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Educational transformations in Jind under Maharaja Ranbir Singh (1887-1947)

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Abstract

Historical forces created Jind State to overthrow the Mughal Empire in the eighteenth century. During Aurangzeb's reign, this state's geographical expansion reached its peak, setting the way for her collapse. Aurangzeb used his best officers, men, horses, and weaponry in the South to attain ultimate dominance, leaving the North vulnerable. The North was left with a small force of inexperienced warriors who were no match for the Sikhs to safeguard the people and their lord. The crisis helped the Sikhs solidify power. The present paper presents a detailed discussion on the state and cause of education in the state of Jind during the reign of Maharaja Ranbir Singh, and his contribution in introducing modern education in the state.

Keywords: Education, Jind, Maharaja Ranbir Singh

Introduction

The development of education in Jind under Maharaja Ranbir Singh marked a significant transformation in the state's educational landscape. Before his reign, education was primarily indigenous, with separate centers for religious and secular teachings for Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims. However, Maharaja Ranbir Singh's vision and efforts ushered in a modern era of education, which revolutionized the state's educational institutions.

During the early days, education focused on religious teachings, with boys typically attending pathshalas to learn about customs, scriptures, and ceremonies related to their faith. Teachers, often unpaid, relied on offerings for sustenance. Similarly, Muslim students attended haktab schools to learn the Quran and Arabic script, usually in mosques. Sikh scripture was taught in Gurudwaras, while business education was offered in specialized chat shalas.

The state's education system evolved under Maharaja Ranbir Singh's reign. Regular schools were established teaching Persian, Sanskrit, and Gurmukhi alongside English, marking a shift towards modern education. Additionally, village schools were introduced, providing formal education to boys and girls and emphasizing the importance of trained teachers.

Secondary education also saw significant advancements with the establishment of Anglo-Vernacular Middle Schools and later High Schools. The state's first high school, initiated in Sangrur, reflected a growing demand for higher education among urban residents.

Maharaja Ranbir Singh's emphasis on education extended to higher education as well. The foundation of the State Intermediate College in Sangrur and efforts to elevate educational standards showcased a commitment to intellectual progress.

The state's initiatives also included adult education centers and specific benefits for marginalized communities like Harijans, demonstrating a holistic approach to education.

Despite some initial challenges and slow progress, Maharaja Ranbir Singh's reign marked a period of substantial growth and modernization in education across Jind. The legacy of his efforts resonates in the educational institutions and opportunities that continue to shape the region's intellectual landscape.

Development of education in Jind

Maharaja Ranbir Singh championed Jind education. He modernised state education. Before him, state education was indigenous. Religious and secular schooling existed. Religious education teaches youngsters the faith's customs, history, and scripture.

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Hindu, Sikh, and Muslim scriptures existed. Each group had its separate educational centre, termed a “pathshala” in a temple or Dharamshala ^[1]. Brahmin boys typically attended these schools, which covered the basics of arithmetic, writing in Devnagri characters, teaching hora-chakra (an astrology primer), and Hindu ceremony methods. The trainees’ only goal was to learn about and receive instruction in conducting specific ceremonies ^[2].

After completing their education, learners would work as Hadhas (Hindu priests) to support themselves. The teacher pundits weren’t frequently compensated. Typically, they subsisted on the offerings. A Maulvi or an educated Mohammedan would teach classes at a Muslim school known as a “haktab” (literally, a place of learning). He would impart the Qur’an in Arabic script. The Ayets of the Quran would be recited by the students. A mosque might be a suitable location for such lessons ^[3].

The Granthi (the Sikh priest) taught Sikh scripture to Sikh boys and girls in the Gurudwara; the classes were never scheduled and had the sole aim of teaching and preaching Sikh Gurbani and Sikh history. The State Government also opened Gurmukhi schools in the Tehsil of Sangrur, where the Sikh religious teachers received wages from the state exchequer. Additionally, Gurmukhi and Sikh holy literature were taught ^[4].

There were other teaching facilities in the state designed specifically for business courses. ‘Chat shala’ was the name given to these. The pupils in them were taught Shajani, the ancient Persian accounting system used by the business class at the time. It is pleasing to note that the mohamadans, who were more in favour of privacy, established a private girls school at Kaliana. In terms of female education, it was strictly limited to religious instructions, residencies, and hands-on instruction in the art of sewing, stitching, and embroidery, which was regarded as imperative for a girl, and was given at home ^[5].

Regular schools

In addition to the institutions already mentioned, the state government opened three ordinary schools, one each in Sangrur, Jind, and Safedon, under the direction of a Director. Persian, Sanskrit, and Gurmukhi were all taught in school as courses of study. In the academic year 1887-1888, 339 students were enrolled in these institutions, and the first school had also begun teaching English ^[6].

The reorganization of helpful departments was greatly assisted by the Council of Regency. Given its good intentions, the Department of Education should not be disregarded. The year 1839 was a turning point in the history of education in the Jind state because of the increased influence of the British Government on state

affairs on the one hand and the appointing of a European physician and a European tutor for the Maharaja on the other. This was the year when the Punjab educational system was adopted by the state. The already-existing schools underwent a Punjabi-inspired makeover. The position of Munsrim (administrator) has been transferred to the director of public institutions, and the state of Punjab has accepted the classification of schools as primary schools, middle schools, vernacular middle schools, anglo vernacular middle schools, and high schools. As a result, Safedon Elementary School was converted to an upper primary school. There was no high school in the state, and the schools in Dadri, Jind, and Sangrur were classified as vernacular middle schools. The State has not yet begun to teach English as a subject ^[7].

Along with the aforementioned institutions, the State also had one Nagri School and one Gurmukhi School; both of these schools were secular in their institutional activities. These schools taught Punjabi in Gurmukhi script and Hindi in the Devanagari script, respectively. With the advent of modern education, these institutions of indigenous education were unable to retain their allure, and the number of students enrolling in them continued to decline. In the year 1889, there were 139 and 17 students, respectively, in the Nagri schools and Gurmukhi schools ^[8].

Village schools

A village school was a one-teacher establishment where boys and girls of all ages could obtain a formal education from the instructor, who was typically an intelligent guy without any official teacher education. The first upper primary school in the state was the government-run Safedon Upper Primary School, which was not given the status of a town school despite being in a small town. In the villages of Halanvali, Kularan, Dadrukhan, Mahlan, Julana, Kaloh, Kalyana, Boond, and Chachappar, upper primary schools were inaugurated in the years 1889-1890. The upper primary school in Safedon was elevated to middle school level in the year 1891. This was the State Department of Education’s first significant advancement. The newly opened nine upper primary schools, which the council of regency designated as a transitional period, continued to operate as intended until the end of the council of regency’s tenure, when the total enrollment in these schools was 201, resulting in an average of 30 pupils per school ^[9].

The spread of elementary education collaboration at the hands of the public alarmed the state government. The public was not the only one to blame because not every village had a school. Small children found it quite challenging to walk a great distance to and from the closest school in the morning and the evening. Because of the tiny size of the villages, there were not enough pupils to support the opening of a school in each one. As a result, new schools were only established when the situation warranted them given the number of pupils involved. The number of pupils in upper primary schools decreased significantly over the nine years of the post-regency administration, according to

¹ Punjab State Gazette, vol. XVII, Phulkian States 1904 (Lahore 1909), p. 329

² Punjab State Gazette, vol. XVII, Phulkian States 1904 (Lahore 1909), p. 333

³ Punjab State Gazette, vol. XVII, Phulkian States 1904 (Lahore 1909), p. 339

⁴ Punjab State Gazette, vol. XVII, Phulkian States 1904 (Lahore 1909), p. 340

⁵ Punjab State Gazette, vol. XVII, Phulkian States 1904 (Lahore 1909), p. 342

⁶ Report on administration of Jind state, 1887-1888, section 108, p. 111.

⁷ Report on the administration of Jind state, 1887-1888, section 37, p. 20

⁸ Report on the administration of Jind state, 1887-1888, section 108

⁹ Report on administration of Jind state, 1887-1888, section 108, p. 111

an analysis of the numerical data. It appears that for a while, the government did not fully utilise all available resources to determine the causes of drop-outs and how to address them^[10].

The issue was reexamined in 1907, and the strategy of offering educational resources at the entrance was adopted. As a result, a single school was initially opened in July 1907 within striking distance of the three villages of Mahlan (in Sangrur), Sajwana (in Jind), and Chhappar (in Uadri). The result was favourable, and the number of students increased from 885 in 1906-07 to 1927 in 1908-09. Encouraged by the success of the experiment, schools were opened at Jarehi Suan (in Dadri), Koran and Dalpura (in sangrur), and Hatt (in Jind), bringing the total number to 30, and 5 more schools were added each year in 1910-1911, 1911-1912, 1912-13, and 1913-1914. The total number of schools increased to 44, 24 of which were only opened during the five-year period i.e. 1911-15^[11].

The First World War, which began in 1914, had a negative impact on the growth of basic education since sons from every village family had served in the military. The fragmented family that was still alive required further assistance with agricultural tasks. As a result, the majority of students were pulled out of school to assist with household chores and farming, which hurt the cause of village schools' development throughout the war. The state revised its guidelines and put a greater emphasis on maintaining effective schools. As a result, despite the fall in number, the number of students increased^[12].

Until March 1942, there were between 30 and 40 primary schools, with minor variance. With the building of a new school in 1942-1943, the number of primary schools increased to 41. In 1945, six more schools were opened, bringing the total number of schools to 47^[13].

The enhancement of the teaching standards in the village schools was one of its unique features. The state education department's inspection personnel used to visit and examine the schools and offer suggestions for ways to raise the bar. Now, the schools that once used untrained teachers to instruct the kids are staffed by qualified, trained, or certified teachers. It should be noted that since 1912, Maharaja Ranbir Singh has provided primary education free in State-run schools.

Secondary education

When Maharaja Ranbir Singh was crowned in 1888 A.D, there were just four schools in the state. Regarding the State's adoption of the Punjabi educational model Three of these schools, notably the Middle School in Sangrur, the State Middle School in Jind, and the State Middle School in Dadri, began offering English and mathematics in 1891, converting them to Anglo-Vernacular Middle Schools. A Vernacular Middle School was established at Safedon's fourth school, where Urdu, mathematics, and Sanskrit were taught. The eighth-grade children took a test known as the "Vernacular Final Examination," and because the state had adopted the Punjabi pattern, they were required to take it

with pupils from the Punjab^[14]. A modern Indian language (Urdu, Gurmukhi (Punjabi), or Hindi) was required as part of the curriculum, along with mathematics, history of India and history of England, elementary Persian, and one more elective course in either agriculture, elementary science, Sanskrit, Arabic, or English. The state government did not pay much attention to middle school education because primary education had always received priority. At the start of the 20th century, the state had three Anglo-Vernacular Middle Schools: Jind, Dadri, and Safedon. Till 1935-1936, the number remained steady.

In the academic year 1938-1939, the State only possessed the Anglo Vernacular Middle School of Safedon due to the upgrading of schools at Dadri and Jind to the High School level. In 1934, the State even had bilingual middle schools. In 1939-1940, three vernacular schools received upgrades, bringing the total number of vernacular middle schools to ten. During the time of Maharaja Ranbir Singh, there were around 14 vernacular middle schools in the state^[15].

High schools

The urban residents of Sangrur gave the State Government a positive answer. In 1994, Sangrur's public Anglo-Vernacular Middle School was raised to the status of a high school. It was the state's first high school. Beginning with the usual courses of English, Mathematics, Urdu, Sanskrit, and Gurmukhi (Punjabi), it later added subjects of science and art to its curriculum in the academic year 1909-1910. By doing this, the school was able to satisfy the fundamental needs and demands of contemporary students who were interested in enrolling in professional courses at engineering and medical schools. The State High School, Sangrur, was its name. Students joined the college from other regions of the state. The school's existing building was deemed insufficient to house the newly accepted pupils due to the approval of high courses for the institution as well as an increase in student enrollment. The Maharaja did not like to see the developing institution continue in disrepair as he had a strong desire to see the subjects of the state receive a proper education. As a result, he approved a sum of Rs. 25000 for the construction of a new building for the school with the endorsement of the Council of Regency. To honour Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in June, the school was renamed The Diamond Jubilee State School in 1897. Sons from wealthy families in the nearby villages enrolled in the high school in considerable numbers. They had trouble locating residential housing in Sangrur. The state government saw this and built a boarding home in Ram Bagh not far from the institution. It could accommodate 32 boys. In it, a small pharmacy was also established and placed under the supervision of a surgical assistant.

The second high school in the state opened for business in April 1936. Why a high school couldn't open for this extended period seems unusual. The biggest contributing factor may have been the poor economic standing of the peasantry, which made up the majority of the population. The agricultural products market had been experiencing a downturn. Higher education was somewhat pricey and out of the grasp of the average person^[16].

¹⁰ Punjab State Gazette, vol. XVII, Phulkian States 1904 (Lahore 1909), p. 330

¹¹ Report on the administration of Jind state, 1889-1890, para 78.

¹² Report on the administration of Jind state, 1889-1890, para 22.

¹³ Report on the administration of Jind state, 1899-1900, p. 127

¹⁴ Educational Report of Jind state, 1911-1912, File no. 9824 (Punjab State Archives)

¹⁵ Report on administration of Jind state, 1934-1939, p. 149.

¹⁶ Report on administration of Jind state, 1939-1943, p. 122.

The total number of High schools increased to four (three for boys and one for girls) after two years, or in 1938, when two more were authorised. The number of students who sat the matriculation examination increased from 54 to 83 in five years (1934-1935 to 1938-1939), while the pass percentage decreased from 94 in 1934-1935 to 79 in 1938-1939 as a result of the urban people's significant interest in their offspring's education. Gradually more students were enrolled until there were 125 in March 1944, when the pass rate was 95 percent. Following that, the number of high schools stayed the same. These institutions have ties to Punjab University in Lahore and were required to adhere to its curricula.

Higher education

Maharaja Ranbir Singh was a smart man who appreciated the significance of a college degree. Therefore, he had Sir William M. Young, the then Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab, lay the foundation stone for the state Intermediate College in Sangrur on the very day (10 November 1899) that he assumed effective control of the state administration. However, it took a while before the college could be completed since it was believed that the nearby area without a high school and the local high school would not be able to supply enough students for it. The residents of the Dadri district wanted to send their kids to Delhi because it was closer than Sangrur. The universities in Patiala and Ludhiana were well-known. Nearby residents sent their children to attend these colleges^[17].

Rich families used to send their kids to the prestigious educational institution in Lahore. Thus, the plan to establish the projected State college at Sangrur was unable to come to fruition until the end of the school year 1938-1939 due to the constraints of the situation. The State College was the first college in the state and was established by the State Government on May 27th, 1939. It was initially an intermediate college.

It was officially opened by Maharaja Ranbir Singh, and the institution bears his name. The initial admission took place in 1939, and it was connected with Punjab University Lahore. An effort was made to raise the college's standards. At a cost of 50,000, a brand-new science building with the moniker Dalip Science Block was built.

People in the State had become interested in the benefits of education. The public responded favourably to their request to have their kids admitted to the facility. Out of the 40 students who took the Intermediate examination in April 1941, 36 were considered to have passed. Thirty-nine candidates showed up for the exam the next year, and thirty-one were deemed successful. The Punjab University was contacted on December 10th, 1942, asking permission for the college to begin degree classes there in light of the college's positive performance and the public's need for them. The college was examined in March 1943 by the University's Inspection Committee.

Based on the college's successful performance in FSC and FA during the 1943-1944 academic year, the university's inspection committee suggested that the state intermediate college in Sangrur to be given permission to offer degree-granting courses. The first third-year B.A. test was held in the 1943-1944 academic year. In the first session, 159

students were admitted throughout the three classes. The very next year, it increased to 222. In this fashion, the little organization developed into a degree-granting college. The kids were first taught about English, Persian, History, and Economics. A milk bar was constructed in the college hostel, elaborate provisions for games were made on the college campus, and the college was designated as an examination location for both intermediate and BA exams.

Teachers' training class

The state administration was fully aware that hiring skilled and trained teachers was essential to improving instructional efficiency. The issue was where and how to obtain them. To solve this issue, the department established a primary school teacher training programme in the State. The first admission to the junior vernacular (J.V.) teachers training programme took place in 1938. The state's need for certified year teachers was not as strong because there weren't many Anglo-Vernacular Middle and High Schools in the state that required trained graduates. In the Government Training College Lahore, the state had been able to secure a few seats specifically for its candidates. After finishing their Bachelor of Teachers Training, these nominated graduates began working for the government. The State government was able to have trained employees in the schools thanks to these actions^[18].

Adult education

During His Highness' rule, efforts were made to educate adults as well, and adult education centres were established in the state's rural districts. The spread of education was not limited to children exclusively. There were 21 such facilities and 418 adults were registered by 1945. The village teachers were instructed to pay attention to the issue. At least one adult has to be taught by each teacher. The state's Harijan Students (Scheduled Castes) were given specific advantages as part of another significant move towards the expansion of education^[19]. At their convenience, there were no tuition expenses for study up to the tenth-grade level. In Sangrur, a unique school for the Harijans was established. They received certain unique scholarships that were approved. The Harijans were encouraged to enrol in school by these liberal actions. There were 221 Harijan students by the year 1945.

Conclusion

About fifty primary schools were opened under Maharaja Ranbir Singh's fifty-year reign. The number was modest, and the rate of work was likewise very slow. The state college's foundation stone was set. The state slept on the problem for forty years without justification, yet it wasn't initiated until 1939. In 1894, the state's first high school was founded. In 1936, the second high school was inaugurated. It is impossible to understand the state government's protracted attitude of indifference. The department's performance in regards to the opening of primary schools was below average. In 1904-05, there were nine elementary schools. 39 were added in the years 1914-1915. After that, it kept decreasing until it reached 30 in 1938-1939. After that,

¹⁸ Educational Report of Jind state, 1911-1912, File no. 17311 (Punjab State Archives)

¹⁹ Punjab State Gazetteer, vol. XVII, Phulkian States 1904 (Lahore 1909), p. 363

¹⁷ Punjab State Gazetteer, vol. XVII, Phulkian States 1904 (Lahore 1909), p. 300

it once more began to stir up, for which the Legislative Assembly is responsible. Overall, the performance of the education department falls short of expectations.

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