

Subject: Geography CBCS (HONS)

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CC: C13T

Evolution of the subject of Geography and its recent trends in India: —

The geographical studies in India began as early as the dawn of Indian civilization in ancient times. The contribution of Indian scholars were quite significant and unparalleled. The formal foundation of academic geography in India were laid in the colonial period as late as 1920s. In the 17th Century, due to the arrival of British and other European colonial powers there was tremendous adjustment in Indian intellectual circle and the subject of geography made progress since independence.

Geography in the colonial period i.e. until 1947 concentrated on descriptive accounts of the land, people and products of different parts of the Indian subcontinent. It primarily met the needs of the British administrators in the process of expansion and consolidation of the colonial empire. Maps and gazetteers were produced to acquaint the colonial ^{civil} service with basic geographic information. By 1881, the British produced the first map of India on a scale of 1 Inch to 32 Miles. India's great luminaries who played an important role in introducing geography into Indian universities during 1920s were N. Subramanyam (Chennai), R.N. Debey (Allahabad), K.S. Ahmad (Lahore)

Tahir Rizvi (Aligarh) and S.C. Chatterjee (Patna). Two leading geographical societies were established in this phase — the Indian Geographical Society at Madras (1926) and the Geographical Society of India at Calcutta (1932).

Indian geography got its first methodological orientation under the influence of Dubey, Rahman and Chatterjee. They expressed the possibilist philosophy of French through man-land relationships. The correlation of physical elements with cultural elements of the German geographic philosophy were emphasized by N.R. Kar and K.R. Dikshit. The formative period in the history of Indian geography were characterised by the descriptive ideographic style having bearing towards the gazetteer trap, heterogeneity and unevenness.

The post-independence period saw the use of the subject in national development. The initiation of the planning era witnessed the recognition of the role of geographers by the National Government and the Planning Commission for carrying out regional surveys, preparing resource inventories and mapping. The National Atlas & Thematic Organisation (NATMO) was established in 1956 under the guidance of S.P. Chatterjee. National, regional and local development became the dominant field of investigation. Urban geography gained importance,

due to rapidly growing population and urban centres. Another area of thrust was local or district land use and population studies. The major preoccupations of the Indian geographers during the 1950s were the physical geography (geomorphology, hydrology, climatology, pedology and biogeography), economic geography (land use and agricultural geography, geography of trade and transport and industrial geography), human geography (urban geography and population geography), cartography, and regional planning for understanding the physical, economic and social realities and for harnessing the resources for national planning and development.

The 1960s saw a dramatic shift in the central ideas of Indian geographers. The major trend continued to be like the earlier and other preoccupations were rural settlements, political geography, regionalisation and regional planning; geographical thought and methodology; historical geography. Applied geography made a debut under the aegis of R. L. Singh and the study of the levels of regional development in India was made popular by Ashok Mitra. The 1960-1970 phase, saw geography emerging as an inter-disciplinary subject to attract people from social sciences and humanities.

The focus of Indian geography during the 20th Century clearly reveals a shift from much criticised 'gazetteer approach'

To relatively analytical works. Indian geography today is standing at the crossroads as there is a systematic introduction of newly developed or introduced methodologies or research techniques, such as remote sensing, quantitative analysis and GIS.

References: —

- 1.) Evolution of Modern Geographical Thinking and Disciplinary Trends in India — Dr. Lalita Rana.
- 2.) Evolution of Geographical Thought — Majid Hussain.
- 3.) Fundamentals of Geographical Thought — Indeepta Adhikari.