

ENVIRONMENTAL GEOGRAPHY (meaning & Scope)

K. Hewitt and F.K. Hare first used the term of 'Environmental Geography' in Man and Environment: Conceptual Frameworks in the year 1973 who remarked that the main needs of environmental geography today are a deeper fusion of ideas & results from the life sciences. It was realized that ecological input in geographical studies of environment would make the discipline of geography more focused subject. This is clearly evident from the assertion of S.R. Eyre (1964) that a more ecological approach enhances the prestige of geographers within the academic world. According to Eyre by adopting an ecological view point geographers can stand to rid themselves of naive determinism, and misinterpretation in both human and physical geography. It was the year 1989 when Ravindra Singh attempted to define environmental geography and determine its scope in his research paper entitled 'Environmental Geography: Conceptual Frameworks' (National Geographers 1989) and published the first comprehensive text and reference book entitled 'Environmental Geography' in 1991. This led to widespread proliferation of environmental geography as a distinct branch of geography and now most of the Indian Universities have included environmental geography in their undergraduate and postgraduate geography syllabi. Emphasising

the fact that the basic approach to the study of man-environment relationships, the core of environmental

geography in 1989 as follows:

Thus broadly speaking

Environmental geography may be defined as the study of spatial attributes of interrelationships between living organisms and natural environment in general, and between technologically advanced 'Economic man' and his natural environment in particular in temporal and spatial framework.

Let us build up the definition of environmental geography step by step so that the final definition may include all aspects of environmental geography so that it may be more flexible and broad based and may very precisely reveal the scope of subject as follows.

(i) Environmental geography is basically the study of Environment. If this is so, why it should not be termed as 'geography of Environment'? The answer is easy, the term environmental geography lays more emphasis on man-Environment relationships vis-a-vis man environment interactions, causes there of and responses there from. On the other hand, 'geography of Environment' focuses more on the study of characteristics and spatial and temporal distribution of different components of environment e.g. land, air, water, society etc. It does not mean that environmental geography. Thus the definition of environmental geography does not focus on the spatial and temporal aspects of environment. Thus the definition of environmental geography has to be broadened as follows on the following pages.

(2) Environmental geography is the study of systematic description of different components of environment and interactions of man with these components. The study of characteristics features of the components of environment such as abiotic components, biotic components and energy components and interactions between these components and among biotic components requires spatial and temporal units.

(3) Environmental geography is the study of characteristic features of various components of the environment, the interactions between and among the components in a geo ecosystem in terms of ecosystems of varying spatial and temporal scales.

SCOPE OF ENVIRONMENTAL GEOGRAPHY

(i) Geoecosystem (Ecosystem) : Ecosystem is the basic ecological unit for the study of various aspects of environmental geography. This group includes the study of following aspects of ecosystems:

- meaning and components of ecosystems
- Ecosystem characteristics.
- Ecosystem types
- Ecological principles.

(ii) ECOSYSTEM FUNCTIONING The ecosystem functions through the input of solar energy and biotic and abiotic matter. The following are included in the study of ecosystem function.

Biogeography - an ecology.

dispersal of plants and animals
world distribution of plants and animals
ecological variations of plants and animals
ecological variations at global level.
ecological variations at regional and local scales.
man-induced environmental changes.
Ecological changes.
Environmental controls of ecological variations and changes.

Global Environmental problems.

global radiation balance.
anthropogenic changes in global radiation heat balance.
indicators of global warming.
Process of global warming: ozone depletion and green house affect

Environmental hazard & disasters.

identification and listing of hazards and disasters.
classification of hazards and disasters.
causes and consequences of hazards and disasters
disasters reduction and management.

Man and Environmental Process.

man and hydrological processes.
man and weathering and mass movement.
man and coastal processes.
man river processes.
man and periglacial processes.
man and subsurface processes.