

## HISTORY OF EDUCATION IN PUNJAB

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### ABSTRACT

*The events that happened in the past affect things going on in the present, which will make a difference in what happens in the future. Same is the case with our education system. Our present education system can not be understood without in depth knowledge of its past. In this paper researchers had tried to analyze the history of education in Punjab. There existed a system of education in Punjab, whose spirit of devotion breathed for its own sake and influenced the character and religious culture. The various forms of indigenous education in the Punjab were concurrent with the establishment of Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism, respectively. Consequently, the schools in the province were denominational in character and were run separately by Hindus, Musalmans and the Sikhs. The Punjabis had a glimpse of western education during the later years s of Ranjit Singh's Reign. The missionaries, infact, were the first to introduce the Western System of Education in Punjab. There was a great desire among the scholars to learn the English language and the sciences. During the early years three main agencies engaged themselves in the education of Punjab. They were the missionaries, the government officials and the government itself. The missionary with their zeal and dedication scored over the government effort. In 1901, only 6.4% of the males and 3% of females were literate in the Punjab.*

### INTRODUCTION

Punjab was incorporated into the British Indian Empire in 1849. The British were startled to find the prevalence of indigenous education in all parts of the new province. In every village there were Hindu, Muslim and Sikh schools attached to temples, mosques and gurudwaras, respectively.

### INDIGENOUS EDUCATION IN THE PUNJAB

The state of education in the 19th century Punjab which once was a great centre of Aryan, Buddhist and Mughal learning, and was the home of university of Taxila was not flourishing as in the ancient and medieval periods of the history. After the down fall of the Mughal Empire and before the advent of the British rule, barring, of course, Ranjit Singh's shorter reign, Punjab had hardly witnessed any years of unbroken peace. There existed a system of education in Punjab, whose spirit of devotion breathed for its own sake and influenced the character and religious culture. The various forms of indigenous education in the Punjab were concurrent with the establishment of Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism, respectively. Consequently, the schools in the province were

denominational in character and were run separately by Hindus, Musalmans and the Sikhs. At the Hindu schools, writing and rudiments of arithmetic's were generally taught in Hindi character; at the Muslim schools, the Koran in Arabic and the didactic and poetical works, Gulistan and Bostan of Sadie in Persian were read; and at the Sikh schools, Guru Granth Sahib, the repository of the faith which Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh preached, was taught. The school house in Punjab was primitive in nature, such as private dwelling, the village town hall, the shade of a tree, a temporary shed, or a courtyard of the temple. The Muslim schools were nearly all attached to the village mosques. The Hindus and Sikhs schools were generally connected with temples, Gurudwaras and Dharamshalas. Schools were also held in the huts of sadhus, fakirs or at the houses of liberal persons. To Punjabi Hindus, 'pathshala' represented a school for primary religious teaching and the study of Sanskrit. In a typical pathshala, the pupil began with either the Nagri character (Hindi) or even with Gurmukhi and then proceeded to learn Sanskrit. The Sikh schools

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were attached to the Gurudwaras or the Dharamshalas of the village. Every Sikh student had to go through the initiation ceremony called 'pohal' or 'Amrit'. The ceremony was originated by Guru Gobind Singh. The school where only the study of Koran was conducted was known as 'Koran school'. It was a place where the Koran formed the staple, a place where the whole thing would fall to the ground was it not for the Koran. Beside these there were Persian schools. It was in the Persian schools that the secular state of Indigenous education came to the fore. Even British educational officers admitted their genuineness. These schools had majority of the Muslim teachers, yet the Hindu pupils formed the larger proportion than Muhammadans. The Hindus were attracted to these schools largely because of the study of Persian language and not due to the fascination for the Islam. Persian had a pecuniary value as it was the official language both during the Mughals rule and that of Sikhs and, thus, was the key to employment and livelihood. There were also 'Lande' schools. In the Lande schools the system of book keeping and accounts were taught to pupils. The majority of students at these institutions were from the trading communities. The teachers of these schools were generally known as Pandahs or the term Guru was also popular. The Muhammadan teachers of these schools were called 'Mians'. There was the prevalence of female education within all parts of the Punjab, the existence of which is almost unknown in other parts of India. There was no prejudice against girls being taught at home. The Punjabi woman had not only more or less taught herself, but she had been also teachers of others. In Delhi, before annexation, there were six public schools run by Punjabi women. In the cities of Lahore and Kasur 128 girls were under instructions. They were all Muslims. The teacher and taught at the female schools were from all the three main religions i.e. Hindu, Muslim and Sikh. The teachers of indigenous schools were Pandas, Prohits and Guru, if they were Hindus; Mians, Mullas, Maulvis and Munshis, if they were Muslims; and Bhai and Gianis in case of Sikhs. Then there were Banya Padahs who often traveled from town to

town and taught the children of Banyas. The age of these teachers varied between 25 to 82. In fact there was no upper age limit. A teacher can go on and on permitting he was healthy and fit. There was no uniform way of the remuneration to the teachers in the indigenous schools. It varied according to the status of the teacher and the taught. Arnold admitted the difficulty in formulating the exact list of the indigenous schools. Yet he estimated 30,196 boys attending indigenous schools in his first educational report in July 1857. He excluded the number of pupils attending 1,775 Koran schools from the above list because according to him, the education imparted in them was 'worthless'. In his second report of June 1858 Arnold listed an aggregate average of 43,736 boys attending the indigenous schools with an average attendance at each school as 7. It was also regretted in the administration report of the Punjab 1849-50 and 1850-51 that the education in India was circumscribed within certain castes such as Brahmans, Banyas and Keats's, who were exclusively devoted to learning, commerce or penmanship, while great landholding farmers and agricultural tribes were fully illiterates.

#### **THE INTRODUCTION OF WESTERN EDUCATION IN THE PUNJAB**

The Punjabis had a glimpse of western education during the later years of Ranjit Singh's Reign. The maharaja himself encouraged the study of English language. He had invited John Lawrie of Ludhiana Mission School for consultation to open an English school at Lahore. The missionaries, in fact, were the first to introduce the Western System of Education in Punjab. In the 19th Century, four leading mission societies were working in the Punjab. They were, the Ludhiana mission of the Presbyterian Church in the USA, the Punjab mission of the Church Missionary Society, the Sialkot Mission of the United Presbyterian Church of America and lastly the Punjab Mission of the Church of Scotland. The first school in Punjab to impart Western education was established at Ludhiana by Cap. Wade, the British political agent. Besides English the missionary also had Persian

Gurmukhi, Hindi and Sanskrit schools under their superintendence at Ludhiana. By 1849, when Punjab became a British Indian province, the A.P. Mission had its schools at Ludhiana, Jalandhar, Ambala, and Sabathu. The strength at English schools was gradually picking up. There was a great desire among the scholars to learn the English language and the sciences. In 1836, the A.P. Mission opened an orphan girls school at Ludhiana. This was another first step for the A.P. Mission for prior to theirs, there was no English education school for girls in the Punjab. The progress in this direction was woefully slow. There were only 19 pupils in 1848 and in 1851 the number of girls students stood at 18. In 1854 another school for girls was opened at Gujranwala. The number of scholars at this school was 20. Another school with 15 pupils was started in 1855 at Sabathu. Because the numbers of girl students were increasing day by day at each of these schools, it was indeed a remarkable achievement on the part of the schools, because it was extremely difficult to convince the pupil to send their daughters to their school. It shows that a change had started setting in respect of female education in the Punjab. The Ludhiana mission report of 1867 throws some light on the female education in those days. The missionaries were also operating their schools at Rawalpindi, Hoshiarpur, Ludhiana, Sabathu, Ambala, Lahore, and Jalandhar. At Rawalpindi, Hoshiarpur, and Sabathu, there was great preponderance of the Hindu girls while at Ludhiana Mohamdeen girls were in majority. Early Years of Western Education in The Punjab. Several commissioners were asked to furnish reports on the general state of education in their respective divisions. The commissioners discovered that both agricultural classes manifested a desire for learning. Consequently, the commissioners and deputy commissioners uniformly recommended the funding of a central school in most of the main cities of the province. The first government funded school was established at Amritsar with annual grant of Rs. 8000/- that was issued by Governor-General. The Amritsar experiment lead to the opening of

the Zillah schools at Rawalpindi, Gujrat, Shahpur, Multan, Jehlem, and Jalandhar. These schools were funded and maintained by some district officers. Prominent among them was Colonel Abott who induced many Zimindars to pay a certain portion of their revenues to assist the schools and thus was able to establish 11 schools at Hoshiarpur, Haryana, Una, Dasuya, Garhshankar, Balachor, Mahalpur, Mahatpur, Mukerian, Hajibpur and Ambala. The education imparted in these institutions in the early years was of elementary nature. The institutions were known as Zillah and Tehsil schools and the grading system of primary, middle, and high schools was as yet a distant dream. The government adopted Urdu as medium of instruction in the schools. The other languages like Hindi, Sanskrit, and Gurmukhi were rejected. The government had also declared Urdu as the court language replacing Persian. The chief commissioner of the Punjab promptly plain an elaborative scheme based on that of the North-Western Provinces and presented it for the sanction of the Supreme Government in May 1854. The first education included the following proposals:

1. The establishment of four normal schools and 50 Tehsildari schools.
2. The establishment of a central college at Lahore.
3. The appointment of a visitor general and twelve Zillah and fifty Purnanah visitors.

The government of India sanctioned the above scheme in June 1854. It was only in 1856 that the government was able to open first girl school in Punjab. To sum up, during the early years three main agencies engaged themselves in the education of Punjab. They were the missionaries, the government officials and the government itself. The missionary with their zeal and dedication scored over the government effort.

In 1865-66 there were 1746 village schools imparting elementary education. They had 55593 pupils on the roles with an average attendance of 45703. In 1869-70, 334 schools were closed down reducing the number from 1466 to 1132. In 1870-71, 41 more schools were wiped out. This reduction was brought about by

the paucity of funds on account of excessive expenditure from 1% cess fund and the rise in the pay of village school teachers. Leitner had opposed this reduction and proposed grant in aid principle. With this 166 aided primary schools with 9984 students were established. The aided schools comprised the lower departments and branches of the most of the district schools. They were supported by municipal contributions, fees and grant in aid system. In 1880-81, 1524 primary schools had 88195 boys on the rolls. But this number was still less than one half percent of the population and there was but one primary school for every 24 square miles of the cultivated area of the province. In the beginning of 1865, the number of girls under instruction had exceeded to 10,000. From that period on ward, the extension of female education in the Punjab was constant and at the close of the year 1866-67, 945 female schools with 17,174 scholars had been established in the Punjab. From the year 1866-67 the trend was reversed. The number of female government schools fell from 296 in 1866-67 to 125 in 1871-72 and that of aided schools from 649 in 1866-67 to 314 in 1871-72. This was because in 1867-68, the Supreme Government stopped the annual assignment from the imperial Revenue to the female schools which were under the direct management of the district officers and whose pupils were chiefly non- agriculturists. This aid exceeding not more than Rs. 10,000 per annum was meant for only three years. After this period, the schools supported from this aid ceased to exist. The educational system started by the department until 1859 was of robust infancy. Schools in Punjab for the most part were still of elementary nature. The curriculum at the government schools consisted of only rudiments of History, Geography, Arithmetic and Grammar. But, still, it was found difficult to teach these subjects to the pupils. There was also dearth of qualified teachers. But with the opening of Normal schools, the quality of the teachers was on the increase. One of the remarkable features of this period was that wherever there were female schools, they were solely attended by the Muslim girls. It is still startling as, in all the boys

schools, Government as well as missionary, the Hindu preponderance prevailed.

With the introduction and extension of western type of education in the Punjab, the indigenous educational system began to recede into oblivion. Hundreds of indigenous schools folded up and gave way to the new schools established by the government during the period. But the fact remains that the English onslaught could not entirely wipe out the indigenous school system. The Mahajani schools and the indigenous medical system stood as pillars among the ruins. The government on its part had expressed its anxiety to educate the great mass of the people in Wood's Despatch of 1854; Lord Stanley's Despatch of 1859 and in the recommendation of the Indian education Commission of 1882. But despite these declarations, the progress of education in the Punjab continued to be slow. The literacy in the Punjab during the period was very low. There were only 63 literate males out of 1000 in 1881 and 74 out of 1,000 in 1891. The figure for the literate female were extremely negligible, being 2 out of 1000 in 1881 and 3 out of 1000 in 1891. In 1901, only 6.4% of the males and 3% of females were literate in the Punjab

### CONCLUSION

History has witnessed Indigenous Education in the Punjab which was interlinked with the religion. Western system of education flourished during Ranjit Singh's regime. During early years the missionaries, the government officials and the government itself were the main agencies engaged in the education in Punjab. But in spite of their best efforts literacy rate of both males and females was very low.

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