ADDRESSING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH EDUCATION:

A STUDY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO NAI TALIM

DISSERTATION

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ANJITA SINGH

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATIONAL PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION, NEW DELHI

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1

DECLARATION

DATE:

I, ANJITA SINGH, hereby declare that this M.Phil dissertation entitled 'Addressing sustainable development through education: A study with special reference to Nai Talim' is based on my original research work, and to the best of my knowledge, has not been submitted, in whole or in part, to this university or any other university for the award of any degree.

Anjita Singh

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled 'Addressing sustainable development through education: A study with special reference to Nai Talim' is the work undertaken by Ms. Anjita Singh under the supervision of Prof. Manisha Priyam as part of her M.Phil degree. We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiner(s) for evaluation and award of the degree of M.Phil.

Signature   Signature

Prof. A.K. Singh   Prof. Manisha Priyam

Dept. Head   Supervisor

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

CONTENTS

Chapter One
INTRODUCTION

"Earth has enough resources to satisfy everybody's need but not greed.''

- Mahatma Gandhi

Abstract – This chapter is introductory, providing a brief outline of the present study. It looks into the concept of development, Gandhi's critique of modern civilization, and the idea of sustainability. It further contains a statement of the problem, hypothesis, research questions, the relevance of the study, chapter plan, etc., presenting the broad framework of the research work.

Sustainable development has become the catchword of the 21st century in every sphere of life ranging from commerce, politics, education, and the framing of law. To understand the concept of sustainable development it is imperative to first comprehend the notion of development. The concept of development evolved in the domain of social sciences to guide the newly emerging nations who won their independence after the second world war. Doubtless to say that the idea of development itself was not new but it gained advertence after the second world war. Development refers to the idea of social change for the fulfillment of the needs of people. While analyzing the concept of development, we generally identify the characteristics of advanced societies and then look into the process of transition of a given society. In other words, development is the process of the attainment of a specific goal. Development is a very complex and multifaceted phenomenon; it is mostly seen as a positive change that helps to improve every sphere of human life.

Although the economic sphere of development has generated maximum debate over time, development as a concept is much wider. The discourse around sustainable development gained prominence because the requirements of economic development necessitated the exploitation of natural resources which happened on a massive scale. The conflicts associated with control and ownership of natural resources have also contributed towards social unsustainability. In contemporary times to meet the growing consumer demands, natural resources have been exploited at such a fast rate that cannot be sustained for long. This excessive unrestricted exploitation of natural resources is a major concern for sustainable development champions.

The idea of sustainable development has its roots in Conference on Human Environment held in Stockholm in 1972. Sustainable development is a "process that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Brundtland Report, 1987, p. 37). Brundtland Commission or World Commission on Environment and Development gave new directions to the process of development based on the Stockholm conference. The idea of sustainable development pays attention to strategies for promoting social and economic development without over-exploitation of natural resources and minimal environmental degradation. Development is a very intricate process. It is understood in different ways by different schools of thought. One such school derives inspiration from Gandhi's vision of development.

Gandhian perspective on development holds relevance in the present times when sustainable development has become the broadest policy goal of governance across the globe. Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) is a moral philosopher and his ideas paved the way to build an alternate model of development. Writers in the 1980s described Gandhi as a philosopher having an alternative vision of development (Sachs, 1980; Dube, 1988). Gandhi did not talk specifically about sustainable development, as it was not a popular concern a century earlier, but the ideas expressed by him in various instances provide insights on the issue.

Gandhi was pessimistic about the western model of development and therefore he did not favour the 'modern civilization'. He has a different understanding of what can be called a 'true civilization'. For him, "Civilization is that mode of conduct which points out to man the path of duty. Performance of duty and observance of morality are convertible terms. To observe morality is to attain mastery over our mind and our passions" (1909, p. 49). He never wanted India to imitate the habits of 'modern civilization' because it sought to promote the material needs of individuals and lead to their moral decline. Gandhi condemns 'modern civilization' in his seminal work *Hind Swaraj (1909)* and suggested an alternative vision for organizing society. Gandhi's critique of modernity or western notions of modernity is where we can find arguments favouring the idea of sustainable development.

The broad concept of sustainable development was first widely publicized by the World Conservation Strategy. Since then, it has become central to the notion of development

and environment. "Sustainable utilization is a simple idea: we should utilize species and ecosystems at levels and in ways that allow them to go on renewing themselves for all practical purposes indefinitely" (Allen, 1980, p. 18). Similarly, Gandhi was against any kind of development which led to the maximization of the material wants of human beings. Modern civilization with its fascination for speed and mindless activity alienated man from his social roots and his environment (Menka, 2014).

Likewise, Gandhi believed that people should consume as much according to their needs and not according to their greed. He argued that growing consumption will lead to grabbing shares of others and compromising the needs of future generations. Gandhi's principle of non-violence was not only restricted to dealing with humans. He wanted to extend it to deal with nature in effect, he deprecated the actions that degrade the earth, impoverish nature by over-exploitation of its resources and create inequity among human beings. As Gandhi pointed out: "How can we be non-violent to nature unless the ethics of non-violence becomes central to the ethos of human culture"? (Gauba, 2014, p. 657).

Gandhi did not appreciate the modern industrial civilization, which has attracted much-agonized debate ever since its emergence in the early years of the nineteenth century (Parekh, 2001). He attributed, "an obsession with the body, machinery, technology, speed, western education, means of transportation and communication, violence, naive rationalism, statist politics, and consumption or indulgence" as the hallmarks of modern industrial civilization or western modernity (Menka, 2014, p. 271).

In his observations on capitalism which developed in the West with the age of the industrial revolution, Gandhi identified materialism forming the main characteristic of modern civilization and where spirituality seemed to have been undervalued (Ishii, 2001, p. 298). Gandhi felt that modern civilization destroys ethical living as it is built on the acquisition of material wealth (Vijayam, 2009). Modern civilization aims to improve the quality of life by raising the standard of living, but the key to advancement lies in the morality of the individual. In Gandhi's view, modern civilization denuded morality of its vital internal dimension and ignored what he called the quality of the soul (Parekh, 2001). According to Gandhi (1909), "The tendency of Indian civilization is to elevate the moral being, that of the western civilization is to propagate immorality"

(p. 51). Gandhi's socio-economic thoughts evolved in this regard to destroy this system of immorality.

Although critical of modern civilization, Gandhi believed that it is 'not an incurable disease'. The western industrial societies which were plagued by it, he hoped, can be remedied from this disease. As Gandhi, had the remedy to modern civilization we can use thoughts of Gandhi as a catalyst to fasten the course of sustainable development. Therefore, we as individuals have to bring changes to our attitudes and give importance to the soul rather than material desires. The criticism provided by Gandhi claims to be valid today. We as individuals have surrendered to modernity and lost our conscience in the process. "People are gradually distancing themselves from their own culture all in the name of progress. But is it progress?" (Menka, 2014, p. 270).

The west has influenced us so much that we have adopted the West's culture, education, and lifestyle. We have distanced ourselves from our surroundings and our environment. As education is an essential tool for sustainable development, we should aim for education that adheres to sustainable development goals. New learning challenges are emerging and 21st-century education must address these and contribute to greater humanity in a rapidly changing world (Mohanty & Dash, 2018). Gandhi also considered education as a powerful tool for developing society in any desired direction. With these ideas to improve the quality of education, some of the global issues and citizenship values need to be integrated into the School and Teacher Education Curriculum viz., climate change, global warming, water crisis, value crisis, swachhta, clean energies, land degradation and erosion of soil fertility, gender equity, inequity, and inclusive growth to develop sensitivity and critical consciousness on the issues, among the students (MGNCRE, 2018). In this regard, Mahatma Gandhi's Nai Talim concept seems to be relevant and could be a successful alternative for education towards sustainable development (Kumari, 2016).

How to structure and implement quality education for Sustainable Development is a key challenge? Possibly, an answer to this query lies in the implementation of the Nai Talim model of education which emphasizes 'learning by doing' and 'learning through life'.

In the Indian context research work and practices are going on in the areas of sustainable environment, sustainable energy, etc. but we need a paradigm shift to create an

educational culture and ecosystem that implies a systematic change in education policy and system, in the thinking and practice of every stakeholder linked to Indian education. Hence, we must draw a systematic plan out of this complex and diversified education system and drive it with a holistic vision (Mohanty & Dash, 2018). Thus, Gandhi's Nai Talim system, which is presently more or less neglected in the educational setup, could be revisited as a powerful alternative for education towards sustainable development. It stresses the indigenous scheme of education with due regard to the creative and constructive capacity of children and the needs of the locality (Kumari, 2016). In this regard, we can refer to the indigenous knowledge of Gandhi which he transformed into the Nai Talim model of education. It is not a rigid approach rather it is a flexible approach that can be altered according to the needs of society. It believes in a transformative role of education - transformation towards a just and sustainable world (Kumari, 2016).

He thought of an education system that could integrate intellectual work with physical labour for the development of a society with a new order of equality of academic and livelihood opportunities at all its strata, self-reliance, cooperation among people, respect for others' culture, and sensitivity towards the environment (Kumari, 2016). Therefore, referring to the Nai Talim model of education is the need of the hour because it is based on the premises of sustainable development. Nai Talim is not alienated assumption-based learning of a given reality but it is involved experiential learning of evolving reality and the reality is that we are facing social, economic, and environmental issues. Schooling experience needs to make this a source of experiential learning. It also makes learning superior. It makes learning complete (MGNCRE, 2018).

"Historically taken, the understanding of education about Nai Talim is 'character building'. Gandhian education aims to be in all areas and for all members of society to implement dynamic and visionary ideas of transformation to make India and the world a better place for all people" (Lang-Wojtasik, 2018). In the present scenario of demand for education for sustainable development where mainstream education is found to be insufficient, Gandhi's idea of Nai Talim and the relevant recommendations of different committees on school education could be reviewed. The mainstream education system should be reframed around the goals of sustainable development giving integral space to elements of Nai Talim in its curriculum and functioning (Kumari, 2016).

If we want long-lasting peace and build a sustainable future for mankind, transformational changes to connect sustainably with the web of life become urgent, in such a scenario we have to think again about how we educate ourselves. We must recognize at an early age, that the interconnectedness of the natural world and the well-being of human life are connected with the well-being of the planet. Instead of presenting each discipline as distinct and separate, we ought to integrate their domains with the natural world. We need to offer holistic education to our children that not only makes them employable and self-reliant but also equips them with the ethics of sustainable living practices.

An integrated model of curriculum, where the various subjects are interwoven through life-skill and environmental education through various subjects should be outlined. This may be helpful for children to develop themselves as individuals who can take sincere participation in the sustainable development of society. Thus, Nai Talim would rise to the status of Nai Talim towards sustainable development (Kumari, 2016).

Our new National Education policy (2020) confers to the growing need for learning based on sustainable development. The vision of the Policy is to instil among the learners a deep-rooted pride in being Indian, not only in thought, but also in spirit, intellect, and deeds, as well as to develop knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions that support responsible commitment to human rights, sustainable development and living, and global well-being, thereby reflecting a truly global citizen (MHRD, 2020). The curriculum and pedagogy in schools should be in such a way that it leads to holistic and integrated learning of students and according to today's rapidly changing world. In addition to vocational exposure and skills; ethical and moral reasoning; knowledge and practice of human and Constitutional values; Fundamental Duties; citizenship skills and values; knowledge of India; environmental awareness including water and resource conservation, sanitation, and hygiene; and knowledge of critical issues facing local communities, states, country, and the world (MHRD, 2020).

1.1 Statement of Problem

In the present scenario of expeditiously deteriorating natural environment, it has become imperative to address the question of 'sustainability in living'. For the given purpose education can be a powerful tool to address this problem. In the given context, Gandhi's idea of Nai Talim and the evolution of the education policy of the Indian state

after Independence could be reviewed. The mainstream education system should be reframed around the goals of sustainable development giving integral space to elements of Nai Talim in its curriculum and functioning.

There is an urgent need to look out for alternative models of living which are in harmony with nature. Gandhian perspective can lead us to the desired sustainability in living styles. Deciding how education should contribute to sustainable development is a major task. In coming to decisions about what approaches to education will be locally relevant and culturally appropriate, countries and educational institutions may take heed of the key lessons learned from discussion and debate about education and sustainable development over the past decade. This study will be an attempt to understand the Gandhian perspective on living a sustainable and nature-friendly life. Along with looking at the debate around sustainable development, Mahatma Gandhi's critique of modern civilization will be reviewed. His idea of Nai Talim (A new model of education) will be given special consideration. The study will be oriented toward understanding the Gandhian model of sustainable living and examining how his idea of Nai Talim leads toward sustainable development.

1.2 Rationale of the study

Sustainable development is the most pressing concern of present times. The pace and trajectory of economic development cannot be sustained for long as its very nature is predatory. It thrives on the exploitation and devastation of the natural systems of the earth. There is an urgent need for course correction before it's too late. Education is generally considered, and rightly so, a powerful instrument to shape the direction of any society. The system of education in India has been subject to criticism due to its unrealistic and unproductive nature. Traditional Education emphasizes on literacy abstract and text-based knowledge which fails to develop skills in the pupils whereas Gandhi's Nai Talim proposes to make a central emphasis to symbolize self-sufficiency. Through his concept of Nai Talim the father of the nation wanted to make villages self-reliant, in short, he dreamed to make rural areas independent. It is an approach toward total personality development. Nai Talim, also known as "Buniyadi Shikshan" is an important tool for sustainable development. The above principles justify that application of Nai Talim will help imbibe skills in the child and inculcate values of nature-friendly living.

The principles of Nai Talim are in harmony with the notion and requirements of sustainable development. Education is the best pathway to empower the pupils, who are the future of the nation and upon whose shoulders lies the development of the society and nation as a whole. Careful incorporation of Nai Talim in our education policy will help achieve sustainable development goals by strengthening the education system, making it practical and productive, and making children ready for life. It will not only make them literate but at the same time socially and environmentally aware. This study will not only attempt to bring the focus on the need for reforms in education in India but also explore the possible remedy taking clues from the Gandhian concept of Nai Talim.

1.3 Objectives of Research

The research of this kind tries to highlight and further enrich with academic work, the issue on which the research is being conducted i.e., in this case, Nai Talim and education towards sustainable development. It is also an attempt to provide insights and thoughts into Gandhi's conception of Nai Talim. Also, to give further explanation on the subject matter and to test the hypothesis. Keeping given all this, the research work will be carried out with the following objectives:

- To study the evolution of the concept of sustainable development.
- To look into Gandhi's critique of modern civilization and his alternative vision of society in light of sustainability discourse.
- To examine the Gandhian concept of Nai Talim as a model leading to sustainable living practices and its relevance in contemporary times.
- To look into the possibilities of incorporating the elements from Nai Talim in the present education system for the sustainable development of society.

1.4 Research Questions

A research question is an answerable inquiry into a specific concern or issue, in our case Nai Talim and education towards sustainable development. It is the initial step in a research project. It's primarily one's concern or idea of what she/he wants to study. A research question primarily is the question around which one centres her research, a fundamental core that doesn't allow the researcher to distract from the primary

objectives of the research. As follows will be some of the primary questions which concern this research work.

- How far Gandhi's idea of Nai Talim is compatible with the goals and targets of sustainable development?
- To what extent does India's education policy incorporate elements of Nai Talim in its prescriptions?
- What relevance Gandhi's critique of modern civilization holds for the debate on sustainable development?

1.5 Hypothesis

The hypothesis in research is a proposition made as a basis for reasoning, without any assumption of its truth. It is a supposition or proposed explanation made based on limited evidence as a starting point for further investigation. Some of the hypotheses for this research project are listed below:

- Incorporating the Gandhian conception of Nai Talim in the present education policy can be of great help in addressing sustainable development.
- Gandhi's critique of modern civilization offers thoughtful insights into the debate on sustainable education.

1.6 Research methodology

The study has primarily followed the comparative and qualitative methods of research. The research of this kind tries to highlight and further enrich with academic work, the issue on which the research is being conducted. To develop an understanding of the issues concerning education and sustainable development various authoritative books, journals, and research papers on the subject have been referred to. Further, various international reports and periodicals on sustainable development, recommendations of various committees on education and their reports, and policy documents of government on education have been looked into.

1.7 Scope and limitations of research

This research work is primarily concerned with normative dimensions of the Gandhian perspective on education towards sustainable development. It aims to study the

conception of Nai Talim in the Gandhian discourse. The evolution of the Gandhian perspective of Nai Talim will be critically examined. In trying to place the Gandhian narrative within the paradigm of sustainable development discourse, this research study also deals briefly with the larger dimensions of Gandhian thought. Although, the research work deals with a very limited dimension of Gandhian thought. There are numerous themes and conceptions in the Gandhian approach dealing with different aspects of life which are equally important to address but will not be covered in this research work. This work also tries to locate the concept-policy interface although to a very limited extent. An attempt will be made to understand how far the Gandhian ideas on education or his model of Nai Talim has influenced or been incorporated into the education policy of the Indian state? This work stays short on the question of the implementation of such a policy.

1.8 Chapter Plan

The present *first chapter* is introductory, providing a brief outlook of the present study. It looks into the concept of development, Gandhi's critique of modern civilization, and the idea of sustainability. It further contains a statement of the problem, hypothesis, research questions, the relevance of the study, etc, presenting the broad framework of the research work.

Chapter Two- Sustainable development: A conceptual outlook, tries to explain the idea and extent of sustainable development. It reflects on the question of 'sustainability' in developmental discourse and tries to establish the meanings of such terms as 'sustainability', 'development', and 'sustainable development'. It also focuses on different dimensions of sustainable development i.e.-economic, social and environmental, separately and also in inter-relational terms. This chapter also deals with major 'debates' on sustainable development. The principal focus of this chapter is to reflect upon the concept of sustainable development, its evolution, definition, essence, relevance and broad contours of the concept. It also looks into the principles which form the foundations of sustainability discourse. Further, it tries to integrate sustainable development with the constitutional, legal and policy frameworks available in India.

Chapter Three- Gandhi's critique of modernity and the sustainability paradigm, as the title suggests this chapter deals with Gandhi's interpretation of modern civilization, the reasons why he condemns it, and what was his idea of development. This chapter tries

to identify various sources and writings where Gandhi had criticized the modern civilization of the west. It will also review the writings of other thinkers who had interpreted Gandhi from various perspectives. The chapter discusses primarily Gandhi's critique of modern industrial civilization to look into the possible elements of sustainability consciousness inherent in it. It also tries to briefly highlight and understand the traditional knowledge systems of India, which had a lot of influence on the Gandhian vision. This was done with the purpose to identify the elements of sustainability in the Gandhian approach by placing them into its contextual roots.

Chapter Four- Gandhi's Nai Talim: A vision for holistic education, deals with Gandhi's concept of Nai Talim and tries to place it in its proper philosophical context to understand its underlying vision and relevance for sustainability education. It also examines if it holds relevance for our present education system. It further attempts to understand the concept-policy interface i.e., to what extent the concept of Nai Talim has shaped the education policy of the Indian state over the decades after independence. The evolution of the concept and its interpretation by varied scholars after Gandhi is also a matter of review in this chapter. The whole exercise is done with a perspective to look for the elements of sustainability consciousness underlying the philosophy and purpose of Nai Talim.

Chapter Five- Nai Talim: An educational tool for sustainable development is an attempt to establish a relationship between Nai Talim as a model of education and sustainable development. It primarily looks for the aspects of 'sustainability' within the larger conception of Nai Talim. It tries to propose that if we place Nai Talim in its right philosophical context, we are likely to find that Nai Talim offers a vision and scheme for developing a sustainable future. Shaping educational structures around the suggestions and direction offered by the New Education of Gandhiji may prove considerable help in aiding the process of sustainable development with sustainable education. How does Nai Talim help develop eco-consciousness in children? And why it can be considered useful for promoting socio-economic sustainability? Such questions are under consideration in this chapter.

It is followed by a concluding chapter providing a comprehensive analysis and suggesting the outcome of the study.

Chapter Two

Sustainable Development: A Conceptual outlook

"Our biggest challenge in this new century is to take an idea that seems abstract - sustainable development - and turn it into a reality for all the world's people".

-Kofi Annan

Abstract – *Principal focus of this chapter is to reflect upon the concept of sustainable development, its evolution, definition, essence, relevance and broad contours of the concept. It also looks into the principles which form the foundations of sustainability discourse. Further, it tries to integrate sustainable development with the constitutional, legal and policy frameworks available in India.*

Member states of the United Nations (UN) adopted 17 goals in September 2015 as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), setting 2030 as the target year for achieving these goals. SDGs cover a much larger range of issues than Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which were adopted in 2000 and can be considered predecessors to SDGs. These goals are supposed to be global in nature, action-oriented, and applicable universally to states of the world, while at the same time also accounting for different national capacities, levels of development, and priorities. These SDGs can be seen as reference goals or guideposts for the world community to achieve 'sustainability' in development (United Nations, 2015). These 17 goals are not to be seen in exclusive or isolated terms but their interdependence and synergies must be recognized as critical before integrating them into the policy frameworks of respective nation-states.

Now, as the UN has adopted Sustainable Development Goals to provide the world with a vision or target for future decades, the question arises what is sustainable development? What are the dimensions which the concept covers? Sustainable development as a concept initially emerged in the 1960s in the debates on the impact of economic development on the natural environment. The early attempt, also the most accepted to date, to define 'sustainable development' was made by World Commission on Environment and Development, more popularly known as Brundtland Commission. It describes sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Brundtland Report, 1987, p. 37) including the future as a party within the ambit of justice.

There are three major dimensions of sustainable development- environmental, social, and economic, although some scholars nowadays add cultural and individual domains as well to this (Thakran, 2015). The improvement and well-being of these spheres are intertwined and interdependent and never should be viewed separately. A healthy society can flourish only in the conditions of a clean and healthy environment, a sound economic setup, and cultural harmony free of ethnopolitical strife and so on.

The contention that economic development leads to inevitable environmental casualty and social strife, is rejected by the paradigm of sustainable development. It places a high degree of faith in the human ability to think, innovate, transform and develop in a manner that not only improves the quality of life of the present generation but also conserves the natural

systems and natural resources for future generations. Equally, the sustainability paradigm emphasizes holistic development where a balance is created across the spheres of life, not solely focusing on economic development. "There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development" (United Nations, 2015, p. 3).

Defining Sustainable Development

The National Environment Policy 2006, almost a decade before the adoption of SDGs by the United Nations, recognized that "only such development is sustainable, which respects ecological constraints and the imperatives of social justice" (MoEF, 2006, p. 10). 'Our Common Future', the report by Brundtland Commission, describes "sustainable development is not a fixed state of harmony, but rather a process of change in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development, and institutional change are made consistent with future as well as present needs" (Brundtland Report, 1987, p. 15). Robert Allen defines sustainable development as "development that is likely to achieve lasting satisfaction of human needs and improvement of the quality of human life" (p. 23). He, summarizing IUCN, further asserts that "conservation of the biosphere is a prerequisite for human survival and well-being; ... interdependence is an inescapable fact of life" (Allen, 1980, p. 16).

Environmental scientists, Goodland and Ledec, highlight social, structural, and economic aspects of sustainable development by enunciating that "development which

18

optimizes the economic and societal benefits available in the present, without jeopardizing the likely potential for similar benefits in the future. A primary goal of sustainable development is to achieve a reasonable and equitably distributed level of economic well-being that can be perpetuated continually for many human generations" (1987, p. 36). They also acknowledged the need for the preservation of natural resources and conservation of systems of nature. They noted that "Sustainable development implies using renewable natural resources in a manner which does not eliminate or degrade them or otherwise diminish their usefulness for future generations…Sustainable development further implies using non-renewable mineral resources in a manner that does not unnecessarily preclude easy access to them by future generations...Sustainable development also implies depleting non-renewable energy resources at a slow enough rate to ensure the high probability of an orderly societal transition to renewable energy sources...." (Goodland & Ledec, 1987, p. 37). Policy analyst of IIASA, C.W. Clark suggested that "A major challenge of the coming decades is to learn how long-term, large-scale interactions between environment and development can be better managed to increase the prospects for ecologically sustainable improvements in human well-being" (Clark & Munn, 1986, p. 5).

A proposition, very similar to the Gandhian line of thought, is suggested by Coomer emphasizing that a "sustainable society lives within the self-perpetuating limits of its environment. That society...is not a 'no-growth' society.... it is, rather a society that recognizes the limits of growth.... looks for alternative ways of growing" (Coomer, 1979, p. 1). World Wide Fund for Nature defines sustainable development as "improvement in the quality of human life within the carrying capacity of supporting ecosystems" (WWF, 1993, p. 32).

The now well-known report 'Our Common Future' by World Commission on Environment and Development further elaborates that "Sustainable development is the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it two key concepts: the concept of 'needs', in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs" (Brundtland Report, 1987, p. 37).

Executive Director of U.N. Environmental Programme, Mostafa Tolba (1987), emphasizes "Sustainable development has become an article of faith: often used but little explained.., in broad terms, the concept of sustainable development encompasses: help for the very poor because they are left with no option other than to destroy their environment; the idea of self-reliant development, within natural resource constraints; the idea of cost-effective development using different economic criteria to the traditional approach; that is to say development should not degrade environmental quality, nor should it reduce productivity in the long run; the great issues of health control, appropriate technologies, food self-reliance, clean water and shelter for all; the notion that people-centred initiatives are needed; human beings, in other words, are the resources in the concept" (Tolba, 1987, p. 98).

Some of the writers have primarily focussed on the environment and economy relationship while trying to formulate their explanations about sustainability discourse. In trying to establish a positive and complementary relationship between environment and economic development, Peter Bartelmus asserts that "...the overall goals of environment and development are not in conflict but are indeed the same, namely the improvement of the human quality of life or welfare for present and future generations" (Bartelmus, 1986, pp. 13-14). Another theorist reflecting on the question of the relationship between the two is Clark (1986), highlighting that "Throughout most of history, the interactions between human development and the environment have been relatively simple and local affairs. But the complexity and scale of these interactions are increasing...What were once straightforward questions of ecological preservation versus economic growth now reflect complex linkages-witness the feedbacks among energy and crop production, deforestation, and climatic change that are evident in studies of the atmospheric 'greenhouse' effect" (Clark & Munn, 1986, p. 5)?

 A similar view to Bartelmus is propounded by Tolba (1987) stating that "...economic development and environmental quality are interdependent and, in the long term, mutually reinforcing. The rational management of the world's threatened natural resource base forestalls a loss in environmental quality and enhances sustainable economic growth" (Tolba, 1987, p. 150). The same line of argument was taken up by the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) in their report which acknowledged that "...it is impossible to separate economic development issues from environment issues; many forms of development erode the environmental resources

upon which they must be based, and environmental degradation can undermine economic development. Poverty is a major cause and effect of global environmental problems" (Brundtland Report, 1987, p. 3). In the same year, a pamphlet by World Bank, *Environment, Growth, and Development* emphasizes this by stating "Promoting growth, alleviating poverty, and protecting the environment are mutually supportive objectives in the long run..., in the short run, however, the objectives are not always compatible..." (World Bank, 1987, p. 5).

Dimensions of sustainable development

Ever since the Stockholm conference in the early 70s, through various Earth summits and till recently held Glasgow summit (COP26), the concept of sustainable development has been continuously evolving. Other than the institutional level, there have also been attempts at the individual level by writers and thinkers to define and redefine the dimensions of the term 'sustainable development'. Although through the changing times, irrespective of wider or narrow definitions of the term, sustainable development as a concept sought to address the twin challenge of improving the quality of human life across the globe and at the same time protecting and conserving the natural environment. In other words, improving the standard of living for all without destroying the natural ecosystems. On the face of it, given the general notions of 'development', it seems a contradictory vision. This is exactly where the concept of sustainable development holds prominence in providing a 'golden mean' sort of an answer to the dilemma. It will become clearer as we now proceed to understand the various dimensions of sustainable development.

The UN report 'Transforming Our World' suggests three primary dimensions of sustainable development by stating that "we are committed to achieving sustainable development in its three dimensions – economic, social and environmental – in a balanced and integrated manner" (United Nations, 2015, p. 6). Although some scholars and writers on the subject matter also include cultural and personal sustainability within the scope of sustainable development (Thakran, 2015, p. 57). Defining each dimension of sustainability separately might help organize the required actions to address sustainable development in real-life efforts. In the following section, each of these dimensions is dealt with in brief.

By the emergence of the 21st century, a reasonable consensus is visible over the need to address the question of *environmental sustainability,* which is perhaps the fundamental pillar of sustainable development. Over the years there is increasing recognition of the importance of biodiversity conservation and restoration of ecological systems of the earth. Environmental sustainability fundamentally deals with the preservation and restoration of critical ecological resources or ecosystem services on which whole life and economic activity depend. Up to the early 70s economic thought was largely ignorant of the limitations posed by ecology to economic activity (Lahiri-Dutt, 2002, p. 29). But the last quarter of the 20th century saw the rise of a most powerful challenge to the conventional wisdom of economic development in the form of environmentalism based on ecology. Now economics and ecology are increasingly considered as two parts of an integrated whole. National Environment Policy 2006 of India recognized "to achieve sustainable development, environmental protection shall constitute an integral part of the development process and cannot be considered in isolation from it" (MoEF, p. 11).

The interdependence is indeed obvious as each economic activity does have some effect on the ecological systems of earth and environmental changes can also have their impact on the economic activity. To uphold the consumption culture of a society natural resources are converted into consumable products, having bearing on ecology. There is a growing concern in the policy circles and society at large about the 'future' because of the continuously degrading ecological systems and still unsatisfactory methods of resource utilization. The pace at which the face of the earth has been altered, and the rate of destruction of natural ecosystems render the future uncertain and unsustainable. In the given scenario, the need is to equip the framers of policy and decision-makers with the ability to identify and adopt such an economic policy that respects the ecological balance (Lahiri-Dutt, 2002, p. 130).

Robert Goodland in his work 'The concept of environmental sustainability' provides us with a definition of environmental sustainability "as the maintenance of natural capital" (1995, p. 10). A concept that is distinct from both – social sustainability and economic sustainability – but at the same time interdependent and intertwined with them. As a concept, it is fundamentally premised on an evolving consensus that there is a need to ensure, at least, clean water, clean air, and productive land as a foundational necessity in any responsible socio-economic system. Apparently, in the value hierarchy

among three pillars of sustainable development – social, economic, and environmental – environmental sustainability is the most fundamental and foundational as the other two cannot be imagined without a sustainable flow of energy, material, and natural resources. However, a sustainable environment can be independent of society and the economy being a self-sustaining natural system, as evident in the wilds. It can be easily concluded that a sustainable environment is an imperative prerequisite to achieving socio-economic sustainability (Morelli, 2011, p. 4).

Traditionally, the environmental problems were addressed after they arise to either mitigate their impact on people or attempt restoration. But it is not always easy to determine the effects and degree of environmental hazards and even more difficult to reverse or restore the natural settings. As a response, there is growing recognition of the need to frame the environmental policies aimed at preventing the damage in the first place. Environmental conservation policy needs to focus on preventing threats to the environment and work out methods of restoration where damage is already done. Many environmental problems are basically of local significance but some have global relevance. Some environmental sustainability issues or challenges can be listed as the defacement of living habitats of natural species (depleting forests, wetlands, etc.); discharging polluting elements and hazardous substances into the environment; depletion of natural resources and fossil fuels posing the threat of energy scarcity; greenhouse gases emission into the atmosphere leading to global warming, depleting ozone layer, climate change and so on (Sutton, 2004, p. i).

Another related dimension of sustainability is *economic sustainability* which refers to the idea of long-lasting and steady economic growth without distorting or negatively impacting social, environmental, and cultural spheres of life. Economic sustainability aims at continuous generation of wealth and wellness without periodic 'booms' and 'busts' in the economic systems. Conventional economic thought up to the middle twentieth century remained largely ignorant of the question of the environmental limitations on economic activities. Economic growth and output enhancement were the major concerns in economic discourse, which were considered to be largely based on capital and labour dynamics; environmental factors were taken for granted. But soon the world realize that economic activities cannot be sustained without accounting for the environmental cost. The natural environment increasingly became a concern within the economic sustainability discourse (Pezzey, 1992, p. 3).

Social Sustainability is an important aspect of sustainability discourse but is often left unnoticed when it comes to discussion on sustainable development. Social sustainability as a concept stands for building inclusive, just, peaceful, and resilient societies. Societies that, value not only economic growth but equality, help the vulnerable to overcome systemic obstacles by addressing the deep-rooted inequalities. Where people have voices and governments respond to those voices. Poverty alleviation, improving the quality of health, water, sanitation, and education services for all the members of society are major sustainable development goals aimed at addressing social sustainability. Accountability, transparency, non-discrimination, and public participation can be considered the fundamental pillars for building a sustainable future for any society.

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24

At its core, social sustainability gives primacy to the value of equality and social justice within a society and among various societies. It aims at reducing social conflict by reducing inequalities, promoting distributive justice, and pitches for fulfilling everybody's basic human needs (Thakran, 2015). Debates around sustainable development largely focus on economic and environmental aspects ignoring the social aspect. Sustainable development targets can only be achieved when all three dimensions of sustainability are addressed simultaneously.

Major Principles of Sustainable Development

The Rio Declaration, "with the goal of establishing a new and equitable global partnership through the creation of new levels of cooperation among States, key sectors of societies and people; and recognizing the integral and interdependent nature of the Earth" (1992, p. 1), points out 27 principles of sustainable development. The essence of these principles is summarized below:

- Discourse on sustainable development should be centred on providing people with a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature.
- States have the sovereign right to use natural resources in their jurisdictions, but the resultant environmental damage should not impact beyond their borders.
- A just and equitable balance should be maintained in meeting the developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations.
- Protection of the environment should be considered integral to, not to be looked at in isolation from, developmental paradigm.
- In efforts of poverty eradication, better meet people's life needs, and reduce disparities in living standards across the world, whole people and states should participate collaboratively.
- The peculiar circumstances and needs of those most vulnerable to climate change, least developed and developing countries shall be prioritized.
- To protect, conserve and restore the well-being and integrity of natural ecosystems of earth, a spirit of global cooperation among states is needed. Concerning varying contribution levels to environmental degradation, "States have common but differentiated responsibilities".
- production and consumption patterns that cannot be sustained should be reduced and eliminated by all states to achieve a sustainable and improved quality of

living for all. States should also formulate their respective demographic policies in accordance with sustainable development.

- Scientific and technological cooperation among states should be enhanced to develop and transfer novel and innovative technologies that can help address sustainable development.

- Creating public awareness and encouraging citizen participation in protecting and conserving the natural environment is very important. All the states have to make necessary and sincere efforts in this direction.

- To give effect to the objectives of sustainable development, states should enact enabling environmental legislation keeping in view the peculiarities of different regions and respective developmental needs.

- All countries should tweak their economic and trade policies in a manner that fosters supportive and open world order leading to economic well-being and a sustainable future for all.

- Effective legislation for establishing liability on the polluter and mechanism for grievance redressal and due compensation to victims of environmental degradation and pollution hazards should be developed at the national as well as international level through global cooperation.

- Effective cooperation among states for discouraging and preventing the inter-state transfer of environmentally hazardous substances and activities that are harmful to human beings and the overall biodiversity of a region.

- States should, as per their capabilities, adopt precautionary measures for the protection of the environment. In addressing cases of substantial environmental degradation, a lack of scientific credentials should not be considered as an excuse by the states for carrying on developmental activities.

- Environmental costs should be internalized within economic activity and economic instruments should be used by national authorities of states premised on the principle that the cost of pollution should be borne by the polluter.

- Environmental impact assessment must be carried out by a competent national authority before approving any meta-project likely to have a considerable environmental impact.

- Information should be immediately shared with other states regarding natural disasters or any other emergencies likely to have a sudden impact on other

states' environments so that timely action can prevent or mitigate the fallout of the disaster. Also, the international community shall make efforts to help afflicted states.

- participation of women and youth of the world in the development process and environmental management is essential for achieving sustainable development.

- Recognition and support should be given to indigenous knowledge systems and traditional living practices of local communities to ensure their participation in the overall sustainable development of the country.

- Peaceful resolution of environmental disputes and recognizing the inherent devastative nature of warfare are necessary for sustainable development.

- "Peace, development and environmental protection are interdependent and indivisible" (UN Rio Declaration, 1992, p. 4).

Integrating SDGs with India's legal and policy framework

All United Nations member states have a commitment to implement the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030, which consists of 17 goals and 169 targets, covering all broad components of sustainability- social, ecological, and economic. Although these goals seem very ambitious, nevertheless, they have charted out a roadmap for nations to be followed to achieve just, inclusive, equitable, and ecologically sensitive development. Human and ecological rights lie at the heart of SDGs. Operationalization of these goals mandates robust, integrated, and synergetic actions at the national level, giving due recognition to the role various actors can play in the process. The SDGs are interdependent and require collective action at various levels to bear fruits. The government at all levels along with other stakeholders like businesses and civil society should perform specific tasks like identification, implementation, reporting, etc. It is expected of the national government to formulate policies to give effect to these goals and targets. In a country as diverse as India, taking civil society members on board is equally crucial as they can help in popularizing these goals and can provide a mechanism for monitoring their implementation (WNTA, 2017).

Now we will look into the legal and policy framework available in India that deals with, or helps provide a legal base for the operationalization of SDGs. The Constitution of India itself contains some provisions which aim at protecting and improving the quality of the environment, the backbone of the sustainability paradigm. Article 48-A of the

Constitution states that "the state shall endeavour to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forests and wildlife of the country" (p. 54). Article 51-A (g) says that "It shall be the duty of every citizen of India to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers, and wildlife and to have compassion for living creatures" (p. 56). These provisions reflect that India, from the very beginning of its independence, had a vision for ecologically sensitive development.

There are also provisions that aim to promote social justice, one of the foundational pillars of sustainable development. To point some out, Art. 42 "the State shall make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief" (p. 53), Art. 46 "the State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and, in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation" (p. 54) and Art. 47 "the State shall regard the raising of the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people and the improvement of public health as among its primary duties…" (p. 54). It can be easily concluded that there are many things in the constitution itself, along with various other legislations, that help to operationalize or give effect to the sustainable development goals.

At the level of policy, a strong commitment to SDGs has been demonstrated by Governments at all levels of decentralization in India. For instance, The National Environment Policy (2006), which "is intended to mainstream environmental concerns in all development activities" (MoEF, 2006, p. 2), revolves around the ecological principles central to SDGs. The National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) is another important initiative that helps in mainstreaming the climate agenda in the development processes across the country. Under NAPCC, there are eight national-level missions that provide an outline to prioritize efforts to mitigate and combat climate change. These missions cover the areas of water, solar energy, sustainable agriculture, energy efficiency, Green India, Himalayan ecosystem, strategic knowledge, and sustainable habitat (TERI & GGGI, 2015).

The joint document of NITI Aayog and the United Nations office in India, which identifies and outlines the collective efforts of the Government of India and the United Nations to implement the Sustainable Development Framework (SDF) for 2018-2022,

underscores and helps to articulate that India's development policy is in harmony with global SDGs. Dr. Rajiv Kumar, Vice-Chairperson NITI Aayog, emphasizes that "successfully implementing the SDF will help achieve India's national priorities and also the globally agreed Sustainable Development Goals" (p. v). Further making the point for synergizing the efforts, the document stresses that the "SDF for the period 2018-2022 is a framework of cooperation, results, and strategies that will contribute to the achievement of national priorities. These priorities are articulated in the NITI Aayog's Three-year Action Agenda (2017-2020) and other policy announcements, such as A New India by 2022, and the Transformation of Aspirational Districts programme, and are aligned to the globally agreed-upon 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" (GOI & UN, 2018, p. 5).

Given the fact that India is home to around 1.3 billion people, it is widely recognized that India will be a key player in determining the success or failure of SDGs. The first Voluntary National Review Report by India, as presented in 2017 to the High-Level Political Forum on sustainable development, states that governments at the central as well as state-level along with the Parliament of India have undertaken substantive measures for localizing SDGs. There have been various initiatives and schemes which, in effect, help to operationalize or give effect to these goals. A report by NITI Aayog in 2018 mapped various central sector schemes of different ministries to identify which initiatives or schemes of government are related to which goal of the SDGs. This report takes up all the seventeen goals separately to identify and establish the linkages between each goal and various central schemes related to that particular goal. For example, it identified around forty central sector schemes like MGNREGA, DAY, NRLM, NSAP, UJJWALA, PMEGP, ICDS, APY, earmarked to achieve different SDG targets and operational under various ministries, were related to SDG1 i.e., "end poverty in all its forms everywhere" (p. 1). Likewise, for SDG4 i.e., "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" (p. 13), some related schemes listed were Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, MDM, NMMSS, NSIGSE, NSS, Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana, and so on (NITI Aayog, 2018, pp. 1-18). This mapping of various government schemes along with different sustainable development goals establishes that the Indian policy framework recognizes the importance of integrating national priorities with these goals.

Sustainable development in general, and even universally agreed on sustainable goals in particular, are so vast and comprehensive that they cover almost every sphere of life on earth. Implementing or addressing them is a humongous challenge. A collective, synergetic and cohesive effort from all the stakeholders becomes inevitable in this pursuit. There are so many fronts on which this has to be simultaneously addressed. For instance, governments need to shape and align their various policy objectives with sustainable goals; businesses need to take into account the environmental costs in their enterprises; civil society also needs to understand its role in this regard; at the individual level, a behavioural change can be of great help. Out of so many ways and policy objectives, the educational policy of a state is just one tool that can be applied to address sustainability issues. An education policy that sought to promote sustainability-sensitive teaching can be of great help in creating awareness among future generations.

Having briefly looked into the concept of sustainable development and its importance, the next chapter of this research work further focuses primarily on the question of whether Gandhi's vision can be of any help to address sustainability issues? And if yes, what sort of remedy or alternative does it offer? In the following chapter, we will look into Gandhi's idea of civilization and his critique of 'modernity' to find an answer to these questions.

Gandhi's critique of modernity and the sustainability paradigm

"There can be no industrialization without predation".

- J.C. Kumarappa

Abstract – The chapter discusses primarily Gandhi's critique of modern industrial civilization to look into the possible elements of sustainability consciousness inherent in it. It also tries to briefly highlight and understand the traditional knowledge systems of India, which had a lot of influence on the Gandhian vision. This was done with the purpose to identify the elements of sustainability in the Gandhian approach by placing them into its contextual roots.

Many people tried to engage Gandhi's ideas from various perspectives over the past century. From his time to ours his views have sparked formidable debates. Some consider him a man of romantic imagination and relegate his ideas belonging to the bygone ages, but there are also people whom his vision still fascinates. There is also a debate around the 'influence on Gandhi', i.e., if his views are shaped by the discourse in the 'west' or the 'orient'. If there are writers like Ashis Nandy proclaiming that "almost all his gurus were Western intellectuals" (1986, p. 128), referring to the Holy Trinity of Ruskin, Tolstoy, and Thoreau; people like Einstein believed "Gandhi would have been Gandhi without Thoreau and Tolstoy" (Cited by H. H. Anniah Gowda, 1969, p. 101). To me, it appears to be more relevant to focus on what he borrowed and later gave to people than from where he did. Going into either of these debates is beyond the scope of this work. The primary concern of this chapter is to reflect on the linkages, if any, between Gandhi's critique of modernity, his idea of true civilization, and the issues of sustainability faced by the world today. Before going into the question of how his ideas have a bearing on sustainability discourse, let's first try to understand his notion of modernity or modern civilization for our purpose.

The first systematic and elaborate criticism of 'modern civilization', as Gandhi presented, is found in his work *Hind Swaraj'* written more than a century ago in 1909 aboard the ship *Kildonan Castle* on his return voyage from London to South Africa. More than a hundred and ten years later this tiny booklet still enthuses readers every day and for long been appreciated for Gandhi's diagnosis of modern civilization. That

modern civilization, which he addressed in his work, has grown many folds since then and has taken deep roots across the globe. And so did the problems and challenges associated with it, if we subscribe to Gandhian views. Gandhi distinguished between 'true civilization' and 'modern civilization'. For him, true civilization "is that mode of conduct which points out to man the path of duty. Performance of duty and observance of morality are convertible terms. To observe morality is to attain mastery over our minds and our passions. So doing, we know ourselves" (1909, p. 49). Whereas, he equates modern civilization with barbarism for it has misunderstood the whole essence of human life as here "people made bodily welfare the object of life" (Anthony Parel ed., 1997, p. 34). The modern civilization gives prominence to the body over the spirit and every activity or enterprise is so directed as to exemplify the bodily pleasures and glorify the former. The industrial revolution brought forth modern civilization, giving rise to 'capitalist society', as known in the Marxian lexicon. This newly formed society is hierarchical in relationships and emphasizes ends over means. Gandhi recognized that the major problem with modern civilization lies in its propensity to destroy the inner spirit and moral being in the pursuit of transient bodily pleasures. It predates on self-restraint, moral fabric in a person, ethical living with collective belongingness, self-satisfaction, and other inner elements in a person which guide one to live a life of contentment and satisfaction. His conception was essentially similar to Tolstoy, what he calls "bondage masquerading as freedom" (Raghavan, 1973, p. 7).

Gandhi believed that modern civilization and the West, or Europe, are not necessarily identical but rather he saw it as a bearer of 'Satanic' materialistic modernity. He recognized that the essence of true civilization was not completely lost in the villages and country regions of the west, which were yet little influenced by the industrial revolution. He understood that village society is not free from its problems but firmly believed that these can be easily rectified, compared to the problems of industrialized urban centres. We found optimism in his analysis when he suggests that modern civilization "is not an incurable disease, but…. the English (West) are at present afflicted by it" (1909, p. 30). Contrary to his general portrayal as too much an idealist, Gandhi was rational enough to understand that it is not possible to do away with modern civilization completely, more so a century later. Therefore, his suggestion was to limit its impact on moral and ethical grounds as far as possible. In his various writings and speeches spanning decades, he not only diagnosed various ills associated with modern

civilization or western 'modernity' but also tried to offer their remedies. Let's first look what are the problems he identified with the modern industrial civilization.

The ills of industrial modernity

For Gandhi, modern industrial civilization, despite having many achievements, had fundamental flaws. It essentially thrives on the exploitation of fellow beings and nature and is primarily violent, brutal, and aggressive in the relationships it establishes. The imperialistic and restless attributes of industrial modernity render it unethical and unsustainable. He stressed that the whole conception of a human being or a man is mistaken under modern civilization. There prevails a misconception about the hierarchy of human nature resulting in a lack of a sense of right direction and purpose among people. Building his analysis based on the classical philosophical traditions in India, Gandhi criticized modern civilization for privileging the body over the soul or spirit in a person and failing to appreciate the inner force or soul force. The body is the source of all the wants, irrational obsessions, and unrestricted desires, whereas, the soul is a source of spiritual energy or force. He defined spirituality in moral terms by suggesting that attainment of spirituality is only possible by attaining morality in our lives. If a person lives with the moral constitution, then only, he can realize his true cosmic self and can come over his 'individualist illusion' (Parekh, 2001, pp. 78-80).

This conception of Gandhi will become clearer as we now identify and focus on some of the attributes he associates with modern industrial civilization. Out of his general criticism of modernity, found across his various writings and speeches, four major characteristics of modern civilization may be highlighted to better understand his viewpoint. The first and foremost criticism he stressed is the failure of modern civilization to inculcate the ethics of self-restraint in individuals or society at large. Because the modern industrial civilization values body over spirit, it is appetite, insatiable desires, greed, and unrestrained bodily wants which are ruling the discourse in such societies. It promotes 'materialist' values and lacks moral fabric. Maximum material production for meeting the never-ending appetite for consumption forms the basis of the industrial economy with no regard for natural limits and boundaries.

He prescribed that "civilization, in the real sense of the term, consists not in the multiplication, but the deliberate and voluntary reduction of wants" (M.K. Gandhi, 1957). The evils of modern civilization are such that they undermine human dignity by

weakening the morality and self-discipline of individuals. Capitalism which gained momentum after industrialization made humans inefficient and lethargic. Human wants to take a materialistic course by giving more value to the body over the soul. Gandhi closely linked the growing dependence on technology with industrialization which was the driving force. The motive behind establishing more and more industries was to surge consumerism and turn human beings into their slaves. Modern life these days was characterized by the consumption of goods produced by these large industries.

A second negative attribute, according to Gandhi, of modern industrial civilization was its inability to recognize the true nature and limits of positivist rationality or more plainly speaking limits of reason. Overemphasis on positivist or scientific observations as the only source of true knowledge constructs a dangerous and untenable 'ideology of rationalism'. Gandhi was not against reason and saw it as an important human faculty that plays a crucial role in human life. But at the same time, he cautioned against unwarranted and blind faith in reason which he terms 'rationalism'-an ideology. He treats 'reason' and 'rationalism' very differently. While reason, an important and indispensable human attribute, is desirable but rationalism is uncalled for. He says that "rationalism is a hideous monster when it claims for itself omnipotence. Attribution of omnipotence to reason is as bad a piece of idolatry as is the worship of stock and stone believing it to be God. I plead not for the suppression of reason, but an appreciation of its inherent limits" (Young India, as cited in Upasana Pandey, 2010).

Gandhi was convinced that some areas of human experience go beyond the limited boundaries of reason and are based on faith. Such areas as religion, morality, and politics should not be judged by the narrow lenses of reason as they need the guidance of tradition, moral insight, wisdom, conscience, and intuition. The conclusions drawn out from positivist reasoning are fundamentally tentative and temporary as they can be challenged and subverted by superior arguments and better reasoning. Hence, the 'truths' derived by positivist reason mostly remain propositions only and cannot be relied upon as fundamentals to guide human life. He criticized rationalism for being anti-pluralist and narrow as it values only one form of knowledge, i.e., derived from scientific observation. It suppresses or ignores many crucial human faculties and stands intolerant to many other forms of knowledge. Under modern civilization disproportionate emphasis on the human ability to reason and their ability to know and

innovate to become the masters of nature have developed arrogance and irrational belief in human beings that they fail to sense their limits.

Another problem he identifies with rationalism is its tendency toward homogenization of individuals and societies due to a lack of any regard for diversity. It postulates universal identical ideals for all people and suggests only one form as an ideal human life, ignoring the individual traits or regional diversity and the various notions of the good life they hold dear. For Gandhi, every individual has their inescapable unique *swabhava* or individuality which one develops in her unique cultural traditions. What is good and dear for one cannot necessarily be so for the other person belonging to an altogether different tradition. Rationalism being "inherently hierarchical and a missionary, and having a deep imperialist orientation" (Parekh, 2001, p. 85), violate human integrity by ignoring the possibilities of diverse forms of human life.

Thirdly, the development of a highly centralized and bureaucratic modern state having a monopoly over violence and political power is essentially a by-product of modern industrial civilization. Modern civilization, he says, fosters the spirit of competition and acquisition pitching people against others in their pursuit of generating and accumulating massive resources. This constant competitiveness leads to a conflict of interest and aggressive behaviour among people, managing which requires a well-armed and powerful state capable of regulating almost all spheres of human life. In the modern industrial economic setup forces of production have become centralized and concentrated in a few hands as a result disturbing social relations along with creating economic disasters for many. The magnitude of these socio-economic problems can be dealt only with a centralized political framework. The modern economy is feeding higher levels of unemployment, poverty, and massive inequalities not only economic but in turn, creating hierarchical social orders. In such a scenario of continuous concentration of wealth and ever-increasing conflict, at the domestic or national level strong political force or state becomes necessary to manage the legitimate discontent and establish order. Whereas, a strong state becomes crucial internationally as well for the protection of global trade and foreign investments. In the process of its efforts to monopolize all political and military power, the state also becomes the sole custodian of morality, soon presenting its self-interests to be the supreme virtue of society.

At one time Gandhi appears to take forward the Marxian argument that in the process of reconciliation of various conflicting interests in society, the state essentially becomes an instrument in the hands of more powerful groups. He believed that individuals who hold morality, societal ethics, and honour dear generally avoid participating in the affairs of the state. On the contrary, morally shallow people eagerly find themselves managing state affairs, mostly for manipulating its functions for individual advantage. He was not too optimistic even about the parliamentary democracy given the very limited control citizens can exercise and its vulnerability to manipulation by powerful interest groups. Although he gave due credit to the institution of democracy by admiring its greatness, he wrote, "the greater the institution the greater the chances of abuse. Democracy is a great institution and therefore it is liable to be greatly abused. The remedy, therefore, is not avoidance of democracy but the reduction of the possibility of abuse to a minimum" (Young India, 7-5-1931, as compiled by RK Prabhu, 1947, p. 16).

The fourth problem, also important from this work's point of view, is the disharmony of modern industrial civilization with nature. Although he did not talk specifically and separately about the sustainability issues, in various instances, we found his arguments showing concern about the disregard for nature in modern industrial civilization. Providing a scathing attack on wholesale industrialization in the West and cautioning India, not to ape the former's economic model he wrote, "God forbid that India should ever take to industrialization after the manner of the West. The economic imperialism of a single tiny island kingdom is today keeping the world in chains. If an entire nation of 300 million (now 1.3 billion) took to similar economic exploitation, it would strip the world bare like locusts" (Young India, 20-12-1928 as cited by Ramachandra Guha, 2006, p. 225). At the level of the individual, he emphasized the nobility in leading a life based on voluntary simplicity and self-restraint which provides a glimpse of leading a sustainable life in harmony with nature. Whereas, modern industrial civilization "looks at man as a limitless consumer and thus sets out to open the floodgates of industrial production" (Chatterjee, 2006, p. 77) to satisfy his appetite for luxury and unrestricted self-indulgence.

Recognizing the achievements of modernity

Now as we have looked into some of the problems Gandhi identifies with modernity, it is worth mentioning that he also praised it for some great achievements. Firstly, he was

a great admirer of the scientific spirit of inquiry found in the people of Western modernity. He himself was on a quest to know the 'Truth', as the title of his autobiography *The story of My Experiments with Truth* also suggests. He once wrote that a restless search for Truth fills the soul of the West, he valued it greatly. He opined that this hallmark of modern civilization, the scientific spirit, got stifled in Indian society under the influence of traditionalists. For him, continuous rigorous examination and scrutiny of established beliefs in any society are of great importance as this intellectual curiosity helps find the real 'Truth'. While appreciating and giving due credit to the penchant for discoveries and the spirit of scientific inquiry under modernity, he emphatically cautioned against the irrational and indiscriminate application of the positivist method of inquiry on all forms and areas of human knowledge. In other words, he sought for understanding the limits of positivist rationality (Parekh, 2001).

A second crucial achievement of modernity lies in its ability to understand and explain the natural and physical systems of the world. This has led to the enhanced human capacity to control and transform the natural world. For example, it has helped to anticipate natural calamities and in turn, mitigate their devastating fallouts. Modern medical science helped eliminate or restrict many diseases, improvement in health and hygiene, and hence prolong human life. There again lies a slippery terrain in Gandhi's opinion. While prolonging life and enhanced health is good for sure, the overemphasis on, and love towards, the body, ignoring the soul or inner spirit, in modern civilization has developed among people 'fear' of death. He believed fear and cowardice are the biggest enemies of a person and held that "strength lies in absence of fear, not in the quantity of flesh and muscle we have on our bodies" (1909, p. 35).

Thirdly, Gandhi acknowledged that modern civilization has helped cultivate the organizational ethos in modern societies. It contributed to cultivating various civic virtues like respect for rules, public morality, punctuality, mutual respect, and so on. In the course of his interaction with the West even he learned many civic virtues of modernity. Again, he criticized modern civilization for its zealous celebration of individuality and self-interest without rightly balancing it with the ethics of public morality and collective belongingness. Gandhi at times even appear incoherent in his arguments, for instance, at one point he argued against modernity for giving individual undue importance over the community, but sooner his arguments also criticized

modernity for over-institutionalization in the name of harnessing the fruits of organization, in turn leaving no space for diversity and individual dissent. Although, it can also be looked at as if he was trying to find out the right balance between individual space and collective good.

In his search for the 'True civilization', Gandhi was essentially juxtaposing the modern industrial civilization of the West with the civilization of the Indian subcontinent, as he saw it. Though his heart goes all out to accept at first instance that Indian civilization was 'far superior' to the 'Satanic' modern civilization of the West, his mind was rational enough to acknowledge the defects and challenges of the homeland. He had an unstoppable zeal for betterment, for the *cleansing* of the mind and soul, in the same manner, he searched for the 'True' civilization – "which points out to man the path of duty" (1909, p. 49). He firmly believed that the real strength of Indian civilization lies in its moral and ethical living and preserving and enhancing these qualities remained his major concern in life.

Looking for sustainability in a nonviolent social economy

Modern civilization challenged the traditional living practices and distorted the notions of time and space. The era of the industrial revolution also brought with it an epoch of unsustainable development. Riding on the scientific quest for knowledge, there was tremendous progress in the sphere of science and technology. Using new techniques of production and modern machines fuelled with energy from coal increased industrial productivity to unprecedented levels. While modernity salvaged humans from the bane of feudalism and bigotry, it nevertheless placed humanity in the shackles of materialism and made people slaves of their own bodies. In the urge to satisfy bodily lust and by employing the power of modern machinery, the western civilization turned to the path of violence and subjugation of peoples of the world far beyond the territories of Europe. The policy of maximum extraction of energy and other natural resources had far-reaching consequences. This not only degraded the natural environment beyond its capacity to regenerate leading to an environmental crisis, but also developed unsustainable economies. The world today has realized that the living practices and development model of modern civilization cannot be sustained for long. Now people are desperately looking for alternative living practices and newer models of sustainable development, as evident by the SDGs (Sahu, 2016, p. 6).

In the given context it is timely to mention that Gandhi recognized, more than a century earlier, that the violent and materialistic character of modernity was unsustainable. The West got awakened to the threat to "Our Common Future" in 1987, he cautioned well in advance against the relentless quest for materialistic comforts and luxury posing an existential threat to the common future of humanity. It won't be an exaggeration to say that *Hind Swaraj* may be looked at as a manifesto for sustainable development, despite making any direct reference to the environment or nature. He asserted that Western industrial modernity contained seeds of self-destruction and whoever try to ape it will also perish. For instance, he warned against efforts to annihilate distance and considered railways to be an instrument to propagate evil. His argument against railways can also be extended to other forms of modern transport systems. Rising levels of greenhouse gases and global warming are major problems of present times. A major chunk of these gases come from fuel combustion to run various modes of modern transportation. Now there is growing recognition that these cannot be sustained and the need to find an alternative framework is imminent.

We can find in Gandhi's arguments a concern for the environment, for instance, he said, "nature has provided it (air) to such extent that we can have it at no cost. But modern civilization has put a price even on air. In these times, one has to go off to a distant place to take the air and this costs money" (CWMG, Vol. 11, p. 453). He was against such a violent and aggressive economy of industrial civilization and preached for a non-violent economic culture. His idea of a non-violent economy was based on the ethics of self-restraint and gaining mastery over our passions. He wrote that the mind is a "restless bird", it cannot be satisfied by the acquisition. For him, happiness was a mental condition, and looking for it in bodily pleasures or the accumulation of wealth is futile. Everyone should recognize voluntary limits on their indulgences because the maladies of materialism and consumerism can only lead to the exploitation of nature and inequalities in society. Non-violence, for him, was not just a philosophical pursuit but a living practice in every sphere of life be it at the level of individual or organization of society, or economics for that matter.

Social justice and equality were the foundational principles in Gandhi's conception of a non-violent economy. He suggested leading a life of moderate simplicity which meets all the basic life requirements and stands in harmony with nature. It was not to suggest living in poverty and insanity but leading a purposeful life of contentment and

cheerfulness. His economic ideas were based or interwoven with the notion of *swadeshi, khadi,* and his *theory of trusteeship.* Khadi, for him, was not just a matter of clothing, it symbolized decentralization of the whole production and distribution framework. At the same time, it also represented a non-violent living practice. Adopting a decentralized mechanism of production and distribution, as in the case of khadi, not only reduces the possibility of unnecessary production but also cuts down the requirement for the accumulation of huge quantities of goods in a single marketplace. It further reduces the cost of transportation, required for the accumulation of raw materials and distribution of finished goods. In turn, it helps to check the unnecessary and avoidable exploitation of natural resources. These benefits of decentralized Khadi production also stand true for cottage industries and village industries. This way the required delicate equilibrium between human material needs and nature's capacity to produce can be achieved (Dharmadhikari, 2009, pp. 18-19).

Gandhi, Indian civilization, and environmental sustainability

Scholars interested in Gandhian studies believe that the tradition and culture of Indian civilization have had a great impact on Gandhi's line of thought. His philosophy of life is greatly embedded in the philosophy and vision of ancient Indian civilization as found in Vedic scriptures and various religious and philosophical texts. In such a scenario, looking into Gandhi's vision of a non-violent, holistic, and *Sarvodaya* society necessitates a reflection on Indian culture, traditions, and philosophy including religious philosophy.

Concerns about nature and the environment had traditionally found their place in Indian culture and civilization. In ancient India, although big urban centres and industries, polluting the environment and air, were not there, neither were any possibilities of global warming, but with the increasing human population clearing of forests and felling of trees had started then for acquiring suitable land for agriculture. Our ancestors were conscious of the long-term consequences of the continuous cutting of trees and forests. To protect the trees and water resources they tried to integrate nature with *Dharma,* which can be loosely translated into the English language as religion. They identified and marked for worship trees like- *Peepal, Vat or Bargad, Neem,* all considered to be having the most positive impact on the environment, and prohibited cutting or felling them by presenting them as the residing spaces of Indian Gods and

Goddess. To make people comprehensively believe this, various myths and festivities were created around these trees. Other than these, plants like- *Avla, Sami, and Tulsi,* having medicinal values were also declared sacred.

Likewise, by presenting rivers as Goddesses and lakes as playgrounds of Gods, efforts were made for their cleanliness and conservation. In ancient India, many temples were built near rivers and other water bodies, and planting these sacred trees within their premises was also made compulsory sacred practice. They were also conscious of the important role of various living creatures, animals, reptiles and so in the preservation of environmental balance. For protecting them they were associated with different gods and goddesses. Birds have always been considered a barometer of the environment. In tribal communities, a close relationship between nature and people is still visible. In our culture, some gods had also been presented as symbols or representatives of nature. Lord *Ganesha* is the biggest example whose head is of an elephant, a rat is his conveyance, an ox is his friend and guardian, a peacock and a snake his family members, the mountain is his home, and the forest his playground. His green colour symbolizes nature, leaves from twenty-one different trees and plants are offered in his worship. Others like *Shiva, Vishnu, and Brahma* also represent nature in different forms with different symbols.

We can also visibly find the consciousness toward nature and respect for the environment embedded in our Vedic scriptures. The *Rigveda* differentiates Gods into three categories namely the Gods of -*Jal* (water), *Vayu* (air), and *Bhoomi* (land). This categorization of Gods clearly reflects the environmental consciousness of our ancestors. The message of Vedas is clear that people should be able to breathe clean and fresh air, should have healthy and fresh food, be able to drink clean and pure water, and should have access to clean soil to play and grow in and for agriculture. If one gets this then only her life not only be long but also healthy and delightful. Our ancestors understood the importance of nature and the environment and with the purpose to create awareness among the masses relied upon *Dharma* and religious practices. But over time those myths, symbols, and practices that were started for developing environmental consciousness and celebrating nature lost relevance because people forgot the essence and purpose of these practices. These were reduced to mere religious tasks and even come to be regarded as superstition. The ignorance of culture and negligence of nature

in developmental activities is giving shape to what sort of future for humanity does not need a vision of Vedas to understand anymore (Dhruv Gupt, 2022).

The continuous ill-treatment and exploitation of mother earth are bound to have consequences unbearable for humankind. The constant clearing of forests and unhindered industrialization have led to an ever-increasing global temperature. Rivers and other water resources are getting polluted and contaminated by hazardous substances. Air is turning poisonous. Glaciers are melting at an increasing pace responsible for rising sea levels. These changes are not only a threat to human beings but all life forms on earth. Today nature and our environment are paying the price of the blind race for 'development', tomorrow it will be us and our next generations. Now, as the world has realized this fact to some extent, as evident from the discourse on sustainable development, the desired and required changes or course correction is hardly visible.

In this chapter, I tried to highlight and understand Gandhi's critique of modernity and also looked into the traditional knowledge systems in India, which had a lot of influence on the Gandhian vision. This was done with the purpose to identify the elements of sustainability in the Gandhian approach by placing them into its contextual roots. The next chapter will focus on the question that how Gandhi was trying to give concrete shape to his vision of a true civilization, or how was he trying to give effect to his idea of the good life? Here comes his conception of Nai Talim, which is the core theme of the next chapter. Understanding the fundamentals of Nai Talim and more importantly placing it within the larger Gandhian discourse is the purpose ahead.

Gandhi's Nai Talim: A vision for holistic education

"Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man."

-Swami Vivekananda

Abstract – This chapter deals with Gandhi's concept of Nai Talim and tries to place it in its proper philosophical context to understand its underlying vision and relevance for sustainability education. It also examines if it holds relevance for our present education system. It further attempts to understand the concept-policy interface i.e., to what extent the concept of Nai Talim has shaped the education policy of the Indian state over the decades after independence. The evolution of the concept and its interpretation by varied scholars after Gandhi is also a matter of review in this chapter.

Education can be considered the backbone of any society. It not only lays the foundations of an individual's future but also shapes the character of a society. One of the fundamental shortcomings of the modern education system is its propensity for developing expertise in limited areas of knowledge by a way of compartmentalization of whole education. In its effort of making 'area experts,' it misses out on the basic essence of education i.e., all-round personality development and holistic growth of a person. The current education apparatus has not been able to provide the desired direction to young people. It has failed in providing the necessary opportunities for all-round growth and helping students to become self-reliant. Passing examinations with good grades and earning numerous degrees are of no use if they fail to prepare a student to face various life challenges. Such a scenario necessitates a relook or even revision of the prevailing educational framework in India. Even the new National Education Policy of 2020 recognizes this proposition to an extent and sets out for making substantial refinements in educational policy and structures in the country.

Mahatma Gandhi was conscious of the transformative potential of education. As we have seen in the previous chapter, he was not a votary of modern civilization. Likewise, he didn't even consider modern education to be the right and desired form of education. Striving towards building or reviving the 'true civilization', which ought to be based on the principles of Truth and Non-violence along with other virtues, he proposed an alternative educational policy – Nai Talim, as it came to be known. For him, the

adoption of Nai Talim was the means to shape true civilization - 'which points to man the path of duty.' Generally, Gandhi's Nai Talim is reduced to having two or three components like craft-based education or emphasizing the use of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction. These, of course, are crucial and fundamental components of his scheme but Nai Talim should be seen as a much larger concept. It is not only an educational model or policy but also an educational philosophy (Jeyapragasam, 2010, p. 26). Gandhi used to view life holistically and comprehensively. His vision or guide for education ought to be seen in the like manner. Rather than considering it as a concrete set of few procedural mechanisms, it should be placed within and along with his philosophy of life.

Contextualizing *Nai Talim*

To comprehend the concept of *Nai Talim* in its true spirit it is important to look at its evolution. It was in June 1937 that Gandhiji came up with his ideas regarding basic education in the periodical 'Harijan'. He stressed that the current system of education, referring to the modern education apparatus of the British Raj, is not only wasteful in its outcome but more importantly positively harmful to Indian society. To set things right he was contemplating an alternative mechanism for basic education which not only enhances the intellect of students but also purifies their souls. For this purpose, an all-India National Educational Conference was called on 22nd-23rd October 1937 in Wardha. The conference was attended by eminent educationists, workers, and leaders of the congress, along with education ministers of some states and Gandhiji presided over the meeting. There a discussion was held over different aspects of the new scheme of education as was proposed by Gandhiji. A committee was appointed by the conference under the chairmanship of Dr. Zakir Hussain with a mandate to prepare a detailed plan of education and the needed syllabus. Some other members of the committee were J.C. Kumarappa, K.T. Shah, Vinoba Bhave, Kishori Lal, and the likes. The committed first submitted its report in December 1937 and a revised report in April 1938, presenting a radically new scheme for basic education, which later became popular as *Nai Talim* (Priti Kumari, 2018, p. 73).

In its initial phase the new scheme of education, which was around then known as Basic Education, was to cover education for children between 7 years to 14 years of age. Further, Pre-Basic education to cover education for years prior to the 7th year, and Post-

Basic education to cover education afterwards 14 years of age, was to be added over time. The scheme of education covering all these three phases is collectively referred to as New Education or more popularly the *Nai Talim* of Gandhiji (Kumarappa, 1953). The ideas concerning a new form of education were not a sudden awakening in Gandhiji. A brief reflection on the evolution of these ideas with his experiences and experiments around education seems in order.

Nai Talim was the outcome or product of Mahatma Gandhi's sustained thought and personal experiences in India and abroad, especially in South Africa. It was equally an outcome of his experiments like the ones he conducted with the education of his own children from 1896 onwards. In the formative period of his ideas concerning education, Gandhiji was wondering about the inadequacies and irrelevancy of prevailing education. He does not subscribe to the ordinary meaning of education as for him education cannot be mere knowledge of letters (Hind Swaraj, 1909, p. 71). He accorded utmost importance to the sphere of education as he believed it behold the 'seeds of future of children of the soil'. In the pursuit of truth, the educational scheme should be framed with 'absolute sincerity', bold experimentation, and fearlessness. The experience he gained with experimenting with the education of his children and that at Tolstoy Farm in South Africa must have a bearing on his conception of *Nai Talim*. In deciding on the question that what constitutes 'national' education as distinct from foreign education, he held that only that education can be considered national which helps to establish Swaraj.

Although the Wardha Conference is largely associated with the emergence of Nai Talim but his views and vision about education are scattered in all his writings, even the ones dated before the conference. Across these writings, from *Hind Swaraj* to various articles in *Harijan* and *Young India,* one can find that the genesis of his idea about Nai Talim lies, firstly, in his dissatisfaction with the British pattern of schooling or education. Secondly, his keen desire for rural development forms the bedrock of his conception (Teertha, Rani, & Sudhakar, 2010, p. 46). He was conscious of the transformational capability in education and stressed the merger of education with work for bringing social transformation and achieving economic self-sufficiency.

It won't be an exaggeration to say that the basic principles which shape *Nai Talim* are principally based on the ancient knowledge system of India. The purpose and

orientation of ancient education in India were similar to Nai Talim i.e., attainment of self-realization and enlightenment. Gandhiji acknowledged the desirability of shaping education along the lines of ancient educational practices. He wrote, "our ancient school system is enough. Character building has the first place in it, and that is primary education. A building erected on that foundation will last" (Hind Swaraj, 1909, p. 72).

History tells that India had a rich tradition for education, be it the Buddhist system of education or the Gurukuls. India also had the world's greatest institutions for higher education. In the 7th century A.D., Huen Tsang documented the rich and flourishing education system prevalent in India (Priti Kumari, 2018). Penchant for moral and ethical education pervades Indian education in historical times. Overall and holistic development of children has always been the purpose of Indian education. The introduction of Modern education in India proved to be a big blow to traditional forms of educational practices. Nai Talim underscores the spirit of traditional forms of education systems. It focuses more on cultural and value aspects in education than literary ones. In his speech at Kasturba Balika Ashram in 1946, Gandhi said, "I attach far more importance to the cultural aspect of education than to the literary" (as cited by Anil Dutta Mishra, 2015, p. 336).

Gandhi's vision of life resembles the wisdom of ancient knowledge in India. Understanding Nai Talim in the right spirit necessitates, first, placing Gandhian vision in its civilizational context. And second, placing his conception of Nai Talim within his larger philosophy of life. Because by Nai Talim what he wished to achieve was nothing lesser than inculcating 'Truth' to the future of India. It would violate Mahatma's approach if we try to categorize his Nai Talim or any other of his concepts. Holisticness lies at the heart of Gandhian philosophy. None of his ideas or concepts should be categorized, doing so one can only get the 'body' not the 'soul' of his views (Pawan K. Gupta, 2010, p. 12). There is a need to comprehensively understand his life philosophy in general and his philosophy of education in particular. For him, education was not about feeding children with information but drawing out the hidden purity and goodness from each human being. Literacy was considered just a means and in no way an end in itself. All-round development of the children was his goal. The elements of sustainability were implicit in his holistic philosophy of life and so is also true about his concept of Nai Talim.

Fundamentals of Nai Talim

By placing Gandhi's Nai Talim in its rightful philosophical context, we can enlist some of the fundamental features of Nai Talim for the sake of academic understanding.

1. *Free and compulsory education for all -* This aspect was raised by him as he firmly believed in the principle of free and compulsory basic education for all Indians. He also held that people should realize that it is only by teaching the children a useful vocation that their mental, physical and spiritual faculties can be cultivated. He emphasized that no one should consider the economic considerations concerning education as wasteful or out of place. The economic calculations will be very helpful in the development of intellect in a student (Harijan, 9-10-1937, p. 292).

2. *Medium of instruction should be mother tongue –* Gandhiji stressed having mother tongue as the medium of instruction for basic education imparted to the children. Instructions in the mother tongue help to lay a solid foundation in a student as he/she better understands the curriculum and also helps in developing a positive attitude in the child towards school. The mother's tongue plays a crucial role in shaping the societal and cultural attributes of a child. It also helps in developing love and respect for the motherland.

3. *Craft-centric education –* He believed that "craft, art, health, and education should all be integrated into one scheme. Nai Talim is a beautiful blend of all four and covers the whole education of the individual from the time of conception to the moment of death…. Instead of regarding craft and industry as different from education, I will regard the former as the medium for the latter" (Harijan, 10-11-1946, p. 394).

4. *Focus on creativity and developing critical thinking-* The principle of 'learning by doing' was emphasized under the scheme of Nai Talim as it stimulates creative and critical thinking in a student. The major emphasis was on introducing students to the work culture from the very initial stage to enable them to contribute productively while learning. So, the scheme of basic education strives for utilization of the head, hand, and heart instead of over-concentration on reading or writing abilities. To quote Gandhiji, "By education, I mean 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

47

of the means whereby man and woman can be educated. Literacy in itself is no education. I would therefore begin the child's education by teaching it a useful handicraft and enabling it to produce from the moment it begins its training. Thus, every school can be made self-supporting, the condition being that the State takes over the manufactures of these schools" (Harijan, 31-7-1937, p.197).

5. *For collaborative learning-* Education is a continuous and lifelong learning process that helps to cultivate the spirit of toleration, cooperation, and collaboration and helps develop a consciousness of responsibility. These qualities are essential for the full development of human personality. It in turn creates a fine balance between the individual and society. Collaborative learning practices lie at the heart of the Nai Talim. Learning with Craftwork helps a child acquire collaborative skills.

6. *Primacy of moral education-* In Gandhiji's perspective peace is fundamental for human life and education can help attain it. Observation of morality and ethical conduct is of paramount importance for attaining peace. He believed that education should inculcate ethics and morality in students. He said, "Our system of education leads to the development of the mind, body, and soul. The ordinary system cares only for the mind." (Harijan, 9-11- 1947, p. 401). "I attach far more importance to the cultural aspect of education than to the literary." (Harijan, 5-5-1946, p. 120)

7. *Prioritizing character-building-* Education is considered a powerful tool to shape the genuine character of a student. The fundamental goal of education under the Nai Talim scheme of education is character-building, which is reflected in the intellectual and social behaviour of a student. Gandhiji wrote, "When it is remembered that the primary aim of all education is, or should be, the moulding of the character of pupils, a teacher who has a character to keep need not lose heart." (Harijan, 1-2-1933, p. 3).

8. *Self-reliance and patriotism-.* Gandhiji emphasized that the basic education system should be self-supporting. Every child should learn a craft or occupational skill for livelihood. He wanted education should be able to ensure employment. He wrote, "My Nai Talim is not dependent on money. The running expenses should come from the educational process itself. Whatever the criticisms may be, I know that the only education is that which is self-supporting" (Harijan, 2-3-1947, p.48). He also wrote, "The teachers earn what

they take. It stands for the art of living. Therefore, both the teacher and the pupil have to produce in the very act of teaching and learning. It enriches life from the commencement. It makes the nation independent of the search for employment". (Harijan, 11-5-1947, p. 145).

9. *Inculcating the virtues of Truth & Non-violence-* Gandhiji always considered non-violence as a fundamental and essential part of Nai Talim. Truth & Non-violence are of fundamental importance in Gandhiji's worldview. In his basic scheme of education also, the principle of truth and Non-violence occupied the central importance. As evident from his statement, "I want to see God face to face. God, I know, is Truth. For me the only certain means of knowing God is non-violence-ahimsa-love. I live for India's freedom and would die for it because it is part of the Truth. Only a free India can worship the true God. But my patriotism is not exclusive; it is calculated not only not to hurt any other nation, but to benefit all in the true sense of the word. India's freedom as conceived by me can never be a menace to the world" (Young India, 3-4-1924, p. 109).

10. *Developing the spirit of Social Service-* Throughout his life, we can see that Gandhiji had a propensity and liking for social service, be it nursing patients or helping people in need. He wanted to make it a point in his scheme of education for children as well, as he says "Your education if it is a vital thing, must shed its fragrance in your surroundings. You must devote a certain portion of your time daily to serving the people around you in a practical manner. You must, therefore, be prepared to take the spade, the broomstick, and the basket. You must become voluntary scavengers of this holy place. That would be the richest part of your education, not learning by heart literary thesis".

11. *Sensitive towards Cleanliness and against Untouchability-* Cleanliness was always close to his heart. He not only considered it as a matter of principle but also understood the associated medical or health benefits of living in a clean environment. He held that one must preach, what he practices in his own life. Sensitizing students of the benefits of leading a life of cleanliness become one of the principal goals of Nai Talim. I quote, "I will inculcate in them the importance of hygiene and sanitation, and when they come and ask me for a sweeper, I will tell them: I will be your sweeper and I will train you all in the job" Harijan (17-3-1946, p.42). Gandhi always considered untouchability as the

biggest menace in Indian society. He wanted to uproot it by making people aware of the inhumanity of the practice. Naturally, he considered it to be a part of his scheme of basic education.

12. *Leading a life of modesty in harmony with nature-* Leading a modest life by restraining bodily comforts became one of his greatest messages in the later years of his life. As we have seen in the previous chapter, he considered the multiplicity of wants and unrestricted bodily indulgences in modern civilization to be a bane for humanity. As his famous statement that 'earth has enough for everybody's needs but not greed' exemplifies, he was conscious of the finiteness of natural resources and the need for their judicious use. It is obvious then that he must have considered it as a focus area in his plan for education.

Relevance of *Nai Talim* in present times

This Gandhian concept came into being around a century earlier, I think it has become even more relevant in the present times. Nai Talim may be considered the most wonderful gift by the father of our nation. It is very unfortunate that the educational development in our country scarcely includes concepts of Nai Talim. Based on the principle of unity of life, the philosophy of Nai Talim reflects on the life of a person with respect to his environment. This scheme of education teaches the right practices to share the earth's resources. A lot has been written and said about some concepts concerning Nai Talim but, there are still more perspectives that have remained unnoticed. Sustainable utilization and conservation of natural resources may be considered one such dimension. Many scholars have argued for not restricting Nai Talim within a few catchy terms like modesty, self-reliance, vocational education, and so on (Prabhath, 2010, p. xii). They are of the view that the true depth of Nai Talim is yet to be realized.

Modernity as it has unfolded over centuries from Europe to conquer the rest of the world has simultaneously created many myths and assumptions around right and wrong, good or bad, and the desirability and undesirability of things. The assumptions around the idea of 'development' and the type of education needed to attain that development are no different. In the modern notions of development, outward appearance has precedence over inner being. In educational practices, the degree has a higher value than real knowledge. The whole set of assumptions and myths has created

such a situation where material bodily comforts are considered of central importance over individual well-being and happiness. Mahatma was conscious of these artificial constructs of modernity. His scheme of Nai Talim attempts to challenge these assumptions and myths of modernity and wants to re-establish Truth.

If we look at the history of challenges faced by people around the world, violence stands out as the foremost and consistent problem. Even at the time when I am writing, devastating war is going on in Ukraine, not to mention many wars like Yemen, Afghanistan, and Africa, raging continuously around the world. At the national level, daily newspapers are full of incidents of violence – murder, riots, lynching, etc. It is difficult to imagine a life free of violence under modern systems of living. In such a scenario we have to search for every possible way to at least limit the extent of violence. Gandhian principle of non-violence as a way of life might be a ray of hope.

Talk about the economic sphere driven by capitalism and riding on the globalization of economic activity. It seems that economics is no longer a means for meeting human needs and better organizing resources in society. Economics has occupied the centre stage in all spheres of life to an extent that human beings have become a means to sustain economies. Industries and manufacturing are not necessarily there to meet societal needs but solely for the purpose of making profits. Further, the increasingly high reliance on machines in big manufacturing and industrial organizations robs men and women of employment opportunities. Gandhi warned against the indiscriminate use of machines as they become means of people's unemployment. He favoured the indigenous cottage industries working on a small scale rather than the large-scale industries relying on machine power. He even favoured the use of small machines or instruments which makes the daily work of men easier. Nai Talim in that direction is an attempt to impart such education which not only teaches people to become self-reliant but also advocates morality and ethics in business or work.

To curtail or limit the evils of society faced by citizens, *Nai Talim* may play a very significant role. Plainly stating, the tenets of his New Education have the potential to stimulate the feeling of harmony among the members of society because it indoctrinates cooperation and mutual respect among the people. *Nai Talim* as envisaged by Gandhiji tends to focus on providing children with practical knowledge of various life challenges which help them to lead a better quality of life. Future citizens trained with the

principles of the New Education will be better placed to help in the right kind of development of the country without degrading the environment. There is little doubt that Gandhi Ji's policy of education was primarily focused on the holistic development of the individual in turn leading to the holistic development of the country.

In contemporary times, such an education system is required which infix children with human values such as compassion, tolerance, non-violence and empathy towards our environment. Education should be such that aids students to understand the economic, intellectual, societal, and environmental interconnectedness, that all these spheres work for the betterment of life on earth. The needs of the people are also interdependent and they should realize by the way of education that it is imperative to build socially sustainable societies by a means of cooperation. In this regard, Mahatma's theory of trusteeship should be referred to for providing guidance. And there should be little confusion that his theory of trusteeship has a great bearing on his educational policy, as he saw life in completeness without dividing it into sections. For achieving sustainability in living in the future, the process of sustainable development should be powered by eco-sensitive teaching and learning. Such education is required which includes vocational education, liberal education, environmental education, and value education and Nai Talim might provide the required perspective to develop that type of educational model (Kumari, 2016).

Gandhi's Nai Talim and new education policy in India

Education plays a fundamental role in social development and building a just and humane society. Quality education is very vital in the foundation of a sustainable society. It empowers the students to become self-reliant and to achieve their full potential. According to Gandhi, quality education is one that leads to the holistic development of children along with character building. He was against western education which was merely knowledge of letters. To drive out western education from our country he introduced us to his education model (Nai Talim) based on values and humanity. Gandhi's Nai Talim focused on forming a sustainable society imbibing students with such values based on truth, non-violence, empathy, resilience, etc.

To accomplish the goal of providing quality education to the student's education policy of our country plays a major role. For many years, Nai Talim has found its presence around the base of our education policy as it holds relevance in present times. The new

education policy 2020 is informed by a broadened and holistic vision by incorporating further some of the basic tenets of Gandhi's Nai Talim. For instance, Gandhi always emphasized in his scheme of education that learning should take place in one's mother tongue. The National Education Policy of India 2020 also focuses on imparting education to children in their mother tongue, understanding the usefulness of a language coming naturally to a child. Further, Gandhiji wanted to develop such an education system by his Nai Talim model that provides a conducive atmosphere for the overall personality development of the child. An education system that is self-sustaining and holistic. According to Gandhi, education should be a blend of vocational education, environmental education, value education, and science education. Similarly, NEP 2020 focuses on multidisciplinary and holistic education. Gandhi emphasized developing the creative and constructive capacity of the learner. NEP 2020 also focuses to develop critical and analytical thinking by replacing the practice of rote memorization (MHRD, 2020).

In the present education policy of India, the focus of education is not only on factual knowledge or knowledge based on modern books but also on the providing vocational and relevant education to children which not only get them degrees but equip them with employable skills, this was one of the major focus areas of Gandhiji's Nai Talim policy. Skill-based education is a major focus of NEP 2020 which makes an individual self-reliant. Gandhi's Nai Talim offered possibilities of flexible curriculum and pedagogy techniques so that education remains rooted in the situational context of a child and a relevant all-round knowledge aimed to help him better lead his life may be given to the student. NEP 2020 addresses this concern by making the curriculum flexible where students can study subjects based on their interests and talents. Students can now choose from arts, science, and vocational subjects along with curricular and extra-curricular activities (Payal Gupta, 2020). It can be said our new educational policy reflects a good influence of the Gandhian educational scheme. It further underscores the continued relevance of Gandhi's New Education.

This chapter tried to place Nai Talim in its proper philosophical context and understood the evolution of the concept. It also discussed briefly some of the fundamental components or tenets of the Gandhian approach to education. Looking out for the possible influence of, or confluence among, elements of Nai Talim on NEP 2020, it also advocated the continued relevance of the Gandhian concept. The following chapter

will explore Gandhiji's New Education for the possibilities of sustainability education it might offer. How does Nai Talim may help in developing eco-consciousness among learners and how does it promote socio-economic sustainability in society, are the major questions to be addressed? Exploring the possible elements of sustainability education in his educational policy is the principal concern of the next chapter.

Nai Talim: An educational tool for sustainable development

"The world is sleep-walking towards climate catastrophe".

- Antonio Guterres

Abstract - *This chapter explores the possible interpretation of Gandhi's Nai Talim from the perspective of sustainable development. It tries to propose that if we place Nai Talim in its right philosophical context, we are likely to find that Nai Talim offers a vision and scheme for developing a sustainable future. Shaping educational structures around the suggestions and direction offered by the New Education of Gandhiji may prove considerable help in aiding the process of sustainable development with sustainable education. How does Nai Talim help develop eco-consciousness in children? And why it can be considered useful for promoting socio-economic sustainability? Such questions are under consideration in this chapter.*

Many environmentalists acknowledge that the Gandhian perspective serves as a useful guide for understanding the environmental problems in proper context. It can be said that Gandhi has hardly left any sphere of life untouched in his analysis. Although we do not find any of his writings or speeches dealing particularly with environmental or ecological issues, it is not difficult to gauge his views towards the environment from his general approach to life. Gandhi stood for leading a holistic life by modest means in tune with fundamental principles of nature. Environmental friendliness constitutes one of the basic principles in his idea of the right kind of living style. His search for truth helped him to identify the factors which disturb the balance of right living practices. He had his notions about the right or true forms of living and modern civilization does not fit into them. Non-violence to him was the central guiding principle for organizing life. He hoped that our living styles should be based on complete non-violence. He realized the importance of setting the limit to material comforts and moving towards spirituality.

Modern approaches to development are generally devoid of a holistic vision of life. They accord unparalleled importance to bodily pursuits and mostly ignore the spiritual and inner aspects of life. That's why most of the developmental approaches and policies are truncated, distorted, and unsustainable. Gandhi realized a century ago that the

development driven by the industrial revolution is set to bring peril to humanity as it does not recognize the inherent limits of the environment. Gandhi foresaw the disruptive possibilities in machine-driven industrial development. Looking into the environmental debates of present times it appears that the fears of Gandhi were not unfounded. The fact that the trajectories of industrial development and environmental degradation are mostly overlapping, establishes the Gandhian proposition of unsustainability of industrial development. In other words, Gandhi recognized the unsustainable processes in the trajectory of industrial development. Most of the environmental problems humanity is facing in present times are nothing but a manifestation of the consequences of industrial civilization. Therefore, looking up to Gandhi's philosophy for addressing issues for a sustainable future is not only relevant but holds significance (Joseph & Mahodaya, 2009, p. iii). Although it will be an injustice to the Gandhian approach to compartmentalize the whole idea of sustainable development, for academic purposes and to get a detailed analysis of components of sustainability, let's first look into how Gandhian educational policy might help achieve ecological sustainability.

Gandhi's Nai Talim: an approach for eco-conscious education

The consciousness of environment and ecology is rooted in the Gandhian worldview or his philosophy for life. The Gandhian perspective does not divide human life into different compartments like political, economic, social, religious, or spiritual for that matter. On the contrary, it sees unity in human life. He believed that everyday life functions cannot be seen in separation from one's spiritual being. This holistic vision of life is equally relevant and applicable when we talk about plants and animals. *Advaita* philosophy pervades his worldview. He had written, "I do not believe that an individual may gain spiritually and those that surround him suffer. I believe in Advaita. I believe in the essential unity of man and for that matter of all that lives. Therefore, I believe that if one man gains spiritually, the whole world gains with him and if one man falls, the whole world falls to that extent" (as cited by Nirmal Kumar Bose, 1996, p. 25).

Mahatma's scheme of New Education was also formulated with this spirit of oneness of life. He wanted the future generations of India to be rooted in soil rather than follow the myths offered by modernity. Modern education has created such a belief system that it makes children despise their own culture and life practices, which were largely

harmonious with nature. He attempted through Nai Talim to break those chains of mental slavery. We can also find the elements of deep ecological consciousness in his philosophy of *Sarvodaya.* This philosophy is rooted in the principle of universal well-being of all human beings but it won't be wrong to include all other life forms within it, given the line of thought of Gandhian philosophy. It can be validated by his statement in his autobiography which states that "to see the universal and all-pervading Spirit of Truth face to face one must be able to love the meanest creation as oneself" (An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth, p. 420). In the Gandhian vision, the *Sarvodaya* society will be based on the principles of non-violence and love towards all living forms, including plants and animals. And his *Nai Talim* is nothing but a means for building such a *Sarvodaya* society.

As we know justice for future generations is a core element of sustainable development. It is expected that the present generation meets its material requirements keeping in mind the necessities of future generations. In other words, we should not destroy the possibilities of future life on mother Earth. This consciousness for a sustainable future might have come to the modern world in the latter half of the previous century but it has always been part of the vision of sages in Indian civilization. This ancient vision of Indian civilization has a great influence on Gandhian philosophy. His writings are scattered with statements showing concern for the future. To quote one such statement, "a seeker of the Truth, a follower of the law of Love cannot hold anything against tomorrow" (From Yeravada Mandir, 1992, p. 15). It is but obvious that this spirit in him would influence his conception of Nai Talim. It then becomes important to understand the fundamentals of Nai Talim by placing them in their holistic philosophical context. And when we do so we are very likely to find that his educational policy becomes a guide for developing future consciousness and means for inculcating sustainable living practices in children.

The ecological and environmental consciousness of Mahatma Gandhi is reflective throughout his criticism of modern civilization. He was of the view that the western civilization under the influence of modernity has created such living practices or life processes that are unsustainable. He was well aware of the regenerative capabilities and the limits of mother earth for providing natural resources to sustain life forms on her. His fear of the devastating impact of modern living structures is well reflected in his following statement, "the incessant search for material comfort and their multiplication

is such an evil and I make bold to say that the Europeans themselves will have to remodel their outlook if they are not to perish under the weight of the comforts to which they are becoming slaves" (Young India 30.04.1931 as cited in India of My Dreams, 1947, p. 5). I am afraid to state that his fears of the western lifestyle hold true, a century later, even for India or the rest of the orient for that purpose. The adoption of disruptive technologies, such as energy and cooling technologies - air conditioners, refrigerators, and so on, by the East has rendered it equally liable for such criticism. By his scheme of education - *Nai Talim*, Gandhiji then wanted to save Indian society from following such an unsustainable trajectory of development.

One of the problems Gandhiji identified with modern education is its propensity of developing a disconnect between the students' outlook and their roots. Indian traditions and culture, which developed as an aggregate of collective wisdom of Indian people over centuries, were generally much closer to Mother Nature. Students trained in modern education not only develop a disconnect with their culture but in turn loses their inherent bond with mother nature. Gandhi's new education tries to directly address that disconnect. It attempts to re-establish the necessary organic connection by providing students with rich experience of farm work or other work in the vicinity of nature. The students trained in New Education will contribute greatly toward building a sustainable India (Rajamma, 2010, p. 7). Although, a century later, his policy of education should be reinterpreted in the light of the present condition while still retaining the spirit of his proposition.

Gandhi's vision of a *Sarvodaya* society should also be interpreted from an ecological perspective. Environmental consciousness may be found implicit in his Sarvodaya philosophy as it expects the performance of *Yajna* by everyone to lead a pure life. He explained the concept of Yajna as, "an act directed to the welfare of others, done without desiring any return for it… 'Act' here must be taken in the widest sense, and includes thoughts and words as well as deeds. 'Others' embraces not only humanity but all life… Yajna having come to us with our birth, we are debtors all our lives, and thus forever bound to serve the universe" (From Yeravada Mandir, 1992, pp. 31-32). It is more than clear that his all theories revolve around repaying the debts one owes for being born and brought up.

It is more than obvious that no one can survive on the earth without relying on the resources provided by mother nature. It can be said that if we try to understand Gandhi's notion of Yajna in its true spirit, it must include the indebtedness of humans towards mother nature, and hence we all are bound to orient our efforts and choices in such a way that helps us to repay our debt to mother nature (Joseph & Mahodaya, 2009, p. 6). It is his philosophy of Sarvodaya and the practice of Yajna that Gandhi wanted to inculcate among the students through his scheme of Nai Talim. In such a scenario, Nai Talim becomes an instrument for generating ecological consciousness among the students. It is my firm conviction that had Gandhi lived to engage the discourse around sustainable development, he would have unequivocally supported the inclusion of ecological sustainability as a goal of his New Education. Now, it becomes the duty of present-day scholars to place various Gandhian concepts, including *Nai Talim*, in their proper philosophical context and reinterpret them as per the needs of present times. And hardly anyone will disagree that the ecological and environmental sustainability question is one of pressing importance now.

Socio-economic sustainability in Gandhi's New Education

To achieve the state of sustainability in the future, the process of sustainable development cannot and must not ignore socio-economic sustainability, the other central pillar of sustainable development along with ecological. What is socio-economic sustainability? And how Gandhi's scheme of New Education can help to achieve it? Attempts to find the answer to these two questions, especially the second, are being made in this section. In socio-economic sustainability lies, as clearly visible, two primary components of sustainable development, namely – social sustainability and economic sustainability, both the concepts have been dealt with briefly in chapter two. But it is my deliberate attempt to study them together in the light of the Gandhian perspective because holisticness is the key to the Gandhian worldview. I think that we can better comprehend the causal relationship between Nai Talim and socio-economic sustainability by reflecting on them collectively.

Socio-economic sustainability is achieved when the decisions, social or economic, are made keeping long-term consequences in mind and also in light of other components of sustainable development, like environmental sustainability. For example, if we are making any economic decision keeping only short time financial benefits and ignoring

the social and environmental costs involved, the said decision cannot be said to be for sustainable development. In other words, any economic decision should not only be economically sustainable in long term but should also be informed of environmental and social costs. And if and only if, that decision satisfies all these concerns can that be considered a decision based on sustainability consciousness.

Nai Talim was envisioned to develop children's ability to make such decisions. Although, the discourse around sustainable development was not there then, but if we look into the vision and purpose behind proposing an alternative policy of education, we will find that it ultimately attempts to achieve the state of sustainability in human living practices. Gandhiji was well aware of the unsustainable economic structures and living practices of modern civilization, as evident from his criticism of the same. He was equally wary of the modern education being imparted by the academic institutions of modernity. It was his firm belief that learning in such educational institutions will develop in children only a worldview and living habits that will make them contributors to unsustainable modern living models. And hence, if a sustainable future for India, or for the whole of humanity for that matter, has to be shaped, an alternative education system has to come up. Because of these considerations, taking inspiration from the ancient educational setup of India, he came up with his policy of New Education. There were of course other reasons and purposes, like a national awakening, but the cumulative effect of his vision and philosophy for new education can be reinterpreted in the light of discourse around sustainable development.

Now I would turn to the socio-economic philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi as it pervades the whole conception of Nai Talim and try to appropriate it to establish the relationship between his educational scheme and socio-economic sustainability. His socio-economic vision was greatly influenced by ancient Indian philosophical traditions. Building his ideas on it, he proposed that wealth can be truly enjoyed only by renouncing it. Consider, for instance, his statement: "earn your crores by all means but understand that your wealth is not yours; it belongs to the people. Take what you require for your legitimate needs and use the remainder for society" (Prabhu & Rao, 1996, p. 193). This statement, I think, has direct relevance for socio-economic sustainability, as it appeals to using excessive wealth for the welfare of the people or society. This is the central idea behind social sustainability that the course of development should reduce the possibilities of social conflict. Although there is a peculiar difference, the

sustainable development goals appeal primarily to states or organizations, but Gandhi appeals primarily to the masses by a way of appealing to each individual. And historical experience suggests that mass movements are more likely to succeed than state efforts. However, a blend of both or all possible means is always preferable.

Now I propose the reader consider another statement of Gandhiji: "No man should have more land than he needs for dignified sustenance……If it is to be brought about by non-violent means, it can only be done by education (Nai Talim) for both the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'……The have-nots must be educated to know that no one can compel them to do anything against their will and that they can secure their freedom by learning the art of non-violence, i.e., self-suffering. If the end in view is to be achieved, the education I have adumbrated has to be commenced now. An atmosphere of mutual respect and trust has to be established as the preliminary step. There can then be no violent conflict between the classes and the masses" (Harijan 20.4.1940 as cited in India of My Dreams, 1947, pp. 23-24). This statement establishes beyond doubt that eradication or suppression of socio-economic conflict was one of the principal functions of Gandhi's scheme of New Education. And as we know reduction in socio-economic conflict is also a principal component of sustainable development, it can be comprehensively concluded that Gandhi's *Nai Talim* may be a tool for achieving socio-economic sustainability.

While criticizing the western civilization for its 'belief in the essential selfishness of human nature', Gandhi said, 'I do not subscribe to it', comprehensively stating his firm belief in the natural possibility of people being public-spirited provided they get the right kind of environment at their learning stage. Based on this conviction, he proposed his theory of trusteeship, by which he wanted the holders of wealth to use it for the welfare of the masses. He wanted that the privileged classes should 'outgrow their greed and sense of possession' and work for the betterment of millions of starving people. It is not too difficult to imagine that he must have had such notions in mind while framing his policy of new education. Unlike the state, which relies on force and violence to bring social change, he was targeting the inner spirit of individuals for bringing positive socio-economic transformation in society. He believed in the hidden natural goodness in every individual and considered it to be the function of education to explore that goodness (Ratan Das, 2010, p. 327). Preparing such public-spirited individuals was then the function of his New Education. He might not be familiar with the term –

sustainable – but his ideas and policy of education were oriented toward achieving socio-economic sustainability.

Well ahead of his times, Mahatma Gandhi in *Hind Swaraj* had warned against the dangers faced by nature and man from a modern civilization based on industrialization. He had foreseen the possibilities of socio-political turmoil implicit in the exploitative nature of so-called modernity. And realized the need for sincere efforts to establish a humane, more equitable, and less exploitative socio-economic order, in other words, a sustainable socio-economic future. He also understood that it is only through the right kind of education that such a socio-economic order could be brought up. For Gandhiji, the New Education was to "spearhead a silent social revolution fraught with the most far-reaching consequences" (Rita Roy, 2010, p. 58).

Now, I would mention some Gandhian concepts which have a direct bearing on Nai Talim and are fundamentally oriented towards reducing social conflict, hence in effect have a standing for promoting socio-economic sustainability.

- *Sarvodaya* stands for the welfare of all. The principal proposition of socio-economic sustainability is also to take everyone along in the process of development. But this remains a utopian dream until and unless every person in society develops a belief and confidence in his/her abilities to stand up against exploitation and injustice and become a contributor to the shared goal of development for all. Nai Talim has the potential to instil that belief and confidence in children as new education is much closer to real-life situations.
- *Swadeshi* primarily stands for self-sufficiency in the localized economy and maximum utilization of locally available resources for development. By now the world has realized the challenges of the globalized economic order and the associated unsustainability of the model. Swadeshi not just makes the economy self-reliant but also helps in achieving equitable regional development, in turn eliminating the possibilities of the regional divide in the developmental process. Nai Talim education helps to inculcate the spirit of adopting the Swadeshi model of economics and hence helps in achieving socio-economic sustainability.
- *Sarva Dharma Samabhava's* concept provides a solution to manage or reduce the social conflict arising out of religious fundamentalism. Nai Talim being

devoted to providing moral and ethical education to children becomes a tool for promoting social sustainability by preaching to students that despite everyone having been born in a specific religion, they should respect and have an appreciation for other religions as well, thereby curtailing the possibilities of religious strife.

All these concepts along with others such as *Constructive Programme, Satyagraha, Swaraj,* etc. were all aimed at developing harmonious socio-economic relations in society. And it is a matter of fact that only harmonious social and economic relations are sustained in the long run. Gandhiji by his New Education policy wanted the future generations of India to imbibe the messages and practices of these concepts. He visualized the potential of social transformation with his educational scheme. If we see all these concepts and his Nai Talim as a collective whole and place it with the current discourse around sustainable development, we are bound to find that most of the principles, objects, and goals of Nai Talim and sustainable development resonate with each other.

Supplementing sustainable development process with New Education

Education for sustainable development (ESD) is an emergent field in research. As a concept ESD relies on the belief that education can be a key enabler or contributor to sustainable development. Even the United Nations recognized the importance of ESD by declaring 2005-2014 as the UN decade of education for sustainable development (UNDESD). Various global efforts have been made to highlight the potential education holds for realizing sustainable development goals (SDGs). This is being increasingly realized that sole reliance on policy instruments or technology-driven solutions would not be able to achieve SDGs (Mohanty & Dash, 2018, p. 2243). Rather, public awareness and mass participation along with a behavioural change in people is very important to attain sustainable development. That's why the role of education is so crucial for achieving sustainable development, as it can be the most effective means to induce behavioural changes.

Now, the question is what type of education? What should be the contours of ESD? I think the Gandhian conception of Nai Talim can work as a philosophical guide and provide a framework to develop around it workable models for ESD. Other than the basic components of New Education, as discussed in the previous chapter, I would also

like to briefly mention the ability of the Gandhian scheme of education to incorporate indigenous knowledge (IK) of local communities. Indigenous knowledge is relied upon by the local people in a particular environment to make their living. "Indigenous knowledge is an integral part of the culture and history of any local community. We need to learn from local communities to enrich the sustainable development process" (J.D. Wolfensolm, World Bank, 2000). It would be misleading to believe that all indigenous knowledge will always be oriented toward sustainable living, although it is generally accepted that the localised knowledge systems are far more sustainable as they evolve within their natural environment and have a better understanding of their surroundings. Gandhi's concept of education relies heavily on localized learning practices, it is natural that it seeks to incorporate indigenous knowledge of local communities in its framework. The influence of the incorporation of IK in the Nai Talim curriculum is likely to promote sustainability-oriented teaching and may prove considerable help in achieving sustainable development (Subhankar Ghosh, 2013, pp. 73-74).

How does the incorporation of Nai Talim as a model of education for sustainable development become relevant? It can be answered by looking at some of the thrust areas of Nai Talim having bearing on conservation and sustainability.

- *Locally relevant*: Gandhi's new education proposes a mechanism of teaching and learning that has evolved in the local conditions and is specifically designed for catering to local educational needs, hence it is far better placed to provide relevant education to children.

- *Minimal resource exploitation*: Inculcating self-restraint and promoting modest living is a major aspect of Gandhian philosophy and his education policy. A society trained in such principles will produce only for subsistence and avoid undue exploitation of natural resources. In turn, making their living practices compatible with requirements of sustainability.

- *Diversified production networks*: Localised living practices as advocated by Nai Talim necessitate localized production facilities to cater to the local needs of the community. This way New Education help to overcome the overexploitation of natural resources due to centralized production networks.

- *Ecological consciousness*: Gandhian Nai Talim promotes conservation ethics. Nature is considered sacred and children are allowed to learn in the lap of nature,

64

thereby developing a bond with nature. At the same time witnessing the processes of nature closely develops a better understanding of natural fundamentals.

- *Flexibility*: New Education scheme of Gandhiji offers flexibility in the curriculum and processes of teaching and learning to make it adaptable to the localized conditions of different communities. It does not adopt a 'one size fits all' approach like modern education systems. This flexibility allows for the incorporation of localized environmental issues to be a part of active education.

- *Social responsibility:* Nai Talim's scheme of Gandhiji can never be looked at without referring to ethical and moral aspects inherent in it. Social sustainability is one of the core elements of sustainable development. The moral and ethical concerns in Gandhian philosophy are nothing but building a just and equitable society where everyone stands to care for the rest. So, it can be said his educational scheme also helps to promote social sustainability by reducing the possibilities of social conflict.

This chapter explored the possible interpretation of Gandhi's Nai Talim from the perspective of sustainable development. I tried to propose that if we place Nai Talim in its right philosophical context, we are likely to find that Nai Talim offers a vision for developing a sustainable future. Shaping educational structures around the suggestions and direction offered by the New Education of Gandhiji may prove considerable help in aiding the process of sustainable development with sustainable education. The following chapter will further conclude this proposition.

Conclusion

The year 2020 was unprecedented in history, not only because of the COVID-19 pandemic but also got marked as the hottest year yet on record, as atmospheric carbon dioxide reached the highest levels ever. Various studies on environment and climate change suggest possible devastating impacts of lethal heatwaves in near future. Many ecosystems on the earth are dying at an alarming pace. However, younger people around the globe have shown considerable zeal for raising climate issues and demanding immediate global attention of policymakers. A recent global survey concludes that youngsters around the globe consider climate change as one of the most important challenges faced by us today. As considers Indian youth, the report states around two-thirds of young Indians share global zeal around sustainability issues, but only half of them have ever had a chance to engage actively in the climate movement (Pushpanathan, 2022). The youth no doubt symbolizes hope for a sustainable future but the questions remain how can the energy of youth be leveraged for developing sustainable societies? What is needed to be done to guide the future generations toward a sustainable future?

For bringing any lasting social transformation, education – as an effective tool for change, comes first to mind. Creating such an educational curriculum that helps to generate sustainability consciousness among children, is no different proposition but certainly remains a strong one. Giving the right kind of sustainability education to children helps create environmental awareness in them and they also realize the ecological footprints of their actions. Over the past years, the importance of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) has been increasingly realized and educational systems across the globe are incorporating ESD elements (Nina Kolleck, 2015, p. 1). Schools in India as well have involved environmental studies (EVS) as a subject at primary and secondary levels. However, it has remained a side subject and never received the much-needed attention.

The Global Education Monitoring (GEM) report published by UNESCO also underscored the insufficient integration of sustainability issues in the educational framework globally. Sustainability education needs to be given much higher importance and should be taught with a defined focus on learning outcomes.

Sustainable development is an intergenerational concern and 21st-century students should be equipped with the right kind of skills and direction which can help them manage the challenges of sustainable development. An innovative educational curriculum that enables students to understand sustainability crises better and train them to come up with sustainable solutions is needed now more than ever.

But this is easy said than done, attaining sustainability is a complex task and creating an educational curriculum for the same purpose is neither easy. Educators are likely to find it a quite challenging exercise. Developing relevant age-appropriate sustainability content is one major challenge. Further, for schools and teachers to equip themselves with sustainability education requires great skill, will and effort. In such a scenario, Gandhiji's Nai Talim should be reinterpreted from the perspective of sustainability education – an education for developing sustainability consciousness among the children. An immersive education based on experiential methodology or lesson plans forms the essence of Nai Talim and that is needed for sustainability learning as well. It has become very essential now to recognise the interconnectedness between social and ecological systems. It is not possible to address ecological and social problems in isolation any further (Chattopadhyay, 2022). A holistic and comprehensive approach is needed not just at the level of governance but at the level of the masses. Incorporating Nai Talim into the educational structure will be helpful specially to mobilise such consciousness in the masses.

Various committees and commissions formed to look into the status of education in India have well recognized the fundamental importance of New Education as suggested by Gandhiji. The Education Commission of 1964-66, popularly known as the Kothari Commission, gave full recognition to the importance of the Nai Talim scheme. It recommended the incorporation of various principal features of Nai Talim like vocational education, social service, community living, moral and spiritual education, and local relevance of education, in its report. The Ishwarbhai Patel Committee of 1977 also acknowledged the Gandhian educational policy and gave somewhat similar importance to the key components of Gandhiji's Nai Talim. One key recommendation was education should be able to equip students for Socially Useful Productive Work (SUPW), apparently underscoring the importance of work-centred and productive education which should also be socially useful, almost borrowing from the scheme of New Education of Gandhiji.

Some similar acknowledgements to Nai Talim were also made by National Policy on Education of 1992, the National Focus Group on Work and Education of 2007 and the more recent National Education Policy of 2020, as discussed in the fourth chapter. All these policy documents emphasised that education should be socially useful and economically contributing (Kumari, 2016, pp. 176-177). At the international level, the UNESCO Commission on Education used the term 'Basic Education' corresponding to primary education in its report. It highlighted that "education must cease being confined within schoolhouse walls and many forms of social and economic activity must be used for educational purposes", in a way recognizing Gandhi's educational philosophy on the global stage.

Despite these acknowledgements, it can be said that the true and actual potential of Gandhi's educational philosophy has not yet been understood. Mostly his educational ideas have been associated with vocational education or focusing on mother tongue as a medium of education or at the most emphasizing an inter-disciplinary approach to education. These are certainly the principal elements in his educational scheme, but it may offer a far more valuable element of sustainability education if we try to interpret Nai Talim in its right philosophical context. In other words, there is a need to interpret Nai Talim from a sustainability perspective by placing it in the larger Gandhian philosophy for life. Firstly, it should be looked if Gandhi's life philosophy has anything to offer for the sustainability discourse, which it certainly does. And secondly, how does that philosophy have a bearing on his conception of Nai Talim? Then his Nai Talim can be interpreted from a sustainability lens. This work tried to connect to these elements to find the sustainability component inherent in Nai Talim.

Nai Talim failed to get a real appreciation and hasn't become yet an integral part of mainstream education. In modern times it has remained more or less a heritage education model or maybe a model for experimentation in education functional only in pockets parallel to the mainstream education system. The reasons for this neglect might be many ranging from some internal deficiencies within the scheme such as its limited emphasis on liberal or academic education, and the external conditions like negligible support from the government agencies in terms of monetary funding and manpower as given to mainstream education. Additionally, various recommendations of educational commissions/committees which have had the influence of Nai Talim are difficult to adequately practice by the schools of the mainstream education, hence remaining

neglected aspects of formal education. Thus, Gandhi's New Education has remained by and large recognized as an educational system better fit for rural societies, or those socially and economically deprived who are generally considered to have lesser potential or capacity intellectually. The true spirit of Nai Talim is yet to be realized.

However, the discourse on sustainable development and the resultant demand for education for sustainable development provides the academic community with a crucial opportunity to revisit and reinterpret Gandhiji's Nai Talim in the light of education for sustainable development. In the first instance, it appears to be a far stretched idea or proposition to connect Nai Talim and sustainable development, but it remains true only if we look at Nai Talim, Gandhi's life philosophy and sustainable development in separate compartments and fails to identify the inherent linkage among the concepts. On the contrary, if we are able to connect all the dots properly and look at the concepts holistically by placing them in their rightful contexts, moving from particular to general, finding the intrinsic linkage between all these concepts especially Nai Talim and sustainable development would not require anything more than common sense. The proposition that Nai Talim may be a tool for addressing sustainable development can be sustained if the emphasis in our interpretation of Nai Talim lies on the holisticness and completeness of life on earth.

Gandhian philosophy offers a very broad and holistic vision for organising life. One can always look up to his ideas to address various challenges faced in life. Looking at him again, especially his Nai Talim scheme of education for our purpose, in the context of sustainable development is surely not an exercise in futility. In the 21st century, when the focus is on education towards sustainable development, the elements of Nai Talim could be reviewed and incorporated into the mainstream education system. The curriculum and pedagogy of the mainstream education system should be reframed around the sustainable development goals and the elements of Nai Talim should be given due consideration. The government should involve different stakeholders like public, private and civil society organizations and find workable solutions towards the opening of Nai Talim schools to achieve the goals of education towards sustainable development. Incorporating the elements of Nai Talim into mainstream education can take us one step ahead in achieving the goals of sustainable development. Studying the practices prevailing in the Nai Talim schools could enlighten us in framing the mainstream education system around the basic tenets of Nai Talim.

This work deals with a very limited dimension of Nai Talim, principally talking about the theoretical aspects and philosophical context around the concept. Understanding the actual functioning of schools running around the Nai Talim concept is beyond the scope of this work. It neither has conducted any data analysis to reflect on the actual outcome of such schools. It also stands short of analysing any concrete model which can help in operationalizing Nai Talim as education for sustainable development. It largely remains in the form of a proposition for finding elements of sustainability in Gandhiji's Nai Talim which might be a help in supplementing the sustainable development process. Although it briefly traces the influence of the Gandhian concept on the evolution of India's education policy.

I would like to conclude by reiterating that true education should be able to integrate the individual with his society and the natural environment and it should not become a mechanism for rifting him/her away from them. After going through the journey of this research work, I stand more convinced that Gandhiji's Nai Talim has the potential to teach children to lead a life in harmony with mother nature and to respect her. A student trained in truth and non-violence is not only more likely to live peacefully in society but is also expected to abjure undue exploitation of natural resources. Having understood the essence of the self-restraint principle under Gandhi's educational scheme, she/he would naturally imbibe a propensity to renounce the violence associated with exploitative economic activity. All this in turn is nothing but a way of leading a sustainable life, i.e., free of socio-economic conflict and harmonious with principles of nature. Hence, integrating the relevant components of Nai Talim with the mainstream education systems may prove helpful in supplementing the sustainable development process. Developing a workable or operational framework for the same, of course, remains a key challenge.

List of abbreviations

MGNCRE   Mahatma Gandhi National Council of Rural Education

NEP   National Education Policy

MHRD   Ministry of Human Resource Development

GOI   Government of India

UN   United Nations

SDG   Sustainable Development Goal

MoEFCC   Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change

IUCN   International Union for Conservation of Nature

IIASA   International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis

WWF   World Wide Fund for Nature

COP   Conference of Parties

WNTA   Wada Na Todo Abhiyan

NAPCC   National Action Plan for Climate Change

TERI   The Energy and Resources Institute

GGGI   The Global Green Growth Institute

SDF   Sustainable Development Framework

NITI   National Institute for Transforming India

MGNREGA   Mahatma Gandhi National Rural

Employment Guarantee Act

DAY   Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Antyodaya Yojana

NRLM   National Rural livelihood Mission

NSAP   National Social Assistance Program

PMEGP	Prime Minister Employment Generation Programme
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Services
APY	Atal Pension Yojana
MDM	Mid-Day Meal Scheme
NMMSS	National Means-Cum-Merit Scholarship Scheme
NSIGSE	National Scheme of Incentives to Girls for Secondary education
NSS	National Social Service
PMKVY	Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana
CWMG	Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
UNDESD	United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development
EVS	Environmental Studies
IK	Indigenous Knowledge
GEM	Global Education Monitoring
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization

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