

CHAPTER – 2

PHYSICAL FEATURES OF INDIA

We learn about the following in this chapter:

- *India's physical features*
- *India's Geographical divisions*
- *Highest mountains, hills, plains and coastal lines.*

India has different types of relief features. These are found in different parts of the country. Their history dates back to different Geological periods and there are differences in the structure and surface features. Based on these differences, the country is divided into four major divisions:

1. Northern Mountains :

The Himalayan mountain the highest in the world and consists of 6 highest peaks, deep valleys, Glaciers rivers etc. The Himalayan range begins at the Pamir Knot in the west and extends upto Arunachala pradesh in the east. It is about 2500 kms in length. These folded mountain ranges are three main ranges: 1.Siwalik mountains (foothills of Himalaya) 2. The Himachal (middle Himalaya) 3.The Greater Himalayas (Himadri)

a) Siwalik Range : These hills are the most recent formations and are located in the southern part. They have lesser height. They are also called 'the Foothills' of the Himalayas. These hills have narrow strips of plains or valleys which are called "Dunes". For example. Dehradune, Kota, Patli and chaukhamba Udhampur and Kotli. These are about 600-1500 meters above the sea level.

b) The Himachal (Middle Himalaya) (central) : They are about 3600 meters to 4500 meters in height and are located between Siwalik and the Greater Himalayas. They are about 60-80 kms in width. The lesser Himalayas consist are many parallel mountain ranges. For ex.Pir Panjal, Mahabharath range, Nagtibba, Mussoorie, etc. Kangra and Kulu are the famous valleys. Shimla, Mussorie, Nainital, Ranikhet, Chakrata and Darjeeling are the well known hill stations.

c) Greater Himalayas (Himadri) : These are known for the highest peaks of the Himalayas and the earlier formed ranges of the Himalayas. This range is completely covered with snow. Hence it is called 'Himadri' (abode of snow). This is about 6000 meters to 8000 meters above sea level. The highest peak, 'Mount Everest' (8848 meters) lies between Nepal and Tibet. Other peaks of this range are Kanchenjunga, Dhawalagiri, Nanda Devi, Gaurishankara etc. These peaks have many of glaciers, the most famous among them being Gangotri it is the origin of river Ganga. There are many passes which not only provide transport facilities but are also excellent tourist attractions. They are Kashmir's Burzil, Zojila, Baralacha of Himachal Pradesh.

The range of fold mountains lying to the north of the Greater Himalayas is called 'trans Himalayas'. This consists of Karakoram range and Kailash range, Godwin Austin or K2 is the highest peak in India (8611 mts). Ladakh plateau is also lies in this region.

Importance of the Himalayas: The Himalayan mountains have influenced the life of Indians to a great extent. They provide protection to India, by obstructing the cold winds from the Siberian regions. They are the birth-place of many rivers. They facilitate hydro-electric power generation. They are the home to many types of plants and animals. They are a great treasure-house of minerals, and are also significant for tourism and religious centers.

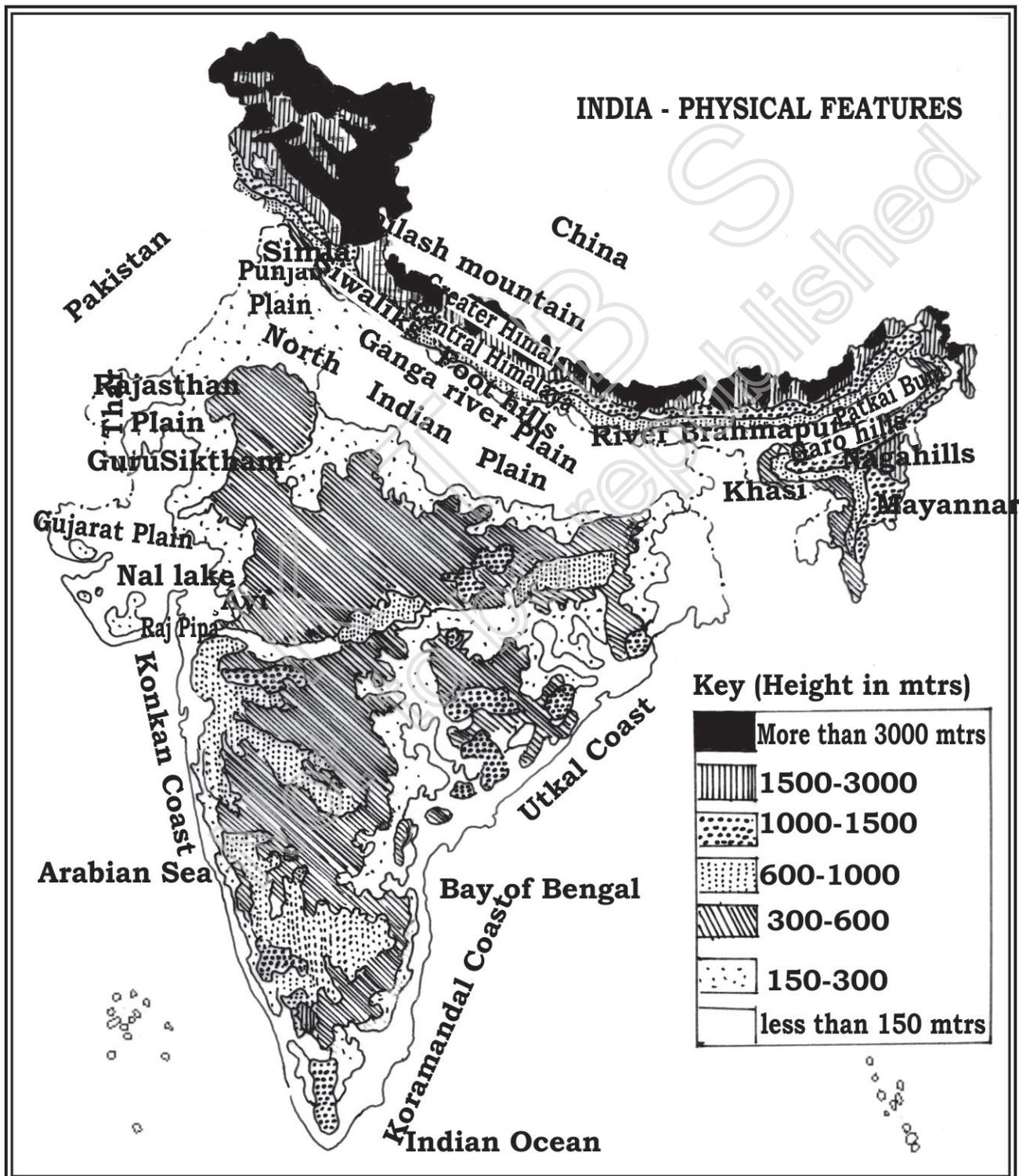
2. Northern great plain :

The Great Plains of the North are also called 'Sutlej-Ganga plains'. They are found between the Himalayan Mountains of the north and the Peninsular Plateau in the south. These plains stretch from the plains of the river Indus in the west to the Brahmaputra valley in the east. Their breadth is around 2400 kms whereas the width is 70 km to 500 kms. This area has the least variation in height and is completely flat. The entire plain is formed by the deposition of alluvial soils brought by the rivers which rise in the Himalayas.

Do you know this?

Babar, Bhangar and Khadar: When the Himalayan rivers enter the plains, they deposit of rock there. These are called 'Babar'. The area with loamy soil deposited of the ancient times is called 'Bhangar'. The loamy soil formed in recent times is called 'Khadar'.

3. Peninsular Plateau: The Peninsular Plateau is the largest of all physiographic divisions of India. Moreover, it is the most ancient, and is a part of the Gondwana landmass which existed in the early stages of the earth.



The Peninsular plateau is the largest of all physical divisions of India. Moreover, according to Earth History it is the oldest and according to Geoscientist is part of the Gondwana landmass which existed in the early stages of the earth.

The Peninsular Plateau stretches from the south of the Sutlej-Ganga plains upto the Indian ocean in the south. Its total area is around 16 lakh sq.km. It stretches from the Aravalli mountains in the north to Kanyakumari in the south. It extends approximately 1400 kms. from the Western Ghats in the west to the Rajmahal hills of Jharkhand in the east. This peninsular Plateau is in the form of a triangular shape being broad in the north and narrow towards the south. It is bounded by the Arabian Sea in the west, Bay of Bengal in the east and the Indian ocean in the south.

In the North of Peninsular Plateau, we find mainly the Vindhya mountains, Satpura hills, Malwa plateau, Chotanagpur plateau and rivers like the Narmada, Tapti and Damodar flow amidst these, along with many small rivers. All these are together to the north of Narmada referred to as the 'Central Plateau'. To the south of these, there is the Deccan Plateau. Mahadev and Maikhal ranges, Amarakantak hills, Rajmahal hills are to the north of Deccan plateau. To the west of the Deccan Plateau, there are the Western Ghats. In Maharashtra and Karnataka, these are referred to as 'Sahyadri'. 'Anaimudi' peak (2665 meters) in Annamalai range is the highest peak in South India. To the east of the Deccan Plateau, there are the Eastern Ghats. They meet the Western Ghats in the Nilgiri hills. The Eastern Ghats are not very high or continuous. In the Eastern Ghats, Armaconda and Mahendragiri are the highest peaks. These Ghats are separated by river valleys here and there.

The Peninsular Plateau has great economic significance. The reason for this is that it has rich deposits of minerals. As the rivers have many forms of waterfalls, the best suited for the production of hydro-electricity.

4. Coastal Plains : Apart from the islands, India has a coastline of 6100 kms. Starting from the Kutch region of Gujarat, the coastline extends upto Gangetic river basin in the east. The narrow plain along the coast is called the coastal plain. The Indian coastline is divided into West coast and East coast.

The West coast spreads from Kutch of Gujarat in the north between the Arabian sea and the Western Ghats upto the Cape of Kanyakumari in the south. It is 1500 kms long. This is further divided into Malabar coast, Karnataka coast, Konkan Coast in Goa and Maharashtra coast and Gujarat coast. Mumbai, Mormugoa, Cochin, Kandla, Karwar and Mangalore are the major ports of this coast. The Eastern coastal plains extends from Kanyakumari in the south to the Gangetic river in the north. The East coast is located between the Bay of Bengal and the Eastern Ghats. This coastline is very wide and flat. It comprises the deltas of Mahanadi, Godavari, Krishna and Cauvery rivers. In the east coast, there are some salty, brackish-water lakes or lagoons. Chilka lake of Orissa and Pulicat lake of Tamil Nadu are the important. The east coast is divided into Utkal coast in the north and Coromandel coast in the south.

Islands: There are totally 247 islands belonging to India. Of them, 204 are in the Bay of Bengal and 43 are in the Arabian Sea. In the Gulf of Mannar, there are a few coral islands. Andaman and Nicobar islands in the Bay of Bengal are formed from hard volcanic rocks. Lakshadweep islands are coral islands. India's extreme southern tip is located in the great Nicobar island. This is called Indira Point.

EXERCISES

I Fill in the blanks with suitable words:

1. India Land form _____ major divisions.
2. Greater Himalaya is also called _____.

3. The highest mountain peak in the world is _____ .
4. The North Indian plain is made up of _____ soil.
5. The Western Ghats in Karnataka are also called _____.

II Answer the following after discussing them in groups:

1. What is the other name for the foothills of the Himalayas?
2. Which is the recently-formed landmass in India.
3. What are the advantages of Himalayas ?
4. Explain the extend of peninsular pleatu?
5. Write about the Shivalik range.
6. The Northern plains are called deposited plains. Why?

III Activities :

1. Draw a map of India and mark major mountain ranges, the Eastern and Western Ghats.
2. Stare your experience with your teacher, about the travel in the Ghat section (towards Mangalore and Dharmasthala.

IV Project :

Collect the information, National diversity in Western ghats and central plains of Karnatka.

