

## French School

In 1752, **Phillippe Bavche** advocated that the right approach for representation of geographical data is in the framework of natural region. **Baron Coquebert** proposed a division of the national territory into natural regions. Such efforts created interest in regional divisions in geography.

**Vidal De La Blache** is known as the founder of human geography. He was a strong opponent and critic of the environmental deterministic approach. Under the influence of writings of Ratzel, he formulated the concept of *Possibilism*. His basic approach towards the study of man and environment was that nature sets limits and offers possibilities for human settlement. But the way man reacts or adjusts to these given conditions depends on his own traditional way of thinking. Vidal opined that the relatively small regions are the ideal units to study and train geographers in the geographical studies. He was, however, of the opinion that regional studies at the meso and macro levels can be of practical utility, which can help in the planning of areas.

In 1921, Vidal's book *Human Geography* was published posthumously. He believed that it is impossible to study natural landscape as something separate from the cultural landscape. In the course of time, man and nature adapt to each other like a snail in its shell. The relationship between man and nature becomes so intimate that it is not possible to distinguish the influence of man on nature and that of nature on man. The

area, over which such an intimate relationship has developed through centuries, constitutes a region. The study of such regions should interest a geographer. Vidal, thus, argued for regional geography as the core of geography.

Vidal's approach of possibilism is best suited only for the agricultural landscape and the concept of cultural determinism seems to be more appropriate for explaining the developed countries' societies.

Noticing the changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution, Vidal suggested that, in the coming future, one should study the economic interplay between a region and the city centre which dominates it, rather than the interplay between natural and cultural elements.

**Jean Brunhes** was the disciple of Vidal de La Blache. He tried to identify the scope and method of human geography. He emphasised two principles in his approach to geographical study i.e. the Principle of Activity and the Principle of Interaction. He opined that everything physical or cultural (e.g. heights of mountains, the sea level, ice-sheets, glaciers, size of valleys, deltas, volcanoes and forests) is continuously changing in its shape, size and attitude. It is in a state of perpetual change and must be studied in terms of the temporal change, instead of taking it as static in time-scale. Thus, in order to understand the interrelationship of physical and cultural components of a meso or micro unit the principle of activity is to be kept in mind to arrive at a just synthesis.

Brunhes borrowed the idea of the principle of interaction from Vidal de La Blache's principle of territorial whole. Brunhes assumed that geographical phenomena, both physical and social, must be studied in all their numerous permutations and combinations. This idea of functional unity later on inspired the regional synthesis.

**Emmanuel De Martonne** was a disciple of Vidal de La Blache. He specialised in physical geography and inspired many French geographers.

**Albert Demangeon** was an outstanding student of Vidal de La Blache. He contributed to *Transport Geography, Population and International Economics*.

From the Vidalian tradition, geography was studied with a new approach during the inter-war period. With the introduction of new tools of

techniques, there appeared more stress on analytical study. With the introduction of more sophisticated statistical techniques now, the trend has been to adopt an inter-disciplinary approach to develop regional synthesis.

In brief, recent researchers have been oriented less towards description and regional analysis in a regional presentation and more towards explanation with a genetic perspective. In physical geography, there is more emphasis on process and systems of erosion and reconstituting the stages of morphogenetic evolution. In human geography emphasis has been placed upon economic factors of production and consumption, on economic systems and regions, on zones of influence, economic regionalisation, analysis of traffic flow, etc. As a result, there is now more use of detailed maps and, above all, aerial photography, than ever before.