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Class 11 Geography Notes Chapter 6 Soils

Soil is the mixture of rock debris and organic materials which develop on the earth's surface.

The major factors affecting the formation of soil are relief, parent material, climate, vegetation and other life-forms and time. Besides these, human activities also influence it to a large extent.

Components of the soil are mineral particles, humus, water and air. The actual amount of each of these depends upon the type of soil.

Soil is bifurcated into three layers called horizons. 'Horizon A' is the topmost zone, where organic materials have got incorporated with the mineral matter, nutrients and water, which are necessary for the growth of plants. 'Horizon B' is a transition zone between the 'horizon A' and 'horizon C', and contains matter derived from below as well as from above. It has some organic matter in it, although the mineral matter is noticeably weathered. 'Horizon C' is composed of the loose parent material. This layer is the first stage in the soil formation process and eventually forms the above two layers.

In ancient times, soils used to be classified into twro main groups – Urvara and Usara, which were fertile and sterile, respectively.

In the 16th century A.D., soils were classified on the basis of their inherent characteristics and external features such as texture, colour, slope of land and moisture content in the soil. Based on texture, main soil types were identified as sandy, clayey, silty and loamy, etc. On the basis of colour, they wrere red, yellow, black, etc.

On the basis of genesis, colour, composition and location, the soils of India have been classified into:

- Alluvial soils
- Black soils
- Red and Yellow soils
- Laterite soils
- Arid soils
- Saline soils
- Peaty soils

- Forest soils.