

CLIMATE OF INDIA

In the previous lesson, we have noted the shape and size of our country along with its latitudinal extent. Not only its physiographic divisions are diverse but also far more contrasting in nature. Each one of these factors has an impact on climatic conditions of India, be it temperature, atmospheric pressure, wind system or precipitation.

In this lesson, we will study regional variations in the climatic conditions of India. A search will be made to identify a series of factors responsible for these climatic variations both over space and time. A cycle of seasons would also merit our attention. As our climate is labelled “a monsoon type of climate” we would study the basic concept of monsoons and their typical characteristics. Since, in our country, the climatic variations depends more on rainfall rather than temperature, we would devote some time to study distribution of rainfall.



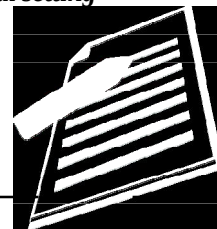
OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, you will be able to:

- explain with suitable examples the climatic variations in India (both seasonal and spatial);
- name various factors which influence the climate of different parts of India;
- explain the concept of monsoon and the way it is caused;
- discuss the typical characteristics of monsoons;
- state the climatic conditions during different seasons;

17.1 CLIMATIC VARIATIONS IN INDIA

You have studied the shape, size, location and latitudinal extent of India. You have also noted the sharply contrasting relief features of India. This has created regional diversities in climatic conditions. The climatic conditions of southern India are a bit





different from those of the northern parts with respect to temperature, rainfall and commencement as well as duration of different seasons.

Now, let us have a closer look at these climatic variations. During June, the north western plains experience high temperature around 45°C when areas of Rajasthan desert record day temperatures around 55°C, while the temperatures around Gulmarg or Pahalgam in Kashmir are hardly around 20°C. Similarly, in the month of December, the people of Kargil or Dras (in Jammu & Kashmir) experience biting cold because the night temperatures drop to -40°C, while the inhabitants of Thiruvananthapuram experience temperatures around 27°C (Table 17.1)

The range of temperature increases as one moves away from coastal areas to interior parts of the country. As a result, the people living along Konkan and Malabar coasts do not experience extremes of temperatures or marked change in seasons. On the other hand, people living in north western parts of India, experience sharp seasonal contrasts.

The diversity in rainfall distribution is equally striking. Mawsynram, near Cherrapunji in Meghalaya, receives about 1080 cm of rainfall annually, while Jaisalmer in the desert of Rajasthan receives only 20 cm of annual rainfall. The northeastern parts and the coastal plains of Orissa and West Bengal experience spells of heavy rain during July and August while the Coromandel coast of Tamilnadu receive very meager rain during these months (Table 17.1)

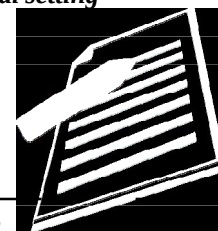
Have a close look at Figure 17.1 and 17.2 which show the dates of onset and withdrawal of Southwest monsoons respectively. This will help you to understand the difference in the duration of rainy season in different parts of India. You will come to the conclusion that the duration of rainy season is the shortest in North-west India and longest in the South and North eastern parts of the country.

- The shape, size, location, latitudinal extent of the country and its contrasting relief have resulted in diverse climatic conditions in different parts of India.
- Climatic diversity is reflected in regional variations in temperature, amount of rainfall and commencement as well as duration of seasons.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 17.1

1. Name two places in India - one experiencing the highest and the other the lowest temperatures.
(a) _____ (b) _____
2. Study the Table 17.1 and answer the following questions:
 - (i) Name the station which has the most equable climate.
 - (ii) Which station has the highest range of temperature ?
 - (iii) Which station has the highest temperature in

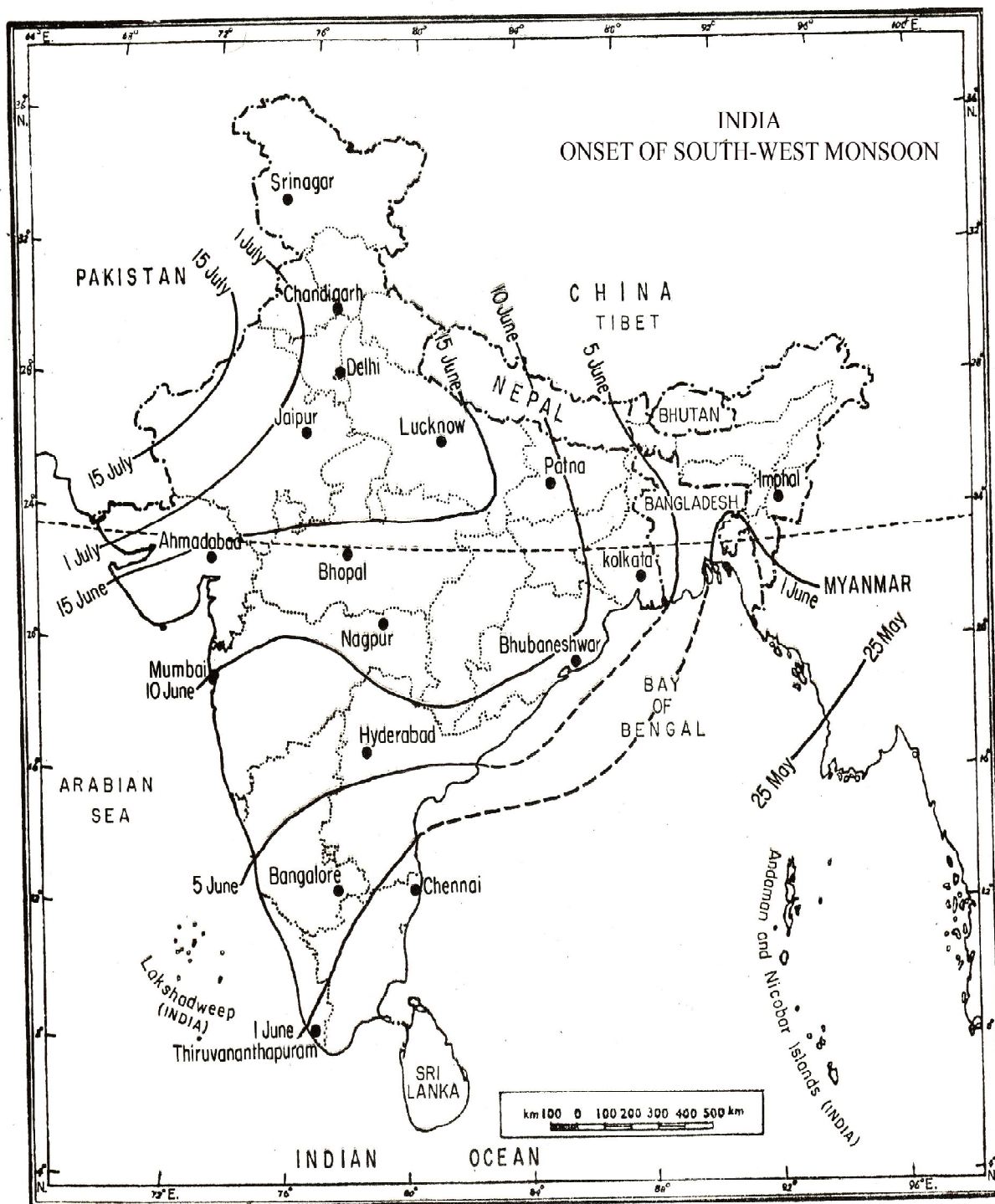


- (a) February (b) April
(c) June (d) August
(iv) Name the four most rainy months in India.
(a) _____ (b) _____ (c) _____ (d) _____
(v) Name a place in India which has the lowest rainfall.

**Table 17.1: Mean Monthly Temperature and Rainfall in
Major Meteorological Centres in India**
T=Temperature (in Celsius) and P=Precipitation (in mm)

Station	T/P	J.	F.	M.	A.	M.	J.	J.	A.	S.	O.	N.	D.
Leh	T. P.	-8 10	-7 8	-1 8	9 5	10 5	14 5	17 13	17 13	12 8	6 5	0 0	-6 5
Shilong	T. P.	10 14	11 29	16 56	19 146	19 295	21 476	21 359	21 343	20 302	17 188	13 36	10 10
Kolkata	T. P.	20 12	22 28	27 34	30 51	30 134	30 290	29 331	29 334	29 253	28 129	24 27	20 4
Delhi	T. P.	14 21	17 24	23 13	29 10	34 10	35 68	31 186	30 170	29 125	21 14	20 2	15 9
Jodhpur	T. P.	17 5	19 6	25 3	30 3	34 10	34 31	31 108	29 131	29 57	27 3	22 2	18 2
Mumbai	T. P.	24 4	24 2	24 2	28 2	30 18	29 465	27 613	27 329	27 286	28 65	27 18	25 2
Mahabaleshwar	T. P.	19 5	20 4	23 5	25 25	24 27	19 440	18 2546	18 1764	18 686	20 154	20 47	19 5
Pune	T. P.	21 3	23 1	26 2	29 14	30 27	28 107	25 169	25 97	25 130	26 76	23 31	21 4
Nagpur	T. P.	22 11	24 23	28 17	33 16	35 21	32 222	28 376	27 286	28 185	27 55	23 20	21 10
Banglore	T. P.	22 9	23 7	26 11	27 45	27 107	25 71	23 111	23 137	23 164	23 53	19 61	20 13
Chennai	T. P.	25 4	26 13	28 13	31 18	33 38	33 45	31 87	31 113	30 119	28 306	26 350	25 135
Thiruvananthapuram	T. P.	27 23	27 21	28 39	29 106	29 208	27 356	26 223	26 146	27 138	27 273	27 206	27 75

The Physical setting of India



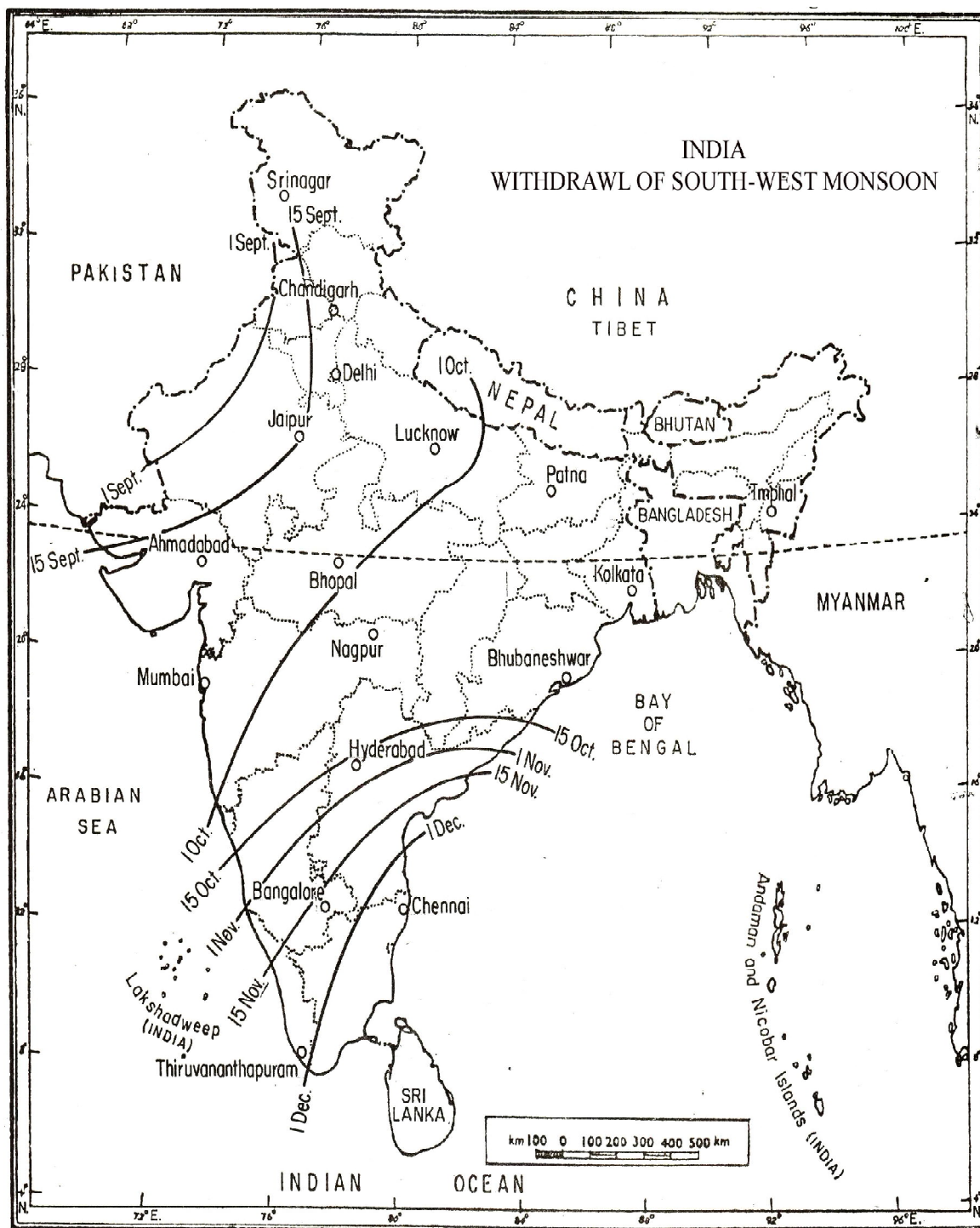
Based upon Survey of India outline map printed in 1979.

The territorial waters of India extend into the sea to a distance of twelve nautical miles measured from the appropriate base line.

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Fig. 17.1 Onset of Southwest Monsoon



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Fig. 17.2 : INDIA : Withdrawal of Southwest Monsoon



17.2 FACTORS INFLUENCING THE CLIMATE OF INDIA

The factors influencing the climate of India are given below:

(i) Location and Latitudinal Extent

India lies roughly between 6°N to 37°N latitudes. The Tropic of Cancer passes through the middle of the country. The southern parts being closer to the Equator, experience high temperatures throughout the year. The northern parts on the other hand lie in the warm temperate zone. Hence they experience low temperatures particularly, in winter. Water bodies surrounding peninsular India make climatic conditions mild along the coastal areas.

(ii) Distance from the Sea

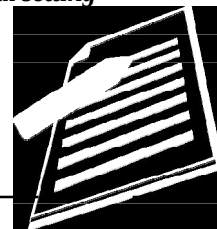
Southern or peninsular India is surrounded by the Arabian Sea, the Indian ocean and the Bay of Bengal, hence the climate of coastal regions of India is equable or maritime. Contrary to this, the climate of the regions located in the interior of the country are cut off from the oceanic influence. As a result, they have an extreme or continental type of climate.

(iii) The Northern Mountain Ranges

The Himalayan and adjoining mountain ranges which extend from Kashmir in the Northwest to Arunachal Pradesh in the Northeast, separate India from the rest of Asia. These ranges protect India from the bitterly cold and dry winds of Central Asia during winter. Further more, they act as an effective physical barrier for the rain bearing southwest monsoons winds to cross the northern frontiers of India. Thus, these ranges act as a climatic divide between Indian Sub-Continent and Central Asia.

(iv) Physiography

The physical features influence the air temperature, atmospheric pressure, direction of winds and the amount of rainfall in different parts of the country. Study the map showing physical features given in the earlier lesson and find out yourself, the relationship between the relief, temperatures, direction of winds and amount of rainfall with the help of climatic maps given in this lesson. This will help you to understand why western, coastal plains receive more rainfall than the interior parts of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu lying east side of the Western Ghats. You will also understand why Bay of Bengal branch of Southwest monsoon is bifurcated into two parts - one moving along the Ganga Valley to the west and the other along the Brahmaputra Valley to the east. Locate on your Atlas the funnel-shaped Cherrapunji Valley and Mawsimram nearby along the steep southern edge of the Meghalaya Plateau. This would give you a clue why Mawsimram happens to be the rainiest spot in the world.

**(v) Monsoon Winds**

The complete reversal in the direction of winds over India brings about a sudden change in seasons - the harsh summer season suddenly giving way to the eagerly awaited monsoon or rainy season. These winds which change their direction completely are called monsoon winds. The word 'monsoon' is derived from the Arabic word 'Mousim' which means 'season'. These winds have such a far reaching influence on India's climate that it is termed as 'monsoon type of climate'. The nature of these winds can be described with reference to the surface distribution of pressure in different regions of India during winter and summer seasons.

- (a) **The Northeast Monsoon and its Effect:** During winter, the weather conditions are influenced by high pressure developed over Northwestern part of the subcontinent. This results in the blowing of cold dry winds from these regions towards southern low pressure areas lying over water bodies surrounding peninsular India. Since these winds are cold and dry, they do not cause rainfall and weather conditions under their influence remain cold and dry. However; wherever these Northeast monsoon winds collect moisture while passing over the Bay of Bengal, they bring rain along Coromandel coast. Strictly speaking these winds are planetary winds known as North-east Trades. In India they are essentially land bearing winds.
- (b) **The Southwest Monsoon and its Effect :** During summer, the north-western parts of India become very hot due to very high temperature. This is ascribed to the apparent shift of the sun in northern hemisphere. This results in the reversal of air pressure conditions not only in northwestern India but also on water bodies surrounding the peninsular. As a result, North-east Trade winds are replaced by Southwest monsoon winds. Since these winds are sea bearing and blow over warm water bodies before reaching land, they are moisture laden, causing wide spread rain over the most parts of India. This period of southwest monsoon from June to September, is known as the rainy season for most parts of the country.

(vi) Upper Air Circulation

The changes in the upper air circulation over Indian landmass is yet another cause for sudden outbreak of monsoons in India. Jet streams in the upper air system influence the climate of India in the following ways:

- (a) **Westerly Jet stream and its Impact:** During Winter, at about 8 km. above sea level, a westerly jet stream blows at a very high speed over the sub-tropical zone. This jet stream is bifurcated by the Himalayan ranges. The northern branch of this jet stream blows along the northern edge of this barrier. The southern branch blows eastwards south of the Himalayan ranges along 25° N latitude. It is believed by meteorologists that this branch of jet stream exercises a significant influence on the winter weather conditions over India. This jet stream is responsible for bringing western disturbances from the Mediterranean region into Indian sub-continent. Winter rain and



hail storms in northwestern plains and occasional heavy snowfall in hilly regions are caused by these disturbances. These are generally followed by cold waves in whole of northern plains.

- (b) **Easterly Jet and its Influence:** During summer, due to the apparent shift of the sun in northern hemisphere, the reversal in upper air circulation takes place. The westerly stream is replaced by easterly jet stream which owes its origin to the heating of the Tibetan plateau. This leads to the development of an easterly cold jet stream centered around 15°N latitude and blowing over peninsular India. This helps in the sudden onset of monsoons.

(vii) Western Disturbances and Tropical Cyclones

The inflow of western disturbances moves under the influence of westerly jet streams from the Mediterranean Sea. It influences winter weather conditions over most parts of Northern Plains and Western Himalayan region. It brings little rain in winter months. This rain is considered to be very good for wheat crops in northern plains.

The tropical cyclones also develop in the Bay of Bengal. The frequency and direction of these cyclones influence weather conditions along the eastern coast during October, November and December.

(viii) El - Nino Effect

Weather conditions in India are also influenced by El-Nino which causes wide spread floods and droughts in tropical regions of the world. El-Nino is a narrow warm current which sometimes appears off the coast of Peru in South America. It is a temporary replacement of the cold Peru current which normally flows along this coast. Sometimes, becoming more intense, it increases the surface water temperatures of the sea by 10° C. This warming of tropical Pacific waters affects the global pattern of pressure and wind systems including the monsoon winds in the Indian Ocean. It is believed that the severest drought of 1987 over India was caused by El-Nino.

(ix) Southern Oscillation and its Effect

The southern oscillation is a pattern of meteorological changes which are often observed between Indian and Pacific oceans. It has been noticed that whenever the surface level pressure is high over Indian ocean, it is low over Pacific Ocean and vice-versa. When the pressure is high over the Pacific Ocean and low over Indian Ocean, the Southwest monsoons' in India tend to be weaker. In the reverse case, the monsoons are most likely to be stronger.

- The factors affecting the climate of India are: location and latitudinal extent, distance from the sea, the northern mountain ranges, physiography, monsoon winds, upper air circulation, western disturbances and tropical cyclones, formation of El-Nino and southern oscillation.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 17.2**

1. Name the mountain range which acts as a climatic divide for the entire Indian subcontinent

2. Why is the climate of Mumbai equable and than of Delhi?

3. Name the Jet Stream which brings Western disturbances in India.

4. Why do Northeast Monsoons cause no rainfall in most parts of India ?

5. Why does reversal of winds take place in India before the onset of south-west monsoons?

17.3 THE CONCEPT AND MECHANISM OF MONSOON

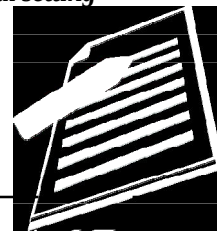
Monsoons refer to a system of winds in the tropical regions under which the direction of winds is reversed completely between the summer and the winter seasons. Under this system, the winds blow from land to sea in winter and from sea to land in summer. Therefore, most of the rainfall in the regions influenced by the monsoons is received in the summer season while winter season is generally dry.

- Monsoon implies the system of tropical winds with complete reversal in their direction between winter and summer seasons.

According to the traditional belief, the monsoon is caused by the differential heating of land and sea. Due to a higher temperature over the land in summer, a low pressure area develops over the continents and the winds blow from neighbouring oceans towards the land. These winds are of maritime origin and hence cause ample rainfall in summer. On the other hand, the continents become colder than the neighboring oceans in winter. As a result a high pressure area is developed over the continents. Therefore, winds blow from land to sea in winter. These winds, being of continental origin, are dry and do not cause rain. This traditional theory of monsoon has been criticized by the German meteorologist Flohn. He argues that the differential heating of land and sea is not enough to cause a seasonal reversal of winds at a global scale. He has explained the origin of the monsoon on the basis of seasonal shift of the pressure and wind belts under the influence of the shift of the vertical rays of the sun.

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According to this theory, as the vertical rays of the sun shift northwards over the Tropic of Cancer in summer season, the Inter-Tropical Convergence Zone(ITCZ) also shifts to north. This results in the formation of a low pressure area over the northwestern parts of India. This low pressure is further intensified by the high temperatures in this region. This low pressure area sucks the air from the Indian Ocean towards the Indian landmass in the form of Southwest monsoons. In winter season, the ITCZ shifts southwards and a mild high pressure is produced over northern parts of India. This high pressure is further intensified by the equator ward shift of the sub tropical high pressure belt. Due to high pressure over northern India, the winds start blowing from northeast as retreating monsoons. According to recent observations, the origin of Indian monsoon is influenced by a number of other factors, besides the differential heating of land and sea and the seasonal shifts of pressure and wind belts. One of the most important factors among these is the system of subtropical westerly and tropical easterly jet streams. The subtropical westerly jet streams blowing over India in winter cause a high pressure over northern India. It thus intensifies the northeast monsoons. This jet stream shifts northwards beyond India in summer season and tropical easterly jets develop over India in this season. The behaviour of this jet streams is partly responsible for the variations in the time of onset of southwest monsoons over India.

- According to the traditional belief, monsoon is caused by the differential heating and cooling of land and sea.
- Flohn, a German meteorologist opined that monsoon originates due to the shifting of planetary pressure and wind belts,
- According to modern scientists, the origin of Indian monsoon is influenced by a number of factors, important among them is the system of jet streams.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 17.3

1. Define monsoons.

2. What is the main cause of the origin of monsoons according to Flohn?

3. List three important theories explaining the origin of monsoon in India.
 - (i) _____
 - (ii) _____
 - (iii) _____

17.4 CYCLE OF SEASONS IN INDIA

By now, you have understood that the complete reversal of direction of winds is the most striking feature of the monsoons. These changing monsoon winds result in the change of seasons over the year. It is, therefore, important to understand in detail, the prevailing weather conditions throughout India during different seasons.

Climatically, the year is divided into following four seasons in India:

- (i) The cold weather season - December to February;
- (ii) The hot weather season - March to May in south and upto June in the north;
- (iii) The advancing southwest monsoon season - June to September;
- (iv) The retreating southwest monsoons season - October and November.

(i) The Cold Weather Season

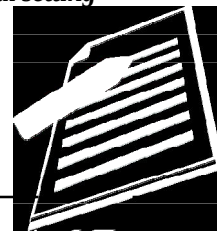
This season usually begins with late-November in northern India. January is the coldest month over most parts of the country as sun shines vertically over the Tropic of Capricorn in the southern hemisphere. During these months, the mean daily temperatures remain below 21°C over northern plains and northern mountain regions. The night temperatures sometimes fall below freezing point resulting in wide spread damage to the standing crops due to frost. The temperature increases as one moves from north to south (Fig. 17.3). As a result of low temperatures, a feeble high pressure area develops over northern parts of India (Fig 17.4) This mild high pressure causes the off-shore Northeast monsoon winds. Their direction in Northern Plains is westerly owing to the relief. These land bearing winds being cold and dry don't give rain over most parts of the country. However, these winds cause rain along the Coromandel coast since they collect moisture on their way over the Bay of Bengal.

The succession of depressions is another feature of this season. These low pressure systems are called "Western disturbances" as they originate in the Mediterranean region. These depressions move with the westerly jet streams. Covering a long distance over Iraq, Iran and Pakistan, they reach India around mid December. Their arrival results in the increase of temperature and in light rains over northern plains. They cause wide spread snowfall over western Himalayas and the adjoining ranges. At times hailstorms cause widespread damage to the standing rabi crops in northwestern plains. The meager rainfall caused by these disturbances is of great importance to the standing crops, particularly the wheat, in unirrigated areas. These depressions are followed by cold waves which bring down temperatures considerably.

The peninsular India has no well defined winter season. The mean monthly temperatures in the month of January is above 20°C in this part. Moreover, the coastal plains hardly experience any seasonal change as is clear from the mean monthly

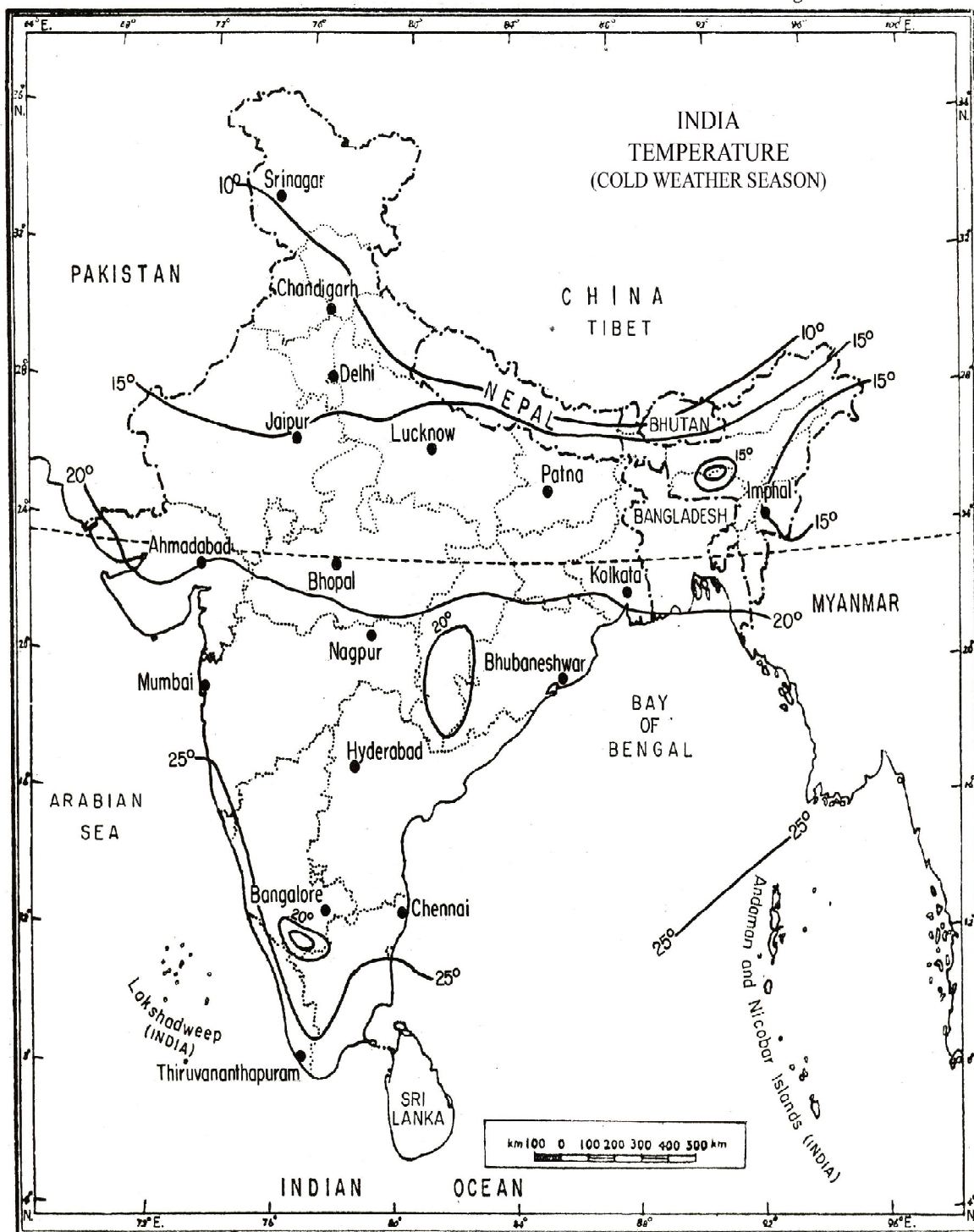
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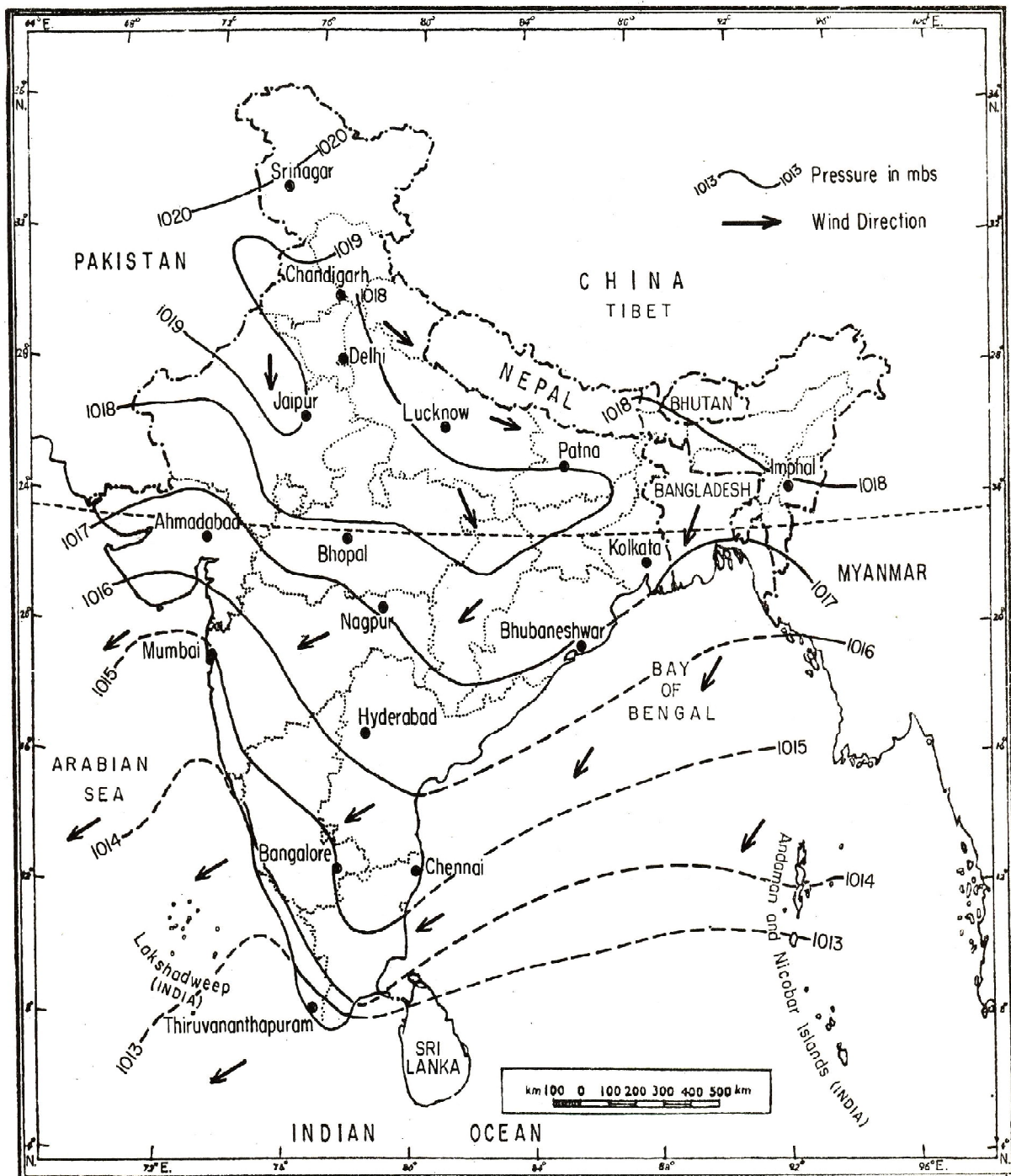
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Fig. 17.3 INDIA : Temperature (cold weather season)



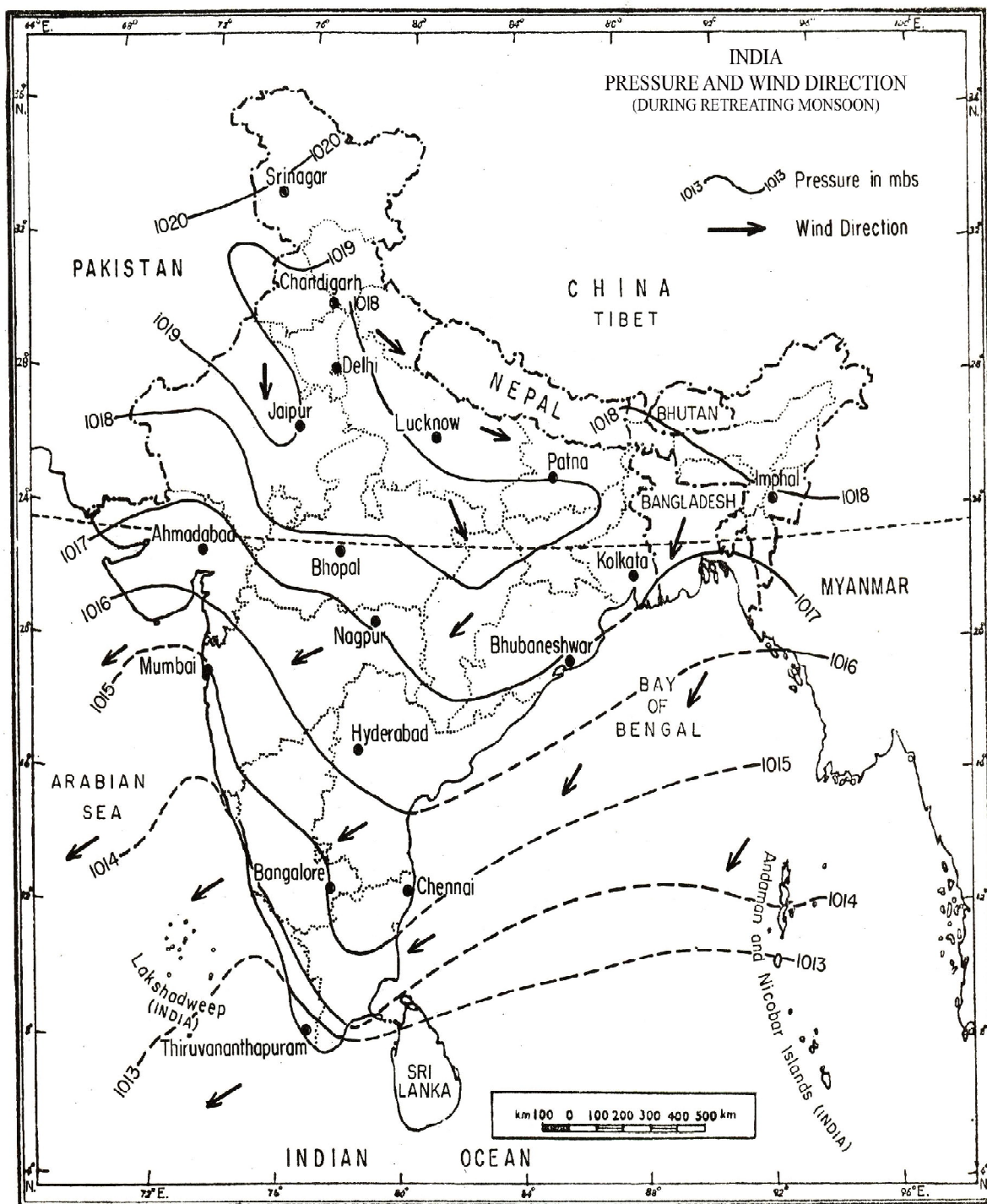
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Fig. 17.4 INDIA : Pressure and wind direction

temperature of above 27°C at Thiruvananthapuram. But Chennai records a temperature of 25°C during December and early January owing to the rains caused by Northeast monsoon winds (Table 17.1)

The important characteristics of cold weather season are:

- Low temperatures in the north and their gradual increase towards southern parts of India.
- Blowing of cold and dry northeast monsoon resulting in dry weather conditions in most parts. Coromandel coast receives rainfall during winter.
- Western disturbances cause light rain in northern plains and snowfall over the Himalayan ranges.

(ii) The Hot Weather Season

The apparent movement of the sun towards the north increases the temperatures in the northern plains. As a result, the spring sets in soon giving way to the hot weather season which lasts till end of June in this region. The temperatures increase northwards and reach around 45°C in mid May in most parts of the northern plains. The characteristic features of this season are afternoon dust storms and ‘Loo’ which is a hot dry wind which blows during May and June mainly over the northern plains. These winds cause heat stroke resulting in deaths of hundreds of people every year. The day temperatures at times rise above 45°C in some north-western parts of the country.

The wind direction is variable during this season. The weather conditions are generally hot and dry throughout the country. However, dust storms cause drizzle in Northern Plains. Light showers are also experienced in Kerala, West Bengal and Assam. In Kerala, these premonsoon showers are popularly known as “Mango Showers”. In West Bengal and Assam, they are called Northwesters or Kal Baisakhi. Sometimes, due to high velocity of winds these Northwesters cause heavy loss of life and property.

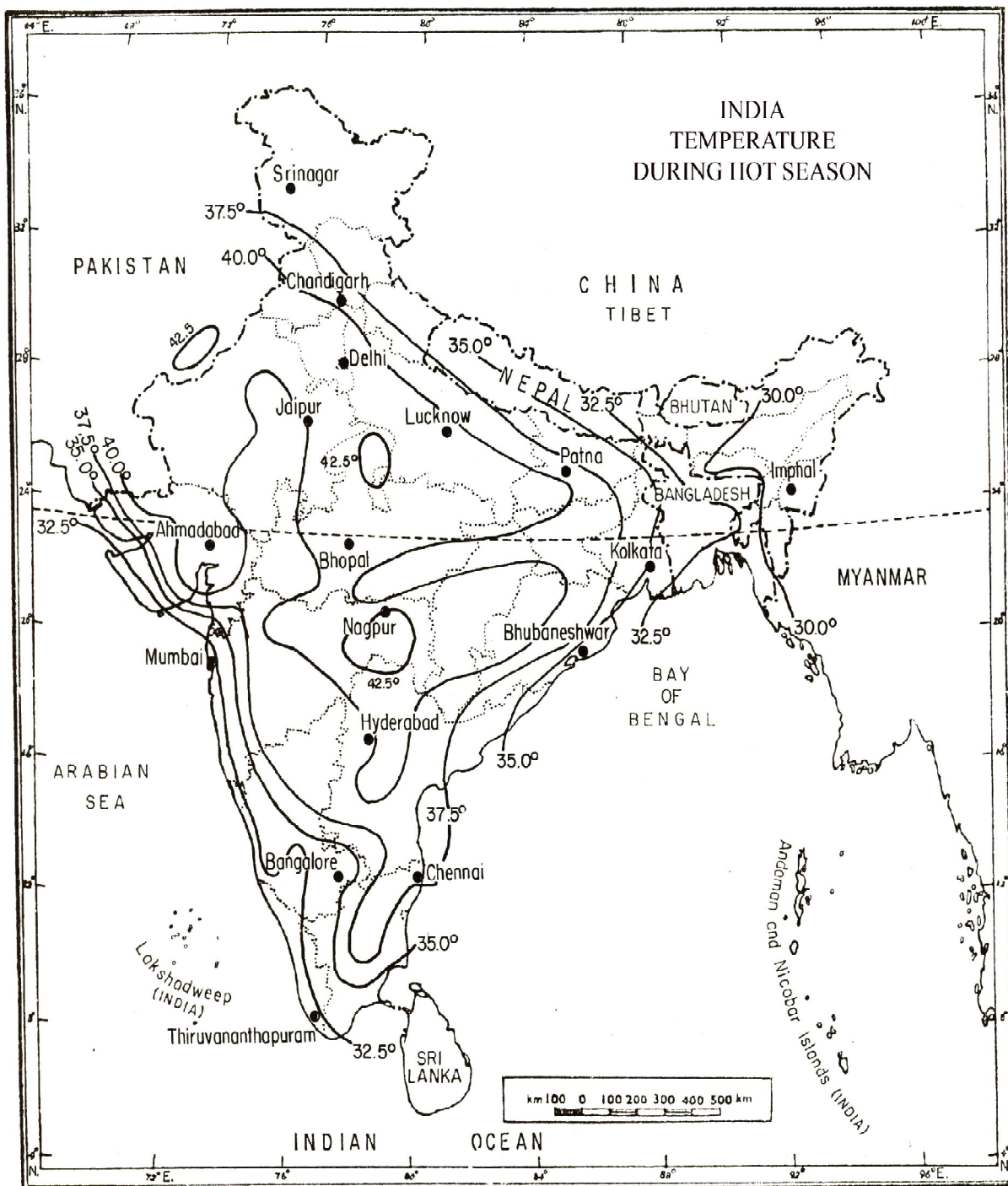
- The main characteristic features of hot weather season are hot and dry weather, blowing of Loo - a hot dry wind in northern plains, afternoon dust storms, sometimes causing drizzle and mild showers in Kerala (Mango showers), West Bengal and Assam (Northwesters / Kal Baisakhi).

(iii) The Advancing Southwest Monsoon Season

It is a rainy season for most parts of India. It starts with the inflow of Southwest monsoons which strike the coast of Kerala normally in the first week of June and cover most of India by mid July. This weather continues till September. The arrival of these warm moisture laden winds brings a total change in weather conditions. Their arrival causes sudden rains which bring down the temperatures considerably. The decline in temperature is between 5°C to 10°C. The sudden onset of

rain is called break of monsoons or the burst of monsoons. The arrival of these winds may be delayed by a week or two depending upon the pressure conditions over northern plains and over the Indian ocean (Fig.17.1) The peninsular shape of India divides these Southwest monsoons into two branches - Arabian Sea branch and Bay of Bengal branch.

- (a) Arabian Sea branch of Southwest monsoons strikes the western coast of India and causes heavy rains on the western slopes of the Western Ghats. After crossing the Western Ghats, these winds cause less rainfall on the eastern slopes as they gain temperature while descending. This area is, therefore, known as rain shadow zone. This explains why interior parts of Maharashtra, Karnataka and Telangana get meagre rains from these winds. Southwest monsoons striking along the coast of Saurashtra and Kutch and pass over Rajasthan and beyond to meet the Bay of Bengal branch. These winds cause widespread rain in these states and western Himalayan region.
- (b) The Bay of Bengal branch is divided into two sub branches after striking eastern Himalayas. One branch moves towards the east northeast direction and causes heavy rains in Brahmaputra valley and northeast hills of India. The other branch moves towards northwest along the Ganga valley and the Himalayan ranges causing heavy and widespread rains over vast areas. In this region, the amount of rainfall decreases from east to west owing to the progressive decrease in humidity of these winds (Fig. 17.8).
- (c) The characteristics of Southwest Monsoons
 - (i) These winds generally strike the Indian coast in the first week of June. but their arrival and departure may be before time or even it may be delayed.
 - (ii) There may be dry spells in between rainy periods. Such long dry spells may even lead to failure of crops.
 - (iii) At times, these winds skip over certain regions without any cause.
 - (iv) The amount and timing of rainfall and intervening duration of wet and dry spells varies from year to year. This is known as the vagaries of the monsoons.
 - (v) The spatial distribution of rainfall is uneven - some regions may receive heavy rains while the others will have to be contented with meagre or scanty rains.
 - (vi) Generally, these winds start retreating by the end of September. But, sometimes, their departure may be delayed till October or they may retreat even much earlier.



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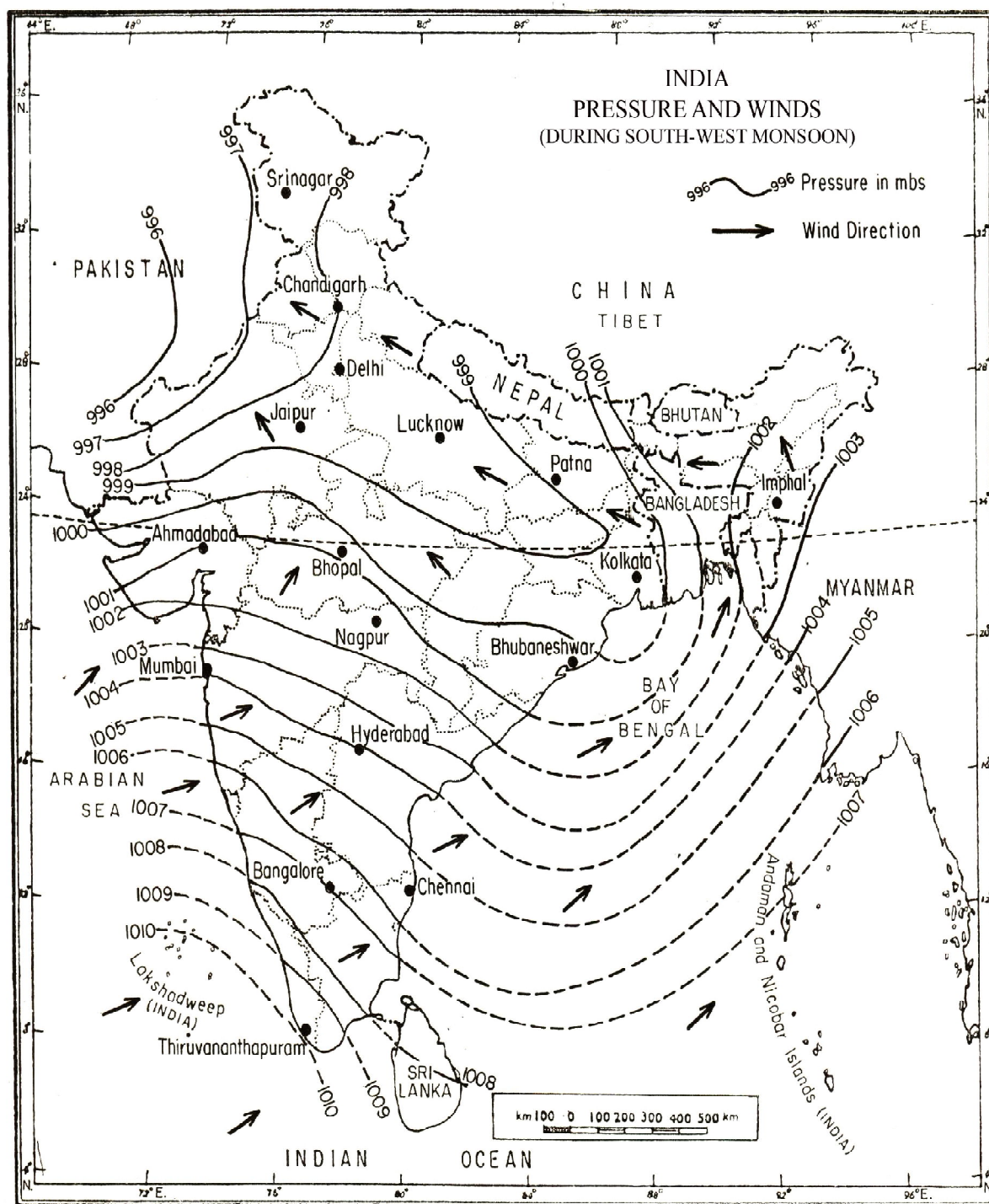
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Fig. 17.6 INDIA : Temperature (during hot season)

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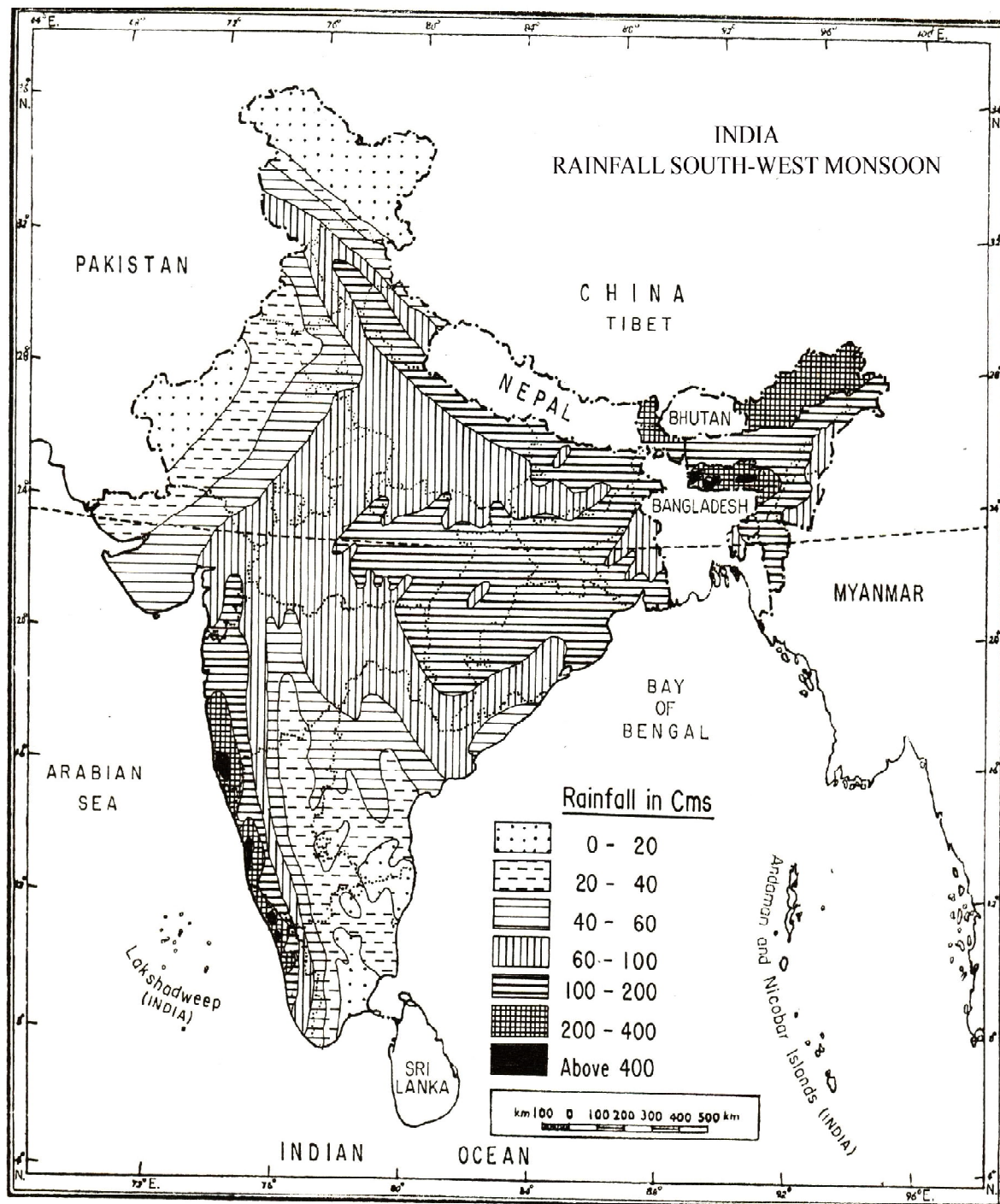
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Fig. 17.7 INDIA : Pressure and winds (during southwest monsoon)



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Fig. 17.8 INDIA : Rainfall



Notes

The main features of advancing Southwest monsoon season are:

- Low pressure conditions over northwestern parts of India and high pressure conditions over seas.
- The general wind direction particularly on the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal is southwest to northeast. They cause wide spread rain interspersed with dry spells.
- The onset of monsoons is in the first week of June and withdrawal by the end of September.
- The weather is generally hot and humid during this season.

(iv) The Retreating Southwest Monsoon Season

The Southwest monsoons start retreating in the first week of September from Pakistan border in Northwest India. Thus, these winds withdraw earlier from the regions where they reach the last. The retreat of these winds takes place due to weakening of low pressure area over the northwestern parts. This happens due to low temperatures caused by apparent shift of the sun towards the equator and also owing to the widespread rains bringing down temperatures perceptibly. Consequently, the air pressure starts decreasing. Such changes in the patterns of atmospheric pressure causes Southwest monsoons to withdraw. Hence, this period is known as the season of retreating Southwest monsoons. By the end of October, these winds retreat from most of northern India. As a result, fair weather conditions prevail over this region.

The low pressure area lying over Northwest India is transferred to the middle of the Bay of Bengal by the end of October. As a result of these unstable conditions, severe cyclonic storms originate in the Bay of Bengal. These cyclonic storms strike along the eastern coast of India causing wide spread rain in the coastal regions. Some times very sever storms cause damage to the standing crops, cattle, property, the lines of transports, communication and even electricity. Tamil Nadu coast receives maximum of its rainfall during October and November - the period of retreating monsoons.

The main characteristic features of retreating Southwest monsoon season are:

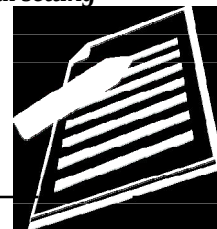
- weakening of low pressure area over Northwest India;
- fall in temperatures throughout India;
- shifting of low pressure area to the south; and
- origin of cyclonic storms in the Bay of Bengal causing heavy rains and damage to crops and property along the eastern coast of India.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 17.4

1. List four important features of each seasons given below

(a) Cold Weather Season



- (i) _____ (ii) _____
 (iii) _____ (iv) _____
- (b) Hot Weather Season
- (i) _____ (ii) _____
 (iii) _____ (iv) _____
- (c) The Advancing Southwest Monsoon Season
- (i) _____ (ii) _____
 (iii) _____ (iv) _____
- (d) The Retreating Southwest Monsoon Season
- (i) _____ (ii) _____
 (iii) _____ (iv) _____

17.5 DISTRIBUTION OF ANNUAL RAINFALL

Study the map carefully. You will find that the regional variations in average annual rainfall are well pronounced. The distribution map of rainfall shows that northeastern parts of Jammu and Kashmir and extreme western Rajasthan receive a rainfall of less than 20 cm. On the other hand, the west coastal plains, Sub-Himalayan areas of northeast India including the Shillong plateau receive more than 200 cm. of annual rainfall. Southern slopes of Khasi and Jaintia Hills, particularly the Cherrapunji valley receive the highest rainfall exceeding 1000 cm. Starting from the southern coast of Gujarat, the isohyte of 200 cm. runs somewhat parallel to the coast of Western Ghats upto kanyakumari. To the east of Western Ghats, the rainfall drops abruptly below 60 cm. over interior Maharashtra and Karnataka. Most parts of Punjab, Haryana, central and eastern Rajasthan and western Gujarat also receive rainfall below 60 cm. Starting from the southwestern parts of Jammu and Kashmir, the isohyte of 100 cm. moves eastwards upto east of Allahabad from where it bends to the west and south west, running over western Madhya Pradesh, eastern Maharashtra and northern Andhra Pradesh, it joins eastern coast near Visakhapatnam. To the west and south west of this isohyte, the areas receive less rainfall. Some parts of Coromandel coast receive a rainfall of more than 100 cm. The areas receiving less than 100 cm. of rainfall depend on means of irrigation for agricultural activities

In India, distribution of rainfall particularly of the southwest monsoon has a close relationship with the relief. Hence it is even described as “relief” or “orographic” rainfall. By and large places with higher altitude have greater chance to catch more rainfall than the places with less altitude. The direction of moist winds also matters.



The distribution of annual rainfall in different parts of India shows the following trends:

- The rainfall decreases as one moves from Kolkata to Amritsar.
- It shows declining trend towards interior from the coastal areas on Deccan Plateau.
- Northeastern parts receive more rainfall than north western parts of India.
- Areas lying on the windward side receive more rains than the areas lying on the leeward side.

17.6 THE MONSOONAL UNITY IN INDIA

Despite the regional diversities in climatic conditions, it is obvious from the above description that there exists a climatic unity in India. The 'Climatic Unity' means that weather conditions over different parts of India are more or less the same during different seasons round the year leaving minor variations as exceptions to the rule. Indian climate is called 'monsoon climate'. It explains how much influence the monsoon winds have in bringing climatic unity. This unity in climatic conditions results from the combined influence of regular movements of monsoons (seasonal winds) and the bounding role of the Himalayan mountain system.

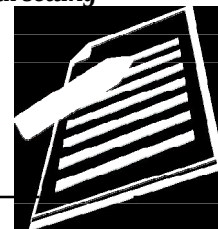
The monsoonal unity of India caused by these twin factors is discernible. It reflects upon the life styles and activities of the common masses in India. They are:

- (i) **Rhythm of seasons:** The sequence of hot, wet and cold seasons affects the life styles and economic activities of the people throughout India in the following ways:

Firstly, the farmers all over India start their agricultural activities like ploughing of fields, sowing of seeds, transplantation etc. with or just before the onset of monsoons. Kharif crops - rice and millets, cotton and sugarcane in different areas is an expression of amount of rainfall they receive. During winter, wheat is the major rabi crop in cool and irrigated areas; whereas barley, gram and oil seeds are common crops of unirrigated areas in northern and central India.

Secondly, the clothes are also affected by seasons. During summer, the people wear cotton clothes whereas the woollen clothes are used in winter season especially in north and central India.

Thirdly, most parts of India have to bear a long dry season; contrary to it, the season of life giving rains is limited to only a few months. This has a far reaching effect on the life style of the Indian people. When the rain drops the monsoon clouds fall on the thirsty parched land. Their music and fragrance coming out of the land generate similar emotional responses all over India. This is reflected in the Kajari of Bhojpuri and Malhar of Brij and their counter parts in other regions of India. Most of the Indian festivals are closely



linked with seasons. In north India, Baisakhi is celebrated when rabi crop is ready for harvesting. During winter, when the sun shines vertically over the Tropic of Capricorn and extreme cold weather conditions prevail over northern plains Lohri and Makar Sakranti are celebrated in the north and west while Pongal distinctly is its southern counterpart. Holi is celebrated in spring after bidding good bye to the prolonged cold winter especially in the north.

Fourthly, the rainfed subsistence farming has been the oldest response of the village community. Its entire economy is based on it, howsoever meagre rain it may be.

Lastly, the seasonal and regional variations in weather conditions have made different regions capable of producing different crops in varying quantities making all regions completely interdependent. This is not a less contribution of the monsoons in promoting underlying unity despite all pervasive diversity.

- (ii) **Thirst for Water:** You know that rain occurs over most parts of India only during four or five months of the year. Thus, India remains dry for seven to eight months in a year. Even during rainy season, spells of dry period are common. Being an agricultural society, the need for water is all pervasive in most parts of India. Even the rainiest parts around Cherrapunji and in Konkan and Kerala have no drinking water during the long and dry summer months. All eyes are focussed on black monsoon clouds in every part of the country.
- (iii) **The Waiting for Monsoon Rains:** The farmers as well as citizens all over India eagerly wait for monsoon rains after a long dry season not only to get rid of summer heat but to start agricultural activities which sustain rural as well as urban economy. So, bursting of monsoon is welcomed with equal joy everywhere in India.
- (iv) **Incidence of Droughts and Floods:** The paradox of Indian monsoons is that no part in India is spared from occasional or even frequent floods or droughts, if not famines. The drought are common even in the areas of heavy rainfall like Kerala and Assam; likewise, dry areas of Northwest India are not free from floods, be it Punjab or Rajasthan. Consequently, there is need to conserve, control and store water for irrigation, drinking and power generation.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 17.5

1. Write True or False against each of the following statements
 - (a) The amount of rainfall decreases from east to west in northern plains.
 - (b) Gujarat and Rajasthan receive low rainfall as monsoon winds become dry on reaching these states.

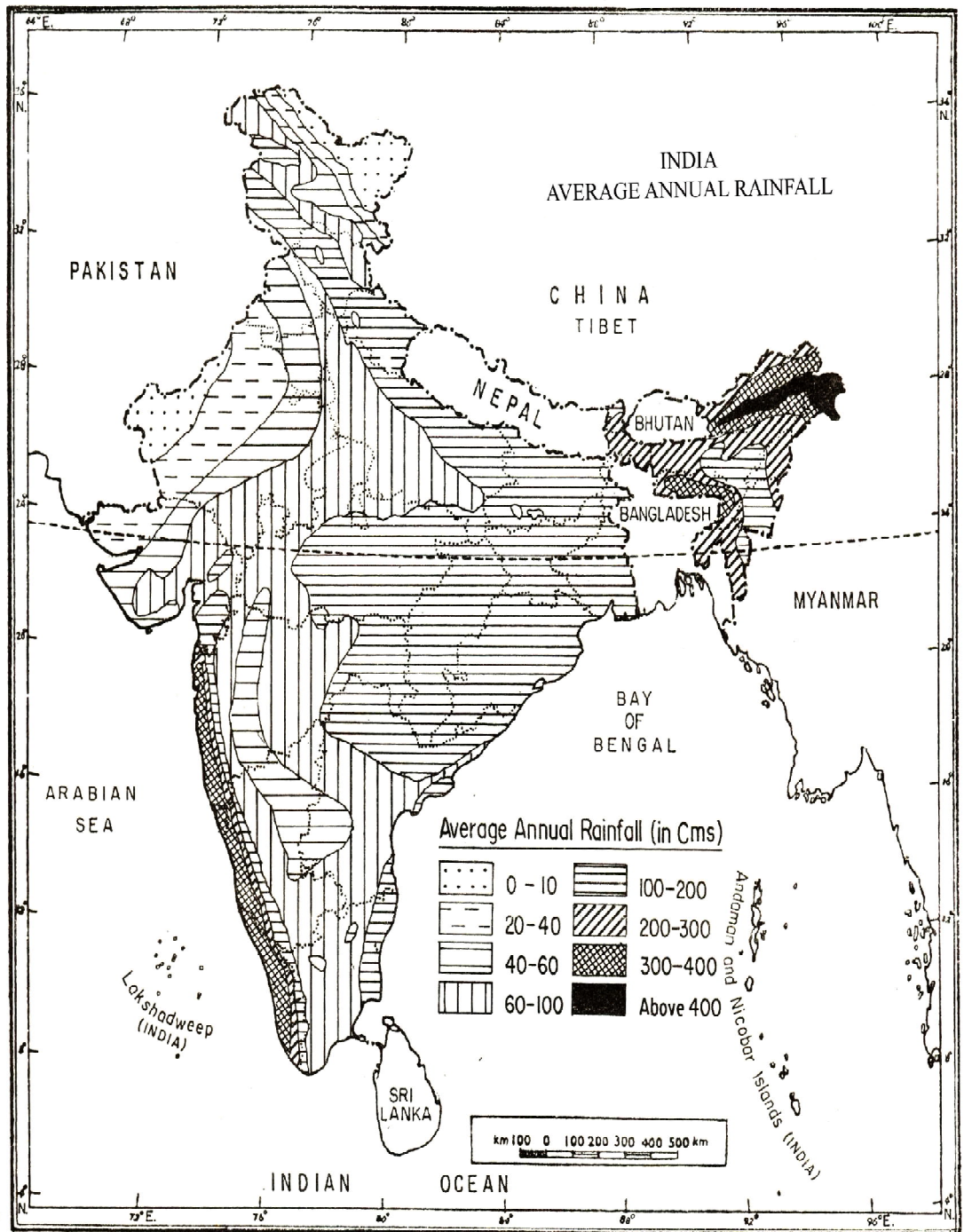
MODULE - 6

The Physical setting
of India



Notes

Climate of India



Based upon Survey of India outline map printed in 1979.

The territorial waters of India extend into the sea to a distance of twelve nautical miles measured from the appropriate baseline.

The boundary of Meghalaya shown on this map is as interpreted from the North-Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act, 1971, but has yet to be verified.

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I II

Fig. 17.9 INDIA : Average Annual Rainfall

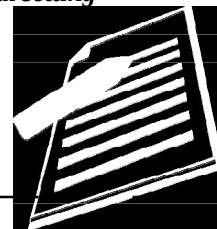
- (c) The date of arrival of monsoon winds is always definite in different parts of India.
 - (d) Coromandel coast receives bulk of its rainfall in October-November from Northeast monsoon winds.
 - (e) Only certain parts of India experience the occurrence of droughts and floods.
2. Name two areas of India which receive less than 20 cm of annual rainfall.
- (i) _____ (ii) _____

**WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT**

India is a country of climatic diversities which are expressed in the variations in the distribution of temperature, pressure, winds and amount of precipitation. The factors which are responsible for determining the climate of different regions of India include her location and latitudinal extent, physiography, the role of Himalayan ranges as a climatic divide, the monsoon winds, upper air circulation, western disturbances and cyclonic storms. Derived from Arabic word 'mousim', monsoon implies the rhythm of season and seasonal reversal of winds. Meteorologically, the year in India is divided into four seasons namely the cold weather season, the hot weather season, the advancing southwest monsoon season and the retreating southwest monsoon season. These seasons have different characteristics of weather conditions.

**TERMINAL QUESTIONS**

1. How do western disturbances influence the weather conditions of north west India?
2. Distinguish between:
 - (i) The cold weather season and hot weather season;
 - (ii) The southwest and northeast monsoons.
3. Give reasons :
 - (i) Dras in Kargil is always colder than Thiruvananthapuram.
 - (ii) Winter is dry and cold over greater parts of India.
 - (iii) Southwest monsoons start retreating from northern India after September.
 - (iv) The western coastal plains receive more rainfall compared to the interior plateau region lying east of the Western Ghats.



MODULE - 6

*The Physical setting
of India*



Notes

Climate of India

4. Describe five major factors which influence the climate of India. Illustrate your answer with examples.
5. Explain with suitable examples the uneven distribution of rainfall in India.
6. Identify the characteristics of monsoons in India.
7. Locate and label the following on the outline maps of India
 - (i) Dras and Cherrapunji;
 - (ii) Areas receiving rainfall from 'western disturbances';
 - (iii) Areas receiving rainfall from northeast monsoons.
 - (iv) Areas receiving annual rainfall less than 20 cm.



ANSWER TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

17.1

1. (a) Jaisalmer in Rajasthan desert (b) Dras in Jammu & Kashmir
2. (i) Thiruvananthapuram
(ii) Delhi
(iii) (a) Thiruvananthapuram (b) Nagpur (c) Delhi (d) Chennai
(iv) June, July, August, September
(v) Leh.

17.2

1. The Himalayas
2. Mumbai lies along the western coast while Delhi is too far away to have any oceanic influence.
3. Westerly jet stream.
4. Because they are cold and dry land bearing winds.
5. Owing to the reversal of air pressure conditions between land and sea at the peak of the summer season.

17.3

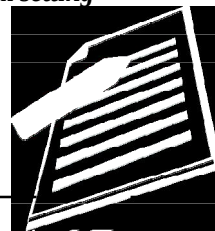
1. Monsoon refer to a system of winds in the tropical regions under which the

direction of winds is reversed completely between summer and winter.

2. The shifting of planetary pressure and wind belts. .
3. (i) Differential heating and cooling of land and sea.
(ii) Shifting of planetary pressure and wind belts.
(iii) System of jet streams.

17.4

1. (a) (i) cold and dry in most parts of India.
(ii) direction of winds is generally northeasterly.
(iii) light rain, hails in northwestern plains and snowfall in Western Himalayan region.
(iv) rainfall along Coromondal coast from N.E. monsoons.
- (b) (i) generally hot and dry throughout India.
(ii) variable wind direction.
(iii) blowing of hot and dry wind called “Loo” in northern plains causing heat strokes.
(iv) light rain in Kerala, W. Bengal and Assam. (premonsoon showers)
- (c) (i) generally rainy throughout India.
(ii) general direction of winds is southwesterly.
(iii) onset and withdrawal of these winds is somewhat certain with marginal variations.
(iv) amount of rainfall varies from place to place and time to time.
- (d) (i) Weakening of low pressure are over northern parts of India.
(ii) fall in temperatures throughout India.
(iii) shifting of low pressure areas to the Indian ocean.
(iv) origin of cyclonic storms in the Bay of Bengal causing heavy rains on coastal areas.



**Notes****17.5**

1. (a) True; (b) False; (c) False; (d) True; (e) False
2. (a) Ladakh (b) Rajasthan desert

HINTS TO TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Refer to 17.2 (vii)
2. (i) Refer to 17.4 (i) and (ii)
(ii) Refer to 17.4 (iii) and (iv)
3. (i) Because Dras is located in high altitude and latitude in interior parts of Jammu and Kashmir while Thiruvananthapuram has coastal location and is nearer to equator.
(ii) Refer to 17.4 (i)
(iii) Refer to 17.5
4. Refer to 17.2
5. Refer to 17.5
6. Refer to 17.6
7. Refer to maps.