

Nai Talim

Module Details

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1. Learning Objectives

At the end of this module, the learner will be able to

- Explains the concept of Nai Talim
- Analyses the role of education in all round development of human being
- Explains the importance of Nai Talim in adult education

Education helps for overall development of a person. It facilitates to develop mind, body and soul. Gandhiji believed that education should be easily accessible to all people. In pre-independence era, education was monopoly of a few, especially of higher caste people. Most of the villagers were either labour or skilled person and who were illiterate. Their children, too, were not having access to education. They were learning skills through observation. Gandhiji used to say that children should be taught the dignity of labour. Literacy education should follow the education of the hand. According to Gandhiji, education means an all-round drawing out of the best in child and man-body, mind and spirit. Literacy is not the end of education nor even the beginning. It is only one of the means whereby man and women can be educated. Literacy in itself is no education. ('The selected works of Gandhi'. Volume 6, The Voice of Truth (ref. <http://www.mkgandhi.org/edugandhi/basic.htm> retrieved on 20.7.17)

2. Introduction

The phrase Nai Talim is a combination of two words- Nai Means 'New' and Talim – a Urdu word-means 'Education'. In 1937, Gandhiji introduced the concept of Nai Talim in India. He believed the importance of role of teacher in the learning process. According to him, teaching-learning process can become fruitful if teacher and learner are at same understanding level. In other words, in teaching-learning process, teacher-learner should learn from each other. They should have mutual understanding. They should respect each other. Nai Talim focuses on development of head, heart and hand. It believes in inseparable relation between work and intelligence. In other words, it insists on learning by doing.

3. Background of Nai Talim

In early twentieth century, India had different social structure where illiteracy, casteism, exploitation were prevalent. Gandhiji wanted to bring radical change in existing society. Majority of people were poor and illiterate. They were from the lowest strata in the hierarchy of the caste system. Major occupation of them was handicraft. They were involved in various crafts such as spinning, weaving, pottery, leather work, etc. In each of these crafts, there was monopoly of specific caste groups, who knew the process of production of these crafts. Many of these people belonged to the category of 'untouchables'. To bring social transformation and make education available to all,

Gandhiji introduced Nai Talim. He believed that such education will make villages self-reliant.

Nai Talim aimed at personal development and social development. Rather, personality development was a precondition for social development. Thus the aim of education moved from personal to social development. There were two purposes of education namely gram vikas/ village development and rural development i.e. Gramin Vikas. Lakhs of villages in India were in pathetic condition. Problems such as uncleanliness, poverty, lack of resources, unemployment, illiteracy and superstitious believes, inequality and casteism were prevalent. This made rural India weaker and vulnerable. Gandhiji wanted to attack all these socio-economic issues. This required preparing a youth with proper understanding of problems and capacity to solve them confidently. Gandhiji thought through Nai Talim, youth will be trained to bring revolutionary change in rural India. Such generation will not dependent on anybody but they will be independent and work for welfare of the society.

The other side of Nai Talim was to bring a just society where nobody will be oppressed. Everyone will be equal, truly a democratic society. There won't be rich-poor class, no distance between cities and villages, no discrimination between person doing intellectual work and manual work (labour), no religious caste differences, no differentiation based on language, class, caste, etc. Hence, Gandhiji insisted on local handicraft with education.

4. Concept of Nai Talim

Gandhiji introduced the concept of Nai Talim in 1937. It aimed to achieve Gram Swaraj. Gram means village and Swaraj means liberation. In short, Gandhiji dreamed to make all villages independent; and self-reliant. It is an approach to the total personality development of body, mind and spirit and was based on four principles (Panse, 2007) namely:

1. Education or learning in mother tongue along with handicraft work,
2. Work should be linked with most useful vocational needs of the locality,
3. Learning should be linked with vocational work, and
4. Work should be socially useful and productive needed for living.

This approach of work centric education with technology accessible locally was basic approach of Nai Talim.

Nai Talim had inherent philosophy of non-violence, equality and oppression free society.

Nai-Talim, also known as Buniyadi Shikshan, means basic education. He defined education as, 'Education for life and education through life". Gandhiji initially focused on education of children. He firmly believed that medium of instruction of education should be in mother tongue. Education in vernacular medium will be beneficial to deprived society. The curriculum should be integrated with local crafts education should be

accessible to all. He rejected bookish education and insisted on practical learning. The main tools of Nai Talim were handicrafts, art and drawing.

In Nai Talim, more focus was on skills. It proved without books one can teach all subject.

Any handicraft can give thorough comprehensive knowledge. By involving oneself in craft, one can prepare one's body, and also simultaneously develops intellect.

Gandhiji believed that Nai Talim will result in self-reliance of children as well as the villages. Students will become independent, immediately after completion of their education; they will stand on their own. In Nai Talim, knowledge and work were considered as two sides of the same coin-work gives knowledge and through fruitful knowledge, work happens. Due to integration of work and education, intelligence develops. Students learn how to get information and actually use it.

Nai Talim is need based education. Only alphabet reading and writing will not achieve intellectual growth. Thus, in Nai Talim hand, eyes and mind is involved simultaneously. Once children are clear about concepts, reading and writing is introduced.

The teachers engaged in Nai Talim require true zeal to work hard. They have to think out of box. They should be clear about what is going to be taught. Hence, teachers need to develop their observation and thinking capacity. In other words, the teachers must have to develop innovative teaching methods and practice them.

The Nai Talim was a new approach to basic education. In this approach the curriculum used was different than in regular schools. The curriculum was prepared in such a way that craft is integrated in it. This prepared the children for their life.

Gandhiji conceived Nai Talim as a 'Craft based' education. It focused on practical skills. He believed that this education will lead towards development of people – spiritual, cultural and social. Literacy along with other subjects can be taught through this method. Actually this is interdisciplinary approach of education where all subjects are taught in context with. Learners immediately apply the knowledge learnt in their day-to-day life.

Nai Talim was also a non-violent approach towards socialization. Teachers were role-models. In Nai Talim, all crafts were considered equal. Thus, dignity to labour was given.

While expressing his views on education, he clearly made distinction between education and learning, knowledge and wisdom, literacy and lessons of life. He opined that literacy in itself is no education. It should carry functionality. According to him, education should not end in making careers and achieving social status, but play important role in building person totally. Nai- Talim, if implemented correctly, helps all round development of a person.

As stated by Marjorie Sykes in 'The story of Nai Talim: fifty years of education at Sewagram, India (1937-1987)' for Gandhiji, Nai Talim was the expression of the principle of non-violence in the educational sphere. It was the preparation for, and practice of, the peaceful organisation of a co-operative human community.'

Nai Talim approach builds attitude of learners, attitude towards daily happenings, respecting each other, tackling and resolving tensions and conflicts in a peaceful manner. Teaching methods used were mostly learning by doing. No lectures, books as such were there. e.g. by asking children to prepare a model on water wheel, children

learnt maths and science. They also learnt manual skills and accuracy as well. Another example is creating a fire by striking a spark in tinder. In this case, teacher will demonstrate and children follow him/her. In other words, many subjects were taught joyfully by using local resources.

Another very important value imbibed was cleanliness. Children who were attending schools were asked to keep classrooms and surrounding, including bathrooms and latrines, clean. Personal cleanliness was also given equal importance. They were also taught gardening. Children used to take care of plants. Through these activities, children learnt environmental science, team work and co-operation. Children were taught good habits and good conduct.

Gandhiji was against the style of 'mugging up' of information. He strongly believed that stuffing of all kinds of information in the minds of children is not education. Education means drawing out the hidden potentials of children. Hence, education should centre around some form of manual and productive work.

Learning by doing, especially crafts education would make them self-reliant. It was child's personal responsibility for his/her progress. Off course, there were many criticisms on this way of education. Some people criticised that such education will end in increasing child labour.

Nai Talim is highly value based and was a mass campaign. In this approach every person had an equal and open opportunity to develop their innate talents. This was a lifelong process. Gandhian approaches to education include learning for life, learning from life and learning throughout life- linking education with yoga, industry and co-operative working (yoga, udyoga and sahayoga) (Bhave, 1959, Takwale, Sawant and Deshmukh, 2010).

Gandhiji also focused on Adult Education according to him Adult Education is a matter of teaching the art of living.

5. Relevance of Nai Talim in adult education

In adult education, while conducting classes for adult learner, one has to take into consideration their characteristics. Most of the adults are in the age group of 25-40 years. They are working may be outside or in the house. The teacher (Prerak/Volunteer teacher) should respect their age and experience. She/he has to give autonomy and freedom to learners. Adult Education teachers should understand andragogy. They should focus more on practical knowledge.

In other words, the preraks and volunteer teachers should act as a catalyst, as a guide in teaching learning process. While implementing Nai Talim in literacy centres, the preraks should organize skill development programmes. As per the philosophy of Nai Talim, these skill development programmes will help the learners to upgrade their skills and / or learn new skills, which will improve their socio-economic status. This will contribute in creating equality and just in society. By doing this, the principles of Nai Talim that is integration of knowledge and action should be followed.

The ultimate aim of adult education is to create a learning society. To achieve this goal, literacy should be integrated with awareness and functionality. Realizing the importance of functionality, the National Literacy Mission Authority set an objective to make adult functionally literate. To achieve this goal, it implemented Total Literacy Campaign in India. In Saakshar Bharat Programme also, which is currently implemented in India, more stress is given on functionality. In many states, skill development programmes are organized at Adult Education Centres with the help of Jana Shikshan Santhans, Non-governmental Organizations and/or Public Private Partnership. The products prepared are exhibited at local, district, state and national level as well. Some of the learners have started their own cottage industry. The best example is of Korea Mahila Gruha Udhayog in Korea district of Chhattisgarh. The marginalized and tribal illiterate women have started their home-based enterprise while acquiring literacy skills. This has helped them to improve their socio-economic status in the community.

Let us take an example of tailoring. I am taking this particular skill as an example because in most of the adult education centres, tailoring classes are organized under skill development programme. For stitching any cloth, one needs to take first measurement. This involves mathematics. Numeracy skills such as additions, subtraction, multiplication and division are used before cutting the cloth. Introduction to the sewing machine teaches geometry. The wheel of machine demonstrates many concepts of geometry. The type of cloth tells us about its production, touch involving science. The prerak can discuss on the type of cloth-whether it is cotton, polyester, silk or any other type. She can continue discussion on when such type of cloth is used. Whether is it useful in summer, winter or rainy season? This teaches environmental science/ seasons. One can also discuss on need to change the type of clothes as per the seasons. When product is ready (means stitched cloth is ready), one needs to decide its price. Learners can use it for themselves or may sell it. If they are using for self or it is used in the family, one can discuss how much saving they have done? If they want to sale it, they have to decide its price. Thus, economics and marketing issues come. Also, one can discuss on for which occasion the clothes will be useful. Is it for festival purpose or for daily use? If it is for festival purpose, one can discuss on various types of festivals, its purpose of celebration, its importance, etc. One can also discuss how the same festival is celebrated differently in various parts of the country. Thus, the discussion on culture, religion can be conducted.

One can further go ahead one step and discuss on how the cloth is made? One can go deep in history of cotton. How and when cotton was first grown, the stages of its cultivation, cotton trade in India and other countries and so on. Further one can discuss on history, geography, culture, flora and fauna in those countries, where cotton is cultivated, modes of transport in these countries, their culture, and so on. This information teaches us about agriculture, economics and tourism. Further one can continue this discussion how East India Company entered in India, what was their motive, how slowly they grabbed our market, how they destroyed our spinning industry, how they entered in local politics and established their power. In short, there is no end to possibilities of teaching through this method. This makes learning faster and

interesting, without memorising. This also helps them to improve their thinking skills, listening skills and communication skills. Thus, through one craft, one can teach and learn many subjects. In this way preraks and volunteer teachers can integrate Nai Talim in literacy classes. Because of this, Nai Talim is called also holistic approach to education.

The preraks/ VTs can also organize cooking demonstrations at AE centres. Let's take the example of preparation of groundnut trophy. Through this they learn proportion of each ingredient, budget, purchase, record-keeping of the expenses, cleanliness, garnishing, packing, cutting it in equal size etc. This activity includes knowledge of many subjects such as mathematics, science, hygiene, nutritional value, co-operation and team work, economics, geometry etc.

Nai Talim can also be introduced through awareness programmes. Let's take the daily life example. Now a day everyone watches TV. The Prerak/VTs can take any one current issue for discussion. Let's take the example of Construction of toilets in every village under Swacha Bharat scheme. Various issues can be discussed such as need for construction of toilets, ill-effects of defecation in open areas, problems women face due to non-availability of toilets at home, how much subsidy one can get to construct the toilets, whom to approach for funds, how to apply, what to do if the contractor is corrupt. It is correct to point fingers at other alone? What is the root cause for corruption? What is my personal responsibility? and so on. Such discussion increases awareness and participation of learners. They develop thinking and communication skills. They understand their rights. If required, they can also take a protest march against corruption. For this purpose, they can prepare slogans and write on pla-cards. Thus, this will increase their creativity. Their writing skills can also be improved. The purpose of languages teaching can be served through this process.

6. Summary

Nai Talim is not a fixed system, method or curriculum. It is a philosophy of learning and living and not just pedagogy. It is not restricted to any vocation. It is a flexi approach, which can be moulded as per local requirements. It has two main components namely:

1. Holistic development of an individual; and
2. Developing non-violent, just, co-operative and sustainable society.