

Vegetation of India - Comprehensive Notes

1. Introduction

Vegetation refers to the plant cover over a region. India has diverse vegetation due to variations in climate, soil, relief, and rainfall. The natural vegetation of India is classified mainly on the basis of climatic conditions, especially rainfall and temperature.

2. Factors Affecting Vegetation

- Climate – Temperature, rainfall, and humidity are major determinants.
- Soil – Different soil types support different vegetation types.
- Relief – Altitude and slope influence plant growth.
- Human Activities – Deforestation, agriculture, urbanization affect natural vegetation.

3. Types of Natural Vegetation in India

India's vegetation is broadly classified into the following categories:

A. Tropical Evergreen Forests

- Found in regions with rainfall above 200 cm.
- Located in Western Ghats, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, and North-East India.
- Trees are tall, dense, and form multi-layered structure.
- Examples: Ebony, Mahogany, Rosewood.

B. Tropical Deciduous Forests (Monsoon Forests)

- Most widespread type.
- Rainfall between 70–200 cm.
- Found in central, eastern, and northern India.
- Trees shed leaves in dry season.
- Examples: Teak, Sal, Shisham.

C. Tropical Thorn Forests

- Found in regions with rainfall less than 70 cm.
- Located in Rajasthan, Gujarat, parts of Punjab and Haryana.
- Trees are scattered, with thorny bushes.
- Examples: Acacia, Cactus, Date Palm.

D. Mountain (Montane) Forests

- Found in Himalayan region.
- Vary with altitude.
- Examples: Pine, Deodar, Fir, Spruce.

E. Mangrove Forests (Tidal Forests)

- Found in coastal areas and river deltas.
- Adapted to saline and swampy conditions.
- Example: Sundari tree in Ganga-Brahmaputra Delta.

4. Forest Conservation in India

- Social Forestry
- Joint Forest Management (JFM)
- Afforestation Programs
- Wildlife Protection Act (1972)
- National Forest Policy

5. Importance of Forests

- Maintain ecological balance
- Prevent soil erosion
- Regulate climate
- Support biodiversity
- Provide timber, fuelwood, and medicinal plants