

## 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 6<sup>th</sup> 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 (Xuanzang), 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 Abu'l Fazl's Ain-i-Akbari. This book is among outstanding works which are normally counted to resemble the spirit and elements of a Gazetteer. But the system of modern Gazetteer literature arose in Europe under the intellectual ferment brought about by the renaissance and industrial evolution. 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 Gazetteers 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 Hisar 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, about one-third of the size of erstwhile State. Many economists and political scientists tended that new State was too poor, in basic resources, to stay on its own for long. But, due to the strong will of the people and the determination of State machinery, Haryana attained the unbelievable position and become an example for the other States, which makes the earlier thinking 'Small is beautiful' meaningful.

With the broad objectives, the work of writing of the District Gazetteers of Haryana State was taken by the Gazetteers Branch of Revenue and Disaster Management Department. The 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries historians, who were used to the "Age of Empire", had ignored the history of masses. A logical approach was adopted to document the events for the compilation of the District Gazetteers. In the new Gazetteers, attempt has been made to bring the people in and to humanize history. The painful contrast, which existed between the splendor of the court and the squalor and poverty of the dweller in the mud houses, has been elaborated therein.

The Gazetteers Branch has so far brought out 14 District Gazetteers and 2 State Gazetteers beginning with Rohtak District Gazetteer (1970) and followed chronologically 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-1 (2004), Haryana State Gazetteer Volume-II (2005), Kurukshetra District Gazetteer (2009), Panipat District Gazetteer (2015) and Jhajjar District Gazetteer (2020).

The reprinting and preservation of historically important rare Gazetteers and other related valuable documents have also been initiated by the Gazetteers Organization of this Department. Seventeen District Gazetteers (Part-A) and Eight Statistical Tables (Part-B); brought out at the fag end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Customary Laws of Hisar and Sirsa District, and the two Imperial Gazetteers (Volumes I and II) belonging to Haryana State have been got reprinted. The reprint work of old Settlement reports of Historical importance has also been undertaken. These Settlement Reports pertaining to the British period contain valuable data, and give vivid description of any district- like its former

fiscal history, scope of settlement, revenue, statistical and economical examination of the existing conditions, measurement, re-measurement, revision of records, etc. In this series, 6 Settlement Reports, namely 'Final Report of Third Revised Settlement, 1906-1910 of the Hisar District'; 'Final Report Third Regular Settlement (1905-1910) of the Rohtak District'; 'Final Report of Second Revised Settlement (1915-20) of the Ambala District'; 'Settlement Report of the Karnal-Ambala, 1891'; 'Final Settlement Report of the Gurgaon District, 1938-43'; 'Settlement Report of the Karnal District, 1909'; and the 'Report on the Re-organization of District Administration in Punjab, 1954', have been got reprinted. From amongst the series of Haryana District Gazetteers, reprints of 'District Gazetteers Rohtak, 1970', and 'District Gazetteer Gurgaon, 1983', have also been brought out recently.

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

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that the District Gazetteer is an important reference book of fundamental importance to administrators, research workers, tourists and general readers, it being a factual account, supported by figures and other relevant data, of the life story of the district and its people from the earliest times. In fact, Gazetteers can play an important role in bringing about national integration. These 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.

August, 2021  
Chandigarh

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