



Behavioural Geography with a critical review

Special class

Special Session by Sachin Arora.

TOPIC : Behavioural Geography
with a critical review

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BEHAVIOURAL GEOGRAPHY

Behavioural approach in human geography is a point of view
rather than a rigorous paradigm !!!

Context of rise of Behavioural Geography !!!

(Continuing from the Special Class on Quantitative Revolution)

AREAS CONCERNING BEHAVIOURAL GEOGRAPHY

- Initial interest in **resource management** was followed by an extension from **environmental perception and decision-making** into aspects of attitudes and motivation.
- These were applied to studies of **migration, the diffusion of innovations, political behaviour (especially voting), perception, choice behaviour, and spatial search and learning.**
- **Morphological laws and systems are insufficient** of themselves for understanding; the **amalgamation of concepts about decision-making** taken from other social sciences **with geography's spatial variable** would allow development of **process theories** that could account for the morphologies observed.

Nature & Scope

- According to **Downs (1970)**, there may be two other approaches to the study of environmental images:

a) the '**structural approach**' which inquires into the **nature of the spatial information stored in people's minds** and which they use in their day-to-day affairs; and

b) the '**evaluative approach**' in which the question is, **what factors do people consider important** about their environment, and having estimated the relative importance of these factors, **how do they employ them in their decision-making activities**. With this evaluative approach geographers moved into the **wider field of cognitive mapping**.

- **The behavioural approach, therefore, is based on four major assumptions, according to Gold (1980):**

1. **The environment** in which an individual acts is that which **they perceive**, which may well differ markedly from the true nature of the real world.

2. **Individuals interact with their environments**, responding to them and reshaping them.

3. The **focus of study is the individual**, not the group.

4. Behavioural geography is **multi-disciplinary**.

BEHAVIOURIST APPROACHES

- The behaviourist approach appears to consist of two approaches:
 1. The first is based on the **study of overt behaviour using the traditional positivist formulation** of dependent variables influenced by independent variables. This approach has **involved the widespread application of statistical techniques**.
 2. The second approach is based on attempts to **identify the mental constructs that lie behind overt behaviour**. However, **little has been achieved in the second approach**, i.e. linking cognitive schemata to behaviour, and thus extending the predictive models of the first approach.

“By studying behavioural processes in these contexts, the aspiration was to increase geographer’s understanding of how spatial patterns evolve, thereby complementing their existing ability to describe such patterns.

MENTAL MAPS

- One aspect of behavioural geography has been the concept of mental map.
- This refers to the images of place, “mentally stored by individuals and drawn upon as resources in their interpretation of spatial desirability, their organisation of spatial routines, and their decision making transaction as satisficing agents. Mental maps are **an amalgam of information and interpretation** reflecting not only **what an agent knows** about places but **also how he or she feels about them**”
- *Mental maps are important to geographers not only as **a means of examining an individual's areas of spatial preference**, but also as **an insight into the processes whereby decisions are made**, opportunities perceived and goals determined and satisfied.*
- Such maps are useful, it is believed, not only in the **analysis of spatial behaviour** but also in the **planning of the social investment**.

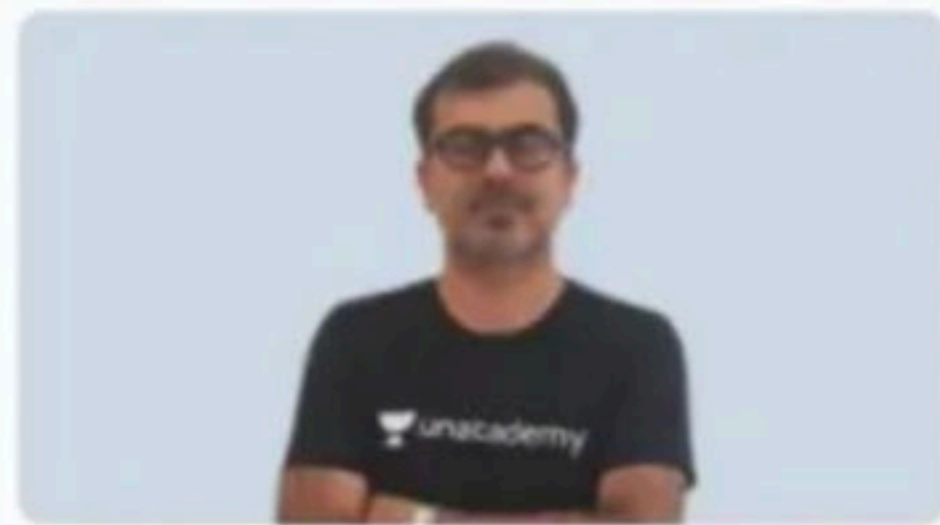
The Hits & the Misses!!!

- It acted as a forum for new philosophies, approaches, and methods, and it revived interest in the study of some older themes, such as cultural landscape, and idiographic analysis of places.
- It opened up new channels of dialogue and debate with other disciplines, and thereby contributed to a trend toward cross-fertilization of ideas.
- Lastly, researchers in behavioural geography had contributed much to the debate on social relevance of geographical research, by helping to explode the myth of value-freedom, by promoting interest in problems of social concern, and by supporting the geographers' involvement in public policy issues.
- It led to a thorough reappraisal of the methodological approaches to man-environment relations.
- It asserted the role of the individual in geography which at that time had showed strong signs of wishing to reduce human activities to point patterns and spatial preferences and indifference curves.

Behaviouralism in Geography: Evolution or Revolution?

- Through the 1960s it had been generally asserted that geography was experiencing a **second revolution—the behavioural revolution—which** was expected to bring about a major transformation in the discipline but experience shows that any **expectations of a “revolution” were at best premature.**
- Their development certainly represents a significant milestone in geographical thought, but hardly constitutes the stuff which revolutions are made.
- Instead what has taken place has been **the gradual emergence and consolidation of a set of approaches that aim to increase the scope of geographical explanation by seeking a fuller understanding of the processes that underpin real-world behaviour.**
- The behavioural approach has **not brought about a revolution away from the spatial science paradigm;** in effect it has become an attachment to it.
- Behavioural geography is **now widely accepted within the positivist orientation.**
- It seeks to account for spatial pattern within the environment (both man-made and natural) by establishing generalizations about man-environment interrelationships, and then using these as a basis for change through environmental planning activities that **‘modify the stimuli which affect the spatial behaviour of ourselves and others’.**
- In a fundamental sense, **behavioural approach in human geography is a point of view rather than a rigorous paradigm**

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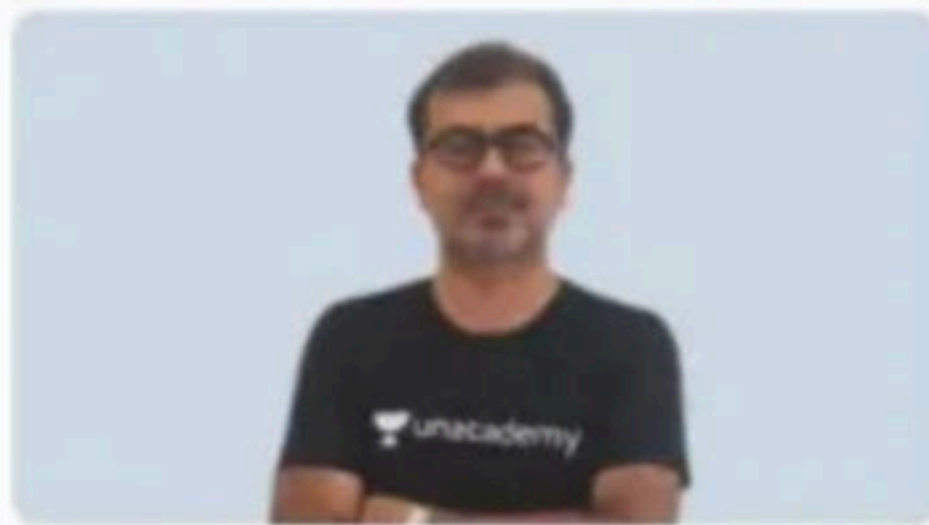


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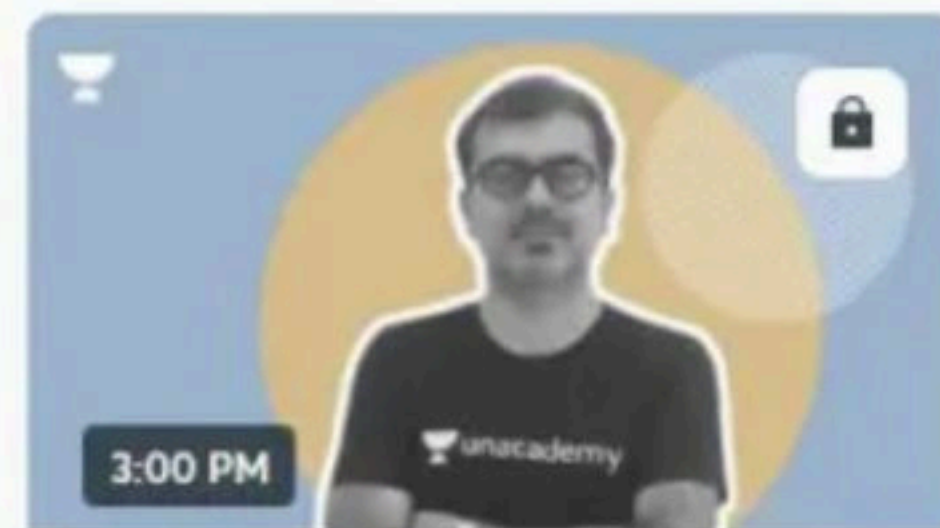


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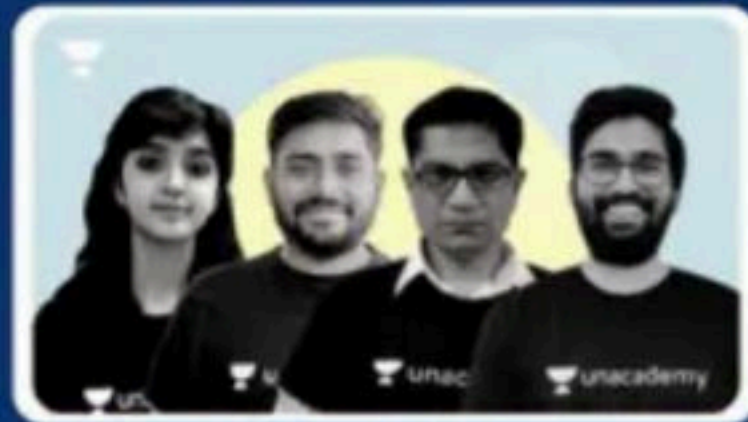
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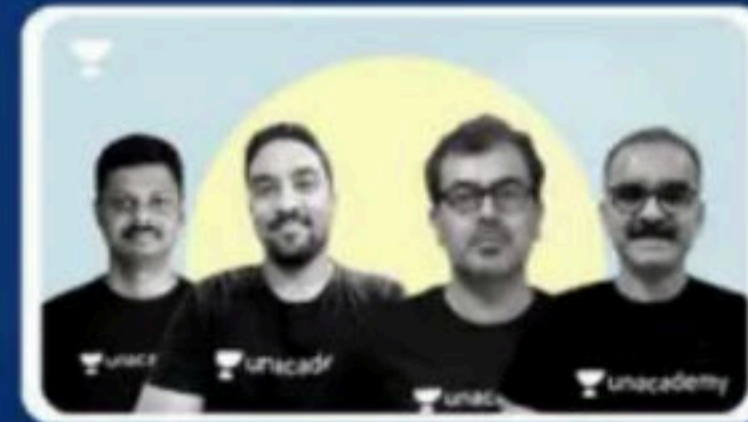
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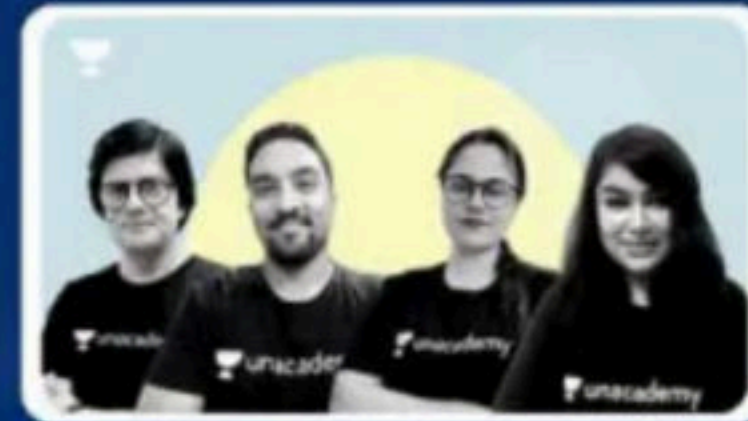


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