

Accounts of Travelers in Medieval India:

1. Al-Biruni (973-1050)

- He was from Khwarjim, modern day Uzbekistan
- He was a polyglot and a polymath (theology, philosophy, logician, mathematician, astronomer, astrologer, geographer and physician)
- His homeland was invaded by Mahmud of Ghazni, but he was freed because of his reputation as Munujjim (astrologer/astronomer)
- He came to India with invading horses of Mahmud and stayed in India for long.
- Wrote **Tarikh Ul hind/Kitab Ul Hind** in Arabic, which was later translated in Persian
- He described socio-religious conditions of India during the invasion of Mahmud of Ghazni
 - His work reflects sociological study, spirit of enquiry and scientific attitude.
 - He highlighted weakness of Indian character and shortcoming which led to their defeat by invaders.
- Al-Biruni adopted a distinctive structure in each chapter, beginning with a question, following this up with a description based on Sanskrit traditions, and concluding with a comparison with other cultures.
- For example, he found caste system to be similar to four social categories in Persia but abhors untouchability and notion of pollution.

2. Ibn Battuta (1304-69):

- He was from Morocco known for his book **Kitab ur Rihla** or just **Rihla** in Arabic
- He was appointed as Qazi of Delhi during the reign of Muhammad Bin Tughlaq.
- He described taste of Paan and coconut to an audience who have never tasted them.
- He wrote about postal systems of India and mentions two systems: Uluq (by Horse) and Dawa (foot post).
 - Dawa was quicker than Uluq
- He was looted many times and talks about dacoits in various parts of the country.

3. Abdur Razzak:

- He was ambassador of Shah Rukh, the Timurid dynasty ruler of Persia.
- He stayed in India from 1442 to 1443.
- He wrote about Vijayanagar empire, Hampi city, Vijayanagar court (Deva Raya II), their wealth, socio-cultural condition of people in Deccan

- A chapter in his book **Matla-us-Sadain wa Majma-ul-Bahrain**, (The Rise of the Two auspicious constellations and the Confluence of the Two Oceans)
- He also wrote about the invasion of Amir Timur to Delhi.

4. European travellers

(Marco Pollo, Duarte Barbosa and Domingos Paes)

- Marco Pollo from Venice
 - he landed in India in late 13th century (around 1290) on Malabar coast during Pandyan King rule Maravarman Kulasekara I.
 - Known for his travels about China and description of Mongol empire under Kublai Khan
 - He also went to Andman islands
 - He wrote about jain monks, Paan and duels.
 - He mentions people wear very few clothes but precious stones around their neck .
- Nicolo Conti from Venice:
 - He visited southern India around 1420
 - Description of Vijaynagar empire (Deva Raya I)
- Duarte Barbosa (1500-16) and Domingos Paes (1500-02):
 - Portugeese official in Cochin (1500-16)
 - Description of Sothern India and Vijaynagar empire (Narsimha Raya II)
- Francois Bernier from France
 - He visited India from 1656 – 1668 during the reign of Shah Jahan.
 - He was physician to Prince Dara Shikoh and later was attached to the court of Aurangzeb
 - He wrote 'Travels in the Mughal Empire' which mainly talks about Dara Sikoh and Aurangzeb.
 - He was aghast by the practice of Sati.