

Concepts in Human Geography.

Concepts are important parts of a discipline, as they give distinct identity to it. The fundamental concepts of a discipline largely depend upon nature of facts studied in that discipline and perspectives adopted to study those facts.

What is concept?

Preston E. James defines concept as a mental image of a thing or event. Its meaning closely resembles to those of facts and percept. A percept is an empirical observation - an observation made through senses and based on experience. An empirical observation is sometimes called a factual statement. Fact refers to a single object, event or individual. Unlike facts and percepts, concepts represent those characteristics that are common to a group of experiences.

The fundamental concepts of Human Geography are Time, space, location, spatial distribution, spatial interaction, spatial structure, hierarchy, spatial organisation, spatial and ecological perception, cognition and behaviour, culture, society, development and inequality. Some of these concepts such as space, spatial distribution, spatial interaction and spatial organisation are indigenous concepts of human geography. Rest are derivative concepts.

A) Scale :-

Scale is primarily related to space in Geography. According to D.R. Montello it carries at least three different connotations.

(i) Scale in Cartographic sense :- It refers to the portrayed size of feature on a map, relative to its actual size in real world. Thus, scale of a map is the ratio of a distance on the map to the corresponding distance on the ground. For example 1 cm on a map may represent 25 km on ground.

(ii) Analysis scale :- It refers to the size of the areal unit at which some problem is analysed such as the country, state or district level.

(iii) Phenomenal Scale :- It refers to the size at which geographical structures exist or over which geographical processes operate in the world. Phenomena studied by geographers can be found at micro, meso or macro spatial level. It can also exist at local, regional or global level.

B) Time and Space :-

Time and space are two fundamental realities of existence of anything on the earth surface. The famous German philosopher, Immanuel Kant was of the view that time and space fill up the entire circumference of human experience. Time is basically a separation of two successive events on the other hand space is defined as separation between two places.

Traditionally the concepts of time and space are used as the starting point of defining history and geography.

Spatio-Temporal Dimension of Reality

Parameters	History (Chronological)	Geography (Chorographic)	Historical Geography
Discipline	Chronology	Chorography	Choro-chronoge
Dimension	Temporal	Spatial	Spatio-Temporal
Focus of Study	Period	Place	Place in part. period
Dynamics	Change	Variation	Spatial vari + Tempo-
Investigation	Trend	Pattern	changing pattern and
Technique	Narration	Description	Narrative-Descri
Tool.	Time line	Map	changing Map

History deals with time. Therefore historians are concerned with temporal dimension of reality. They are mainly interested in studying the temporal evolution of society. But they often overlook the spatial and ecological realities of the earth in interpreting different type of changes. The truth, however is that everything that has even happened in human history has happened in specific places only.

Geography is concerned with space. Therefore, geographers are concerned with spatial dimensions of reality. They describe differences in character of places. They also describe similarities in the spatial distribution of phenomena. Since geography is defined as an areal or spatial science, therefore, they tend to ignore time in their study. The reality is however is that anything that is found anywhere on the earth's surface occur in specific time frame and change with time.

The interdependence of concepts of time and space only suggest the need for closer look. As Herodotus state that "All history must be treated geographically and all geography must be treated historically."

Therefore, human geographers must study time or temporal dimension in their study of world.