

THROUGH THE EYES OF TRAVELLERS

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Comparing "East" and "West":

- He travelled to several parts of the country and wrote accounts of what he saw and comparing India with the situation in Europe.
- He dedicated his major writing to the king of France.

The question of landownership:

- According to **Bernier** one of the fundamental differences between Mughal India and Europe was the lack of private property in land.
- He believed in the virtues of private property and saw crown ownership of land as harmful for both the state and its people.
- The empire owned all the land and distributed it among his nobles who had disastrous consequences for the economy and society.

A more complex social reality:

- He felt that artisans had no incentive to improve the quality of their manufactures.
- The profit was appropriated by the state.
- A vast quantities of the world's precious metal flowed into India, as manufactures were exported in exchange for gold and silver.
- He also noticed the existence of prosperous merchant community, engaged in long distance exchange.
- Merchants often had strong community or kin ties and were organized into their own caste – cum occupational bodies.
 - Other urban groups included professional classes such as physicians (hakim or vaid), teachers (pundit or mulla), lawyers (wakil), painters, architects, musicians, calligraphers, etc
 - Some depended on imperial patronage, many made their living by serving other patrons and some served ordinary people.

Women Slaves, Sati and Labourers

- Travellers who left written accounts were generally men who sometimes took social inequities for granted as a "natural" state of affairs.
- It appears from Ibn Battuta's account that there was considerable differentiation among slaves.
- Slaves were generally used for domestic labour, and Ibn Battuta found their services particularly indispensable for carrying women and men on palanquins or dola.
- The price of slaves, particularly female slaves required for domestic labour, was very low, and most families who could afford to do so kept at least one or two of them.

- **Contemporary European travellers and writers often highlighted the treatment of women as a crucial marker of difference between Western and Eastern societies**
- **Bernier chose the practice of sati for detailed description. He noted that while some women seemed to embrace death cheerfully, others were forced to die.**
- **It seems unlikely that women were confined to the private spaces of their homes because their labour was crucial in both agricultural and non-agricultural production.**