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**The Contribution and Achievements of Men  
in Various Spheres at National and  
International Levels**

संपादक

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पुणे

# **Contribution and Achievement of Friedrich Ratzel for the Development of Modern Human Geography**

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## **Introduction -**

Modern Geography was born in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In latter parts of 19<sup>th</sup> century, Ratzel dominated the scene of German geography. Ratzel was a great scholar, influential teacher, a patriot and good writer. Due to these qualities, he was the 2nd influential geographer after Ritter in Germany. Ratzel was highly impressed by the philosophy of Charles Darwin especially his 'Origin of Species' (1859).

## **Life of Friedrich Ratzel (1844 -1904) -**

Friedrich Ratzel was born 30<sup>th</sup> August 1844 at Karlsruhe in Germany. He completed his graduate study at Heidelberg in 1868. He studied in Zoology, Geology and Comparative Anatomy. Because of his patriotism, that at the occurrence of Franco- Prussian War in 1870, he joined the Prussian Army and was wounded twice during the War. He was appointed as the Professor of geography at Leipzig University in 1886. After making outstanding contribution for the development of human geography he passes away on 9<sup>th</sup> August, 1904.

## **Contribution of Friedrich Ratzel -**

**I) Ratzel's Geographical Writings -** His writing includes the following books -

1. A Commentary on Darwin's Work-1869.
2. Travels of a Naturalist.
3. Book on United States 1878-1880.
4. North America 1893.
5. The History of Mankind 1896.

6. Letters for News Paper in Cologne.
7. Articles for Kolnische Zeitung.
8. A Book on Chinese Immigration.
9. Earth and Life: A Comparative Geography.
10. 'Anthropogeography' 1882
11. Political Geography.
12. The Geography of States.
13. The Geography of Wars.
14. The Geography of Trade.

## **II) Major Contribution in the Development of Modern Human Geography -**

### **1) The Development of Systematic Human Geography-**

Ratzel attempted systematic study of man by comparing the mode of life of different nationals, tribes and races. His interest in tribes, races and nations was keen. 'Anthropogeography' is the famous monumental work of Ratzel. The main focus of this monumental work is the effects of different physical features and locations on the style of life of people. Anthropogeography was published in two volumes.

**Volume – I** - 'An Introduction to the Amplification of Geography to History' (1882) OR 'Outline of the Influences of the Geographical Environment upon History'- In this volume, Ratzel stressed on the extent to which men live under nature's laws. He tended to see man as the product of his environment, moulded by physical force's that surrounded his and succeeding only in so far as he made the correct adjustment to their demands.

**Volume - II** 'The Geographical Distribution of Mankind' (1891) - Second volume attempted to discuss the concentration and distribution of population, settlement forms, migration, and the diffusion of cultural characteristics.

Ratzel adopted chorological approach to the study of human geography. Chorology means the causal interaction among the diverse things in particular areas. In this context, Ratzel made special note of cases where cultural differences were more important than the differences in physical character of the land. He observed the contrast between the

French and the German cultural traditions in the physical resemblance between the two places of low mountain regions on either side of the middle Rhine valley. Thus, the environment dominated man response approach was influenced by the chorological approach in the second volume of Anthropogeography.

## **2) Deterministic Approach -**

Friedrich Ratzel was a determinist/strong supporter of determinism. The essence of deterministic is that the history, culture, living style and stage of development of a social group or nation are exclusively or largely governed by the physical factors of environment.

## **3) Social Determinism -**

Friedrich Ratzel was the contemporary to Darwin. He was highly influenced by Darwin's 'Theory of Evolution of Species' especially Darwin's ideas of evolutionary change, natural selection and struggle for existence. Ratzel applied Darwin's concept of human societies. This analogy suggested that groups of human beings must struggle to survive in a particular environment as much as plant and animal do. This is known as 'Social Darwinism'. Ratzel's basic philosophy was survival of fittest in a physical environment.

## **4) Political Geography (1897) -**

In his political geography, he emphasized that a state like some simple organism must either grow or die and can never stand still.

Philosophy of living space (*Lebensraum*) - It was this philosophy of living space which created the controversy of superior and inferior races which advocates that the superior people (nation) have a right to expand their territory living space at the expense of inferior neighbours. The superior nations thus by ruling over the inferior peoples fulfil a natural organic necessity and, in this context, he used the concept of 'lebensraum'. Ratzel has elaborated different types of *hinterland* of ports. Hinterland means 'the remote areas of a country away from the coast or the banks of major rivers'.

## **5) Fundamental Unity in Diversity -**

Ratzel tried to build a fundamental unity in diversity.

Ratzel stressed the principle of unity in diversity stating that in diverse physical conditions man is adjusting himself and, therefore, in order to have a complete view of the geographical horizon we have to synthesize the diverse physical and cultural phenomena.

### **III) Conclusion -**

Ratzel's human geography is the guidelines for a comparable systematic study of a man. Ratzel's view about geography illuminated for decades, a tribute to his ability as a teacher and scholar- as Semple wrote-“He grew with his work and his work and its problem grew with him. He took a mountain of the things, kept his eyes always on the horizons and in the splendid sweep of his scientific conceptions sometimes overlooked the details near at hand. Herein lay his greatness and his limitations”.Ratzel adopted deterministic approach as the physical phenomena is primary and man is secondary. But this approach was criticized by George Gerland by stating that geography should be the study of the whole Earth body without reference to man.Controversy of dichotomy of Physical V/s Human geography was started from the formulation of Ratzel's human geography.

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