

# Marco polo the travels – the silk road

People



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This is the story of a great young adventurous traveler. At the young age of 21, he embarked upon and successfully completed, the tasks seemed practically impossible to achieve in the era to which he belonged. He was not much educated in the academic sense, but till date he continues to be the research subject for the aspiring Doctorates. He studied everything in the college of self-education, where his mind was his Principal. His initiative, his Professors! His hard work his tutors! A man who would decide! A man who would act! A man who would start and a man who would finish! God moulds souls like Marco Polo but rare, perhaps for the specific purpose of inspiring the younger generation!

The Great Khan must have given him the brief, mostly from political angle, but the self-starter Marco Polo, brought along with him the comprehensive information and details that staggers the most fertile imagination. Marco Polo is a trader-author; not an author-trader. The latent writing ability in him of which perhaps he was not consciously aware, enthralled those who read his work. Volumes have been written and discussed about his travelogues. If Marco Polo were to appear for a test on criticism/appreciation about his writings, the syllabus would be so vast, Marco Polo would not be able to cover it in his life-time. The critics have seen so much in his writings, made threadbare analysis, which the original author would have never imagined.

Another reason for the popularity of the book was—the details highlighted in it were revealed to the outside world for the first time. They were so mysterious that the readers were enthralled by the descriptions. Many refused to believe his accounts. When Marco Polo lay on his deathbed, his priest, his friends and relations clustered around him to plead that he at last

renounce the countless lies he had recounted as his true adventures, so his soul would be cleansed to Heaven. The old man rose up, roundly damned them all and declared, " I have not told the half of what I saw and did!" Remember, the people who were attempting to cross him belonged to that generation which argued that the Earth was flat and the sun rotated around the Earth! Marco Polo was much ahead of his times!

I think Marco Polo provided the greatest inspiration to the younger generation of not only Italy, but the entire world, as for adventures and travels. He was the genius, who embodied the spirit of hard aspirations and their fulfillment, under most difficult conditions. His travel experiences have all-time significance, all over the world. I do believe that Marco Polo provided positive knowledge, information that was not known to the people. He was the first Westerners to travel through the Silk Road. (It is only named as a Silk Road, but in reality there is nothing silken about it; it is a rough, rugged, treacherous route.)

He is hailed as one of the most important figures from Italy. His life p from 1254-1324, was quite eventful. He highlighted the differences between Europe and Asia. During the medieval times, religion had the greatest impact on the lives of Kings and his subjects. Marco Polo explains how secularism was practiced then. " But concerning God and your own soul do what you will, whether you be Jew or pagan, Saracen or Christian, who live among Tartars.

They freely confess in Tartarv that Christ is a lord; but they say that he is a proud lord, because he will not keep company with other gods but wants to be over all others in the world. So in some places, they have a Christ of gold

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or silver and keep him ensconced within a shrine and say that he is the great lord of the Christians.”(Polo, 1958, p. 47). The concept of unity in diversity was clearly seen and appreciated by Marco Polo.

Education and trade:

To Marco Polo, it must be admitted, traveling and interest in trade is the family heritage. In 1260, Niccolo Polo, the father of Marco Polo, and his brother Maffeo went across Black Sea in search of profitable ventures. They brought from Venice sizeable quantity of extraordinary jewels and set out from Constantinople by ship to Sudak and onward to Barku. When Marc Polo was introduced to the Great Khan, he was just 21 years old. By then, he had possessed an excellent knowledge of the letters and customs of the Tartars.

Khan took great fascination for this brilliant youth and soon he was the trusted lieutenant of Khan with whom he took counsel on important issues. Marco Polo was then sent on a mission to Kara-jang (Yunnan) in the far south west, as an emissary. The mission was a great success. The trader- instincts surfaced en route, Marco Polo made the detailed scrutiny of all the curiosities and novelties. On return, the Great Khan was given a brief, about the issues and business for which he was sent. The curious customs of the people were highlighted. This young lad impressed Khan on all counts.

The Silk Road is—the travel chronicles about the arduous three years journey from Venice to the abode of the Great Khan initially through the ancient trade corridor and blow by blow account of his wonderful experiences based on facts related to the peoples of Iran, Iraq, India, Tibet, Pamir, Mongolia and China. Marco Polo made it a point to record every aspect of the life that he

encountered; they were so different, peculiar and interesting from region to region, country to country. Therefore, Marco Polo is regarded as a great anthropologist. In addition, the book contains many areas which Marco Polo covered during his epic travels as an emissary for the Great Khan, when he was in China for seventeen long years.

I think Marco Polo had a great eye for the details, and nothing escaped his attention. The emporiums en route, the construction of yurt in Mangolia as residential quarters( comparable to the mass cheap housing colonies in the developing countries), fireworks, paper currency, printing and pasta, the treatment and honor provided for the dead, glass making, the introduction of ginger in various recipes, tea as a popular form drink, Marco Polo's statement in Persia that he had chicken cooked in pomegranate juice, turmeric,(look at the style how he introduces turmeric --" here is also a vegetable that has all the properties of true saffron, as well as the smell and the color, and yet it is not really saffron.").

Marco Polo was responsible for transfer of scientific and technological innovations, such as gunpowder, ceramics, the magnetic compass, the printing press and mathematics, along the Silk Road to the West. I also feel that Marco Polo won the trust of Kubilai (the sixth Khan in the Yuan dynasty) and retained it for 17 long years is one of his greatest achievements. He began his journey with an empty book and returned as an encyclopedia.

To complete his mission, Marco Polo traveled by foot, on horse and boat. The Silk Road is not just an historical entity of the 13th century. In the modern times also, this route holds fascination for the travelers. As if to pay compliments and tributes to History, during the summer vacation, people in <https://assignbuster.com/marco-polo-the-travels-the-silk-road/>

large numbers traverse along the original route from Shaanxi Province east to Gansu and then to Xinjiang. En route, one can see the traces and landmarks of the ancient glory—the religious art painted in caves by art-loving travelers.

The ancient pagodas stand tall and majestic side by side with the new artistically and classically designed buildings. Traveling on this Silk Road is to study the pages of an historical book. Actual travel and experiencing is more than to study a dozen books on the subject. Columbus treasured Marco Polo's book as a reference guide for his adventures, not without reasons. Marco Polo provided some amazing and accurate details relating to trade routes. He did his job of amassing details and making notes with the enthusiasm of a modern MBA research scholar. He was alone on his travel and other efforts, but he never hesitated to collaborate with the local populace and authorities regularly. Marco Polo had rare insight for minutest of the details regarding a particular product or activity.

Marco Polo-the legend of a name:

The name Marco Polo has assumed legendary significance. That was not a jet-set age where one can travel end to end of the world within a matter of days. Grit and courage were the domineering traits. That a 21 year young lad achieved the intimate trust and became the emissary of the Great Khan is an inspiration to the modern youth. He was successful in all his political, trade and cultural assignments. His name has become a legendary trademark! Marco Polo's name was given to a children's game, in a story in the sciencefiction series of DoctorWho. A ship with three masts clipper built in Saint John, New Brunswick, in 1851 was named Marco Polo.

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Marco Polo was the first ship to sail around the world in under six months. Many ships of the Italian name were named Marco Polo. The International Airport in Venice is named Marco Polo. In Hong Kong also at least there are 3 Marco Polo Hotels. He is the source of inspiration to many novelists like Donn Byrne's *Messer Marco Polo* (Irish Writer), Gary Jennings's novel *The Journeyer* (1984). Marco Polo is one of the important characters in Italo Calvino's novel *Invisible Cities*.

When he was 15 years old, John Goddard, who was also known as "the real life Indiana Jones," and one of his expeditions, "the most amazing adventure of this generation" was to follow Marco Polo's route through all of the Middle East, Asia and China. Marco Polo continues to be the perennial source of inspiration for adventure-seeking younger generation.

#### References Cited:

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