

NCERT SOLUTIONS

CLASS - 12th



aglasem.com

Class : 12th

Subject : History

Chapter : 5

Chapter Name : Through The Eyes Of Society

Q1 Write a short note on the Kitab-ul-Hind.

Answer. The Kitab-ul-Hind was written by Al-Biruni. It was simple and was written in Arabic. It was divided into 80 chapters on subjects such as religion, philosophy, festivals, astronomy, alchemy, manners and customs, social life, weights and measures, iconography, laws and metrology. It was written in a very distinctive structure, each chapter generally began with a question, followed by a description based on Sanskrit traditions, and concluded with a comparison with other cultures. Some scholars are of the notion that it had remarkable precision and predictability about geometric structures.

Page : 138 , Block Name : Short Answer

Q2 Compare and Contrast the perspectives from which Ibn Batutta and Bernier wrote their accounts of their travels in India.

Answer. Ibn Batutta considered experience gained through travels to be a more important source of knowledge. He meticulously recorded his observations about new cultures, people, beliefs, values, etc. He wrote all those fascinated him, gave entertainment to the mundane delight to eyes and ears. Ibn Batutta chose to describe everything that impressed and excited him because of its novelty.

Whereas, Bernier came to India at the time when Mughals ruled he travelled to several parts of the country and wrote what he saw and frequently compared what he saw in India with the situation in Europe in general and France in particular. He laid emphasis on the weaknesses of the Indian society.

Both used to write with different perspectives one wrote what fascinated him while other used to lay emphasis on the weaknesses and comparison with that of European culture.

Page : 138 , Block Name : Short Answer

Q3 Discuss the picture of urban centres that emerges from Bernier's account.

Answer. During the 17th century about 15 percent of the Indian population lived in towns, this was on average higher than the proportion of urban population in Western Europe in the same period. The towns here depended on the imperial camps for their survival. The urban groups included professional classes such as physicians, teachers, lawyers, painters, architects, musicians, calligraphers, etc. Some depended on imperial patronage, many made their living by serving other patrons, while still others served ordinary people in crowded markets or bazaars.

Page : 138 , Block Name : Short Answer

Q4 Analyse the evidence for Slavery provided by Ibn Batutta.

Answer. Slaves were openly sold in markets, other commodity, and were exchanged as gifts on regular basis. When Ibn Batutta reached Sind he purchased "horses, camels and slaves" as gifts for Sultan Mohammed bin Tughlaq. From his account it was clear that there were differences among slaves. Some of the female slaves who were in the service of the Sultan were experts in music and dance. Some female slaves were also employed by the Sultan to keep a watch on his nobles. Slaves were generally used for domestic labour. The price of the female slaves for domestic labour was very low.

Page : 138 , Block Name : Short Answer

Q5 What were the elements of the practice of sati that drew the attention of Bernier?

Answer. The treatment of women became a crucial marker of difference between Western and Eastern societies. The practice of sati drew Bernier's mind. He noted that some women embraced death cheerfully while others were forced to die.

"One of the most poignant descriptions by him was : At Lahore he saw a beautiful young widow sacrificed, who must be not more than twelve years of age. The poor little creature appeared more dead than alive when she approached the dreadful pit, the agony of her mind cannot be described - she wept bitterly and trembled, but some Brahmanas, assisted by an old woman who held her under her arm forced the victim, made her seated on the wood, tied her hands and hands and feet so that she could not run away and she was burnt alive."

Page : 138 , Block Name : Short Answer

Q6 Discuss Al-Biruni's understanding of the caste system.

Answer. Al-Biruni tried to explain the caste system by looking for parallels in other societies. He took the example of ancient Persia, he explained that four social categories were recognised there : Knights and princes; monks, fire-priests and lawyers; physicians, astronomers and other scientists; and peasants and artisans. Through this example he tried to explain that the social divisions were not unique to India. At the same time he compared and pointed out that within Islam all men were considered equal, differing only in their observance of piety.

Al-Biruni also wrote about the system of varnas : The highest caste was that of the Brahmanas, the next are the Kshatriyas, then the Vaishyas and lastly the Shudras. His description of the caste system suggested that it was deeply influenced by his study of normative Sanskrit texts which laid down the rules governing the system from the point of view of the Brahmanas.

In spite of his acceptance of the Brahmanical description of the Caste system. Al-Biruni disapproved of the notion of pollution. He remarked that everything which falls into a state of impurity strives and succeeds in regaining its original condition of purity. The sun cleanses the air, and the salt in the sea prevents the water from becoming polluted. If it were not so, insisted Al-Biruni, life on earth would have been impossible. According to him, the conception of social pollution, intrinsic to the caste system, was contrary to the laws of nature.

Page : 138 , Block Name : Long Answer

Q7 Do you think Ibn Batutta's account is useful in arriving at an understanding of life in contemporary urban centres? Give reasons for your answer.

Answer. Ibn Batutta's accounts about life in contemporary urban centres are as follows :

- He found the cities full of exciting opportunities for those who had the necessary drive, resources and skills.
- They were densely populated and prosperous, except for the occasional disruption caused by wars and invasions.
- Cities had crowded streets and bright and colourful markets stacked with a wide variety of goods.
- The bazaars were not only places of economic transactions, but also the hub of social and cultural activities.
- Most of the bazaars had a temple and a mosque, and some of them had spaces marked for public performances by dancers, musicians and singers.
- Inter-Asian networks of trade and commerce were good.
- Indian manufacturers were in great demand in both West Asia and Southeast Asia and this used to fetch huge profits for artisans and merchants.
- Indian textiles, particularly cotton cloth, fine muslins, silks, brocade and satin, were in great demand.

He described Delhi as a vast city, with a great population, the largest in India and Daulatabad (in Maharashtra) was almost the same size as that of Delhi. So we can conclude that his account gives us an insight into the life in urban centres but we do not get the complete details about food habits, lifestyle professionals practiced etc.

Page : 138 , Block Name : Long Answer

Q8 Discuss the extent to which Bernier's account helps historians to reconstruct contemporary rural society.

Answer. Bernier's assessment was not always accurate about the contemporary rural society. He compared everything that he saw in India to that in Europe and saw almost everything as bleak situation. His account on contemporary rural society was :

- According to him, there was a lack of private property ownership of land in India. He was a firm believer in the virtues of private property, and saw crown ownership being harmful to both state and its people.
- According to him, in the Mughal Empire the emperor owned all the land and distributed it among his nobles and that it had disastrous consequences for the economy and the society.

This perception was given by other travelers too which shows that it was prevalent and thus it becomes an important factor to reconstruct contemporary rural society.

- According to him, Landholders could not pass their lands to their children. So they were averse to any long-term investment in sustenance and expansion of production.
- The absence of private property in land, had, therefore, prevented the emergence of the class of "improving" landlords with a concern to improve or maintain the land which 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.
- According to him, very rich and powerful class was in minority. He also asserted that there was no middle state in India.

Page : 138 , Block Name : Long Answer

Q9 Read this excerpt from Bernier

Numerous are the instances of handsome pieces of workmanship made by persons destitute of tools, and who can scarcely be said to have received instruction from a master. Sometimes they imitate so perfectly articles of European manufacture that the difference between the original and copy can hardly be discerned. Among other things, the Indians make excellent muskets, and fowling-pieces, and such beautiful gold ornaments that it may be doubted if the exquisite workmanship of those articles can be exceeded by any European goldsmith. I have often admired the beauty, softness and delicacy of their paintings.

List the crafts mentioned in the passage. Compare these with the descriptions of artisanal activity in the chapter.

Answer. The crafts mentioned in the passage are : Muskets, fowling-pieces, and beautiful gold-ornaments.

Other artisanal activities are :

- Art of Terracotta Sculpture, Art of Boat production, temple architecture. (We get to know through the terracotta sculpture from a temple in Bengal.)
- Art of Painting
- Art of weaving patterns on clothes
- Art of music and dance

- The work of Mughal artisans has been made with reference to a gold spoon studded with emeralds and rubies.
- A seventeenth century painting depicting Bernier in European clothes.
- A painting depicting Tavernier in Indian clothes.
- An eighteenth century painting depicting travellers gathered around a campfire.

Page : 138 , Block Name : Long Answer

Q10 On an outline map of the world mark the countries visited by Ibn Batutta. What are the seas that he may have crossed?

Answer. Countries visited by Ibn Batutta are : Mecca, Syria, Iraq, Persia, Yemen, Oman, India, China, Sumatra, Maldives, Srilanka.

Name of seas are :

Indian Ocean, Red Sea, Arabian Sea, Bay of Bengal, South China Sea, East China Sea, North Atlantic Ocean, South Atlantic Ocean.



Page : 139 , Block Name : Map Work

aglasem.com