



# Gandhian Idea of *Nai Talim* in Contemporary India: Possibilities and Challenges

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## ABSTRACT

*Quality education encourages social development and reduces social inequality and is a means to attain gender equality. Education fosters tolerance and contributes to a more sustainable society. It prepares people with knowledge, skills and self-reliance, which open avenues for expanding opportunities for employment and overall development of an individual. It gives people a voice and increases a nation's productivity and competitiveness, which is an instrument of social and political progress. Mahatma Gandhi's vision about quality 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, '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. The idea was firmly against exploitation and centralization. India is committed to achieving the goals as mentioned in the Agenda 2030 of the Sustainable Development Goals. Ensuring quality education is a crucial development goal that India seeks to achieve. In this backdrop, the paper argues that Nai Talim or Wardha Scheme could be a road map for an egalitarian and empowered Indian society. A major challenge India faces today is that whether our present education pattern capable of building a sustainable society. Does it provide the younger generation with the required knowledge base to become a responsible and conscious citizen? The paper will analyse the basic principles of Nai Talim in terms of educational curriculum and pedagogy and examine its role in contemporary India.*

**Keywords:** Gender equality, Nai Talim, Quality education, Social inequality, Sustainable goals, Sustainable society, Wardha scheme

## INTRODUCTION

According to Swami Vivekananda, "Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in the man". Which means all knowledge, spiritual and secular is being presented in the human

mind, as a huge banyan tree lies within a tiny seed. The ordinary meaning of education is knowledge of letters but education is one of the tools for achieving the long-cherished dreams and emerged to be a man or women with vision and voice of marginalized.

According to Gandhiji, “Education is an all-round drawing out the best in the child and man- In body mind and spirit.”

Education is a process where learning can be done with tripolar approaches (learner, curriculum, and the teacher). Teaching-learning processes were focused on the children social, moral, aesthetic, theoretical and vocational development. In present scenario reading- writing is to be considered as education but that is literacy, not education. The one who knows how to write and read is called literate not educated. There is a difference between literacy and education. Literacy defines only the eligibility of reading and writing where education steps more ahead beyond reading and writing. It is a path for structuring a sustainable society. Day to day the literacy rate is increasingly increasing in India but the quality of education get step-downs due to insufficient and improper structure.

The uses of the word, **Quality Education** are common with carelessly in everyday discussion especially among the policymakers and social thinkers. Everyone wants to deliver the quality education on the name of the expensive and facilitated structure of education with higher prices without any remarkable impression on the quality education served to the people. It is already been seen in the past attempts that huge amount of resources have been lavishly utilized in the name of improving the quality of education which is still far from the reach of humankind whose motive is holistic development. Gandhiji had strong opinion related to education- right from policymaking to manage the educational system. His vision about quality 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** ‘basic education’ also known as *Nai Talim* was introduced by Mahatma Gandhi in 1937 at Wardha and subsequently became known as Wardha Scheme or Basic National Education Scheme (Kumar, 2019). The scheme was the educational practices which focus on developing qualities which were necessary for building a non- violent sustainable society. It was meant to transform village children into a model villager. The motive was to link the children, whether of the villages or the town to all that is best and lasting India. It develops both the body and mind and helps the child’s root to the land with a glorious vision of the future in the realization of which he or she begins to take his or her share from the very commencement of his or her journey from ill-literacy to be literate. The idea was firmly against exploitation and centralization.

Although India has achieved enormous progress from the Millennium Declaration 2000 up to the MDG target year 2015 in having more primary age children across the economies that have been left behind (Ramachandran, 2016).

India is too committed for achieving the goals enlisted in the 2030 Agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals. The target of Sustainable Development in education is to **“ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning for all.”** At present, the Indian education system is not been able to enlighten the right path of direction to the youth and it does not provide them with opportunities for their all-round development and or make them self-reliant.

## **GANDHI AS EDUCATIONIST**

**“De Di Hame Azadi Bina Khhadga Bina Dhaal’  
Sabarmati Ke Sant Tune Kar Diya kamaal”.**

In the words of Mahatma Gandhi “literacy is not the end of education or even the beginning. It is only one of the means whereby man and women can be educated. Literacy in itself is no education”.

Education is a mean of value development. The motive of Gandhiji philosophy of education was to open avenues for social development and reducing social inequalities with reaching to gender equality and turn out good individuals being socially useful men and women who understand their place in and duty to the society they live. They also learn to put the needs of the community above their own petty pleasures and advantages. Gandhiji considered this aspect as an essential part of education and this is to be given not theoretically but by practical observance by the commencement of his or her journey from illiteracy to literate.

Gandhiji thought for education was a dynamic concept. He was devoted to the thought that education should bring about the development of the whole man or women. His educational visions were relevant to the life, needs and aspiration of the developing Indian society. He was a firm believer that teaching should be carried on through real-life phases related to livelihood and physical environment, by which whatever child learn get assimilated into his day to day activity. There is a unique feature in Gandhiji educational vision that “the application of the law of non-violence in the learning of the child so he can be a prospective citizen of the nation”. He was against the western education system of colonial rule which was far from the actual meaning of education and its purposes. He came out with a new pedagogy which builds a comprehensive system of education benefited for the uplift of the masses and the marginalized which came to

known as ‘New Education’, “National Basic Education”. The term ‘Basic’ is derived from the word ‘Base’ which term the bottom or the foundation of a thing upon which the whole things rests or is originated.

## **FEATURES OF QUALITY EDUCATION**

The nation which claims that he is offering quality education to their countrymen, it should ensure the presence of the following conditions:

- Learners who are healthy and participate for learning must be supported in learning by the community and families.
- The environment is healthy, safe, protective, and gender-sensitive and must be avail with adequate resources, facilities and opportunities.
- Content which is reflected in curricular and method for acquisition of basic skills, especially in the area of literacy and knowledge in that area such as gender, health, nutrition and peace.
- Results which encompass knowledge, skills, attitudes, should be linked to national integrity and society solidity.

### ***Nai Talim***

***Nai Talim*** was a step put forward by the Mahatma Gandhi the against colonial education system which was meant only to serve the colonial system and was far from the real meaning of education, innovation and overall development of the child.

## **CONCEPT**

Nai Talim, the concept means ‘New Education’ which is considered as education for life. It is synonyms of ‘basic education’ which was an extract of Gandhiji philosophy of education. It aims to develop a child with self-independence by availing him to use his learning’s and skills in life affairs. It is education that child-centred and related to the basic needs and interest of a child.

## **EVOLUTION**

On June 31, 1937, Mahatma Gandhi in “Harijan” a weekly journal published by Gandhiji shared his thought for education claiming that the colonial education is not only wasteful but also positively harmful (Gandhi, 2011).

To meet the remedies of colonial education system Gandhiji came up with an idea of new type education which he delivered to the nation in the period of colonial rule on 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1937 at Indian Education Conference held in Wardha (Gandhi, 2011). He discussed the various aspects of the proposed new scheme of education that further came to be known as ‘Wardha Scheme’ or ‘National Basic Education Scheme.’ The conference came to end up with the appointed a committee under the chairmanship of Dr Zakir Hussian to prepare a detailed education plan and curriculums. The other members of the committee were Prof. K.G. Saigidain, AryaNayakem, Vinoba Bhave, Kaka Kalekar, J.C. Kumarappa, Kishorilal, Prof. K.T. Shah, etc. The report was submitted in December 1937 and revised in April 1938(Gandhi, M. K., 2011). And the report came up with a new way of Education from then the Basic Education is also known as ‘*Nai Talim*’.

*Nai Talim* is being also remembered as a revolution in social and economic structure in Indian Education.

### **AIMS**

- Vocational Efficiency
- Cultural Development
- Spiritual Development
- Character Development
- Emphasized the 3 H’s : Hand, Head, and Heart
- Work Education through Economic activities and Craft based education
- The student should be inculcated with desirable values of culture
- Moral virtues like Righteousness, Integrity, Self-Restraint, Purity of Character should be sowed
- Self-realization should be the ultimate goal of education.

### **OBJECTIVES**

- Rural Engagement
- Community Engagement
- Cleanliness
- Dignity of labour
- Gender Equity

## **FUNDAMENTALS**

Basic Education scheme of Gandhiji is based on his vows and experiment's which were – Truth, Non-violence, Non-stealing, Self-discipline, Non-possession, Bread labour, Control of the palate, Fearlessness, Use of Swadeshi goods, Removing Social Inequalities and equality of all religions. So, these eleven vows lead his thought on Nai Talim and the fundamentals Nai Talim or Basic Education are-:

- All kind of education must be self-supporting in nature so that it can meet the education expenses.
- In this education system, the skill of fingers is to be utilized up to the final stage.
- All the students skillfully work with objects for some period in every day during school hours.
- The education must be imparted through the medium of the regional language.
- In this education, there is no place for sectional religious training. Universal ethics were given full scope.
- The scheme whether it is confined to the children or adults or male or female will find its ways to the homes of the learner.

## **PRINCIPLES**

- Free, compulsory and universal education- the primary education up to 07 to 14 years has to be provided free and compulsory to a child on a wide scale.
- The education to be based on Indian traditional culture.
- Medium- The primary medium of instruction to be in the mother tongue.
- Productive work- Importance to be given to the practical or productive craft for self-supporting through education.
- Trained educator- the educator should be the best character, well-trained and the knower of the subject.
- Management of school- The school should be administrated properly. The management should make an inspection periodically.
- Co-related- the subject has to be co-related with each other.
- Knowledge and work are not separate. Hard work should be the key to the success of education.

- Education must be originated from real-life experiences where others could get the chance to make new benchmarks.
- Child to be in the centre of education so that mind, soul and body can be developed together.
- Equity- equality- education should be based on creating a sense of brotherhood, co-operation and social service among the pupils.

## **IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

Globalization and digitalization connected the world. As a result, there is an emergence of culture mix, growing economy and speeded up the communication. The world is turning into more complex and uncertain. “Education for sustainable Development empowers the learner to take responsible actions for environmental integrity, economic viability and develop a sustainable society for his present and future generations with respecting the cultural diversity.”

## **EDUCATION IN CONTEMPORARY INDIA**

In the present scenario, Indian education has not able to provide the light of direction to the youth of the nation and it does not avail them with the opportunities for their all-round development and make them self- dependent. There are thousands of literate youth in the country, as the engineering degree holder, Master’s Degree holders, but it is sad to accept that only 30% of youth possess the employability skill. It determines that Indian education system is only producing degree holder not educated skilled human resource.

## **Issues and Challenges in Contemporary Indian Educational Scenario**

India has been a nation with unity in diversity as it is multi-cultural, multi-religious, and multi-linguistic. Every part of the nation has a distinct and different identity. Managing with multi aspirations of such people in a democratic nation is a challenge to the government. The various challenges are outlined here:

- Low level of literacy
- The gap between education, knowledge and literacy
- Literacy and Unemployment
- Privatization and Marketing strategy of the education system
- Lack of value education

- Curriculum issues
- Wrong societal outlook
- Lack of gender equality

### ***Nai Talim* as a paradigm in Contemporary Indian Education System**

The drivers of globalization continuously giving privilege to the white-collar and elite class over the middle suppress classes which have disconnected the dignity of labour from the education. The education system is fully concentrated on the textual knowledge as being only the certification of knowledge. *Nai Talim* is a paradigm of learning, working with the community and the availed technology at the surroundings which are today termed as Socially Useful Productive Works (SUPW). Though it revolves around the over all-round development of society and people.

Through Basic education or *Nai Talim* the barrier of class and caste, between educated and non-educated, manual, and intellectual can be meet out and social harmony and national integration can be created. The emphasis on the regional language and universal religion will help to meet out the fallacy of importance provided to English and religious education which mislead the society in the name of religious sayings. *Nai Talim* is a child-centred and activity and activity-oriented education system in which the child feel free to learn. Basic Education also targeted the inculcation of democratic, social and moral values in the child, respect for peace and non-violence and will initiate harmonious development of the body, mind, and soul.

### **Views on *Nai Talim***

“Our country simply cannot realizes its full potential if we are not able to contribute too meaningfully to economic development. Gandhiji’s *Nai Talim* promotes the dignity of labour and social equality and practices the harmonious combination of the body, mind and soul. Achieving this harmony is indeed the essence of education: harmonious development of different faculties and the ability to live in harmony.”

**Shri Venkaiah Naidu**  
**Honorable Vice- President of India**

“*Nai Talim* is equated to 3Hs and is the same as 4 pillars of UNESCO and the 4H of Abraham Lincoln- Head, Heart, Hand and Healthy Lifestyle. The 4 pillars deal with the process of learning (to learn, to do, to be, to live together).”

**Dr. T Karunakaran, Mentor**  
**Mahatma Gandhi National Council of Rural Education**



“If Nai Talim gets imprisoned into a system, it will be killed. If that should happen there will be no room for initiative and people will spend their time contriving how this piece of knowledge can be correlated with that activity. We must steer clear of that kind of thing.”

**Vinoba Bhave**

“Revolutions are disturbing and most people do not want to be disturbed. There were a few people of imagination and insight who welcomed Gandhiji’s educational revolution from the beginning, but most educationists voiced doubts.”

**Marjorie Sykes**

## **CONCLUSION**

The present paper discusses on certain fundamental ideas and the link between Gandhiji’s idea of education and the Agenda 2030 for sustainable development goals 4 which is Quality education for sustainable development. It strengthens and gives new status to Gandhi’s idea of Nai Talim in the current context of education for sustainable development. It also provides the route map for achieving the long-cherished dreams and emerged to be a man of vision and leader of marginalized. Nai Talim provides the new ground of education for all three dimensions of education- Tutor-Tutee-Tuition which is directly proportional to each other. It refers to the modern value education as well as preserves the old traditional Indian education.

The Kothari commission ‘1964-64’ which is known as the “Father of Indian Modern Education System” somehow also supports the views of Nai Talim (Mishra Anil Dutta, 2015). The key elements of both are similar. Gandhiji quoted “Education means an all draw out the best child in man-body, mind, and spirit” Nai Talim creates meaning to this purpose.

Nai Talim only a change makes a child self-dependent. It promotes the village child development and facilitates with the opportunities of earning and also realizes the way of success where they stand independently. Now it’s the time to hold your hand with each other to make the unity of our nation and unity for the nation. Jai Hind Jai Bharat

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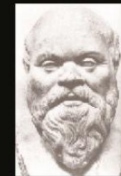
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