



Hotel and hospitality in India through the ages

Pratibh budania¹

¹ Assistant Lecturer, Institute of Hotel Management, Rohtak, Haryana, India

Abstract

The history of travel is a great landmark in the field of tourism industry. Travel is as old as mankind. From the time of immemorial, people started the traveling due to the various causes. It may be the purpose of the economic, social, cultural, spiritual achievement of the human being. Travel in the distant past, however, was not undertaken for the purpose of pleasure since the motive was not to seek any holiday from the work situation. The primary motive for which travel was undertaken related to trade, commerce and the activities associated with it. No travel formalities existed as there were no frontiers. The history of travel can be divided into mainly seven divisions. These can be: Early Travel, Pleasure Travel, Travel in Middle, Travel in Renaissance, Emergency of, spas and seaside Resorts. The Industrial Revolution Period, Air transport system. In India, development of catering can also be attributed also to the legacy left by people belonging to different cultures and ethnic groups who have ruled her. Development of catering in India as we see it today is chiefly due to the British, who had introduced hotels and restaurants similar to those found in Europe.

Keywords: hospitality, hotels, dharma, travelar, visitors, literature, Hindu, Sanskrit, past

Introduction

Since the dawn of culture, India has maintained a magnificent heritage of hospitality, based on human kindness and fellow-feeling. Indian culture and religions, for centuries now, have imbibed mutual respect, concern, pardon and forgiveness for humans, animals and even Nature. There exists etiquette in every culture of receiving guests and hosting; but, it reached an artistic divinity in India in the Vedic culture that flourished some fifty centuries ago.

In ancient Indian culture, guest was equated to God and has been called Atithi in Sanskrit. The relationship of guest and host was elevated to Godly binding, where guest too is bound by certain gratefulness, as a part of the hospitality Code of Conduct. It is wrong to say that it was part of Hindu culture alone, because this code of conduct was formed before the word Hindu 'came into existence, when a simple Sanatana Dharma prevailed in India for all Indians. In modern India, Indian government has invoked the Atithi Devo Bhava campaign under tourism enhancement.

In Vedic times

Selfless acts of charity and hospitality, stemming out of concern for others, were the cornerstones of Indian culture in the Vedic times. According to the Vedic tradition, the host is greatly benefited by receiving saintly persons, who, neither complained nor demanded. They did not socialize or lived life of luxury, or saved for future. In their quest for spiritual life, they went to seek alms enough only to sustain themselves. They were regarded as semi-Gods and their possible unhappiness was perceived with dread.

Giving alms to saints and saintly humans, hosting fellow-humans of any class or creed were thought to be God's work. In ancient times, when wheel was not discovered, people use

to travel by walking, to cover long distance. Since then the concept of hospitality was there but there was no interest of money or any economic profit travellers use to stay in homes of villagers. Then slowly inns charged very low rent. This period was dominated by Brahmanical culture and they wrote and followed Vedas. Our Vedas reiterate the importance of guest in social life. Vedas are very specific of what one has to provide for a guest.

At the same time they describe what penalties one will bear for not respecting a stranger. For instance, it is said that if a person is unfriendly and hostile towards someone in need of shelter, that person will end up on a lower level planet type. The specific punishment for that attitude to guests is a meeting with a kind of carrion-crows, which first gaze directly into that person's eyes just as he or she used to look at strangers and then peck them out.

In ancient India, hospitality was a right of the traveller. A Sanskrit verse tells us the highly honourable relationship between host and guest and compares it with the best of relationships. Be one to whom the mother is a God. Be one to whom the father is a God. Be one to whom the teacher is a God. Be one to whom the guest is a God." So advises the Taittiriya Upanishad of the Yajur Veda, affirming the remarkable Hindu reverence for a guest. Mathr Devo bhavah Pithr Devo Bhavah Acharya Devo Bhavah Atithi Devo Bhavah.

This equates Mother, Father, Teacher and Guest with the God. In Sanskrit, guest is called Atithi for a reason. Tithi is a fixed date and atithi means the opposite, the person who arrives uninformed. In the days of non-existing communication, other than perhaps through pigeon messengers, when people had to travel for days and months to reach the next intended destination, their arrival dates were always unknown, in a

journey riddled with difficulties and dangers. Even if it were known, there were very few ways of conveying the information in advance. Hence, the Atithis came unannounced and none resented it.

Later, in the days of communication improvement, the practice continued, mainly because people nursed a belief that giving information of their impending arrival is a matter of arrogance and self-importance. In usual Indian households, guests are sure of rapturous welcome from their hosts, and even to this day, no host could think of being rude to the guests or turning them away. Indians believe that Hospitality is the way of treating people in the way you want yourself to be treated.

Even as early as Vedic times, India was full of travellers, religious, political or military. India was never a stranded society and people were curious and education-minded. Indian culture was more advanced, compared to the neighboring regions and Indian kings travelling to meet their counterparts of distant regions, battles, taking part in yajnas, coronations, marriages and sympathy fights on behalf of friendly king against his or a common enemy, initiated much travelling.

Princes travelled to distant countries or regions, seeking more education, art of fighting and adventure. We hear of Arjuna, the mighty warrior and the Mahanayaka of Mahabharata, travelling all over India and beyond, in search of weapons or weaponry education. The ordinary citizens were not unambitious either. They were keen on scholarly pursuit, adventure and geography and frequently travelled. Religious travelling was the primary cause of people moving out of houses for long touristy seasons.

India set the lead in Asian travel as it was the most developed of the region in the early times. Developed civilizations brought travel. It is impossible to segregate the travel from the military and political evolution of India. Therefore, in accounting for travel, one has to understand the socio-political scenario during the different ages in India.

Ramayana and Mahabharata

In Ramayana, the entire drama takes place across the sub-continent and the sea and there are mentions that after Ravana's defeat, Srilankans, with Vibhishana as their King, frequented India very often. This interaction of ordinary people encouraged hospitality units in both countries and the exchange of culture, religion can be seen even today. In this context, we can mention the Lakshmana Rekha, which Sita ignored when the Ravana, in the garb of Rishi condemned that she was unaware of Atithi Dharma. Who has not heard of the caring hospitality rendered by Shabari to Ayodhya Princes, Ram and Lakshman, who came unannounced in a chance meeting?

Stories like that of Krishna and his childhood friend Sudhama, who visited Krishna after a long time of separation give evidence to another level of hospitality prevailed and still prevails in India. Bhagavata says that the Gopis of Brindavan travelled to Kurukshetra to meet their childhood friend Krishna. Ashwamedha yagas took place for the army to travel the length and breadth of sub-continent and beyond to defeat the kings and satraps for the complete success of the Yaga. In Book 12 of Mahabharata, there is an immensely interesting story attributed to the great warrior Prince, Bhishma, who

narrates the hospitality of a pigeon couple. Beholding that fowler whose avocation was the slaughter of birds, the pigeon honoured him scrupulously according to the rites laid down in the ordinance. Addressing him, he said, 'Thou art welcome today. Tell me, what I shall do for thee. Thou shouldst not repine. This is thy home. Tell me quickly what I am to do and what is thy pleasure. I ask thee this in affection, for thou hast solicited shelter at our hands. Hospitality should be shown to even one's foe when he comes to one's house. The tree withdraws not its shade from even the person that approaches it for cutting it down.

One should, with scrupulous care, do the duties of hospitality towards a person that craves for shelter. Indeed, one is especially bound to do so if one happens to lead a life of domesticity that consists of the five sacrifices. If one, while leading a life of domesticity, does not, from want of judgment, perform the five sacrifices, one loses, according to the scriptures, both this and the next world.....'I am stiff with cold. Let provision be made for warming me.' 'Hunger is afflicting me. I wish thee to give me some food.'... The bird said, 'I have no stores by which to appease thy hunger. We, denizens of the woods, always live upon what we get every day. Like the ascetics of the forest we never hoard for the morrow.' Having formed this resolution, the high-souled bird with a smiling face, thrice circumambulated that fire and then entered its flames. 'What have I done? Alas, dark and terrible will be my sin, without doubt in consequence of my own acts! I am exceedingly cruel and worthy of reprobation. Indeed, observing the bird lay down his life, the fowler, deprecating his own acts, began to indulge in copious tears.

Later times

Sanatana dharma shrank and took the form of rather compartmentalised Hinduism with a certain fundamental mindset. Eventually, India saw the emergence of two other religions called Jainism and Buddhism. Although they were new religions, they remained close to Hinduism and continued the same culture of hospitality. They took spiritual begging to an entirely higher plane where Hindu rishis, Jain munis and Bouddha bhikshus were treated with great hospitality and humility. This extended itself to the societies and hospitality took over with great fervour. They were religions born in India, Sikhism included, and could not differ from the land's culture. These religions gave more importance to humility and kindness to an almost impossible extent. They became part of the original Ganges culture. All other minority religions, Islam and Christianity came to India and took root with the same hospitality as one of the unwritten rules. Religions could be many; but, they did not defy the rule of land. India uplifted hospitality to divinity and made it a way of life, where even the humblest are treated with regard and respect.

Hospitality units over the ages

Even though they were far and few, well-maintained Dharmshalas (Charity houses for travellers) and roadside Sarais' to provide food and shelter from rain, animals and dacoits were available in Ancient India, a few, run for profit and others, by charitable people of means throughout the sub-continent and beyond.

Journey in those days was nothing less than going to

battlefield. People mainly travelled on horse-back and in a bullock-cart. Another tourism that flourished in Ancient India was Commercial Tourism. Traders travelled with their goods and with the risk of never to be seen again. They usually maintained a known route and patronised trustworthy inns. In ancient India, travel was not for pleasure and carried high risk. A Traveller of the day was anyone like a merchant, scholar in search of ancient texts, or a curious wayfarer looking for new adventures, or even a medical man in search of further knowledge. Eventually, the trade routes opened and tourism got enhanced in India. Travel across the sea became better known and Indians ventured into the sea for the first time.

The opening of trade routes, perhaps, gave birth to tourism. There are evidences that throughout the land, more so, in the prominent routes, the earliest versions of Indian commercial hotels, roadside inns, pubs and guest houses existed as Sarais' and Dharmashalas', charity houses, drinking corners (madira houses). These provided diverse kinds of food, entertainment, medical help and animal shelter and a night's or a longer stay, facility for the sick etc. according to the financial capabilities and necessities of tourists.

It is important to know that humbler versions of these well-run guest houses were functioning almost in every village or Small Township, or in deserted routes, at temples, mosques or even at a village headman's front yard. Some were run by temples and others belonged to benevolent landlords of the area or the village headman. Some belonged to the entire village. No village turned a traveller in need away. There were stories of an entire year without crops in any village that was unkind to its visitors and passersby.

In spite of such a situation, tourists were well looked after by local folk, as leaving a tourist without food and roof over his head for a night was considered a sin. There were households, who, before consuming their meal, waited and looked for a traveller to share their food with. Almost every household provided water and jaggery in the outer sit-out for any traveller, who happened to pass by. India had open houses in those days, where a meal and the open veranda always belonged to any traveller, who happened to arrive any time. People generously provided for travellers from their meagre wealth, which, rightly should have gone to their own families; but, no one grudged. These were good deeds of kindness and fellow-feeling.

Most traders used these noble houses during their annual marketing visits, where they were treated as part of the family and were trusted like any other members of the family. Language barrier did not come in the way of hospitality. Most traders stayed in these houses year after year. People came from as far as Afghanistan and lived in the houses and palaces of landlords, village heads and Satraps.

Charity accommodation and food were simple and free. These are the places where the guests were treated with traditional 'you have gratified me by your visit'. Even the commercial establishments where a nominal amount was charged treated their guests with courtesy and conventional respect. Sarais on prime roads functioned like information centres of those days. Travellers from various countries and regions frequented these Sarais, spent time and late nights under the benevolent gaze of

their genial host and the host knew about their homelands and the places they came from. Here, people from all backgrounds and countries mingled and shared their travel experiences and the result was enriching the already brimming knowledge of the host about distant lands and this was useful to other travellers, who followed them later.

Emperors like Kanishka, Harsha and Ashoka were particularly active in setting up Bouddha viharas all over the region. Meant to take care of travelling Bhikshus, these places did equally well in looking after people from other religions. This apart, all small and medium kingdoms all over the undivided sub-continent, took great pleasure in maintaining convenient and free hospitality centres, on which, the fair name of their kingdom rested. Sufi saints travelled freely in India and accepted hospitality from all religions.

India's tourism grew in leaps and bounds during the golden era of Moghul Emperors. Leaving perhaps Babar out, who was initially busy in attacking and acquiring and stabilizing himself and his rule, and later, sadly died before he could show his administrative prowess, all the rest, starting from Emperor Humayun, were genial, generous, wise, kind and farsighted. Almost today's entire India, Bangla Desh, Pakistan, Baluchistan and Afghanistan were under their able governance and perhaps after Emperor Ashoka's rule, for the first time, India had been ruled by benevolent emperors (Emperor Alamgir could be called an exception, although he was an administration marvel!) and rules/policies were planned for the entire land.

Those were the days when India kept strong relationships with Persia, Middle-East, China, Burma, Russia etc. West came to Moghul court and with Emperor Akbar's great enthusiasm to know more about other cultures, lands and religions, due to which, no visitor was sent away without being heard or felicitated, foreigners felt at home in India. They were all welcome not only at the central courts of Delhi and Agra, but also in the courts of lesser kings, Satraps, nobles, most of whom were Hindus practicing hospitality as a religion. Moghuls were the first outsiders, who embraced India and its culture as their own and most Indian practices reflected in their ways of administration and politics. For all Indians, hospitality and being kind to others was the law of land and when Moghuls adapted India, married Indian princesses with the result that later Mughals were more Hindus than Muslims, and together, they adapted all the good laws of land. This sets Moghuls apart from other invaders and Muslim rulers by miles. A glance at the Moghul court under Emperor Akbar would confirm this argument.

Hence, brisk travelling was taking place under their administration and naturally, many Dharmashalas and Sarais and charity houses were set up and run either by Government or by local satraps/noble men. We come across Yusuf Sarai in South Delhi and Mughal Sarai in Uttar Pradesh and they exist even to this day, retaining their proud suffix Sarail. These were busy houses where diplomats, visitors, traders, affluent tourists from other countries stayed to either seek favour from the emperors, or to simply visit the Empire.

Princess Jahanara, Emperor Shahjahan's daughter was an apt granddaughter to Emperor Akbar. She lived a charitable and blameless life, worrying about people than herself. After the defeat of her brother, Crown Prince Dara Shukoh, whom she

favoured and the sad death of her Emperor father, who was, unfortunately confined to Agra fort by his murderer son, Aurangzeb (Emperor Alamgir), Jahanara spent the rest of her life in providing beneficial policies and conveniences to people.

Today's Gandhi ground was called Begum ka Bagh in her days, and here, the Princess had built a Sarai of two story building. This Sarai was known to have been fashioned after the Isfahan Caravan Sarai, built by Shah Abbas. Affluent Uzbeks and Persians stayed here and it was popular with foreign royalties and nobilities. Similarly, another Sarai, built by Bibi Saheba, the main wife of Mohammad Khan Bangash, very close to Khari Baoli in Delhi, was famous as Bangash Ki Sarai. This was beginning of 18th century and trade was brisk between India and Afghanistan resulting in multitudes of caravans to and fro and most Afghan travellers preferred Bangash Ki Sarai. Upper class people travelled from Delhi and Ferozabad simply on pleasure trip, favouring many guest houses on the way. It is not wrong to say that powerful Moghuls and their flourishing empire furthered the hospitality scene in India.

Venturing into sea Roman Empire was the most powerful European kingdom in the beginning of Christian era and this kingdom had traders and merchant caravans that frequented most central and south East Asian countries and thus, began Indian trade with the West. These trade transactions gave way to regular travelling and it might be wrong to say that only commercial traders attracted by ivory, silk, spices, precious stones etc travelled to the East. Along with them, came historians, adventurers, entrepreneurs, craftsmen, historians, students, religious missionaries intending to spread the word of religion, writers, scholars, etc. These trade groups had entertainers, cooks, soldiers, and doctors etc. going together in an unknown voyage to reach an unseen land.

Initially, they preferred the land routes. Most important were the people, who came with the single-minded focus of visiting new places and recognise new cultures. They were neither interested in the Asian wealth or lucre or conversion. They came on a scholarly pursuit, for their intellectual satisfaction and education. They wanted to satisfy their intellectual quest and see the wonders of a supremely wonderful land, India. They were welcomed in every corner of India, Indians returned these visits and new cultures were born in distant lands, while their cultures took root in India. That was the real advancement of mankind. China and India were exchanging tourists even before the dawn of Christian era.

But, voyage by sea from the West to India and back was long, dangerous and tedious and took more than six months, solely depending on weather, unpredictable wind and even high voltage monsoon. Seasonal winds could change their direction and velocity, sending the ships to the bottom of the sea.

When Buddhism became popular in India and the peace-loving Indians succumbed to the new faith, Buddhism also spread to nearby countries like Burma and China. Many tourists from these countries came to India to find out more about it. Buddha missionaries went to almost all the Asian countries to spread awareness of this religion. Buddha Bikshus of all nationalities were a rare breed of sincerity and devotion, as we can deduce from historical evidence today. All Bhikshus had great desire to see the land of Buddha, where he

strode like a colossus and where the most important of his relics could be found. In 65 AD, The Chinese Emperor Ming Ti of Han Dynasty dispatched a goodwill mission to India.

Buddhism had brought the two countries closer and the Emperor was eager to know the original Buddhism that flourished in India, where emperors and kings were the patrons of this new religion. Strangely, the fascination of Buddhism was such, especially to nature- worshipping Indians that they were increasingly abandoning their Sanatana Dharma to gain access to Buddhism with its adorable, most recent Prophet, Buddha, who abandoned his princely rights to become a Bhikshu.

Around the 3rd century AD, India had become the prime destination for the Chinese travellers for whom, it was a spiritual wonderland, where their religion's holy places, scriptures were situated and where their God lived. Indian culture, way of living, their beliefs and diversities fascinated millions into India and amongst them, came Fa Hien and Hiuen Tsang. They left their memoirs of Indian tour and became immortal. Buddha Bhikshus, who came here only to know about the religion perhaps never thought it necessary to write either about India or her people. They were spiritual beings on a mission. But, our history is grateful to these two prominent writers on whom, we depend today for valuable information and authentic historical evidence.

Until conquerors belonging to the youngest religion, Islam came to India, frequent travel between India and China continued with great bonhomie for centuries and scholars, travellers, adventurers, medicine men, writers, religious groups, travelled back and forth, without any kind of intimidation from either of the countries. Those were the golden years of India-China relationship and perhaps China was the most influential first country that initiated travel to India.

Both countries appreciated each other's culture with affectionate sincerity. At the same time, all other Asian countries followed suit and frequented Indian shores, taking away not only Indian goods, religion and goodwill, but also, Indian travellers from here. Tourism amongst the Asians flourished and continued to do so for centuries to come.

Maritime history of India

Indian hospitality was extended to foreigners when maritime activities started and Indians went abroad and foreign travellers came to India. Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro were discovered in 1922. These ancient civilizations existed approximately during 3,000-2,500 BC and continued till 1,500 BC perhaps at the same time as Sumerian and Egyptian civilization. Scholars believe that the maritime travelling of India started during the Indus valley when trading contact with Mesopotamia was established. When Romans annexed Egypt, trade with India increased.

According to Strabo, at least 100 ships and 20 vessels sailed to India every year. He says, at any rate, when Gallus was prefect of Egypt, I accompanied him and ascended the Nile as far as Syene and the frontiers of Kingdom of Aksum (Ethiopia), and I learned that as many as one hundred and twenty vessels were sailing from Myos Hormos to India, whereas formerly, under the Ptolemies, only a very few ventured to undertake the voyage and to carry on traffic in

Indian merchandise. India exported spices as the main commodity to the Greco-Roman World and the West, says Ball. Silk and other commodities were not really favoured.

Trade between Greco-Roman World increased steadily and spices took the centre stage even to the West that earlier preferred silk and other luxurious goods. Evidences of Indians living in Alexandria were found and Jews and Christians continued to live in India even after Roman Empire fell. This historically relevant event resulted in Rome's losing all Red Sea trade ports. Since the days of Ptolemaic dynasty, Indian trade took this route and ports. During 7th and 8th centuries, trade connection with India was very important to Arabian and Persian merchants.

Inscriptions found in Indus Valley civilisation and Archaeological surveys conducted in countries like Oman, Bahrain and Mesopotamia have all confirmed this international trade of India. Soapstone stamp seals, stone weights, carnelian beads of all colours were found. In a way, the trade between Indus valley and Mesopotamia were not direct. In those days, shippers, traders, caravans, touring routes had a way of converging in the ports of Persian Gulf, more so, in the Bahrain Island.

Sumerians called this island as Dilmun. This was the most popular trading route for Indian traders. During the archaeological excavations of the Arabian Peninsula in Oman and in Bahrain itself, many artefacts that are crafted in the style of Indus valley artefacts, stamp seals. Similar stamp seals were found in Indus Valley and Mesopotamia giving the impression that perhaps Bahrain was a point where redistribution of goods took place for a long time.

Also, there are indications that Indian merchants and bead-makers and artisans might have stayed back in Mesopotamia, creating their own communities and some archaeological excavations at Ur stands evidence to this fact. Tourism and hospitality sectors in India went further after the initiation of these events. It also shows that Indians found these unknown shores hospitable enough to settle down there and vice versa.

Foreign visitors

Megasthenes was the ambassador of Seleucus I of Syria and came to the court of Chandragupta (Chandragupta Maurya). He has left extensive social and administrative details of conditions under Maurya Dynasty's rule. Megasthenes lived with Sisyrtius, satrap of Arachosia, and often speaks of his visiting Sandracottus (deduced to be Chandragupta Maurya), the King of the Indians. He visited many parts of India, after entering the subcontinent through the district of the Pentapotamia (perhaps modern day Punjab).

He provides a complete account of rivers in Punjab and then, he proceeds towards Pataliputra. We come across many accounts that he visited Madurai when Pandyan Kings had it as their capital, and perhaps he did not visit any other cities of the day. He does not mention Buddhists at all and it looks as though until Chandragupta's grandson Ashoka came to power, Buddhism was not a prominent religion. Later writers like Diodorus, Pliny, Strabo and Arrian refer to Indika of Megasthenes. The culture Megasthenes describes is the Sanatana Dharma, more like a way of living, prevailed in India at the time of his visit.

Fa-Hien

After the spread of the Buddhist religion, many Chinese travellers came to India to collect religious texts and knowledge and to visit holy places of Buddhism. During A.D. 399-414, Chinese scholar Fa-Hien travelled to India in search of great Buddhist books of discipline. According to his records of integrity, Indian cities are prosperous and stretch far and wide. There are many guest houses for travellers. There are hospitals providing free medical services for the poor. The viharas and temples are majestic. People are free to choose their occupations. There are no restrictions on the movement of the people.

Government officials and soldiers are paid salaries regularly. People are not addicted to drinks. They shun violence. The administration provided by the Gupta rulers is fair and just, says Fa Hien, the Chinese traveller who visited India during the rule of Chandragupta.

Hiuen Tsang (629-645)

Hiuen Tsang, the Chinese traveller visited Harsha Vardhana's kingdom. He came through Tashkent and Swat Valley. He has written Records of Western World (Si yu ki). In Swat, he found over 3,000 non Mahayana monks, including Prajnakara, clxxiii monk with whom he studied initial scriptures of Buddhism. He acquired the important Mahabhasa text here, which he later translated into Chinese. Prajnakara then accompanied the party southward to Bamyan, where Xuanzang met the king and saw tens of non Mahayana monasteries. He wrote Great Tang Records on the Western Regions, a great source for studying India and medieval central Asia.

Grousset writes: —The Chinese pilgrim had finally found the omniscient masters; the incomparable metaphysician who was to make known to him the ultimate secrets of the idealist systems. He went to Nalanda and wherever he went, saw thousands of monks and we can argue that Buddhism was at its peak in India. He also visited Mahasthangarh and mentions so in his writings. Perhaps, this is now in Bangladesh. He visited at least 20 well-run monasteries with more than 3,000 students, all studying either Hinayana or Mahayana. One such was the Gvasibha Monastery (Po Shi Po), with 700 Mahayana monks, mainly from the eastern part of India. This goes to show to what extent hospitality and tourism flourished in India of his time. We owe a lot to this Buddhist traveller for his unbiased accounts of social, political history of all the lands he visited.

AL Beruni (1000-1025)

With Mohammad Ghazni, whose only desire was to plunder the wealth in India, came Al Beruni, one of the greatest scholars of medieval Islamic era, who knew astronomy, mathematics and physics and was a linguist, brilliant scholar, chronologist and historian. He was considered to be the founder of Indology.

He travelled the Indian sub-continent in 1017 and was an impartial writer. He was called Ustad (The Master) for his remarkable description of 11th century India. His fame as Indologist comes from two texts. One was an encyclopaedic work called Tarikh Al Hind (History of India), where he wrote about Indian mathematics, religion, social life, life,

history, geography, science and geology in the most un-biased way as a great scholar. According to Mohammad Yasin, The Indica (another name to Al Berun's History of India) is like a magic island of quiet, impartial research in the midst of a world of clashing swords, burning towns and burned temples.

IBN Batuta

Ibn Batuta (February 25, 1304 – 1368), was a Moroccan explorer of Berber descent, is generally considered one of the greatest travellers of all times. After outlining the extensive route of Ibn Battuta's Journey, Jawaharlal Nehru notes: "This is a record of travel which is rare enough today with our many conveniences.... In any event, Ibn Battuta must be amongst the great travellers of all time." He came to Mohammad bin Tughluq's court, who was the wealthiest of the kings of the time, who patronised Sufis, scholars. Ibn was appointed a Qadi (judge), but, found that enforcing Islamic laws beyond the court in an alien-religioned India was difficult. He visited Sarsatti, Hansi and described them as among the most beautiful cities, the best constructed and the most populated; it is surrounded with a strong wall, and its founder is said to be one of the great infidel kings, called Tara. He escaped the erratic King Tuglaq's court and started his journey to China. En route, he and his fellow-travellers were attacked by bandits. He was separated from his party, was robbed and almost got killed. But, he could catch up with them soon in Gujarat, from where they reached Kozhikode (Calicut), where he lost one of his ships. In his accounts, he writes about Grand Canals, watching fields, orchids, children, women and priests wearing fine silk. He, somehow managed to reach the Madurai kingdom and spent some time with Madurai Sultanate of Ghiyas-ud-Din Muhammad Damghani.

Marco polo

He was an Italian merchant who visited India. He was a merchant traveller. Niccolò de' Conti (1395–1469) was a Venetian adventurer and explorer. He visited India and other countries of South East Asia, around the earlier part of 15th century. His was a rare record available after Marco Polo, of returning from China by sea in 1439. He crossed Arabian sea and reached Cambhay, Gujarat and during the course of his Indian journey, he visited Pacamura, and Vijayanar Empire, all before 1555. His travel account is venerated as one of the best accounts of a 15th century traveller.

It was included in the Book IV of his "De varietate fortunae" ("On the Vicissitudes of Fortune"). He visited Maliapur, regarded as the resting places of St. Thomas the Apostle, was the shrine most sacred to Indian Christians. He seems to have visited during the accession of Deva Raya I. He never wrote any of his accounts; but, narrated them to Poggio Bracciolini, secretary of the Pope himself, who appreciated information about distant lands. "The great city of Bizenegalia is situated near very steep mountains. The circumference of the city is sixty miles; its walls are carried up to the mountains and enclose the valleys at their foot, so that its extent is thereby increased.

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