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RESEARCH ARTICLE

IMPACT OF GANDHIAN VALUES ON NATIONAL SERVICE SCHEME IN INDIA

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Abstract

The idea of social service in India became much popular in the time of Mahatma Gandhi who always urged his followers for service to the common people. He calls upon the Indian youth to indulge their energy and spirit to the work of nation building. After Independence, the Government of India introduced National Service Scheme (NSS), a student's social service scheme for youth and social development. The National Service Scheme was started to establish a meaningful linkage between the Campus and the Community. Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation, believed in "Manava Seva ya Madhava Seva" Service to man is service to God, he had recognised that the country could not progress in a desired direction until the student youth, who are committed, sincere and dedicated to the nation were motivated to work for the upliftment of the villages/slums/ community. In this paper author would like to establish the relationship between Gandhian values or Gandhian philosophy with the National Service Scheme.

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Introduction:-

"Your beliefs become your thoughts. Your thoughts become your words. Your words become your actions. Your actions become your habits. Your habits become your values. Your values become your destiny."

– M.K. Gandhi

The development of a nation is speculated upon the contributions and sacrifices of many stalwarts whose personal philosophy, ideas on education, and social change rejuvenate an entire nation of people. Mahatma Gandhi led this country to the goal of attaining independence through his path of nonviolence¹ from the second decade of the twentieth century^{2,3}. He dedicated his entire life to the welfare of humanity. He was the pioneer whose philosophy and leadership changed the entire world. He led India to the path of light from the darkness of superstition, oppression and medieval ideology. Before as well as after independence, Gandhi bestowed upon the students and youth of this country the responsibility of uplifting and developing the conditions of the poor working class farmers and all people belonging to backward socio-economic condition. He wisely gave this responsibility to the youth whose energetic participation in the Independence Movement ensured India's freedom⁴.

It has been 75 years since Independence, Gandhian values and philosophy remains the only path for developing a strong ideological consciousness in today's youth. Mahatma Gandhi always dreamt about the spontaneous participation of students and youth in the construction of an ideal society⁵. The youth is the storehouse of strength and courage. In order to turn this dream into reality and for the sake of social development and overall wholesome

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development of students and youth, the Indian Government started a social service based project for students named the National Service Scheme (NSS) on 24th September, 1969, nearing the centenary of Gandhi's birth. The main goal of this scheme is to engage school, college and university going students to develop communications with working class people in villages and cities. Students must be aware of village and slum people's problems, physically and intellectually engage in solving these problems, and develop their own self-confidence, positive outlook, leadership qualities, and moral values in order to participate in social development and contribute to building the country's future⁶.

Historical background of NSS and its relationship with Gandhi

The National Service Scheme will be in the forefront, when we consider the popular youth moments in the post independent India. However, it was in the year 1958, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru took initiative and advised the academicians to suggest the programme to involve student Youth in Social Service activities. Since then various committees were appointed, first a Committee was appointed under the chairmanship of Dr.C.D.Deshumkh to prepare a scheme for compulsory national service by students prior to their admission for degree courses. At the second stage Prof.K.G.Saiyidain had undertaken a study of National Service by student youth in several countries and he had recommended that the national service may be introduced on a Voluntary basis. The Education Commission was appointed under the Chairmanship of Dr. B.S. Kothari in 1964, after the study, he recommended that students at all stages of education should be associated with some form of Social Service. This was taken into account by the State Education Ministers during their conference in April, 1967, and they recommended that at the University students could be permitted to Join the National Cadet Corps (NCC), which was already in existence on a Voluntary basis an alternative to NCC they could be joined in the form of a new programme that is National Service Scheme (NSS).

In the pursuance of these recommendations the NSS programme was started on 24th September, 1969, during the Mahatma Gandhi Centenary years. Since Gandhi had inspired the Youth to participate in the National Movement such as Non Cooperation, Civil disobedience and Quit India Movements for the Independence of India and for the Social upliftment of the downtrodden masses. Then the Union Education Minister Dr. V.R.V.Rao, launched the NSS Programme in 37 Universities covering all the states initially 40,000 student volunteers were enrolled in this NSS Scheme. This scheme has tremendous effect upon the youth one ray of hope could be the proper utilization of youth power through NSS programmes in universities and colleges at present the scheme is extended to all the State and Universities in the country.

Gandhian philosophy is that the human values and not the market should govern life. Service of the teeming millions, the poor – **Daridranarayan**⁷ - is of the utmost importance. Gandhi presents the humane face of development. Basic objectives of the Gandhian scheme of holistic development are- (1) human development (including moral development) for capability expansion, (2) development in a balanced way through manual and intellectual labour (development of body, mind and soul), (3) development with social justice, rights and freedom. This is in accordance with the principle of social and human development. (4) Attainment of self-sufficiency and self-reliance through rural development, (5) reduction in poverty through the generation of additional income and employment⁸.



NSS Symbol

The Symbol of the National Service Scheme is based on the 'Rath' wheel of the Konark Sun Temple situated in Orissa. These giant wheel of the Sun Temple portray the cycle of creation, preservation and release, and signify the movement in life across time and space. The design of the symbol, a simplified form of the Sun-chariot wheel

primarily depicts movement. The wheel signifies the progressive cycle of life. It stands for continuity as well as changed and implies the continuous striving of NSS for social transformation and upliftment.



NSS Badge

The NSS symbol is embossed on the NSS badge. The NSS volunteers wear it while undertaking any programme of community service. The Konark wheel in the symbol has eight bars which represent the 24 hours of the day. Hence, the badge reminds the wearer to be in readiness for service of the nation round the clock i.e. for 24 hours. The Red colour in the badge indicates that the NSS Volunteers are full of blood i.e. lively, active energetic and full of high spirit. The navy blue colour indicates the cosmos of which the NSS is a tiny part, ready to contribute its share for the welfare of the mankind.

Influence of Mahatma Gandhi behind the foundation of NSS

The National Service Scheme was started to establish a meaningful linkage between the Campus and the Community. Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation, believed in “Manava Seva ya Madhava Seva” Service to man is service to God, he had recognised that the country could not progress in a desired direction until the student youth, who are committed, sincere and dedicated to the nation were motivated to work for the upliftment of the villages/slums/ community. For Gandhiji the villages, where majority of the population lived, represent the country, i.e. India. Therefore, for the national reconstruction and national resurgence it was deemed fit that the student youth, teachers and intellectuals should be properly sensitized and utilized for strengthening the Indian Society as a whole and rural community in particular.

Reflection of Gandhian Values in NSS

The main concern of Mahatma Gandhi’s educational and social philosophy was service and development of social awareness. Service gives birth to love for the motherland. Gandhiji said, “The end of all education should surely be service”. Students develop social awareness and responsibility through involvement in acts of social service. According to Gandhiji education is completed through three main subjects- Naturalism, Idealism and Pragmatism⁹.

The National Service Scheme strives the youth to develop a positive attitude towards the community and commitment to work for the upliftment of the weaker sections and downtrodden people in the society. The National Service Scheme also creates a module to involve the students youth for the process of social development in the country by inculcating the qualities such as, social consciousness, service to the community, and sense of responsibility, personality development and self-confidence. This helps them to contribute towards National Integration, attaining perfection, credibility, stability and maturity. The NSS proves to groom the student youth into an active citizen, which brings about satisfaction to an individual and promotes peace in the community.

Community Service rendered by the NSS volunteers has covered several aspects like adoption of villages for intensive development work, carrying out the medico-social survey’s setting up of medical centres, programmes of mass immunization, sanitation drives, adult education programmes for the weaker sections of the community, blood donation, helping inmate of orphanages and the physically handicapped etc., The NSS Volunteers did commendable relief work during natural calamities emergencies such as cyclones, floods, famine, earthquake, etc. from time to time all over the country. They have also done useful work in organizing campaigns for eradication of social evils, and popularisation of the national accepted objectives like nationalism, democracy, secularism, social harmony and

development of scientific temper. These all are completely related to Gandhi's philosophy like self development by getting social leadership skills and a sense of fraternity, grass root development, sadbhavana and emphasis on awareness and discipline.

The Motto of NSS based on Gandhian Values

The Motto of NSS "Not Me But You" is a sense of expression of face it appears to be very simple and short, but behind it lies a lot of meaning. It is very deep and suggestive and is quite in keeping with the spirit of NSS service for others.

The expression stands for two things. (i) For getting and surrendering the Self, and (ii) Rendering selfless service for others. The word "Not" before 'me' is to reduce the self to enhance the importance of others. The abridged expression "Not me but you" can be simply expanded as follows: I do not live for me but for you. The world is not only for me but for you also.

The motto of NSS reminds us of the words of Swami Vivekananda "Not I but Thou" which advise us to forget ourselves completely whatever we may be according to the swami the watchword of all moral good, is "Not I But, Thou" here is the world and it is full of misery. We should try to lessen the misery and make it worth living for all.

This expresses the essence of democratic living and upholds the need for selfless service and appreciation of the other man's point of view, and also to show consideration for fellow human beings. It underlines that the welfare of an individual is ultimately dependent on the welfare of society as a whole therefore it should be the aim of the NSS to demonstrate this motto in its day-to-day programme. It develops love, devotion, dedication, determination and personality development. They received to concrete social use. It has been felt that the primary aim of the scheme is to enable the students to upgrade their personality.

Gandhian Value of Nation building and its relation with the Aims of NSS

For Gandhi rebuilding villages, in accordance with the principles of self-sufficiency and decentralization, was very important. To quote him, "I would say that if the village perishes, India will perish too"¹⁰. The nearest approach to civilization based on nonviolence was the erstwhile village republic of India¹¹. According to him, cities have so far exploited the villages, and that has resulted in the gap between villages and cities in education, culture, facilities, employment. Now a new partnership between cities and villages is needed.

The rift between the rich and the poor is increasing in our times and the exploitation involved in the process of the amassing wealth is blatant. Gandhi was sure that too much emphasis on materialism leads to violence and unhappiness. He criticized the exploitative and materialistic Western civilization and believed that India cannot be a replica of that. Many western thinkers also have noticed trends of exploitation and dehumanization trends of industrialization. Gandhi's critique of the exploitative and dehumanizing modern western civilization is relevant today, as it makes us aware of the fact that economic progress devoid of moral elements will not ultimately help the people but will make internal divisions and dissensions more intense. Parekh suggests that Gandhi's critique was directed to modern, materialistic society rather than the Western culture in general. He argues that the modern society is built and maintained by massive violence, and relationships are characterized by struggle, mastery, subjugation, domination, victory and defeat¹².

On the other hand, the main aim of NSS is Service through education and personality development, it is planned for educated youth and programmed around youth and it tops the potentials of Youth and for National construction and national regeneration. Above all understanding a human beings their needs, feelings, and work for their betterment. The NSS develops the social ethics involves, several human values like sincerity, honesty, discipline, loyalty, freedom, dignity of labour, individuality, understanding other Co-operation, motivation, equality, integrity, brotherhood, character building and thinking for others are the prime request of NSS Volunteers and functionaries. Aims of NSS activities with regards to Nation building are – awareness on environmental protection, health awareness programme, literacy programme, community development and student development etc.

Life Skills gained through NSS has an inherent connection to Gandhian Values

The overall objective of the National Service Scheme, as envisaged originally was Service to the Community, offered while undergoing instruction in educational institutions. It was sought to arouse the social consciousness of students and provide them with the opportunity to work with the people around the educational campuses creatively

and constructively and to put the education they received to concrete social use. It has been felt that the primary aim of the Scheme is to enable the students to upgrade their personality and experience through community service to the community is a means through which such improvements is sought to be achieved.

1. It develop a sense of respect to the Principles, Values, rights and obligations promote national unity, Integrity, nonviolence, secularism, democracy, equality before law.
2. It develops sense of respect for our great historic and cultural heritage.
3. It promotes spirit of respect and scientific attitude to others encourage them to fight against evil practices corruption dogmatism, caste system, communalism etc.
4. The NSS understands the community in which they work.
5. Identify the needs of problems in the community in the solution of which they can be involved.
6. Develop among them a sense of social and civic responsibility.
7. They apply their education in finding practical solutions to individual and community problems.
8. Develop competence required for group living and sharing responsibilities.
9. Acquire leadership qualities and democratic attitude.
10. Develop capacity to meet emergencies and natural disasters.
11. The NSS creates the awareness of the national and international issue and prepare them to play an effective role in the construction of national and international economic politics and social systems.

Through these NSS objectives Volunteers gained some life skills which positively connected with Gandhian values. These are – a) Self Actualisation¹³, b) Empathy^{14, 15, 16}, Interpersonal Skills, Effective Communication, Problem Solving, Decision Making, Creative Thinking, Coping with Stress, Coping with emotions.

Gandhian Values and NSS in context to present situation of youth

National Service Scheme envisioned by the Indian government for the development of youth, students and society has its foundation firmly set in Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of service. Gandhiji was quite anxious about the divide between knowledge and work, and mind and body in the British education system. He strongly appealed to the Indian students to reject the materialistic education system and greedy work culture and become self-reliant and self-confident. Gandhiji inspired the youth and students to come out of institutionalized education, connect with the common people, understand their problems and create solutions. He called forth the youth to always be ready and courageously face all the problems that might endanger the youth and student body.

If Gandhian values are sincerely inculcated in the youth, so that they become more vibrant and active in Nation building. Hence through NSS, Gandhian values are inculcated in the youth making them healthy partners in Nation building. Gandhian philosophy is best suited for the present day situation and needs to be epitomized among the youth. It will lead to positive nation building with trust, prosperity, harmony and happiness.

Gandhiji imagined education as a powerful weapon that draws its power from a strong value system and helps the students fight against communalism, fatalism, mysticism, superstitions and all kinds of social backwardness. Hence after Independence the Indian government established the National Service Scheme based on Gandhiji's ideals to inculcate social values, citizenship ideals and social responsibility in students, inspire students to make connections with the larger society, teach them teamwork and responsibility, develop in them leadership qualities and democratic ideals, teach practice of communal harmony and protection of national solidarity, develop in them strong personalities, social consciousness, discipline, individual and social health, teach them to respect labour, achieve self-sufficiency and look at physical labour from creative perspectives. In this was the National Service Scheme is intrinsically linked to Gandhian philosophy in its goals and methods¹⁷.

Gandhian values and principles adopted in NSS activities

Article 45 and article 47 of the Indian Constitution provides glimpses of Gandhi's values and philosophy. Article 45 provides for free and compulsory education for children. The State shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years. NSS volunteers also helping children in villages and slums in providing education.

Article 47 mentions that duty of the State to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living and to improve public health The State shall regard the raising of the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people and the improvement of public health as among its primary duties and, in particular, the State shall endeavour to bring

about prohibition of the consumption except for medicinal purposes of intoxicating drinks and of drugs which are injurious to health. NSS volunteers invite doctors for health camps, awareness camps in different health issues and blood donation camps. Gandhiji's 'Swacchta Hi Seva' led NSS volunteers to undertake cleanliness drives.

Conclusion:-

NSS volunteers constantly work for nation development on various contemporary issues. At present 40 lakh NSS volunteers are working directly in more than 30,000 educational institutions through 657 Universities and 51 Educational Directorates of Secondary School and Directorates of Polytechnics. NSS volunteers work in 50 thousand villages/colonies/slums on education, health, environment, different awareness programmes, response to natural disasters and many other developmental areas. These NSS volunteers are oriented to become real contributors in national development while pursuing the main objective of personality development through community services. The major contribution is seen in the field of plantation, blood donation, pulse polio immunization, different awareness activity and work in the disaster relief and rescue during natural calamities. These vibrant groups of young men and women volunteers have contributed a lot to the social development in all these years and a number of innovative activities are being carried out by them in the community. NSS has adapted and evolved from the field of voluntary community services to systematic adoption of programmes on community development as well as personality development.

The University Grants Commission expressed satisfaction after reviewing the work of NSS for almost the last 53 years in the development of students and society and declared "National Service scheme as an Extension under the third dimension of the university system"¹⁸. It is also recommended the Vice-Chancellors of all Universities in the country to include NSS as an optional subject in the curriculum.

The service oriented institution that was created following Mahatma Gandhi's ideology of social and educational development, has successfully progressed for 53 years. In a recent survey by the government it is found that - "National service scheme has been a well introduced and ideologically motivated Scheme of the Government of India and that NSS is one of the greatest experiments in the field of youth work in the world"¹⁹. In conclusion it can be said that Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy and values of social and educational development lies at the core of the aims and directives of the National Service Scheme; and the proud volunteers are forever working towards fulfilling them.

"The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others".

– M.K. Gandhi, 1869

Notes and References:-

1. With Gandhi, the notion of nonviolence attained a special status. He not only theorized on it, he adopted nonviolence as a philosophy and an ideal way of life. He made us understand that the philosophy of nonviolence is not a weapon of the weak; it is a weapon, which can be tried by all.
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5. M.K.Gandhi, India of my Dreams Compiled R.K.Prabhu, (Ahmedabad: Navajiban Mudralaya, 1947), p.5
6. NSS Manual, Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports, Govt. of India.
7. Daridranarayana is an axiom enunciated by the late-19th century Indian sage Swami Vivekananda, espousing that service to the poor is equivalent in importance and faithfulness to service to God. This exposition was a result of Vivekananda's wanderings in the country for two years, when he personally experienced the deprivation of the lower classes in the country. Vivekananda then referred to feeding the poor as "Narayana Seva", and preached for "Daridra Narayana Seva", meaning service to the poor as service to Narayana. Though the term was coined by Vivekananda, it was popularized by Mahatma Gandhi.
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9. S. Rukmini & M. Vasimalairaja, Mahatma Gandhi Views on Education, (New Delhi: Indian Council of Social Science Research, 2020).
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12. B.Parekh, Gandhi's Political Philosophy: A Critical Examination, (New Delhi: Ajanta Publications, 1995), pp.20 – 26
13. Self-actualization, in Maslow's hierarchy of needs, is the highest level of psychological development, where personal potential is fully realized after basic bodily and ego needs have been fulfilled. Self-actualization was coined by the organismic theorist Kurt Goldstein for the motive to realize one's full potential: "the tendency to actualize itself as fully as possible is the basic drive ... the drive of self-actualization." Carl Rogers similarly wrote of "the curative force in psychotherapy – man's tendency to actualize himself, to become his potentialities ... to express and activate all the capacities of the organism."
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