

Pre-Requisites of Designing and Developing a Dictionary of Place Names of Odisha: A Geographical Information Source

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ABSTRACT

The study of place names, also known as "Toponymy", involves language, history, personalities, people, geography, topography, religion, cultural tradition, politics, and even local industries. A place name is a window that can shade light on the past as to who the inhabitants were at that time, where they went, and how they communicated. The coining of names often follows historical developments. Odisha has a great and glorious history ruled by the British, Moghuls, Marathas and other rulers from time to time and many place names were given by them. The toponym gives the meaning and origin of names of countries, towns, cities and villages of historical and cultural interest tracing their development from the earliest times to the present day. It reflects our cultural heritage, tradition and an identity which are in need of being recorded in the dictionary format for generations to use, and so is the objective herein.

Keywords: Place Name, Toponymy, Geographical Dictionary

Introduction:

Whenever and wherever people of any sort starting from the ancient to modern times come into a land which is new to them, they at once begin to name their surroundings for the purpose of identification. Hence the man, the tool maker and the man, the thinker, becomes the name giver of a particular place. Thus, place name is a reflection of cultural heritage of mankind. Place becomes a space without a name. The plans, diagrams, visual images and maps drawn by the human, will remain inhuman bearing no relation to man, until they are identified with geographical names. Each place in this world is distinguished and identified by its name. A place is known to the outside world through its identity. The travelers visit places by their names in the course of their journey. Place names of a region speak about the geographical and historical peculiarities revealing cultural identities of the people. Place names do speak when there is no history. Place names narrate their interesting characteristics. Hence a place name is an expression of the name giver's thought process.

Characteristics of Place Names:

The appropriate date of founding or naming of the place may be a natural phenomenon. The language, religion, social political attitude of the name giver may also provide some clues. The older the name, the more difficult it would be to discover those facts. The migration of

people in the border area may have a profound influence on the naming of the places. Some place names, whose meaning are not readily apparent in their current form, might have evolved over time. In order to ascertain the present meaning it may be necessary to go back to the historical root. The coining of names speaks of historical developments of that place. The process of finding the origin of place name and the cause behind the naming of such will continue to lead the man from dark caves of ignorance to citadels of light, and temple of wisdom. It is a collaborating effort of researchers, geographers, archaeologists, epigraphists, linguists and information scientists having mutual interest and common understanding to work together. Then the task of compiling a dictionary of place names will successfully materialize.

Definition of Place Names:

Toponyms (place names) are names to denote or identify human habitation (cities, towns, villages, etc.), topography (mountains, rivers, lakes, bays, seas, etc.) and political boundaries (states, municipalities, etc.). They identify and reflect culture, heritage and landscape, and therefore, offer much to cartographers, historians, genealogists, linguists, language planner, and tourists. (Kostanski,2009).

Most place names today are what could be termed 'Linguistic fossils'. Although they originated as living units of speech coined by our distant ancestors as descriptions of places in terms of topography, appearance, situation, use, ownership, or other association, have generally lost their linguistic meaning over the course of time. This is perhaps not surprising when one considers that most place names are a thousand years vintage or more. Some place names through evolution have lost their original form which may be difficult to trace at present. (Ask oxford.co)

The primary role of place name is the reference (or label) function, including the connotations that the name users may associate historical content which may tell us something about the qualities and circumstances of the named entity at the moment when the name was assigned. The names also convey information on the relationship between the name giver and the named object. Place names are parts of the history of a given area and if they are correctly interpreted - reveal details of the name-givers' understanding of the named place at the time when the name was coined. Thus names are viewed as a historical oral or written text of the landscape and the people in it. (Helleland,2006)

When all the place names of different categories in a region are brought together and arranged alphabetically with brief narration for easy retrieval of information, it assumes the status of a dictionary.

Usefulness of Place Names Dictionary:

The dictionary of place names is a vehicle for reference. It is used for location, delineation and identification, and can also function as a powerful political tool(e.g. Anti - German sentiments during World war I resulted in renaming 69 German place names in south Australia). As a mechanism for personal reference, toponyms play an integral part of personal identity, because people always associate themselves with one or more places. Dictionaries have two broad functions: Constructive and Cognitive. Those designed for communicative purposes are used for language encoding or decoding. Bi-lingual dictionaries and Learner's dictionaries are best examples. Dictionaries compiled for cognitive purposes are chiefly used for acquiring knowledge or information. Place name dictionaries have cognitive functions. They are knowledge oriented, and should therefore, be considered as specialized or technical dictionaries.

Need for Dictionary of Place Names in Indian Language:

The first National Conference on dictionary making in Indian languages, held in 1970 at Mysore under the auspices of Central Institute of Indian Languages, has expressed anguish and concern over the absence of a dictionary of place names in the majority of the Indian languages, and recommended to generate a dictionary of place names for each state. This recommendation has drawn attention of the authors to develop a computer generated dictionary of place names for the state of Odisha.

Odisha at a Glance:

Odisha, a maritime state, on the east coast of India, is bounded by West Bengal and Jharkhand on the North, Andhra Pradesh on the South, the Bay of Bengal on the East and Chattisgarh on the West. Its location is between 17⁰49'N – 22⁰ 30'N latitudes and 81⁰27'E – 87⁰ 35'E longitudes. Large numbers of small and large rivers dissect the state before draining into the Bay of Bengal which washes its shores on the south- east side. Perpetually washed by the blue waters of the Bay of Bengal, it has a total coastal length of 482 Km. The state is endowed with a vast reserve of minerals as well as other natural resources. The state has also won accolades both in domestic as well as international markets for its exquisite arts and crafts. Works of Appliqué, metal crafts, silver filigree, pattachitra from the state have own special appreciations from places in and around the world.(Dora,2014)

Owing to its rich varied topography, vibrant culture and captivating festivities, the State of Odisha offers immense tourism delights to tourists from the whole country and abroad. Visitors starting from neighboring states to the far flung countries through the states at different times especially during the festivities. Compiling a comprehensive place name dictionary would serve a useful purpose to the visitors of Odisha.

Sources of Naming:

A place acquires its name from various sources such as its physical location, environment, religion, association with deities, education, political importance, association with prominent personalities, industries, flora and fauna. Causes of origin and evolution of place names are both simple and complex, variegated and sometimes mysterious. Some examples are:

Physical Location	Source
(<u>Baranasi</u>) Varanasi	Place of pilgrimage in Uttar Pradesh, confluence of the rivers Baruna and Asi
Khandagiri&Udayagiri	Jain & Buddhist caves and shrines. Giri means mountain Khanda means one part Udaya means rising

Religion & Temple	Source
Bhubaneswar	Place of Lord Shiva known as Bhubaneswar Bhubana-Universe Iswara- Lord Siva
Konark	A place where the Sun (Surya) Temple is located and the sun shines from an angle. Kona- Angle Arka- The Sun (Surya)
Taratarini	Place name associated with the Goddesses Tara and Tarini

	(two sisters)
Sambalpur	After the name of Goddess Samaleswari

Education & Learning	Source
Vanivihar	Place where Utkal university is located. Vani- Saraswati (The Goddess of Learning) Vihar- Living place
Bhanjavihar	Place where Berhampur University is located After the name of great poet KabiSamratUpendraBhanja

Prominent Personalities	Source
Bhanja Nagar	After the name of great poet UpendraBhanja
Kavisurya Nagar	After the name of great poet Kabi Surya BaladevRath

Flora & Fauna	Source
Nandankanan	Botanical & Zoological garden Nandan- Heaven Kanana-Garden
Shimilipal	Forest Shimul- The name of a tree

Review Literature:

A cursory look into the published literature on place names indicates that the studies on place names began in western countries as early as in the 16th century. The United Nations “Manual for the national standardization of geographical names” states that there were 43 national geographical names authorities worldwide in 2002, and 12 countries intended to form such authorities in the future. The reports and guidelines produced by these authorities provide ample resources for further research on the subject.

However, the study of place names has acquired considerable interest in our country recently. For instance, Place Name Society of India, Mysore brings out an annual journal entitled “Studies in Indian Place-Names” since 1980 and conducts annual conference at different places of India for creating awareness on the importance of place names in multilingual country like India.

To name only a few, English Place Name Society, American Name Society, and Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names of Alberta Society are now in existence. In India too several scholars of the previous generations have made individual efforts to study the place names including geographical and cultural history. One such work is, “India as known to Panini” by V.S Agarwal, which deals primarily with geographical data from famous Ashtadhyayi of Panini. Similarly, B.N.Puri has worked on Patanjali-Mahabhashya and K.D.Bajpai has published Geographical Encyclopedia of Ancient and Medieval India. A few other writings of some place names are, A study of Place Names in Calicut by Namboothiri, Contribution of Place Names to the geography and history of Bengal by Blockman, Names of places in Tanjavur district by Branfil, Kerala and Karnataka Place Names by T. K. Joseph, Discursive Notes on Malabar and its Place Names by Padmanava Menon, Place Names after personal names in early medieval Odisha and Toponyms of villages of Puri District by Subrat Kumar Acharya, Dictionary of Place Name of Odisha : a source of Geographical Information, an unpublished dissertation of M.Lib.Sc.of Utkal University by Sucharita Pradhan are some of the important works which provide insight into study of place names. Historical Geography and Ethnography of Gujarat inspired a number of students to undertake such studies in

different regions of the country. Ishikawa Kar, a Japanese scholar, has produced a fairly comprehensive work on the Historical Geography of western Deccan mostly based on place names and obtained his Ph.D. from Karnataka University. A recent article entitled, Place Name Study-Computer Analysis by N.Pankaj, reveals efforts to generate computer-based dictionary on place names.

The United Nations' group of experts issued a brochure in 2001 which underlines the socio-economic benefit of a standard set of names for national and international use. "Manual for the national standardization of Geographical Names" published by Economic and Social Council of United Nations (2006) is a unique document which provides international standardization of generating dictionary of place names in each country and also at the international level.

All these publications contribute for the literary development of the compilation of dictionary of place names. On the basis of the published literature, a researcher can get ample opportunities to investigate further and get new information in the matter of future development.

Material & Methods:

In securing names for the study and their origins, the following references have been consulted.

1. Odisha District Gazetteer
2. Odisha state gazetteer, 1990-91
3. www.villagemap.in/odisha
4. www.orissatourism.gov.in
5. Purna Chandra Bhasakosha Vol.I to VII.
6. Cultural guide book titled Places of Tourist Interest in Odisha by Gobadrhdhan Dora.

Methodology:

For the purpose of generating the place names in the dictionary, the following procedures are adopted:

1. Recording of all village names from the village map of Odisha and the important place names are selected for the study giving emphasis on the places having historical, geographical, religious, cultural, business and scenic interests.
2. Searching available written sources on place names and recording all pertinent information on place names.
3. Interview and suggestions of local people who are considered knowledgeable of the area and history. Whenever a piece of information relating to the place names and their importance are not adequately available, then another method is adopted by sending letter to historians, linguistics and writers to collect their views about relevant places.

Structure of the Dictionary:

Place name dictionaries are under the cognitive category as they are knowledge oriented and satisfy the requirement of various categories of people such as toponymist, geographers, linguists, historians, tourists etc. To satisfy the needs of above group of people, the structure of the place name dictionary is as follows.

Entry Head (place name)

- i. Derivation and Meaning of the place name
- ii. Significance
- iii. Longitude and Latitude
- iv. District
- v. Description of the place
- vi. How to reach
- vii. Where to stay
- viii. What to see
- ix. What to buy
- x. Best time for visit
- xi. Photograph of the place

To generate the place names through computer, a web-enabled application is developed. The application is developed in VB studio 10 using C#.net. SQL Server 2008 R2 has been used as backend server. The application provides interface to enter data & also facilitates to retrieve data on query.

Challenges:

The compiler of place name dictionary faces many challenges unlike the compilers of other types of dictionaries. The major challenge is the lack of historical documents that contain the origin of the place names. The consequence is inability to present the-then picture of who the name giver was, why the name was given, what the place was at that time, when the name was given and where the place was. Moreover, to pick the place name as entry head in the dictionary is another challenge, because it is difficult to compile a dictionary of all the place names of Odisha which comes under the revenue map within a stipulated time period. Therefore, the compiler of a place name dictionary must place some rationality as to decide which place name is to be included and which not to be.

Conclusion:

Judging by the content of the majority place name dictionaries, it could be opined that cognitive function will be fulfilled if the compiler of a place name dictionary focuses on a very fundamental principle that who the intended users are. A best place name dictionary of Odisha will be compiled if a place name society of Odisha will be established at Government level with the inclusion of toponymists, lexicographers, historians, and geographers, etc. to make Odisha place names famous globally.

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