

6th Social Science Lesson 19 Notes in English

19] Asia

Asia:

- Asia is the largest and the most populous continent in the world. It covers about **30 percent** of the world's land area and about **60 percent** of the world's population.
- Most of the land of Asia lies in the **northern hemisphere**. It has different types of physical and cultural features. Lofty mountains, plateaus, plains, islands and peninsulas are the major physiographic features of Asia.
- Many perennial rivers flow through different parts of Asia. These river valleys are the cradles of ancient civilizations (**Indus valley, Mesopotamian and Chinese civilizations**).

Location and Area of Asia:

Asia extends from **10°11' South to 81°12' North latitudes and from 26°2' East to 169°40' West**, longitudes. It spreads for an area of **44 million km²**.

Boundaries of Asia:

- Asia is surrounded by the **Arctic Ocean in the north, Pacific Ocean in the east, Indian Ocean in the south and the Ural Mountains, Caucasus Mountains, Red Sea, Mediterranean Sea, Caspian Sea and Black Sea in the west**.
- The **Suez Canal** separates Asia from Africa. The narrow **Bering Strait** separates Asia from North America.

Politically Divisions:

There are forty eight countries in Asia. The countries are grouped into several realms based on landscape and political status such as

1. East Asia 2. Southeast Asia 3. South Asia 4. Southwest and 5. Central Asia

Physiographic Divisions:

- Asia is the land of long mountain ranges, snow **capped high mountains, vast plateaus, extensive plains, river valleys and sea coasts**.
- These diverse physical features encourage the people of this continent to involve in diverse economic activities.

The physiography of Asia can be divided into five major groups. They are;

1. The Northern lowlands
2. The Central High Mountains
3. The Southern Plateaus
4. The Great Plains and
5. The Island Groups

The Northern Lowlands

The most extensive lowland in **Asia is the Siberian plain**. It extends from the Ural Mountains in the west to the Verkhoyansk Range in the east.

The Central Highlands

The central highlands stretches from **Turkey to the Bering Strait**. There are two knots found in Asia. They are

- The Pamir Knot
- The Armenian Knot.
- **The Hindukush range, the Sulaiman range, the Himalayan range and the Tian Shan range** radiate from the PamirKnot.
- The **Hindukush** range continues westward as the Elburz, whereas **the Sulaiman** range continues south west as the Zagros range.
- The **Elburz and the Zagros** converge at the Armenian knot.
- The Taurus and the Pontine ranges radiate from the Armenian knot.
- The other important mountain ranges are the great Khingan, the Altai, the Verkoyansk and the Arakan yoma.
- The **Himalayan mountain range is the highest mountain** range in the world **Mt. Everest (8848 m)** is the highest peak in Asia, as well as the world.
- The lowest point in the world is located in **Dead Sea in Asia**. Intermontane plateaus are found in these mountain ranges.

The important plateaus are

- The plateau of Anatolia (Pontine to Taurus)
- The plateau of Iran (Elburz to Zagros mt)

- The plateau of Tibet (Kunlun to Himalayas)
- The Southern Plateaus

Southern Plateau:

- The **southern plateaus are relatively lower than the northern plateaus**. The four important southern plateaus are the Arabian Plateau (Saudi Arabia), Deccan Plateau (India), Shan Plateau (Myanmar) and the Yunnan Plateau (China).
- The **Arabian Plateau** is the largest Plateau.

Great Plains:

- The great plains are formed by the major rivers of Asia.
- They are the West Siberian plain (Ob and Yenisey), Manchurian Plain (Amur), Great Plain of China (Yangtze and Sikiang), Indo-Gangetic Plain (Indus and Ganga), Mesopotamian plain (Tigris and Euphrates) and the Irrawaddy plain (Irrawaddy).

Island Groups of Asia:

- Numerous islands are found in the Pacific coast of Southeast Asia. **Kuril, Taiwan, Singapore and Borneo** are the important island groups. The Philippines, Japan islands and Indonesia are the major archipelagos in Asia.
- **Smaller archipelagos** are also located in the Indian Ocean such as the islands of Maldives and Lakshadweep in the Arabian Sea. Bahrain is in the Persian Gulf. **Sri Lanka** is an island, which is located in the Bay of Bengal.
- A group of islands is called an archipelago. The **largest archipelago is Indonesia**.

Drainage in Asia:

- The rivers of Asia originate mostly from the central highlands. The **Ob, Yenise and Lena** are the major rivers that flow towards the north and drain into the Arctic Ocean. These rivers remain frozen during winter.
- South Asia has many perennial rivers (**e.g.) Brahmaputra, Indus, Ganga and Irrawaddy** which originate from the snow covered high mountains that do not freeze during winter.
- The **Euphrates and Tigris** flow in West Asia. The **Amur, Huang He, Yangtze and Mekong** rivers flow in the south and south eastern parts of Asia.
- **Yangtze** is the longest river in Asia.

Climate:

- Asia exhibits a variety of climate. The northern part of Asia experiences severe long winter and cool summer. (**Winter -37°C and Summer 10°C**). Precipitation is in the form of snow (**250 mm to 300 mm**). The north eastern part of Asia experiences cold winter and warm summer and a moderate rainfall of 50 mm to 250 mm.
- The south, south east and eastern parts of Asia are strongly influenced by **monsoon** winds.
- Summer is **hot and humid while winter is cool and dry**. The summer monsoon winds bring heavy rainfall to India, Bangladesh, Indo-China, Philippines and Southern China (1500 mm to 2500 mm).
- In India, **Mawsynram (11871 mm)** receives the highest rainfall. So, this place is called the wettest place in the world. The areas found in and around the equator have uniform climate throughout the year. There is no winter. The average temperature is **27°C and the mean rainfall is 1270 mm**.
- The west and central parts of Asia have hot, dry climate. The temperature is very high during the day and very low during the night. Rainfall varies from **25 mm to 200 mm**.
- The West coastal fringe of Asia (along the Mediterranean Sea) receives rainfall in **winter and is warm in summer**.
- Deserts are found along the western part of Asia. The major hot deserts are **the Arabian (Saudi Arabia) and Thar (India and Pakistan) deserts**. The cold deserts of Asia are **Gobi and Taklamakan**.
- The largest desert in Asia is the **Arabian Desert**.

Natural Vegetation:

Natural vegetation depends upon rainfall, temperature and soil. As Asia stretches from the equator to poles, all types of vegetation are found here. Some rare species are found in Asia. (**OrangUtan, Komodo Dragon, Giant panda**).

Mineral Resources in Asia:

- Asia has a variety of mineral deposits. It holds an important place in the production of **Iron, Coal, Manganese, Bauxite, Zinc, Tungsten, Petroleum, Tin etc.**
- Oil and Natural Gas found in the west Asian countries. **One third of the world's oil is produced in Asia**. Among the west Asian countries, Iran has a considerable wealth of mineral resources.
- Asia has the largest deposits of iron ore in the world. China and India are the important iron ore deposit countries of Asia. **Turkey, Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand, Myanmar etc.**, are a few other countries that have iron ore deposits.
- Coal is a fossil fuel. Asia has the largest deposits of coal in the world. China and India are the largest producers of coal in Asia.

- Petroleum is a mineral oil. The largest petroleum reserves are found in South West Asia. The important petroleum producing countries are **Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iran, Bahrain, Qatar and UAE. South China, Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia, India, Russia** are the other important petroleum producing countries in Asia.
- Bauxite is found in India and Indonesia. India is the largest producer of Mica in the world. Tin is found in Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia.

Agriculture in Asia:

- Only about **18 percent** of the total area is cultivable in Asia. **Agriculture** is the chief occupation of the people here.
- The river valleys in the **South, South East and East Asia have rich alluvial soil**. Agriculture is intensively practised in the riverine plains of Asia.
- Some areas are not suitable for agricultural practices. India has the largest area of arable lands in Asia. **Most of the west Asian countries cultivate their crops where the ground water level is nearer to the surface**. Iraq practices agricultural activities based on the availability of rainfall and supply of water from Euphrates and Tigris rivers.
- Rice and Wheat are the staple food crops in Asia. **China and India are the leading producers of rice in the world**. Other important rice producing countries are Myanmar, Japan, Bangladesh and Thailand.
- Monsoon Asia is suitable for rice cultivation because of the abundant rainfall, fertile plains and availability of labour. **Thailand** is called the Rice bowl of South East Asia.
- The Banaue rice terraces were built 2000 year ago by the **Ifugaos people** in the Philippines. It is located approximately about 1524 m above sea level.
- Wheat is grown in the temperate regions of Asia.
- Russia, India, China and Pakistan are the leading producers of wheat in Asia.
- Millets like **Bajra, Jower, Ragi and Sorgham** are grown in the drier parts of Asia. These are widely cultivated in India, Pakistan and a few gulf countries.
- Apart from these, pulses, spices and oil seeds are also cultivated in various parts of Asia.
- Jute and cotton are the important **natural fibres cultivated in Asia**.
- One third of the world's cotton is produced by Asia. The major cotton producing countries are **India, China, Russia and Kazakhstan**. **India, Pakistan, China and Bangladesh** are the leading producers of jute.

- The tropical wet and dry climate is suitable for sugarcane cultivation in Asia. **India, Indonesia and Philippines** are the major producers of sugarcane.
- Coffee, Tea, Rubber, Palm trees and Cocoa are the important plantation crops. **India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia and Indonesia** are important producers of plantation crops. Malaysia and Thailand are the leading producers of natural rubber. **Dates are produced in west Asia, among the countries Iran is the largest producer of dates** in the world.

Fishing in Asia:

- Fishing is an important economic activity in Asia. It is prevalent in open seas as well as inland water bodies. **China and Japan** are the leading fishing nations.
- In **Cambodia, Tonle Sap lake** is one of the world's richest sources of fresh water fishing. **Bay of Bengal is the major fishing ground for India, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Bangladesh.** Fishing is the mainstay of the national economy in Maldives. Pearl fishing (Bahrein) is popular in the eastern coast of Arabia.

Industrial Regions of Asia:

- In **China**, Manchurian, ShanghaiWuhan, Peking-Shenyang, GuangdongHongkong regions are the major industrial regions.
- In **Japan**, the major regions are Tokyo, Yokohama and Osaka-Kyoto regions.
- In **India**, Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Coimbatore, Bengaluru and Chottanagpur are the important industrial regions.

Transport in Asia:

Transport is the backbone of the economic development of a region. Many Asian countries are developing their transport network for their economic progress. **Roadway** is the most common mode of transport in Asia.

Roadways:

- The Asian Highway connects Tokyo in the east to Turkey in the west, Russia in the north to Indonesia in the south and the total length of road is **1,41,000 km**.
- It passes through **32** countries.
- The Asian Highway 1(AH 1) is the longest highway among the Asian Highway Network (20557 km). It connects Tokyo to Turkey.
- The Asian Highway 43 (AH 43) runs from Agra in India to Matara in Sri Lanka (3024 km).

Railways System in Asia:

- The **Trans - Siberian Railways (9258 km)** is the longest rail route in the world. It is a transcontinental railway line which connects Leningrad and Vladivostok.
- The Trans Asian Railway links Singapore and Istanbul in Turkey.
- The **Shinkansen**, bullet train is the world famous super express train that runs between Osaka and Tokyo in Japan at a speed of **352 km/h**.
- The **Indian railway network** is the second largest railway network in Asia.

Asian Waterways:

- The Cape of Good Hope route connects Europe to South Asia.
- The Trans Pacific route connects the ports of eastern Asia to the ports of western American countries.
- The Suez Canal route passes through the heart of the world trade route and connects Europe with South and Southeast Asia.
- Tokyo, Shanghai, Singapore, Hong Kong, Chennai, Mumbai, Karachi and Dubai are the important seaports in Asia.

Population of Asia:

- **Asia is the most populated continent in the world.** Approximately six-tenth of the world's population lives in Asia. The population is unevenly distributed because of various physical features. **China and India** alone covers three fifth of Asia's population.
- The population density in **Asia is 143** persons per Km². India, Japan, Bangladesh and Singapore have high population density. River plains and industrial regions have high density of population, whereas low density is found in the interior parts of Asia.

Religion & Language:

Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism Christianity and Sikhism are the major creeds in Asia. The minor creeds **Zoroastrianism, Jainism, Shintoism, Confucianism and Taoism** are also practised in Asia. Mandarin, English, Indonesian, Japanese, Arabic, Korea, Vietnamese and Hindi are the most widely spoken languages in Asia.

Major civilization of Asia:

Asia is the home land of three civilizations. (**Mesopotamian, Indus valley and Chinese civilizations**). These three contributed to the architectural works at an early stage.

The important architecture work of Asia:

Among the seven wonders of the world, two are located in Asia (**The Tajmahal in India, The Great wall of China**). The people of Yemen built a mud skyscraper thousands of years ago. **Ankorwat in Cambodia, Buddhist Temple in East and Southeast Asia, Mosques in west Asia and the temples and forts in India** are fine examples of Asian architecture

Food methods in Asia:

- **Rice, Wheat, Maize and Barley** are the staple food in Asia.
- Dairy products, fruits and nuts are also consumed.
- In East Asia, bread and noodles are the staple food where rice is not available.
- **Tea, Coffee and green tea** are the chief beverages.
- In West Asia, meat, herbs and olive oil are the prime ingredients in their food.

Dance and Music in Asia:

In Asia, **Yangee, Dragon Dance, Kabaki** are popular in East Asia **Ram Thai in Thailand, Bhangra, Kathak and Bharathanatyam** in India are also important dances in Asia. Sufi music and Arabic classical music are common in west Asia. Tinikling is the national dance of Philippines.

Festivals in Asia:

- The **mid autumn festival / moon festival** in China, Taiwan and Vietnam.
- **Holi and Mahara Sankaranthi / Pongal** in major parts of India and Sukkoth in Israel are the important harvest festivals of Asia.
- The snow sculpture festival, **Chinese New Year, Thaipusam, Diwali, Taiwan Lantern festival, Songkran, winter light festival** are also some of the famous festivals in Asia.

A Comparison of Asia and Europe

Asia and Europe are integrated geographically and separated politically. Europe is the giant peninsula of Asia. Both the Himalayas (Asia) and the Alps (Europe) were formed during the same geological period.

The Steppe grass lands and coniferous forests are spread over several hundred kilometres from Europe to Asia. Generally, the plains are found in the northern part and the mountains in the southern part in both the continents.

The two continents are the homeland of ancient civilizations. From the ancient period, these two continents had trade relationship through the silk route and the spice route.

Despite the various geographical similarities, these two continents have striking differences.

Asia	Europe
1. It is the largest continent, both by area and population.	1. It is the smallest continent by area and the most developed.
2. It extends from 10° 11' S to 81° 12' N latitudes. That is, from the equatorial region to the polar region.	2. It extends from 34° 51' N to 81° 47' N latitudes. That is, from the sub-tropical region to the polar region.
3. It is located on the eastern hemisphere	3. It is located at the centre of the earth.
4. The Bering Strait separates Asia and North America.	4. The Strait of Gibraltar separates Europe from Africa.
5. The Arabian, Indo China, India and Korea are the important peninsulas in Asia.	5. The Scandinavian, Iberian, Italian and Balkan are the important peninsulas in Europe.
6. The important parallels such as the Equator, Tropic of Cancer, Arctic Circle pass through it.	6. Only the Arctic Circle passes through it.
7. All kinds of climatic conditions are found here. It also enjoys the distinctive monsoon type of climate Southern Asia receives summer rainfall.	7. It lies largely in the temperate zone. It enjoys the distinctive Mediterranean type of climate. Southern Europe receives winter rainfall.
8. Both hot and cold deserts are located here.	8. There are no deserts here.
9. It has a variety of mineral deposits .	9. Mineral resources are limited, except for coal & iron.
10. Plantation crops such as tea, rubber and dates are largely cultivated in Asia.	10. Citrus fruits, olives and grapes are cultivated mostly in Asia.
11. A majority of people in Asia are involved in primary activities.	11. A majority of people in Europe are involved in secondary and tertiary activities.

More to Know:

1. Asia is the **biggest continent**. It has different types of land features such as mountain, plateau, plain, valley, bay, island etc. It also has **different climatic conditions from the equator to polar region**. **Apart from this, many races, languages, religions and cultures** are followed by people who live in Asia. So, Asia is called 'the land of contrasts'.

2. Angkorwat:

It is a world heritage site. It was built by king Suriya Varma II in 1100 AD (CE) at Cambodia. '**Angkorwat**' means '**the city of temples**' in Khmer language. It is the largest Hindu Temple in the world.

3. The Banaue rice terraces were built 2000 year ago by the Ifugaos people in the Philippines. It is located approximately about **1524 m** above sea level.

4. **Rub'al Khali** desert is the largest, continuous sandy desert in the world. It is found in the southeastern part of Saudi Arabia.

5. Natural Regions of Asia:

Sl. No	Climate	Location	Flora	Fauna
1	High Temperature, High rainfall	Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Sri Lanka	Evergreen trees - Mahogany, Rubber, Rosewood, Sal	Rhinoceros, Tiger, Babirusa, Orangutan, Komodo Dragon
2	Summer rainfall, Dry winter	India, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Southern China	Deciduous trees – Teak, Sandal wood, Bamboo	Tiger, Elephant, Indian Cobra, viper
3	Extreme temperatures	Arabian desert, North, North West India	Cactus, Dates (Oasis), Thorny shrubs, Babul tree	Bactrian Camel, The Sand grouse, desert oryx
4	Dry winter, Warm summer	East China, Japan, North and South Korea	Cherry, Apricot, Plum	Giant Panda, Japanese macaque
5	Warm Summer and winter rainfall	Israel, Lebanon, Turkey, Syria	Figs, Olives, Citrus fruits	Lynx, Jackrabbit
6	Long and dry winter, short and cool summer	Siberia, Himalayas	Coniferous trees - Pine, Fir, Spruce	Siberian Tiger, Brown bear, Wolf
7	Permanent snow cover	Beyond the snow line	Lichen, mosses, Grass	Polar bear, Lemming, Reindeer, Arctic fox

6. The **Three Gorges dam** has been constructed across the river **Yangtze**. It is the largest power station dam in the world. It fulfills ten percent of power needs of China.

7. Major Rivers of Asia:

Major Rivers of Asia

S. No	Name of the River	Origin	Outflow	Length in Km
1	Yangtze	Tibetan plateau	East China sea	6,350
2	Huang He	Tibetan plateau	Gulf of Pohai	5,464
3	Mekong	Tibetan plateau	South China sea	4,350
4	Yenisei	Tannuala Mountain	Arctic Ocean	4,090
5	Ob	Altai Mountain	Gulf of Ob	3,650
6	Brahmaputra	Himalayas	Bay of Bengal	2,900
7	Indus	Himalayas	Arabian sea	3,610
8	Amur	Confluence of Shika and Argun rivers	Tatar Strait	2,824
9	Ganga	Himalayas	Bay of Bengal	2,525
10	Irrawaddy	North Myanmar	Bay of Bengal	2,170

8. Physical Map of Asia:



9. There are **12 landlocked countries in Asia**. Among these, only one is doubly landlocked which means it is surrounded entirely by other landlocked countries.

10. 'Knot' refers to the **convergence of mountain ranges**.

11. **Tibet is called the 'Roof of the world'** and it is also known as the third pole because of its cold weather, largest reserve of freshwater and inhospitable environment.

12. **Mountain Regions of Asia:**

