

EVIDENTIARY VALUE OF HISTORICAL FACTS AND GAZETTEER

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ABSTRACT:

The word ‘Gazetteer’ comes from the Latin term ‘Gazeta’ which means a small coin or the cost of an early news sheet. In earlier days, it was used in narrow sense. But today this word has a broader meaning. After geographical discoveries various attempts to prepare Gazetteers of various regions. As a result of establishment of imperialism and colonialism, preparation of Gazetteers began. In the same way the British who came to India to establish their Supremacy became interested in the study of the regions of India which came under their rule. Mainly there was self interest in this matter. There was a plan by the British to establish their colonial subjugation and political hegemony over the regions through a study and acquaintance.

Keyword: Historical, Gazetteer, geographical discoveries etc.

INTRODUCTION

In the beginning the word “Gazetteer” had a narrow meaning. At present the meaning of this work has been expanded. The word ‘Gazetteer’ comes from the Latin term, ‘gazeta’ which means ‘a small coin’ or ‘the cost of an early news sheet’¹. In the early days, it was also used in a narrow sense meaning ‘a geographical index of a place’². It has to be noted that today this word has a broader meaning. It is considered as a store-house of the physical features, natural resources, fauna and flora, details of generations, history, religion and faith, administrative system, language, literature, art, culture, life of the people, economic condition, etc. of a region.

EVOLUTION OF GAZETTEER TRADITION

All over the world after geographical discoveries attempts to prepare Gazetteers of various regions were made. In Europe as a result of renaissance and industrial revolution, there was the rise of intellectual renaissance. As a part of this, there developed Gazetteer literature. The first work, which may be called ‘Gazetteer’ in modern sense, was edited by Johann G.H. Hassel, the Geographer of Germany, entitled, ‘Gographisch statistics handwörter buch’ in 1817.³

Following geographical discoveries, as a result of establishment of imperialism and colonialism, preparation of Gazetteers began. The Westerners/English, in addition to establishment of colonies, gave attention to the study of the land, rivers and people of the region they became acquainted with. In this self-interest of the foreigners was also important⁴. But is noteworthy that the local people are also indirectly benefited by this study.

In the same way the British who came to India to establish their supremacy became interested in the study of the regions of India which came under their rule. Mainly there was self-interest in this matter. There was a plan by the British to establish their imperialism and political hegemony over the regions through a study and acquaintance. Even though the British were not acquainted with the life and culture of the Indian people, they had to rule the vast regions in their possession. As such it became inevitable for them to conduct supervision, study and field work in various ways for the purpose of collecting information on the local revenue system, military system, economic details, administration,

population, etc. Thus the collection of information on the basis of supervision, study and field work reports, took the form of "Gazetteer".

EVOLUTION OF GAZETTEER PREPARATION IN INDIA

When the history of India is reviewed, it is seen that in the beginning Kautilya's 'Arthashastra' and writings of Fahian and Hiuen Tasang, and later the story of travels by Ibn-Batuta, Al-Beruni's 'India', Abul Fazl's 'Ain-E-Akbari', etc. give us valuable information regarding contemporary administration, and history in addition to geographical and numerical particulars. W.W. Hunter who is the editor of "Gazetteer of India" volumes, has, in preface to the first edition, referred to AbulFazl's 'Ain-E-Akbari' as a masterpiece of administrative details.

After the British acquired Bengal, attempts were made to prepare Gazetteers in various provinces of India. During first half of the 19th century they paid their attention to the work of conducting survey, supervision and exploration for the purpose of collecting information on the existing revenue system, economic details, various sources of natural wealth, particulars of community life, etc. In this regard, Colonel Collin Meckenize, Dr. Francis Buchanan-Hamilton, Dr. Benjamin Hayne, Dr. John Laden, Colonel Mark Wilkes and others collected very valuable information on various matters pertaining to Mysore state and published reports and articles. These reports and articles helped Rice to edit and publish Gazetteers of Mysore and Kodugu states.

Collin Mackenzie joined service as surveyor in madras Province in 1783. He retired as the first Indian Surveyor-General. Between the end of 18th century and beginning of 19th century he conducted the first survey of South India (1799-1807)⁵. He prepared the sketch of the areas acquired by the British Government and he conducted the trigonometrical survey work of the physical features of the areas and prepared maps. Besides he also collected sources of writings and historical materials he came across in his survey work. He selected a group of Brahmins (Lakshmana Rao and others of Mysore), gave them training and appointed them as his assistants in his research work. With their help he had collected inscriptions, manuscripts and ancient materials together with an account of local traditions and legends, etc. In the course of survey of Mysore State he had collected 1700 lithographs, copper plates and 600 manuscripts⁶. He had engaged the series of regional scholars for the purpose of reading old inscriptions containing poems, to write them on paper copying them and to explain the meaning.

During the same period, Lord Wellesley entrusted Dr. Francis Buchanan, a Physician, with the task of collecting information and particulars regarding natural products, commercial activity, mining and the condition of the people in the regions of Canara, Malabar and Mysore that were under the rule of Tipu Sultan. Accordingly Buchanan left Madras on 23rd April 1800, traveled over Mysore, Canara and Malabar regions and returned to Madras on 6th July 1801⁷.

Buchanan had greater historical bent of mind than Mackenzie. He had the nature of scrutinizing and testing the veracity and authenticity of the inscriptions and documents collected. Finally on the basis of the information collected from his survey and supervision, he published in 1807 his work entitled "A journey from Madras through the countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar" in 3 volumes⁸. Even to this day this work is a valuable book for those who want to take up research work of Mysore State.

After Dr. Buchanan, the survey work of Mysore state was taken up by Dr. Benjamin Hayne. He was the first surgeon and naturalist who took up the survey work of Mysore state. He had collected information on various facts of Mysore state. He consolidated all the information on various facts of Mysore state. He consolidated all the information and particulars in his work, "Tracts, Historical and

Statistical on India". It was published in 1814 in London. After the survey work of Mysore state was taken up by Dr. John Laden.

Likewise Colonel Mark Wilks wrote a book on the history of Mysore entitled, "Historical sketches of South India" which were published in 3 volumes between 1810 and 1817⁹. There was widespread criticism of historians because it had a biased colonial view point here and there. Rice, who came later, relied very much on these volumes. For example, he reproduced the details as Colonel Mark Wilks had given regarding Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan.

After 1855 Sir mark Cubbon prepared the "General Memorandum", according to which it was decided to produce every year Administrative Reports of Mysore State. All these helped Rice in the preparation of Gazetteer.

But all the above works/reports were not helpful to know the comprehensive information about Mysore state. As such there arose the necessity of preparation of Gazetteers that would provide a comprehensive view of Mysore state. Besides there was need to provide comprehensive matters of Mysore state to the administrators. In this regard the first official attempt was made in the preparation of Gazetteer in June of 1867. In 1867, the then in-charge Chief Commissioner, Saunders C.B. sent a circular to the Divisional Superintendents¹⁰. He directed them to take up the work of preparing District-wise Gazetteers of Mysore state on the lines of Bhandra district of Madhya Pradesh. As a result of this order, within the next two years manuscript of 9 district volumes were prepared. But for various reasons Gazetteers of only Mysore and Kolar districts, edited by H. Wellesley and Krishna Iyengar respectively, were published¹¹. The Gazetteer of Bangalore and Kadur were incomplete. Even though the Gazetteers of Shivamoga, Hassan, Tumkur and Chitradurga were edited by Capt. Gordon Cumming, Major W. Hill, Major C. Pears and Krishna Rao, respectively, they were not in a position to go the press.

Added to this, the report of 1871 census report given by Major Lindse turned all the information and data of the volumes (which were at the stage of going to the press) topsy-turvy¹². Like this, the writing of Lewin Bowring, entitled "Eastern Experiences" published in 1872, also contained historical and geographical information about Mysore state.

Thereafter, with a view to bring out the information about Mysore state, in its entirety, the then Chief Commissioner, Richard Meade, in 1873, appointed Rice, who was then the Director of Public Instruction, for the purpose of preparing a uniform scheme and proceed with the task of bringing out the Gazetteer¹³. The main reason for entrusting this task to Rice was that Rice was well acquainted with the language, literature, people and history of this region.

In 1874, W.W. Hunter, who was the editor of "The Imperial Gazetteer" volumes visited Bangalore. He saw for himself the hard work, wide experience and enthusiasm of Rice in the editing of Gazetteer, and gave suggestion to prepare a consolidated information of the entire province (consisting of 8 districts) together. On his advice, Rice took up the task. He collected various available reports, works, Government documents, and on that basis brought out between 1876 and 1877 three volumes of the first edition of "Mysore and Coorg Gazetteers". Later on, on the basis of the information collected by him in the course of 20 years, in 1897 brought out the revised edition. During this period of 20 years, Rice had travelled in various parts of Mysore and Kodagu states and had discovered a huge wealth of inscription, literature and art. As a result of the survey, supervision and field work undertaken by Rice, the horizon of historical knowledge of Mysore and Kodagu states became widened. About this time Rice himself had prepared the 1881 census report. There were many Government reports and Government orders. Rice made use of these and in 1897 published the revised "Mysore and Coorg

Gazetteer" wherein both size and standard increased. In 1897 Kodagu had come under the rule of Madras Presidency. As such the third volume of the first edition could not be revised. The three volumes of the first edition contained 1650 pages. But the first two volumes of the second edition contained more than 1400 pages (I Vol. 833; II Vol. 581).

LATER DEVELOPMENT

Between 1929 and 1936 under the editorship of Hayavadana Rao, under the auspices of the Government 5 huge volumes of revised Mysore Gazetteer were published. After independence and formation of linguistic states, in 1958 these revised editions of the volumes was published in 1983.

It is pertinent to note that at present the Government of Karnataka has reprinted the Gazetteer edited by Rice, which was not hither to available, and helped the readers to study the same.

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