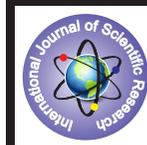


Application of Geographical Studies and Historiography



History

KEYWORDS :

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ABSTRACT

"...geography is by nature the constant companion of historical studies; it is hardly possible to grasp the one without the other."

An attempt is made in this paper to assess and examine the perspectives and problems in applying Geography or the study of Geographical data in interpreting socio, cultural, economic and political history. Historiography is the history of writing history. History, from Greek 'historia' means, inquiry, knowledge acquired by investigation. Geography from Greek geographia, means "earth description is the branch of knowledge that studies the lands, the features, the inhabitants, and the phenomena of the Earth.

History is not names and dates, its stories about people and groups of people a great deal of history is often described in terms of conflicts between these groups and the impact that individuals had on those conflicts. One of the ways people have defined themselves throughout history is their geographic location, which sets boundaries such as rivers, mountains and seas to define who those people are.

Application of scientific methods is only to make the study more precise, effective, logical and objective. Hence the historian has to test and establish the validity of his sources, secondly he has to logically interpret them and thirdly he has to derive generalisations.

"...geography is by nature the constant companion of historical studies; it is hardly possible to grasp the one without the other."¹

"The historical record is inextricably linked to the geographic setting in which it developed."²

"History is concerned with understanding the temporal dimension of human experience (time and chronology). Geography is concerned with understanding the spatial dimension of human experience (space and place)."³

"Key concepts of geography, such as location, place, and region are tied inseparably to major ideas of history such as time, period, and events. Geography and history in tandem enable learners to understand how events and places have affected each other across time..."⁴

The application of studies in Geography as a device or a tool in historiography or historical studies for attaining precision and perfection is possible in the light of the above quotes? An attempt is made here to assess and examine the perspectives and problems in applying Geography or the study of Geographical data in interpreting socio, cultural, economic and political history.

Historiography is the history of writing history. History, from Greek 'historia' means, inquiry, knowledge acquired by investigation.⁵ It is an umbrella term that relates to past events as well as the discovery, collection, organisation and presentation of information about these events. History can also refer to the academic discipline which uses a narrative to examine and analyse a sequence of past events and objectively determine the patterns of cause and effect that determine them.⁶ Historians sometimes debate the nature of history and its usefulness by discussing the study of the discipline as an end itself and as a way of providing "perspective" on the problems of the present.⁷ It is a discipline of principles and methods of writing history. In re-

constructing a past event, historians decide and discuss certain themes such as economic history, political history, military history, social history and cultural history. They evaluate historical sources, the evidences available, which circumstances were important, which causes produced which effects? Thus, it is clear that History is the study of the past or study of the past events or the study of what happened in the past. Thus Colling Wood has rightly observed that "Historical thinking is that activity of imagination by which we endeavour to provide this innate idea with detail content. And by this we do by using the present as the evidence of its own past. Every present has a past of its own and any imaginative reconstruction of the past aim at reconstructing of the past of this present. Every new generation must rewrite history of its own way"⁸

It is not out of context to say that in Indian Historiography a revolutionary change occurred due to D.D.Kosambi's effect. His Historical materialism based on Dialectical materialism of Karl Marx changed the very face of Historical writings in India. Kosambi can be considered the patriarch of the Marxist school of Indian Historiography.⁹ However; Historical writing is ever a contentious business.

Geography from Greek geographia, means "earth description"¹⁰ is the branch of knowledge that studies the lands, the features, the inhabitants, and the phenomena of the Earth.¹¹ A literal translation would be "to describe or write about the Earth". Four historical traditions in geographical research are spatial analysis of the natural and the human phenomena (geography as the study of distribution), area studies (places and regions), study of the man-land relationship, and research in the Earth sciences.¹² Nonetheless, modern geography is an all-encompassing discipline that foremost seeks to understand the Earth and all of its human and natural complexities - not merely where objects are, but how they have changed and come to be. Geography has been called "the world discipline" and "the bridge between the human and the physical science". Geography is divided into two main branches: human geography and physical geography.¹³

History is not names and dates, its stories about people and groups of people a great deal of history is often described in terms of conflicts between these groups and the impact that individuals had on those conflicts. One of the ways people have defined themselves throughout history is their geographic location, which sets boundaries such as rivers, mountains and seas to define who those people are. Before the advent of ships, the potential effect a given group of people could assert on another group was limited to their neighbours. Shipping extended this range via rivers and coastlines, and eventually trans-oceanic interaction.

Another way that geography has affected our history is straightforward. If you want to build a city, or even a village, you have to have access to clean water, meaning that virtually every city on the planet started out on a water source. Another major point is defensibility. Certain geographies make it easier to defend your holdings against hostile forces. Even with the advent of aircraft and intercontinental ballistic missiles, geography remains important because it can effect weather patterns and limit the range of effect that a given country can have on another. In

short, geography has been a constant effect throughout history because it defines the limitation of the effect one group could or can have had on another.

Geography is the study of Earth's landscapes, peoples, places and environments. It is, quite simply, about the world in which we live. Geography is unique in bridging the social sciences (human geography) with the natural sciences (physical geography). Human geography concerns the understanding of the dynamics of cultures, societies and economies, and physical geography concerns the understanding of the dynamics of physical landscapes and the environment.

Geography puts this understanding of social and physical processes within the context of places and regions - recognising the great differences in cultures, political systems, economies, landscapes and environments across the world, and the links between them. Understanding the causes of differences and inequalities between places and social groups underlie much of the newer developments in human geography. Geography provides an ideal framework for relating other fields of knowledge. Geography is, in the broadest sense, an education for life and for living. The relationship between history and geography is especially close because they represent two fundamental dimensions of the same phenomenon. History views human experience from the perspective of time, geography from the perspective of space. These dimensions of time and space are locked in a symbiotic dance, a perpetual interactive feedback loop in which one dimension is constantly affecting the other.¹⁴

Thus, it can be said that history and geography mutually influence each other. In other words, History without Geography is incomplete, and cannot be explained in terms of spatial developments. That is why; the study of geography helps us to understand the history of human impacts on nature and the interactions between human and nature (Ecology). The term 'nature' and 'environment' are largely seen as being synonymous. In traditional, pre industrial societies, generally, the natural en-

vironment is described as comprising of elements such as the landscape, rivers, climate and weather, animals and plants.

People have been the prime movers in history. The mankind has adopted itself to the changing environmental conditions corresponding to different regions since prehistorically past. The journey from the hunter-gatherers to modern man has followed an evolutionary pattern.

It is an attempt to put in concrete terms what remains as a series of abstract ideas. In fact, a historian, who was not convinced of the amount of precision available in historical studies, wants history should also make maximum use of the exploding scientific knowledge. However history is a study in which abstract ideas cannot be studied in concrete terms. It cannot construct models out of rigorously constructed concepts into which data is fed.

But what is needed in this process is accurate data, which can provide reasonably accurate knowledge of occupational and cultural groups, the social structure of community and population mobility. It is viewed that it can be a highly useful method of getting at the grass roots and seeing the hitherto unsuspected patterns at the mass level, when adequate data are available. With the recent explosion of computer analysis, usage and domain of these devices have greatly extended.

Conclusion

However, what needs of a scholar employing geographical devices and techniques in historical research should be very careful in handling of the data, cautious progress, and drawing conclusions. Application of scientific methods is only to make the study more precise, effective, logical and objective. Hence, the historian has to test and establish the validity of his sources,

i.e. geographical features and affects, secondly he has to logically interpret them and thirdly he has to derive generalisations.

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