

# PUBLIC SCHOOL EDUCATION PAST & PRESENT ROLE OF SIKH EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE

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## INTRODUCTION

Public School Education system perhaps dates back to the hoary past when ETON and HARROW, the two elite's schools of England became known the world over. It was considered prestigious by the world potentates, especially of British Empire to corner a seat for their offspring in one of these two institutes. They vied with each other to have their descendents groomed in the company of those students who were the **WOULD BE RULERS**. They were perhaps right to consider that by doing so they will enable their wards develop the links with those who would really count in future, would be 'who is who'. Pt Jawahar Lal Nehru, Col Naser, Marshal Tito and so on who shaped the destiny of world in 70's could rely on their association of student days.

## HISTORY

Craze on the part of British time Royalty, the higher echelon of the rich and beaurocracy resulted into a situation of ever soaring demand for seats in the most sought after institutions of Europe. Now the need was felt to replicate them in India too.

In an effort to meet the demand for such educational opportunities in India, 9 (nine) such Public Schools were set up in 19<sup>th</sup> century on the lines of these high profile schools of Europe one after the other. Majority of the schools were started in the states ruled by erstwhile princes though some were opened in the territories directly under the British. Thus came the existence of the first Public school of India christened as 'The Lawrence School Sanawar', which was established in the year 1847. Thereafter came:

- ii) St George College, Mussoorie in 1853
- iii) Woodstock School, Mussoorie in 1854
- iv) Mayo College, Ajmer which is better known as ETON of the east in 1859
- v) Chiefs' College which is now known as 'Rajkumar College Rajkot' was opened in 1868 and a college with the same name at Raipur in 1894.
- vi) Bhisop Cotton School, Simla was established in 1875 by a graduate of Cambridge .
- vii) Scindia School, Gawalior was opened in 1897

Further 25 more schools were opened in first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century bringing the total number of Public Schools in India to 34 till 1947. The prominent Public schools of 20<sup>th</sup> century in pre-independence era are:

- i) The Sacred Heart high school, Dalhousi opened in 1901
- ii) Anjuman-I- Islam Public School, Panchgani which was at the pattern of ETON & HARROW of England was founded in 1920
- iii) Hyderabad Public School, Hydrabed in 1923
- iv) The Doon School, Dehradun in 1935

The Public schools like Yadvindera Public School Patiala, The Punjab Public School Nabha, Guru Nanak Fifth Centenary School, Mussoorie and Dasmesh Academy Anandpur Sahib are the product of post independence era and were opened in the years 1948, 1960,1969 and 1978, respectively.

## PHILOSOPHY

The chief aim of these PUBLIC SCHOOLS in **pre-independence** era was to entrench the British legacy in

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India and to propagate and perpetuate the culture of the colonial ruling Masters.

They were established to keep the privileged children separate from the under privileged at the education level even. Purpose was to make the product of these schools RULERS in all fields. Efforts were to impart them westernized education, teach them western life style, western games & sports and of course aristocratic way of life. They were made to believe that Indian culture, Indian games, Indian sports were meant for 'THE RULED' only. They needed a distinct barrier between 'RULERS' and 'THE RULED'.

The above all Public Schools were essentially RESIDENTIAL institutions basically opened for English people, Princely descendents, offspring of the zimindars, and wards of the very affluent Indian families only. The expenses of these schools were sky high and undoubtedly beyond the reach of a average Indian family.

With the **dawn of independence**, the later version of these Public Schools under went sea change. The change by and large resulted from the change in clientele these schools were to cater for. The Royalty and its hangers on had diminished in numbers. Now these were replaced by NEO-RICH business class, professionals and of course the RURAL affluent gentry.

Since the PATRONS of these schools were the Masters of large enterprises themselves, their chief aim in getting education for their sons and daughters was to equip them with modicum of sophistication, mannerism and reasonably good command over foreign medium of communication. These qualities they thought essential for their progeny when they are called upon to take up MANAGERIAL assignments in their own family concerns.

Some diversification also occurred when schools of specialized nature, like SAINIK schools joined the Public school mainstream. Sainik schools were set up by Ministry of Defence following the worst ever debacle suffered by India in Indo China war.

With the further advance of time more change became discernible in the expectations of the guardians of the students of these Public Schools. This change reflected the changed scenario on the economic front. The swelling clientele had such parents who wanted their wards to excel in professions that guaranteed both, the status and the money.

The Public schools in pre independence days were following ISCE, i.e. Cambridge system. Now came

into existence the CENTRAL BOARD, an educational arm of the Human Resource Ministry. Though some of the old schools like Hyderabad Public School, St George college Missouri, Rajkumar College, Rajkot and Sacred Heart Convent, Dalhousi are still holding to ISCE, the majority of schools have adopted CBSE system. To be in step with the changing time, the scenario in Public Schools too started changing; in addition to teaching of liberal Arts, the teaching of science and technology became imperative with any school worth the name.

### QUALITY EDUCATION

As a sculptor deftly shapes his icon or image with appropriate tools of high quality; similarly the QUALITY EDUCATION too is a means to shape the perceptions and personality of young growing minds. When we talk about the QUALITY EDUCATION I mean:

- i) Education, which encompasses the development of the individual as a whole i.e. academic, aesthetic, creative, social, physical, emotional and spiritual as well.
- ii) Education, which provide meaningful, relevant experiences that parallel those found in every day life.
- iii) Education, which foster self esteem, self-confidence in the individuals to become the integral component of their life.
- iv) Education, which promote positive inter-personal relationship where students can work together, become caring and sharing individuals with the concern and feeling for others.
- v) Education, which encourages responsible citizenship and global awareness.
- vi) and above all that education, which inculcates the urge for life long learning.

Mind you QUALITY is never an accident; it is always the result of high intentions, sincere efforts, intelligent direction and skilful execution; it represents the wise choice of many alternatives as William A. Foster says: QUALITY EDUCATION will depend upon QUALITY SCHOOLS and QUALITY TEACHERS.

The parents know the child's temperament, personality, ability, talents, and special needs. Choosing the most suitable educational environment is probably the most significant decisions that the guardians make on behalf of their child.

### QUALITY PUBLIC SCHOOL

Besides open grounds, well ventilated class rooms, serene surroundings and ideal student teacher ratio, in my opinion important ingredients of a Quality school are :

#### i) Management

The managers of the school must realize their tremendous responsibility towards the school, teachers and students. Motive of the management should never be to use education as a marketable commodity. It will be ideal

situation if management have a self imposed discipline in matters regarding selection of staff which should be purely on merit, no nepotism. An in-efficient teacher if selected is going to mar the chances of otherwise brilliant students for 25-30 years to come besides robbing the school of finances in the shape of his / her perks. And if the management has not been judicious while appointing the PRINCIPAL, God saves the institution. It is the paramount duty of he management to safeguard the interest of teachers by providing them good salaries and better terms & conditions of service. This will go long way in building the image of the institutions.

The training, retraining by providing refresher courses and professional growth & development seminars to faculty members assumes great significance today more than ever before. Management should be too willing to send teachers to institutions of repute for updating their knowledge and skill to be imparted to the students for their betterment. While preparing the annual budget of the school this aspect should be kept in mind.

Liberal scholarships, awards and rewards should also be catered for in the annual budget of the school for under privileged students and the students otherwise exceptionally deserving. Of course this will depend upon the financial health of the school.

Last but not the least the management should work with a team spirit submerging all narrow consideration. The ultimate good of the institutions should be the guiding factor. It is well said, " there is no limit to what can be accomplished provided it does not matter who gets the credit".

Missionary Zeal of the management will go long way to establish the credibility of the institution.

#### ii) Academic Leadership

Head of a school, i.e. Principal need to be well qualified, talented individual and a person of high integrity, sound judgment who should have good inter personal & communication skill, temperamental stability and should possess leadership quality. It is the stature of the HEAD, which will electrify the staff and students for greater devotion to duty and keener interest in their work. His / her own example is the best source of inspiration and motivation for teachers and students. He is the role model for all.

#### iii) Faculty/ the Staff

An intellectually and morally superior band of committed, talented teachers will certainly turn out better quality students. The knowledge level of students is directly proportional to the knowledge level of their teachers in schools. Skills, attitudes, habits, practices are

all imbibed by the students largely from their teachers than even their parents. Various studies show that those who climb high in the corporate ladder, IAS, IPS today are those who come from quality schools. The influence of schools far outweighs all other influences. Herein lies the significance of good schooling under the able guidance of great teachers.

*Total sum of these three will constitute the Ethos / Culture of any institution . which identifies it from the others.*

### FORMATION OF SIKH EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE AND ITS ACHIEVEMENTS IN EDUCATION

Chief Khalsa Dewan Amritsar was founded in 1902. On January 9, 1908, the intelligentsia of the community conceived the idea for setting up of SIKH EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE for spiritual elevation, educational advancement, social regeneration and material improvement of the Sikh community. They envisaged that synthesis of best of western education with Indian education along with religious blend could be the possible solution of the problems faced by Sikh community. The other grave problem before the Sikhs was how to make the message of the Sikh Scriptures read, understood and appreciated when the knowledge of the GURMUKHI script was fast dwindling. When we go through the report of the first Sikh Educational Conference at Gujranwala held on 17,18 and 19<sup>th</sup> April 1908 under the presidentship of S Bhagel Singh 'Raees', as per available statistics, out of 2,130,987 Sikhs, only 88,558 were put down as knowing GURMUKHI ie only 4.15 % of the Sikh population only knew Gurmukhi .

Prior to the formation of SIKH EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE in 1908, the SIKHS could claim only 1 college, 4 middle schools and one primary school for boys and one for the girls. Within a short span of 35 years, i.e. in 1943, when 30<sup>th</sup> session was held at Faridkot, Sikh Educational Conference could justly be proud of having achieved a record of 6 colleges (4 for boys and 2 for girls), 65 high schools (60 for boys and 5 for girls) 60 middle schools (34 for boys and 26 for girls) and 300 primary schools.

The Educational Conference by this time had donated Rs\*508,068 in the shape of grants- in aid to the Sikh institutions and Rs70,564 was given to deserving candidates as scholarships. The Sikh Educational Conference also paid adequate attention to agriculture and technical education. It also successfully worked for the introduction of Punjabi in educational and government departments in post independence era. Philanthropists like Sardar Sunder Singh Majithia, Bhai

Vir Singh, S Harbans Singh Attari, Bhai Jodh Singh, S Tarlochan Singh, Bhai Sahib Arjan Singh Bagarian, Sardar Dan Singh of Lahore and Babu Gulab Singh Gujranwala and their associates worked with ardent zeal for the betterment of SIKH Community. These stalwarts will always be remembered with sense of gratitude by the Sikhs community. But for their relentless efforts neither Chief Khalsa Dewan nor Sikh Educational Conference perhaps could have seen the day to serve the Sikh community.

To sum up we may say that the CONFERENCE labored hard to achieve success in every field of education. But for the Sikh educational Conference, the Sikhs would have lagged behind the other sister communities in the hectic race of education. **However still lot more remains to be done.**

#### My Recommendations:

1. Reasonable educational facilities exist in cities but villages in Punjab are crying for quality education for their children.
  - (a) Any village Panchayat if passes a resolution to open a Public School and donates about three acre of land EDUCATION COMMITTEE OF Chief Khalsa Dewan should help them to open a Public School. Funds can be generated by collecting Rs10,000 as the membership fee of the TRUST meant to run the school. The NRI of the village and nearby villages should be motivated to become members of such TRUSTS.
  - (b) Chief Khalsa Dewan should loan Rs 500,000 to such school for construction of buildings and other expenditures. The loan should be recoverable in ten years with interest. The First installment of loan recovery should start from 3rd year onward. After the initial investment these Public Schools will start generating funds and soon become self sufficient with good governance.
  - (c) All village Gurdwaras should be actively involved to raise funds for the school.
2. Roster of the Sikh NRI from Punjab should be prepared by the Education Committee and request letters be sent to them all to contribute to the CENTRAL FUND of the Education Committee exclusively for education of rural youth.
3. Appeals should be made to NRIs, industrialists/ businessmen, and affluent rural gentry to sponsor education of deserving Sikh students for professional courses.
4. Sikhs should have a Quality Missionary School headed by highly qualified, preferably a Doctorate in RELIGION with missionary zeal. This school be run by Education Committee to produce Quality

Pracharaks, Katha Vachak and Kirtianas. Preachers should be well qualified and better trained to match with the requirements of this scientific age. Sikh religion is most modern and most scientific as widely accepted by world missionaries.

5. Religious studies be made part of the curriculum in all Sikh institutions. If we take care of the Sikh youths at their infancy, religion will be taken care by them as part of their life style. We should have Gurdwaras in educational institutes and not the institutes in Gurdwaras.
6. EDUCATION COMMITTEE of Chief Khalsa Dewan should have a SPORTS & CULTURAL WING also. Sikh youth be motivated to participate in games & sports and Sikh martial arts to keep them away from intoxicants. They must develop sense of belonging to our glorious history and very, very rich heritage.
7. Fervent appeals should be made to SANT SMAJ including all Sikh SAMPERDAIS like 'Sewapanthi', Damdami Taksal and alike to undertake educational projects as a mission. They should invariably be represented on Education committee of Chief Khalsa Dewan. Mahant Tirath Singh ji Sewapanthi is already doing a lot in this direction.
8. Directive /Appeal through Sri AKAL Thakht Sahib be issued to make it mandatory for Every Sikh to donate **minimum Rs1.00 per month** towards the CENTRAL FUND of EDUCATION COMMITTEE. Mind you I say Rupee one each month and not daily, i.e. Rs 5.00 only per month for a family of 5 members. We are more than 20 million Sikhs, this can generate more than Rs 20 million each month which should be religiously spent on education only. Payment of donations should be accepted through cheques only to maintain transparency.
9. All India Sikh Conference must resolve to day to open minimum one educational institution each year in the rural set up and this process must continue. Presently there are 6 Sr Secondary Schools, 17 High School, 11 Middle Schools and 5 Primary schools being managed by Chief Khalsa Dewan. These numbers must swell. The Chief Khalsa Dewan rightfully claimed 6 colleges, 65 High Schools, 60 Middle Schools and 300 Primary Schools/ Pathshalas in 1943 as I said earlier. We must make good the loss of Sikh institutions left out in Pakistan after partition, which could not be revived in India our elders, set the ball rolling. If we fail in our duty to take care of the Sikh youth by providing them proper education and awareness of our history & heritage, the posterity will not forgive us.

Thanks.

\* Rs = Rupees (Indian currency = 30 Rupee = \$1 CDN)