

Inevitability of European Travelogues in the Socio-Cultural Studies of Later Medieval Maharashtra

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Abstract: After the Arrival of Portuguese sailor Vasco-de-Gama in India, many foreign travelers has been visited India. The ratio of European travelers was more than other foreign travelers in the post medieval period for visiting India. European travelers had keenly and minutely observed and what they had observed, heard; they have noted it down carefully. They had noted down the information about the cities which they had visited; the customs and traditions, believes and blind-believes, birds and animals, weights and measurements.

Social Life in the Later Medieval Maharashtra

Hindu Society

Most of the foreign travelers traveled in Maharashtra by sea route, so in their travelogues we get the information about the harbors on sea shores like Vasai, Mumbai, Chaul, Dabhol, Rajapur etc.

Foreign travelers traveling through Maharashtra by land route clears the main routes like Surat to Burhanpur, Surat to Goa, Surat to Aurangabad and Govalkonda in medieval Maharashtra.

Through the narration of these travelers we get the information like the roads in Maharashtra, towns, foods, lifestyle, environment, animals and birds, religious faiths, superstitions, the sources of measurements etc. By that we get the idea of social, religious, economical, political and cultural conditions of contemporary Maharashtra.

The foreign travelers like Gemelli Carreri (Italy) (Guha J.P. (Ed.) 1979, b, Pp. 309-315), Dr. John Fryer (England) (Crooke W. (Ed.) 1912, Pp. 100-115), Tavernier (France) (Crooke W. (Ed.) 1995, Pp. 141-146, 149), James Forbes (England) (Forbes J. 1834, Pp. 38-40) explained the social life of Maharashtra in later period that Hindu society was divided in caste and tribes like *Brahmin*, *Rajput* (fighters), *Bania* (Traders), Carpenter, Milkman, Gardener, Goldsmith, Farmer, Washer man, Fisherman etc. They were restricted for inter-caste marriage and diet system.

Lifestyle of the Society

Contemporary Maharashtrian society was divided into two parts, one is high class and other one is general middle class. There was much distance in their lifestyles. High class society enjoyed delicious food. Wealthy people lived in big buildings and bungalows. In general middle class there was no variety in diet and their houses were short and thatched.

Costume- As per the socio-economical conditions there were the variety in the costume. The costume of high class people was different than common people. John Fryer (Crooke W. (Ed.) 1912, Pp. 116- 119), Niccolao Manucci (Italy) (Kaul H. K. (Ed.) 2002, Pp. 337-338), James Forbes (Forbes J. 1834, Pp. 52-53) observed that, common people tried limited costumes and they remained half naked. High class women were fond of variety of cloths. All Hindu, Muslim men and women liked the ornaments of various metals.

Mediums of Entertainment- John Fryer (Crooke W. (Ed.) 1912, Pp. 68-73), Carreri (Guha J.P. (Ed.) 1979, b, Pp. 200-205) and James Forbes (Forbes J. 1834, Pp. 114-116) noted that, at that time there were many sources of entertainment like hunting, racing and fight between animals, acrobats, singing and playing the instruments and it was the monopoly of high class people. Common people were entertained by snake charmers and Bear shows. There were the coronation ceremonies and kings and royal family members weighed in wealth, sugar etc.

Festivals- The most of the travelers traveled through *Konkan* (sea shore Maharashtra), so we get the description about the festivals in the *Konkan*. Hindu and Muslim communities celebrated many festivals, but the travelers like John Fryer (Crooke W. (Ed.) 1912, Pp. 79-80), Thevenot (Guha J.P. (Ed.) 1979, b, Pp. 141) & Ovington (England) (Crooke W. (Ed.)

1967, Pp. 197, Footnote No. 3) specially noticed about the two festivals *Holi* (Festival of fire in the winter season) and *Narli Pournima* (Full moon day in the rainy season).

Custom of chewing Betel Leaves: Foreign travelers like Duarte Barbosa (Portugal) (Dames M. L. (Ed.) 1918, Pp. 167-169), Thomas Herbert (England) (Foster W. (Ed.) 1928, Pp. 275-276), Carreri (Ojha Dr. P.N. 1975, Pp. 33, Footnote no. 99) were surprised because of the custom of chewing Betel leaves at the same time threw through light on the medicinal features of the Betel leaves.

Condition of Women

The contemporary condition of woman was much degraded than today. The customs like child marriage, widow burning were in practice on large scale. The *Purdah* (veil) system was much practiced in Muslim women. From the narration of Ralph Fitch (England) (Prasad R. C. 1980, Pp. 55-56), Thevenot (Guha J.P. (Ed.) 1979, b, P. 141), Edward Terry (Samuel Purchas, 1905-07, Vol. IX, P. 43) & James Forbes (Forbes J. 1834, P. 56) we can find that, the marriageable age for girls was 9-10 years and for boys it was before 16. Divorce was agreed by all in Muslim community and in Hindu Community it was used by lower caste. Widow marriages were agreed only in lower communities.

Sati (Widow Burning) Custom

European travelers like Tom Pires (Portugal) (Cortesao A. (Ed.) 1944, P. 52), John Lincostone (Holland) (Samuel Purchas, 1905, P. 256-257), Tavernier (Crooke W. (Ed.) 1995, Vol. I., Pp. 175-176) & Bernier (France) (Constable A. (Tr.) 1992, Pp. 306-315), James Forbes (Forbes J. 1834, Pp. 57-58) give in detail about this custom and remarks that there was plight and predicament of women due to inhuman customs like *Sati* (widow burning) and child marriage. The widow woman was neglected in the society. The lives of widow women were humiliating, servile and below dignity, so those women optioned for widow burning. About the burned widow there was honor and respect in the society. The foreign travelers considered Brahmin community responsible for such customs. According to Tavernier, Muslim Commanders does not permit for widow burning, so the ratio of widow burning was less. But in Hindu kingdom the ratio was high. Up to 19th century widow burning customs was practiced.

Devdasi custom (girl child dedicated to the God) was also in practice in Maharashtra; James Forbes (Forbes J. 1834, Pp. 61-62) observed that "Dancing girls are dedicated to the principal Hindoo temples, they are supplied by their parents, and they dance and sing at the festivals. We shall find that these damsels are not only dedicated to the principal idols, but to the pleasure of the priests."

The Hindu calendar

European travelers like John Fryer, Peter Mundy & Edward Terry (Crooke W. (Ed.) 1912, Pp. 90-94) have minutely noticed about the Hindu calendar and the system of counting the time, *Pal* (moments), *Ghatika* (Seconds), *Prahar* (the day is divided into 8 parts).

Natural Calamities & Diseases

In the foreign travelogues of Peter Mundy, Manucci, Martin Francois (France), John Lincostone (Samuel Purchas, 1905, Vol. X, P. 253-254), Thevenot (Guha J.P. (Ed.) 1979, b, Pp. 184-185), John Fryer (Crooke W. (Ed.) 1967, Pp. 178-180), Carreri (Guha J.P. (Ed.) 1979, b, Pp. 200-205) we get the eye witness narration about the suffering due to natural calamities like famine, drought and flood. They also noted about the epidemic diseases, their symptoms and solutions. So it threw light on the contemporary later medieval of Maharashtrian health and lifestyle.

Crops & Animals

From the travelogues of John Fryer (Crooke W. (Ed.) 1967, Pp. 209-210, (Crooke W. (Ed.) 1912, Pp. 73-76, 84-85), Thevenot & Carreri (Guha J.P. (Ed.) 1979, b, Pp. 200-205, 136), James Forbes (Forbes J. 1834, Pp. 12-22, 26-34, 121-122) we get the narration about various crops, vegetables, foods, animals, birds in Maharashtra. Fryer noted that Maharashtrian produces two harvests. Various kinds of pulse, rice, wheat, melons, cucumbers, gourds were the main crops. They found that this country was rich in bamboos, tamarind, teak, coconut, mango, cashew, and pine-apple. Animals and birds like tigers, leopards, wild hogs, antelopes, deer, hares, elephants, monkey, snakes, sheep, sparrow,

peacock, *bulbul* (Persian Nightingale), different types of fishes find in abundant here. So their travelogues are the real mirrors of lifestyle of Maharashtrais.

Parsi Community

The sun of Parsi society was setting in Iran, at the same time there condition in India was raising. The foreign traveler like Dr. John Fryer (England) (Crooke W. (Ed.) 1912, Pp. 115), Alexander Hamilton (England) (Firby N. K. 1988, P. 147) gave the information about their industries. Travelers like British Governor of Mumbai Gerald Anguier and Strensham Master Firby N. K. 1988, Pp. 141, 143) told about their march towards Mumbai, but it was slow process. Hamilton provided the wide list about their business. Till the time of Strensham Master (1672 AD) Parsi started sea journey and turn towards Mumbai, and Surat was their chief station. Such things are cleared through their travelogues.

Cities and Lifestyle

We get the information about people's life, towns and cities through the parts where they traveled, but they did not throw light on the remaining parts.

One can understand well through the details of social life given by some foreigner (John Fryer (Crooke W. (Ed.) 1967, Pp. 323-331, 337-340), Thevenot (Guha J.P. (Ed.) 1979, b, Pp. 140-141) because they traveled through Kolhapur, Junner, Ramnagar, Peth and Baglan.

Contemporary foreign travelers like John Fryer (Crooke W. (Ed.) 1967, Pp. 172-178), Abbe Carre (Fawcett C. (Ed.) and Burn R. (assist.) 1947, Pp. 182, Footnote no. 3), Ovington (Guha J.P. (Ed.) 1979, a, P. 57) and James Forbes (Forbes J. 1834, Pp. 11-12, 94-101) explained the development of Mumbai from small village to a Metropolitan city and the administrative system of the city.

For the study of medieval Burhanpur foreign travelogues are the Main source of information. Fitch Ralph (Samuel Purchas, 1905, Vol. X, P. 170-171), Captain Hawkins (Kunte B.G. (Executive Ed.) 1974, P. 105), Captain Coverte (Oaten E. F. 1909, Pp. 158-159), Sir Thomas Roe (Foster William (Ed.) (1899, Vol. I, Pp. 89-95, 100, 397-399, 403, 409, 489-495, 502, 523), Thevenot (Guha J.P. (Ed.) 1979, b, Pp. 120-122), Tavernier (Crooke W. (Ed.) 1995, Vol. I., P. 42) and Bernier (Constable A. (Tr.) 1992, Pp. 32) provides the first hand information about this town's structural design, historical importance, the constructions and surprising water management. Burhanpur has contemporary important town and it was known as the Key of the Deccan, such details were present in their travelogues.

Main Routes in the Maharashtra

1) *Surat-Burhanpur*- Many travelers like William Finch (Foster W. (Ed.) 1985, Pp. 136-138), Sir Thomas Roe (Foster William (Ed.) (1899, Vol. I, Pp. 85-89) and Tavernier (Crooke W. (Ed.) 1995, Vol. I., Pp. 40-42) traveled by the route of Surat to Burhanpur, so they described the conditions of Khandesh in their travelogues. So their travelogues are the important tools for the study of Medieval Khandesh. Through their travelogues we get the description of Navapur, Salher, Mulher, Nandurbar, Thalner, Chopda and Adavad. They also described about the *Bhill* tribe in the Khandesh and the qualities of nature and disposition of *Bhill* women.

2) *Surat to Goa*- The foreign traveler (John Fryer (Crooke W. (Ed.) 1912, Pp. 1-5, 19-20, 30-41), Tavernier (Crooke W. (Ed.) 1995, Vol. I., Pp. 142, 145-146), James Forbes (Forbes J. 1834, Pp. 103-106, 113-114, 117-123, 127-129, 133-136, 143) mainly traveled through Maharashtra by the route of sea-shore, mainly through Kelve, Mahim, Vasai, Sashti, Mumbai, Thane, Kalyan, Chaul, Alibag, Janjira, Dande Rajpuri, Dabhol, Rajapur, Vengurle, Kharepatan and Dasgaon (which is famous for hot water pond). Due to this they provide vide information about the socio-cultural scenario of the sea shore Maharashtra (Konkan).

3) *Surat to Govalkonda* (Hyderabad) - Tavernier (Crooke W. (Ed.) 1995, Vol. I., Pp. 119-121) and Thevenot (Guha J.P. (Ed.) 1979, b, Pp. 123-125, 131-136, 184) traveled by this route, so in their travelogues we find the description about the provinces like Aurangabad, Daulatabad and Balaghat.

Caves

Except James Forbes (Forbes J. 1834, Pp. 265-270) other foreign travelers did not widely narrated about Maharashtraian caves, Indian culture and sculpture. So it is clear that they did not have much knowledge about it. Selected travelers narrated about the caves like Ellora, Kanheri, Elephanta, Mahad and Ganesh caves near Junnar. But they lack the real

information about Indian religion and culture. Only the travelers like James Forbes provided the objective information. So I mentioned that how much these foreign travelers understand the caves?

Conclusions

We can derive the following conclusions through their travelogues:

We find the later medieval socio-cultural conditions of Maharashtra in the foreigner's travelogues. These travelers while traveling provide the information about the social life, the customs, important towns, the routes of traveling and the medium of traveling. They give in detail about the Hindu society and culture which was in majority. Due to that we easily understand the lifestyle of Hindu society and the typical characteristics of Brahmin, *Rajput* (fighters), *Bania* (Traders), Carpenter, Milkman, Gardener, Goldsmith, Farmer, Washer man, Fisherman etc.

Through their first hand observations they have explained the socio-cultural life of medieval Maharashtra by showing the customs like child marriage, *Devdasi* custom (girl child dedicated to the God), mediums of entertainment, food, vegetables, fruits, crops, trees, animals and birds.

The foreign travelers also noticed about the minority people like Parsi. They explained the customs, lifestyle and industriousness of the Parsi people.

The foreign travelers traveling through Maharashtra noted the information by traveling from Surat to Goa, Surat to Burhanpur and Surat to Govalkonda (Hyderabad), which were the contemporary high ways. These travelers also described about their stages in the traveling, distances, *Ghats* (hilly roads) in Maharashtra. They also explained about charitable shelters, *Palanquins*, bulls, horses and carts as the important sources of traveling and the security system and the servants through their narrations. The foreign travelers also threw light on the traders and nomadic tribes like *Banjara*. The foreign travelers like Tavernier and James Forbes described about the medieval postal system.

Thus here my attempt is to show later medieval Maharashtrian socio-cultural life through foreign travelogues and thus these travelogues as the mirror of the contemporary system.

But there is some drawbacks in their travelogues, as they wrote their travelogues after much time of their traveling, so they did not provide accurate information, but they have the first hand observation about it, so they were the primary sources of information. But if it was only heard information then it might be secondary. The above said foreign travelers wrote about the observed and heard information and they informed this information to the second officer or the friends through letters. For the heard information they gave the importance as news only. They never thought that their travelogues would be the sources for history writing.

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APPENDIX-1

Profile of the Travelers, Traveled in Later Medieval Maharashtra

Sr. No.	Name of the Traveler	Country	Period
1	Barbosa Duarte	Portugal	1500
2	Varthema Ludovico di	Italy	1505
3	Barros Joao de	Portugal	16 th Cent.
4	Pires Tom	Portugal	1512
5	Orta Garcia da	Portugal	1534
6	Castro Dom Joao de	Portugal	1538
7	Federici Caesar d)	Italy	1565
8	Stephens Thomas	England	1579
9	Monserate Antonio	Spain	1580
10	Fitch Ralph	England	1583
11	Pyrard Francois	France	1607
12	Finch William	England	1608
13	Hawkins William	England	1608
14	Jourdain John	England	1611
15	Floris Peter	Germany	1611
16	Best Thomas	England	1612
17	Downton Nicholas	England	1614
18	Dodsworth Edward	England	1614
19	Roe Sir Thomas	England	1615
20	Valle Pietro Della	Italy	1622
21	Herbert Sir Thomas	England	1628
22	Mundy Peter	England	1628
23	Tavernier Jean Baptiste	France	1631
24	Mandelslo John Albert de	Germany	1638
25	Manucci Niccolao	Italy	1656
26	Master Streynsham	England	1657
27	Bernier Francois	France	1659
28	Baldaeus Phillippus	Holland	1660
29	Godhino Father Manuel	Portugal	1662
30	Martin Francois	France	1665
31	Thevenot Jean de	France	1666
32	Carre Barthelemy	France	1668
33	Dellon Francis	France	1670
34	Navarrete Domingo Fernandez de	France	1670
35	Ogilby John	England	1670
36	Fryer John	England	1672
37	Ovington John	England	1690
38	Careri Giovanni Francesco Gemelli	Italy	1695
39	Hamilton Alexander	England	1695
40	Norris Sir William	England	1699
41	Cleland John	England	1728
42	Grose John Henry	England	1750
43	Forbes James	England	1766