

INTRODUCTION

The word “Gazetteer” is of Greek origin called ‘*Gaza*’ meaning a treasury of news. It is generally understood to signify a geographical index or geographical dictionary or a guide book of important places and people. But, with the passage of time, its range has vastly widened and it has come to mean a veritable voyage of discovery and a mine of knowledge concerning numerous dimensions of human life and of the country or region they inhabit. In the west during the 6th century AD, the *Magnum Opus* of Stephen of Byzantium Empire and *Doomsday Book* compiled for William, the conquerors are normally cited as earliest gazetteer forms.

India, a country of traditions, provided more systematic works of this nature. Gazetteer literature in India as elsewhere, begin with travellers. Examples of such literature in India are the accounts of Megasthenese, Fa-Hien, Hiuen Tsang, Al-Biruni, Ibn Battuta and others. Kautilya’s *Arthashastra* also provides valuable statistical information about India in the Mauryan Age. None of these works can however strictly be regarded as Gazetteer. The nearest approach to a Gazetteer in the modern sense is Abul Fazl’s *Ain-i-Akbari*. This book is of outstanding works which are normally counted to resemble the spirit and elements of Gazetteers. But the system of modern Gazetteer literature arose in Europe under the intellectual ferment brought about by the renaissance and industrial revolution. Germany and France led the way in this respect. The colonial British administration in India took up military, revenue and statistical survey to help and stabilize its position in the country.

The earliest Gazetteers to appear in India were the East India Gazetteers in 1815 and the Gazetteer of the territories published under the governance of East India

Company in 1854. Two private authors Walter Hamilton and Edward Thornton prepared the latter. A few years later, around 1866, Richard Temple published the official Gazetteer of the Bhandara district of Central Province. This set the pace and there appeared a number of Gazetteer volumes concerning various parts of the country. The first series of district Gazetteers of Haryana region concerning the districts of Gurgaon, Karnal, Rohtak, Ambala, Hisar and Delhi was brought out in 1883-84. The revision of District Gazetteers of Ambala, Karnal and Hissar was carried out in 1892. At the beginning of the 20th Century, the Gazetteers of Dujana State (1904) and Phulkian States Patiala, Jind & Nabha (1904) were also compiled. Thereafter the revision of District Gazetteers of Gurgaon (1910), Rohtak (1910), Delhi (1912), Hisar (1915) and Karnal (1918) was also completed. The last exercise by the British on district Gazetteer was for the Ambala district in 1923-24.

All these Gazetteers speak of sad tale of Haryana region. It was the land of recurring droughts and famines and the most discriminated region of India in the matter of social, cultural and economic developments. This region was carved out of Punjab as a separate state in 1966, but it was now one-third of its real size. Many economists and political scientists tended to hold that new state was too poor in basic resources to be able to hold its own for long. But due to the will of the people and the determination of state apparatus, Haryana attained the unviable position and the State became the example of the other States- 'Small is beautiful' encountered the earlier thinking.

Rewriting of District Gazetteers of the new state of Haryana with broad objectives was taken up by the Gazetteers Branch of Revenue and Disaster Management

Department. A logical approach to document the events was adopted to compile the District Gazetteers. The 19th and early 20th centuries historians who were used to the “Age of Empire” have ignored the history of masses. In the new Gazetteers, attempt has been made to bring the people in and to humanize history. The painful contrast that existed between the splendour of the court and the squalor and poverty of the dweller in the mud houses has been elaborated.

The Gazetteers Branch has so far rewritten twelve District Gazetteers and two State Gazetteers beginning with Rohtak District Gazetteer in 1970 followed by Karnal District Gazetteer (1975), Bhiwani District Gazetteer (1982), Gurgaon District Gazetteer (1983), Ambala District Gazetteer (1984), Jind District Gazetteer (1986) Hisar District Gazetteer (1987), Sirsa District Gazetteer (1988), Mahendergarh District Gazetteer (1988), Sonapat District Gazetteer (1990) Faridabad District Gazetteer (1994) Haryana State Gazetteer Volume-I (2004), Volume-II Agriculture & Irrigation (2005) and Kurukshetra District Gazetteer (2009).

The Revenue and Disaster Management Department of Haryana has adopted a fast track inching towards e-governance i.e. transparency in the functioning and toning up the official machinery for quick disposal of official business. The gigantic task of computerization of land records is in hand on top-priority. The documentation of rare pieces of District Gazetteers has already been completed by the Gazetteers Organization of this department. The 24 District Gazetteers brought out at the fag end of the 19th century and in the early 20th century have been got reprinted. The Haryana is the only State of India who has done this fete.

The blend of old and new District Gazetteers reveals that Haryana is emerging as the favourite Information Technology State of the Indian Union. With the updating of District Gazetteers it is best positioned to provide high reliability and rapid information at micro-level to enter into an era of. I.T. Revolution. Through well compiled District Gazetteers, we may think, we may talk, we may learn, we may communicate, we may govern and we may do business as an e-governance State.

Before I conclude, I would repeat that the District Gazetteer is a factual account, supported by figures and other data, of the life story of the district and its people from the earliest times. It is an important reference book of fundamental importance to administrators, research workers and general readers. In fact, Gazetteers can play an important role in bringing about national integration. These Gazetteers help us to know and understand the country and its people better and thus will maintain and promote the sense of unity in the country.

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