

## Chapter- 5

# The Great Indian Desert

## STUDY NOTES



### Physical Features :

- To the west of the Northern Plains lies the Great Indian Desert or the Thar Desert.
- It is about 800 kilometers long and 500 kilometers wide. It covers a major part of west Rajasthan.
- The land here is partly rocky and partly sandy.
- To the north-east of the Thar Desert is the Satluj River Basin.
- To the south-east is the Aravali Range of hills.
- To the south is a salt marsh known as the Rann of Kachchh.
- The desert extends west into Pakistan, till the Indus River Basin.

### Climate:

- The climate in the desert is extreme.
- During the summer, the days are hot and dry. As the Sun sets, it becomes cooler. This is because the sand heats up quickly in the day, and cools down fast at night.
- In winter, the days are pleasant but the nights become very cold.



#### Vegetation:

- There is very little rainfall in the desert.
- Not many plants grow in the region because of the sandy soil and lack of water.
- There are few scattered bushes and thorny shrubs in desert region.
- There are a few streams which fill up only when there is rain.



- There is a severe shortage of drinking water for the people who live there.

#### Landforms:

- As the land is dry, and there is very little vegetation, soil erosion due to wind occurs.
- The desert has many small hills of sand called sand dunes.
- Sand dunes are formed when sand starts piling around any barrier that blocks the sand-laden desert wind.
- These dunes do not remain at one place.

- The strong winds of the desert keep moving the dunes from one place to another.
- The hot winds carry a lot of sand with them and severe sand storms are common.
- There are some places in the desert where underground water comes up to the surface in the form of springs.
- Date palms, Kikar and Babul trees, and grasses grow in these areas. Such an area in the desert, with water and greenery, is called an oasis.

Life in the Desert Regions of Rajasthan :

- Life in the desert areas of Rajasthan is very hard due to shortage of water and the dry sandy soil.
- As few crops can be grown, many people rear camels, and cattle such as sheep and goat.

Populations:

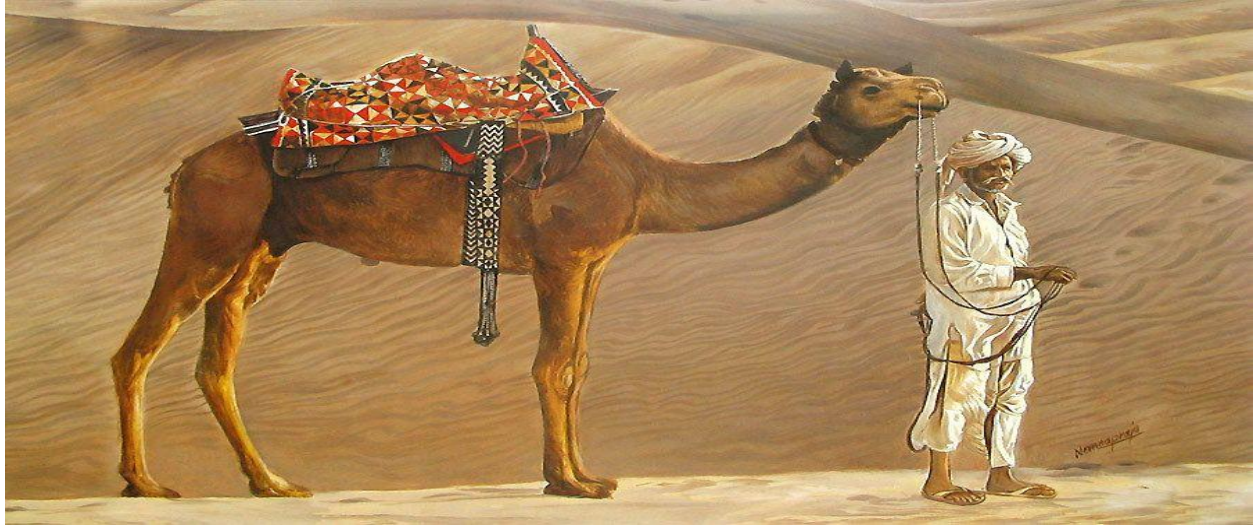
- The population in the desert area is small.
- Most villages in deserts come up around places where water is available.
- As a result of the shortage of food for themselves and their cattle many people keep moving from place to place.
- Such people are called nomads.
- The nomads of the Thar Desert are called Banjaras.
- There are very few cities in the desert region.
- Jaisalmer, Jodhpur and Bikaner are some important cities.



Farming:

- In areas where water is available, millets like jowar and bajra, and wheat are grown.

- The Indira Gandhi Canal, which starts from the Satluj River, provides water to parts of the Thar Desert.
- These areas have now become green and the farmers can grow a variety of crops.



#### The Ship of the Desert:

- The camel is the most useful animal in the desert.
- It can withstand the desert heat, walk easily on the sand, and live without food and water for several days. It is, therefore, called the ship of the desert.
- Today, modern roads link important cities in the Thar Desert, and vehicles run on them. However, the camel still remains an important means of transport in the region.
- It is used to carry loads, pull carts and plough fields. Also, its milk and meat serve as food for the people.



#### Dresses:

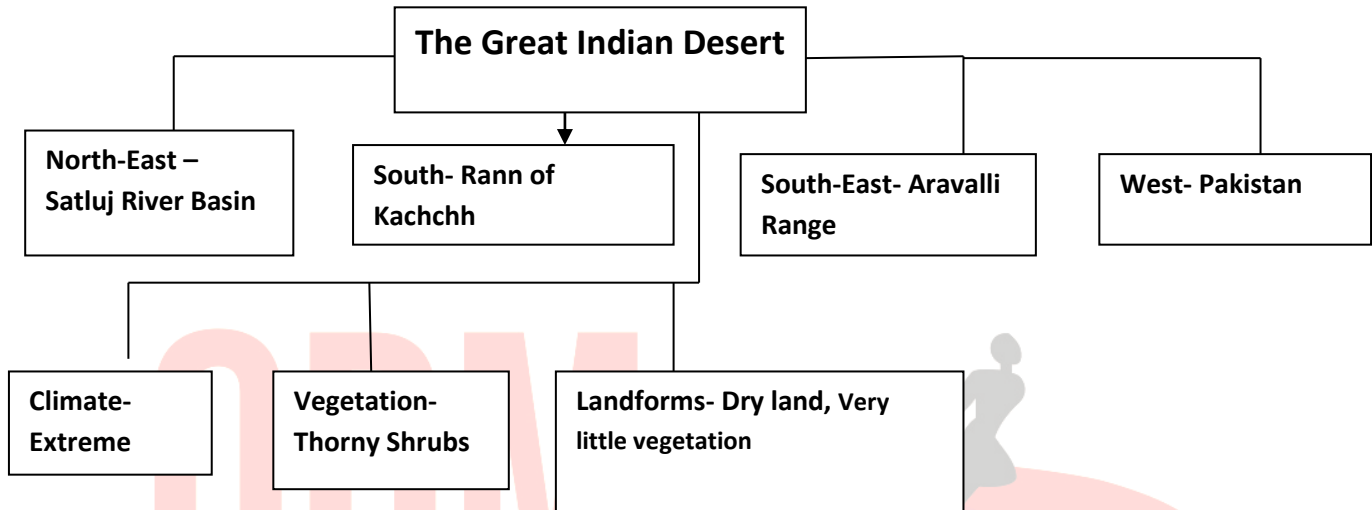
- Bright, colourful clothes are common among both men and Women in Rajasthan.
- The traditional dress of the women is:

- ghaghra-choli with an odhni to cover the head.
- The men wear:
  - dhoti-kurta and a colourful turban.



#### Language and Festivals:

- Hindi and Rajasthani are the main languages.
- The main festivals celebrated in Rajasthan are:
  - Holi
  - Diwali
  - Eid
  - Dussehra
  - Gangaur
  - Teej
- Tourism:
- Tourism is an important industry in the state.
- People from all over the world come to Jaisalmer in Rajasthan during the Desert Festival.
- Old forts and historical monuments in Rajasthan are a great attraction for tourists.

**Memory Map:****Let's Know More:****I. Fill in the blanks:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ is the driest place in the world.
- \_\_\_\_\_ is the largest hot desert in the world.
- Rajasthan is also known as \_\_\_\_\_.

**Let's Do:****A. Fill in the blanks.**

- A flat area with sandy soil and very little rain and vegetation is called a \_\_\_\_\_.
- Sand \_\_\_\_\_ are small hills of sand that keep shifting in the Wind.
- A green area with water in the middle of a desert is called an \_\_\_\_\_.
- People who do not settle down at one place and move their home from place to place are called \_\_\_\_\_.
- The most useful animal for the people of the Thar Desert is the \_\_\_\_\_.
- The \_\_\_\_\_ Festival is held at Jaiselmer every year and is a great tourist attraction.

**B. Write T for true and F for false sentences.**

1. The Aravalli Range of hills is to the south of the Thar Desert.
2. Sand heats up quickly in the day and cools quickly at night.
3. Sand dunes shift because of soil erosion by water.
4. In an Oasis, underground water is brought out by digging wells.
5. Camel milk is popular among the people of Rajasthan.
6. **The people of Rajasthan earn a lot of money from tourism.**

**C. Multiple choice questions.**

1. Which of these is to the south of the Thar Desert?

- a. Satluj River Basin
- b. Aravalli hills
- c. Indus River Basin
- d. Rann of Kachch

2. Which of these best describes the climate in the Thar Desert?

- a. hot days and nights during summer and winter
- b. hot days, cold nights during summer and winter
- c. hot days, cool nights during summer, cool days and cold nights during winter
- d. hot days and nights during summer, cold days and nights during winter

3. Which of these crops cannot be normally grown in Rajasthan?

- a. wheat
- b. rice
- c. Jowar
- d. Bajra

4. Which of these is called the ship of the desert?

- a. horse
- b. tractor
- c. donkey
- d. camel

5. Which of these best describes Banjaras?

- a. They live in small villages around an oasis.
- b. They do not settle down at one place.
- c. They live in large cities and raise cattle.
- d. They live in fertile areas and grow crops.

**D. Understand and Answer:**

1. What is a desert?
2. Why are days hot and nights cool in the desert?
3. What is a sand dune? Why does it keep shifting?
4. What is an oasis?
5. What has been the effect of the Indira Gandhi Canal on the Thar Desert?
6. Why is the camel still a very important means of transport in the desert?
7. Describe the traditional clothes of the people of Rajasthan.
8. Name a few tourist attractions of Rajasthan.

**Teacher's Note:**

- Write five lines about famous Kathputli dance of Rajasthan.

**Improve Your GK**

- Bandhani is a form of tie and dye that is special to Rajasthan.
- Jaipur is called the pink city of Rajasthan.



**Answer Key****I. Fill in the blanks:**

1. Atacama
2. Sahara
3. 'Land of Kings'

**A. Fill in the blanks.**

1. desert
2. dunes
3. Oasis
4. Banjara
5. camel

6. Desert

**B. Write T for true and F for false sentences.**

1. False

2. True

3. False

4. False

5. True

6. True

**C. Multiple choice questions.**

- 1.d. Rann of Kachch

2. c. hot days, cool nights during summer, cool days and cold nights during winter

3. b. Rice
4. d. camel
5. b. They do not settle down at one place.

**D. Understand and Answer:**

1. A flat area with sandy soil and very little rain and vegetation is called a desert .
2. The days are hot and nights are cool in desert because the sun heats up quickly in the day and cools down fast at night.
3. Sand dunes are small Hills of sand. sand dunes keep shifting because the strong winds move the dunes from one place to another.
4. Oasis is an area in the desert with water and greenery is called an Oasis.
5.
  - a. Due to Indira Gandhi Canal which starts from Satluj river provides water to the part of Thar Desert. These areas have become green and farmers can grow variety of crops.
  - b. These areas have become green and farmers can grow variety of crops.
6.
  - a. Camel still a very important means of transport in the desert because it is used to carry loads, pull carts and plough fields.
  - b. Its milk and meat serve as food for the people.
7. The traditional clothes of people of Rajasthan is:
  - a. Women wear ghagra- choli with odhni to cover their head.
  - b. The men wear dhoti kurta and colourful turban.
8. The few tourist attraction are:
  - a. Desert Festival
  - b. Old forts
  - c. historical monuments