

Original Research Article

GENERATING SOIL PARENT MATERIAL ENVIRONMENTAL COVARIATES USING SENTINEL – 2A IMAGES FOR DELINEATING SOIL ATTRIBUTES

ABSTRACT

Soil mapping procedures typically involve the combination of possible soil-forming SCORPAN factors. Among the factors, parent materials/ mineralogy has been considered important for the soil classification besides the Organisms (O) and Relief (R). Inclusion of the parent material covariate for the Digital soil mapping involves implication through geological maps, spectral derivatives and predictive modelling. In this study, the most prominent parent materials identified were derived using the spectral indices formulated based on the Sentinel – 2A multispectral information. While considering the coarse spatial resolution constraints of the Landsat -8 bands that may limit certain applications, Sentinel-2 images were used for the indices derivation. The generated mineral maps can support the digital soil mapping of the soil attributes in different spatial scales.

Keywords: Parent materials/mineralogy, SCORPAN factors, Sentinel -2A, spectral indices

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the decade, estimating soil properties and their associated factors has been crucial for managerial practices and to propagate 'soil security' (McBratney et al., 2014). To ascertain the demands on the requirement of soil resource database, several methodologies have been instigated for the precise soil information. The developed repositories can be accessed as an important decision-making component in many of the applications, such as crop selection procedures, among others. Soil mapping involves the participation of the soil-forming factors as defined by Jenny (1994) (i.e.) SCORPAN factors, which can be utilized as the covariates. Among the factors, parent material/mineralogy has the most depictable soil information in regard to the historical and influential context. Brady and Weil (2014) defined mineral soil as "A soil consisting predominantly of, and having its properties predominantly determined by, mineral matter." Understanding the relationships between the soil minerals and the underlying soil properties have been widely studied in different aspects. The parent mineralogy is essentially classified as basaltic and granitic parent materials. Basaltic minerals generally are characterized by little or no quartz, ferromagnesium minerals, N or K feldspar, and vice-versa in the granitic minerals (Wilson, 2006). Gray and Murphy (2002) studied the influence of the parent materials on the soil properties and soil distribution based on the information derived from the SALIS database. The nutrient retention and the physical properties of the soil stabilizes with increase in the mafic parent materials which indirectly affects the Cation Exchange Capacity as it controls the potential quality of the produced clay content.

The soil parent material maps are utilized by the soil surveyors for the soil attribute mapping, delineating soil boundaries and mineralogy associated and related soil properties. Dash et al. (2021) indicated that the utilization of the parent materials for DSM constituted about 8% of all the environmental covariates. Typical means of spatial parent material information are extracted from the digitized geological or lithological maps, which share the same data properties as the conventional survey maps. Several studies utilized the geological information of India obtained from the Geological Survey of India (Bhukosh) and Bhuvan portal as the covariates for the Digital soil Mapping. The data representation and availability depend on the mapping unit, mapping scale, spatial coverage of the features and source material of the soil under study. Nussbaum et al. (2018) compared digital soil mapping procedures based on the parent materials covariates derived through conventional geological maps, hydrogeological maps and raw mineral maps of different

units. A subtle difference can be noticed between the geological maps and the soil parent mineral maps in regard to the grouping of the lithologies, where the latter requires the delineation exclusively based on the pedological information to indicate the soil formation and single unit representation of the information rather than grouping of the units as rocks formed from the similar geological period. To mitigate the constraints associated with the survey maps, parent material maps can be mapped through the predictive approaches based on different satellite data products or can be derived as a spectral derivative (Wilson, 2019).

Bonfatti et al. (2020) proposed a digital parent mineral mapping methodology with parent mineral information sampled from the existing geological and lithological maps. A total of 32 terrain and hydrological covariates were derived from DEM and Landsat – 8 images for generating a parent material map based on the machine learning algorithms. Boettinger et al. (2008) derived the parent material covariates based on the spectral information obtained from the Landsat spectral images. Spectral band ratios have been optimized pertaining to the exposed parent materials of the study area. P *et al.*, (2020) determined and studied the iron ore distribution of the study area by digital processing and analyzing of ASTER data by calibrating the spectral ratios of the bands selected through Principal component analysis. The ratios were then compared with the geochemical data obtained through field investigations. Other means of inferring parent minerals include information derived from the regolith and topographic maps. Cook et al. (1996) studied the discriminative ability of the gamma radiometric information obtained through the airborne sensors by comparing it with the field radiometric measurements of different parent minerals. The radiometric information can be used further for generating weathering intensity maps and ultimately for deriving digital soil maps. This study aims at generating the soil parent material maps as defined, based on the spectral information derived from the Sentinel – 2 images for the study area.

2. STUDY AREA

The indices development of the study area was carried over for four districts of Tamil Nadu. (i.e.) Ariyalur, Cuddalore, Mayiladuthurai and Perambalur. The area of four districts collectively covered was about 8569.21 square kilometres. The extent of the study area is covered adjacently by various districts of Tamil Nadu, with coastal regions adjoining the Cuddalore and Mayiladuthurai districts. Ariyalur and Perambalur are considered to be the inland districts of Tamil Nadu, with Black and Red loam soil as the predominant soil types with a semi-arid climate. In contrast, the Cuddalore and Mayiladuthurai districts have tropical climates with alluvial, sandy loam and sandy clay loam as the predominant soil types.

The major irrigation source of the study area includes Cauvery and Vellalar basins in the Ariyalur and Perambalur districts and Gelidam, Kollidam and Pennaiyar river basins in the Cuddalore and Mayiladuthurai districts. With respect to the average temperature and average precipitation of the study area districts, the Cuddalore, Perambalur, Mayiladuthurai and Ariyalur districts have 28.01 degree Celsius and 4.71 mm, 26.81 degree Celsius and 3.68 mm, 27.57 degree Celsius and 4.48 mm, 27.57 degree Celsius and 4.48 mm, respectively and Fig.1 illustrates the study area map of the districts using True colour composite of the Sentinel-2 images. Considering the rainfed irrigation prevalence of Ariyalur and Perambalur districts, Maize and Cotton were the most cultivated crops, whereas situated in the Cauvery River basin regions, major crops cultivated in the Cuddalore and Mayiladuthurai districts range from Paddy, Cumbu, Maize, Pulses among others.

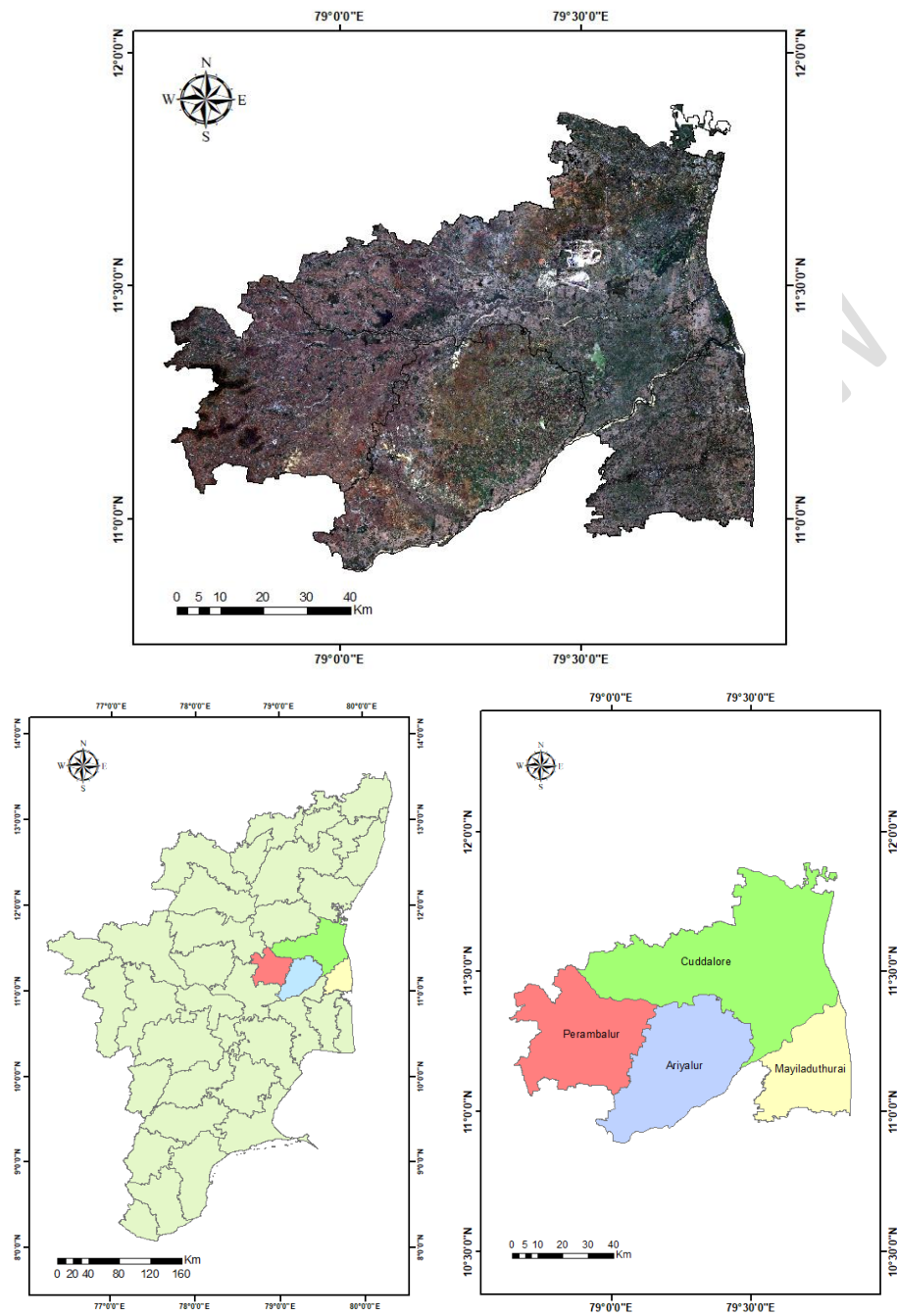
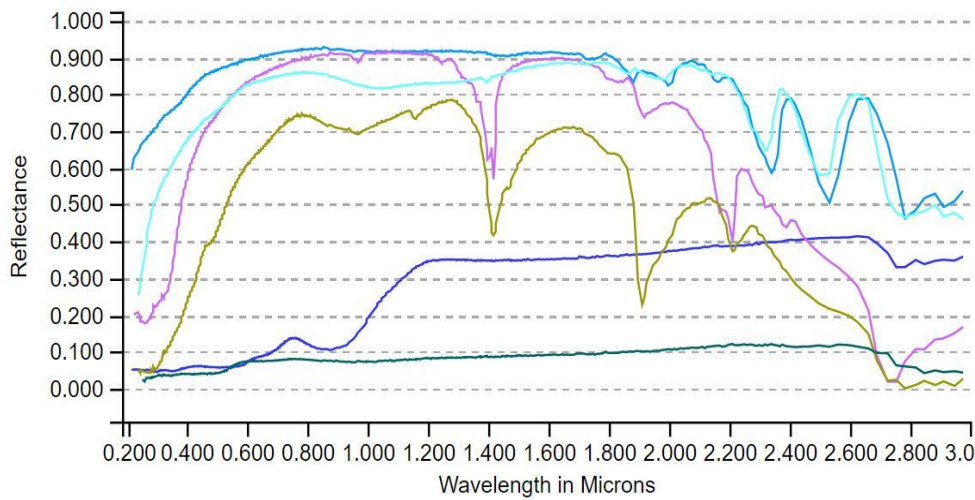


Fig.1. Study area map

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The spectral ratios of each of the parent mineral materials, as defined by Boettinger et al. (2008), have been aligned in regard to that of spectral information of the Sentinel – 2 data. The respective Sentinel-2 MSI ("COPERNICUS/S2_SR") data have been downloaded by applying the median reducer from Google Earth Engine. The data collection was limited to March to May (i.e.) to best discriminate the soil properties as a 3-month composite with a median reducer filter to reduce the effects of cloud cover and patches. Each parent material or the mineral has an associated spectral signature with differentiations that can be utilized to identify the individual parent materials. Fig. 2 illustrates the spectral signatures of the Calcite, Hematite, Kaolinite, Montmorillonite, Dolomite and Geothite, which are responsive particularly to the short infrared wavelength region.



Source: <https://landsat.usgs.gov/spectral-characteristics-viewer>

■ Calcite ■ Hematite ■ Kaolinite ■ Montmorillonite ■ Dolomite ■ Geothite

Fig 2. Spectral characteristics of the different parent minerals

The methodology required for the generation of the parent material covariate is depicted in Figure 3. The Soil enhancement ratios as defined by the Bureau of Land Management and the existing maps corresponding to the parent mineralogy are mentioned in Table 1. Though the geology maps may be an important covariate and utilized in several studies, the spectral derivatives better quantify parent materials than the existing maps, which may not be exclusive to all the study areas. For delineating the soil properties, the effect of geology and geomorphology are also included to increase the model's predictability that is to be calibrated and validated. The spectral properties of the particular parent minerals can be compared or explored through the spectral libraries defined for each parent material via the spectral characteristic viewer of USGS (Boettinger et al., 2008).

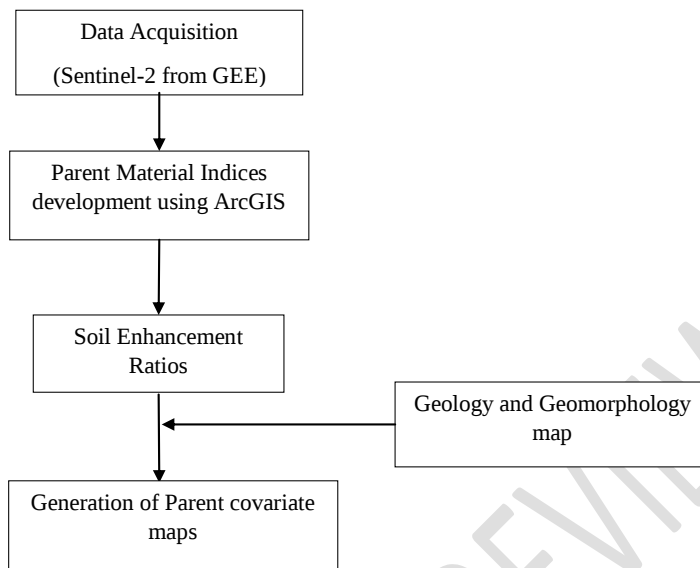


Fig. 3. Methodology Flow Chart

Covariate	Description	Resolution
Carbonate Difference Ratio	Differentiate carbonate-rich areas (Band 4 - Band 3) / (Band 4 + Band 3)	10m
Clay Difference Ratio	Differentiate areas of high clay hydroxyl influence (Band 11 - Band 12) / (Band 11 + Band 12)	20m
Ferrous Minerals Difference Ratio	Differentiate areas of higher ferrous mineral influence (Band 11 - Band 8a) / (Band 11 + Band 8a)	20m
Iron Difference Ratio	Differentiate areas of higher iron mineral influence (Band 4 - Band 12) / (Band 4 + Band 12)	20m
Rock Outcrop Difference Ratio	Differentiate sedimentary rock (lime/dolostone) from igneous rock (Band 11 - Band 3) / (Band 11 + Band 3)	20m
Geology	A kind of geologic map showing the rock types of a particular area	1: 2M
Geomorphology	Study of physical and Morphological features of the Earth's landform	1:50,000

Table 1. Generated or Derived parent materials covariates for Digital Soil Mapping

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

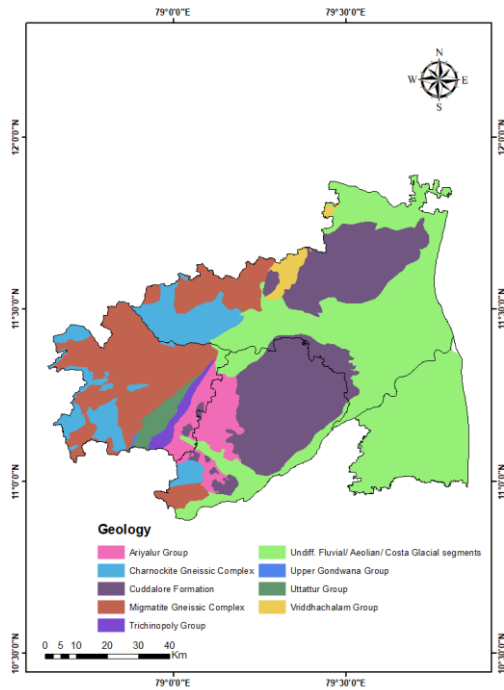


Fig.4 Geology map of study area

most predominantly covering 3450.07 square kilometres of the study area, followed by the Cuddalore Formation and Migmatite Gneissic Complex features.

Geomorphology depicts the physical, chemical and biological processes and origin that affect the topographical and bathymetric characteristics of landforms. Major geomorphological features that represent the aspects of the study area include the erosional surfaces of the Pediment Pediplain Complex predominantly, covering about the 4736.74 square kilometres, followed by the Flood Plain and Deltaic Plains.

Environmental covariates based on SCORPAN factors besides parent materials are to be selected depending upon the characteristics of the study area to model the soil properties under study. Ideally, the context of the parent materials defines the underlying sediments and bedrock that depicts the topography of the landscape. In most cases, the soil properties are majorly determined based on the confluence of the slope/Relief and parent material by influencing the thickness of the solum (Janarth et al., 2022).

The geological features found in the study area include, Ariyalur Group, Charnockite Gneissic Complex, Cuddalore Formation, Migmatite Gneissic Complex, Trichinopoly Group, Undifferentiated Fluvial / Aeolian / Coastal & Glacial Sediments, Upper Gondwana Group, Uttattur Group and Vriddhachalam Group. Sediments of Fluvial and Aeolian nature are found

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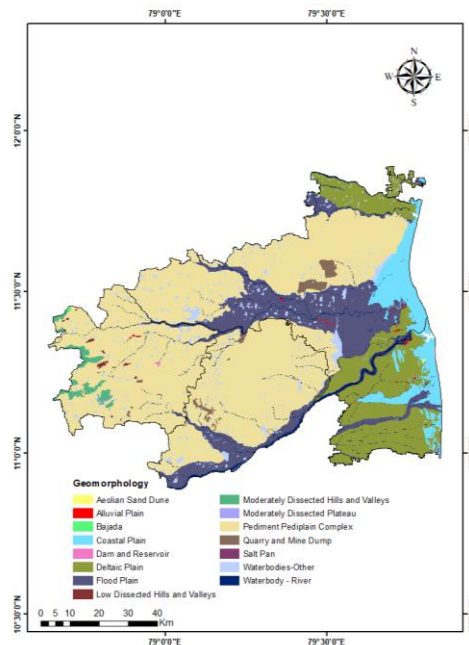


Fig.5.Geomorphology map of study area

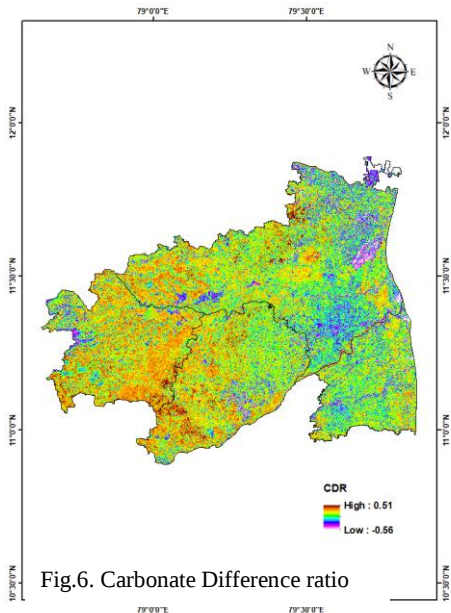


Fig.6. Carbonate Difference ratio

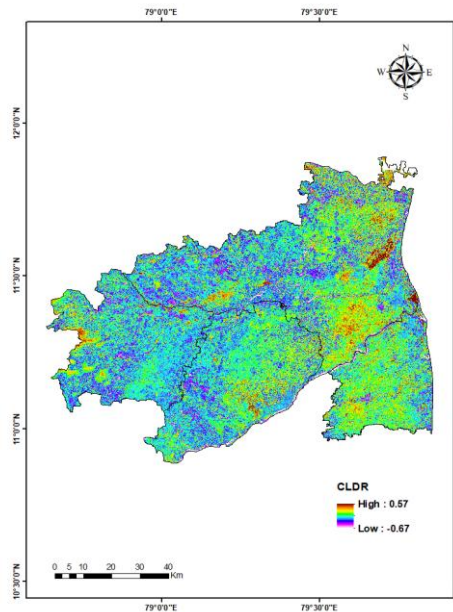
concentration of the Carbonate is usually accounted due to the presence of red loam soils as the predominant soil type followed by the mediocre presence of black soil. Similarly, sharing almost the same characteristics as the Ariyalur, the Perambalur district also had a low concentration of carbonate-rich sites with values ranging from -0.38 to 0.38.

In general, each of the spectral derived indices (i.e.) Carbonate Difference Ratio, Clay Minerals Difference Ratio, Ferrous Minerals Difference Ratio, Iron Difference Ratio, Rock Outcrop Difference Ratio varies in the range of -1 to +1, indicating the low and high values for each of the respective parent materials. The Carbonate Difference Ratio of the study area falls between -0.56 to 0.51 (Fig.6).

The Carbonate Difference Ratio of the Ariyalur district had a low concentration of carbonate-rich

sites with values ranging from -0.56 to 0.3. The low

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Cuddalore and Mayiladuthurai districts had a mediocre concentration of the Carbonate rich sites with values ranging from -0.52 to 0.51 and -0.46 to 0.41, respectively. The mediocre range of Carbonate may be associated with the presence of sandy clay loam and sandy coastal alluvium as the predominant soil types in

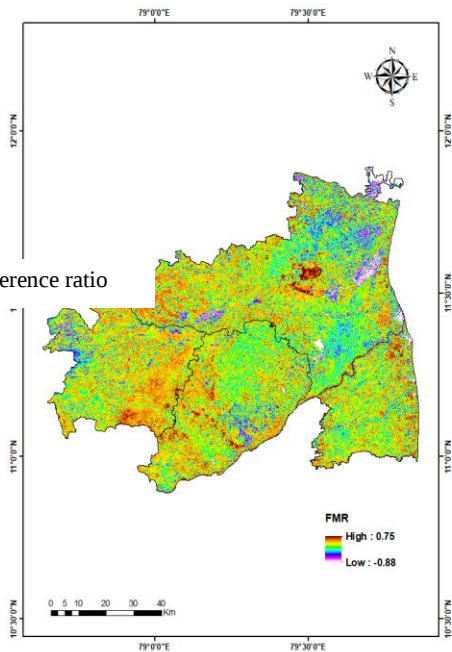


Fig.7. Clay Difference ratio

the Cuddalore and Mayiladuthurai districts. The Clay Difference Ratio of the study area varies between -0.67 and 0.57 (Fig.7).

The Clay Difference Ratio of Ariyalur, Perambalur, Cuddalore and Mayiladuthurai districts ranged from -0.67 to 0.43, -0.1 to 0.42, -0.34 to 0.57 and -0.19 to 0.48, respectively. The mediocre concentration of hydroxyl clay content of the regions is usually related to the predominant soil types, prevailing soil texture and CEC of the region. The Ferrous Mineral Difference Ratio falls between -0.88 and 0.75 (Fig.8).

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0.78 and 0.95 (Fig.9). The Iron Difference Ratio of Ariyalur, Perambalur, Cuddalore and Mayiladuthurai districts ranged from -0.75 to 0.95, -0.70 to 0.86, -0.78 to 0.94 and -0.70 to 0.90, respectively. The Rock Outcrop Difference Ratio varies between -0.94 and 0.82 (Fig.10).

The districts of Ariyalur, Perambalur, Cuddalore and Mayiladuthurai district had a Rock Outcrop Difference Ratio of -0.94 to 0.73, -0.77 to 0.74, -0.93 to 0.82 and -0.86 to 0.73, respectively. The higher concentration of Ferrous minerals and Iron Minerals in Ariyalur and Perambalur districts is usually associated with the presence of limestone ferruginous red loam soils and red loam, respectively

Fig.8. Ferrous Mineral Difference Ratio

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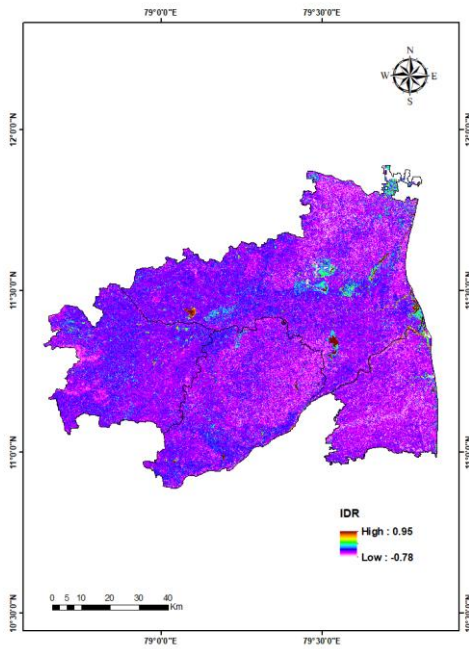


Fig.9. Iron Difference Ratio

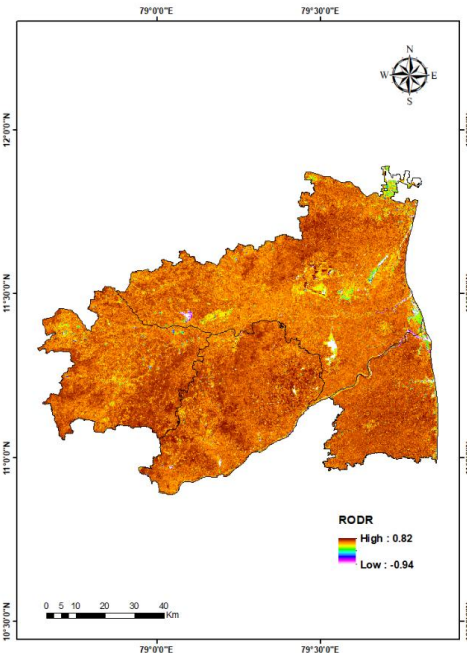


Fig.10. Rock Outcrop Difference Ratio

5. CONCLUSION

This study substantiated that remote sensing satellite datasets provide a wide range of application in the exploration of soil attributes of a larger area in a very short time and at a low cost. In General, delineating soil properties and deriving a digital soil map includes modeling the soil attributes with respect to the generated specialized covariates. The modeling procedures are based on the machine learning algorithms such as Random Forest, Multinomial Logistic Regression, Cubist models etc., Selection of the appropriate learning algorithms, and the covariates are essential for increasing the efficiency of the model calibrated. In this study, Parent material covariate layers were generated using Sentinel- 2 images, which are to be included while calibrating a DSM model. In most of the studies on Digital Soil mapping, existing information on the bedrocks and sediments was imparted through Geology, Lithology and Geomorphology maps. Information on the spectral derivatives corresponding to parent mineralogy that were standardized based on their influence in the spectrum can enhance the qualitative and quantitative characterization of the soil properties.

6. REFERENCES

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