

Ad Hoc Group of Experts on
the Standardization of
Geographical Names

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REPORT ON ACTIVITIES

submitted by India

HISTORICAL

1. India is a multi-lingual country. Apart from Hindi in Devanagari script and English the Indian Constitution recognises 13 other languages as official. Many other written languages have not found official recognition. In addition, there are innumerable dialects, some of them written. The scripts of all the written languages are phonetic in character, and till English became the official language of the Govt. in India, the need for standardization of spelling of names was not felt acutely. No doubt there were minor differences of pronunciation of names amongst different languages. English spelling not being phonetic, and the Englishman who came to India being quite unfamiliar with Indian names and sounds, complete confusion and anarchy prevailed in the English spelling of names of places in the gazetteers, Post Office Guide, Railway Time Tables, maps and other official and private publications. To quote a few examples, we had "Sir Roger Dowler" for Sirajud-Daulah, "Crotchy" for Karachi and "Isle of Bats" for Allahabad and six different spellings for Sind, i.e., Scinde, Scind, Scindh, Sindh, Sinde and Sind.

1.1. In 1868, the Government of India decided to compile provincial gazetteers throughout India, and appointed Dr. W.W. Hunter, LL.D of the Bengal Civil Service "to use his exertions to secure uniformity of spelling in the preparation of these gazetteers". Dr. Hunter prepared a plan for transliteration of Indian names into Roman script, which was approved by the Government of India in 1870. This plan was adopted in legislation, in the gazetteers by the Surveyor General, in the Post Office Guide, Railway Time Tables, by Government offices and by several newspapers. Dr. Hunter's

system, suitably modified, is now used for transliteration of names from Persian and Devanagari scripts into Roman script. This system, however, does not permit reverse transliteration. The system and method of transliteration used in India are described in the attached annexure.

NATIONAL AUTHORITY FOR THE STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

2. In 1953, the Government of India decided that the following principles and procedures should be adopted for determining the spelling of geographical names in India:

- "(a) Authority to determine the spelling of any name in the script used as the official language of the Centre will vest in the Central Government.
- (b) All Ministries of the Central Govt. and Subordinate Offices will observe the spelling approved by the Central Government.
- (c) The Survey of India will be the only authority for the transliteration of names from one script to another according to the system approved by the Central Government. In the event of disagreement between the Survey of India and a State Government, the decision of the Government of India will be final.
- (d) Where a State Government uses a script (other than the Devanagari script) which differs from that used by the Central Government or where a local script of the State differs from the script used by the Central Government, the State Government will be the authority for deciding the spelling of geographical names of places or features in the State in local script.

Survey of India will be responsible for transliterating these names into Devanagari or Roman script in accordance with the approved system of transliteration and in consultation, where necessary, with the State Government and other appropriate authorities."

GIVING NAMES TO PLACES AND NATURAL FEATURES HITHERTO UNNAMED.

3. State Governments have full authority, where they adopt Hindi in the Devanagari script as the official language or even where Hindi is only a local language of the State Government to give names to places and natural features within their areas hitherto unnamed. Such names are communicated to the Survey of India in the Devanagari script for transliteration to the Roman script. Should it be necessary to alter the existing spelling in Devanagari script of a name in use by the Survey of India, the State Government asks the Survey of India to adopt the new spelling. If the Survey of India is unable to agree, the State Government may refer the matter to the Central Government for a decision. This procedure applies also to changes in the spelling of names that appear in the Gazetteer of India.

CHANGES IN SPELLING OF EXISTING NAMES

4.1 In order to preserve historical continuity and avoid confusion, it has been decided not to change the existing English spelling of some internationally known places and features, e.g. Calcutta, Bombay and Delhi even though they may have slightly different local pronunciation. The Roman spelling of the geographical names appearing in the Constitution of India are to be retained unless changed by the Government of India.

4.2 As a result of historical processes, some names undergo minor changes which are noticed when these places are revisited for the purpose of revision surveys. Their spelling is corrected.

4.3 In the case of names appearing in the Imperial Gazetteer/ Gazetteer of India, a minor change or inaccuracy in the spelling of ^aname, which comes to notice during field surveys, is made in consultation with the State Government concerned. In the case of a major change the State Government is required to refer the matter to the Central Government.

4.4 In some cases, spelling of names may have to be corrected due to incorrect spelling having been initially adopted by mistake, or some place having undergone a change in the name. In such cases, the old name is inserted in brackets and is dropped only when it falls in disuse.

GIVING A NEW NAME TO A PLACE ALREADY NAMED

5. The policy of the Govt. is to discourage changing an accepted name which people have got used to. Names of villages etc. having a historical connection are not allowed to be changed as far as possible. A change is not allowed to be made merely on grounds of local patriotism or for linguistic reasons, i.e., villages cannot be renamed after national leaders merely to show respect to them or for satisfying local sentiment in the matter of language etc. Any such changes can be made only with the approval of the Central Government which generally consult the Surveyor General of India.

FIELD COLLECTION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES AND STANDARDIZATION OF THEIR SPELLING

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FIELD COLLECTION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES AND STANDARDIZATION OF THEIR SPELLING

6. The Survey of India is responsible for the collection of

geographical names and standardizing their spelling. While the surveyor is carrying out surveys in an area, he enters the names of places and geographical features, indicating the extent of the latter, in a register. He writes the name in any Indian language known to him, adhering faithfully to the local pronunciation, as the main aim is that the map should be able to guide the individual to the place named. No attempt is made to trace the etymology of the name or its historical origin. The spelling of the name picked up by the surveyor is finalised after consulting the local administration who maintains revenue records. The spelling, if not in Devanagari, is at first transcribed into it and then transliterated into Roman. In some States which have not yet adopted Hindi for official use, the names are transcribed into Roman from the regional script.

6.1 Since Indian languages have no definite article, the problem of its use with geographical names does not arise.

DESCRIPTIVE PART OF A NAME.

7.1 The descriptive part of a geographical name, such as river, mountain, bay, is generally given in the same language in which the name is written.

7.2 When the descriptive part of a name is a component part of the name and the local inhabitants generally couple the descriptive part with the name, the latter includes the descriptive word.

7.3 The descriptive part is written separately when the name is applied for the natural feature to which the descriptive word applies, and combined in one word when the name applies to a village or other feature e.g. 'Malai' is the Tamil word for 'hill'

Chenni Malai	name of hill.
Chennimalai	name of village.

7.4 Translations of descriptive name in a regional language are not entered in other languages when their meaning is sufficiently clear, either from the use of a symbol or by a study of the neighbouring topography, or when the descriptive regional name is well known as for instance, in Tibetan, such names as La, Tso, Dzong, Gampa, etc.

However translations of the words such as river, fort, rope bridge are used.

Ganga River in Roman and गंगा नदी in Devanagari.

When, however, the local words might not be readily understood, their meaning is given in a footnote on topographical maps.

FEATURES HAVING MORE THAN ONE NAME

8. When a feature, like a river or a mountain, extends over a wide distance or area, it may have a variety of local names. In such cases, the more important name is shown boldly and the local name is given in brackets alongside, in the part to which the latter pertains.

FEATURES EXTENDING BEYOND THE FRONTIERS OF INDIA

9. Within the Indian territory, our practice is to adopt the Indian name and beyond it, the name adopted by the country concerned. To avoid confusion and for international reference, it is very desirable that names of such features should be standardized. Although it is difficult to make the inhabitants of an area adopt a new foreign name for such a feature, the standard name could be shown alongside the locally accepted name at least on all official publications.

GAZETTER OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

10. In India, standard geographical names appear on Survey of India maps and in the Gazetteers of India. Although gazetteers of well known places and features have been compiled in the past, no comprehensive gazetteer of all the known geographical names has as yet been compiled.

GLOSSARY OF GEOGRAPHICAL TERMS

11. The compilation of a glossary of internationally accepted geographical terms will be of great benefit, especially for navigational purposes and delimitation of territorial waters etc. Indian delegation lends full support to this project.

FOREIGN NAMES

12. Due to non-standardization of names ^{great} difficulty is experienced in giving the spelling of foreign names on our maps which may be understood in different countries. We shall welcome assistance from other countries in the form of their national gazetteers and instructions regarding rendering the names into Roman script.

HC PANT

TRANSLITERATION OF VERNACULAR NAMES

1. **Orthography of vernacular names.**—The proper transliteration of vernacular names into English must be carefully attended to. For most parts of India, lists of names showing the proper spelling have been circulated by order of the Government, but these lists cannot embrace every name that the surveyor will meet with, and consequently he should be conversant with the system in use.

2. **The Hunterian system.**—The system of transliteration adopted by the Government of India, a modification of that proposed by Dr. Hunter, is given herewith. It must be in all cases strictly adhered to for the spelling of all names throughout India, with the exception of Burmese, Arabic, Tibetan and Chinese names, and names in all trans-frontier countries for which special rules are issued. (See Section IV—Typing, and Appendix B paras. 5 to 8).

Note:—Accents will not, however, be used by the Survey of India for a final "a", "i", or "u". The "a" in "gaon" and the "u" in "pur" are not accented.

3. **Rules for transliteration.**—Every letter in the vernacular must be uniformly represented by a certain letter in the Roman character as follows:—

(i). *Vowels.*

PERSIAN		DEVANĀGRĪ		Roman	Pronunciation
Initial	Non-initial	Initial	Non-initial		
ا	- or ۰ - (when at the end of a word)	अ	not expressed	a	As in woman.
آ	اَ	आ	ा	ā	„ father.
اِ	اِ	इ	ि	i	„ bit.
اِي	اِ or يِ	ई	ी	ī	„ machine.
اُ	اُ	उ	ु	u	„ pull.
اُو	اُو	ऊ	ू	ū	As in rude.

Note.—It should be noted that when the letter 'i' is accented, the dot should not be entered, and that the letters 'e' and 'o' are not accented.

VERNACULAR NAMES

(i) *Vowels—(conclud.)*

PERSIAN		DEVANĀGRI		Roman	Pronunciation
Initial	Non-initial	Initial	Non-initial		
ای	ای	ए	~	e	As in grey.
آی	آی or آئی	ऐ	^	ai	As in aisle.
او	و	ओ	ो	o	As in hole.
اُ	و	औ	ी	au	As <i>ou</i> in house (nearly), being a combination of the <i>a</i> and <i>u</i> above.
ع	ع ع			† (inverted comma)	Guttural, slightly aspirated.

* *آی* or *آئی* should always be transliterated 'e' except when it forms, with Hamza ^ء, a "Ya-i-izafati" (or "joining" Ye), e.g. :— چشمهٔ مالک = Chashma-i-Mālik (not Chashma-e-Mālik). The letter 'i' should be used unaccented in such cases, as it is in accordance with usage.

"Nouns in Pashto and other oriental languages frequently end in *آی* or *آئی* or *ی* or *ے*. The first two forms are pronounced "ai", the third form is pronounced "i" and the fourth "e", eg.: Orakzai, Shāhi, Kili, Khidze etc."

† The letter ع (ain) is generally accompanied by vowel a, i, or u, and sometimes o. To avoid confusion with detail due to the use of diacritical marks, the '(inverted comma)' for 'ain' is not to be entered in the body of maps. Only the correct vowel a, i, u, or o should be used and the '(inverted comma)' omitted. In all other cases the '(inverted comma)' should be used.

(ii) *Consonants*

Persian	Devanāgri	Roman
ب	ब	b
پ	भ	bh
چ (ج)	च	ch
چچ	छ	chh
د or ذ	द or ढ	d

(contd.)

VERNACULAR NAMES

(ii). Consonants.—(Concl'd.).

Persian	Devanagri	Roman
د or ذ	घ or ढ	dh
ف	wanting	f
گ	ग	g
گ or غ (غ)	घ	gh
ح (ع) ه ت	ह*	h
ج (چ)	ज	j
ج	झ	jh
ک	क	k
ک or خ (خ)	ख	kh
wanting	क्ष	ksh
ل	ल	l
م	म	m
ن (ذ)	न, ङ, ञ, ण, or <i>anuswara</i>	n
پ	प	p
پ	फ	ph
ق	wanting	q
ر or ز	र or ङ	r
ر or ز	ढ	rh
س or س ت	स	s
ش	श or ष	sh
ط or ت ت	त or ट	t
ث or ث	थ or ड	th
و	व	w or v
ی	य	y
ظ or ض ز ذ	wanting	z
ز	”	zh
wanting	झ	gy

* Note.— The word सिंह will be transliterated as “singh” in all cases.

4. The Principal diacritical marks used in Persian character.—

- (i) The mark *Hamza* ؤ is used to separate a syllable ending with a vowel from another commencing with a vowel, e.g., فَايدِه = fā-ida (*not* fāida). It is thus used much as we use a hyphen in English in words like re-open. It may be transliterated by a hyphen. It is also used with or without ؤ to form the Persian genitive case in some instances, e.g., چشمانِه مالِك = Chashma-i-Mālik or چشمِه مالِك = Chashma-i-Mālik.
- (ii) The mark *Madda* ˆ is placed over the letter ا (*alif*) to lengthen it, thus: ā = آ.
- (iii) The mark *Tashdid* ˆ doubles the letter over which it is placed, thus: بَلَل = Ballā.
- (iv) The mark *Jazm* ˆ is used to mark the end of a syllable, thus: جَزْم = Jazm (not Jazam).
- (v) The mark *Tanwin* ˆ signifies the letter n when used over a vowel at the end of a word, e.g., اِتِّفَاقًا = ittifaqan.
- (vi) The mark *Wasla* ˆ is placed over ا in Arabic words to mark union with the preceding vowel.

مَلِاحِ الدِّينِ = Salāhuddin (*not* Salādin *nor* Salāhuldin);
vide note below.

Note.—In the case of Urdu names derived from Arabic, when the Arabic definite article ال occurs preceding the letters { ش س ز ر ذ د ت }
ن ل ط ظ ص ص
the ال is not pronounced but the following letter is doubled.

Therefore قَمْرُ الدِّينِ, for instance, should be transliterated Qamruddin (*not* Qamruddin *nor* Qamrdin).

5. Rules for spelling geographical names in maps of trans-frontier countries.—The spelling of names will be that adopted by the “Permanent Committee on Geographical Names” of the Royal Geographical Society as given in their published lists. If names given in these lists are found to be incorrect, the evidence to this effect should be put forward to the Director, Map Publication, who will correspond with the Permanent Committee on Geographical Names on behalf of the Surveyor General.

VERNACULAR NAMES

6. Chinese names.—

- (a) Chinese names not included in para 5 will be taken from the “*List of Post Offices*” in the *Postal Guide* of China.
- (b) Chinese names not included in the above will be taken from the following in the order named :—
 - (i) “*Postal Atlas of China*” (Peking : Directorate General of Posts, 1919).
 - (ii) “*Complete Atlas of China*”, by Edward Stanford, for the China Inland Mission.
- (c) Other Chinese names will be romanized on the system adopted by the Chinese Imperial Post Office as mentioned in the preface to (b) (ii) above.

Note :—The term “Chinese names” does not include Turki names which will be spelt in accordance with para 5 or 8.

7. Tibetan names.—Tibetan names not included in para 5 will be rendered phonetically in Roman characters using the table of pronunciation laid down in the Royal Geographical Society System II. The following books should be consulted :—

- (a) *Tibet, Past and Present*, by Sir Charles Bell, published by the Oxford University Press.
- (b) *Tibet—Historical Section of the Foreign Office—No. 70*, published by H.M. Stationery Office, London.
- (c) *Rules for the phonetic transcription into English of Tibetan words* by Captain W. F. O'Connor, R.G.A. and Mr. C. A. Bell, I.C.S.
- (d) In the absence of vernacular spelling, however, preference will always be given to spelling as given by well known explorers or authorities on Tibet.

8. Names not included in the above.—When a name is not included in any of the above it will be transliterated in accordance with the Royal Geographical Society System II, as given in the “*Alphabets of Foreign Languages*” published by the Royal Geographical Society.

9. Thai names.—Subject to the rules in para 5, Thai names in Thai characters will be transliterated according to the “*Bangkok Times*” phonetic system. Unless they can be converted to the “*Bangkok Times*” system, Thai names in Latin characters will be accepted as such. The conventional British spelling will be adhered to in both cases.