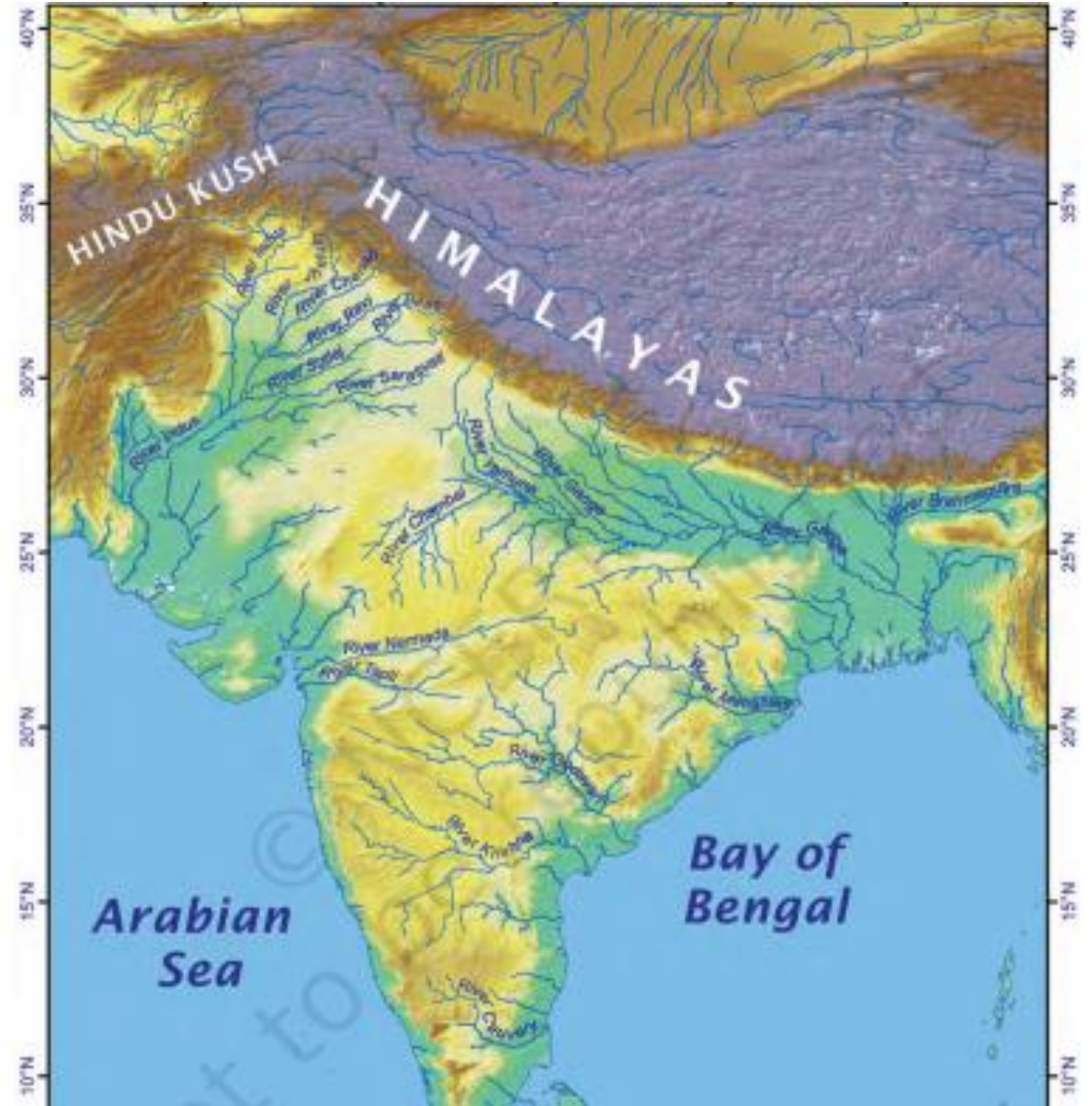


CLASS: VI
SUBJECT: SOCIAL SCIENCE
CHAPTER: 5 INDIA, THAT IS BHARAT
BOOK: EXPLORING SOCIETY: INDIA AND
BEYOND



A physical map of the Indian Subcontinent, with some of its rivers.



Modern vs. Historical India:

1

Today's India has defined borders and states, but it was very different 500, 2,000, or 5,000 years ago.

2

This region of the world, which we often call the 'Indian Subcontinent', has had many different names and shifting boundaries.

3

We can learn about India's past and evolution from many different sources.

In the course of history, India has been called by many names — both by its inhabitants and by visitors from outside.

These names come to us from -

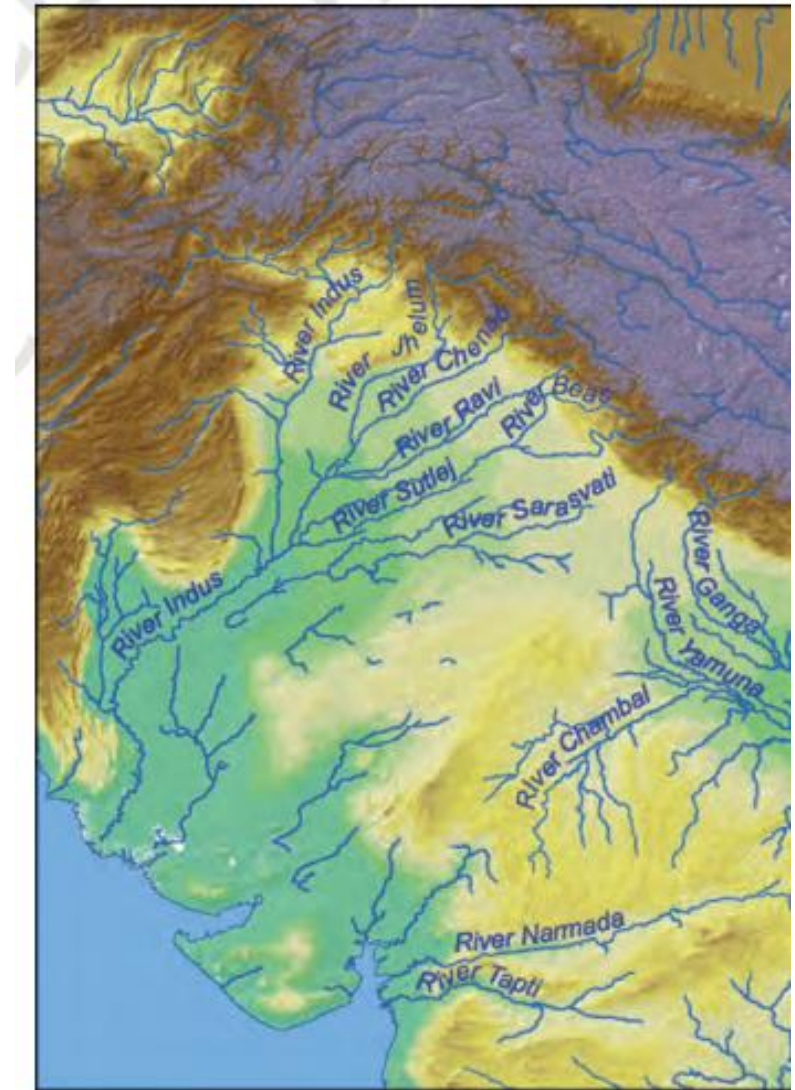
- ancient texts
- accounts of travellers
- accounts of pilgrims
- inscriptions

How Indians Named India

The Ṛig Veda is India's most ancient text; as we will see in Chapter 7, it is several thousand years old.

It gives the northwest region of the Subcontinent the name 'Sapta Sindhava', that is, the 'land of the seven rivers'.

The word 'Sindhava' comes from 'Sindhu', which refers to the Indus River, or at times to a river in general.



Moving on in time, we see names for other parts of India appear in the literature.



The Mahābhārata is one of India's most famous texts (we read about it in the theme 'Our Cultural Heritage and Knowledge Traditions').



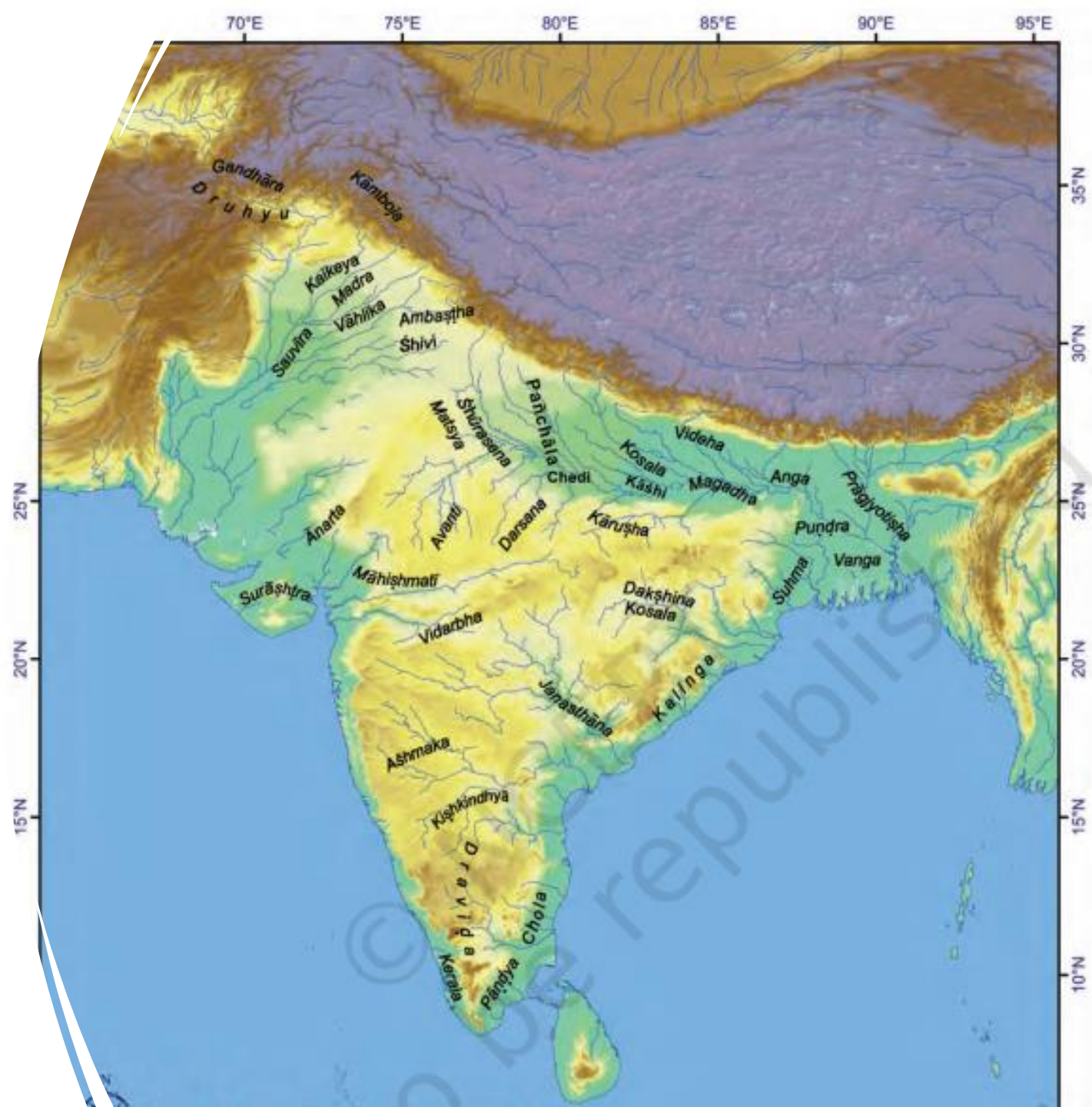
Interestingly, it lists many regions, such as Kāshmīra (more or less today's Kashmir), Kurukṣhetra (parts of Haryana today), Vanga (parts of Bengal), Prāgjyotiṣha (roughly today's Assam), Kaccha (today's Kutch), Kerala (more or less today's Kerala), and so on.

Bhāratavarṣha

The name for the entire Indian Subcontinent appears in ancient texts like the *Mahābhārata*. This epic, written a few centuries BCE, uses two terms to refer to the region:

Bhāratavarṣha – Meaning "the country of the Bharatas," this term refers to the entire Subcontinent. The name "Bharata" first appears in the *Ṛig Veda* and was used to describe a group of Vedic people and later, several kings.

Map of a few regions
listed in the
Mahābhārata.
(Many of them are
also mentioned in
the text as
kingdoms.)



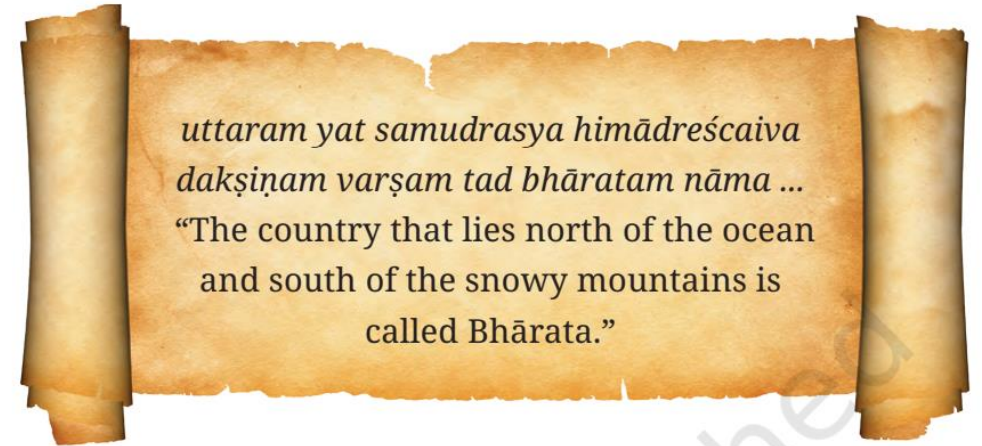
Jambudvīpa

- **Jambudvīpa** – Meaning "the island of the fruit of the jamun tree," this term was later used to refer to the Indian Subcontinent. The jamun tree is native to India, and the name symbolized the land.
- Additionally, Emperor **Aśhoka**, around 250 BCE, also used the term *Jambudvīpa* in his inscriptions, providing further evidence of how these names were used to refer to the Indian Subcontinent.



Viṣṇu Purāṇa

- A few centuries later, ‘Bhārata’ became the name generally used for the Indian Subcontinent. For instance, in an ancient text called the Viṣṇu Purāṇa.
- This name, ‘Bhārata’ remains in use even today. In north India, it is generally written as ‘Bharat’, while in south India, it is often ‘Bharatam’.



*uttaram yat samudrasya himādreścaiva
dakṣiṇam varṣam tad bhāratam nāma ...*

“The country that lies north of the ocean
and south of the snowy mountains is
called Bhārata.”

Cape Kumari

Ancient Indian literature reflects a strong understanding of geography.

A Tamil poem, dating back about 2,000 years, praises a king whose domain stretches from **Cape Kumari** in the south to **the great mountain in the north**, and from the oceans on the east and west.

This description highlights the recognition of the northern Himalayas and the southern tip of India, indicating that ancient Indians had a clear awareness of the geographical boundaries of their land.

The Indian Constitution

The Indian Constitution, which was first written in English, uses the phrase 'India, that is Bharat' right at the beginning.

Similarly, the Hindi version of the Constitution mentions the same as 'Bhārat arthāth India'.

Persian/Greeks

01

The first foreigners to mention India were the Persians in the 6th century BCE. After conquering the region of the **Indus River**, which was called '**Sindhu**', they adapted the name to '**Hind**', '**Hidu**', or '**Hindu**'. In ancient Persian, the term "Hindu" was purely geographical, not related to the religion.

02

The ancient Greeks, drawing from Persian sources, then named the region '**Indoi**' or '**Indike**', dropping the 'h' from "Hindu" because the letter 'h' did not exist in the Greek alphabet.

Chinese

Sindhu → **Hindhu** → **Indoi / Indike**

The ancient Chinese also interacted with India. In several texts, they refer to India as 'Yintu' or 'Yindu'. This word also originally comes from 'Sindhu', in the following manner:

Sindhu → **Hindhu** → **Indu** → **Yindu**

The Chinese also derived a term for India from 'Sindhu', calling it '**Tianzhu**', which could also mean 'heavenly master', reflecting the respect they had for India as the land of the Buddha.

The term '**Hindustān**', which is more familiar today, was first used in a Persian inscription around 1,800 years ago.

Over time, '**Hindustān**' became the common term used by invaders to refer to the Indian Subcontinent.

LET'S EXPLORE

Can you complete this table of the many names of India?

Persian	
Greek	
Latin	India
Chinese	
Arabic & Persian	
English	India
French	Inde

Before we move on ...

- India is an ancient land, which has had many names in the course of its history.
- The names given by the ancient inhabitants of India include 'Jambudvīpa' and 'Bhārata'. The latter became widespread in time and is the name of India in most Indian languages.
- Foreign visitors to, or invaders of, India mostly adopted names derived from the Sindhu or Indus River; this resulted in names like 'Hindu', 'Indoi', and eventually 'India'.

THANK YOU