

# Journey to the Ganges

*The American writer Mark Twain visited India in 1896. Twain felt awed by India. It was, he exclaimed, a “land of dreams and romance, of fabulous wealth and fabulous poverty, of splendor and rags, of palaces and hovels, of famine and disease, of tigers and elephants, the cobra and the jungle, and country of a hundred tongues.”*

You’re assuming the persona of an Indian student whose family is making a special journey to the Ganges River with his/her family for the Kumbh Mela Festival that occurs every 12 years for 40 days. Kumbh Mela, is a Hindu religious festival that brings people from all over the world. It celebrates the return of a special life-giving nectar that returns to the river water every twelve years, and that lasts for 40 days (Douglas 35).



## Chapter 1

**Our first step** is to choose **your name and write a background story** before we embark on the journey to Allahabad and Benares (Varanasi).

### 1. Choose a main character:

**Boy names** (Baldev, Bharat, Brahma, Dipak, Ganesh, Indra, Kama, Karan, Krishna, Narayan, Rama, Ravi, Shiva, Surya, Vishnu)

**Girl Names** (Arundahati, Chandra, Devi, Durga, Gauri, Indira, Kali, Lakshmi, Parvati, Rati, Saraswati, Sita, Tara, Uma)

*Name meanings can be researched online at <http://www.behindthename.com/nmc/ind-myth.html>.*

### 2. About the main character:

- ☞ He/She is 13 years old and lives in the capital city of India, New Delhi. You have not traveled outside of New Delhi ever. This journey is your first long distance trip.
- ☞ What caste does the family belong? What does that mean? How does that affect their life in New Delhi?
- ☞ What do his/her parents do?
- ☞ Why is the Ganges River important to his/her family? Why is this trip important?
- ☞ They have about 400 miles to travel. How would they travel there? (train, bus, car) Why that mode of transportation?

**3. Write your back story:** Tell your story in first person, as if you are that person. Give all the details above and tell as much as you can about your life in New Delhi...family, friends, things you do, your feelings about this trip, etc. You may want to plan on the back of this sheet and then write your story on notebook paper. Keep ideas that belong together in the same paragraph. Try to connect your thoughts in a logical manner. Tell as much as necessary so that the next chapter of your *Journey to the Ganges* is the first day of traveling. You may need to refer to your Social Studies book, notes or handouts for information.

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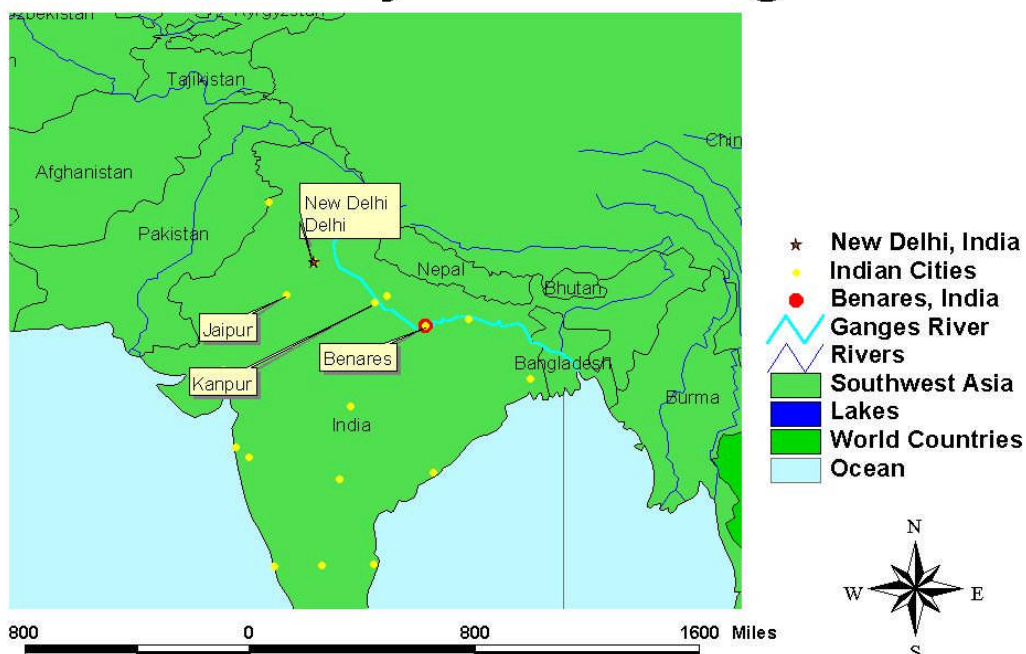
## Chapter 2

### Day One

Use the following prompts and questions to guide your Chapter 2 discussion. You may want to write this chapter like a journal of thoughts, conversations and feelings of your journey to the festival city. Refer to the map for possible cities that you pass through.

- ✎ Describe getting prepared to leave your home, travel and stay at the festival a week.
  - ✎ How are you traveling? Why?
  - ✎ How do you feel about the trip today?
  - ✎ What do you see along the way?
  - ✎ What are you and your family doing or talking about as you travel?
  - ✎ Do you stop anywhere along the way? Where? Why?
  - ✎ Do you arrive in one day or does it take longer? Why?
  - ✎ Where do you go when you arrive?
  - ✎ Where are you staying?
  - ✎ Do you have friends or relatives there?
  - ✎ Did you travel with other friends or family members?
  - ✎ As you lie down to sleep on day one, how do you feel?
  - ✎ What are you looking forward to doing while you're at the festival?
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### **Chapter 3**

- ✎ What was the main purpose of your trip to Benares?
- ✎ What did you learn about your faith on your trip?
- ✎ What did you learn about your family on your trip?
- ✎ What was fun about the festival?
- ✎ What will you remember always about your trip? Why