

**MODULE-1**  
**GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING AND EARLY SETTLEMENTS**  
**TOPIC- GEOGRAPHICAL BOUNDARIES**

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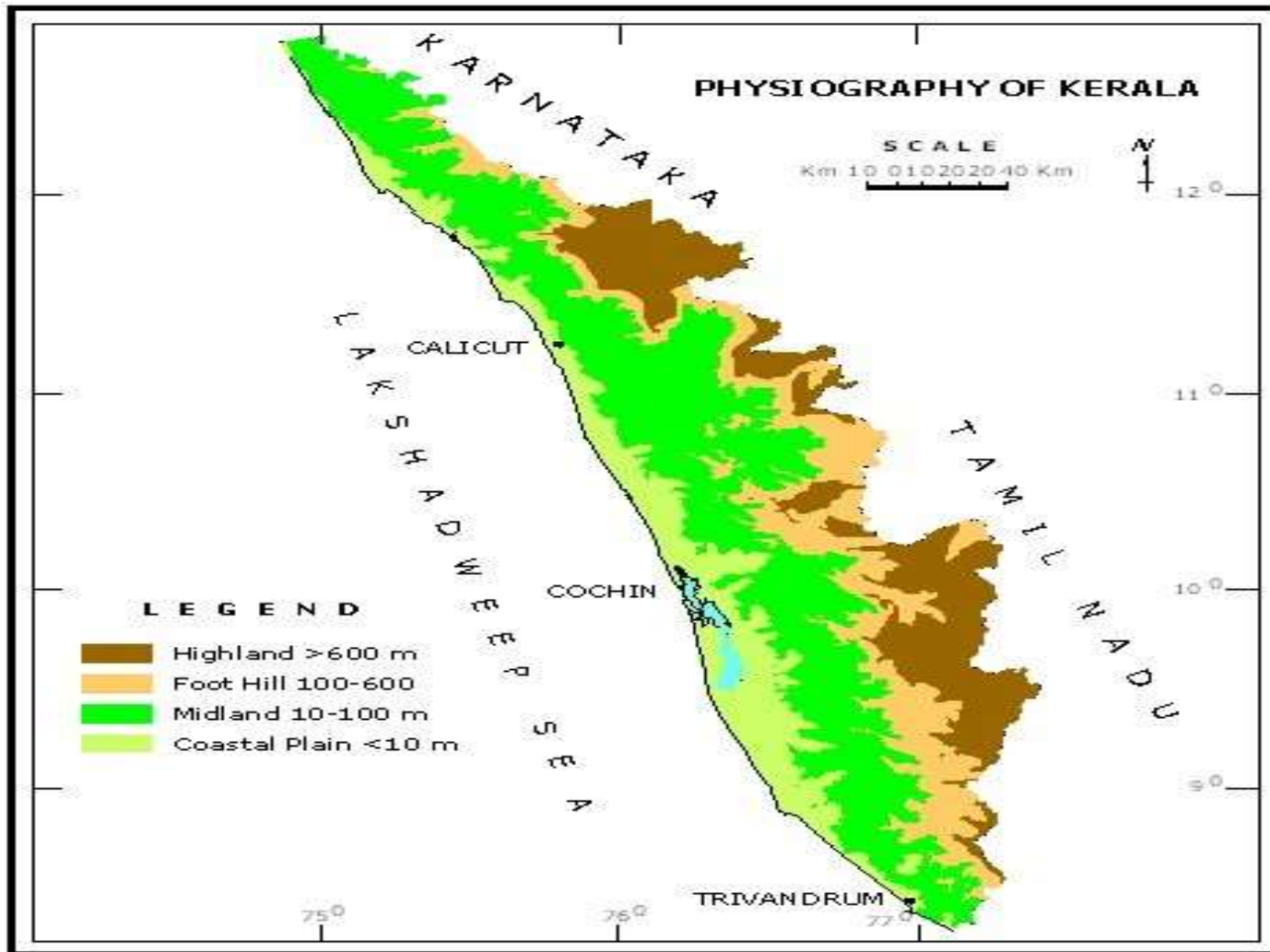
- Study of geographical features helps to understand the history of a region
- Helps to know how geography helps in the creation of history of a region
- In this section we are going to understand how geography help in the creation of a particular culture and history of Kerala
- It is a narrow strip of land lying b/w Arabian sea & Western Ghats in the Southern most part of Indian Subcontinent
- Geographically isolated – contacts with other parts of India through passes in the mountain ranges

- Isolation led to the development of an independent political & cultural tradition
- As guarded by Western Ghats, Kerala was isolated from rest part of India especially North India
- But had a continuous trade & cultural contacts with other parts of world from ancient period onwards
- Kerala was free from invasions, which shook North India through centuries because of her insular position.
- It was a hindrance for friendly contacts with the North. It took longer time for north Indian religions to penetrate in to Kerala than foreign ones.

- It enabled Kerala to evolve its own styles of art, architecture and sculpture like Kathakali and Kudiattam.
- However this did not prevent intellectuals like Sankaracharya to propagate his philosophy outside Kerala.
- It was not a hindrance to the Chola, Vijaya Nagar, Mysore and other South Indian powers to raid the Kerala territory.
- It did not prevent Tamil, Kannada and Tulu languages to influence our dialect and writing languages.

- Located on Malabar coast of south-west India
- 1<sup>st</sup> November 1956 by State Reorganization Act
- Area – 15005sq.miles
- Boundaries – Karnataka( North & North-East)
  - Tamil Nadu (South & South –East)
  - Arabian sea (West)
  - Western Ghats (East)
- Highest literacy rate
- 3% of India's population

- **Topography – 3 zones**
- **Low land / Coastal tracts**
- **Midland / Plains- Edanadu**
- **Highland / Hilly Area- Malanadu**



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# LOW LAND / THE COASTAL TRACT

- Comprised of beach, coconut groves and settlements bordering the coast
- Meeting place of sea, rivers & back waters
- Soil – sandy & fertile
- Long coastal line with 41 rivers flowing to Arabian sea
- Several inlets to sea –shipping & fishing – numerous ports
- Ancient Ports – Muziris, Tyndis, Nelkinda
- Later ports -Vizhinjam, Kollam, Purakkad, Kayamkulam, Kochi, Beypore, Kozhikode, Kannur, Valapattanam, Ezhimala
- Main industries – fishing, coir production
- coconut trees



# THE MIDLAND/ PLAIN

- B/W coastal area & highland
- Has rivers, garden lands & homesteads (purayidams)
- Widespread Cultivation – coconut, arecanut, paddy, tapioca, sugarcane, vegetables....
- Based on climate— monsoon

# HIGHLAND / HILLY AREA

- Part of Western Ghats
- Dense forest
- Fertile soil
- Spices –tea, coffee, ginger, cardamom, rubber....
- Spices attracts foreigners to Kerala

# SOILS

- Different types of soil in Kerala
- Laterite soil – majority- suitable for the cultivation of cash crops & mixed crops
- Coconut – is grown every where especially sandy soil
- Paddy – alluvial soil

# MINERALS

- Not rich in mineral resources
- Iron ore – Malabar
- Neendakara – Monozite
- Quartz & quartzite – all over Kerala
- Bauxite- north Malabar

# Western Ghats

- Western ghats on the eastern side of Kerala is almost continuous & stands like a natural fort from south to north, sloping to the east
- It influenced our history.
- It protected the state from political invasions that hit South India till the 18th century.
- It guards the eastern frontier.
- It safeguarded the territorial integrity of the land.
- It was the source of most of the rivers of Kerala.
- It provided mountain passes for traffic between Kerala and neighboring states of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.



Figure 1. Physical map of Kerala

- The forest in the Ghat is a source of wealth to the state. Some of the peaks important from the political and religious points of view are situated in the Western Ghats.
- The Anamudi peak in the Ghat represents the highest point in India
- The Agastyakutam, the southernmost peak in the Western Ghats figures in the popular legend of Agastya.
- From Ezhimala in the north to Mahendragiri in the South, we have innumerable hills.
- Among the hills, mention may be made of Vavvimala, Vatamala, Puralimala, KalladiKotan, Nelliampathy, Pothundi, Anamala, Elamala, Peerumedu, Sabarimala, Ponmudi, Agastykutam and Aruvamozhi

- These hills have influenced our history
- Ezhimala was the seat of a flourishing kingdom during the early centuries of the Christian era.
- As it is projected in to the sea, it was a well-known land mark for ancient mariners.
- The Puralimala was the headquarters of Pazhassi Raja for a long time'.
- The Brahmagiri in Wayanad is important as Thirunelli temple is located here.
- The Sabari hills are famous for the Sastha shrine, one of the important centers of Hindu pilgrimage in the state.
- The Malayattur hills is famous as a centre of Christian pilgrimage associated with St. Thomas.



# Passes

- The mountains provide a number of passes/gaps to facilitate contacts.
- There are a number of mountain passes in Kerala which influence our history.
- Palakkad pass, Thamarassery pass, Kamban pass, Bodinayakanur pass, Aruvaymozhi pass, Perambadi pass, Periya pass, Aryankavu pass, Nadakani pass
- **The Palakkad Gap**
- -30-40 KMs.
- – largest pass in western ghats
- -Bharathapuzha originates from the Palakkadan pass
- Through it, the south west winds bring pleasant moist air and grateful showers to the thirsty plains of Coimbatore.
- Through it, many a stream from the higher mountains finds their way to the Arabian Sea.
- The gap is of great economic value to Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

- **Thamarassery churam**

- - connects Kozhikode & Wayanad

- -used by the British in Malabar to transport spices to Beypore port

- **Aryankavu Pass**

- - connects Punalur in Kollam district with Shenkottai in Tamil Nadu

- **Bodinaikanur Pass**

- - connects Idukki Madurai in Tamil Nadu

- **Perambadi Pass**
- - connects Kerala with Coorg in Karnataka
- **Kamban Pass**
- - Thodupuzha & Kambam
- **Aruvamozhi Pass**
- - Thiruvananthapuram with Kanyakumari
- **Nadukani Churam**
- - Malappuram district with Ooty

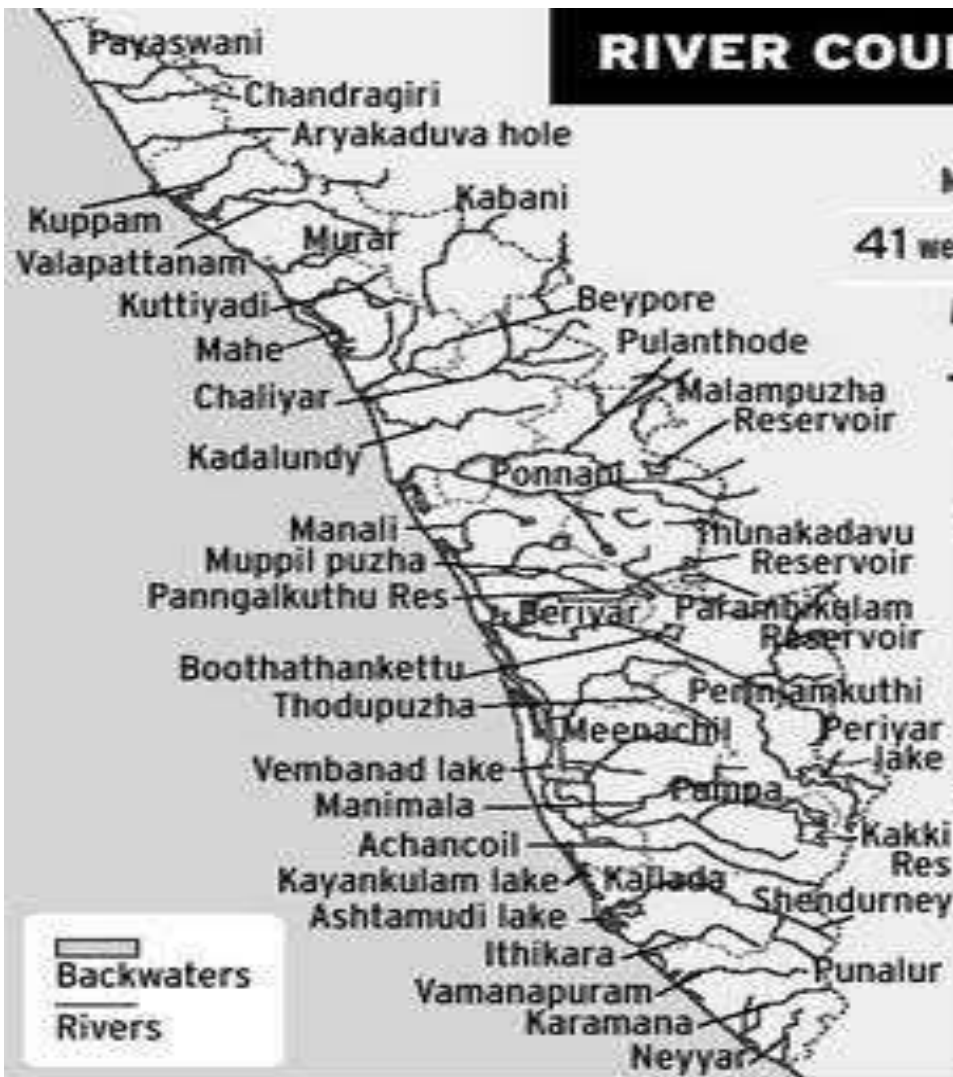
- Passes helped human migration
- Affects weather patterns- allowing moisture-laden south west monsoon winds to Kerala & moderating summer temperatures
- Palakkadan pass- Cheras extended their domination over Kongunadu
- Hyder Ali- attacked Malabar in 18<sup>th</sup> C- due to strategic importance of Palakkadan pass built a fort there in 1776

# Arabian sea

- The Arabian Sea has been a permanent geographical factor in our History.
- In fact Kerala has been the gift of the Arabian Sea.
- Kerala depended for its prosperity on the sea and the sea borne trade.
- The Jews, Christian, Muslims and Parsees came here following a sea route and first landed here.
- The Europeans anchored at Kerala coast.
- The Portuguese were the first in this endeavor followed by the Dutch. French and the English, all followed a sea route to reach Kerala and landed on the Kerala coast and built their settlements here.
- The Arabian sea had been the field of activity for the Kunjalis, the Admirals of the Calicut fleet.

- The imperialists first set their foot here
- The commercial and cultural contacts that Kerala has had in the past immensely benefited the princes and peoples of Kerala.
- The extensive sea coast of Kerala has provided a number of harbours both in the ancient and modern times.
- In ancient times we have such ports as Muziris, Tyndis, Barace and Nelcynda.
- In medieval times we have Kollam, Kozhikode and Kodungallur, and in modern times we have Kochi, Alapuzha and Ezhimala.
- If Kerala was isolated from the rest of India by the mountains, she was opened to the rest of the world by the sea.

# RIVER COUNTRY



Major rivers of Kerala: **44**

**41** west-flowing, **3** east-flowing

All the rivers originate from  
the Western Ghats

• Six major rivers, including the Pampa and the Achancoil, drain into the Vembanad lake ecosystem

• The rivers flowing out of the Western Ghats are biodiversity-supporting systems

# Rivers

- The land of Kerala 44 rivers in the state – 41 west flowing and 3 (tributaries of Kaveri-Kabani, Bhavani and Pampa) east flowing.
- The state is rich in water potential, but no long rivers.
- The major rivers are Nila (Bharata puzha or Perar), Periyar and Pampa; Kunthipuzha, Chandragiri puzha, Korapuzha and Chaliyar.
- Largest river- Periyar- 244Kms
- Second largest- Bharathapuzha
- Third – Pamba-176 kms
- Fourth – Chaliyar, Chalakkudy



- Periyar
- - longest river
- - originates from Sivagiri hills along border of Kerala & Tamil Nadu
- Splits in to 2 when it reaches Aluva,- southern branch again splits in to 2 – one join sea at Varapuzha & other at Trippunithura
- Northern branch falls into the back water near Kodungallur
- Kaladi- Sankaracharya

- **Bharathapuzha**
- - Ananamala hills in TN
- Flows through Palakkad, Malappuram & Thrissur
- Joins Arabian sea at Ponnani
- Mamankam festival
- Also known as Nila

- The rivers perform two-fold function.
- They provide uninterrupted water transport through the length and breadth of the state.
- They add to the land area forming backwaters and ports.
- They make the land fertile and the country prosperous.
- Inland trade has been mainly through the rivers.
- They are arteries of trade and communication

- The harbours at the mouth of the rivers provide safe anchorage to ships. Kerala rivers have been the cradles of early civilizations.
- 24 out of the 32 Brahmin settlements are on the banks of rivers.
- A number of historic and religious temples and churches are situated on the banks of rivers.
- The rivers have influenced our political and military history.
- The Periyar flood of 1341 made Muziris useless for trade and brought in to existence the Vaipin Island.
- The flood of 1789 in the same river forced Tippu Sultan to abandon his further conquest of Thiruvitamkur.

- Several places of historical and cultural importance are located on the river banks.
- We have Chittur, Palakkad, Thiruvillamala, Pattambi, Thirunavaya and Chamravattam on the banks of Bharatapuzha.
- Ayiramalai, Malayattur, Kaladi, Aluva and Kodungallur on the banks of Periyar;
- Aanmala, Sabarimala, Chengannur, Maramon, Edathwa on the banks of Pamba.

# Lagoons/ Back waters

- Lagoon is a network of 5 large lakes linked by both natural & man made canals, fed by 38 rivers & extending to a large area of state
- Formed by action of waves & shore currents creating low barrier islands across the mouth of many rivers flowing down from western ghats
- Lie near to the sea & separated by a natural dam formed by soil brought down from hills through the rivers
- Kerala has a chain of lagoons and backwaters.
- They provide communication between the different parts of Kerala.
- The more important of the lakes of Kerala are Vembanad, Ashtamudi, Bakel and Kumbla.
- Ashtamudi kayal- south Kerala- 200 kms area- most preserved lake with unique ecosystem- a barrage is built near Needakara near Kollam to prevent salt water from sea to enter deep inside the lagoon- fresh water used for irrigation purpose

- The Vembanad Lake; its name came from the ancient kingdom of Venpolinad.
- It is the largest lake in Kerala extending from the south up to Kochi
- On its banks are situated Vaikkam, a famous Hindu pilgrim centre, Alleppey, Quilon and Cochin famous ports.
- The Sasthamkotta Lake is the one and the only one fresh water lake in Kerala.
- Lagoons were utilised by fishermen, sailors- as parking places, inland navigation and fishing
- Also helped in the development of port cities

# Monsoon

- Closer to equator
- Bestowed with a pleasant climate- due to the presence of sea & western ghats
- Western ghats resist the dry wind blowing from north reaching Kerala
- Receives rain with an average 3000 mm a year
- Temperature- 28° to 32° C on plains & 20° C in high lands
- Diverse climatic condition due to topography
- Climatic conditions- winter, summer, south-west monsoon, north-east monsoon



- Winter-november- middle of february
- Temperature is low & witness lowest amount of rainfall
- Summer- end of february to end of May
- High Temperature, low rain fall, humid weather
- Summer in Kerala is more cool & pleasant due to presence of western ghats & also due to cool breeze from Arabian sea
- Rain accompanied by lightening & thunder

- Monsoon
- Rainy phase
- South – west monsoon – June – september
- Winds reaching southern point of Indian peninsula, divided in to 2 parts – Arabian sea branch & Bay of Bengal branch
- Arabian sea branch first hits western ghats
- South west monsoon locally known as ‘ Edavapathy’
- 85% of total rain
- Most of the rivers fed by edavapathy
- North east monsoon –october to november – ‘Thulavarsham’ – afternoon rain accompanied by thunder