

GEOGRAPHY: GUJARAT STATE

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INTRODUCTION:

India is a land of diversities in the planet earth. Geography of India is an essential subject to be studied by every citizen of the country. As a nation, India occupies a significant position in the world. It is a country known for its unique culture, history, heritage, natural resources and human capital. India is a union of states. For administrative reasons, the country is divided into 28 states and seven union territories. Each part of India is unique in its geography, culture, language and socio-economic conditions.

Gujarat is one of the prominent states in India. The main objective of learning this lesson is to know about its geographic setting, people, governance and contributions in the country. It is necessary to understand:

- a) The physiographic setting
- b) The climate, rainfall and land cover
- c) The administrative divisions and population
- d) Economic resources and contributors
- e) Culture, tourism and unique features of the state as a whole.

Gujarat state is known for its role in the economic history of India. It is the home for all Gujarati-speaking people of India.

LOCATION

Gujarat is located in the western India. Geographically, Gujarat lies in between 20° 6' N to 24° 42' N north latitudes and 68° 10'E to 74° 28'E east longitudes.

It covers an area of 196030 Sq Km. with a coastline of 1600 Km. The state is bordered by Rajasthan to the North, Maharashtra to the South, Madhya Pradesh to the east and the Arabian Sea as well as the Pakistani province of Sindh on the West. It is the State known for the Indus Valley civilization.

ESTABLISHMENT

Gujarat became an independent state on 1st May 1960. The first capital of Gujarat was Ahmedabad and since 1970, Gandhinagar is named as its capital. The State has the fastest growing economy in India.

Gandhinagar is the capital city. The other major cities are Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Surat, Rajkot, Bhavnagar and Jamnagar.

Gujarat is the 7th largest state by area in India. Gujarat is the 10th largest state in India by population.

LANGUAGE SPOKEN BY PEOPLE

Gujarati is the official language of the state, which is spoken by 84.5 % of the people. Gujarati is an Indo-Aryan Language evolved from Sanskrit. People from Kutch region speak in Kutchi language. Other native languages spoken in low proportions are Bhili and Gamit. About 5% of the population speak native tribal languages, 4.7% Hindi, 2% Sindhi, 1.5% Marathi and 1% Urdu language.

PHYSIOGRAPHY AND NATURAL REGIONS

The state of Gujarat occupies the northern extremity of the western India. Based on the physiographic characteristics, Gujarat state has been divided into three major morphological regions. They are:

- a) The peninsula, traditionally known as Saurashtra. It is essentially a hilly tract sprinkled with low mountains.
- b) Kutch on the north-east part of Gujarat. It is a barren and rocky area containing the famous Rann (desert) of Kutch, the big Rann in the north and the little Rann in the east.
- c) The mainland extending from the Rann of Kutch and the Aravalli Hills to the river Damanganga, is on the whole a level plain of alluvial soil.

Mainland Regions – The Mainland of Gujarat consists of North Gujarat, Central Gujarat and the Plains of South Gujarat which are spread in the valley regions of Narmada, Mahi and Tapti rivers. In the north-eastern region of mainland Gujarat, there are the Aravalli mountain regions, with heights of about 150 to 319 meters. In the eastern side of mainland Gujarat, there are the Saputara mountain ranges, which have heights between 150 and 243 meters. These regions separate Gujarat from the western Khandesh of Maharashtra and divides Narmada and Tapti into two parts. Tapti, Mahi, Sabarmati and Narmada rivers flow through the alluvial plains of these mountain ranges.

Peninsula Regions: The Peninsular Gujarat is divided into three parts such as High Lands, Interior Plains and Coastal Saurashtra Regions. In the central high lands, rivers Machhu, Shetrunji and Bhadar flow towards the Arabian Sea through the Gulf of Khambhat. In the Northern part of Saurashtra, there are muddy plains and large areas of saline lands.

NATURAL REGIONS:

Gujarat is a state endowed with many natural regions. The National parks include Vansda National Park, Blackbuck National Park, Velavadar and Marine National Park, Gulf of Kutch. Wildlife sanctuaries include: Wild Ass Wildlife Sanctuary, Nal Sarovar Bird Sanctuary, Porbandar Bird Sanctuary, Kutch Desert Wildlife Sanctuary, Kutch Bustard Sanctuary, Narayan Sarovar Sanctuary, Jessore Sloth Bear Sanctuary, Anjal, Balaram-Ambaji, Barda, Jambughoda, Khavda, Paniya, Purna, Rampura, Ratanmahal, and Surpaneshwar.

The major mountain-ranges of India, like Aravalli, Sahyadri, Vindhya and Satpura are all in Gujarat. Apart from this, Gir hills, Barda, Jessore, Chotila etc. are situated in different parts of the State. Girnar is the tallest hill of Gujarat. Saputara is the only hill-station of the state.

Narmada is the biggest river of Gujarat followed by Tapti, although Sabarmati covers the longest area in the state. Sardar Sarovar Project is built on Narmada River. Narmada is one of the major rivers of peninsular India with a length of around 1312 Km. It is one of the three rivers of peninsular India that runs from east to west. There are altogether about 31 rivers draining through the lands of Gujarat.

There are some notable lakes like Kankaria Lake, Gaurishankar Lake and Gogha existing in Gujarat.

GEOLOGY:

The geology of Gujarat is very complex. In Kutch, the high ground is overlain by hard volcanic rock (Basalt) or deep layers of weathered Sandstones, Shales, marls and limestone. Coastal and lowland areas are water logged. In the Saurashtra region of Gujarat, the geology is mainly comprising of Basalt with few limestone outcrops west of Jamnagar. A deep layer of recent alluvium occur along river courses.

CLIMATE:

The state's annual temperature varies very widely from 6 to 45°C. It has tropical climates, namely sub humid, arid, and semi arid spread over different regions of the state. North Gujarat region comprising of Kutch, part of Banaskantha, Mehsana and North Western part of Saurashtra, all have arid climate, while the South Gujarat enjoys sub humid climate and in the rest of the state, the semi arid climate prevails.

RAINFALL

Gujarat state receives an average annual rainfall of 828 mm in 35 rainy days. The coefficient of variation of rainfall is 50%. There is a large spatial and temporal variation in rainfall of the state. Kutch district and western parts of Banaskantha and Patan districts and parts of Jamnagar, Rajkot and Surendranagar districts are regions which receive, less than 500 mm rainfall. The high rainfall of (> 1000 mm), is received in Dang, Valsad, Navsari and Surat districts. The rest of the state receives a rainfall between 500-1000 mm and generally fall under semi-arid climate.

WATER RESOURCES:

Gujarat has a good amount of water resources. Gir forms the catchments of seven perennial rivers viz. Hiran, Saraswati, Datardi, Shingoda, Machhundri, Ghodavadi and Raval. During peak summer, surface water for wild animals is available at about 300 water points. In order to tap water resources, 4 dams have been constructed along Hiran, Machhundri, Raval and Shingoda respectively. The total catchments area of these 4 reservoirs is 820 Sq Km.

The State Fisheries Department of Gujarat has listed 50 reservoirs suitable for fisheries, covering an area of 2,42,205 ha. This is in addition to 561 small irrigation tanks, which are actually reservoirs, with a water spread of 44,025 ha. Thus, the total area under reservoirs in the State is 2,86,230 ha.

Dams: The other are Sukhi Dam, Narmada Dam, and Ukai Dam, Kakrapar Dam.

There is a good Irrigation potential available in the state of Gujarat. Many villages in Gujarat have adopted 100% drip and sprinkler irrigation systems to water the crops. In June 2009, more than 93,000 farmers in Gujarat have adopted drip irrigation for irrigating their total 1.51 lakh hectare land. Drip Irrigation system and inter-linking of 21 rivers of the state for conservation of water has made it possible for Sugarcane cultivation in the state

There is potential soil resources in the state of Gujarat. The Southern Hilly regions are occupied by deep black soils with patches of coastal alkali – rich lateritic soils and medium black soils. The Central Gujarat state is characterized by deep black clayey soils to loamy sand. Northern Gujarat is occupied by sandy soils and saline soils.

ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISIONS:

The Districts, of Gujarat State are:

Ahmedabad, Amreli, Anand, Banaskantha, Bharuch, Bhavnagar, Dahod, Dang, Gandhinagar, Jamnagar, Junagadh, Kheda, Kutch, Mehsana, Narmada, Navsari, Panchmahal, Patan, Porbandar, Rajkot, Sabarkantha, Surat, Surendranagar, Tapi, Vadodara and, Valsad.

Parliamentary constituencies and Legislative assemblies

Gujarat is governed by a Legislative Assembly of 182 members 26 members represent this state to the Lok Sabha, of India.

The largest cities are Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Surat, Rajkot, Bhavnagar and Jamnagar, Surendranagar city, Anand, Junagadh, Gandhinagar.

POPULATION:

The population of the Gujarat State was 60,383,628 as per the year 2011 census. The density of population is 308 per square kilometers, a lower density compared to other states of the country. Male population is 31,482,282 and Female is 28,901,346. Sex Ratio in Gujarat is 918 females per 1,000 males. The literacy rate is 79.3% of which Male literacy rate 87.2% and Female literacy rate 70.7%. The life expectancy in the state is 64.1 years.

The state has a birth rate of 22.3 per 1000 people per year and a death rate of 6.9.

Ethnic Group:

As per 2011 Census a total of 84.5% of population reported Gujarati as their first language, 5% were speakers of native tribal languages, 4.7% Hindi, 2% Sindhi, 1.5% Marathi and 1% were speakers of Urdu language. Religion-wise, 90% of Hindus in Gujarat speak Gujarati while the other 10% speak Hindi and other languages. Almost 88% of the Muslims speak Gujarati while the other 12% speak Urdu. Almost all of the Jains speak Gujarati, a few speak Marwari as well. Parsi Zoroastrians also speak Gujarati as their native language. Marathi is spoken by a large number of people in Vadodara and Surat. Apart from this, English, Sindhi, Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu, Bengali, Kannada, Oriya, Malayalam, etc. is also spoken by a lower proportion.

The people of the state of Gujarat are mostly of Hindu religion. Hinduism is followed by 89.1% of the total population of Gujarat state. Muslims account for 9.1%, Jain 1.0% and Sikh 0.1% of the population.

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS:

Forest resources: Gujarat has recorded more than 400 plant species existing in Gir forest. Teak bearing areas are mainly confined to the Western portion of the Gir forests, which constitute nearly half of area. In the remaining half of the area, there is predominance of miscellaneous species

Mineral resources: The state is rich in calcite, gypsum, manganese, lignite, bauxite, limestone, agate, feldspar and quartz sand. Successful mining of these minerals are done in this State. Gujarat produces about 98% of India's required amount of Soda Ash and also meets about 78% of the national requirement of salt. It is one of India's most prosperous states, having a per-capita GDP significantly above India's average. Kalol, Khambhat and Ankleshwar are today known for their oil and natural gas production.

Energy resources: Gujarat government is a front runner in the development of solar energy in India. It is also the biggest industrial hub in ceramic business around Morbi, Himatanagar.

INDUSTRIES:

Gujarat is the largest producer of milk in India. It has Asia's biggest dairy. In animal Husbandry the livestock raised are buffalo and other cattle, sheep, and goats. Apart from milk production, production of eggs and wool are the other important industries in this state. Gujarat also contributes through other industries like textiles, oil, and soap.

AGRICULTURE:

The Major agricultural produce of Gujarat state include cotton, groundnuts (peanuts), dates, and sugar cane, milk and milk products.

CROPS:

Cotton, groundnut, Sesamum, castor, paddy, bajra, maize, tur, green gram, sugarcane are major Kharif crops while wheat, rice, mustard, gram, groundnut and bajra are summer crops. Sesame, pigeon pea, Desi Cotton, Sorghum, Soyabean are grown during the monsoon seasons.

EXPORT-IMPORT:

Gujarat state exports spices and goods through ships to Europe and other western countries. Gujarat exported Textiles since 13th Century and had been selling Cotton Textiles to the Middle East and most probably, South-East Asia. Silk Patola, Ikat Fabrics, plainly woven and coarse cotton textiles are exported. It is the largest producer (35%) and exporter (60%) of cotton and is the third largest denim producer in the world. It offers India's 12% textile exports and Known as the 'Manchester of the East' and 'Denim City.' Six percent of Gujarat's total income comes from the textile industry.

INFRASTRUCTURE:

Gujarat Infrastructure comprise of Extensive network of Education Infrastructure, Access infrastructure Power and Energy Infrastructure, Water Infrastructure Industrial Infrastructure, Rural and Urban Development, Tele communication, IT Infrastructure and Tourism

TRANSPORT:

Gujarat State is well connected by road with good national and state highways. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport in Ahmedabad offers international flights to many countries directly. There are few domestic airports in the state. Kandla Port is one of the largest ports serving Western India. Other important ports in Gujarat are the Port of Navlakhi, Port of Magdalla, Port of Pipavav, Port of Porbandar and the privately owned Mundra Port.

NATURAL HAZARDS

Gujarat state is highly prone to extremes like droughts, floods, and earth quakes. A devastating earthquake measuring 6.9 on the Richter scale hit Gujarat causing a lot of damage including massive death and destruction in many parts of the State during the year 2001.

OTHER IMPORTANT ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES:

Gujarat records the highest decadal agricultural growth rate of 10.97%. The Economist noted that Gujarat's infrastructure competes with Guangdong - the economic engine of China. With double digit growth rates, Gujarat continues to outpace growth in other Indian states. An article in the Economist claims that the state government of Gujarat has kept red tape to a minimum, does not ask for bribes, and does not interfere with entrepreneurial corporations. The state has reliable electricity and effective bureaucracy.

CULTURE:

The traditional culture of Gujaratis with their traditional music and dance form of Garba, Garbi, Raas and other are well known attractions to tourists. Raas and Garba dance forms are said to have been passed on by Lord Krishna, who spent his childhood at Gokul while he played the flute. Dandiya Raas is a very energetic, colorful and playful dance seen in the state of Gujarat. Garba is a very graceful form of dance mainly performed by females in a circular formation. The Gujarat State has a lot of such cultural contribution.

LITERATURE:

Laureates of Gujarati literature are Hemchandracharya, Narsinh Mehta, Mirabai, Akho, Premanand Bhatt, Shamal Bhatt, Dayaram, Dalpatram, Narmad, Govardhanram Tripathi, Gandhiji, K. M. Munshi, Umashankar Joshi, Suresh Joshi, Pannalal Patel and Rajendra Shah. A huge contribution to Gujarati language literature came from the Swaminarayan paramhanso, like Bramhanand, Premanand, with prose like Vachanamrut and poetry in the form of bhajans.

EDUCATION:

The State of Gujarat has 13 universities and four agricultural universities. The Central Salt and Marine Chemicals Research Institute has been established under Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, at Bhavnagar. The National Institute of Design (NID) is located at Gandhinagar.

In addition, the Institute of Rural Management (IRMA) is located at Anand.

TOURISM:

The State of Gujarat is known for its arts culture, music, Fairs, and Festivals. Gujarat's museums are run by the state's Department of Museums. They are located at the principal state museum, Baroda Museum & Picture Gallery. Other famous museums include, the Gandhi Smarak Sangrahalaya, Calico Museum of Textiles, the Vadodara Museum, Maharaja Fatehsingh Museum, the Gandhi Museum, the Watson Museum are some of tourism spots in this state.

PROMINENT PEOPLE & PERSONALITIES:

Indian Freedom fighters and Leaders like Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Morarji Desai, K.M. Munshi, Narhari Parikh, Mahadev Desai, Mohanlal Pandya, Bhulabhai Desai and Ravi Shankar Vyas all hailed from Gujarat. Gujarat was also the site of some of the most popular revolts, including the Satyagrahas in Kheda, Bardoli, Borsad and the Salt Satyagraha.

SPORTS:

The State of Gujarat has produced several luminaries in the field of sports. The Sports Authority of Gujarat encourages the active participation of rural children in all the sporting events organized by the state. The state government has introduced sports as an important subject in the curriculum of the schools for a balanced development of the students' personalities.

HISTORY:

Historically, the state of Gujarat has been one of the main centers of the Indus Valley Civilization. It contains major ancient metropolitan cities from the Indus Valley such as Lothal, Dholavira and Gola Dhoro. The ancient city of Lothal was where India's first port was established. There are about 50 Indus Valley settlement ruins which have been discovered from Gujarat. The historical evidence of trade and commerce with Persia and Gulf during 1000 to 750 BC has provided enormous information. There was a succession of Hindu / Buddhist states such as the Gupta Empire, Rashtrakuta Empire, Pala Empire and Gurjara-Pratihara Empire as well as local dynasties such as the Maitrakas and then the Solankis all have ruled the region of the country. The 11th century history of Gujarat saw the emergence of the Muslims in the political arena of the state. The first Muslim conqueror was Mahmud of Ghazni whose conquest of Somnath effectively ended the rule of the Solankis.

MONUMENTS AND FORTS:

The notable forts and Monuments of Gujarat are Bhadra Fort & Teen Darwaza Mata Bhavani Well Ahmedabad, Tomb of Ahmed Shah, Sabasmati Ashram, Shaking Minarets, Dada Hari Wav, Laxmi Vilas Palace Vadodara, Navsari Near Surat Udvada, Sanjan, Lighthouse Daman, Moti Daman Fort, Nani Daman Fort Daman Zampa Gateway Diu, Portugese Fort Diu Fortim do Mar Diu and Naida Caves Diu Junagadh Gate Somnath.

HERITAGE:

The Gujarat state has a rich culture and heritage. The people of Gujarat have preserved the ancient art and craft techniques. They still practice them with great determination. Gujaratis are proud of their customs and traditions and follow them with utmost pride. The people have their own set of customs and rituals.

Gujarat strives to continue to outpace the growth of other Indian states. It is a land of 1000 festivals in India.