



Rajasthan in the west to Brahmaputra valley in the east. The area of this plain is more than 7 lakh square km. This plain is very fertile and a very sizeable part of the Indian population lives in innumerable villages and several big cities in this region.

This plain is made up of the soils brought down and deposited by the rivers flowing from the Himalayas in the North and the Great Indian plateau in the South. The rivers have been depositing their sediments in this plain over millions of years. Therefore, the alluvium in this plain is quite a few hundred metres deep. In some of the parts, the depth of the sediments is as much as 2000 to 3000 metres.

This plain is almost dead flat. Its average height is 200 metres above the mean sea level. Due to a very gentle slope towards the sea, the rivers in this plain flow very leisurely and at times even sluggishly. The slope from Varanasi upto the mouth of Ganga is only 10 cm. per km. The land around Ambala is a bit more elevated. However, it acts as a water divide between the two major river basins - the Satluj in the west and the Ganga in the east. Rivers lying eastwards of this water divide flow into the Bay of Bengal while those west of it flow into the Arabian Sea.

The relatively higher part of the plain is called *bangar*. This area is never covered with flood water of the rivers. Contrary to this, the comparatively lower area is called the *khadar*. This area is flooded by streams almost every year. *Khadar* area is known as *bet* in Punjab.

There is a strip of plain about 10-15 km broad along the outer slopes of the Siwaliks in Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. This region is known as '*bhabar*'. This strip of *bhabar* is made of gravel and coarse sand. The smaller streams disappear under ground in the '*bhabar*' region during the summer season and their water surfaces again after crossing the *bhabar*. This water accumulates in the strip of plain about 15 to 30 km wide and extends to the south of *bhabar*. Accumulation of this water makes the land marshy. This marshy land is called the *terai*. Many parts of the *terai* have been reclaimed, for agricultural purposes.

The great Northern Plain can be divided into four parts: (i) Western plain (ii) North Central plain (iii) Eastern plain and (iv) Brahmaputra plain.

- (i) **Western Plain :** This region includes the Rajasthan desert and *bangar* region lying to the west of Aravali ranges. The desert is partly rocky and partly sandy. In the ancient period, the perennial streams - Saraswati and Drishadvati - flowed through this region. This region includes the fertile area of Bikaner. River Luni flows through this *bangar* region and falls into the Rann of Kutch. The famous salt water lake of Sambhar is situated in this part of the plain.
- (ii) **North Central Plain:** This plain extends over Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. The part of this plain extending into Punjab and Haryana has been formed by the alluvium brought by rivers Satluj, Beas and Ravi. This is a very fertile area. The part of this plain lying in Uttar Pradesh is made up of