

An overview of the 1960-70 staff which established and laid the strong foundations of The Punjab Public School, Nabha.



Dr Jashanjot Singh (S-52,1967)

Respected Headmaster sahib, President of ONA Brig. HS Bedi, respected Teachers and all who have gathered here physically and online around the world to honour the Ex-teachers of our school of 1960s. I wish you a very good afternoon.

The Background

In order to get the right perspective and better appreciate what we are going to do, it is in my opinion, very important to know the environment in which our School was conceived and born.

India got freedom in 1947. It took two years to write the constitution before we became a Republic in 1950.

The British had developed India as per their needs. It was now up to the leaders of a New India to build it into a strong and viable nation with all its diversity. Mr Nehru an idealistic intellectual leader as PM and dedicated CMs like Sardar Pratap Singh Kairon set about building India in right earnest. The problems were huge starting with settlement of refugees of a tragic partition and many building blocks were needed. Transport, Communications, Power or electricity, Industry, mining, defence, trade, banking and not the least of all for future human resource of India a **sound education** which had to reach the remotest corners of the vast country.

The resources to do this building were very limited. In such an environment ten years later in 1959 was conceived the idea of our School. To provide future leadership to the state and the country the PWSRF led by persons like Gen Kalwant Singh, Col Naunihal Singh and Mr Y Choudhary and the Govt of Punjab Led by CM Mr Kairon came together to create an institution where children of ex-servicemen other ranks, small businessmen, farmers and rural areas could get quality education as provided in the elite Public Schools, if they were bright. The PWSRF and Punjab govt provided scholarships to deserving students. Thus, was born a novel institution called **The Sainik school at Nabha**. Sainik, because of the Fund was meant for rehabilitation of soldiers of second world war.

It was an experiment; it was a pilot project to create future leadership in the country and Punjab. Today, it maybe fashionable to call it innovation. It had to be made successful. The onus of this lay on the Headmaster and Teachers of the 1960s of 'The Sainik School'.

Mr Menon, DM of India liked the concept so much that he adopted it to form Sainik Schools in all the states. In fact, he asked Punjab to hand over the School under the Central scheme or change the name. **Thus, at Sardar Kairon's behest, we became "The Punjab Public School", Nabha**

Mr JK Kate joins and history begins.

Mr JK Kate formally joined as Headmaster on 30th December, 1959, and reported to the Governor's Secretary. He then returned to Sanawar and drafted the rules, regulations, prospectus and advertisements for various posts.

(based on papers from the personal file of Gen Kalwant Singh of 1959)

Follow up 1960

The credit for officially reporting first on duty goes to Mr Mukut Narain Tankha who had started his career as a Geography teacher at Modern School, New Delhi. Both Mr Cowell and Mr Tankha joined PPS in the month of March, 1960. It was the trio of Mr Kate, Mr Cowell and Mr Tankha that prepared the blueprint for functioning of the school.

Mr Cowell, being an academician, planned the curriculum and time table. Mr Tankha, on the other hand was a versatile genius. A passionate and lively geography teacher, a trained mountaineer, a good artist, photographer, and an excellent all-round sportsman, who could play the harmonium and sing, he played a vital role in the early years. He would mark the fields meticulously and later on organised the athletic meets almost single-handedly. His six feet four-inch frame and good looks endeared him to the students and everybody in the school looked up to him, quite literally. He and his tall elegant wife Asha were good at dancing the waltz too.

To start a new school with no staff, no infrastructure, and no students demanded vision, intelligence and the co-operation of a dedicated team. Mr Kate began to build one with Mr Samuel Charles Cowell. He had the reputation of being a strict disciplinarian and he brought every bit of it to Nabha. Interviews were also conducted for the post of Senior Master, teachers, administrative staff, matrons, nursing sister and other ancillary staff.

Mr Kate's unique ability to spot and nurture talent ensured recruitment of promising and passionate teachers. Under the leadership of Mr Kate, these very teachers were to make, The PPS, Nabha, the envy of all leading public schools in the country in a very short time.

(from Chronicles)

The section below is based mostly on Mr. Kate's article "Pride of Punjab" written by him at the time of Silver Jubilee of The Punjab Public School, Nabha, 1985:

All our academic progress including I.S.C. and N.D.A. results was due to the competent and hard-working staff we had right from the beginning. Miss Malkani in the junior school and Mr. Cowell in the Senior school were great assets, not only to the English faculty but also to the whole school in general. They shouldered many responsibilities outside the class-rooms. Both of them were strict disciplinarians with an eye for minutest details.

As most of the students admitted to the school, had never heard a word of English, we had an uphill task of teaching them through English. We, therefore, decided to concentrate on English during the first two years of their stay at the school. As a first step in this direction, only those teachers who had an

excellent command over English, irrespective of the subjects they taught, were selected. Even matrons, nursing sister, and other staff were selected on this basis, apart from the basic qualifications for the posts on which they were appointed. The English faculty was further strengthened by the appointment of Mr. Vodden and Mr. Mallon whose services were made available to us by the British Council.

In addition to this the Council helped us by posting one or more V.S.Os at P.P.S. every year. They were young boys and girls who had completed their, "A levels" and had to wait for a year or two before they got admission to Universities in U.K. During this intervening period, they served in Indian Schools. We were also fortunate in getting similar response from the American Peace Corps and Canadian Volunteers. Most of these young teachers worked in the junior School and shouldered many responsibilities. The credit for starting the school poultry goes to Roger Miall, the first V.S.O. Richard Pine took charge of the Swimming Pool. David Goldberg organised the Library and looked after the pool after Richard's departure. He was very strict in enforcing the rules framed by him for the users of swimming pool. Lowell Edward set the textbooks store in order and made the whole system of lending textbooks to the boys more methodical.

Apart from a well-staffed English Faculty we had equally competent teachers like Mr. Johri, Mr. Dighe, Mr. Nijjar, Mr. Bhalla and Mr. Ram Singh for Mathematics. After the departure of Englishmen from the Faculty of English, it was looked after admirably well by Mr. Oberoi, Mr. Sibal, Mr. Bhatnagar, Mr. Chandola, Mr. Onial and Mr. Bhati. Dr. Surjit Singh and Mr. Bhave gave a good account of themselves as far as Chemistry was concerned. Mr. Bhave was so good at teaching Chemistry that we not only had a large number of distinctions in that subject but most of the boys scored higher marks in Chemistry than in any other subject. Mr. Kakkar worked very hard to improve

upon Physics results. Mr., Katyal too produced excellent results in Biology. Mr. Mathu, though very old-fashioned, taught both Commerce and Geography to Arts students all of whom were not very bright. His ISC results of both these subjects were very impressive. When I compared our ISC results with those of reputed public schools like Doon, Sanawar, Mayo and Lovedale, I found that our boys did better in Mathematics and Science subjects than boys from these schools, We, were beaten in English Language and Literature but this was understandable taking into account the social and economic background of our boys.

The competence of the P.P.S, Staff can be proved by one more fact that as many as fourteen teachers were selected for Bursaries in U.K. and Exchange Programme in U.S.A. within a span of first ten years.

There was hardly any year when somebody from the staff did not go either to U.K. or the U.S.A. for further training. One year when U.S.A. offered twenty seats to the whole of India under its Exchange Programme, our teachers bagged four seats.

Therefore, it was a statement of fact when Mr. K. I. Thomas Ex-Headmaster of Lovedale remarked during one of his visits to Nabha that the P.P.S. had the best staff of all public schools in India. If, I am not wrong nearly fifteen teachers who joined the P.P.S. in the early sixties are now Principals or Vice Principals of reputed schools run, on public school lines all over India.

The school did well not only in academics but in games and other creative and cultural activities also. With the acquisition of forestland and Sham Bag we had spacious and enough playgrounds to enable the whole school to play games simultaneously.

The appointment of two Ranji Trophy players, Mr. Y. P. Bhardwaj and Mr. M. S. Bhatnagar as teachers of History and Biology respectively solved our

problem of coaching in cricket. Mr. M. N. Tankha who was our games-master, had an experience of coaching boys in athletics. He organised the Inter-house Athletic meet on a grand scale.

The contribution of Mr. H. Kumar and Mr. P.S. Gill in raising the standard of P. T. and Gymnastics was very commendable. Therefore P.T. display formed a popular part of Founders' Day Celebrations.

With the impetus given to house plays, class plays and school-plays, our achievements in the field of dramatics and music were above average. Mr. Katyal's production of, "Godan" a Hindi play, was praised by one and all.

Art and craft exhibition formed invariable part of our Founders' Day Programme. In this respect, I must acknowledge the grand performance of Mr. Khan, who introduced so many crafts and inspired boys to develop them as their hobbies. Mr. Khan our Art-Master who was educated at Shanti-Niketan, worked quietly to build up the department. He was replaced by a very talented Mr Ghan.

As far as administration was concerned, I must say we were very lucky in having bursars like Major U. M. Sharma and Mr. G. S. Punia, both of whom I found very honest, loyal and co-operative. With the appointment of Mr. Mela Singh our Accounts Section was well organised. Their audit reports year after year can be an evidence of how efficiently we managed our finances.

I must mention that the share of class IV Employees, in making the school what it is today, is not insignificant. Their selfless services (Ram Singh cook), Balbir Singh Chowkidar, Bir Singh and Santri Singh, Sweepers to mention a few) right from the inception of the school are praiseworthy.

It is difficult to mention all the events and personalities, **which brought the school on the educational map of India within a span of seven or eight years.** I, therefore, may be excused if the names of some persons or institutions

which helped us in the building up of the school are not mentioned inadvertently in this short article.

On this occasion of Silver jubilee, when we look back, we are proud that P.P.S. is one of the best schools of India.

Mr. Alfred D'Souza who conducted an exhaustive study in his book "The Indian Public Schools" writes as follows:

"Among British Public Schools, the most famous are known as the "Seven". These are Charter House, Eton, Harrow, Rugby, Shrewsbury, West Minster and Winchester. The masters of the schools in the sample were asked to rank the seven leading Indian Public Schools. According to 84 per cent of the masters (excluding Military schools) the following are the Indian equivalent of the British, Seven " Doon School, Mayo College, Modern School, Scindia, Lovedale, Sanawar and Punjab Public School. It should be noted that these schools are not listed here in an evaluative rank order."

"Let us today, as ex-students of The Punjab Public School, Nabha dedicate this day in the diamond Jubilee Year of our School to honour those noble souls or our Gurus, who were the solid pillars of strength of the School that are still serving it, even today. It is because of them that the school has survived all kinds of tremors over the years."

Compiled by Dr Jashanjot S. Bhangu (S-52,1967)