

The Changing Western Perspective on Geography and The Indian Context

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A reading of the contemporary literature in Geography leads one to conclude that there is a radical change in the purpose, content and approach to geography. Some even think that the situation is ripe for a revolution, a paradigm shift. The modern geographical thought is tending to be more philosophical joining rank with other social sciences. There is a gradually declining interest and emphasis on physical component of the discipline. May be, there is a need to redefine geography, keeping in view the larger objective of societal good. Some even believe that our understanding of geography is inadequate in the contemporary intellectual or academic climate. Some others believe that geography has hardly any scope in the epoch of extreme specialisation, its traditional role of an integrating science, with a holistic approach, notwithstanding. These may be some of the questions one would ask before thinking of redefining, modifying or changing the direction of the discipline. The present day geographers, particularly in India would not like to jettison traditional geography with a heritage extending over 2000 years. Even in the west, there are divergent views, and not every geographer is eager to change his mantle and embrace the prescribed code of a genuine social science rev-

elling in structuralist or postmodernist philosophy. The echo of traditional geography is heard even in the most celebrated precincts of prestigious universities.

India being a fast growing economy, the geographers here are seeking a role in the development process. They find their purpose ill defined and tools unequal to the tasks related to socio-economic development. There is, thus, a discussion in the following pages of our geographical heritage, traditional modern geography, radical and socialist schools and finally the current wave of postmodernism and its relevance to geography. The situation is considered in the Indian context and some broad hints are provided to fashion geography in a way that can prove more relevant to the fast changing nature of the discipline and even to the contemporary socio-economic changes in the society..

Our Heritage

We, in India, inherited the notion of geography largely, though not exclusively, from the WEST. Where was geography teaching, or for that matter teaching in many other disciplines, in India, before the subject was introduced in Indian schools, colleges and

finally universities in the latter part of the 19th century, but more precisely in the first half of the 20th century? Even in the West, after the initial interest in exploration and description of different parts of the globe, and their cartographic representation, the subject suffered obscurity for centuries till its revival with growing colonisation by the European powers and concurrent growth of international trade.

Geography, in its most rudimentary form, means description of the earth. This was the meaning given to the discipline by Greek scholars. The earliest regional accounts, after Strabo (63 BC to 24 AD), the monumental writer of regional geography, were produced by Sebastian Münster (1489-1552), a German, and subsequently Varenius (based in Amsterdam) in the sixteenth century. The former known as German Strabo wrote 'Cosmography' in six volumes. Familiar with the work of Strabo, he derived inspiration from Strabo's writing and followed his style, though his keen personal observation is noticed in his description of Rhineland, a part of his larger work. Münster's books were the best sellers and widely read for over hundred years (Schmithüsen-1970). Bernhard Varenius (1621-1650) wrote a regional account of Japan to assist the mercantile community in Netherlands, besides his celebrated work 'General Geography', that was more cosmology and astronomy than geography. In the writings of these two scholars lay the roots of what subsequently developed into systematic and regional geography. Their lead was followed by other European geographers. By the turn of the 19th century most universities in Europe recognised the need for geography, more as a study of regions than of individual elements that constitute

together the regional landscape. The 'General Geography' of Varenius appeared in a new *avatar* as what we know today as Systematic geography, though one may also surmise that the *logical* and *physical* divisions of Kant was later adopted in the system of classification of geographical studies into systematic and regional geography. Carl Ritter (1779-1859), who believed in proceeding from observation to observation in geographical studies, and 'was the first great opponent of what may properly be called 'arm-chair geography' (Hartshorne-1951:55), established a tradition of regional geography by writing several volumes of regional studies under the title 'Erdkunde', in preference to Kant's 'Erdbeschreibung'. Despite the fact that 'Erdkunde' occasionally leaned on teleological support for explanation, Ritter had a good following in Europe and one of his students Reclus Elisee (1830-1905) followed his style in producing a regional account of the world under the title 'La nouvelle Geographie Universelle; la Terre et les Hommes', in 10 volumes. A very clear-cut and long lasting classification of geographical subject matter was introduced by Alfred Hettner in the beginning of the last century when he produced his famous essay 'The system of Sciences' in 1905, following two German philosophers Winderband and Rickert, 'distinguishing between nomothetic, or law abiding sciences and idiographic sciences, those concerned with the 'einmalige, the unique' (Hartshorne (1939- reprint-1951: 379-80).

The development of geography in the 20th century is well known. Germany took the lead in starting geography at the university level, followed by France, U. K. and the USA. German geography witnessed a uniform growth of both systematic as well as

regional geography. In France geography was initiated with regional geography, starting with Reclus and Vidal de la Blache. In UK, Geography at the University at Oxford, initiated by Mackinder and followed by Herbertson and Unstead was made essentially into a study of regions. It is not surprising as both UK and France as colonial powers had to learn more about the overseas regions in general, and their colonies in Asia and Africa in particular. Outside Germany, systematic geography started late primarily under the influence of geologists. In the USA W. M. Davis (1850-1934) at Harvard, and his students Salisbury (1858-1922) at Chicago, and R. S. Tarr (1864-1912) at Cornell, in association with the geologists of the US Geological Survey, had considerable influence in promoting what was once known as physiography. In the interval between the two world wars, the subject spread to most of the universities in Europe and the USA. Geography also found a place in the universities of the European colonies and subsequently other countries of the third world.

In fact, the horizontal spread of the discipline was complete by mid-twentieth century and both regional and systematic branches of the discipline prospered equally. In Britain, a tradition developed to specialise in one of the systematic branches, while developing expertise on some region, the former was largely dominated by geologists like S. W. Wooldridge (1900-1963), who inspired by the pioneering work of W. M. Davis, advanced geomorphology. In the USA, after the disappearance of the pioneers of physical geography, regional geography became the contemporary idiom and remained so till the fifties of the last century, following the writings of Hartshorne, espe-

cially his '*Nature of Geography*'. The late fifties saw a reversal of the trend, and regional geography as the *sine qua non* of all geographical studies was challenged by many, notably Schaeffer (1953) who criticised the existing notion that geography was an integrating science as it did not, and could not, produce generalisations and laws. The discipline was virtually taken over by the so-called systematisers looking for generalisations, particularly after the triggering effect of the Schaeffer-Hartshorne debate.

Also, the production of regional texts and monographs, having filled the blanks in our knowledge of regions and outlived the necessity of empire building, did not excite the interest of the scholars from other disciplines. But the difficulty was that while regional geography was downgraded, the systematic branches of the discipline, like climatology, geomorphology, and human geography could hardly contribute anything worthwhile that could be considered a scientific law, and, at best, presented the summary of the recent findings of various other scientific disciplines in a regional frame. There was nothing, nor is there anything today, in geographical research that could claim some advance or addition to the existing laws of science. Various approaches and methodologies were introduced to inject greater vigour and precision in the discipline and to make it scientific and predictively more rewarding. All such efforts and trends did not have a lasting impact and the crisis persists.

What is important is to realise that the subject has a distinguished lineage and a heritage which we cannot, and should not, part with. The study of regions, areal segments of the earth, as much as of different

societies, that are ever changing, has a perpetual appeal and utility. The regions are not frozen in time, they have a dynamic character, and their understanding, as they change with their society and culture, would help providing direction for their development or provide the basic material for solving many problems typical of a specific region or the society. The study of different elements in a region and their study as a global system, what we know as systematic geography is not less important, as these provide insight into the processes of nature.

Modern, Postmodern and Contemporary

Unlike history, where the time scale is enormous, starting from prehistory to modern with a continuing and ceaseless human activity, and where a period of human activity is also referred to as the history of that period, geography in general, and systematic geography in particular, is referred to the period when geographical treatises were written, as the generalisations related to nature change rather gradually and are valid for centuries. James grouped geographical writings, sequentially, in three parts: Classical, Modern and Contemporary. He dated the 'Modern period in the history of geographical ideas with the establishment of professional staffs in universities' (James-1971, reprint-1980:175), which, according to him, coincides with 1875 when the first university professors were appointed in Germany. The changes after the Second World War and a rapid advance in science and technology brought about changes in the field of study, the nature of questions posed and the methods and techniques applied. James doesn't give any precise date after

which the development in geography could be considered as contemporary, but to an outsider it appeared that he meant the sixties and the seventies of the 20th century. In this historical sequence, the postmodern geography or geographies, as Soja calls it (Soja-1989), appears, at first instance, a paradox. Does the postmodern geography convey the same meaning as contemporary geography, the term suggested by James. The Postmodern geographies represent a different philosophical approach, usually recognised as postmodern philosophy. It made its way into social science theory where space became a prime element in theory building in contrast to the existing grand theory where historicism was the key factor. Some geographers, notably Soja, were quick to adopt a postmodern approach, to seek primacy for geography as a discipline, among the social sciences, since it is largely concerned with space. Thus, while James' contemporary geography denoted a historical sequence of the present day geographical ideas, the postmodern geography relates to the content, and approach of geography, as a social science, consistent with the postmodern philosophy.

Recently, M. Dear (2002) has described what he calls Pre-Postmodern Geography spanning a period of hardly two decades. The Pre-Postmodern Geography period runs, according to him, from 1965 to 1983. Obviously, he considers the publication of '*Locational Analysis in Human Geography*' (P. Hagget-1965), as the point of depart for Pre-Postmodern Geography, which winding its way through multiple approaches ends up with the arrival of Postmodern Geography in the mid-eighties, perhaps with the publication of E. Soja's (1986) '*Taking Los Angeles Apart : Some fragments of a criti-*

cal human geography'. The Postmodern Geography has undergone several modifications, the most important being the retention of historical materialism as a mode of explanation together with space, thus generating a new species of geographical-historical materialism as an adequate basis for postmodern geography.

The contemporary idiom in geographical thinking, apart from theoretical issues, relates primarily, at least in India, to social relevance. And this should certainly be the case in most developing or under developed countries. The concept of social relevance, apart from the understanding of social organisation and functioning of the society, is not new, and similar views were echoed by Marxist geographers even earlier. David Harvey talked of social justice in the early seventies. According to him *'social justice is a normative concept and it is surprising, therefore, that considerations of social justice have not been incorporated into geographical methods of analysis'* (Harvey-1973:96). The difference between social relevance and social justice is very thin. While social relevance refers, in my understanding, to all those activities that are meant for the good of the society, like better nutrition, better health care, better education and gainful employment and the development of all the institutions and the infrastructure that promote this, social justice relates to equality in the society. One reflects an idea leading to wealth generation and production of goods and services for the society; the other reflects the socialist idea of distributive justice. Harvey believes in *'constructing a normative theory of spatial and territorial allocation based on principles of social justice'* (Ibid:97). Despite Harvey's concern for social justice, he is honest enough to reflect,

in another context, on- *'How the conference on Globalisation (The one he was attending at Duke University in Nov 1994, Durham, North Carolina) myself included, ostensibly 'radical' and 'leftist' (though not necessarily anti-capitalist) in its orientation, might help to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, minister to the sick and generally pursue the foundational aims of socialist/ anti-capitalist politics'* (Harvey-1996:5). This reflection of Harvey should be the concern of all such geographers who see themselves as the champions of the cause of the poor and downtrodden, with their understanding of Marxism and the tool of their Marxist, - in fact, more anti-capitalist than Marxist- philosophy. A tentative answer is given by Harvey in suggesting that *'Exploration of political space, time, place and environment, instead of being in isolation, should simultaneously pursue a political commitment to feed, nourish, clothe and sustain the hungry, the poor and the weak'* (Harvey-1996:6).

What is contemporary? Is a question one may justifiably ask. The answer is not simple, as unlike physics or chemistry, there is nothing like frontline or cutting edge research in geography. The old and new run almost parallel without signifying what is obsolete and what is the latest. One of the important aspects in the contemporary discussion of geography is an almost total neglect, if not omission, of the natural science segment of the discipline, as if climatology, hydrology or bio-geography have nothing to do with geography. And, this, despite the fact that the degradation of environment and its impact and the certainty of global climatic change pose serious threat to humanity. It is, perhaps, the likely effect of the worldwide numerical dominance of human

geographers who find themselves utterly incapable of grappling with environmental problems that require a basic understanding of natural sciences which still follow the positivist approach and don't indulge in discussing the advantages of 'meta-narratives' versus 'postmodernism'.

Geography, to my mind, will be a loser in jettisoning the natural component of the discipline. What is needed is its strengthening by making better facility for research, like trained faculty, and facilities for laboratory and field investigation. It would be worth trying restricting the study of physical geography to science stream students.

Changing Paradigms in Geography

Over the decades, confined to the last one and a half century, there have been frequent shifts in geographical paradigm. Beginning with the exploration and description of continents and countries that formed the basis of present day regional geography, the subject acquired the flavour of a scientific discipline in studying the individual elements that constitute the landscape in their spread and behaviour in different parts of the globe. Thus emerged man-environment relationship and the conviction that societal behaviour is moulded by the environment in which it grows, producing in the process the principle of environmental determinism practiced by geographers like Fredrick Ratzel, Ellsworth Huntington and Griffith Taylor. The regional approach aimed at describing the regional landscape with a synthesis of all the physical and human elements symbolised the creativity among geographers, though defining a region proved a difficult and even a sterile exercise as it was bound to be. The very assumption that

if the regions cannot be defined and delineated and therefore they don't exist and there cannot be regional geography, was a fallacy. Places, regions and countries existed on the face of the earth regardless of the regionalisation exercises. This was a blind alley, a time consuming exercise and led to only non-productive controversies, leading to the neglect of this very important branch.

Till mid-twentieth century when the scientific nature of geography began to be questioned, Hartshorne's writings notably '*Nature of Geography*' (1939) was the philosophical staple of geographers of both Europe and the USA, may be, more USA than Europe. Hartshorne while discussing geography as a science - the theme most discussed during the last half century - depended heavily on Alfred Hettner and Otto Graff who adopted their classification of sciences from two German philosophers, Windelband and Rickert distinguishing between 'nomothetic' or law-making sciences, and 'idiographic' sciences concerned with the *einmalige*, the unique. Though all branches of science, according to Hartshorne, are concerned to some extent with the study of the universals as well as unique, Hartshorne's perceived emphasis on regions and regional geography resulted in the study and writings of regional geographies particularly in the USA. In fact, there was a flurry of regional studies and the latter became an integral part of the postgraduate courses all over the world. For some time, regional monographs attained primacy over systematic studies. And following Hartshorne's dictum - '*He who does not understand geography is no true geographer*' (1939:458), most geographers developed some regional interest. The physical segment of the discipline, geomorphology and

climatology, had a measure of success in applying methods of other natural sciences, may these be statistical approach, field or laboratory experimentation or a systems approach interlinking the elements of any natural systems, thus producing models with some predictive value. In this, established principles borrowed from geology, hydrology, or biology could help further advance the subject. The influence of W. M. Davis, a Professor at Harvard ((1850-1934), and the originator of the theory of 'Cycle of Erosion' though a trail blazer in geomorphology, remained confined to the geologists, till he was pronounced the 'Master of the Craft' by Wooldridge & Morgan (1937:v). The latter went to the extent of regretting 'the murmurings of dispraise heard occasionally from his native land' (Wooldridge -1937-vi). The publication of Wooldridge's '*Physical Basis of Geography: An Outline of Geomor-phology* (1937-1st edition) proved a trailblazer in British Geography. And many geography departments started offering courses in physical geography.

Exceptionalism and Schaeffer-Hartshorne Debate

During the Post-war years, Hartshorne's book '*The Nature of Geography*' (1939) was not only the most influential work on philosophy and methodology of geography, but widely read and consulted, both, as a reference manual and a text book in the universities on the two sides of the Atlantic. The idiographic view of geography, as defined by Hartshorne, was, however, criticised by many, notably Schaefer who rejected the study of 'unique' as a science and emphasised the study of systematic geography.

This gave rise to a tide of fast changing approaches and varying emphasis on different aspects of the discipline, all with an idea to make the results of geographical enquiry more precise and scientific. In the USA, the publication of '*Exceptionalism in Geography*' by S. K. Schaeffer (1953) was a virtual revolt against the established norms of geography as an integrating science. His main argument against geography as a science was the incapacity of the discipline to generate laws or even universal generalisations. His criticism was directed against regional geography, and argued that '*the claim of geography as the integrating science which put together the findings of individual systematic sciences was arrogant, ..as a science requires explanation which, in turn, require laws.*' Hartshorne's rebuttal of Schaeffer's critique and his response appeared in a series of papers, and finally his refashioned book '*Perspective on the Nature of Geography* (1959)'. Many geographers, like the present author, disregard Schaeffer's criticism of Hartshorne who had explained fully the importance of laws and argued that all aspects of reality cannot be understood by the laws yet known'. '*While every one recognises the importance of universal in science, it is a common error to overlook that part of our scientific knowledge which cannot, as yet at least, be expressed in universals. Many have assumed (as has Schaeffer-parenthesis mine) that science was concerned exclusively in the development of laws and principles.*' This concept, according to Hettner, represents '*an outgrowth of great development of laws and principles in astronomy, physics and chemistry in the last century... More recently, however, many scientists and philosophers of science have recognised that no branch*

of science concerned with reality - as distinct from theoretical mathematics - can limit itself to laws and principles. Though science strives for universals, these do not exhaust the study of reality, there is always an individual remainder that is not described or explained. If this is ignored, our knowledge is less complete' Hartshorne-1951:378). It was never imagined that geographers who were deeply involved in regional geography considered themselves distinguished scientists comparable with physicists. They advanced geographic understanding regardless of its being comparable to mathematics and physics. Secondly, there are hierarchies of sciences, at different levels of hierarchy, like oceanography, atmospheric, meteorology or even medical sciences, which, in effect, are based on the cumulative application of the principles of physics and chemistry, and represent the practice of scientific laws, producing very valid generalisations. This could apply as well apply to some aspects of regional geography. The *exceptionalist* view of geography has to be looked at from the point of view of acquiring and perfecting our knowledge of the different segments of the globe. It is not relevant to accept or reject its inclusion in the array of sciences. More about the necessity of regional geography later.

From Exceptionalism to Postmodernism in Geography

Schaeffer's exceptionalism (1953) provided the triggering effect to dump regional studies, as something unique, beyond the pale of science. This view was strengthened by some earlier observations such as one made by Ullman (1953) who believed that geography as '*areal differentiation implies that*

we are not seeking principles or generalisations or similarities, the goal of all sciences'. He related the idea of spatial interaction to the existing notion of regional geography. Space came to dominate the thinking of many geographers, particularly those of Chicago school like B.J.L. Brian and William Bunge who swore by scientific method based on mathematical approach. The quantitative analysis promoted by the Washington-Seattle school, and nurtured at Chicago and subsequently at Iowa, provided a new vigour to the declining appeal of geography as a science that could talk of generalisations and theories. Quantitative geography, however, enjoyed a short-lived prestige, though at the initial stage, it had '*some thing electrifying about tilting with the dragons of establishment'* (Morrill-1984) and the practitioners of this art thought of themselves as revolutionaries. The situation was not very different in India in the mid-seventies when some geographers learning the basic statistical techniques from the textbooks, largely produced in the USA, considered themselves a breed apart. One often heard quantifiers talking of co-linearity and auto-correlations. It soon dawned upon many that statistical techniques remained a technique and neither a subject matter of geography nor a substitute for geographical theorising. The situation was remedied to some extent by using space as the object of study, which, with its nodes, chords and surfaces, lent admirably to numerical treatment, transforming geography into the study of spatial relationships, where space became the subject of study and quantification its methodology. This gave rise to a tide of fast changing approaches and varying emphasis on different aspects of the discipline all with an idea to make the results of geographical

enquiry more precise and scientific. The human geography part of the subject developed a bewildering array of disciplinary approaches ranging from quantitative to behavioural and humanistic on the one side, and with an ideological bias like Marxist and radical on the other, with postmodern and critical geography thrown in as the latest novelties. While the postmodern geography derived its inspiration from postmodernism, a concept in philosophy, critical geography is the result of critical social theory.

While space and spatial interaction were being emphasised to make geography a truly scientific discipline, a number of subsidiary approaches, related to social science realm, like humanistic geography (Y. F. Tuan-1976) or radical geography appeared on the scene..

Initially Radical Geographers '*accepted the view that geography was a science of space and environment*'. The substitution of space for earth, area or region was a matter of convenience. They argued for a change in the spatial topics of concern in the direction of urgent social issues. '*The language tended to be confrontational, optimistic, anarchistic and the message in 'Antipode' was often phrased, as drawings, cartoons and posters as well as the usual articles and reviews*' (Peet-1998:68). The radicals among geographers were considered a new breed of intellectuals committed to social good. '*The late 1960s and the early 1970s were years of political involvement and intellectual excitement unique in the history of Geography*' (ibid: 68) The radical school in geography, a fall out of Civil rights movement following the Vietnam war, and backed by the Union of Socialist Geographers that was started in 1974, took to some kind of activism in directing their energy and directly involving themselves in social trans-

formation or redressing social problems through their expertise. The concern for '*social relevance produced*', as Peet (1998:75) puts it, '*a contradiction inside radical geography, between political objectives which were virtually unlimited (i.e. aimed at transformation of the society) and analytical capacities which were claustrophobically contained by the techniques, methodologies and paradigmatic boundaries of conventional scientific concepts*'... '*The urgent need for an alternate mode of understanding became clear even to people reluctant to completely abandon positivism with its quantitative methods which geographers had slaved over in a desperate attempt at becoming white-coated scientists*'. Radical geography transformed itself to Marxist geography, '*which is typified by the trajectory of David Harvey, previously a guru of positivist geography*'. The Marxist geography, hitherto practised in the West is radically different from what Indian geographers led by M. Raza at Jawahar Lal Nehru University, at Delhi, practised in the seventies. While the Western model depended exclusively on historical materialism for their explanation ignoring space, Raza embraced space as a prime factor in socio-economic analysis and thus appears closer to the postmodernists than the Marxists. The JNU school to an extent anticipated the writings of Soja (1989) who while appreciating the space element in the postmodern philosophy put forward by Lyotard (1979) and Foucault (1986) and Lefebvre (1991), related the idea of spatial interaction to the existing notion of regional geography, much later..

In Search of a Scientific Geography

The disenchantment of regional geography and the search for a scientific geography with predictive value led to the growth of quantitative analysis in the USA. A group of geographers rushed to quantify in the belief that with a more precise statement and explanation of locational attributes, association correlation, with a quasi-predictive appeal could bring the discipline closer to science and enhance its prestige and even its utility. Believably, it was a reaction to the debate that the idea of exceptionalism generated, and also a strategy to elevate the declining status of the discipline.

The introduction of quantification in place of an observed factual qualitative approach formed a new basis for introducing rigour in the discipline. The quantitative approach, often erroneously called quantitative geography, did offer a glimmer of hope to those who believed in its efficacy. The approach though not appreciated by many, made an unflinching onslaught on the established geography courses and was accepted with a belief that the approach may produce some fundamentally different results that could be established by an underpinning of mathematical precision and accepted by non geographers. This did not happen and the approach ended in an unskilful juggling of numbers through elementary statistical exercises. The main reason for the quick end to the statistical enthusiasm was a complete lack of understanding of the objective or lack of clarity about what we wanted to achieve. Some used it for establishing simple relationship, others used it for regionalisation and still other applied it to understand the principle determinants of certain events or occurrence in space. With a perfect understanding of the

problem, a geographer with a thorough training in mathematical statistics and its application could produce valid models in the field of economic geography involving measurable variables. But, unfortunately in India, such geographers are not only rare but even unknown. Teachers of quantitative methods have learnt the elements of the subject from the textbooks but their application to produce results has not progressed. Indirectly, the prestige of quantification has done some harm by producing some half-baked geographers who neither tried to understand geographical problems nor quantification, but proudly flaunted their newly acquired skill, without any valid achievement, as the torchbearers of a new geography. To emphasise my view point I quote Harvey, though with a minimal appreciation of his views - *'though Geographers' theoretical and quantitative revolutions have resulted in thousands of hypotheses proven correct at some appropriate level of significance in the geographic literature by now, I am left with the impression that in to this adds up to a little more than the proverbial hill of beans'* (Harvey, 1989:170). To some like Johnston, *'the quantitative and theoretical revolutions of 1960s are not only over but overthrown'* (R.J. Johnston- 1993:157). Even on purely academic grounds and scientific reasons, spatial analysis through mathematical modelling, following largely the location theory and cost-benefit analysis could not present a picture of social reality. The radical geography and geographers of the seventies were the first to question the idea of quantitative spatial geography and largely concerned with social relevance. There emerged a Union of Social Geographers in the USA and Britain with a clear objective of promoting geography which may prove socially

relevant As the present author sees it, geography lost a generation, and quantification seems to be ending in the historical junkyard of the discipline.

Social Theory and Postmodernism

The concept of postmodernism as a social/philosophical theory appeared on the scene with the publication of Jean-Fançois Lyotard's '*La Condition Moderne*' in 1979, (translated into English as 'The Post Modern Condition: A Report on Knowledge' 1984). He defined '*postmodern*.' as incredulity toward meta-narratives and an emphasis on differences. Meta-narratives (grand theories), according to Lyotard, ignore the heterogeneity or variety of human existence. These tend to dismiss the naturally occurring chaos and disorder of the universe. Lyotard argues that 'meta narratives' should give way to 'petit recits' or more modest and localised narratives. Thus as a philosophy, postmodernism is opposed to universal truths, universalities and some thing foundational. Postmodernists attempt to replace grand theories by focusing on specific local context as well as the diversity of human experience. They argue for the existence of a multiplicity of theoretical standpoints, rather than the grand all encompassing theories. The postmodern philosophers who provided the ideological support and inspiration to E. Soja, the initiator of postmodern geography, were Lefebvre and M. Foucault. Though Lyotard initiated the discourse on postmodernity, it was Foucault and Lefebvre whom Soja found closer to geographical interpretation. A very good summary of the thinking of the above philosophers can be seen in Derek Gregory's *Geographical Imaginations* (1994:274). Henry Lefebvre,

a French sociologist philosopher, '*parts of whose work most related to geography became known only gradually in the Anglo-American world in the 1970s through brief introductory summaries (Lefebvre-1976) and oblique references. Indeed, only with the translation of his ' Production of Space' (1991) were his ideas available in English when they produced a kind of Lefebvorean revival' (Peet-1998:101). The importance given to space in the Lefebvorean tradition can be seen in one of Soja's early essays 'Between Geographical Materialism and Spatial Feticism: Some observations on the Development of Marxist Spatial Analysis' (Soja-1979: 3-11). Here, Soja poses three questions: 1. What is the role of space in Marxist theory and practice? 2. What is the appropriate position of a spatial problematic in the class struggle? and 3. Must historical materialism be complemented by an equally robust geographical materialism? and partly answers the question by recapitulating and quoting from Lefebvre's major work - '*La Survie du Capitalism*' and demonstrating that revolution can only take place through the reproduction of dominant social relations and this reproduction process is located in social space.*

Soja's own observation about the neglect of space in the traditional Marxist analysis is as follow - '*The growing spatial and its rootedness in changing material conditions - for it certainly does not spring from the thin air of isolated intellectual contemplation— is not often acknowledged explicitly in Marxist writings. But it is the undercurrent beneath the recent growth of an interest and concern for spatial analysis that is unparalleled within the Marxist tradition (and it should be added, a social practice) organised around such horizontal themes as*

the political economy of urbanisation, urban social movements, the ideology of urban planning, regional underdevelopment, core-periphery relations within the world capitalist system, the geographical concentration of capital and the geographical transfer of values, and national (territorial) liberation movements. And as spatial problematic moves closer to the surface, there has also developed a powerful counteraction to what is often viewed as a new fetishism of space'. (Soja-1979:3 Soja's advocacy of an inclusive interpretation of Marxist theory insists on space as a vital element in Marxist interpretation which till lately depends on historicism neglecting space.

The first chapter of Soja's book *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Place in Critical Social Theory* (1989: 10) is a quote from Foucault (1986:22) - *'The great obsession of 19th century, as we know, was history...the present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space. We are in the epoch of simultaneity, we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of near and far, of the side by side, of the dispersed. We are at a moment I believe, when our experience of a world is less that of a long life developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein.....'*

Soja collects his essay in a book that traces the spatiality in the French Marxist tradition, talks of organisation of space as a social product and of reassertions towards a spatialised ontology. Such human geographers as are committed to social geography and social science theorising owe a debt to Soja for his persistent entrepreneurship in bringing space to the centre stage of social theory, through postmodernism, in the face of such Marxist geographers as David

Harvey who always emphasised historical materialism. D. Gregory(1994:258) in an assessment of Soja observes- *'I want to make it plain that I regard 'Postmodern Geographies' as a brilliant book, the work of a master craftsman, its intellectual sparkle is the product of a rare and generous critical intelligence. Soja has taken a collection of his previously published essays and re-worked every one into a new setting. The result is a carefully polished text with each word weighed and set in place to bring out the deeper tonalities of the others'*. Two of the facets which Gregory thinks integral to the design of the book are, first the intellectual history... the terrain on which Soja mobilises his claim for the construction of a distinctly *postmodern geography*, and the second is his creative deconstruction of Los Angeles as the *'quintessential post modern place'* (Gregory-1994:258). It is through these two interventions that Soja seeks to establish the importance of space within critical Social Theory.

Has the Postmodern Geography really found a place as an essential element in the Critical Social Theory? Has it received the recognition by social scientists as some thing basic to social theory building? These are questions only future will show. It will largely depend on the intellectual vigour of the social geographers to establish their indispensability. For the present, however, postmodern geography should inject some cheer in the ranks of social geographers who, with their capital of space, are eager to enter the realm of critical social theory.

One of the ardent exponents of postmodernism M. Dear, Professor of Geography at the University of Southern California, and once the editor of 'ANTIPODE', wholeheartedly embraces postmodern geog-

raphy as the saviour of human geography. His observations, from an apparently subservient position, are too optimistic when he declares - *'I am happy to embrace the central proposition of postmodernism. I reject the intellectual hegemony implied by the modernist project; there can be no 'grand theory' for human geography: on the other hand I am unhappy with the extremes of deconstructionist relativism'* (Dear 1888:267). The central object in human geography, according to Dear, is to understand the simultaneity of time and space in structuring social process. *'Human geography is the study of contemporaneity of social process in time and space'*. Unfortunately not many have yet appreciated the enormous consequences of time-space analysis in our cognate disciplines. *It promises to resituate biography at the very centre of the newly defined paradigm of human enquiry.*' Dear believes, and perhaps rightly so, that geographers can gain enormously if they substitute the wider concerns of social theory for the set of internalised, isolated questions which currently consume geographers. As his working hypothesis Dear concludes - *'By aligning itself with the trends in social theory and by accepting the challenges of postmodernism, a separate identity and meaning for human geography is established and the discipline takes on a crucial significance in assembling and interpreting knowledge of our world'*. The acceptance of a strong advocacy of M. Dear aligning human geography with social sciences does not require any additional enforcement. The problem is that geographers like Dear rubbish regional geography and the quality and characteristics of space. Space doesn't exist only in the English lexicon, it is a physical reality which is moulded equally by en-

vironmental and social causation, and thus space is both a socially as well as environmentally determined entity. The potential of 'space' in social theory would be fully realised only when space is defined inclusively with all the elements contained in it. To use it in an abstract sense and ignore its physical reality would be a pretentious exercise in theory building. The socialist geographers are not too happy about bringing space in social theory at the expense of historical materialism. In this context Harvey, known for his leftist views, seems to find himself in an odd position. His acceptance of postmodernism doesn't appear wholehearted, as he observes- *'I find myself in somewhat odd position. For, while, I welcome on the one hand the explosion of interest (again much of it literary rather than social theory) in things spatial and a proliferation of texts and arguments that wrestle with what spatiality may be all about, it has never been my intention to use such conceptual apparatus to attack meta theory per se. My concern is, rather, with trying to rebuild Marxian meta theory in such a way as to incorporate an understanding of spatio-temporality (and socio-ecological issues) within its frame. This has me writing against those uses of spatiality and of spatial metaphor whose sole purpose seems to be to take irreconcilable difference, incommunicability, particularity, and irreducible individualism and fix them in stone* (Harvey 1996: 9).

This shows the conflict in social theory. The exponents of meta-narratives (grand theories - here historical materialism) are not incredulous of meta-narratives and hang on to it. So, postmodernism still remains a school without any universal acceptance, and only with an insignificant following

Space in Social Theory

It must be clearly understood that the postmodern geography is the late phase in the development of postmodern philosophy developed in the late sixties and seventies by French philosophers, notably F. J. Lyotard (1979) and M. Foucault. The notion of post-modern geography is greeted by geographers because postmodernism rejects the overarching social theories (termed meta narratives) like Marx historical materialism, asserting that every society, community or locality is fundamentally different from other, and each has to be looked into individually, thus rejecting the universality of grand theories. This also provided a place for incorporating space as an element in social theory, as societies and social behaviour or interaction is space based, and its hermeneutic (interpretative) meaning. It is not, however, easy to perceive space in the sense philosophers or social theorists use. Geographers are accustomed to using space almost interchangeably with place or area. To philosophers, space might be highly abstract. Lefebvre who defined space in his classic work 'Production of Space' distinguishes absolute space from abstract space. By absolute space he means 'fragments of nature at sites chosen for their intrinsic qualities'. As Neil Smith says 'different conceptions of space are produced by different types of human activities, and the contemporary situation of modern day production processes provides the basis for bifurcation of absolute, natural and physical space (the world of physical and natural phenomena) from relative and social space (the humanly constituted field of social events). To impart clarity to this question of space let me quote Harvey (2002:61) who is as frank in his admission of inability and ignorance as

he is assertive about his convictions. He says- 'The problem of proper conceptualisation of space is resolved through human practice with respect to it. In other words, there are no philosophical answers to philosophical questions that arise over the nature of space- the answers lie in human practice. The question 'what is space' is therefore replaced by the question "how is it that that different human practices create and make distinctive conceptualisation of space?" According to him '*space is neither absolute, relative or relational in itself, but it can become one and all simultaneously depending on the circumstances*'. If one has to paraphrase, one might say that a place develops a character depending on human and non-human circumstances and activities. If we don't get bogged down with ontological and philosophical question the idea of space becomes clear to us. One may grossly simplify the 'space' concept by saying that a natural site with its intrinsic qualities is an absolute space; a set of circumstances present an abstract space and human activities produce a relative space-social or economic.

The rejection of grand theories as the sole explanation of a complex society has, in the process, produced a multiplicity of social theories and a chaotic situation. This also implies the examination and assessment of a situation or a phenomenon from a variety of perspectives where odd individual behaviour may be as significant as that of an organised society. As one who claims familiarity with the Indian geographical scene, the application of postmodern approach has not entered the research effort. In fact, many including the writer of this note are struggling to find out more about its. Only a few geographers in India, if at all,

are inclined to take part in social-theory building debate. In large measure, this exercise is highly philosophical and invariably one tends to adopt a doctrinaire approach.

The writer of this note honestly believes that instead of indulging in social theory building, it would be more constructive to emphasise the social relevance of the discipline, ask ourselves valid questions and arrive at some conclusion about making geography scientifically reliable and socially relevant.

The Spirit of Geography

One may legitimately ask – what is the spirit of geography? The answer may not be that simple, but it is certainly not running away from the tradition of geography. If we talk of *'Limits to Capital'* à la Harvey, or *'Food Policies'* by Terrant, geography appears tending to wear a thematic mantle, unconcerned about its traditional parameter. The philosophical question of geography seen through the prism of post modernism where philosophical arguments are advanced to understand the contemporary situation appears too remote to a practising geographer. Sample this - *'To understand the post modern world with its emphasis on difference rather than conformity of modernism, requires an appreciation of the potentials created by the time-space compression of flexible accumulation'* (Harvey-1989). One would like to quote Stoddart (1986) with a counter view. He writes: *'I confess to a feeling of unreality to much of the literature on the philosophy, methodology and even history of the subject, much of it written by people who signally fail to practice what they preach. Meanwhile, so many retreat into increasing restrictive and esoteric speciali-*

ties, where they protect themselves with secret languages and erudite techniques'. It may appear a harsh judgment but the message in this statement carries the accusation of running away from doing real geography. To many of us an empiricist – positivist approach to geography accords with the general notion of geography as a science contrasting with another approach called by some as 'realist and emancipatory' where explanations are sought in history, culture, race, rituals and such other phenomena. One thus delves into historical materialism often with a political bias.

The Indian Context - The Discomfiture of Geographers

As ever larger segments of the globe were discovered and written upon, regional accounts gradually became infructuous, a non-exciting piece of writing unlike those of early explorers. By mid-twentieth century the discomfiture of geographers was evident. The horizontal spread of the discipline and the growing number of geographers in many new universities added to the volume of geographical writings. There were a few geographers like Karl Sauer, indeed a very few, whose contributions came to be recognised. The result was the emergence of sub-disciplines, based on individual elements in physical or social landscape, but more specifically those that characterise human societies. Thus emerged geo-graphies, based on population, migration, religion, ethnicity, castes, politics, economics, agriculture, crops, irrigation, land use, productivity, industry, transport, hunger, development, plants, animals, what to talk of regional analysis, regional development and regional planning.

The familiarity with space and its cartographic representation helped geographers to establish claim for their expertise in Town Planning, Regional Planning, Land Use and several such fields, but geographers as a class remained only on the periphery. Map making was another field where the newly emerging democracies could depend on them to prepare thematic maps and produce atlases that could be an authoritative document. Disgruntled with the situation, geographers joining the rank of social scientists, have started thinking in terms of grand theories related to systems of production, class struggle, exploitation, economic and social disabilities and disparities. These made them a vocal champion of one school of thought or the other where pre-established ideas were given an illustrative cover through a regional fabric.

The Indian geographical scene after the mid-twentieth century was characterised by a growing number of universities and new geography departments which required trained geographers to execute the academic programmes in these universities. Quite a few early geographers trained abroad, introduced similar courses in Indian universities; many of them replicated their doctoral work through their Ph. D. students, and a patterned, often outdated, thoughtless research emerged. Indian geographers had either no time, or were incapable of thinking independently to formulate meaningful research programmes, repeating ad nauseam, the same kind of work they had done under their research supervisors, abroad. The result was the mass production of doctoral dissertations on identical themes in slightly different regional or local context. The initial enthusiasm for geography slowly waned as more and more graduates came out of the

universities looking for jobs and helplessly began questioning the scope of geographical study in professional life, or in simple terms, job opportunities for geographers. The situation was, let it be assured, no better in the developed world.

Outside the academia, some job opportunities like the one offered by NATMO provided a flicker of hope, and geographers vaguely speculated that an expertise in planning, that could effectively assist the planning process in the country, could ensure job opportunities to geographers. This led to the establishment of courses in Regional Planning in most universities concurrently with courses in professional planning institutes. The geographers faced the competition with economists, sociologists besides architects and civil engineers. The initiative produced a very few trained geographers who could take up position parallel to architects or engineer-planners. The process continued with the production of State Planning Atlases, slightly yet not substantially or radically different from the statistical atlases, often being underrated and in most cases kept as an ornamental piece in planning offices.

The general outline of Indian geography given above could be illustrated by reviewing the work of Indian geographers, but this is not the objective of this paper. Interested scholars may refer to the review of Indian geography by many authors, notably, S.P. Chatterjee (1963, 1972), Singh, R.L: and Rana P. B. Singh (eds-1992), B.Thakur, (1994) and L.R. Singh (ed-1996). The objective here is to outline the general thinking in Indian geography about the utility of the discipline and the nature of concern expressed by Indian geographers. For this, reliance has been placed on the impressions

of the author gathered in seminars and conferences and the presidential addresses of the National Association of Geographers of India, and the Institute of Indian Geographers, delivered at their annual conventions.

There is a general feeling that despite the rapid growth of the discipline, its academic health is far from what it should have been. Almost in a state of anguish, Ahmed (1997) narrates his experience in bold outlines: *'The experience over the years shows that the departments of teaching and research have developed as fiefdoms. Individual initiative and freedom were curbed under the domineering authority of a departmental leader. Specialisms were born or made to die at his or her will'*. He adds further – *'in my estimate, geography in the south Asian sub-continent suffered from individualism and adherence to the feudal values which led to the incurable diseases. While systematic and regional geographies were talked and discussed in the class rooms and departmental seminars, open debates on the country-wide scale were never conducted mostly because of groupism that permeated the body academic of local geography. Regional or local leaders organised themselves in groups with parochial tendencies, jeopardizing the chances of a collective leadership on an all India platform'*. The above statement of late Professor A. Ahmad is an eloquent testimony to the state of Indian geography's health. Some geographers even believe that the main cause of the stagnation of the discipline and a decline in the standard of teaching and research is the general illiteracy among Indian geographers of the philosophy and methodology of the discipline

The concern for the Socio-Economic Relevance of the Discipline

Of late there has been a growing concern among some geographers not only to examine the social relevance of the discipline but even to make the subject socially relevant. Thus, there is a growing tendency among the geographers to look at the discipline and mould it in a utilitarian frame. They even suggest that the geographers should be able to influence and advise the Government on matters involving policy decision. The geographers' disenchantment with the discipline is not universal, though its limited application makes them uncomfortable about its future. Far too many of them, largely confined to the academic institutions, are immersed in teaching, writing research papers and doing other routine work in their areas of speciality, left with no time to think of the discipline in a larger perspective. There has been no conclave, as far as this author knows, to have a close look at the discipline, modify its basic aim and model its content and approach in the light of a contemporary objective, and reposition it as a science that could conform with and respond to the needs of the changing environment and society. In India, and even elsewhere, it is the Cultural or the Human geographers who are *the avant-garde* in the movement for a change. Seemingly bored with incessant exercises on settlement, population, agriculture and other forms of man made landscape, governed by contemporary forces of nature and society, not infrequently encapsulated in statistical determinants, variables and indices, this group of geographers quarrels with the discipline and not with the inadequacy of their understanding of history and culture of the region and society. At best, they examine the

process of change and variety in space through a doctrinaire view of historical materialism. Culture, ethnicity, gender, religion, and history have always remained in the background.

The above statement is, in no way a negation or disapproval of the concern displayed by these geographers, born as it is out of an honest perception of the triviality of the discipline as it is taught in Indian universities. The crucial question is 'how to make geography more responsive to the needs of the society'? There appears, no doubt, a surge of introspection among the honest Indian geographers. This self-criticism relates to the state of the geography in India, its inadequacy as a socially relevant discipline in the Indian context, ignorance among Indian geographers of the contemporary thinking about philosophy, methodology and the orientation of the discipline in the western world, and above all their failure to remedy the situation by redesigning their content and structure, shifting their focus, evaluating the modern philosophical orientation of geographical thought in the Indian context.

In fact, the utilitarian view emphasising social relevance has gripped the attention of most geographers in India claiming to specialise in economic, human and even cultural geography. Luckily, geographers specialising in the natural segment of the subject have not experienced the tyranny of perpetual search for relevance. And the feeling is that if your research is socially not relevant, you have no place in the academia, you had better be a plumber, a difficult yet a more utilitarian trade.

Mukerji (1990) was probably the first to fire the salvo. Writing in 1990 he observes that '*after fifty years of labour, hard work,*

investment of mountains of money, time and energy, Indian geography has practically no place in the society, in academia and in the intellectual world. Whatever be the branch of geography or the theme in it you are referring to in polite conversation, the listener looks at you with askance: Is it geography, or is it also geography?' In recent years many voices of frustration and dissent are heard, some about the way geography is taught, some about the attitude of senior geographers and some outright about politics of patronage in the universities. Ahmed (2002) was very categorical in emphasising that '*the question of social relevance will continue to be central to the very existence of the discipline in the decades to come... Geography in my opinion will be an academic redundancy if its value as a utilitarian discipline is not generally recognised*'. He further adds - '*the primary task before us is to inculcate a sense of social responsibility in our students who come to us in the pursuit of knowledge. The new geographer in the making should spend his/her energies not on trivialities but on the significant social problems which can acquire new meaning, if analysed with the tools of geographical analysis.... The new agenda for geography is to throw a force of dedicated researchers in the field to generate this knowledge and thus help the emancipation of the deprived, the downtrodden and the underprivileged section of our people... Let us minimise the parasitic tendencies which geographical research has acquired in the past and make an instrument of social awakening and tool of social reconstruction.*' Indeed, a very noble idea with lofty objectives! Ahmed's radical pontification, in the garb of a social theorist, almost akin to a political activist is hard to accept as the primary task of a ge-

ographer. His new agenda will require all of us to unlearn all that we have learnt as geographers and be initiated into the art of social awakening. Besides, are we sure, we shall do it better as geographers than what our Marxist friends have been doing all along at the grass roots, giving rise in the process to another class of activists called *Naxalites*? Ahmed is not alone in putting 'Social relevance' as the primary guiding principle of geographical research. Statements like '*Geography can serve the cause of human welfare if its research activities are oriented to social problems at different levels of spatial scale*' (Gosal-92) or Gopalkrisan's conviction that '*Indian geography should be guided by the tenet of social relevance*' (2000)-all place society and its welfare at the core of geographical research. Dayal (1994) advances the same idea in a different form when he says that '*active participation in the solution of problems of national and social concern will strengthen our academic base and enhance our prestige as an academic discipline*'. Chakravorty (1988) is more ironical and talks of the '*prospects (of geography) within the current pattern of our activities being meagre*'. The basic reason behind this proposition, he argues, '*is given by the fact that the common man is threatened in his effort to survive. If he fails, then all our possession of scientific knowledge will also prove inadequate to let us survive*'. Geographers, beware, a doomsday scenario is hanging on us.

The geographers, by and large, have not remained untouched by this apprehension and quite a few of them have taken up research themes, suited to their expertise, that appear of social consequence. These range from pollution, temperature rise and flood

studies, erosion and soil losses and bio-diversity on the physical side, to water conservation, rural and village development, impact analysis of major projects, and urban fringe studies on the social side. There are reasons why these isolated studies don't make much of an impact. These studies are presented as research reports/papers and are only occasionally looked into by the authorities that survey, plan, design and execute the development projects. While the question of social relevance exercises the mind of many geographers, more so if they are involved with the cultural and social aspects of the discipline, they have a frame of reference that occupies only a peripheral position in the scheme of socio-economic development of the society. But more importantly, the evaluation of 'what is socially relevant' is both difficult and evasive.

An important aspect of geographical writings in India is their confinement to micro level studies. Such studies, though important, are usually not noticed by scholars from other disciplines. Geography, as a discipline, suffers from an incapacity to generate fundamental equations that revolutionise scientific thinking. It can produce some generalisation related to society or region that can trigger debate and may lead to rethinking certain issues. These may relate to themes like drought or flood situations, or coastal and river erosion on the physical side, and demographic behaviour, urban growth, or pattern of migration on the human side, to mention a few. Such studies are far and few between. To give a few examples, R. D. Dikshit's '*The Political Geography of Federalism: An Enquiry into Origin and Stability*', or R. Vaidyanadhan's edited volume - '*Quaternary Deltas of India*' (1991). Similarly V.S. Kale's edited

volume on 'Flood Studies in India' (1998), or Swapna Banerjee Guha's 'Spatial Dynamics of International Capital: A study of Multinational Corporations in India' (1997) can be included in the category of broad themes that are relevant to Indian situation and attract the attention of scholars, administrators and the enlightened members of the society. There is a need to write research based books that could form the basis of, or at least be helpful in discussing the policy matters.

Obsession with Geography as a Social Science

Another obsession with many Indian geographers is the inadequate recognition of geography as a social science, as seen in the question posed by Anu Kapur (2004)- '*why is geography in India not recognised by social scientists, in spite of the fact that it is a social science*'. She feels that '. Briefly reviewing the contribution of geography during the colonial period and its comparative presence among social sciences, she speculates that one of the reasons '*to ignore geography among the social sciences could be that its field of study includes the physical realm: land, water, soil, vegetation. In the paradigm of environmentalism, geography could be perceived as a science.....(and) the discipline could be stigmatised as having the nature-human relationship as environmentalism at its core, in contrast to human-human ecology, which is the basic concern of social science. One could add that the common vocabulary of geography is sprinkled with words like region, area, landscape, location and land use, all of which carry a strong fragrance of the physical realm. The straddled position of geography could be the*

(perhaps, a) reason for its being ignored by other social sciences'. *Perhaps in India, there continues the ossified view that geography is the study of places and geographer is primarily an explorer traveller and mapmaker, and is distantly located from the arena of social sciences.* (Kapur-2004:4191) There could be several answers to this question including one speculated by Kapur herself when she poses another question - '*In seclusion of their own, have geographers in India been overtly (or covertly) busy publishing research which could be texts in furtherance of knowledge?*' and then answers- '*not really, geographers are low on stamina in publishing articles or books*'. A very serious indictment indeed! One would not like to comment on this issue, as it requires an objective assessment of Indian geography during the last half a century, which is not the objective of this paper. Kapur, however, discovers a dismal picture of Indian geography after eliciting the views of 25 geographers from different departments across the country, in the '*unanimous agreement that enough good quality geographical research in India was not being produced*' and that '*it is difficult to find Indian geographers who have made a marked impression even regionally, let alone globally on the expansion of ideas, theory and knowledge related to their disciplines*'. Kapur's findings about Indian geographers may have some element of truth, yet apportioning the blame, even partially, on physical geography is reaching too far to find a lame excuse for the disarray and lack of standing of geography as a social science. As she has enumerated there are far too many human geographers in the country, enough in strength, to register their presence and the signature on the template of social science history in India. To my

mind, it is neither the nature and composition, nor the 'ossified view' of geography which is at the core of its eutrophication in the back waters nurturing weeds, and its marginalisation among the social sciences, it is the indisputably the practitioners of the discipline who are either too fragile or too self centred to add to the strength of the discipline by their own contributions. The global scenario is not very different and many human geographers have revived the debate about the exclusion of space from social theory and are trying to enter into the field through postmodernism, evolving a school of postmodern geography.

Let it be clearly stated that with the exception of economics, most social sciences in India are in a state of disarray and survive only in universities. Some are fortunate in having public support through an organisational base, like anthropology and history, the former, a colonial heritage from the early twentieth century when monographs on 'Castes and Tribes of India' were written, and the latter, an organisation that is rewriting Indian history. Geographers don't have neither to envy nor to compete with other social sciences. They can always use methodologies and findings of other disciplines of they appear supportive in our research.

Environmentalism and Geography as a Social Science

Let me add a few words about environmentalism, the imagined *bête noir* of social sciences. Environmentalism is going to remain eternally with the regions and societies of the world. It is not dead as dodo. The philosophical flourish with which it was thrown overboard, as if it was too much of an

unnecessary baggage on a rocking boat, struggling to sail through the choppy waters of 19th and 20th century disciplinary relativism and competition, was unwarranted. Discarding environmentalism in the face of growing technological advance was misconceived. The distribution of oceans and continents and their great mountain chains, plains, plateaus and plains, the atmospheric circulation, role of hydrological cycles, the distribution of water and other natural resources, the disasters like seismic disturbances, floods, or super cyclones like Katrina certainly have an indelible impact on human societies. Those who think or naively believe that society has nothing to do with environmental causation are certainly indulging in the pleasure of a dreamy paradise of social theorising. During the last few decades, there has been the surge of a philosophical doctrine recognised as postmodernism, and human geographers of all hues are only keen to embrace it, in order to assert the importance of space in social theory and establish the legitimacy and the recognition of geography as social science. Space, even though it implies more that geographical space, is a part of environment which needs to be factored in, in all geographical studies. How do geographers carrying the label of a social scientists distinguish themselves as geographers from sociologists or political scientists, if they don't claim acquaintance with environment, which is their forte?. Shorn of any understanding of land, atmosphere or biosphere, they would reduce themselves to be the followers of other discipline without having any standing of their own or without being able to contribute any thing meaningful to the expansion of knowledge or ongoing debate.

It is appropriate quoting the late Prof. Raza who says that '*The science of geography is the only discipline which has the unique capability to combine the two strains into a composite view of the planet earth and an integrated strategy for development*' (Raza- 1989)

Perhaps, another discipline termed Sociography could be introduced to accommodate such geographers who would like to disown their environmental heritage.

Without going into reasons, let us admit that we have not been able to produce quality research to merit attention, yet it should also be remembered, that geography as a social science, despite its primacy over the physical segment of the discipline, is languishing not only in India but all over the world. Even '*within social sciences and humanities, there is presently a tremendous furore over philosophy and method (amounting in many cases) to a collapse of identity*' (Dear-1988). Some geographers even believe that the main cause of stagnation of the discipline and a decline in the standard of teaching and research is the general illiteracy among Indian geographers of the philosophy and methodology of the discipline (R.D. Dikshit-2004), but that is about the discipline as a whole and not only about 'geography as a social science'.

Recent changes in the last few decades

The recent shift in the content and approach to the discipline symbolises the fast pace of change not only in the physical and cultural environment but in the societies all over the world. Technological innovations have shortened and in some sense even eliminated the distance barrier. Economic development is perhaps faster than ever, and the emerg-

ing landscapes in the Third World countries are being unrecognisably transformed. The explanation for postmodern conditions marked by social incoherence and instability, intolerance and inequality of various hues, economic, religious, ethnic etc. among individuals and societies all over the world, is being sought in 'Post Modernism', a philosophy that deconstructs the established grand theories and seeks explanation in individual and group perception and behaviour, local attitudes and initiatives, far beyond the pale of grand theories. The social structure and the living experience of the society, events and interactions and the resulting social unrest, instability and the general social landscape has to be understood by deconstructing the situation and reconstructing it that could lend to an appropriate interpretation. To this author, the 'Post Modernism' derives its inspiration from the world of biological sciences where the DNA unit as the building block of the biological system determines the conduct and behaviour of the individuals and ethnic groups. The analogy drawn between postmodernism and the DNA may appear extraneous, and social scientists may even ridicule this suggestion, but to this author, the metaphor is obvious. The rejection of grand theories as the sole explanation of a complex society has, in the process, produced a multiplicity of social theories and a chaotic situation. This also implies, aptly the examination and assessment of a situation or a phenomenon from a variety of perspectives where odd individual behaviour may be as significant as that of an organised society. As one who claims familiarity with the Indian geographical scene, the application of postmodern approach has not entered the research effort. In fact, many including

the writer of this note are struggling to find out more about its application to geography.

How Relevant are the Social Theories to Indian Geography? –

Opinions may be divided on the question of indispensability of integrating social science theories in geographical explanations. Geography has, by and large, stuck to a positivist approach where verifiability through experimentation and prediction are the norms. Perhaps, this is true to the extent that part of the discipline studies the natural systems. The cultural geography segment of the discipline, however, based on the living experience of the individuals and the societies, has to take into account psychology and human motivation which cannot be easily subjected to a positivist approach. The social sciences thus resort to social theory *'dealing with social, political and cultural tendencies and characteristics in real societies. Social theory is particularly important as a combination of storage and bridging device, storing the summarised results of work in one area in the form of ideas that can be transferred across theoretical bridges to other fields. Increasingly, it allows the formation of general social theory developed for its own sake. What used to be separate disciplines, like geography, become dedicated to furthering social theory interests and causes rather than their own disciplinary ends. Increasingly, scholars are social theorists with disciplinary specializations, rather than disciplinary specialists with social theory inclinations.... The growth of a generalised social theory rather than a set of separate disciplines is an exciting development of the last few decades'* (Peet-1998). Strangely, *'social theory is almost always leftist in style'*.

In the context of Indian geography, marked by an overwhelming emphasis on social relevance, how far the integration of social theory or one of its offshoots in the discipline of geography or vice versa is justified. A theory might provide a philosophical anchor as it is related to epistemological accuracy and may have very little to do with geography's direct contribution to the society. Yet, many following Dikshit believe that *'the most essential step in recreating Indian geography is to open up the intellectual horizon of our students through a sound programme of training in the discipline's philosophy and methodology, as it has evolved over the past fifty years'* and further that *'only a thorough grounding in the methodology of the subject can help to awaken students' consciousness about the status of geography as a socially useful discipline'* (R. D. Dikshit- 2001). Similarly, Ahmed though vouching for social relevance of geography and deeply committed to its utilitarian value doesn't escape the temptation of looking into the entry of postmodernism in geography. His opposition to postmodernism is obvious as he observes that: *'Luckily, so far we are concerned, post modernity is miles away and many among us may be unconcerned about epistemological implications. But that may be unrealistic as the implications are dangerous both at the philosophical plane as well as in practical terms'* (Ahmad-2002:372). Quoting Livingstone and D. Harvey he shows how chaotic the situation is, yet he finds merit in tracing the history of exclusion of geography from social theory which has been dominated by historical materialism. Both, R.D. Dikshit (2001) and Ahmad (2002) find Soja's explanation convincing and both quote from Soja to demonstrate that- *'the growing subordination of*

the spatiality of social life as a generative source of social theorizing and the associated tendency toward an historicism of theoretical consciousness was so complete by the end of the period that it was to remain unseen and unquestioned for almost half a century afterwards. Historicism in various forms became the epistemological centrepiece for most of the newly formed social sciences (especially in their more liberal or critical variants) and in the modified Marxism which was also consolidated and codified at the same time. In the wake of these two opposing modern movements, modern geography as it took shape was squeezed out of the competitive battle ground of theory construction and the attempt to make sense of the dramatic changes affecting then contemporary society and social life' (Soja-1999:324).

It seems the justification for embracing postmodernism as a contemporary idiom in geography is to find the discipline an inalienable place in social theory by virtue of its spatiality component.

Making geography and an exciting and meaningful subject

The present author doesn't believe that there is a need to redefine geography. To me it appears that no other discipline has examined and scrutinised itself as much and as often as geography. But despite the churning, we end up with: '*Le plus ça change, le plus c'est la même chose*'.

There are hundreds of articles in the pages of geographical journals, and scores of books, edited and written, that examine the validity and state of geography from different perspectives. Besides Hettner, Hartshorne, James and Dickinson, till the

fifties, Hagget, Chorley and Johnston and Stoddart defined and added new perspective to geography in the seventies and eighties of the last century. Some of the books, not to include papers, include- Hagget et al., *Models in Geography*, R. Hagget (1980); *Systems Analysis in Geography*; R. J. Johnston (1991), *A Question of Place - The Challenge of Geography*, 1993; R. J. Chorley, (ed.-1973) *Directions in Geography*; Johnston (ed-1985) *The Future of Geography*; Johnston (1991) *Geography and Geographers*; Massey and Allens (ed-1984) *Geography Matters*; B. Macmillan, (ed-1989) *Remodelling Geography*; Kobayashi & Macmillan (ed-1989) *Remaking Human Geography*, J. R. Wolch, (ed-1989) *The Power of Geography*. The crop of geographers who talk of philosophy and grapple with capitalism or anti-capitalism, structuralism and post-modernism include people like David Harvey (*Social Justice and the City*, 1973, *Limits to Capital*, 1982, *The Urbanization of Capital*, 1985; *Consciousness and Urban Experience*, 1985, *Justice, Nature and Geography of Difference*, 1996 and many others), E. Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, 1989, and finally Richard Peet (1998) *Modern Geographical Thought*. The contents of this much celebrated and publicised book by Peet will beat the imagination of many traditional geographers. One has to go into the philosophy of existentialism, structuralism or post structuralism and study Claude Levi-Strauss and J. P. Sartre to understand these concepts. Peet has established a link –to my mind too tenuous– between these philosophical concepts and geography. He has taken seven years to write this book, and as the blurb says- 'The book will be central to courses in geographical thought and the history of geographical

thought, and as part of virtually all courses in human geography which entails philosophy and theory.' And 'after spending time with the book, the reader should be able to tackle virtually any philosophical theme in contemporary geographical thought'. In fact, each of these philosophical concepts, like existentialism or structuralism, can engage one for years and to get a grasp of these concepts as part of a course in human geography is like a geographer turning a philosopher. Only a few, indeed a very few, with a gift for philosophical theorising in the context of geography would be able to specialise in this field with a hope that it will further the contribution of geography to humanity or help understand geographical reality better. It may be exciting to fly into the firmament of ethereal heights through philosophical concepts, but geographers need to be firmly rooted to the ground.

Mention must be made here of M. Dear and Steven Flusty (2002) edited volume- '*Spaces of Postmodernity: Readings in Human Geography*', a book that covers not only a pre-postmodern phase of human geography, but even what he calls the altered spaces of postmodernity. The authors have written the last chapter of the book with great dexterity, and title it 'INCONCLUSION: A conversation'. They cover practically most of the questions that are raised about postmodern geography, with an imagery derived from '*The Hunting of A Snark*' by Lewis Carroll (1676). To be fair to Dear, he always isolates human geography as the subject matter of postmodern geography, leaving the physical geography alone, as he argues the case of a social theory as space its guiding force.

Have all these new creations helped geography attain a higher status in the disci-

plinary hierarchy, made the subject socially more relevant or enhanced its value as a utilitarian discipline. The answer, sought through the familiar terrain of Indian geography is plainly NO. Yet, it is quite fashionable to talk of these concepts in the seminars without their implications and usefulness being clear.

One wonders how many of us will be able to read through these texts to feel the trend in geographical theorising, as a social science. One thing is for certain, much of this 'Modern or Postmodern Geographical Thought' is being debated within the framework of social sciences - theories related to Society, not so much Man - and the man made environment, the socio-economic landscape. But a more vital question is - does an understanding of postmodernism or poststructuralism, helps our cause of defining geography in the Indian context. Even those who survey the latest literature don't seem to be convinced of the either the validity or application of such theories. Here are some revealing excerpts from the '*Modern Geographical Thought*' (R. Peet, 1998:226):

'There is a tendency for postmodern geographers to subject famous authors to endless readings, often through other authors ... At its best, postmodern geography consists of fragments, flashes of insight into space and environment, or rather their representations simulated by experiences almost exclusively in the postmodern world.... At its worst, postmodern geography is a kind of selfish privileged self gratification, displayed in essays which meander between personal idiosyncrasy and lazy bits of research, mainly reading books through other works'.

One may turn around and ask - doesn't the same assessment apply to other philosophical thoughts which are intruding into the domain of geography. Indian geographers, to my mind, don't have to break their heads to enter into the domain of 'Social Theory Making' unless they have the real inclination for it. We should, to quote Stoddart, '*Do some real geography*' (Stoddart- 1986-x). Most modern geography is a hybrid of continental philosophical thought and Anglo-Saxon approach to problems of human geography. There is not much participation of geographers from Europe including Russia, China, Japan, let alone India and other countries of the third world.

Should geographers be overtly concerned about finding a respectable place for geography among social sciences?

Many in Indian geography think of geography purely as a social science. This tendency has arisen either out of the inadequacy of rigorous training in the discipline. It needs hardly be pointed that even as a social science geography represents space as a canvas, as a determinant in several, if not all, aspects of social activities which are strongly influenced by place/region/area and its distinctive character. Human, economic and cultural geographies, if studied with a penetrating analysis should suitably fill the bill. An incisive cultural study should attract the attention of social scientists to the extent they use the findings of geography. It is not geographers who should seek recognition; it should be the other way round where a social scientist should be proud to travel with a geographer.

What is real geography?

While tradition, continuity and heritage are important, one can ignore the contemporary reality of the fast changing world at one's own peril. How to incorporate our response to the changing world, with technological revolution, changing society and the process of globalisation through or in geography? One can think of broad parameters that would see geography anchored to the ground, earth, space, area and region with all their complexities. Let it be unhesitatingly stated that a study of the society, economy or man in non-spatial context may also be a good piece of research, and can add an additional value to geography but it cannot be classed a geographical writing.

The components of geography can most conveniently be grouped into: A. Subject matter, B. Tools and Techniques. In the former one would like to include 1. Natural Environment, 2. Man-made Environment, 3. Region and 4. Society, and in the latter category are included all the methods, techniques and tools that help our understanding of the variety of landscapes, - physical, cultural, economic and social. This is not very different from what we have been doing traditionally; the difference will be just in the emphasis. These broad divisions could also be labelled as Physical Geography, Human or Cultural Geography, Regional Geography and Society and its spatial attributes

There is no controversy about physical environment that may cover much of the traditional bio-physical geography, and cultural geography could extend to any attribute of society like religion, customs, art and recreation. The controversy or some times intentional indifference centres around Re-

gional Studies. The study of Man or Society insofar as it is anchored in the earth and its regions forms the core of geography, but as a geographer I would not dispute the claim of theorists amongst us who revel in reading Foucault, Soja and Harvey and understand or keep theorising about the changes in a society and the forces that govern it. But this, in no way, can or should deviate a professional geographer from studying the diversity on the globe.

A brief for regional study

It would be appropriate to preface my brief for regional study with a most quoted and most quotable quote from Hartshorne - '*He who does not understand regional geography is no true geographer. While regional geography alone, without systematic geography, is incomplete, it remains geography; systematic geography without regional geography cannot fulfil the full function of geography and easily falls out of geography*' (Hartshorne-1939:459) This aspect of geography that once provided the sole *raison d'être* in the early days of the discipline is not only neglected but even contemptuously marginalised. This needs to be revived and invigorated. There has been a renaissance of regional research, though the regional geography of the 21st century may be different from the traditional one. It is a pity that in a vast country like India, there is not enough appreciation of regional studies and the geographers often betray their ignorance when the occasion arises to understand the regional problems. To emphasise my point of view, I take a leaf from R. F. Abler, once a Professor at Pennsylvania and the Executive Director of Association of American Geographers. His lament - '*My generation*

commonly cultivated one or two topical specialism. We were uninterested in fostering regional specialization..... Can this prodigal discipline now go home, regain its patrimony and partake of a regional calf fattening on a world that is growing more complicated every month? I believe, it will'. (Abler -1993)

The indifference displayed by geographers, born necessarily out of his inability to indulge in the creative art of writing regional geography, has led to its being high jacked by other disciplines often in the garb of Area Study. Regardless of what regional planning requires and the difficulties experienced in regionalisation exercises, a regional study is a necessity as it offers a multidimensional acquaintance with the region; where response to environmental situation, and the initiative to overcome the difficulties offer the best of opportunities to the society to create its own environment reflected in its history, culture and the contemporary attitudes. One has only to look at the administrative map of India to realise the multiplicity of problems that the country has or the prospects it offers. Let every geographer in India ask himself or herself how well is he/she acquainted with the regional realities before theorising or generalising on any aspect of Indian culture history or economy. He would be far better prepared to analyse the situation and provide answers if he is acquainted with the regional landscape and realities.

Regional study is the core of the discipline, the craft of a geographer, and that is what brings to the fore, the reality of landscape and the diversities of the earth. In the current geopolitical situation, region specific studies provide the basic background to work towards problem solving.

No more geography - non-geography Debate

The geography – non- geography debate has always proved sterile and generated uncalled for rancour. At the same time one would not like some kind of anarchy to take hold of our discipline. The author recalls an incident while delivering a talk on ‘Territorial Organisation in Ancient India’. The audience consisted of students and teachers of geography. There were hardly any questions after the talk, but the chairman, a former professor of geography, remarked from his privileged position of the chair, that what I talked was not geography and that explains why there are no questions. While I wondered at my stupidity, the situation was saved by the observation of an economist among the audience, (and as I later learnt) the chairman of the Foundation that invited me to deliver the lecture, who found the lecture well researched and very interesting. I narrate this incident to emphasise that a blinkered view of the discipline as ‘what is not taught in the classroom and does not figure in the text books’ is not geography, is, to say the least, not congenial to the health of geography or for that matter any other discipline. Social sciences have a point of convergence, i.e. society, individuals, structures, events, behaviour etc. And these aspects can be approached from any perspective. A dedicated enterprise to understand reality even from a non-geographic perspective has to be respected. Such an approach has to be seen in the light of the seriousness of purpose and the achievement of the individual. While one talks of techniques, tools or approach in geography, there would be some convergence of purpose.

The study of the same subject could evoke different approaches. A tribal group

studied by a geographer, an anthropologist, an economist or a sociologist could produce equally valid and admirable results, and its inclusion in a single domain may deprive it of several perspectives. This is ‘the geography and the rest is all trash’ is a short sighted approach. What is more appropriate is the priority for a specific task and purpose.

The geography – non-geography debate would lead us nowhere. There should be more debate on the spirit, purpose, content, approach and methodology of the subject, relevant to the Indian context. So long we have a purpose in doing the kind of geography we are doing, it is academically acceptable. Dedication is important. Let it be clearly understood that geography is neither mathematics nor physics, the subject requires description and interpretation and the findings of a geographer cannot be put in some mathematical equation that could revolutionise our thinking.

Where do we go from here?

In the contemporary Indian situation one finds a deep feeling of concern, and even frustration, among Indian geographers. Firstly, there is a feeling that Indian geographers are not well informed about what is being talked and researched at the global level. This, though a deficiency, is not so serious as to need immediate rectification. Even in teaching, as R. D. Dikshit, believes, ‘*there is all round illiteracy in the post-1970 developments in geographical theory*’ (Dikshit-2001:14). This may be the fact, but to my mind not very detrimental to the growth of research in the discipline. Geographical research, except in few cases, indeed a very few, are not contingent upon the findings of earlier researchers. What is im-

portant to be informed about the research findings in the area of one's research. There is a view that there is too much teaching of diverse branches of geography even at the post graduate level, without acquainting the student about the theme he is interested in for his research. This brings the question of what one might call thematic geography, different from the usual systematic geography. So, by the time, a gifted student gets his master's degree, he knows the theme on which he is going to work for a decade or so.

Thematic geography

Could it be a Prescription for Social Relevance? For want of a very meaningful term, I introduce the term 'thematic geography' which implies that a student will study all aspects of a specific theme which could be related to environment, the resources and their utilisation, society, its structure, organisation or functioning or any other aspect of society or nature. This can be better defined by giving examples. Take the case of geomorphology, a branch of physical geography which is taught almost as a basic course in the universities. While this branch is already divided into a number of sub-branches like tectonic, fluvial, coastal, based on the processes, or even tropical or arid geomorphology, representing study of zonal forms, its usefulness is hardly realised. Similarly, climatology as a branch may have several sub-branches, like general climatology, synoptic climatology or agricultural climatology. But rainfall as a theme could examine all its attributes such as distribution, amount, intensity, duration, seasonality, variability, short and long term changes and the consequences of each of these includ-

ing its impact on the availability of water resources, occurrence of drought etc. Urban geography, another branch which is taught in almost all universities, has a fixed structure of its content that do not say much about the merits of urbanisation and the problems of urbanism. In the developing countries, large cities pose special problem, related to their rapid growth, housing, transport, health, water supply, development of slums, and provision of other urban amenities. Each one of these problems could be a theme for a specialised study. All aspects of slums in large cities, water supply in Indian cities, intra urban transport, and many such problems related to cities could be studied comprehensively to seek solution for such problems. Urban studies could be broken into several thematic components related to some of the problems mentioned above. There could be a comprehensive study that could produce a theory of urban growth or urban slums in Indian cities leading to the measures that could be taken to discourage their growth. Land could be another theme which could be studied in entirety. Today it is split in geomorphology, soil geography, land utilisation, and agriculture or urban land use. Similarly, a theme like 'water' is studied theoretically as precipitation in climatology, water balance in agricultural climatology, irrigation in agriculture and crop ecology, hydrodynamics in power generation, and urban water supply in urban planning, and in certain other areas. Nowhere, to my knowledge, water is taught as a separate theme from the point of view of human value and utility. The systematic disciplines have to be redesigned to impart some expertise to geographers that could see the problems related to the society. There was, and still there is, raging a debate on large versus small

dams. There could be a thematic study of different forms of water storages, their history and contemporary situation discussing the utility of different kinds of storage for various purposes at various locations. These examples are indicative and not exhaustive, but I would like to believe that I have made my suggestions clear to the readers. Geography, as often repeated, gives geographers a holistic view; they can use it in understanding many of the socio-economical problems theoretically. Even for those who advocate that the geographers should participate in policy formulation in areas of their expertise, a theme oriented approach could make them much better advocates of their views in matters of policy.

This suggestion, in no way, means to discourage the pursuit of geographical theories. Those who have the inclination, and believe they are gifted, may enter into the field of philosophical theories. It appears, theory building in social sciences does not quite follow the positivist approach as in natural sciences, and could at best partially take resort to logical positivism, but even to know the existing schools and views in philosophy requires patience and boundless time. The human, economic and cultural geographies lend excellently to certain generalisations, since the processes involved are in response to natural and man made environment. Besides, the enterprise of seeking a generalisation is quite fascinating and this should be the focus of geographical research. Yet, if immediate social relevance is to be given priority, a thematic approach may be the answer.

Scepticism about Techniques and Tools: Not infrequently, one comes across geographers who believe that a knowledge of techniques is a peripheral exercise. This attitude

not only leads to a situation of ignorance of the contemporary development but deprives one of the benefits of these techniques. Techniques and tools are important as much as the philosophy and methodology of the discipline. A familiarity with simple traditional maps to the use of Geographical Information System and their uses could help us judiciously opt for their application in our studies, wherever the need arose

The latest weapon in the arsenal of geographers is the remotely sensed geographical information system aided with variety of software, both analytical and cartographic. This tool has a wide reach; it is used not only by geographers but many other disciplines and has, no doubt, simplified the work of many scientists, managers and bureaucrats. All these novel approaches, some short and some long lived, don't add up to a paradigm, nor they represent the spirit of geography. As spectroscopy and electron microscopy, both very important tools in the field of physics are by themselves not physics; all novel approaches, tools and even offshoots of the discipline by themselves don't represent the spirit of geography. This is not to underestimate or undermine the importance of available tools, but to emphasise the fact that tools are meant for a specific purpose, and the efficacy of the tool would be realised only if the purpose is kept constantly in view. GIS (Geographic Information System), I believe, is the most potent medium that the scientists have acquired, and some may acquire expertise in the use of these tools, but we remain anchored to the earth with its splendour of variety in environment, human activity and the physical, social and economic landscape, nature and man have produced together.

To conclude, one might say that an urgent task before Indian geography is to find ways to make it socially more relevant. For this, Indian geographers, particularly human geographers, don't have to be anxious to tread the path followed by their distinguished colleagues in the USA, Europe, Africa, Australia or China. Each region has its own socio-economic or political problems and there cannot be a uniform for all the regions endowed with varying natural and human resources and varying forms of political set up.

Indian geography could establish its own paradigm and priority in research and teaching of geography. Let the Indian geographers contemplate on it.

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