**Description of Bharat-Hindustan and geography**

### Bharat, Hindustan and India

India’s official name is Bharat and this is accorded equal primacy as the word India in the Constitution. In fact the First Clause of the Constitution begins with the words:**India, that is Bharat,….**

In Sanskrit, ‘Bha’ means Light and Knowledge while ‘rata’ means “Devoted”. Bharat means "devoted to light/knowledge". The name "Bharat" is symbolic in nature revealing the quest of knowledge and the spiritual/scientific prosperity of this country.

Through the ages our ancestors referred this land as Bharat. Though the name ‘Bharat’ should be used, we seldom use it today! Why not refer India as In + Dia = India ==> The Land of Inner Light analogous to its original name Bha + rata = Bharat ==> meaning devoted to light and knowledge ?  
  
If you are using India, refer or think of it as In + Dia (The Land of Inner Diya) retaining the glory of its name in the modern name ‘India’ rather than just ‘India’ as ascribed by others.

## DIVING THROUGH THE PAST

### Bharat

According to the Puranas, this country is known as Bharatavasha after the king Bharata Chakravarti. It is clearly stated that this country is known as Bharata Varsha.

Rishabha was born to Marudevi, Bharata was born to Rishabh,

Bharatvarsha (India) arose from Bharata, and Sumati arose from Bharata  
   —Vishnu Purana

This country is known as Bharatavarsha since the times the father entrusted the kingdom to the son Bharata and he himself went to the forest for ascetic practices  
 —Vishnu Purana

*uttaraṃ yatsamudrasya himādreścaiva dakṣiṇam  
varṣaṃ tadbhārataṃ nāma bhāratī yatra santatiḥ*

"The country (*varṣam*) that lies north of the ocean and south of the snowy mountains is called *Bhāratam*; there dwell the descendants of Bharata."  
 —Vishnu Purana

The realm of Bharata is known as *Bharātavarṣa* in the *Mahabhārata* (the core portion of which is itself known as *Bhārata*) and later texts. The term *varsa* means a division of the earth, or a continent.  
According to Mahabharata as well as the numerous puranas and diverse Indian history, Bharat Empire included the whole territory of the Indian subcontinent, including parts of present day Pakistan, Afghanistan,China, Iran, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Turkmenistan, North-west Tibet,Nepal and Bangladesh.  
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This represented as the ideal sample of great empires, which was dominated by harmony, wealth and prosperity.

**Hindustan**

Hindustan, as is the term Hindu itself, entered the English language in the 17th century. In the 19th century, the term as used in English referred to the northern region of India between the Indus and Brahmaputra rivers and between the Himalayas and the Vindhyas in particular, hence the term Hindustani for the Hindi-Urdu language.Hindustan was in use synonymously with India during the British Raj.

#### **Origin of the name Hindu**

In the words of Dr Frank Morales, the term “Hindu” is not a term that is inherent to the religion itself. Rather, the term is known to have been first coined by the ancient Persians, who were culturally, religiously, and perspectively extrinsic to the culture. The term was first used by these ancient Persians in order to conveniently designate the ancient Vedic spiritual culture, and was mistakenly used to refer to the Vedic religion as primarily a geographic and ethnic phenomenon, more than as a religio-philosophical world-view.To the ancient Persians, the word Hindu simply referred to the culture, people, religion and practices of the peoples who lived on the other side of the Sindhu River. In the ancient Avestan Persian language ‘s’ grammatically became ‘h’. Thus, the Persians pronounced the name of this river Hindhu, rather than Sindhu. Thus, ironically, the currently used word Hindu is itself a corruption of the Persian word Hindhu, which is in turn a corruption of the term Sindhu, which is itself only referring to a river, and not a religion! Thus when the word Hindu is used today to refer to the ancient religion of India, the term is in actuality a corruption of a corruption of a word whose meaning is irrelevant to begin with.  
An alternate and infrequently cited theory on the origin of the word Hindustan is based on the Sanskrit shloka from the Barhaspatya Samhita of the Rigveda (ca. 1700-1100 BCE):

### *Himalyam Samarabhya Yavadindusarovaram Tam Deonirmitam Desham Hindusthanam Prachakshate*

### "The land created by the gods which stretched from the Himalayas to the Indu (i.e. Southern) ocean is called Hindusthan, with the हिंदु (Hindu) mentioned in word हिंदुस्थानं (Hindusthan)."

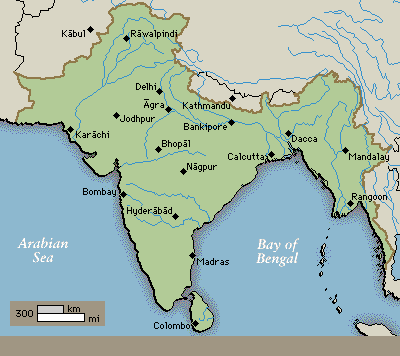
### India

Most experts agree today that the name India was derived from the river Indus (in today’s Pakistan).  
 **But where did the name ‘Indus’ come from?**

### In ancient times, the entire Indus river system (along with its seven tributaries – Chenab, Ravi, Sutlej, Jhelum, Beas and the now extinct River Saraswati) and the area it covered, used to be called Sapta Sindhu i.e. the land of seven rivers (Sindhu means river in Sanskrit). The word Sindhu not only referred to the river system and adjoining area but also became the label to denote the culture that had developed along its valleys. The corruption of Sindhu into Hindu can be traced back to journeys made by early Persian explorers from the Northwest who due to the peculiarities of their own language aspirated the ‘S’ sound in ‘Sindhu’ to make the word ‘Hindu’ Thus to world beyond, the area around the Saraswati-Sindhu rivers and its culture became to be known as the area of Hindus(thus the name Hindustan which literally means the land of Hindus). About 2500 years ago, when the Greeks first reached the river plains of Punjab, they borrowed the name of the region from the Persians and simply modified it to Indos. Indos later morphed into Indus in Latin  by which name the river is still known in the West. The Romans began to call the whole land mass after this river and thus the name India came to stay which has been the form used by Europeans over the ages. The ancient Greeks referred to the Indians as *Indoi* (Ινδοί), which translates as "the people of the Indus".

**Bharatvarsha and Its Geographical Feature**

The concept of Bharatavarsha is an age-old one. It is not only associated v.ith the name of the soil but also mingles within itself the culture, geography and history of the region. This sub-continent called India, stretching from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin and from the Bay of Bengal to the Arabian Sea, is known as Bharatavarsha or the Land of Bharata. In the shape of a three-cornered peninsula, the sub-continent is bounded in the north by the lofty Himalayas running a length of 2414 kms. The eastern, western and southern sides are flanked by open seas.



Ancient Indian Sanskrit and Pali literature divides the country into five zones

1. The North (Udichya)

2.2. The Centre (Madhya or Majhimadesa)

3-3. The East (Prachya)

4-4. The West (Pratichya)

5-5. The South (Dakshinapatha)

But these physical references in ancient literature were replaced by a more systematic approach to India's geographical divisions in

later periods. Primarily India is divided into four major geographical units.

ey are:

1. The Great Himalayan mountain range

2. The Indo-Gangetic Brahmaputra plains

3. The Central and Deccan plateau

4. The Coastal regions

5. The Indian subcontinent has three main reasons: Himalaya Mountains, southern peninsula and Indo - Gangetic plains.

6. Regional differences and related separate identities greatly fostered by geography, have stood in the way of the rise of durable pan

Indian states in Indian history.

7. Never was the whole subcontinent a single political unit.

8. The Himalayas in the North and northwest and the Indian ocean in the south create a superficial view of isolation of the country

from the subcontinent.

9. However, the most difficult terrain does not impede the movement of ideas and influences between the people. Cultural influences

have been exchanged across the frontiers and there have been maritime contacts with the west, West Asia and South east asia from

the earlier times.

**Himalayan Mountains**

• The mountains stretch from Pamir in the North West to north east. It has a length of 2560 km and breadth of 240 - 320km.

• The Himalayas protect Indian subcontinent from cold winds blowing from Siberia to central Asia.

• The Himalayas also protect against external invasions but the passes Khyber, Gomal, Khurram and Bolan allow easy access.

• The Greeks, Huns, Parthian's, Turks and Sakas entered the subcontinent through these. Alexander came through the Swat valley.

These passes allowed trade as well as cultural contacts between India and central Asia.

• In the east the Himalayas have thick forests and heavy rains and thus many regions of the Himalayas are isolated from rest.

**Himalyas as a Natural Barrier**

Cold Siberian winds

• Mountains (Divisions of India)

• Provide safety from Invaders

• Safe santuries for various cultures.

**Indo Gangetic Plains**

* It is a very fertile region irrigated by Ganga, Yamuna and Brahmaputra. Thar Desert and Aravalli hills are located between Ganga and Indus plains. Area between two rivers is called "doab"
* Many urban centers are located at the confluence of rivers and riverbanks. Most important urban center is Delhi on the western side of Gangetic plain.
* The plain is a source of temptation and attraction to foreign invaders due to its fertility and productive wealth. Important battles were fought to conquer these plains especially the Ganga Yamuna doab was the most coveted and contested battle.
* Kurukshetra and Panipat were most common battles grounds. The rivers in these regions are arteries of commerce and communication.

**The Southern Peninsula**

* The Vindhya and Satpuda mountain ranges along with Narmada and Tapti rivers form the dividing line. The plateau to the south of it is Deccan plateau which is of volcanic rock. As the rocks are easier to cut many rock cut temples and monasteries are found here.
* The Deccan plateau is flanked by Eastern and Western Ghats.
* The Coromandel Coast is located between Eastern Ghats and Bay of Bengal. The Western Ghats and Eastern Ghats meet at Nilgiri hills.
* The Deccan plateau is bridge between north and south but due to the dense forests in the Vindhyas the culture and language is well preserved due to geographic isolation.
* In the south, Palghat pass from Kaveri valley to Malabar Coast was famous for Indo - Roman trade. The Eastern Ghats are low and cut in places due to fast flowing rivers. The rivers of the southern peninsula flow from west to east except Narmada and Tapti whick flow from east to west. The rivers flow parallel to each other.
* The Krishna Tungabhadra doab has been hotly contested by southern kingdoms due to its fertility. Due to the long coastline the south kingdoms developed cultural and commercial relations with Greco - Roman kingdoms.