

BSCPGEOC401

UNIT 1

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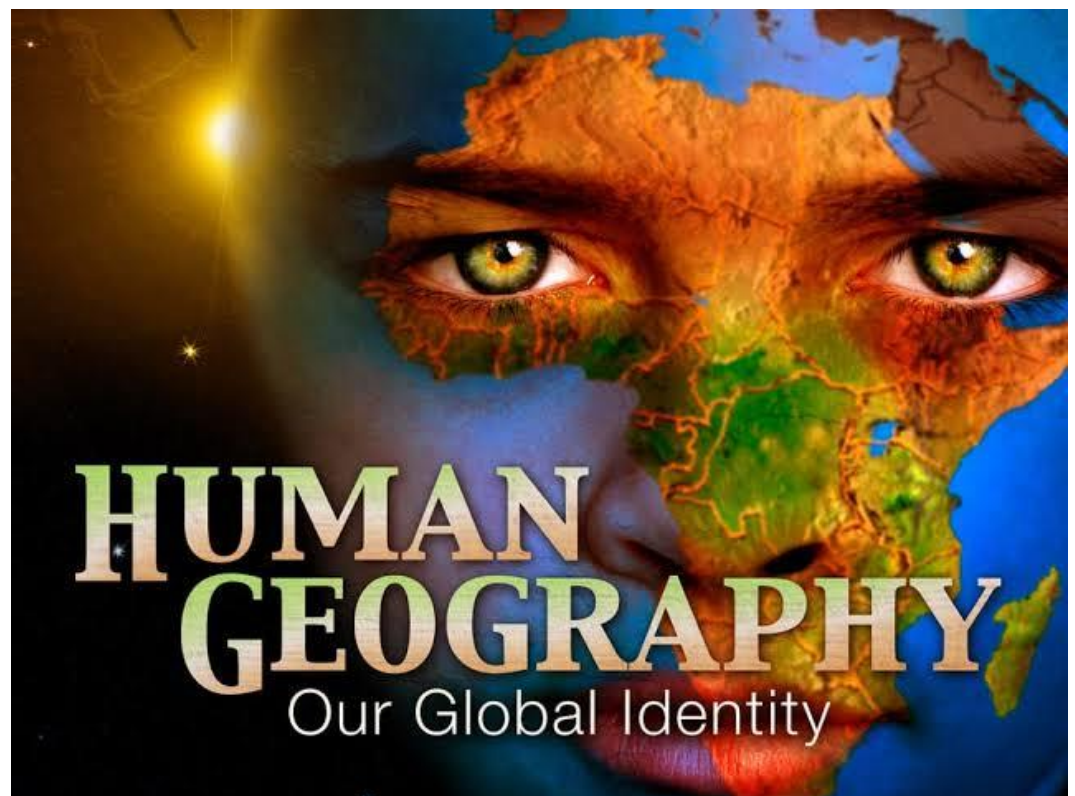
HUMAN GEOGRAPHY

F. Ratzel

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

NATURE, SCOPE AND ELEMENTS

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



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DEFINITION

Geography is the study of spatio-temporal variations over earth surface. It is to understand the earth as home of man. The scope of human geography has evolved with changes in paradigms and perspectives over the period of time. Human geographers focus on the spatial organization and processes shaping the lives and activities of people, and their interactions with places and environment. The major themes of human geography such as – location, distribution, space, place, region, movement, diffusion and man-environment interrelationships have contemporary significance. Contemporary human geography is focused on the scientific study of location of people and activities over the earth surface and the reasons for their distribution.

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 spatio-temporal 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.

“Human geography is the study of changing relationship between the unresting man and the unstable earth.” - E.C. Semple (1911).

“Human geography offers a new conception of the inter-relationships between earth and man a more synthetic knowledge of physical laws governing our earth and of the relations between the living beings which inhabit it.” - Vidal de la Blache (1926).

“Human geography may be defined as the study of the nature and distribution of the relationships between geographical environment and human activities and qualities.” - Ellsworth Huntington (1959).

BRANCHES

FIELDS OF HUMAN GEOGRAPHY	SUB-FIELDS	INTERFACE WITH SISTER DISCIPLINES OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
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
Urban Geography	-----	Urban Studies and Planning
Political Geography	-----	Political Science
	Electoral Geography	Psephology
	Military Geography	Military Science
Population Geography	-----	Demography
Settlement Geography	-----	Urban/Rural Planning
Economic Geography	-----	Economics
	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

NATURE AND SCOPE

- Human geographers are concerned with the “who”, “what”, “where”, “why”, “when”, and “how” of humans their interrelationships and their relationship to the environment.
- It focuses on the spatial aspects of population growth and distribution, cultural differentiation, urban growth and decline, the spread of ideas and innovations, regional development, and the location of economic activity, as well as problems associated with these processes.
- Human Geography is a broad dynamic domain that reflects the developments and conditions in the contemporary world. It is a field of inquiry and an academic discipline with its own traditions, objectives, and approaches to the changing world. It involves an examination of the setting in which people live their lives as part of a continual process of struggle and transformation.
- It focuses on social, economic, political, cultural, and human-environment processes and patterns and how they change over space and time.
- The close relationship between man and his physical environment was recognized and emphasized in geography from the very beginning by Greek and Roman scholars such as Hecataeus, Herodotus, Aristotle, Eratosthenes and Strabo. The Arab scholars such as Al Masudi, Al Biruni, Al Idrisi and especially Ibn-a-Khaldun, also established relationships between physical environment and cultural characteristics. In the classical period of modern geography, German geographers Humboldt and Ritter focused on the relationship between social groups and their physical environment. The man-oriented perspective of Ritter was reflected in his work ‘Erdkunde’. Ritter concluded that the earth and its inhabitants stand in the closest reciprocal relation and one cannot be truly presented in all its relationships without the other. The German Geographer Friedrich Ratzel established Human Geography as an independent discipline. His two-volume work ‘Anthropogeographie’ (1882 and 1891) presented for the first time a broad vision of man and his works and a deep systematic analysis of complex relationship of human beings with a conditioning physical environment. Ratzel demonstrated that like natural phenomena the cultural phenomena can also be systematized. Before his time human geography had largely confined itself to regional studies.

NATURE AND SCOPE

- Human geographers try to understand and explain why differences exist and how social customs are related to cultural landscape. It helps in understanding cultural features such as languages, religions and ethnicities across earth. Human geography clarifies the contrasts in societies and cultures and in the human landscapes they have created in different parts of the world. It helps in better understanding of 'isms' such as racism, communalism, casteism, regionalism, naxalism, terrorism and nationalism.
- In contemporary phase people are being pulled in opposite directions by two factors – globalization and local diversity. Globalization due to information technology revolution pulls people into greater cultural and economic interaction with others. At the same time people are searching for more ways to express their unique cultural traditions and economic practices. Political conflicts, economic uncertainty and pollution of environment are reflections of these two divergent forces.
- Within human geography political geographers help to explain the physical and cultural elements that underlie political unrest in the world. They try to explain how people have organized earth surface into countries and different level alliances and what are reasons underlying the observed arrangements and conflicts resulting out of this geopolitics.
- Human geographers are different from other social scientists because they never forget physical environment as they are trained in both social and physical-biological sciences. This is of special significance in studies related to natural disasters and their management and mitigation. This integrated approach has also special significance in achieving the goal of sustainable development. Human geographers address urban problems and help in process of sustainable urbanization.

**ELEMENTS OF
HUMAN
GEOGRAPHY
(Jean Brunhes)**

Jean Brunhes elaborated Blache's ideas on human geography and possibilism, and diffused the Vidalian tradition to other countries through his major work titled '*Geographie Humaine : essai de classification positive*' (1910). This work sought to give the geography of Man a clear disciplinary basis with the identification of following scope or *elements of human geography*-

(i) On the Basis of Evolution of Civilization

(a) Geography of the First Vital Necessity – this category included three primary needs – food, cloth and shelter which are basic needs of all persons irrespective of time and place;

(b) Geography of the Earth's Exploitation – this category included the human activities and efforts in which human beings satisfy their needs based on exploitation of natural resources;

(c) Geography of Social and Economic Needs – in the social category Brunhes included interdependence, cooperation, division of labour and civic system and other diverse social aspects. In economic needs production, consumption, exchange, and distribution were included.

(d) Political and Historical Needs – this category included description of political and historical events in relation to geographical facts.

(ii) On the basis of Positive Classification or 'essential facts of geography'

(a) Facts of unproductive occupation of the soil – houses and roads (including rural habitations, urban agglomerations, and circulation patterns).

(b) Facts of plant and animal conquest – the cultivation of plants and the raising of animals.

(c) Facts of destructive exploitation – plant and animal devastation, mineral exploitation. He termed it as 'economic plunder' or 'robber economy'.

***ESSENTIAL
FACTS OF
HUMAN
GEOGRAPHY
(Jean Brunhes &
Ellsworth
Huntington)***

Further, **Brunhes** himself admitted that the study of human geography is not confined to these three sets of observable phenomena but is an area of wider study which can be described as ‘geography of history’. It includes following five major aspects – (i) distribution of population, (ii) economic geography, (iii) geography of political groupings, (iv) social geography and finally a synthesis of all essential facts as (v) regional geography.

Ellsworth Huntington, an eminent American geographer while determining the elements of human geography took a comprehensive view of physical conditions, forms of life and human responses. According to Huntington all elements of bio-physical environment are inter-related and affect each other and their combined affect is reflected in various human responses. He grouped these human responses into four categories and identified 21 human responses as scope or subject matter of human geography.

Over the period of time the human geography has widened its scope and changes in perspectives have enriched its subject matter and nature. Quantitative revolution and Behaviouralism dominated in 1950s and 1960s respectively. In 1970s diversified approaches of welfare geography, radical geography and humanism and feminism played a major role in addressing the contemporary issues. Over the period of time the sub-fields and sub-sub-fields of human geography have evolved and established themselves focusing on different elements of human activity and organization. What distinguishes human geography from other related disciplines such as demography, economics, sociology, politics and psychology etc, are the application of a set of core geographical themes including location, place, man-environment interrelationship, movement and region. These themes foreground the perception that the world acts spatially and temporally, and that social relations do not operate independently of place and environment, but are comprehensively grounded in and through them.

CONCLUSION

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 spatio-temporal perspective. Human geography is the study of changing relationship between the active man and dynamic earth surface features. The major branches of human geography are population geography, settlement geography, economic geography, socio-cultural geography, political geography, medical geography, behavioural and environmental geography. Human geography helps in developing better informed citizens and better human beings, more capable of understanding contemporary challenges faced by communities and countries and finally better prepared to contribute in overcoming these challenges.

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