climate condition is different from each other substantially. Use, misuse and underuse the resources according to their cultural belief and technological knowledge.

**History**
- HG has long history but got more value in 18\(^{th}\) and 19\(^{th}\) century.
- Man and his environment relationship were supported by Herodotus, Aristotle, and Eratosthenes.
- Strabo explained the effect of geo-ecological features on the progress of human being.
- Arabs – Al-Idrisi, Ibn-Khaldun, Al Battani, Al beruni discussed about the nature and its effects on the cultural characteristics of human being.
- The idea was revived in Europe during **Renaissance** – late 18\(^{th}\) and early 19\(^{th}\) century
- Alexander Von Humboldt and Karl Ritter – Kosmos and Erd kunde
- HG become more popular after origin of species 1859
- F. Ratzel (German - father of human geography) – Anthropogeography: landmark in human geography **Definition** - Human geography is the synthetic study of relationship between human societies and earth’s surface”
- **E.C Semple definition**: Human geography is the study of “the changing relationship between the unresting man and the unstable earth. Ellen Churchill Semple (American Geographer (1863- 1932)
- **Blache definition** - 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”.
- By the 1980s, human geography widened and included al thing which are note natural like cartography, quantitative techniques ect.

**SCOPE**
- Each of the physical, biological and social science has its own philosophy, methodology and scope. Geology is the study of physical structure, their composition and structure of the earth.
- The major thrust of HG is the study of human society in relation to their natural habitat.
- Deal with wide distribution of human society therefore its scope is enormous. Influence of physical environment on economy, culture, food, customs, **language etc.**
- Human geography consists of a number of sub-disciplinary fields that focus on different elements of human activity and organization, for example, cultural geography, economic geography, health geography, historical geography, political geography, population geography, rural geography, social geography, transport geography, and urban geography. What distinguishes human geography from other related disciplines, such as development, economics, politics, and sociology, are the application of a set of core
geographical concepts to the phenomena under investigation, including space, place, scale, landscape, mobility, and nature.

- These concepts foreground the notion that the world operates spatially and temporally, and that social relations do not operate independently of place and environment, but are thoroughly grounded in and through them.
- With respect to methods, human geography uses the full sweep of quantitative and qualitative methods from across the social sciences and humanities, mindful of using them to provide a thorough geographic analysis. It also places emphasis on fieldwork and mapping and has made a number of contributions to developing new methods and techniques, notably in the areas of spatial analysis, spatial statistics, and GIS science.
- The long-term development of human geography has progressed in tandem with that of the discipline more generally. Since the Quantitative Revolution in the 1950s and 1960s, the philosophy underpinning human geography research has diversified enormously. The 1970s saw the introduction of behavioral geography, radical geography, and humanistic geography. These were followed in the 1980s by a turn to political economy, the development of feminist geography, and the introduction of critical social theory underpinning the cultural turn. Together these approaches formed the basis for the growth of critical geography, and the introduction of postmodern and post-structural thinking into the discipline in the 1990s. These various developments did not fully replace the theoretical approaches developed in earlier periods, but rather led to further diversification of geographic thought. For example, quantitative geography continues to be a vibrant area of geographical scholarship, especially through the growth of GIS science. The result is that geographical thinking is presently highly pluralist in nature, with no one approach dominating.

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<tr>
<th>period</th>
<th>approaches</th>
<th>Broad features</th>
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<tr>
<td>Colonial period</td>
<td>Exploration &amp; description.</td>
<td>Imperial &amp; trade interests prompted the discovery &amp; exploration of new areas.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Colonial period</td>
<td>Regional analysis</td>
<td>Elaborate description of all aspects of a region was undertaken. The idea was that all the regions were part of a whole.</td>
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<td>1930s through the inter-war period</td>
<td>Areal differentiation</td>
<td>The focus was on identifying the uniqueness of any region &amp; understanding how &amp; why it was different from others.</td>
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<td><strong>Late 1950s to the late 1960s</strong></td>
<td><strong>Spatial organization</strong></td>
<td>Marked by the use of computers &amp; sophisticated statistical tools. Laws of physics, were often applied to map &amp; analyze human phenomena. This phase was called quantitative revolution.</td>
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<td><strong>1970s</strong></td>
<td><strong>Emergence of humanistic, radical &amp; behavioural schools</strong></td>
<td>Welfare/humanistic school- concerned with different aspects of social well-being of people like housing, health &amp; education. Radical- employed Marxian theory to explain basic cause of poverty, deprivation &amp; social inequality. Behavioural- great emphasis on lived experience.</td>
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<td><strong>1990s</strong></td>
<td><strong>Post-modernism in geography</strong></td>
<td>Grand generalization &amp; the applicability of universal theories to explain the human conditions were questioned.</td>
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