**Geographers’ Approach to Environmental Studies**

Environmental study is a broad branch of science that tries to cover all the occurrences of the environment under one canopy. Geographers' approach to environment i.e. more specifically man-environment relationship can be perceived and evaluated in a variety of ways. Such as:

1. Environmental deterministic approach
2. Teleological Approach
3. Possibilistic Approach
4. Economic deterministic approach
5. Ecological approach
6. Geographical approach

**ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINISTIC APPROACH**

* Basic tenet: Earth made man
* Man is a sub-ordinate to natural environment as all aspect of human life viz. physical, social, economic, political, ethical and aesthetic etc. not only depend but are dominantly controlled by physical environment.
* Greek and Roman scholars were the first to explain the physical features and character traits of various people and their culture with reference to the natural conditions.
* Aristotle explained the differences between Northern Europeans and Asians in terms of climatic causes. Similarly, Strabo attempted to explain how slope, relief, climate all were the works of God and how these phenomena goverened the life style of people.
* Arab geographers divided the world into seven ‘kishwars’ or terrestrial zones and highlighted the physical and cultural characteristics of races and nations of these zones. Some of the Arab contributors were Al-Battani, Al-Masudi, Al-Idrisi, Ibn-Khaldun.
* The origin of scientific determinism rise through the publication of ‘The Origin of Species’ by Charles Darwin in 1859.
* The founder of ‘new’ determinism was Friedrich Ratzel who gave the theory of ‘Social Darwinism’ in which the state is considered as an organism.

**POSSIBILISTIC APPROACH**

* Basic tenets: man as an active rather than a passive agent
* This approach asserts that natural environment provided options the number of which increases as the knowledge and technology of a cultural group develop.
* The possibilists show that society interposes practices, beliefs and rule of life between nature and man.
* Possibilistic approach is associated with French school of Geography and became very popular after first world war.
* This approach was founded by Vidal de La Blache. The historian Lucein Febvre and H.J.Fleure were also influenced by this philosophy. H.J.Fleure tried to formulate world regions based on human characteristics rather than the biotic regions.
* This approach was criticized by many contemporary thinkers like Griffith Taylor.

**TELEOLOGICAL APPROACH**

* Basic tenets: nature inherently tend towards definite ends, A thing, process or action is teleological when it is for the sake of an end, i.e. a *telos* or final cause
* Based on religious faith that man being superior to nature and all other creatures
* This approach to man-environment relationship led to excessive and rapid rate of exploitation of natural resources in North America and Western Europe as well as in other parts of the world which were their colonies
* This approach of man towards nature stimulated Europeans to spread all over the world in search of unexplored land and resources
* After 1750 there began a race for rapacious exploitation of natural resources and widespread industrialization in Europe and America
* This process continued for the last three centuries
* A host of scientists and environmentalists have held this religious tradition responsible for present day ecological crisis

**ECONOMIC DETERMINISTIC APPROACH**

* Based on the ideology of the man’s mastery over the environment and continued economic and industrial expansion through the application of modern technology
* This approach is based on two fallacious assumptions:

1. Positive correlation between population of a given region and level of economic development and activity in that region and

b) The interaction of people, resources and society being governed by universal economic principal

* This approach led to rapacious exploitation of natural resources in the western developed countries and thus created most of the environmental and ecological problems of global dimensions.

**ECOLOGICAL APPROACH**

* Basic tenet: man is considered as an integral part of environment
* This approach is based on the basic principal of ecology which is the mutual study of man and nature. According to C.C. Park, ‘the relationship of man with natural environment should be symbiotic and not exploitative nor suppressive.
* This approach lays emphasis on wise and restrained use of natural resources, application of appropriate environmental management programme, policies and strategies keeping in view the ecological principal so that already depleted natural resources are replenished (whenever possible), degraded environment is set right and ecological balance is maintained.
* It lays emphasis on rational exploitation of resources and optimum utilization through recycling of resources.

**GEOGRAPHICAL APPROACH**

* Basic tenets: geographic science supported by GIS can be used to understand our world and applying geographic knowledge to solve problems and guide human behaviour.
* This science provides human with awareness of what is going on, prediction of what may happen, and systematic information for planning and decision making
* Geography helps us better understanding of spatial phenomena and their interrelationship e.g. the relationship between landuse change, surficial hydrology, flooding, biodiversity etc.