

GEOGRAPHY OF ODISHA

Odisha is a littoral state on the eastern coast of peninsular India located between the parallels of 17° 49' N to 22° 34' N latitude and the meridians of 81° 27' E and 87° 29' E longitudes. While the Bay of Bengal swirls along its eastern and south-eastern boundary, on the land front it is wedged between the neighbouring states of West Bengal on the North East, Jharkhand on the North and Chhatisgarh on the West, Andhra Pradesh on the South. The geographical area of the state of Odisha is 1,55,707 sq.km. It was finalised on 1st of January 1949 when Mayurbhanj, the last among the Princely States, merged in it.

The eye-catching beauty of this land is enhanced by the diversity of the natural regions. Morphologically Odisha is divided into five parts-the coastal plains, the middle mountainous country, the rolling upland, the river valleys & the subdued plateaus.

The coastal plains of Odisha stretch from the Subarnarekha in the North to the Rushikulya in the South. They are narrow in the North, widest in the middle, narrowest in the lake Chilka coast and broad in the South.

The coastal plains are the gift of six major rivers, which bring silt from their catchments, has reclaimed this area from the depths of the Bay of Bengal. The rivers from North to South are the Subarnarekha, the Budha Balanga, the Baitarani, the Brahmani, the Mahanadi and the Rushikulya. The coastal plains can be termed as a land of 'six deltas' of the Subarnarekha and the Budha Balanga, the middle coastal plains the combined deltas of the Baitarani, the Brahmani and the Mahanadi and the South coastal plains (The Rushikulya plains).

The mountainous region of Odisha covers about three-fourths of the area of the State. This region is a part of Indian peninsula. Here deep and broad valleys are cut by the Baitarani, the Brahmani, the Mahanadi, the Rushikulya, the Vansadhara and the Nagavali rivers. They are fertile, well-drained and thickly populated. Morphologically this region can be divided into the following units (a) the Simulia and the Meghasan mountains, (b) the Baitarani and the Brahmani interfluus, (c) the watershed between the Brahmani and the Mahanadi, (d) the watershed of the Rushikulya and the Vansadhara. The elevation ranges from 610 to 1,068 meters.

The rolling uplands are lower in elevation than the plateaus. They vary from 153m. to 305m. They are the products of continued river action, are rich in soil nutrients, and are situated in the Koelsankh basin of the upper Brahmani in the IB, the Suktel and the Tel of the middle Mahanadi and the Sabari basins. The rolling uplands may be grouped as follows : the Rajgangpur uplands, the Jharsuguda uplands, the Bargarh uplands, the Bolangir-Titilagarh-Patnagarh uplands, the Bhawanipatna uplands, the Malkangiri uplands and the Rairangpur uplands.

River valleys are net product of the action of rivers. They are fertile and at times present an undulating topography. The major river valleys of Odisha are associated with the Brahmani, the Mahanadi and the Vansadhara rivers.

The subdued plateaus (305–610m.) reveal all the peculiarities of peninsular tablelands. They are almost flat and the monotony of orography is interrupted by the river valleys. These features are commonly met within the upper Baitarani and the Sabari basins of the Keonjhar and Koraput Districts, respectively. In these uplands sheet erosion is most common while gulying is confined to the river valleys. These plateaus can be divided into the Panposh-Keonjhar-Pallahara plateaus and the Nawrangpur-Jeypore plateaus.