



SIGNIFICANCE GEOGRAPHY ON INDIAN CULTURE

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The cultural history of India has also been influenced by geography. Specially, the northern part of India has been a centre for cultural development. As this part of the country has been fertile, its people could always earn their living easily, and had plenty of time of spare. So while living such a peaceful life, they used their leisure for developing art, literature and philosophy. The Vedic literature is the most valuable treasure of our country. It was a product of this soil. Further, in the reigns of the Mauryas and the Guptas there was a considerable development in the fields of art and crafts. Architecture, stone working, temple architecture and painting were in their swing during this age. The famous Gandhara School of Art, 'Arthashastra' of Kautilya, and dramas of Kalidasa are the immortal gifts of ancient India. Besides this, there flourished the world-renowned universities of Taxila and Nalanda which were known as the greatest centres of higher education in India, and students from all corners of the world used to throng them for their higher education. In philosophy too, Indians stood at the bitop and abstract subjects like Life and Death, God and Soul or Nature and Universe were vividly explained by them.

Main Geographical Divisions of India Culture

1) Cultural significance in north mountainous ranges :

The north of the country are located the Himalayan mountains, which spread out both to the east as well as west. These mountains are roughly 1500

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miles in length and stretch from Kashmir in the West to Assam in the east. The hills like Hindukush, Suleiman. The north -western region while the hills like khasi, Jaintya, Patkoi, Lushai etc are located in the eastern part. Dr. R.C Majundar observes: “The Himalaya is the most inaccessible frontier that nature has designed for any country, but even here there are roads from Tibet to Nepal that have carried for ages not merely peaceful missionaries of culture and religion, but on rare occasions even formidable hosts of soldiers as well. The most prominent passes are Khyber, Tochi, Kara, Kurram, Gomals, Bolan. It was through these passes that almost all the invaders right from the times of the Aryans came to India. Some of the prominent invaders who entered India through these passes included Persians, Macedonians, Scythians, Parthians, Sakas, Kushans, Hunas, Turks, Mongols, Mughals, Afghans etc, Though these invaders came to this country mainly with a view to plunder the riches but they left a deep impact on the culture and institutions of the country. In short we can say that the Himalayans have not only cut off India from the outside world but have also, constituted India into a world by itself. Some of the prominent rivers which have made our Lands fertile also originates from the Himalayans.

Effect's:-

The Himalayas known as the great sentinel of the North, have played an important role in shaping the history of India.

- 1. Protection from North-East Mountain Ranges :** Right from Kashmir to Assam the Himalayas continue to run into high ranges which have always been protecting India from cold Siberian winds and the political revolution across, the Tibetan Chinese lands. As these mountain ranges are very high and are always covered with snow, it is very difficult to cross them. Specially, invader crossed into India from the east due to **impenetrable** forests on the **hills flooded** with heavy rains and unconditional climate.

2. **Effects of North-West Frontier :** But the low lying western passes which are easily accessible, have often been used by invaders from central Asia. The Persians, Greeks, Huns, Afghans, Mongols etc. carried on their invasions through these passes. In the beginning the invaders who plundered and ravaged the country, went back to their own lands but their increasing fascination for the Indian soil made them stay in India forever.

a. Isolation from Other Countries of Asia : At the same time high mountain ranges have played an important part in separating our land from other parts of Asia. And it is due to this isolation that Indians could develop a civilization of their own. Dr. Ray Chaudhary also writes "The mountain chain fences this country off from the rest of Asia, while it constituted India a world by itself and favoured the growth of distinct type of civilization."

b. Heavy Rainfall : In summer, the rain bearing clouds or monsoons rise from the Indian Ocean. While moving towards the north, these clouds are checked by the eastern off-shoots of the Himalayas, resulting in heavy rainfall in Assam. Moreover, after striking against the high mountain ranges, the clouds move towards the west and shower plenty of rain on the Indo - Gangetic plain.

3. **Culture of Indo - Gangetic plain :-** The Indo - Gangetic plain is spread from Bay of Bengal to the Arabian Sea and is roughly 2000 mile long and 200 miles in breadth. This plain embraces the valleys of the Indus and its tributaries, the deserts of Sind and Rajputana as well as regions watered by the Ganges, the Jamuna and the Brahmaputra. Most of the important events worth recording took place in these plains. Its enormous wealth and resources were the sources of temptation for foreign invaders. Most of the mighty kingdoms of ancient time like those of Chandra Gupta Maurya, Ashoka, Samudra Gupta, Vikramaditya, Harsha Vardhan, Ala - Ud-Din and Akbar, flourished in these regions. This region was also a centre for the great religious

movements like Jainism and Buddhism. The Prosperity of this region has also been responsible for the misery and suffering of the inhabitants. A number of muslim invaders like Mahmud Ghaznavi and Mohammad Ghori made repeated invasions on India only with a view to amass and plunder the rich booty which they could expect. Some of the important battles which took place in this region include the battle of Mahabharata, Tarain and Panipat. After the settlement of Muslims in this region a cultural assimilation took place.

Effect's:-

- a. **Achievements in Art and Literature** :This great plain of the north played an unforgettable role in the development of art and literature. As the people could have a comfortable living for little effort, they had plenty of time at their disposal. So they employed their leisure and spare time in making achievements in art and literature. And it is worthy of note that right from the Vedic Age, people of this region have been creating the highest specimens of art and literature.
- b. **Cultural Development** :Due to the fertility of the great plain its people were happy and peace loving. They wished to spread their culture to other parts of the world. It was that they travelled in other countries of the world and propagated their civilization and way of living over there
- c. **Birth of Big Cities and Empires** : The huge rivers and their tributaries provided an abundant supply of water to the northern plain, with the result, it turned into the most productive part of the world. It also helped the people of this region in initiating their trade with other countries of the world. Moreover, the people understood the great importance of the rivers and settled on their banks. That is, why, many big cities like Kashi, Prayag, Agra and Delhi, grew on these banks, Besides this, the productivity of the

plain was the chief factor that helped the formation of magnificent empires. The mighty emperors like Ashoka, Samudragupta, Vikramaditya, Harsha and Akbar are the legacies of this region.

d. **Panipat as the Gateway of India** : The unique geographical situation of Panipat has given it a shape of natural battle-field. Situated in the south of Punjab there is a was dry and barren desert which has always been known as the battle-field of Panipat. As there are mountain ranges of the Himalayas in the north of this field, Panipat had always been the only entrance for the foreign invaders who attacked India from this side. The famous battles which decided the fate of India were fought in the fields of Panipat. Moreover, Delhi being the capital of India for long, the fields of Panipat had been the best way to enter the country and win the capital.

3) **Significance of Deccan culture** :

The Deccan plateau lies to the south of the Gangetic plain and is separated by the Vindhyas and Satpuras. This Area Stretches from Vindhyas to Cape camorin. On its west are situated the western Ghats and in the east the Eastern Ghats, The important rivers running in this region are Kaveri, Krishna, Godavari, Narmada. The exception of Narmada and Tapti all other important rivers flow eastward into the Bay of Bengal. The rivers of the south are not as much usefull as means of communication, as the rivers of the north. The Deccan peninsula is a triangular table and rising abruptly in the west slopping way towards the east this area is considered to be the oldest part of India. The area lying to the south of Krishna and Tungabhadra is knows as Far- South. The present territories of Mysore and Tamil Nadu constitute this region. On the northern side of the Deccan plateau, the Vindhyas and the Satpura

ranges exist. These areas are covered with dense forests which are very difficult to cross. The unaccessibility of these regions led to the conception of two different countries in India - Aryabrata and Dakshinapath in the ancient times. Most of the Indian rulers never made any attempt to combine these two regions into one political unit. Only some of the prominent rulers like Ashoka, Samudragupta, Allauddin Khilji, Muhammad Tughlaq and Aurangzeb tried to bring both these regions under their control. This was in a way a blessing in disguise. One of the advantages of this separation according to the historian has been that. "In difficult and troublesome times the culture of the north could always seek refuge in the Deccan. When Buddhism became dominant in the north Brahmanical religion and culture made their way to the south. The refugee northern literature and culture were welcomed by the great Andhra, Chola, Chalukya, Yadava and Hoysala rulers.

Effect's:-

These geographical features have been instrumental in shaping Indian History.

- 1) **Saviour of Hindu Religion and Culture:** The south remained the centre of Indian culture and religion as the invasions on the north had no effect on it due to its natural isolation from the northern parts of the country. Indian culture in the Deccan could not be influenced even by Buddhism or Islam. So, the Deccan has played a creditable role in preserving the Hindu culture in its pristine form. It will not be wrong to say that the people of the north should always be grateful to those of the south for preserving and saving the Hindu religion, literature and culture.
- 2) **Hard Life :** As there are mountain ranges of the Vindhya and the Satpura in this part, it has been quite unfit for the use of cultivation,

people belonging to this region, have to work hard to earn their living. This practice of working hard has made the people energetic and laborious.

- 3) **Fine Military Field_:** The Deccan plateau has also been a fine military field. The people of this area could easily defend themselves against the external invasions with the natural protection provided by the mountain ranges, dense forests and irregular terrain of this region. The hills provided a natural barrier to the inhabitants who could easily get shelter in the valleys after letting their enemy out at the battle-field. And it was very difficult for the enemy to trace the circuitous routes of the hills. Thus, these geographical features helped the Marathas a lot in facing the great Mughal army. And it was due to these natural advantages that their comparatively small army could get victory over the imperial Mughal army. The last mighty Mughal emperor Aurangzeb, too, fell a victim to this region.
- 4) **Navigation :** As the Deccan plateau is surrounded by the open sea on its three sides, the people of this region took a keen interest in the maritime activities and the kings of this part were aware of the importance of navigation from the early times. Moreover, a great deal of trade and commerce went on through seaways of this region, Eastern Asiatic countries like Jawa, Sumatra, Burma, Champa and Cambodia, were reached by the mariners and a wide propaganda of Indian art, religion and culture was made in these parts of the world. The Indians also visited Persia, Egypt, Greece and Mesopotamia and established their political, commercial and cultural relations with them.

4) Cultural characteristics of Coastal region :-

The plains of the south extend from the eastern sea - coats to the western sea coat and contains some of the rich ports like Konkan and Malabar. The fertile deltas of Godawari, the Krishna and the Kaveri are also Located here. Their length is roughly 700 miles similarly in the east, the region is known as Eastern Ghats. The Western Ghats are 3,000 to 8,000 feet above sea level and possess a number of flat topped peaks. The Marathas build fortresses on these peaks and played an important role in the history of the country. As a result certain practices and customs developed in this region, which are not found elsewhere in India. The Eastern Ghats, however, are much broader and are easily accessible to communication. This resulted in the growth of number of important cities and kingdoms in those regions. The contact with the outside countries like Jawa, Sumatra, Burma, Siam and Indo - China was also maintained through the ports of the eastern Ghats. Most coastal communities have developed strategies, knowledge, traditions, beliefs and professional skills connected to trade, exchange and exploitation of marine resources, which are particularly rich as they correspond of the specific challenges connected to the management of the coastal and marine environment and because of the particular intensity of exchanges between cultures passing across the seas[1]. Coastal and marine activities have created buildings and artefacts highly adapted to their specific technical needs, like port structures, shipyards, structures for navigation, fisheries and aquaculture as well as representative buildings which once defined the physical interface between land and sea, defining the identity of a place.

References:-

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