

## **2. SCHOOLS IN VADODARA - A BIRD'S EYE VIEW**

### **2.1 VADODARA... HISTORY**

**Vadodara**, also known as **Baroda**, is the third-most populated town in Gujarat after Ahmedabad and Surat, (the three towns with a population of over 1 million in Gujarat).

Baroda is situated on the banks of the river Vishwamitri (whose name is derived from the great saint Rishi Vishwamitra). The city was once called Chandravati, after its ruler Raja Chandan, then Viravati, the abode of the brave, and then Vadpatra because of the abundance of banyan trees on the banks of the Vishwamitri. From Vadpatra it derived its present name Baroda or Vadodara.

Baroda has a rich historical background. The ardent historians have traced Baroda's history over 2000 years and more. However, the recent threads can be picked up when the Mughal rule over the city came to an end in 1732, when Pilaji brought the Maratha activities in Southern Gujarat to a head and captured it. Except for a short break, Baroda continued to be in the hands of the Gaekwads from 1734 to 1949.

The greatest period in the Maratha rule of Baroda started with the accession of Maharaja Sayajirao III in 1875. It was an era of great progress and constructive achievements in all fields.

Maharaja Sayajirao was one of the foremost administrators and reformers of his times. It was the dream of this able administrator to make Baroda an educational, industrial and commercial centre and he ensured that his dream would come true.

He initiated a series of bold socio-economic reforms. He attached great importance to economic development and started a number of model industries to encourage initiative, and then handed back the working industries to private enterprises. He started model textile and tile factories. It is as a result of his policy of industrial development that Baroda is today one of the most important centres for textile, chemical and oil industries today. He introduced a number of social

reforms. In no department of administration has the far-sighted policy of this wise ruler been more conspicuous than in education, and in none have the results been more real and tangible. He boldly introduced compulsory primary education and a library movement (the first of its kind in India) to augment his adult education scheme.

It was he who visualised a general scheme of development in all branches of knowledge at different stages, with the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda at the apex. Modern Baroda owes its beauty, its educational institutions and its masterpieces of architecture to the insight and vision of this great ruler.

There is a saying that nothing grows under the banyan tree, but this is not true of Baroda. Having witnessed the rise and fall of the empires and kingdoms of the Hindus, Pathans, Mughals and Marathas, it now occupies a unique position on the educational, cultural and industrial map of India. Yet, it has been fortunate enough to retain the beauty of its rich and varied past and proudly announce itself as the “sanskari Nagari” that is a “cultured city”.

## **2.2 SCHOOLS IN THE PAST**

The patronage of education in Vadodara was started with the age old Maharaja Sayajirao University and the city was built further on the academic infrastructure which can be proved by the presence of number of schools in the city.

The universalization of elementary education or universalization of primary education had been adopted as a national goal so that the weaker strata of the society which has equal right towards education can not be deprived of education which is the basic building block for further social development. This was the only way; government can bring in social equality amongst the people. Education for all was regarded as the international target and the national challenge for India for true empowerment and democratization.

With this view, many schools run by the municipal corporation of vadodara, were started. There are about 120 primary schools governed by Municipal Corporation of Vadodara, spread out in different corners of the city to impart education to the deprived section of the society so that the children get quality education at

affordable cost. Basically the government's policy to bring in social and economic equality amongst all had paved the way towards the state government run or the municipal run schools.

Unfortunately, in the process of catering to the poorest sections of the society, these government run schools were not able to concentrate on the quality of education they imparted. Their role changed from educating the future citizens of the country to mere spreading literacy to the masses. Again, these government schools were plagued by several problems including poor infrastructure, poor teacher attendance, bad teaching quality and complete lack of sensitivity to the communities they cater to.

### **2.3 SHIFT TOWARDS SELF-FINANCE SCHOOLS**

Due to the growing awareness about the quality of education provided by the private schools and the lack of government run school to compete with them, a silent revolution had begun in the field of education in Vadodara. Significantly, a higher number of primary schools had been registered with the district education office.

Looking at the growing expectations of the parents and the inability of the government run schools to fulfil the expectations of the society, the government liberalized the education policy. Thus the number of schools had increased in the city. According to the data provided by the district education office, apart from 131 schools managed by the Vadodara Municipal Corporation and 307 private schools, as many as 53 new primary schools were registered for the year 2001-02. This increase in the number of private schools did not stop here. More and more schools were registered in the following years. It would be surprising to note that the number of schools has considerably increased.

The development has raised serious doubts about the quality of education provided by the VMC run schools as several students have shifted to private schools. Again there is a great pressure on the government run schools to provide education to the economically poor students. In such circumstances self-finance schools would come as a great help to the government. The state government is

aiming for 100 per cent literacy, which is not possible without the support of the self-finance schools. Considering the same, the government has become soft as far as new registrations of private schools are concerned. However, schools that will not meet with the specified standards will be shut automatically as the parents have become attentive towards their child's education. In such a competitive scenario, the expectations of parents have become so high that no schools can afford to relax.

Though government schools provided with free rice at lunchtime, free books, and, of course, free tuition, but parents who care, would not dream of sending their children to such schools.

Parents are keen on quality of education that is being imparted in the schools and the overall development of their children rather than other benefits. Even the parent who could hardly afford costly education knows that government schools won't serve their needs.

Such parents make up the majority not only in Vadodara but throughout the country. Thus most of the parents started enrolling their wards in the private unaided schools.

## **2.4 PRESENT SCENARIO OF SCHOOLS IN VADODARA**

There are a number of schools in Vadodara, catering to different strata of society. Apart from schools governed by the State and the Central level, there are a lot of schools run under an autonomous body. With the liberalization, education sector in India is also getting decentralized gradually with the number of government run schools becoming lesser and lesser and schools run by Charitable Trust or Private bodies increasing in number. The aims and style of functioning of schools governed by government bodies are very different than that of private bodies.

However, there lies diversity amongst the self-finance schools also. The different schools of Vadodara form heterogeneous mix with wide range of differences in every aspect beginning from ideology, aim and goals to operational methods.

Again the heterogeneity exists not only in infrastructure but also in the education imparted to the students. Imparting quality education has become the buzzword of today. Every school boasts to be different from the other. Every school boasts to have something better than the rest.

Even the students and parents have become more selective and the definition of good school has become more concrete than ever before. Constant vigilance, continuous improvement in the working of the school has become the order of the day.