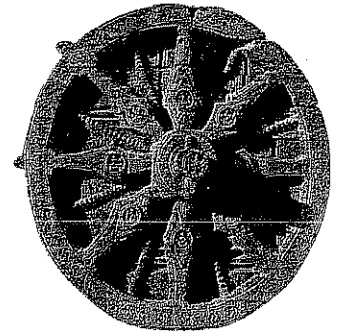


Geography of Ancient India

LESSON

1



The present-day countries of India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan are located in southern Asia. The area these countries fill is called the Indian subcontinent. A **subcontinent** is a large area of land that is separated by geography from the rest of a continent. To the north of the Indian subcontinent lie the tallest mountains in the world, the Himalayas (hih•muh•LAY•uhz). The Himalayas form a natural barrier between the Indian subcontinent and the rest of Asia.

The Land of India

The two great rivers of the Indian subcontinent, the Indus and the Ganges (GAN•jeez), begin in the snowy peaks of the Himalayas. Many tributaries flow into the Indus and the Ganges rivers. The Indus River and its tributaries begin in the western Himalayas and move southward through Pakistan to empty into the Arabian Sea.

The Himalayas stretch for about 1,500 miles (2,414 km) and are divided into three ranges—the Greater, Lesser, and Outer Himalayas.

FOCUS

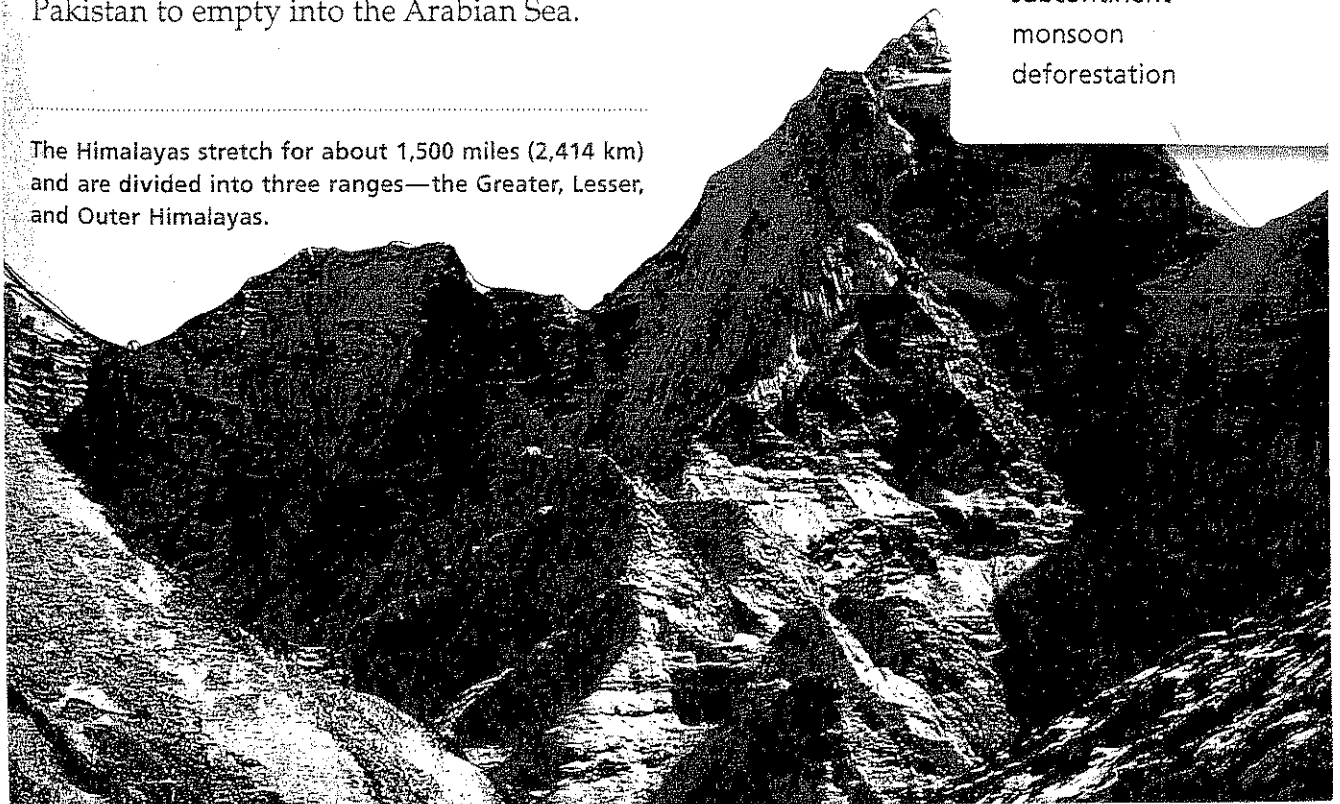
How do elevations and climates affect the lives of people today?

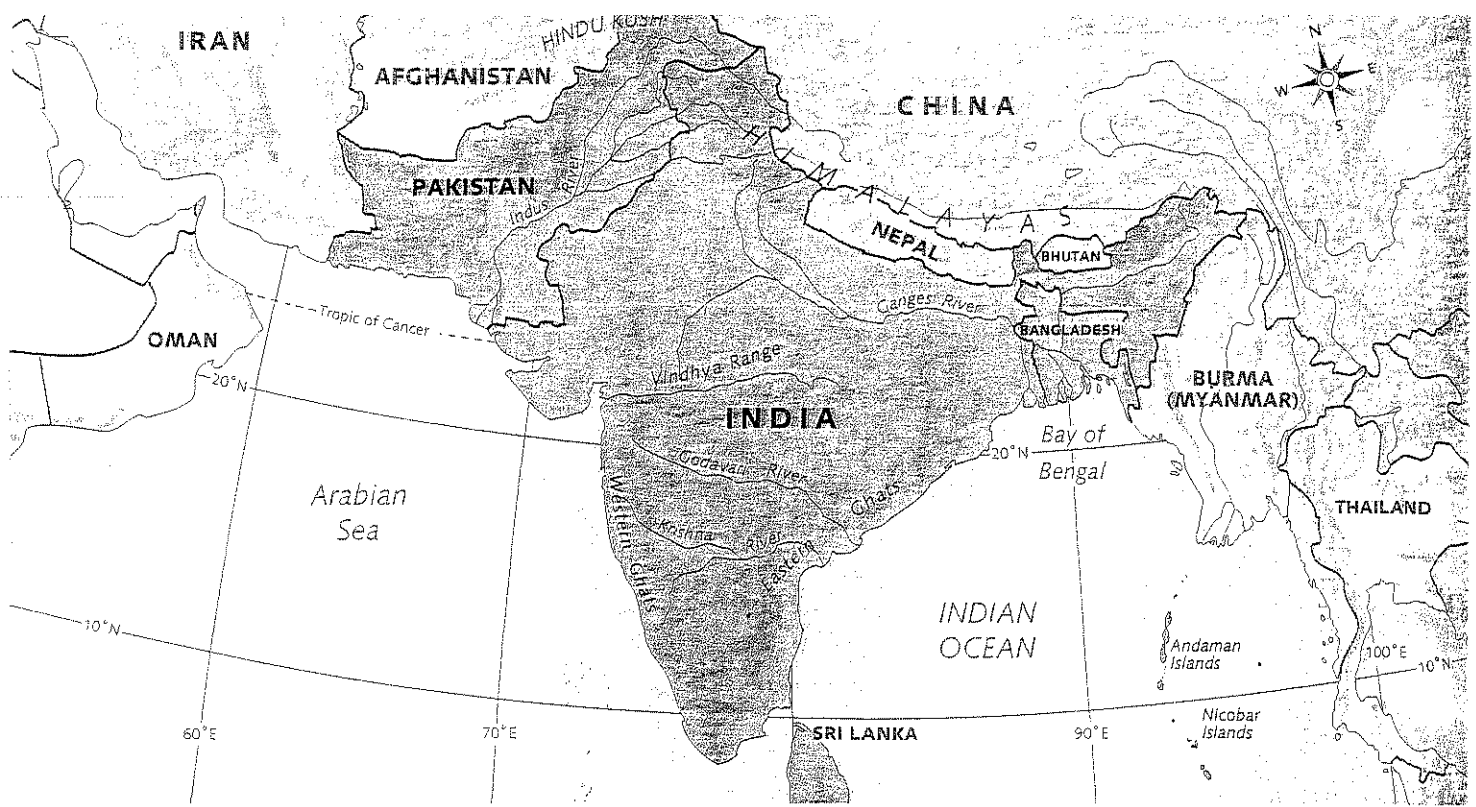
Main Idea Read

to find out how the elevations and climates of India affected the lives of the ancient people who lived there.

Vocabulary

subcontinent
monsoon
deforestation





Place This map shows present-day India and Pakistan.
 ■ Where are most of the mountains located in India?

The Indus is one of the longest rivers in the world, with a length of about 1,800 miles (2,900 km). The Ganges River and its tributaries start in the middle of the Himalayas and flow eastward through India to the Bay of Bengal.

Today much of the Indian subcontinent is part of the country of India. For the most part northern India is covered by wide river plains. The plain that surrounds the Indus River and its four main tributaries is called the Punjab, or "Five Rivers." East of the Punjab, the Ganges River flows through the large Ganges Plain. This region of the Indian subcontinent is often called the North Indian Plain.

No large mountains like the Himalayas rise in southern India. This area also lacks the wide river plains found in northern India. Instead, southern India is a land of varying heights, with many large rugged hills. This region is known as the Deccan (DEH•kuhn). Travel is more difficult in this hilly land than in northern India.

Rivers in southern India are fed by rainfall, not by melting snow as in northern India. Because of this, many of southern India's smaller streams are dry except during the rainy season. While the rivers of northern India are often used for transporting people and goods, boats are rarely used on southern India's rivers.

The greater ease of travel in northern India made it easier for people to unite there. This may help explain why the large empires of ancient India were all located in the north.

REVIEW How is the geography of northern India different from that of southern India?