

Bihar District Gazetteers

PALAMAU

By

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P R E F A C E .

The first District Gazetteer of Palamau by L.S.S. O'Malley, I.C.S., was published in 1907 as one of series of Bengal District Gazetteer. O'Malley in his Preface had mentioned:- "Palamau occupies a somewhat unique position among the districts of Bengal. It is the youngest district in the Province, having been part of the Lohardaga district until 1892; and it has been characterised as the driest and probably the poorest district in both Bengal and Eastern Bengal. Five districts only surpass it in size; on the other hand only three districts have fewer inhabitants, and nowhere, except in Angul, is the density of population so small. Ethnologically, it is a kind of neutral ground between the tracts which still form the home of aboriginal tribes and those inhabited by people of Aryan descent; its people, their manners, customs, and land-tenures are different both from those of Chotanagpur proper and from those of Bihar. Physically, it is a land of hill and jungle interspersed with picturesque valleys and ravines, which to the north into a level plain along the banks of the Son. It is one of the most beautiful districts in the Province, and a country which wins the affections of every officer who serves in it."

O'Malley had based the District Gazetteer mainly on W. W. Hunter's Statistical Account of Bengal, Volume XVI, the reports on the Settlement of the Government Estate by Mr. L.R. Forbes and Mr. D. H. E. Sunder and materials supplied by the local officers. His book ran to 171 pages including index, etc.

P. C. Tallents, I.C.S., published in 1926 a revised edition of the Gazetteer as one of Bihar and Orissa District Gazetteer series. The book ran to 202 pages. Mr. Tallents' Preface had mentioned:- "The first edition of the Palamau District Gazetteer being out of print, and a quantity of fresh information having become available as the result of the survey and settlement and of the two censuses of the population that have taken place since the first edition was issued in 1907, it has been decided to revise as well as reprint the book. The second edition has been prepared on the same lines as the first, but certain statistical information is now given in tables at the end of the Gazetteer itself which was previously relegated to a separate volume."

The State Government in the Revenue Department have undertaken the work of rewriting and publishing the entire series of Bihar District Gazetteer. The old series of District Gazetteers although replete with facts and brilliantly written were meant to be more an administrator's handbook and had a very limited objective. In the last few decades there had been very many basic changes in the district and the country. With independence in the country, the very character of the State Government has changed. Palamau is no longer the district for shikar, forest and tribals only. Palamau is now partially industrialized, very well linked up with communications and is changing very fast. The old District Gazetteer of Tallents even if available would not have served much purpose now.

The Ministry of Scientific Research and Cultural Affairs, New Delhi, have taken up the work of co-ordinating the new District Gazetteers in the States and publishing four Volumes of Central Gazetteers for India. In consultation with the State Editors, the

Ministry has drawn up a general plan to be followed as far as possible by the States for their District Gazetteers so that the Gazetteers in India will be of a uniform pattern. The State Government have agreed to work in collaboration with the Ministry of Scientific Research and Cultural Affairs.

This rewritten District Gazetteer of Palamau is my eighth publication in the new series. The rewritten District Gazetteers for Hazaribag, Muzaffarpur, Gaya, Singhbhum, Saran, Champaran and Monghyr have already been published. The last three District Gazetteers are according to India's pattern.

The work of rewriting the District Gazetteer of Palamau has its own difficulties. There have been no recent Survey and Settlement Operations. No comprehensive socio-economic survey of the district has been undertaken. Till very recently Palamau was commonly regarded as a picturesque minor district noted for wild games. It is peculiar that while the tribals in some other Chotanagpur district have been studied, the tribals of Palamau district did not attract that amount of attention from the anthropologists. The march of events since 1947 has been extremely rapid. Officers in key position have their own problems and even if interested in this type of work, they have very little leisure to give any active collaboration. The District Gazetteers of border districts in other States have not yet been published.

I was, however, fortunate in receiving help from various sources and in some cases they were unexpected. Institutions like National Archives, New Delhi, National Library, Calcutta, and Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, have continued giving me valuable help as before by loaning their old records or replying to my queries very promptly. The Geological Survey of India has kindly given the data for geology of the district. The old records in Palamau Collectorate were looked into. For the later events, I have had help from various published books, census reports, manuscripts and data collected from collaborators and personal investigation.

The general pattern laid down by the Ministry of Scientific Research and Cultural Affairs has been generally followed. A special chapter on Forests has, however, been included as forests play a very important role in the economy of the district.

I am grateful to Father M. Topno of St. Stanislaus' College, Hazaribagh, for an appraisal of some of the tribals. I was much profited by personal contacts with Father Schille of Kanjia Roman Catholic Ashram. He has been in this district for about four decades. The Chief Mining Engineer of Messrs. Andrew Yule and Coy. Ltd., has placed me in debt by giving the historical background of Rajhara Colliery. Sri Akhauri Bhola Nath, an old and prominent Advocate of Daltonganj, and Sri Ramdin Pandey, a retired Professor, were very helpful. My gratitude is also due to many known and unknown people from whom I had always tried to draw information in the course of my tours. I have continued receiving valuable suggestions from Sri Binodanand Jha, Chief Minister, who also holds Revenue portfolio.

My thanks are due to the Editor, Gazetteers and his compilers in the Ministry of Scientific Research and Cultural Affairs for some suggestions. My thanks are also due to

the Superintendent of the Secretariat Press, Gulgarbagh, and the Deputy Director, Bihar Surveys for their interest in the printing of the book and the maps. For some of the photos I am indebted to the Archaeological Department, Mid Eastern Circle, Patna, Sri M. Shariff of Bihar Civil Service and Sri J. N. Sinha, Chief Conservator of Forests, Bihar.

It is only by the pooling of resources, extensive tours, personal contacts, investigations and study that a book of this type could be made ready. My close association with Chotanagpur for three decades was a help. I have tried to provide a book for a very wide range of readers which include administrators, academicians, politicians, tourists, and by no means, least, the interested man in the street. It will be a privilege if the book is of some help to the readers. The joy that I have had in compiling this book is my reward.

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The 31st March, 1961.

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