

Chapter- 8

The Physical Divisions of India

STUDY NOTES

INTRODUCTION

The physical features of India range from the mighty mountains of the Himalayas to the fertile plains of the north India; from the plateaus of the Deccan to the Eastern and western coastal plains; and from the dry deserts of Rajasthan to the wet hills of Arunachal Pradesh.

Geographers usually divide India into six major physical divisions.

- The Great Northern Mountains
- The Northern Plains
- The Peninsular Plateau
- The Thar Desert or the Great Indian Desert
- The Coastal Plains
- The Islands

THE GREAT NORTHERN MOUNTAINS

The Northern mountains consists of the Trans- Himalayan Ranges and the Himalayan Ranges.

TRANS- HIMALAYAN RANGES

The northern mountains in the north of India extend from northwest to northeast of India. The Himalayas, the karakoram mountains and the the northeastern mountain ranges are together called the Northern Mountains Karakoram Range: The Karakoram Ranges lie to the northwest of Himalayas . Mount Godwin Austin (k2) is the second highest peak in the world The Himalayas: The Himalayas extend in a long curve from Jammu and Kashmir in the west to Arunachal Pradesh in the east. It is about 2500 kms in length. Its width varies from 150 to 400 kms.

THE HIMALAYAN RANGES

The word Himalaya means 'the abode of snow' in Sanskrit. The Himalayas consist of three parallel ranges.

1. The Greater Himalayas or Himadri – It is the highest Himalayan range. Kanchenjunga is the highest peak in India. Many glaciers originate from this region. Rivers such as Indus, Ganga, Yamuna and Brahmaputra originate from such glaciers. River Ganga originates from Gangotri glacier and river Yamuna originates from the yamunotri glacier
2. The Lesser Himalayas or Himachal – This range lies to the south of himadri. It has dense forests of pine and deodar on the mountain slopes. Beautiful hill stations like Darjeeling, Shimla, Mussoorie, Nainital and Kullu are situated in this range.

3. The Outer Himalayas or shivalik – The southernmost range of the Himalayas is called the Shiwaliks. This range is covered with thick forests which are a home to many wild animals. Terrace farming is done on the slopes of the shivaliks.

Purvanchal ranges- The purvanchal ranges are the eastern extension of Himalayas. They cover the states of Assam, Manipur, Tripura, Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram. The Garo, Khasi, Jaintia, Naga, Mizo and Lushai are the main hills in this range. Mawsynram in Khasi hills, Meghalaya is the wettest place on earth. Passes in the Northern Mountains - - A pass is a route or path through two mountains. It is used for crossing the mountains.

THE NORTHERN PLAINS

Northern plains lie in the south of Himalayas Mountains and north of Deccan plateau. It is formed by flooding of three major rivers- Indus, Ganga and Brahmaputra. It is drained by many other rivers like Yamuna, Ghaghara, Gandak etc. .

The northern plain of India is formed by three river systems, i.e. the Indus, the Ganga and the Brahmaputra; along with their tributaries. The northern plains are the **largest alluvial tract** of the world. An area drained by a river system is called a drainage system or a river basin. A river system consists of a main river and its tributaries.

A tributary is a stream or river that flows into or joins its various tributaries and distributaries.

A distributary is a branch of a river that flows away from the main stream and does not rejoin it.

On the basis of drainage basins, the Northern Plain is divided into three major regions:

- i) The Indus Basin: It is drained by the river Indus and its tributaries (Jhelum, Chenab, Beas, Ravi and Satluj). The Indus originates near Lake Manasarovar and drains Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Punjab.
- ii) The Ganga Basin: It is drained by the river Ganga and its tributaries and distributaries. The Ganga originates in Gagotri in the Himalayas, and drains most of the Northern Plains.
- iii) The Brahmaputra basin: It is drained by river Brahmaputra and its tributaries. The Brahmaputra originates near Lake Manasarovara in Tibet and flows through three countries- China, India and Bangladesh.

The Ganga and Brahmaputra together form the world's largest delta, called the Ganga Delta. The world's largest mangrove forest, the Sunderban is found on the Ganga Delta.

THE PENINSULAR PLATEAU

Main features of the Peninsular Plateau are

- It is triangular in shape and is composed of the old crystalline, igneous and metamorphic rocks.
- The Peninsular Plateau has several rounded hill ranges and broad valleys.
- The Aravalli Mountains border the plateau on the northwestern side. The Vindhyas and Satpuras are other important ranges in the region.
- This plateau consists of two broad divisions, namely, the Central Highlands and the Deccan Plateau.
- The Plateau is rich in mineral resources such as iron ore and coal.

MALWA PLATEAU

- This plateau has two systems of drainage; one towards the Arabian sea (The Narmada, the Tapi and the Mahi), and the other towards the Bay of Bengal (Chambal and Betwa, joining the Yamuna).
- In the north it is drained by the Chambal and many of its right bank tributaries like the Kali, the Sindh and the Parbati. It also includes the upper courses of the Sindh, the Ken and the Betwa.
- It is composed of extensive lava flow and is covered with black soils

CHOTANAGPUR PLATEAU

- Chotanagpur plateau represents the north-eastern projection of the Indian Peninsula.
- Mostly in Jharkhand, northern part of Chhattisgarh and Purulia district of West Bengal.
- The Son river flows in the north-west of the plateau and joins the Ganga.
- The average elevation of the plateau is 700 m above sea level.
- This plateau is composed mainly of Gondwana rocks.

The **Deccan Plateau** is triangular in shape and is India's largest plateau. It occupies land between the Western and the Eastern Ghats and the south of the Mahadeo, Maikal and Satpura ranges. The Deccan Plateau is divided into following

- It is the Northwestern part of the deccan Plateau which is made up of lava flows.
- This is a large igneous province located on the deccan plateau of west - central India
- It is one of the largest volcanic features on the earth.

THE WESTERN GHATS

- The Western Ghats are the western edge of the deccan plateau
- They lie parallel to the western coast

THE EASTERN GHATS

- The Eastern Ghats are the eastern edge of the deccan plateau.
- It has an average elevation of 600m
- The eastern ghats are older than the western ghats.

THE THAR DESERT

The **Thar Desert**, also known as the Great Indian **Desert**, is a large arid region in the northwestern part of the Indian subcontinent that covers an area of 200,000 km² (77,000 sq mi) and forms a natural boundary between India and Pakistan. It is the world's 17th largest desert, and the world's 9th largest subtropical desert. This region gets very little rainfall as it lies in the rain shadow of the Aravali Mountains.

THE COASTAL PLAINS

The **Coastal Plains of India** lie on either side of the Peninsular Plateau, along the western and eastern **coasts of India**. They extend for about 6,150 km from the Rann of Kutch in the west to West

Bengal in the east. They are broadly divided into the Western **Coastal Plains** and the Eastern **Coastal Plains**. Many parts of the **Indian coastal plains** have rich, fertile soil on which, apart from rice, a large variety of crops are grown. Some areas along the **coastal plain** have deposits of mineral oil. hence the **coastal plains** play a very **important** role in the economic development of **India**.

THE ISLANDS IN INDIA

India has two groups of **islands**. The Lakshadweep **Islands** lie in the Arabian Sea, to the southwest of the mainland. The Andaman and Nicobar **Islands** lie in the Bay of Bengal, to the southeast of the mainland. Lakshadweep is composed of small coral **islands**, covering a small area of 32 square kilometres. Earlier they were known as Laccadive, Minicoy and Amindive. In 1973 these were named as Lakshadweep. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands are bigger in size and has number of islands. This group of islands can be divided into two groups. The Andaman is in the north and the Nicobar is in the south. These islands too have rich biodiversity.

