

SALTORA NETAJI CENTENARY COLLEGE
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

SEMESTER –IV

COURSE CODE: AHHST 402 C-9

COURSE TITLE: HISTORY OF MEDIEVAL INDIA (C.1526 AD –
C.1757AD)

TOPIC: ACCOUNT OF FOREIGNERS ABOUT THE MUGHAL
EMPIRE

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Introduction

During the rule of Mughals quite a number of foreign travellers, mostly Europeans, visited India for various purposes. Some of them were missionaries like Jesuit Fathers, some were ambassadors like Sir Thomas Roe and Bernier while others were commercial travellers like Tavernier or adventurers like Manucci. Most of them recorded their impressions which throw sidelights on the social, economic and political condition of the country under the Mughal rule. All of them were highly impressed by the pomp and magnificence of the Mughal court but they did not forget to note that behind this splendid façade lay hidden a crumbling interior.

Ralph Fitch

Ralph Fitch, an English traveller, came to India in Akbar's time and visited Agra and Fatehpur Sikri in 1585. He describes them as very great cities much greater than London and very populous. The cities were resorted to by merchants from Persia and other places outside of India and there were available in them much merchandise of silk cloth and precious stones, both rubies, diamonds and pearls. He speaks of a regular boat-traffic between Agra and Bengal and undertook a river journey to the latter place with a fleet of 180 boats carrying salt, opium, lead, carpets etc. As regards Akbar's manners and personality, Jesuit Fathers like Monserrate and Jerome Xavier state that Akbar was great with great and lowly with the lowly.

Hawkins and Sir Thomas Roe

In Jahangir's time, we have two travellers, Hawkins and Sir Thomas Roe. They came to India to secure commercial privileges for the East India Company. Hawkins has described the Emperor's daily life and the revelries of his court. At the same time, he noticed the prevailing misgovernment in the provinces. He found that the local authorities in Gujrat were tyrannical and corrupt and would not allow anything to be done without a bribe. The Captain himself was robbed of all his valuables by the Governor. Sir Thomas Roe described the splendour of the court and of the royal camp and had at the same time noted the venality and oppression of the provincial governor and the nobility.

Pelsaert and Bernier

Francisco Pelsaert, the chief of the Dutch factory at Agra, who reached India during Jehangir's period, gives a very gloomy picture of the condition of the ordinary people. He says that there were three classes who were nominally free but their status was little removed from slavery. The most famous of the European travellers was Bernier, a French Physician. He came to India at the close of Shah Jahan's reign and resided in the country for about nine years (1658-1667). He says, "the Great Mughal is a foreigner in Hindustan. He finds himself in a hostile country or nearly so....The provincial governors are so many tyrants, possessing a boundless authority".

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8. ইরফান হাবিব – মধ্যকালীন ভারত

THANK YOU