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Location and Extent of Odisha

Odisha, a vibrant state on the eastern coast of India, is known for its rich cultural heritage, natural beauty, and historical significance. Understanding the geographical attributes of Odisha provides insight into its economic, cultural, and social dynamics.

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1. Introduction

Odisha, formerly known as Orissa, holds a significant place in India's geographical and cultural landscape. The state's location on the eastern seaboard provides it with unique natural and strategic advantages. It serves as a crucial link between the central and eastern regions of India.

2. Geographical Coordinates

Odisha lies between the latitudes **17°49'N to 22°34'N** and longitudes **81°27'E to 87°29'E**. This positioning places the state in the **tropical zone**, influencing its climate, vegetation, and overall geography.

3. Location

3.1. Eastern Coastline

Odisha is bordered by the Bay of Bengal to the east, which stretches for about **485 kilometers**, making it one of the most important maritime states in India. The coastline plays a vital role in trade, tourism, and fishing.

3.2. Neighboring States

- **North:** West Bengal and Jharkhand
- **West:** Chhattisgarh
- **South:** Andhra Pradesh This location provides Odisha with diverse cultural and economic exchanges with neighboring states.

4. Area and Size

- Total geographical area: **155,707 square kilometers**
- Odisha ranks as the **8th largest state in India** in terms of area.
- It accounts for **4.87% of the total geographical area of India**.

5. Physical Boundaries

The physical boundaries of Odisha are defined by a combination of natural features and political borders:

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- **Eastern Boundary:** Bay of Bengal
- **Northern Boundary:** Subarnarekha River and the Dalma Hills
- **Western Boundary:** Plateaus of Chhattisgarh
- **Southern Boundary:** Eastern Ghats merging into Andhra Pradesh

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6. Topographical Features

Odisha's terrain is marked by diverse geographical features:

6.1. Coastal Plains

The coastal plains of Odisha are fertile and cover a significant portion of the state. These plains are home to major rivers like the **Mahanadi**, **Brahmani**, and **Baitarani**, forming a rich delta region.

6.2. Eastern Ghats

The Eastern Ghats, a chain of low hills and plateaus, traverse the western and southern parts of Odisha. The **Deomali Hill**, Odisha's highest peak at **1,672 meters**, lies in this region.

6.3. Central Plateau

The central plateau region is a mix of rugged terrain and rolling uplands, rich in minerals like coal, bauxite, and iron ore.

6.4. River Systems

Odisha is blessed with an intricate network of rivers that enhance its agricultural potential and hydroelectric power. Major rivers include:

- **Mahanadi**
- **Brahmani**
- **Baitarani**
- **Subarnarekha**
- **Rushikulya**

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7. Climate

Odisha's geographical location influences its climate, which is tropical and characterized by three distinct seasons:

- **Summer (March to June):** Hot and humid with temperatures reaching up to 40°C.
- **Monsoon (July to September):** Heavy rainfall due to the southwest monsoon.
- **Winter (October to February):** Mild and dry with temperatures ranging between 10°C and 25°C.

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8. Importance of Location

8.1. Economic Significance

- The proximity to the Bay of Bengal has established Odisha as a hub for maritime trade and commerce.
- Major ports like **Paradip** facilitate both national and international trade.
- The fertile plains are the backbone of Odisha's agrarian economy.

8.2. Cultural and Historical Significance

Odisha's location on ancient trade routes facilitated cultural exchanges with Southeast Asia, evident in the architecture of **Konark Sun Temple** and **Jagannath Temple**.

8.3. Strategic Significance

- The coastal region plays a vital role in India's defense and maritime security.
- Odisha's geographical position enables it to serve as a bridge between India's northern and southern states.

9. Challenges Related to Geography

9.1. Natural Disasters

Due to its location along the Bay of Bengal, Odisha is prone to natural calamities like:

- **Cyclones:** Regularly battered by severe cyclonic storms (e.g., 1999 Super Cyclone, Cyclone Fani).
- **Floods:** Overflowing rivers during monsoon season cause widespread flooding.

9.2. Coastal Erosion

The coastal areas face significant erosion, threatening habitats and infrastructure.

9.3. Regional Disparities

While the coastal belt is developed and urbanized, the interior regions, especially those dominated by the Eastern Ghats, remain underdeveloped.

10. Government Initiatives

The state government and central authorities have implemented several measures to address geographic challenges and harness Odisha's location for development:

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- **Cyclone Preparedness:** Construction of cyclone shelters and establishment of early warning systems.
- **Port Development:** Expansion of Paradip and Dhamra ports to enhance maritime trade.
- **Tourism Promotion:** Focus on eco-tourism in the coastal and plateau regions.

Physiographic Divisions of Odisha

Odisha, a state in eastern India, is endowed with diverse physiographic features ranging from the coast to the hills. These features can be broadly categorized into five distinct divisions:

1. **The Coastal Plains:**

- Stretching from the Subarnarekha River in the north to the Rushikulya River in the south.
- Formed by the deposition of sediments carried by six major rivers: Mahanadi, Brahmani, Baitarani, Subarnarekha, Budhabalanga, and Rushikulya.
- Width varies along the coast, with the widest part in the middle and narrowest near Chilika Lake.
- Consists of fertile alluvial soil, supporting agriculture and a dense population.
- Home to several lagoons and deltas, including the Chilika Lake, one of the largest brackish water lagoons in the world.

2. **The Central Plateaus:**

- Part of the Eastern Ghats, sloping towards the west.
- Mostly eroded plateaus with elevations ranging from 305 to 610 meters.
- Composed of Gondwana rocks and laterite formations.
- Rich in mineral resources like iron ore, manganese, bauxite, and coal.
- Supports deciduous forests and provides grazing land.

3. **The Central Mountainous and Highlands Region:**

- Consists of hills and mountains, including the highest peak of Odisha, Deomali (1672 meters).
- Forms a watershed between the Mahanadi and Godavari river systems.
- Rich in biodiversity, with a variety of flora and fauna.
- Home to several tribal communities who practice shifting cultivation.

4. **The Western Rolling Uplands:**

- Located between the Eastern Ghats and the Chhattisgarh Plain.
- Characterized by undulating terrain with scattered hills and valleys.
- Drained by the tributaries of the Mahanadi and Brahmani rivers.
- Consists of red and lateritic soils, supporting mixed deciduous forests.
- Used for agriculture, mainly paddy cultivation.

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