

UPSC Civil Services Examination

UPSC Notes [GS-I]

Topic: List of Major Indian River Systems [Geography Notes for UPSC]

List of Major Indian River Systems- Rivers and their Origin

Given below are the major river systems:

Indian River Systems		
River System	Total length	Length in India
Indus River System	2897 km	700 km
Brahmaputra River System	3848 km	2900 km
Ganga River System	2525 km	2525 km
Yamuna river System	1376 km	1376 km
Narmada River System	1163 km	1163 km
Tapi River System	724 km	724 km
Godavari River System	1465 km	1465 km
Krishna River System	1400 km	1400 km
Cauvery River System	805 km	805 km
Mahanadi River System	900 km	900 km

The Indus arises from the northern slopes of the Kailash range in Tibet near Lake Manasarovar.

The Indus River System

- It has a large number of tributaries in both India and Pakistan and has a total length of about 2897 km from the source to the point near Karachi where it falls into the Arabian Sea out of which approx 700km lies in India.
- It enters Indian Territory in Jammu and Kashmir by forming a picturesque gorge.

- In the Kashmir region, it joins with many tributaries – the Zaskar, the Shyok, the Nubra and the Hunza.
- It flows between the Ladakh Range and the Zaskar Range at Leh.
- It crosses the Himalayas through a 5181 m deep gorge near Attock, which is lying north of Nanga Parbat.

The major tributaries of the Indus River in India are Jhelum, Ravi, Chenab, Beas, and Sutlej.

Also read [Indus Valley Civilization for UPSC IAS Exam](#)

The Brahmaputra River System

The Brahmaputra originates from Mansarovar Lake, which is also a source of the Indus and Sutlej.

- It is 3848kms long, a little longer than the Indus River.
- Most of its course lies outside India.
- It flows parallel to the Himalayas in the eastward direction. When it reaches Namcha Barwa, it takes a U-turn around it and enters India in the state of Arunachal Pradesh.
- Here it is known as the **Dihang River**. In India, it flows through the states of Arunachal Pradesh and Assam and is connected by several tributaries.
- The Brahmaputra has a braided channel throughout most of its length in Assam.

The river is known as the **Tsangpo in Tibet**. It receives less volume of water and has less silt in the Tibet region. But in India, the river passes through a region of heavy precipitation and as such, the river carries large amounts of water during rainfall and a significant amount of silt. It is considered one of the largest rivers in India in terms of Volume. It is known for creating the calamity in Assam and Bangladesh.

Ganga River System

- The Ganga originates as the Bhagirathi from the Gangotri glacier.
- Before it reaches Devprayag in the Garhwal Division, the Mandakini, Pindar, the Dhauliganga and the Bishenganga rivers merge into the Alaknanda and the Bheling drain into the Bhagirathi.
- The Pindar River rises from East Trishul and Nanda Devi unite with the Alaknanda at Karan Prayag. The Mandakini meets at RudraPrayag.
- The water from both Bhagirathi and the Alaknanda flows in the name of the Ganga at Devprayag.

The concept of Panch Prayag

1. **Vishnuprayag**: where the river Alaknanda meets river Dhauli Ganga
2. **Nandprayag**: where river Alaknanda meets river Mandakini
3. **Karnaprayag**: where river Alaknanda meets river Pinder
4. **Rudraprayag**: where river Alaknanda meets river Mandakini
5. **Devprayag**: where river Alaknanda meets river Bhagirathi -GANGA

The principal tributaries of the Ganga are Yamuna, Damodar, Sapta Kosi, Ram Ganga, Gomati, Ghaghara, and Son. The river after travelling a distance of 2525 km from its source meets the Bay of Bengal.

Yamuna River System

- The Yamuna River is the largest tributary of the Ganga River.
- It originates from the **Yamunotri** glacier, at the Bandarpooch peak in Uttarakhand.
- The main tributaries joining the river include the Sin, Hindon, Betwa Ken and Chambal.
- The **Tons** is the largest tributary of the Yamuna.
- The catchment of the river extends to the states of Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh.

The Narmada River System

- The Narmada is a river located in central India.
- It rises to the summit of the Amarkantak Hill in Madhya Pradesh state.
- It outlines the traditional frontier between North India and South India.
- It is one of the major rivers of peninsular India. Only the Narmada, the Tapi, and the Mahi rivers run from east to west.
- The river flows through the states of Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra.
- It drains into the Arabian Sea in the Bharuch district of Gujarat.

The Tapi River System

- It is a central Indian river. It is one of the most important rivers of peninsular India with the run from east to west.
- It originates in the Eastern Satpura Range of southern Madhya Pradesh state.
- It flows in a westward direction, draining some important historic places like Madhya Pradesh's Nimar region, East Vidarbha region and Maharashtra's Khandesh in the northwest corner of the Deccan Plateau and South Gujarat before draining into the Gulf of Cambay of the Arabian Sea.
- The River Basin of Tapi River lies mostly in eastern and northern districts Maharashtra state.
- The river also covers some districts of Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat as well.
- The principal tributaries of Tapi River are Waghur River, Aner River, Girna River, Purna River, Panzara River and Bori River.

The Godavari River System

- The Godavari River is the second-longest course in India with brownish water.
- The river is often referred to as the Dakshin (South) Ganga or Vriddh (Old) Ganga.
- It is a seasonal river, dried during the summers and widens during the monsoons.
- It river originates from **Trimbakeshwar**, near Nasik in Maharashtra.
- It flows southeast across south-central India through the states of Madhya Pradesh, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Orissa, and drains into the Bay of Bengal.

- The river forms a fertile delta at Rajahmundry.
- The banks of this river have many pilgrimage sites, Nasik(MH), Bhadrachalam(TS), and Trimbak. Some of its tributaries include Pranahita (Combination of Penuganga and Warda), Indravati River, Bindusara, Sabari, and Manjira.
- Asia's largest rail-cum-road bridge which links Kovvur and Rajahmundry is located on the river Godavari.

The Krishna river system

- Krishna is one of the longest rivers of India, which originates from Mahabaleshwar in Maharashtra.
- It flows through Sangli and drains the sea in the Bay of Bengal.
- The river flows through the states of Maharashtra, Karnataka, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.
- **Tungabhadra River** is the main tributary which itself is formed by the Tunga and Bhadra rivers that originate in the Western Ghats.
- Dudhganga Rivers, Koyna, Bhima, Mallaprabha, Dindi, Ghataprabha, Warna, Yerla, and Musi are some of the other tributaries.

The Cauvery River System

- The Cauvery is also known as Dakshin Ganga.
- It originates from Talakaveri located in the Western Ghats.
- It is a famous pilgrimage and tourist place in Kodagu district of Karnataka.
- The headwaters of the river are in the Western Ghats range of Karnataka state, and from Karnataka through Tamil Nadu.
- The river drains into the Bay of Bengal. The river supports irrigation for agriculture and considered as a means of support of the ancient kingdoms and modern cities of South India.
- The river has many tributaries called Arkavathy, Shimsha, Hemavati, Kapila, Shimsha, Honnuhole, Amaravati, Lakshmana Kabini, Lokapavani, Bhavani, Noyyal, and Tirtha.

The Mahanadi River System

- The Mahanadi originates from the Satpura Range of central India and it is a river in eastern India.
- It flows east to the Bay of Bengal. The river drains of the state of Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Orissa.
- The largest dam, the Hirakud Dam is built on the river.