

**Why should we study geography? To know how -**

- Our lives are affected by our surroundings (the physical environment) in many ways.
- We depend on the resources to sustain ourselves e.g. producing our food using natural resources like land, soil and water as well as technology.
- We have adapted with and modified our physical environment. For e.g. we adjusted our food habits and clothing according to the prevailing weather conditions as well as created pollution while producing food and clothing.
- The natural resource base, technological development, adaptation, social and cultural development varies over space and time.

**What is geography?**

The term geography was first coined by Eratosthenese, a Greek scholar (276-194 BC.). The word has been derived from two roots from Greek language geo (earth) and graphos (description).

- In very simple words, it can be said that geography is “the description of the earth as the abode of human beings”.
- Geography study all those phenomena which vary over space and the associations with the other factors which cause these variations (Areal differentiation).
- All geographical phenomena are highly dynamic. Therefore, geography study interactive processes between ever changing earth and untiring and ever-active human beings (Nature and Human interactions).
- As a social science discipline, geography studies the ‘spatial organisation’ and ‘spatial integration’. (Space)

**Geography as a discipline is concerned with three sets of questions:**

- Some questions are related to the identification of the patterns of natural and cultural features as found over the surface of the earth. These are the questions about **what?**
- Some questions are related to the distribution of the natural and human/cultural features over the surface of the earth. These are the questions about **where?**
- Some questions are related to the explanation or the causal relationships between features and the processes and phenomena. These are the questions about **why?**

**GEOGRAPHY AS AN INTEGRATING DISCIPLINE**

- Geography as an integrating discipline has interface with numerous natural and social sciences such as
- Geography helps in understanding the reality in totality in its spatial perspective.
- A geographer is required to have a broad understanding of all the related fields, to be able to logically integrate them.

**The major approaches to study geography are (i) Systematic and (ii) Regional.**

- The systematic geography approach was introduced by Alexander von Humboldt, a German geographer (1769-1859). In systematic approach a phenomenon is studied world over as a whole. For example, studying natural vegetation at the world level.
- The regional geography approach was developed by another German geographer Karl Ritter (1779-1859). In the regional approach, the world is divided into regions and then all the geographical phenomena in a particular region are studied.

**BRANCHES OF GEOGRAPHY (BASED ON SYSTEMATIC APPROACH)**

1. Physical Geography
  - a. Geomorphology - study of landforms, their evolution and related processes.
  - b. Climatology - study of atmosphere, climate and elements of weather.
  - c. Hydrology – study of the realm of water and its effects.
  - d. Soil Geography – study of soil formation, soil types and use.
2. Human Geography
  - a. Social/Cultural Geography - study of society and its spatial dynamics.
  - b. Population and Settlement Geography – study of population composition and growth, distribution, density, human settlements etc.
  - c. Economic Geography – study of primary, secondary and tertiary activities.
  - d. Historical Geography studies the historical processes through which the space gets organised.
  - e. Political Geography studies political space and the political behaviour.
3. Biogeography is the interface between physical geography and human geography:
  - a. Plant Geography studies the spatial pattern of natural vegetation.
  - b. Zoo Geography studies the spatial patterns of animals and their habitats.
  - c. Ecology /Ecosystem studies the habitats characteristic of species.
  - d. Environmental Geography studies environmental problems.

**BRANCHES OF GEOGRAPHY BASED ON REGIONAL APPROACH**

1. Regional Studies/Area Studies comprising Macro, Meso and Micro Regional Studies
2. Regional Planning Comprising Country/Rural and Town/ Urban Planning
3. Regional Development
4. Regional Analysis

**COMMON TO BOTH BRANCHES**

1. Philosophy
  - a. Geographical Thought
  - b. Land and Human Interaction/ Human Ecology
2. Methods and Techniques
  - a. Cartography including Computer Cartography
  - b. Quantitative Techniques/Statistical Techniques

**PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY AND ITS IMPORTANCE**

- Physical geography includes study of Lithosphere, Atmosphere, Hydrosphere & Biosphere- each element is very important for human beings.
- Physical environment provides resources, and human beings utilise these resources and ensure their economic and cultural development.
- Accelerated pace of resource utilisation with the help of modern technology has created ecological imbalance in the world.
- Hence, a better understanding of physical environment is absolutely essential for sustainable development.