

**ADVANCES IN
GEOGRAPHICAL THOUGHT****BLOCK****3****POLITICAL ECONOMY AND CRITICAL GEOGRAPHY**

Unit 5**Radical and Liberal Perspectives**

Unit 6**Critical Geography**

Glossary

Programme Expert Committee

Prof. K. R. Dikshit (Retd.) Department of Geography, University of Pune, Pune, Maharashtra	Prof. K. Kumaraswamy (Retd.) Department of Geography, Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu	Prof. Subhakanta Mohapatra Discipline of Geography, School of Sciences, IGNOU, New Delhi
Prof. Gopal Krishan (Emeritus Professor) Department of Geography, Panjab University, Chandigarh	Prof. Sachidanand Sinha (Retd.) Centre for the Study of Regional Development, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi	Prof. Vijay Kumar Baraik Discipline of Geography, School of Sciences, IGNOU, New Delhi
Prof. H. S. Sharma (Retd.) Department of Geography, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur, Rajasthan	Prof. Nina Singh (Retd.) Department of Geography, Maharshi Dayanand University, Rohtak, Haryana	Dr. Satya Raj Discipline of Geography, School of Sciences, IGNOU, New Delhi
Prof. Harjit Singh (Retd.) Centre for the Study of Regional Development, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi	Prof. Debendra Kumar Nayak Department of Geography, North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, Meghalaya	Dr. Koppiseti Nageswara Rao Discipline of Geography, School of Sciences, IGNOU, New Delhi
Prof. S. Padmaja (Retd.) Department of Geography, Osmania University, Hyderabad Telangana	Prof. M.S. Nathawat (Retd.) Professor, Discipline of Geography & Former Director, School of Sciences, IGNOU, New Delhi	Dr. Vishal Warpa Discipline of Geography, School of Sciences, IGNOU, New Delhi

Course Design Committee

Prof. M.H. Qureshi (Retd.) Centre for the Study of Regional Development, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi	Prof. Sachidanand Sinha (Retd.) Centre for the Study of Regional Development, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi	Faculty of Geography Discipline: Prof. M.S. Nathawat (Retd.) Prof. Subhakanta Mohapatra Prof. Vijay Kumar Baraik Dr Koppiseti Nageswara Rao Dr. Vishal Warpa
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Block Preparation Team

Course Contributors

Prof. B.S. Butola (Retd.) (Unit - 5)
Centre for the Study of Regional Development,
Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

Prof. Anindita Datta (Unit – 6)
Department of Geography,
University of Delhi, Delhi

Content Editor

Prof. Sachidanand Sinha (Retd.)
Centre for the Study of Regional Development,
Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

Course Coordinator - Prof. Vijay Kumar Baraik

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Sh. Rajiv Girdhar
A.R., MPDD, IGNOU

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CONTENTS

Block 3: Political Economy and Critical Geography	77
Credit Page.....	78
Contents.....	79
Block 3: Political Economy and Critical Geography	80
Unit 5: Radical and Liberal Perspectives	81
5.1 Introduction.....	81
Expected Learning Outcomes.....	82
5.2 Structuralism and Structuration	82
5.2.1 Structuralism	82
5.2.2 Structuration	85
5.3 Structuralism in Human Geography	86
5.4 Contributions of David Harvey and David M. Smith	88
5.4.1 David Harvey	88
5.4.2 David M. Smith	89
5.5 Social Production of Nature	92
5.6 Summary.....	94
5.7 Terminal Questions.....	94
5.8 Answers.....	95
5.9 References and Further Reading.....	96
Unit 6: Critical Geography	97
6.1 Introduction.....	97
Expected Learning Outcome.....	98
6.2 Origins of Critical Geographies	98
6.3 Radical Geography and Critical Geography	99
6.4 Geographies of Gender and Feminist Geographies	101
6.5 Geographies of Difference	104
6.6 Post-Structural Geographies	105
6.7 Post-Colonial Geographies	106
6.8 Rise of Technologies and Changing Perspectives on Space and Place	107
6.9 Contemporary Concerns and Critiques	108
6.10 Summary.....	109
6.11 Terminal Questions.....	109
6.12 Answers.....	109
6.13 References and Further Reading.....	111
Glossary.....	113

BLOCK 3: POLITICAL ECONOMY AND CRITICAL GEOGRAPHY

Geography has experienced rapid evolution in the second half of the last century and the present century. It has moved from the traditional geographical study to the complex branches and sub-branches in the form of post-modern, radical and liberal as well as critical geographies influenced by several philosophical backgrounds. It explores the radical and liberal perspectives in geography highlighting contradictions. This Block also tries to explore the questions related to the development in contemporary geography with a huge shift in the perspectives on space and place. This Block has two Units - 1. Unit 5: Radical and Liberal Perspectives, and Unit 6: Critical Geography.

Unit 5: Radical and Liberal Perspectives tries to highlight the radical and liberal perspectives by going to the root of the contradictions of modern society and making objective and scientific understanding to create a just and humane society. There has also been an attempt to make aware of the path of the life-world by travelling from information to the realm of wisdom. The primary aims of this Unit are to introduce students to the concepts of structuralism and structuration and explain the production of nature and the contributions of David Harvey and David M. Smith.

Unit 6: Critical Geography aims to make students familiar with the development of Critical Geography distinguishing it from Radical geography, to acquaint them with the development and growth of geographies of gender and feminist geography, explain geographies of difference, appreciate post-structural and post-colonial geographies, describe how perspectives on space and place have changed, link contemporary concerns to critical geographies, and make aware of main critiques of Critical Geography. The sub-themes in the Unit are origins of critical geographies, similarities and differences with radical geography, feminist perspectives- geographies of gender and feminist geographies, geographies of difference, post-structural and post-colonial human geographies, the rise of technologies and changing perspectives on space and place and contemporary concerns and critiques.

It is expected that the students will have good exposure to the recent developments in geography, which have emerged from the various ideological influences and latest developments in human society. Our best wishes are always with you.

RADICAL AND LIBERAL PERSPECTIVES

Structure

5.1	Introduction	David Harvey
	Expected Learning Outcomes	David M. Smith
5.2	Structuralism and Structuration	5.5 Social Production of Nature
	Structuralism	5.6 Summary
	Structuration	5.7 Terminal Questions
5.3	Structuralism in Human	5.8 Answers
	Geography	5.9 References and Further
5.4	Contributions of David Harvey	Reading
	and David M. Smith	

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The twentieth century could be considered as one of the most controversial times in human history. It witnessed some of the greatest and most spectacular achievements of human history in the fields of science, technology, politics, economy, art, culture, health and material prosperity. It is also credited with putting an end to the age-old contradictions of human society, thereby heralding the end of history. According to Francis Fukuyama, the twentieth century witnessed the resolutions of two fundamental contradictions and prime movers of history, i.e. the struggle for redistributions and recognitions. He advocated that the capitalist path of development based on individual freedom and democratic governance has contributed to resolving these social contradictions and human beings have reached the end of history because today one cannot imagine a world which is non-capitalist and undemocratic.

This is only one side of the story. The other side is more frightening. This century also witnessed two World Wars, the Holocaust, Auschwitz, gas chambers, concentration camps, the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by atom bombs, ozone layer depletion, global warming, and other ecological crises all in the name of peace and development. Scholars across disciplines have tried to analyse the paradoxes of modern times in various ways.

According to Marx “The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it” (Marx, 1976, p. 620). To change means to go beyond the epiphenomena and understand the essence.

In Unit 4, you have studied spatial science and the rise of humanistic geography. Attempts have been made in this Unit to go at the root of the apparent contradictions of modern society and make an objective and scientific understanding to create a just and humane society in the following backdrop:

- We are in the age of information revolution. There are numerous channels of information providing more information than what the human mind is able to make sense out of these. Though there are great advantages of the information revolution, the trade of costs is so high that society, in general, is losing its critical faculty to judge critically.
- T.S. Eliot once wrote “Where is Life we have lost in living? Where is the wisdom we have lost in Knowledge? Where is the knowledge we have lost in information”? In this Unit, an attempt has been made to take the students away from information through the path of knowledge into the realm of wisdom and finally into the life world.
- Moving beyond appearance and addressing the essence (structure) is easier said than done. In the words of poet Kabir “*Sadhu raah kathin hai jaise ped khazoor; Chadhey to amrit ras chakhe giray to chaknachoor*”. Meaning thereby, the path accessing the essence is difficult like climbing a date palm tree. If one succeeds then (s)he can taste the elixir from the sweet fruits but if one falls/fails then total devastation will be the outcome. Similarly, structural analysis is a wonderful endeavour but it has greater dangers of sacrificing individual freedom to the over-determining rules of the structure.

Expected Learning Outcomes

After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- be acquainted with structuralism and structuration;
- be familiar with structuralism in human geography;
- describe the contributions of David Harvey and David M. Smith in human geography; and
- explain the social production of nature.

5.2 STRUCTURALISM AND STRUCTURATION

5.2.1 Structuralism

The paradoxes and contradictions in modern society are so pervasive and entrenched that there exists no institution and individual who have the required wherewithal to provide relief to an individual and establish a just social order. Consequently, the individual is more helpless and alienated than ever before, which has been responded to differently across cultures and times. There are some who believe that an individual is alienated and confused in a hostile world (Expressionism). There are others who opine that

an individual is bewildered in a mysterious and unknown world (Surrealism). There are some others who believe that an individual is lonely in an absurd world (Existentialism), and; there are still more who believe that an individual is struggling to escape from banal and illusionary reality (Abstractionism). Among all these strategies, the common concern is the struggle of an individual in an absurd world encountering the Kafkaesque space, which has drawn the attention of many geographers. The radicals were particularly concerned about the efforts made by the above-mentioned ideological positions for reducing the collective social experiences and distress at the level of individual's attitude and experiences towards the social reality as a confused and hostile, bewildered, mysterious and unknown, lonely individual in an absurd world and finally an escape from banal and illusionary reality. They encountered it with collective social action and tried unpacking the absurd world with the help of theoretical constructs. Structuralism was one of the dominant philosophical trends in the 1960s and after.

Structuralism in geography was initially advocated by the radicals against Sartre's existential notion of radical freedom. They primarily concentrated on human behaviour the way it is determined and defined by modes of production, particularly the relations of production, forces of production, nature of class struggle, cultural, social and psychological structures on the one hand and if possible offered a synthesised and a single unified approach to understand human social life, which has occupied the central position across disciplines on the other. Though, the credit of introducing structuralism as an episteme goes to Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, yet for the structuralists, there were two other prominent sources. The first one was Karl Marx's exposition outlined in 'Preface to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy': "Neither legal relations nor forms of state could be grasped whether by themselves or on the basis of a so-called general development of human mind, but on the contrary they have their origin in the material conditions of existence...In the social production of their existence, humans enter into definite, necessary relations of production corresponding to a determinate stage of development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation on which there arises a legal and political superstructure and to which there arises a legal and political superstructure and to which there correspond definite forms of social consciousness" (Marx, 1976, p. 3). The second source was French Anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss. According to him "things cannot be understood in isolation, they have to be seen in the context of larger structures they are part of" and in their turn, the contexts of larger structures do not exist by themselves, but are formed by the way one perceives the world. Quintessentially, the structuralists believed that all human activities are socially constructed and there is nothing natural about these. The structuralists argued that for a proper and scientific understanding of human actions, an analysis should be made at three levels:

- a. At the level of appearance or superstructure,
- b. At the level of processes of infrastructure and;
- c. At the level of imperatives of deep structure.

According to the structuralists, normal observers only apprehend and encounter the apparent or the superstructure, comprising social, cultural, political and spatial organisation in their daily lives, which, in essence, don't account for their own existence. The task of creating these lies with the processes or the infrastructure. They also believe that though it is difficult to comprehend the processes, the underlying structures which organise the rules including synthesising these into a meaningful system are generated by the human mind and not through simple sense perceptions. Thus, they try to simplify the complexities of human experiences to certain underlying structures, which are universal. According to Marx, these universal structures constitute the economic structure, labour process and class struggle.

As mentioned before, the other significant contribution for popularising structuralism across disciplines including geography goes to Claude Levi-Strauss, who in turn was influenced by Emile Durkheim and his nephew Marcel Mauss. However, he distinguished himself from Durkheim because "his vision of social science was far exclusive and its autonomy wrongly conceived" (Gregory, p. 91). For Levi-Strauss, the concept of a structural domain was less important than the very special way in which the disciples of Durkheim conceptualised it. This in turn has raised two important questions about the developments namely: how to reassemble these new elements in such a way that their collation disclose the domain from which they are derived? And, secondly, how to maintain the distinction between explained and explanatory phenomena while providing genuinely reductive explanations of social and natural phenomena?

Levi-Strauss attempted to solve these problems by suggesting two propositions: first, by observing the time-tested rules if there are any to analyse the structure and second, to unpack the universal trends that are embedded deep in the structures. Though these propositions were partially helpful in understanding the social structures, their usefulness was severely constrained in explaining the spatial structures, which because of the disciplinary inclinations Levi-Strauss could hardly ignore. These proved weak links in his proposition and the Marxists were prompt in pointing out without mincing too many words. They argued that spatial structures are more complex than any other structure, which led to a direct encounter between the Structuralists and the Marxists. The concept of 'Mode of Production' was a substantive analytical category for the Marxists while for the structuralists the principle contradiction was between the base and superstructures.

Consequently, structuralist like Althusser uses the category of structure even analyzing the evolution of thoughts in Marx as well as in his works, particularly *The Capital*, *State and Civil Society*. Levi-Strauss pointed out that Marx paid little attention to the analyses and understanding of the state (including the Civil Society, particularly its Ideological State Apparatuses and Repressive State Apparatuses) and the general development of the human mind independent of the material conditions of life, which Althusser did not agree. On the contrary, he identified three levels in Marx's thoughts; the Economic, Political and Ideological as part of his structuralist interpretations of Marx. Consequently, the structural approach to geography developed into two diverse yet interrelated theoretical orientations: Structuralism and Structuration.

5.2.2 Structuration

Greek scholar Eratosthenes defined Geography as a branch of knowledge devoted to the study of the lands, features, inhabitants and phenomena on the Earth in 3rd BC. Since then, geographers across the world have debated apart from other things about the concept of land, the inclusion/exclusion of humans in the subject matter and the scale of geographical enquiry. During his own time, Eratosthenes himself was greatly influenced by Euclidian geometry and used the area as a two-dimensional entity as the unity of study in geography, which for all practical purposes was an abstract entity. Since then, the discipline has travelled a long distance in terms of its subject matter as well as methods of enquiry with certain important milestones such as the study of humanised nature and naturalised humans, region and regional differentiations, space and spatialisation, etc. Few among such were the concepts of place and locality, which gained immense popularity in postmodern discourses. Though, without adhering to any standardised definition, these were definitely offered important components of the critique of historical materialism and the notion of class struggle, obsessions among the Marxists on the one hand and overtly abstract, a totalising and deterministic conception of human existence leaving little space for the autonomy of consciousness or actions of the individuals by the structuralists on the other.

Anthony Giddens, a British sociologist tried to open up the constraints of class interpretation of the Marxist sociologists and attempted to present a holistic view of modern society by introducing the concept of Structuration. It was an attempt to find answers to two vital questions: 'whether it is individual or society (social forces) that shapes the social reality and how to synthesise the Micro (individual self and identity) and Macro (society, state, multinational corporations, etc.) for bringing about social transformation? Structure according to him consists of two diametrically opposite forces of rules and resources involving human action. Rules restrict human actions while resources make it possible to perform the action. Thus, he developed structuration as a concept to provide a theoretical perspective to comprehend the methods and strategies people evolve first to understand and then transform social structures. Structuration for Giddens was a time and space-specific process in which an individual, as well as communities, grapple to negotiate among a range of institutions, practices and experiences occupying the spaces between the deterministic structures and conscious individual agencies. Thus, for Giddens structuration was a bridging notion between structure and agency aimed at not to build a classless society (Marx) but to end empire-building endeavours of the imperialism of the subjects (individual) and object (society). Moreover, structuration unlike the universal conceptual tool of the structuralist is a contextual, particularly time and space-specific, approach to social reality, which is diametrically opposite to the method of viewing social relations and spatial structures distinct from each other. Similarly, he was critical of reducing spatial structure to a theatre of operations among social relations. For him, human spatiality is an ensemble of both, i.e., the social production of space and the spatial construction of society (Dikshit, p. 256). His focus was to develop understanding in order to transform the social structure. Thus, Giddens proposed that to achieve this

goal by bringing the understanding of social practices and recursive social activities at the centre of social science disciplines (Peet, p. 154). According to him, human social practices are recursive because these are continually recreated by social actors, just as many processes in nature are self-reproducing. Giddens further elaborated that the common human understanding of these recursive practices is still in its nascent stages, therefore, there is an urgent need to evolve a new interpretative discipline, which was Sociology in his case. It is imperative for such a discipline to prepare the ordering of such recursive practices not only limited to the aspects of human self-consciousness (awareness) but also the mental monitoring of the flow of social life (watching and learning from social action). He believed that human cognition and action occur as a continuous flow which ultimately remained linked to power because action based on human knowledgeability (cognition) implicitly involves the power to transform society.

These postulations have special significance in geography because the abstract space hereafter is replaced by lived and experiential space, locales (localities) and ultimately a site of social interaction. Thus, he, like Francois Perroux, emphasised liberating the locales from the narrow confines of physical, geographical and materialistic axiomatic. For him, locales are sites of performing life's activities in their entirety i.e. economic, social, political and psychological. The influence of Giddens was very emphatic among geographers like Urry, Massey, David Smith, David Harvey, Derek Gregory etc. and most of the studies after him started the trend of locality studies not only in geography as a discipline but also the government institutions such as Economic and Social Research Council, United Kingdom. The main thrust of the Council and programmes sponsored by it were to collect detailed empirical evidence to identify the causes and consequences of spatial differentiation in the process of structural transformation.

SAQ I

Define structuralism and structuration.

5.3 STRUCTURALISM IN HUMAN GEOGRAPHY

Keeping the above-mentioned differences between the Marxists and the Structuralist in view, the latter opined that the underlying structure which organises the rules and units into meaningful systems are generated by the human mind and not by sense perception. Thus, they tried to reduce the complexities of human experiences to certain underlying structures which are universal. These propositions were different from the Marxists who assigned importance to material relations in different forms of articulations at the level of superstructures. Thus, they tried to question the false polarisation created between Durkheim and Ratzel in the name of 'naturalisation of human or humanisation of nature' respectively and tried to replace it with the dialectical concept of "Structuration".

It is ironic that most geographers generally avoided analysing one of the three levels i.e. the deep structures in their analysis, though some tried to address

certain spatial concepts like the sense of place, space, territoriality, orientation, etc., yet they concentrated heavily on infrastructure (mostly physical) and partially on the superstructure. However, the structuralist approach was extensively used in the field of Human Geography. David Harvey in his seminal work *Social Justice and the City* (1973) attempted to analyse the processes of spatial organisation in a city. He observed that socio-economic factors (class relations) are the main reasons for social segregation in the cities, which in turn reproduce the same socio-spatial relations. Similarly, P.J. Taylor used the structuralist framework to explain the division of the World into Core and Peripheries in the World Economic System and the imperatives of the state particularly in the Post Colonial Nation States in accepting dependent status in the world market. Furthermore, Derek Gregory and O.H.K. Spate also argued that cultural regions and perennial nuclear regions are also formed on the basis of spatial variations of economic processes respectively. They believed that the infrastructure provides determinants of activity of which actors are unaware of their roles and positions yet perform the work, take decisions and make choices within the broad parameters laid down by the structure. Though most structuralists do not subscribe to the idea that the content of the superstructure is determined by the processes of the infrastructure, they believe that for a proper understanding of the superstructure, it is necessary to know the development and testing of the theories related to the infrastructure.

Moreover, the structuralists also believed in the universality of class struggle throughout human history: "The history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggle" (Marx and Engels, 1976). However, they also believed that there are bound to be variations in the nature of class conflicts across time and space, which in turn create variations in the superstructures and it calls for proper understanding of the base-superstructure interrelationships in order to buttress resistance against oppressive structures. It is imperative because their main goal is to overthrow the basic structure and with this, only the exploitation of the labour, generalised and universalised alienation of humans and loss of human dignity will end.

According to R.J. Johnston, the contributions of Structural Marxist Geography can be summarised as:

1. Explanations of patterns of spatial organisation and of human-environment relations within the superstructure can only be understood as realisations of economic processes operating in the infrastructure;
2. Economic processes cannot be apprehended directly, but only appreciated through the development of theories that are consistent with the outputs in the superstructure;
3. Economic processes are continually changing, and with them, the outputs – as a result, universal laws of the superstructure cannot be derived;
4. Class conflict (bourgeoisie v/s proletariat) is central to the economic processes;
5. The processes are realised in the superstructure, which reflects the actions of individuals operating within the constraints set by the processes and their preceding relations – individuals are considered as enablers, not deterministic;

6. Any attempt to retain the present superstructure, by planning procedures based on positivist examination of the present, can only help the present unjust system to survive;
7. Understanding the processes and their realisations requires much closer cooperation among if not integration of, the social sciences than heretofore; and
8. The goal of academic work must be emancipation leading to social change.

As mentioned before, the limitations of the structural approach to address the components of spatial structure, over-determination of the role of basic structure and obsession with the search for universal dimensions imposed stringent conditions on its application in geography. Therefore, the concept of Structuration was used to address their concerns holistically and comprehensively.

SAQ 2

What is the importance of structuralism in human geography?

5.4 CONTRIBUTIONS OF DAVID HARVEY AND DAVID M. SMITH

5.4.1 David Harvey

David Harvey made his entry as a Marxist Geographer at a juncture when the discipline was sharply divided into two camps of quantitative and logical positivism in geography- the height of the quantitative revolution in the 1950s and 1960s. Consequently, geography was dominated by either the Old Guard advocating regional description or the Young Turks propagating spatial theorisations. Harvey made his academic orientations explicit by making a profound statement "Geography is concerned with the description and explanation of areal differentiation of earth's surface", which moved him academically close to Hartshorne. It was considered as an ensemble of disciplinary objectives, areal differentiation and methods of understanding description and explanation. From these philosophical and methodological propositions, Harvey's academic orientations graduated from the critique of modern science after Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Thomas Kuhn and Karl Popper among others. Finally, he emerged as an important Marxist thinker in geography, though his book 'Explanation in Geography' was still revered by logical positivists because of the justifications it provided for scientific-geographic methodologies and his lackadaisical acceptance that with less rigid criteria if it was possible to formulate laws in geography. However, Harvey always avoided taking absolutist positions about the geographical space as well as the laws. For him, the laws in geography will be different from the laws in Physics but similar to Life Sciences and Economics.

During the 1970s and 1980s in the aftermath of the quantitative revolution, Harvey was greatly influenced by the structural analysis in various disciplines.

In his book 'Social Justice and the City' Harvey relied on structuralism without adhering too much to Levis-Strauss and Althusser. In this book, he tried to breach the gap that exists between two irreconcilable modes of analysis, i.e., the ethical and the scientific. Initially, his analysis was by and large moralistic (normative), but subsequently, after his first-hand experience with the material conditions prevalent within the inner city of Baltimore, he changed his entire perception including Kuhn's idealistic formulations and accepted the importance of external anomalies in transforming the paradigms of knowledge, which moved him closure to J.D. Bernal's postulations regarding the role of material forces of society such as industrial and financial interests in manipulating scientific research. Subsequently, he distanced himself from both the Kuhnian Structure of Scientific Discoveries and structuralism for analysing the urban processes for three main reasons: firstly, he never revealed his affinity with Althusserian structuralism; secondly, abstract Marxist theory is incapable of explaining specificities of history as well as particularities of geography, and finally he wanted to explode the myth that though Marxism talks about totalities, yet it can "never-never land of non-totalising discourses" (Peet, p. 188). On the contrary, for Harvey 'there is nothing more totalising than the penetration of capitalist social relations and the commodity calculus into every niche of contemporary life'. So, in defence of Marxist Geography, he proposed the following five theses in order to develop people's geography:

1. A popular geography free from prejudice but reflective of real conflicts and contradictions can open channels of communication and common understanding,
2. A people's geography is not beholden to narrow or powerful special interests, but instead broadly democratic,
3. A dual methodological commitment to scientific integrity and non-neutrality,
4. Geographical sensitivities integrated into general social theories from the historical materialist traditions, and
5. A political project that sees the transition from capitalism to socialism in historic-geographical terms.

The onslaught of Neoliberal economic order in the last decades of the last century, Harvey extended his analytical canvas to incorporate uneven development and spatial differentiation, spatial and ecological conditions along with socio-ecological and political-economic processes that have been formulated by the neoliberal market and state to protect and promote the interest of global finance capital at the cost of labour, increase the vulnerabilities of marginalised sections of the society and ecologically vulnerable communities. His new interpretations of primitive accumulation and accumulation by dispossession have moved him to the helm of New Marxist and Radical Geographers. These formulations of Harvey have been extensively popular in new urbanisation, land acquisition for infrastructure and real estate development across the disciplines in many countries.

5.4.2 David M. Smith

The decades of the 1960s and 1970s proved to be a watershed in every sphere of social life. The economic boom after World War II was almost over

and the levels of social and economic disparities were increasing with leaps and bounds. The popularity of the quantitative revolution mainly focusing on data, methods and techniques was almost on the decline. People were up in arms against human rights violations, particularly by the state. Civil Rights movements and movements against wars, particularly the Vietnam war and students' unrest in 1968 in the United States of America, France and other European countries compelled nearly all the disciplines to articulate the genuine concerns of the people. The government as well as scholars across the world, were forced to measure the health of the national as well as the world economy not through GDP growth but on the basis of Quality of Standard of Living since the mid-1960s (Morris, 1978) and above all Human Development Index (1990). Consequently, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) of the UNO realised the need for alternative methods of measuring development and came up with the First Human Development Report 1990 under the leadership of Mahbub-ul-Haq, an economist from Pakistan in collaboration with Paul Streeten, and Amartya Sen.

The dependency school of scholars blamed the incorporation of every economy big and small in the world market and particularly the participation of the post-colonies as unequal partners, subjected to the imposition of unequal exchanges throughout the colonial period responsible for the uneven development and two divisions of the world - Developed and Underdeveloped. Scholars like Paul Baran, Paul Sweezy, Samir Amin, Andre Gunder Frank, Immanuel Wallenstein, Emmanuel Arghiri, etc., blamed that the transfer of economic surplus from the colonial countries (satellites, peripheries) and its accumulation in the metropolitan countries (core) is responsible for the development in the latter at the cost of the former. They advocated that the only remedy for such a distress situation in the colonies and post-colonies is their complete disjunction, and rupture from the world market. Their strategy suggested revolutionary struggles in the underdeveloped world against world imperialism headed by developed countries.

There were others like American Cultural Geographer Wilbur Zelinsky who took a middle path and instead of blaming the exploitation of the colonies by the metropolitan countries, he put the blame on the growth syndrome in the developed world characterised by acceleration in their production and consumption of commodities, the misapplication of old technologies responsible for the crisis in the world economy and upsurge against the same. His intervention instigated the geographers in America to take a firm position on public policies. The first articulation of such concerns was voiced by geographers at Clark in Antipod in 1969. These shifts also influenced the British Geographers and in 1971 David Smith felt the need to highlight the precarious human conditions and rising disillusionments on account of crises of justice, ethics and morals across the world resulting from the ongoing capitalist path of development. He also emphasised the growing insensitivities among the government (states) about the cost of wars particularly war in Vietnam, various manifestations of injustice and violation of ethics on account of pollution and ecological crises. Smith along with Paul Knox articulated concerns and felt the need for a new geography concerned with mapping the social inequalities and quality of life by measuring three types of needs:

physical needs (nutrition, shelter and health), cultural needs (education, leisure, recreation and security) and higher needs (surplus income). Smith on his own took the discussion many notches up in his books: *Where the Grass is Greener: A Geographical Perspective on Inequality* (1977) and *Human Geography: a Welfare Approach* (1977).

The book 'Where the Grass is Greener' "offers a geographical perspective on inequalities. It seeks to reveal the nature and extent of place-to-place variations in living standards at different geographical scales: among nations, among regions and cities within nations, and within individual cities" (Smith, 1979, p.11). The thrust of the argument presented in the book is to "explore the role of the organisation of human activity in geographical space as a factor making of inequality". It does not claim to offer a dramatic solution to the ever-growing gap between haves and have-nots at different spatial scales. It only makes and attempts to understand and unpack the origin of these inequalities as a geographical condition and suggests ways and plans to promote greater equality in society. The book maps the inequality across countries: 'Who Gets Where' within the broad theoretical frame of dependency school using the model of Development and Underdevelopment as dialectically related outcomes from one and the same processes operationalised through the participation of every nation, region and city in the world market.

After mapping the causes, nature, intensity and spatial aspects of inequalities, Smith ventured into offering methods and strategies of human geography around the theme of Welfare and Social Justice. The welfare approach according to him should provide positive knowledge and guidance in a normative realm of evaluation and policy formulation (Smith, 1977, p. ix). He suggested an integrative interdisciplinary strategy to yield desired results. In the same book, he also presented a systematic beginning with the generation of useful knowledge equipped with super academic ethics to evaluate the quality of human life substantiated with empirical evidence from South Africa and The United States of America and finally suggestions regarding Location and Allocation Problems: What should go where? With these changes, he declared that there was a paradigm shift taking place in geography and the discipline was undergoing a second revolution, the Radical Revolution, dominated by Harvey, Peet, Neil Smith, Doreen Massey and the geographers associated with Antipod.

David Smith along with other geographers particularly, the Social and Cultural Geography Study Group of the Institute of British Geographers introduced a new theme in the discipline and called for engagement with ethical or moral philosophy involving the articulation of the moral and spatial in 1991 (Smith, 1997, 583). He urged to bring ethics within the ambit of spatial studies, which was also reverberated during the entire decade of the 1990s among geographers, including in the Association of American Geographers, and finally, David Smith mapped the trajectory of the 'moral and spatial' in geography in his famous article "Geography and Ethics: a Moral Turn?" in 1997. He along with James D. Proctor proposed to divide ethics into Four Sections for exploring the 'ethical dimensions of the space and spatial dimensions of the ethics' into four major themes in geography: *ethics and space*, *ethics and place*, *ethics and nature*, and *ethics and knowledge* in their

book *Geography and Ethics: Journeys in a Moral Terrain* (1999) and appealed for context-sensitive ethics.

To conclude the foregoing discussion, it can be mentioned that, the use of concepts like structuralism and structuration has benefited in re-contextualising geography as a discipline deeply concerned with the transformation of space (social and natural). Geographers across the world have used these concepts successfully in articulating the sensitivities of people towards sustainability, morality, equality and Justice. David Harvey and David Smith have proved their competence beyond doubt in using these concepts in synthesising the spatial dimensions of ethics and ethical dimensions of space.

There are no doubts that the issues raised by the structuralists in understanding reality through the over-determining role of the underlying structure, Anthony Giddens by propagating the concept of structuration and David Smith's emphasis on Geography and Ethics have raised the levels of academic discourses in the field of Geography many notches up. These discourses enriched and brought in epistemological shifts in the discipline. But, the credit for creating an "Ontological Shift" in geography goes to the seminal contribution made by Neil Smith and David Harvey through their concept of "Social Production of Nature".

SAQ 3

What are the important works of David Harvey and David Smith, which are major contributions based on structuralism in human geography?

5.5 SOCIAL PRODUCTION OF NATURE

Social Production of nature makes an ontological shift because nature which was traditionally conceived either as primordial/"non-human creation" or an entity which is "beyond human control" was replaced by Neil Smith and David Harvey's concept of "Social Production of Nature" under capitalism. According to Smith, the concept of nature as primordial/non-human creation external to human society is part and parcel of the ideology of graded and society divided into classes, which is pontificated in obscuring the proper understanding of nature throughout human history. Though such an ideology had existed in all the class societies, it triumphed and became dominant under capitalism. According to Neil Smith, the conceptualisation of nature as non-human creation under capitalism has serious internal contradictions, namely: capitalism has replaced the non-human/first nature with socially produced/second nature in order to pursue its insatiable desire to extract surplus through commodity production by externalising a significantly large part of the cost of production.

The ontological shift has become so pervasive that scholars too have been forced to position themselves at the extreme ends i.e. either to view the production of nature in totality down to the last atom and molecules or to consider the process all-pervasive and encompassing that every new innovation in technology is pushing the extremes beyond the perceptible

limits. Finally, this process has reached its climax when nature is used either to externalise the cost of production or become an instrument of production, thus becoming subordinate to profit imperatives of the capitalist or further more nature is constructed as Cyborgs i.e. cybernetically configured organism half-organism half-machine (Dona Haraway). There are scholars at the other extreme who believe that it is near impossible to produce nature in its entirety. Nature can be produced to the extent human labour gets embodied in the work performed in the field, factory and mines, etc.

Neil Smith prefers to take a more balanced position and distanced himself from these wide and narrow views on the production of nature respectively. He along with David Harvey argued that the process of production of labour involves the whole system of capitalist economic relations and commodity production, including exchange, distribution and competition. His production of nature thesis is more acceptable largely because it reinforces the proposition Marx made about the organic, reciprocal and non-unilateral relationships between Nature and Humans. According to Marx, humans oppose themselves to nature as one of her own forces, setting in motion arms and legs, head and hands, the natural forces of their own body, in order to appropriate Nature's production in a form adapted to their own wants (Marx, 1976, p. 173). Unlike other organisms, humans are able to interact with nature because of their unique attribute, labour, in which both nature and humans participate in a reciprocal relationship i.e. while acting on the external world and changing it, humans at the same time change their own nature. In order to substantiate their argument, Smith and Harvey proposed the following three theses:

1. The relationships between nature and humans are not binary. Meaning thereby, considering nature external to human beings, the entire discourse on nature degenerates either into environmentalism or neo-Malthusianism and advocates for limits to growth, and conservation of nature by imposing social sanctions on the use of nature or advocates complete control and mastery over nature. Both, positions are detrimental to the proper understanding of nature and society.
2. Emphasising the ability of humans to produce nature instead of nature as primordial unpacks, the relations of production particularly under capitalism and the way these relations use nature as an instrument of capital accumulation and profit maximisation.
3. Taking a critical view of the world, particularly "last two decades have witnessed an emergent restructuring of geographical space more dramatic than any before. De-industrialisation and regional decline, gentrification and extra metropolitan growth, industrialisation of the third world, and new international division of labour intensified nationalism and new geopolitics of war – these are not separate developments but symptoms of a much deeper transformations in the geography of capitalism" (Neil Smith, 1990, p. xi). But above all these, lies the geography of uneven development which is "too fundamental to the unfolding of capitalism...uneven development is the hallmark of the geography of capitalism" (Neil Smith, 1990, p. xii-xiii).

These three hypotheses proposed by Smith and Harvey though apparently, go against the Marxist understanding of nature, yet these have contributed immensely to reconstructing the concept of nature advocated by Marx. His

concept of Uneven Development focusing mainly on an anti-essentialist understanding of nature brought him within the fold of the Marxist concept of Nature. According to Smith bourgeois essentialist view of nature symbolises “an inverted, truncated, distorted reflection of reality”. Therefore, it is essential to reconstruct both ideological as well as methodological coordinates of nature within the Marxist framework. The first step towards such exercise is to place human-nature relationships in a historical perspective which in turn will help in unpacking the metabolic relationships between society and nature against environmental determinism on the one hand, and socialised conceptualisation of environmental conservatism on the other. To illustrate their arguments, Smith and Harvey cite the changes brought in by the burgeoning spread of rapid urbanisation and metropolitanisation, agri-business, plantation, wars, etc., which have finally contributed to the success of capitalism, the way it has replaced the non-human nature/first nature by socially produced/second nature.

To conclude the foregoing discussion, it can be mentioned that, the use of concepts like structuralism and structuration has benefited in recontextualising geography as a discipline deeply concerned with the transformation of space (social and natural). Geographers across the world have used these concepts successfully in articulating the sensitivities of people towards, sustainability, morality, equality and Justice. David Harvey and David Smith have proved their competence beyond doubt in using these concepts in synthesising the spatial dimensions of ethics and ethical dimensions of space. The contributions made by Neil Smith and David Harvey are exceptional in broadening the frontiers of geography by introducing ontological shifts in the discipline from non-human nature to socially produced nature.

SAQ 4

What is the meaning of social production of nature?

5.6 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have studied:

- Structuralism and Structuration,
- Structuralism in human geography,
- Contributions of David Harvey and David M. Smith, and
- Social production of nature.

5.7 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. How is structuration more appropriate to understand the spatial structure as compared to structuralism? Do you agree that structuralism moved Marxism as a praxis (a guide to revolutionary social transformation) to abstract theorisations?
2. What are the important components of the ideological and repressive apparatuses of the State? Do these apparatuses subsume diverse aspects of civil society?

3. What are the main differences among the three indices- Quality of Life, Standard of Living and Human Development?
4. What is meant by accumulation by dispossession? Map the trajectory of convergence and divergence between Marxism and Structuralism.
5. Explain the social production of nature.

5.8 ANSWERS

Self-Assessment Questions (SAQ)

1. Structuralism is moving beyond (under, deeper) into the reality represented by the epiphenomena and trying to identify the real material bases on which the overlying superstructure articulates, where it is believed that the underlying structure defines the rule for the organisation. Structuration is a method of synthesising the social and spatial aspects, which have been neglected by structuralism.
2. Explanations of patterns of spatial organisation and of human-environment relations within the superstructure can only be understood as realisations of economic processes operating in the infrastructure. Hence, one has to move beyond superstructure which is given by structuralism. Therefore, it enables human geography to expand its scope as a holistic study of things and phenomena under its domain.
3. David Harvey contributed to human geography by analysing socio-economic factors (class relations) and social segregation in the cities producing socio-spatial relations through his seminal work 'Social Justice and the City (1973)'. David Smith contributed to human geography based on structuralism through his books 'Where the Grass is Greener: A Geographical Perspective on Inequality (1977)' and 'Human Geography: A Welfare Approach (1977)'.
4. The social production of nature is about the idea given by Neil Smith in 1984 based on Marxism that nature is the production of society rather than it is primordial/"non-human creation". In this idea, the existing form of nature is viewed as the outcome of capitalism.

Terminal Questions

1. Give your comparative argument on the structuration and structuralism in understanding spatial structure. Refer to Section 5.2.
2. Describe the important components of ideological and repressive apparatuses of the State in relation to the diverse aspects of civil society. Refer to Section 5.2.1
3. Discuss major differences among Quality of Life, Standard of Living and Human Development used in geography for measuring development. Refer to Section 5.4.2.
4. Explain accumulation by dispossession argued by David Harvey with reference to economic diversion in the context of core and periphery. Refer to Section 5.4.2
5. Explain the idea of nature as the product of society rather than primordial/"non-human creation". Refer to Section 5.5.

5.9 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

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CRITICAL GEOGRAPHY |

Structure

6.1	Introduction Expected Learning Outcomes	6.8	Rise of Technologies and Changing Perspectives on Space and Place
6.2	Origins of Critical Geographies	6.9	Contemporary Concerns and Critiques
6.3	Radical Geography and Critical Geography	6.10	Summary
6.4	Geographies of Gender and Feminist Geographies	6.11	Terminal Questions
6.5	Geographies of Difference	6.12	Answers
6.6	Post-Structural Geographies	6.13	References and Suggested Reading
6.7	Post-Colonial Geographies		

6.1 INTRODUCTION

What are critical geographies? How does adding the prefix 'critical' alter or enhance the scope of the subject matter of geography? In what contexts did critical geographies emerge? What do critical geographers do differently in their research? This unit explores these questions among the developments in contemporary geography. We will discuss how these developments in geography have imparted a new relevance and 'critical' edge to the discipline.

To begin with, the development of critical geographies has to be traced against a background of the history of geography and different philosophical influences on the discipline such as Realism, Marxism, feminism, post-modernism, post-structuralism and post-colonialism. It is against the background of these philosophical influences that we can understand geographies of gender and feminist geographies, geographies of difference, post-structural and post-colonial geographies. Finally, as a result of these developments, perspectives on space and place too have undergone a huge shift. All these interesting aspects are discussed within this unit. You have already studied geography since World War II, positivism, empiricism and geography; spatial systems, spatial theory and behaviouralism, spatial science and the rise of humanistic geography, and radical and liberal perspectives.

Expected Learning Outcomes

After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- be familiar with the development of critical geography,
- to distinguish critical geography from radical geography,
- discuss the development and growth of geographies of gender and feminist geography,
- explain geographies of difference,
- appreciate post-structural and post-colonial geographies,
- describe how perspectives on space and place have changed,
- link contemporary concerns to critical geographies, and
- be aware of the main critiques of critical geography.

6.2 ORIGINS OF CRITICAL GEOGRAPHIES

Let us trace the origins of critical geographies. You may have studied earlier, the key milestones in the establishment of geography as a discipline. Here, you may remember the emergence of radical geography in the 1970s. A critique of the overwhelming use of quantitative methods within the paradigms of Areal Differentiation and Spatial Organization and the inability of geography to address issues of hunger, poverty, inequality, civil rights and other social issues was being increasingly raised especially in the US. Against this background, in 1969, the journal *Antipode* was launched. *Antipode* was radical and carried papers that addressed social issues such as poverty, race and civil rights and was also anti-war. The authors were strongly influenced by the ideas of Marx and the journal emerged as a forum for Marxist, feminist and socialist geography.

Critical Geographies have developed against a background of critiques of positivism and quantification, earlier influences of the work of Kropotkin, Baber, Wittfogel and Lattimore as well as the end of the Vietnam War in US.

Did you know that students such as you were at the forefront of raising questions about inequality, racism, and US participation in the Vietnam War? It was these students that launched the journal *Antipode*. The journal has remained critical of capitalism and is constantly working towards more inclusive and relevant geographies.

What were the key themes in the last few issues? Find out using search engines online or from your college/university library.

Another key milestone in the development of radical (and critical geographies) was the strong resolution passed against the Vietnam War in the 1971 meeting of the Association of American Geographers in Boston. Here the relevance debate was raised emphasising the need for geography and geographers to address contemporary political concerns and issues of social relevance.

Eventually, within the radical geography of the 1970s, three distinct streams, i.e., Behavioral, Feminist and Marxist/ Radical streams emerged. These streams developed as a critique of quantification within geography and its failure to address pressing social issues that could not be quantified. Behavioural geographers were preoccupied with the way spatial decisions were made, believing that decision-making could be predicted. The role of knowledge, perceptions, etc., guided these spatial decisions. Meanwhile, Marxist or Radical geographers were deeply influenced by the writings of Karl

Marx and examined questions related to inequality and uneven development. Feminist geographers noted the absence of women and women's issues in geography and focused on visibilising women in the discipline. Critical geographies have their roots in this early stage of radical geography and remain committed to questions of social justice, equity and equality.

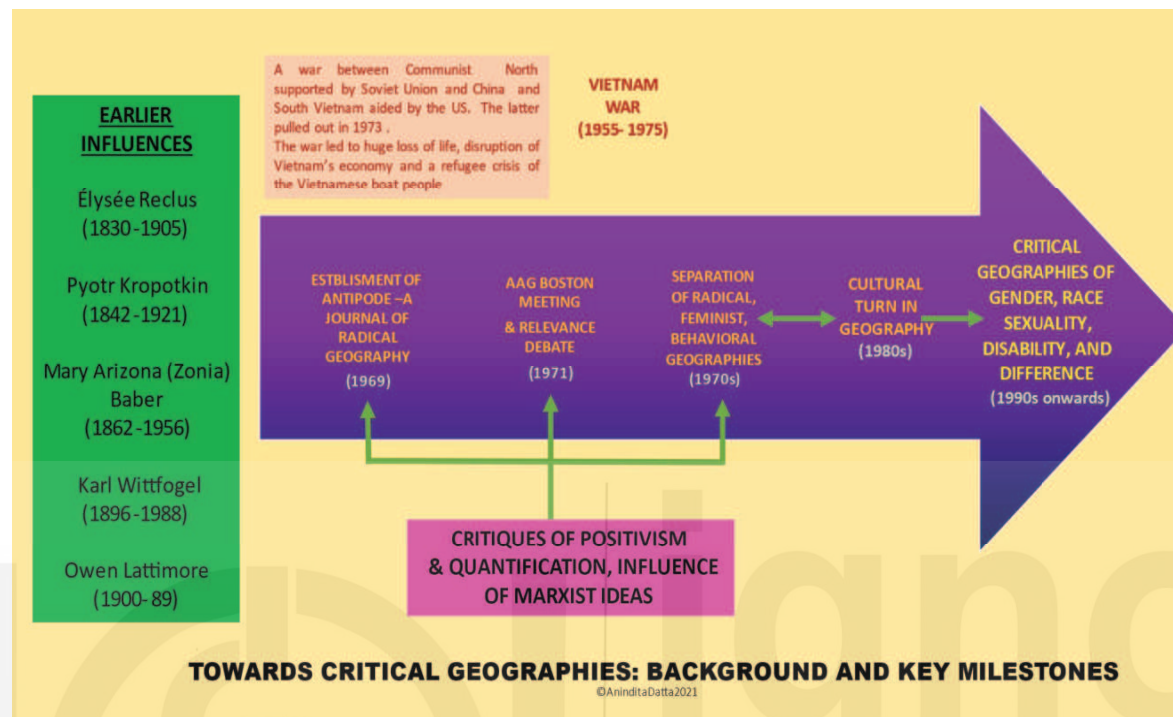


Fig. 6.1: Towards Critical Geographies.

(Source: Datta, A. (2021): 'On Doing Feminist Geographies and Speaking from the Margins': Dissident Action, Body and Space in *5th Latin American Seminar of Geography, Gender and Sexualities*, <https://sites.google.com/view/seminariogeoygenerochile?pli=1> and *unpublished Class Lecture on Critical Geography*)

The influence of the cultural turn, bringing with it an emphasis on difference, diversity, multiplicity of voices, truths and use of qualitative methods together with attention to the contexts within which geographical research is carried out distinguishes critical geography as an approach and subfield within geography. See Figure 6.1 to get an idea of the timeline associated with the development of critical geographies.

SAQ I

How did critical geography emerge?

6.3 RADICAL GEOGRAPHY AND CRITICAL GEOGRAPHY

In the previous section, we have studied the origins of critical geography. As you must have noticed, critical geography shares much in common with radical geography. However, they are distinct from each other and it is incorrect to use the terms interchangeably. In this section, we explore the differences between critical geography and radical geography.

So how do Critical Geographies differ from Radical Geography?

Both radical and critical geographies have much in common. One way of looking at it is that the critical geographies of the 1990s developed from the radical geographies of the 70s. Critical geographies are influenced by the cultural turn and philosophies of post-structuralism (explained later in this unit) unlike the radical geographers who are influenced by Marxism. This has meant that while radical geographers lay greater emphasis on economic questions and the influence of economic structures in shaping society, critical geographers explore more cultural questions related to identity, representation and the experiences of being discriminated against or marginalised. Also, in comparison to radical geography, critical geography places more emphasis on human agency and the multiplicity of perspectives, rejecting the idea of both structures and a single theory.

Critical geographers thus are 'rooted in dissent'. This approach and subfield reject the grand theory or metatheory and remain committed to challenging the shortcomings of the philosophy and methods of positivism, exploring social issues, and exposing social inequality and the unequal distributions of social power. Critical geographers strongly feel that these issues can be challenged and changed through their scholarship, hence they lay great emphasis on the processes through which knowledge is created, and questions such as the position of the researcher, social location, cultural contexts, etc. Critical geographers draw on a wide range of theories including anti-imperialism, feminism, anti-racism and others and strongly believe in the value of praxis- that is the enactment of theory or in simpler words they follow the theoretical positions in daily life too. There is thus a close link with social activism too. A group of critical geographers is, therefore, committed to catalysing societal change by bringing theory and practice close to each other.

Critical geographers also place a lot of emphasis on representations- both as a means of domination and resistance to the same domination. One very common example of this is the power of cartoons and memes- who is making these? What are these resisting? How are different communities represented? Similarly, for critical geographers, space is crucial as a tool – not simply a backdrop against which events unfold. According to them, 'spatial arrangements and representations can be used to produce oppression and inequality' (Gregory, et al., 2011, p. 123)

Finally, notice also that often the term 'Geographies' is used in plural usage rather than the singular term 'Geography'. This is to indicate the rejection of a single overarching metatheory and to acknowledge the multiplicity of voices and perspectives.

Fig. 6.2 gives some key points of differences and similarities between radical geography and critical geography.

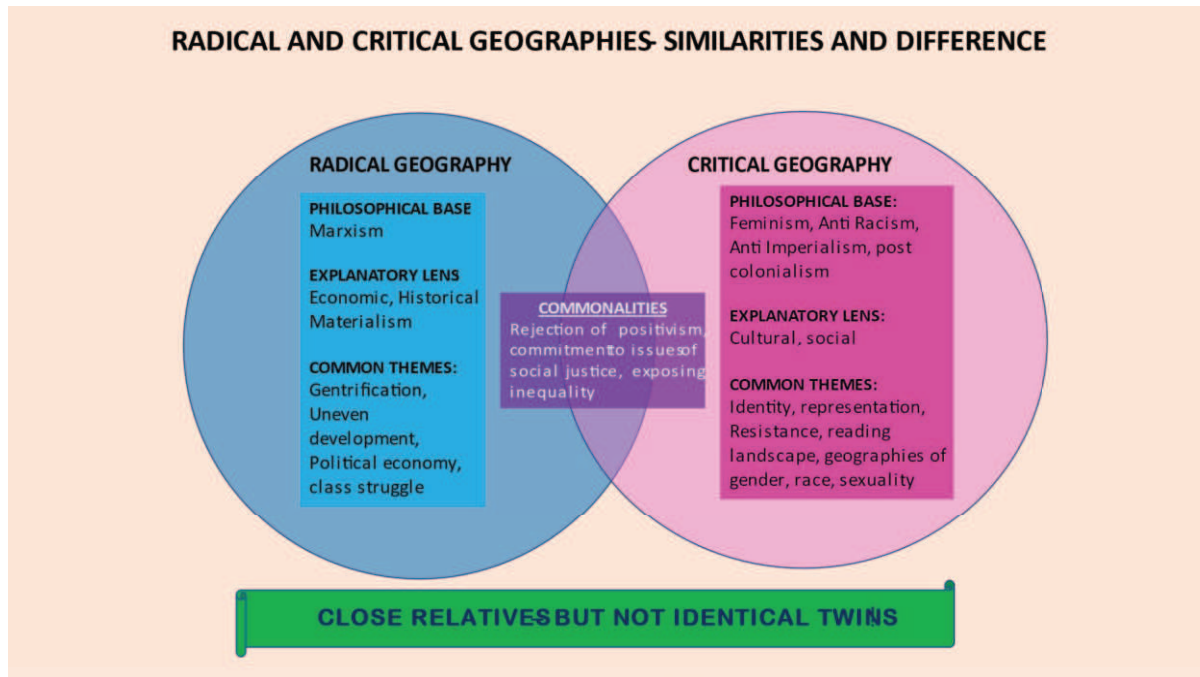


Fig. 6.2: Radical and critical geographies- similarities and differences.

(Source: Datta, A. (2022): "Critical Perspectives in Geography", *unpublished Lecture delivered in the UGC Human Resource Development Centre, Kolkata: University of Calcutta, 18 January 2022*)

SAQ 2

What is the basic difference between radical geography and critical geography?

6.4 GEOGRAPHIES OF GENDER AND FEMINIST GEOGRAPHIES

"Gender based inequalities which intersect with sex, sexuality, race and so on remain one of the greatest global injustices..." (Datta et al., 2020, p. 6)

The discipline of geography has been particularly male-dominated and for a major part of the discipline's history, women and women's issues did not find space within the discipline. In other words, women as practitioners and subjects were practically invisible in mainstream geography. How did this change? How has the subfield of the geography of gender taken shape? What about our Indian contexts? In this section, we will turn our attention to these questions.

Geographies of gender and feminist geographies were influenced by the theories of feminism, Marxism, anti-capitalism, globalisation and a host of others. It remains among one of the most theoretically rich and diverse strands of critical geography. Let us see how it emerged in the seventies and enlarged its scope. As you may be aware, the second wave of the feminist movements was unfolding in the 1970s along with discussions over civil rights, racism, patriarchy and other structures that perpetuated inequality. Against this background, the absence of women and women's issues from the discipline as well as the subject matter of geography began being raised in

the 1970s. Some of the early publications that addressed this question were Zelinsky's 1973 paper titled '*The Strange Case of the Missing Female Geographer*'. Monk and Hanson's 1982 essay '*On not excluding half of the human in human geography*' was another seminal paper questioning the invisibility of women in geography. At the same time, the theoretical base of Marxism that had influenced the radical geographers did not take into account the unpaid work women did in their households and the entire spectrum of care work that women routinely undertook. Geography of gender and feminist geography took root against this background. It shared the critique of positivism and the need to make the discipline of geography more relevant and inclusive, but in its early stages was focused on visibilising women and women's issues within geography. Hence, the focus of research and writing was on documenting women's lives in different spatial contexts. Alison Tivers' paper '*How the other half lives: the geographical study of women*' published in the journal *Area* in 1978 is an example. In this early phase, beginning from the mid 70's and stretching to the mid to late 80s the focus remained on gender roles within different spatial contexts. Basically, this stream of writing observed the disadvantages women in different parts of the world experienced, their constraints and inequalities vis a vis men, and the spatial variation in gender roles. As noted by Bowlby et al, "The key concern of feminist geographers at this time was to document the extent to which women were systematically disadvantaged in many areas of life by the sets of assumptions made about 'women's place' and by the resulting material constraints on their activities..." (Bowlby et al., 1989, p. 158). The main theoretical influences were from welfare geography and liberal feminism in this phase.

Gradually sometime in the mid-80s, the focus of feminist geographers shifted from gender roles to gender relations, as feminist geographers attempted to explain the patterns and causes of inequality, noting that patriarchy and capitalism intersected to produce women's oppression. They used the theories of Marxism, anti-capitalism and feminism in their work. Later, in the 90s as a result of the cultural turn and the impact of post-colonialism, the issues of identity and difference assumed prominence within human geography. Thus, the 90s saw a questioning of the monolithic category of women in geography (and other social sciences) and the need to make feminist geography more inclusive of the experiences of non-white and non-Western women. More recently feminist geographers have been influenced by theories of transnationalism, globalisation, and non-representational theory and have focused on themes related to mobility, migration, citizenship, and violence among others.

Based on all these developments, at least 4 major strands of feminist geography can be differentiated today. These are (i) Geography of Women (ii) Socialist Feminist Geography (iii) Feminist Geographies of Difference (iv) Feminist Transversal Geographies.

Figure 6.3 shows these four strands each of which developed in a particular time period and had a specific thematic focus.

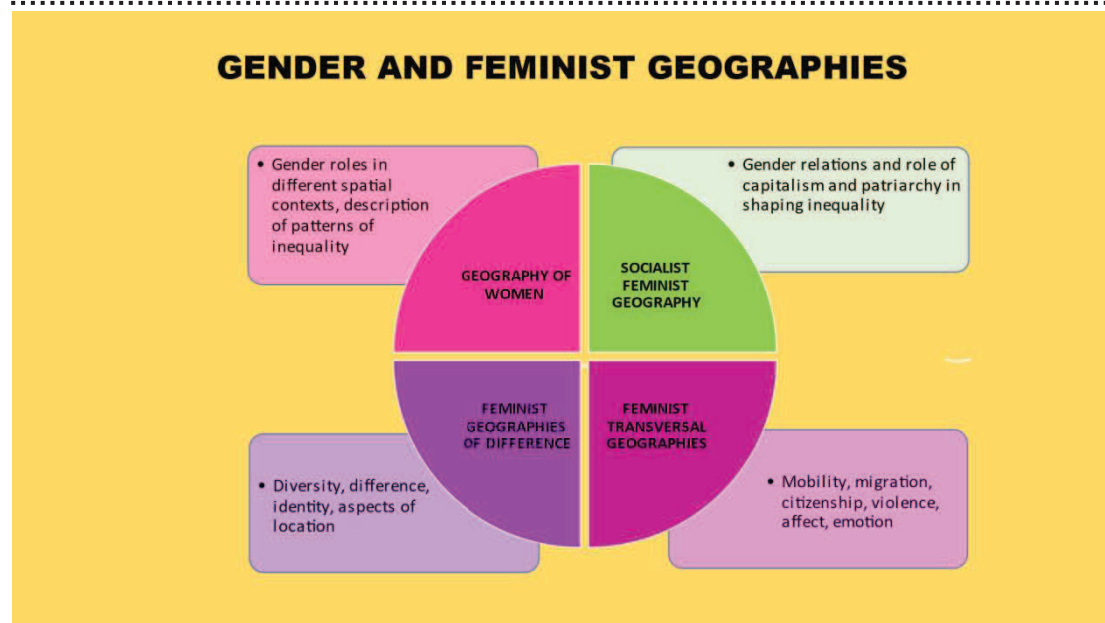


Fig. 6.3: Thematic Strands within Feminist Geographies.

The struggles to bring in gender as an analytical lens within geography included women geographers getting together to write and publish in groups. The Women and Geography Study Group established in 1980, later renamed Gender and Feminist Geography Research Group is one such example. Women geographers, similarly, lobbied hard to have the Commission on Gender and Geography recognised as a full-fledged Commission within IGU. This was achieved in 1992. Today Gender and Feminist geographies are a well-established subfield in the Western world.

Let us now examine the Indian case. Do we see a similar trajectory of development? In India, the earliest writings on women as subjects appeared sporadically from the late 60s through the 80s. However, these were papers on women's migration, workforce participation, education and other themes that fitted neatly within the dominant research themes within geography at that time. We need to remember that unlike in the Western world, in India there was no debate on women's invisibility, critique of positivism and quantification or professional grouping of women geographers that lobbied for the development of the subfield. Rather growth has been organic and driven by specific milestones. Some of these are (i) the availability of Gender segregated data from the 1990s (ii) participation of women geographers from India in international research groups and projects (iii) the publication of Gender Atlases in the 1980s and 90s (iv) courses on the geography of gender in UGC model syllabus in 2000 and subsequently introduced in several universities.

Viewing the growth of the subfield in India against the four strands or phases of feminist geographies shown in Figure 6.3, one can see that here the predominant stream of feminist geographies in India still remains writing a geography of women. However, of late one can note the movements towards transversal geographies and geographies of difference with studies on mobilities, leisure, gendered rights to the city, and spaces of resistance together with studies of women and men in marginal locations emerging. It

remains to be seen whether these streams will develop as robustly as the dominant stream- writing a geography of women (Datta, 2019, 2020)

SAQ 3

What is the major thrust of gender and feminist geography?

6.5 GEOGRAPHIES OF DIFFERENCE

What does difference imply within contemporary human geography? In this section, we will examine the emerging field of geographies of difference within critical geographies. As you know, the cultural turn of the 1980s had a profound influence on subjects and methods within human geography. Geographers turned their attention to cultural readings of spaces as texts and issues of identity and representation became prominent concerns. Overall, the move to make geography more inclusive by including the voices and perspectives of those on the margins, from underrepresented areas and outside the Anglophone world gained prominence. It is within these developments that the geographies of difference are rooted.

For Geographers, recognising difference meant not just recognising that inequalities can arise out of different contexts and social locations but also how boundaries of exclusion can also be based on race, class, gender or sexuality, physical ability, etc. Further, it is our social behaviour or “social practices,” that very often reproduces and strengthens these boundaries. Thus, differences result in unequal access to resources, knowledge and power. For example, coloured people located in the Global South are likely to have unequal status within academia due to inequalities in research funding. Another example is that of slum dwellers in any mega city- here you can notice how caste boundaries become synonymous with spatial boundaries between a slum and an adjacent high-rise apartment complex or gated community. These boundaries are also maintained in the work profiles of the residents of both spaces. From this, you can understand that difference refers to social differences. Due to this social difference, people are placed differently in their access to resources of all kinds, i.e. economic, cultural, societal, political, etc. Also, this social difference is often synonymous with *spatial difference* and operated through a segregation of people based on the social difference of race, class, gender, sexuality, disability and so on.

Geographies of difference allow us to be able to think about exclusion and discrimination arising out of boundaries that are socially constructed through practices in our social life. These differences and experiences of exclusion can also be the basis for forging alliances and solidarity among socially excluded groups. Yet, while forming these alliances, the differences *within* these oppressed and marginalised groups may be overlooked in what is termed as “strategic essentialism” – i.e. choosing to overlook differences within oppressed groups to highlight shared aims instead. A good example of strategic essentialism from the Indian context is the struggle against casteism by the DBA (Dalit Bahujan Adivasi) movements. Here the shared aims of the DBA community are highlighted rather than intra-community differences.

SAQ 4

What is the geography of difference?

6.6 POST-STRUCTURAL GEOGRAPHIES

In this section, we will discuss post-structural geographies followed by post-colonial geographies in the next section. Both these are relatively recent, yet have changed the way, in which we 'do' geography and are among the most emancipatory developments in the discipline. Let us examine them in more detail.

Post-structural geographies need to be understood against the philosophy of structuralism. Structuralism had a short but important influence on the discipline of geography. Originally associated with linguistics, with an influence among other social sciences, the philosophy of structuralism advocated that our cultural life was framed within deep-rooted underlying structures. Such structures guided or determined the spectrum of human actions. The structures themselves could be of two types (i) construct type (ii) process type. Within the ambit of such structures, there was little scope for human agency. However, construct-type structures were more rigid and seen as permanent or mostly unchanging whereas process-type structures changed slowly through time. The latter was of relatively more interest to geographers. In the field of linguistics, the way language was structured with signifiers and signified containing both literal and metaphorical meanings was seen in the work of Saussure. Similarly, in anthropology the structures of kinship revolving around the principle of descent and marriage were explained by Levi Strauss, and in Psychology, Piaget developed his theory of cognitive development comprising four distinct stages.

Reading the urban landscape in terms of underlying structures will show that it is the structures of caste, class-capitalism, ableism and patriarchy that influence and shape the urban (or rural) landscape around you. Look around you- what does the landscape around you reflect? Try reading these as reflecting the underlying power structures- Whose needs are marginal and whose are privileged in the space around you? Can you see space for the poor, homeless, and differently abled? These categories of people are not central to urban spaces. So, the basic idea within structuralism is the control or dominance of unyielding and all-pervasive structures within which social and economic life rests. Post-Structuralism questioned this rigidity of structures and emphasised the multiplicity of truths, the celebration of human agency, diversity, and foregrounding issues such as positionality and reflexivity. The point to remember is the prefix post to structuralism which implies beyond structures.

Post-structural geographies thus reject the idea of a stable world or stable truth arguing that it is language and enunciation that makes the world seem stable and fixed, i.e. facts or truth is unstable, fluid and in process. The main concerns of post-structural geographies have been to expose the way in which geography's attempt to classify knowledge maintains the myth of a

stable world. Hence post-structural geographies are critical of any form of knowledge that seeks to represent the truth and instead are more concerned with understanding the complexity of the social world, trying to uncover what power means, where power is located, what or whose truths are privileged as facts and who is excluded. Issues of identity and difference, layered meanings, and reading space as text, all find a place within post-structural geographies. The cultural turn of the 1980s was the precursor to post-structural geographies. Today we can surmise that post-structuralism has had a profound influence on the way we “do” geography.

SAQ 5

What are the major concerns of post-structural geographies?

6.7 POST-COLONIAL GEOGRAPHIES

Post-colonial geographies present yet another stream of critical geographies. Such geographies relate to the way geographies of formerly colonised communities and spaces are being rewritten from the perspective of the colonised communities. The complicated relationship between colonised nations and former colonisers shapes this re-writing. According to Gregory, such geographies present the following:

“(1) a ‘close and critical reading of colonial discourse’; (2) an understanding of ‘the complicated and fractured histories through which colonialism passes from the past into the present’; (3) a mapping of ‘the ways in which metropolitan and colonial societies are drawn together in webs of affinity, influence and dependence’; and (4) a sensitivity to the ‘political implications’ of the way history is constructed” (Gregory, 2000, et al., 2011, p. 561).

Post-colonial geographies are thus a new and emerging area that contest the colonisers' writing or gaze and put forward perspectives from the point of view of those who were colonised. This means it resists colonial narratives, tries to map new forms of colonialism or the way colonialism reproduces itself and also reexamines and replaces the ways in which the colonised societies were interpreted (or read) and documented by the colonisers. Dismantling such readings is the most crucial part of doing post-colonial geographies. Such geographies are emancipatory as they present space for colonised people to write their own histories and interpret their own societies. Unlike the deracinated accounts of society and space produced by the colonisers or their representatives, post-colonial geographies are more authentic.

Both post-structural and post-colonial geographies are critiqued as being very abstract and distracted from the ‘real’ problems of the world.

However, both are emancipatory and provide new ways of thinking about the world and how we create or know it.

SAQ 6

What are post-colonial geographies?

6.8 RISE OF TECHNOLOGIES AND CHANGING PERSPECTIVES ON SPACE AND PLACE

Critical geographies have enabled us to move beyond the concept of real spaces to explore many new exciting ideas of space. The idea of space thus is no longer confined to the idea of geomorphic space and astronomical location. The idea of a cultural landscape also came into prominence. Some of the newer concepts of space that have come into usage within critical geographies are lived space, third space, imagined space, cyber space, liminal spaces, textual spaces and Appadurai's notion of scapes.

The idea of lived spaces is similar to the idea of life world given earlier by humanistic geographers. 'Lived spaces' refers to those everyday spaces that individuals and communities shape and are also shaped by. Such spaces are inseparable from their everyday geographies.

In the same way, the idea of 'Third Space' has been used by Lefebvre (Lefebvre 1991), Bhabha (1990, 1994) and Soja (1996) as an alternative to positivist/tangible real space. It stems from Lefebvre's spatial triad and trialectics of space, where space is seen as socially produced through a set of spatial practices and representations. Third spaces can be called the spaces of representation, they are spaces over which life is lived (hence they encompass lived spaces). To this, Bhabha adds the notion of cultural hybridity. Simply put, such hybridity arises from the encounters between colonisers and colonised. Thus, in Bhabha's view, the third spaces are alternatives and hybrid spaces, and also the spaces of resistance and identity.

Appadurai in his 1990 paper, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy" defines 5 new kinds of scapes which are a result of globalisation. These scapes are characterised by fluidity and flows. Appadurai calls them ethnoscares, technoscares, ideoscares, financescares, and mediascares. In brief, these scapes are cultural spaces within a globalised world that are shaped by the flows of people (migrants) technology, ideas, finance and media.

From these descriptions, you can see how emancipatory the field of critical geography is!

Due to rapid technological and socio-economic changes, the place is now subsumed by space (Agnew, 2011). There are many writings on the changing perception of space and place like the death of distance (Frances Cairncross), the flat world (Thomas Friedman), etc. in a specific sense of technological advancements and their applications in various spheres of life, which have significantly transformed the world.

Almost parallel to the changing notions of space and place has been the advances in geospatial technologies and cartographic methods.

However, space and location remain critical in geographic reality. For critical geographers, the key questions would pertain to the thematic concerns,

ownership of data and questions of representation. Are the hegemonic understandings of our world being challenged through these advances?

SAQ 7

What has been the major shift in the concepts of space and places?

6.9 CONTEMPORARY CONCERNS AND CRITIQUES

After studying about the development and research themes in critical geographies, can you list what the contemporary concerns are? These are shaped by global and local contexts.

The world over, the years 2020 and 2021 have been in the grip of the global pandemic. How have these played out for different communities? What are the social fissures that the pandemic has exposed? Have access to vaccines been uniform? Has the lockdown-related livelihood loss impacted some sections more than others? Have experiences of racism been heightened? What kind of implications has working online and from home had on our everyday lives? Has online learning been accessible to all children? Who are the people working on the frontline? What kind of safeguards do these frontline workers have? What happened to borders during the pandemic? These are some of the themes critical geographers are currently researching.

The pandemic years have also seen long drawn-out resistances for racial and economic justice. 'The Black Lives Matter' in the USA and the yearlong farmers' resistance to the corporatisation of agriculture are two ongoing resistances that are interesting to critical geographers working on people's resistance.

What are some of the other contemporary themes that you feel Critical Geographers from India might be interested in?

In India, the critical approach to geography and the subfield of critical geography remains small but with exciting potential. Caste/ethnicity, gender, sexuality and spaces of resistance are some of the research themes that the small group of critical geographers are engaged in.

Despite its exciting potential, critical geography has drawn the following critiques:

- (i) It is a wide field but the pre-fix "critical" has not been fully explained or agreed to. It is seen more as an approach with a collection of themes and methods.
- (ii) In a policy-driven research environment, critical geography has limited scope due to its rejection of prescriptive solutions and emphasis on explanatory processes.

(iii) Over the time, the subfield of critical geography has become central to geographical research in the Western world. This institutionalisation may have blunted its commitment to political change.

SAQ 8

What is the crux of contemporary concerns and critiques?

6.10 SUMMARY

In this Unit, you have studied:

- Origins of critical geographies,
- Similarities and differences with radical geography,
- Feminist perspectives- geographies of gender and feminist geographies,
- Geographies of difference,
- Post-structural and post-colonial human geographies,
- Rise of technologies and changing perspectives on space and place, and
- Contemporary concerns and critiques.

6.11 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Discuss in detail the origins of critical geographies with similarities and differences between radical geography and critical geographies.
2. Explain feminist perspectives in geography with geographies of gender and feminist geographies.
3. What are the geographies of difference? Explain.
4. Give a detailed discussion on post-structural and post-colonial human geography.
5. Elaborate the changing perspectives on space and place with the rise of technologies.
6. Critically discuss the contemporary concerns and critiques in human geography.

6.12 ANSWERS

Self-Assessment Questions (SAQ)

1. Critical geographies have developed as an approach and subfield within geography as critiques of positivism and quantification using qualitative methods and taking the cultural turn with an emphasis on difference, diversity, the multiplicity of voices, truths, etc.
2. Critical geographies are influenced by the cultural turn and philosophies of post-structuralism with emphasis on cultural questions related to identity,

representation and the experiences of being discriminated against or marginalised, whereas the radical geographies are influenced by Marxism emphasising the influence of economic structures and historical materialism as the factors of shaping society. Also, in comparison to radical geography, critical geography places more emphasis on human agency and the multiplicity of perspectives, rejecting the idea of both structures and a single theory.

3. The major thrust of gender and feminist geography is the representation of women and women's work and the issues of women in the male-dominated society and academia in the domain of human geography. Geographies of gender and feminist geographies were influenced by the theories of feminism, Marxism, anti-capitalism, globalisation and a host of others.
4. Geographies of difference allow us to be able to think about exclusion and discrimination arising out of boundaries that are socially constructed through practices in our social life based on the boundaries and exclusion built because of race, class, gender or sexuality, physical ability, etc. in addition to economic status.
5. The main concerns of post-structural geographies have been to expose the way in which geography's attempt to classify knowledge maintains the myth of a stable world. Hence post-structural geographies are critical of any form of knowledge that seeks to represent the truth and instead are more concerned with understanding the complexity of the social world, trying to uncover what power means, where power is located, what or whose truths are privileged as facts and who is excluded.
6. Post-colonial geographies are a new and emerging area that contest the colonisers' writing or gaze and put forward perspectives from the point of view of those who were colonised. This means it resists colonial narratives, tries to map new forms of colonialism or the way colonialism reproduces itself and also reexamines and replaces the ways in which the colonised societies were interpreted (or read) and documented by the coloniser.
7. The major shift in the concepts of space and places is the departure from absolute or physical to functional and relational/notional.
8. There are contemporary concerns of critical geography related to the emerging issues in society like caste/ethnicity-based exclusion, gender, sexuality, spaces of resistance, etc. The major critiques are fully unexplained term 'critical' and limited scope due to its rejection of prescriptive solutions and emphasis on explanatory processes in certain regions.

Terminal Questions

1. Write about the origins of critical geographies in detail. Also, highlight the similarities and differences between radical geography and critical geographies. Refer to Sections 6.2 and 6.3.

2. Underline the feminist perspectives in geography with a detailed discussion on geographies of gender and feminist geographies. Refer to Section 6.4.
3. Give a detailed analysis of emerging field of geographies of difference within contemporary human geography or critical geographies. Refer to Section 6.5.
4. Discuss and examine post-structural and post-colonial human geography as the most emancipatory developments in geography. Refer to Sections 6.6 and 6.7.
5. Discuss the idea of space, which has emerged beyond the physical space to lived space, third space, imagined space, cyber space, liminal spaces, textual spaces and Appadurai's notion of scapes within critical geographies with technological advancements and development. Refer to Section 6.8.
6. Give a critical analysis of contemporary concerns and critiques shaped by global and local contexts. Refer to Section 6.9.

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GLOSSARY

- Critical Geographies** : Critical geographies have developed as an approach and subfield within geography as critiques of positivism and quantification using qualitative methods and taking the cultural turn with an emphasis on difference, diversity, the multiplicity of voices, truths, etc. Critical geographies are influenced by the cultural turn and philosophies of post-structuralism, unlike the radical geographers who are influenced by Marxism. Critical geography places more emphasis on human agency and the multiplicity of perspectives, rejecting the idea of both structures and a single theory. Critical geographers explore more cultural questions related to identity, representation and the experiences of being discriminated or marginalised. Critical geographers thus are 'rooted in dissent'.
- Geographies of Difference** : Geographies of difference allow us to be able to think about exclusion and discrimination arising out of boundaries that are socially constructed through practices in our social life based on the boundaries and exclusion built because of race, class, gender or sexuality, physical ability, etc., in addition to economic status.
- Geographies of Gender and Feminist Geography** : Major thrust of gender and feminist geography is the representation of women and women's work and the issues of women in male-dominated societies and academia in the domain of human geography. Geographies of gender and feminist geographies were influenced by the theories of feminism, Marxism, anti-capitalism, globalisation and a host of others.
- Human Development Index** : It is a statistical measure and ranking the countries in terms of their composite scores related to their achievements in three dimensions: long and healthy life, knowledge and a decent standard of living with the help of four indicators - life expectancy at birth for long and healthy life, expected year of schooling and mean year of schooling for knowledge and per capita income in US\$ for a decent standard of living. It is prepared by the United Nations Development Programme every year since 1990. It is also computed at various levels in India and other countries. Though, the credit for constructing the first Human Development Index in 1990 goes to Mahbub-ul-Haq, yet it was based on Amartya Sen's work on human capabilities.
- Paradigm** : The concept was coined by Thomas Kuhn and was elaborated during the Kuhn-Popper debate. Though, Kuhn in his book 'The Structure of Scientific Revolution' defined a Paradigm in 28 different ways, yet the most common elements of a paradigm are "a set of assumptions and procedures whose findings are normally accepted by a group of scholars". A paradigm consists of a tradition or a model of actual scientific practice based on certain laws, theories, applications, instruments, etc. that

provide a coherent tradition of scientific research.

Post-Structural Human Geography : Post-structural human geographies are critical of any form of knowledge that seeks to represent the truth and instead are more concerned with understanding the complexity of the social world, trying to uncover what power means, where power is located, what or whose truths are privileged as facts and who is excluded.

Post-Colonial Human Geographies : Post-colonial geographies are a new and emerging area that contest the colonisers' writing or gaze and put forward perspectives from the point of view of those who were colonised. This means it resists colonial narratives, tries to map new forms of colonialism or the way colonialism reproduces itself and also re-examines and replaces how the colonised societies were interpreted (or read) and documented by the colonisers.

Radical Geography : Radical geography is based on Marxism philosophy and its explanatory lenses are economic inequity and historical materialism with the themes of gentrification, uneven development, political economy and class struggle. Radical geographers lay greater emphasis on economic questions and the influence of economic structures in shaping society,

Space and Place : Space is any kind of physical or imagined/ mentally constructed abstract expanse indicating some type of container. The place is the absolute location on the earth characterised by some attributes.

Structuralism : Moving beyond (under, deeper) into the reality represented by the epiphenomena and trying to identify the real material bases on which the overlying superstructure articulates. The structuralist believe that it is the material base which organises the rules for the organisation of a system and thus tries to reduce the complexities of human experiences, perceptions, etc., to certain universal parameters.

Structuration : Theorised by Anthony Giddens to understand the intersections between agency and structure. It is an attempt to rescue the freedom of individuals from the stringent conditions laid down by structuralism in understanding the society and possibility of human liberation. It is a method of synthesising the social and the spatial aspects which have been neglected by structuralism. Structure is also reinterpreted/reconstructed with its three fundamental concepts: reflexivity, recursiveness and spatiality (regionalisation).

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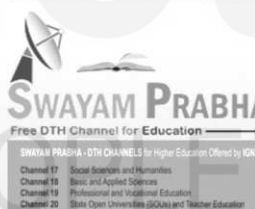
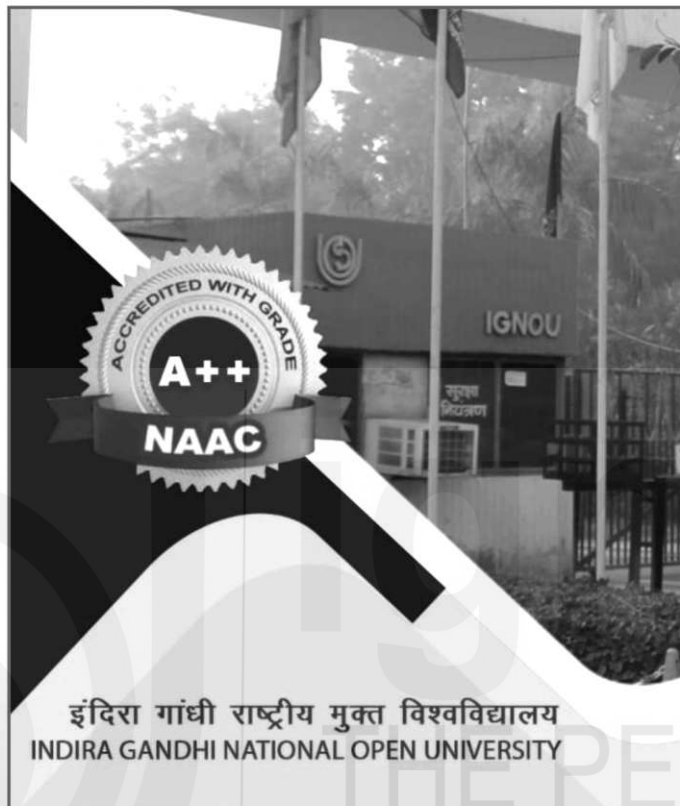
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