

The Influence of Gandhi's Philosophy on the NSS: Fostering Self Reliance and Rural Development

Nilanjana Sarva¹ and Sanjay Kumar Singh^{2*}

¹Student, School of Management, O.P. Jindal University, Raigarh, Chhattisgarh, India.

^{2*}Professor of English, Department of Humanities, O.P. Jindal University, Raigarh, Chhattisgarh, India.

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*Corresponding author: Nilanjana Sarva

Abstract: Mahatma Gandhi had a vision of Sarvodaya (the welfare of all) which he considered to be realized through Gram Swaraj (village self-governance). Gandhi thought independence and progress could be achieved through self-reliance and rural development. His philosophy supported the idea of a decentralized system of government, management of resources and cottage industries for economic self-sufficiency. The National Service Scheme (NSS) regards Gandhi's ideals as motivating force behind the programmes which involve our youth in community service and rural development. Students actively join community-driven projects that work on sustainable agriculture, rural sanitation, adult literacy and skill development for the youth. This experience brings awareness among youth concerning rural issues and social responsibility. This method aims at sporting the rural development and helping in the making of socialized citizens that become fundamentally self-reliant for himself as well as for the rural people. NSS's following of Gandhiji's principles shows that the vision of Gandhiji is still relevant today in uplifting people. Gandhi's self-reliance, rural upliftment and community service philosophy has influenced NSS (National Service Scheme) in India. The NSS, based on Gandhian principles, strives to develop the youth's personality through community service and voluntary work. Gandhi's ideals and their impact on NSS is the emphasis. The NSS programme aims at making student self-reliant. As a whole, NSS embodies Gandhi's vision of a self-sufficient society through participative development, skill building and social awareness. Through service learning and grassroots development, NSS continues to be a mechanism for the fulfilment of Gandhi's vision of self-reliant India.

Keywords: Sarvodaya, Gram Swaraj, Self-reliance, Social responsibility, Nation-building

INTRODUCTION

The National service scheme (NSS) in India has been influenced greatly by the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi. A study looks in detail at rural development as well as self-reliance ideals of Gandhi and how these reflect into the schemes. The present study focuses on the incorporation of Gandhi's Sarvodaya, Gram Swaraj in NSS. The set objective is to evaluate whether the entire concepts of Gandhi are taken in NSS or only taken parts of it. By analyzing the NSS programs and initiatives, the study shows how volunteering through the Gandhian approach can produce change in the society such as services, sustainable rural development, and sensitivity towards youth. The NSS must be strengthened by reconfiguring its relationship with the Sant M, a criticism of the Sant M, and a criticism of the Sant M internal social and economic structure. This study adds knowledge to the strength of Gandhi's relevance to India's social development programs. Further, it shows how his philosophy is relevant even today.

NSS: Introduction

The NSS or the National Service Scheme is nothing but a shadow of Mahatmas Gandhi and his philosophy. It is of great significance to the development of India since social development and youth development are critical (and mrg) concerns in a country. The NSS was launched in 1969. It has been a big move in favor of self-dependence. Also, it is

directed at the rural development. The NSS has heavily resorted to the thoughts of Gandhi. These concepts are Sarvodaya and Gram swaraj. Non-violence, self-reliance, and social justice are the ideals of Gandhi which have certainly affected the goals and operations of NSS. This scheme is further enhanced by the fact that he insists on the village-based development and the empowerment of rural masses. The NSS has made the principles of Gandhi a reality by involving the young generation in numerous community service procedures that strive to bring about rural development and instill social awareness in the young generation in India. This report tries to explore the different ways through which the NSS has been shaped by Gandhi and his insistence on self-reliance and rural development. The study attempts to illuminate practical implementation of Gandhian principles in India today by analyzing the activities of the scheme, experience as a volunteer and its effects on the rural population. It also seeks to investigate the challenges of the Gandhi edifice in the contemporary era and give recommendations of how NSS can be more efficient in the realization of its purposes. These aspects of the application of the philosophy of NSS Gandhi in the modern society issues shows that the ideologies are timeless. With India struggling with the issue of rural development and youth empowerment, it is notable to examine how ideas of Gandhi influenced policies and programmes such as NSS to map out the programmes and policies of sustainable social development in the future.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review on Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy and the national service scheme (NSS) covers rural development, self-reliance, and education in India.

The NSS was started in 1969 on the centenary of Gandhi with the aim of instilling self-confidence, social conscience and sense of responsibility in students through the implementation of social service projects, and development of personality. NSS activities include nation building, environmental protection, health awareness, literacy, community and student development. Volunteers engage in several social welfare activities by directly working in educational institutions, villages, and slums.

NSS participation motivates students and makes them feel good, especially in higher education, research shows. This study compares the achievement motivation of NSS and non NSS male students in the Boudh district of Odisha. According to the study findings, motivation is the essential element of life. The organized training programs through NSS will be useful to the students. It will also create an environment for the same.

Gandhi's philosophy on gram vikas stresses on self-sufficiency, education and empowerment for development. Panchayati Raj or village Swaraj consists of his idea of democratic decentralization under which each village is a self-sufficient republic linked organically with larger spatial bodies. The Panchayati Raj scheme uses local resource for development in agriculture and industry sector. Gandhi believed a proper system of education should encompass the intellectual, physical and moral development of children. Nai Talim, or basic education, was his solution. He said that the colonial education is above the head of the people and people in village India

certainly do not want it. Gandhi suggested a syllabus connected theoretical courses with practical subjects to make for self-reliance.

Gandhi's emphasis on Swadeshi principle is all about becoming economically independent by not relying too much on foreign nations and imports by becoming self-reliant and using locally produced items. This idea is related to his larger demand for Swaraj (self-rule) in which he views the economic independence to be essential for political freedom.

Gandhi's principles have played a crucial role in shaping post-independence educational reforms, particularly in the context of policy making that promotes rural development, vocationalisation, and community participation. His focus has a big impact on social progress and economic independence because it helps create communities that can look after themselves and become economically independent.

In recent years, the Khadi and Village Industries sector, which owes its origin to Gandhi, has grown significantly and has the potential for exports, production and rural employment. Khadi is an exclusive fabric that stands for economic empowerment, social equality, and nationalism. Gandhi's vision for Khadi was not just for self-sufficiency but as an instrument to empower people and bring all Indians together.

To sum up, the philosophy of Gandhi continues to affect the different spheres of rural development, education, and self-reliance in the case of India through different programs of NSS and promotion of Khadi and Village Industries. These methods make eco-friendly lifestyle possible for natural and healthy living with a sustainable approach.

NSS Symbol

The NSS symbol is inspired by the 'Rath' wheel of the Konark Sun Temple located in Odisha, India. The wheel shows how creation changes patterns but creates a cycle of stabilisation that promotes liberation. NSS has been working for social change which is symbolic of continuity and change.



NSS Badge

The badge that volunteers wear when engaged in community service is called the NSS badge. It bears the emblem of NSS. The colours of the badge red and blue encourage NSS volunteers to remain active and vigorous while engaging in the service of nation-building social activities. Also, it keeps the volunteers always ready to serve when the need arises. The red colour stands for the volunteer's vitality, energy, and spirit, while the navy-blue colour stands for the universe. It shows NSS is a small effort but one that plays a significant role in making humanity better.



Gandhi's Principles for Social Development Sarvodaya

Gandhi originally used the word "Sarvodaya," which translates to "Universal Uplift" or "Progress of All," in 1908 when he translated a political economy tract by John Ruskin. Later, it evolved to represent the social movement in post-independence India that sought to guarantee equality and self-determination for all societal classes. The socialist Sarvodaya society encourages personal growth and is founded on equality and liberty. It emphasises honesty, non-violence, and self-denial while doing away with private property, exploitation, and class hate. The movement seeks to foster an environment that unites those who really believe in the well-being of all. Each quality's growth is contingent upon the others' growth.

Gram swaraj

Gandhi promoted Gram Swaraj, a perfect nonviolent social structure in which independent village-states that are self-sufficient, self-reliant, and self-governing. People are totally empowered and awakened to their potential in this complete grassroots democracy and revolution. Spiritual ideals like inner self-rule, love, compassion, service, sacrifice, and a reinterpretation of development, minimum government, universalism, individualism, and nationalism are the foundation of Gramme Swaraj. It is not the same as decentralisation and panchayat raj, which are popular right now both in India and beyond. Cultural, social, economic, and ecological facets of existence are all impacted by the idea of Gramme Swaraj. Gandhi recommended a Panchayati Raj System for rural administration and upliftment, emphasising the value of village development for India's advancement and betterment.

NSS Initiatives in Rural Development and Self Reliance Adoption of villages and slum

By adopting villages and slums, National Service Scheme (NSS) helps in the process of rural development and self-reliance. Most of the time, students of different universities are the NSS volunteers through the program. Therefore, they can manage the essential interaction and general development of the community. NSS groups adopt villages and slums and carry out several activities to improve the living conditions of the people. Some examples of initiatives include health-awareness, literacy drives, sanitation campaigns and environmental conservation activity, as well as infrastructure improvements like pavement of roads, construction of toilets and drainage.

The ability to engage the local community (that is, having volunteers collaborate with locals to uncover issues and implement long-term solutions) is an essential part of this model. Through their activities, they allow the people to be in charge of their health through awareness programs on diet, hygiene, and education activities. Special attention is

being paid to youth and women and they are provided with vocational training to enhance their career opportunities. Moreover, NSS also sets up microfinance and self-help organizations to motivate slum and rural dwellers to be self-reliant.

Through the integration of education and service, the NSS adoption program promotes national development while instilling pupils with the values of leadership, empathy and responsibility. It fits in with the philosophy of "Sarvodaya"-upliftment of all and Gandhi's vision of self-sufficient villages. NSS helps underdeveloped areas and creates civic-minded people committed to sustainable development and inclusive growth through its various initiatives.

Environment Conservation

NSS has contributed immensely in safeguarding the environment by multiple programs whose themes revolve around environmental sustainability, community involvement and awareness. NSS volunteers participate in afforestation and waste management campaigns, water and biodiversity conservation campaigns. The tree plantation programme is one of the key activities of NSS. In this project, volunteers will be involved to plant the saplings of trees and take care of them in the open space, schools, colleges, universities, and degraded land. The goal is to minimize the deforestation rate and enhance the green cover.

The NSS also cleans up the community as part of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan to assist in waste management which is another vital sector. Volunteers are useful in minimizing pollution in the environment through educating communities on the importance of composting, recycling, and waste segregation. The NSS teams also undertake the awareness efforts regarding the maintenance of hygiene, support to the use of eco-friendly options, and reduce the use of plastic in the urban and rural settings.

The environmental conservation efforts by NSS is also reflected in water conservation programs such as water harvesting of rainwater, pond and lake rejuvenation and sustainability water use education. NSS also plays quite an active role in terms of promoting renewable energy sources, by supporting the use of solar energy and biogas in rural areas.

Environment Enrichment and Conservation: Environmental Enrichment and Conservation is the central focus of the special camping program, with activities organized under the sub-theme "Youth for a Better Environment."

These activities will include, among other things:

- Planting trees and ensuring their care and maintenance (each NSS unit is expected to plant and nurture at least 1,000 saplings)
- Establishing NSS parks and gardens
- Building and maintaining village roads, drainage systems, etc., to maintain cleanliness
- Constructing sanitary latrines
- Cleaning village ponds and wells
- Promoting and constructing Gobar Gas Plants and utilizing alternative energy sources
- Ensuring environmental sanitation and managing waste and composting
- Preventing soil erosion and engaging in soil conservation efforts
- Managing watersheds and developing wastelands
- Preserving monuments and fostering awareness about cultural heritage preservation within the community.

NSS educates the public and young people about environmental responsibility through workshops, seminars, and rallies. Their initiatives support Mahatma Gandhi's goals of self-sufficient rural communities and peaceful cohabitation with the natural world. NSS fosters a deep-seated environmental consciousness among young people while helping to create a greener, healthier, and more sustainable future for the country by combining environmental protection with community service.

Health and Nutrition Program

National Service Scheme (NSS) plays a major role in promoting health and nutrition among the communities through various awareness campaigns, medical camps and with the help of various nutritional programs. The volatility

of NSS persons in programs related to prevent disease, hygiene and malnutrition and child and maternity healthcare is due to their perception of the value of public health. Some of the key projects include establishing free health check-up camps in the poor and rural regions where physicians give consultations, immunization, and required medicines. Such camps guarantee the enhancement of access to healthcare by poor populations by contributing to early diagnosis and therapeutic treatment of diseases.

Moreover, NSS volunteers organize sensitisation on the critical health matters such as diabetes, TB, anaemia, and rat or insect-borne diseases such as malaria and dengue. They educate societies about the importance of a healthy diet, hygiene, and preventive measures. The maternal and child health is given a particular focus through campaigns in support of breastfeeding, vaccinations and healthy eating among babies and expectant women.

The following initiatives are part of programs such as Health, Family Welfare, and Nutrition Program. It mainly includes:

- Mass immunization campaigns
- Collaborating with communities in nutrition initiatives with support from Home Science and medical college students
- Ensuring access to safe and clean drinking water
- Comprehensive child development programs
- Health education, AIDS awareness, and basic healthcare services
- Population education and family welfare initiatives
- Lifestyle education centres and counselling services.

In order to ensure that people have access to wholesome, fresh food, NSS arranges food distribution programs and promotes the establishment of kitchen gardens in homes and schools. To increase the effectiveness of these programs, volunteers work in tandem with government health programs and Anganwadi facilities.

By integrating health and nutrition with community service, NSS not only improves public health but also instills a culture of preventive healthcare among youth. Their efforts align with Mahatma Gandhi's vision of holistic well-being, where self-reliance and community-driven health initiatives create a healthier and more empowered society.

Skill Development and Women's Empowerment

NSS offers rural and urban-based vocational training programs to equip people specially women with the skills necessary to work and do business since it realizes that social empowerment requires economic independence. These programs that allow the participants to generate income and support their families contain computer literacy, organic farming, tailoring, handicrafts, and small business training.

Awareness campaigns about gender equality, legal rights, financial literacy, and health education are some of the functions undertaken by volunteers concerning the primary theme of NSS, which is empowering women. NSS is an active advocate of the establishment and maintenance of self-help groups (SHGs) to assist women to save, invest, and start microbusinesses to encourage financial autonomy. NSS also collaborates with government schemes such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao and other skills-building schemes to make them more accessible and effective.

Entrepreneurship workshops, speech and leadership development make women feel more confident and take active roles in society. NSS also addresses such problems in the society like child marriage, domestic violence and harassment at work places by organizing community discussions and seminars and facilitating promotion of policies that support women rights.

NSS helps to create a society that is inclusive and self-sufficient by fusing social empowerment with skill development. These initiatives support Mahatma Gandhi's "Sarvodaya" (upliftment of all) ideal by making sure that women have the knowledge, abilities, and self-assurance necessary to live autonomous, respectable lives.

In India, community service, skill development, and youth empowerment have been achieved remarkably through the scheme of community service, National Service Scheme (NSS) and the Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development (RGNIYD). RGNIYD and NSS have supported the idea of leadership, social responsibility, and sustainable development of young volunteers through several joint projects. To equip the youth with skills needed in employment and running business, they engage in organizing leadership development camps, vocational trainings and capacity building seminars. Both groups have also contributed towards social welfare through gender equality, digital literacy, environmental conservation and health awareness efforts. The combination of academic and practical community experience has helped RGNIYD and NSS to create socially conscious individuals who can contribute a lot to country development. The achievements of the projects initiated by youths show the transformative role that these projects play in ensuring a positive change in society.

S. No	Duration	Training Programs - Current (No.)	Students in Program Courses - Current (No.)	Scholarship No of student - Current (No.)	Participation in Training - Current (No.)
1	Apr-24	7	1,956	0	206
2	May-24	4	1,956	0	220
3	Jun-24	4	1,956	0	55
4	Jul-24	1	1,956	0	25
5	Aug-24	1	746	0	9
6	Sep-24	2	746	0	159
7	Oct-24	3	746	0	60
8	Nov-24	0	746	0	0
9	Dec-24	0	746	0	0

Source: NSS RGNIYD [Dashboard](#)

Initiatives designed to raise awareness about enhancing women's status may include

- Programs to educate the public and inform them about women's constitutional and legal rights
- Encouraging women to recognize their contributions to the community's economic and social welfare
- Promoting the understanding among women that all professions are accessible to them if they possess the necessary skills
- Providing training in sewing, embroidery, knitting, and other skills whenever feasible
- Beti Bachao Beti Padhao

CONCLUSION

The impact of Mahatma Gandhi is far more than the Indian freedom movement. His peaceful resistance theory which he referred to as satyagraha has remained influential in the fight of liberation, equality and justice in the world. Besides struggling to grant the freedom of India in history, Mahatma Gandhi has been involved in the justice movements, equality movements as well as human rights movements across the world. The Third World leaders like Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King Jr. also were influenced by his philosophy of nonviolence (Satyagraha) as it was shown to be powerful. The moral courage, self control and the truth are the principles of the social and political movements all over the world and the integrity of Gandhi is still its moral one. The moral behaviour, independence and thrift maintained by Gandhi are also applicable in the new world. His ideas of sustainable life, economic independence and social integrity provide solutions to the contemporary problems of social

segregation, environmental devastation, and economic injustice. The fact that he approved such good programs as universal education and rural development, highlights the significance of empowerment of the grassroots to the well-being of a country.

Social harmony and religious tolerance expressed by Gandhi also give one of the classic teachings on the attitudes of preaching harmony and peace in a world, which is sometimes defined as a conflict and a division. His life is an excellent witness of the everlasting power of nonviolence and the way human beings can do much change with the help of moral leadership and perseverance. The heritage of Gandhi is not a historical accomplishment in the literal meaning of the word, but it is an idea that can be used as a guide by all the generations that will follow him as they strive to create a world that is just, caring and caring. His doctrine of being truthful and nonviolent also remains as the ray of hope that even morally right and peaceful methods could change something.

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