

**“A CRITICAL STUDY OF GEMELLI CARERI’S INDIAN JOURNEY  
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SOCIO –CULTURAL  
INFORMATION”**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The subject matter of History is the human past. A variety of materials are used in history to study the past. Although we have abundant court and non-court Persian sources available for the study of medieval India, yet the political content in those sources is more. And the details related to the then Socio-economic and religious life are less. In the context of medieval Indian history, this deficiency can be filled through the accounts of contemporary foreign travelers. Many European travelers visited India in the 17th century. But the place of Italian traveler Gemellacareri (1651-1725 AD) is very high among the European travellers of India.*

*In his travelogue- "A voyage round the world", careri has given a detailed description of the cities and vegetation, Society and religious beliefs of South and West Indian people. Although careri has tried to accurately describe the then Society and their religious beliefs, however he has not been able to deeply understand many of the traditions and customs of contemporary Indian Society. But there is no doubt, he accurately describes the Indian flora and cities of South and West India overall, both sides of his travel account – the beneficial and the flawed side are visible.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Constantinople, Isfahan, Galgala, Caravan Inn, Bernier, Tavernier, Flora, Telangani, Persian, Eclipse, Vaitarni.*

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**INTRODUCTION**

If we look in the context of Indian history, it is acknowledged that foreign travelers have been visiting India since ancient times. Even in the medieval period, many European travelers came to visit India for various purposes. Especially the name of Bernier, Tavernier, Thevenot, Manucci and careri is important in these European travelers.<sup>1</sup> These travelers have given a detailed description of the contemporary Society, economy and religious beliefs in their travelogues. Among these, especially Italian traveler Gemelli Careri (1651-1725 AD) travelogues has its own special historical significance.

In this research Paper, an attempt has been made to specifically see what information Italian traveller GemelliCarerih has given about the then Indian society culture, religion or religious beliefs and economy in his travelogue–“A voyage round the World” and from what point of

view. Gemellio Careri was a 17th century Italian adventurer and traveler. It is known from the available sources that Careri was born in Italy in 1651 AD and received the education of law and justice. After completing his education, he practiced law for a few years. After that Careri had left the home. In 1685 AD he took time to travel to Europe (France, Spain, Hungary etc), but in 1689 AD, he returned home due to his circumstances. But when Careri did not get much success even in his legal profession, he went on a journey to eastern Countries.

When Gemelli Careri set foot in India, it had been fifteen years since Shivaji's death. It is important to mention that this medieval traveler from Italy met Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, when he was caught in the middle of the Deccan Campaigns. He had toured the whole world of which India was actually a small part. Careri started his world tour from Naples in June 1693 AD and visited Egypt, Constantinople, Trebizond and Isfahan and returned to Europe via Peking, Philippines and it was done via Vera Cruz. In the early part of 1695 AD, Careri came on a short visit to India.<sup>2</sup>

It is important to mention that Careri travels from Goa to Galgala for the purpose of meeting, with Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb. Careri describes travelling in India as expensive. He especially mentions the presence of guards and toll officials at the bottom of the mountain at Balaghati and they were very greedy in nature.<sup>3</sup> Careri describes the entire travelling process as costly, inconvenient and difficult. He tells these guards and toll officers to be attracted to the goods of others.

Careri has also thrown light on the lack of travel and passenger facilities in the state of Bijapur. He also complains of non-availability of draft animals for his carts. According to Careri "there are not even Caravan inns at convenient distances".<sup>4</sup> And the fear of thieves always remained. And at the same time, he says that the fear of Maratha attacks always remained-even if it was near the Mughal camp that means there was no protection from Maratha attacks anywhere. But he mentions that apart from Bijapur state, travelling to other place of India is both convenient and safe.

Careri also describes the Mughal Camp at Galgala which was spread in a radius of thirty miles long. According to Careri, a population of about one million lived in it. And the camps of the emperor Aurangzeb and his sons used to be spread over an area of about three miles. He sees that there is happiness, luxury and lack of virility everywhere. And the lack of discipline was evident even among the Mughal and mercenary European soldiers.

Careri appeared before the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb on March 21, 1695.<sup>5</sup> He describes the emperor as an old man of eighty years, a king with white beard, tall and thin body, wheatish complexion and pointed nose. And the Emperor was dressed in simple white muslin, wearing a turban, in which a large emerald was attached. Surrounded by his Nobles (Umrah), with the help of a stick, he was taking reports from people and reading them without any spectacles. Careri was surprised that the king was doing this work with such a smile and happiness in this condition. The Emperor also talked to Careri with affection. The Emperor Aurangzeb also requested him (as he did to all visiting Europeans) that Careri take a job in the Mughal Empire. Careri also makes interesting and important comments on Mughal administrative system and land revenue management.<sup>6</sup> He also discusses the revenue wealth of Emperor Aurangzeb. Besides this, he also throws light on the area expansion of his empire.

Careri discusses the autocratic authority of the Mughal Emperor and also throws light on military, organization of the Mughals.<sup>7</sup> But it is. Important to mention only here that he only repeats the same old things, as written by other European travelers, So, it is neither important nor necessary to discuss these things in detail here.

The description of South and west India given by Careri is very delightful and interesting. It is important to mention that for many years Modern Scholars and experts did not consider Careri's adventurous journey authentic with time, however its truthfulness was proved.

Gemelli Careri has given a detailed description of the cities and vegetation especially located in the south and west of India. In particular, he describes the coastal cities i.e.-Goa, Camby Damien, Surat, Ahmedabad etc. and their commercial importance.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, Careri has mentioned different types of Plants-trees and vegetation like coconut, Beetalnut, Palm, Jamun, Pappaya, Jaquers, cinnamon, Pineapple etc.<sup>9</sup> In this context it is important to mention that Careri has given detail and accurate description of the Indian flora in his travelogue. This is probably not found in any other contemporary European traveller's account.

Gemelli Careri, (who came to India in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century) has also given detail details about Indian social life and religious beliefs. In this context Careri writes that religions (Dharm) are prominent in the social life of Indians. By the way defining the word 'Dharm' is a complex task, however "Dharm" is an important term., for Indian Socio-religions context. In Hindustan it means duty, virtue, morality, even religion and it refers to the power which upholds the universe and society. According to famous historian K.M. Ashraf - "Dharm is an attempt to determine the moral outlook of a social group."<sup>10</sup> It is essential to mention here that most of the travellers who visited India at that time found the social life and religious beliefs of Indian Society very different from their own motherland or their respective countries.

Gemelli Italian traveler Careri divided the contemporary Indian society on the basis of religion and caste. He has written about Hindu religion that followers of Hindu religion had full faith in God, Soul, heaven-hell and rebirth.<sup>11</sup> French Traveler Tavernier<sup>12</sup> also corroborated Careri's view. Regarding religious beliefs of the Hindus Careri said, "Hindus believed in seven different worlds (lok).

They believed that these are the seven worlds (loks) — Bhu, Bhuvah, Swah, Mah, Janah, Tappah, Satyam" And a person gets a place in these worlds according to their deeds.<sup>13</sup> In this context, Niccolo Manucci, (another Italian traveller) also confirmed that the Hindus strongly believed in the Concept of multiple worlds and Heaven and Hell.<sup>14</sup> Besides this, they also believed that "Manu" was the first man of the Universe and the whole world is his Child.

Gemelli Careri also informed us that the Hindu people worshipped. Many Gods and Goddesses. Regarding this Italian traveler Manucci writes that Hindus used to believe in 33 crore Gods and Goddesses. And the Hindus did not even know the names of all of them.<sup>15</sup>

Careri mentions some other Socio-religious beliefs and superstitions of the Hindus. Especially at the time of eclipse, Brahmins and other Hindus used to break their utensils and used to beat the drums. Apart from this, Hindus used to bath the river and used to give a lot of Charity at the time of eclipse. Careri's account is also corroborated by some other European travellers of 17th century. It is important to point out that all these European travellers show that Hindus did

not know the scientific reasons for eclipses. But their opinion does not seem to be correct. Because the scientific reasons for Lunar and Solar eclipses were known to Indian astrologers and astronomers since ancient times.<sup>16</sup>

GemelliCateri also informed us that superstition was very prevalent among the Hindus.<sup>17</sup> And due to this many times they used to kill their children too. The Hindus also considered the cow very sacred and gave it the name of 'Mother'. And when a Hindu died, cow urine was sprinkled on the person's face. Another popular belief of the Hindus was that the 'Vaitarni River' could be crossed only by holding the tail of cow. By the way, according to Hindu mythological belief crossing the Vaitarni river was very painful.

Apart from this, Careri also describes witchcraft and magicians of the contemporary society. But they used to mislead and deceive people by showing different types of shows. In this context, GemelliCareri is also corroborated by another traveller Frankos Martin. According to traveller Martin, "The Hindus were very superstitious and used to believe in witchcraft and also believed in Shakun vidya."<sup>18</sup> Careri has also mentioned that Hindus believed in idol worship and their main deities were Sri Ram and Sri Krishna. And Hindus worshipped Sri Maha Lakshmi as the chief among the goddesses. Similarly, Careri has also thrown light on the places and methods of worship of the Hindus. He informs us that the temples of the Hindus were round. Careri has also given a brief description of some of the temples in the south.

In his travelogue, Careri has given detail account of caste system prevalent among Hindus. In this system, the upper class was that of Brahmins, which was divided into several classes. Brahmins used to play the role of religious leader and teachers. There were sub classes of Brahmins such as Marathi Brahmin, Telangani, Brahmin, Dravid Brahmin and Gujrati Brahmin were prominent. The second class in Hindu society was that of the Rajputs. Polygamy and Jauhar system were prevalent among Rajputs. This has also been confirmed by some other contemporary and near contemporary European travellers. The third class among the Hindus was that of the 'Baniyas', which was divided into several sub classes. They were mainly traders and led a vegetarian life. Similarly Careri mentions Kurmi, Kansars and Carpenter class among other classes of the society. Careri also mentions Jogis-fakirs in the contemporary Hindu Society. These people led a difficult life but they were respected in the society. Careri also describes the practice of polygamy and the worse conditions of widows in the then Indian society.<sup>19</sup>

GemelliCareri also throws light on 'Gotra System' and states that among Hindus one could not marry within one's own gotra. Besides this, Careri has also mentioned some festivals of Hindus especially Diwali and Holi of these, Diwali was celebrated on Amavasya and Holi was celebrated on Purnima. Careri comments that on the day of Holi, there was an atmosphere of joy all around. Some other foreign travellers have also given detailed description of Holi and Diwali. Father Monserrate<sup>20</sup> writes in this context that on the day of Holi people used to throw colors as well as mud among themselves. The way people celebrate this festival shows their ignorance but it seems that the European traveller including Careri could not understand deeply the festivals and customs of the Indians. They have a positive attitude towards their western culture and a negative attitude towards the customs here.

In short, the place of Careri is very high among the European travellers of India. It is important to comment that Careri's interpretation of Emperor Aurangzeb's military position in the middle of

the deccan campaign is unique and valuable. But in terms of social description although careri has tried to accurately describe the then society and their religious beliefs However, he has not been able to deeply understand many of the traditions and customs of contemporary Indian society. Another short coming of careri was that he lived in India for a very short time. But there is no doubt; he accurately describes the Indian flora and cities of South and West India. Thus, both side of his travel account-the beneficial and the flawed side are visible.

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