Chapter - I
CHAPTER-I

A - HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF THE NATIONAL SERVICE SCHEME

Great leaders and philosophers universally and unanimously have been of the view that socio-economic and cultural profile of a nation could be changed by invoking among youth the sensitivity regarding problems of the nation.

Swami Vivekanand considered sincere, strong and vigorous youth as backbone of a nation "For nation building, organizing them and channelising their energies was need of the hour. The destiny of nation lies in the hands of youth as they are the leaders of tomorrow. We need young men and women who will identify them selves with the problems of poor and needy. Their spirit can give a new heart to our nation. Youth will respond when confronted with something positive, and challenging. They are flexible and amenable to change. They have a tendency to explore new grounds, embark upon excitingly hazardous tasks, defy unworthy traditions and to undertake experiments in socio-economic fields. Therefore, their boundless energy needs to be tapped to step up development activities to bring about the social transformation needed to enable youth to face their future with confidence"\(^1\).

The fact that the potentialities of youth contribute significantly to development is being recongnised by the state and central
governments. There is an increasing awareness of the need to develop the vast resources of youth to play a constructive role in society. Experiences with programmes organised for youth indicate that development programmes, to be real and beneficial, should be linked with the development of youth. In a country like India, youth who constitute the most crucial asset of the community, should be utilised in the process of modernising the traditional rural society through the transfer of science and technology.

For the upliftment of the society every developing country requires the services of social agencies on no profit basis. These agencies face resources problems and are unable to function properly to meet their objectives. It is the need of the time to have agencies supported by the government to achieve the national goals. In this context there is no other alternative except to involve the educational institutions at grass root level.

Educational institutions can become store houses of knowledge and makers of human civilization and culture. They can play a significant role in the social, economic, educational and cultural growth of the communities around them.

The idea of involving students in national development, engaging them in the tasks of National Service dates back to the times of Mahatma Gandhi, the father of our nation. The central theme which Gandhiji tried to impress upon his student audience, time and again, was that they should never forget their supreme social responsibilities.
"The first duty of the students should be not to treat their period of study as one of the opportunities for indulgence in intellectual luxury, but preparing themselves for final dedication in the service of those on whose back they were resting. Advising them to form a living contact with the community in whose midst their institution is located, he suggested that instead of undertaking sympathetic research about economic and social disability, the student should do "something positive so that the life of the villagers could be raised to a higher material and a moral level".

The post independence era was marked by an urge for introducing social service for students, both as a measure of educational reformed as a means to improve the quality of educated manpower. "The university commission headed by Dr. Radhakrishanan recommended introduction of National Service in the academic institutions on a voluntary basis with a view to develop healthy contacts between the students and teachers on the one hand and establishing a constructive linkage between the campus and the community on the other".

Ever since independence, the institution of social and labour service for students have been urged, both as a measure of educational reform and as a means to improve the quality of educated manpower. This question was "considered by the central advisory board of education at its meeting held in January, 1950. After examining the various aspects of the matter and in the light or, experience of other countries in this field, the board recommended that the students should
devote some time to manual work on a voluntary basis only; and that teachers should also associate them with such work. The first five year plan adopted by the government of India in 1952 stressed the need for compulsory social and labour service for students for a period of about a year. The economic value of such labour was not the chief consideration as the primary aim of the period of training was to build up the students as workers and disciplined citizens. The vast place which manual work occupied in the life of the nation ought to be to some extent, reflected in the activities of every citizen. The service could take a variety of forms but it should develop significance in proportion relating to the real needs of the community. The association of students with such work would bring in them an intellectual and emotional awareness of the various tasks of national reconstruction going on in the country, introducing compulsion in the matter related only to short them difficulties and did not seriously touch any question of principle. A period of preparation and experimentation was however necessary before the service could be put on a compulsory footing, but in the meanwhile, the scheme should be introduced on a voluntary basis with certain inducements. Those going through such a course would naturally be more fitted for positions of responsibility. The first five year plan concluded with saying that the organisers of this scheme should be, as for as possible, college professors for whose training adequate provision should be made.

Pursuant to the recommendations made in the first five year plan, a number of schemes such as "labour and social service camps, campus work-projects, village apprenticeship scheme, etc." were put
into operation on a voluntary basis with the object of inculcating a sense of discipline, a spirit of social service and dignity of manual labour among the students and developing among them an awareness of and identification with the problems of social and economic reconstruction of the country, specially in the rural areas. The response of students to participate in these schemes has been reported as encouraging and those successfully completing their period of training have shown some signs of the desired improvement. The two major drawbacks of these schemes were: firstly, in view of their limited scope, it was not possible to cover a large majority of students; and secondly, owing to the short duration of the period of service, the work undertaken was mostly of marginal significance. The operation of these schemes has, however, served as a period of experimentation and preparation.

The question of introducing compulsion in this field was raised from time to time and was forcefully voiced by the Prime Minister in his letter of the 9th June, 1958 to the Chief-minister in these words: "I have been thinking that it would be very good for our people to have a period of compulsory service for all young men and young women between certain age limits, say 19, to 22. In most countries of the western world there is conception for military service. There it is not considered to be an infringement of there liberties or freedom. We do not aim any such thing for military purposes, but some kind of compulsory period of training and service for every person appears to me to be very necessary. That period should be one year and for,
say six months in the year. During this period everyone should live in camp under some kind of military discipline. This will give them military discipline, physical health and capacity for manual work and to work together for productive schemes. The next six months might well depend on the capacity and training of individual. Another advantage of this will be to bring together every one at the same level, whether he is rich or poor, and make him do exactly the same type of work, part of which will be manual". The Prime Minister then went on to say that, "in view of the enormous cost involved, if the whole of India was brought within the purview of the scheme, it was not necessary to start it in a big way but everyone between certain ages could be made liable, by law to serve and this could be done in suitable batches". The Prime Minister further endorsed the idea that every graduate before he gets his degree, should put in a certain period of service in an allotted sphere, depending upon his training and capacity and including work in a village or a tribal area. The Prime Minister directed the Ministry of Education to formulate a suitable scheme for introduction of national service into the academic institutions.

"In 1959, a draft outline of the scheme was placed before the Education Minister's conference. The conference unanimously resolved that there was an urgent need for trying out a workable scheme for National Service in view of the fact that education, as it was imparted in schools and colleges today, left something desirable and it was necessary to supplement it with a programme which would arouse interest in the social and economic reconstruction of the country.
Conference was also of the view that if the real objectives of the scheme were to be realised, it was essential to integrate it with the educational process as early as possible. However, the general feeling at the conference was that the scheme should not be made compulsory at this stage but that it should be tried initially on a voluntary basis. Finally, the conferences recommended that "(i) The question of introducing the scheme on a compulsory basis should be considered after the experience of a pilot project to be operated for a few years; (ii) Pilot projects of three months duration consistent with the objectives of the scheme, and preferably one for each university, for students volunteering to participate in the programme, may be organised; and (iii) a committee may be appointed to work out the details of the proposed pilot projects".

The appointment of the committee by the Ministry of Education and the inclusion of many educationists indicates that the scheme of National Service to be worked out by the committee was primarily intended to be educational in nature, scope and functions. The Scheme should therefore be visualized as a measure of educational reform directed towards remedying the observed deficiencies in our educational system. As has been discerned by the educationists, the present system is not fully attuned to the needs and aspirations of the independent contemporary India and has not been successful in developing a kind of attitudes which are required for the task of national reconstruction. By and large, students fail to cultivate a positive sense of discipline, they are also averse to manual labour. Moreover, they
seem to lack the spirit of social service or a sense of social purpose, idealism and enthusiasm and its importance for a developing country like India have been lacking.

In pursuance of these recommendations, "a National Service committee was appointed under the chairmanship of Dr. C.D. Deshmukh on August 28, 1959 to make concrete suggestions in this regard. The committee recommended that National Service for a period of nine months to a year may be made compulsory for all students completing high school education and intending to enroll themselves in a college or a university. The scheme was to include some military training, social service manual labour and general education. The recommendations of committee could not be accepted because of its financial implications and difficulties in its implementation".

In 1960, at the instance of the Govt of India, Prof. K.G. Saiyidein studied national service by students implemented in several countries of the world and submitted his report under the title "National Service for the youth" to the government with a number of recommendations as to what could be done in India to develop a feasible scheme of social service by students. It was recommended that National or Social service should be introduced on a voluntary basis and extended as widely as possible with a provision for rich and varied programmes of activities. It was also recommended that social service camps should be open to students as well as non students within the prescribed age group for better interrelationship.
"The Education Commission headed by Dr. D.S. Kothari (1964-66) recommended that students at all stages of education should be associated with some form of social service. This was taken into account by the state Education Ministers during their conference in April 1967 and they recommended that at the university stage, students could be permitted to join the National Cadet Corps (NCC) which was already in existence on a voluntary basis".11

An alternative to National Cadet Corps (NCC) could be offered in the form of a New programme, the "National Service Scheme (NSS)".12 Promising sportsmen could be exempted from both National Cadet Corps (NCC) and National Service Scheme (NSS) and allowed to join another scheme called the "National sports organisation (NSO), in view of the need to give priority to the development of sports and athletics."13

In September, 1967, this recommendation was welcomed by the vice-chancellor's conference, which suggested that "a special committee of vice chancellor's could be setup to examine this question in detail."14 In the statement of National Policy on Education (NPE) of the Govt.of India, it was laid down that work experience and National service should be an integral part of education. In May, 1969, a conference of student representatives of the universities and institutions of higher learning was convened by the Ministry of Education and the University Grants Commission (U.G.C), it unanimously declared that National Service could be a powerful instrument for National integration and could be used to introduce urban students the rural life. Projects of permanent value could also be undertaken as a symbol of the
contribution of the students community to the progress and upliftment of the Nation.\textsuperscript{15}

The details soon were worked out and "the planning commission sanctioned an Rs. 5 crores for National Service Scheme (NSS) during the fourth - five year plan. It was stipulated that the National Service Scheme (NSS) programme should be started as a pilot project in selected institutions and universities."\textsuperscript{16}

On the basis of the recommendation of Prof. K.G. Saiyidein committee and Dr. D.S. Kotharia commission the National Service Scheme (NSS) was launched " on 24th September 1969".\textsuperscript{17} The union Education Minister, Dr. V.K. R.V. Rao, launched the NSS programme in 37 universities involving 40,000 students covering all states and also requested the Chief minister of states for their coopration and help. It was appropriate that the programme was started during the Gandhi Centenary year as it was Gandhiji who inspired the Indian youth to participate in the movement for Indian independence and the social upliftment of the down-trodden masses of our Nation".\textsuperscript{18} Since its inception NSS has been responding to the everchanging social needs and challenges in a creative and constructive manner.

The National Service Scheme (NSS) was started in Uttar Pradesh with an enrollment of 2,500. Student volunteersm the yearof 1969\textsuperscript{19} were covering 4 recognised universities namely, Aligarh Muslim University, Banaras Hindu University, Lucknow University and its affiliated colleges and Agra university and its affiliated colleges\textsuperscript{20}. Now National Service Scheme in Uttar Pradesh inits fold has more than one lakh student volunteers covering 22 universities and its affiliated colleges.\textsuperscript{21}
B - DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATIONAL SERVICE SCHEME

It was in the sixties that governments all over the country woke up to face challenges thrown up by the student youth in campuses. University after university became autonomous breeding ground for anti-establishment campaigns. The increasing irrelevance of education and the consequent social alienation of the academics contributed to further deterioration of campus environment. Such a situation had been foreseen by Gandhiji when he used to plead for providing a constructive responsibility to the students in community development programmes. Both the "university commission headed by Dr. Radhakrishnan" and Education Commission headed by Dr. D.S. Kothari respectively, had strongly recommended for introducing national service as a part of higher education system in order to promote youth participation in developmental affairs as well as also to provide creative outlets to this abundant youth energy and potential. However, the process of serious thinking started with "Pandit Nehru's letter in 1958" addressed to the chief ministers pleading for a campus-community linkage. At that time, education was a state subject and as such, no new scheme or programme could be introduced without the concurrence and cooperation of the state governments. The centre-state partnership in NSS was a recognition of this reality. However, the process of consultation with state Education Ministers, vice-chancellors and finally, with the student leaders took long 11 years before Mrs, Indira
Gandhi decided to launch the scheme in 1969, during Gandhi birth centenary year. A package of programmes linking the higher education with the existential requirements of the communities was evolved. It aimed at breaking down the barriers between education in the college and the work in the village. In this process, the broom and the book and the pen and the plough became friends, the needle, bath-tub, pickaxe and crow bar became allies of the blackboard, globe, lab and the libraries. The classroom shifted to mass education centres, the campus reached to the community. Thus, NSS added a new dimension to the process of education, aligning it to the needs of the community and simultaneously preparing students for their future role as sensitive, self-confident citizens. A conscious decision to make participation in the programme selective and voluntary reflected the lessons learned from the short-lived compulsory experiment of NCC in the early sixties that failed. The emphasis on learning through doing and the premium on combining knowledge with reflection and action, helped NSS develop its own distinct character and identity. Added to this was the wise decision to exclude the cash-component from programme implementation, which apparently felt as a handicap but essentially helped the organisation steer clear of controversies and scandals, consequently the organisation had to depend on collective initiative and indigenous resource mobilisation for creating community assets that gave it a sense of confidence and its volunteers a sense of achievement. The fact that it was launched as a special study service programme during Ghandhi birth centenary year, lent a moral tone and
priority to its programme content and a continuous appeal to the social conscience of its participants, both students as well as teachers.

Just three years after its birth, NSS faced the first major challenge in 1972 when large parts of the country were affected by an acute drought condition. NSS responded to this challenge by mobilising its volunteers throughout the country to participate in water resource-creation activities. Earlier, special camps were being organised at the unit level for social welfare and service activities. But, in 1973 was 'youth against famine'(YAF) in this way, programmes of National Service Scheme became a part of National issues and problem solving endeavours. (YAF) had its successes and failures. It required 100% participation of NSS volunteers, the camping period extended to four weeks and the timing was the summer vacation. In many places volunteers worked hard and constructed water channels, ponds and canals, desilted dams tributaries, gabions, cross bunds and water-harvesting structures came up in hundreds. However, an evaluation of the (YAF) identified some of the limitations of such large scale long duration camps that required total participation of the entire NSS unit in physically overwhelming projects. With this realisation, "the duration of the special camping was reduced to 10 days" and "the participation to 50 %" of the volunteers strength in the NSS unit." But, from then onwards, special campings in NSS became theme based. The drought years of 1972-73 was followed by National malaria eradication and small-pox-eradication programmes. Thus the NSS camping theme was changed in "1974-75 to youth against dirt and disease."
During this period, NSS entered into the area of health immunisation, blood donation, free eye-operation and composite health camps were organised and became a part of regular NSS activities. Microlevel collaboration between education and health agencies became a permanent feature of NSS programme content. This increased people's faith in NSS.

During late seventies, there was a world wide awareness about the deteriorating environment. Satellite images identified the fast declining green cover in the Indian sub-continent. NSS quickly responded to this issue by changing the theme and focus of its special camping and announced the "youth for afforestation and tree plantation (1975)" campaign. The success of this campaign generated lot of interest in the state, particularly in development ministries. Consequently, an inter-ministerial collaboration was worked out between the ministry of education and the ministry of forest and environment giving birth to the new NSS programme called "youth for eco-development" in 1981. It was a massive campaign in which more than fifty thousand NSS volunteers participated with enthusiasm.

Bald hills and denuded forest and wasteland were taken for plantation in different parts of the state. Since 1981, environment enrichment became an integral element of NSS activities and tree-plantation, a regular programme.

After participating in all these developmental experiments, the organisation gained considerable confidence to move towards omnibus
and holistic themes like "youth for rural reconstruction." During the seventies the 'adopted village' and area approach had been crystalised and hence, the new theme focussed on all round development of the adopted areas in collaboration with developmental agencies. Regular activities were concentrated in adopted areas. In the subsequent years, the scope of the theme was further enlarged by a still broader theme called "youth for development (1988-89)" to cover both rural as well as urban issues. The theme was decided in consonance with the theme of the international youth year, 1985-i.e., peace, participation and development. Three years after united nations declared the international literacy year followed by the establishment of the national literacy mission in India. As it is, literacy was an important component of NSS and hence, it was felt to renew and reinforce the programme focus on literacy. Thus, the "youth for mass literacy" programme was launched in 1989-90, initially with 'each-one-teach-one' approach and subsequently switching over to the 'area based neighbourhood approach' in NSS adopted villages and slums.

During 1992, the social environment and inter-community relations in the state of U.P. displayed acute signs of stress and strain. Ever willing to make constructive response to social issues and challenges NSS changed its focus and gear towards uniting people's minds and hearts. From "1993-94 the special camping them is "youth for National integration" displayed a manifestation of the organisation's concern about and commitment to social harmony and peace.
A living social organisation should not only respond to challenges when they come, but must anticipate them in advance. That is what happened in case of the AIDS. Realising that it would be too late to wait, NSS launched an innovative educational intervention called "University Talk Aids (UTA)," one year before the National Aids Control Organisation (NACO) was established by the Government. The youth being one of the most vulnerable groups to the HIV/AIDS, their protection through information and education was considered an urgent requirement. UTA brought about a major change in the NSS approach. The NSS youth, used to work with the community, now were trained to work additionally for the youth to ensure their survival. Thus the 'youth to youth' approach was added to the traditional NSS approach of 'youth to community'. This brought about a change in the stereotyped image of NSS.

A major development worth mentioning here is the acceptance of NSS as a part of the "National Policy on education in 1986" and its revised version in 1992.

The contribution of NSS was recognised for the first time when the policy recommended to make it a part of the education system and as an alternative to NCC and sports. The programme of action (POA) spelt out the need for incentives and academic credits to students and teachers for their social contribution through NSS. It was recognised as a "third dimension of the higher education system." The U.G.C. also had recognised the teachers' participation in NSS as a positive
element in the performance appraisal of college and university teachers. A debate went on in the universities how to integrate NSS, adult education, population education and women's development programmes as a composite extension service.

It was a long journey in programme development for the student youth. The positive aspect of it is that NSS as a value-based volunteers programme has always remained closer to the living issues affecting the Indian society from time to time and has avoided the narrow and natural bureaucratic approach towards implementation of policies. It has located the decision making and problem-solving responsibilities as close to the programme information source as possible. It has always encouraged practice of self-imposed discipline and self-direction and various levels of the organisation and has created to a very great extent a flexible open programme implementation climate. The objectives, motto and symbol of the organisation which were developed during the seventies have sent out clear signals that people who are egoistic, self-seeking and are unable to appreciate the other person's point of view cannot have a respectable status in NSS. To clarify the point further, the objectives of NSS as spelt out in a full paragraph in the early seventies were changed into a clear concise half-sentence: "Personality development through community service." In order to implement the objectives NSS has created low-cost structures which could operate through autonomous agencies in a federal setup and through competing identifications and affiliations, for instance, Training and Orientation Centres (TOCS) and Training Orientation and Research
centres (TORCS) have 'training jurisdiction' over universities in the same sense as regional centres have 'liaison jurisdiction' over TOCS, TORCS and the state government and programme coordinators have 'coordination jurisdiction' over autonomous colleges and institutions having NSS. Structurally, and hierarchically, NSS has a very difficult and sensitive experiment about which senior programme and training functionaries will have to be aware of. Despite lot of limitations NSS has been marching ahead basically on the strength of its spirit of volunteerism and sacrifices made by millions of students and thousands of teachers.
C - AIMS & OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of National Service Scheme to provide more lively awareness on the part of the educated youth with the purpose and process of the nation's reconstruction efforts, especially in the rural areas, and to inculcate in them a sense of discipline. A spirit of social service, dignity of manual labour and dedication to the cause of the country in order to make up the deficiencies of the present educational system such as lack of discipline, absence of self-reliance, want of maturity and lack of idealism, and thus prepare the educated youth, the future leaders of the country, for the enormous tasks of national reconstruction requiring arduous, sustained and responsible work and to safeguard national security requiring a reserve of trained personnel available to meet any emergency.47

The national service scheme, originally contemplated as an alternative to NCC and NSO, to cover all university students was started during the fourth plan as a pilot scheme by selecting college students to participate during their first degree studies, in various programmes of social service and national development to help the community and at the same time to provide them an opportunity to understand and appreciate the conditions and problems of the community and inculcate among them a sense of social consciousness and dignity of labour, leading to fuller and more balanced development of personality of students.48 "Participation in NSS enables the students to discharge at least partially, their social obligation towards the
community, bring educated youth closer to the community and enables them to contribute towards national development."

"The overall objective of the National service scheme, as envisaged originally was service to community offered while undergoing instruction in an educational institution. It was sought to arouse the social consciousness of students and provide them with the opportunity to work with the people around the educational campuses creatively and constructively, and to put the education they receive to concrete social use. It has been felt that the primary aim of the scheme is to enable the students to upgrade their personality and experience through community service. Its end is the improvement of personality while service to the community is a means through which such improvement is sought to be achieved. The objective of the scheme, as restated, is therefore, 'development of the personality of students through community service.'" This objective is sought to be achieved by enabling the students to:

(i) understand the community in which they work;
(ii) understand themselves in relation to their community;
(iii) identify the needs and problems of the community and the solution to which they can be involved;
(iv) develop among them a sense of social and civil responsibility;
(v) apply their education in finding practical solutions to
individual and community problems;

(vi) develop competence required for group living and sharing responsibilities;

(vii) gain skills in mobilising community participation;

(viii) acquire leadership qualities and democratic attitude;

(ix) develop capacity to meet emergencies and natural disasters;

and

(x) practice National Integration."

Symbol

The symbol of the National Service Scheme is based on the Rath Wheel of the Konark Sun Temple of Orissa. These giant wheels of the sun Temple portray the cycle of creation, preservation, and release signifying the movement in life across time and space. The design of the symbol, a simplified form of the sun chariot wheel, primarily depicts the movement, the objective of progress of the National Service Scheme. The aims and objective of NSS, of involving the urban and rural youth in constructive and development programmes in rural society of participation in socio-economic life of the community, and of national integration through corporate living and co-operative action etc. are symbolised in the form created which mainly signified the progressive 'cycle of life'.
NSS Day

Since beginning till 1994, NSS day was celebrated on 15th January every year on all the NSS units. After 1994 onwards NSS day is celebrated on 24th September with the involvement of the community in a befitting manner. On this day various competitions, seminars, workshops, symposia, etc. are organised in line with the philosophy of NSS and teaching of Swami Vivekananda, Subhash Chandra Bose, Mahatma Gandhi, Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru, and other leaders. The best volunteers of NSS are given awards and recognition for their contribution in NSS. (For detailed please see appendix-III)
Foot Notes


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22. NSS Manual, Govt. of India, Ministry of Human Resource
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47. S. Tripathi, Philosophy, programmes and thought process of NSS, Simrika, National Service Scheme. Banaras Hindu University, Varansi, 1994 - P. 4, 5.

48. Ibid P. 5

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52 Gurdev Sing, NSS Reporter (ed.) National Service Scheme, Punjab University, Chandigarh, 1985 - P. 45.


