

Social geography is a branch of Human Geography dealing with social structures, social groups and social activities. It is difficult to define this sub-discipline (of human geography). It is still in its formative stage and yet to assume a crystalised and final form with distinct perimeters. However, the following tentative definitions give us some idea about the meaning and scope of social geography.

Definition

It was W. Fitzgerald (1946), who for the first time, looked for a definition of social geography (as the sub-discipline was conceived immediately after World War II). He almost equated it with human geography and stated that social geography studied

'spatial arrangement of social phenomena, which are of significance to man'. Fitzgerald was followed by T. Harrison (1946), who says that 'social geography is not a systematic treatment of society in relation with environment but a 'genetic description of social differences' as they relate to other factors and to differences in areas on the earth's surface'.

Social geography began to consolidate slowly over the nineteen-fifties and sixties. J. Watson (1957) defined it 'as the identification of different regions of the earth according to their association of social phenomenon related to the total environment', R.E. Pahl gave a clearer definition of the sub-discipline in 1965. According to him, social geography was 'the study of the patterns and processes for understanding socially defined population groups (say, Telugu, Sindhi, Oriya, Assamese, etc.) in their spatial settings' In the nineteen-sixties, A. Buttimer (1968), another geographer, attempted at defining social geography and said that the sub-discipline was 'the study of areal (spatial) patterns and functional relations of social groups in the context of their social environment', The study, according to Buttimer, further extends to consider the centres (nodes of social activity i.e. towns and villages) and the channels and media of social communications' (educational institutions, performing art, fairs and festivals, etc).

David Harvey, who is renowned for his radical bent of mind, defined social geography (1973) as a sub-discipline that 'addresses itself both to the spatial expression of institutions as witnessed by the incidence of inequality, poverty, racism and exploitation; and to the active (though by no means determinant) role of space in influencing these social structures' Two British geographers, J. Eyles and E. Jones contributed substantially towards consolidating social geography. J. Eyles (1974) defined social geography as 'the analysis of social patterns and processes arising from the distribution of and access to, scarce resources' It may,