



Mains Practice Question

Q. Explain the significance of the Eastern Ghats for India. Suggest steps that can be taken to conserve the biodiversity of the region (250 Words).

08 Mar, 2021 GS Paper 1 Geography

Approach

- Introduce by giving general information (like location, biodiversity) about the Eastern Ghats.
- Explain the significance of the Eastern Ghats for India.
- Write about increasing threat to the Eastern Ghats and degrading forest cover and biodiversity.
- Suggest steps that can be taken to conserve the biodiversity.
Conclude suitably in brief.

Introduction

The Eastern Ghats, **discontinuous hill-ranges** spread across Odisha, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu, are home to unique ecosystems.

This diverse landscape is home to endemic flora and fauna. Many animals, including tigers and elephants, and some 400 bird species are found in these discontinuous forests that receive an annual average rainfall of 1,200 mm to 1,500 mm.

Body

Significance

- Spread across some 75,000 sq. km, Eastern Ghats play an important dual role in fostering biodiversity and storing energy (biomass) in trees.
- It has many dams like Krishnagiri, Sathanur, Shenbagathoppu, Kariyalur, Gomuki,, Mriganda, Chengam, etc.
 - They help in **irrigation and flood management** by **controlling water flow**.
- Waterfalls such as the Periyar Falls, Megam Falls, Beeman Falls, Killiyur Falls, Hogenakkal, make the **land fertile** apart from **drawing tourists**.
- The forest resources of the region act as **Carbon sink**, thereby helping in reduced concentration of water.

Threats to Eastern Ghats

- The Eastern Ghats face a serious **threat from climate change**. The area has shrunk by 16% over the past century, and just one region, Papikonda National Park, lost about 650 sq. km. over the last twenty years.
- Tremendous stress, degradation and damage due to **human greed, population pressure, unsustainable development**, apathy by the public, negligence by public servants, etc.
- **Haphazard mining, logging, poaching, forest fires**, unsustainable harvest of forest produce, pilferage of rare species, smuggling and export of rare flora and fauna, encroachments of forest

land and infrastructure development industrialization, springing up of habitations with an intention to colonize and devour the forest.

Steps To Be Taken to Conserve the Eastern Ghats

- Promotion of **sustainable use of forest resources** should be done in order to counter overexploitation.
- **Adequate Agricultural Practices:** Government should incentivize **settled agriculture** in order to counter the impact of shifting agriculture because the practice of shifting agriculture will directly contribute to deforestation.
- **Afforestation:** Improving tree cover nationally can confer multiple benefits, including modulation of the monsoon, improved air quality and wider spaces for biodiversity to persist.
- **Planting Indigenous varieties:** Government should finance the usage of indigenous plants and trees for restoring and strengthening the peripheral areas of the forest of Eastern Ghats by tapping into the International Climate Fund available.
- **Local Participation:** There is a need for **concerted and macro-level conservation movement** by the involvement of all stakeholders especially the public.
 - Collectivizing or binding all individuals and civil society groups into a network will bring much focus and strength to the cause.
- **Eco-tourism:** It takes care of the livelihood of locals by making them stake-holders, the forest and its biodiversity are guarded by eco-tourism management committee members in turn.
- **Holistic Conservation:** Conservation of ecosystems like **wildlife Corridors, specialised ecosystems, and special breeding sites**, areas with intrinsically low resilience, sacred groves and frontier forests etc. is also very important.

Conclusion

Only if an effective strategy for the eco-development of these regions is developed by involving the local people, the flora, fauna and other natural resources of Eastern Ghats can be protected. Otherwise the future of the Eastern Ghats and its precious biodiversity will be only an illusion.

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