

Evaluation of Sayaji Rao-III's Contribution in changing education policy of Baroda State

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Abstract:

In modern Indian history, there have been a few rare heroes who have worked across various fields and achieved unprecedented success, among whom Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III of Baroda State is one. Despite being a princely state, he laid the foundation for a modern state using the resources available to him, which continues to serve as an inspiration for today's states. The efforts made by the Maharaja in the field of education are essential for any welfare state. His initiatives included compulsory education, schools in every region of the state, schools for women and Dalits, colleges, technical colleges, Kalabhavan, libraries, and the establishment of various faculties and institutions for the holistic development of young students. By providing compulsory education for both men and women and granting the right to education to Dalits, he implemented a high level of equality in his state that was a significant issue for contemporary society and governance. The work and ideas of the Maharaja play a crucial role in the construction of a modern India.

Key Words: Maratha, Baroda, Gaekwad, School Education, Princely State, Kala Bhavan.

Introduction:

With the weakening of the powerful Mughal authority in India, a new Maratha power emerged in the Deccan, establishing a vast and formidable empire. Over time, the strength and territorial expansion of the Marathas increased, culminating in the end of Mughal rule in prosperous regions like Gujarat, where Maratha chieftains established their authority. In later periods, they became known as the Gaekwads, ruling over the region of Baroda, which was nurtured by progressive-minded kings.

Origin of the Gaekwads:

The first ancestor of the Gaekwad dynasty was Nandaji Rao Matre, who served as an administrative minister in a village. The term "minister" gradually transformed into "Matre," but due to Nandaji's efforts to prohibit cow slaughter in his area, he was given the title of "Gaurakshak," which later evolved into "Gaekwad" in Marathi.¹

Nandaji Rao's son, Keraji Rao, showcased his capabilities in the Maratha army, and his son, Damoji Rao I, supported him. Damoji Rao I adopted his brother Jimaji Rao's son Pilaji Rao.

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Pilaji Rao established actual power in Gujarat, followed by Damoji Rao II, Govind Rao, Sayajirao I, Manaji Rao, Anand Rao, Sayajirao II, Ganpat Rao, Khande Rao, and Malhar Rao becoming Maharajas.²

Kovlan Gaekwad and Sayajirao III:

After the death of Maharaja Khande Rao of Baroda, his brother Malhar Rao ascended to the throne. However, the widow Maharani Jamuna Bai sent Malhar Rao to Madras with the help of the British. Maharani Jamuna Bai arrived in Baroda by special train where she was welcomed by Sir Richard Meade. The late Maharaja had granted her the right to adopt due to his assistance to the British during the 1857 revolt. Utilizing this right, Jamuna Bai summoned Kovlan Gaekwad from Nashik, who lived a very simple life and two sons of Kashi Rao: Gopal Rao (13) and Sampat Rao (9), along with Dadasaheb (10), son of Ukhoji Rao.

In Baroda, a detailed study was conducted on these young boys. One day, the Maharani asked them, "What do you think is the reason you were called here?" The Maharani was dissatisfied with Sampat Rao and Dadasaheb's responses; however, when Gopal Rao said it was "to become a Maharaja and to rule," she replied, "And yes, you will."³

Gopal Rao was selected as the heir and underwent further examinations in which he succeeded. Astrologers predicted Gopal Rao would be a brilliant and long-lived Maharaja, and Sir Richard Meade made the official adoption announcement on May 25, 1875. On May 27, 1875, the young prince was coronated and addressed as Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III amid cheers. The new Maharaja received a salute from a personal army of 122 guns and an additional salute of 21 guns from the British army.

Until the Maharaja reached adulthood, all state affairs were managed by Diwan T. Madhav Rao, Rajmata Jamuna Bai, and Sir Richard Meade.

Education of Sayajirao III:

Before his coronation, Gopal Rao did not receive formal education; however, after becoming Maharaja, arrangements were made for Sayajirao's education at Moti Bagh Palace.⁴ Initially, he was taught Marathi, Gujarati, and Urdu; however, when Edward VII 'Prince of Wales' visited India in November 1875 and toured Baroda on November 19th, Rajmata Jamuna Bai and Diwan T. Madhav Rao recognized his discomfort with English language and Western customs. They arranged for Gopal Rao to be taught English language and literature as well as mathematics, history, and geography by retired officer Mr. Elliot. He effectively managed Gopal Rao's education schedule by incorporating exercises like horse riding and sword fighting into his daily routine. Other high-class children from Baroda were also educated alongside Sayajirao III.

Mr. Elliot's teachings had a profound impact on Sayajirao III's education and proved pivotal in shaping future plans. Sayajirao III reached adulthood in 1881 when all governmental responsibilities were officially transferred to him by Diwan T. Madhav Rao.

Sayajirao III as an Educator:

Awareness regarding education was evident from the beginning in Baroda State. During Maharaja Malhar Rao's reign in 1871, approximately 9,000 students received education with an expenditure of ₹ 32,000 by the state on education.⁵ In 1876-77 Diwan T. Madhav Rao invited P.S. Mainwaring to devise plans for independent educational development; he prepared a budget of ₹ 1,11,000 for establishing sound educational infrastructure. Under Sayajirao III's rule in 1881, this amount increased to ₹ 1,56,500 and escalated to ₹ 30,56,866 by 1925.⁶

During Malhar Rao's reign 1 high school and 4 primary schools were established in Baroda, 2 Marathi and 2 Gujarati schools along with an Anglo-Oriental school set up at Petlad, however there was no establishment for educational upliftment under any government department at that time. In 1875 an Oriental Education Department was established in Baroda with 55 primary schools that grew to 180 by 1881; yet only 18 were government schools.

The first robust initiative for education came from the Maharaja in 1891 when he announced that primary schools would be opened in every village with at least 16 children eligible for education; teachers would be appointed at community expense. Two years later saw the opening of 632 new primary schools.⁷

The idea of providing compulsory education for every boy and girl began taking shape in the Maharaja's mind from 1893; however, Diwan ManiBhai JasBhai prioritized other significant government tasks which delayed implementation until then. Due to Sayajirao III's pragmatism he decided to first implement compulsory free education in one taluka selecting Amreli taluka for this purpose and achieved success saying: "I may not enjoy the benefits from my works but my successors will certainly benefit."⁸

In 1896 the title of President of Oriental Education was changed to 'Vidyaadhikari.' By 1904 in Amreli taluka alone 5,201 children received compulsory education while 939 obtained higher education including 2,200 girls alone. Seeing success from this experiment led him to issue a royal decree in 1906 that compulsory free primary education would be provided across his Baroda State with age limits set at seven years for boys and seven to ten years for girls; amendments made in 1913 raised these limits to 14 years for boys and 12 years for girls.⁹

The Maharaja established various levels for education which were successfully managed as follows:

Primary Schools:

Various primary schools were opened across the state where students studied happily under qualified teachers. According to reports from 1924-25 there were 2,355 Oriental schools for boys

with an enrollment of 1,29,033 students while there were also 368 schools for girls with an enrollment of 66,093 girls totaling up to 2,838 schools with an aggregate enrollment of 2,02,713 students at an average expenditure of ₹ 668 per school.¹⁰

By 1924 passing sixth grade became mandatory for every student since only those who passed could be appointed as clerks within government departments. Notably there were also twenty-nine English primary schools with an enrollment of approximately 1,405 students wherein Indian teachers were appointed specifically for English instruction without any discrimination towards students; special provisions were made for Dalits including starting primary schools specifically for them while they were also allowed to attend mixed schools. To promote holistic development among children's various sports activities were organized ensuring they led healthy lives.

Secondary Education:

Between 1875-1925 there were nineteen high schools for boys one for girls along with forty-seven Anglo-Oriental schools while numerous private institutions operated without government grants the most prominent being located in Baroda constructed at a cost of ₹ 280,000 in 1918 housing around 900 students all affiliated with Bombay University.

Upon passing sixteen years students could gain admission into Baroda College where all teachers were Indian yet taught exclusively through English medium while various sports activities were conducted alongside separate arrangements made for girls' education including teaching English Gujarati along with Hindustani language while cricket was also played. In Mehsana during 1924-25 fourteen out of eighteen students passed their final examinations making it one among top-performing institutions.¹¹

Women's Higher Secondary School:

Only one institution 'the Maharani Girls High School' was operational specifically catering to women under an English principal alongside Indian teaching staff established since no facilities existed prior to 1896; however this year saw encouragement towards English language education leading up until establishment of first Anglo-Oriental school converted into high school by 1917 enrolling 330 girls enabling them freedom post-graduation towards teaching positions within Bombay or Pune colleges while also engaging them into music art along with culinary classes across various locations like Pelad, Patan, Navasari, Amreli producing many learned women.

Baroda College:

Alongside schooling arrangements higher educational provisions were also made within Baroda State when Mr. R. Chikholam laid down plans for establishing Baroda College costing ₹ 6 lakh¹² Which completed ahead of schedule enrolling 33 students initially while student numbers grew progressively over time:

Year	Number of Students
1892	151
1902	206
1910	315
1914	550
1922	526
1923	625
1924	694

In the 1925 annual examination, out of 814 students who passed, there were 13 women, 754 Hindus, 28 Parsis, 25 Muslims, and 7 others. Among these, 203 students were from Baroda city, 225 from various regions of the state, 58 from other states, 278 from the Bombay province, and 40 from other areas of India.¹³ Free education was provided for 10% of the students. In 1925, the state received ₹ 91,718, but it spent ₹ 1,486,614 on students, resulting in an estimated expenditure of ₹ 183 per student.¹⁴

The college duration lasted four years receiving recognition post-first year through Bombay University while numbers graduating within different faculties during 1925 included:

Faculty	Total Students	Passed Students
M.A.	05	03
B.A.	144	58
Intermediate Arts	242	89
B.Sc	34	21
Intermediate Science	116	55

The college generally offered instruction across English, Gujarati, Marathi languages alongside other subjects including Sanskrit, Persian, French languages under guidance provided by one English principal supported by Indian staff comprising 15 professors, 2 assistant professors, 3 lecturers, 2 demonstrators and 2 associates.

The college had a well-organized library, which received a grant of ₹ 1,000 from the state. This library housed a collection of numerous books related to various subjects. The college also provided facilities for various sports such as cricket, football, tennis, hockey, table tennis, and badminton. Additionally, a series of distinguished individuals emerged from among the colleges in different fields, including high-ranking officials, judges, lawyers, teachers, writers, sociologists, historians, and industrialists.

Training College:

Two training colleges were established in the Baroda state, one for men and one for women. A training college was founded in 1885, which was closed 13 years later. In 1905, it was restarted under Kala Bhavan, but in 1908, it was established as an independent college under the

education department, providing teacher training for the state's schools. A new building was arranged for this purpose in Karelibaug.

The state also made provisions for a training college for the marginalized, where students studied together with others without any discrimination. Notably, a mid-day meal scheme was arranged for students at one training school with private support from the region.¹⁵ These students had their own union, study hall, debate club, and social service groups. There were 150 women studying in these training colleges, of which 70 were regular students. Among them were 70 Hindus, 40 widows, and 6 unmarried women. The state received 340 trained female teachers from these colleges, most of whom began teaching at Maharani High School and served the state in various capacities.

Kala Bhavan :

In 1886, Maharaja Sayajirao III conceived the idea of establishing a technical institution, which led to the founding of Kala Bhavan in 1890. This institution focused on subjects related to science, industry, fine arts, and literature, although literary activities were separated in 1876. A substantial amount of money was spent by the state for its operation. Training was provided in subjects such as civil engineering, electrical engineering, drama, printing press operations, weaving, and soap manufacturing. Many soap factories were established in the state, with products being sent not only to other regions of India but also to Britain and Germany.

In 1925, five foreigners were invited to provide training in the state, including one principal from Europe and two from America; details of the other two were not reported. The enrollment of students in various departments in 1925 was as follows¹⁶:

Department	Number of Students
Mechanical Engineering	124
Civil Engineering	81
Arts	79
Textile Industry	59
Dyeing Industry	46
Commerce	22
Total	411

The state provided incentives and grants for further activities.

Backward Classes:

Similar to other regions in India, the Baroda state was home to many minorities, marginalized individuals, and tribals. The state took care of their needs, and with a generous mindset, the Maharaja devised plans for them. Education was arranged for these groups starting from 1883, and by 1925, there were 219 schools operational, including five specifically for women, where approximately 14,000 marginalized children received education. By 1925, there were four hostels for marginalized students in various regions of the state.

Education was also arranged for Muslims. The state provided full support to them. Urdu was first introduced in government schools in Amreli in the academic year 1892-93, and by 1925, there were 124 Urdu schools operating. Private efforts were also made for Muslim education with the establishment of Madarsa-E-Anwarul-Ulma in Baroda city.¹⁷

The state made provisions for the education of tribals (Bhil, Vaghera, Koli, Okhamandal, Kaliparaj). Efforts were made to introduce them to civilization, and the Maharaja succeeded in some areas.

Library:

The Baroda state was under a ruler with a very progressive mindset. When Maharaja visited a library in America in 1906, he expressed his desire to establish a similar library in Baroda, which was accomplished in 1910. Mr. W.A. Barden worked tirelessly for three years to outline the Baroda Library, library department, provincial library, study rooms, and mobile libraries.

The Maharaja himself established a central library at Lakshmi Vilas with an initial collection of 20,000 books.¹⁸ This collection grew to over 1,00,000 books, including 51,000 English books, 19,000 Gujarati books, and 14,000 Marathi books along with literature and texts in other regional languages and Sanskrit. Libraries were also established for women and children within the state. A Sanskrit library was set up containing 6,846 books¹⁹ and preserving 13,000 manuscripts. Emphasis was placed on studying Vedic knowledge and Upanishads. The status of libraries during the years 1911-12 and 1924-25 is as follows:

Year	Libraries		Total Study Rooms	Total Students
	City Libraries	Village Libraries		
1911-12	09	265	60	6200
1924-25	43	618	87	47,506

Through the library system established by the Maharaja, an educational wave spread among the populace that enhanced ancient and valuable texts. Mobile libraries were set up across various regions of the state soon becoming competitive with libraries abroad.

Boy Scouts Organization:

One of the ambitious plans of the Maharaja was to ensure that educated individuals contributed to society; thus, he established a scout guide program where youths selflessly served various sectors at different times. This group was considered part of the Maharaja's army and received salutes during annual ceremonies from him. The Maharaja also attempted to create a similar group for women but was not very successful. These groups served not only the state but also contributed to national service.

Conclusion:

Maharaja Sayajirao III was a person endowed with remarkable abilities. His reforms were years ahead of his contemporaries among princely rulers and the British government. His improvements in education, health care, railways, canals, revenue systems, and industries infused new energy into Baroda. The Baroda state became the first princely state where a private railway line was established by the Maharaja. Due to his revenue reforms, every section of society within the state was happy and satisfied. To promote glorious history, he established museums. Numerous unforgettable works were undertaken by him in education and women's upliftment during his long reign that led Baroda state towards unprecedented progress.

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