

Branches of Geography in Ancient India

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Ancient Indian geography encompassed branches like **Astronomy, Mathematical Geography, Cosmology, Regional Geography, and Practical Geography**, informed by texts like the Surya Siddhanta. Key contributions came from scholars like Aryabhata, who described a spherical Earth, and Varahamihira, who discussed astronomical phenomena. This ancient knowledge focused on the physical layout of the subcontinent, the movements of celestial bodies, and the relationship between the physical environment and human activities.

Key Branches of Geography in Ancient India:

- **Astronomy:** Ancient Indian scholars made significant advancements in understanding planetary positions, movements, and forces, contributing to the development of astronomical geography.
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- **Mathematical Geography:** This branch included calculations for latitudes, longitudes, and local time, alongside studies on the Earth's circumference, as exemplified by Aryabhata's work
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- **Cosmology:** Ancient texts reflect concepts of the universe and the classification of elements like Earth, water, and ether, which are foundational to cosmological understanding.

- **Regional Geography:** Scholars identified and described major geographical regions of the Indian subcontinent, including the Himalayas, river plains, and peninsular India.
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- **Physical Geography:** Knowledge of the subcontinent's physical features, such as mountain systems, rivers, and geological divisions, was developed through observational and analytical studies.
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- **Cartography:** The creation of maps was an integral part of ancient Indian geographical thought, as evidenced by scholars like Brahmagupta and Bhaskara.
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Key Figures and Texts:

- **Aryabhatta (476 A.D.):** Described the Earth as a sphere and wrote the *Aryabhattiyam*, containing early calculations for Earth's circumference.
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- **Varahamihira (505–587 A.D.):** Authored the *Panchasiddhantika*, discussing solar and lunar eclipses and developing astronomical concepts.
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- **Brahmagupta (598–665 A.D.):** Contributed to astronomy and mathematics, with his works including *Brahma Siddhanta* and *Khand Kavya*.
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- **Bhaskaracharya (1114–1185 A.D.):** Wrote the *Siddhanta Shiromani*, discussing gravitation and other mathematical and astronomical topics.
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- **Surya Siddhanta:** This ancient astronomical treatise is noted for first using the term "Bhogol" (geography).

Contributions:

- **Earth's Shape:** The ancient Indian belief in a spherical Earth was scientifically established by scholars like Aryabhata
- **Geographical Terminology:** The term "Bhogeol" was used in ancient texts to denote geography.
- **Regional Understanding:** Ancient texts described the main geographical regions of India, such as the Himalayas and the Deccan plateau.