

CONCEPT AND CLASSIFICATION OF REGION

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Region

In the concluding part of the 19th century, the French geographers like Vidal de Lablache called the areas of similar physical and cultural characteristics as pays. A more comprehensive and widely acceptable definition of region can be given as “an area having the homogeneity of the physical and cultural phenomena”. It has also been defined as “an area that is differentiated from other areas according to the specified criteria”.

- Herbertson (1905) was the first to divide the earth into major natural regions on the basis of climatic parameters and thus having some links with the determinism. On the smaller scale, geographers attempted to identify individual areas with particular characteristics.

- The fundamental idea behind the small geographic regions was to show some distinct individuality, if not necessarily entire homogeneity through a study of all its geographical features, i.e. structure, climate, soils, vegetation, agriculture mineral and industrial resources, settlement and distribution of population.

- Some of his work, exemplified by Herbertson's (1905), was the precursor of the concept of ecosystem.

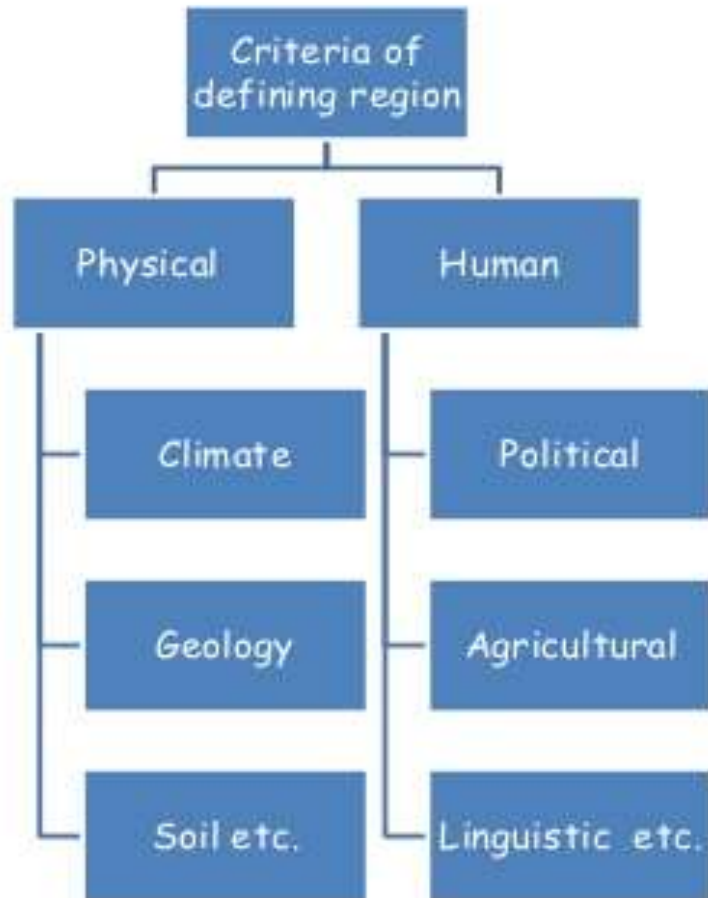
- The basic objective of the discipline of geography is to provide accurate, orderly, and rational description and interpretation of the variable character of the earth surface (Hartshorne in *Perspective on Nature of Geography*, 1959). In fact, the geographer's main concern is how things are distributed over the surface of the earth, how physical and cultural features of areas are alike or different from place to place, how the varying content of different places came about, and what all these differences and similarities mean for people.

- Thus, region is a device of area generalization. It has also been defined as “a differentiated segment of earth surface” (Whittlesey, 1929). The generalization of the features of the earth surface is to make the infinitely varying world around us understandable through spatial (regional) summaries. It is, however, difficult to divide the earth surface into neat regions of uniformity.

- Although as many possible regions exist as there are physical (topography, relief, climate, soils, natural vegetation, minerals, etc.), cultural (religion, language, population, agriculture, industries) or organizational (socio-economic institutions) phenomena.

Defining Region

A region is an area of Earth's surface with physical and human characteristics that distinguish it from other regions.



Definition of Region

What is a region

- A region is an area of land with a unique character that makes it different from other areas. The criteria that distinguish regions are natural/ physical attributes and human environment.
- Regions are complex and often blend into one another, with their borders sharing common characteristics and changing over time.



What is a “Region” ?

- **an area with certain characteristics**, often- mere size, by virtue of which it is adopted as a suitable unit for some particular purpose of business and administration.
- It is also **an area which is homogeneous in respect of some particular set of associated conditions**, whether of the land or of the people, such as industry, farming, distribution of population, commerce, or the general sphere of influence of a city.
- A region in general terms is envisaged as a natural unit, in contrast to the artificial unit created for administrative purposes.

Two basic approach

- Subjective view
- Objective view

Regional classification #1

Objective View

Region as an end itself – natural & absolute entity

Linked with space & has spatial dimension
(e.g. fishing villages, Light & Medium Industries area)

Also known as “formal region”

Favoured by geographers and general public

Problem: in determining the boundaries

Example: Herbertson’s way of regional classification

Herbertson's work

- A pioneer in essaying a classification of natural environment
- Divided the world into natural regions (6 types)
- Read: *Sum, Kong-Sut (n.d) Andrew John Herbertson (1865 – 1915) and the Natural Regions*

Herbertson's classification (examples)

Polar Regions

- Highlands (ice-cap)
- Lowlands (tundra type)

Warm temperate region

- Eastern margin with summer rain (China)
- Plateaus (Iran)
- Western margin with winter rain (Mediterranean type)

Hot Region

- West tropical deserts (Sahara type)
- East tropical lands (Monsoon type)
- Interior tropical tablelands (Sudan type)

Regional classification #2

Subjective View

Mental construct (spaceless)

arbitrarily dividing it into as many region as needs be – independent of the considerations of space

Region defined based on particular criteria for particular purpose (i.e. used as descriptive tool)

Favoured by economist – engaged in the formulation of regional growth theory

Attributes of Region:

- **(i) Regions have location:**
- **(ii) Regions have spatial extent:**
- **(iii) Regions have boundaries:**
- **(iv) Regions may be either formal or functional:**
- **(v) Regions are hierarchically arranged:**
- **(vi) Regions have transitional boundaries:**

(i) Regions have location:

All region—physical or cultural—are often expressed in the regional name such as the Middle East, the South-East Asia, the North-West Europe, the Far East, etc.

(ii) Regions have spatial extent:

- The homogeneous physical and cultural attributes of the earth surface have spatial (areal) extent. For example, the Thar Desert, the Sahara Desert, the Latin America and Anglo-America cover certain areas of the earth surface. Thus, regions are not in abeyance; they have a personality on the ground.

(iii) Regions have boundaries:

- Each region—physical or cultural—has a boundary. The boundary of a region is drawn at the outer edge where the phenomenon (feature) no longer occurs or dominates. For example, where the Himalayas and the Siwaliks end, the Indo-Gangetic plains begin, and where the Gangetic plains end, the Deccan plateau begins. Similar may be the case of the language regions in India. There is a line of demarcation between the Telugu, Tamil and Malayalam regions in India. Similarly, we find the tribal and non-tribal regions in the different states of India. Likewise, at some defined point, urban is replaced by rural, or the rain forest ceases and the savanna emerges. Regions boundaries, are however, not like the walled medieval city,

(iv) Regions may be either formal or functional:

- Formal regions are areas of essentially uniformity throughout in one or limited combination of physical or cultural features. The equatorial region, the monsoon region, the Sahel region (Africa), the Tundra region, the mountainous region are the examples of formal physical regions. Similarly, we may observe the homogeneity of language, religion, ethnicity and lifestyle in certain areas. Such regions are known as the formal cultural regions. Whatever the basis of its definition, the formal region is the largest area over which a valid generalization of attribute uniformity may be made. Whatever is stated about one part of the region holds true for its other parts also. Up to 1960, most of the regions demarcated by geographers used to be formal regions. Functional region, in contrast, is a spatial system defined by the interactions and connections that give it a dynamic, organizational basis. Its boundaries remain constant only as long as the interchanges establishing it remain unaltered. 'City region' may be cited as a good example of functional region. The city region is "an area of interrelated activities, kindred interests and common organizations, brought into being through the medium of the routes which bind it to the urban centres". We can delineate the commuting regions of Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta or any one of the metropolitan and mega cities. Similarly, functional regions of the national capital of India may be demarcated by taking the supply of milk, fruits, vegetables and newspapers. The functional region is, however, a dynamic concept which changes in space and time.

(v) Regions are hierarchically arranged:

- Although regions vary in scale, type and degree of generalization, none stands alone as the ultimate key to areal understanding. Each defines only a part of the spatial (regional) reality.
- On a formal regional scale of size progression the Ganga-Yamuna Doab may be seen as part of the Upper Gangetic Plain, which in turn is a portion of the Sutlej-Ganga Plain. Similarly, the Central Business District (CBD) of Delhi (Connaught Place) is one land use complex in the functional regional hierarchy that describes the spatial influences of the city of Delhi and the National Capital Region of which it is the core. Each recognised regional entity in such progression may stand alone and at the same time exists as a part of a larger, equally valid, territorial unit. The above generalizations about regions and the regional concept show that regions are human intellectual creations designed to serve a purpose. Regions focus our attention on spatial uniformities. They bring clarity to the seeming confusion of observable physical and cultural features of the world we inhabit. Regions provide the framework for the purposeful organisation of spatial (regional) data and information.

(vi) Regions have transitional boundaries:

- Generally, regions do not have sharp boundaries. In most of the cases their boundaries are transitional. It means there is some overlapping of one phenomenon over the other.

Classification of Region

- Formal Region
- Functional Region
- Perceptual Region

Formal Region

- Geographers draw formal regions on the basis of one or more measurable, shared traits that distinguish them from the surrounding area.
- These traits can range from such characteristics of the local population as language, income, or religion to such physical characteristics as elevation or climate. !
- Many physical features, such as valleys, are easy to map as formal regions using naturally occurring boundaries. !

FUNCTIONAL REGIONS!

- Functional regions are defined by a system of interactions.
- Picture a bicycle wheel with a central axel in the middle of the wheel, which represents the center of all the activity. The spokes of the wheel represent links to outside areas (the tire) through transportation, communication and trade. !

PERCEPTUAL REGIONS!

- A perceptual region is defined by people's feelings and attitudes about an area.
- Perceptual regions are more likely than other kinds of regions to change over time.
- They are also frequently based upon stereotypes, as people's definitions of perceptual regions are influenced by travel, media, reading, films, and conversations.

Major Question

- Define Region. -2
- What is formal region ? -2
- What is Functional Region? -2
- Differentiate between Formal and functional Region -5
- Write a short note on Perceptual Region. – 5
- What are the major types of region ? Explain the major characteristics of those with example. -10