**Meaning of Human Geography**

Geography is a broad and complex subject is currently going through an exciting period of development as new problems are identified and new methods of analysis are formulated.

According to traditional definition:

Geography is the study of earth as a home of mankind. As such the subject covers a wide range of knowledge and consequently geography has been divided into two major branches of study

1) The first one is the physical geography which is concerned with the physical environment of the earth.

2) The second one is the human geography which is concerned with the man activities over the earth’s surface.

In many ways, there is a false distinction since the activities of man occur within physical environment is considerably modified by man’s activities. Since physical geography deals with the physical features of the earth and human geography studies human aspects, so there is a need of separate discipline called human geography.

In the words of Miss E.C. Sample “Human Geography is the study of changing relationship between unresting man and the unstable. Human Geography deals with the condition of the earth, the distribution of people on the earth’s surface and finally the relationship of man to various environment.

According to Demangeaon “Human Geography is the study of human groups and societies and their relationship to physical environment.

We learnt earlier that geography is the study of the earth as home of mankind. Its nature is inter disciplinary and integrative. Geography looks at the earth’s surface from two different but inter related perspectives known as systematic and regional. According it has two broad branches:

1) Systematic geography

2) Regional geography

Human geography is a branch of systematic geography. It studies the location and distributional aspects of cultural phenomena, resulting from ever changing human nature interaction.

Before we know more about human geography it would be useful to understand its nature and scope. In the following pages, we will study it emergence as a branch of geography. Its scope approaches and present status.

**Scope of Human Geography**

Each of the physical, biological and social sciences has its own philosophy, methodology and scope. Geography examines numerous tangible and intangible natural and manmade phenomena.

In human geography the major thrust is on the study of human societies in their relationship to their habitat or their environment. Dealing with the spatial distribution of mankind, human geography covers a wide field or its scope is enormous. It embraces the study of human races, the growth, the distribution of human population in different parts of the earth and their demographic attributes and migration patterns.

Human geography also studies the settlement patterns and growth as well as spatial distribution of economic activities of mankind such as agriculture, mankind such as agriculture, mining, industry, trade and transport.

Hence human geography studies about the human organization of space. The scope of human geographical expanded considerably during the last century from a rather restricted view of man environment relationship to its present form.

At present, human geography includes the major systematic fields of behavioral geography, cultural geography, economic, historical, political, electronic, population, medical, rural, urban, social, marketing geography. Like geography as a whole, human geography covers three related themes:

1) Spatial analysis: The study of man’s and organization of space

2) The study of inter relationship between human beings and their environment both natural and socioeconomic

3) A regional synthesis which combines the first two themes

**Emergence of Human geography as a field of study**

Age of explorations from approximately the later half of the15th century to the 18th century led to the appreciable advances in techniques of map making and accumulation of vast information through expeditions undertaken to different parts of the world.

The information on geographic facts thus collected were examined, classified and organized by the professional geographers or scientific lines. A good example of this scientific approach is the work of Bernhard Varenius. His geographic Genetalis divides the subject of geography into two parts- general and spatial. The former considers the earth as a whole and explains the properties, whereas the latter focuses on the constitution of individual regions. The idea of division of geography has been in existence since the time of early Greeks. In his treatise on regional geography, Varenius outlined its context under three sections:

1) Celestial properties

2) Terrestrial properties

3) Human properties

During the 19th century with the rapid development of scientific methods attempts were made to restrict the scope of geography. The major emphasis was on the study of relief features. It was perhaps earlier to describe the relatively stable features of the earth than the more variable cultural features. Relief features were measured and tested in various ways and through the activity a special branch of geography developed.

It was originally called physiography but later modified as geomorphology was cultivated at the cost of other subfields of geography. Partly as a reaction against the school of geography, which over emphasizes physical features, scholars begin to examine relationship between humans and their natural environment. Thus originated the school of human geography.

The development of human geography as a special branch of geographic study was stimulated in the later half of the 19th century with the publication of Charles Darwin “Origin of Species” in 1859. Buckle in the history of Civilization of England 1881 supported this new field by devoting a considerable portion of the book on the dependence of humans upon their environment.

Friedrick Ratzel book Anthropogeographie is considered as a landmark in history for giving human centric orientation to geography. Ratzel, known as a father of modern human geography defined it as the synthetic study of relationship between human societies and the earth’s surface.

Similarly Ellen Churchill Sample disciple of Ratzel defined human geography as the human geography as the study of the changing relationship between the unresting man and unstable earth.

French geographers Vidal dela Blache classic work entitled “Principles de Geographie Humaine emphasized that human geographers provides a new understanding of interrelationship between the earth and the man .It synthesis the knowledge of the physical laws governing over earth and the relationship between the living beings inhabiting it.

The role of human vis-à-vis nature is both active and passive. Humans continue to act and react. The story of human progress both in space and time is a process of human’s adaptation to their geographical milieu.

E. Huntington defined as the study of relation of geographical environment to human activities and qualities. This human-environment relationship is dynamic rather than static.

Jean Brunhes another French geographer paraphrased it as retrogression and progression of human phenomena which like all terrestrial phenomena never remains stationary, so we must study them in evolution.

Human geography has been defined by different scholars at different times. The early scholars such as Aristotle, Buckle, Humboldt, Ritter focused on the influence of land upon history. Later on in the works of Ratzel and Sample the thrust shifted to examination of the question how physical environment influenced the human activities. Blache viewed ecological and terrestrial unity as the two principles of human geography.