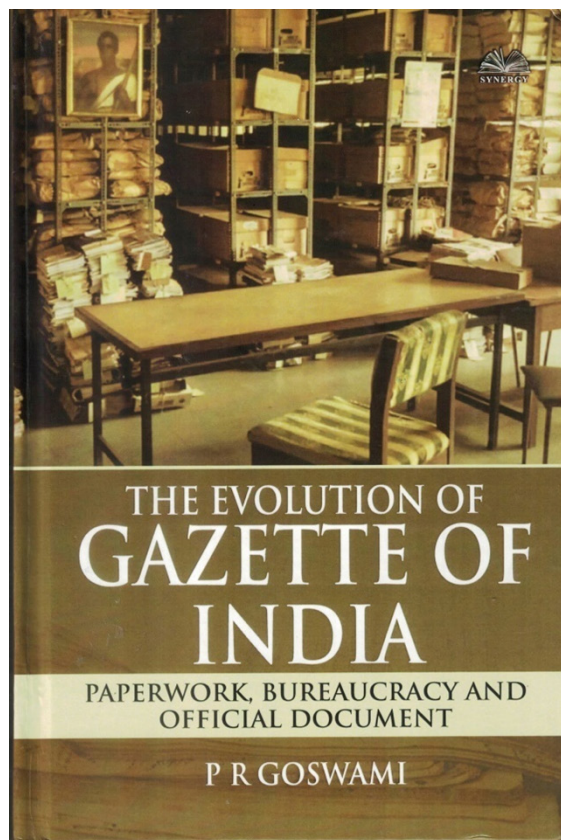


Evolutionary Perspectives of the Gazette of India



The Evolution of Gazette of India: Paperwork, Bureaucracy and Official Document. Written by P. R. Goswami. New Delhi: Synergy Books India, 2022, ISBN: 978194843047.

The Gazettes of India, official government publications, have played a pivotal role in disseminating information, shaping public policy and recording historical events since 1774. The Book titled “The Evolution of Gazette of India: Paperwork, Bureaucracy and Official Document”, written by India’s well-acclaimed information professional Dr. P. R. Goswami, critically examines the history of Gazettes of India, highlighting their evolution, impact and limitations.

The book is structured into 5 Chapters, namely, (1) Introduction, (2) Paperwork and the State, (3) Gazette: Source of Official Information, (4) Gazette: Reference Source to Research Tool and (5) Endnote: Future of the Gazette of India.

Chapters 2 and 3 mainly depict the history of the Gazettes of India. As described by Goswami, the evolution of the Gazettes of India can be divided into three distinct periods. (i) Early Years (1774-1857): The first Gazette of India, Hickey’s Bengal Gazette, was published in 1774 by James Augustus Hickey. Other 2 important Gazettes started during this period were Bombay Gazette (1780) and Madras Gazette (1785), both started by the British East India Company. Initially, gazettes served as government notices, advertisements and news outlets. During the British Raj, gazettes became tools for colonial administration, facilitating communication between government officials and the public. (ii) Expansion and Standardization (1858-1947): The Indian Gazette Act of 1858 standardized gazette publications, establishing the Government of India Gazette. Other four important Gazettes started during this period were the Imperial Gazette of India, started in 1874 by the Government of India; the Punjab Gazette (1859); the United Provinces Gazette (1865); and the Bombay Government Gazette (1865). Gazettes expanded to provincial levels, covering official notifications, laws and policies. This period saw increased emphasis on administrative transparency and accountability. And (iii) Post-Independence



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(1947-Present): After India's independence, gazettes continued to play a crucial role in disseminating government information. The Gazette of India Act, 1950, further solidified their importance. Gazettes now cover a wide range of topics, including legislation, policy changes and public notifications.

Post-Independence, the Gazette of India maintains several special editions that cater to specific needs and purposes. These are namely: (i) Extraordinary Editions: These are published to announce important government decisions, laws and regulations that require immediate attention. They are usually marked as "Extraordinary" and have a separate pagination. (ii) Part I and Part II Sections: The Gazette is divided into two main parts: Part I and Part II, each with multiple sections. Part I contains general information, while Part II includes official notifications, rules and orders. (iii) Section 3, Sub-section (II): This section is dedicated to publishing notifications related to appointments, promotions and transfers of government officials. (iv) Special Issues: Occasionally, special issues are published to commemorate important events or milestones, such as Independence Day or Republic Day. And (v) Annual Supplements: These provide a consolidated view of important government decisions, laws and regulations enacted during the year.

As examined by Goswami, there are certain special editions of the Gazette of India published since 1950. Some examples of special editions include: The Gazette of India: Extraordinary [Part II-Section 3(I)]; The Gazette of India: Extraordinary [Part I-Section 2]; and The Gazette of India: Extraordinary Part II Section 3-Sub-section (II). These special editions serve as a vital resource for researchers, policymakers and citizens seeking to stay informed about government activities and decisions.

While gazettes have contributed significantly to India's administrative and historical records, in the Chapter 5 Goswami pointed out several limitations of the same. Such as, (i) Accessibility: Historically, gazettes were inaccessible to the masses due to limited circulation and language barriers; (ii) Bias: Gazette content often reflected colonial or government biases, obscuring marginalized voices; (iii) Digitization: The transition to digitized contents has been slow, hindering easy access to historical records; and (iv) Authenticity: Concerns surround the accuracy and reliability of gazette content, particularly regarding historical events. The History of Gazettes of India is a complex narrative of information dissemination, policy formation and historical record-keeping. Despite limitations, gazettes remain vital primary sources for historians, researchers and policymakers. Efforts to digitize and increase accessibility will enhance their significance. However, Goswami also informed the readers that since 1st October 2015 only the digital version of the Gazette is available and the print version ceased to exist.

This Book is a powerful rejoinder of the critical role the Gazette of India plays in shaping not just government functioning, but societies at large as it reinforced a recorded knowledge of Indian bureaucracy. The Gazette of India as a critical reference tool, as depicted in this book, needs to be elaborated in the information science schools across the country. This is a must read for the budding information professionals, public policymakers, public administrators, public sector leaders and social science researchers, who will not only enrich their knowledge through this book, but also learn the shaping of the culture of recorded knowledge in the colonial and democratic governments.

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