CHAPTER - II

(i) Different Names of India:

Oldest nomenclature of India according to Col. Wilford; names denoting this country or certain part of it as found in the Vedic literature, Avesta (Vendidad), Purānic literature, Epigraphs, Buddhist literature; Origin of the name Jambudvīpa in Brahmanical and Buddhist literature and according to V. Venkatachellam Iyer, Sarad Chandra and James Legge; different names of India in Chinese and other foreign sources.

(ii) Shape of India: evidences from Vedic literature, Mahābhārata, Purāṇas, Parāśara and Varāhamihira; Buddhist source: Dīgha Nikāya and Mahāvastu; Jain Conception; Chinese and Greek accounts.

Size of India: Brahmanical Sources; Buddhist Sources; Greek accounts.
CHAPTER — II.

(i) Different Names of India.
(ii) Shape And Size of India.

The name of a country changes from age to age according to its geographical and geopolitical conditions. A certain name given to a certain country in a certain period reflects, though not entirely, the geographical character of that country. As in different ages the geographical boundary as well as the geopolitical condition of a country goes on varying, the connotation of the territorial name given to it also changes. Thus our subcontinent, at present called 'India' (the undivided India including Pakistan and Bangladesh is intended here), had her names changed from time to time with the change of condition on geographical scene. This subcontinent or "the major part of it is referred to by different names in various sources of early and mediaeval ages". Most important of such names are Jambudvipa (in Buddhist literature), Bharatavarśa, Kumārīdvipa (in Sanskrit Brahmanical literature other than the Buddhist texts, e.g. in the Purāṇas, Śmṛti works, epics, etc.), Bharāhavāha (in Jain literature), India (mentioned interalia in European, including Greek and Latin treatises), Shen-tu and T'ien chu (referred to in Chinese texts) and Hindustan and

1. Prof. B.N. Mukherjee's paper entitled 'The Name Hindustan — A Study in its Geopolitical Connotations' read out at the seminar on Geographical Factors in Indian History, organised by the Department of Ancient History and Culture, Calcutta University, in March 1979. Introduction. (Dr. Mukherjee has also discussed in details the evolution of different indigenous and foreign names of India in his monograph 'The Foreign Names of the Indian Subcontinent published by the Place Names Society of India, Mysore, 1989.)
Hind (used by inter-alios the authors of Arabic and Persian writings).²

B.N. Mukherjee³ observes wisely, "These names, as it is well-known, did not perhaps have a uniform geographical connotation throughout the period of their existence. So the appearance of one of these names in an early source need not necessarily imply the application of the term to the whole of the subcontinent. Its geographical connotation during the period concerned will have to be determined in order to evaluate the importance of that source for the history of the subcontinent."

The Indian subcontinent is so large and have so much variety of "fauna and flora, races and languages, religions and culture"⁴ that the observers and explorers only slowly and gradually could discover and explore the remote parts of this country. It therefore seems very natural that from the earliest recorded times we have no comprehensive term to designate the whole country.⁵ Dr. H.C. Raychaudhuri observes with a deep insight into facts, "The Indian and foreign people to whom we are indebted for the earliest notices of Hindusthan,

². Ibid.
³. Ibid.
⁴. Historical Geography of Ancient India, by B.C. Law, p. 9.
⁵. Ibid.
were acquainted only with one corner of this vast subcontinent, viz. the northern region watered by the Indus and the upper Ganges". Col. Wilford also says that the foreigners "bestowed upon the whole continent of India the name of that part of it nearest to them. Thus in Tartary it is called Anu Gangam or Anon-Khenkh; in the west it was called Sind, Hind, India from the country of Sindhu or the river of the same name." Col. Wilford gives in his article very interesting facts regarding the oldest name of India. According to him the oldest name of India is COLAR which prevailed till the arrival of the followers of Brahma, and, is still preserved by the numerous 'Aborigines', living among woods and mountains. These aborigines are called in the peninsula to this day, Colaris and Colairs; and in the north of India Coles, Coils, Coolies; thus it seems that the radical name is Cola. This appellation of Cola was not unknown to the ancients; for the younger Plutarch says, that a certain person called Ganges was the son of the Indus and of Dio-Pithusa, a Calaurian damsel; who through grief threw him into the river Chliarus, which after him was called Ganges; and Chliarus is probably a mistake for Calaurius, or the Colarian river. Again, Col. Wilford remarks that in Pegu, Ava, Sumatra, India was called Kalinga from the peninsula which they frequented most. In the

countries of Lahdaca, Dsābād'am or Dsaprong India is called Zac. But whether it meant originally all India or only part of it is uncertain. Pausinians mention three large islands or countries, bordering upon the sea, in the remote parts of the Erythraea. Their names were Seria, Sacaia and Abasa or Abasan. The first is obviously China, still called the kingdom of Ser in Tibet. Sacaia for Zāceya or the country of Zac [6] Indosten and Abasa is the Bhaīsa or Bhainsa or Buffalo country on the banks of the Indus. 8

In the Vedic literature there is no specific name for this whole country and the Vedic seers are contented by calling it by the general name "the earth". 9 The Vedic Aryans applied the name Sapta Sindhavah 10 to their homeland. But it is clear that the whole of the Indian subcontinent was not included within the connotation of this term. Mainly the northwestern part of India comes within the scope of the name "Sapta Sindhavah". It is interesting to have a look at the Vedīdād in this matter. Here Abur Mazda describes Yima the first progenitor of the Iranians as the son of Vīvāṃghat. It has

8. Ibid., p. 229.
10. R.V. VI. 56. 6; 6. 1. 10; VII. 36. 6; VIII. 54. 4; also Historical Geography of Ancient India by B.C. Law, p. 9.
11. Vedīdād ii. 21, 22; SBE, Vol. IV, p. 15.
been said that their original home was at the bank of the river Daityā and was called Ariyana Vaśgō. In the Rgveda Yama is presented as the son of Vivasvat. If we equate Vivāmghat with Vivasvat and Yima with Yama, another two equations also become possible. On the basis of phonetic resemblance we may suggest the identity of the river Daityā with Drśadvatī and Ariyanawith Aryavarta. In that case it would be a very old reference to the Indian subcontinent which was then only partially explored by the migrators and was accordingly given this narrow one-eyed designation.

Coming down to the Epic and Purānic literature we have the name Bhāratavarṣa, though the names 'sāgarasamvrtadvipa' and Kumārādvipa' are sometimes applied to it. Bhārata was, according to the Purānic tradition the southernmost of the four Varṣas of Jambudvīpa (which was more or less co-extensive with the continent of Asia). The Purāṇas say that Bhāratavarṣa lies between the Himavat and the sea. But it is very interesting to note that the term Bhāratavarṣa, according to the Purānic authors, indicated an area which was wider than India Proper. The names of some of its divisions clearly indicate that the geographical connotation of the term Bhāratavarṣa also embraced territories which "extend to the ocean,  

13. Vāyu Pu. 45. 75-76.
but are mutually inaccessible". Among such countries are Kaṭāḥa and Simhala identified with Kedah in the Malay Peninsula and Ceylon respectively.

The name Bhāratavarṣa has a legendary origin. The king named Bharata, who is generally described as a descendant of Priyavrata, son of Svāyambhuva Manu, is said to be responsible for the name Bhāratavarṣa. From the Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa it is known that Bhārata Varṣa in great antiquity was called Hima (Himāhva), a name obviously derived from the Himalayan Chain. The name Haimavata Varṣa, however, is applied in the Maññabhārata to the Kimpuruṣa Varṣa. In certain Purānic passages it is stated that Bharata was an epithet of Manu himself and the country was named after him. Sometimes the name Bhārata is said to have been derived from Bharata the son of Dūṣyanta the famous king of the Great Epic and the Purāṇas. It has been suggested by scholars like Dr. H.C. Raychaudhuri that the name Bhāratavarṣa may have been derived

15. Mark. Pu. 57. 6 — Saṃudrāntaritā jñeyāste tvagamyāq parasparam.
17. Ibid., p. 76; Brahmāṇḍa Pu. 34. 55.
18. Stud. Ind. Ant., p. 77, f.n. 2; Brahmāṇḍa Pu., Ch. 34. 55.
20. Ibid., p. 77.
from the historical Bharata tribe and not from the mythical Bharata of the Purāṇas. In fact the Bharata tribe plays a very important role in Vedic and Epic tradition. From the Buddhist texts too we come to know about the political domination of the greater part of India by 'seven Bharatas'.

Patañjali in his Mahābhāṣya refers to the sphere of the Bharatas, and remarks that proper Prācyya country lies outside it. The Bhāgavata Purāṇa calls Bhāratavarṣa by the name Ajanabha Varṣa. In the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa we are told that Bhāratavarṣa is divided into nine parts. Eight of them are mentioned by name as Indraivīpa, Kāserumāṇa, Tamraparna, Gabhastimāṇa, Nagadvīpa, Saumya, Gandhārya and Varuṇa. The ninth one is described as encircled by the seas (sāgara-saṃvṛta) and as extending over a thousand yojanas from north to south with Kirātas at the eastern extremity and the Yavanas at the western, and the Brāhmaṇas, Kṣatriyas, Vaśyas and Śūdras residing in the interior portion. The name of this ninth dvīpa is supplied by the Vāmana Purāṇa as Kumāra, by the Skanda Purāṇa as Kumārikā, and by the Kāvyamīmāṃsā of Rājaśekhara as Kumārī. This Kumāra, Kumārī or Kumārikā is

23. Ibid., Dialogues of the Buddha, Part II, p. 270.
24. II. 4. 66; 1. 493; India as known to Panini, p. 38.
27. Stud. Ind. Ant., p. 82, f.n. 4, 5.
obviously India proper here regarded only as a part of Bharata-varṣa. Thus from the idea of the nine divisions of Bharata-varṣa, it appears that this name (i.e. Bharatavarṣa) was sometimes applied to denote a wider area. It must be admitted, as pointed out by Dr. H.C. Raychaudhuri in his Studies in Indian Antiquities (p. 83) however, that the epithet 'sagarasarvāra' applied to Kumārī Dvīpa does not fully accord with the geographical position of India, for India proper is not surrounded by the sea, but bounded by it only on the east, south and west; on the north it is bounded by the great snow-capped Himalayas which may give us some vague idea of the ocean.

The earliest epigraphic reference to the name Bharatavarṣa seems to have occurred in the Hāthigumpha Inscription of Kharavela who flourished in Orissa during the latter half of the 1st century B.C. 29

Now we may concentrate on the Buddhist sources to have a fair idea of the nomenclature of India as found in the Buddhist texts. After a more or less thorough study of the Buddhist texts, one is struck with wonder to find that in the whole Buddhist literature, the one and only one appellation of India that occurs is the Jambudvīpa (Pali Jambudīpa).

28. Ibid., pp. 82-83, also f.n. 1.
29. OBI, p. 20, f.n. 4 — "Indraji (reads) .... Bharadhavasapaṭhāna". Jayaswal once read "mahadhita'bhisamayo Bharadhavasapaṭhānam" though he finally changed it.
It seems very surprising by the side of the varied names of this subcontinent found in the Brahmanical literature. In Buddhist literature Jambudvīpa figures as one of the four Great Island Continents or Mahādvīpas.

Childers in his Pali Dictionary points out that when opposed to Śīhaladvīpa Jambudvīpa means the continent of India. When opposed to Sīhaladvīpa Jambudvīpa means the continent of India.30 'But, it is difficult to be definite on this point', remarks B.C. Law in his Geographical Essays.31 Jambudvīpa in Brahmanical literature is described as one of the seven concentric islands encircled by seven samudras.32 The Brahmanical Jambudvīpa, in its wider sense, probably denoted the continent of Asia, but in its narrower sense it was sometimes identified with Bhāratavarṣa or Indian peninsula.33 It must be noted here that Jambudvīpa in Brahmanical literature was never a regular name for Indian subcontinent.

Both the Brahmanical and Buddhist texts account for the name 'Jambudvīpa' from a mythical giant Jambu tree growing in it. In the Brahmanical literature the name of the tree is

31. p. 5.
32. B.C. Law, Geography of Early Buddhism, p. xvi; CAGI, p. XXXVI.
Mbh. VI. 6. 13; Brahmāṇḍa Pu., 37. 28 -34; 43. 32.
Sudarśana and consequently the island is also called Sudarśana.\textsuperscript{34} According to the \textit{Papāṇcasūdani}, a commentary on the \textit{Majjhima Nikāya}, it is called Vana or forest.\textsuperscript{35} The tree stands on the bank of the river Jambo (Jambu).\textsuperscript{36}

The Jambu tree which is also called Naga has a trunk 15 Yojanas in girth. Its outspreading branches are 50 yojanas in length, its shade is 100 yojanas in extent and its height is 100 yojanas.\textsuperscript{37} On account of this tree the Jambudvīpa is also called Jambusandha (khaṇḍa)\textsuperscript{38} and Jambudhvaja.\textsuperscript{39}

From the description of the Jambudvīpa (Pali Jambudīpa) in the Buddhist literature it appears that the Jambudvīpa of the Buddhist tradition was more or less co-extensive with what we knew as the undivided Indian subcontinent. Buddhaghosa, the great Pali commentator says that five great rivers, Gahgā, Yamunā, Sarabhu, Aciravati and Mahī after watering Jambudīpa fall into the sea.\textsuperscript{40} He further informs us that Jambudīpa has 500 islands.\textsuperscript{41} We may also recall here the description of it

\textsuperscript{34} \textit{Stud. Ind. Ant.}, p. 70; \textit{Matsya Pu.}, 114. 74-75.
\textsuperscript{35} \textit{M.A.} Vol. II, p. 423; also \textit{Samantapāsādikā}, 1. 119.
\textsuperscript{36} \textit{India as described ... } p. 7.
\textsuperscript{37} \textit{DPPN.} I. p. 941.
\textsuperscript{38} SN. v. 552; SNA. 1. 121.
\textsuperscript{39} \textit{Lalit.} p. 13; \textit{Bodhi.} 4. 45.
\textsuperscript{40} \textit{Historical Geography of Ancient India ... } p. 10; \textit{D.A. II.} 429.
\textsuperscript{41} \textit{Historical Geography ... } p. 10; \textit{D.A. II.} 449.
in Anguttara Nikāya. Innumerable references to the high culture and learning of Jambudvīpa and also to the places of interest here are scattered throughout the Buddhist literature, which convince us that Jambudvīpa in their concept was nothing but a synonym of the Purānic Bharatavarṣa or Jaina Bharaha Vāsa. Dr. B.M. Barua gives his discreet view on this question in the following extract, 'This Jambudvīpa, may, for all practical purposes, be treated as India proper plus the inhabited tracts in the Himalayan region extending as far north as the Altyn range, if not still further up, as far west as the Hindukush range, and as far east as the Namklu mountains.'

Sometimes in Buddhist texts India has been designated simply Paṭhavi or Mahāpaṭhavi.

The Jaina work Jambudvāpannatti speaks of seven varṣas as constituent parts of Jambudvīpa. The Jaina description of Jambudvīpa in the said work and other works based on it, is materially the same as found in the Puraṇas.

It is interesting to note that Emperor Asoka who was a staunch supporter of Buddhism, mentions Jambudvīpa in one of

42. A.I. 35.
43. e.g. in Milā. p.3; Cūlavamsa Vol.I, p.36 etc.
44. Asoka and his inscriptions.I p. 70.
45. e.g. in D. II. 235.
46. India as described ... p. 1, also f.n. 1.
his minor Rock Edicts as the designation of the extensive region throughout which his valour was felt. Asoka is described in Buddhist tradition as a Dvīpacakraṇavartin i.e. the ruler of the entire Jambudvīpa. If we admit the exaggeration in ancient texts as natural, the statement should be regarded as more or less historical. Because, with the exception of Assam and the Antas in the south, Asoka's empire included roughly the whole of India together with parts of Afghanistan.

Asvaghosa the Buddhist poet accepts and states the Buddhist tradition regarding the continent of Jambudvīpa without comment.

It is more interesting that the Pāla kings of Bengal who were ardent Buddhists use the term Jambudvīpa instead of Bharatavarśa in their inscriptions.

47. *Stud. Ind. Ant.*, p. 64;
49. Ibid.
51. e.g. in Khālimpur Copper Plate of Dharmapāla, Bānagāḍa Copper Plate of Mānāhāli Copper plate Grant of Madanapaladeva, Monghyr Copper plate of Devapāladeva and so on ... samasta Jambudvīpabhupālānanantapadātabharanamadavaneḥ, (Corpus of Bengal Inscriptions, pp. 99, 201, 215, 118).
The Buddhist authors amaze us to a great extent by following such a strict and rigid principle regarding the name of India in every kind of writing by them. The Buddhist writings extend over a long period of time and it would have been quite natural if the authors denoted this subcontinent by different names at different ages, as did the Brahmanical authors. The appellation 'Jambudvīpa' seems to have become an integral part of Buddhist culture and tradition. It is very difficult to say why the Buddhists attached so much importance to the Jambu tree in naming this subcontinent. It would have been more sensible if they did so to the Bo-tree seated under which the Buddha attained Enlightenment.

V. Venkatachellan Iyer in the Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society\(^{52}\) wrote an article entitled 'The Seven Dvīpas of the Purānas in which he has tried to find out the etymology of the name 'Jambudvīpa' in a number of suggestions.\(^{53}\) These suggestions are as follows:–

(1) According to the Purānas the name is acquired by reason of a certain colossal tree of the Jambu species (Eugenia Jambolana), the rose apple tree. This is the common source of the name of Jambudvīpa according to both the Brahmanical and Buddhist writers.

(2) The Sanskrit word Jāmbuka means a jackal; and the Sanskrit word Jambala means mud, clay and aquatic plant (thus

\(^{52}\) Vols. XV-XVIII.

Jambalinī meaning a river i.e. having mud). The name Jambudvīpa may have had a root in the now obsolete word Jamba or Jambu meaning muddy or slushy or watery etc. Jambuka or Jackal is so called because it infests swamps and marsh lands. Mr. Iyer thinks that it was originally an adjectival form passed as a noun as has happened in the case of Jambalinī which primarily meant "abounding with mud, muddy" and secondarily the meaning of which came to be "a river". According to Mr. Iyer Jambudvīpa has derived its name from the same source. It was a land of swamps, bogs, fens, marshes etc. The author, however, accounts for the name of Jambudvīpa of the Purāṇas which in all probability signified more or less the continent of Asia. This identification obviously does not apply to the Buddhist Jambudvīpa. But one may think of the etymologies of the word in this respect, when one considers the fact that India is a land where there is no scarcity of marshy lands infested by jackals.

According to Sarad Chandra this continent is also named "from the jamjam sound made by the falling from heaven of the leaves of the wishing tree into the river Ganges." 54

James Legge in his "A Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms" 55 accounts for the name of Jambudvīpa in the following lines:

54. ERE Vol.IV, p.132, f.n.7
55. p. 34, f.n. 1.
"Jambudvīpa is ....... so called because it resembles in shape the leaves of the jambu-tree."

By the side of the rigid Indian Buddhist tradition about the name of this subcontinent, we have curiously enough the Chinese texts, the authors of which, though Buddhist by religion, call India by a number of appellations.

According to Yuan Chwang, the Chinese knew the names of India as T'ien-chu, Shen-tu and Sien (or Hien) tou, but he himself calls it Yin-tu and thinks it to be the correct pronunciation. Yuan Chwang's account also informs us that though India was known as Shen-tu, but most probably in its first use Shen-tu indicated a small region. The name Hsien tou was apparently applied to a region different from that designated Shen-tu. But Hsien (Hien) tou came to be used as a name for India and we find it described as a native designation for the whole country properly called Indravardhana. The name T'ien-chu "supplanted the old Shen-tu and all other names for India among the Chinese; and it continued to be the

56. Watters, Yuan Chwang I. p.131; S.N. Sen, India through Chinese Eyes, p. 59; B.C. Law, Historical Geography of Ancient India, p. 8.
57. Watters, Yuan Chwang I, p.131; S.N. Sen, India through Chinese Eyes, p. 59.
58. Watters, Yuan Chwang, I. p. 134; Yunnan and Bur'mah.
general literary designation for the country down to the T'ang period when the new name Yin-tu was brought into fashion. 60

I-ting says that Āryadeśa (A-li-ya-t'i-sha) the Noble Region was a name of India. 61 He also states that India was also known to the people as Madhyadeśa (Mo-t'i-t'i-sha), i.e. the Middle Land, "for it is the centre of a hundred myriads of countries". 62 We come to know from I-ting's account that the northern tribes who were known as the Mongols and Turks described it, the Noble Land "Hindu". 63

The Chinese authors very naturally were acquainted with the famous Indian Buddhist nomenclature of this country, i.e. Jambudvīpa. Fa Hien refers to it several times. 64 I-ting also mentions this name. 65

60. Ibid., p. 37.
61. Takakusu, A Record of the Buddhist Religion as practised in India and the Malay Archipelago (A.D. 671-695), p. 118; Ārya meaning 'noble' and 'desa' region. It was so called because men of noble character appear there successively and people all praise the land by that name.
62. Ibid., p.118; S.N. Sen, India through Chinese Eyes, p. 59.
64. A Record of Buddhistic kingdoms, James Legge, pp. 34-48, 80.
65. Takakusu, op. cit., pp. xlvi, 12, 13, 14, 67.
Thus the Chinese travellers accepted the Buddhist tradition of India and at the same time took heed of the current tradition of their own country regarding the nomenclature of this subcontinent. The records of Yuan Chwang and I-tsing also refer to India as Si-fang (the west) and Wu-t'ien (the five countries of India). These names give us a suggestion of India's geographical position in relation to China and of its grand regional divisions.\textsuperscript{66}

Other foreign sources also produce before us a considerable amount of information regarding the names of India. Dr. H.C. Raychaudhuri observes, "while the Purāṇas name India after a mythical tree (Jambu), a legendary hero, or the great mountain of snow (Hima), which walls it off from the rest of the world, foreigners, particularly those coming from the north-west, named it after the mighty river, which like the Nile in Egypt constitutes the most imposing feature of that part of the country with which they first came into contact".\textsuperscript{67}

Of the names derived from this mighty river, i.e. Sindhu (Persian Hindu, Greek Indus) the earliest are those recorded by the ancient Persians in the Avestā and the Inscriptions of Darius.\textsuperscript{68} In the Vendīdād we have the name 'Hapta Hindu' doubtless identical with "Septa Sindhavēh" of

\textsuperscript{66} Stud. Ind. Ant., p. 79.
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., pp. 77-78.
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid., p. 78.
The famous name Himdu occurs in the Persepolis and Naqsh-i-Rustam inscriptions of Darius. In the Greek version of the Naqsh-i-Rustam inscription of the Sasanid Monarch Shapur I (dated to c. A.D. 262) the name India occurs. In the Parthian version of the same inscription the word Hindstan is found in the place of India. The form Hndy may perhaps be traced in the Pahlavi recension of the record. It appears that the inscription of Shapur I refers to one and the same region as India, Hindstan and Hndy. Hndy may be considered as a precursor of the name Hind, used mainly by the Arab geographers. The expression Hind was obviously derived from the name of the land of Hindu (Sindhu) i.e. Hindustan.

Megasthenes applies the name 'India' to the whole country, "which is in shape quadrilateral" and has "its eastern as well as its western side bounded by the great sea but on the northern side it is divided by Mount Hemados from that part of Skythia which is inhabited by the Sakai, while

69. Ibid.
70. Ibid.
72. Ibid.
73. Ibid.
74. Ibid.
75. Ibid., p. 182.
the fourth western side is bounded by the river called Indus." This statement hints at the fact that in the days of Alexander and his immediate successors the term India acquired a wider meaning than in the days of Herodotus. In the days of Ptolemy, the denotation of India is far more widened because we find that he includes within its limits not only Hindusthan but also the vast region lying beyond the Ganges (India Extra Gangem).

The Babur Nama or the Tuzuk-i-Baburi refers to Hind, Hindustan and Hindustanat to denote the greater part of India.

Hindustan is probably the latest foreign name of India. It is, very interesting to note that the term 'Hindu' has found a place even in the Brahmanical epigraphs. The earliest reference to the term Hindu probably occurs in the inscriptions of the kings of Vijayanagara.

(ii) Shape Of India:

Curiously enough the shape of India has been almost perfectly reflected in many places by the ancient Indian texts.

76. Stud. Ind. Ant., p. 75.
77. Ibid., p. 78.
78. Ibid., p. 79.
which otherwise do not give us any systematic or well-arranged geographical information about this country and which are often full of colourful exaggerations in the place of sober history of geography. There are, however, a blend of fact and fiction, as usual, in the descriptions of the configuration of India in these works.

To begin with, the Vedas do not say a single word on the configuration of this country. In fact the Vedic Aryans could not yet acquire a full knowledge of the country and their activities seem to have been confined to the north-western part of India, though later on they apparently penetrated the eastern countries up to Bengal.

Coming to the Epics we find that the Mahābhārata (the Bhīṣmaparvan) gives a beautiful description of the shape of India which is very important from the geographical point of view. According to it, India is of a triangular figure. Its base rests upon the snowy mountains and Cape Comorin is its summit. This equilateral triangle is divided into four other triangles, equilateral also, and of equal dimensions. But no dimensions are given and no places are mentioned.

82. JASB, XX, Wilford, quoting the Bhīṣma Parvan of the Mbh.
as communicated to him by Colebrook, CAGI, p. 5.
There are three triangles in the north and the large one in the south represents the peninsula. The three triangles in the north meet exactly in the middle of the basis of the larger one, upon the banks of the river Drṣadvatī, a little to the northeast of Sthāneśwar or Than-e-sur according to a very curious passage from the commentaries on the Vedas.

Cunningham observes in this connection — 'The shape corresponds very well with the general form of the country, if we extend the limits of India to Ghazni on the northwest, and fix the other two points of the triangle at Cape Comorin and Sadiya in Assam.'

In the Purānic geography, the shape of India has been described with the help of varied similes. The author of the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa thinks that the shape of India is like that of 'a tortoise' (kūrma) which lies outspread with the face towards the east. Here we find a "total misconception of the configuration of India." But elsewhere in the same text the shape of India is very faithfully depicted like that of a peninsula with the Himalayan range stretching along on its

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84. Wilford, JASB, XX. p. 228.
85. CĀGI, p. 6.
86. India as described .... p.13; Mārk. Pu., Ch.58, of. Varāhamihira's Brhatsamhitā, XIV.
88. Mārkaṇḍeya Pu. 57. 59.
north like the string of a bow. Thus India has been described as 'catuḥ samsthāna samsthita' or having a fourfold configuration. This description suits beautifully with the true geographical shape of India. Another interesting description of the shape of this country occurs in the Purāṇas as well as in the Mahābhārata. According to this description, India is bow-like in shape. Here we should take the word bow-like (dhanuḥsamsthā) as signifying triangular in shape as pointed out by Nīlakaṇṭha in his commentary on Mahābhārata VI. 6. 38 and VI. 6. 2. He explains the term in this way: when two ends of a fully-strung bow, made of horn, meet together, the mid point of it creates a triangle with a curve. In the Mahābhārata itself it has been clearly stated that Bhāratavarṣa resembles from south to north, a bended bow, of which the string being pulled by the hand forms an apex at Dhanuṣkoṭi, Rāmsetu or Rāmesvara.

Another description of India is that of the Nava Khanda or nine divisions which was first described by astronomers Parāśara and Varāhamihira and later accepted by several Purāṇas.

90. Matsya Purāṇa. 113. 32; Brahmanda Pu. 35. 33; Mbh. VI. 6. 38; also cf. Nīlakaṇṭha's commentary on Mbh. VI. 6. 3-5; Bhārata-varṣasya dhanuḥkāraṇatvam (Mbhe. ed. Haridāsa Siddhāntavāgīśa, vol. 17, pp. 63-64)
91. India as described ...... p. 13;
   Mbh., Bhīṣma-parvan. 6. 38.
92. CAGI. p. 6.
According to this description India had the shape of an eight-petalled lotus encircling a round central division. Pañcāla is the pericarp of the lotus the eight petals being Magadha(east), Kāliṅga(southeast), Āvanta(south), Ānarta(southwest), Sindhu Sauvīra(west), Harahaura(northwest), Madra(north) and Kanindā (northeast).93 The Mārkandeya Purāṇa, however, places Sindhu Sauvīra and Ānarta to the southwest.94 Alberuni remarks on this point: 'Astronomers and astrologers divide the directions according to the lunar stations. Therefore the country, too, is divided according to the lunar stations and the figure which represents this division is similar to a tortoise. Therefore it is called Kūmacakra i.e. the tortoise circle or the tortoise shape.'95

Now, turning to our main source in concern, the Buddhist literature, we find that early Buddhist sources are silent about the shape of India. For a Buddhist conception about the configuration of this country we have to turn to the Mahāgovinda-suttanta of the Dīgha Nikāya96 which describes India as having the shape of a bullock cart with face towards south.97 This

93. Ibid., pp. 6-7; Brhatsamhitā, Ch. XIV. 32. 33.
94. CAGI, pp. 6-7.
   Here the term Mahāpatthavi has been used to denote India.
97. India as described ... p. 13.
Shape of India in Buddhist concept: uttareṇa ayotam dakkhinenā sakataṃ ni khaṃ.
metaphor represents India as broad on north and narrow on south. The Dīgha Nikāya also adds that this country is divided into seven equal parts. It points further that king Renu's country was situated in the middle of these divisions. This shape of India agrees fairly to the actual configuration of India which (with Pakistan on the northwest) really is broad on the north and narrow in the south. The Chinese author Fah-kai-lih-to also recorded this broadness on the north and narrowness in the south of the Indian subcontinent.

The Mahāvastu Avadāna also gives almost an exact Sanskritised version of the Dīgha Nikāya passage describing the shape and divisions of India. The Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics says, "It is a chariot in form with four sides: three 2,000 leagues long, the fourth 3.5 leagues (perimeter 6003.5)".

The Jain conception of the shape of India is found in the Jambudīpamappatti according to which the country is broad on the north just like an outspread bed-stead (uttaraō paliyakkaṃṭhānaṃṣṭhis) whereas in the south as being bow-like

100. HGAI, B.C. Law, ... p. 13.
   Dakṣipena saṃkṣipta śakaṭamukhaṃṣṭhitam, etc.
102. ERE. Vol. IV. p. 132.
Ci.e. semi-circular) in shape (dhanupitthasathie). The Deccan is described by this text as having the shape of a half-moon (addhac andhasanthiasanthiye). 103

When we compare the foreign sources with the indigenous ones on the question of the configuration of India, striking resemblance is seen between the two in this respect.

The Chinese pilgrims, who were Buddhist by religion, give us fair idea of the shape of the country. Yuan Chwang refers to the shape of India like a crescent or a half-moon. 104 He tells us: "The term used was apparently Indukala transcribed Yin-t'e-ka-lo. This word means a digit of the moon or a crescent but, it is rendered in Chinese simply by Yueh or moon." 105 One becomes confused why a thorough pilgrim and traveller like Yuan Chwang describes the shape of India in a not-so-accurate way. The solution perhaps lies in the fact that Yuan Chwang widely travelled on the northern part of India and most probably he refers to that side which exactly looked like a half-moon: "with the Vindhya as its base and the Himalayas spreading its two arms on two sides of the diameter." 106

103. India as described ... p. 8.
104. HGAI, B.C. Law, ... p. 13.
105. Watters, Yuan Chwang, I. p. 140.
106. Historical Geography of Ancient India, p. 13.
The Greek accounts leave on us the impression that "the ancient Indians had a very accurate knowledge of the true shape and size of their country." The Greek writers who wrote accounts of India depending partly on their own observation and partly on the information derived from the Indian sources described the shape of India with singular accuracy as that of a rhomboid with the Indus on the west, the mountains on the north and the sea on the east and south. But this accuracy is not always maintained as in the Geography of Ptolemy we find that the true shape of India has been completely distorted and its most striking physical feature, the acute angle formed by the meeting of two coasts of the peninsula at Cape Comorin is changed to a single coast line running almost straight from the mouth of the Indus to the mouth of the Ganges.

Thus it is clear that though both the Indian and foreign accounts regarding the shape of the Indian subcontinent mingle up facts with fiction, and sometimes make the configuration of India distorted, yet, on the whole the actual shape of India, broad on the north and narrow or triangular towards the south has been faithfully reflected in general in these accounts which prove how sincerely the ancient Indians and foreigners tried to know the geography of this country.

108. Ibid., p. 2.
109. Ibid., p. 9.
Size Of India:

The ancient Indian texts do not furnish us with much reliable information about the actual size of the country. Whatever data regarding this matter is contained in the indigenous literature seem to have been exaggerated beyond reality.

According to the Arthaśāstra of Kautilya, "the land which extends north to south from the Himalaya to the sea and measures east to west a thousand yojanas is the kṣetra (i.e. the sphere of influence) of a Cakravartin (i.e. an imperial ruler of India)." 110 Rājasekhara's Kāvyamīmāṃsā says that a sāmrat (practically the same as a Cakravartin) is one who conquers the whole land from the southern sea (the Indian Ocean) to the Himālaya. 111 Rājasekhara also holds that the sphere of influence of a Cakravartin is the land measuring one thousand yojanas and lying between Kumārīpura (Cape Comorin) and Bindusaras (in the Himalayas) according to the Purāṇas and that the conqueror of above kṣetra is a Cakravartin. 112 If we take a yojana equal to 4½ miles 113

110. Studies in the Geography of Ancient and Mediaeval India, D.C. Sircar, p. 5 (also Arthaśāstra of Kautilya, IX. 1).
113. "The Yojana would ... be ... a little more than 4½ miles. But in all the Hindu books the yojana is reckoned at 4 kroṣas, either of 1,000 or 2,000 dhanus or bow lengths". — contd ... p. 85.
roughly the sphere of Cakravartiksetra becomes \(4\frac{1}{2} \times 1,000\) miles = 4,500 miles.

Coming to the Buddhist source, we find that early Pali Buddhist texts practically offer no glimpses on this subject. The Buddhist Sanskrit text Lalitavistara states in this respect: paramāṇurajonikṣepasyānena praveṣenāyaṁ Jambudvīpaḥ saptayojanaṣahasrāṇi.\(^{114}\) The smallest unit in the measurement is here conceived as paramāṇu. According to the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa the following process of equation is to be formed to reach Yojana from Paramāṇu: \(^{115}\)

\[
\begin{align*}
10 \text{ paramāṇu} &= 1 \text{ parasūkṣma}. \\
10 \text{ parasūkṣma} &= 1 \text{ trasareṇu}. \\
10 \text{ trasareṇu} &= \text{ a particle of dust}. \\
10 \text{ particles of dust} &= 1 \text{ hair's point}. \\
10 \text{ hair's points} &= 1 \text{ likhya} \\
10 \text{ likhyas} &= 1 \text{ yuka}
\end{align*}
\]

CAGI Appendix B. p. 655. Wilson in his Sanskrit Dictionary states that the yojana is a measure of distance equal to four krośas which at 8,000 cubits or 4,000 yards to the krośa will be exactly 9 miles. Other computations make the yojana about 5 miles or even more than 4½ miles. — A Manual of Buddhism, p. 11 f.n. By the Singhalese it is regarded as about 16 miles in length. The Hindus of the continent, however, obviously make it much shorter — A Manual of Buddhism, p. 11 f.n.

114. Lalit. ed. Lefmann, p. 149.

10 yukas = 1 heart of barley.
10 hearts of barley = 1 grain of barley of middle size.
10 grains of barley = 1 finger (or inch).
6 fingers = 1 pāda (or foot, the breadth of it).
2 feet = 1 span.
2 spans = 1 cubit.
4 cubits = 1 staff.
2,000 staves = 1 gavyūti.
4 gavyūtis = 1 yojana.

According to some Pali commentarial texts, Jambudīpa is 10,000 yojanas in extent. Of them 4,000 are covered by the ocean, 3,000 by the forest of the Himalayas and only 3,000 are inhabited by men. The Burmese version of the Lalitavistāra specifically points out the size of the Jambudvīpa: "That island (Dzaboudiba = Sanskrit Jambudvīpa) is a most extensive one, measuring in length 300 youdzanas, in breadth 252 and in circumference 900".

Without getting into the difficult task of measuring the exact extent of the Jambudvīpa, some of the Buddhist texts call it only "mahā" or great. In the Dīgha Nikāya the

116. India as described ... p.7; Lalit. R.L. Mitra, p. 51.
117. D.A. j., 429; D.III. 75; SNA vol.1, p. 59; J. IV. 84. The Jaina Jambudīpamaṇṇatti (i. 9) says that the Jambudiva is 526.6

contd ... p.87.
Buddha predicts that Jambudīpa will be mighty and prosperous (iddho ceva phīto ca) with 84,000 towns which conveys an idea of its great extent.

The measurements of Jambudīpa as found in the Buddhist texts and commentaries are by no means close to the real extent of India Proper. Even if we take a yojana to be equal to 4 1/2 miles the circumference of Jambudīpa becomes 45,000 miles (as the extent of Jambudīpa is stated to be 10,000 yojanas in the commentaries) or 31,500 miles (as the Lalitāvistara describes it to be 7,000 yojanas in extent) both of which are far from reality. But while criticizing the Pali commentarial literature as well as the Buddhist Sanskrit text Lalitavistara as being full of discrepancies regarding the true measurements of India, we must not forget that India in those days might have denoted a far greater land extending over the seas to the southeast Asian countries, the India Extra Gangem of Ptolemy. The statement of the commentaries that 4,000 yojanas of the Jambudīpa are covered by the ocean becomes significant if we entertain the idea of Greater India suggested by Ptolemy and corroborated by the Purānic sources. The commentaries also inform us that to the Jambudīpa are attributed 500 islands. Those statements may signify that the

in extent — India as described ... p.8. Asoka in his Rock Edict (M.R.E. and R.E. XIII) gives Jambudīpa a length of six hundred leagues. — India as described ..., p. 15.

120. HGAI, p. 10; D.A. i:449.
Buddhist authors while giving the extent of the Jambudīpa took into account the great number of islands and countries in the ocean skirting the Indian subcontinent.

It is the Greeks among the foreigners who took pains in measuring the length and breadth of the Indian subcontinent. But the results are not always satisfactory and the measurement done by one differs in some ways from that done by the other. But all the accounts agree that the course of the Indus from Alexander's Bridge to the sea was 10,000 stadia or 1,149 British miles. The whole distance from the Indus to the mouth of the Ganges was estimated as 16,000 stadia or 1,838 British miles. The southern or southwestern coast from Cape Comorin to the mouth of the Indus was reckoned at 3,000 stadia more than the northern side, i.e. 19,000 stadia or 2,183 British miles. Though there are some discrepancies in these measurements, we must not rule out the probability that the ancient geographers might have taken into account also the deep indentation of the two Great Gulfs of Cambay and Cutch which perhaps led to the greater part of the discrepancy.

Diodorus says that the whole extent of India from east to west is 28,000 stadia and from north to south 32,000 stadia, or 60,000 stadia (6,890 British miles) altogether.

121. CAGI. pp. 1-5.
122. Ibid., p. 3.
123. Ibid., p. 4.
124. Ibid., p. 5.