

THEME-5
THROUGH THE EYES OF TRAVELLERS

Perceptions of society
(C. Tenth to seventeenth century)

Key concepts in nutshell

- Al-Biruni was born in Khwarizm in present day Uzbekistan.
- Sultan Mahmud attacked Khwarizm and took Al-Biruni to his capital Ghazni.
- Al-Biruni wrote "Kitab-ul-Hind" also known as "Tahkik-a-Hind"
- Ibn-Battuta's travelling account "Rihla" gives a very interesting information of social and cultural life of India.
- Ibn-Battuta was attacked by bands of robbers several times.
- Whatever Bernier saw in India, compared it with European condition.
- Al-Biruni discussed several "barriers".
- Ibn-Battuta's wrote that Indian agriculture was very productive.
- Ibn-Battuta was greatly amazed by looking at the postal system.
- Bernier critically wrote his account "Travels in the Mughal Empire".
- Around 15% population in 17th century lived in towns in India.
- Bernier called Mughal cities as "camp town", which were dependent upon imperial protection for their survival.
- Bernier's description influenced western theorists like Montesquieu and Karl Marx.

V. S. A. (2 Marks)

Q.1. What were the elements of the practice of Sati that drew the attention of Bernier?

Ans.

- According to Bernier, the treatment of women in western and Eastern societies has a lot of difference.
- Child widows were forcefully burnt screaming in agony.

Q.2. Name two Portuguese writers who came to India.

Ans.

- Jesuit Roberto Nobili - in 16th Cen.
- Duarte Barbosa - Wrote about trade & society of Southern India.

Q.3. What does AL-Beruni write about the administration of justice in India?

Ans.

- Administration of Justice in India was as follows
- Crude and primitive in many ways - but also liberal and humane.
- Written complaints, cases were decided on the testimony of witnesses.
- Criminal Law was mild.

- Brahmanas were exempted from taxation and capital punishment.

Q.4. Give any one feature of the writing of the foreign travellers to India during the medieval period.

Ans.

- To some extent, the personal prejudices and interests of the travellers colour the versions given by them.
- In associating the historical data, the writer has to be extremely impartial.
- They wrote about social & cultural life in India during medieval period.

Q.5. What do you understand by Dawa and Uluq?

Ans. There were two types of Postal system i.e.

- Dawa - On Foot.
- Uluq - on horse

Q.6. Mention any two shortcomings of Ibn-Battuta's account.

Ans.- He didn't take notes of everything which he saw daily.

- Many things out of his memory.
- He also wrote those things which he heard from his friends.
- So in his account one finds such terrible mistakes as "wrong routes" and "wrong names" of the rulers.

S. A. (4 Marks)

Q.7. How did Ibn Battuta describe Indian cities?

Ans.

- Indian Cities were densely populated.
- Very Prosperous
- Streets were crowded.
- Market were bright and colorful & had a variety of goods.
- The Market were the hub of social & cultural activities and economic transactions.
- They had both a mosque and a temple.
- They had spaces for public performers

Q.8. Compare and contrast the perspectives from which Ibn Battuta and Bernier wrote their accounts of their travels in India.

Ans. Ibn Battuta's perspectives -

- Narrative style.
- Highlighted anything that was unfamiliar and different.

(b) Bernier's Perspective -

- He belonged to a different intellectual tradition.
- He was concerned with comparing and contrasting things in India with Europe.
- He emphasized the superiority of Europe.

- He perceived differences hierarchically and shows India inferior to the western world.

Q.9. Analyze the evidence for slavery provided by Ibn Battuta.

Ans. Evidence for Slavery -

- Slaves were openly sold in Market.
- Different types of slaves.
- Female slaves in the service of Sultan.
- Slaves were used for different kind of domestic work.
- Female slaves were appointed to keep an eye on the nobles of the Sultan.
- It was tradition to present slaves as a gift.

Q.10. Write a note on Kitab-ul-Hind.

Ans.- It's written by AL-Biruni in Arabic.

- It's simple, lucid and easy to understand.
- It has 80 chapters.
- Varied topics e.g. religion, philosophy to customs, social life, metrology.
- Most of chapters beginning with a Questions followed by a description and concluded with a comparison with other culture.

Q.11. Describe the Social condition of India as described by Al-Biruni in the 12th Century.

Ans.

Social Condition of India.

- Child marriage.
- Widows were not allowed to remarry.
- Practice of Sati was in vogue.
- Uncultured people were polytheists, but the cultured classes' believed in one god.
- No one popular Religion of India at that time.
- About 42 religions in the country.
- Hinduism was divided into number of sects.

L. A. (8 Marks)

Q.12. Describe the extent to which Bernier's account enables historians to reconstruct contemporary rural society.

Ans.

- In the Mughal Empire all land was owned by the emperor.
- Lack of Private property.
- Crown ownership was disastrous for both economy and society.
- Land couldn't be inherited by their heirs.
- Land holders ignored the improvement in land.

- Resulted - decline in agricultural yields, oppression of the peasantry, decline in living standards of all sections of society.
- There were only two classes - rich ruling class and poor class - no middle class existed in India.
- Many European travellers were influenced by Bernier's view. But this presents an erroneous picture.

Q.13. Discuss Al-Baruni's understanding of the caste system.

Ans.

- Caste System was influenced by Sanskrit texts.
- There were four Vernas i.e. Brahman, Kshatriya, vaishya and shudra.
- He pointed out about ancient Persian society which was also divided into four categories.
- He was against the notion of pollution.
- According to the law of nature anything which becomes impure, ultimately becomes pure again.
- He realized that the caste system was not as rigid as portrayed in Sanskrit text.
- Untouchables were expected to provide inexpensive labour to peasants and zamindars.

Para Based Questions

The bird leaves its nest. Pg. 118

Q.14. This is an excerpt from the Rihla:

My departure from Tangier, my birth place, took place on Thursday..... About 30 years after he had set out.

- Who was Ibn Battuta? Which book did he write?
- For how long did Ibn Battuta remain at the court of Muhammad Bin Tughlaq?
- Name the countries which Ibn Battuta crossed before came to India?

Ans.- Ibn Battuta was a Moroccan traveller; He wrote a book called Rihla - description of his journey.

- For eight years at the court of Tughlaq.
- Egypt, Palestine, Arabia, Persia, Oman, Eastern Africa, Mecca, Syria & reached Delhi in AD-1333.

Value Based Questions

Q.15. Travels were more difficult and risky in 14th Century". Do you agree with the state?

Ans. Yes, because -

- Always danger of robbers.
- Travellers felt home sickness and fell ill.

Q.16. What were the main objectives of Bernier's writing behind the "Travels in the Mughal Empire?"

Ans. The main objectives of Bernier -

- To compare India with the European Conditions.
- Europeans may take correct decision regarding India.
- To highlight the Europeans Supremacy.

Q.17. With which objectives did the people travel?

Ans. Main objectives of people to travel.

- In search of job opportunities.
- To expand their trade.
- To escape from any threat of natural calamity.
- In form of Soldier and priest.

Map Work

Q.18. On the online map of the world, Marks the countries visited by Ibn Battuta, What are the seas that he might have crossed?

Ans. Countries visited by Ibn Battuta:

1. Morocco
2. Syria
3. Persia
4. Oman
5. India
6. Sri Lanka
7. Iraq
8. Mecca
9. China
10. Maldives
11. Sumatra (Indonesia)
12. Yamen

Name of Seas:

1. North Atlantic Ocean
2. Indian Ocean
3. Arabian Sea
4. South China Sea
5. South Atlantic Ocean
6. Red Sea
7. Bay of Bengal
8. East China Sea