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PART I — EXPLORING SOCIETY: INDIA AND BEYOND

CHAPTER 1

Geographical Diversity of India

GEOGRAPHY

Did You Know? • Concept Notes • Study Tips • Fully Solved Q&A

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1

The Himalayas are still growing!

India is pushing into Asia at about 5 cm every year — roughly the speed your fingernails grow. That is why the Himalayas rise a little taller every single year, and why earthquakes occur in the region.

2

Mount Everest was once an ocean floor

Marine fossils of sea creatures have been found near Himalayan peaks. Before India collided with Eurasia ~50 million years ago, the land that became the Himalayas lay under the Tethys Sea!

3

India was the world's first zinc master

The ancient mines at Zawar in the Aravallis prove that Indians mastered zinc extraction more than 800 years ago — the first people in the world to do so.

4

A lake so salty it belongs to no river

Pangong Tso in Ladakh sits at over 4,200 m and has no outlet. Minerals wash in from the mountains and never leave — so this stunning blue lake is salty, and parts of it still freeze completely in winter!

5

'Moonland' on Earth

Ladakh's terrain was once an ocean bed. Wind and rain eroded the folded rock into shapes so strange that the region resembles the Moon's surface — earning it the name 'Moonland'.

6

The desert that drinks the rain

In the Thar Desert, families survive on taanka and kund — ingenious rainwater harvesting systems that catch and store every precious drop, centuries before 'water conservation' became a modern slogan.

7

One country, almost every climate

From Ladakh at -30°C to the scorching Thar, from the wettest hills to sun-baked plateaus — India packs so many landscapes into one nation that geographers call it a 'mini-continent'.

► The Indian Subcontinent

India, together with Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Myanmar, forms the **Indian Subcontinent** — a large, distinct landmass of Asia. India is the **seventh-largest** country in the world.

► Birth of the Himalayas — Fold Mountains

India was once part of the ancient landmass **Gondwana**. About **50 million years ago**, the Indian Plate collided with the **Eurasian Plate**; the land between them crumpled and folded upward like a pushed carpet — forming the Himalayas, classic **fold mountains**. The collision continues today (~5 cm/year), so the Himalayas are still rising.

► The three Himalayan ranges

Himadri (Greater Himalayas) — highest range, permanently snow-covered, peaks like Mt Everest. **Himachal** (Lower Himalayas) — home to popular hill stations. **Shivalik** — outermost and lowest foothills. 'Himalaya' = *hima* (snow) + *ālaya* (abode): the **Abode of Snow**.

► Water Tower of Asia

Summer snowmelt from the Himalayas feeds mighty rivers — the **Ganga, Indus and Brahmaputra**. **Gaumukh**, the snout of the **Gangotri Glacier**, is the sacred source of the Bhagirathi (headstream of the Ganga). Mountain people build **kath-kuni** houses of stone and wood — warm in winter and resistant to earthquakes.

► Cold desert: Ladakh

A high-altitude **cold desert** beyond the Himalayas. Features: 'Moonland' terrain, salty **Pangong Tso**, yaks reared for milk, meat and wool, and festivals like **Losar** and **Hemis**.

► Hot desert: The Thar

India's great hot desert in **Rajasthan**. Life adapts through the **camel economy** ('ship of the desert') and traditional water harvesting — **taanka** and **kund**. **Jaisalmer Fort**, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, rises from these sands.

► The Aravallis

One of the world's **oldest mountain ranges**, rich in minerals — the ancient **Zawar zinc mines** lie here.

► The Northern Plains

Formed by fertile **alluvial soil** deposited by the Ganga, Indus and Brahmaputra. Flat land + fertile soil + rivers = dense population, multi-cropping and an elaborate road-rail network (the bright band seen in night-time satellite images).

► The Peninsular Plateau

One of India's **oldest, most stable** landmasses, containing the **Deccan Plateau**. Bordered by the **Western Ghats** (tall, continuous; northern part called **Sahyadri**; UNESCO World Heritage Site) and the **Eastern Ghats** (lower, broken). East-flowing rivers — **Godavari, Krishna, Kaveri** — form fertile **deltas** in the Bay of Bengal; west-flowing **Narmada and Tapti** enter the Arabian Sea through **estuaries**. Waterfalls such as **Jog Falls** (Karnataka) generate hydroelectric power. Tribal communities include the **Santhal, Gond, Baiga, Bhil and Korku**.

► Guardians of biodiversity

The **Great Himalayan National Park** (Himachal Pradesh), a UNESCO site, shelters the **Snow Leopard** and the **Himalayan Monal**. It is preserved jointly by the **government and village communities** — a model of community conservation. The **Sundarbans** delta (India + Bangladesh) is home to the Royal Bengal Tiger.

★ **Ranges mnemonic:** 'High Hills Slope' = **H**imadri (highest) → **H**imachal (hill stations) → **S**hivalik (smallest). Height decreases in that order.

★ **River-direction trap:** East-flowing rivers (Godavari, Krishna, Kaveri) → Bay of Bengal → **deltas**. West-flowing (Narmada, Tapti) → Arabian Sea → **estuaries**. Examiners love swapping delta/estuary — never mix them.

★ **UNESCO list for this chapter:** Western Ghats, Great Himalayan National Park, Jaisalmer Fort, Sundarbans. A 1-mark question hides here almost every year.

★ **Common mistake:** India is the **seventh**-largest country, not fifth. Sahyadri = northern **Western** Ghats (not Shivalik!).

★ **Map practice:** Practise marking Gangotri Glacier, Thar Desert, Western Ghats, Pangong Tso and Sundarbans on a blank India outline at least twice before the exam — map questions are guaranteed marks.

★ **Answer like a topper:** In long answers on 'diversity', always link geography → life (e.g., 'fertile plains → dense settlement'). Cause-and-effect sentences earn full marks.

SECTION A — Multiple Choice Questions

10 × 1 = 10 Marks

Q1. Which of the following statements about the Indian Subcontinent is CORRECT? [1]

- (a) India is the fifth-largest country in the world. (b) The Indian Subcontinent includes India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar.
- (c) India shares its boundaries only with Pakistan and Bangladesh. (d) The Indian Subcontinent is a separate continent from Asia.

ANSWER

(b) — India is the seventh-largest country and, together with Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar, forms the Indian Subcontinent. Option (a) is wrong (India is seventh-largest, not fifth). Options (c) and (d) are incorrect per NCERT.

Q2. Assertion (A): The Himalayas are called the 'Water Tower of Asia'. Reason (R): In summer, snow on the Himalayas melts and feeds major rivers like the Ganga, Indus, and Brahmaputra. Select the correct option: [1]

- (a) Both A and R are true, and R is the correct explanation of A. (b) Both A and R are true, but R is NOT the correct explanation of A.
- (c) A is true, but R is false. (d) A is false, but R is true.

ANSWER

(a) — The Himalayas feed major rivers from snowmelt — this IS the reason they are called the 'Water Tower of Asia'. Both A and R are true, and R correctly explains A.

Q3. Match the Himalayan ranges in Column I with their descriptions in Column II and choose the correct option: Column I: P. Himadri Q. Himachal R. Shivalik Column II: 1. Outermost and lowest range 2. Greatest Himalayas with peaks like Everest 3. Lower Himalayas with popular hill stations [1]

- (a) P-2, Q-3, R-1 (b) P-1, Q-2, R-3
- (c) P-3, Q-1, R-2 (d) P-2, Q-1, R-3

ANSWER

(a) — Himadri = Greater Himalayas (highest peaks like Everest) → P-2; Himachal = Lower Himalayas (hill stations) → Q-3; Shivalik = Outer/lowest foothills → R-1. Answer: P-2, Q-3, R-1.

Q4. India was originally part of the ancient landmass called Gondwana. When it collided with the Eurasian Plate approximately 50 million years ago, the Himalayas were formed. This type of mountain formation is called: [1]

- (a) Block Mountain formation (b) Fold Mountain formation
- (c) Volcanic Mountain formation (d) Residual Mountain formation

ANSWER

(b) — When the Indian plate collided with Eurasia, the land between them crumpled and rose — this is classic Fold Mountain formation. NCERT uses the carpet analogy.

Q5. Ladakh is called 'Moonland' because: [1]

- (a) It is extremely cold and has no life at all. (b) Its rocky, eroded terrain resembles the surface of the Moon.
- (c) It is the highest plateau in the world and touches the sky. (d) It gets no sunlight and remains dark for months.

ANSWER

(b) — Ladakh's terrain was formed when the folded portion (which was an ocean bed) was eroded by wind and rain into strange, rocky shapes resembling the surface of the Moon.

Q6. In the Thar Desert, 'taanka' and 'kund' are: [1]

- (a) Traditional mud houses that keep desert dwellers cool. (b) Underground networks used to transport goods by camel.
- (c) Ingenious water collection systems that store rainwater for drinking. (d) Ancient temples built by desert communities.

ANSWER

(c) — Taanka and kund are traditional rainwater harvesting / water conservation structures used in Rajasthan to store drinking water. This is explicitly stated in the 'Don't Miss Out' section.

Q7. The ancient mines at Zawar in the Aravallis are historically significant because: [1]

- (a) They produced the largest reserves of gold ever found in India. (b) Indians were the first in the world to master zinc extraction over 800 years ago.
- (c) They supplied marble for the Taj Mahal and Qutub Minar. (d) They were used by the Mughals to mint silver coins.

ANSWER

(b) — Evidence from ancient mines at Zawar in the Aravallis shows Indians mastered zinc extraction over 800 years ago — first in the world to do so.

Q8. The rivers Narmada and Tapti are unique among peninsular rivers because they: [1]

- (a) Flow from west to east and form deltas in the Bay of Bengal. (b) Originate in the Western Ghats and flow into the Arabian Sea through estuaries.
- (c) Flow north and join the Ganga river system. (d) Flow west to east across the Deccan Plateau and form fertile deltas.

ANSWER

(b) — The Narmada and Tapti are west-flowing rivers that drain into the Arabian Sea through estuaries. This distinguishes them from the east-flowing rivers (Godavari, Krishna, Kaveri) that form deltas.

Q9. Riya is writing a report on India's UNESCO World Heritage Sites covered in Chapter 1 of her Geography textbook. Which of the following pairs is CORRECTLY matched? (Site — Location/Significance) [1]

- (a) Great Himalayan National Park — Uttarakhand; famous for Gangotri Glacier (b) Jaisalmer Fort — Rajasthan; located in the middle of the Thar Desert
- (c) Western Ghats — Known as Shivalik Hills in their southern portion (d) Sundarbans — Located entirely in India; home to Snow Leopards

ANSWER

(b) — Jaisalmer Fort is a UNESCO World Heritage Site located in the Thar Desert (NCERT, Fig 1.22 caption). Option (a) is wrong — Great Himalayan National Park is in Himachal Pradesh. Option (c) is wrong — the northern Western Ghats are called Sahyadri, not Shivalik. Option (d) is wrong — Sundarbans spans India and Bangladesh, and hosts Royal Bengal Tiger, not Snow Leopards.

Q10. A student observes a satellite image of India at night and notices a high concentration of artificial lights in a particular region. Which geographical reason BEST explains this? [1]

- (a) The desert reflects moonlight, making it appear brighter. (b) The Northern Plains have fertile soil and an elaborate transport network, leading to dense population and settlements.
- (c) The Western Ghats receive heavy rainfall, which powers more electric lights. (d) The Himalayan peaks reflect sunlight into the plains below.

ANSWER

(b) — High population concentration in the Northern Plains is due to fertile alluvial soil and an elaborate road/rail transport network — satellites show bright lights = dense human settlement.

SECTION B — Very Short Answer Questions

5 × 2 = 10 Marks

Q11. Explain in your own words why the Himalayas are described as 'fold mountains'. What caused the land to 'fold'? [2]

ANSWER

The Himalayas are fold mountains because they were formed when the Indian tectonic plate collided with the Eurasian Plate about 50 million years ago. The land between them crumpled and folded upward — similar to how a carpet wrinkles when pushed — creating the towering Himalayan peaks. This collision is still ongoing; India continues to push into Asia at about 5 cm per year, so the Himalayas are still growing. Marking: 1 mark for fold mountain explanation + 1 mark for cause (Indian plate colliding with Eurasian plate / Gondwana origin)

Q12. Gaumukh is considered both sacred and scientifically important. State TWO reasons — one cultural and one geographical — that explain its significance. [2]

ANSWER

Cultural significance: Gaumukh is considered a sacred site; the Bhagirathi River that originates here is a major tributary of the holy Ganga, and it attracts thousands of pilgrims and spiritual seekers. Geographical significance: Gaumukh is the snout (edge) of the Gangotri Glacier, which is one of the largest glaciers in the Indian Himalayas and the source of the Bhagirathi / Ganga river system that supports hundreds of millions of people. Marking: 1 mark for cultural reason (sacred/pilgrimage) + 1 mark for geographical reason (origin of Bhagirathi/source of Gangotri Glacier)

Q13. Kath-kuni houses in the western Himalayas are built with a specific combination of materials. Name the materials used and give TWO advantages of this construction style. [2]

ANSWER

Kath-kuni (also called dhajji-dewari) houses use locally available stone and wood. Advantages: (i) The combination of materials keeps the house warm in the cold Himalayan winters. (ii) The flexible wood-and-stone structure resists damage in the event of mild earthquakes, making it suitable for the seismically active Himalayan region. Marking: 1 mark for materials (stone + wood) + 1 mark for any two advantages (warmth / earthquake resistance)

Q14. The word 'Himalaya' has a Sanskrit origin. What do the two Sanskrit words 'hima' and 'ālaya' mean? How does the name reflect the character of the mountain range? [2]

ANSWER

'Himalaya' comes from two Sanskrit words: 'hima' meaning 'snow' and 'ālaya' meaning 'abode' or 'dwelling' — thus the Himalayas literally mean the 'Abode of Snow'. This perfectly reflects the character of the range: the highest peaks (Himadri/Greater Himalayas) remain snow-covered throughout the year, and the region receives significant snowfall that feeds major rivers of Asia. Marking: 1 mark for both word meanings (hima = snow, ālaya = abode/dwelling) + 1 mark for connecting the name to the snow-covered nature of the mountains

Q15. Pangong Tso, located in Ladakh, has salty water unlike most freshwater lakes. What geographical reason does the textbook give for this saltiness? [2]

ANSWER

The textbook explains that Pangong Tso's water is salty because minerals dissolve from the surrounding mountain rock and accumulate in the lake water over time. Since the lake has no major outlet (it is a closed basin at high altitude), the minerals keep building up, making the water saline unlike most freshwater Himalayan lakes. Marking: 1 mark for identifying minerals dissolving from surrounding mountains + 1 mark for noting the lake retains the minerals (no outlet / closed basin)

SECTION C — Short Answer Questions

3 × 3 = 9 Marks

Q16. CASE STUDY: Read the following situation and answer the questions that follow. Amara lives in a village in the Thar Desert. Every morning, her mother wakes up before dawn to fetch water from a source several kilometres away. The family uses sand to scour their utensils, and even the rinse water is reused to water their one small plant. (a) What does Amara's daily life tell us about the key challenge faced by desert communities? (b) Name TWO traditional water conservation methods used in Rajasthan that could help Amara's family. (c) How does the camel play an important role in desert life? [3]

ANSWER

Case Study — Thar Desert (a) [1 mark]: Amara's life highlights the severe scarcity of water in the desert. People must travel long distances daily to fetch water, and every drop must be reused — showing that water conservation is central to desert survival. (b) [1 mark]: Taanka and Kund — traditional rainwater harvesting systems in Rajasthan that collect and store rainwater (often for drinking) without relying on distant water sources. (c) [1 mark]: The camel is the 'ship of the desert' and is central to the camel economy of the Thar. It provides transport across sandy terrain where roads are scarce, and is also reared for milk, meat, and wool — playing multiple economic and livelihood roles for desert communities.

Q17. Compare the Western Ghats and Eastern Ghats under the following heads: (a) Height / terrain, (b) Direction of rivers and their destination, (c) One additional point of difference (UNESCO status, name in north, or broken nature of range). [3]

ANSWER

Western Ghats vs Eastern Ghats (a) Height/Terrain [1 mark]: The Western Ghats are taller and form a continuous wall along the western coast. The Eastern Ghats are lower and broken into smaller, discontinuous hills along the eastern coast. (b) Rivers [1 mark]: Rivers rising in the Western Ghats flow swiftly westward and form estuaries into the Arabian Sea (Narmada, Tapti). Rivers of the Peninsular Plateau (Godavari, Krishna, Kaveri) generally flow from west to east and drain into the Bay of Bengal, forming fertile deltas. (c) Additional point [1 mark] (any one): The Western Ghats have been declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site; the Eastern Ghats have not. OR: The northern portion of the Western Ghats is also called the Sahyadri Hills. OR: The Western Ghats are a continuous range while the Eastern Ghats are broken and scattered.

Q18. The Great Himalayan National Park has been declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Who is responsible for preserving its biodiversity? Explain why it is important to conserve the biodiversity of this park, with reference to the kinds of wildlife found there. [3]

ANSWER

Great Himalayan National Park The Great Himalayan National Park in Himachal Pradesh has been declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Its biodiversity is preserved jointly by (i) the government and (ii) the village communities that live inside the park — a model of community conservation. Importance: the park shelters a wide diversity of flora and fauna found nowhere else, including the rare Snow Leopard (visible in Fig. 1.7), the colourful Himalayan Monal (state bird of Himachal Pradesh), and many plant species. Losing this biodiversity would mean losing species that are part of the fragile Himalayan ecosystem, which also supports millions of people through clean water, climate regulation, and medicinal plants. Marking: 1 mark for both preservers (government + village communities) + 1 mark for naming wildlife (Snow Leopard/Monal/flora) + 1 mark for explaining why conservation matters (ecosystem/unique species/benefit to people)

SECTION D — Long Answer Question

1 × 5 = 5 Marks

Q19. India has been called a 'mini-continent' due to the extraordinary diversity of its geographical features. With reference to at least FOUR different geographical regions covered in Chapter 1, explain how India's geographical diversity shapes: (i) climate and temperature, (ii) agriculture and economy, (iii) transport and settlement, and (iv) the lifestyle and culture of its people. Conclude with a statement on why this diversity, despite its contrasts, makes India a geographically unique country. [5]

ANSWER

India's Geographical Diversity — Model Answer Aspect Key Points (1 mark per aspect)

(i) **Climate & Temperature** The Himalayas act as a barrier, blocking cold Central Asian winds and trapping monsoon rains in the plains. Ladakh (cold desert) has temperatures below -30°C in winter; the Thar Desert has extreme heat in the day and cold nights; the Gangetic Plains have moderate, fertile conditions. This diversity means India has almost every climate type.

(ii) **Agriculture & Economy** The fertile alluvial soil of the Gangetic Plains supports multi-cropping (wheat, rice, sugarcane). The Peninsular Plateau's rivers (Godavari, Krishna, Kaveri) irrigate vast delta farmlands. The Aravallis supply minerals like zinc, marble, and granite. Jog Falls and other plateau waterfalls generate hydroelectric power. The Thar Desert has its camel economy and water-conservation agriculture.

(iii) **Transport & Settlement** The flat Northern Plains allow an elaborate road and rail network; rivers like the Ganga and Brahmaputra have served as waterways for millennia. Dense population clusters in the plains (visible as lights in satellite images). In contrast, the rugged Himalayas and cold Ladakh have very sparse settlements.

(iv) **Lifestyle & Culture** Himalayan people build kath-kuni houses for warmth and earthquake safety; Ladakhis keep yaks for milk, meat, wool, and transport; desert people adapt with conserved water, camel use, and covered clothing. Tribal communities (Santhal, Gond, Bhil) in plateau forests have distinct traditions tied to nature. Festivals like Losar and Hemis (Ladakh) and Pushkar Mela (Thar) reflect local geography.

Conclusion India's geography ranges from permanent snow to hot desert, from fertile plains to forested plateaus — a range unmatched by most countries. This diversity has shaped India's civilisation, culture, economy, and identity, earning it the title of a 'geographical mini-continent'.

Marking: 1 mark each for (i) Climate, (ii) Agriculture/Economy, (iii) Transport/Settlement, (iv) Lifestyle/Culture, and (v) a clear concluding statement. Award full marks for coherent, multi-region answers that integrate chapter concepts. Accept alternative valid examples from the chapter.

SECTION E — Map Skill Activity

1 × 3 = 3 Marks

Q20. Map Activity (3 Marks) On the outline map of India provided below, locate and label the following geographical features using appropriate symbols. Each correctly labelled feature carries 1 mark. Label any **THREE** of the following five: (a) Gangotri Glacier / Gaumukh (Uttarakhand) (b) Thar Desert (Rajasthan) (c) Western Ghats (along the western coast) (d) Pangong Tso (Ladakh) (e) Sundarbans Delta (West Bengal) Use: $\triangle$ for mountain/glacial features $\bigcirc$ for lakes $\star$ for forests/deltas $\sim$ for desert = for mountain ranges [**OUTLINE MAP OF INDIA — Students mark features in this space**]

ANSWER

Correct positions and symbols: [1 mark each — award for any 3 correctly labelled] (a) Gangotri Glacier / Gaumukh — Located in Uttarakhand in the northern tip of the map (Himalayan region). Symbol: $\triangle$ (b) Thar Desert — Western part of India, largely in Rajasthan. Symbol: $\sim$ or shading to indicate desert. (c) Western Ghats — Along the western coast of peninsular India (running north-south from Gujarat/Maharashtra through Goa, Karnataka to Kerala). Symbol: = or range markers. (d) Pangong Tso — In Ladakh (far north-west/north-east depending on map), a high-altitude lake. Symbol: $\bigcirc$ with label. (e) Sundarbans Delta — At the mouth of the Ganga in West Bengal (eastern coast). Symbol: $\star$ or delta symbol. Award 1 mark per correctly placed and labelled feature (location + label + symbol). Deduct 0 for missing symbol if position and label are correct.

SECTION F — Source / Case Study

1 × 3 = 3 Marks

SOURCE PASSAGE

The Peninsular Plateau is one of the oldest and most stable landmasses in India. Bordered by the Western Ghats to the west and the Eastern Ghats to the east, it contains the vast Deccan Plateau within. Rivers like the Godavari, Krishna, and Kaveri flow from west to east across the plateau and empty into the Bay of Bengal, creating fertile deltas ideal for farming. West-flowing rivers such as the Narmada and Tapti drain into the Arabian Sea. The plateau is rich in minerals, coal, and forests, and is home to several tribal communities including the Santhal, Gond, Baiga, Bhil, and Korku. Waterfalls formed where rivers flow over rocky plateau edges — such as Jog Falls in Karnataka — generate hydroelectric power and attract tourists. The Western Ghats, also called Sahyadri in the north, have been declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site for their remarkable biodiversity.

Q21. (a) Name the two mountain ranges that border the Peninsular Plateau. Which of these [] has been declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site and by what other name is its northern part known? [1]

ANSWER

(a) [1 mark] The two mountain ranges that border the Peninsular Plateau are the Western Ghats (to the west) and the Eastern Ghats (to the east). The Western Ghats have been declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The northern portion of the Western Ghats is also known as the Sahyadri Hills.

Q22. (b) Name any TWO east-flowing and ONE west-flowing river of the Peninsular Plateau. In [] what way do east-flowing rivers benefit the people living near the coast? [1]

ANSWER

(b) [1 mark] East-flowing rivers: Godavari, Krishna (or Kaveri / Mahanadi — any two). West-flowing river: Narmada (or Tapti). Benefit: East-flowing rivers create fertile deltas at the coast, making the land ideal for farming and supporting millions of people in coastal communities with water for agriculture and drinking.

Q23. (c) Jog Falls is shown in the opening page of Chapter 1. Based on the source passage, [] what is the geographical reason waterfalls form on plateaus, and what is one economic benefit they provide? --- END OF WORKSHEET --- Total Marks: 40 [1]

ANSWER

(c) [1 mark] Waterfalls form on plateaus because rivers flow over uneven, rocky plateau surfaces; when the level suddenly drops, the water plunges as a waterfall (e.g., Jog Falls in Karnataka, shown in Fig. 1.1). Economic benefit: Waterfalls are harnessed for hydroelectric power generation (the opening page of the chapter explicitly states this about Jog Falls), and they also attract tourists, supporting local livelihoods.