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Army Goodwill Schools in J&K

Helping Nation Building

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Nation Building refers to constructing or rebuilding a country's institutions, economy, social structures, and identity to promote unity, stability, and prosperity. It involves the creation of a sense of national identity, the establishment of a functional government, the development of a strong economy, and the promotion of social and cultural cohesion.

Education plays a critical role in the development and growth of a nation. It is a fundamental tool for nation-building as it prepares individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary to contribute to society. Some key ways how education bequests to Nation Building:

DEVELOPING HUMAN CAPITAL

Education provides individuals with the skills and knowledge necessary to perform effectively in their chosen professions, leading to human capital development. Human capital development is critical to nation-building as it contributes to economic growth and development.

FOSTERING INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY

Education enables individuals to think critically, solve problems, and innovate. These skills are essential for developing new products, services, and technologies that can contribute to the growth and development of the nation.

PROMOTING SOCIAL COHESION

Education promotes social cohesion by bringing people from diverse backgrounds together and providing them with a common language and culture. This supports fostering a sense of unity and national identity.

ENHANCING DEMOCRATIC VALUES

Education promotes democratic values such as freedom, equality, and justice. Educated individuals are more likely to participate in the democratic process, which helps to promote good governance and a stable political system.

REDUCING POVERTY AND INEQUALITY

Education is a powerful tool for reducing poverty and inequality. It gives individuals the skills and knowledge necessary to access better-paying jobs and improve their living standards.

"Encompassing the needs, rights and expectations of youth to the centre stage of the development should be our priority." (Dr A P J Abdul Kalam). Children are our incredible wealth. Every child born in the nation must be empowered to bloom. Education is an essential element for the growth and prosperity of a nation. Indian Army realised the importance of education for the youth of J&K and decided to contribute in this direction.

In the 1990s, the Indian Army chose to provide quality education to the children affected by terrorism in J&K. The focus of 'Operation Sadbhavana' in J&K consequently incorporated ameliorating the fundamental social indices by providing Quality Education, Women and Youth Empowerment, Infrastructure Development and



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Health and Veterinary Care. A significant push was given to impart education to the deprived sections of J&K. Due to a lack of education, some people were left out of the loop of growth and development.

The Indian Army has established forty-six Army Goodwill Schools and rendered help to about 2000 schools in remote and border areas in J&K. The assistance rendered to schools was in the form of renovation, construction of additional classrooms, labs, libraries, toilets, playgrounds, furniture, computers, books etc. More than one lakh students have benefited so far. Nearly 15000 students are enrolled in various schools. About 850 students from the weaker sections of society are getting scholarships even for studying outside J&K. Besides providing education, more than 1000 people are employed for teaching and non-teaching duties. The popularity of these schools could be gauged from the demand made by the local populace for such schools in their areas.

For the first time now, 110 students from J&K and Ladakh will get a chance to study in Army-run colleges and schools every year as a part of the initiative. For the current academic year, 100 seats (50 each) have been ear-

marked for students of classes eighth and ninth in Army schools at Beas in Punjab and Pithoragarh in Uttarakhand. From the next academic session, 100 seats will also be reserved in Army Public Schools in Dhaula Kuan (New Delhi), Noida (Uttar Pradesh), and Dagshai (Himachal Pradesh).

Indian Army has broadened the scope further for provisioning of education to the students from J&K. It has helped more than 565 students to get admission in numerous institutions outside the J&K like Pacific University, Udaipur, Global Research Institute, Kurukshetra, NOIDA International University, Greater NOIDA and Hunar-e-Tarash, a rural ministry initiative. The Kashmir Super 30 project is based on the well-known Super 30 programme. The Indian Army aligned with the Centre for Social Responsibility and Leadership and launched this project in the academic year 2013-2014.

Twenty-three needy yet academically brilliant students were selected from all corners to be trained for appearing in competitive examinations for pursuing higher education in engineering. The results were spectacular. 17 of the 23 students got seats in important engi-

neering colleges. Reinvigorated by the positive impact, the programme admitted 36 students for the next academic year.

Until now, the Indian Army was helping the youth of J&K and Ladakh through the schools within the territories of these UTs under 'Operation Sadbhavana'. But now, it will be sponsoring undergraduate courses and school education for selected children and youth from J&K and Ladakh in residential schools and colleges functioning under the Army Welfare Education Society (AWES) nationwide. This will help them explore the various career opportunities available in the country and integrate them with the rest.

Seats will also be earmarked for undergraduate courses in some Army-run colleges. For instance, this year, two seats have been allocated in the Army Institute of Hotel Management and Catering Technology and Army Institute of Fashion Design in Bengaluru and the Army Colleges of Nursing in Guwahati and Jalandhar. While colleges will offer undergraduate degrees in hospitality to both girls and boys, seats in courses like fashion design and nursing will be available only for girls.

From the academic session 2022-23 onwards, two additional seats have been provided in the Army's Management institutions at Kolkata and Greater Noida and the Army Institute of Education (only girls) at Greater Noida. The students will be offered MBA and B Ed/B Ed special education (only girls) courses in these colleges. All domiciled residents of J&K and Ladakh will be eligible for admission.

In addition to all these, J&K has a sizeable population mix comprising Gujjar/Bakarwals. This nomadic group migrates every year in summer to the upper reaches and lower foothills in the winter. While doing so, they traverse all three distinct regions of J&K. To ensure their children get quality primary and middle school education, Indian Army runs unique 'Shepherds Schools', an initiative at various receiving areas frequented by nomadic groups. Children are being given quality education at summer schools located at Tosha Maidan, Jumagund, Mandian & Kundian and Lokut Bangas, Kupwara.

Initiatives like these are comforting not only because of the positive numbers and results but also because in these actions exists a leeway of socially elevating a section of the society which not only suffers socioeconomically but also lives under a constant threat of terror and uncertainties.

Education is a tool that might be very effective in encouraging social mobility. Army Goodwill Schools provide a conducive environment where the character gets moulded as children spend maximum time in these schools. Here ethics of giving to others are cultivated through inclusive education. They learn to contribute to their development and the development of others and the nation. Values such as teamwork, fair play, cooperation, hard work, and doing things right and doing right things, etc. imbibed in them become the bedrock of Nation Building.

Th K P Singh

Rai Vijay Pal was the last Pawar ruler of Akhnoor. He was a noble king. He spent most of his time in worship leaving the administration to the nobles and officials who exploited it to the hilt. That weakened the empire. Sensing easy victory, Ramgarhias crossed River Chenab and invaded Akhnoor in 1745. Thus the kingdom was lost. Period of Raja Budhi Singh Ramgarhia's rule is known as Akhnoori Raj, also referred as 'Andher Nagri-Chaupat Raja'.

Ramgarhia brothers, Jai Singh and Vijay Singh, sons of Mian Samadon attacked Akhnoor. (Raja Kapoor Dev of Jammu had granted Ramgarh as Jagir to his son Raja Bhoj Dev whose descendants came to be known as Ramgarhias). Bitter fight went on for a month. Rai Vijay Pal gave a good fight. Both the Ramgarhia brother were killed by Pawars but defeat could not be averted. Vijay Pal escaped towards West of Chhamb. Mahi Parkash, son of slain Mian Jai Singh Ramgarhia became the ruler of Akhnoor. He appointed Mian Sidh Manalia as Wazir. He made Garhi as his capital where a Pawar Fort existed.

Soon after defeat, the deposed ruler of Akhnoor Vijay Pal launched a fierce attack to restore his kingdom. Raja Mahi Parkash was killed in this invasion. Despite that Akhnoor couldn't be regained. Budhi Singh became the ruler after his father's death. Upon enthronement, to avenge his father's killing, he vowed to kill one Ambarian (Pawar) daily before taking his meal.

Daily killings of Ambarians by tyrant Budhi Singh forced them to leave Akhnoor for safer places. When none remained to be killed for breaking fast, Raja Budhi Singh's Wazir Sidh Manalia suggested that his vow could still be maintained if he cut a Mango tree grown by Ambarians. Hence the day no Ambarian could be killed, he would cut a Mango tree and have his meal. When the mango trees also finished, it came down to cutting a branch and finally a leaf of a Mango branch before breaking fast.

Prevalent chaos was such that tallest person of the Family was hanged if someone committed a crime. On the occurrence of theft of cattle or any other commodity, Goldsmiths were sent to locate them. Though shepherds grazed village/zamindars' cattle, the Rotis were collected by Barbars of the village.

12 Pethe 13 Lagi. This is a fascinating & beguiling story of Akhnoori Raj. It was talked about in almost every household. I have grown hearing it. Whenever any person from countryside took his commodity for selling in Akhnoor Bazar, he would be looted. The entire commodity would be forcibly taken as Nazrana by officials. Even the packing material such as Bori/Tarangri (Jute bag/net) would be confiscated. Nazrana for officials could not be met by the sellers irrespective of the quantity or number of the commodity. Whence a seller took 12 Pethe (Pumpkins) for selling in Akhnoor market, he faced 13 Nazrana takers. 13th took away his Tarangri.

Rani Khan Da Sala. Anguished, the seller of 12 Pumpkins went to the Shamsan Ghat in desperation. But being a clever person he didn't give up. He got an innovative idea which he practised wisely. He made entrance of Shamsan Ghat as his Adda (abode) and announced himself as 'Rani Khan da Sala'

Glimpses of Akhnoori Raj



(Brother-in-law of Rani). Soon he became popular. He levied 1 Rupee and 4 Annas as cremation fees for every cremation which people paid. This went on. Once Raja Budhi Singh attended cremation procession of his relative. 'Rani Khan da Sala' demanded the cremation fees. Despite being informed of a Royal cremation, he didn't allow the procession to proceed. Raja had to pay the fees. On return to the Palace, Rani enquired about the cause of delay in cremation. Raja said, "Your Sala Sahib delayed the cremation. He didn't exempt the royal household cremation despite being your Sala and charged 1 Rupee & 4 Anna from me. Rani sensed a trickery in the story. She told Raja that Salas are of men and not of women. Raja felt tricked and got angry. He summoned him to be punished for the trickery. He was asked the reason for such Pakhand. He narrated the story of 12 Pethe and 13 Lagi and his plight after that open loot. Seeking pardon, he told Raja that entire amount collected by him by this trickery is lying safe with him which Raja could take and utilise for any purpose. Raja spared his life while the so called Rani Khan da Sala spent that amount for the renovation of the Bazar. Renovated Bazar was named Pacca Danga.

Akhnoor was an ancient kingdom. It is Viratnagri of Mahabharat era. Hence in 1151, Rai Jagdev Pawar of Dharnagri, chose Akhnoor for migration and selected Ambaran as abode. He constructed a Fort at Ambaran and another fort at Garhi, 5 Miles West of Akhnoor. These forts got ruined over the period. (Haveli of Th. Kartar Singh, Revenue Minister of Maharaja Hari Singh era exists at the site of Garhi Fort. Th. Kartar Singh was grandson of Raja of

Akhnoor Nihal Singh Jamwal who applied Raj Tilak to Raja Gulab Singh with his blood after Raj Tilak by Maharaja Ranjit Singh). About 30 generations of Pawars ruled over Akhnoor. The rulers of Akhnoor had very good relations with ruler of Jammu & Rajouri. They would help each other against outside invaders. Akhnoor kingdom was prospering under the Pawars when an unsavoury event, 'Bua Tripta ka Parkop' happened which started its downfall.

Parkop of Bua Tripta. When Rai Kishora was the ruler of Akhnoor, Raj Purohit was the Wazir. Some nobles were not happy with him. An extraordinary event occurred during that period. Wazir took leave to visit his in-law's in Deva Batala to try to oust him. He told Raja that he would be hobnobbing with Chhabal Jagirdars to oust him. Wazir's longer overstay turned doubt into belief. Infuriated, Raja ordered that Wazir be produced in Darbar on return. Wazir learnt of happenings in his absence and smelled conspiracy & punishment. On arrival home he was taken the court as accused. When being taken to Darbar, he cautioned his newly wed wife of conspiracy and impending punishment, even death. He told her to be vigilant with instructions that on hearing loud noise in the Palace, She should take it as his death wanting her to be Sati. When produced in Darbar, Wazir regretted his inordinate delay and explained the reasons that restored Raja's faith in his loyalty. While the Darbar was on, a Mule of the constabulary ran amok creating upheaval in the army. Seeing, others mules also ran helter-skelter. Noise of 'Pakro-Pakro-Pakro' echoed the Palace. Hearing this, Purohityani hurried to end her life. Instead of being Sati on husband's

pyre, put the house on fire. Seeing Wazir's house aflame, everyone, including Raja ran towards it but she couldn't be saved. She was consumed by fire, the same Agni which gave birth to Pawars. This was a personal blow to the ruler. Owing his role in her tragic end, Raja adopted Sati as revered Kul-Devi. Her Murti was made and worship started to redeem the sin. This practice is still followed by Pawars. (An annual Mela and prayers are held in Ambaran which is attended by Pawars from far off places). The sin continued to haunt Pawars. Lot of evil omens engulfed the kingdom. The downfall of the prosperous empire began with the death of Bua Tripta. Many left Ambaran/Akhnoor and migrated to far off places. Many descendants of those-day Pawars are living in Pakistan. Bua Tripta Mandir and Samadhi exist at the site where she ended her life. Post marriage Pawar weds go there to pay their obeisance, seek blessings and to perform various other rituals.

End of Pawar Rule.

History repeats itself. It repeated in the case of Pawars of Ambaran. Rise turned into fall. Agni which produced Pawars caused their extinction. Goddess Bhagwati who revived slain Rai Jagdev to establish a kingdom, in the guise of Bua Tripta ended the same Kingdom. Flourishing Kingdom became Andher Nagri. Anarchy and chaos made the Kingdom a laughing stock. At that time Delhi Darbar tasked Mian Chandan Dev Jamwal, Wazir of Nawab of Lahore to invest the State of Khari-Khari of Raja Saadat Khan in which he succeeded. As a reward, Mian Chandan Dev was given the Jagir of Akhnoor. Chandan Dev captured Akhnoor from the tyrant Budhi Singh and turned it into a safe and prosperous kingdom. Within 4/5 years of his rule, Ramgarhias attacked Akhnoor but failed to invest it. Thereafter Raja Chandan Dev further extended and strengthened his empire. After Chandan Dev, his 12 years old son Teg Singh became ruler of Akhnoor. Teg Singh was a great warrior, supporter and admirer of Jammu Raja-e-Rajgan Ranjit Dev. When Ranjit Dev wanted his favorite younger Rani's son Dalel Singh to be his heir apparent, Teg Singh came in the way. He reminded him of existing practice of elder son to be a successor and compelled him to declare elder Rani's son Brij Raj Dev as successor. That infuriated younger Rani. She poisoned Teg Singh while serving a meal to him with husband Maharaja Ranjit Dev. Luckily he was saved by a Sadhoo's treatment, but later done away with, by deceit, by her son Dalel Dev to clear the way for his succession to Jammu Raj. On Teg Singh's death, his son Raja Alam Singh became the ruler. During his rule Maharaja Ranjit Singh annexed Akhnoor and gave 16 Villages, ie Sohal as Jagir to him. He was succeeded by his son Raja Avtar Singh who was the last so called king/Governor of Akhnoor. It was in his time that kingdom of Akhnoor became part of Raja Gulab Singh's Jammu State after his coronation as ruler of Jammu in 1822. That much I think is enough for the coming generations. Comprehensive account of Pawar's, Ramgarhia's & Jamwal's rule over Akhnoor is expected to be included in the new history books and school curriculum under the new education policy of govt of India, applicable from this academic year. Hence many details have been omitted intentionally.

(Some information has been gleaned from 'Tarikh Dogra Desh' by Narsingdas Nargis)