

Chapter 2

Physical Features of India

❖ The Himalayan Mountains

- Spreads over the northern borders of India and stretches from the river Indus to the river Brahmaputra.
- Covers a distance of 2400 km.
- Width varies from 400 Km in Kashmir to 150 Km in Arunachal Pradesh.
- Northern most range of the Himalayas is called the Great/Inner Himalayas or '**Himadri**'. It has all the famous Himalayan peaks such as the Mt. Everest, Kanchenjunga, Makalu, Dhaulagiri, Nanga Parbat, etc.
- The range to the south of the *Himadri* is called the '**Himachal**' or the Lesser Himalaya and has important ranges like the Pir Panjal, Dhauladhar and Mahabharat range. It is well known for hill stations.
- Outer most range of the Himalayas is called the '**Shiwaliks**'. It has a width of 10-15 Km and an altitude between 900-1000 metres.
- The valleys between the *Himachal* and the *Shiwaliks* are called Duns. Famous duns are Dehra Dun, Kotli Dun and Patli Dun.
- Classification of the Himalayas
 - Between the Indus and Satluj rivers: the Punjab Himalaya or the Himachal Himalayas and the Kashmir Himalayas.
 - Between the Satluj and Kali rivers: the Kumaon Himalayas.
 - Between the Tista and Dihang rivers: the Assam Himalayas.
- The part that extends past the Dihang gorge and bends towards South along the eastern boundary is called the Purvachal or Eastern hills and mountains. It has famous hills like the Patkai Hills, the Naga Hills, the Manipur Hills, and the Mizo Hills, etc.

❖ The Northern Plain

- The interaction of three major rivers- the Indus, the Ganga and the Brahmaputra led to the formation of the Northern Plain. It is the most fertile region of India as it is made-up of alluvial soil.
- Length – 2400 Km.
- Breadth – 240-320 Km.
- The plain is agriculturally a high productive region of India owing to the excellent supply of water and extremely fertile soil.

- The Plain is divided into three segments—
 - The western part of this plain is called the **Punjab Plains** and was created by the river Indus and its tributaries. Its maximum part lies in Pakistan.
 - The second segment is called the **Ganga Plain**. It is the largest segment of the Northern Plain and expands between the Ghagar and the Teesta rivers. It stretches over the states of Northern India, Haryana, Delhi, U.P, Bihar, etc.
 - The third segment is the Eastern part of the Northern Plain called the **Brahmaputra Plain**. It is a flood prone region.
- The Northern plain is divided into four regions on the basis of the soil type –
 - **Bhabar**: (A thin belt of 8-16 Km in width where the rivers from the Himalayas leave the pebbles.
 - **Terai**: Wet and soggy region created by rivers and streams.
 - **Bhangar**: The largest section of the Northern Plain made up of old alluvium.
 - **Khadar**: Contains the younger deposits of the flood plains that are renewed every year, thus making the plain fertile and suitable for agriculture.

❖ The Peninsular Plateau

- Has two divisions- the Central Highlands and the Deccan Plateau.
- **The Central Highlands**
 - Portion of the Peninsular Plateau that lies to the North of the river Narmada and covers a major part of the Malwa Plateau. It binds the Vindhyan Range towards the South.
 - The Western extension of the Central Highlands merges with the desert of Rajasthan.
 - The Eastern expansions of this plateau are called the **Bundelkhand** and the **Baghelkhand** plateaus.
- **The Deccan Plateau**
 - The triangular landmass to the South of river Narmada.
 - It is higher in the West and slopes towards the East.
 - The Northeast expansions of the Deccan Plateau are locally called the Meghalaya, North Cachar Hills and Karbi-Anglong Plateau.
 - The Eastern and Western corners of the Deccan Plateau are called the **Eastern Ghats** and the **Western Ghats, respectively**.

- **The Western Ghats**

- They run parallel to the Western coast of India and are higher than the Eastern Ghats. They can be crossed through passes only.
- The highest peaks in the Western Ghats are Anai Mudi (2,695 metres) and the Doda Betta (2,637 metres).

- **The Eastern Ghats**

- They extend from the Mahanadi valley to the Nilgiris.
- They are not continuous and are irregular.
- At the southeast of the Eastern Ghats are the Shevroy hills and the Javadi Hills, and the highest peak in the Eastern Ghats is Mahendragiri (1501 metres).

- ❖ **The Indian Desert**

- Known as the *Thar* desert.
- Located at the western lines of the Aravali Hills.
- It is covered with sand dunes and has scanty vegetation.
- Streams flow through the desert during rainy seasons, but they soon dry up as the quantity of water is not enough.
- The only large river is the Luni.
Semi circular sand dunes called *Barchans* can be seen near the Indo-Pakistan border.

- ❖ **The Coastal Plains**

- Runs amidst the peninsular plateau and the waterbodies surrounding the country.
- Form the coastal boundry of India.
- They are a thin stretch of fertile land.
- They can be classified into the Western Coastal Plains and the Eastern Coastal Plains.
- **The Western Coastal Plains**
 - Sandwiched between the *Western* Ghats and the Arabian Sea.
 - It is a thin stretch of land divided into three sections.
 - The Northern section of the plain is called the *Konkan Plain*. It runs from Mumbai to Goa.
 - The Central section is called the *Kannad Plain*.
 - The Southern section is the *Malabar Coast*.

- **The Eastern Coastal Plains**

- The plains between the Eastern Ghats and the Bay of Bengal.
- They are broad fertile plains.
- The Northern part it is called the Northern Circar and the Southern part is called the Coromandel Coast.
- Extensive deltas have been formed by rivers like the Godavari, the Mahanadi, the Krishna and the Kaveri.
- Lake Chilika is an important lake on this coast.

- ❖ **The Islands**

- India has two sets of islands in the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal.
- The first set of islands is the **Lakshadweep Islands**. They are located near the Malabar Coast of Kerala in the Arabian Sea.
- The Lakshadweep Islands are made up of little coral islands and covers an area of 32 sq. km only.
- The Kavaratti is the headquarters of the Lakshadweep islands. Lakshadweep is a Union Territory of India.
- With remarkable flora and fauna in Lakshadweep, the Pitti Island which is uninhabited is home to a bird sanctuary.
- The group of islands in the Bay of Bengal, stretching from North to South is the **Andaman and Nicobar islands**.
- Compared to the Lakshadweep islands, these groups of islands are bigger and have more islands.
- The Andaman and Nicobar islands are divided into two sections- the Andaman in the North and the Nicobar in the South.
- With a great variety of flora and fauna, this island group is located near the equator and has dense forests.
- It is also a Union Territory of India.