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Mini Review

Importance of Inscriptions in Historiography of Rajasthan

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Abstract

Historiography is the area of study which emphasizes on the writing of history. Various sources are available which enable the historian to study and analyze the contemporary political and social conditions. Amongst these, inscriptions form an important component, especially when we talk about Rajasthan. There are various inscriptions which are scattered all over Rajasthan and which, if studied thoroughly, may be of immense importance. The details of some rare inscriptions of Rajasthan have been compiled so as to make the study relevant.

Keywords: Historiography; Excavations; Rajasthan; Prashasti; Inscriptions

Introduction

History of any nation depends upon the originality and authenticity of the sources available. Thus Historiography is the study of how history itself is developed in black and white or handed down throughout the civilizations. Historiography of any era takes into deliberation the various means by which a historical source is shaped, such as the reliability of the sources used, the motives of the author composing the history, and its authenticity. According to Conal Furay and Michael J. Salevouris, "*Historiography is the study of the way history has been and is written. When you study 'historiography' you do not study the events of the past directly, but the changing interpretations of those events in the works of individual historians*" (Furay and Salevouris, 2009).

Historiography

The study of historiography demands a critical approach that goes beyond the mere examination of historical fact. Historiographical studies consider the source, often by researching the author, his or her position in society, and the type of history being written at the time. Historiographers tend to differentiate these sources in terms of written and oral histories. Oral history is a more dynamic because it is spread by word of mouth, while written history is fixed and emphasizes the recording of facts. In its older form, historiography reminded readers that historical writing has fashions in its method and approaches (Bentley, 1997).

Historiography tries to place these various sources into a specific context. This means that the historiographer does not merely accept the content of a source at face value, but traces the source looking for various motifs in its formation.

One can understand a historical source as conceived from within a certain perspective and with a precise objective tied to its very production. Historical events can be seen as biased by the particularities of their recording and presentation. The historiographer seeks to unravel the logic of the production of history.

Historiography of Rajasthan

Rajasthan has been a cultural as well as social hub of India since time immemorial. The excavations works in Rajasthan has been very informative not only for Rajasthan but for the whole Indian History. Though, geographically, the region of Rajasthan was divided into various units but the various sources of history indicate uniformity in the culture and tradition. It has been a land of warriors as well as saints of various traditions, that way, emphasizing a moral yet glorified style of living and inscriptions have been a part of the historical writing tradition. The most important source of Historiography of Rajasthan is the "Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan" by James Todd (Jayapalan, 2004).

Inscriptions

Inscriptions are one of the most important archaeological sources that throw light on the contemporary society as well as culture. Though inscriptions are not as straightforward and indicative as the literary sources, yet they are less prone to tampering and distortion and so prove an important source of history. Most of the inscriptions on stone either commemorate particular events or record the dedication of buildings or images. The commemorative documents range from the simple signature of a pilgrim to long and elaborate Sanskrit poems are called "Prashasti". The inscriptions on metal are for the most part grants of land inscribed on plates

of copper. They are sometimes extremely long, especially in the south, and usually include information about the reigning king and his ancestors. Exact knowledge of the

dates of events in history of Rajasthan, so far as it has been attained, rests chiefly on the testimony of the inscriptions. A few major inscriptions of Rajasthan and their important aspects are shown in Table 1 (Mohammad, 2005).

Table 1: Inscriptions of Rajasthan and their important aspects

S. N.	Name of Inscription	Year (A.D.)	Location	Subject
1	Ghatiala Inscription	861	22 miles north from Jodhpur	Written in Sanskrit Language it emphasizes social life of Brahmins of Mag caste.
2	Pratapgarh Inscription	946	Pratapgarh	Divided into four parts, it throws light on various grants and donations. The socio-religious life of contemporary period is reflected in the verses and hymns written in it.
3	Chittor Inscription	971	Chittorgarh	Basically it was found from Chittorgarh but at present it is not available there and its replica is in Ahmedabad. It tells about the spread of Jainism and the social conditions of Chittor.
4	Nath Prashasti	971	Eklingji	Located in Lakulish temple near Eknathji temple, it gives information regarding culture of Mewar. Also, it tells about presence of a peculiar type of saints resembling Pashupats.
5	Ingnoda Inscription	1133	Ingnoda	Written in Sanskrit, it emphasises information of grants as well as the trend of giving information by various Mahajans of that time. Also, it indicates that caste system was becoming rigid.
6	Nadlai Inscription	1143 A.D	Nadlai	It is found in Adinath temple of Nadlai and is written in prose form. It inscribes about the Rath yatra festival of that time.
7	Bijoliya Inscription	1170	Parshwanath temple at Bijoliya	Throws light on the achievements of Chauhans. Also tells the social and moral life of contemporary period.
8	Loonvasadi Prashasti	1230	Dilwara, Abu	Explains the geneology of Parmars of Abu. Also tells about the construction of Neminath temple.
9	Sati Smarak of Hudera Jogiyan	1252	Near Churu	Inform about the process of how Pohad (wife of Rathore Narharidas) became sati. It also throws light on the marital relations of Rathore and Bhatias.
10	Cheerwe Inscription	1273	Cheerwa (8 miles north to Udaipur)	It informs about the contemporary rural administration, sati pratha and the social condition.
11	Rasiya ki Chhatri Inscription	1274	Chittorgarh	The inscription is encarved with details of cosmetics used by the queens at that time and about the untouchability prevalent in society.
12	Morkhana Inscription ¹	1515	Bikaner	Inform that there were roads to Multan from Rajasthan
13	MadhavRaiPrashasti	1591	Surajpur (Dungarpur)	Written in Sanskrit, it tells about the culture and society. It says that there were 3500 villages in the Bagad area. Apart from this it emphasizes that education was a part of society and study of Ved, Puran and Shaastras was promoted.
14	Saadadi's Inscriptions	1597	Saadadi	Written in devnagari script, it tells about the prevalence of sati system in contemporary society.
15	Trimukh Bawadi	1675	Debari	Emphasise achievements from Bapa to Raj Singh in brief. Formation of gardens during the reign of Rajsingh is also mentioned.

Inference

Thus we see that inscriptions play a vital role in organizing the history of Rajasthan. They have been the most important and trustworthy source of knowledge. The use of inscription in the Rajasthan has been important in helping preserve information on culture for which we can find such artifacts. Further excavations in this regard will unveil more facts about the glorious history of Rajasthan and a new picture of Historiography of Rajasthan will be emerged.

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