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State Civil Services

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Volume - 2

GEOGRAPHY OF INDIA



TAMILNADU PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

GEOGRAPHY OF INDIA

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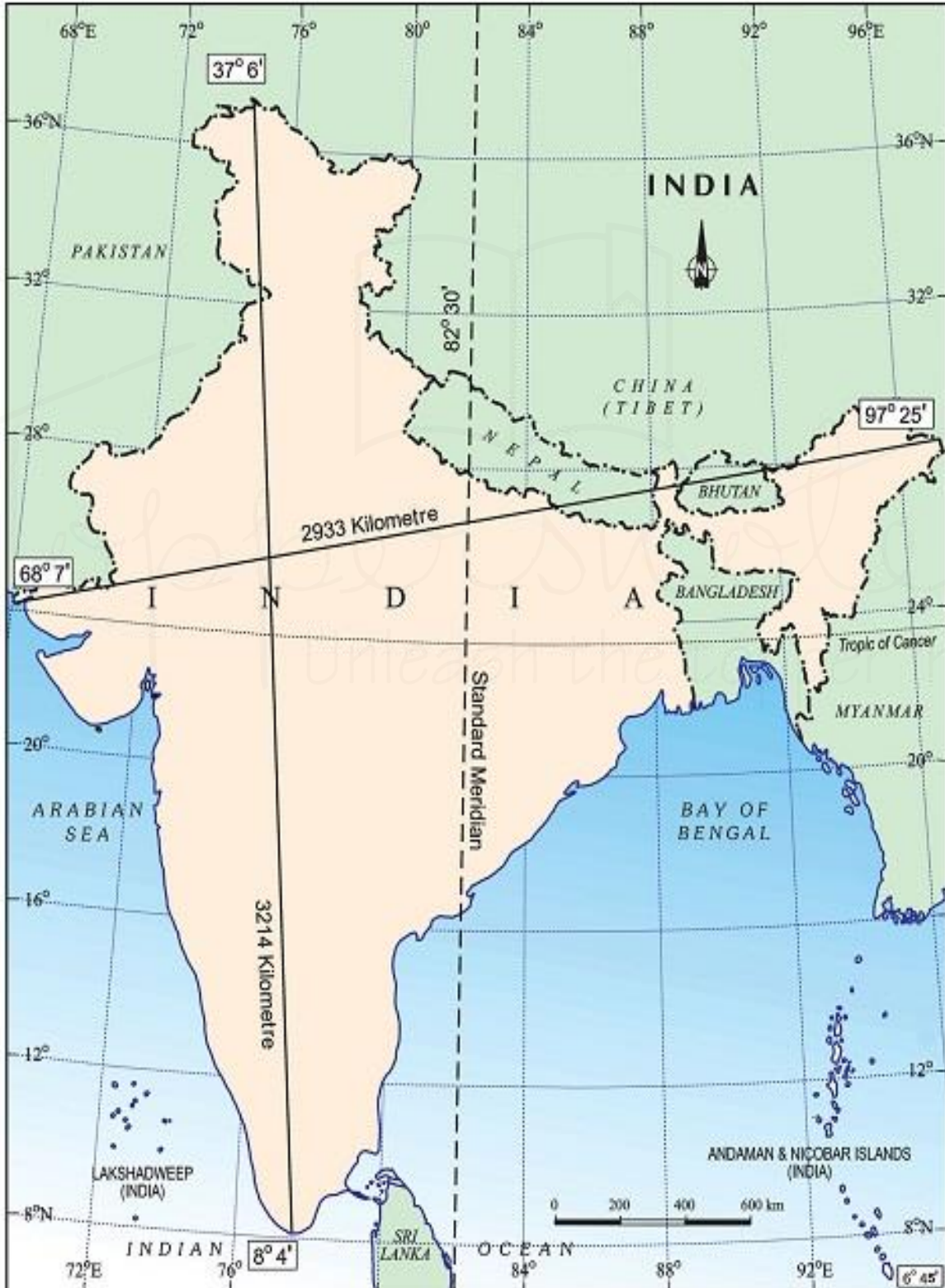
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1

CHAPTER

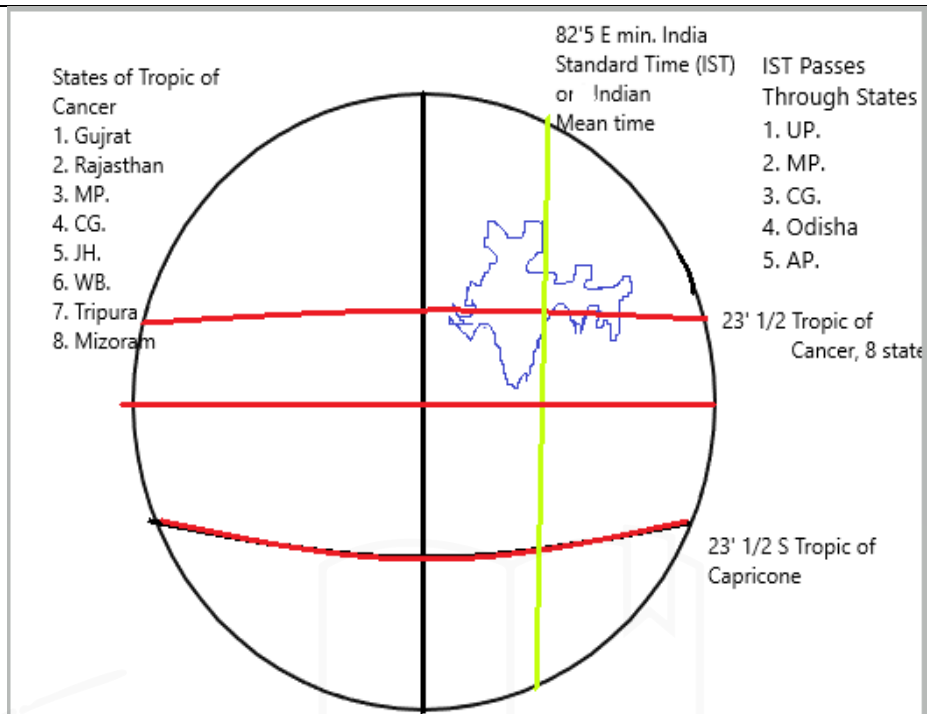
Location

India - Size & Location



- Situated in the **northern hemisphere (8°4'N to 37°6'N and 68°7'E to 97°25'E)**
- **Bounded by**
 - **North:** the Great Himalayas
 - **West:** Arabian Sea
 - **East:** Bay of Bengal
 - **South:** the Indian Ocean.
- **7th largest country** in the world.
- **Northernmost point:** Indira Col
- **Southernmost point:** Indira Point in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- **Easternmost point:** near Kibithu in Anjaw district of Arunachal Pradesh
- **Westernmost point:** Sir Creek in Kutch, near the “Guhar Mota” in Gujarat.
- **Length:** 3214 Km
- **Width:** 2933 Km (longitudinal difference: 30⁰ or 2 hours)
- **Area:** 32,87,263 sq. km (**2.42% of the world**)
- **Population:** 2nd largest country in the world (**17.5% of world's population**)
- **Total land boundary**=15,200 km.
- **Total Sea boundary**= 7516.5 Km (without islands 6100 Km)
- **Border Countries:**
 - **North-west:** Afghanistan and Pakistan
 - India-Pakistan border: Radcliffe line
 - Pakistan-Afghanistan border: Durand line.
 - **North:** China, Bhutan and Nepal
 - India-China border: McMahon line.
 - **East:** Myanmar, Bangladesh (India has longest boundary with Bangladesh)
 - **South:** Sri Lanka separated by Palk Strait and the Gulf of Mannar.
- **States sharing International borders:**
 - **Bangladesh:** total boundary= **4096km**
 - **5 States:** West Bengal, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Assam
 - **China:**Total boundary=**3488km**
 - **3 States and 1 UT:** Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Sikkim and Ladakh
 - **Pakistan :** Total boundary= **3323km**
 - **4 States and 1 UT:** Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Ladakh
 - **Nepal:** Total boundary= **1751km**
 - **5 States:** Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, West Bengal
 - **Myanmar:** Total boundary= **1643km**
 - **4 States:** Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, and Nagaland
 - **Bhutan:** Total boundary= **699km**
 - **4 States:** Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Sikkim, and West Bengal
 - **Afghanistan:**total boundary= **106km**
 - **1 UT:** Ladakh

Indian Standard Meridian



- **82°30'E** Meridian crossing through **Mirzapur city of Uttar Pradesh** is India's Standard Meridian.
- **Ahead of mean time by 5 hours and 30 minutes.**
- **Tropic of cancer (23°30'N)** passes through -Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Mizoram, and Tripura.

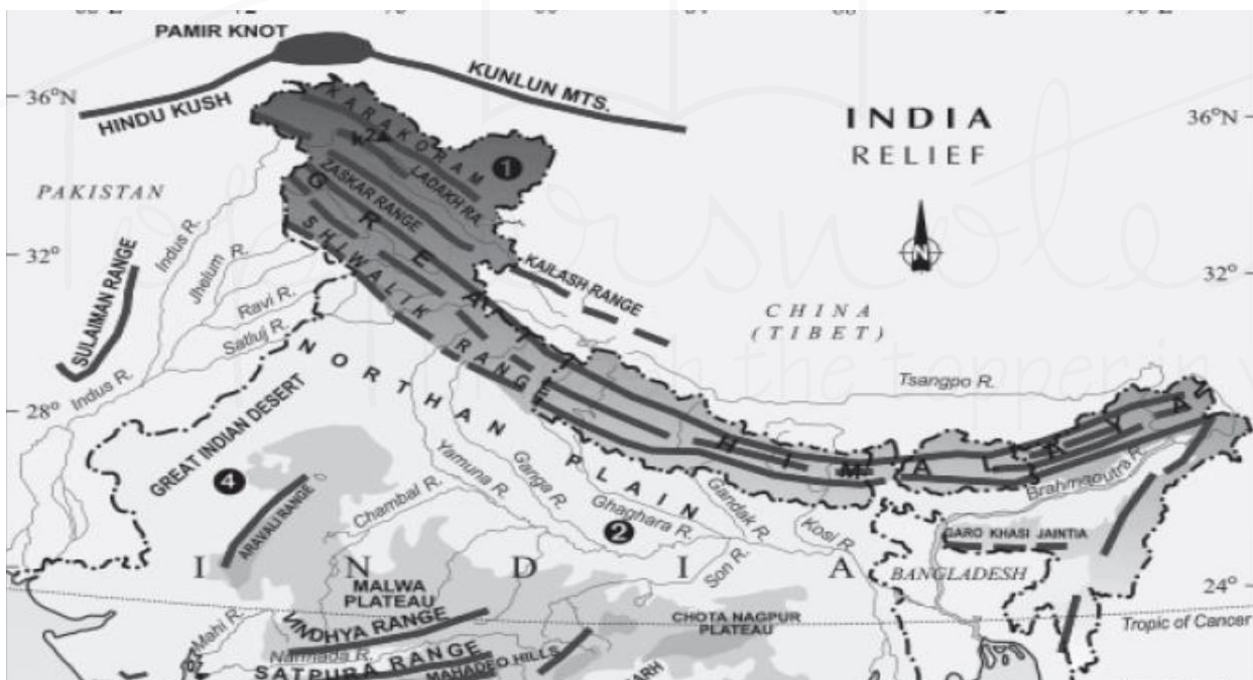
2 CHAPTER

Physical Features

Major Physiographic Divisions of India

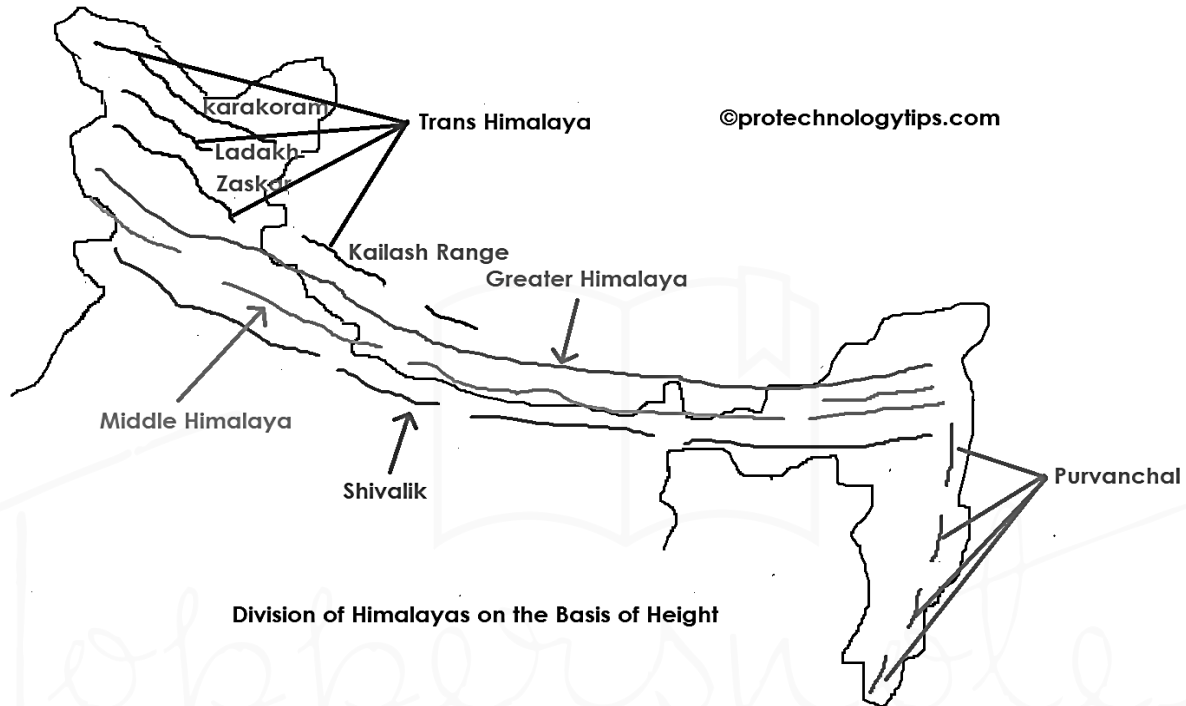
- It is divided into the following five physiographic divisions:
 1. The Himalayan Mountains
 2. The Great Northern Plains
 3. The Peninsular plateau
 4. The Indian Desert
 5. The Coastal Plains
 6. The Islands

1. Himalayan Mountains



- The term “Himalaya” is derived from Sanskrit.
- It is referred as “The Abode of Snow”.
- The Himalayan Mountains (Northern Mountains) consist of the **youngest and the loftiest** mountain chains in the world.
- They have been formed only a few millions years ago.
- It has been found that they were formed because of the **folding of the earth crust** as a **result of tectonic activity**.
- It extends for a distance of 2,500 km from the **Indus gorge in the west** to **Brahmaputra gorge in the east**.

- The width of the Northern Mountains varies from **500 km in Kashmir to 200 km in Arunachal Pradesh**.
- The **Pamir Knot**, popularly referred as the **“Roof of the World”** is the connecting link between the Himalayas and the high ranges of Central Asia.
- Himalayas **extend from Pamir towards east in the form of an arc shape**.
- The Northern Mountains that function as a great wall are grouped into three divisions. 1) The Trans-Himalayas, 2) The Himalayas



A. The Trans-Himalayas

- It is also known as **western Himalaya's**.
- It lies to the north of the great Himalayan range and lies in Jammu and Kashmir and Tibetan plateau.
- Its aerial extent is more in Tibet, **it is also known as Tibetan Himalayas**.
- The Trans-Himalayas are about 40 km wide in its eastern and western extremities and about 225 km wide in its central part.
- They contain the Tethys sediments.
- The rocks of this region contain fossils having marine sediments which are underlain by **'Tertiary granite'**.
- It also had **metamorphosed sediments** - the **core of the Himalayan axis**.
- The prominent ranges of Trans Himalayas are **Zaskar, Ladakh, Kailash, and Karakoram**.

B. The Himalayas

- It constitutes the **core part of northern mountains**.
- It is a **young fold mountain** formed by the movement of **Angara land mass in the north and Gondwana landmass in the south**.
- The Tethys sea found between these two land masses was uplifted by the compression and the resultant landform was the Himalayas.
- It consists of many ranges.

- The main divisions of the Himalayas are the (i) Greater Himalayas, (ii) the Lesser Himalayas and (iii) the Siwaliks.

(i) The Greater Himalayas or the Himadri

- The Greater Himalayas rise abruptly like a wall north of the Lesser Himalayas.
- The Greater Himalayas are about 25 km wide. Its average height is about 6,000 m.
- **It receives less rainfall** as compared to the Lesser Himalayas and the Siwaliks.
- Physical weathering is less effective over the Greater Himalayas as compared to the other ranges.
- Almost all the lofty peaks of Himalayas are located in this range. The notable ones are **Mt. Everest (8,848 m) and Kanchenjunga (8,586 m)**.
 - ✓ **Mt. Everest** is located in **Nepal** and **Kanchenjunga** is located between **Nepal and Sikkim**.
- This range is the most continuous of all ranges.
- It is a region of **permanent snow cover**. So, it has many glaciers.
- **Gangotri, Yamunotri and Siachen** are some of them.

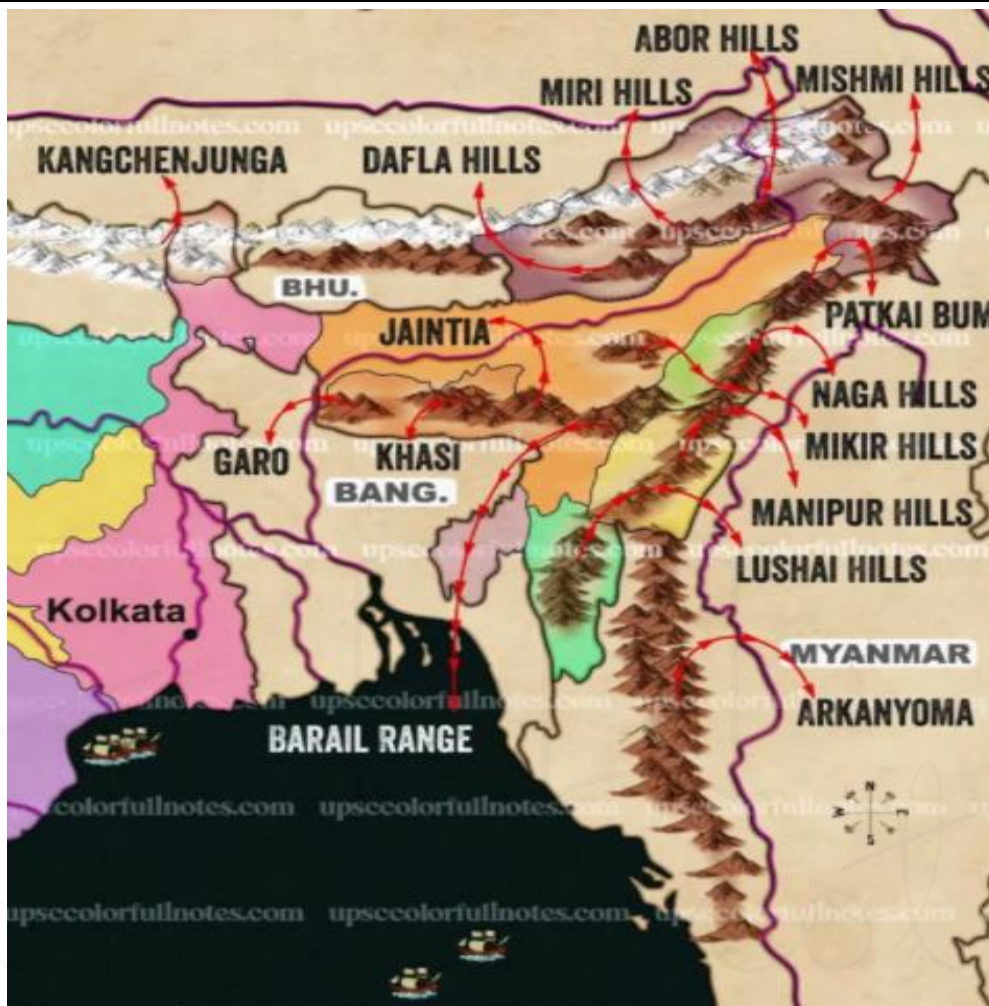
(ii) The Lesser Himalayas or The Himachal

- It is in the **middle range of the Himalayas**.
- Height of this range varies from **3, 700 to 4,500 m**.
- Its width varies upto 80 km.
- The major rocks of this range are **slate, limestone and quartzite**.
- This region is subjected to extensive erosion due to heavy rainfall, deforestation and urbanization.
- **Pir Panjal, Dhauladhar and Mahabharat** are the **mountain ranges** found in this part.
- Major hill stations of the Himalayas are located in this range.
 - ✓ **Shimla, Mussoorie, Nainital, Almora, Ranikhet and Darjeeling** are the familiar ones.
- The major passes in the Himalayan are **Karakoram pass** (Jammu and Kashmir), **Zojila pass**, **Shipkila pass** (Himachal Pradesh), **Bomdila pass** (Arunachal Pradesh), **Nathala pass** (Sikkim) and **Jhelepla pass** (Sikkim).
 - ✓ **The Khyber pass which connects Pakistan and Afghanistan, and Bolan pass in Pakistan** are important passes of the Indian subcontinent

(iii) The Siwaliks or Outer Himalayas

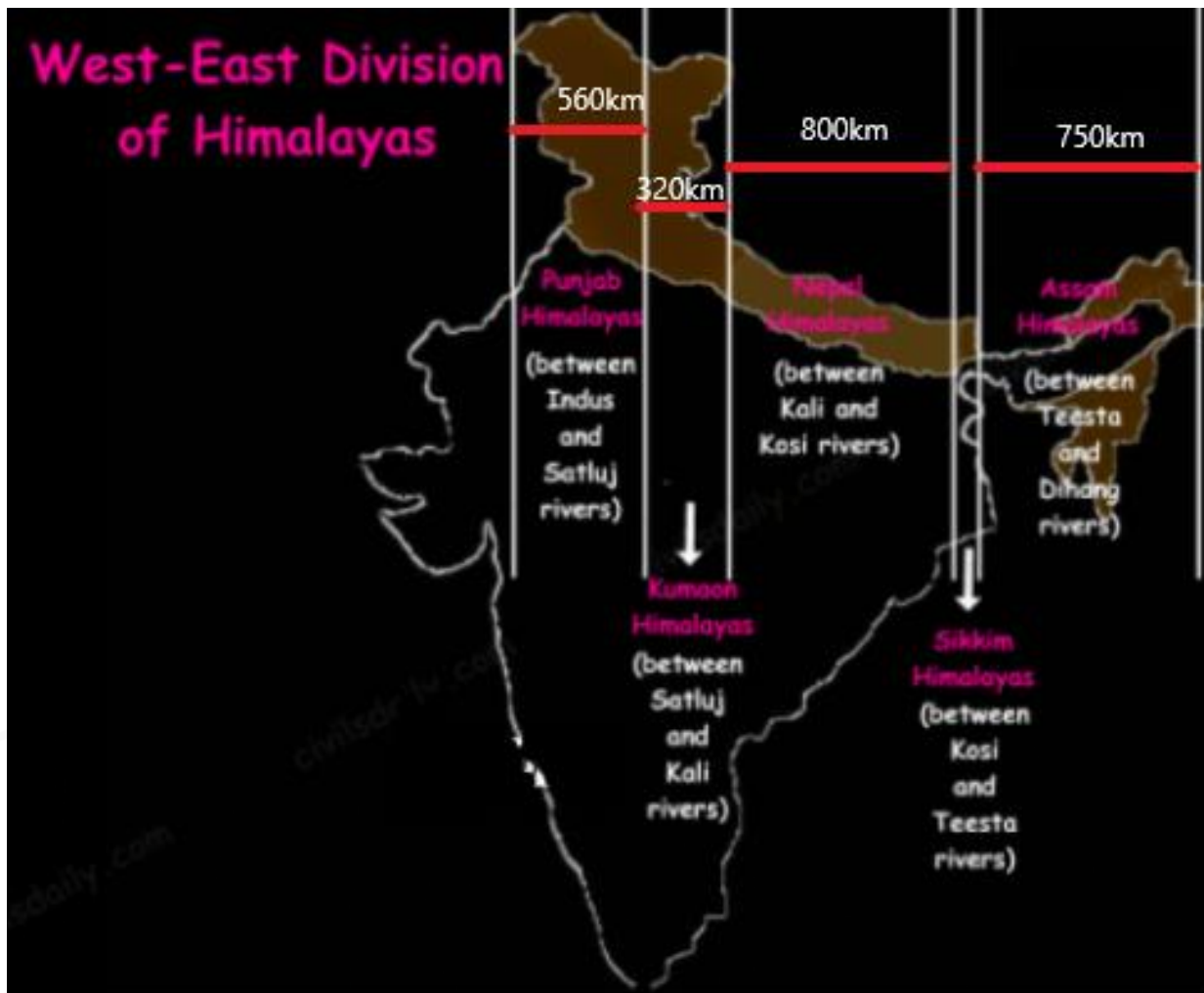
- The Siwaliks extend from Jammu and Kashmir to Assam.
- It is partly made by the debris brought by the Himalayan rivers.
- The altitude varying between 900-1100 metres elevation of this range is 1300 m.
- The width of Siwaliks vary from 10 km in the east to 50 km in the west.
- It is the most discontinuous range.
- Siwaliks and the Lesser Himalayas are called Duns in the west and Duars in the east.
- These are the ideal sites for the development of settlements in this region.

Purvanchal Hills



- These are the **eastern off-shoot of the Himalayas**.
- It extended in the north-eastern states of India.
- Most of these hills are located along the border of India and Myanmar while others are inside India.
- **Dafla Hills, Abor Hills, Mishmi Hills, Patkai Bum Hills, Naga Hills, Manipur Hills, Mizo Hills, Tripura Hills, Mikir Hills, Garo Hills, Khasi Hills and Jaintia Hills** are the hills which are collectively known as **purvanchal Hills**.

Longitudinal Divisions of Himalayas



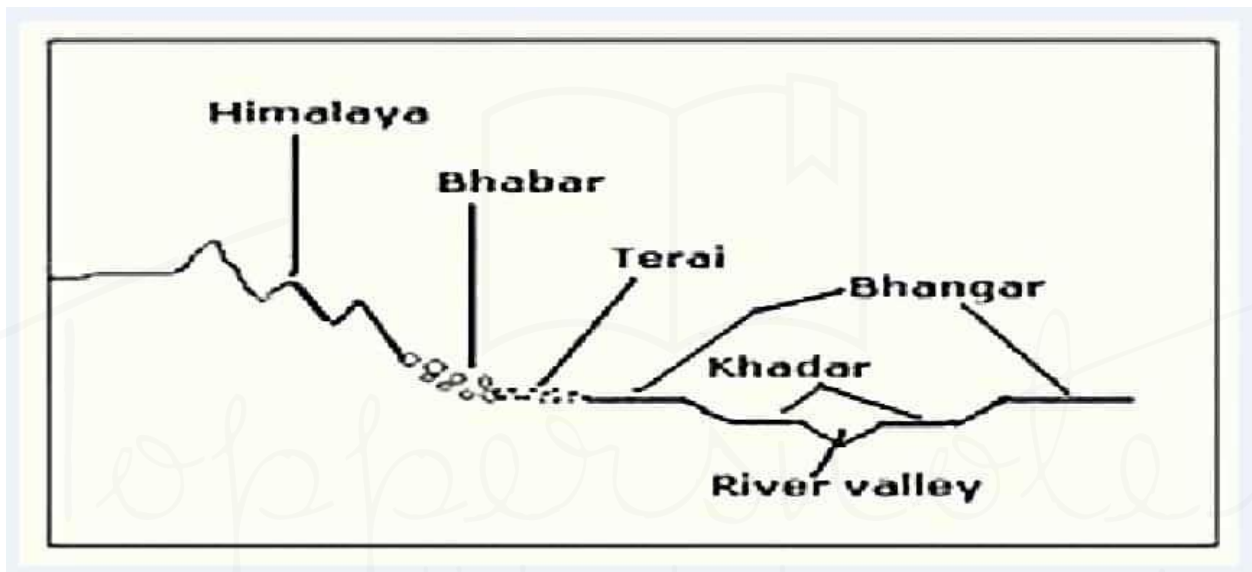
- **Kashmir/Punjab/Himachal Himalayas-** Located between the rivers of Indus and Sutlej.
- **Kumaon Himalayas-** Located between the rivers of Sutlej and Kali.
- **Central-Nepal Himalayas-** Located between the rivers of Kali and Tista.
- **Assam Eastern Himalayas-** Located between the rivers of Tista and Dihang.

Importance of Himalayas

- The Himalayas blocks southwest monsoon winds and causes heavy rainfall to north India.
- It forms a **natural barrier to the subcontinent.**
- It is the source for **many perennial rivers like Indus, Ganges, Brahmaputra** etc.
- The Northern Mountains are described as the paradise of tourists due to its natural beauty.
- Many hill stations and pilgrim centres like **Amarnath, Kedarnath, Badrinath and Vaishnavidevi temples** are situated here.
- It provides **raw material for many forest based industries.**
- It prevents the cold winds blowing from central Asia and protects India from severe cold.
- The Himalayas are renowned for their rich biodiversity.

The Great Northern Plains

- The fertile land extending across seven north Indian states forms the Great Northern Plains.
- This extensive plain lies to the south of the northern mountains.
- This plain is one of the most extensive stretches of the alluvium in the world and is deposited by the rivers **Indus, Ganga, Brahmaputra and their tributaries**.
- The length of the plain is about **2,400 km** and the width varies from **240 to 320 km**.
- Its width increases from east to west.
- It covers an area of over **7 lakh sq.km**.
- It is a **homogeneous surface** with an **imperceptible slope**.
- Formed mostly by the **depositional process of the Himalayan and Vindhyan river**
- The important characteristics features of sediment deposition in the plains areas are as follows:



A. The Bhabar Plain

- This plain is made up of gravels and unsorted sediments which was deposited by the Himalayan rivers.
- The porosity of this plain is so high that most of the small streams flowing over this region disappear.
- It lies to the south of the Siwalik from west to east (Jammu Division to Assam).
- **Its width varies from 8 to 15 km.**
- It is wider in the western plains (Jammu Division) than in the east (Assam).
- This plain is **not suitable for cultivation**, only big trees with large roots thrive in this region.

B. The Tarai Tract

- It is a **zone of excessive dampness, thick forests and rich wild life**.
- This tract lies to the south of Bhabar plains.
- The **width of this belt is 15-30 km**.
- The Tarai is wider in the eastern parts of the Great Plains, especially in Brahmaputra Valley due to heavy rainfall.
- In many states, the Tarai forests have been cleared for cultivation.

C. The Bhangar Plains

- The Bhangar represent the upland alluvial tracts of the Great Plains of India, formed by the older alluviums.
- The Bhangar land lies above the flood limits of the rivers.
- This soil is dark in colour, rich in humus content, well drained and useful for agriculture.

D. The Khadar Plains

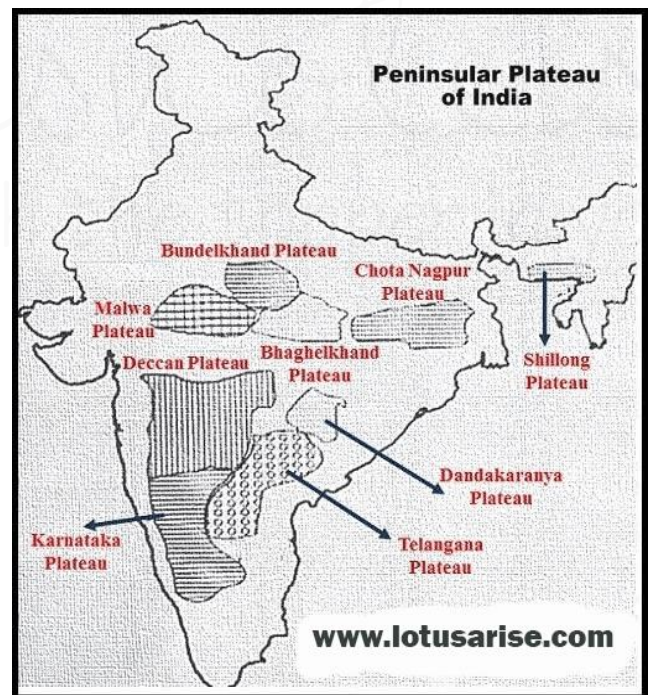
- The new alluvium tracts along the courses of the rivers are known as the '**Khadar**' or '**Bet**' lands.
- The Khadar tracts are enriched by fresh deposits of silt every year during rainy seasons.
- **The Khadar land consists of sand, silt, clay and mud.**
- It is highly fertile soil.

E. Delta Plains

- The deltaic plain is an extension of the Khadar land.
- It covers about 1.9 lakh sq.km in the lower reaches of the Ganga River.
- It is an area of deposition as the river flows in this tract sluggishly.
- **The deltaic plain consists mainly of old mud, new mud and marsh.**
- In the delta region, **the uplands are called 'Chars' while the marshy areas are called 'Bils'.**

The Peninsular Plateaus

- The plateau region lies to the **south of the Great Northern Plains.**
- This is the **largest physiographic division of our country.**
- It covers an **area of about 16 lakh sq.km** (about **half of the total area of the country**).
- **It is an old rocky plateau region.**
- The **topography** consists of a series of **plateaus and hill** ranges **interspersed with river valleys.**
- **Aravalli hills** mark the **north-western boundary** of the plateau region.
- Its **northern and north-eastern boundaries** are marked by the **Bundelkhand upland, Kaimur and Rajmahal hills.**
- The **Western Ghats and the Eastern Ghats** mark the **western and eastern boundaries** respectively.
- The **altitude** of a large portion of the plateau is **more than 600 m** from mean sea level.



- The peak of **Anaimudi is the highest point in the plateau.** Its height is 2,695 m and is located in **Anaimalai.**
- **The general slope of this plateau is towards the east.**
- The **Great Plateau is a part of the Gondwana (very ancient one) land mass.**
- Due to the **old age**, the **rivers** in this region attained their base level and developed **broad and shallow valleys.**

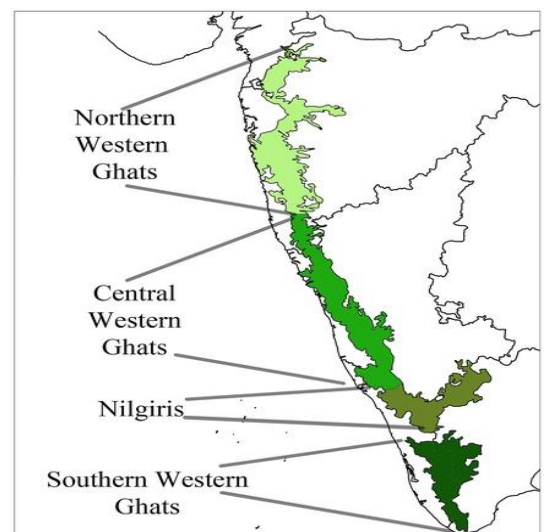
- The **river Narmada divides the plateau** region of India broadly into two parts.
 - The region lying to the **north of the Narmada is called the Central Highlands**
 - The region lying to the **south of Narmada is called the Deccan Plateau.**
- All the major rivers (**Mahanadi, Godavari, Krishna, Kaveri etc.**) lying to the **south of the Vindhyas flow eastwards and fall into the Bay of Bengal.**
- **Narmada and Tapti situated to the south of the Vindhyas flow westward.**
- Their movement towards west is due to the presence of a rift valley in the region.

Central Highlands

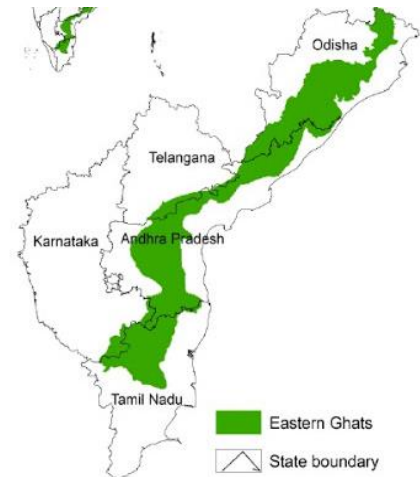
- The **Central Highlands** extend **between the river Narmada and the Northern Great Plains.**
- The **Aravallis** form the **west and northwestern edge** of the Central Highlands.
 - These hills **extend from Gujarat, through Rajasthan to Delhi** in the northwesterly direction for a distance of about 700 km.
 - The **height** of these hills is about **1,500 m in the southwest** while near **Delhi** the height is hardly **400 m.**
 - **Gurushikhar** with 1,722 m is the **highest peak** of this range.
- The **Western part** of the Central Highland is known as the **Malwa Plateau.**
 - It lies to the **southeast of Aravallis** and to the **north of Vindhya Range.**
 - The rivers **Chambal, Betwa and Ken drain the Malwa Plateau** before they join the river Yamuna.
- The part of the Central Highlands which extends to the **east of Malwa Plateau** is known as **Bundelkhand** and its **further extension** is known as **Bagelkhand.**
- The **eastern part** of the Central Highlands which lies in the north-eastern part of the Indian Plateau is known as **Chhota-Nagpur Plateau.**
 - It covers much of **Jharkhand**, adjacent parts of **Odisha, West Bengal, Bihar and Chhattisgarh.**
 - This region is very **rich in mineral resources** particularly **iron ore and coal.**

Deccan Plateau

- This physiographic division is the **largest part of the plateau** region of India.
- The shape of this plateau is roughly **triangular.**
 - One of the sides of this triangle is marked by the line **joining Kanniyakumari with Rajmahal Hills** and this line passes **through the Eastern Ghats.**
 - The second arm is marked by the **Satpura Range, Mahadeo Hills, Maikal Range and the Rajmahal Hills.**
 - The third arm is marked by the **Western Ghats.**
- **Area:** 7 lakh sqkm
- **Height:** 500 to 1000 m above sea level.
- **Western Ghats:**
 - Forms the **western edge** of the Peninsular Plateau.
 - It runs **parallel to the Arabian Sea coast.**
 - **The northern part** of this range is called **Sahyadris.**
 - The **height** of the Sahyadris increases from **north to south.**
 - **Anamudi** is a tri-junction of the **Anaimalai Range, the Cardamom Hills and the Palani Hills.**



- **Kodaikanal** is a beautiful hill resort situated on the **Palani Hills**.
- **Eastern Ghats:**
 - Run from **southwest to northeast** from the eastern edge of this Plateau.
 - This range is also called **Poorvadi**.
 - The Eastern Ghats **join the Western Ghats at the Nilgiri hills**, bordering **Karnataka and Tamil Nadu**.
 - The Eastern Ghats are **not continuous** like the Western Ghats.
 - The rivers of **Mahanadi, Godavari, Krishna, Pennar and Kaveri** have **dissected this range** at many places.



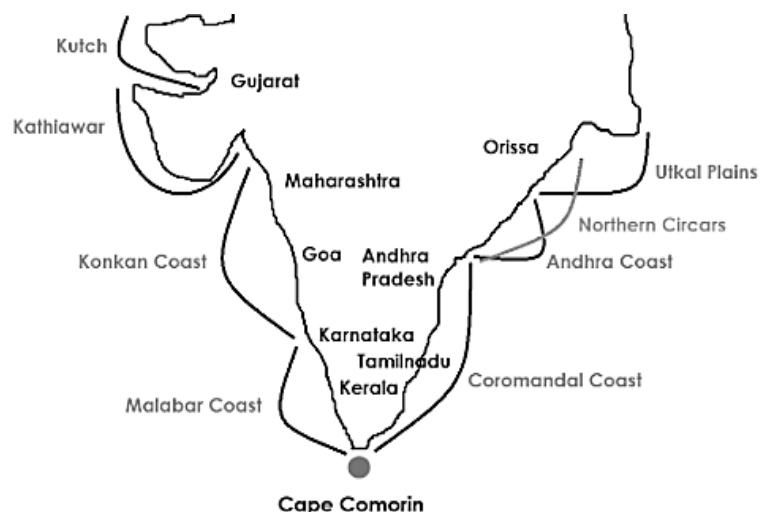
The Indian Desert

- The **Thar desert**, also known as the **Great Indian desert**.
- It is a **large arid region in the north western part** of the Indian subcontinent that covers an **area of 2,00,000 km²** and forms a natural **boundary between India and Pakistan**.
- It is the world's **7th largest desert**, and world's **9th largest subtropical desert** located in **Western part of India**.
- The desert lies in the **western part of the Aravalli range** and covers **2/3rd of Rajasthan state**.
- There are **two major divisions** in the Thar desert.
 - **Actual desert region (Marusthali)**
 - **Semi desert region (Bhangar).**
- Many different types of **sand dunes and salt lakes (Dhands)** are seen here.



The Coastal Plains

- The Peninsular Plateau of India is **flanked by narrow coastal plains** of varied width from north to south.
- It came to be known as the **Western Coastal Plains and the Eastern Coastal Plains**.
- They were **formed by the depositional action of the rivers** and the erosional and depositional actions of the sea-waves.
- The Indian coastal plains are **divided into** the following two divisions:
 - **Western Coastal Plains**
 - **Eastern Coastal Plains**



Eastern and Western Coastal Plains of India

Western Coastal Plain

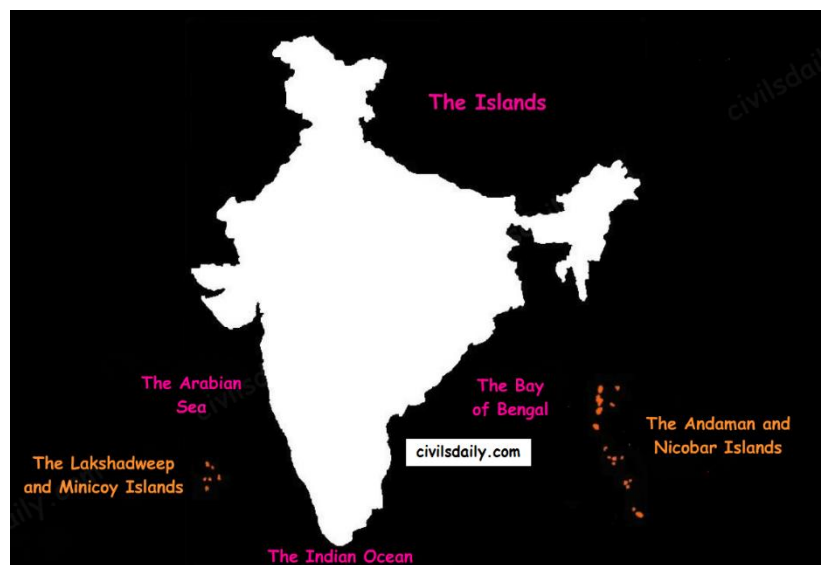
- It lies between the **Western Ghats and the Arabian Sea**.
- It extends from Rann of Kutch in the north to Kanniyakumari in the south and its width varies from 10 to 80 km.
- It is mainly characterized by **sandy beaches, coastal sand dunes, mud flats, lagoons, estuary, laterite platforms and residual hills**.
- The northern part of the West Coastal Plain is known as Konkan Plain.
- **The middle part of this plain is known as Kanara.**
- The southern part of the plain is known as Malabar coast which is about 550 km long and 20-100 km wide.
- This part of the coast is **characterized by sand dunes**.
- Along the coast, there are numerous shallow lagoons and backwaters called **Kayals and Teris**.
- **Vembanad is a famous back water lake found in this region.**

Eastern Coastal Plain

- It lies between the Eastern Ghats and the Bay of Bengal and stretches along the states of West Bengal, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.
- These plains are formed by the alluvial fillings of the littoral zone by the east flowing rivers of India.
- The coastal plain consists mainly of the recent alluvial deposits.
- The **coastal plain between Mahanadi and Krishna river** is known as the **Northern Circars** and the southern part lies between **Krishna and Kaveri rivers** is called **Coromandel coast**.
- The **Marina beach** on this coast in **Chennai** and it is the **second longest beach in the world**.
- The lake **Chilka (Odisha - Back water lake)** is the largest lake in India located to the **southwest of the Mahanadi delta**.
- The **Kolleru Lake** which lies **between** the deltas of **Godavari and Krishna**.
- The **Pulicat Lake** lies on the border of **Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu** are the well known lakes in the east coastal plain.

The Islands

- India has two major island groups namely **Andaman and Nicobar and Lakshadweep**.
- The former group consists of **572 islands and are located in Bay of Bengal**, and the later one has **27 islands and are located in Arabian Sea**.
- The islands of Andaman and Nicobar are **largely tectonic and volcanic in origin**.
- **India's only active volcano** is found on **Barren Island in Andaman and Nicobar** group of Islands, while the islands of the Arabian Sea are mainly coral origin.



Andaman and Nicobar archipelago

- In Bay of Bengal
- Extended in a north-south direction b/w 6° 45' N to 13° 45' N.
- Composed of ~ 265 big and small islands [203 Andaman + 62 Nicobar Islands]
- 3 main groups i.e. North, Middle, and South.
- **Duncan passage** - separates Little Andaman from South Andaman.
- Andaman group of islands in the north separated by **Ten Degree Channel** from Nicobar group in the south.
- **Grand Channel** - b/w Great Nicobar islands and Sumatra islands of Indonesia.
- **Coco Strait** - b/w North Andaman islands and Coco Islands of Myanmar.
- **Port Blair**- capital of Andaman Nicobar Islands, - in South Andaman.
- **Volcanic island**- Barren and Narcondam Islands (only active volcano in India).
- **Highest peak**- Saddle peak (737 m) in North Andaman.
- **Tropical marine climate** influenced by seasonal flow of monsoon winds.
- **Major earthquake zone.**
- also known as **Emerald Islands.**
- **Home to the only** known paleolithic people, the **Sentinelese.**
 - One of the last humans on earth untouched by modern civilization.
- **State Animal**- dugong (sea mammal)
- **Major islands of Andaman and Nicobar:**



Narcondam Island	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● India's easternmost Island ● A small volcanic island of the northern Andaman Sea. ● Dormant volcano with a conical shape ● No remains of a crater at the top (710 m above sea level)- second tallest point after the Saddle Peak ● Proximity to Myanmar - great strategic and geopolitical significance
Barren Island	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Located in Andaman Sea, south of the Narcondam Island. ● Only active volcano in the Indian subcontinent. ● Also the only active volcano from Sumatra to Myanmar. ● Most recent eruption – 2020 ● Uninhabited ● 2 km wide caldera at the top
Landfall Island	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Northernmost island of Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Separated from Coco Island of Myanmar by the Coco Channel. ● Separated from North Andaman Island by the Cleugh Passage. ● Limited tourism.
North Andaman Island	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Northern island of Great Andaman. ● Highest point- Saddle Peak (731 metres) present here. ● Northern tip k/a Cape Price ● Part of the Arakan Yoma ● Main town - Diglipur ● Main economic activities – Rice and Orange production.
Middle Andaman Island	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● b/w North Andaman and South Andaman ● Home to Jarawa tribe. ● Geologically part of the Arakan Yoma ● Dependent on Fishing and agriculture ● Towns: Rangat, Billiground and Mayabunder
South Andaman Island	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Southernmost island of great Andaman Group ● 3rd largest after Middle and North. ● Port Blair - Capital city of Andaman and Nicobar- south-eastern part of the island (less mountainous than others) ● Majority of population of Andaman and Nicobar live here.
Rutland Island	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● b/w South Andaman and Little Andaman ● North of the Duncan Passage ● Rich in marine life ● Formerly home to the Jangil (Rutland Jarawa), an indigenous Andamanese tribe. ● Presently, no permanent indigenous settlement.
Little Andaman	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 4th largest of the Andaman Group. ● Separated from Rutland Island in Great Andaman by Duncan Passage. ● b/w Duncan Passage and 10 Degree Channel ● A counterpart of Great Andaman island group. ● Home to Onge people.
Interview Island	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In Andaman Islands. ● West of Austen Strait - separates North and Middle Andaman Island
Swaraj Island	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Formerly k/a Havelock Island. ● One of the largest islands in Ritchie's Archipelago ● Located b/w Peel Island Neil Island. ● East of Great Andaman within Andaman Islands. ● Named after Henry Havelock, a British general.