

LECTURE IV

BRANCHES OF HUMAN GEOGRAPHY

Human geography deals with the study of man and his activities on the earth's surface. Principal focus of study in human geography is occupancy and use of physical environment by man. Study of man nature interactions and the result of those interactions is also important aspect of human geography. Thus human geography is concerned with the study of two aspects:

- Mans relationship with the environment in which he lives. Here geographers identify and analyse the form and nature of ecological system in which man interacts with the environment, being influenced by it and in turn modify it.
- How man uses and organises space. So far as this aspect is concerned, geographers are concerned with identifying and analysing the form and nature of spatial systems which man interacts with and other human beings through his economic, social, religious and political activities.

Human geography is subdivided into following branches:-

1. Social Geography

Social geography deals with the study of human society and the social phenomenon in spatial context. A social geographer focuses on the study of spatial arrangement of social phenomena in relation to the total environment. Radical and Welfare Geography, the off-shoots of social geography, concern with such things as social-being, social problems and their root-cause and their spatial variations. Further we have the following sub-branches of Social geography:

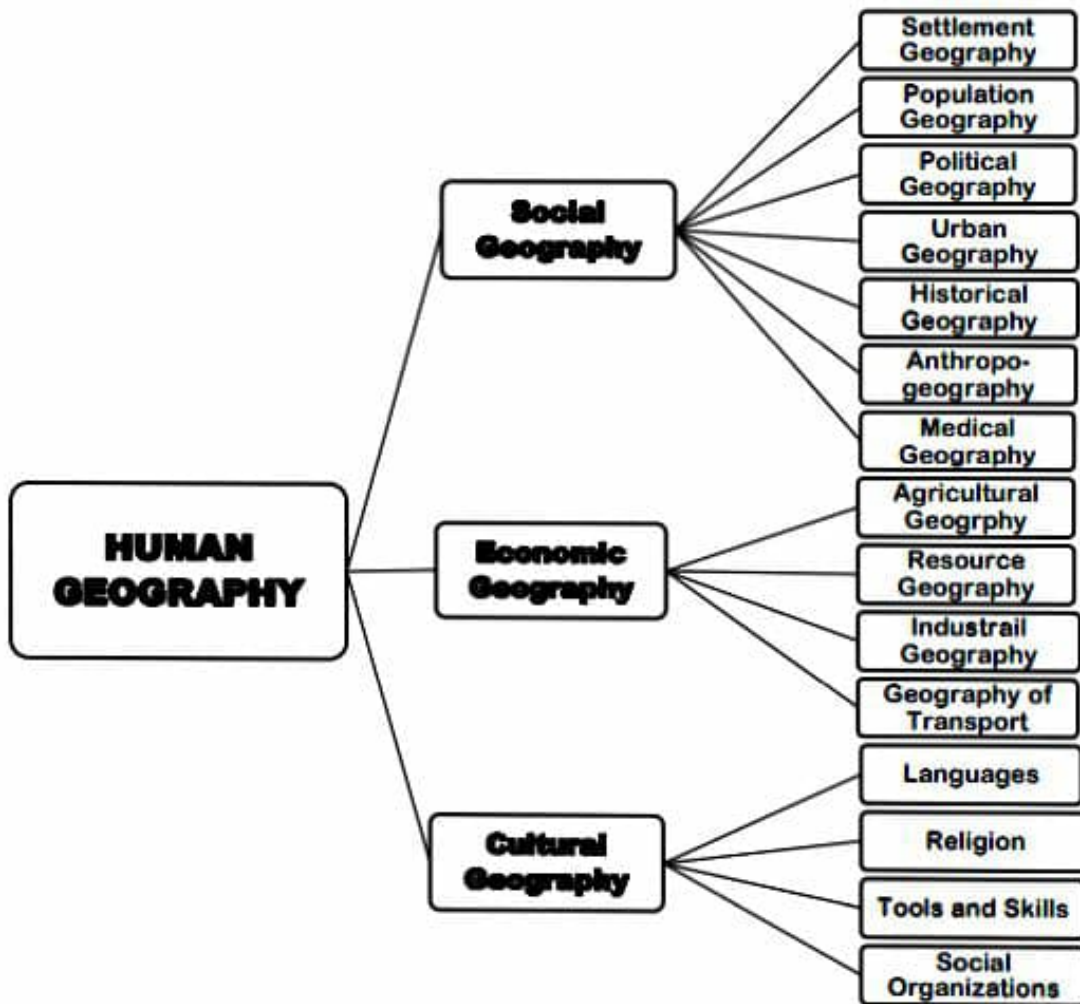
(a). Settlement Geography

It is that branch of social geography which deals with the study of human settlements – their spatial distribution, patterns, shapes, sizes and their evolution. It also analyses the influence of various geographical factors on the distribution, shape, size and types of human settlements. Settlement geographers are now concerned with a search for order in the spacing of settlements and in their internal organization and for greater understanding of the processes that help to shape settlements, including cultural influences and factors of perception.

(b). Population Geography

Population geography deals with the study of human population – their growth, distribution, density, composition and other demographic attributes. It studies the ways in which spatial variations in the dynamics of population, composition of population and factors of population growth are related to the nature of places. It is also concerned with the study of factors affecting population growth, distribution, density, composition etc.

Table 1. Various Branches of Human Geography



(c). Political Geography

Political geography is concerned with the study of political units i.e. states and nations in relation to their geographical settings. For this purpose the whole world is divided into various political divisions known as countries. Geopolitics and geostrategy are also important themes of study in political geography nowadays. A political geographer is concerned with the relationship between these countries and their physical background. F. Ratzel, a German Geographer, is considered as the father of modern Political Geography.

(d). Urban Geography

Urban geography is concerned with the study of urban centres i.e. towns and cities, their morphology, spatial patterns, origin, evolution, functions, problems and so on. Thus this branch deals with the land use patterns and classification of cities according to their function. Levels of hierarchy of the towns, functions of the towns, land use pattern and structure of the towns are explained with reference to the models.

(e). Historical Geography

The branch of social geography which is concerned with the past is called historical geography. The two main aspects of the field are: (a) reconstruction of past environments at a particular point of time, and (b) the study of the sequence of changes that take place with the passage of time at a place. The main aim is to ascertain how, due to human influence, a particular place, region or a geographical feature undergoes a change through time and how a cultural landscape is created. Paleontology , sedimentology and stratigraphy are of immense significance to a student of historical geography.

(f). Anthropogeography

The term anthropogeography was first coined by German geographer Friedrich Ratzel. This sub-field focuses on the study of the products of human social life in relation to the environment. It deals with the study of races of mankind – their origin, evolution, their physical characteristics and their diffusion. It bears the same relation to anthropology as biogeography to biology.

(g). Medical geography

Medical geography is a recent development in the field of human geography. It deals with the study of various diseases and their geographical

causes, diffusion of various diseases and the role of geography, spatial distribution of healthcare system and so on. The branch is based on the fact that health issues of the people differ from one geographical setting to the other.

LECTURE V

BRANCHES OF HUMAN GEOGRAPHY (CONTD.)

2. Economic Geography

This branch of human geography deals with the spatial variations in the economic activities and the different ways in which wealth is produced, distributed, exchanged and consumed. It is essentially concerned with the economic activities of man in relation to the physical environment. In this branch a detailed study of various human occupations like agriculture, manufacturing of goods, means of communication and transport etc. are taken up. Economic geography can be subdivided into the following fields:-

(a). Agricultural Geography

Agricultural geography deals with the study of agricultural activities of man. It studies the spatial variations of agricultural activities over the surface of earth and influence of geographical factors on agriculture. A comparative study is also undertaken with a view to understand how different agricultural systems are shaped in different areas of the world.

(b). Resource Geography

Resource geography is concerned with the study of resources, their geographical distribution, availability in terms of development, their production and their utilization.

(c). Industrial Geography

Industrial geography deals with the study of geographical variations in industrial activities on the earth's surface. It also studies role of geographical factors in industrial localisation. In a narrow sense an industry is confined to the production of goods i.e. manufacturing industry. However, in a wider sense it is meant to cover the provision of services as well such as tourism, banking, transport etc.

(d). Geography of Transport

Transport geography is concerned with the study of mobility of goods and people, transportation routes and different means and modes of transportation. It also analyses accessibility and connectivity and the control of geographical factors and geographical barriers.

3. Cultural Geography

Culture refers to the aesthetic and intellectual achievements of civilization. Cultural geography deals with the study of various cultural aspects of man such as his clothing, housing, tools, language, religion, food habits and their variations in time and space. It also deeply analyses the impact of geographical settings on human culture and impact of human culture on the physical environment or geographical settings in a particular region. Herodotus, who pioneered the study of the cultural traits of the people with whom Greeks were unfamiliar, is considered as the father of Ethnography (Cultural Geography). Cultural geography too has been divided into sub-fields which are Geography of Religion, Geography of Languages, Geography of Tools and Skills etc.

LECTURE VI

THEMES IN GEOGRAPHY

Areal Differentiation

Varied phenomena occurring on the earth's surface have a variable character which leads to differences in the concerned areas in terms of geographical character. The study of areal variations of physical and human phenomena, as they relate to each other spatially proximate and casually linked phenomena, is known as areal differentiation. It explains how and why one part of the world differs from the others. The concept of Areal Differentiation is mainly based on the ideas of Alfred Hettner who regards geography as chorological science concerned with the variable character of regions. The concept of region is the derivative of Areal Differentiation. The word region connotes an area which is unique and distinguishable from the other and is produced due to distinct interrelated and interwoven phenomena prevalent in the area. It has some degree of identifiable homogeneity in terms of some specific characteristics.

The term 'Areal Differentiation' was coined and used by Richard Hartshorne in his classic work, "The Nature of Geography", published in 1939. The Areal Differentiation is also known as chorology or chorography. Chorology is the study of areal difference of the earth's surface. It represents the oldest tradition of western geographical inquiry. In the 1980s Areal Differentiation has been reinstated as a central perspective in Human Geography. Despite all criticisms, Areal Differentiation is being considered as the rational and scientific definition of the discipline of geography.

Man – Environment Interaction

Man-environment interaction has been one of the central themes in geography. Friedrich Ratzel, the founder of human geography, and his disciple Miss Semple treated the subject of geography as the study of man-environment relationship. The theme of Geography as the study of man-environment interaction has stirred a debate about the position of man in relation to the environment. The debate first focussed on whether man is a part of the environment or apart from it, and then on the second issue-to what extent man is affected by nature. Currently the focus has shifted to 'interrelationship' between man and environment.

Early geographers emphasized that environment leaves an indelible imprint on human life in a particular region. Even the present day scholars of the discipline reiterate the same. Emphasis is laid on understanding various processes going on in the environment and on human response to adjust these processes. Human beings have always tried to adjust to the physical environment with the help of cultural and technological achievements. In this endeavour they have gone a step farther. They have not learnt only how to adjust to the environment but, in some regions, they have also attained the capability of adjusting their environment to their needs to some extent. Thus man and the environment are intimately related to one another. Environment influences man and in turn gets influenced by man. Environment determines way of life of man – his customs, traditions, habits, his complexion, skin colour, his dwellings and activities all are influenced by his environment. Man is also an important agent of change; he with his efforts constantly modifies his environment to his tastes and comfort.

Spatial Organization

This concept is based on the notion that if, within a given study area, spatial distribution of two or more phenomena are similar, then those phenomena are somehow related. Moreover, greater the similarity, stronger the relation between the phenomena they depict. Thus Spatial Organisation may be defined as the similarity within the same study area between two or more spatial distributions determined by the information collected for the same unit area. It provides a philosophical rationale for much geographic research.