

For CMAT Exam

FOREIGN TRAVELERS OBSERVATION OF INDIA

GREEK TRAVELLERS

MEGASTHENES

- An ancient Greek historian, diplomat and explorer.
- Visited India between 302 to 288 BC as an ambassador of Greek warrior Seleucus I Nikator during the reign of Chandragupta Maurya.
- Book - Indica. Famous Greek writers such as Arrian, Strabo, Diodorus, and Pliny referred to Indica in their works.
- Indica described the geography of India.
- It also gives us the details of soils, rivers, plants, animals, administration and the social and religious life of India.
- Indians worshiped Lord Krishna during that time and there existed seven castes in India.
- He founded two major aspects of Indian caste system, i.e. endogamy and hereditary occupation.

DEIMACHOS

- Period - 320-273 BC
- Came to India during the reign of Bindusara.

CHINESE TRAVELLERS

FA-HIEN

- A Chinese pilgrim.
- Visited India during the Gupta period around 400 AD during the period of Chandragupta II (Vikramaditya).
- He came to visit various Buddhist monasteries and took copies of religious texts.
- He studied Sanskrit Language in Pataliputra.

- Book - "Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms".
- His book details the religious and social life of Indians at that time.
- Buddhism and Hinduism were the most popular religions at that time.
- India had trade relations with China, countries of South-East Asia, Western Asia and as well as Europe.

HIUEN TSANG

- A Chinese traveller, Buddhist scholar monk and translator.
- Also known as Xuanzang and the Prince of Pilgrims.
- Came to India through the Silk route in between 629-644 AD during the reign of Harshavardhana.
- Book - Si-Yu-Ki : Buddhist Record of the Western World", many details of administrative, political, religious, economic and social conditions during those days in India can be found.
- He described mainly the city life in India (in terms of construction of various types of houses, city-streets, etc. (specially of Kannauj).
- Prayag was a prominent city and the importance of Pataliputra was replaced by Harshavardhana's capital Kannauj. Sravasti and Kapilavastu had lost their religious importance and instead, Nalanda (Bihar) and Vallabhi (Gujarat) became the centres of learning.
- Harsha divided the State's income into four parts :
 - (i) 1/4th for routine administrative expenditure of the State.
 - (ii) 1/4th to pay government employees.
 - (iii) 1/4th to scholars.
 - (iv) 1/4th as charity to Brahmin and Buddhist monks.
- He narrated that travelling was not safe during that time.
- He spent 5 years at the University of Nalanda and studied under Acharya Shilabhadra.
- His journey to India was recorded in detail in the classic Chinese text Great Tang Record on the Western Regions.
- The descriptions were biased so as to glorify Buddhism and praise King Harshavardhana.

I-Tsing

- Period - 671-695 AD
- Visited India in connection with Buddhism.
- His works are Biographies of Eminent Monks.
- Gives useful information about the social, religious and cultural life of the people.

ARAB TRAVELLERS

AL-MASUDI

- An Arab historian, geographer and explorer.
- Also known as the "Herodotus of the Arabs".

- Born in Baghdad and descended from Abdullah Ibn Masud, a companion of Prophet Muhammad.
- He combined world history with scientific geography, social commentary and biography and is published in English named 'The Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems'.
- Book - Muruj-al-Zahab in 956 AD.

AL-BIRUNI (or Abu Rehan Mahamud)

- Born in Khwarazm (present day Uzbekistan) which was an important centre of learning.
- He was a scholar who was well versed in Syriac, Arabic, Persian, Hebrew and Sanskrit.
- In 1017, Sultan Mahmud invaded Khwarizm and took many scholars and poets along with him to his capital, Ghazni. He was one of them.
- First Muslim Scholar to study India also known as founder of Indology.
- He spent years in the company of Brahmana priests and scholars where he learnt Sanskrit.
- Translated several Sanskrit works, including Patanjali's work on Grammar.
- Translated Euclid's (Greek Mathematician) works into Sanskrit.
- Book - Kitab-ul-Hind/Tahqiq-i-Hind (in Arabic) - covers a wide range of subjects such as religion, philosophy, festivals, astronomy, alchemy, manners and customs, social life, weights and measures, iconography, laws and metrology.
- Distinctive feature of the book - each chapter of the book -beginning with a question, following this up with a description based on Sanskritic traditions, and concluding with a comparison with other cultures.
- Tried to explain the caste system by looking for parallels in other societies known to him.

IBN BATTUTA

- A Moroccan traveler who was born in Tangier.
- He travelled extensively in Syria, Iraq, Persia, Yemen, Oman and a few trading ports on the coast of East Africa.
- Came to India in 1332–33 AD during the reign of Muhammad Bin Tughlaq who then appointed him as "qazi" or judge of Delhi.
- In 1342, he travelled to China as the Sultan's envoy.
- Book - 'Rihla'(in Arabic).
- It provides vivid details about the social and cultural life of India in the 14th century.
- The book is highly meticulous where deep observations about new cultures, people, beliefs, values, etc. are recorded.
- He was fascinated by Paan (Betel leaves) and Coconut and compared coconut with a human's head.
- He even wrote about Indian cities (wrote about Delhi in detail) were vibrant and densely populated.
- Mentioned that the postal system was very efficient then which was not only used to send information and remit credit across long distances but was also used to dispatch goods.

ITALIAN TRAVELLERS

MARCO POLO

- An Italian merchant, adventurer and writer.
- He was born in the republic of Venice in 1254 AD.
- Visited South India in 1294 A.D during the reign of Pandyan ruler of Madurai, Madverman, Kulshekhara.
- Book - "The Travels of Marco Polo", "The Book of Sir Marco Polo".
- Manuscripts - The Customs of the Kingdoms of India, Florida Marco Polo, Travels in the Land of Serpents and Pearls.
- Visited the Kakatiya kingdom in around 1289 CE during the reign of Queen Rudramadevi.
- His works mentions that a woman named Rudramadevi had inherited her father's throne and ruled the dynasty as a kind and benevolent ruler.

NICOLO DE CONTI

- An Italian merchant and explorer.
- Came to India in 1420-1421 AD.
- Visited the Vijayanagara kingdom during the reign of Devaraya I.
- In Mylapore (in Chennai), he found the tomb of St. Thomas which ensured the presence of Christian community in India.
- He confirmed the gold and spice trade amongst India, Sumatra and China.
- He referred to the Telugu language as "Italian of the East".
- De' Conti described South-East Asia as "overtaking all other regions in terms of wealth, culture and magnificence".

PETER MUNDY

- Visited the court of the Mughal Emperor, Shahjahan.
- He gave valuable information about the living standard of the common people in the Mughal Empire.

NICOLAO MANUCCI

- Period: 1653- 1708 AD.
- Came during the rule of Achyutdeva Raya of Tuluva dynasty of Vijayanagar Empire.
- Wrote history of the empire from its earliest times of the closing years of Achyutdeva Raya's reign.

PERSIAN TRAVELLERS

ABDUR RAZZAQ

- He was a Persian, Timurid chronicler.
- Visited the Vijayanagara Kingdom at the time of Dev Raya II.
- He gave an account of the reign of Devaraya II.
- He came to the court of King Zamorin of Calicut, as an ambassador of Shahrukh (the Timurid Dynasty Ruler of Persia) in 1442.

- Book - Matla-us-Sadain wa Majma-ul-Bahrain.

PORTUGUESE TRAVELLERS

DOMINGO PAES

- Portuguese merchant.
- Visited India between 1520–1522 AD.
- Described about the ancient city of Hampi under the reign of King Krishnadeva Raya of Tuluva Dynasty under Vijayanagara Empire.
- Book - “Chronica dos reis de Bisnaga”.
- He wrote about the advanced irrigation technology that allowed the peasants to produce high yielding crops at very low prices.
- A wide variety of cultures were shown in crops and vegetation.
- He described a busy market of precious stones.
- Hampi was prospering and its size was comparable to Rome, with abundant vegetation, aqueducts and artificial lakes.

DUARTE BARBOSA

- Period: 1500-1516 AD.
- Wrote about the government and the people of Vijayanagar Empire.

ENGLISH TRAVELLERS

WILLIAM HAWKINS (1608-1611 AD)

- He came to India in 1608 and travelled to Agra in the court of Mughal Emperor Jahangir to negotiate for the establishment of a factory at Surat.
- He was a representative of the English East India Company and an ambassador of the British King James-I.
- Favour by Jahangir enabled him to overcome all difficulties and this permission was the first distinct recognition of English commerce in the East.

SIR THOMAS ROE (1615 – 1619 AD)

- From 1615 to 1619, he stayed at the court of the Mughal Emperor Jahangir.
- The main objective of his mission was to get protection of the factory of British East India Company at Surat.
- He was an English diplomat and a member of the House of Commons during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I.
- Book - “The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe to the Court of the Great Mogul, 1615-1619, as narrated in his journal and correspondence”.
- His “Journal of the Mission to the Mughal Empire” is a treasured contribution to the history of India.

FRENCH TRAVELLERS

JEAN-BAPTISTE TAVERNIER (1638-1643 AD)

- He was a 17th-century French gem (especially diamond) merchant and traveler.
- During his second voyage between 1638-1643 AD, he came to India and traveled as far as Agra and from there to the Kingdom of Golconda.
- Visited the court of the Shahjahan and made his first trip to the diamond mines.
- In his book, he has extensively discussed diamond and the diamond mines of India.
- He is popular for his discovery/purchase of Blue diamond.

FRANCOIS BERNIER

- A doctor, political philosopher and historian.
- Came to India in 1656 and stayed here for 12 years in the Mughal Empire.
- Danishmand Khan, a noble of Aurangzeb, was his patron.
- Comparing Mughal India with contemporary Europe, especially France he tried to portray the latter as superior.
- He noted that there was a lack of private property in the land in Mughal India.
- He felt that artisans had no incentives to improve the quality of their products since the profit was appropriated by the State.
- Described Mughal cities as 'Camp Towns' because towns owed their existence in the imperial camps.
- He wrote in detail about workshops or imperial Karkhanas.
- Merchants were organised in their caste-cum-occupational bodies like Mahajans, Sheths and Nagarsheth.

OTHER TRAVELLERS**SHIHABUDDIN al-UMARI**

- Came from Damascus in 1348 AD.
- He gave a vivid account of India in his book "Masalik albsar fi-mamalik al-amsar".

ATHANASIUS NIKITIN

- A Russian merchant.
- Visited South India in 1470.
- Book - The journey beyond 3 seas.
- Describes the condition of the Bahmani kingdom under Muhammad III.