

## Prologue

“Place-names have an abiding interest : historical geographical, linguistic, and above all, human. They may tell us how our ancestors lived, and how they looked on life. Place-names may be picturesque, even poetical, or they may be pedestrian, even trivial. All are worthy of observation”.<sup>1</sup>

Their study needs serious scientific investigation. Every available recorded form must be studied minutely and an extensive knowledge of many languages and dialects may be required. Names of cities, castles, countries, towns, villages, hamlets, roads, lanes, footpaths, mountains, hills, islands, fields, forests, rivers, lakes and streams can provide us with a wealth of information about local history, geography, dialects and phonetic features. We should arrange the recorded forms in a chronological order and study them keeping in view the similar instances. We should study the place names by the following process :

- (i) The initial terms and their significance,
- (ii) The suffixes and their significance,
- (iii) Synthesis of the above results.

By such study of place-names we can peep into the culture of the past and compare it with the existing culture.

Countries, towns, mountains and rivers are generally named after discoverers, conquerors, founders and celebrated men. We must also keep in view the situation of a place, its surroundings and inhabitants.

The study of place names has received considerable attention in Western countries specially in Scandinavia, England and America.

In England the scientific investigation of local nomenclature began in the year 1901 when Walter William Skeat's book *The place-names of Cambridgeshire* was published. Skeat was constantly stimulated and encouraged by the erudite scholar Henry Bradley. Skeat and Bradley with Sir Allen