**Indian Weather and the Monsoon Cycle**

In late spring, the grassy plains and forested hillsides of southwestern India are among the hottest places on earth, with temperatures regularly edging above 100 degrees. In the **stifling heat**, "nature seems to be frozen in time," writes Indian short story author Shantipriva. "The air is on fire and the leaves are perfectly still as if holding their breath." Still, he writes, "there is a curious sense of anticipation.”

**Stifling Heat:** Extremely hot and intense

That is because Indians know that as the baking-hot air around them rises high into the sky, it slowly sucks in a blanket of cool, moist air from the nearby ocean. As the two great air masses collide each June, the once still leaves begin to flutter in the arriving sea winds. The sky darkens as the sun disappears beneath a blanket of clouds. Then, seemingly in an instant, sheets of rain are gushing across the **parched** landscape. The heavy, spattering raindrops announce the arrival of the life-giving monsoon. "With its life-giving rain and its wild storms, the monsoon is a mixed blessing: **whimsical**, unpredictable and unmistakably Indian," says Shantipriya. It is also a breathtaking event that annually shapes the lives of both the people of India and the country's wildlife. The Indian Monsoon, which climate scientists call one of the most intense annual weather events in the world, begins in early June and lasts for several months. Many Indians fear the monsoon's deadly floods, which regularly sweep away unlucky communities. But farmers also rely on it to get their crops out from the soil. Indeed, without the monsoon's storms, which can deliver up to 90 percent of a year's rainfall, almost a billion people would starve.

**Whimsical:** Playful and odd

**Parched:** Extremely dry

**Annual Flooding of the Nile in Egypt**

The Nile's waters increase in the summer due to the heavy rainfall that occurs in the tropical Ethiopian highlands. In April, flooding begins in southern Sudan. It is July before the floods reach Aswan, Egypt. The river continues to rise until it peaks in mid-September. In Cairo, the floods are delayed until October. After the river has peaked, the levels fall quickly during November and December. The Nile is at its lowest levels between March and May. The annually **recurring** flooding can now be controlled by means of the Aswan Dam.

**Recurring:** Returning

Were it not for the [Nile River](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nile_River), Egyptian civilization (mummies, tombs, and all) could not have developed, as it is the only significant source of water in this desert region. Its other importance was the fact that it was their gateway to the unknown world. The Nile flows from south to north, to its [delta](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nile_delta) on the [Mediterranean Sea](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mediterranean_Sea). It would flood each year, bringing in [silt](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silt)-laden waters; when the waters receded the silt would stay behind, fertilizing the land, the silt would be helpful for growing crops. If a flood were too large it would wash over mud [**dykes**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dyke_(construction)) protecting a village. A small flood or no flood at all would mean **famine**. A flood must be of just the right intensity for a good season.

**Dykes:** a wall or ditch built to protect during flooding

**Famine:** widespread hunger, starvation

1. What sort of preparations might a modern Egyptian or Indian need to make before the flood or monsoon each year?
2. What sort of preparations would an inhabitant of Ancient India or Ancient Egypt need to make before the coming flood/monsoon?
3. What are two advantages and two disadvantages to the monsoon cycle in India?
4. What are two advantages and two disadvantages of the annual flooding of the Nile in India?