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**Gist
of**

INDIA

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LAND & THE PEOPLE

India is the seventh largest country in the world with an area of 32,87,263 sq. km and ranks second in population after China.

Lying entirely in the Northern Hemisphere, the mainland extends between latitudes 8°4' and 37°6' north, longitudes 68°7' and 97°25' east and measures about 3,214 km from north to south between the extreme latitudes and about 2,933 km from east to west between the extreme longitudes.

Geographical Background

- Countries having a common border with India are:
 - Afghanistan and Pakistan to the north-west
 - China, Bhutan and Nepal to the north
 - Myanmar to the far east and Bangladesh to the east
- Sri Lanka is separated from India by a narrow channel of sea formed by the Palk Strait and the Gulf of Mannar.
- The country can be divided into six zones, namely north, south, east, west, central and north-east zone. It has 29 states and 7 union territories.

Physical Features

- The mainland comprises four regions, namely, the great mountain zone, plains of the Ganga and the Indus, the desert region and the southern peninsula.
- The Himalayas comprise three almost parallel ranges interspersed with large plateaus and valleys, some of which, like the Kashmir and Kullu valleys, are fertile, extensive and of great scenic beauty.
- Notable passes include Jelep La and Nathu La on the main Indo-Tibet trade route through the Chumbi valley, north-east of Darjeeling and Shipki La in the Satluj valley, north-east of Kalpa (Kinnaur).
- In the east, between India and Myanmar and India and Bangladesh, hill ranges are much lower. Garo, Khasi, Jaintia and Naga Hills, running almost east-west, join the chain to Mizo and Rakhine Hills running north-south.
- The plains of the Ganga and the Indus are formed by basins of three distinct river systems-the Indus, the Ganga and the Brahmaputra. They are one of the world's greatest stretches of flat alluvium and also one of the most densely populated areas on the earth.
- The desert region can be divided into 2 parts-the 'great desert', which extends from the edge of the Rann of Kutch beyond the Luni river northward, and the 'little desert', which extends from the Luni between Jaisalmer and Jodhpur up to the north west.
- The Peninsular Plateau is marked off from the plains of the Ganga and the Indus by a mass of mountain and hill ranges, like Aravali, Vindhya, Satpura, Maikala and Ajanta. The Peninsula is flanked on the one side by the Eastern Ghats where the average elevation is about 610 metres and on the other by the Western Ghats where it is generally from 915 to 1,220 metres.



- Between the Western Ghats and the Arabian Sea lies a narrow coastal strip, while between the Eastern Ghats and the Bay of Bengal, there is a broader coastal area.
- The southern point of the plateau is formed by the Nilgiri Hills, where the Eastern and the Western Ghats meet.
- The Cardamom Hills lying beyond may be regarded as a continuation of the Western Ghats.

Geological Structure

- The geological regions can be grouped into three regions: the Himalayas and their associated group of mountains, the Indo-Gangetic Plain and the Peninsular Shield.
- The Himalayan mountain belt to the north and the Naga-Lushai Mountain in the east, are the regions of mountain-building movement.
- The Indo-Ganga plains are a great alluvial tract that separates the Himalayas in the north from the Peninsula in the south.
- The Peninsula is a region of relative stability and occasional seismic disturbances. Highly metamorphosed rocks of the earliest periods occur in this area; the rest being covered by the Gondwana formations, lava flows belonging to the Deccan Trap formation and younger sediments.

River Systems

The river systems of India can be classified into four groups: (i) Himalayan rivers, (ii) Deccan rivers, (iii) Coastal rivers, (iv) Rivers of the inland drainage basin.

Himalayan Rivers

- The Himalayan Rivers are formed by melting snow and glaciers and therefore, continuously flow throughout the year.
- During the monsoon months, Himalayas receive very heavy rainfall and rivers swell, causing frequent floods.
- The main Himalayan river systems are those of the Indus and the Ganga-Brahmaputra-Meghna system.

Indus River System

- The Indus rises near Mansarovar in Tibet and flows through India and thereafter through Pakistan. The Indus receives a number of Himalayan tributaries such as the Shyok, the Gilgit, the Zaskar, the Hunza, the Nubra, the Shigar, the Gasting and the Dras. It finally emerges out of the hills near Attock where it receives the Kabul river on its right bank.
- The other important tributaries joining the right bank of the Indus are the Khurram, the Tochi, the Gomai, the Vibia and the Sangar. They all originate in the Sulaiman ranges.
- The river flows southward and receives 'Panjnad' a little above Mithankot. The Panjnad is the name given to the five rivers of Punjab, namely the Satluj, the Beas, the Ravi, the Chenab and the Jhelum. It finally discharges into the Arabian Sea, east of Karachi. The Indus flows in India through the Leh district in Jammu and Kashmir.



Indus River System

- The Indus, which is one of the great rivers of the world, rises near Mansarovar in Tibet and flows through India and thereafter through Pakistan and finally falls into the Arabian sea near Karachi.
- Its important tributaries flowing in Indian territory are the Sutlej (originating in Tibet), the Beas, the Ravi, the Chenab and the Jhelum.

Ganga-Brahmaputra-Meghna River System

- The principal sub-basins of this river system are Bhagirathi and the Alaknanda, which join at Dev Prayag to form the Ganga.
- The Ganga traverses through Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal. Below Rajmahal Hills, the Bhagirathi, which used to be the main course in the past, takes off, while the Padma continues eastward and enters Bangladesh.
- The Yamuna, the Ramganga, the Ghaghra, the Gandak, the Kosi, the Mahananda and the Son are the important tributaries of the Ganga.
- Rivers Chambal and Betwa are the important sub-tributaries, which join the Yamuna before it meets the Ganga.
- The Padma and the Brahmaputra join at Bangladesh and continue to flow as the Padma or Ganga.
- The Brahmaputra rises in Tibet, where it is known as Tsangpo and runs a long distance till it crosses over into India in Arunachal Pradesh under the name of Dihang.
- Near Passighat, the Debang and Lohit join the river Brahmaputra and the combined river runs all along the Assam valley. It crosses into Bangladesh downstream of Dhubri.
- The principal tributaries of Brahmaputra in India are the Subansiri, Jia Bhareli, Dhansiri, Puthimari, Pagladiya and the Manas. The Brahmaputra in Bangladesh fed by Teesta, etc. finally falls into the Ganga.
- The Barak river, the head stream of Meghna, rises in the hills in Manipur. The important tributaries of the river are Makku, Trang, Tuivai, Jiri, Sonai, Rukni, Katakhal, Dhaleswari, Langachini, Maduva and Jatinga. Barak continues in Bangladesh till the combined Ganga-Brahmaputra join it near Bhairab Bazar.

Ganga-Brahmaputra-Meghna River System

- The principal sub-basins of this river system are Bhagirathi and the Alaknanda, which join at Dev Prayag to form the Ganga.
- The Ganga is the most important river of India. It rises in the Gangotri glacier near Gaumukh) in the Uttarkashi district of Uttarakhand. Here, it is known as the Bhagirathi. It cuts through the Central and the Lesser Himalayas in narrow gorges. At Devprayag, the Bhagirathi meets the Alaknanda; hereafter, it is known as the Ganga.
- The Alaknanda has its source in the Satopanth glacier above Badrinath. The Alaknanda consists of the Dhauli and the Vishnu Ganga which meet at Joshimath or Vishnu Prayag. The other tributaries of Alaknanda such as the Pindar join it at Karna Prayag while Mandakini or Kali Ganga meets it at Rudra Prayag.

Place	Confluence of Rivers
Devaprayag	Bhagirathi + Alaknanda
Rudraprayag	Mandakini + Alaknanda
Karnaprayag	Pindar + Alaknanda
Vishnuprayag	Dhauliganga + Alaknanda

- The Ganga enters the plains at Haridwar. From here, it flows first to the south, then to the southeast and east before splitting into two distributaries, namely the Bhagirathi and the Hugli. The main stream flows southwards into Bangladesh as
- Padma and is joined by the Brahmaputra at Goalundo and after meeting Meghna it enters into the Bay of Bengal. They make the World's largest delta covered by dense forests called Sundarbans.
- The Sone is its major right bank tributary. The important left bank tributaries are the Ramganga, the Gomati, the Ghaghara, the Gandak, the Kosi and the Mahananda.

Deccan Rivers

- The Deccan rivers are rain-fed and therefore fluctuate in volume. Many of these are non-perennial.
- In the Deccan region, most of the major river systems flowing generally in the east fall into the Bay of Bengal.
- The major east flowing rivers are Godavari, Krishna, Cauvery and Mahanadi. Narmada and Tapi are major west flowing rivers.
- The Godavari in the southern Peninsula has the second largest river basin covering 10% of the area of India. Next to it is the Krishna basin in the region and the Mahanadi is another large basin of the region.
- The basins of the Narmada in the uplands of the Deccan, flowing to the Arabian Sea and that of the Cauvery in the south, falling into the Bay of Bengal are about the same size, though with different character and shape.

Coastal Rivers

- The Coastal streams, especially on the west coast are short in length and have limited catchment areas. Most of them are non-perennial.
- While only handful of such rivers drains into the sea near the delta of the east coast, there are as many as 600 such rivers on the west coast.

Rivers of the Inland Drainage Basin

- The streams of the inland drainage basin of western Rajasthan are mostly of an ephemeral character.
- A few rivers in Rajasthan do not drain into the sea. They drain into salt lakes and get lost in sand with no outlet to the sea.
- Besides these, there are the desert rivers which flow for some distance and are lost in the desert. These are Luni, Machhu, Rupen, Saraswati, Banas, Ghaggar and others.
- The entire country has been divided into 20 river basins/group (12 major basins and 8 composite river basins).
- Major river basins have a drainage area exceeding 20,000 sq km.
- 12 major river basins are: Indus, Ganga-Brahmaputra-Meghna, Godavari, Krishna, Cauvery, Mahanadi, Pennar, Brahmani-Baitarani, Sabarmati, Mahi, Narmada and Tapi.
- Medium river basins have a drainage area of 2,000 to 20,000 sq km.
- 8 composite river basins are: Subarnarekha—combining Subarnarekha and other small rivers between Subarnarekha and Baitarani; east flowing rivers between Mahanadi and



Pennar; east flowing rivers between Pennar and Kanyakumari; area of Inland drainage in Rajasthan desert; west flowing rivers of Kutch and Saurashtra including Luni; west flowing rivers from Tapi to Tadri; west flowing rivers from Tadri to Kanyakumari and minor rivers draining into Myanmar (Burma) and Bangladesh.

- Minor river basins have a drainage area of 2000 sq km and below.

Climate/Seasons

- The climate of India may be broadly described as a tropical monsoon type.
- The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) designates the 4 following official seasons:
 - Winter, from December to early April. The year's coldest months are December and January, when temperatures average around 10-15 °C in the north-west; temperatures rise as one proceeds towards the equator, peaking around 20-25 °C in mainland India's southeast.
 - Summer or pre-monsoon season, lasting from April to June (April to July in north-western India). In western and southern regions, the hottest month is April; for northern regions, May is the hottest month. Temperatures average around 32-40°C in most of the interior.
 - Monsoon or rainy season, lasting from June to September. The season is dominated by the humid southwest summer monsoon, which slowly sweeps across the country beginning in late May or early June. Monsoon rains begin to recede from North India at the beginning of October.
 - Post-monsoon season, lasting from October to December. In northwestern India, October and November are usually cloudless.
- The Himalayan states, being more temperate, experience two additional seasons: autumn and spring.
- Traditionally, Indians note six seasons, each about two months long. These are the spring, summer, monsoon, early autumn, late autumn and winter.
- India's climate is affected by two seasonal winds – the north-east monsoon and the south-west monsoon.
- The north-east monsoon commonly known as winter monsoon blows from land to sea, whereas south-west monsoon known as the summer monsoon blows from sea to land after crossing the Indian ocean, the Arabian sea and the Bay of Bengal.
- The south-west monsoon brings most of the rainfall during the year in the country.

Flora

- India is in the tenth position in the world and fourth in Asia in plant diversity.
- India can be divided into eight distinct floral regions, namely, the western Himalayas, the eastern Himalayas, Assam, the Indus plain, the Ganga plain, the Deccan, the Malabar and the Andamans.
- The western Himalayan region extends from Kashmir to Kumaon. Its temperate zone is rich in forests of chir, pine, other conifers and broad-leaved temperate trees.
- Higher up, forests of deodar, blue pine, spruce and silver fir occur. The alpine zone extends from the upper limit of the temperate zone of about 4,750 metres or even higher.
- The characteristic trees of this zone are high-level silver fir, silver birch and junipers.

- The eastern Himalayan region extends from Sikkim eastwards and embraces Darjeeling, Kurseong and the adjacent tracts. The temperate zone has forests of oaks, laurels, maples, rhododendrons, alder and birch. Many conifers, junipers and dwarf willows also grow here.
- The Assam region comprises the Brahmaputra and the Surma valleys with evergreen forests, occasional thick clumps of bamboos and tall grasses.
- The Indus plain region comprises the plains of Punjab, western Rajasthan and northern Gujarat. It is dry, hot and supports natural vegetation.
- The Ganga plain region covers the area which is alluvial plain and is under cultivation of wheat, sugarcane and rice. Only small areas support forests of widely differing types.
- The Deccan region comprises the entire table land of the Indian Peninsula and supports vegetation of various kinds from shrub jungles to mixed deciduous forests.
- The Malabar region covers the excessively humid belt of mountain country parallel to the west coast of the Peninsula. Besides being rich in forest vegetation, this region produces important commercial crops, such as coconut, betel nut, pepper, coffee, tea, rubber and cashew nut.
- The Andaman region abounds in evergreen, mangrove, beach and diluvial forests.
- The Himalayan region extending from Kashmir to Arunachal Pradesh through Sikkim, Meghalaya and Nagaland and the Deccan Peninsula are rich in endemic flora, with a large number of plants which are not found elsewhere.
- The flora of the country is being studied by BSI and its nine circle/field offices located all over the country along with certain universities and research institutions.
- Ethno-botanical study deals with the utilization of plants and plant products by ethnic races. A scientific study of such plants has been done by BSI.
- Owing to the destruction of forests for agricultural, industrial and urban development, several Indian plants are facing threat of extinction. About 1,336 plant species are considered vulnerable and endangered.
- About 20 species of higher plants are categorized as possibly extinct, as these have not been sighted during the last six to ten decades.
- BSI brings out an inventory of endangered plants in the form of a publication titled 'Red Data Book.'

Fauna

- India is very rich in terms of biological diversity due to its unique biogeographical location, diversified climatic conditions and enormous ecodiversity and geodiversity.
- This diversity can be attributed to the vast variety in physiography and climatic situations resulting in a diversity of ecological habitats ranging from tropical, sub-tropical, temperate, alpine to desert.
- According to the World biogeographic classification, India represents two of the major realms (the Palearctic and Indo-Malayan) and three biomes (Tropical Humid Forests, Tropical Dry/Deciduous Forests and Warm Deserts/Semi-Deserts).
- The Wildlife Institute of India has proposed a modified classification which divides the country into ten biogeographic regions: Trans-Himalaya, Himalayan, Indian Desert, Semi-Arid, Western Ghats, Deccan Peninsula, the Gangetic Plain, and North-East India, Islands and Coasts.



- With only about 2% of the world's total land surface, India is known to have over 7.50% of the species of animals that the world holds.

Demographic Background

Census

- Census 2011 was the 15th census of its kind since 1872. It was held in two phases: House Listing and Housing Census and Population Enumeration.
- Reference Date was 00:00 hour of March 1st, 2011.
- The Final Population data was released on April 30th, 2013.

Population

- India accounts for a meagre 2.4% of the world surface area, but sustains a whopping of about 17% of the world population.
- The population of India as recorded at each decennial census from 1901 has grown steadily except for a decrease during 1911-21.

Population Density

- One of the important indices of population concentration is the density of population.
- It is defined as the number of persons per sq. km.
- The population density of India in 2011 was 382 per sq. km-decadal growth being 17.72%.
- The density of population increased in all states and union territories between 1991 and 2011.
- Among major states, Bihar is the most thickly populated followed by West Bengal and then Kerala.

Sex Ratio

- The Sex ratio is defined as the number of females per thousand males.
- It was 972 at the beginning of the twentieth century and thereafter showed continuous decline until 1941.
- The sex ratio from 1901 to 2011 has registered a 10 point increase at census 2011 over 2001; however, the child sex ratio has declined to 919 per thousand males.

Literacy

- For the purpose of census 2011, a person aged 7 and above, who can both read and write with understanding in any language, is treated as literate.
- A person, who can only read but cannot write, is not literate. In the censuses prior to 1991, children below 5 years of age were necessarily treated as illiterates.
- According to 2011 census literacy has increased in the country. The literacy rate in the country is 73.0% (80.9% for males and 64.6% for females).
- Kerala has the highest literacy rate of 94%, closely followed by Lakshadweep (91.9%). Bihar with a literacy rate of 61.8% ranks last in the country.
- Kerala also has the highest male (96.1 %) and female (92.1%) literacy rate.
- Bihar has the lowest literacy rates both in case of males (71.2%) and females (51.5%).

