

BA/BSc 6th SEMESTER (GENERAL)

PAPER 601: ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL GEOGRAPHY

Unit 1: Field of Economic Geography

Meaning, scope and approaches of Economic Geography

Economic Geography is the study of man and his economic activities under varying sets of conditions. It means the study of the spatial distribution of man's economic activities in relation to its environment, be it physical or non-physical. According to Dudley Stamp, Economic Geography "involves consideration of the geographical and other factors which influence man's productivity, but only in limited depths, so far as they are connected with production and trade." Professor E. W. Zimmermann pointed out that, Economic Geography deals with the economic life of man with relation to environment.

Scope of Economic Geography:

1. Economic Geography is the study of the place, distribution and spatial organization of economic actions across the world. It represents a traditional subfield of the discipline of Geography. However, in recent decades, also many economists have approached the field in ways more typical of the discipline of economics.
2. Economic Geography has taken a variety of approaches to many different subject matters, including but not limited to the place of industries, economic agglomeration, transportation, economic development, real estate, gentrification, ethnic economies, gendered economies, core periphery theory, the economics of urban form, the relationship between environment and economy and globalization.
3. Economists, such as Paul Krugman and Jeffery Sachs have also analysed many traits related to economic geography. Krugman has gone so far as to call his application of spatial thinking in international trade theory the "new economic geography", which directly competes with an approach within disciplines of geography that is also called new economic geography.
4. Economic geography is sometimes approached as a branch of anthropogeography that focuses on regional system of human economic activity. Study may focus on production, exchange, distribution and consumption of item of economic activity. Allowing parameter of space time and item to vary, a geographer may also examine the flow of material, commodity, population and information from different parts of the economic activity system.
5. Thematically economic geography can be divided into these subdisciplines. They are- Geography of Agriculture, Geography of Industries, Geography of International Trade, Geography of Resources, Geography of Transport & Communications and Geography of Finance.
6. With the rise of the New Economy, economic inequalities are rising spatially. The new economy generally characterized by Globalization, rising of Information and Communication Technology, growth of knowledge goods, feminization has enabled economic geographers to study social and spatial division caused by the arising of New Economy including the emerging digital divide.

Approaches in Economic Geography

Regional Approach: This is one of the popular approaches of study of Economic Geography that attempts to study the economy of the different geographical regions in a country, a continent or the world as a whole. By region we mean a suitable areal unit with some degree of homogeneity. Taylor has rightly remarked “the concept of a region as a well-integrated whole, characterized as regards its parts by first class accessibility to and from the regional capital, and well balanced as regards its resources, economic development, commerce, culture and occupations is one that so far has not spread outside the ranks of the geographers and the planners.” A region which is determined purely on the basis of any geographical phenomenon has certainly some advantages over a political area which is dynamic in nature. The basic advantage of the regional approach is that it gives a better and comprehensive knowledge of the different parts of a unit, their relationship to each other and to the units as a whole. This is true whether the unit is a country, a continent or the world.

Systematic Approach: This approach provides a systematic description and interpretation of the distributional pattern of individual resources or commodity (e.g. wheat, rice) or an industry (e.g. cotton textile). As Wildfred Smith has observed: ‘it analyses the whole sequence of their development and catches them on their march to progression or retrogression.’ This systematic or commodity approach is very popular.