

## IMPORTANCE OF GANDHIAN IDEAS OF 'NAI TALIM' IN CONTEMPORARY INDIA

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### ABSTRACT

*Education is the key to the development and prosperity of any society. Education is a process where learning involves three components i.e., learner, curriculum, and teachers. Teaching learning should focus on children's social, moral, aesthetic, theoretical, and vocational development. Gandhi mainly aims at the education in mother tongue and asked for activity centered education to make the children skilled and independent. Gandhi wanted to construct small, self-reliant communities with its ideal citizens being all industrious, self-respecting, and generous individuals living in small co-operatives and communities. Therefore, this article explores Gandhi's idea of Nai Talim and how applicable it is to the growth of young people in contemporary India. The paper also explores the ideas of Nai Talim in terms in terms of educational curriculum and pedagogy and examines its role in contemporary India.*

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**Keywords:** Gandhi, Education, Nai Talim, Self-Reliant, Basic Education.

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### Introduction

Mahatma Gandhi's vision about education focuses on learning basic skills and all-round development of human personality that includes physical, intellectual, and spiritual development, a key component of quality education. *Buniyadi Shiksha*, or 'Basic Education' also known as Nai Talim, was the foundation of educational practices as envisioned by Mahatma Gandhi. It was introduced in 1937 at Wardha and subsequently became known as Wardha Scheme or Basic National Education. It focuses on developing qualities that are necessary for building a non-violent sustainable society.

### Mahatma Gandhi's View on Education

Mahatma Gandhi considered basic education very important and valuable to give to India. It is also known by the names Wardha Yojana, Nai Talim, Buniyadi Talim, and Basic Education. On 23 October 1937, Gandhiji planned 'Nai Talim', which was given a nationwide practical shape. Gandhi's educational ideas diverged from those of his contemporaries, leading to initial opposition. He considered 'Nai Talim' his ultimate and most significant contribution to India. Throughout his life, Gandhiji passionately pursued truth and actively experimented to build a strong nation. This deep contemplation culminated in the development of the philosophy and process of Nai Talim, which held the potential to revolutionize not only India but also the global human society (Barua, 2008).

Consequently, Gandhi's dreams for the country remain unfulfilled to this day. Instead, India has been progressing under biased ideologies from educational, social, and economic perspectives. Gandhi often referred to Indian education as 'The Beautiful Tree' due to its societal control rather than government oversight. Inspired by Gandhi's phrase, 'The Beautiful Tree' Dr. Dharampal embarked on extensive research, delving into British documents and archival records from India, both in-country and abroad, dating back to the East India Company era and Sir Thomas Roe's time in India until the British left the country (Upadhyay, 2018).

All-round development of the best qualities found in the body, mind, and soul of the child and man is essential. Therefore, for the all-round development of the child, it is necessary to enhance his physical, mental, intellectual, and spiritual qualities. The new education was closer to the national

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civilization and culture. In addition, the community was associated with the basic occupations of life and the individual made a living through the basic craft learned. So, this education was related to the basic foundation of our life, due to which it was named 'Nai Talim' or 'Basic Education'.

### **Nai Talim**

Gandhi's educational experiments commenced at the Tolstoy Farm ashram in South Africa. However, it was during his time in *Sevagram*, amid the favor of the Independence struggle, that he penned his influential article in *Harijan*, outlining his fundamental pedagogical principles. He believed that the highest development of the mind and soul was attainable through such an educational system. It was crucial to teach every handicraft not merely mechanically but scientifically, with children understanding the reasons behind each process. Gandhi personally taught sandal-making and spinning using these principles, achieving positive outcomes. He acknowledged the value of history and geography but preferred imparting such general knowledge through oral transmission, as it proved more effective than reading and writing. The alphabet's symbols could be introduced later. Mathematics, in Gandhi's view, could be learned through hands-on handicraft work. He emphasized the utmost importance of primary education, which, according to him, should be equivalent to the present matriculation, excluding English (Kumari, 2016).

In the national education conference in Wardha on 22–23 October 1937, two model schools were established in Wardha. Subsequently, post-basic education and pre-basic education schools were developed after Gandhi's passing. However, the National Planning Commission established by the central government opposed Gandhi's vision of Basic Education for various reasons. Krishna Kumar noted that the implementation of Gandhi's educational plan could not withstand the 'development decade' of the 1960s when India's economy and politics shifted into a new phase, marked by the influence of Western advanced economies on Indian agriculture and a centralization of power. As a result, Gandhi's educational vision faced challenges and did not fully materialize in the broader education system (Dudhkohle, 2018).

Gandhi's educational model was intricately tied to his alternative vision of the social order. He believed that the core of his basic education lay in shaping an ideal society comprised of small, self-reliant communities. According to Gandhi, the ideal citizen embodied industriousness, self-respect, and generosity, living harmoniously within a small cooperative community. In Gandhi's concept of 'Nai Talim' teachers played a distinct role. They were not merely professionals confined to rigid curricula and abstract standards. Instead, they engaged in direct dialogue with their students, seeking to establish a genuine rapport. Gandhi believed that a teacher who learned from their disciples and considered themselves as students of their students was truly valuable. This approach emphasized a symbiotic learning process, benefiting both teacher and student (Vaishnav, 2019).

Gandhi's disciple, Vinobha Bhave, took the idea of Nai Talim further, viewing it as a means of social transformation. Central to this concept was breaking down the barriers between learning and teaching, as well as between knowledge and work. The traditional teacher-student hierarchy was redefined to view each other as fellow workers. The teacher's expertise lay in a specific craft or skill (*kala/hunar*), and they derived sustenance from it, rather than relying on a teaching salary. Students lived, worked, and grew alongside the teacher and their families, immersing themselves in the skill as part of a way of life, guided by a code of ethics and interconnected relationships (Deshpande, 2021).

Buniyadi Shiksha, another aspect of Gandhi's educational philosophy, addressed the dialectic between human beings and machines or technology, representing a broader global concern. Gandhi emphasized handicrafts like weaving, metalwork, pottery, and spinning, as they symbolized values of self-sufficiency (*Swaraj*) and independence (*Swadeshi*). This focus on craftsmanship aimed to retain human dignity and counter the overpowering influence of mechanization and industrialization. In essence, Gandhi's educational ideas not only offered an alternative vision of society but also sought to foster a holistic and empowering learning experience that connected individuals to their roots, their community, and their sense of self-reliance (Takwale & Deshmukh, 2010).

### **Basic Principles of the Nai Talim Education System**

- The duration of the course of basic education is of 7 years.
- Free and compulsory education should be given to boys and girls in the age group of 7 to 14 years.
- Medium of instruction is the mother tongue.

- Study of Hindi language is compulsory for boys and girls.
- Complete education is related to basic craft.
- To make self-supporting by making a good craftsman by giving education of the chosen craft.
- Craft education should be given in such a way that the child can understand its social and scientific importance.
- Importance was given to manual labor so that one could earn a living through the learned craft.
- Education should be closely related to children's life, home, village, and village industries, handicrafts, and businesses.
- Things made by the children which can be used and by selling them, they can spend some money on the school.
- There is co-education till the fifth grade and the same curriculum should be kept for boys and girls.
- In classes VI and VII, girls can take Home Science instead of Basic Craft.
- There is a system of separate schools for boys and girls after the fifth grade.
- The level of the course should be equivalent to the current matriculation and the education of English and religion has not been given in the course.
- There is an education system of Sanskrit, commerce, modern Indian languages, etc. in seventh and eighth grade (Takwale & Deshmukh, 2010).

In his Wardha education plan, Mahatma Gandhi explained the rationale for excluding religious education, stating, "We have consciously avoided including religious education in our plan, as we fear that the religions currently taught and followed tend to create conflicts rather than fostering harmony" (Kumari, 2016, pp. 175-179). Gandhi firmly believed that children should receive an education that embodies the essence of all major religions. He recognized that the true essence of religion transcends mere words and books. Instead, it can only be imbibed through the daily actions and conduct of the teacher, influencing and guiding the child's understanding and values.

### **Nai Talim School**

In the schools of Nai Talim, work is done for 5 hours daily which is as follows:

<b>Sr. No.</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Time</b>
1	Basic Craft	3 hours, 20 minutes
2	Mother Tongue	40 minutes
3	Music, Painting, and Maths	40 minutes
4	Social Study and General Knowledge	30 minutes
5	Physical Education	10 minutes
6	Recess	10 minutes

### **Nai Talim Curriculum**

Gandhi's educational framework, known as the Basic Education System, was action-oriented and aimed at nurturing the complete human being by fostering physical, intellectual, and spiritual growth. The curriculum of this system encompassed a diverse range of subjects. New crafts tailored to local living conditions, such as agriculture, spinning, weaving, woodwork, cardboard work, metalwork, horticulture, and leatherwork, held a prominent place in the education system, reflecting Gandhi's emphasis on craft-centered learning.

Gandhi strongly advocated using the mother tongue as the medium of instruction in schools, recognizing its effectiveness in expression and idea transmission. Mathematics, in his vision, was to be integrated with real-life situations, connecting various mathematical processes with practical applications like weighing, arithmetic, algebra, and geometry, all while providing basic training in crafts.

To foster personal and social qualities, children were encouraged to learn about history, geography, civics, and modern events. Developing a scientific attitude was essential, and subjects like nature study, life science, physiology, health science, chemistry, botany, astronomy, social studies, stories of great inventors and scientists, art, music, painting, physical education, exercise, and games were incorporated into the curriculum. For girls in the fourth and fifth classes, home science was introduced (Singh & Vikaskumar, 2018).

Furthermore, music and painting were included to stimulate genuine interest in students' education. In promoting the national language, Hindustani was made a compulsory subject in the school curriculum, emphasizing the importance of preserving and developing the linguistic heritage of the nation.

### **Teaching Methods**

In the Nai Talim school, special emphasis is placed on utilizing various technical tools and methods by teachers to engage students in learning different subjects. The approach encompasses activity-based education, audio-visual aids, contextual understanding, physical and mental well-being, intellectual maturity, appropriate subject materials, and teaching methods, conducive learning environments, motivational techniques, teacher's behavior, oral and written study techniques, prior knowledge utilization, project-based learning, charts, internet resources, and timely workshops. Technical equipment like computers, projectors, classroom resources, models, agricultural tools, and tablets are also incorporated to enhance the learning experience (Takwale & Deshmukh, (2010).

Gandhi's vision emphasizes craft-centered education, wherein students are taught various handicraft skills. He attached great significance to effective teaching methods, including teaching through self-experience and supporting the Samvaya method, which connects different subjects. Gandhi advocated for the use of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction, allowing children to access knowledge across all subjects in their native language. His teaching methods included lectures and the question-based approach, which facilitated better understanding for students. The training process in Nai Talim revolves around studying most subjects through real-life experiences in natural and social environments, incorporating hands-on learning. Gandhiji's pragmatic and naturalistic outlook guided the integration of these diverse methods, ensuring a comprehensive and effective educational experience for the students (Vaishnav, 2019, pp. 627-632).

### **Teacher-Student Interaction**

Teacher-Student Interaction is of paramount importance in the Nai Talim school. Recognizing the significance of prior knowledge in the teaching-learning process, this approach acknowledges that a student's existing knowledge shapes their further understanding and interest in a subject. Consequently, teachers skillfully utilize this prior knowledge in the classroom to enhance students' comprehension and engagement with the subject matter.

In the Nai Talim system, teachers place great emphasis on fostering self-discipline through their interactions with the students. They encourage responsible behaviour and install a sense of self-control in the students, creating a conducive learning environment. Furthermore, handicraft skills are deemed crucial in Nai Talim because they contribute to the holistic development of the students nurturing their minds, intellect, and physical abilities. By integrating handicraft skills into the curriculum, teachers facilitate meaningful interactions with students, thereby enhancing their overall understanding and making education more accessible (Upadhyay, 2018).

Nai Talim lays special emphasis on imparting relevant and practical knowledge, value education, and vocational training to students, equipping them with essential skills for earning a livelihood. By providing such comprehensive education, Nai Talim prepares students for a smoother and more successful future, empowering them to navigate life with confidence. In summary, the Nai Talim approach has proven successful in making students capable and well-prepared for their educational journey and beyond, emphasizing meaningful interactions, practical skills, and values essential for a fulfilling life.

Further, discipline holds a special place in the Nai Talim school, with an emphasis on cultivating self-discipline among the students. A notable example of discipline in action is the school's commencement at 10 am, where students themselves conduct the prayer meeting. Following this, they orderly proceed to their respective classes, forming a line outside, and upon entering the class, they collect their assigned tables and mats, arranging themselves for learning. Even in the evening, as the students prepare to leave, they responsibly gather their tables and bedding, returning them to their designated spots. Nai Talim attaches significant importance to various practical tasks like cleaning, gardening, handicrafts, cooking, dance, music, and computer education. When teaching science, the students are taken to the laboratory, ensuring a hands-on approach to learning.

### **Conclusion**

Nai Talim's education system aims to provide not only academic subjects but also vocational education, preparing students for their future livelihoods. To achieve this, teachers are required to possess a deep understanding of the timeless values found in diverse heritage and traditions. This

knowledge enables them to guide the teaching-learning process effectively. The essence of Nai Talim lies in making the learning experience enjoyable for the students, encouraging their curiosity, and nurturing their talents through a sensitive integration of various activities, textbooks, and instructional methods. This approach is essential for the progress and prosperity of society and humanity as a whole, as it equips children with the necessary skills and values to thrive in their lives.

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