



7th – Human Environment- Tropical & Sub Tropical Areas

Life in the Amazon Basin: The tropical region lies very close to the equator; between 10°N and 10°S. It is referred to as the equatorial region. The river Amazon flows through this region. It flows from the mountain to the west and reaches the Atlantic Ocean to the east. The place where a river flows into another body of water is called the river's mouth. Numerous tributaries join the Amazon River to form the Amazon basin. The river basin drains portions of Brazil, parts of Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, Columbia and a small part of Venezuela.

Climate: The Amazon's basin stretches directly on the equator and is characterized by hot and wet climate throughout the year. Both day and nights are almost equally hot and humid. It rains almost every day, that too without much warning. The day temperatures are high with very high humidity. At night the temperature goes down but the humidity remains high.

Rainforests: As it rains heavily in this region, thick forests grow. The forests are in fact so thick that the dense "roof" created by leaves and branches does not allow the sunlight to reach the ground. The ground remains dark and damp. Only shade tolerant vegetation may grow here, orchids, bromeliads grow as plant parasites.

Animal life: The rainforest is rich in fauna. Birds such as toucans, humming birds, bird of paradise with their brilliantly colored plumage, oversized bills for eating make them different from birds we commonly see in India. Animals like monkeys, sloth and anti-eating tapirs are found here. Various species of reptiles and snakes also thrive in these jungles. Crocodiles, snakes, pythons abound. Anaconda and boa constrictor are some of the species. Several species of fishes including the flesh-eating piranha fish is also found in the river. This basin is thus extraordinarily rich in the variety of life found there.

People of the Rainforests: People grow most of their food in small areas after clearing some tress in the forest. While men hunt and fish along the rivers, women take care of the crops. They mainly grow tapioca, pineapple and sweet potato. As hunting and fishing are uncertain it is the women who keep their families alive by feeding them the vegetables they grow. They practice "slash and burn agriculture". The staple food is manioc, also known as cassava that grows under the ground like the potato. They also eat queen ants and egg sacs. Cash crops like coffee, maize and cocoa are also grown.

The rainforest provide a lot of wood for the houses. Some families live in thatched house shaped like beehives. There are other large apartment-like houses called "Maloca" with a steeply slanting roof.

Impact of Development: Life of the people of the Amazon basin is slowly changing. The development activities are leading to the gradual destruction of the biologically diverse rainforests. It is estimated that a large area of the rainforest has been disappearing annually in the Amazon basin. The topsoil is washed away as the rains fall and the lush forest turns into a barren landscape.

Life in the Ganga- Brahmaputra Basin: The tributaries of rivers Ganga and Brahmaputra together form the Ganga- Brahmaputra basin in the Indian subcontinent. The basin lies in the sub- tropical region that is situated between 10°N to 30°N latitudes. The Ganga has its source at Gaumukh in the Gangotri glacier. It enters the plains at Haridwar and flows eastwards. The tributaries of the river Ganga like the Ghaghara, the son, the Chambal, the Gandak, the Kosi and the tributaries of Brahmaputra drain it.

The Brahmaputra originates near the glacial lake Manasarovar in Tibet. It is a river with many names. In Tibet, it is known as Tsang-Po. It flows eastwards and then, cutting through a narrow deep gorge, takes a sharp turn (south-west) into Arunachal Pradesh. Here it is known as Dihang. It is known as the Brahmaputra in Arunachal Pradesh and Assam, through which flows further. In Bangladesh the river is known as Jamuna. The river formed by the joining of the Ganga and the Brahmaputra is called Padma. The plains of the Ganga and the Brahmaputra, the mountains and the foothills of the Himalayas and the sunder bans delta are the



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main features of this basin. The monsoon brings rains from mid-June to mid-September. The summers are hot and winters are cool.

Climate : The summers are very hot and winters are warm and mild. However in the landlocked regions of the western and central Ganga Basin the winters are reasonably cold. It experiences well above 200cm of rainfall a year. The south-west monsoon winds bring rain to this region between June and mid-September. The basin area has varied topography. The mountain areas with steep slopes have inhospitable terrain. Therefore less number of people lives in the mountain area of the Ganga-Brahmaputra basin. The plain area provides the most suitable land for human inhabitation.

Agriculture is the main occupation of the people where flat land is available to grow crops. The main crop is paddy. Since cultivation of paddy requires sufficient water, it is grown in the areas where the amount of rainfall is high. Wheat, maize, sorghum, gram and millets are the other crops that are grown. Cash crops like sugarcane and jute are also grown. Banana plantations are seen in the some areas of the plain. In west Bengal and Assam tea is grown in plantations. Silk is produced through the cultivation of silk worms in parts of Bihar and Assam. In the mountain and hills, where the slopes are gentle, crops are grown on terraces.

Natural vegetation : In the Ganga and Brahmaputra plain tropical deciduous trees grow, along with teak, Sal and peepal. Thick bamboo groves are common in the Brahmaputra plain. The delta area is covered with the mangrove forests. In parts of Uttarakhand, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh, coniferous trees like pine, deodar and fir can be seen because the climate is cool and the slopes are steep.

There is a variety of wildlife in the basin. Elephants, tigers, deer and monkeys are common. The one-horned rhinoceros is found in the Brahmaputra plain. In the delta area, Bengal tiger, crocodiles and alligator are found. Aquatic life abounds in the fresh river waters, the lakes and the Bay of Bengal Sea. The most popular varieties of the fish are the rohu, catla and hilsa. Fish and rice is the staple diet of the people living in the area.

The Ganga-Brahmaputra plain has several big towns and cities. The wastewater from these towns and industries is discharged into the rivers. This leads to the pollution of the rivers. All the four ways of transport are well developed in the Ganga- Brahmaputra basin. In the plain areas the roadways and railways transport the people from one place to another. The waterways, is an effective means of transport particularly along the rivers. Kolkata is an important port on the River Hooghly. The plain area also has a large number of airport. Tourism is another important activity of the basin. Taj Mahal on the banks of river Yamuna in Agra, Allahabad on the confluence of the rivers Ganga and Yamuna, Buddhists stupas in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, Lucknow with its Imambara, Assam with Kaziranga and Manas with wild life sanctuaries and Arunachal Pradesh with a distinct tribal cultures are some of the places are worth a visit.