

The 5 Themes of the Himalaya

NOTES:

In Sanskrit, Hima = snow and Alaya = abode.

Himalaya is plural and the "s" at the end of the word is therefore unnecessary.

Why Study the Himalaya? The Himalaya region provides the life-support system for about 50 million mountain people and probably in excess of 450 million people in the very densely populated areas of the Indus, Ganges, Brahmaputra and the Sichuan Basin!

LOCATION

Absolute: Between 26 20' and 35 40' North latitude and 74 50' and 95 40' East longitudes. Covers 612,021 square feet.

Relative: North of India. Southern Asia.

PLACE

Physical:

One of the most disparate places on Earth.

Extreme cold and hot, humid tropical climate can be found.

Some of the highest inhabited places in earth (Most of the Tibet plateau is above 14,760 feet).

Source of several major Asian rivers (Indus, Brahmaputra, Ganges, Sutlej)
Highest mountain on earth.

Areas of very little rain fall to vary high rainfall. (Meghalaya State in Northern India is noted for the second highest average annual rainfall of 450 inches.)

Relatively young mountain range. Still forming.

Plays a central role in the Asian monsoon system.

Deepest gorges on Earth.

High rate of plant and animal species diversity and endemism (found nowhere else on earth).

The eastern section of the Himalaya is a world-class biodiversity hot spot.

Created by a collision of the Indian and Asian plates – earthquake prone.

Human

Mix of Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam

Linguistic and cultural diversity is high.

Sherpa culture

Chipko Tree hugging Movement

“Shangri-La” image to many westerners

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT INTERACTION

Sophisticated, fragile interconnectedness between humans and their environment in most parts of the region. Harsh conditions make this a necessity.

Fragile balance between human and environment being taxed by overpopulation, tourism

Dependence on yaks, camels for transportation.

Deforestation and topsoil erosion a problem?

MOVEMENT

Movement of ideas and goods has traditionally been difficult because of extreme physical conditions.

Played an important role in the Silk Roads.

Nepali migration to Bhutan – source of conflict.

Tibetans into Ladak –source of conflict

Movement of Islam into the region

REGION

Asia

The Indian subcontinent

Mountain climbing location

Earthquake zone

Land of the Yeti?