

MAJOR THEMES OF HUMAN GEOGRAPHY

(For B.A 2nd Semester, Core)

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Major Themes of Human Geography

- 1) Human geography is the second major branch of geography which 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.

- 2) In 1984, five themes of geography were identified by the Geography Education National Implementation Project (GENIP) as –
 - a) location
 - b) Place
 - c) Human-environment relationship
 - d) Movements
 - e) and Regions.

These fundamental themes of human geography have a logical succession.

- They begin with location because geography is a spatial science and site and situation is of primary concern.
- Place is the next logical sequence after location and it elaborates on location by describing its physical and cultural characteristics.
- The human environmental interrelationships are obviously the next in logical sequence. These interactions set the stage for movements and diffusions.
- The movement and diffusion comprise of the cultural and physical relationships between and among places or are representative of spatial interactions.
- Regions are hierarchical in nature and can operate at any scale and are dynamic due to internal as well as external factors.

A brief description of these themes is provided in the following section

Location

Location is to address the question - Where is it?

- Location can be of two types absolute and relative. Absolute location is defined on the basis of latitude and longitude or its exact address.
- In geographical studies the location is also described on the basis of site and situation. The site is the actual location on the earth surface and it is composed of the physical characteristics of the landscape specific to the area
- The site factors include – topography, climate, vegetation types, availability of water, soil quality, minerals and wildlife if any.

Place

The theme Place answers the question - What kind of place is it?

➤ It tells about what a location is like. Place refers to the physical and human characteristics of a location. This theme of human geography is associated with the name of the place, site and situation.

➤ Every place on the earth surface is unique because of its distinct physical and human characteristics.

➤ The physical characteristics are related to topography, climate, hydrology and biogeography and human characteristics are related to the nature and size of its population, cultural and social characteristics and political systems.

➤ Places are segments of the earth's surface.

Distribution

- Distribution is to answer – What is where on earth surface and how is it arranged over space?
- Distribution refers to the way something is spread out or arranged over a geographic area.
- The concept of distribution can be applied to nearly all elements of physical and cultural landscape like distribution of landforms, climatic elements (temperature, precipitation, winds and air masses etc), animal and plant species, population, religion, language, settlements, diseases, crime, poverty, crops, industries and other economic activities. The three properties of distribution identified by geographers are density, concentration and pattern.
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Space

Knox and Marston (2007) described three ways of measuring space

(i) absolute space (ii) relative space and (iii) cognitive space.

➤ Absolute space is a mathematical space which can be described on the basis of mathematical reasoning through points, lines, areas, planes and configurations.

➤ The cognitive space is defined and measured in terms of values, feelings, beliefs and perceptions. Therefore it is described in terms of behavioral space, like landmarks, paths, environments.

➤ Another mathematical space is called the topological space which is defined on the basis of connections or connectivity between points in space. A topological space is defined on the basis of a set of points along with a set of neighbourhoods for each point, satisfying a set of axioms relating points and neighbourhoods.

Human-Environment Relationship

- What is the relationship between humans and their environment?
- How does environment controls/influences human activity?
- How do different culture groups understand, use, and transform their environments?
- Earlier the geographers tempted to generalize about the controls of physical environment on man and his activities.
- According to Blache “nature is never more than an adviser and nature sets limit and offers possibilities for human settlements, but the way man reacts or adjusts to these given conditions depends on his own genre de vie (way of living)”.
- The relationship of environment and man has changed from control to influence to adjustment/adaptation/modification.

Movement

- How and why are places connected with one another?
 - It refers to the mobility of people, goods and ideas from one place to another and within one place.
 - The physical movement of human beings has resulted into inhabitation of different parts of continents and islands world over and presence of man in all types of ecosystems, and also to explore great oceanic depths
 - Migration from local to global level has remained a core issue for human geographers.
 - Human geographers have focused on causes and consequences of migration.

Diffusion

- Diffusion represents the process of spread of a characteristic over space with the passage of time from one place to another.
- Transportation and communication networks play most significant role in diffusion.
- Hagerstrand developed the model of diffusion of innovation during the phase of quantitative revolution in geography.
- Human geographers are interested in the study of diffusion of innovation from place of origin i.e. hearth to other places.

Region

- The concept of region is core or central to geographical studies from the very beginning.
- Geography has been defined as study of regions or a chorological science or study of areal differentiations by well known geographers.
- Regions can be of three types :
 - (i) formal regions or uniform regions
 - (ii) functional regions or nodal regions
 - (iii) planning regions or adhoc regions

SOURCE:

Dr. Jitender Saroha, Associate Professor, Dr. B.R.Ambedkar College, University of Delhi.)

Regional Planning in India by Mahesh Chand and Puri

THANK YOU