# ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY: SUBJECT MATTER AND RESOURCE

#### KEY POINTS

- Definition of Economic Geography and its Subject matter, Scope and Branches
- Meaning, Importance and Classification of Resource
- Uses of Resources
- Resource Conservation: Meaning, Need, Methods and Role of National and International Organizations

#### 1.1 Definition and Subject Matter of Economic Geography:

The subject Geography is broadly divided into two divisions — Physical Geography and Human Geography. Economic Geography is one of the important branches of Human Geography. The branch of the ography in which the study of human activities associated with production, distribution, consumption and exchange of resources is done in spatial and temporal contexts is known as Economic Geography. In fact, the way the natural environment of different places on the earth is not the same, the same way its man-made environment is also different.

The natural environment of the earth's surface is characteristically different due to differences in its geological and physiographic structure including climate and soil. For instance, when some part of the earth's surface

is mountainous highland, its other parts may be characterized by fertile plain, oceanic coastal plains, and some places may again be climatically very cold or very hot. Besides, some areas are covered with forest, or some other areas are confronted with natural hazards like floods and river bank erosion. In addition, like differences in the availability of vegetation, water, mineral resources, etc there also exists marked variation in availability of natural resources and their distribution and characteristic quality on the earth's surface. Due to the prevalence of such differences in natural environment the relationship between man and environment is not found to be similar in every place, and its resultant human environment also becomes different in different parts of the earth's surface. Hence, the areas with fertile soil are having developed agriculture, coastal areas for fishing and transport-trade, and the areas rich in mineral resources are industrially advanced. On the other hand, the areas with luxuriant grasslands have livestock rearing.

Actually, due to the prevalence of variation in the elements of the natural and man-made environments, human's way of life and its economic activities also do not remain the same everywhere. In view of such differences, if one place is agriculturally developed, another place may be developed in trade and commerce, or even rich in industrial or fish production activities. That is why all the places on the earth having dependent on one another continue to maintain a kind of interrelationship. In fact, resources and all the phenomena relating to various activities of man are discussed in economic geography.

# 1.2 Scope of Economic Geography and its Branches:

The distribution of economic activities of man and the factors and processes associated with it are mainly studied in Economic Geography. The scope of its study is mainly based on the under mentioned basic questions:

- (1) Where is the economic activity located?
- (2) What are the characteristics of the economic activity?
- (3) To what other phenomena is the economic activity related?
- (4) Why is the economic activity located where it is?
- (5) Would it not be better if located elsewhere?

Among the above mentioned five questions, the traditional economic geography is associated with the first three. But the latter two questions have laid the foundation of modern economic geography. According to George Chisholm, who is considered as the father of modern economic

Geography

geography, the main objective of economic geography is determination of the economic development trend and direction of a place. On the other hand, according to two other economic geographers C.F. Jones and G.G. Darkenwald, economic geography is associated with productive occupations or activities and attempts to explore the answers to why certain regions are outstanding in the production and export of various articles and why some others are advanced in import and trade and commerce. It means economic geography basically studies the relationship between man's productive activities and environmental conditions. There are four types of economic activities or occupations of man:

- Primary Occupation: The human activity through which man collects resources from the nature is called primary occupation. For example, agricultural activity, fishing activity, forest resource collection, mineral resource collection, etc.
- (2) Secondary Occupation: The human activity through which man transforms the commodities collected from the nature into a usable form by using various technologies is called secondary occupation. For example, manufacturing process, various types of construction and repairing works, etc.
- (3) Tertiary Occupation: The human activity through which the commodities produced by means of primary and secondary activities reach the consumers is called tertiary occupation. For example, transport, communication, marketing, wholesale or retail selling, tourism activity, etc.
- (4) Quaternary Occupation: The human activity through which the secondary and tertiary activities can be made more easy and productive is called quaternary occupation. For example, bank or other financial institutions, publicity media, administration, education and research, etc.)<sup>2</sup>

As a vast discipline economic geography is studied by using a number of approaches. Among them Regional Approach, Topical or Commodity Approach, Behavioural Approach, Principles Approach, System Analysis Approach and Institutional Approach are worth mentioning. In the contemporary period quantitative techniques along with Geographical Information System (GIS) and Theory-Model are used in applied economic geography. Hence, in many cases problem solving approach is used in applied economic geography.

The way human activities are diverse, the same way many specialized branches of economic geography have emerged. Among these, Agricultural

Economic Geography: Subject Matter and Resource

Geography, Industrial Geography, Geography of Resources, Transport Geography, Marketing Geography, Geography of Planning and Development, Geography of Tourism, etc are worth mentioning (Table 1.1). Such specialized branches of economic geography explain in detail various phenomena associated with a variety of economic activities of man (As every economic activity or development process is very closely related to environment, more emphasis is now given on sustainable development. It may be mentioned that the study of economic geography and its different branches is very closely related to geography of resources. It is because the economic development of any country is greatly dependent on its quality and availability of resources.

Table 1.1: Major Branches of Economic Geography and their Subject Matter

Branches of Economic Geography	Subject Matter
Agricultural Geography	An important branch of Economic Geography. Here, factors associated with agricultural activity, types of agriculture, distribution and methods of agricultural activity, crop production and its associated theory, marketing and export-import of agricultural activity.
Industrial Geographical	Here, economic and other factors associated with establishment of industry, types of industry and geographical distribution, production of industria goods, theories associated with location of industria
3. Geography of Resources	Here, types of resource, regional distribution of resources, the factors associated with exploration and production of resources, relationship between resource and development, conservations and account of the sources and development.
4. Transport Geography	resources, etc are studied.  Here, types of transport system and factors associated with it, role of transport on resource distribution, role of transport in movement and development, viz. industrial development, agricultural development, etc are studied.
5. Geography of Marketing	Here, the need of establishing
6. Geography of Planning and Development	Here, factors associated with economic development,
7. Geography of Tourism	based development process, etc are studied.  Here, tourism and factors associated with its growth, types of tourism, development and planning process of tourism system, etc are studied.

## 1.3 Meaning and Importance of Resource:

All the materials essential for human living are known as Resources. The air, water, sunrays, soil, plants, fruits, minerals, etc found on the earth are all essential to man. Hence, these are all resources. These resources are collected by man mainly from the nature through various means (Fig. 1.1). The resources so obtained from the nature are used by man employing its own energy, knowledge and intelligence and skill. It is due to the availability of these resources, apart from



Fig. 1.1: Natural resource

fulfilling the man's primary needs – food, shelter and clothing and many other requirements, the improvement in the living conditions of man has been possible. But, it needs to be mentioned that every material found on the earth is not resource. According to a famous economist Zimmermann, any material to become a resource should have two properties, viz. functionality and utility. It is because of these two properties resource utilization has been able to bring about human welfare and socio-economic development. That is why resource and its use are closely associated with progress of human society. It may be mentioned that the resources are formed as a result of the interactions among the nature, man and culture including science and technology. Man is associated with resource in two different ways – as producer of resource and as consumer of resource. Although many of the resources useful to man are made available from the nature, most of them are transformed as per requirement into more consumable form by man.

Moreover, the attributes of <u>functionality</u> and utility of the materials found in nature can be explored only through human knowledge. With the expansion of the horizon of human knowledge many new resources are also created and used. It means, apart from the resources derived from nature, many of the resources, for example, technology, house, roads, industries, schools, offices, agro-farm equipments, vehicles, etc are produced by men themselves. That is why these are called

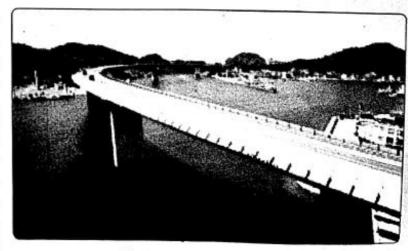


Fig. 1.2: Manmade resource

man-made resources (Fig. 1.2). Moreover, as a producer or a creator of resource man is also a kind of resource. It is known as Human Bescuree. It is notable that the variation in the use of natural and man-made resources is dependent on the change in human demand and development of new technology. Hence, the meaning of the same resource may be different with respect to change in time and place.

Resource is dynamic. Even though a commodity is not used by man today or it is harmful to man today, the same may be used for human welfare in future. In fact, of these materials found on the earth, which are in no way useful or harmful to man are known as Neutral Stuff. For instance, until man did not learn about the use of coal or mineral oil in

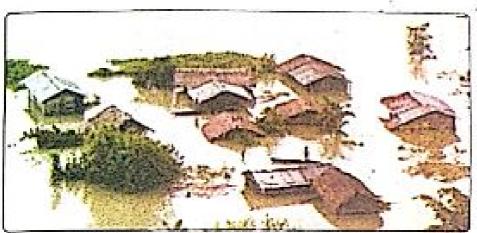


Fig. 1.3: Flood problem in Assam- A resistance

generation of power, they were simply Neutral Stuffs. On the other hand, the materials or phenomena harmful to man are called Resistance. For example, infertile soil, severely flood-affected region (Fig. 1.3), etc are resistances. It may be mentioned here that until construction of dam on the river Damodar for generation of hydropower and creation of irrigation facility, the Damodar river that used to create flood havoe in West Bengal

was considered as a resistance. Thus, with the expansion of human knowledge and development of science and technology many such neutral stuffs and resistances found on the earth are getting transformed into resource through human efforts. It is due to such a dynamic attribute of resource, a material or phenomenon which is found to be useful today may get transformed in the course of time into a resistance or neutral stuff. It means with change in society simultaneous change occurs in the concept of resource, and consequent change in resource collection and use.

It may be mentioned in many respect both resource and wealth are considered same. But, according to the principle of Economies, the materials which have value in exchange are called wealth. Notably, besides usefulness, the supply of wealth is relatively limited and it can be transferred from one individual to another through money or value.

For example, land, house, machineries, company share, etc are wealth. All these have market price. But, the sonshine, air, water, soil, rivers, takes, education, social institutions, good government, public health, etc are not included in the category of wealth. Because some of these are found in abundance and some others cannot be evchanged and do not have market value. Thus, all wealth is resources, but all resources may not be wealth. Moreover, resource use brings about human welfare. But wealth may have both utility and harmful effects. For instance, the substances with market value like poison, chemical insecticides and pesticides, etc are wealth. But, the use of such substances is harmful or dangerous to man. Hence, such materials are not resources.

#### 1.4 Classification and Use of Resources:

Many types of resources are found on the earth. The way there are different types of innemerable resources on the earth, the same way their classification may also be done in different ways. On the basis of origin the resources can be broadly divided into natural resource, mannade resource and human resource. Besides, the resources may also be divided into biotic and abiotic; renewable and non-renewable; and individual, national and international resources (Chart 1.1).

Although the resources are classified in a number of ways into different groups, many of them are found to overlep with one another in the chart. As for example, plant is a natural resource and at the same time it is a biotic resource and renewable resource. Again, plant is also an individual or national resource. Similarly, gold is a natural resource, and at the same time it is also an abiotic resource, non-renewable resource and individual or national resource.

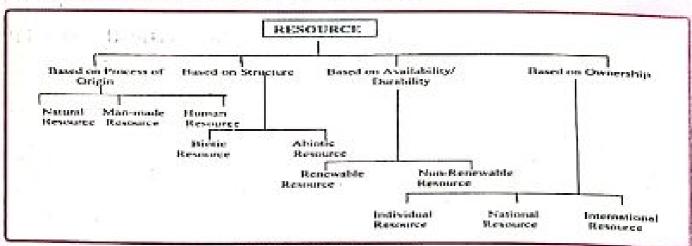


Table 1.2 : Classification of Resources

Economic Geography ; Subject Master and Resource

#### 1.4.1 Natural, Man-made and Human Resource:

The resources, for example, sunshine, air, water, soil, plants animals, minerals, rivers, etc. which after natural formation remain distributed on the earth, are known as Natural Resources). The natural resources are found in solid, liquid or gaseous states, and in metallior non-metallic form. Many of such natural resources are used as . +w. materials in different industries. Besides, coal, mineral oil, natural gas, ete are also natural resources (Fig. 1.1) which are used by us as sources of energy. We know that many materials having collected from the nature are converted into more usable forms as per requirement by applying different technologies [Mention may be made in this respect, for example, paper from bamboo; cloth from cotton; different types of dyes, paints, naptha, synthetic cloth, chemical fertilizer, insecticides, soap, plastic, synthetic rubber, wax, etc; different types of food items, medicine, word, house construction materials, etc. are derived from plants. Such materials, as produced through human efforts are known as man-made resourt as (Fig. 1.2). It is necessary to have adequate skill, education, technology and desire among men so as to make the natural resources useful to man. It is because of these attributes, population is known as hurary resource. Actually man is the creator of resources. It is due to humper resource development despite searcity of many natural resources and raw materials for industries, the countries like Japan, Switzerland, Taiwa... Singapore, South Korea, etc have been able to occupy a high position in respect of development in the world.

#### 1.4.2 Biotic and Abiotic Resource:



Fig. 1.4: Renewable resource- Solar energy

According to physical structure or composition the resources which have life are called Biotic Resources and those without having life are called Abiotic Resources. The plants, animals, fishes, crops, etc are biotic resources. On the other hand, sail, rock, water, air, minerals, coal, etc are abiotic resources. But it is necessary to know that coal, mineral oil, natural gas, etc are of biotic or organic origin in respect of mode of formation. However, in view of non-living character in present context these

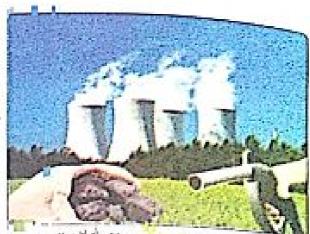
are included under the category of abiotic resource.

#### 1.4.3 Renewable and Non-Renewable Resource:

Among the available natural resources on the earth, some do not get exhausted after use and some others get gradually exhausted. The

Geography:

through the process of regeneration are called Reminable or Inexhaustible Resources (Fig. 1.4). It means seashing, air, water, plants, animals, humanbeings, crops, other remember resources. These resources originate very easily on the earth. Of course, some plant and animal species have been extinct for ever or may get extinct soon due to excessive use or a variety of physical or human factors. On the other hand, the resources which cannot be regenerated after use and get completely exhaust due called Non-Benewable of Exhaustible



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Resources) For example, coal, mineral oil, minerals (e.g. Copper, field, Limestone, Iron, Silver, etc), natural gas, etc are non-renewable resources (Fig. 1.5). Once used, such a sources get exhausted forever. Hence, adequate emphasis should be given for planned extraction and utilization of these resources so that such types of mineral resources are not easily exhausted.

#### 1.4.4 Individual, National and International Resource:

On the basis of ownership all the resources found on the earth can be grouped into individual, national and international resources. The things in possession of individual man – such as land, household properties and good self attributes, e.g. good character, education, working skill, etc are known as Individual or Fersonal Resources. All the resources under the responsibility or possession of a country, such as transport networks, land, rivers, bridges, wildlife sanctuaries, plants

and animals present in forests, educational institutions, administrative systems, government, etc are called National Resources. For instance, Kaziranga National Park is a national resource (Fig. 1.6). On the other hand, national resources belonging to all the countries and the resources under the possession of the whole world, such as oceans and seas and their mineral and biotic resources, atmosphere, forests, etc are together known as International Resources. It

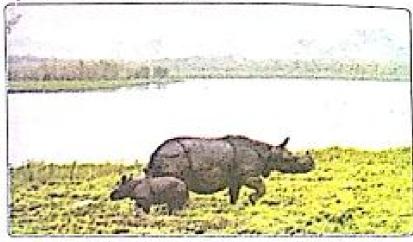


Fig. 1.6 : Kaziranga National Park- a national resource

Economic Geography : Subject Matter and Resource



is because all these resources are used for the welfare of mankind. The international organization UNO is responsible for the management of exploitation and utilization of the international resources following already set regulations.

It may be mentioned that the distribution of all the resources, more particularly natural resources, is not same. Because some of the natural resources like sunshine, air, water, etc are found everywhere or available in all places on the earth. Such natural resources are called Ubiquitous Resource. On the other hand, the natural resources which are found only in some selected places on the earth are called Localized Resource. For example, coal, petroleum, iron ore, uranium, etc mineral resources, vegetation, crops, etc are some of the localized resources.

# 1.5 Conservation of Resources - Meaning, Needs and Methods:

The resources, more particularly the natural resources, are not found uniformly on the earth. Many of these natural resources are again non-renewable or exhaustible, that is limited. But, the use of such natural resources has increased tremendously due to rapid growth of population and continued advancement of human civilization. Although the countries like USA, Canada, Japan, Germany, England, etc are not so populous like that of China and India, the use of natural resources is very high in these countries. It is worth mentioning that the main reason behind successfully reaching a very high position in economic development by these countries is the large scale utilization of many natural resources including mineral resources. It is notable that large scale utilization of natural resources in the developed countries and increased use of natural resources due to population explosion in the developing countries have given an indication of gradual exhaustion of many natural resources, more particularly non-renewable ones, throughout the world. In order to overcome or address such a serious situation a comprehensive plan for conservation of resources is taken up worldwide. As exploitation and use of natural resources have considerable impact on the natural environment, more emphasis is now given on conservation of nature.

Use of resources and its conservation are very closely associated. Generally, the concept or act of possible complete utilization of any resource without any destruction and misuse is known as Conservation of Resources. It means the main objective of resource conservation is that we have to collect and use the necessary resources from the nature in such a way so that we all continue to get benefit from these



for long time. By the term 'Conscivation of Resources' simply does not mean preservation of resources without any use. For example, by conservation of mineral oil means the act of exploitation of mineral oil from the nature without any wastage and its proper use for long time towards human welfare.

Although resource conservation is more associated with nonrenewable resources, actually the concepts of conservation are applicable to all the resources. It may be mentioned that destruction of forests (renewable resource) results in decline of animal habitat including its bio-diversity and disturbance in the environmental balance in such areas. In view of such a situation many plans and projects for conservation of some rare and important biotic resources, such as tiger, elephant, thing, dolphin, etc have been taken up throughout the world. Besides Imany of the valuable plant-species of Assam, such as Sarpagandha, Chalmugra, Kalmegh, Arjun, Agaru, Chirata, Jaifal, Satmul, Suklati, etc are getting extinct: Among the animals getting extinct, Golden Langur, Hoolock Gibbon, wild Buffalo, Pigmy Hog, River's Dolphin, White Wood Duck, Hornbill, Greater Adjutant Stork, etc are worth mentioning. Moreover, the rapid increase in the use of mineral oil, coal, etc as the sources of energy and chemical fertilizer, chemical insecticides and pesticides, etc in agriculture has caused serious environmental problems due to pollution of air, water and soil. Thus, we have to take up necessary steps for resource conservation including economical use of resources so that our development process lasts long. For instance, in respect of soil conservation, we have to make use of a plot of land for agriculture in such a way so that we continue to get good harvest of crops without depletion of soil fertility. Even though fish is a kind of renewable natural resource, its rapid increase of production has given rise to shortage of fish including its variety in many fishing grounds in the world. Besides, due to rapid increase of motor vehicles and industries and expansion of man's luxurious modern life style the non-renewable energy resources like coal, petroleum, natural gas, etc are getting gradually vanished. In view of such a situation, conservation and rational use of resources have become very important globally. Otherwise, it would become difficult for sustenance of human and its civilization on this earth.

In view of rapid increase of world population and growing environmental problems including depletion of many natural resources efforts are being made worldwide at various levels for environmental protection and conservation of natural resources. For this purpose a

Economic Geography : Subject Matter and Resource



large number of governmental and non-governmental agencies and organizations have been formed at international, national, regional and local levels. In this respect an international environment conservation organization under/United Nations Organization named International Union for Conservation of Nature - IUCN is worth mentioning) In fact, IUCN was formed in the year 1948 with the initiative of British Biologist Julian Huxley, the founder Director General of UNESCO. The main objective of this organization is to carry out study and research on conservation of global natural environment and natural resources including biodiversity, and to take appropriate measures. It is with the initiative of the IUCN two more international organizations like WWF for Nature (Worldwide Fund for Nature) and World Conservation Monitoring Centre have been established. In this way a large number of associations and organizations have been working at international and national levels for conservation of some specific animal and plant species including overall natural environment. For such purpose a Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change has been formed at government level in India. Such government organizations are also responsible for formulation of laws related to environment protection and conservation of natural resources. Under this Ministry an autonomous institute named Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education was formed in 1986. Besides, a number of non-governmental organizations like Centre for Science and Environment (CSE). Greenpeace India, Wildlife Trust of India, etc are working for protection of the environment. In Assam also a number of non-governmental organizations like Assam Science Society, Aaranyak, etc are working for environment protection, biodiversity conservation, etc. As per decision and appeal of the United Nations Organization 5th June of every year is celebrated worldwide as the World Environment Day so



Fig. 1.7 : Alternative (renewable) resource-Hydroelectricity

as to increase awareness among the general people about the protection of the environment.

It may be mentioned here that the process of resource conservation ennnot remain active of its own. Its proper execution requires well-considered and well planned programme. Thus, it is highly necessary to incorporate the following methods for successful implementation of resource conservation programme:

12

Geography

- (a) Some h for Alternative Resource: It is necessary to carry out required research and survey for exploring possible source of alternative resource even when the production of any highly used resource goes on. Synthetic fibre in place of cotton fibre, synthetic rubber in place of natural rubber, etc are a few examples of alternative resources. Besides, in order to reduce the use of non-renewable energy resources like coal, mineral oil, etc., use of renewable resources like solar energy, hydro electricity (Fig. 1.7), wind energy, organic energy, etc needs to be increased.
- (b) Recycling: In order to reduce the use of raw materials with limited reserve usable disposed garbages can be reused through the process of recycling. For instance, by the method of recycling of the old polythene bag, plastic bottle, paper, iron scrapes, etc the use of raw materials for such products can be reduced to some extent. Thus, the recycling of some usable waste materials helps conservation of resources.
- (c) Innovation: Necessary study and research are to be undertaken to develop innovation in converting the resources collected from the nature into usable forms. This also helps check misuse of raw materials and increase resource production. Emphasis needs to be given on the use of organic fertilizer so as to check the negative impact of the use of chemical fertilizer.
- (d) Waste Control: Considerable amount of resources can be conserved if adequate measures are taken to check production of waste materials through their recycling and reuse while converting raw materials to useful resources. For example, while constructing wooden materials after cutting trees, if arrangement is simultaneously made by utilizing waste wood through establishment of some small industries, misuse of natural resources can be checked. If the waste materials of wood and bamboo generated in a paper mill are converted into organic or chemical substances, the pressure on natural resources will automatically fall.
- (e) Expansion of Knowledge and Education: For proper management of production and use of resources, expansion of knowledge and education is highly essential. Awareness among the people needs to be increased to check unnecessary wastage of resources.
- (f) Execution of Conservation Related Acts: For proper execution of resource conservation programmes the provision of conservation acts needs to be strict and transparent and it should be effectively implemented.
  - (g) Proper Assessment of Resource Reserve: For future planning

Economic Geography: Subject Matter and Resource

of resource use a correct assessment of available reserve of any resource is necessary. This in turn helps in curtailing unnecessary use of certain resource and emphasizing to explore alternative resource.

(h) Assessment of Future Requirement of Resources: Looking at the extent of present use of a resource and growth rate of population it is highly essential to determine the future requirement of the resource. It is through this effort also unnecessary use and wastage of resources can be checked and at the same it would help in expediting exploration of alternative resource.

### SUMMARY

- Definition of Economic Geography: (The branch of Geography in which the study of human activities relating to the production, distribution, consumption and exchange of resources is done with respect to space and time is called Economic Geography.)
- A few major branches of Economic Geography: Resource Geography, Agricultural Geography, Industrial Geography, Geography of Marketing, Transport Geography and Geography of Tourism.
- Definition of Resource: All the materials necessary for human living are called resources. As air, water, sunshine, soil, plants, animals, fruits, minerals, etc are all useful to man, these are all resources.
- Main Characteristics of Resource: Utility, Functionality and Dynamism,
- Types of Resource: Resources are broadly classified into three divisions! Natural resource, Man-made resource and Human resource.
- Resource Conservation: Generally the act or concept of complete use of resources without any kind of destruction and misuse is known as Resource Conservation.

### EXERCISE

- What is Economic Geography? What is its main subject matter? Mention the important branches of Economic Geography.
- 2. Write in brief about the scope of Economic Geography.
- 3. What do you mean by economic activities of man? What are such economic activities?
- Write briefly about the subject matter of the important branches of Economic Geography.
- 5/ Why 'Resource Geography' is known as an important branch of Economic Geography?
- What is meant by 'Resource'? Mention its main characteristics.
- 7/ 'Resource is Dynamic'. Explain.

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Geography

8.	Briefly discuss about th	e necessities of a	esources with examples.			
9.	Write in brief about the relationship between resource and man.					
10.	Briefly discuss about the relationship between resource and science-technology.					
11.	Write about classification of a sources with examples.					
13:	What is meant by natural resource? Write briefly with examples. What is man-made resource? Write in brief about its use with examples.					
13:	What is man-made resource? Write in brief about its use with examples.					
11	What are the different	es between ren	ewable and non-renewal	ole resources? Discuss		
	the contract of the contract o					
18:00	What is meant by 'Conservation of Besources'? What is its necessity? Write in brief about the methods of resource conservation.					
16.	Write in brief about the methods of a source conservation.					
17.	Write in brief about the organizations associated with resource conservation and their					
	role.					
13.	Write short notes:					
	(a) Resource (b) Human Resource					
	(c) Wealth (d) Renovable Resource					
	(c) Personal Resource		(f) National Resource			
	(g) Biotic Resource		(h) Besource Conservation			
	(i) Resource Recycling		(i) (UC) I			
19.	Write the differences between:					
	(a) Resource and Wealth					
	(b) Economic Geography and Resource Geography					
	(c) Resource and Neutral Staff					
	(d) Biotic and Abiotic Resource					
	(e) Renewable and Non-Renewable Resource					
	(f) Personal resource and National resource					
	(g) Man-made Resource and Human Resource					
	(h) Recycling of Resource and Innovation					
20/	Choose the correct ans	A Color of the Col		三三:		
	(3) Which of the follow		Control of the Contro			
	(1) Rivers (2) Mineral Oil (3) Irrigation Canal . (4) Forest					
	(b) Which one of the					
100	/ ATTAIR	(2) Plants	(3) Animals	(4) Fungus		
	(e) Which one of the		n-renewable resource?			
	(1) Air	(2) Water	(3) Crops	(4) Coal		
	(d) Which one of the following animals is about to be extinct?					
	(1) One-horned Rhino £276 ygmi Hog					
	(3) Giraffe (4) Gayal (Mithun)					
	(e) The organization IUCN is under which of the following organizations?					
	(I) UNESCO	528 UNO	(3) WWF	(4) UNEP		



