

Social Geography

D S E - 2 A S o c i a l G e o g r a p h y

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Social- the things related to human groups and their interaction between themselves apart from natural worlds. The interaction between individuals and groups, behaviour, that are determined by non physical elements.

Geography- why things are located, where they are? **Three questions:** what, where and how.....

What- the natural and human phenomena, their structure and pattern of distribution.

Where- the geographical location (absolute and relative) of the phenomena.

How- the interpretation of such phenomena, their structure and pattern of distribution, the underlying processes leading to such structure and patterns.

- **Social geography** is the study of the aerial patterns and functional relations of social groups in the context of their social environment; the internal structure and external relations of the nodes of social activity, and the articulation of various channels of social communication. **Buttimer** (1968)
- According to **Eyles** social Geography is the analysis of the social patterns and processes arising from the distribution of, and access to, scarce resources and....an examination of the societal causes of, and suggested solutions to, social and environmental problems.

Nature and Background of social Geography

- Geographical analysis of social phenomena seems to be important to the geographer. This necessity gave birth the new branch of human geography- the social geography.
- The term social geography although not new (first used by **E. Demolins**, 1844 AD), but as the branch of human geography it was developed 1945 onwards. Prior to this, it was synonymous with the human geography.
- The term social geography was perhaps first used by **Vallaux** in 1908 in his work “Geographic Sociale: La Mer” and was synonyms with him in geography.
- **J. Eyles** saw the foundation of contemporary social geography in the development of philosophy of **possibilism** in late-nineteenth century. He visualised social geography as a continuation of Vidal-de-laBlach and Bobeks.

- According to **Monkhouse** it was synonyms with human geography or in the United States of America with cultural geography.
- Since the origin of social Geography it remained ill-defined and often confused with human geography and cultural geography.
- The idea which has gained popularity in the domain of social Geography is the analysis of social phenomena as expressed in space. Although the term **social phenomena** should be interpreted in a variety of ways keeping in view the specific context of the societies at different stages of social evolution in the **occidental** and **Oriental** worlds.
- **Social phenomena** encompasses the whole framework of human interactions with environment leading to the articulation of social space by diverse human groups in different ways. The end product of human activity may be perceived in the **social patterns** manifest in the personality of regions.

- The **social patterns** is the way the social phenomena express themselves in space.
- Social Geography deals various concepts and components of human society like, social behaviour , social relations, social processes, social behaviour, social problems and issues, social beings, Social justice, social pathology and different social elements Like caste class gender etc in such a way all these components and elements are attached to the space.
- The special analysis of the elements and components is the main focus in social geography.

- In the **first half of 20th century**, identification of different regions reflecting geographic patterns of association of social phenomena was the primary analysis of the social geographic analysis.
- In the 20th and 30th decades of the 20th century Social geography was concerned with study of human population organised in settlements, particularly in urban settlements- the ethnic composition of population. The approach was regional. '**social contexts in urban space**'.
- In order to do this the concerns, like access to civic amenities, and housing and related social pathological issues like crime, Juvenile delinquency, mental ill-health were thrown up from social Geography study.

- In the 1950s **quantitative revolution** 'positivist approach' in social geography gave rise to the analysis of spatial pattern of social phenomena on urban space. '**Social Area Analysis**' as a tool in social geography. Besides social physics has been developed in this period as a tool of analysis of spatial expression of social phenomena.
- The underlying Idea was to examine the social content of the urban space which resulted from coming together of diverse ethnic groups within city. The spatial segregation of peoples of different ethnic and racial communities, like black, North Africans, France, Asians become inevitable in American cities.
- **Human Ecology Approach** was introduced to explain the formation and development of urban space by using the principle of ecology.
- In **1960s and 1970s** social geography focuses on **welfare issues** like, inequality, wellbeing and their spatial pattern. Structural approach was used to explain the inequalities based on power relations.
- Although inequality study was limited within urban space (e.g. community, crime, health, housing condition, segregation and poverty).

- In **1980s** the emphasis shifted to gender relations (bias, discrimination, inequality), disability, age, justice.
- **Rural** social structure, pattern, inequality included.
- **Approaches**

Jones and Eyles in 1977 described social geography as a group approach.

The progress of social geography **1960 onwards** based on the three school of thoughts-

1. **Welfare o humanistic school-** this school of geography concerned with the **state of wellbeing** expressed by territorial indicator of housing, health, social pathology.
2. **Radical school-** this school of geography employed Marxist theory to explain basic causes of poverty and inequality. They related the contemporary social problems with the capitalism.
3. **Phenomenological school-** this school of geography emphasise on the live experience and on the perception of geographical space by social categories based on ethnicity, race or religion.

Thus contemporary social geography is developed in the line with the theoretical development in human geography as a whole.

Social Geography: India

- Social Geography in the context of India is a very interesting discussion because from the very beginning of Indian social evolution Indian society has evolved in diverse geographical settings which helps to develop diverse socio cultural patterns in people of India.
- India has a multi cultural social background which has been evolved and differentiated from each other in different social cultural aspects. The various social elements interacting in different socio-cultural groups and the interaction between those socio cultural groups Created complex social pattern in India.
- Social aspects intermingled with physical settings must demand serious studies in social Geographical context.

Social Geography: India

- Although social geography as a branch of human Geography has been developed in the America and Europe in 20th century, but in India despite its treasure of sociocultural diversity social geography as a branch of human geography attracted the attention of geographers after independence.
- In the year 1972 Jawaharlal Nehru University started a course on social Geography with reference to India understanding the sociocultural treasure of India.
- After independence the federal political system of India has been determined by its specific socio-cultural diversity intermingled with the physical settings of the country. Diverse socio cultural pattern in different physical settings created social differentiation resulting into to the formation of region which later emerged at Indian states in the Indian union.

Scope of Social Geography:

The contents of social geography may be similar with the many of social sciences. But there is certain specific scope, which do not shared by any of the other social sciences.

The main area is the **space relation** of social geography.

Social geography deals every social phenomena in relation to the space. How space influences the space and how societies shape the space, its pattern etc.

Study man in the context of space and to analyse the processes that shaped his activities.

So **space patterns** and **processes** are the three basic parameters on which the scope of social geography rests.

- The Scope of social geography cannot be understood properly without knowing the concepts that attached to the analysis of social geography.
- These are-
- **Landscape,**
- **Space and territoriality,**
- **perceived space,**
- **genre de vie.**
- **Social patterns**

The nature of social Geography cannot be completed without understanding the various levels of social pattern which is basically the special arrangement of various social elements and groups and the special nature of social behaviour.

- **Social processes**

The interaction between individuals and groups.

Contents of Social Geography:

Presently social geography deals with many things related to human society and groups. The main theme is the study of versatile **relations of human groups** and individuals within society. The relation includes the **social processes, social phenomena** and the obvious outcomes of such relations- the **social structure**.

The **three main theme** in social geography-

Social Space- social space is the core concept of social geography. It deals with the social phenomena, processes, structure, relations that characterise the space.

Social Pattern- the spatial arrangements of social groups- their activities, relation, behaviour, elements expressed distinctively over space.

Social Process- the interaction individuals as well as groups themselves. There are both positive as well as negative processes; specific as well as fundamental processes

Beyond these three, social geography deals with-

Social problems,

Social pathology,

Social welfare and planning.

SOCIAL GEOGRAPHY AND OTHER SOCIAL SCIENCES

1. Social Geography and Archaeology:

Social Geography shares its content with Archaeology and may be said based on Archaeology. Archaeology is a systematic and scientific discipline and deals with the human society and its relation with the environment constructed from the evidences got at the past sites of human civilization. It systematically analyse the social structure, processes, interaction of the then people but it definitely lacks one important thing- the 'space' that is important part of the social geography. Social Geography is more concerned with present social phenomena than past.

2. Social Geography and Anthropology

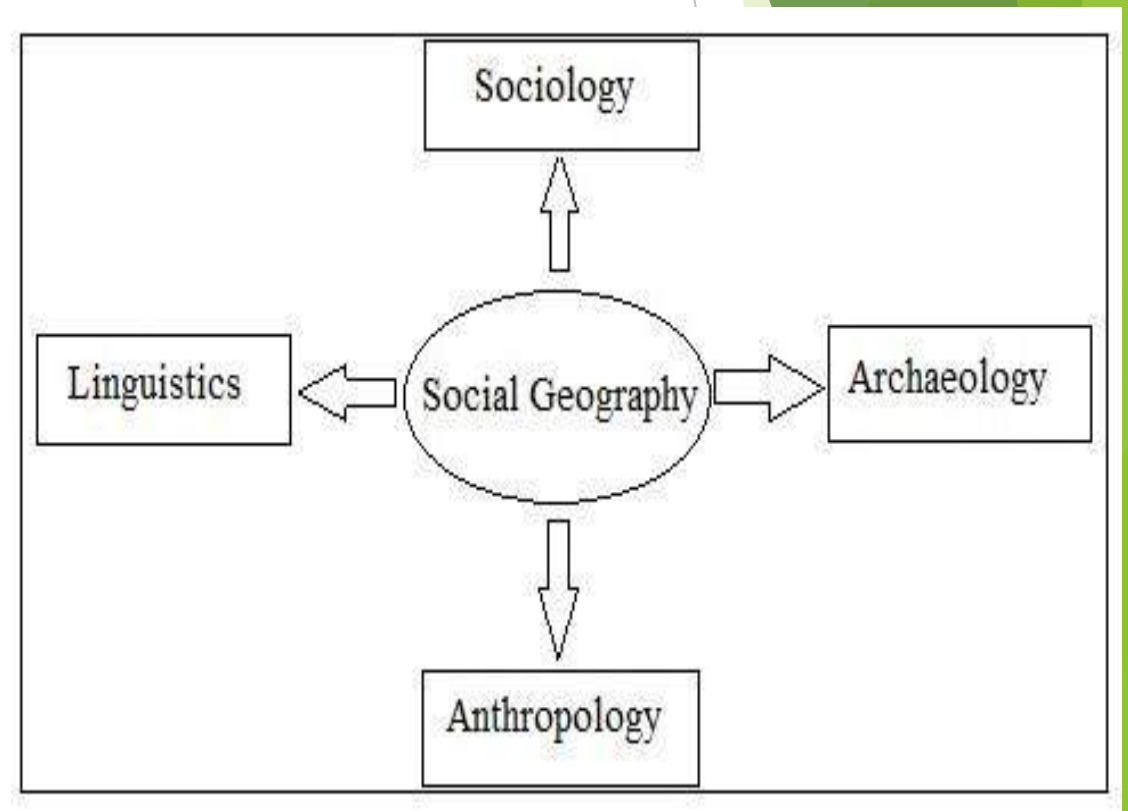
Anthropology also has some common ground with social geography. As a field of study related to man it deals with the dimension of human relationship with nature, the relation and social characteristics of human community and groups with reference to caste, tribe, race, ethnicity, folk customs and religions etc. Social geography study spatial variation of social characteristics, human interactions with reference to spatial correlates of social phenomena, which is unique for it. Social Geography use the materials of Anthropology for comparative analysis.

3. Social Geography and Sociology

Both Sociology and Social Geography deal with society. Their contents are also similar. But **Sociology** study society and its various aspects in a **systematic way to formulate laws of society**. There is no spatial affinity with it. On the other hand **Social Geography** deals with **society and its various aspects in relation to space**.

4. Social Geography and Linguistics

Linguistics deals with the origin, evolution, diffusion, geographical variation and characteristics of languages and their alphabets. It also try to analyse the relation of language with the geographical environments and social relations. **Social Geography** share the contents with Linguistics but in a different way by assigning **spatial contexts to the languages**.



Cultural Geography:

Although there is no universal definition of Cultural Geography, as different country use it for their own situation. But a single consensus about it is that, “Cultural Geography deals with the expression of cultures in areas in a large variety of ways- both material and non-material.”

It has a rich background within the domain of human geography. Carl O Sauer was a pioneer of cultural geography. Besides, Ratzel, Schluter, Richthofen, Meitzen in German school contribute to the development of cultural study.

Contents of Cultural Geography:

Cultural Geography is basically a subfield of human geography and deals with the things related to the expression of culture over space. These are-

1. **Form of culture-** material and non-material,
2. **Cultural hearth, realm, diffusion and cultural regions,**
3. **Cultural landscape-** through settlements, households, buildings and other landscapes.