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OUR COUNTRY – INDIA

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 Kanyakumari 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. There is a great variety in the climate, vegetation, wildlife as well as in the language and culture. In this diversity, we find unity that is reflected in traditions that bind us as one nation. India has a population of more than one hundred twenty crores since the year 2011. It is the *second most populous* country of the world after China.

The peninsula is a piece of land that is surrounded by water on three sides (figure 6.1).

LOCATIONAL SETTING

India is located in the northern hemisphere. The **Tropic of Cancer (23°30'N)** passes almost halfway through the country (Figure 7.2). 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**. If we divide the world into eastern and western hemispheres, which hemisphere would India belong to? Due to great longitudinal extent of about 29°, there could be a 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



Do you know?

Large countries which stretch extensively from east to west do not have a single Standard Time for the whole country. The USA and Canada have seven and six time zones respectively. Do you remember how many time zones are there in Russia?

about two hours. As you have learnt earlier, 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). You have already read earlier, why the local time of longitude of $82^{\circ}30'E$ 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. Find out names

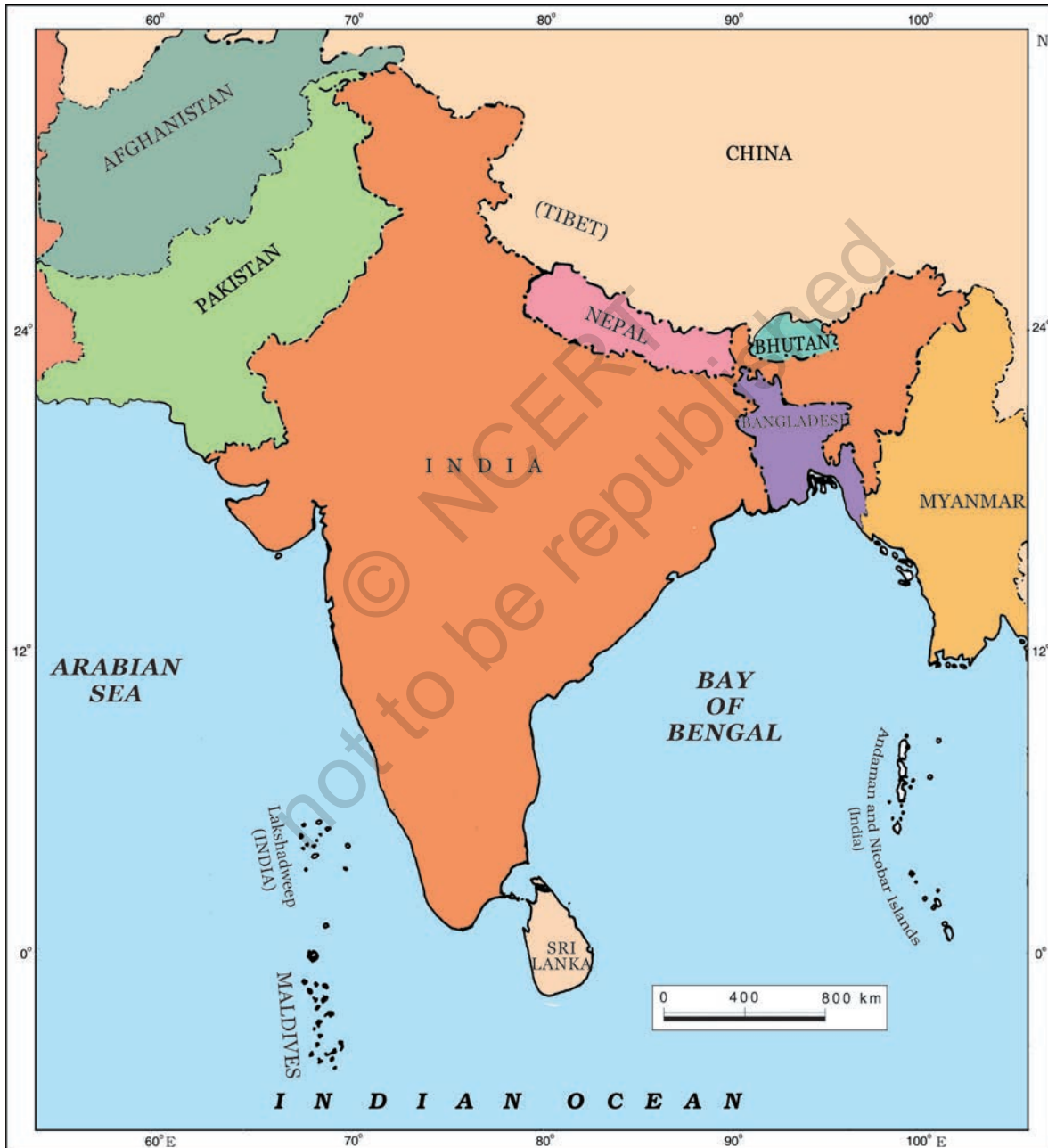


Figure 7.1 : India and its neighbouring countries

of these countries from the Figure 7.1. How many of these countries do not have access to any ocean or sea? Across the sea to the south, lie our island neighbours—Sri Lanka and Maldives. Sri Lanka is separated from India by the *Palk Strait*.

POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISIONS

India is a vast country. For administrative purposes, the country is divided into 29

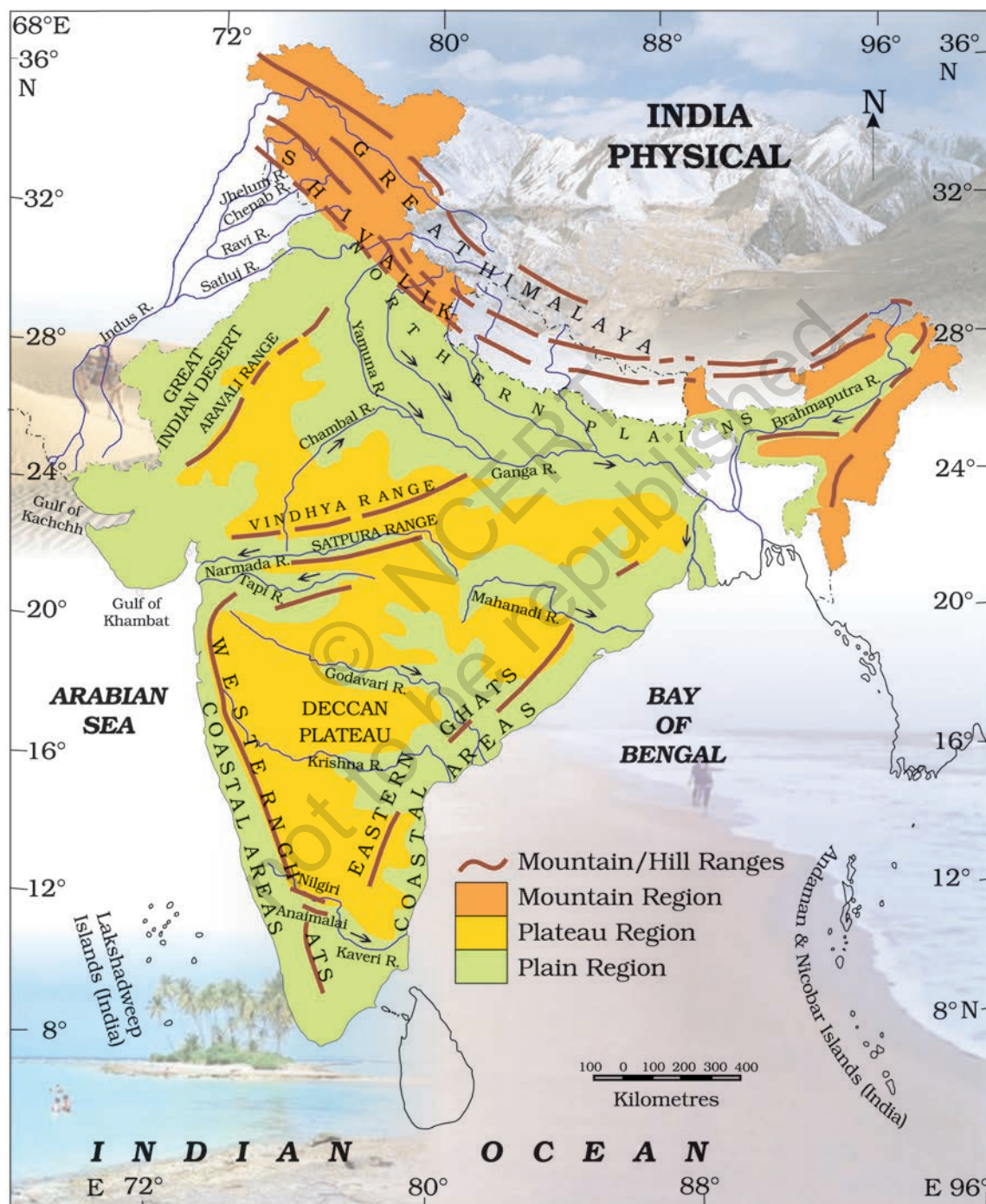


Figure 7.3 : India : Physical Divisions

States and 9 Union Territories (Appendix-I). Delhi is the national capital. The states have been formed mainly on the basis of languages.

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. *Him+alaya* mean 'the abode of snow'. The Himalayan 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. Many popular hill stations are situated here. Find out the names of five hill stations. The **Shivalik** 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*. These river plains provide fertile land for cultivation. That is the reason for high concentration of population in these plains.

In the *western* part of India lies the **Great Indian desert**. It is a 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. The relief is highly uneven. This is a region with numerous hill ranges and valleys. 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 (Figure 7.3). The plateau is rich in minerals like coal and iron-ore.

To the West of the Western Ghats and the East of Eastern Ghats lie the **Coastal plains**. The western

Alluvial deposits : These are very fine soils, brought by rivers and deposited in the river basins.

Tributary : A river or stream which contributes its water to a main river by discharging it into main river from either side (Figure 6.1).



Do you know?

The Ganga and the Brahmaputra form the world's largest delta, the Sundarbans delta. The delta is triangular in shape. It is an area of land formed at the *mouth of the river* (Where rivers enter the sea, that point is called the mouth of the river, Figure 6.1).



Let's Do

Many girls are named after rivers eg. Yamuna, Mandakini, and Kaveri. Do you know anyone in your locality who is named after a river? Ask your parents and others and make a list of such names. Could you also find other names related to water e.g. Shabnam?



Figure 7.4 : Coral Islands



Do you know?

Corals are skeletons of tiny marine animals called **Polyps**. When the living polyps die, their skeletons are left. Other polyps grow on top of the hard skeleton which grows higher and higher, thus forming the coral islands. Figure 7.4 shows Coral islands.

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 Sunderban delta is formed where the Ganga and Brahmaputra flow into the Bay of Bengal.

Danger Waters

Down there in Sumatra started a big quake,
But no one had expected the Tsunami it did make,
Waves big as mountains like an army they charged,
And into the South Asian lands with all might
they barged.

Full with fury, they killed people in thousands,
And destroyed everything from buildings to farmlands.
The waves came and went from Sumatra to
other places,

And left nothing there except empty spaces.
People were left without shelter and food,
Tourists who had come decided they never should.
People lost their loved, near and dear ones,
Survivors snatched and fought for clothes and buns.
Relief to the affected was being sent out,
But now of disease there was a big bout.
People feared going near the sea,
Could it swell up again giving no time to flee?
The fear installed in them may stay by the days,
But in this darkness of sorrow there's still a
happy ray!



Aparna Sinha
IX Std.



Vednath Swain
IV Std.



Tsunamis'
Killer
Waves

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. Do you know which group of islands were affected by the Tsunami in 2004? Find out through newspaper reports and by speaking to people how in different ways people faced this challenge when Tsunami struck the Indian coast. Tsunami is a huge sea wave generated due to an earthquake on the sea floor.

EXERCISES

1. Answer the following questions briefly.

- Name the major physical divisions of India.
- India shares its land boundaries with seven countries. Name them.
- Which two major rivers fall into the Arabian Sea?
- Name the delta formed by the Ganga and the Brahmaputra.
- How many States and Union Territories are there in India? Which states have a common capital?
- Why do a large number of people live in the Northern plains?
- Why is Lakshadweep known as a coral island?

2. Tick the correct answers.

- The southernmost Himalayas are known as
 - Shivaliks
 - Himadri
 - Himachal
- Sahyadris is also known as
 - Aravali
 - Western Ghats
 - Himadri
- The Palk Strait lies between the countries
 - Sri Lanka and Maldives
 - India and Sri Lanka
 - India and Maldives
- The Indian islands in the Arabian Sea are known as
 - Andaman and Nicobar Islands
 - Lakshadweep Islands
 - Maldives

- (e) The oldest mountain range in India is the
(i) Aravali hills (ii) Western ghats (iii) Himalayas

3. Fill in the blanks.

- (a) India has an area of about _____.
- (b) The Greater Himalayas are also known as _____.
- (c) The largest state in India in terms of area is _____.
- (d) The river Narmada falls into the _____ sea.
- (e) The latitude that runs almost halfway through India is _____.

Map skills

1. On an outline map of India, mark the following.
- (a) Tropic of Cancer
- (b) Standard Meridian of India
- (c) State in which you live
- (d) Andaman Islands and Lakshadweep Islands
- (e) Western Ghats and Eastern Ghats

