

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

AS EARLY as 1843 an attempt was made to arrange for the preparation of Statistical Accounts of the different districts of the Bombay Presidency. The following extract\* will be found interesting as giving an idea of the intention of those who desired to have such Accounts compiled :—

“Government called on the Revenue Commissioner to obtain from all the Collectors as part of their next Annual Report the fullest available information regarding their districts ..... Government remarked that, as Collectors and their Assistants during the large portion of the year moved about the district in constant and intimate communication with all classes they possessed advantages which no other public officers enjoyed of acquiring a full knowledge of the condition of the country, the causes of progress or retrogradation, the good measures which require to be fostered and extended, the evil measures which call for abandonment, the defects in existing institutions which require to be remedied, and the nature of the remedies to be applied. Collectors also, it was observed, have an opportunity of judging of the effect of British rule on the condition and character of the people, on their caste prejudices, and on their superstitious observances. They can trace any alteration for the better or worse in dwellings, clothing and diet, and can observe the use of improved implements of husbandry or other crafts, the habits of locomotion, the state of education, particularly among the higher classes whose decaying means and energy under our most levelling system compared with that of preceding governments will attract their attention. Finally they can learn how far existing village institutions are effectual to their end, and may be made available for self-government and in the management of local taxation for local purposes”.

“In obedience to these orders, reports were received from the Collectors of Ahmedabad, Broach, Kaira, Thana and Khandesh. Some of the reports contained much interesting information. These five northern reports were practically the only result of the Circular Letter of 1843”.

The matter does not seem to have been pursued any further.

In October 1867, the Secretary of State for India desired the Bombay Government to take concrete steps for the compilation of a Gazetteer of the Presidency on the model of the Gazetteer prepared during that year for the Central Provinces. The Government of Bombay then requested some of its responsible officials to submit a scheme for carrying into effect the orders of the Secretary of State, and in 1868, appointed the Bombay Gazetteer Committee to supervise and direct the preparation of the Gazetteer. After a few organizational experiments the responsibility was finally entrusted to Mr. James M. Campbell of the Bombay Civil Service, who commenced the compilation in 1874 and completed the series in 1884. The actual publication, however, of these volumes was spread over a period of 27 years between 1877 and 1904, in which year the last General Index volume was published.

Though a Gazetteer literally means only a geographical index or a geographical dictionary, the scope of this particular compilation was much wider. It included not only a description of the physical and natural features of a region but also a broad narrative of the social, political, economic and cultural life of the people living in that region. The purpose which the Gazetteer was intended to serve was made clear in the following remarks of Sir William Hunter,

\* Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency, Vol. I, Part I (History of Gujarat) pp. III and IV.

Director General of Statistics to the Government of India, when his opinion was sought on a draft article on Dharwar District in 1871. He said :—

“My own conception of the work is that, in return for a couple of days' reading, the Account should give a new Collector a comprehensive, and, at the same time, a distinct idea of the district which he has been sent to administer. Mere reading can never supersede practical experience in the district administration. But a succinct and well conceived district account is capable of antedating the acquisition of such personal experience by many months and of both facilitating and systematising a Collector's personal enquiries ..... But in all cases a District Account besides dealing with local specialists should furnish a historical narration of its revenue and expenditure since it passed under the British rule, of the sums which we have taken from it in taxes, and of the amount which we have returned to it in the protection of property and person and the other charges of civil government.”\*

The Gazetteer was thus intended to give a complete picture of the district to men who were entire strangers to India and its people but who as members of the ruling race carried on their shoulders the responsibility of conducting its administration.

The Gazetteer had 27 Volumes, some split up into two or three Parts, making a total of 35 books including the General Index which was published in 1904. Some of the Volumes were of a general nature and were not confined to the limits of a particular district. For example, Volume I dealt with History and was split up into two Parts, one dealing with Gujarat and the other with Konkan, Dekhan and Southern Maratha Country; Volume IX was devoted to the Population of Gujarat and contained two parts, one describing Hindus and the other Mussalmans and Parsis, but there was no corresponding Volume devoted to the Population of Maharashtra or Karnatak; Volume XXV gave an account of the Botany of the area covered in the whole Presidency. The remaining Volumes dealt with the various districts of the Presidency and with what were then known as Native States attached to the Bombay Presidency. Some of the District Volumes had two or three Parts, for example, those of Thana, Kanara, Poona and Bombay. On the other hand, there was only one combined Volume for some districts, as for example, Surat and Broach, and Kaira and Panch Mahals.

The scheme of the contents was more or less the same for all the District Volumes though the accounts of particular items varied considerably from district to district. Information was collected from Government Offices and, in respect of social and religious practices, from responsible citizens. Eminent scholars, experts and administrators contributed articles on special subjects.

This Gazetteer compiled over seventy years ago had long become scarce and entirely out of print. It contained authentic and useful information on several aspects of life in a district and was considered to be of great value to the administrator, the scholar and the general reader. There was a general desire that there should be a new and revised edition of this monumental work. The Government of Bombay, therefore, decided that the old Gazetteer should be revised and republished, and entrusted the

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\* Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency, Vol. I, Part I (History of Gujarat) p. VII.

work of revision to an Editorial Board specially created for that purpose in 1949. This new edition has been prepared under the direction of that Editorial Board. With the reorganization of States in 1956, certain areas for which no District Gazetteers had previously been compiled were incorporated in the Bombay State. Even for such areas, new District Gazetteers will be compiled in accordance with the common pattern.

In the nature of things, after a lapse of over seventy years after their publication, most of the statistical information contained in the old Gazetteer had become entirely out of date and had to be dropped altogether. In this edition an attempt has been made to give an idea of the latest developments, whether in regard to the administrative structure or the economic set up or in regard to social, religious and cultural trends. There are portions in the old Gazetteer bearing on archaeology and history which have the impress of profound scholarship and learning and their worth has not diminished by the mere passage of time. Even in their case, however, some restatement is occasionally necessary in view of later investigations and new archaeological finds by scholars, and an attempt has been made to incorporate in this edition the results of such subsequent research. The revision of the old Volumes has, in fact, meant an entire re-writing of most of the chapters and sections. In doing so, statistical and other information was obtained from the relevant Departments of Government, and articles on certain specialized subjects were obtained from competent scholars.

In a dynamic world, circumstances and facts of life change, and so do national requirements and social values. Such significant changes have taken place in India as in other countries during the last half a century, and more so after the advent of Independence in 1947. The general scheme and contents of this revised series of the Gazetteer have been adapted to the needs of the altered conditions. There is inevitably some shift in emphasis in the presentation and interpretation of certain phenomena. For example, the weighted importance given to caste and community in the old Gazetteer cannot obviously accord with the ideological concepts of a secular democracy, though much of that data may have considerable interest from the functional, sociological or cultural point of view. What is necessary is a change in perspective in presenting that account so that it could be viewed against the background of a broad nationalism and the synthesis of a larger social life. It is also necessary to abridge and even to eliminate elaborate details about customs and practices which no longer obtain on any extensive scale or which are too insignificant to need any elaboration. In the revised Gazetteer, therefore, only a general outline of the practices and customs of the main sections of the population has been given.

An important addition to the District Volume in this edition is the Directory of Villages and Towns given at the end which contains, in a tabulated form, useful information about every village and town in the district. The district maps given in this edition are also fairly large and up-to-date.

The revised Gazetteer will be published in two series :—

I. *The General Series.*—This will comprise Volumes on subjects which can best be treated for the State as a whole and not for the smaller area of a district. As at present planned, they will deal with Physical Features, People and Their Culture, History, Language and Literature, Botany, and Public Administration.

II. *The District Series.*—This will contain one Volume for every district of the Bombay State. The information given in all Volumes will follow the same pattern, and the table of contents will more or less be the same for all districts.

It was originally thought feasible to number the district volumes in the alphabetical order in the District Series and accordingly the Poona Volume which was the first revised District Gazetteer to be compiled and published by the Board (in 1954) was numbered as Volume XX. However, the arrangement was not found to be suitable and it was therefore subsequently decided not to give any number to any volume.

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Executive Editor and Secretary.