

Revision Notes
Chapter – 10
Life in the Deserts

Deserts are arid regions characterised by low rainfall, scanty vegetation and extreme temperatures. Depending on the temperatures, there can be hot deserts or cold deserts. The people inhabit these lands wherever little water is available to practise agriculture.

The Hot Desert-Sahara:

- (i) Sahara Desert in Africa is the world's largest hot desert.
- (ii) It touches 11 countries and has got gravel plains and elevated plateaus with bare rocky surface.
- (iii) The climate of Sahara is scorching hot and parch dry with temperature as high as 50 degrees Celsius.
- (iv) The nights are freezing cold with temperature nearing zero degrees. The climate of the Sahara desert is scorching hot and parch dry. It has a short rainy season. The moisture evaporates faster than it accumulates. Days are unbelievably hot.
- (v) Vegetation in the Sahara Desert includes cactus, date palms and acacia. Camels, hyenas, jackals, foxes, scorpions, snakes and lizards are the main animal species found here.
- (vi) Despite its harsh climate, Sahara is inhabited by various groups of people. The main groups are Bedouins and Tuaregs. These groups are nomadic tribes rearing livestock such as goats, sheep, camels and horses. These animals provide them with milk, hides from which they make leather for belts, slippers, water bottles; hair is used for mats, carpets, clothes and blankets. They wear heavy robes as protection against dust storms and hot winds.
- (vii) The oasis in the Sahara and the Nile Valley in Egypt supports settled population. Since water is available, the people grow date palms. Crops such as rice, wheat, barley, cotton and beans are also grown.
- (viii) The discovery of oil is constantly transforming this region. Other important minerals found here are iron, phosphorus, manganese and uranium.
- (ix) More and more nomadic tribes are taking to city life finding jobs in oil and gas operations.

The Cold-Desert-Ladakh:

- (i) Ladakh is a cold desert lying in the Great Himalayas, on the eastern side of Jammu and Kashmir.
- (ii) The altitude in Ladakh varies from 3,000 m in Kargil to more than 8,000 m in Karakoram.
- (iii) Several rivers flow through Ladakh, Indus being the most important among them. The rivers form deep valleys and gorges. Several glaciers are found in Ladakh, for example the Gangri glacier.
- (iv) The area experiences freezing winds and burning hot sunlight. The day temperatures in summer are just above zero degree and the night temperatures well below 30 C. It is freezing cold in the winters when the temperatures may remain below 40 C for most of the time.
- (v) Due to high aridity, the vegetation is sparse. Groves of willows and poplars are seen in the valleys. During the summers, fruit trees such as apples, apricots and walnuts bloom.
- (vi) The animals of Ladakh are wild goats, wild sheep, yak and special kinds of dogs.
- (vii) The animals are reared as they provide milk, meat and hides. Several species of birds are sighted in Ladakh. Robins, redstarts, Tibetan snowcock, raven and hoopoe are common. Some of these are migratory birds. The animals of Ladakh are wild goats, wild sheep, yak and special kinds of dogs. The animals are reared to provide for the milk, meat and hides. Yak's milk is used to make cheese and butter. The hair of sheep and goats is used to make woollens.
- (ix) The local population consists of either Muslims or Buddhists.
- (x) Some famous Buddhist monasteries are Hemis, Thiksey, Shey and Lamyuru.
- (xi) In summer season, the people are busy cultivating barley, potatoes, peas, beans and turnips.
- (xii) The climate in winter months is so harsh that people keep themselves engaged in festivities and ceremonies. The women are very hard working. They work not only in the house and fields, but also manage small business and shops.
- (xiii) Leh, the capital of Ladakh is well connected both by road and air.
- (xiv) Tourism is a major activity with several tourists streaming in from within India and abroad.
- (xv) People of Ladakh have over the centuries learnt to live in balance and harmony with nature. Due to scarcity of resources like water and fuel, they are used with reverence and care. Nothing is discarded or wasted.