



PG Department of English

Sambalpur University

Jyoti Vihar, Burla, 768019

National Seminar on Travel Narratives and India 27-28 November 2026

Travel Literature defies simple categorisation and encompasses a wide range of writings from ancient to modern times, exploring people and their social, cultural, historical, geographical, and economic landscapes. Travel accounts written by pilgrims, traders, rulers, explorers, colonial officials, reformers, nationalists, and modern writers show how different people have viewed India and how these views have changed over time.

When European travellers arrived in India during the seventeenth century, they began recording their experiences in new ways. Some understood India through careful observation and logical explanation, while for others it was mysterious, exotic, and full of wonders. Over time, the representations of India underwent a significant change. India was initially depicted as a prosperous and abundant land, later represented as unhealthy and difficult, and eventually presented as a country in need of European guidance and administration. Through these changing portrayals, colonial expansions came to be supported and justified.

India has a rich tradition of travel narratives. In ancient and medieval India, travel was closely connected with religion, trade, learning, and exploration. Pilgrims travelled to holy places, merchants followed trade routes, and poets and storytellers described journeys that combined geography with culture and spirituality. Indian ways of understanding travel are the earliest, as evident in such works as *Sandeha Kavyas* (messenger-poems) and *sthalamahātmayas* (sacred site guides), and they get redefined by Rahul Sankrityayan's *Ghumakkar Shastra (The Science of Wandering)*, which sees travel as a way of learning, personal growth, and serving society.

India has responded to the world through their own travel writing. The Eighteenth-century Indo-Persian travellers wrote about Europe with curiosity and admiration. Indian reformers looked to the West for ideas about education and social change, while others became aware of how Europeans often judged and stereotyped Indians. Nationalist thinkers such as Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and B. R. Ambedkar used travel to reflect on India's identity, freedom, and social inequalities. In contemporary postcolonial literature, travel remains a dominant motif for most Indian writers who explore the experiences of migrations and exiles.

Indian travel writing from ancient to modern continues to blur the boundaries between the sacred and the secular, the local and the global. The two-day National Seminar “Travel Narratives and India” seeks to explore how travel writings have shaped the understanding of India from ancient times to the present. It invites scholars to explore and analyse travel narratives, their historical role and their influence in understanding and theorising Indian travel narratives.

The seminar welcomes papers on topics such as Indian travel writing, pilgrimage, exploration, gender and travel, ecology and landscape, travel and empire, indigenous ways of understanding space, and the role of travel in shaping cultural and national identities.

Submissions may include:

- Gendered narratives: women travellers in India
- Travel narratives and ethnography
- Travel and globalisation
- Ecotourism and environmental narratives
- Diasporic travel narratives and the idea of home
- Travel and tracing culinary roots
- Religion and travel
- Travel narratives and the digital world

Abstract Submission Guidelines:

Format: MS Word Document (Please name your document as: Your Full Name _ Title of the Abstract.

Example: Ajit Kumar Kullu _ Travel Narratives in India)

Please format your submission according to *MLA 9th Edition*

Word Limit: 200 (Please include the keywords)

Submission must include the name, address, and details of the presenter(s)' institutional affiliation.

Selected papers from the Seminar will be published in the forthcoming issue of *Sambalpur Studies in Literatures and Cultures* (SSLC) (ISSN: 2231-5616), the Department's peer-reviewed journal. (Website: <https://www.sambalpurslc.com>)

Link for submitting the abstracts: <https://forms.gle/5oMWD7Kg3d91hzoh6>

Last Date for Submission of Abstracts: **31.08.2026**

Last Date for Submission of Complete Paper: **10.10.2026**

Registration:

Registration Fee: ₹2000/-

PhD/Research Scholars: ₹1000/-

(The registration fee will cover the participant's lunch and tea for two days. No TA/DA will be paid for attending the Seminar.)

Bank Account Details

Name of the Account: Sambalpur Studies in Literatures and Cultures (SSLC)

Account No. 38192098786

Bank and Branch: SBI Jyoti Vihar

Contact Details

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