

**Advancement of Education in Post-Independence Punjab with
special reference to Partap Singh Kairon**

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Abstract

The ex- Chief Minister Partap Singh Kairon is well known for the works which he did for the development and economic progress of Punjab. The said work is an attempt to analyse how Partap Singh Kairon worked for the advancement of education in post partition Punjab. The main sources of this work are newspapers, interviews, books, journal, reports and hand writing of Partap Singh Kairon. Partap Singh Kairon was a passionate advocate of education to all. Kairon not only supported the educational system of western countries but planned his education policies accordingly so that same type of education system be established in Punjab. The paper concludes that all type of educational institutions were greatly expanded during Kairon' regime.

Keywords: Partap Singh Kairon, development of education in Punjab, higher education, Female education, Science and Technology

The tradition of learning has been strong in the Punjab since ancient times. Old educational centres like the University of Taxila flourished in this area from about 700 B.C. to about 300 A.D. in later times, the Muslims as well as the Sikhs promoted learning by encouraging a network of Maktabs, Madrassahs, and Gurumukhi schools. When the English took over the government of the state in 1849, they found that the Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims had three distinct types of educational institutional and that the Punjab was educationally more advanced than most other parts of the country.

In 1947 came the partition of the Punjab. This disrupted the normal life of the people. As a result of partition, education in the state received a severe set back. Thousands of uprooted teachers and students had to be rehabilitated and the whole educational system had to be organised *de novo*. When India became independent,

there was a cry from every part of the state for more primary schools. The education department responded to this need and a special drive was launched to open schools in villages which had a population of 500 or more. The object was to make a primary school available to every child at a distance of not more than one and half miles from his home. The people also gave their ample cooperation in the drive. And the result of this was that there 12, 281 primary schools in the state in 1961 as against 2,429 in 1947, according to a report of Government of India (India, Review of Education in India 1947-1961, Punjab, 1962, p. 5).

Kairon wanted to wipe out illiteracy from the state. This was the reason that when the budget of 1952 was introduced in assembly, Kairon openly spoke against the government's policy of stumpy fund for the educational development in the state when he was a Development Minister in government. He suggested to the then government to cut down the number of Cabinet Minister in the state, so that wastage of money could be stopped and that money utilised for other better works like on dissemination of education.¹

A society can develop only when its people have education. It is well known fact that educated class played a prominent role in freedom movement of the country. Partap Singh Kairon also worked very hard for the spreading of education in Punjab. Kairon was not satisfied with education system which was adopted by the government of Punjab after partition. In a convocation address Partap Singh Kairon gave his views on the education system of that time. According to Kairon, "The present system of education is prosaic. Its retention does not suit the conditions of an independent country. Education means training for any profession. If education does not train an individual for some profession, that education is a poor education. The present institutions are more in the nature of factories manufacturing raw graduated rather than temples of knowledge, enlightening and enabling persons for the life."² Kairon hold that government was responsible who had not reorientated education system to the earning of live hood. After the partition, the state was left without any established technical institution, and had to start almost scratch.

¹ Punjab Legislative Assembly Debates, 17th June, 1952, p. (3)25.

² Convocation address by Partap Singh Kairon at Khalsa College, Amritsar, 1956.

Technical education also played a very important role in the field of development. The government set up a board of technical education in 1958 with the express object of coordinating the education, and for maintaining a satisfactory standard of teaching in technical education. There was a provision of rupees 2.40 crores for technical education in the Second Year Plan of which rupees 72.69 lakhs spent during the first years of the Plan (India, Review of Education in India 1947-1961, Punjab, 1962, pp. 12-13). Education up to fifth class made free all over the state in all government institutions in 1957 (India, Review of Education in India 1947-1961, Punjab, 1962, p. 16). Mention should also be made of the 15 new schemes that were launched during the Second Plan. These schemes included opening of junior technical schools, the reorganisation of exiting industrial schools and arts and crafts institutions and the reorganisation of seven diploma schools for girls. To encourage promising boys and girls, a number of stipends and scholarships, tenable in technical institutes and industrial schools were made to give grants-in-aid to private institutions. This was necessary because, in the past, the voluntary organisations were rather shy of venturing in the field of technical and professional education (India, Review of Education in India 1947-1961, Punjab, 1962, p. 12). To facilitate the growth of technical education in the state, polytechnic institute at Sirsa, Jhajjar and Guru Teg Bahadurgarh were established during 1963-64. Construction works were also started by Kairon on the polytechnic at Hamirpur, Batala, Amritsar and Hoshiarpur which were completed in 1965 (Punjab G. o., Punjab on the March, 1964, p. 75).

Although secondary schools were greatly disrupted in the wake of partition, the progress of secondary education was phenomenal during Kairon's time. The number of high schools, higher secondary schools and middle schools were 1,153, 141 and 1,358 respectively in 1961 as against 255 high schools and 981 middle schools in 1946-47. The number of scholars under instruction were 7,07,451 boys and 2,15,543 girls in 1961 as against 2,74,917 boys and 23,153 girls in 1947 (India, Review of Education in India 1947-1961, Punjab, 1962, pp. 7-8). There was a steady increase in the number of colleges affiliated to the university. From 53 colleges in 1947, the number rose to 115 in 1958-59. Similarly, the number of students attending the various arts, science, professional and technical colleges and departments were 25,376 in 1947 which increased to 62, 381 in 1961 (India, Review of Education in India 1947-1961, Punjab, 1962, p. 10).

During a speech on Budget, Gopi Chand Bhargava discussed government's policies of free education by saying that, "In sphere of education, we have already allowed, as Honourable members are aware, free education in government institutions up to the 8th class and in flood affected areas up to the 10th class. From 1st April, 1961, education will be free in the 9th class in all government girls high and higher secondary schools in the state. Moreover, poor students in the 9th class of the government high and higher secondary schools for boys, the income of whose parents is below Rs. 100, will be given half-fee concessions. This will result in loss of revenue to the extent of Rs. 12.87 lakhs in 1961-62."³ Another scheme initiated by Kairon government in 1962, was the supply of free books to the students of first class.⁴ The aim of this scheme was to ensure success of free and compulsory education in state.

The great development in agriculture that had taken place in the United States of America attracted the attention of the Government of India. An agreement was signed on January 5, 1952, establishing the Indo-United State Technical Co-operation Programme. Under this co-operative agreement, provision was made in 1954 for assisting agricultural education, research and extension. This supplementary project divided India into five regions and five of the United State Land Grant Colleges were invited to participate, one in each region, under contractual arrangements (Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhania, 1969, p. 21). On the basis of this, Punjab Agricultural University was established in 1962. It becomes clear from the M.S. Randhawa's views about Kairon's role in the establishment of agricultural university, who stated as, "If any person is to be called the father of this university, it is Sardar Partap Singh Kairon who was the Chief Minister of the Punjab (Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhania, 1969, p. 38)."

In spite of various tremendous odds, the progress of education was phenomenal during Kairon's Chief Ministership. The number of educational institutions rose from 5,027 in 1947 to 16,025 in 1959 and the enrolment from 5,52,709 to 19,68,923. The number of school-going children increased from 5.44 lakhs to 25 lakhs and the number of literate persons from 17.86 lakhs to 48.95 lakhs. Education was made compulsory at the elementary stage. It was also made free up to

³ Speech of Gopi Chand Bhargava in Vidhan Sabha 1962.

⁴ The Statesman, 24th March, 1962.

the eight class for all students, up to the ninth class for girls and up to the tenth class in the flood effected areas. According to a provision, students belonging to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes were eligible for free education up to the highest level. The number of colleges and their capacity were also increased. It was the result of Kairon's concerned efforts that a significant progress achieved in the field of technical education.

Kairon was also a believer in the discipline and quality of education through public schools. That's why Kairon introduced public school in Punjab. He was, however, clear that these schools must cater for heterogeneity of incomes and not merely to the richer classes.⁵ The first of its kind was inaugurated by the President of India at Nabha. Kairon stressed on the need of all side development of the Punjabi language. He wanted that efforts should be made by all concerned to translate classic woks of world literature and technical treaties on various scientific subjects. "All responsibility devoted on the elected leaders of the people and they must fulfil their duty most honestly and efficiently" were the views of Kairon on education works.⁶ Thus a reorientation of the educational system was taken up with a view to suit it to the then requirements of the country. Selected high schools were being converted into multipurpose schools with diversified courses of study and technical education was being provincialised and free education introduced in government schools upto sixth class. Kairon urged people to educate their children and thereby derive the advantage of free education upto the middle standard. He also made arrangements that every primary school student got free one egg daily.⁷ It can be seen that Kairon wished a good health of the future generation of the country. He was not in favour of giving grant to the private affiliated colleges and wanted to nationalise all schools and colleges in the state.⁸

It is well known fact that Kairon was against the formation of Punjabi Suba, but he was not against the development of Punjabi language. For this, Punjabi University came into being on April 30, 1962. His love for this language can be seen

⁵ E. N. Mangat Rai's Papers, p. 3.

⁶ The Tribune, 2nd January, 1961.

⁷ *Ibid*, 26th January, 1964.

⁸ *Ibid*.

from his remarkable speech during the inauguration ceremony of Punjabi University, where he stated as:

Punjabi is the language of rebels and revolutionaries, which has kept aloof from pomp and show of royalty. It has never sounded the eulogies of aggressors, usurpers and pretenders. It is not recited before haughty Kings and mighty Monks, and never plays the part of dancing damsels in the courts of Maharajas and Nawabs. It sings the glory of cowherds and peasants with full-throated ease... It has sung the songs of the spear, the sword and of arrows and also that of romantic love, of toils in deserts, jungles and wild waste-lands. It has sung hymns of the gurus, saints and devotees of Punjab, and recited the chivalry and bravery of the Punjab warriors. It is a living expression of our patriotism and religious devotees.⁹

Kairon was of the opinion that school and colleges must be spread over the whole state to cater to the educational needs of the expanding population. An adult literacy campaign was launched with vigour and enthusiasm so as to convert the majority of illiterate to the literate. He was not only the lover of Punjabi language, but also opened Kurukshetra University for the development of Hindi language there by respecting other languages.

The concern of Kairon's government for improving standards in games and sports has been also well known. At that time, Punjab was the only state in India which had a Sports Minister in the cabinet. For the encouragement of games in the rural areas, a large number clubs were established in villages and government gave liberal aid to these clubs. In some of the districts rural sports organisers were appointed. As a consequence of these measures, an increasing number of tournaments and sports meets were held every year (India, Review of Education in India 1947-1961, Punjab, 1962, p. 18). In order to improve the quality of teaching of English, the government set up Punjab Institute of English for providing specialised training in the

⁹ Speech of Partap Singh Kairon on 24th June, 1962, Annual Report of Punjabi University, Patiala, 1963.

latest methods and techniques of teaching that language. It was also decided to set up in the state an institute for improving the quality of elementary education.

Kairon laid great emphasis on education and wanted to provide free educational facilities to all up to tenth standard and higher educational facilities were to be provided to deserving students. He also wanted that poor students who got admission in engineering and medical colleges would be provided loans equivalent to five years cost of study to be repaid in instalments after they got jobs on completion of their study.¹⁰ He also introduced free education up to sixth standard in underdeveloped sub mountain. A lot of development took place in the field of technical education in the state both at degree and diploma level. The pace of development was accelerated with the establishment of a state board of technical education with a directorate as its executive body. The board was controlling all the government technical institutions of diploma standard and also affiliated private institutions of the same standard. The examinations of degree institutions were conducted by the universities concerned (Punjab G. o., Punjab on the March, 1964, p. 114).

So, we can see that during Kairon's era, the people of the state acquired a new outlook suited to those days' national requirements and thus a better system of education took shape. During Kairon's regime educational institutions of all type were greatly expanded. The benefits of free education were extended up to the eighth standard and secondary and primary education was also reoriented. University education was both expanded and improved. All this progress was achieved with the utmost effort of Kairon who himself was educated in America and dreamt to wipe out illiteracy from Punjab.

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