

GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION OF INDIA

India is situated north of the equator between 8°4' north to 37°6' north latitude and 68°7' to 97°25' east longitude. It is the seventh-largest country in the world, with a total area of 3,287,263 square kilometres (1,269,219 sq mi). India measures 3,214 km (1,997 mi) from north to south and 2,933 km (1,822 mi) from east to west. It has a land frontier of 15,200 km (9,445 mi) and a coastline of 7,516.6 km (4,671 mi).



Fig.1: Geographical location of India

On the south, India projects into and is bounded by the Indian Ocean in particular, by the Arabian Sea on the west, the Lakshadweep Sea to the southwest, the Bay of Bengal on the east, and the Indian Ocean proper to the south. The Palk Strait and Gulf of Mannar separate India from Sri Lanka to its immediate southeast, and the Maldives are some 125 kilometres (78 mi) to the south of India's Lakshadweep Islands across the Eight Degree Channel. India's Andaman and Nicobar Islands, some 1,200 kilometres (750 mi) southeast of the mainland, share maritime borders with Myanmar, Thailand and Indonesia. Kanyakumari at 8°4'41"N and 77°55'230"E is the southernmost tip of the Indian mainland, while the southernmost point in India is Indira Point on Great Nicobar Island. The northernmost point which is under Indian administration is Indira Col, Siachen Glacier. India's territorial

waters extend into the sea to a distance of 12 nautical miles (13.8 mi; 22.2 km) from the coast baseline.

The northern frontiers of India are defined largely by the Himalayan mountain range, where the country borders China, Bhutan, and Nepal. Its western border with Pakistan lies in the Karakoram range, Punjab Plains, the Thar Desert and the Rann of Kutch salt marshes. In the far northeast, the Chin Hills and Kachin Hills, deeply forested mountainous regions, separate India from Burma. On the east, its border with Bangladesh is largely defined by the Khasi Hills and Mizo Hills, and the watershed region of the Indo-Gangetic Plain.

The geographical location of India can be identified in three ways:

1. With the help of latitudes and longitudes:

(A) Latitude: Being located in the northern hemisphere. India stretches from 8°04' north latitude in the south to 37°06' north latitude in the north, i.e. the mainland of India extends from Kanyakumari in the south to Kashmir in the north. The southernmost point of Indian union is Indira Point which was previously known as Persons Pygmalion; is actually the southernmost point of Car Nicobar where it touches the parallel of 6°45' north.

(B) Longitude: In the eastern hemisphere, India stretches from 68°07' east longitude in the west to 97°25' east longitude in the east, i.e. between the western frontier of Gujarat in the west to the eastern frontier of Arunachal Pradesh in the east.

2. According to the distance from the sea: India is surrounded by (i) the Bay of Bengal in the east, (ii) the Arabian Sea in the west, (iii) the Indian Ocean in the south and (iv) the Lakshadweep Sea to the southwest. No part of India is beyond 900 km from the sea.

3. In relation to the location of neighbouring countries: India is bordered on the north by China (the largest neighbour, 96 lakhs sq. km), Nepal and Bhutan, on the east by Myanmar and Bangladesh, on the south by Sri Lanka, on the west by Pakistan and on the north-west by Afghanistan. The smallest neighbour of India (298 sq. km), Maldives, lies to the south-east of India; with these neighbours India has trade relations as well as cultural links.

LOCATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE OF INDIA

1. Central location at the head of Indian Ocean: India commands an important strategic position on the globe with respect to trade as well as social and cultural interaction. India stands at the head of the Indian Ocean at the very centre of the Eastern hemisphere commanding trade routes running in all directions. East and West coast have many natural harbours due to which India had a flourishing sea trade from ancient times.

Indian Ocean is the only ocean in the world which has been named after a country. The Indian Ocean bridges the gap between East and the west. It has served as a great linkage between the countries lying on its coast and even further beyond. The Peninsula table land of India gets into the Indian Ocean for a distance of about 1600 km and divides it into two parts the Western and Eastern parts are known as the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal respectively no other country has such a long coastline on this ocean as India has. These geographical features provide India a significant edge in International trade.

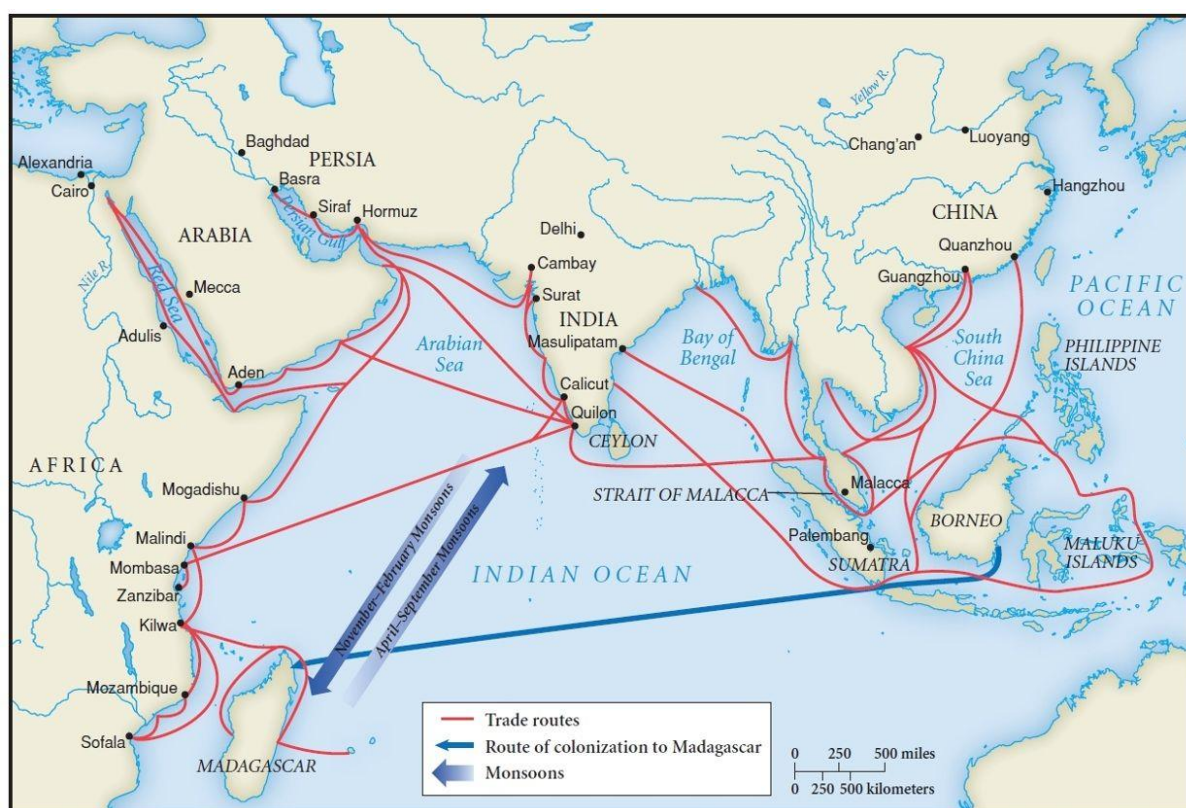


Fig. 2: Trade routes of India through Indian Ocean

India's central location at the head of Indian Ocean gives it a great strategic importance and helps in maintaining trade and commerce. It helps India to keep a close contact with west Asia, Africa and Europe from western coast and southeast and east Asia from the eastern Asia. It is also an important transit point for sea routes connecting the two regions that is countries of Europe with countries of East Asia. India is centrally located between the East and the West Asia. India is strategically located at the centre of the trans-Indian Ocean routes which connect the European countries in the west and the countries of

East Asia. India could establish close contact with West Asia, Africa and Europe from the western coast. India also serves as an important transit points for sea routes connecting the two regions that is countries of Europe with countries of East Asia. India has the longest coastline in the Indian Ocean and it helps a lot for trade with Africa, south-east Asia, Australia and Europe. Due to this maritime location India receive benefits of south west monsoon seasons

2. Central Location in Eastern Hemisphere:



Fig. 3: Location of India in Eastern Hemisphere

India is very favourably located in relation to Eurasia, Africa and Australia. It occupies central position in the eastern hemisphere. India's location has many economic advantages. It helped in establishing economic and cultural contacts with the East Asian countries. Moreover, it could establish close contact with Southeast and East Asia from the sea ports of eastern coast. It is favourably located on the world's highway of trade and commerce, both to the east and the west. There are some prominent air routes and sea routes passing through the Indian subcontinent.

3. Central Location in Southern Part of Asia's Continent: India is centrally located between the East and the West Asia. India is strategically located at the centre of the trans-Indian Ocean routes which connect the European countries in the west and the countries of East Asia. India could establish close contact with West Asia, Africa and Europe from the western coast and Southeast and East Asia from the eastern coast.

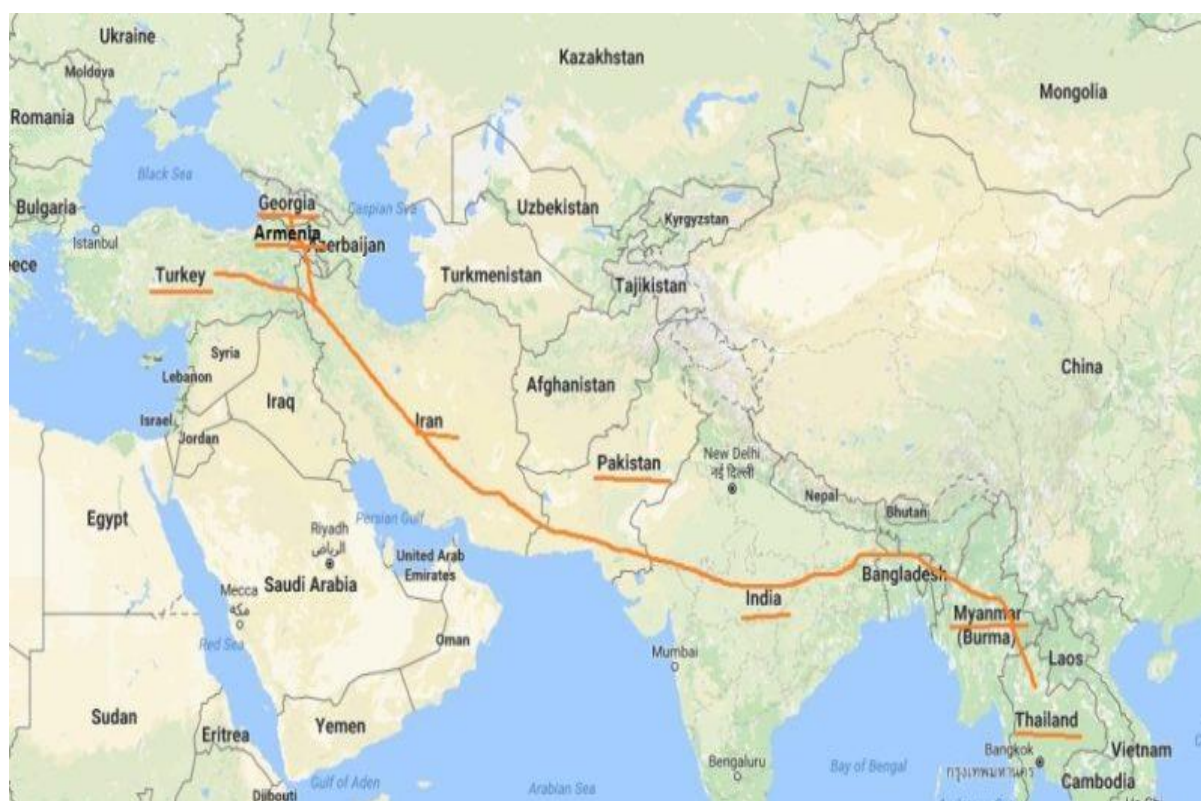


Fig. 4: Inland trade route of India connecting Middle East to Far East

India is a south west extension of the Asian continent. The Trans Indian Ocean routes which connect the developed countries of Europe in the west and the developing countries of East Asia in the east must skirt the shores of India thus provide a strategic central location to India. The Deccan Peninsula, India's Southward extension protrudes into Indian Ocean and divides it into two seas, the Arabian Sea on the West and the Bay of Bengal on its East and thus helping India to establish easy contact with West Asia, East Africa and Europe from Western coast also establishes contacts with South-East Asia, East Asia and Australia from Eastern coast.

4. Strategic position midway between the Far East and the Middle East: India's strategic position midway between the Far East and the Middle East is significant because the Trans-Indian Ocean routes connect the industrially developed countries of Europe in the west and the underdeveloped countries of East Asia. India being centrally located in South Asia, she enjoys an advantageous-position for doing trade with Australia and the countries of Africa, the Middle East and the Far East. Thus, India dominates the Indian Ocean and commands an important strategic position. The central location of India is considered of great significance as it helps India to keep a close contact for business purpose with West Asia, Africa and Europe from western coast, and Southeast and East Asia from the eastern coast. India occupies a unique position on the globe. It enjoys a unique proximity with Europe, Africa and Australia. The Indian landmass has a central location between East and West Asia. India is Southward extension of Asia, thus, it forms the South-Central Peninsula of world's largest continent.



Fig. 5: Strategic position of India

The central location of India is considered of great significance as it helps India to keep a close contact for business purpose with West Asia, Africa and Europe from western coast, and Southeast and East Asia from the eastern coast. Moreover, most of the air routes between Europe, West Asia and Africa in the west and East Asia, Southeast Asia, Japan & Australia in the east also pass through India.



Fig. 6: Air routes through India connecting Europe and Middle East with Australia, South Asia and East Asia

The centrality and the consequent significance of India to broader Indian Ocean geopolitics and economics have been proved beyond doubt. It was India's status as the principal entrepot in a highly profitable oceanic trade structure which attracted the West Asian Muslims, and the European colonial powers towards India. India became the 'jewel in the crown' of the vast British Empire due to its wealth and because of its role as a fulcrum upon which the imperial and commercial system in Asia was balanced. India thus commands an important strategic position on the globe with respect to trade as well as social and cultural interaction.