TOPOGRAPHY OF THE AREA
Chapter 3

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Himachal Pradesh is a high mountainous terrain which lies in the western flank of the main Himalayas. The rugged grandeur, snow-clad mountains at some places - usually above an elevation of 5000 m, coupled with weird and awe-inspiring depth of the valleys are important and unique features of the state and determine the natural divisions. The adjoining states are: Jammu and Kashmir in the north, Punjab in the west and south-west, Haryana in the south, Uttar Pradesh in the south-east and western Tibet in the east (Fig. 1). Himachal Pradesh has an area of 58,232 sq. kms (Negi, 1963) with a height varying from
600 m to 6700 m. It lies between 31° - 30° North latitude and 72° - 80° East longitude. The area occupied by the forests is approximately 21,2654.91 sq. kms.

The mountain ranges in Himachal Pradesh fall under three major groups.

1. Great Himalayan range in the north with the height of mountains varying from 3800 - 7000 m. The major Pir Panjal mountains ranges are in this category.

2. The lesser Himalayas in between them with a height from 1200 - 3800 m.

3. The Shivalik ranges along with plains in the south with the height of mountains from 600 - 2000 m.

These mountain ranges extending in the east-west directions are deeply dissected by rivers flowing southwards or south-westwards. Broad river valley bottoms, inter-mountain basins and plateaus are rare or almost absent in these closely packed, complex mass of mountains.

The Himachal Pradesh region is interspersed with four major rivers, viz. the Chanab, the Ravi, the Beas and the Sutlej, which have their origin and catchment areas in this region. There are notable number of rivulets, streams or streamlets offering their tributes to the major mighty rivers.

Climate: The mountainous region presents a varying degree of climate, starting from the tropical low-lands right
up to snow-line. Below 95 m, there is a tropical zone, and above 5000 m, the terrain of the state remains under permanent snow and is very cold. The area above 4250 m remains covered with snow for more than six months a year. The area falling under 2800 - 4250 m remains under snow from 2 - 5 months.

The zone between 1000 m to 2500 m is temperate with warm summer and cold winters. The rain is received usually from middle of June to the end of September as in the other parts of India. The annual rainfall varies from 60 cms to about 300 cms. The area in the range of north Great Himalayas is usually dry. The eastern part of this region usually receives more rainfall than the western part.