

Date: 08.05.2020

## Geography (Hons)-Paper-CT13-6<sup>th</sup> Semester

### Behaviouralism in Geography

#### Questions

1. Define 'Behavioural Geography'. (Marks-2)
2. Mention the objectives of behavioural geography. (Marks-2)
3. Trace the origin of behavioural geography? (Marks-10)
4. Explain the significance behavioural approach? (Marks-5)
5. What do you mean by Behavioural Environment? Classify Behavioural Environment according to behaviouralism? (Marks-5)
6. What are the salient features of behavioural geography? (Marks-5)
7. Critically analyse the demerits of behavioural geography. (Marks-10)
8. Describe the present relevance of behavioural geography. (Marks-2)

#### **Behavioural Geography:**

It is a psychological turn in human geography which emphasized the role of cognitive (subjective) and decision-making variables as mediating the relationship between environment and spatial behavior.

#### **Mention the Objectives of behavioural geography**

1. Development of humanistic models instead of quantitative locational models
2. Defining cognitive (subjective) environment for the determination of decision making processes of man.
3. Unfold the spatial dimensions of human behaviour.
4. Reliance on primary data instead of secondary data.
5. Adoption of interdisciplinary approach for theory building and problem solving.

#### **Origin of behavioural geography:**

Its origin in the 1960s can be traced to the frustration that was widely felt with normative and mechanistic models developed with the help of quantitative techniques. These normative and mechanistic models are mainly based on such unreal behavioural postulates as 'rational economic man' and isotropic earth surface. In normative models, there always several assumptions, and generally the centre of attention is a set of omniscient (having infinite knowledge) fully rational actors (men) operating freely in a competitive manner on isotropic plane (homogenous land surface). Many normative models are thus grossly unrealistic as they ignore the complexities of real world

situations and instead concentrate on idealised behavioural postulates such as rational economic man. People behave rationally, but within constraints-the cultures in which they have become socialized to make decisions.

The followers of behavioural geography do not recognise man as a rational person or an 'economic man' who always tries to optimise his profits. Man always does not take into consideration the profit aspect while performing an economic function. Most of his decisions are based on behavioural environment (mental map) rather than on the 'objective or real environment'. According to behavioural paradigm, man has been depicted as a thinking individual whose transactions with the environment are mediated by mental processes and cognitive representation of external environment. the conceptual framework proposes that information from environment (real world)is filtered as a result of personality, culture, beliefs and cognitive variables to image in the mind of man who utilises the environment. On the basis of the image formed in the mind of the utiliser about the environment he takes a decision and uses the resources to fulfil his basic higher needs. In this way behavioural geography opposed positivism and quantitative revolution and developed as an independent branch of human geography.

**Normative** generally means relating to an evaluative standard. Normativity is the phenomenon in human societies of designating some actions or outcomes as good or desirable or permissible and others as bad or undesirable or impermissible. A norm in this normative sense means a standard for evaluating or making judgments about behavior or outcomes. Normative is sometimes also used, somewhat confusingly, to mean relating to a descriptive standard: doing what is normally done or what most others are expected to do in practice. In this sense a norm is not evaluative, a basis for judging behavior or outcomes; it is simply a fact or observation about behavior or outcomes, without judgment. Many researchers in this field try to restrict the use of the term normative to the evaluative sense and refer to the description of behavior and outcomes as positive, descriptive, predictive, or empirical.

*Normative* has specialized meanings in different academic disciplines such as philosophy, social sciences, and law.

### **Rational Economic Man:**

The term *homo economicus*, or **economic man**, is the portrayal of humans as agents who are consistently rational, narrowly self-interested, and who pursue their subjectively-defined ends optimally. It is a word play on *Homo sapiens*, used in some economic theories and in pedagogy.

In game theory, *homo economicus* is often modeled through the assumption of **perfect rationality**. It assumes that agents always act in a way that maximize utility as a consumer and profit as a producer, and are capable of arbitrarily complex deductions towards that end. They will always be capable of thinking through all possible outcomes and choosing that course of action which will result in the best possible result.

As a theory on human conduct, it contrasts to the concepts of behavioral economics, which examines cognitive biases and other irrationalities, and to bounded rationality, which assumes that practical elements such as cognitive and time limitations restrict the rationality of agents.

### **Significance of behavioural approach:**

This approach recognises that man shapes as well as responds to his environment and that man and environment are dynamically interrelated. Man is viewed as a motivated social being, whose decisions and actions are mediated by his cognition of the spatial environment. Behavioural geography banks heavily on 'behaviouralism'. Behaviouralism is an important approach adopted mainly by psychologists and philosophers to analyse the man-environment relationship. The behaviouralistic approach is largely inductive, aiming to build general statements out of observations of outgoing processes. The essence of behavioural approach in geography lies in the fact that the way in which people behave is mediated by their understanding of the environment in which they live or by the environment itself with which they are confronted. In behavioural geography an explanation for man-environment problem is founded upon the premise that environmental cognition and behaviour are intimately related. In other words, behavioural approach has taken the view that a deeper understanding of man-environment interaction can be achieved by looking at the various psychological processes through which man comes to know environment in which he lives, and by examining the way in which these processes influence the nature of resultant behaviour. The behavioural approach in geography is a fruitful one and it helps in establishing a scientific relationship between man and his physical environment.

### **Behavioural Environment and its classification according to behaviouralism:**

According to Downs' conceptual framework on environmental perception and behaviour information from environment (real world) is filtered as a result of-

- Personality,
- culture,
- beliefs and
- cognitive variables

to form image in the mind of man who utilises the environment. on the basis of the image formed in the mind of the utiliser about the environment he takes a decision and uses the resources to fulfil his basic and higher needs.

Downs' framework also suggested there exist-

- (i) An **objective environment** and
- (ii) A **behavioural environment**

A similar but slightly more complex classification came from Porteous (1977) who recognized the existence of:

- (i) The **phenomenal environment** (physical objects);
- (ii) The **personal environment** (perceived images of real phenomenal environment); and
- (iii) **Contextual environment** (culture, religion, beliefs and expectations that influence behaviour).

Sonnenfeld (1972) went even further and proposed four levels at which the environment should be studied. The four-fold environment, advocated by Sonnenfeld, has been given as below:

The **geographical environment** (the world);

The **operational environment** (those parts of the world that impinge upon a man, whether or not he is aware of them);

The **perceptual environment** (the parts of the world that man is aware of as a result of direct and indirect experience); and

The **behavioural environment** (that part of the perceptual environment that elicits a behavioural response);

### **Salient features of Behavioural Geography:**

The salient features of behavioural geography are as follows:

- (i) According to behavioural geography environmental cognition (perception) differentiates the behavioural environment or the world of the mind from the objective environment or the world of actuality.

- (ii) In Behavioural Geography the focus of study is the individual, not the group or community. Man is a goal-directed animal who influences the environment and in turn is influenced by it. In brief, an individual rather than a group of people or social group is more important in man-nature relationship.
- (iii) Behavioural approach in geography postulated a mutually interacting relationship between man and his environment, whereby man shaped the environment and was subsequently shaped by it (Gold, 1980:4).
- (iv) Another important feature of Behavioural Geography is its multidisciplinary outlook. A behavioural geographer takes the help of ideas, paradigms, and theories produced by psychologists, philosophers, historians, sociologists, anthropologists, ethnologists and planners. However, the lack of theories of its own is coming in the way of rapid development of behavioural geography.

### **Demerits of behavioural geography:**

The behavioural approach in geography is a fruitful one and it helps in establishing a scientific relationship between man and his physical environment. The broad scope of behavioural geography is remarkable even by the standard of human geography. There are, however, overall biases and theoretical weakness which are discussed below.

- (i) It has biasness in content towards urban topics and towards developed countries.
- (ii) It lacks in synthesis of empirical findings, poor communication, inadvertent duplication, and conflicting terminology.
- (iii) The terminology and concepts remain loosely defined and poorly integrated, primarily owing to the lack of systematically organised theoretical basis.
- (iv) Its data are generated in laboratory experiments on animals and the findings are applied directly to human behaviour.
- (v) Little research has been undertaken on image and behaviour.
- (vi) Behavioural geography has too often put too much emphasis on ego-centered interpretations of the environment. So, there remains a gap between theory and practice.
- (vii) There is a serious lack of knowledge of planning theories and methods amongst behavioural geographers, which is an impediment to more active involvement. In fact, behavioural geographers remain observers rather than participants.

The future of behavioural geography would be bright only if it could improve its standing in the subject while maintaining its multidisciplinary links.

### **Describe the present relevance of behavioural geography.**

Despite several constraints and methodological limitations, behavioural geography is now widely accepted within the positivist orientation. It seeks to account for spatial patterns by establishing generalisations about people-environment interrelationship, which may then be used to stimulate change through environmental planning activities that modify the stimuli which affect the spatial behaviour of ourselves and others.

The research methods of behavioural geography vary substantially but the general orientation-inductive generalisation leading to planning for environmental change remains. Eventually, it is hoped, a 'powerful new theory' will emerge. Substantial advances in understanding spatial behaviour have already been made by studying individual preferences, opinions, attitudes, cognitions, cognitive maps, perception; and so on what he terms process variables.

\*\*\*\*\*