

EDUCATION IN KHETRI THIKANA

Dr. Awatar Krishna Sharma*

ABSTRACT

Khetri, in present known worldwide as copper mining, was a major destination of the princely state of Jaipur before independence. Khetri, a sub divisional headquarter in Jhunjhunu district in Rajasthan, was the capital of the Thikana which is situated at 28^o nort latitude and 75^o 53^o longitude, 90 miles south west of Delhi and 75 miles north of Jaipur. This Thikana was established by Thakur Bhupal Singh, born in a branch of Shekhawat, known as Sadhani¹. From the establishment of the base in 1757 AD till the merger of it with unification of Rajasthan, Khetri was ruled by 11 rulers for about two hundred years. Khetri Thikana was divided into two geographical areas of Rajasthan, Shekhawati and Torawati (Tanwarawati) Its Kotputali Nizamat and some part of Babai Tehasil was in Torawati and the reamaing part of thikana was in Shekawati which is currently under Jhunjhunu district. The total area of Khetri Thikana was 903 square miles, out of which 118 square miles was surrounded by hills and mountains and 50 square miles area came under river drains.² Of the total area 335.43 square miles area, which includes 198 square miles of Kotputali nizamat and 137.43 square miles of Babai Tahsil, was under Torawati and 567.57 square miles under Shekawati region. At the time of merger in unification of the princely states in Rajasthan, Khetri thikana had control over a total of 331 villages. Of these, 294 villages were wholly owned by Khetri and 37 villages were under joint control of Khetri as well as other thikanas.³

Keywords: copper mining, Khetri, Thikana, Kotputali Nizamat, Tanwarawati.

Introduction

Khetri and Sikar were the two influential thikans under the princely state of Jaipur. Along with civil and criminal rights, they also had important rights in the economic sector like Rahadari, mining etc. Due to the friendly relations of the Khetri thikana with the British government and dominant rulers, it has had a special influence in the political field. Progressive kings like Raja Fateh Singh and Ajit Singh, it remained more modern and progressive than other major Riyasats or thikanas in many areas, especially in the field of education and health. The role played by Khetri in propagating Indian spirituality in the world by helping Swami Vivekananda through his thoughts is well known. The introduction of a new system in thikana in place of the traditional contract system of revenue and the establishment of an effective police system were the result of the progressive thoughts of the rulers here. The rulers of Khetri Thikana, in which the names of Raja Fateh Singh and Ajit Singh are notable, understood the importance of education and tried to make effective arrangements for it in the thikana.

Before the advent of western education system, ancient indigenous education system was more or less prevalent in Khetri thikana like other thikana of India. Along with Hindu Pathshala and Chatshala, Muslim Maktab and Madrasa and Jain Upashrayas, teaching work was also done in Guru Grihas. Temple gardens, Chhatris, Dharamshala etc. were used as schools. Hindu schools were generally of two types. In one, education was given in Sanskrit language, in which generally Amarkosh Saraswat Chandrika,

* Lecturer in History, Swami Vivekanand Government College Khetri, Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan, India.

Raghuvansh, Shringar Bodh, Bhagwat, Laghu Kaumudi etc. were taught. After general studies, a student could study in one of the branch of Jyotisha or Vaidhyak. There were practical schools in the form of second school, which were popular as 'Mahajani Vidhyalaya'. In these schools, Devnagari and Mudia script were taught along with addition, remainder, multiplication, division, numbers, general accountancy. Books written in Persian and Arabic like Ahadnama, Khalikbari, Gulista, Quran etc. were taught in Maktabs and Madrasas.⁴

Scarcity of availability of printed text books was a common phenomenon in those days, so oral studies were generally conducted in the Gurukul. Wooden Patti and Barata as writing material to be used. Gradually, the place of the wooden strip was taken by the thin sheet of iron and later by the stone slate. After the whole day's study, in the last hour, the students were collectively made to pronounce tables in a loud voice, due to which the tables were memorized by the students.

Discipline in the schools was very strict. The teachers kept a close watch on the students. The students also respected the teacher a lot. Even in the village community, the Guru was seen with respect. The student was severely punished for indiscipline, not remembering the lesson or for any other fault. But the punishment of the Guru was considered justified by students, parents as well as society. The parents also considered him right to punish his ward on bad grounds. There was a holiday on Pratipada and festival days. Studying on the day of Pratipada weakens knowledge, such was the belief.⁵ In the form of education fee, cash amount was given to the guru according to per patty (per student). Apart from this, on Amavasya and Purnima and Holi, Diwali, the students used to give 'Sidha' to the Guru.⁶

This system of education remained prevalent in this area for a little over a century after the establishment of the Khetri thikana. After the advent of western education through the British, this method continued parallel to it for some time, later gradually this system declined. The establishment of modern educational institutions in the princely state of Jaipur started between 1842-45 AD. But only after the recommendation of the Hunter Commission (1882 AD), taking steps in the direction of Jaipur, started opening schools in Shekhawati Nizamat outside Jaipur city in 1887 AD.⁷ Due to Khetri thikana being a part of Shekhawati Nizamat of Jaipur state, schools were opened in some areas under the education department of Jaipur state. But regular indigenous schools for systematic education in Khetri place were started much before Hunter commission, at the time of Raja Fateh Singh (Reign 1861-1870 AD). Fateh Singh was very fond of education. Fateh Singh was also familiar with the importance of education. For this he established two vernacular schools at Khetri and Kotputli around 1865 AD.⁸ Being an education addict himself, he opened English, Hindi, Urdu and Sanskrit schools in Sadar Khetri to educate the people. Schools were also established in the villages. Book collection laid the foundation of Khetri's famous 'Tehsil Library'. Fateh Singh wrote his auto biography named 'Autobiography of the Chief of Khetri'. He was probably the first king of Rajputana to write his autobiography in English language.

During the time of Raja Ajit Singh, there was remarkable progress in education like other fields. During his time in 1885, three schools were opened in Singhana, Babai and Chirawa. Along with this, the curriculum was also changed. At the same time arrangements were made to deliver lectures in English, Persian, Sanskrit and Hindi languages. Classes of Vedas, Nyaya, Jyotisha and Vyakarana were also started in Sanskrit schools. With the efforts of the thikana, gradually the number of schools and the number of students increased. In the second decade of the 20th century, the private sector started contributing in the field of education. Seths moneylenders contributed to the spread of education by opening schools at their own level. Many educational societies/ institutes were established by Seths of the thikana. Birla Education Trust Pilani, Marwari Relief Society Calcutta, Seth Mahadev Maheshwari Bagad, Dalmia Chidawa, Rajputana Education Board Jhujhunu etc. were prominent among those who made personal efforts in spreading education in the thikana area. Private schools were not adversely affected due to lack of funds, for this they were encouraged by giving grants-in-aid by the thikana. The policy of encouraging the private sector by giving grants-in-aid for education was the result of the foresight of the rulers of Khetri. Probably, in the same way even after independence, government aided educational institutions remained in existence.

Education for girls was a revolutionary idea at that time. There was a lot of negative thinking towards educating girls in the conservative families of this area.⁹ As per the wish of Jaipur's Queen Sahiba, the then enlightened ruler, Raja Ajit Singh, while making efforts in this direction, opened the first girls' school in Khetri in April 1885. To manage in a way it was opened, a European lady P.E. Pannell was appointed teacher in that girl's school. School opened but contrary to the wish, As expected, there was opposition from the orthodox sections of the society and this great effort of the

ruler was viewed with disdain. The result was that not a single girl was enrolled in the school in the first year. But Raja Ajit Singh continued his efforts. As a result of the strong will power and efforts of Raja Ajit Singh, gradually the girl students and their parents got inclined in this direction. It was recommended to give such education to the girls to inculcate truth, honesty and mutual goodwill. Along with this, an attempt was made to inculcate in them the qualities of a good housewife. Due to the efforts of the thikana, the number of girls' schools gradually increased. Till 1946 AD total 7 girls in the hideout.¹⁰ Out of these, two schools were being run by the thikana itself and 5 schools in the private sector by the help of thikana.

The structure of education in the thikana was divided into two branches. The first Anglo Vernacular School and the second Vernacular School. Anglo Vernacular School had the facility of study only for boys while in the vernacular school both boys and girls were given education. The Anglo Vernacular School was divided into three levels, primary, secondary and higher secondary. There was a system of education in the vernacular school only up to the secondary level. Inspectors were appointed to maintain the high standard of education in the schools. In 1894, an inspector was also appointed to inspect rural schools. Both private and government education was given free of cost. All the schools were run according to the rules of the princely state of Jaipur and under the control and supervision of the State Education Department. Along with education, extra-curricular activities were also taken care of. Regular inspection was done to take care of the health of the students to keep them healthy and fit.

As a result of adequate attention paid to education by the thikana, gradually a good environment of education was created here. The capital Khetri came to be known as the city of education. By the year 1946, the number of schools in the locality increased to 135. Out of these, 34 schools were being run by the thikana itself, 68 schools in private sector with grant-in-aid by the thikana and the remaining 33 schools with full private efforts. These schools also included 7 girls' schools. The number of students studying was about 7912 in which 106 were girl students.¹¹ In view of the upliftment of socially backward group, Harijan schools were also opened by the thikana for the spread of education in the lower class. Both indigenous and English education systems were prevalent here.

Due to continuous efforts in the thikana, the status of education improved. The advancement of education here can be estimated from the fact that after Jaipur, the high school was only exist in Khetri, the capital of thikana, in the entire Jaipur princely state. To increase need of the educational institutions, the education department of thikana continuously increased the expenditure on education. In 1946, the establishment spent Rs 92,788 on education. Almost the same amount (Rs 89278) was spent by the operators of private and aided institutions. This amount does not include the cost of construction and maintenance of the school building. About 14 percent of the total income of the place was spent on education, which was comparatively more than the amount spent by other thikanas and princely states.

Eligible and promising students were given stipend by the thikana. There was also a provision to provide assistance to the students for their needs to study from the funds of the temples.¹² Hardly any student in Sadar Khetri was deprived of some kind of help given by the thikana. Attention was also given to the construction of hostels for the study of distance students. For this, one hostel each was opened in Jai Singh High School Khetri, Sanskrit School Khetri and Kotputli. Hostel facilities were also available for students of indigenous schools at Babai, Singhana and Nareda (Kotputli Pargana). Hostels were also opened in private schools at Chidawa, Chudi and Kosli. Expenses of hostels opened by the thikana for boarding and lodging of students were made available by the thikana through funds operated by temples.

Libraries were opened with the aim of making text books available to the students and to generate interest in education among the public. Taking innovative steps in this direction, Raja Fateh Singh opened a public library in Khetri. Many valuable books of different genres and medium were stored in this library. By looking at the index register of the existing public library in the form of Tehsil Library, the interest of the then rulers towards education and collection of books is known. In this public library, valuable and rare books of almost every field were stored on various subjects including history, medicine, and literature. In 1946, about 9 thousand books were present in it. About 11 newspapers and magazines in Hindi, English and Urdu languages were also procured here. And a reading room was also established for the study of newspapers and magazines. Apart from the library located in Khetri, there was also another library 'Saraswati Bhavan' in Khetri itself. Financial assistance were made available for reading rooms for their recurring expenditures. Grant of Rs 100 per year were given to Saraswati Bhavan Vachnayalay of Khetri and 'Shri Krishna Vachnayalay of Chidawa. There were also three other libraries one each in Kotputli, Chudi and Darumtala in Khetri which were run with the help of the public.

References

1. Shardul Singh Shekhawat established the power of Shekhawats in Jhunjhunu. In this relation, a couplet has been kept prevalent - "सतरह सौ सत्तासिये अगहन मास उदार। सादे लिनी झुञ्जुनू सुदि आठे शनिवार।।" (Strah so sattasi Agahan mas Udar, Sade Lini Jhunjhunu sudi aathen Shaniwar.) (Raisal Jas Saroj Kavaiya Ramdayal). The descendants of Shardul Singh Shekhawat known as 'Sadhani' in his name.
2. Jhabarmall Sharma, History of Khetri Page 43
3. Locate Report, pages 15,16. 3 Village Directory, Khetri Thikana, Year 1932.
4. Report on Public Instruction in Jaipur State 1895, page 25.
5. Pratipada is the Sanskrit word for First and is the first day in the lunar fortnight of the Hindu calendar. At that time this saying was prevalent - Padva Path Bhulavni Chhora Na Khilavani. ('पड़वा पाठ भुळावणी, छोरां नं खिलावणी')
6. Sidha was local word given to Gurus, Sadhus or Elders depends of various socio-religious traditions. It was a material form of food items like flour, pulses, vegetables, milk, ghee etc. it was depends on capacity of the parent and was not compulsory.
7. J.C Verma, Growth and Development of Modern Education in Rajasthan (1819 - 1949), Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur.
8. Annual Administration Report of Khetri Thikana 1945-40. Page 45.
9. Administration Report of Khetri State 1886 page 12.
10. Annual Administration Report of Khetri Thikana 1945-48. Page 45.
11. ibid page 45.
12. District Gazetteer of India, Rajasthan, Jhunjhunu. Page 345.

