

## When, Where and How?

## New Terms

- ❑ **Subcontinent** : A large piece of land which has all the characteristic of a continent
- ❑ **Description** : Accounts written by different writers about various rulers.

## The Indian Subcontinent

The Indian subcontinent is spread over a large part of south Asia. To its north is the mighty Himalayan range while the Indian Ocean lies to its south. The Arabian Sea is to its south-west while the Bay of Bengal is to its south-east. From ancient times, India has been a unique geographical and geopolitical unit. Looking at its large size and its physical and cultural

diversities, the Britishers christened it as a **subcontinent**.

## Nomenclature

The historical roots of the origin of the name Bharata are very deep. The Aryans occupied the region around the Indus Valley and named it **Sapta Saindhav** (Land of Seven Rivers). Extending their sovereignty to Ganga-Yamuna doab, they named it as **Brahmarshi Pradesh**. Later, the whole region lying between the Himalayas and Vindhya mountains was called **Aryavarta** and when the Aryans extended their sovereignty to the south, they called it as **Dakshinapanth**. In the Puranas, the land of the Vedic culture and Sanskrit language is called **Bharata**. There are many stories about the origin of this name. As per 'Markandeya Purana' and 'Vayu Purana', the country was named 'Bharata', after the son of Rishabha, from Manu's clan. But in another chapter of Vayu Purana, Bharata is said to be king Dushyanta's son. It is believed that five tribes of Aryans, Bharata, Trishu, Anu, Drahu and Yadu lived in Sapta Saindhav, in which Bharata had conquered the larger part of the country. Hence, the country came to be called 'Bharatvarsha'.

Persians called the land of Sindhu as Hindu and named the land beyond Sindhu as **Hindustan**. Greeks called Sindhu as **Indus** and called the country as **India**,

## Know This

When Buddhism entered China, the local people called India as Tien-Chu. When Hieun Tsang arrived in India, it came to be known as 'Yin Tu' which means, 'the moon' in Chinese.



The Indian Subcontinent

which is the English word translation of 'Bharata'. In our Constitution and in foreign countries too, the name India is used for Bharata.

In the Vedic Age, India extended from Afghanistan in the west to Myanmar in the east and Nepal in the north to Tamil Nadu in the south. The country was divided into five main regions: Udhichaya (Afghanistan and north Pakistan), Prateechya (Rajasthan, Gujarat and south Pakistan), Madhyadesha (Punjab and west Uttar Pradesh), Prachya (East Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Bengal, Assam and Odisha) and Dakshinapantha (South India). Myanmar was then known as Brahmadesha.

During the Mahajanapada Age (1000-500 BC), there were 16 Janapadas (Anga, Kashi, Magadha, Matsya, Kaushala, Vajji, Vatsa, Malla, Kuru, Chedi, Panchala, Avanti, Surasena, Gandhara, Ashmaka and Kamboja) in India which were present at Buddhas' time too.

Himalayas in the north to Narmada in the south and from Gujarat in the west to Bengal in the east.

The whole subcontinent was unified by Mughal Emperor Akbar (1556 - 1605 AD). During the British period, Myanmar and Sri Lanka too were parts of the British empire till 1937 AD.

### Medieval Period of Indian History

The history of every country in the world is divided into three periods: Ancient, Medieval and Modern. Every Age is made up of many centuries. But the duration of every Age is different in different countries. The Medieval Age in India began around 8th century AD and continued till 18th century. Many political, social and economic changes took place in the 8th century and the Medieval Age closed with the decline of the Mughals.

**Main developments in the Medieval Period :** The medieval period is important due to following reasons:-



India in 600 BC

Chandryaupta Maurya unified most parts of the Indian subcontinent as one single political unit. Mauryan empire attained its zenith at the time of Ashoka which included whole of India, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Gupta empire (300-450 AD) too extended from

1. Enough historical evidences, related to the age, are available hence we are more aware about it.
2. In this age, many changes happened to our clothing and food habits.
3. Most of the regional languages developed during this age only.

4. Many of the religious and social traditions, and customs, besides new religions such as Din-i-Ilahi and Sikhism developed during this age only.
5. In this period, due to intermingling of salient features of Hinduism and Islam, a composite Indian culture developed. This cultural amalgamation becomes evident through its language, literature, art, music, painting and architecture.
6. Bhakti and Sufi saints explained the basic tenets of Hinduism and Islam in a better manner, which led to better mutual feelings of understanding and tolerance.
7. The status and position of women declined in this period.
8. Many countries, impressed and attracted by India's wealth, tried to establish direct trade relations with it.
9. The circulation of metal currency developed the country economically. Agriculture, commerce and trade too grew, developed and expanded.

### Source of History

Historical sources informing us about medieval period are divided into two groups :

1. Archaeological source
2. Literary source.

**1. Archaeological source :** Among the archaeological sources, the following are worth mentioning :

**(i) Inscriptions :** Different kinds of information is provided to us by inscriptions. Besides being inscribed on rocks and stones, they were carved on copper plates also. The study of inscriptions is called **epigraphy**. We get detailed information about important events, king, their qualities, their achievements,



Coins of medieval period

administration and art from inscriptions.

**(ii) Coins :** Coins too inform us about the conditions of economy and when they were minted. They throw light on important historical personalities and events. The study of coins is called **numismatics**.

**(iii) Memorials, Temples, Forts and Palaces :** Medieval rulers built many memorials, mosques, temples, forts and palaces. Some famous memorials are Qutub Minar at Mehrauli in Delhi, Vijay Stambha at Chittor, Buland Darwaza at Fatehpur Sikri, Taj Mahal at Agra and Red Fort at Delhi. The famous forts are Red Fort (Delhi), the Old Fort of Tughlaqabad, the Chittor Fort, the Agra Fort and the Gwalior Fort. The Palaces at Jaisalmer, Jodhpur and Jaipur are worth mentioning. The famous temples built by the monarchs include Vrihadeeshwara Temple (Tanjor), Kandariya Mahadev Temple (Khajuraho), Lingaraj Temple (Bhubaneswara), Kailashnatha Temple (Ellora), Shore Temple (Mamallapuram-Mahabalipuram) and many temples at Kanchipuram.

### Know This

- The responsibility of excavations of memorials lies with the Archaeological Survey of India.
- Science related to inscriptions is called epigraphy.

**2. Literary Source :** In early times, writing was done on leaves but with the invention of paper in the 13th century, it came to be used for writing. Many books were written and published in this period. The following literary sources are worth mentioning :

**(i) Autobiographies :** The reminiscences of Babar (Tuzaq-i-Babri) and Jahangir (Tuzaq-i-Jahangiri) were written as their biographies.

**(ii) Life-histories :** Many writers and scholars wrote many life histories of kings and royal families. For example, Rajatarangini of Kalhana (12th century) is a history of Kashmir rulers. Kumarapala Charita of Kshemendra and Prithviraj Raso of Chandbardai are historical works. 'Akbarnama', written by Abul Fazal, is the life history of Akbar.

**(iii) Literary work :** In literary works, 'Tuzaq-i-Babri', 'Ain-i-Akbari' and 'Tuzaq-i-Jahangiri' are worth mentioning. These are adorned with beautiful paintings, which are called miniature paintings.

**(iv) Accounts of Foreign Travellers and Historians :** Foreign traveller and historian, Alberuni, came to

India with Mahmud Ghaznavi and wrote detailed accounts about contemporary Indian history, geography, astronomy and philosophy. Minhas wrote history of Indian sultans and Muslim rulers of the 13th century. Ziauddin Barani presented detailed accounts about Muslim rulers of the 14th century. Amir Khusro wrote Tughlaqnama in 13th century.

Charita of Banabhatta, Rajatarangini of Kalhana, Vikramank Devacharita of Bilhana, Prithviraj Raso of Chandbardai and Kumarpala Charita of Kshemendra are great historical works, besides being literary ones.

Besides these, a huge body of temporal literary works was created which include writings on grammar, dictionaries, plays, religion, medicine, etc.

(v) **Literature** : Dasakumar Charita of Dandi, Harsha

## To Recapitulate

- India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, etc. make up the Indian subcontinent.
- In ancient times, India was called by different names.
- The Aryans conquered Indus basin and named it as Sapta Saindhav.
- Later, the Aryans moved into the Ganga valley and called it Aryavarta.
- Persians called Sindhu as Indus and the country beyond it as Hindustan.
- Greeks called the land as Indus.
- In the Vedic period, India was named Bharat after king Bharata.
- Historical sources comprise of archaeological and literary sources.
- Many sources about medieval period are available which throw light on the dress, food, religion, culture, and politico-economic conditions of the time.
- The archaeological sources are memorials, temples, mosques, towers, palaces, forts, inscriptions and coins.
- Literary sources are autobiographies, life histories, accounts, and descriptions of foreign travellers.



## Exercise

### A. Tick the correct option:-

1. To the south of Indian subcontinent lies:
 

(a) Himalayas <input type="checkbox"/>	(b) Arabian Sea <input type="checkbox"/>
(c) Bay of Bengal <input type="checkbox"/>	(d) Indian ocean <input type="checkbox"/>
2. Persians named India as:
 

(a) Indus <input type="checkbox"/>	(b) Hindustan <input type="checkbox"/>
(c) Aryavart <input type="checkbox"/>	(d) Dakshinapanth <input type="checkbox"/>
3. The meaning of Tien-chu in Chinese language is :
 

(a) Moon <input type="checkbox"/>	(b) Sun <input type="checkbox"/>
(c) Stars <input type="checkbox"/>	(d) Planets <input type="checkbox"/>
4. In ancient times, Punjab and west Uttar Pradesh were called :
 

(a) Dakshinapanth <input type="checkbox"/>	(b) Prateechya <input type="checkbox"/>
(c) Madhyadesha <input type="checkbox"/>	(d) Praachya <input type="checkbox"/>
5. Tuzaq-i-Jahangiri is a/an:
 

(a) autobiography <input type="checkbox"/>	(b) historical document <input type="checkbox"/>
(c) account <input type="checkbox"/>	(d) literary source <input type="checkbox"/>

**B. Fill in the blanks :**

1. The land of seven rivers was called \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Greeks called India as \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Prithviraj Raso is a historical work of \_\_\_\_\_.
4. The study of coins is called \_\_\_\_\_.
5. In ancient times, writing-work was done on \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

**C. Write True or False :**

1. Guptas established the first empire in India. \_\_\_\_\_
2. In Vedic Age, India was divided into five regions. \_\_\_\_\_
3. Inscriptions were carved on leaves. \_\_\_\_\_
4. Rajatarangini is a history of Kashmiri rulers. \_\_\_\_\_
5. Alberuni came to India in the 11th century. \_\_\_\_\_

**D. Write the names of historical works written by the following writers :**

1. Bilhana
2. Jahangir
3. Amir Khusro
4. Firoz Shah Tughlaq

**E. Short Answer Questions :**

1. Write the names of countries of the Indian Subcontinent.
2. How did the country come to be known as India?
3. Into which five regions was India divided in the Vedic Age?
4. In which Age was Sikhism founded?
5. Write the names of any two memorials of the Medieval Age.

**F. Long Answer Questions :**

1. Detail the expansion of the Indian subcontinent.
2. Explain the nomenclature of India in serial order.
3. Explain the importance of the Medieval Period.
4. Mention the archaeological sources of history.
5. Mention the literary sources of history.

**Project & Activity**

1. On an outline map of India, mark the places of the following memorials : Qutub Minar, Taj Mahal, Vijay Stambha and Buland Darwaza.
2. Visit any historical monument in your neighbourhood. Click photographs of inscriptions and paste them in your scrapbook.