

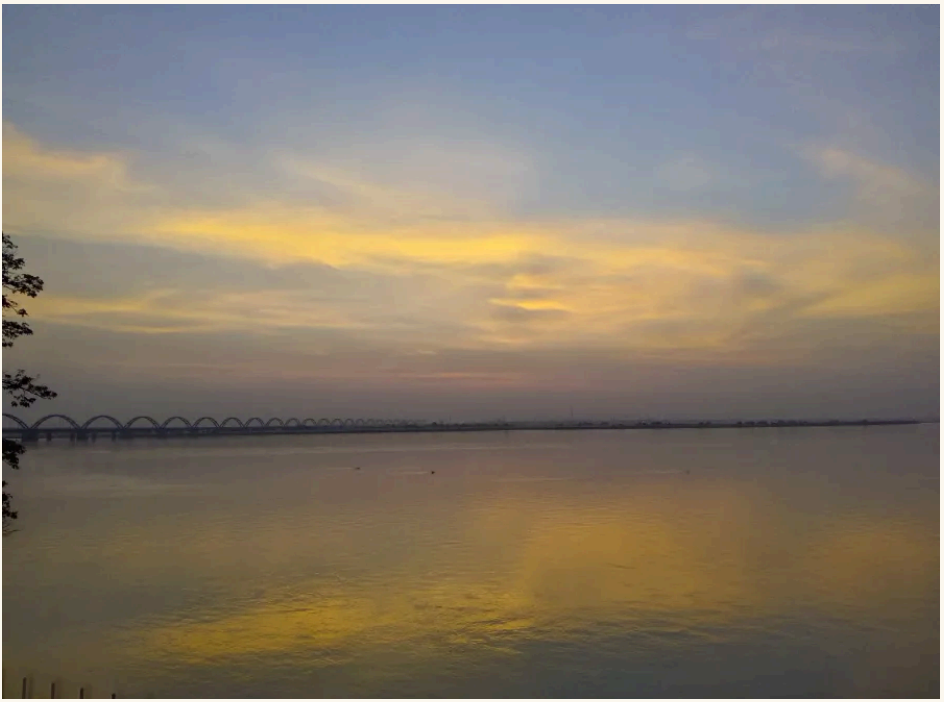
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The Godavari River

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The Godavari River

Peninsular India has no Himalayan glaciers to feed its rivers. Yet the Godavari carries more water across more land than almost any other river south of the Ganga.



Sunset over the Godavari River at Rajahmundry, Andhra Pradesh. Photo: Pavan santhosh.s, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.

The Godavari, at a glance

Peninsular India's largest river, known as the "Dakshin Ganga"

01
1,465 km long

The longest river in Peninsular India.

02
Rises at Trimbakeshwar

Near Nashik, Maharashtra.

03
~3.13 lakh sq km basin

The largest river basin in Peninsular India.

04
No glacier, still massive

Runs entirely on monsoon rainfall.

Dakshin Ganga The Godavari's popular nickname, "Ganga of the South," for its length and sacred status.
DistributaryA channel that branches off a river before it reaches the sea, rather than joining it.
River interlinking Connecting two river basins by canal, to move surplus water from one to a drier one.
Shale gas Natural gas trapped in fine-grained shale rock, extracted by hydraulic fracturing.

Where Does the Godavari Actually Flow?

Must Know

How long is the Godavari, and where does it rise?

Among all Indian rivers, only the Ganga covers a larger stretch of the country and carries a larger volume of water:

- **The Godavari is Peninsular India's longest river**, running about 1,465 km. It rises at Trimbakeshwar, near Nashik in Maharashtra.
- The main river flows through Maharashtra, Telangana, and Andhra Pradesh. It also passes through Puducherry's Yanam enclave before reaching the Bay of Bengal. Its basin also reaches Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, and Odisha, but only through tributaries.
- **The river is popularly called the "Dakshin Ganga"** (Ganga of the South), for its length and its sacred standing.

Why does the Godavari flow east, and why does it run dry sometimes?

- Like most Peninsular rivers, the Godavari flows west to east, unlike the west-flowing Narmada and Tapti further north.
- It follows the general eastward slope of the Deccan Plateau. The Narmada and Tapti instead run along fault-guided rift valleys.
- **Despite its size, the Godavari carries far less water in the driest months**, since it depends almost entirely on the annual southwest monsoon.

> **Quick check 1.** Q1. True or False: the Godavari rises at Trimbakeshwar, near Nashik in Maharashtra, and is called the "Dakshin Ganga." *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Quick check 2. Q2. True or False: the Godavari is a snow-fed river, carrying steady water year-round from Himalayan glaciers. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Which Rivers Really Feed the Godavari, and Which Don't?

Good to Know

Which tributaries are real, and which rivers only look like tributaries?

- **The Godavari's major tributaries include the Pranahita, Indravati, Manjira, and Wardha**, joining from both banks along its long eastward run.
- The Pranahita alone carries about a third of the Godavari's entire drainage basin, making it the single largest tributary by volume.
- **Vamsadhara and Pennar are separate, independent rivers.** Both flow east into the Bay of Bengal on their own, without ever joining the Godavari, a common exam trap.
- Most major tributaries, including the Pranahita and Indravati, join from the left (northern) bank rather than the right.

How big is the delta, and what does the basin hold besides farmland?

- The Godavari basin covers roughly 3.13 lakh sq km, the largest river basin in Peninsular India, emptying through a broad, fertile delta.
- Nashik, on the Godavari's banks, hosts one of India's four Kumbh Mela sites, called the Simhastha Kumbh Mela.

- **The Krishna-Godavari Basin isn't only agricultural.** It also holds confirmed shale gas resources, alongside the Cambay and Cauvery basins elsewhere in India.

Quick check 3. Q3. True or False: Vamsadhara and Pennar are separate, independent rivers that never join the Godavari. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Think it through, before reading on. Shale gas resources in India are found across three named sedimentary basins in a UPSC question. Can you name all three?

Show the explanation

The Cambay Basin, the Cauvery Basin, and the Krishna-Godavari Basin, all three together. The Godavari delta region turns up in both irrigation and energy-resource questions.

Exam Point of View

Test Yourself

Remember the trap. Indravati and Pranahita are real Godavari tributaries. Vamsadhara and Pennar are not; both are independent rivers that reach the Bay of Bengal on their own.

How Did Cotton's 1852 Anicut Change the Whole Delta?

Great to Know

What did Arthur Cotton's anicut actually do?

- **Sir Arthur Cotton built the Dowleswaram anicut in 1852**, turning the delta into fertile farmland almost overnight. The present Sir Arthur Cotton Barrage was completed in 1982.
- It now regulates water for delta irrigation.
- Modern lift-irrigation projects now connect Godavari water to the neighbouring Krishna delta, easing pressure on the smaller Krishna basin.
- The Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation System, also built on the Godavari, sits in Telangana.

Why does the "how many states" question trip students up?

- **Counting every state the Godavari basin's tributaries reach**, not just the main channel, brings the true state count higher than the three states, plus Yanam, that the main river itself crosses.

- Exam questions on “states the Godavari flows through” sometimes mean the main river only, and sometimes mean the whole basin, so reading the question carefully matters.
- The Godavari River Management Board now oversees water-sharing between Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, the two states formed after the 2014 bifurcation of undivided Andhra Pradesh.

> **Quick check 4.** Q4. True or False: the Pattiseema Lift Irrigation Project, opened in 2016, links the Godavari and Krishna basins, India’s first completed river-interlinking project. *(True or False?)*
>
> See answer ↓

> **Quick check 5.** Q5. True or False: below Rajahmundry, the Godavari stays a single channel all the way to the sea, without splitting. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Why Is Rajamahendravaram Studying Its Own River in 2026?

Current Affairs

Why are Telangana and Maharashtra arguing over the Tummidihetti barrage?

Maharashtra’s Chief Minister agreed on 26 October 2026 to study Telangana’s request for a higher Tummidihetti barrage, but did not approve it. The barrage is planned on the Pranahita, the Godavari’s largest tributary. (Source: The Hans India, 26 October 2026)

- Maharashtra had earlier agreed to 148 m. Telangana now asks for 152 m, with 150 m discussed as a lower option. (The Hans India)

- At 152 m, about 2,300 acres would be submerged. At 150 m the loss would be under 1,000 acres. These are Telangana's own estimates. (The Hans India)
- The Chief Secretaries and Water Resources Secretaries of both states will study the submergence jointly. (The Hans India)
- *So what?* [Mains fodder] It shows how a tributary of the Godavari becomes an inter-state dispute. Height decides both water drawn and land lost. Read the legal route in Article 262 and inter-state water disputes.

What did Andhra Pradesh's Deputy CM just order?

Andhra Pradesh Deputy CM K. Pawan Kalyan directed the state pollution board to run a comprehensive scientific study of Godavari water quality between Rajamahendravaram and Antarvedi. (Source: The Hindu, September 4, 2026)

- The board will sample the main river plus 15 major and 45 minor drains, funded by a ₹100-crore allocation released in May 2026.
- A task force led by the Principal Secretary for Environment and Forest, with district Collectors from the Godavari region as members, was set up to oversee the clean-up.
- It shows the same delta this article's Dowleswaram anicut and Kumbh Mela sections describe now faces a serious modern pollution challenge.

> **Quick check 6.** Q6. True or False: Andhra Pradesh ordered a scientific study of Godavari water quality between Rajamahendravaram and Antarvedi in 2026. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Quick Q&A

Where does the Godavari rise?

At Trimbakeshwar, near Nashik, Maharashtra.

Which rivers are genuine Godavari tributaries?

Indravati and Pranahita, not Vamsadhara or Pennar.

What did the 1852 Dowleswaram anicut do?

Turned the Godavari delta into fertile farmland. The Sir Arthur Cotton Barrage (1982) now serves the delta.

What did the Pattiseema project achieve in 2016?

India's first completed river-interlinking project, connecting Godavari and Krishna.

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✅ MCQ on the Godavari River

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Practice MCQs

1. Which river is the Tummidihetti barrage proposed on, in the Telangana–Maharashtra dispute reported in October 2026?

A. Godavari (Pranahita)

B. Narmada

C. Mahanadi

D. Krishna

See answer ↓

2. In October 2026, Telangana sought a higher full reservoir level for the Tummidihetti barrage.

Which level had Maharashtra earlier agreed to?

A. 145 m

B. 152 m

C. 150 m

D. 148 m

See answer ↓

3. The Godavari, Peninsular India's longest river, rises near which city?

A. Pune

B. Nashik

C. Nagpur

D. Hyderabad

See answer ↓

4. The Godavari, often called the 'Dakshin Ganga' (Ganges of the South), is the largest river in which region?

A. Eastern India

B. Central India

C. South India

D. Western India

See answer ↓

5. Which river is called the "Dakshin Ganga," and roughly how long is it?

A. Narmada, about 1,312 km

B. Krishna, about 1,400 km

C. Cauvery, about 805 km

D. Godavari, about 1,465 km

See answer ↓

6. The city of Nashik, on the Godavari's banks, is significant for hosting which event?

A. The country's oldest film festival

B. One of India's four Kumbh Mela sites

C. The annual National Games

D. India's largest cotton exchange

See answer ↓

7. In which of these regions of India are shale gas resources found?

A. Krishna-Godavari Basin only

B. Cambay Basin, Cauvery Basin, and Krishna-Godavari Basin, all three

C. Cambay Basin only

D. None of India's sedimentary basins have shale gas

See answer ↓

8. Among the major east-flowing Peninsular rivers of India are the Godavari, Krishna and?

A. The Tapti

B. The Sabarmati

C. The Narmada

D. The Kaveri

See answer ↓

9. The Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation System, which was in the news recently, is constructed in

A. Maharashtra

B. Telangana

C. Gujarat

D. Kerala

See answer ↓

Answer Key

1. **A.** The Tummidihetti barrage is proposed on the Pranahita, the Godavari's largest tributary, near the Telangana–Maharashtra border. Telangana wants a higher reservoir level; Maharashtra worries about submergence. ↑ Q1
2. **D.** Maharashtra had earlier agreed to 148 m. Telangana now proposes 152 m, with 150 m discussed as a lower option to cut submergence in Maharashtra. ↑ Q2
3. **B.** The Godavari rises at Trimbakeshwar, near Nashik in Maharashtra. ↑ Q3
4. **C.** The Godavari's basin covers a large share of peninsular India, spanning several states. ↑ Q4
5. **D.** The Godavari, called the "Dakshin Ganga," runs about 1,465 km from Trimbakeshwar in Maharashtra. The other lengths given are the real lengths of the Krishna, Cauvery, and Narmada respectively. ↑ Q5
6. **B.** Nashik, on the Godavari, hosts one of India's four Kumbh Mela sites. ↑ Q6
7. **B.** Shale gas resources in India are found in the Cambay Basin, Cauvery Basin, and Krishna-Godavari Basin, all three. ↑ Q7
8. **D.** The Kaveri, along with the Godavari and Krishna, ranks among South India's most significant east-flowing rivers. Each drains a substantial river basin before eventually reaching the Bay of Bengal. Together, these rivers support extensive agriculture and remain central to several long-running river-water-sharing disputes between different Indian states. ↑ Q8
9. **B.** The answer is Telangana. It lifts water from the Godavari river across 13 districts, and is among the world's largest multi-stage lift irrigation projects. ↑ Q9

Quick-check answers

1. **True.** ↑ 1
2. **False.** ↑ 2
3. **True.** ↑ 3
4. **True.** ↑ 4
5. **False.** ↑ 5
6. **True.** ↑ 6

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