

Foreign Travellers Ancient and Medieval India

Q. Following persons came to India at one time or another (UPSC Pre-1999)

1. Fa-Hien
2. I-Tsing
3. Megasthenese
4. Hieun-Tsang

Arrange them in chronological order

- a) 3124
- b) 3142
- c) 1324
- d) 1342

Find correct statement(s)

1. Fa-Hien attended Kanishka's 4th Buddhist council
2. Hiuen-Tsang met Harsha & found him to be antagonistic to Buddhism
3. Both 1 and 2
4. Neither 1 nor 2

Q. According to Chinese traveller Yuan Chwang (Hiuen Tsang)

1. The roads and river-routes were completely immune from robbery.
2. As regards punishment for offences, ordeals by fire, water and poison were the instruments for determining the innocence or guilt of a person.
3. The tradesmen had to pay duties at ferries and barrier stations.

Select the correct answer using the codes given below.

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 1 and 3 only
- d) 1, 2 and 3

Q. Which one of the following foreign travellers elaborately discussed diamonds and diamond mines of India? (2018)

- a) Francois Bernier
- b) Jean-Baptiste Tavernier
- c) Jean de Thevenot
- d) Abbe Barthelemy Carre

Q. According to Portuguese writer Nuniz, the women in the Vijayanagara Empire were experts in which of the following areas?

(2021)

1. Wrestling
2. Astrology
3. Accounting
4. Soothsaying

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

- a) 1, 2 and 3 only
- b) 1, 3 and 4 only
- c) 2 and 4 only
- d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Q. Which one of the following statements is not correct? (CDS-2018-i)

1. Al-Biruni identifies the Sufi doctrine of divine love as self-annihilation with parallel passages from Bhagavad Gita.
2. According to Al-Biruni, Sufi theories of Soul were similar to those in Patanjali's Yoga Sutra.
3. The Hatha Yogic treatise Amrita Kunda had lasting impact on Sufism.
4. Hujwiri's conversation with the Yogis shows that he was impressed with their theory of the division of the human body.

Q. Who among the following mentioned the incidents of Sati system in India?

1. Marco Polo
2. Hiuen Tsang
3. Both 1 and 2
4. Neither 1 nor 2

Who among the following European travellers never returned to Europe and settled down in India? (UPSC's-CDS-ii-2018)

1. Duarte Barbosa
2. Manucci
3. Tavernier
4. Bernier

According to the French traveller Tavernier, the majority of houses in Varanasi during the 17th century were made of (UPSC's-CDS-ii-2018)

1. brick and mud
2. stone and thatch
3. wood and stone
4. brick and stone

Q.

19. Match List I with List II and select the correct answer using the code given below the Lists :

<i>List I</i>		<i>List II</i>	
<i>(Traveller)</i>		<i>(Country)</i>	
P.	Seydi Ali Reis	1.	Morocco
Q.	Ibn Battuta	2.	Turkey
R.	Peter Mundy	3.	Portugal
S.	Duarte Barbosa	4.	England

Code :

	P	Q	R	S
(a)	2	1	4	3
(b)	3	4	1	2
(c)	3	1	4	2
(d)	2	4	1	3

Greek and Chinese Travellers

Megasthenes

- ❑ In around 302 BC he came India in Mauryan court of **Chandragupta Maurya** as an **ambassador of Greek ruler Seleucus I Nicator** of the Seleucid dynasty.
- ❑ **He described India in his book Indica**, which is now lost, but has been partially reconstructed from the writings of the later authors.
 - Theft was rare
 - Farmers were never touched in war,
 - **There was no slavery,**
 - Indians did not borrow and lent money on interest etc.
 - People never drank wine except at sacrifices,



Megasthenes

❑ He describes that Indians are divided into **seven classes.**

1. Philosophers
2. Farmers
3. Shepherds and Hunters
4. Artisans and
5. Soldiers
6. **Overseers/ Spies**
7. Councillors and Assessors

**Hereditary
Occupation
and
Endogamy.**



□ Provincial and local Administration

- Agronomoi or district officials:
- Six committees of five members each to look after the administration of Pataliputra (**Town Officials - Astynomoi**)

These committees looked after: 1. Industries 2. Foreigners 3. Birth and deaths 4. Trade 5. Manufacture and sale of goods 6. Collection of sales tax.

- Megasthenes' account regarding **army administration** mentions six committees of five members each.
These were in charge of the navy, the infantry, cavalry, chariots and elephants, supervision of equipment and transport.

Provincial and local Administration

- ❑ **Land revenue:** It was the main source of income for the State, but varied from **one-fourth to one-sixth of the produce**. It was directly collected by the king's officials from the individual cultivators **without bringing in intermediaries**. Tax exemption or reduction was done by the king, whenever necessary.
- ❑ There are the references in Greek texts that quote Megasthenes as saying that **all land in India owned by the King**.

Megasthenes

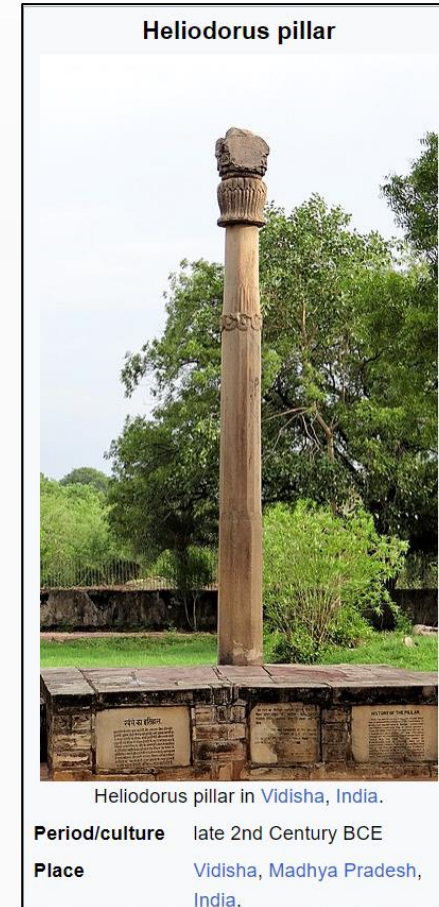
❑ Law and Justice:

King administers justice to his subjects.

- Criminal law was severe. One of the recognized punishment was mutilation.
 - There was no written law.
-
- ❑ The Mauryan palaces were described as the greatest creations of mankind by Megasthenes.
 - ❑ The Pandyas are first mentioned by Megasthenes, wherein he refers to a Pandya kingdom celebrated for pearls and ruled by a woman, suggesting that the Pandya society was matriarchal.

Other Greek Travellers

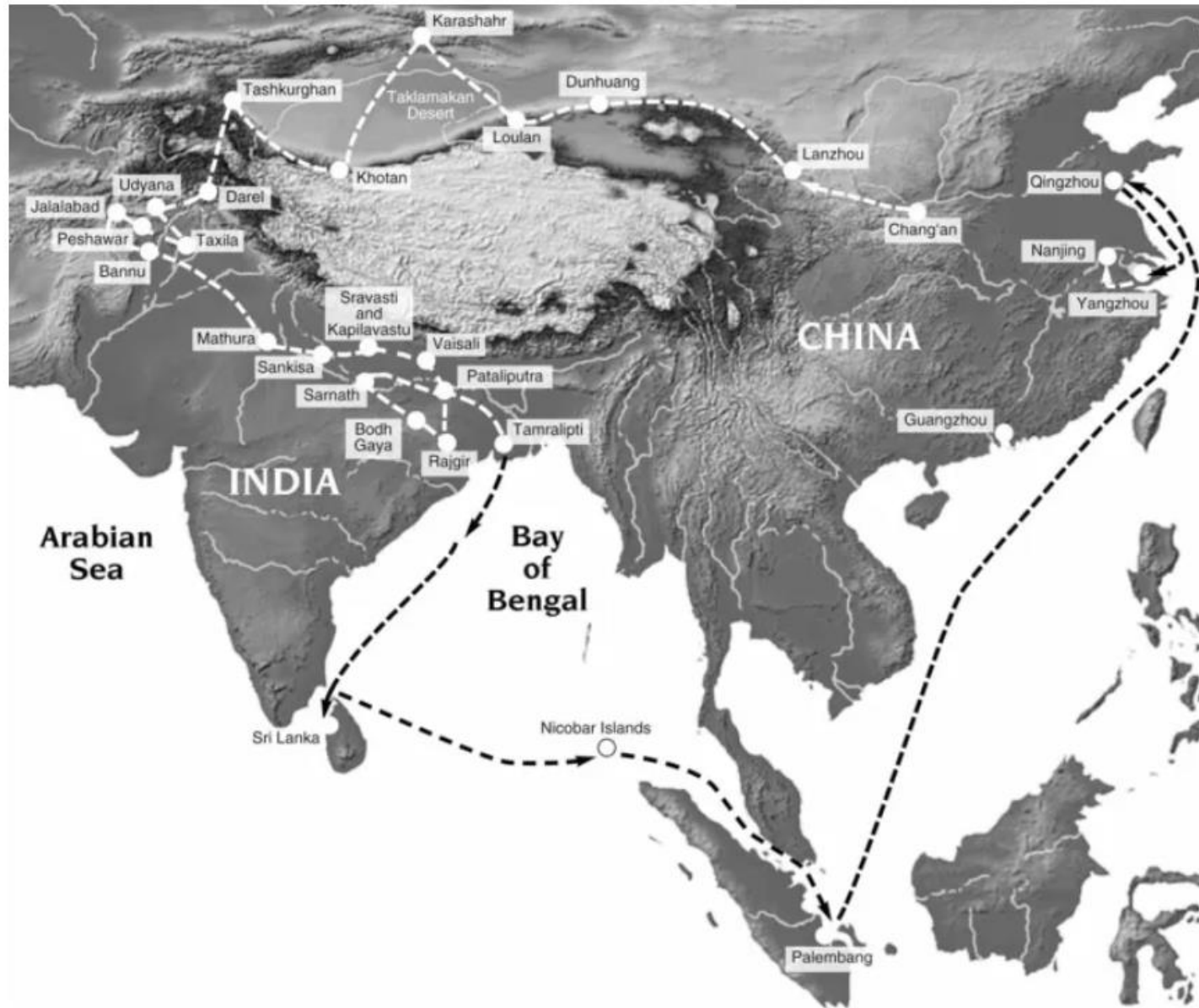
Foreign Traveller	Time Period	Sent by
Deimachus	Mauryan Ruler Bindusara (297 – 273 BCE)	Antioch I Soter, Seleucid Empire
Dionysius	Mauryan Ruler Ashoka (268 – 232 BCE)	Ptolemy Philadelphus of Egypt
Heliodorus	Bhagbhadra of Sunga Dynasty	Antialcidas of Taxila



Fa-hien/Faxian

- He was a **Buddhist monk from China** who came to India during **Chandragupta II (Vikramaditya)** region in search of original Buddhist texts.
- He recorded his observations in a travelogue titled **Fo-Kwo-Ki** (A Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms; also known as Faxian's Account).
- He had given a detailed description of the **Buddhist pilgrimages**.
- According to him, the Buddhist religion was divided into **Mahayana and Hinayana**.
- He saw twenty Buddha vihars in Mathura. But in **Kapilavastu, Gaya and Kushinagar** the condition was deteriorating which indicated the weakening of Buddhism.





Fa-hien / Faxian

- He did not mention even the name of Chandra Gupta II.
- Fahien stated that the **death penalty was not imposed in north India**, but most crime was punished by fines and only serious revolt by the amputation of one hand. Executions were rare.
- People were **law-abiding**.
- **Religious tolerance** in the society.
- There was the **existence of Caste but harmony** was well established.
- According to Fahien, the **Shudras were kept outside the town** and entered the town by making a noise with a stick. They were butchers, hunters, and fishermen.



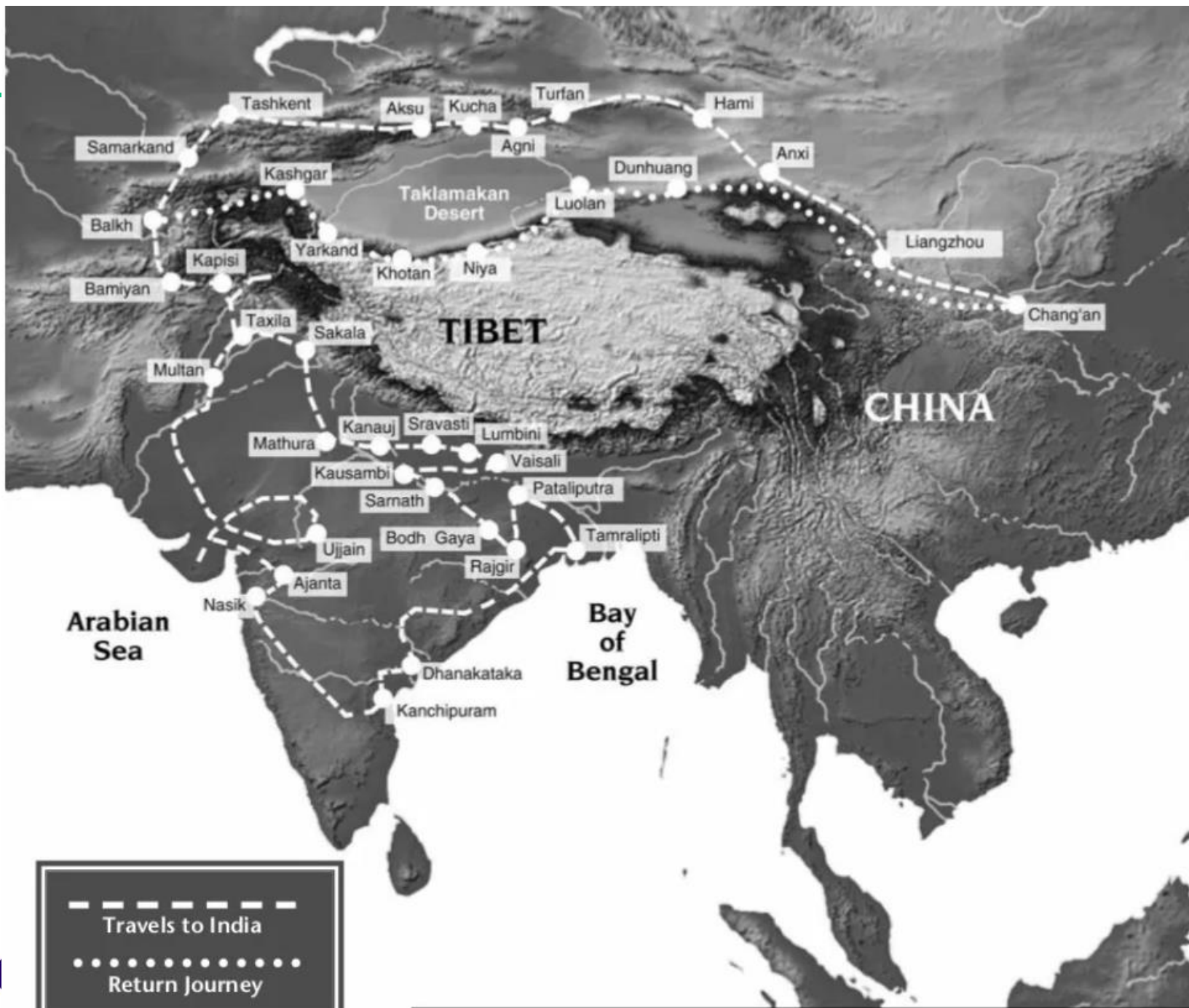
Fa-hien / Faxian

- **People were vegetarian.**
- Descriptions given by him like no corporal punishment, no theft, no sale of liquor, vegetarianism etc are not supported by other contemporary sources.
- **Both internal and external trade in progressive stage and sea voyages were also carried out by Indians.**

Hieun Tsang (Xuan Zang)

- Hieun Tsang was a **Chinese pilgrim** who had come to India during **Harsha's reign**.
- He is known as 'prince of pilgrims'.
- He was **Buddhist monk** and one of the main reasons to visit India was to visit its sacred Buddhist sites.
- Xuanzang's work (Si-yu-ki) is the longest and most detailed account of the countries of Central and South Asia.
- He visited all holy places which were related to **Budha's life** (Lumbini. Kapilavastu. Bodha Gaya. Sarnath and Kushinara).





Hieun Tsang (Xuan Zang)

- Hiuen Tsang **praised emperor Harsha and his administration very much.**
- Hiuen Tsang described that Harsha divided his **income into four parts.**
 - One part of it was spent on **administrative routine** of the state;
 - the second part of it was distributed among **government employees;**
 - the third of it was given **to scholars;** and
 - the fourth part of it was given in charity to Brahamanas and the Buddhist monks (religious bodies)

Hieun Tsang (Xuan Zang)

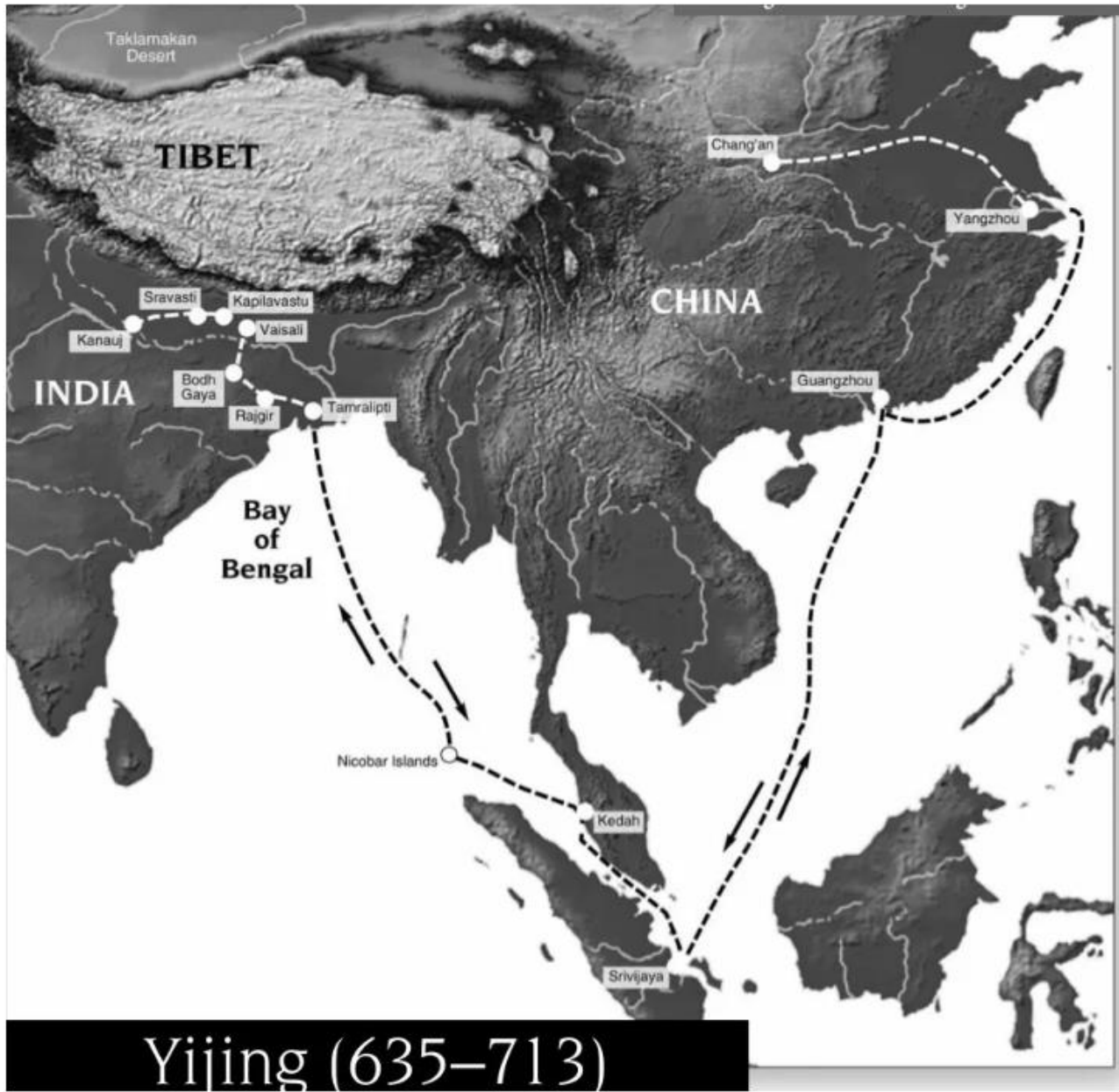
- The kingdom was **well-governed**; it was- free from revolts; there were **a few cases of law-breaking**.
- Hiuen Tsang had said he had been **robbed twice which implies there were law and order problem** during Harsha period.
- **The burden of taxation was not heavy on the subjects**; they were free from the oppression of the government servants.
- **Cruel Form of Punishments, four kinds of ordeal used - ordeal by water, by fire, by weighing, and by poison.**

Hieun Tsang (Xuan Zang)

- Hiuen Tsang wrote that **caste-system was rigid**.
- He described that **Brahmanism, Buddhism and Jainism** were all popular religions in India.
- Though he did not write that Buddhism was on decline, yet, his description of cities indicates that **Buddhism was, certainly, on decline and Brahmanism was progressing**.
- Hiuen Tsang gave **description of religious assemblies** also which were organised by Emperor Harsha at **Prayag (Allahabad) and Kanauj**.

Hieun Tsang (Xuan Zang)

- Hiuen Tsang had also reported that **Nalanda** was **supported by the revenues of an enormous estate of one hundred villages**, and by the alms of many patrons, **including the great Harsha himself**; it provided free training for no less than 10,000 students, who had a large staff to wait on them.



Yijing (635–713)

Yijing / I-Tsing (671-695)

- **Book - The Record of Buddhism As Practiced in India**
- **The Memoirs of Eminent**
- It contains 56 Chinese monks who travelled to India in 7th century.
- The written records of his 25-year travels contributed to the world **knowledge of the ancient kingdom of Srivijaya**, as well as providing information about the other kingdoms lying on the route between China and the Nalanda Buddhist university in India.
- **He was also responsible for the translation of a large number of Buddhist texts from Sanskrit into Chinese.**

Arabian Travellers

Arabian Travellers

Foreign Traveller	Time Period	Imp. Points
Sulaiman, Iran	Mid of 9 th Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Pratihara Cavalry - Finest▪ Al - Juzr - Mihir Bhoja▪ Ruhma - Dharma Pala▪ Amoghvarsha - Four great kings of the world.
Al - Masudi, Baghdad	10 th Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ First Arab writer to <u>combine history and scientific geography</u> in his works and thus was hailed as the '<u>Herodotus of the Arabs.</u>▪ The Pratihara kingdom "had no access to the sea," which led to the Rashtrakutas gaining dominance of Gujarat.▪ Mihir Bhoja - King Baura

Al-Beruni

- Al-Beruni was born in 973, in Khwarazm in present day Uzbekistan
- Well versed in several languages: **Syrian, Arabic, Persian, Hebrew and Sanskrit.**
- He spent the first twenty-five years of his life in Khwarazm where he studied **Islamic jurisprudence, theology, grammar, mathematics, astronomy, medicine, philosophy and most other sciences.**
- Alberuni was 44 years of age when he came to India with Mahmud of Ghazni.



- For his keen observations **on Indian society and cultural ethos of the time**, some scholars have actually written of him as the **'first anthropologist'**.
- He translated several Sanskrit works, including **Patanjali's work on grammar, into Arabic.**
- For his Brahmana friends, he translated the works of Euclid (a Greek mathematician) into Sanskrit.

Al- Beruni

- Al-Biruni's **Kitab-ul-Hind**, written in **Arabic**, is simple and lucid.
- **Al-Biruni's description of the caste system:**
 - ✓ **Social divisions were not unique to India.**
 - ✓ In ancient Persia, four social categories were recognised: those of 1. **knights and princes**; 2. **monks, fire-priests and lawyers**; 3. **physicians, astronomers and other scientists**; and finally, 4. **peasants and artisans.**
 - ✓ Accepted the Brahmanical description of the caste system, **but disapproved of the notion of pollution.**
 - ✓ The conception of social pollution, was according to him, **contrary to the laws of nature.**

Closed Society:

- **The closed attitude of society, lacking dynamism did not go untouched by Alberuni.**
- Alberuni further says that the isolationist attitude of Indians was further buttressed by **a false sense of superiority.**
- In his opening chapter itself Alberuni writes that "**the Indians believed that there is no country like theirs, no nation like theirs, no king like theirs, no religion like theirs, no science like theirs**".

Social evils:

- Alberuni mentions evil social practices within the Indian society like **child- marriage, prohibition on widow remarriage, sati, the low position of women in general and widows in particular.**

Indian Festivals:

- Alberuni enlists all the important festivals without much comment on them. He mentions: **2nd Chaitra (a Kashmiri festival), Guru tritiya, Vasanta etc.**
- He takes an important note of the fact that most of the festivals are celebrated by women and children only.

Marco Polo

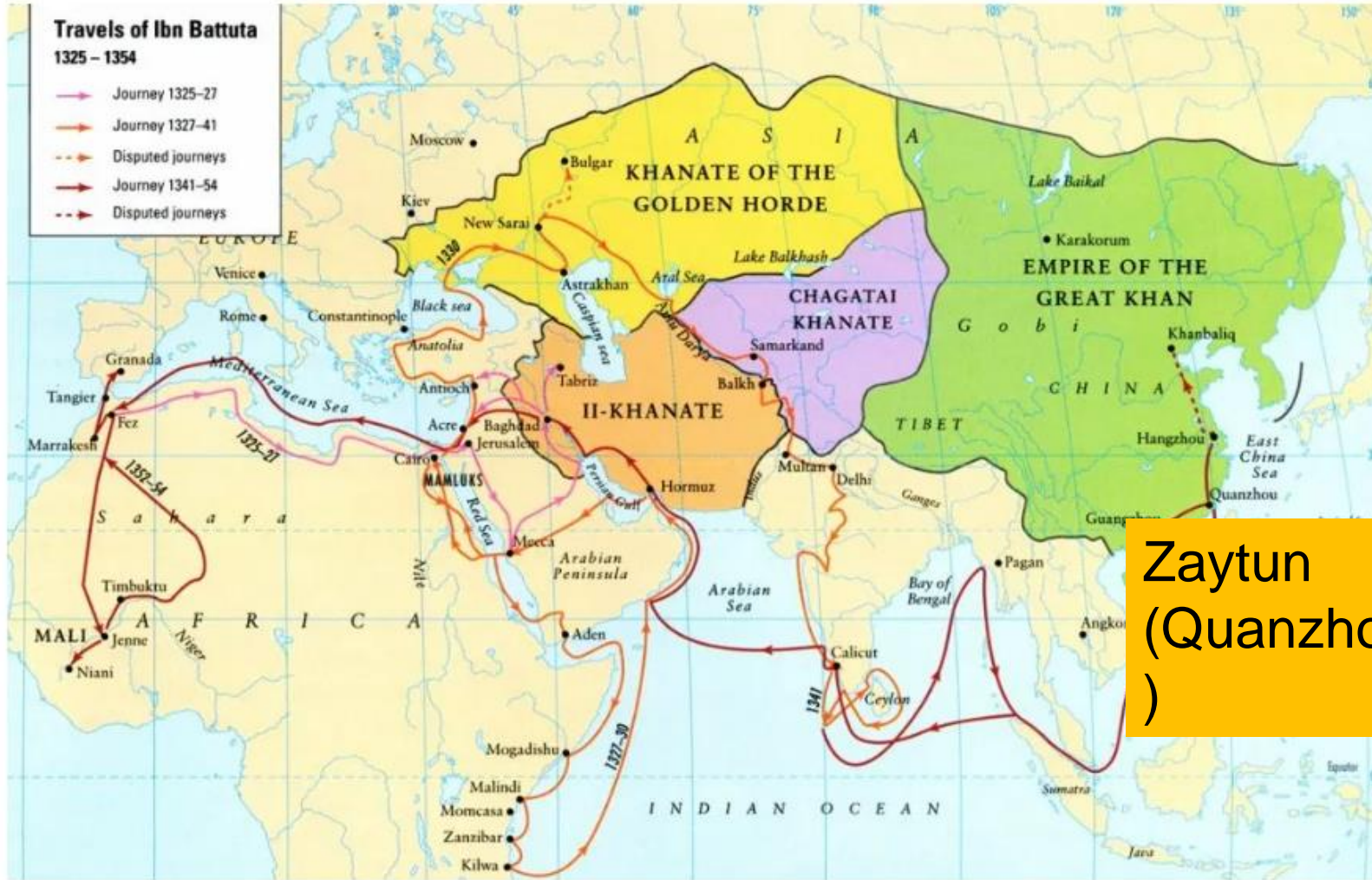
- Marco Polo was a merchant **from Venice** and an adventurer who travelled from Europe to Asia from **1271 to 1295**.
- He travelled through Asia along the Silk road in the **13th century**.
- The story of his travels is recorded in '**Il Milione**' (The Million) also called '**The Travels of Marco Polo**'/ '**Description of the World**'
- Marco Polo arrived on the Coromandel Coast of India in AD **1292**.
- He entered the kingdom of the **Tamil Pandyas** near **Tanjore**.



Marco Polo

- He visited Southern India during the reign of **Rudramma Devi of the Kakatiya Dynasty.**
(He describes **Mutfili** (or Motupalli) as a flourishing city and sea-borne trade centre.)
- He called the **Ramappa temple “The brightest star in the galaxy of temples.”**
- During his visit to India, he has accounted that –
 1. **The climate is so hot** that men and women wore only loincloths.
 2. **The sole local grain produced was rice.**

Ibn Battuta:



- Ibn Battuta was born in Tangiers, Morocco in 1304 CE in the medieval era in Islamic family
- Ibn Battuta's book of travels, called **Rihla**, written in Arabic.

Zaytun
(Quanzhou)

Ibn Battuta:

- Battuta's descriptions of **Muhammad Bin Tughlaq** cast the king as an **eccentric man, prone to severeness of temper.**
- **He left an account of Harihara I's reign in his book.**
- He provides useful information on Tughlaq Empire, its administrative structure especially the **espionage and communication systems.**
- He mentions the **postal system (by horse and human runners).**
- The system is said to have employed a horse courier (**Horse Post - Uluq**) stationed every four miles and three foot courier (**Dawa**) stationed every mile.

Ibn Battuta



Ibn Battuta:

- **Practice of Sati – the burning of widows (With Permission of Sultan) and the caste system prevailed.**
- **Ibn Battuta described about, slave market, slavery, social custom that muslims were allowed to have four wives.**
- **Adultery was a serious crime, since men were having sexual relationships with multiple women simultaneously.**

Ibn Battuta:

- **The cities were densely populated, prosperous with bright and colourful markets and streets.**
- **The bazaar was the place of economic transactions and the hub of social and cultural activities and had various Mosques and Temples.**
- **The network of trade and commerce was strong, the great trade taking place in Malabar through the ports of Calicut and Kollam, where ships from China and Persia came to trade in pepper.**

Ibn Battuta:

- **Indian textiles particularly cotton cloth, muslin, silk, brocade and satin were in great demand.** The Indian manufacturers traded both in West Asia and Southeast Asia.
- Ibn Battuta noted that the **soil of the land was very fertile and allowed farmers to grow 2 crops per year** Rabi and Kharif. He also mentioned that rice was sown three times in a year. **Rice and sugarcane were sown in the east, while wheat and Oilseeds were grown in the North. Sesame, Cotton and barley were also sown.**

Travellers During Vijayanagar Period

NAME OF TRAVELERS	FROM	VIJAYANAGARA-RULER
Abu Abdullah/Ibn Batuta (Book: Rihla)	Morocco	Harihara I
Nicolo de Conti	Italy	Devaraya-I
Abdur Razzaq	Persia	Devaraya-II
Athanasius Nikitin	Russia	Virupaksha Raya II
Ludvico de Vortheima	Italy	Krishna Deva Raya
Duarte Barbosa	Portugal	Krishna Deva Raya
Dominigo Paes	Portugal	Krishna Deva Raya
Fernao Nuniz	Portugal	Achyuta Deva Raya

Travellers During Vijayanagar Period

Traveller	Country of Origin	Ruler/Kingdom	Description
Nicolo Conti, 1420 - 1421	Italian	Devaraya I	1. fortifications of the city 2. Slavery
Abdur Razzaq (1443 -1444)	Persian Diplomat	Devaraya II	Wealth and life in the Vijayanagar kingdom. <u>Matla us Saddin</u> <u>wa Majuma ul</u> <u>Baharain.</u> - Troops

Travellers During Vijayanagar Period

Traveller	Country of Origin	Ruler/Kingdom	Description
Athanasius Nikitin Period: (1470-1474 A.D.)	Russian merchant	Bahmani kingdom under Muhammad III (1463-82).	His narrative “ The journey beyond 3 seas ”

Travellers During Vijayanagar Period

Traveller	Country of Origin	Ruler/Kingdom	Description
Barbosa (1500 - 1516)	Portuguese	Krishna Deva Raya	The king allows such freedom that every man may come and go and live according to his own creed, without suffering any annoyance and without enquiry, whether he is Christian, Jew, Muslim, or Hindu'.

Travellers During Vijayanagar Period

Traveller	Country of Origin	Ruler/Kingdom	Description
Domingo Paes Period: (1520-1522 A.D.)	Portuguese	Krishna Deva Raya	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Devdasi system▪ "Chronicle of the Vijayanagar kings" (Chronica dos Reis de <u>Bisnaga</u>).
Fernao Nuniz Period: (1535-1537 A.D.)	Portuguese Merchant	Achyutdeva Raya	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prevalence of Sati and polygamy in the Vijayanagar Empire.▪ Women in multiple roles.

Travellers During Mughal Period

Francisco Pelsaert (1595-1630) was a **Dutch merchant** and representative of the Dutch East India Company (VOC).

- **In 1620**, he came to India for trading purposes and remained there until 1627.
- He travelled in different parts of Mughal India **and stayed in Agra for seven years** before departing to Java.

Peter Mundy (1630-34 A.D.), **British merchant, trader and traveller**, Came in the reign of the Mughal Emperor, **Shahjahan**.

Travellers During Mughal Period

Jean Baptiste Tavernier :

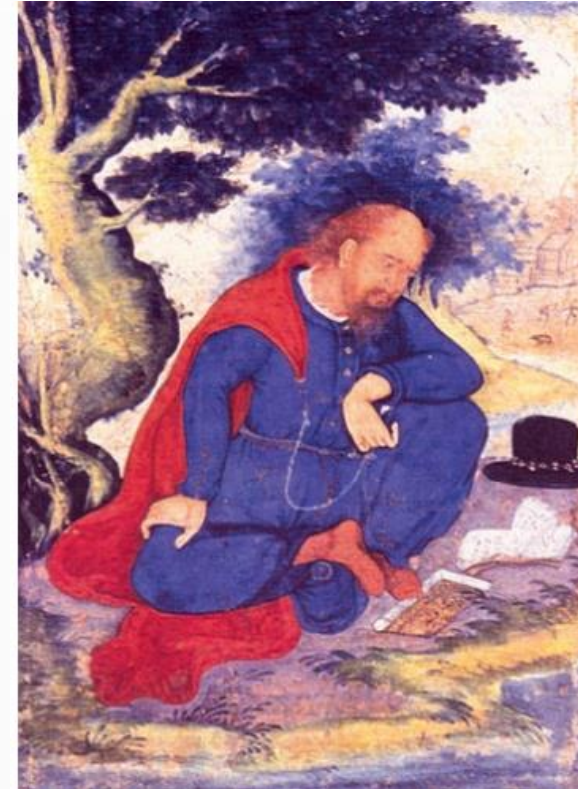
- He was a **French gem merchant**, visited India during the **reign of Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb**.
- Gives an elaborate account about **diamond and diamond mines** in India in his **book 'Six Voyages.'**
- He was particularly fascinated with **the trading conditions in India**, and compared India to Iran and the Ottoman empire.

Italian doctor Manucci (1653 -1708) never returned to Europe, and settled down in India.

Travellers During Mughal Period

Francois Bernier (1656 -1668), Frenchman, doctor, Political Philosopher and Historian.

- **Physician of Dara Shikoh.**
- Danishmand Khan, an Armenian noble of Aurangzeb was his patron.
- In virtually every instance Bernier described what he saw in India as a bleak situation in comparison to developments in Europe - Travels in the Mughal Empire.
- one of the fundamental differences between Mughal India and Europe was the lack of private property in land in the former.



Travellers During Mughal Period

- Landholders could not pass on their land to their children.
- It had led to the **uniform ruination of agriculture**, excessive oppression of the peasantry and a continuous decline in the living standards of all sections of society, except the ruling aristocracy.
- At the same time, he conceded **that vast quantities of the world's precious metals flowed into India**, as manufactures were exported in exchange for gold and silver. He also noticed the existence of a prosperous merchant community, engaged in long-distance exchange.

TIMELINE

SOME TRAVELLERS WHO LEFT ACCOUNTS

Tenth-eleventh centuries

973-1048 Muhammad ibn Ahmad Abu Raihan al-Biruni
(from Uzbekistan)

Thirteenth century

1254-1323 Marco Polo (from Italy)

Fourteenth century

1304-77 Ibn Battuta (from Morocco)

Fifteenth century

1413-82 Abd al-Razzaq Kamal al-Din ibn Ishaq al-Samarqandi
(from Samarqand)

1466-72 Afanasii Nikitich Nikitin
(years spent in India) (fifteenth century, from Russia)

Sixteenth century

1518
(visit to India) Duarte Barbosa, d. 1521 (from Portugal)

1562
(year of death) Seydi Ali Reis (from Turkey)

1536-1600 Antonio Monserrate (from Spain)

Seventeenth century

1626-31
(years spent in India) Mahmud Wali Balkhi (from Balkh)

1600-67 Peter Mundy (from England)

1605-89 Jean-Baptiste Tavernier (from France)

1620-88 François Bernier (from France)

Note: Unless otherwise indicated, the dates mentioned are those of the lifespan of the traveller.

Extra Points:

- Mahmud Wali Balkhi, who travelled very widely in the 1620s and even became a sort of sanyasi for a time, and
- The testimony of an Italian traveller, Giovanni Careri, an Italian Traveller who passed through India c. 1690, provides a graphic account about the way silver travelled across the globe to reach India. It also gives us an idea of the phenomenal amounts of cash and commodity transactions in seventeenth-century India.
- Shaikh Ali Hazin, who came to north India in the 1740s.



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