

CLASS NOTES

Class: XII

Topic: **CHAPTER-2. THROUGH THE EYES OF TRAVELLERS.**

Subject: HISTORY

IBN BATTUTA'S RIHLA- Ibn Battuta was an inveterate traveller who spent several years travelling through North Africa, West Asia and parts of Central Asia, the Indian subcontinent and China, before returning to his native land, Morocco. When he returned, the local ruler issued instructions that his stories be recorded.

Q. Compare and contrast the perspective from which Ibn Battuta and Bernier wrote their accounts of their travel in India.

Ans: Both accounts have been written from different **perspectives**. One can see that Ibn Battuta has described India with an **impressive** and **excited notion** because of his **novelty**, where as Bernier had followed a different **intellectual tradition**. He presented an account of whatever he saw in India.

It seems to be Bernier wanted to highlight the **weakness** of the Indian society and present the Mughal India inferior to European society. On the other hand, Ibn Battuta has described India with a different culture, belief, values and people.

Ibn Battuta's perspectives - **Narrative style**. Highlighted anything that was unfamiliar and different.

Bernier's Perspective - He perceived differences **hierarchically** and shows India inferior to the western world.

Ibn Battuta and His book Rihla

1. Ibn Battuta was a Moroccan traveller. He was born in Tangier into one of the most respectable and educated families. Ibn Battuta considered experience gained through travels to be a more important sources of knowledge than books.

2. Before he come to India, he had made pilgrimage trips to Mecca, and had already travelled extensively in Syria, Iraq, Persia, Yemen, Oman and a few trading ports on the coast of East Africa.

3. Ibn Battuta reached Sind in 1333. He had heard about Muhammad bin Tughlaq, the Sultan of Delhi. The Sultan of Delhi. The Sultan was impressed by his scholarship, and appointed him the *qazi* or judge of Delhi. He remained in that position for several years, until he fell out of favour and was thrown into prison.

4. Once the misunderstanding between him and the Sultan was cleared, he was restored to imperial service, vice and was ordered in 1342 to proceed to China as the Sultan's envoy to the Mongol ruler.

5. With the new assignment, Ibn Battuta proceeded to the Malabar Coast through central India. From Malabar he went to the Maldives. He took a ship to Sumatra, and from there another ship for the Chinese port town of

Zaytun (now known as Quanzhou). He travelled extensively in China, going as far as Beijing and returned

6. home in 1347.

6. Ibn Battuta's book of travels, called *Rihla*, written in Arabic. His account is often compared with that of Marco Polo, who visited China (and also India) from his home base in Venice in the late thirteenth century.

Q. Why was travelling more insecure in the medieval period according to Ibn Battuta?

AAAns: 1. Ibn Battuta was attacked by bands of robbers several times. So, he preferred travelling in a caravan

along with. Companions, but this did not deter highway robbers

2. While travelling from Multan to Delhi, his caravan was attacked and many of his fellow travellers lost their lives; those travellers, who survived, including Ibn Battuta, were severely wounded.

3. He suffered from home sick and in many places he was not welcomed by the people.

Ibn Battuta and the Excitement of the Unfamiliar- By the time Ibn Battuta arrived Delhi in the fourteenth century, the subcontinent was part of a global network of communication that stretched from China in the east to north-west Africa and Europe in the west.

- He enjoyed spending time with learned men and rulers, often officiating as qazi, and enjoying the cosmopolitan culture of urban centres. Anything that was unfamiliar was particularly highlighted to impress the readers or listeners.

- The coconut and the paan: Ibn Battuta's strategies of representation are evident in the ways in which he described the coconut and the paan, two kinds of plant that were unfamiliar to his audience.

The coconut –He had compared coconut and with that of palm; they look exactly the same except that one produces date and the bears the nuts as its fruits. It resembles a man's head. Inside of it looks like a brain.

Its fibre looks like human hair. Its fibre used for making rope which is used for pulling ships.

The paan- Betel plant looked like grape plant. It is grown for the sake its leaves. People chew betel leaves. with areca nut and lime.

Q. Explain the observation of Ibn Battuta about the cities of India, with special reference to Delhi.

Ans: Ibn Battuta came to Delhi in the fourteenth century. He has given a vivid description of the Indian cities.

This information is an important source to understand the lifestyle of the Indians.

1. According to Ibn Battuta, the Indian cities were full of opportunities for those people who had the Zeal, resources and were skilful.

2. He described Delhi as a large and well-populated city. Daulatabad was no less than Delhi in size.

3. The city had crowded streets and bright and colourful markets with a wide variety of goods.

4. There was huge rampart around the city. The wall was eleven cubits broad. The lower part or the

rampart was built to stone while the upper part of bricks.

5. Inside the rampart were houses for the night sentry and gatekeepers and storehouses for storing edibles, magazines, ammunition, ballistic and siege machines.

6. There were twenty –eight gates in the city which were called ‘darwaza’. Some of the famous.

darwazas were Buland darwaza, Mandwi darwaza and Gul darwaza.

7. There was fine cemetery in which graves either had domes over them or had an arch.

8. The bazaars of the city were not only places of economic activity but also a hub of social and cultural activity.

9. One could find a mosque and temple in most of these bazaars.

10. Some bazaars had special spaces marked for public performances by dancers, singers and musicians.

11. Ibn Battuta noticed that appropriation of surplus from villages was the reason of prosperity of many towns.

A Unique System Of Communication- Almost all trade routes were well supplied with inns and guest houses. Ibn

Battuta was also amazed by the efficiency of the postal system(**by horse and human runners**) which allowed

Merchants to not only send information and remit credit across long distances, but also to dispatch goods.

Q. “The conception of social pollution intrinsic to the caste system was contrary to the law of nature.”Examine Al-Biruni’s statement on Indian caste system.

Ans: Al-Biruni, a well known Arab writer, wrote Kitab-ul-Hind. In this book, he gave a detailed description of the social life of the people in India.

1. According to him the conception of social pollution intrinsic to the caste system was contrary societies. He noticed that in ancient Persia, four social categories were recognized;

a. Knights and princess

b. Monks, fire-priests and lawyers;

c. Physicians, astronomers and other scientists; and

d. Peasants and artisans

2. In other words, he tried to imply that social divisions were not unique to India. At the same time, he

Pointed out that within Islam, all men were considered equal, differing only in their observance of piety.

3. In spite of his acceptance of the Brahmanical description of the caste system, Al-Biruni disapproved of the notion of pollution.

4. He remarked that everything which falls in to a state of impurity strives and succeeds in regarding its original condition of purity. The sun cleanses the air, and the salt in the sea prevents the water from becoming polluted. He believed that life on the earth would not be possible without these phenomena.

Q. “India had a unique system of communication during the fourteenth century.” Examine the statement of

Ibn Battuta.

Ans: Ibn Battuta informed us about the unique system of communication in fourteenth century India.

1. The state took special measures to encourage merchants. Inns and guesthouses were available at short distance along all the trade routes.
2. There were two kinds of postal system in India-horse post **uluq** and foot post called **dawa**.
3. The efficiency of the postal system was such that it allowed merchants not only to send information And send credit across long distances, but also to transmit goods at short notice.

Q. Analyse the evidence for slavery provided by Ibn Battuta.

A Ans: a) Slaves were openly sold in markets, like any other commodity, and were regularly exchanged as gifts When Ibn Battuta reached Sind he purchased "horses, camels and slaves" as gifts for Sultan

M Muhammad bin Tughlaq.

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- b) There was considerable differentiation among slaves. Some female slaves in the service of the Sultan were experts in music and dance, and Ibn Battuta enjoyed their performance at the wedding of the Sultan's sister.
 - c) Female slaves were also employed by the Sultan to keep a watch on his nobles. They were generally used for domestic labour.
 - d) Ibn Battuta found that men slaves were used for carrying rich women and men on palanquins or *dola*.
 - e) The price of slaves, particularly female slaves required for domestic labour, was very low, and most families who could afford to do so kept at least one or two of them.