

Paper name: Environmental Geography and Disaster Management

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Topic: Nature of Disasters

As disasters have profound and often long lasting effects on the people and their safety, it is essential to acquire fullest possible knowledge about their occurrence, impacts and precautions including remedial measures. However, study of disasters has many facets. While their mechanism requires the study of the scientific aspects of their genesis and life cycle, this impacts on the environment and society also need a multi-disciplinary approach involving the social and medical services. Hence, scholars for studying disasters have adopted the following six approaches.

1) Geographical Approach

In this, social science methods are widely used and emphasis is given to the spatiotemporal distribution of hazard, impacts and vulnerability. Geographers have also given particular thought to the question of how choices are made between different types of adjustment to natural hazards.

2) Anthropological Approach

This approach has focused on the role of disasters in guiding the socio-economic evolution of populations in dispersing them and in causing the destruction of civilizations. A strong concern has led anthropologists to search for the threshold points beyond which local communities can no longer provide the basic requirements for survival of their members.

3) Sociological Approach

In this approach, vulnerability and impacts all are considered in terms of patterns of human behavior and the effects of disasters on community. In addition, psychologists have studied disaster in relation to factors such as a psychologically determined defensive reaction pattern.

4) Developmental Studies Approach

It considers problems of providing aid and relief, migration management, health care and the avoidance of starvation. Over 80 per cent of disasters occur in developing countries, and it is clear that the prevailing poverty increases human vulnerability to natural hazards.

5) Disaster Medicine and Epidemiology

It focuses on the management of mass casualties, the treatment of severe physical trauma and the epidemiological surveillance of communicable diseases whose incidence rates may increase during the disruption of public health measures following a disaster.

6) Technical Approach

The natural and physical scientists emphasize upon this approach. Emphasis is given to geological, geomorphological and geophysical approaches to disasters.
