

Education in the Phulkian States

Abstract

The question of education has been one of those live problems which always aroused passion of interest in India. The Phulkian rulers made progressive efforts in this direction. First regular school was opened in Patiala in 1860 and in 1870 regular department of education was established. Primary education was made free in the state in 1911. Alongside of the primary education the scope of middle and high school education was also enlarges. Patiala was among the first few cities of the Punjab which could legitimately boast of a degree college. The first notable attempt at modernising education in the Nabha State was made by Raja Bharpur Singh in 1863 A.D. when he established a school in Nabha itself with one teacher for English and another for Arabic and Persian. In 1890 a separate cantonment school at Nabha was opened in which English, Gurumukhi, Persian and other subjects were taught. In Nabha State by 1917, the number rose to 15 schools for boys and two for girls. Attention was also paid towards adult education and technical education. Scholarships and stipends were introduced to encourage promising students of the state to acquire college education. Similarly in Jind State, the number of primary schools rose to 47 in 1945, Maharaja Ranbir Singh had made primary education free in the schools of the State since 1912. The rulers of the Phulkian States of Patiala, Nabha, and Jind showed enough interest in the development of education in their respective states.

Keywords: Education, Patiala State, Nabha State, Jind State, Primary, School, Maharaja.

Introduction

As per Imperial Gazetteer of India, 1908, the Phulkian States of Punjab included the three Native States of Patiala, Jind and Nabha. They represented the most important states of the Cis-Sutlej territory with a population (1901) of 2,176,644 and occupied an area of 7,599 square miles. The regional boundaries were formed by district Ludhiana on the north, Ambala and Karnal on the east, Rohtak and Hissar on the south, Ferozepore on the west.

Aim of the Study

The question of education has been one of those live problems which has always aroused passionate interest in India. The Phulkian States of Patiala, Nabha and Jind made progressive efforts in this direction throughout. Its rulers took keen interest in the matter and devised schemes for development of education in their respective states. Here is an attempt to trace development of education in these states upto 1947.

Discussion

Patiala State: Formerly the State had no regular system of education. The rulers of the Patiala State paid keen attention towards the education of their subjects. The first notable effort in this field was made by Maharaja Narinder Singh when he opened the first regular school in Patiala in 1860.¹ Education imparted in this school consisted of Persian, Arabic and Sanskrit on traditional pattern. In 1862 the teaching of English and Mathematics was started.

A regular department of education in the State was however, established in 1870 during the reign of Maharaja Mohinder Singh. He had a keen personal interest in the establishment of the department and appointed his tutor Master Ram Chandra as the first Director of Education.² As a result the department of education began to make rapid strides. Indigenous *maktabs* of Patiala were converted into State Schools as the branches of the Central School. At the close of 1870 there were no less than 20 schools in the State. Orders were issued prohibiting *begar* from the school going boys in the hill territory of the State to spread education. This helped in the spread of literacy in that part of the State.

The Central School at Patiala was elevated to the status of a College in 1872 and was named Mahendra College after its founder



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Maharaja Mahinder Singh.³ In 1876 Maharaja Mohinder Singh held the first educational Darbar at Patiala. Patiala was among the first few cities of the Punjab which could legitimately boast of a degree college. Students were also encouraged to go out of the state for receiving Engineering, Medical and Vocational education.

Like his predecessors, Maharaja Rajinder Singh also played his part in the development of education in the State. During his reign of 24 years (1876-1900) measures were taken to improve the academic quality of teachers, Middle school education was set as minimum qualification for employment in Education Department. Maharaja Rajinder Singh also established public library called the Rajindra Victoria Diamond Jubille Public Library,⁴ which contained a great many choice works on science and literature.

During the minority of Maharaja Bhupinder Singh (1900-1909) the Council of Regency introduced a number of reforms for the development of education. In 1903 Mr. H.T. Knowlton of the Indian Education Service was taken on deputation from the Punjab to draw up a scheme and to reorganise the department.⁵ His report was a thorough catalogue of the weaknesses and shortcomings of the system. When Maharaja Bhupinder Singh came of age he took keen interest in the spread and development of education in the State. He issued a decree regarding the importance of education. "No one even if he belongs to the royal family shall be taken in state service, if he has not passed certain examination."⁶

Owing to the personal interest and liberal patronage of the dynamic Maharaja education made remarkable strides. The primary education was made free throughout the State in 1911.⁷ More important still the State Government passed Patiala Primary Education Act in April 1927 under which education was made compulsory as well as free within the Patiala Municipal limits.⁸ Fortnightly or three weeks supervision visits were introduced. Not even a single school remained unvisited under this programme.⁹ The Government of the Maharaja chalked out an ambitious scheme for the expansion of education among his subjects called 'Ten year Education Programme'.¹⁰ The first five years saw considerable progress towards the consummation of the ten years plan which judged by its results had been quite satisfactory. For the next five years remarkable progress was made so that in 1938 Patiala had 306 high schools, middle schools and primary schools for the boys and 57 schools including one High School for girls.¹¹ In 1941 there were 313 schools.¹²

It was proposed in the scheme of 1927¹³ to establish one primary school for every village with a population of over 4,000 and every tehsil and nizamath headquarters in the first years. The Maharaja sanctioned liberal additional grants to the Department. It was only in the secondary schools that the fees were charged. The Patiala State still imparted the cheapest education.

The most significant feature of education of the period was that great impetus was given to the study of Punjabi. The language was made compulsory in the second third and fourth primary classes.¹⁴ It

was introduced in all the schools except where Hindi language had been prevalent and in the Mohammadan schools. In 1910 Punjabi was declared the court language. It was the first state in this region to do so.¹⁵ There were some schools in the State upto the primary standard where the sole medium was Punjabi in Gurmukhi script.

Alongside of the primary education the scope of middle and high school education was also enlarged. The Scout Movement was also introduced in the State in 1926.

Generally the female education was looked upon with disfavour by the conservative people of the state. In some families girls were taught only Gurmukhi, Nagri, Sanskrit and Arabic according to their religion.¹⁶ Maharaja Rajinder Singh rewarded the people who sent their girls to the school. By 1907 there were 23 girls school in the state out of which one was middle schools and 22 primary schools.¹⁷ Following the example of the Baroda and Mysore, the Patiala authority made girls education compulsory in the State in 1912.¹⁸ English had been introduced in the Victoria Girls School Patiala in 1910.¹⁹

The teaching of plain needle work was also encouraged and a school was established in 1910. An up-to-date girl high school was started at Patiala in 1928²⁰ and placed under the management of an experienced Lady Superintendent. At the time of the death of Maharaja Bhupinder Singh there were 89 girls' schools in the State. Patiala State had been a pioneer state in the cause of fighting ignorance. Unfortunately in rural areas a great number of the persons continued to remain illiterate. The benefit of higher education was also confined to a small fraction of Urban population.

Nabha State: For a long time the Nabha State had no regular system of education. In fact the education was not considered to be the concern of the state, but that of the priestly class. There were *pathshalas* of the Hindus and *Madrasas* of the Muslims. The work of imparting education in these institutions was mainly by *Pandits* in *Pathshalas* and the *Mullas* or the *Maulvis* in the *Madrasas*. There were no fee levied on these institutions.²¹

The first notable attempt at modernising education in the State was made by Raja Bharpur Singh in 1863 A.D. when he established a school in Nabha itself with one teacher for English and another for Arabic and Persian.²² But it was in the time of Raja Hira Singh that some substantial progress was made in the development of education on modern lines in the State. Having keen interest in education, he raised the Nabha school to the middle standard in 1880 A.D. and the status of a high school in 1888 AD. and in 1893 the Nabha High School raised to college status. But in 1898 A.D. it was again reduced to a high school because of the lack of funds.²³ The admission to the school was open to all castes on payment of prescribed fees. New schools were opened. He would often visit the school for the purpose of inspection of the students.

Female education was not neglected. A girl school at Phul was opened. The teachers of this school were directed to come to the *zenana* with the

students and there they were examined by the Rani.²⁴ An attempt was made to start indigenous Gurmukhi school in the villages to teach the sons of the zamindars because they generally remained illiterate. At Chotian a Zamindari School was established in 1898 A.D.²⁵ Only the sons of agriculturists were admitted in his school. No fee was levied. This school was ranked as Anglo-Vernacular School. In 1890 a separate cantonment school at Nabha was opened in which English, Gurumukhi, Persian and other subjects were taught. Its students were provided boarding, clothes and books etc., from the state.²⁶ The education expenditure of the State was borne mainly by the zamindar class because the State levied school cess along with the land revenue.²⁷ Fees were only levied from non-agriculturists, the sons of cultivators being exempt. Hira Singh also spent state funds for the cause of education outside the State. Special attention was paid to the higher education of the sons of the zamindar. The students were sent to Lahore and Rurki for medical and engineering at the State expense.

After Hira Singh the work was continued by his son and successor, Ripudaman Singh. In 1913 on the occasion of Dushehra, he abolished the fees in primary schools²⁸ when he assumed the charge there were only 12 schools. By 1917 the number rose to 15 schools for boys and two for girls. He also spent money for education outside the State. The brilliant boys were sent to England for higher education.

During the minority of Maharaja Partap Singh (1928-41) the progress of education had been gradual but not unsatisfactory. Many new schools were opened both for boys and girls. Girls schools were opened at Nabha, Dhanaula and Bawal.²⁹ In 1936 the number of schools rose to forty one. Nabha was declared by the Panjab University as a centre for students appearing in the Matriculation examination. Due to all these reforms the number of schools which was 1636 in 1925 rose to 4879 in 1938-39.³⁰

Attention was also paid towards adult education and technical education. The adult schools were started at Sulkha and Amlah.³¹ But later on under Maharaja Partap Singh 50 adult education centres were opened to eradicate illiteracy among the masses.³² Uptill 1934 there was only one Anglo-Vernacular Middle school for girls at Nabha and one primary school for girls at Dhanaula. It gave an impetus to female education which was an essential preliminary to any scheme for the achievement of universal literacy.³³ Measures were taken for imparting the academic quality of teachers. A separate Inspector for schools was appointed for the inspection of the schools.³⁴ Scholarships and stipends were introduced to encourage promising students of the state to acquire college education. The boys' Scout Movement was also introduced in the State.

Like his predecessors Maharaja Partap Singh made an important contribution in the development of education in the State after 1941. The most important achievement was the inauguration of a degree college at Nabha in 1946.³⁵ It was named after his late father Ripudaman Singh. It was affiliated to Panjab University and imparted education in science

both medical and non-medical groups and arts to the intermediate and degree classes. Library facilities were provided for the students. During his period the number of schools which was 40 in 1941 rose to 75 in 1945 and 95 in 1947.³⁶ A Central Public Library was started by the Maharaja in 1947. Free education was imparted in all girls schools and boys schools upto primary class.³⁷ Girl's Guide and Blue Bird movements were introduced in the State Girls High School, Nabha in 1944.³⁸

As a result of all these efforts Nabha State became the leading Princely State of the Punjab region so far as the literacy of the people was concerned. It attained the literacy rate of 4.7% while in Patiala it was 4% and in Jind it was 2.4%. The literacy rate of the Nabha State was even higher than that of the British Punjab.³⁹

Jind State: The cause of education in the State of Jind attracted the attention of Maharaja Ranbir Singh. He introduced modern education in his State. Prior to his rule education in the State was an indigenous one. It had two distinct forms – religious education and secular education. Each community had its own independent teaching centres. A Hindu school was housed in some temple or *dharamshala* and was commonly called *pathshala*.⁴⁰ The sole aim of the learners was to acquire knowledge of Hindu scriptures and to receive training in performing certain ceremonies. The teachers were Pandits. Muslim school was called *Maktab*, a Maulvi or a learned Mohammadan would hold classes. He would teach Urdu⁴¹ in Arabic characters. Sikh boys and girls were taught Sikh scriptures in Gurdwaras by the *Granthi*. The classes were never regular. Another type of teaching centres which existed in the State were meant for the commercial classes. These were called *chatshalas Mahnjani*⁴² (Lande).

As regards the female education it was strictly confined to the religious instructions.⁴³ Beside practical training in the art of sewing, stitching and embroidery which was considered imperative for a girl, was given at home.⁴⁴

Beside the institution mentioned above three regular schools (one each at Sangrur, Jind and Safidon) were opened by the State Government under the supervision of a Director.⁴⁵ The course of studies in the latter two schools comprised teaching of Persian, Sanskrit and Gurmukhi. In the first school subject of English had also been introduced.⁴⁶ The year 1889 was a landmark in the history of education in the Jind State. It was in this year that the State adopted the Punjab Education System.⁴⁷ The existing schools were remodeled on the Punjab pattern.⁴⁸ Accordingly the then existing school of Safidon was made an upper primary school. The schools of Dadri, Jind and Sangrur were graded as Vernacular Middle Schools.⁴⁹ Beside above institutions, one Nagri school and one Gurmukhi school also existed in the State.

A village school was a single teacher school. Safidon was the first upper primary school of the State. In 1889-90 upper primary schools were opened in the village of Balanwali, Kularan, Badrukhan, Mahlan, Julgna, Kaloh, Kalyan, Boond and Chhappar.⁵⁰ In 1891 A.D., the upper primary School

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at Safidon was upgraded to the standard of a middle school.⁵¹ This was the first major development in the education department of the State. One school was opened in each of the three villages in July 1907.⁵² Encouraged by the success, the schools were opened bringing the total number to 20.⁵³ Therefore, 6, 3, 3, 7 and 5 new schools were opened by 1910-11, 1911-12, 1912-13, 1913-14 and 1914-15 respectively and the total number during these 5 years rose to 44.⁵⁴ The number of primary schools rose to 47 in 1945,⁵⁵ Maharaja Ranbir Singh had made primary education free in the schools of the State since 1912.⁵⁶

The State had seven⁵⁷ Vernacular middle schools in the year 1934. Three Vernacular schools were upgraded in 1939-40. There were about 14 vernacular middle schools in the State towards the close of Maharaja Ranbir Singh's rule. The State had two High schools upgraded in 1894⁵⁸ and other was started in 1936. The foundation stone of the State Intermediate College, Sangrur was laid by Sir William M. Young, the then Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab,⁵⁹ to understand the value of higher education. But the College was not built for a long time. On May 27, 1939, the State Government opened the State College. It was an intermediate college to begin with and was the first college in the State.⁶⁰ It was affiliated to Punjab University, Lahore. There was a good response from the public for getting their children admitted into the institutions. On 10 December 1942 the University allowed the College to start degree classes. Elaborate arrangements for the games on the college campus were made. Arrangements were made for the training of teachers. Scholarships were awarded for brilliant students and they were sent to Europe for higher education.

Efforts were made for the development of Girl's education. New schools were opened and trained staff was appointed. Maharaja Ranbir Singh made female education free in the schools of Jind, Dadri and Safidon. Later on the concession was extended to cover all the girls schools in the State in 1913.⁶¹ The Ranbir Mintoo Girls School was the first, which was raised to the Girls High School in 1938-39⁶² and Lady Mintoo-Ranbir Girls High School was raised to the standard of intermediate college with its name as Ranbir College for Women. The subject of Home science was introduced in the college.

Spread of education was not confined to the Youngsters only. During the reign of His Highness efforts were made to educate the adult people also and adult centres were opened in the rural areas of the State. By the year 1945, there were 21 such centres. The other important step taken in connection with the spread of education was in the form of special concessions which were granted to the poor students and *Harijan* (scheduled castes) students of the State. Some special scholarships were also sanctioned for them.

Conclusion

Thus keeping in view the facts related above it may be concluded that the rulers of the Phulkian States of Patiala, Nabha, and Jind showed enough interest in the development of education in their respective states. It is interesting to see that in certain

measures, these states were even ahead of the Punjab under the British in spread of literacy. Incentives for girls education, adult education, introduction of Punjabi and even compulsory primary free education were some of the special features introduced by the Phulkian Rulers.

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