**THEME 5: Through the Eyes of Travellers**

*A Brief Overview*

The chapter entitled ‘Through the Eyes of Travellers’ focuses on the accounts of many travellers who visited India from the 10th to 17th century. The travellers who came to India during this period travelled extensively in India, learned many Indian languages and jotted down the vivid landscape or physical environment, customs, languages, beliefs and practices of people of this land.

The accounts that survive are often varied in terms of their subject matter. Some deal with affairs of the court, while others are mainly focused on religious issues or architectural features and movements.

In this chapter, we shall learn how our knowledge of the past can be enriched through the descriptions of social life provided by travellers who visited the subcontinent, focusing on the accounts of three travellers: Al-Biruni who came from Uzbekistan (11th century), Ibn Batuta who came from Morocco, in north-western Africa (14th century) and the Frenchman Francois Bernier (17th century).

As these travellers came from different social and cultural background, they took great interest in everyday activities and practices of the people of the subcontinent which were often taken for granted by the indigenous writers for whom these were routine matters, not worthy of being recorded. It is this difference in perspectives that makes the accounts of travellers interesting.

NOTE: Next time we will discuss the aforementioned three travellers