

VENTEL: An Attempt of Transforming Rural India

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Abstract:

Education plays a constructive role in the development of society and the nation. India where two-third of its total population resides in rural areas needs a comprehensive planning for the development of their educational status that guarantees their economic development by providing employment, may be self-employment. Basic Education as suggested by Mahatma Gandhi in 1937 was an attempt to promote work centric education with the aim to achieve the educational, economic and overall development mainly in rural India. It was reconstructed as *Nai Talim* in 1944-45, but the basic idea of craft centeredness was unchanged. Vocational Education Nai Talim Experiential Learning (VENTAL) can be referred as a subsequent attempt of *Nai Talim* adopted by Mahatma Gandhi National Council of Rural Education under the Ministry of Education, Government of India in the present time to promote work centric education with economic value. This paper will be an attempt to study different aspects of VENTAL as a whole.

Keyword: *Nai Talim*, VENTEL

Introduction:

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (2nd October 1869-30 January 1948) is one of the most prominent personalities of Indian freedom struggle. His role in the history of Indian freedom struggle is very significant and will be remembered with honor forever. Father of the nation- Gandhiji was not only a freedom fighter rather he was a great philosopher, social reformer and an eminent educationalist too. Gandhian philosophy of education and social reconstruction is relevant and admired even today also. The concept of “Basic Education” and eventually “*Nai Talim*’ or New Education with a craft in its centre was designed and implemented with the ultimate objective of bringing social revolution through education in India for a better tomorrow. By imparting a craft, Gandhiji was intended to ensure individual development, social development and economic self-dependency which were matter of concern for India at that point of time and equally relevant in the present context too.

***Nai Talim*-A Brief Introduction:**

Gandhiji believed that true education never neglects any side of development. The aims of education as envisaged by Gandhiji may be stated as overall development of the personality of the child, employment for all, social development, economic advancement, national integration and international understanding. Gandhiji always wanted to restore or establish the social order in Indian society and he believed that it largely depend upon the nature of the educational system. Gandhiji advocated for free and compulsory education for all at the same time Gandhian Educational Philosophy emphasized on the importance of child centric educational system. Probably the most important characteristic of Gandhian Educational Philosophy was its nature of work centeredness or craft centeredness. Gandhiji suggested to imparting a

craft subject at the centre of the educational system. Gandhiji wanted to associate education with the rural life and he suggested those crafts to be incorporated in the educational system which were related to day to day life mainly in the rural areas of India. It not only grow the interest but at the same time the creative and productive nature of the educational system might play an important role in the overall social and economic development of the nation which ultimately would bring a new dawn in India.

In 1937 a committee for developing the blueprint of basic education was formed under the leadership of Dr. Zakir Hussain. A craft centric, activity based curriculum was developed to give shape to Basic Education. Mother tongue was essential selected as a medium of instruction. Subjects like nature studies, general science, general mathematics, music, painting etc. were incorporated and the principle of correlation among the subject were consciously followed while framing the curriculum. The entire course of study was divided into different steps and a craft subject based on the regional specialty was kept at the centre of the education. The Committee in 1938 placed the detailed plan of Basic Education at the Haripura Conference of Indian National Congress. Accordingly Hindustani Talim Sangh was formed to work out the implementation blueprint of Basic Education as an alternative way of education with the aim of character building of students and the nation. The new form of education was also a strong protest against the educational system of the nation as implemented by the British Government. Nai Talim or New Education of Gandhiji was an attempt to associate teaching-learning with the craft, students and with their lives. Various social traits were expected to develop within the students through the Nai Talim. Nai Talim had four different phases namely Pre-Basic Education, Basic Education, Post-Basic Education and Adult Education.

The literacy scenario of India in the first four decades of 20th century it was quite miserable. A long protest and Indian National Education Movement which geared up from early 20th Century onwards demanded for such an educational system which was Indian in nature; due importance was given to the vocational education, long tradition and heritage of Indian education and society. Female literacy during this period was in a more poor state. Women's status in the social, economic and in the political setup was in more sorry stage. Education can only act as a tool to ensure the development of overall status of the women in the society and can ultimately move the nation towards a sustainable social development. Gandhiji through his Nai Talim also envisioned to bring the women of the nation to the realm of education to enhance their self-confidence, self-respect and the rightful status in the social, economic and political setup of the nation and at the same time provided them with a vocational guidance to empower her economically in the future.

Gender wise Percentage of Literacy in India (1901-2011)

CENSUS YEAR	MALE LITERACY (in %)	FEMALE LITERACY (in %)	TOTAL LITERACY (in %)
1901	9.8	0.6	5.4
1911	10.6	1.0	5.9
1921	12.2	1.8	7.2
1931	15.6	2.9	9.5
1941	24.9	7.3	16.1
1951	27.16	8.86	18.33

1961	40.4	15.35	28.3
1971	45.96	21.97	34.45
1981	56.38	29.76	43.57
1991	64.13	39.29	52.21
2001	75.26	53.67	64.83
2011	82.14	65.46	74.04

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literacy_in_India retrieved on 09.02.2022at 09.00pm

A craft based educational system was plan to ensure the earning for the educational expenses from the process of education itself and at the same time at the end of the education the students would be able to earn for their own by being self-employed. So it can be said, that Nai Talim of Gandhiji was an educational planning with the aim to develop the basic skills of the life and living with the holistic approach of nurturing mind, body and soul of the child and at the same time to increase the literacy rate of India. Another important approach of Nai Talim was to ensure the development of the rural India by providing them necessary skill training and education which supposed to ensure the rural development and hence the socio- economic development, development of political awareness, leadership quality and ultimately the national development.

Basic Education or broadly Nai Talim of Gandhiji had multiple objectives, some of which were as follows:

- Training of craft subject
- Self supporting for employment and economic dependency
- Physical, moral and spiritual development of the student
- Knowledge about different subjects related to our day to day life
- Character building and overall development of the personality of the student
- Substituting the British educational system in India
- Enhancing women literacy rate
- Ensuring women empowerment
- Promoting Indian culture and heritage its development and conservation
- Enhancing overall literacy of the nation
- Connecting education with the life of the nation
- Social reconstruction
- Rural development
- Respect for others
- Respect to labour
- Enhancing creativity within the student
- Encouraging regional specialty
- Promoting education in mother tongue
- Minimizing the gap between vocational education and formal education
- National development

Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the nation always wanted to bring changes in the rural set up of the nation as majority of the India resided in the rural areas. Therefore to him rural development was the most important part of the overall development of the nation. After Indian Independence a bunch of programs and policies had been adopted by Government of India based on Gandhian philosophy. Some of which are Mahatma Gandhi BunkarBima Yojana-2003, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Program-2006, Mahatma Gandhi Pravasi Bharat Abhiyan-2012, Swachh Bharat Abhiyan-2014, Mahatma Gandhi Shilpa Bazar-2015 and many more. These programs are primarily aimed at bringing residence in different social aspects.

Mahatma Gandhi National Council for Rural Education is an organization under the Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India. It started its journey from 1995 with the aim of human resource development and capacity building in rural India by providing education. A comprehensive effort has been made by Government of India through this council to ensure the overall development of the rural areas of the nation where 68.84% of the total population resides with the literacy rate of 68.91% in compare to 31.16% of urban population with 84.98% literacy rate (Census 2011). The statistics regarding the social facilities and amenities clearly represents a gap in between rural and urban areas will clearly visible and that has its effect on the overall rural development also. In various plan periods in India, emphasis had been given to address this issue and widen the horizon of opportunity in rural areas mainly in the remote areas of the nation with an intention to bring social resilience. Education is considered as a powerful mean which can result a positive change at all level of the society but if we look at the literacy rate of India then also it is very clear that the average Rural Literacy Rate is even lower than the National Average Literacy, especially in case of higher education which requires immediate attention. A very conscious effort from government side is given to uplift the status of rural literacy which will ultimately increase the overall literacy rate of the nation.

Rural Urban Literacy Rate: 2011 & 2021

LEVEL	2011	2021
National Literacy	73.00 %	77.7 %
Urban Literacy	84.1 %	87.7 %
Rural Literacy	67.8 %	73.5%

Source: 1. Handbook on Social Welfare Statistic 2018, p.20.

2. <https://www.findeasy.in/indian-states-by-literacy-rate/#:~:text=According%20to%20National%20Statistical%20Office,female%20literacy%20stands%20at%2070.30%25>. Retrieved on 20.02.2022 at 11.42 pm ;survey by National Statistical Office (NSO)

PERCENT LITERATES BY LEVEL OF EDUCATION: INDIA 2001

Level of education	Percent to Literate		
	Persons	Males	Females
Literate without educational level	3.6	3.4	3.9
Below Primary	25.8	24.1	28.4
Primary	26.2	24.8	28.2

Middle	16.1	16.6	15.3
Matriculation/Secondary	14.1	15.2	12.5
High secondary/ Intermediate/Pre-University/ Senior Secondary	6.7	7.3	5.9
Non technical diploma or certificate not equal to degree	0.1	0.1	0.1
Technical diploma or certificate not equal to degree	0.7	0.9	0.3
Graduate and above	6.7	7.6	5.4

Source: https://censusindia.gov.in/census_and_you/literacy_and_level_of_education.aspx, Retrieved on 05.03.2022 at 9.42 pm.

Vocational education is another significant aspect in the present day context and considered as an important subsector of education. In India, almost in every education policy due importance has given on the development of vocational education and on its promotion among the general mass. It provides job oriented skill training with an aim to help the students to become self-employed; hence it plays an important role in the development of the social and economic setup and the psychological well-being of the unemployed youth. It also plays a very vital role in women empowerment as it increases the literacy among female and enable them in earning also. Need based non-formal vocational education can improve the enrolment in adult education also. So it can be said that, vocational education is designed by the government with an aim to develop a sustainable inclusive society. National Policy on Skill Development is an initiative by government of India to enhance skill for self-employment among the youth generation of the nation. Another important approach of vocational education is its acceptable among the rural areas. By providing different kinds of skill training a large number of youth or dependent age group of population are becoming self-dependent by enrolling in vocational education even in rural areas where the economic opportunity are even lesser than that of the urban areas. Keeping all these into consideration National Education Policy-2020 categorically emphasized on the incorporation of arts and craft subjects in the curriculum with an aim to develop a positive attitude among the young minds towards vocational education. In fact one of the important principles of National Education Policy-2020 says that *no hard separation between vocational and academic subjects.....* (NEP 2020, p. 5). It clearly indicates the vision of National Education Policy-2020 about the vocational education. In case of higher education also development of vocational education was prioritized and recommendation was made for the integration of vocational education in the mainstream of education. So it can be said that, vocational education is going to be one of the major tool for social change in the future in India.

Vocational Education Nai Talim Experiential Learning (VENTEL):

Mahatma Gandhi National Council for Rural Education is playing a vital role in promoting education among the rural people in India. It must be mentioned that vocational education is an indispensable part of the effort of Mahatma Gandhi National Council for Rural Education. VENTEL or Vocational Education Nai Talim Experiential Learning is the program of Mahatma Gandhi National Council for Rural Education that plays the leading role in promoting Vocational Education, Nai Talim, Experiential Learning in rural India. It essentially emphasizes on the promotion of training of the productive work with economic value. VENTEL aims at developing a zest of self-employment among the rural youth by providing them skill training in various activities. It not only helps the rural population in self-reliance but at the same time it will also play and vital role in promoting and encouraging local art forms, local

artist, artisans, their development and in the conservation of the regional art forms. It also encourages in small entrepreneurship and in community engagement which ultimately will be helpful in developing a local harmony. As VENTEL aims at providing skill training it plays a vital role in developing the abilities and the talent hidden abundantly in rural India. Mother tongue was given priority as a medium of instruction as it was done in Nai Talim, which psychologically motivate the students to enroll in the process and expected to bring a better result in its goal. VENTEL is an attempt to ensure empowerment of rural India academically and professionally and at the same time rural management was also emphasized. Developments of self-help groups, cooperative society's etc. were also focused. Women empowerment by providing necessary skill training, professional training and self-employment opportunity are the prime aim of VENTEL. Along with that economically and socially backward section of the rural areas of the nation are also targeted to equip with the necessary skills and employment opportunity. Another important aspect of VENTEL is that it may provide an alternative source of income to the rural community specially those who are mainly engaged in agriculture mainly the small and marginal farmers and the agricultural labors. Efforts have been made through VENTEL to formulate a comprehensive curriculum for higher education incorporating the components of vocational education and Nai Talim. For school level also the policy of incorporating the components from Nai Talim and vocational education was discussed with importance to develop a positive attitude within the students towards professional skills. VENTEL is the blueprint to bridge education with skill and equip the rural population with the life skills, knowledge and ultimately ensure their fullest development. Another important aspect of VENTEL is that it also grows some good habit for leisure our activity within the rural population. At the same time learning takes place in a friendly atmosphere which makes the learning in a joyful environment. VENTEL also encourages the activities of self-help groups which linked with the micro credit system in the rural areas that has a direct impact on the development process of that area. This kind of activities are also helpful in developing communication skills, social interaction, exchange of ideas, leadership qualities and ultimately in the overall development of the personality of an individual. It has some psychological value too as regular interaction with peers' and constructive discussions; engagement above all the economic self-dependency is directly linked with the mental health and well being also.

VENTEL is a comprehensive effort of Mahatma Gandhi National Council for Rural Education with multidimensional objectives and aims to regain the overall status of the rural areas in India. Based on the principles of Gandhian Educational Philosophy, VENTEL is framed with an aim of achieving inclusive social development. Conscious efforts have been made to impart task-based and experiential learning from the beginning of school days and it was very clearly reflected in National Education Policy-2020 too. Apart from this skill development, some other essential focus areas of VENTEL are Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, awareness about proper use of water resource and its conservation, environmental awareness generation, cooperative work etc. However, lack of adequate infrastructure, shortage of resource persons and some other issues can create some initial hurdles in the way of VENTEL which needs to be overcome along with other problems in the way of its journey. So it can be said that, the successful implementation of VENTEL can be an effective program for transforming the overall scenario of rural economy, education and social status in India which definitely will be helpful in moving the nation forward and at the same time it has the potentiality to become a global model for rural transformation, reconstruction and overall development of the nation.

Examples of different activities of VENTEL:

Faculty development programme, workshops, round table discussion, publication, conferences, village visit, industry academia meet exhibition, action research project, minor research project, case studies, video lessons, rural immersion training program, motivational talk, special lecture series, seminar, rural internship program, orientation programme etc. are some of the programmes and activities which are organized round the year by Mahatma Gandhi National Council for Rural Education through VENTEL. According to the Annual Report of 2019-20 of Mahatma Gandhi National Council for Rural Education, around 112 workshops, 52 internships, 24 action research project, 139 village case studies and 12 orientation programmes were organized in different parts of the country to promote VENTEL and other activities for rural reconstruction.

Some of the Action Plan Activities of VENTEL as recommended by Ministry of Education, Government of India

EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES
Hand Weaving
Tailoring
Book Binding
Furniture
Pottery
Carpentry
Toy Making
Gardening of flowers and vegetables
Sericulture
Flower Bouquets
Poultry Farming
Making Jams, Pickles, Sweets & Snacks
Making Milk Based Products
Electrical Repairs
Mobile Repairs
Biogas Production and Use
Greening the campus
Campus Cleaning Teams
Water Conservation
Making Masks
Making Sanitizer, Soap
Post Covid-19 Sanitization
Paramedical Training
Yoga and Meditation
Lok Vidya

Source: https://yvucdc.in/uploadedfiles/MGNCRE_VENTEL_ACTION_PLAN_Proforma.docx

Conclusion:

In 1924 Rabindranath Tagore established *Siksha Satra* “The Poet School” in Visva-Bharati Santiniketan where there was the craft subject at the centre of the educational system. This school in 1926 shifted to Sriniketan where the Rabindranath Tagore initiated the program of rural development through connecting education with the day-to-day rural life. Awareness regarding health, environment, economic dependency and hence overall the development of the rural areas was targeted. Rabindranath Tagore did this experiment in a micro scale and Gandhiji's basic education or Nai Talim which had some similarity

with Tagore's model, was planned to implement at a large scale throughout the nation with the aim to ensure the overall rural development. An intellectual synthesis among the educational ideas in this aspect was clearly visible between the two most eminent personalities and social reformer of early 20th century in India.

Both Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi had emphasized on the development of skill for earning and at the same time developing a new work force to strengthen the socio-economic base of the rural India. Gandhiji said that "*Nai Talim was not confined to teach a little spinning and a little sweeping....the functions of Nai Talim was not made to teach an occupation but through it to develop a whole man*".(Tendulkar. G. 1953, page 510 and 513). From this, it is very clear that through Nai Talim, Gandhiji aimed to transform and build up the national character and hence a new India.

Mahatma Gandhi National Council for Rural Education is an initiative of Government of India under the Ministry of Education which specially focuses on the educational scenario of rural India. From its name itself it is very clear that it primarily follows the philosophy of the father of the nation. VENTEL or Vocational Education Nai Talim Experiential Learning is one of the most important activities of Mahatma Gandhi National Council for Rural Education in the direction of incorporating vocational education, Nai Talim and experiential learning with higher education in the rural areas of the nation. Complete planning had been made to educate the young group of the rural population with an aim to make them self-dependent economically. Taking these into consideration in National Education Policy-2020, provision has been made to make the school students acquainted with vocational activities. It can be said that VENTEL which based on Gandhiji's philosophy of learning through Hand, Head and Heart or 3Hs, has multidimensional objectives and no doubt it is the demand of the time too. On one hand it provides self-employment opportunity to the rural youth by providing skill training while on the other hand it ensures women literacy, social and economic status also. The concept of VENTEL seems to have the potential to ensure the overall development of the society as a whole and rural society in specific. In India, rural development always occupies an important position in any developmental planning and policy. Focusing on that, Government of India also adopted policies like "*Utkarsh gram, Unnat Bharat*" and VENTEL is a milestone towards this journey. VENTEL which reflects the Gandhian philosophy of reforming the nation is expected to bring positive changes in the overall situation and will be helpful in developing an inclusive and sustainable Indian society, the dream of the father of the nation in coming future which suppose to move the nation forward.

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