Chapter - I

INTRODUCTION

Since the earliest period of his existence Man has found the necessity of identifying places and the earliest use of language must have included its use for identifying locations. The identification of places and communication of this identification through language gained great importance with the passage of time. In order to run the human social communication smoothly, it is essential that various locations should be easily identified. This seems to be a common phenomenon in the development of the activity of a society on the territorial plane. A study of these names, their origin, formation and development is known as toponymy. This word is derived from the Greek work 'topos' meaning site or place and 'nomos' meaning name.

Toponymy is essentially a phenomenon of language. In the final analysis, language is an integral part of human culture and thus place-names also reflect the culture over a territory occupied and used by Men. However, the place-name is such a common phenomenon of language, that it hardly attracts much attention, in spite of its wide use. The tendency to explain place-names seems to exist among ancient writers. In the Purāṇas, specially the sthala purāṇas they religious explanations of Tirthas are given. Such efforts are known from folk
etymologies of many sites. Though these aspects of the study existed, systematic examination of place-names is a recent phenomenon.

The systematic study of this subject is also a recent phenomenon. Scholars like Bhagwānlāl Indraji, Buhler, Hari-prasād Shāstri, H. D. Sānkalia, B. J. Sāndesara, Umāshankar Joshi, and R. N. Mehta have done significant spadework in this direction, in Gujarat. There are scholars who have done work on the place-names of some parts of Gujarat. Here we can include the names of Bhānuprasād Chokshi, Karaiyālāl B. Dave, Pushkar Chandarvākakar, and R. N. Mehta. They have done pioneering work on the place-names of Baroda, and Fādārā tālukā of Vadodara District.

A lead in this field was first taken in western India by the Gujarat Place-name Society or Gujarat Sthala-nāme Samsad—which was started in 1957 at Vadodara. Its activities include lectures on such varied subject as Place-names of Vadodara city', 'place-names of Gujarat during the Maitrakā period', 'Place-names of Khambhät (Cambay)', 'place-names of Bharuch', etc. These lectures made a very interesting study and furnished valuable information about various facets of the cultural and social life and also provided insight into the working of the human mind.
The systematic study of place-names in Vadodara district was stated by Prof. Mehta. He had worked on the Vadodara and Padra Talukas. This study indicated that it requires extension over the whole district; so the study of the place-names of Vadodara district was taken up. The district has a long cultural and political history, and a variety of natural resources like rivers, ponds, jungles (forests), pastures, fertile lands, and even hilly regions. These have attracted the attention of people from early times. These features had developed place-names of habitants, natural rivers, hills, as well as lakes, etc.

In Vadodara district there are 12 talukas and in all these talukas there are totally 1690 habitats that include villages, towns and cities. It was planned to study these place-names only. The names of rivers, natural objects, and the names within the habitat are not studied, because it would require more time than that could be devoted.

Aims and objectives

The aim of the study is to examine the place-names of Vadodara district, from different angles such as language, geography, flora, fauna and social beliefs and thereby understand the natural and social phenomena that lead to their growth.
Sources:

The major sources in the study of place-names which supply material that can throw light on them are various lists prepared for government records. In Gujarati which is the local language district-wise lists of villages and towns are available, and they are useful for the correct pronunciation of the place-names. In copper plates also certain place-names are mentioned. In puranic literature one finds place-names which are mostly of religious places. The other literature such as historical writings, travelogues etc. also refer to some places. These sources are utilised in this work.

Besides this, many scholars have worked on various aspects of place-names. In this thesis their published material is also utilised.

Method of work:

Vadodara district has 12 talukas. In these talukas there are totally 1630 villages. A complete list of the names of the villages is given in Census Report. All these names were studied.

For this each name was analysed into its constituent parts. It is found that some names are single words; others are a compound of usually two words. A few indicate the use of more than two words and historical notes on these names are given where they were available.
After this study of individual names, their analysis was undertaken. It was found that the first part of the name suggested the natural or cultural reason of its origin and the second part indicated nature of the habitat. These were further studied by rearranging the names with similar factors of their origin and the nature of the habitat.

This study gave indication of various factors such as geographical, floral, faunal, and social and individual names that were responsible for the growth of the place-names. The analysis of the nature of the habitat indicated that they were camps, villages, towns, forts etc. These factors were further examined for the languages from which these words were derived. Where there was a problem of identification, survey maps of the area were consulted. For understanding the historical growth and changes in pronunciations, the names occurring in old documents such as copper plates etc. were used, wherever possible.

Short Summary of the Result:

The present study of the place-names of Vadodara District shows that the tradition of giving names has been continued from early times till today. These names revealed the original inhabitants of certain parts of Vadodara district. Along with these the pastures for the herds were also associated and convenient names were given to them. Other than these there are
certain names showing the professions which people of this region followed in early times and continued till today. Religion which is associated with the life of man has also played an important role. According to different religious beliefs and names of Gods and Godesses, various places are named. Some of the names refer to natural or geographical situations, such as the rivers, the hills, streams, lakes, ponds and also various types of plants, bushes and animals etc.

Besides all these the influence of different languages like Gujarati, Sanskrit, Urdu, Persian and even Arabic can be seen in the place-names of the district.

Thus the district shows that the tradition of naming the places is the same as it was in ancient and medieval period.
References


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