

# Socio Economic and Cultural Life of Medieval India by Foreign Travelers

Dr. Shashi Kiran\*

Associate Professor (History), CISKMV Fatehpur Pundri, Kaithal Haryana

**Abstract – A travelog or an itinerary is a travel writing of literary worth. It regularly records the encounters of a creator visiting a spot for the delight of travel. In post-old style times Muslims and Chinese commanded in travel writing however Europeans took the focal stage in travel and travel writing during the early present day time (From 1500-1800 A.D.). Europeans dared to the inaccessible comers of the globe and European print machines produced a large number of travel accounts that portrayed remote land and people groups. The volume of travel literature was extraordinary to the point that few editors, including Giambattista, Ramusio, Richard Hakluyt, Theodore de Bry and Samuel Purchas amassed various travel accounts and made them accessible in distributed assortments. Throughout the hundreds of years India has consistently been the object of remote intrigue which has driven scholars, conquerors missionaries, journalists and travelers to wander portrayals and arrangements. Remote endeavors at portraying the sub-landmass have extraordinarily affected individuals imaginaries, causing the introduction of a cliché vision of the nation which by one way or another has made due until today, both in the West where those records were created and in India itself.**

-----X-----

## INTRODUCTION

India's old style picture was set up by travelers from outside - those exceptional individuals who dared to remote terrains in the attire of traders, representatives, rulers, pastors, pioneers, heads, fighters, specialists, author, artists, thinkers, missionaries, sailors, scholars, conquerors, journalists, doctor, diamond setter and so forth and recorded the contemporary occasions, conditions and conditions political, social, monetary, social and authoritative, geological subtleties, thoughts and ideas, exchange, widely varied vegetation, conduct and manners and numerous different parts of life in India which are important for comprehension the socio-social just as financial existence of the time. They passed on back impressions to their comrades through enthusiastic stories, tales and travel diaries. These travelers originated from far and close. They were from England, Portugal, Italy, France, Germany, Holland, Russia, Persia, Turkey, Tibet and the Arab nations. The importance of 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> can't be estimated in the World History. Indeed, even the time of these two centuries framed the most splendid ages in Indian History due to the development and ruin of Hindu Kingdom in the South during the principal half of the sixteenth century. On another hand it saw the ascent and development of the Mughals to centrality in Northern India. The political strife of the principal half of the sixteenth century was transitional. In the end, it offered way, to the security that implied Akbar's

rule; starting with the second 50% of the sixteenth century.

The historical backdrop of both the hundreds of years in India has been an extremely fascinating study politically, socially, monetarily and socially. The adjustments in every one of these circles are momentous and set apart as well as, likewise, progressive. The Turko-Afghan guideline in the early medieval period, offered path to the foundation of the Mughal influence in any case, it came up short on a strong premise and was cleared away-rather, too early, by the Afghans under Sher Shah. However, it is shockingly that, the Mughals had the option to strike back effectively, and reestablish their lost greatness and respect. Besides, they had the option to execute their dynastic principle in this land for around two centuries.

During the main portion of the sixteenth century travelers by and large visited Southern India, particularly the Malabar Coast and the Hindu realm of Vijayanagar. This was because of its topographical location. South India lies in the peninsular Deccan Plateau and is limited by the Arabian Sea in the west, the Indian Ocean in the south and the Bay of Bengal in the east. The topography of the district is assorted, incorporating two mountain extends, the Western and Eastern Ghats, and a level heartland. Various dynastic

realms administered over pieces of South India during its great history.

In this paper we study those parts of financial and social existence of Medieval India which were either not engaged or not given due significance in the official or Persian chronicle. Hence the Socio-monetary and Cultural existence of Medieval India as delineated in the records of outside travelers has been managed in incredible detail in this postulation. Pretty much every part of financial and social existence of medieval India had been taken by these travelers. In spite of the fact that there are bunches of claims on the travelers like they overstated the issue and relied essentially upon bazaar chatters however there are a few parts of Indian History that came into light as a result of these outsiders like the issue of 'Anarkali' and so forth. As they were informal sources they were not constrained to praise the authoritative ruler.

The most significant data with respect to the contemporary method of sociocultural life during the medieval period is to be found in the records of Barbosa, Pyard Laval, Nuniz, Paes, Fitch, Pelsaert, William Finch, Edward Terry, Coryat, Pietro Delia Valle, Peter Mundy, Manrique Mandelso, Tavemier, Bemier, Manucci, Thevnot, Bowrey, Carre, Careri, Fryer, Marshall, Ovington and Hamilton. These travelers recorded realities about Indian public activity with extensive objectivity. Records of Pelsaert, Tavemier and different travelers illuminate the exchange and economy of India during 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century with no limitations. These outside travelers had considered the financial states of various fragments of society.

### Foreign Travellers Who Visited Medieval India

The wealth assortment and abundance of the records of the remote travelers who visited India adds new measurements to the tale of life and human progress by topping off the wide lacunae in the missing connections of the portrayal of realities, supplement imperative data to cover basic aspects of the social and social history and loans totality of life in Medieval India during the sixteenth and the seventeenth century. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had felt the gigantic appearance of outside travelers on Indian sub-mainland. The marvel of their appearance was not a remarkable one since antiquated occasions in Indian history. Be that as it may, their appearance was not as customary or consistent as in sixteenth century or in crowd as in the seventeenth century.

The explanation is evident to this expansion in the convergence of remote travelers in India which is given by numerous modern history specialists also. H.K. Kaul expresses, "With Vasco da Gama's opening of Cape course in 1498. European contacts with India turned out to be increasingly ordinary; various travel accounts and insightful works were

delivered and, by the eighteenth and nineteenth hundreds of years the multiplication of manuals on India mirrors the presence of much traveling from Europe.

After the Vasco da Gama's arriving at Calicut in 1498, the 50 years that followed saw the ascent of the Portuguese force which was stretched out all through the East Indies. They began involving pretty much every spot of significance to the Indian exchange among Aden and Formosa step by step. Those spots were Malacca, Mangalore, Surat, all the Gujarat ports, Muscat, Ormuz, Daman, Calicut, Cochin, the greater part of Ceylon, Negapatam and Thatta on the Indus, Masulipatam, Macao, the greater part of the Coromandel and Bengal ports.

### Foreign Travellers of the Sixteenth Century

Ludovico Di Varthema of Bologna was an Italian vagabond whose travel date is 1502-1508. Not a lot is thought about his life before his travel. Indeed, even his accurate origination can't be followed. A few references to his prior life can be taken from his discussion in his content which also isn't clear. His travel places in India incorporate the Indian coasts similarly as Pulicat close to Madras on its eastern piece including Ceylon. From Pulicat he went over the Bay of Bengal. He begins for India on 4<sup>th</sup> March, 1504 and came to Diu, he leaves India for Europe. Varthema's account on Calicut is in detail when contrasted with other town of India. To Varthema, Calicut was the central town in all India. He visited Calicut multiple times. In 1505 and 1506, he worked around eighteen months in the limit of a factor (exchange operator). He expounds on Navratra Festival at the Himlii New Year in the area of Calicut. He sees the haughty standoffish quality of both Brahman and Nairs from the "unapproachable" lower classes of society and the food and way embraced by the various standings in the public arena. He takes note of the notable matriarchal arrangement of legacy and the law of legacy common at Calicut in some detail.

Contacting the financial life during his travel Varthema gives a decent record of "brokers and cash changer" of Calicut. The different sorts of pontoons by names in different dialects other than the nearby vernacular, Malayalam, are noted at Calicut. Varthema's record of Vijayanagar ends up with a decent portrayal of the money. Varthema's account is direct and regularly excessively short. Further obvious botches, they are brilliantly exact

### Foreign Travellers of the Early Seventeenth Century

The seventeenth century in India saw the development of an extremely extraordinary domain in the East, the Mughal Empire. The time of a century which saw the rule of three most significant Mughal rulers other than Akbar was critical really

taking shape of the Indian Medieval History. The Portuguese were the main country to grab hold of regional belongings in India involving Goa and a couple of different ports on the western coast until the end of the sixteenth century. The English were likewise investigating the potential outcomes to set up their entitlement to exchange with India through the northern entry. "They embraced different intends to accomplish their objective. They attempted to dazzle the rulers and honorability by giving exorbitant presents. Commander Nicholas Dovnton arranged a rundown of presents to be given to Jahangir. Thomas Roe had introduced an alluring blade to Jahangir present giving was extremely basic as alluded by practically all the travelers. Another approach to pick up their objective was to pay off the degenerate Mughal authorities. Therefore, the legitimate establishment of the East India Company was laid by a Royal Charter of December 31, 1600 A.D

A swarm of remote travelers visited the Mughal Empire from the mid seventeenth century. The mid seventeenth century concurs with the time of Jahangir (1605-1627). Generally the travelers were Englishmen. All things considered, there were some significant non-English travelers likewise in record in each rule that had advanced an intriguing and nitty gritty record for the period managing the financial and social existence of the period. Pyard De Laval made an opening of the arrangements of remote guests during the mid seventeenth century. Two things that merit referencing here are right off the bat, he was a Frenchman and also, he visited South India.

## **OBJECTIVES**

This thesis proposes to study the following aspects and questions

1. To study the individuals have travelled beyond their own Societies
2. To study the conditions that accelerated the arrival of foreign visitors on Indian Sub-continent

## **Trade and Commerce**

During the sixteenth and seventeenth hundreds of years the exchange and business of India thrived as the volume of exchange and the assortment of the articles of exchange expanded significantly. An insurgency occurred in the exchange and business of India with the happening to Portuguese in 1498 A.D. Moreland comments the sixteenth century as, 'a time of insecure balance' which started with the political authority over the maritime trade. The exchange turned into their (Portuguese) state restraining infrastructure. The seventeenth century caused much progressively sweeping transformation

in business. The Portuguese were supplanted by the Dutch and the English who changed the pattern of India's exchange with East Africa and Asia and set up another immediate exchange with new markets in Western Europe in specific articles (cotton, saltpeter and mdigo). They solidly settled on India's seacoasts from Sind to Bengal and furthermore infiltrated into Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Before the century's over they built up direct exchange with Europe in Madras calicoes, Bihar saltpeter, Bengal silk and Bengal sugar. The expensive "toN' exchange" of Europe came to be belittled by the rich.

The articles of exchange were commonly same in both the hundreds of years under examination. India imported a couple of necessities, some crude materials and extravagances. Among the fares including material textures, regular food articles, dark pepper, indigo, crude silk, crude cotton, cotton merchandise, particularly the coarser ones, were the most significant and broad. In the seventeenth century indigo turned into a 'prime product' in IndoEuropean exchange, while Bihar saltpeter was seen as crucial for the developing weapons industry in Western Europe, and Bengal currently superseded different nations in providing crude silk (sweet potato) to Europe.

## **Foreign Trade**

The outside exchange India was fundamentally ocean borne in nature which might be assembled into two general classes as (I) Ports on the Western ocean coast (ii) Ports on the Eastern ocean coast These ports were again into territorial gatherings. The western ocean coast was separated into five territorial gatherings (a) The Indus Delta or The Sindh gathering (b) The Gujarat gathering (c) The Konkan gathering (d) The Kanarese gathering (e) The Malabar gathering. Then again, the eastern ocean coast was partitioned into four significant gatherings (a) The Coromandel Coast ports (b) The Gingly coast (c) The Orissa ports (d) The Bengal ports. Further for the accommodation of the examination the main ports partaking effectively in the India's remote exchange might be isolated by their centrality in the northern and the southern India. The main ocean ports in the north were (a) The Indus Delta or Sindh gathering (b) The Gujarat bunch and (c) The Bengal ports. Though the main ocean port gatherings in the south comprised (a) The Kanarese gathering (b) The Malabar gathering and (c) The Coromandel Coast ports. The significance of the Indus Delta was because of the port Lahiri Bander which was inside associated by Thatta, Multan, and Lahore by the water courses while its fare exchange via ocean was continued with Arabia and Persia, especially with Ormuz. Towards the finish of the sixteenth century it lost quite a bit of its significance with the fall of Ormuz.

## Internal Trade

The interior trade in India was similarly energetic when contrasted with the outside trade of the time which is plentifully proved by the remote travelers. Inward trade assumed the job to make accessible the necessities of the people groups inside an area additionally that were created or found in different districts attributable to the diverse climatic conditions and characteristic assets found in various pieces of the nation. In this manner inner trade was of two sorts (i) Intra-local trade and (ii) Inter-regional trade.

### Intra-local Trade

The Intra-neighborhood trade when held at the lower level at towns which were independent and the business sectors things of everyday utilization, for example, salt, palatable oil, ghee, flavors, vegetables, string, coarse fabric, rural actualizes and customary utensils were commonly accessible, and were traded by the necessities of the individuals known as bargain framework. Consequently, the oats and different grains were traded for the durable articles of every day utilization of ranchers from the town Banian in the week by week advertise or now and again more market days in seven days. "Indeed, even in the littlest towns, rice, flour, spread, milk, beans and different vegetables, sugar and different sweetmeats, dry and fluid can be secured in abundance." The town markets were discount markets (mcwclis) not at all like the bazars which were for the most part retail showcases.

### Inter-local trade

The between regional prerequisites of articles were satisfied by this sort. The over creation or the under creation of specific articles in a single district was the central point answerable for between regional trade. Kashmir was the producer of conspicuous extravagance merchandise which were being used in all aspects of the India. The iron from Gwalior mines was utilized to create 'various articles' which were sent to the primary urban areas of the Mughal Empire. In like manner the plenitude of tobacco at Burhanpur was sent out to different parts in India. The primary modern and business focuses were Delhi, Lahore, Punjab, Agra, Ajmer, Gujarat, Banaras, Patna, Bengal, Orissa and Kashmir.

## Transport System

Transport and correspondence changes the association in industry, makes incredible urban areas and increases the expectation of living, advances culture and joins strategically. In this way, the noteworthiness of transport and correspondence is evident in the general advancement of any financial and social life. The vehicle and correspondence framework in India during the sixteenth and the seventeenth century was not as cutting edge as it is today. There were no metalled streets. Indeed, even

the weakness on courses are featured by the sources on and off more particularly by the remote travelers. Some of the time awful courses of action at serais and even non-accessibility of serais were the normal complaints of the travelers. Despite these it is commonly realized that the courses and transports were sufficient for the need of individuals and organization of the nation. The transportation framework was comparable in North and South India. Sadly, there is a shortage of confirmations in the contemporary sources with respect to this subject for South India. The outside travelers, for example, Barbosa, Paes, Pietro Delia Valle gives some wanderer snippets of data while portraying the courses of their excursion and remarkable spots on their way. The transportation framework under the Great Mughals discovers a lot of notice in the travelogs of the period dependent on the direct encounters of the period.

## Land Transport

The most critical course followed during the rule of Akbar was from Surat-Burhanpur-Gwalior-Aholpur-Agra-Delhi-Lahore-Kabul-China-(Lahore-Multan-Kandhar-Persia)." Another course followed from Surat to Agra during the period was Surat-Broach-Baroda-Ahmadabad-Ahmadabad-Roha-Bagra-Merta-Ajmer-Bayana-Fatehpur Sikri-Agra." Agra was associated with Bengal through Benaras and Patna in the way, Agra-Etawah-Allahabad-Benaras-Mughal Serai-Patna-Bengal. This course was trailed by Ralph Fitch for arriving at Agra." Agra was viewed as the core of the realm. During the rule of Jahangir the course followed for Agra to Surat and viceversa was as per the following Surat-Burhanpur-Dholpur-Agra and Agra-Fatehpur Sikri-Sikandrabad-Hindaun-Chandangaon-Ahmadabad. De Laet had depicted the course from Agra to Jaunpur and furthermore from Agra to Ajmer." The above courses were likewise affirmed later by different travelers of the time like Roe, Jourdain, Peisaert, Mundy, Tavemier and some others.

## Water Transport

In the North India there were three regular conduits, the Indus, the Ganga-Jumna and the Brahmaputra. Initial two waterway frameworks were utilized completely. In the South India there were likewise three significant stream frameworks specifically, the Godavari, the Krishna and the Kaveri. Be that as it may, dissimilar to the waterway frameworks in North India these riversystems had a few confinements like they were safe occasionally relying upon the rainstorm and furthermore their course obstructed by numerous normal snags. Every one of these streams were utilized as methods for transport and correspondence conveying products in vessels of various sizes relying on the profundity and broadness of the waterway. Vessels and nation made little ships were utilized for conveying trade

and traveling on these streams. The upsides of riverine transport were many like minimal effort, massive merchandise of trade could be shipped advantageously, and so forth.

Domingo Paes, Nuniz, Ralph Fitch, Peter Mundy, Manrique, Fryer, Bowrey, Ovington had referenced the different sorts of pontoons being used at that point. Ralph Fitch in 1583 cruised from Agra to Satgaon in Bengal with 180 vessels intensely loaded down with salt, opium, pivot, lead, floor coverings, and so forth., each gauging 400 to 500 tons. He specifies a pontoon called 'Pericose' having 24 or 26 oars to push them.' The Thatta sarkar of Sind alone had 40,000 vessels of different sorts, enormous and small.^^ Not just amount however there were likewise characteristics of vessels utilized during the period.

### **Representation of Women in the Foreign Traveller's Account**

The portrayal of ladies in the public eye is a subtle idea in accordance with the level of ladies' entrance to material assets and social assets inside the family, in the network and in the general public everywhere, estimated both in outright terms and comparative with men. There are numerous ground-breaking and powerful ladies in the expert, business, administration and government who appreciate the benefits and advantages of their status in the general public. Be that as it may, by far most of ladies in the locale don't have a place with this well-to-do class. The lives of such ladies are obliged by numerous social, monetary and strict and political variables. Students of history are looking into sexual orientation history which is about ladies when talked in a general view. Be that as it may, for an expert student of history it isn't just about ladies, it is about them just as the general public all in all in which they are set alongside men. For a superior comprehension of the sexual orientation based issues of present situation it is basic to investigate the past.

### **CONCLUSION**

The travelogs are helpful wellspring of data for the period under investigation. This class of informal recorded writing has its own significance even encompassed by much analysis; it is bountifully utilized by the modern history specialists in confirming the realities. It reveals insight into social traditions and establishments, strict practices and convictions, trade industry and business and the monetary state of the individuals. Travelers like Duarte Barbosa, Varthema, Nuniz and Paes has given an extremely intriguing portrayal of southern India particularly of Vijayanagara Empire covering a wide range from ruler to regular masses during the mid-sixteenth century. Northern India was likewise visited by a crowd of travelers, for example, Sir Thomas Roe, William Hawkins, Edward Terry, Bernier and Manucci; who were in close touch with

the Mughal Court and they furnish us with itemized data about the court life, celebrations and formal capacities. Others travelers like Ovington, Thevenot, Careri composed much on regular masses. These travelers recorded the minutest subtleties of Indian social-social and monetary life. Investigating the huge mass of material gave by the travelers prompts the determination that a typical human progress jumped up in most of the nation during the sixteenth and seventeenth hundreds of years. The foundation of a solid focal government under the Mughals offered harmony to the nation. This tranquil environment empowered the individuals to develop a typical standpoint upon life which achieved homogeneity in social and otherworldly standards and in workmanship and literature.

The Hindus and Muslims lived respectively with immaculate harmony and amicability. There was no genuine strict struggle or shared unsettling influences in India with the exception of that of some unimportant sharpness between the Shias and Sunnis. The Hindus and Muslims both received the traditions and habits of one another. They commended their fairs and celebrations in a similar way. In the courts of the rulers a portion of the Hindu celebrations, for example, Diwali and Rakshabandhan were praised with a similar eagerness as the two Ids and Shab-e-Biqrat. This gave an extremely sound impact on the populace

### **REFERENCES**

1. Riiqat-i-Alamgiri or Letters of Aurangzebe, English Tr. Jamshid H. Bilimoria, B.A., Delhi, 2009.
2. Babiirnama or Memoirs of Babur, English tr. fi-om the Original text by Aimette Susannah Beveridge, 2Vols, New Delhi, 1922, rpt. 1979,
3. Badaoni, Abdul Qadir, Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh, English tr. and ed. (Vol.1George S.A. Ranking) and (Vol.2-W.H. Lowe), 2Vols, (reprint-first published, 1899), Delhi, 1973.
4. Barbosa, Duarte, The Book of Duarte Barbosa, ed. and annotated by Mansel Longworth Dames, 1918-21, 2Vols, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, (rpt. 1989).
5. Begum, Gulbadan, Humayun Nama, Tr. Annette S. Beveridge, Delhi, First Published, 1902, Third rpt. 1996.
6. Fryer, John, A New Account of East India and Persia Being Nine Years" 1672-81, ed.

- William Crooke, 3 Vols., London, 1909, New Delhi, 1992.
7. Guerreiro, Father Femao, Jahagir and the Jesuits, Tr. C.H. Payne, London, 1930.
  8. Hedges, William, The Dicay of William Hedges, 1681-1687, ed., R. Barlow and H. Yule, 3 Vols, London, 1887-89.
  9. Linschoten, J.H. Van, The Voyage of John Huyghen Van Linschoten to the East Indies, English tr. and ed.. Vol. I. Arthur Coke Bumell, and Vol. II, P.A. Tiele, 2Vols, London, 1885, New Delhi, 1988.
  10. Sachau, Edward C. (ed.) Alheruni's India, 2Vols, New Delhi, rpt., 1989.
  11. Tavemier, Jean-Baptiste, Travels In India, English tr. & ed. V. Ball and William Crooke, 2Vols, Delhi, rpt., 2000.
  12. Mandelslo, John Albert De, Mandelslo's Travels in Western India (1638-1639), ed. M.S. Commissariat, London, 1931, New Delhi, 1995.
  13. Norris, William, The Norris Embassy to Aurangzeb (1699-1702), ed., Harihar Das, Condensed and rearranged by S.C. Sarkar, Calcutta, 1959.
  14. Ovington, John, A Voyage to Surat in the Year 1689 by J. Ovington, ed., H.G. Rawlinson, London, 1929, New Delhi, rpt., 1994.
  15. Purchas, Samuel, Hakluyt Posthumus or Purchas his Pilgrimes, Contayning A Histoiy of the World in Sea Voyages and Lunde Travells by Englishmen and Others, 20 Vols., Glasgow, James MacLehose, 1905.

---

### Corresponding Author

**Dr. Shashi Kiran\***

Associate Professor (History), CISKMV Fatehpur  
Pundri, Kaithal Haryana

[kiranshashi123@gmail.com](mailto:kiranshashi123@gmail.com)