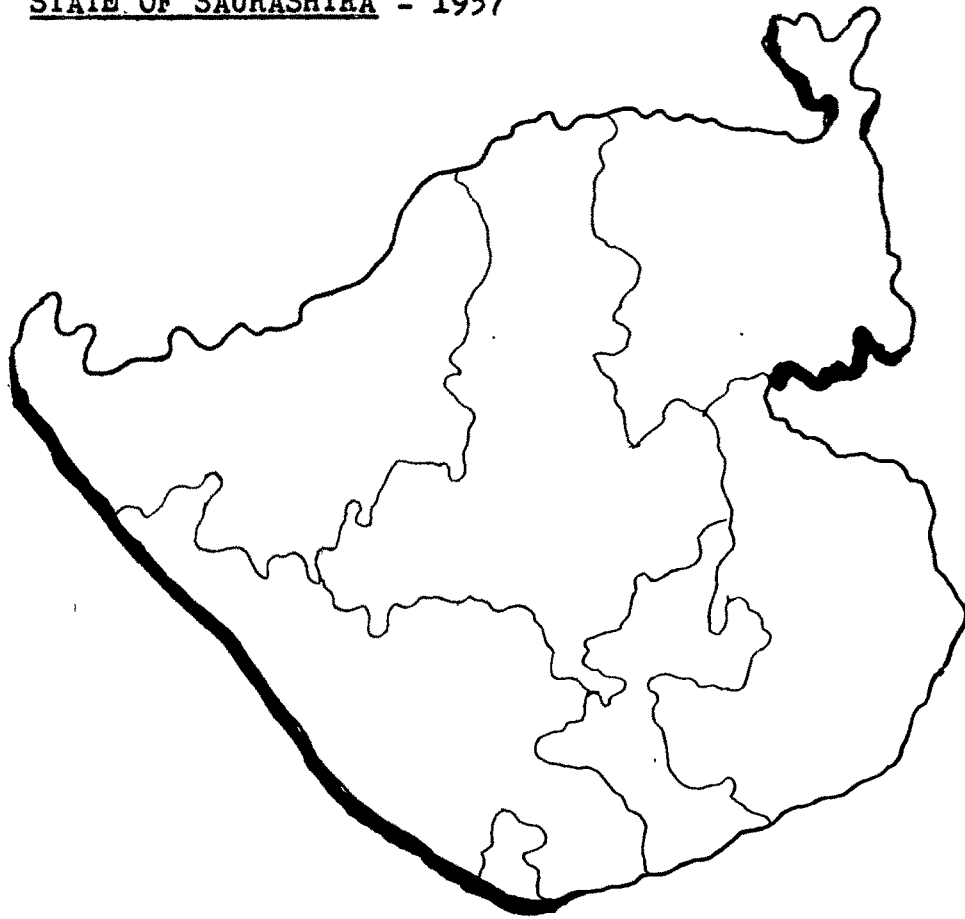


STATE OF SAURASHTRA - 1957



C H A P T E R I

BASIC EDUCATION IN SAURASHTRA

Introduction

Saurashtra is a land of Mahatma Gandhi. Basic education was therefore not a new concept to Saurashtra even before the formation of democratic government in Saurashtra in 1948. The following brief report of the educational activity of the government from 1948 to 1954 will give us a lucid picture of the progress of Basic education in Saurashtra.(1)

Reorientation in education

Since the formation of the democratic government in Saurashtra, it was considered an urgent need to reform the existing educational

(1) Progress of Basic Education in Saurashtra;
Education Department, Saurashtra (1948-1954)

system to suit the spirit of nationalism. The new democracy had to infuse new life and spirit into the various spheres of society, as also to resolve to reconstruct the educational sphere with cogent yet continuous determination.

Social environment and traditions are factors which have powerfully influenced education at all times. A glimpse therefore at the past - the immediate past, not very remote from the date of independence and the formation of a democratic state in Saurashtra is an absolute necessity; for, it alone can show what has been realised in the sphere of education during the years that followed.

Historical retrospect

Saurashtra is not large in area; yet geographically as well as historically, it has significant points of importance. Composed of small States and principalities, Saurashtra has a chequered history of educational policy and reform, comparable to the history of British India with its century and a half of British domination. The history of Saurashtra is replete with the record of efforts good, bad or indifferent, which the small or large States tried to make in the sphere of education.

Specific significance

Saurashtra has a specific personality, a character of its own. The coastland of Saurashtra,

the Gir forest and its woodland scenery, the heroic tribes of Ahirs, Rajputs, and Kathis, the places of pilgrimage like Dwarka, so glorified by Krishna and Mira, Porbander, the birth place of Sudama and Gandhiji, Somnath of Rajputs, Vaishnava saints like Narsinha and so many other popular saints of old, as also Maharshi Dayanand are a few illustrations which speak of the glory that Saurashtra was.

Moreover, Saurashtra enjoys a peculiar position in the realm of Indian culture for its indigenous art, folk-lore, folk-songs, and for the colourful costumes of its people, their habits and traditions.

Birth of Nationalism

The force of cultural tradition has been so powerful that even during the darkest period of its history, Saurashtra had imbibed progressive currents of thought that inundated the other parts of India. Saurashtra responded to the call for independence given by Gandhiji in 1920. The formation of a basis for national education in Saurashtra was its first and most direct outcome. This nationalistic activity was manifested in two ways:-

(i) Formation of new educational institutions.

(ii) Constructive programme.

(i) Daxinamoorthy in Bhavnagar

Daxinamoorthy in the form of Residential school was started in 1912. After 1920 it

assumed an attitude of nationalistic education. This institution presented before the country some small or large-scale experiments in the sphere of education.

New thinking in Child Education

From amongst the sponsors of Daxinamoorthy, Shri Gijubhai has contributed a great deal towards new thinking in child education, especially in the introduction of pre-primary institutions run on Montessori system of education, and which gave the child a kind of respect hitherto unknown to family and society.

Basic education, its beginning

In 1937 when a new ideology of Basic education was presented before the country, this institution circumscribed its sphere of activity, and founded Gram Daxinamoorthy (Rural Basic Education Centre) at Ambla, a place twenty miles away from Bhavnagar. This institution has, under all vicissitudes struggled to achieve something by experimenting in Basic educational methods in Saurashtra. This institution has been now extended and Lok Bharti (Rural institution) is founded at Sansora with a new approach to higher education in rural areas.

The experiments in Basic education by Wadhwan Educational Society and Rashtriya Shala, Rajkot, are also worthy to be noted.

(ii) Constructive programme

The various educational activities

throve in Saurashtra inspite of adverse circumstances, solely due to the fact that, constructive workers ardently worked and established centres of organisation and thereby created a favourable atmosphere for the new ideology. In the sphere of social reforms, sponsored by the Constructive Programme Committee, Saurashtra had its manifold activities. These forces have contributed a great deal towards the making of patriotic environment in Saurashtra.

Contribution of States

The background of National Education in Saurashtra was built from its geographical position, its historical tradition and its cultural heritage. Along with the understanding of these factors, another also deserves mention. This is the contribution of States in the Basic Education in Saurashtra. Some States had paid considerable attention to education. Among such states must be reckoned the states of Bhavnagar for its free primary education, of Gondal for its compulsory education to girls between the age 6 and 10, of Rajkot for its introduction of pre-primary education and of Porbandar for its emphasis on physical education.

After integration

India became free on August 15, 1947. The democratic government in Saurashtra was

established on April 15, 1948. The merger of 222 states and principalities that divided Saurashtra and the evolution of a homogeneous state of Saurashtra was a Herculean task. Saurashtra could not find it very easy to switch off from autocratic kingship to democratic form of government. As in other spheres of activity, so also in education, the state of Saurashtra had to fight hard in the spirit of desperate missionary, against the forces of disruption. The government from its very outset declared its educational policy. It declared its primary objectives to develop primary education on the pattern of national education in India. The state of Saurashtra showed its full faith in the Basic national education and therefore the declaration of the objectives was inspired by a concrete ideology and practicable constructive programme.

Though accepting fully the principles of Basic education, the government was keenly aware of its limitations, as also of the prevalent circumstances and so, it thought unwise to launch forth in mad rage for a new endeavour. The State considered it a preliminary duty to transform the primary education schools into satisfactory schools and then to proceed ahead for evolving proper atmosphere for Basic education.

New Curriculum and its specialities

With the development of Basic education, the changes in matters of curriculum were also felt necessary. The government appointed

a committee of nine members in 1952-53 to draft a new curriculum of Basic education for eight years.

This curriculum provides for the study of languages, sciences, etc., through living contact with practical life. The major part of the curriculum consists of things which are within the reach of child's experience, e.g. in the new curriculum history has been taken in a larger perspective. It consists of the rise of people or of the stories describing the basis of the country's cultural tradition. The legends, myths, tales of religion, etc., are provided as means to the understanding of true history.

Once the curriculum was fixed, it was found difficult to provide the means of education to all the new schools, or to cater to the needs of teachers. As a result, the state thought it worthwhile to go ahead with cautious and conscious steps. Hence the experiment in the initial stage was circumscribed to only 200 schools wherein this curriculum was to be worked out.

Three types of schools

The curriculum was drafted to suit three types of schools. Hence the study units are discussed in three parts: (i) Subject teaching (ii) Activity as a part of study and (iii) correlation of subjects.

In some schools provision could be made for creating activities which support the study of various subjects by practical work. A list of activities is provided in the second division.

In a very few cases satisfactory degrees of correlation of work and knowledge could be realised in some schools. Correlated topics are given in the third division.

Thus the curriculum framed by the expert committee caters to the needs of three types of schools viz. (i) Traditional (ii) Activity-centred and (iii) Basic schools.

Basic school: what it means

The principle of Basic education has been accepted by all the states of India . But the popular mind has a variety of notions about basic schools. " Are the so called basic schools truly working out the aims of Basic education ? " . People seem to raise this fundamental question.

The government was wisely aware of this kind of questioning doubt from the very beginning. The government therefore paid due attention in this direction. The mere change in nomenclature of a school to basic school has no meaning. In order therefore to acquaint the people's mind with the true nature of basic education, the government resolved to take progressive steps in that direction.

Programme of basic schools

The old schools were slowly changed over to new ideas of Basic education on the five fundamental postulates of love of labour, health, self-reliance, social responsibility and cultural attitude. The old schools were given a programme to achieve these, and work accordingly.

Stages of progress

No school became a basic school by mere change in name. The government was actively aware of this. Hence it was thought fit to convince the teachers of the validity of principles of Basic education by prescribing a particular programme for such schools. Three stages of progressive work were suggested for such schools.

Regularity, cleanliness, tidiness, propriety, equality, etc., are considered indispensable for all schools. The second category of schools was given full freedom for activities that were helpful for study. While the third category of schools planned to follow strictly the principles of Basic education and develop on these lines. The new curriculum caters to the needs of these three categories.

Planning for the future

The Basic national education has fixed its curriculum of study within VIII forms (standards) for a child. In consideration of this the government of Saurashtra resolved to conduct Basic educational scheme within the first eight forms. Here it was thought that the child would have during the first four forms rudimentary knowledge of some industries, farming, spinning etc., and complete training in self-reliance during the later stages - from V to VIII forms. Over and above the senior basic schools, the government started junior and senior Lokshalas with agriculture as a primary subject.

The government planned to have fixed group-units for basic schools in the educational districts in all among 15 schools, a unit of 5 schools was fixed, of which one might be selected as a central school preparing children for all the eight forms. The other five subordinate schools would function for practical training. This was considered to provide one post-basic school per each inspectoral area containing 15 such groups.

However, owing to circumstances, the following table (2) shows that there was no senior basic school or central school in Saurashtra preparing children for all the eight forms upto 1955-56.

T A B L E NO.1

Number of Basic Schools during
1954-55 & 1955-56
State-wise Distribution

States	Junior Basic Schools		Senior Basic Schools	
	1954-55:	1955-56:	1954-55:	1955-56:
Andhra	463	594	38	44
Assam	485	612	20	28
Bihar	1139	1498	547	620
Bombay	59	383	108	3287
M. Pradesh	40	775	142	355
Madras	918	2063	157	342
Orissa	335	367	15	16
Punjab	293	328	6	6
Uttar Pradesh	31232	31398	-	-
West Bengal	446	492	5	4
Hyderabad	87	189	-	-

(continued)

(2) Progress of Basic Education (1949-1955) Government of India, NIBE, New Delhi. p.11

(Table No.1 continued)

States	Junior Basic Schools		Senior Basic Schools	
	1954-55	1955-56	1954-55	1955-56
M. Bharat	231	442	-	-
Mysore	124	264	9	11
Pepsu	70	67	-	-
Rajasthan	59	128	13	14
Saurashtra	449	1742	-	-
Trav. Cochin	6	6	-	-
Ajmer	462	475	-	-
A.N. Island	5	5	-	-
Bhopal	34	90	-	-
Coorg	22	69	24	49
Delhi	270	255	26	44
Himachal Pradesh	63	83	3	3
Manipur	1	1	-	-
N.E.F.A.	5	7	-	-
Tripura	5	33	2	11
Vindhya Pradesh	72	105	-	-
J. & Kashmir	-	-	-	-
Kutch	-	-	-	-

Integration with Bombay State

With all these plans and procedures the state of Saurashtra was merged with Bombay State in 1957. The government of Bombay had its own scheme for Basic education. Initially Saurashtra was allowed to go ahead with its own plans and procedures of Basic education. But the fundamental difference lies in the curricula because Saurashtra had 8 years' syllabus for basic schools, while Bombay State including Gujarat had a common syllabus of 7 years for primary and basic schools with an improved syllabus in craft for basic schools. This therefore led to a consolidation period in the history of Basic

education in Saurashtra. None the less, during the second five year plan Saurashtra and Bombay planned the same approach to the Basic education schemes for further advance on the following two lines:

(1) Increasing the number of full-fledged basic schools by converting ordinary primary schools directly to the basic pattern; and

(2) Converting the existing craft schools into basic schools as soon as the teaching of the craft is sufficiently consolidated.

At present

There are more than one thousand basic schools and more than a dozen basic training institutions at present in Saurashtra under the new regime of Gujarat state. But unfortunately, the idea of central basic schools could not thrive well and therefore, during my study in 1958-59 a few central senior basic schools were seen by me, probably most of them in the Gohilwad district of Saurashtra where the experiment of the said plan of central basic schools was started earlier. The following remarks in the Report of the Assessment Committee on Basic Education is aptly applicable to the state of affairs in Saurashtra.

" Even where it is readily agreed that Basic Education is one continuous process of eight years, in actual practice this has not been done and innumerable Basic schools come up to the fifth grade and then stop there. This again is a mutilation which will ultimately defeat Basic Education." (3)

3. Report of the Assessment Committee on Basic Education, Ministry of Education, Govt. of India. 1955 p.23

Of course, this state of affairs is due to difficulties faced by basic school teachers. The National Institute of Basic Education, New Delhi has studied these difficulties prevalent in various states and the following table for Saurashtra presents them in descending order of the magnitude of their acuteness.(4)

T A B L E N O. 2

Frequency of Respondents Giving
Various Ranks to the Ten Difficulties

S A U R A S H T R A

Sample size-37 (all from Junior Basic Schools)

Difficulties	R A N K O R D E R										Comp- osite
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Building	17	3	1	6	3	0	0	2	0	5	2
Equipment	18	9	3	1	3	1	0	0	0	2	1
Organisation	2	3	2	9	3	3	2	4	1	8	6
Staff	9	7	2	2	3	1	4	2	1	6	4
Syllabus	2	6	6	3	3	4	3	2	0	8	5
Craft	6	4	10	4	3	1	0	3	1	5	3
Teaching method	3	2	1	0	9	3	7	1	2	9	7
Community living	3	0	0	0	6	2	7	7	2	10	8
Teacher-pupil relationship	1	0	0	0	5	2	0	8	6	15	10
Attitude	2	0	2	1	2	2	3	1	5	19	9

(4) Research and Studies, difficulties of Basic school teachers, NIBE, New Delhi, 1960.

On the basis of this table the area of difficulties can be arranged as follows in descending order of the magnitude of their acuteness:

1. Equipment
 2. Building
 3. Craft
 4. Staff
 5. Syllabus
 6. Organisation
 7. Teaching method
 8. Community living
 9. Attitude
 10. Teacher-pupil relationship.
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