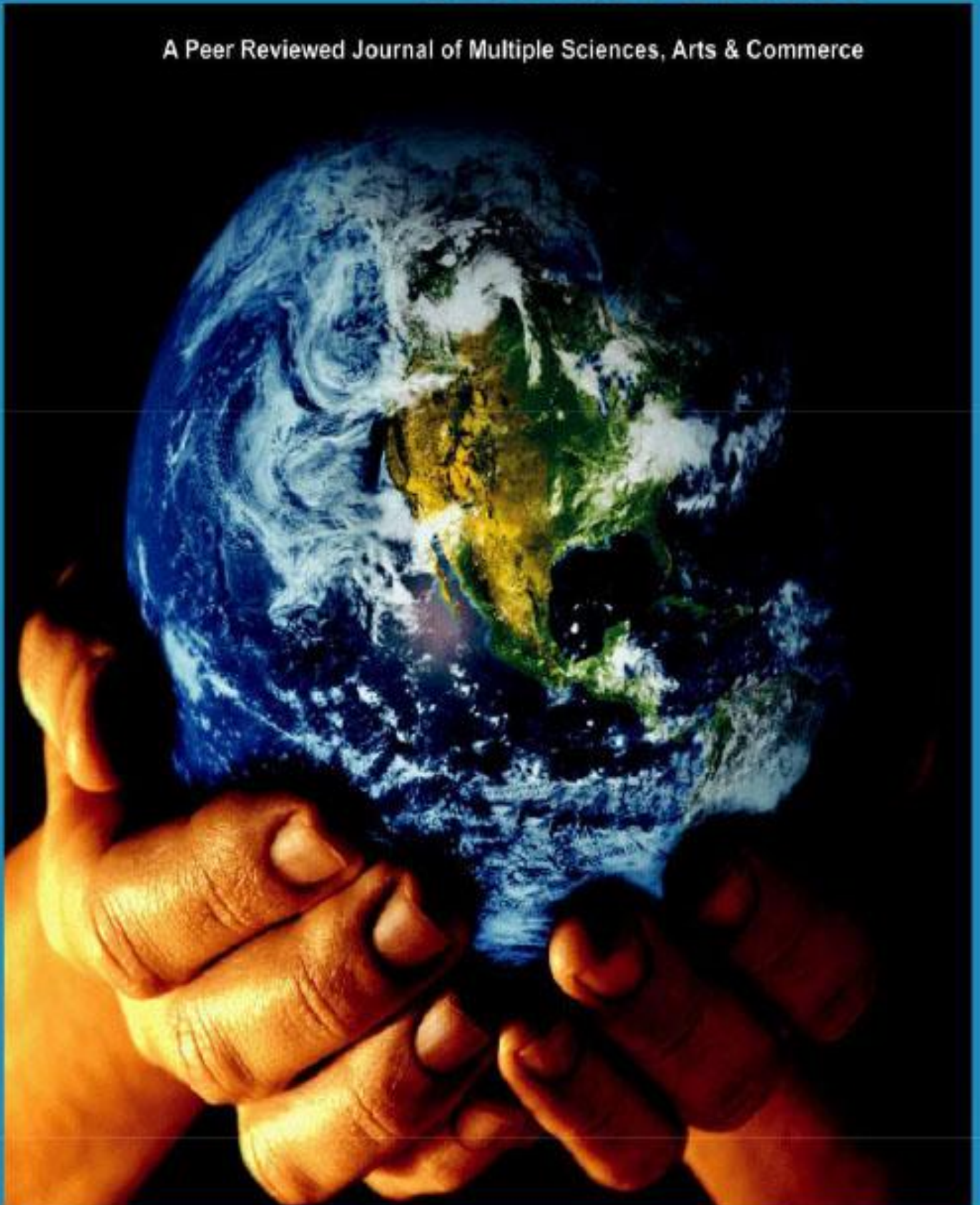


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# RESEARCH FRONTS

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E-mail : [krishnanandan112@gmail.com](mailto:krishnanandan112@gmail.com)

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*From the Desk of Chief Editor...*

*It is a matter of proud privilege for me to place before the Indian academia the 8<sup>th</sup> volume of **Research Fronts (2018)**, one of the most regular journals in our country. Over the years, scholars from various universities have been highly appreciative of our attempt, to not only regularly publish and but also improve the quality of a research journal, being brought out from a mufassil college in a backward region. Contextually, it needs emphasis that I have succeeded in my endeavors, to a large extent, because of my **alma mater, The Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi**. Despite shockwaves created by vested interests, the university is internationally recognized for scientific vision, academic freedom, interdisciplinary research and high quality of knowledge production. The **peer group** formed during my formative years in **CSRD/SSS/JNU**, are now noted academicians in various universities of our country. Whenever I requested for quality research papers for our journal, they never disappointed me. However, this 8<sup>th</sup> volume was hurriedly planned and executed, hardly within three months. Consequently, I could get response only from my JNU fraternity as well as from Indore University.*

*I, therefore, take an opportunity to highlight some of the salient features of the papers including areal coverage of the contributing universities as well as the disciplines. **One**, this volume contains **10 articles** from multiple disciplines of **Geography, Economics and Business Administration**. **Two**, the very first article, **Richard Hartshorne: A Biographical Sketch and Academic Pathways** is an outstanding piece of work, from the stature of a world class geographer that may encourage others to follow. Article on **Cultural Studies** will acquaint the readers with the emergence of a new discipline in the western world. Space and place may be considered as the **raison d'être** of geography. In this context, paper on **Space Imagination** interrogates the philosophy in a very simple language. Similarly, paper on **Social Justice through Quota in India**, conceptually rooted in the philosophies of social welfare provides some newer insights about it. Similarly, **all other papers** rooted in local/regional issues are also immersed in scientific rigour, employing appropriate methodologies and have their own great value.*

*Three*, it is a national level publication in terms of its geographical coverage of articles received from *North India* (3), *East India* (2), *West India* (2) and *Central India* (3). *Four*, the institutions involved are *Jamia Millia Islamia*, New Delhi, *ITS Engineering College*, Greater Noida, *The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda*, Vadodara, *Shivaji University*, Kolhapur, *Devi Ahilya Viswavidyalaya*, Indore, *Calcutta University*, Kolkata, and *Ravenshaw University*, Cuttack. The overall improvement in the quality of research production and geographical coverage of articles in this volume ostensibly reflect that the journal has come out of its stage of infancy, and can rightly claim its national status.

I am highly thankful to all the contributors who have sent their scholarly works for publication as well as promptly revising them according to reviewer's comments. I am extremely obliged to my friends, Shri Mumtaz Khan (New Delhi) and Prof. Gyan Prakash (Indore), for their kind help and consistent encouragement, over the years, for improving the quality of publication besides reviewing the papers and suggesting the required changes.

I am extremely thankful to our Principal Dr. R. N. Singh for his patronage, inspiration and encouragement in this noble effort. I highly appreciate the academic and moral support of my enthusiastic colleagues, Dr. Shailendra Singh and Dr. Sanjay Thiske, the editor and associate editor respectively. I extend my special thanks to Dr. Pramod Kumar Mahish and Shri Raju Khunttey, both assistant editors, for extending their technical know-how in setting, formatting and converting the word files into pdf ones, so that we may be saved from the blunders of unprofessional printers of this small town. However, as Chief Editor of the Journal, for any lacunae, the sole responsibility lies in me. Moreover, suggestions for improvement in the quality of the journal would be highly appreciated.

Krishna Nandan Prasad

## **Relevance of Space Imagination in Geography**

Niladri Ranjan Dash\*

### **Introduction:**

If you ask a child not to go the adjoining room, the child would rather get more curious and insist on seeing what is there in the next room. This is so because; human beings are basically the most curious creatures. The earliest man was no different. He/she did try to explore what existed beyond the known milieu. This curiosity has helped human beings to explore their world and in the process, our scientific knowledge has expanded and reached the contemporary stage. But, is it possible to explore anything without developing an imaginative picture about it in the mind? The scientist, in almost every case, first imagines, and then tries to test and prove the validity of that imagination. Imagination therefore, is the prelude to all scientific pursuit.

### **The Discipline of Geography and Imagination:**

Geography can be said to be as old as human beings, because the primeval human beings were also curious to know, interpret and analyze what existed beyond their milieu. We have of course no records about geographical thinking of the primeval human beings. Whatever we have pertains to the ancient Indians, Greeks, Romans and medieval Arabs. Geography as an academic discipline was established only with the opening up of Departments of Geography and appointment of professors of Geography in the universities of Germany during the 1870s.

Whether it is the case of the pre-historic man or the ancient man or the modern man, it is foolhardy to think how these geographers could have thought of exploring the world beyond their milieu without first creating an impression/imagination in their mind about the unknown. Initially, this impression would be of the one that is known. If the unknown happens to be different from the known, that needed explanation and comprehension. Space and its attributes being extremely varied over the earth, therefore, demand equally varied imaginations. Thus, for all practical purposes, imagination of space is highly crucial in geography.

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\* Professor, Department of Geography, Faculty of Science,  
The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Vadodara – 390002 (Gujarat).  
Email: [nrdash1958@gmail.com](mailto:nrdash1958@gmail.com) Mobile: 9427 837 149

### **Examples of Spatial Imagination in Geography:**

The ancient Greek scholars imagined the Earth as a disc floating on water. Based on this imagination, the phenomenon of day and night was explained. That imagination remained in vogue, till it was substituted by another imagination based on the Principle of Symmetry that the Earth can only be of spherical shape – A sequel of Deductive Reasoning of Plato. Aristotle proved this imagination with Inductive Reasoning.

The Sumerians had drawn pictorial “maps” of some of their cities as early as 2700BC. The first ever map of the World drawn to scale by Anaximander had Greece in the center, with other parts of Europe and Asia known to the Greeks around it. The map was used to convince the Spartans to join the Greeks in war against the Persians. But the Spartans said the map proved that Persia was too far away to worry about.

Based on observed high temperatures along the southern shores of the Mediterranean Sea and the presence of black coloured people there (inductive reasoning), Aristotle postulated the theory of habitability. His student, Alexander the Great, tried to physically verify these and many other such ‘spatial imaginations’.

Eudoxus, a contemporary of Plato developed the theory of zones of climate, based on increasing slope (klima) away from the sun on a spherical surface, which was accepted and modified by Aristotle and latter by Eratosthenes and Al-Maqdisi (985 AD).

Posidonius did not subscribe to Aristotle’s view regarding the un-inhabitability of the Torrid Zone (spatial imagination supported by pure logic).

The Arab geographers corrected many of the Greek theories about different parts of the World through physical verification, e.g. courses of several rivers like, Danube and Niger and, the Caspian Sea as a gulf of World Ocean etcetera (new spatial imaginations replacing the old ones).

Several Portuguese sailors explored whether the Indian Ocean is open to the south of Africa, and finally Vasco da Gama could reach India.

Voyagers, sailors and explorers of 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century, transformed the images of the World, and consequently the trend of scientific pursuits from cosmography to science.

With changed images, philosophical frameworks for understanding the reality also changed – determinism, possibilism, behaviouralism, structuralism, modernism and so on. The propagators of these philosophies like Ratzel, Blache, Wolpert, Peter Gould, David Harvey etcetera, were in fact trying to provide new frameworks to understand the multifaceted “reality”.

### **Multifaceted Nature of Reality and Sciences:**

This multifaceted nature of reality has led to the birth of natural sciences like, Geology, Botany, Physics etcetera and social sciences like, Sociology, Economics and Political Science to name a few. Each one of these disciplines break apart this multifaceted reality and try to know more and more about less and less. Geography is different from these disciplines. Geography derives its data base from all these sciences and attempts their “Synthesis”. This synthesization enables the geographer to understand the reality in holistic manner.

### **Synthesization in Geography:**

The Geographer is primarily concerned with variations from place to place. Like the Historian, the Geographer does not stop at just identifying variations over space. Rather, he/she is actually interested in the relationships between phenomena that cause these variations.

In fact, there would be no Geography if physical or human phenomena were distributed uniformly over the Earth. Everything varies over space; rainfall, farming, population, manufacturing, all vary from one location to another. All that vary over space qualify as geographical phenomena. Which means every phenomenon over the Earth qualifies as a geographical variable.

This makes the task of the geographer not only enormous but also difficult. Obviously therefore, Geography is characteristically eclectic. So is the nature of History. Both disciplines do not have a subject matter or a content of study, and they are defined not on the basis of ‘What’ they study, rather ‘How’ they study.

### **Humboldt’s Understanding:**

According to Humboldt, Geography is related to the study of “interconnections among phenomena of diverse origins existing together in harmonious relationship in particular segments (places/regions) of the Earth’s surface.”

“These interconnections give personality to particular areas and regions, and only through reference to such interconnections could the nature and spatial distribution of diverse Earth phenomena, e.g. plants, animals and elements of climate etcetera be properly understood and explained.”



### **Geography as an Integrated Science:**

Following Humboldt and Ritter (the two founding fathers of modern geography) Friedrich Ratzel (1844-1904), Ferdinand von Richthofen (1833-1905) and Alfred Hettner (1859-1941) of Germany, and Paul Vidal de la Blache (1845-1918) of France, established the discipline of Geography as an integrated science.

Since then, the conceptual frame of Geography as a law-seeking/positivist science stands established. The difference is, while the systematic sciences search for ‘process laws’, in Geography, it is the ‘pattern laws’.

### **Pattern Laws & Spatial Imagination:**

One of the ways of defining Geography is, “the description of the Earth as the abode of human beings”. Here the term ‘description should not be understood as mere ‘depiction of patterns’. In fact, no discipline can claim to sustain by only attempting to describe. Description is a prelude to every scientific investigation, and every discipline starts with the description of the phenomenon they intent to investigate. Description in Geography is a bit elaborate, as it tries to understand and explain the reality in its multifaceted frame of the multidimensional earth.

The understanding in Geography is, ‘nothing exists in isolation and nothing is static’. Every phenomenon changes over time as a result of the interactive process between the ever changing Earth and untiring and ever-active human beings. Human societies modify the natural environment by inventing and using technology. Such modifications vary over time and space. Present societies have put their imprints everywhere and created avenues in collaboration with Nature. Thus we find, “humanized nature” and “naturalized human beings”. Geography studies this interactive relationship.

Humanization of nature is manifested in the organization of space; e.g. the networks of transportation and communication, industries, settlements and cultivated land are all organized and integrated in space.

Naturalization of human beings is manifested in their adaptations to variations in nature; such as plains, hills, deserts, fertile soil, less fertile soil, hot climate, cold climate and so on.

As a science, geography studies these “spatial organizations” and “spatial integrations”. Geography studies these “spatial organizations” and “spatial integrations” by attempting “spatial synthesis” (in case of History, it is “temporal synthesis”). In order to

synthesize or to understand the “reality” holistically, Geography tries to comprehend the association of phenomena as related in sections of reality (facets of reality). These facets of reality are themselves areas of investigation of different natural and social sciences. Thus, Geography as an integrated science has interface with other natural and social sciences – with which it maintains give-and-take relationship.

Let us take an example to understand how important it is for the geographer to develop the attitude and aptitude of spatial imagination in comprehending the “reality”. To understand variations in the cropping pattern from region to region, the Geographer relates it to the variations in soils, climate, market, attitude of farmers, availability of technology and its awareness among farmers and so on. This way the Geographer attempts to establish relationship between varied phenomena. While doing so, the Geographer also takes into consideration the time component – examines the present in the context of the past and foresees the future.

The fact is, any geographical study requires thorough grounding in both physical and human geography. ‘No geographer can claim that he/she is a physical geographer, and has nothing to do with human geography’ and ‘no human geographer can say he/she is a human geographer, and has nothing to do with physical geography’. Geography is an integrated, holistic science. And if it is not pursued accordingly, it would lose its utility as well as scientific character.

Let us take the case of the “Geographical Study of Floods”. Which variables would induce probability of flooding?

- i) Climate – (a) Prolonged and/or intense rainfall, (b) Snowfall
- ii) Basin Characteristics – (a) Physical (steep slope, stream network density, channel aggradations, soil, impermeable rocks, flood plain) (b) Human (settlement - urbanization, agricultural land, deforestation, upstream flood control)
- iii) Others - (a) High tides (b) Coastal storm surges (c) Earthquake (d) Landslides (e) Dam failures.

Any systematic scientist would be conversant with some or one of these aspects; e.g. A Botanist may deal with the aspects of vegetation with ease. A Geologist may deal with earthquake, landslide etcetera with ease. An Engineer may deal with dam structure with ease, and so on. In comparison to all these disciplines, the geographer by training is well equipped to deal with all these aspects with ease. The added advantage of the geographer is he/she is particularly equipped to integrate the physical and human aspects.

### **The Requirement:**

To accomplish the task of integrating phenomena of diverse origin within the holistic framework of geography, scientists professing the discipline should develop the attitude and aptitude to comprehend the spatial linkages of the phenomenon under investigation. This means geographers are not supposed to use blinkers while dealing with any phenomenon. The understanding is; (i) nothing exists in isolation, and (ii) the reality is not broken into discrete compartments. The systematic scientists divide the reality into discrete compartments in order to gather greater knowledge about them.

For the geographer, the reality is one. And in this reality, every phenomenon varies over space and is intricately related to other phenomena. The geographer therefore, has to be highly imaginative in approach in order to comprehend the linkages.

### **To Conclude...**

To my understanding, a true geographer is he/she, who can create the spatial image that incorporates all that is relevant to the respective study. Without this, we are trying to imitate systematic sciences, and in turn going away from what we should be pursuing and the very purpose of the discipline. Geography is indeed a discipline with distinct character, approach and perspective, which has to be adhered to in order to maintain its stand among all sciences. Bereft of this, we are portraying ourselves simply as a pedagogic discipline, without any practical applicability. In the process, other branches of knowledge are grabbing the opportunity and we are relegated to the position of followers.

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