

## State Photograph

Jammu & Kashmir State situated between  $32^{\circ}-15'$  and  $37^{\circ}-5'$  north latitude and  $72^{\circ}-35'$  and  $80^{\circ}-20'$  and east longitude and commonly referred to as the Kashmir region comprises an area of  $22236 \text{ km}^2$  as tentatively fixed by the Surveyor General of India. The region is spread over huge mountain masses constituting the Karakoram, the Great Himalaya, Ladakh or Zaskar, the Main Himalaya and the Middle Himalaya or the Pir Panjal ranges. Numerous peaks exceeding 6,000 m dot the area; Mt. Godwin Austen (8,611 m) and Nanga Parbat (8,126 m) tower over the landscape. Nestling under these ranges are the elongated latitudinal valleys of the Gilgit, the Shyok and the Indus as also the oval-shaped and flat-surfaced Jhelum valley. South of the Pir Panjal is the Shivalik range comparatively much lower in elevation and known as the group of outer hills of Jammu. Further south, a narrow strip of foothill plains (300 m) 25 km wide merges into the plains of Punjab. The principal river of this area is the Chenab.

The Vale of Kashmir, the most important as well as the most famous part of the region lies between the main Himalaya and Panjal ranges. It stretches over an area of  $15,853 \text{ km}^2$  giving the appearance of an old lacustrine bed which measures 135 km in length and 14 km at its widest point.

The Jhelum which rises at the southern end of the Valley at Weth Wutur near Verinag flows approximately through its middle, receiving numerous tributaries before it enters the Wular lake out of which it flows again through the gorge at Baramula. Chief among its tributaries on the right bank are the Lidder and the Sind, flowing through some exquisite mountain scenery. Outside the Vale of Kashmir, it joins the Krishen Ganga at Domel and Muzaffarabad. On the left bank of the river, roughly west, lies the Pir Panjal range from the slopes of which numerous mountain torrents rush to swell its waters. The mountains surrounding the Jhelum Valley have an average height of 3636 m but many peaks exceed 4242 m. At the southern end of the valley, they dip to about 2727 m where the Banihal pass gives an exit to the Jammu province. The main Kashmir valley averages about 1666 m with Srinagar (1576 m) at its centre. The higher cultivable areas in the Lidder and Sind valleys exceed 2121 m.

North of the vale are situated the great Himalayan ranges including the well-known Zaskar range which is bounded in the North by the deep gorge of the Indus. At its western end near the bend of the Indus stands the mighty Nanga Parbat. Two of the important passes in the Great Himalayan ranges giving direct access to the Kashmir valley are Fotu La (4094 m) and Zoji-La (3529 m). The famous Amarnath cave is situated south of Zoji-La in the upper reaches of the Sind valley.

The eastern sector of the Zaskar range in Rupshu consists of intricately ramifying glaciated ranges of crystallized rocks. The Hazara range is a continuation of the Himdari in the north-west beyond the Indus gorge round Nanga Parbat.

The Ladakh range is situated between the Indus and Shyok rivers. It forms a prominent range in the trans-Himalayan region. It stretches from the Shyok-Indus confluence upto the western border of Tibet where the Indus bends sharply and cuts through it, separating it from the Zaskar range in Rapshu.