

6th – Our Country India I



India is a country of vast geographical expanse. In the north, it is bound by the lofty Himalayas. The Arabian Sea in the west, the Bay of Bengal in the east and the Indian Ocean in the south, wash the shores of the Indian peninsula.

India has an area of about 3.28 million sq. km. The north-south extent from Kashmir to Kanya Kumari is about 3,200 km. And the east-west extent from Arunachal Pradesh to Kuchchh is about 2,900 km. The lofty mountains, the Great Indian Desert, the northern plains, the uneven plateau surface and the coasts and islands present a diversity of landforms.

India is a **peninsula**. A peninsula is a land surrounded by water on three sides. India is bounded by the Himalayas in the north, the Indian Ocean in the south, the Arabian Sea in the west and the Bay of Bengal in the east.

Locational setting

India is located in the northern hemisphere. The tropic of cancer passes almost halfway through the country. From south to north, main land of India extends between 8°4'N and 37°6'N latitudes.

From west to east, India extends between 68° 7'E and 97° 25'E longitudes. Due to great longitudinal extent of about 29°, there could be wide differences in local time of places located at two extreme points of India. As such, the difference between these two points would be of about two hours.

The local time changes by four minutes for every one degree of longitude. The sun rises about two hours earlier in the east (Arunachal Pradesh) than in the west (Gujarat). The local time of longitude of 82°30'E has been taken as the Indian standard time. This meridian or longitude is also termed as the standard meridian of India.

India's Neighbours

There are seven countries that share land boundaries with India. Across the sea to the south, lie our island neighbours- Srilanka and Maldives. Sri Lanka is separated from India by the Palk Strait. We have Pakistan and Afghanistan on the north-west and Bangladesh and Myanmar on the north-east. In the North, we share the boundary with China, Nepal and Bhutan.

Political and Administrative Divisions

India is a vast country. For administrative purposes, the country is divided into 29 states and 7 union territories. Delhi is the national capital. The states have been formed mainly on the basis of languages. Rajasthan is the largest state and Goa is the smallest state in terms of area. The states are further divided into districts.

Physical divisions

India is marked by a diversity of physical features such as mountains, plateaus, plains, coasts and islands. Standing as sentinels in the north are the lofty snow-capped Himalayas. The Himalayas Mountains are divided into three main parallel ranges. The northernmost is the great Himalaya or Himadri.

The world's highest peaks are located in this range. Middle Himalaya or Himachal lies to the south of Himadri. The Shiwalik is the southernmost range. The northern Indian plains lie to the south of the Himalayas. They are generally level and flat.

These are formed by the alluvial deposits laid down by the rivers-the Indus, the Ganga, the Brahmaputra and their tributaries. In the western part of India lies the Great Indian Desert. It is dry, hot and sandy stretch of land. It has very little vegetation. To the south of northern plains lies the peninsular plateau. It is triangular in shape. Aravali hills, one of the oldest ranges of the world, border it on the north-west side. The Vindhyas and the Satpuras are the important ranges. The rivers Narmada and Tapi flow through these



ranges. These are west-flowing rivers that drain into the Arabian Sea. The Western Ghats or Sahyadris border the plateau in the west and the Eastern Ghats provide the eastern boundary. While the Western Ghats are almost continuous, the Eastern Ghats are broken and uneven. The plateau is rich in minerals like coal and iron- ore.

- To the west of the West Ghats and the east of Eastern Ghats lie the coastal plains. The western coastal plains are very narrow. The eastern coastal plains are much broader. There are a number of east flowing rivers. The rivers Mahanadi, Godavari, Krishna and Kaveri drain into the Bay of Bengal. These rivers have formed fertile deltas at their mouth. The sunder ban delta is formed where the Ganga and Brahmaputra flow into the Bay of Bengal.

- Two groups of islands also form part of India. Lakshadweep islands are located in the Arabian Sea. These are coral islands located off the coast of Kerala. The Andaman and the Nicobar Islands lie to the southeast of the Indian mainland in the Bay of Bengal.

Physical Divisions of India

- Geographers usually divide India into Six major physical divisions.

1. The Great Northern Mountains
2. The Northern Plains
3. The Peninsular Plateau
4. The Thar Desert or the Great Indian Desert
5. The Coastal Plains
6. The Island

The Great Northern Mountains

- The Northern Mountains consist of the **Trans- Himalayan Ranges and Himalayan Ranges.**

The Trans- Himalayan Ranges

- The Trans- Himalayan Ranges are a series of towering mountain chain that originate from the Pamir Knot. The Pamir, a plateau, is also known as the ‘roof of the world’. These range lie to the north of the Himalayas and have an average height of 6000m. Of the various Trans-Himalayan Ranges that radiate out of the Pamir Knot, the ones that lie in India are the Karakoram Range, the Ladakh Range and the Zaskar Range.

- The **Karakoram** is the northernmost mountain range of India. The highest peak of this range is **Mt K2 or Godwin –Austin** (8611m) (this region now lies in POK or Pakistan Occupied Kashmir). The **Ladakh and Zaskar Ranges** cut across Jammu and Kashmir from the north-east to the south-east.

