



Hosts by default

Gondwana was a super-continent, believed to be existing around 550+ million years ago. It started fragmenting gradually with time, finally around 180+ million years ago it split into seven different land masses. We identify them today as - South America, America, Africa, Australia, Antarctica, Arabian Peninsula and the Indian subcontinent.

Imagine yourself sitting on a satellite, looking through the emptiness of space towards the Earth. Now move your eyes towards its equator and bring them to rest on a 'gigantic piece of Earth' extending far into the sea, its upper most fringes towering gloriously over the mainland.

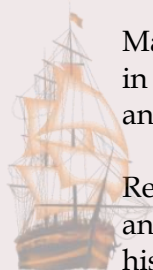
Go ahead and zoom closer. Soon you will begin to see its 7520+ kms coastline, encircling its southern land with a necklace of surfy sparkle. You will also see the glistening crowns of its 2505+ kms long greater Himalayas range fortifying its northern land. **This is India**, 'the piece of celebrated Earth' that gives us our commercial nirvana and livelihoods.

Our geo-positioning is unique. This fortunate isolation from rest of the world kept us at the prime of our experimental best, leading to phenomenal accomplishments in ancient human sciences and practices. Abundance of resources resting in our topographies, our cultural galores and spirit of natives, distinguished us from all other lands, as the land of allure, wealth and opportunities.



Across the centuries, our country has been the epitome of human warmth and welcome, psyche to pamper the guest was rooted deep in our societies. Archives of history display loud evidences of our hosting skills and extravagances. Starting from the early centuries, activities of hospitality have been an integral part of Indian life. The idea and concept of hotel is also not new to us, our records are abound with mentions of musafir khanas and sarais.

Man's desire for experiencing the non-native is a force that has lead to many milestones in the fascinating history of mankind. His innate quest for discovering new knowledge and habitats has resulted in interesting outcomes.



Recorded travelogues of travellers during medieval periods (5th to 15th century) present an eye opening histography of striking information, an unquestionable testimony of our historic appeal to the world. It clearly exhibits the uniqueness of our desirability, charm and lure. The magic of our spell commanded voyagers to alter bearings of their compass and redraw the routes on their marine charts, in an attempt to reach this land of mystics, intrigues and riches.

Our soil has seen the arrival of over 34 explorers and their entourages, from Marco Polo to Giovanni Francesco Careri, men of every race have anchored gratefully at our shores seeking dreams of their rejoicing. Our coastline has played host to mortals coming from nearly every continent; seafarers, colonisers, tradesmen, enterprising travellers, scholars

and philosophers. India has been their bountiful bliss, which has met with their glowing expectations of that distant fantasy-land they had heard about.

History tell us travel, hospitality and entertainment had started early. It graduated to exceptional levels around early 16th century during the Mughal times and continued with greater aplomb in mid 18th century, after the British colonisers arrived here. Since long our princely states, little kingdoms and aristocracies, had been inviting and hosting visitors from foreign lands, organising many excursions to show them highlights of their provinces, territories and jagirs.

It is no surprise that 'Athithi Devo Bhavo' (Guest is God) comes naturally to us. Perhaps it is a genetic trait, we Indians have lived with it for centuries. The grip of this mania has seldom allowed us to distinguish between a friend or a foe, such is our history. We have been gracious hosts to all - be it the cadres of un-invited soldiers of the British East India Company frolicking in the rural folds of our coastal Bengal or the legendry Greek soldiers delighting in the fragrant mists of Malana village up in the Himalayas or the footloose curious travellers of today basking in the generosity of our natives across the country or the radiating warmth of a rickshaw-wala's smile while zig-zaging the visitor through ancient lanes and alleys.

Buzz of welcome is everywhere. Indeed India is Incredible, we are hosts by default. And that makes us conditioned perfectly for the business of tourism and hospitality.

- *Neel Thakur (Author)*