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Geography: Nature of Geography as a Discipline: Objectives and Geography in Daily Life

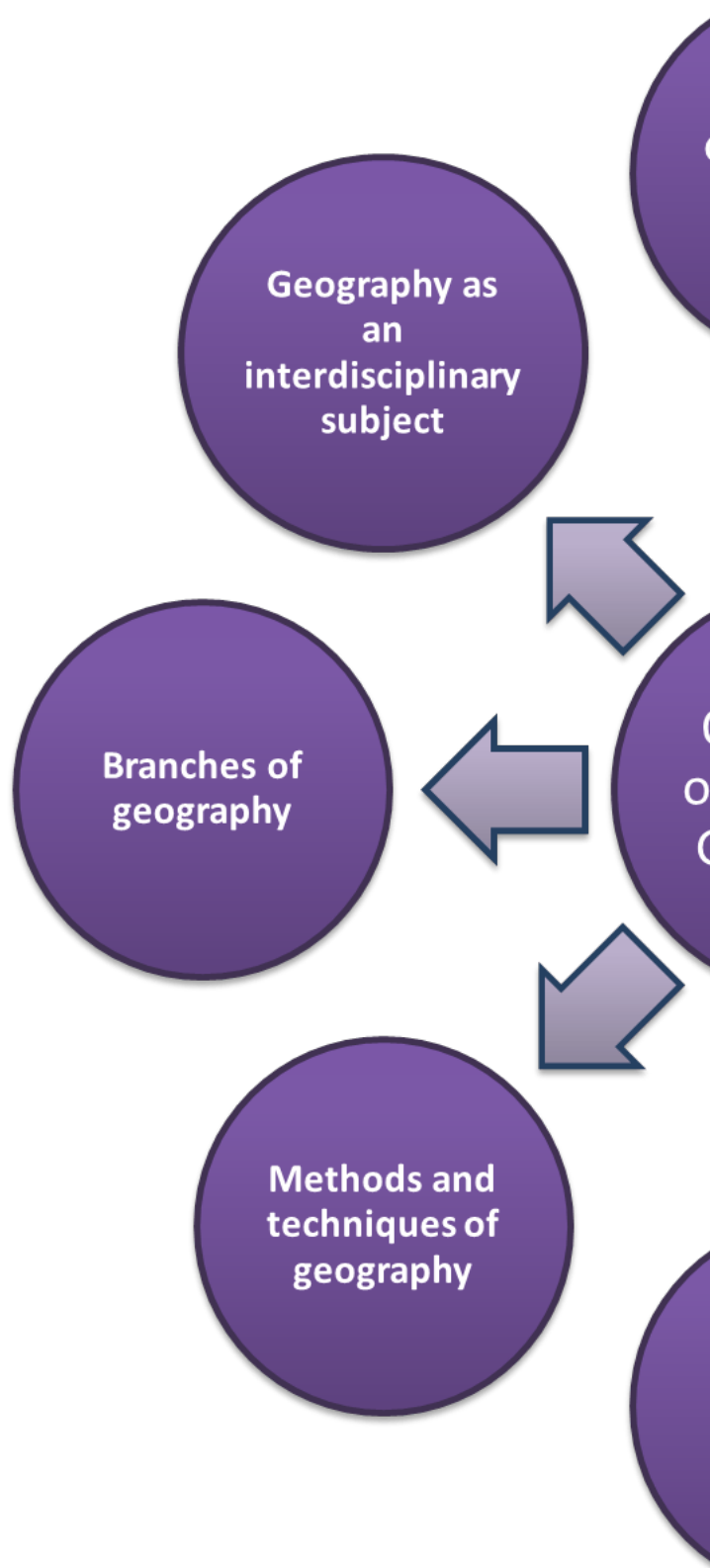
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- Geography is one of the oldest earth sciences having its roots date back in the works of the early Greek scholars. The word 'geography' was first coined by the Greek scholar Eratosthenes in the 3rd century B. C.
- The word geo means earth and graphy means to describe. The literal meaning of geography is to describe about the surface of the earth. Geography is largely the study of the interaction of all the physical and human phenomena and the landscapes created by such interactions.
- Geography has undergone several changes in its approach. The earlier geographers were mainly concentrated on the descriptive geography. Later, the discipline of geography came to be developed as an analytical science. Today the discipline is not only concerned with descriptions but also with analysis as well as the prediction.

Objectives

The major objectives of this chapter are:

- To appreciate the use of Geography in daily life
- To trace the development of Geography as a discipline
- To explain the scope of Geography
- To illustrate the systematic and regional approaches of Geography
- To understand the man-environment relationship and their impacts on each other
- To understand the various analytical techniques in Geography
- To identify the different branches of Geography and its scope
- To appreciate Geography as an interdisciplinary subject



Geography in Daily Life

- The surface of the earth is ever changing. In general, the natural phenomena including the mountains, rivers, lakes etc. change slowly on the other hand, the cultural elements including the buildings, roads, crops, change comparatively at faster pace. By moving from one place to another we notice that the number of trees and the types of trees change from area to area. This is due to the continuous interaction between the environment in which we live and the way we use it. One aspect of geography is to understand the factors or reasons behind the areal differentiation, how do the social, cultural, economic, and demographic factors change the physical landscape and create new or altered landscapes by human interventions. For example, the human settlements are the transformation of the forest or barren lands for living purpose by human beings.
- Geography is often regarded as the art of making and studying maps. Maps give us more correct and graphic view of the way the surface of the earth look like compared to a picture or a drawing. In earlier times, geographical information about an area was available through reports, travel diaries and gazetteers. At present, maps can be drawn by using satellite images using Geographic Information Systems or

GIS tools. Computers can easily convert the information from satellite images into maps to show the changes, development can bring about.

- Geography not only investigates the location of different places on the earth, but also the reason of its location there. Geographers not only study the location of the activities, but carefully identify patterns using maps and also find out the reasons for these patterns. The areas are then described based on the distribution of landforms, population, house types and agriculture. They discover the linkages and movements between these places and are able to infer the spatial processes that are working in an area.
- All over the world there are several problems related to providing food security, health, effective energy use and environmental conservation. Equally important are the issues of equality and sustainable development. These can be achieved only by using our resources in a sustainable way. Therefore, the study of geography is important to learn more about the environmental processes and to understand how land use planning can help us to overcome these problems.

In brief, it can be said that:

- Geography is the science of space.
- Maps are an essential tool for geographers to discover the linkages and movements between different places and to infer the spatial processes that are working in an area.
- Digital Geographical Information System is a new tool for map-making.
- Spatial Planning can be done by incorporating maps and the study of geography.