

VIDYA BHAWAN BALIKA VIDYAPITH SHAKTI UTTHAN ASHRAM LAKHISARAI

CLASS 12th SUBJECT GEOGRAPHY DATE 5.6.2021.

Ch:Human GEOGRAPHY NATURE AND SCOPE (Notes)

Determinism and possibilism are two philosophical approaches in human geography.

Contents

- [Determinism](#)
- [Environmental determinism](#)
- [Possibilism](#)
- [Neo-determinism](#)

Determinism

Philosophy of Determinism is based upon the interaction between primitive human society and strong forces of nature. This is an older philosophy which persisted till World War II. It says that the strong forces of environment control the course of human action. This implies that the history, culture, mode of life, and the level of development of the societal groups and countries are exclusively or largely controlled by the physical environment.

- According to Determinism, man is a passive agent, and nature is active agent, which controls and determines the action and decision-making processes of man.
- As per determinism, the human actions can be explained as a response to the natural environment.

Environmental determinism

This philosophy says that aspects of physical geography, particularly climate, influenced the psychological mind-set of individuals, which in turn defined the behaviour and culture of the society that those individuals formed. For example, tropical climates were said to cause laziness, relaxed attitudes and promiscuity, while the frequent variability in the weather of the middle latitudes led to more determined and driven work ethics.

- The core philosophy is that the supreme achievements of civilisation in any region were always bound up with a particular type of climate and variation in climate led to pulsations in the history and culture of the people.

These geographers who propound this theory say that the civilisations of Egyptians, Mesopotamians, Indus-valley, disappeared because of the climatic changes. The attacks of the central Asian nomads in different directions in the 13th century were also attributed to the drying up of their pastures directions of climatic change.

Possibilism

Possibilism is reaction to determinism and environmental determinism. It is based upon the assumption that environment sets certain constraints or limitations, but culture is otherwise determined by social conditions. This theory says that the true and only geographical problem is that to **utilisation of possibilities**.

Essence of Possibilism is that:

- Nature provides possibilities and man utilises them according to his culture, traditions, and levels of socioeconomic development.
- People are not just the products of their environment or just pawn of natural environment.
- *Nature is never more than an adviser.*
- There are not necessities but everywhere possibilities.
- The range of possibilities in every region is limited more by the price man is willing to pay of what he wants than by the dictates of environment. For instance, man through his technical skill can grow banana, rice and rubber plants in tundra, Greenland, and Antarctica, but he has to take into consideration the input cost.
- The prohibitive cost of production of these crops in the extremely cold conditions of these areas will compel man not to grow them in the tundra climate.

This approach has been criticised on several accounts. For example, despite numerous possibilities, man, has not been able to get rid of the obstacles set by the physical forces. The possibilities may be many in the temperate regions but they are very limited in the deserts, equatorial, tundra, and high mountainous regions.

Neo-determinism

Australian geographer Griffith Taylor, in 1920 argued that the limit of agricultural settlements in Australia has been set by factors of the physical environment such a distribution of rainfall. He further said that the best economic programme for a country to follow has in large part been determined by nature ,and it is the geographer's duty to interpret this programme. Man is able to accelerate, slow, or stop the progress of a country's regions development. But he should not, if he is wise, depart from directions as indicated by natural environment. He is like the traffic controller in a large city who alters the rate but not the direction of progress.

- This theory is also called "stop and go determinism".
- It says that man follows nature's plan only if he is wise, presuming he can act foolishly ,which admits the possible contention that within broad limits set by environment,

man can choose at the very least. But wisdom and folly are human concepts. The nature knows nothing of them.

- This theory says that in no environment are the possibilities limitless and for every choice a price must be paid. Man makes his choice and man himself judges its relative wisdom or folly by reference to goals he himself has established.

SUBJECT TEACHER MUKESH KUMAR