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REVIEWER'S REPORT

Manuscript No.: IJAR-58173

Title: An Analysis of The Travelogue Of François Bernier And His Depiction Of The Subcontinent,

Recommendation:

Accept after minor revision

Rating	Excel.	Good	Fair	Poor
Originality			✓	
Techn. Quality		✓		
Clarity		✓		
Significance	✓			

Reviewer's ID: JPR-Abdul Haseeb Mir

Detailed Reviewer's Report

The manuscript titled "An Analysis of The Travelogue Of François Bernier And His Depiction Of The Subcontinent" offers an evaluation of seventeenth-century subcontinental history through the observational lens of the French physician and traveler François Bernier. By situating Bernier within both the intellectual circles of early modern Europe and the internal administrative landscape of the Mughal Empire, the paper explores how travelogues serve as foundational texts that bridge regional developments with global historical thought. The work highlights how Bernier's training under the neo-Epicurean philosopher Pierre Gassendi and his subsequent medical qualification at Montpellier informed an empiricist methodology, allowing him to navigate the subcontinent not as a merchant or missionary, but as an independent, curious intellectual. The narrative traces his entry into the Mughal domain during the volatile war of succession among Shah Jahan's sons, his brief medical service to the doomed prince Dara Shikoh, and his subsequent long-term employment under Danishmand Khan, the Secretary of State for foreign affairs and imperial treasurer. Through this placement, the paper underscores how Bernier obtained access to court dynamics, diplomatic missions, and economic structures, which he later compiled into his seminal publications within the Parisian salon of Marguerite de La Sablière.

The primary significance of this manuscript lies in its dual analytical approach, which treats Bernier's travelogue not merely as a passive ethnographic description of India, but as a mirrored critique of the political and economic vulnerabilities of absolutist France. The author examines Bernier's famous correspondence with the French Finance Minister Jean-Baptiste Colbert, illustrating a complex economic paradox where the Mughal Empire acted as an economic abyss that swallowed global silver and gold bullion through manufacturing exports while its internal population remained systemically impoverished.



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By evaluating Bernier's conceptualization of land tenure and the non-hereditary nature of Mughal jagirs, the paper explains the genesis of what Western philosophy later formalized as Oriental Despotism. Furthermore, the manuscript provides balanced coverage by highlighting elements of cultural relativism and female political agency within Bernier's writings—such as his defense of subcontinental architectural adaptations to climate, his awe of the Taj Mahal, and his acknowledgment of the economic power wielded by royal women like Nur Jahan, Jahanara, and Roshanara Begum. This multidimensional reading ensures that Bernier is not flattened into a monolithic precursor to colonialism, but is instead understood as a complex writer whose insights were contested even by his own contemporaries, such as the Venetian traveler Nicolò Manucci.

Methodological and Analytical Issues Requiring Improvement

Despite the sophisticated thematic framework of the manuscript, it suffers from several severe historical inaccuracies, conceptual errors, and citation inconsistencies that undermine its scholastic validity and must be corrected before publication. The most egregious error within the text is the repeated and systemic misidentification of the reigning monarch of France during the seventeenth century. The manuscript states multiple times that Bernier's ethnographic accounts served as a warning or mirror relating to the political situation and absolute regime of King Louis XVI. This is a massive chronological anachronism. François Bernier traveled to India between 1658 and 1669, corresponding directly with Jean-Baptiste Colbert and publishing his works during the height of the seventeenth century. The absolute ruler of France during this entire period was King Louis XIV, the Sun King. King Louis XVI did not ascend to the throne until 1774, more than a century after Bernier's travels. Attributing the geopolitical concerns, the sale of state offices, the burden of the land tax or *taille*, and the expenditures on vanity and war to the regime of Louis XVI completely breaks the temporal architecture of the paper's comparative thesis. The author must systematically audit the entire manuscript to replace every mention of Louis XVI with Louis XIV to align the text with historical reality.

Another prominent analytical gap concerns the paper's uncritical presentation of certain figures and historical timelines within the text, which creates internal confusion. For example, the author writes that in the 1640s, nearly twenty years after his birth, Bernier left for Paris for his studies. While this biographical detail is acceptable, the text later introduces the historical events of 1665 involving the representatives of the French Compagnie des Indes, specifically naming La Boulaye and Beber visiting the subcontinental court. However, the analytical connection between these specific ambassadors and Bernier's direct involvement is left unquantified. The paper notes that Bernier and Tavernier classified this embassy as a diplomatic failure due to the Europeans' refusal to perform the traditional *salaam*, yet it fails to explain the precise mechanism through which Bernier observed or documented this event.



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Grounding these assertions with clearer chronological markers and explaining Bernier's proximity to these specific events would substantially strengthen the historical methodology of the narrative.

Furthermore, the section analyzing Bernier's socio-cultural judgments regarding Indian artisans and the caste system contains conceptual contradictions that require tighter editorial synthesis. The text notes that Bernier highly praised the superior craftsmanship of Indian artisans who produced intricate gold ornaments, miniature paintings, and luxurious silk fabrics without formal Western machinery or training. Immediately following this praise, the manuscript explains that Bernier labeled these same craftsmen as naturally indolent, lazy, and vile due to a Eurocentric bias rooted in the capitalist frameworks of Europe and the nature of indigenous worship. While the paper correctly identifies this as a paradox, it treats Bernier's Eurocentric labeling and his praise as separate observations rather than deeply exploring the underlying sociological tension. The analysis would be far more robust if the author integrated these observations, explaining how early modern European travelers frequently weaponized the concept of natural indolence to justify the structural necessity of state compulsion or external intervention, thereby laying the intellectual foundation for subsequent colonial labor theories.

Finally, the manuscript exhibits several technical, typographical, and citation formatting defects that detract from its academic presentation. In the title and throughout the introductory paragraphs, there are visible text corruption errors resulting from improper character encoding, such as rendering the name of the central historical figure as "FranÃ§ois Bernier" instead of "FranÃ§ois Bernier". There are also multiple spacing errors where words are run together without appropriate breaks, such as "les Indesorientalesas" in the first paragraph and "theyoung generation" or "satiprevalent" in later sections. In terms of citation mechanics, the footnotes and bibliography display significant formatting inconsistencies. The text intermittently embeds primary author names directly into the narrative phrasing, such as writing "Sunderaj Et al (2012)" or "Abhinav Kumar et al that there was marked improvement," which appears to be mismatched text injected from an entirely different paper on oral medicine, having no relevance to a seventeenth-century historical analysis of Mughal India. This severe text contamination suggests a critical copy-pasting error during draft compilation. The bibliography also fails to adhere to a singular, standardized academic citation index, blending disparate styles and leaving several entries with incomplete publication data.

Recommendations for Revision

To elevate this manuscript to a standard suitable for international publication, the author must execute several targeted revisions. First, a thorough textual sweep must be performed to correct the central historical anachronism. Every reference to King Louis XVI must be deleted and replaced with King Louis XIV to ensure that the analysis of absolute monarchy, Colbertian economic policies, and



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seventeenth-century French state vulnerabilities is historically accurate. Second, the author must completely excise the anomalous paragraphs regarding oral mucous fibrosis, lycopene capsules, and clinical studies involving individuals named Abhinav Kumar or S. Sunderaj. These lines are entirely irrelevant to the historical travelogue of François Bernier and represent a profound structural error in the manuscript draft that completely disrupts the continuity of the paper.

Third, the text corruptions caused by character encoding issues, such as "FranÃ§ois," must be corrected to the proper French orthography across all headers and footnotes. The author must also manually fix all run-on typographical spacing errors to restore standard professional readability. Fourth, the intellectual critique of Bernier's top-down approach should be expanded. The author should deepen the discussion regarding Bernier's systemic omission of the rural zamindar class, explaining more thoroughly how his linguistic limitations and reliance on elite court informants blinded him to the realities of private land ownership in medieval India, which led to his flawed formulation of Asian economic decadence. Lastly, the entire bibliographic reference list must be restructured into a single, cohesive academic format, ensuring that all dates, publishers, titles, and journal volumes are uniformly cited.

Final Recommendation

This manuscript provides a compelling, critical examination of François Bernier's travel literature, correctly highlighting its value as both a window into the seventeenth-century Mughal court and a covert critique of early modern European political structures. The author successfully frames Bernier's observations within a web of contained conflicts, utilizing contemporary critiques like those of Nicolò Manucci to show that European knowledge production was never a monolithic enterprise. Although the paper is currently marred by a major historical error regarding the French monarchy, significant text contamination from an unrelated clinical study, and numerous typographical flaws, the core historical argument and the thematic layout remain valuable. These issues can be fully resolved through rigorous historical editing, the removal of extraneous text, and systematic copyediting. Consequently, I recommend that this manuscript be **Accepted with Minor Revisions**.