1. Details of Module and its structure

Module Detail	
Subject Name	Geography
Course Name	Geography 03 (Class XII, Semester - 1)
Module Name/Title	Nature and scope of human geography – Part 1
Module Id	legy_10101
Pre-requisites	Basic concepts about nature of Geography as a discipline
Objectives	After going through this lesson, the learners will be able to understand the following: • Understand man-environment relationships and their impact on each other • Understand the Nature and Scope of Human Geography • Illustrate the environmental determinism, possibilism and neo-determinism approaches of Geography • Identify the different branches of Geography
Keywords	Environmental determinism, Possibilism, Neo-determinism

2. Development Team

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1. General Introduction

When you see the surface of the earth, you realise that the earth comprises two major components-one is its nature or physical environment and another is life forms including human beings. If you want to make list of physical and human components of your surroundings, you can easily make it. And your list may include rivers, mountains, soils, animals, trees, birds, school, parks, roads etc. Physical geography studies physical environment and human geography studies "the relationship between the physical environment and the human worlds, the spatial distributions of human phenomena and how they come about, the social and economic differences between different parts of the world". Human geography deals with the study of people and their communities, cultures, economies and interactions with the environment by studying their relations with and across space and place.

The core concern of geography as a discipline is to understand the earth as home of human beings and to study all those elements which have sustained them. Thus, emphasis is on study of nature and human beings. But doing so, you will realise that geography got subjected to dualism and also started the wide-ranging issues for debates:

- Whether geography as a discipline should be a law making/theorising (nomothetic) or descriptive (idiographic). Whether its subject matter should be organised and approach of the study should be regional or systematic?
- Whether geographical phenomena be interpreted theoretically or through historic institutional approach? Human geography is the study of the relation between the various forms of human activity, economic, social, and political, and the phenomena of physical geography.

Well, these have been issues for intellectual exercise but finally you will appreciate that the dichotomy between physical and human is not a very valid one because nature and human are inseparable elements and should be seen holistically. It is interesting to note that both physical and human phenomena are described in metaphors using symbols from the human anatomy.
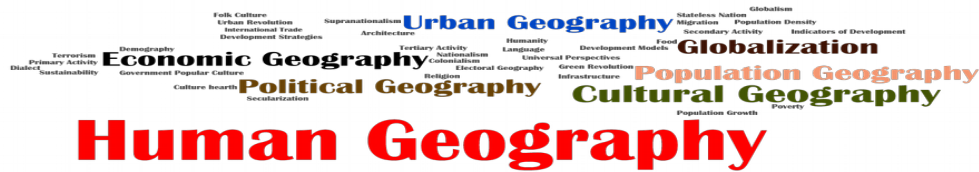

Fig No. 1 Human geography

We often talk of the 'face' of the earth, 'eye' of the storm, 'mouth' of the river, 'snout' of the glacier, 'neck' of the isthmus and 'profile' of the soil. Similarly regions, villages, towns have been described as 'organisms'. German geographers describe the 'state/country' as a 'living organism'. Networks of road, railways and water ways have often been described as "arteries of circulation". Now you can also collect such terms and expressions from your own language. The basic question that may come in your mind now is that can nature and human be separated when they are so intricately intertwined? Before we get answer to this question in more detail in the sections that follow, now, have a look at the definitions of Human Geography by various geographers:

According to Ratzel, "Human geography is the synthetic study of relationship between human societies and earth's surface".

Fig No. 2. Friedrich Ratzel

According to Ellen C. Semple, "Human geography is the study of the changing relationship between the unresting man and the unstable earth."

Fig No. 3 Ellen C. Semple

According to Paul Vidal de la Blache, "Conception resulting from a more synthetic knowledge of the physical laws governing our earth and of the relations between the living beings which inhabit it".

Fig No. 4 Paul Vidal de la Blache

http://www.travel-university.org/im/general/geography/history/blache.jpg

2. Nature of human geography

Human geography studies the inter-relationship between the physical environment and socio-cultural environment created by human beings through mutual interaction with each other. These elements are landforms, soils, climate, water, natural vegetation and diverse flora and fauna.
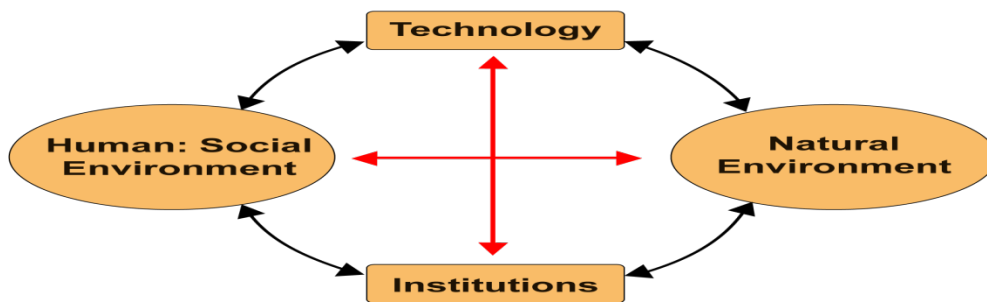

Fig No.5 Human Nature Interaction

Now, if you make a list of elements which human beings have created through their activities on the stage provided by the physical environment, your list may include houses, villages, cities, road-rail networks, industries, farms, ports, items of our daily use and all other elements of material culture that have been created by human beings using the resources provided by the physical environment. While physical environment has been greatly modified by human beings, it has also, in turn, impacted human lives.

Fig No.6 : Components created by human beings using resources provided by the nature

3. Naturalisation of humans

Human beings interact with their physical environment with the help of technology. It is not important what human beings produce and create but it is extremely important 'with the help of which tools and techniques do they produce and create'. Technology indicates the level of cultural development of society. Human beings were able to develop technology after they developed better understanding of natural laws. For example, the understanding of concepts of friction and heat helped us discover fire. Similarly, understanding of the secrets of DNA and genetics enabled us to conquer many diseases. We use the laws of aerodynamics to develop faster planes. You can see that knowledge about Nature is extremely important to develop technology and technology loosens the shackles of environment on human beings. In the early stages of their interaction with their natural environment humans were greatly influenced by it. They adapted to the dictates of Nature. This is so because the level of technology was very low and the stage of human social development was also primitive. This type of interaction between primitive human society and strong forces of nature was termed as environmental determinism. This approach advocates Nature's supremacy over man. Ratzel and E.C.Semple were the staunch supporters of this approach.

This approach in human geography says that all activities of the human beings are determined by the environment in which he lives. To know a little bit more about environmental determinism, we may go by the words of E.C.Semple, an American geographer who says, "Man is a product of the earth's surface. This means not merely that he is a child of the earth, dust of her dust, but the earth has mothered him, set him task, directed his thought, and confronted him with difficulties that have strengthened his body and sharpened his wits, gave him his problems of navigation or irrigation and at the same time whispered hints for their solution." She also emphasizes that people of Europe are energetic, serious, thoughtful and cautious due to influence of the environment while temperate climate of Mediterranean region has made people mild, gay, imaginative and easy going. People living in the mountains are essentially conservative, industrious, frugal (careful and economical), provident and honest, they have strong religious feeling and love for family. So, this is the stage of very low technological development where we can imagine the presence of a naturalized human, who listened to Nature and was afraid of its fury and worshipped it.

Lets read a story to understand the term environmental determinism in greater detail:

Benda lives in the wilds of the Abujh Maad area of central India. His village consists of three huts deep in the wilds. Not even birds or stray dogs that usually crowd villages can be seen in these areas. Wearing a small loin cloth and armed with his axe he slowly surveys the penda (forest) where his tribe practices a primitive form of agriculture called shifting cultivation. Benda and his friends burn small patches of forest to clear them for cultivation. The ash is used for making the soil fertile. Benda is happy that the Mahua trees around him are in bloom. How lucky I am to be a part of this beautiful universe, he thinks as he looks up to see the Mahua, Palash and Sal trees that have sheltered him since childhood. Crossing the penda in a gliding motion, Benda makes his way to a stream. As he bends down to scoop up a palmful of water, he remembers to thank Loi-Lugi, the spirit of the forest for allowing him to quench his thirst. Moving on with his friends, Benda chews on succulent leaves and roots. The boys have been trying to collect Gajjhara and Kuchla, from the forest. These are special plants that Benda and his people use. He hopes the spirits of the forest will be kind and lead him to these herbs. These are needed to barter in the madhai or tribal fair coming up the next full moon. He closes his eyes and tries hard to recall what the elders had taught him about these herbs and the places they are found in. He wishes he had listened more carefully. Suddenly there is a rustling of leaves. Benda and his friends know it is the outsiders who

have come searching for them in the wilds. In a single fluid motion Benda and his friends
disappear behind the thick canopy of trees and become one with the spirit of the forest.

The story of Benda represents the direct relationship of a household belonging to an
economically primitive society with nature. You may read about other primitive societies
which live in complete harmony with their natural environment. You will realise that in all
such cases nature is a powerful force, worshipped, revered and conserved. There is direct
dependence of human beings on nature for resources which sustain them. The physical
environment for such societies becomes the "Mother Nature". The people begin to
understand their environment and the forces of nature with the passage of time. With social
and cultural development, humans develop better and more efficient technology. They move
from a state of necessity to a state of freedom. They create possibilities with the resources
obtained from the environment. The human activities create cultural landscape. The imprints
of human activities are created everywhere. For example, health resorts on highlands, huge
urban sprawls, fields, orchards and pastures in plains and rolling hills, ports on the coasts,
oceanic routes on the oceanic surface and satellites in the space. The earlier scholars such as
Lucian Febvre, Paul Vidal-de-La Blache termed this as possibilism.

Fig No.7
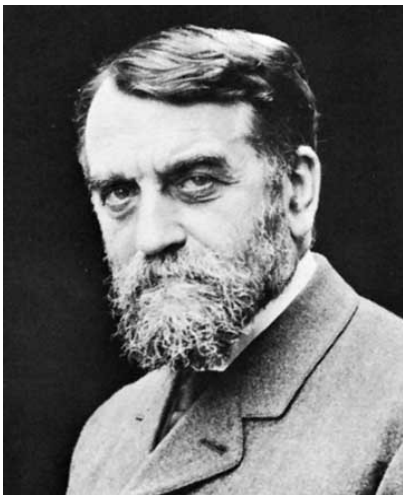SOURCE: https://media1.britannica.com/eb-media/12/41712-004-1C64285C.jpg

Paul Vidal-de-la Blache, the "Father of Geography" was a French geographer who opposed
environmental determinism based on Darwinian lines "survival of the fittest" and developed
the idea of Possibilism based on the principle of "human selection". Possibilism says the

physical environment (Nature) provides a range of possibilities (opportunities) and human being make use of these according to his needs, wishes and capacities in creating his habitat and slowly nature gets humanised and starts bearing the imprints of human endeavour.

Fig No.8 ; Environmental Determinism

4 . Humanisation of nature

Now let's read another story about Humanisation of Nature:

Story of Kari:

Winters in the town of Trondheim mean fierce winds and heavy snow. The skies are dark for months. Kari drives to work in the dark at 8 am. She has special tyres for the winter and keeps the headlights of her powerful car switched on. Her office is artificially heated at a comfortable 23 degrees Celsius. The campus of the university she works in is built under a huge glass dome. This dome keeps the snow out in winter and lets in the sunshine in the summer. The temperature is controlled carefully and there is adequate lighting. Even though fresh vegetables and plants don't grow in such harsh weather, Kari keeps an orchid on her desk and enjoys eating tropical fruits like banana and kiwi. These are flown in from warmer areas regularly. With a click of the mouse, Kari can network with colleagues in New Delhi. She frequently takes a morning flight to London and returns in the evening in time to watch her favourite television serial. Though Kari is fifty-eight years old, she is fitter and looks younger than many thirty year- olds in other parts of the world.

Now, after going through this story of Kari, you can think of the tool that has made such a life style possible. Yes, of course, it is technology that has allowed the people of Trondheim

and others to overcome the constraints imposed by nature. Do you know about some other such instances? Such examples are not difficult to find.

5. Middle path or neo-determinism

A geographer, Griffith Taylor introduced another concept which reflects a middle path (Madhyam Marg) between the two ideas of environmental determinism and possibilism which led a controversy regarding the role of human being in modifying the environment. He termed it as Neo-determinism or stop and go determinism which is a compromise between the two extremes. In this approach, it was established that "Nature" controls the human activities like a policeman on crossings controls the traffic. Many of you, who live in cities and those who have visited a city, might have seen that traffic is regulated by lights on the cross-roads. Red light means 'stop', amber light provides a gap between red and green lights 'to get set' and green light means 'go'. The concept shows that neither is there a situation of absolute necessity (environmental determinism) nor is there a condition of absolute freedom (possibilism). It means that human beings can conquer nature by obeying it. They have to respond to the red signals and can proceed in their pursuits of development when nature permits the modifications. It means that possibilities can be created within the limits which do not damage the environment and there is no free run without accidents. The free run which the developed economies attempted to take has already resulted in the greenhouse effect, ozone layer depletion, global warming, receding glaciers and degrading lands. The neo-determinism conceptually attempts to bring a balance nullifying the 'either' 'or' dichotomy.

6. Human geography through the corridors of time

The process of adaptation, adjustment and modification of the environment started with the appearance of human beings over the surface of the earth in different ecological niches. Thus, if we imagine the beginning of human geography with the interaction of environment and human beings, it has its roots deep in history. Thus, the concerns of human geography have a long temporal continuum though the approaches to articulate them have changed over time. This dynamism in approaches and thrusts shows the vibrant nature of the discipline. Earlier there was little interaction between different societies and the knowledge about each other was limited. Travellers and explorers used to disseminate information about the areas

of their visits. Navigational skills were not developed and voyages were fraught with dangers. The late fifteenth century witnessed attempts of explorations in Europe and slowly the myths and mysteries about countries and people started to open up. The colonial period provided impetus to further explorations in order to access the resources of the regions and to obtain inventorised information. The intention here is not to present an in-depth historical account but to make you aware of the processes of steady development of human geography.

Now look at the table below which introduces you to the broad stages and the thrust of human geography as a sub-field of geography.

Table 1.1: Broad Stages and Thrust of Human Geography

Period	Approaches	Broad Features
Early Colonial period	Exploration and description	Imperial and trade interests prompted the discovery and exploration of new areas. An encyclopedic description of the area formed an important aspect of the geographer's account.
Later Colonial period	Regional analysis	Elaborate description of all aspects of a region those were undertaken. The idea was that all the regions were part of a whole, i.e. (the earth); so, understanding the parts in totality would lead to an understanding of the whole.
1930s through the inter-War period	Areal differentiation	The focus was on identifying the uniqueness of any region and understanding how and why it was different from others.
Late 1950s to the late 1960s	Spatial organisation	Marked by the use of computers and sophisticated statistical tools. Laws of physics were often applied to map and analyse human phenomena. This phase was called the quantitative revolution. The main objective was to identify mappable patterns for different human activities.
1970s	Emergence of humanistic, radical	Discontentment with the quantitative revolution and its dehumanized manner of

| | and behavioural schools | doing geography led to the emergence of three new schools of thought of human geography in the 1970s. Human geography was made more relevant to the socio-political reality by the emergence of these schools of thought: *(Consult the brief description below to know a little bit more about these schools of thought) |
| 1990s | Post-modernism in geography | The grand generalizations and the applicability of universal theories to explain the human conditions were questioned. The importance of understanding each local context in its own right was emphasized. |

Now to know a little bit more about three schools of thoughts that emerged during the 1970s:

Welfare or humanistic school of thought in human geography was mainly concerned with the different aspects of social well-being of the people. These included aspects such as housing, health and education. Geographers have already introduced a paper as Geography of Social well-being in the Post Graduate curriculum'. D.M.Smith and David Harvey followed this approach in the study of Human Geography.

Radical school of thought employed Marxian theory to explain the basic cause of poverty, deprivation and social inequality. Contemporary social problems were related to the development of capitalism.

Behavioural school of thought laid great emphasis on lived experience and also on the perception of space by social categories based on ethnicity, race and religion, etc. This approach is borrowed from Psychology. It emphasised on the cognitive power of human being. With help of this approach, behaviour of people towards physical and social environment is studied in different form.

7. Fields and sub-fields of human geography

Human geography, as you have seen, attempts to explain the relationship between all elements of human life and the space they occur over. Thus, human geography assumes a highly inter-disciplinary nature. It develops close interface with other sister disciplines in

social sciences in order to understand and explain human elements on the surface of the earth. With the expansion of knowledge, new subfields emerge and it has also happened to human geography. Now, let us examine these fields and sub-fields of Human Geography given in the table (1.2).

Table 1.2: Human Geography and Sister Disciplines of Social Sciences

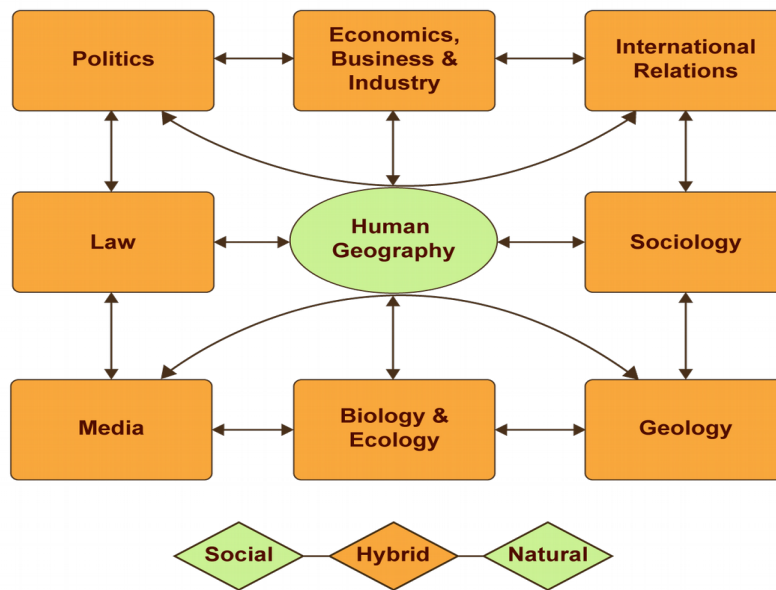| Fields of Human Geography	Sub-fields	Interface with Sister Disciplines of Social Sciences
Social Geography	-	Social Sciences- Sociology
	Behavioural Geography	Psychology
	Geography of Social being	Welfare Economics
	Geography of Leisure	Sociology
	Cultural Geography	Anthropology
	Gender Geography,	Sociology, Anthropology, Women's Studies
	Historical Geography	History
	Medical Geography	Epidemiology
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

Fig No.9 ; Fields and sub-fields of human geography

8. Summary

You would have noticed that the list is large and comprehensive. It reflects the expanding scope of human geography. The boundaries between sub-fields often overlap. These modules will provide you a fairly widespread coverage of different aspects of human geography. The exercises, the activities and the case studies will provide you with some empirical instances so as to have a better understanding of its subject matter.