CHAPTER – I

INTRODUCTION

The NSS has been in existence and in action for the last four decades (1969-2013). It has expanded both quantitatively and qualitatively. The scheme has the support of the Government, recognition in the new 20 Point Programme of the Government of India, and has found its place in the New Education Policy package of 1986 and its Programme of Action in 1992. The NSS has gained universal prominence due to its educational value being more need and field oriented. It is assumed that the scheme has been instrumental in the student community’s experience by arousing their interest, awareness and understanding of the realities of life and problems of the weaker sections of the society. It is also expected that the community would benefit through NSS activities resulting in durable asset creation, relief during natural calamities and crisis situations and gain awareness and recognition of youth’s service potentialities. In the process it is hoped that the community would be provoked to improve their lot through knowledge and skills gained. The present study, in a historical perspective, and an inter disciplinary mode is an attempt to examine the overall objective of NSS: Personality Development of Students Through Community Service.

To confirm the assumption and expectations that there is a need to evaluate the inputs of the programme in order to assess the extent to which NSS has played its role by benefiting the students, the community and locating the
measures improving upon the quality of the programmes to meet the challenges and demands of a dynamic modern society. It visualizes building the nation by using the creative potential of students in the campus and extending the fruits of higher education to the community at grass root level. Hence a reappraisal is needed for its further improvement. As the NSS is an essential extension component of higher education, its improvement has much positive implications for the human resource development of the nation. The present study, on the NSS of Kerala, is undertaken after reviewing the previous studies.

The study would be based on the growth and progress of the scheme and its impact on the student volunteers and the community. No attempt has so far been made to look at the National service scheme from the perspective of history and its impact on students in Kerala. To fill this gap and sketch an outline of its different community service activities, highlighting some of its significant contributions and replicable success stories, by shedding light on the linkages and collaborations it has made for a creative synergy. The purpose of the study is to have an over view of various studies conducted so far at different levels, relating to the NSS in general and the NSS of Kerala in particular. It also intended to have an analysis on what was the need and nature of NSS in the early stage (1969 1980), what are the present activities and on the basis of both the past and the present what kind of modification is to be made in the prospective activities of NSS, to revamp it as a venue for the dynamic students, who need exciting opportunities for the national development at the grassroot and institutional levels.
The study would examine the relevance of the activities undertaken by
the NSS, as a scheme for the national service in the current context. To
establish the argument that the NSS is a powerful scheme for a meaningful
intervention in the national development, the researcher has used tools of
analysis from the domain of psychology and statistics by using the expertise of
the concerned faculties from the University of Kerala and University of Calicut.

Within the frame of the main research objectives, considered for the
study are the origin and development of national service scheme in a historical
perspective and it attempts to examine the contributions made by the NSS in
Kerala for the development of the personality of students by engaging them in
the service of the community. Another objective is promotion of voluntary
spirit in the young minds of students in an age of globalisation, without profit
motive. It would also investigate the relevance of continuing the NSS
Programmes, by providing opportunities for students in collective experience
sharing and constant interaction with the community. Within the frame of broad
research objectives, the following specific questions will be taken up in this
study. The motivation for the foundation of NSS in India, by tracing the
historical development and context of its formation and the pressing historical
necessity for the launching of the scheme. The extent which the NSS could act
as a catalyst involving student volunteers in the national service. The problems
faced by the key functionaries of NSS and to anlyse the ways and means to
contain it, assess the Government departments and agencies, which are
cooperating with the NSS, as a facilitator, in a win win situation, and to
examine whether the national objectives of NSS are materialized in Kerala, analyse the impact of NSS on the development of the personality of its student volunteers, acting of NSS, as an extension dimension of higher education by upholding the spirit of volunteerism of youth, examine the significant achievements of NSS in Kerala along with some major activities and a few success stories.

The major hypothesis in focus is that, the NSS is a powerful component and a common platform in the domain of the Third/Extension Dimension of Higher Education, which is immensely contributing as a youth force, having enormous potential for nation building from below. Nowadays, there is a tendency for stagnation in the vigour and vitality of its functioning in the campuses. This tendency is construde as a negative force which demands remedial measures in the best interest of the nation and its people. In this circumstances the endeavour is to find a practical solution to make NSS more attractive to the students, as a complementing and supplementing component of higher education, especially for smart career aspirants, in a fast growing globalized employment market, with a deep commitment to the society and a balanced patriotic feeling. In the light of the reading, consultations, interaction and practical experience of the researcher as the State Liaison officer of the NSS, the researcher's conviction is that, through a paradigm shift of NSS activities, it can act as a gap filling effective mechanism in the field of higher education. The assumption is that if the useful services of the NSS are timely delivered to the society by its key functionaries and volunteers, it can fulfil one
of the principal purposes of Higher Education – benefit of the campus to the community. The NSS as a catalyst and facilitating agency, the student volunteers will have a learning experience and they can put their finger on the felt needs of the community. In the process of this campus community interaction, at different levels, the stake holders will be exposed to a variety of creative situations. As a student of history the researcher thinks that knowledge of the past is critically needed to solve the problems of the present and to logically plan for the future. Hence the researcher is investigating the ups and downs of the NSS in yester years.

The National Service Scheme act as a common platform to bring together different sections of students, who were affiliated to politically motivated associations, caste and creed prejudices. The NSS enable them for an emotional integration as well as national integration through its national level camps. During the mandatory 10/7 day special camp, in the adopted villages or slums the concept of the campus community communication and an intensive social interaction facilitated in a win win situation, an environment of mutual benefit for the volunteers.

The primary and secondary source materials relevant for the study were used and interpretations and assessments were done according to the accepted norms of research in history. As the researcher himself was the Programme Officer of NSS in Farook College and the State Liaison Officer of the NSS responsible for implementing the scheme in the state, he acquired first-hand
knowledge and field experiences, right from the lowest unit level to the national level. This vertical and horizontal experiences and exposure have been utilized for revamping the NSS, relevant to the changing needs and aspirations of the students of the campus and members of the community. The study seeks to develop a ‘Kerala model’ in youth empowerment and voluntary community service. It is anticipated to create ripples and rays of hope in the extension dimension of higher education. The inter disciplinary nature is another feature of this study. The probing is to evaluate this action oriented scheme by subjecting it to an analysis. The universe of investigation is limiting to some selected areas of NSS in the state of Kerala, which can be considered as a limitation of the study. Another limitation of the study is lack of proper documentation of NSS activities in the early stages of its implementation in universities and colleges.

Thus the state administrative experience, field visits in NSS camps, participation on behalf of the State, in the national level NSS activities and consultations, resulted in igniting the thinking process of the researcher, which resulted in the development of a keen interest in the movement. It was in this context the researcher made up his mind to undertake the task. It was felt like a fascination to trace the origin of the seed of NSS, which has been upholding a quite different voice as its motto “NOT ME BUT YOU” which means that society is more important than self, a concept promoted by the oriental scriptures from time immemorial. During the period of the research, the researcher could get an opportunity to participate in an international gathering,
at Bologna, in Italy, Organized by WYSE International, on the Recommendation of the UNO. The programme added value for the study. (05/13/2010).

It is a universal fact that research and development are siblings, essential for the advancement of any movement to attain the targeted task. Consequently the researcher wanted to assess the important activities and achievements of NSS in the state of Kerala. In this project an analysis is made on the impact of NSS in enhancing the potentialities of its student volunteers. The overall objective of the scheme is “Development of the Personality of Students through Community Service”. As the community service is a meaningful means for the personality development, which has an inbuilt utility, the researcher also had to examine the benefit for the community. Both of the components are necessary for community development and national reconstruction. The vision of NSS appears that, its architects planned to mould a generation of students competent to the core and committed for the cause of the community and the country.

As mentioned above, by virtue of his official position, the researcher had a good accessibility to the original source materials and primary data. By and large the activities involved by the NSS volunteers are socially useful productive works, as recommended by the National Education Commission headed by Dr.S.Radhakrishnan in 1948. It has a component of value addition and recognized by the New Education Policy (1986) and its programme of
Action (1992). As a sensitized citizen and as a teacher fellow of history, the researcher considers the endeavour, to broaden the knowledge base and expected to contribute for the wider society. Hence this evaluative investigation of the scheme.

The First evaluative study of NSS in Kerala was entrusted with the Madras School of Social Work in 1977, by the Ministry of Education and social welfare, Government of India, New Delhi. One of the main purposes was to gain proper perspective of the scheme in general. The study has brought to light the significant strides made in NSS as well as some weak links in the scheme. It has examined the Regular Works, Special camping and the problems of NSS in Kerala. The study shows that the NSS is well received in the campus but the Student strikes, postponement of examinations and lack of follow up actions of special camp projects were found as main problems in the smooth functioning of the NSS in Kerala. It provided general information about the NSS but it fails to give a clear picture of the major activities conducted by the NSS in different regions of Kerala. It is not treated in a historical perspective and development Oriented. As a pioneer effort it is an eye opener for the stake holders of NSS.

A Second evaluation of NSS of Kerala was done by the same agency, Madras School of Social Work, in 1986-87 by a team, headed by Prof. K.N.George. The study was conducted as per the direction given by Department of Youth Affairs and Sports, Ministry of HRD, New Delhi. The
evaluating agency i.e. Madras School of Social Work, largely relied upon the interview schedule as their methodology for the study. But reliance was also placed on questionnaires which were mailed to the functionaries. Unfortunately very few responded to the questionnaires, notable among them the College Principals. To this extent the study remains incomplete.

The scope of the study is widened by including the Mass Programme for Functional Literacy as well as devoting attention to functionaries and organizational set up of the NSS Programme. On the whole the study and the final report submitted by Madras School of Social Work, enables the planners to understand the strength and weaknesses of the NSS programme and take remedial measures to improve its function further.

Though mention is made about inter collegiate and inter State programmes of NSS, the evaluating agency probably did not have any mandate to go into the functioning of the above programmes. It would have been ideal, if these programmes were also formed part of their study.

**Comparison between the Study Report of 1977-78 and 1986-87**

The intervening period of 9 years between the two studies saw phenomenal growth of NSS in Kerala. Increase of NSS Units in 1977-78 from 128 to 338 in 1986-87 shows an impressive growth of 264%, an increase which will make any voluntary organization proud. While the methodology followed during the earlier study was equally shared between interview schedule and
questionnaires, in the latter study maximum reliance was placed on interview schedule encompassing all the major participants of the NSS programme. Naturally, therefore, the report of 1986-87 is more authentic and fool-proof than that of the Report of 1977-1978.

The scope of the study, after 9 years was enlarged to include Mass Programme for Functional Literacy as well as the study of the profiles of programme functionaries through Programme Coordinators, Programme Officers and Principals, in addition to covering the organizational and administrative set up of the NSS Programme. This has helped the evaluating agency to submit more specific recommendations and pin-point the flaws in the programmes being implemented. As compared to the earlier report, the present one suggests creative programmes, in addition to the usual activities undertaken so far, for bringing about variety and channelizes the energies of the youthful volunteers participating in NSS Programmes.

On the whole the present report has endeavoured to overcome whatever little lacunae, which have crept in to the study report of 1977-78. As far as the cited two evaluative studies are concerned both the 1977-78 & 1986-87 studies are of immense use as it provided a lot of background information about the general functioning of the NSS in Kerala. The two major limitations of both the studies are as follows:-

- Less focus on different programmes conducted by the NSS for social service at the grass root level or as a service to the community.
How far the NSS was successful in developing the student potentialities were not brought under the purview of the investigations. Hence the current study is significant as these two lacunae are focused on the current study on NSS. In the light of the cited evaluation study, serious researches were made on the topic subsequently.

Apart from the study reports, PhD. thesis are also submitted on the NSS. The first PhD thesis submitted in Kerala on the National Service Scheme was on COMMUNITISING EDUCATION THROUGH NATIONAL SERVICE SCHEME, by Dr. C Thomas Abraham in 2000. He was supervised by Dr. Mahajan P. Mani, Department of Gandhian Studies, Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam. One of the significant roles of Communitizing Education is a sort of facilitation for healthy and productive relationship between campus and community. Mr. Thomas Abraham failed to explain in detail the history of the origin and development of the NSS, a government supported voluntary scheme. He compares two eminent educationists Mahatma Gandhi and Friere (educationist of Brazil). He considers education for the community action and social development. Despite its limitations, the study is contributed a lot for further investigation.

The second PhD. thesis submitted on the National Service Scheme of Kerala was in 2002. The title of the thesis is National Service Scheme And Community Development by Dr. M. C. Dileep Kumar under the supervision of Dr. Ramesh, School of Social Sciences, Mahatma Gandhi University,
Kottayam. The work is focusing more on the functioning of NSS Units, Literacy Programme and community development. Dr. Dileep Kumar did not mention about the regular fund flow or delay in fund releasing to the NSS Units. He is of the opinion that the role of Non-Governmental Organization is critical in the development of a country. He did not trace the origin and development of NSS from an historic perspective and assess the change effected over the years.

Dr. H.S Suresh, former Assistant Programme Advisor, NSS Regional Centre, Thiruvananthapuram, in his thesis on the "Role of National Service Scheme Programme Officers in the Effective Implementation of National Service Scheme Problems and Perspectives", submitted his thesis to Swami Ramanad Theerth Maratha Wada University, Nandeed, in 2002, under the Guidance of Dr. N.A. Mote, has made a valuable study on the contributions of the Programme Officers, for the programme implementations of National Service Scheme. His work is not tracing the history of National Service Scheme from the beginning. The work is showing the similarity of extension education pre and post independent India, and reveal the growth of National Service Scheme and its planning, implementation, programme execution and extension of the programmes to the community in the Karnataka state. He has briefly mentioned of its concept, meaning, definitions and role of Programme officers. The Thesis in a big way helps to understand the role of Programme officers, their main limitation, especially, the lack of proper training and orientation for Programme officers. The study points out that the Programme officers are the
role models of National Service Scheme, so they should be trained immediately after their appointment. The main limitation of the work is that, it has not suggested the details of contents for the training and orientation programme for the programme officers. Moreover it is not up to the mark in analysing the changing needs of orientation in a historic perspective.

Another study on the NSS of Kerala was conducted by the University of Calicut in 1980, under the leadership of Dr. A. Achyuthan, Dean of Students Affairs and the Programme Co-ordinator, NSS. The title, NATIONAL SERVICE SCHEME: TEN YEARS OF PROGRESS, which has explored the scope of associating NSS with different segments of social life. It is a work on integrating different curriculum with NSS. It is not an in depth study with a vision and has a dearth of historical perspective.

NATIONAL SERVICE SCHEME AND CHANGE IN SOCIAL PERCEPTION, a hand book on NSS, co-authored by Sri. P. K Mohammed, Former NSS Training Co-ordinator TOC, Kalamassery, and his colleague Sri. I.V.Soman, published in 2000 by NSS Training and Orientation Centre, Rajagiri College of Social Sciences. It is sufficient to get a vision on NSS. The authors stress the idealism of NSS and neglected the asset creation part of the NSS. It was highly useful work for the current study.

TEN STEPS TOWARDS PARTNERSHIP WITH THE COMMUNITY written by Dr. C. Thomas Abraham, former NSS Programme Co-ordinator, Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, in 2003. It is like a manual for the
smooth functioning of NSS. It is a collection of his previous works which has been published by 'Ripples', Kottayam, 2003. This is a modified form of his PhD thesis, Communitizing Education through NSS. It has no historical perspective.

*Nalpathimalayile Pareekshanam* (Malayalam), an experiment of Nalpathimala is a work produced by the same author Dr. Thomas Abraham.C and published by Mariama Mathew, a Gramavikas Publication, Kottayam in 1995. It is a work based on a case study in village adoption under NSS, undertaken by Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam. It is an action oriented research work, which concentrated on special camping alone. It is neither traced the development of NSS nor viewed NSS as an instrument of the youth development.

The University of Kerala published a book on NSS namely *YOUTH AS PEACE MAKERS*, 1987, which was edited by Prof. M.Salihu. This book was published by National Service Scheme, University of Kerala, Trivandrum. It is mainly focusing on general studies and lacks a concentration on NSS alone. Though it was useful for the current research, it fails to catch the attention of serious investigators of NSS.

Another study conducted by Dr. P. V. Basheer Ahamed, Associate Professor and Head of the P.G. Department of Commerce, P.S.M.O College Tirurangadi, in 2009, as part of the UGC Supported Minor Research Project, proved that even in financial terms the NSS is viable. This topic has been
published as an article namely *NSS for Social Asset Creation* in *YOJANA*, August, 2010, New Delhi, P.47.

Other important studies conducted on the NSS are T.V. Narasimha Rao’s *National Service Scheme: Organisational structure Central and state level*, published in Thiruvananthapuram, 1990.


*CAMPUS TO COMMUNITY 25 YEAR NSS MOVEMENT*, Department of Youth Affairs and Sports Government of India, New Delhi in 1994. The study report of the Tata Institute of Social sciences, an *Evaluation of NSS in India*, (2008-09) supported by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India, New Delhi, has done an elaborate study about the major areas of NSS in India. The study report points out that valuable recommendations and findings to the areas of NSS activities (Regular and special camping), planning, implementation, impact, administration and financial mechanism. The study conducted in five zones in India. South, East, West, North and Central. The Union Territories also included for the study. One state was evaluated from each zone as a sample. The report examines the achievements and limitations of each zone as sample. The report reveals that the NSS is a great opportunity to reach out to the people. It recommends that
the NSS must be seen as an opportunity to groom youth, confident of themselves with empathy and responsibility to the people and the nation. The young people are willing to learn and are looking for opportunities to contribute to the common good of the society. There is a need to rejuvenate the scheme which is one of the greatest experiments in the field of higher education system with the community process, the NSS has to revamp its organization, redesign its strategy and reorient itself to the changed global scenario.

Dr. C. Thomas Abraham explains his experience in his recently published book National Service Darshanavum Sakshalkaravum (Malayalam) (Ripples-Kottayam 2011). He was the Programme co-ordinator for twelve years in Mahatma Gandhi University. This book examines all aspects of NSS and very useful to each NSS volunteer and officers. The major components on the ideology and philosophy of NSS has mentioned in this book and get some idea to a new volunteer and programme officer. Therefore the book is very significant for the researches related to NSS.

The studies and researches conducted on the NSS of Kerala, by different agencies and scholars, reveals that nobody has done it on historical perspective and developmental oriented. They made least attempts to bring out the details of NSS activities, major contributions, and impact of NSS on student volunteers. They did not analyse the motto and overall objectives of NSS. In these circumstances the endeavour is to fill the knowledge gap on the NSS of Kerala which is expected to produce useful information for the society. It is
also anticipated to open up new vistas for further research. Hence the current study on the history of NSS in Kerala.

This work targets a comprehensive study on the NSS and visualizes its progress and expansion. The NSS organically integrates community service with higher education and facilitates students for inspiring lessons, from their exposure to the community experience. To a considerable extent the NSS empowers civil society and trying to go global in acquiring life skills and career skills. It promotes local culture and indigenous wisdom. It indirectly disseminate the message for protecting the local globally.

In the cited context it is to be noted that awareness and reverence for history is one of the biggest assets of any society lest the society would be like a victim of Alzheimer disease. Unfortunately the lack of a sense of history among the younger generation is one of the predicaments of our times. To address this problem, the topic, ‘A History of National Service Scheme in Kerala’ is undertaken. This work has been arranged in six chapters. It is an attempt to bring to light the valuable contributions of NSS in Kerala. In effect it takes into consideration the national development questions like illiteracy, legal illiteracy, housing, public health, environmental conservation, utilization of youth energy (Yuva Sakthi) etc. The researcher would like to illuminate and develop the theme of NSS on the basis of its own history in the state of Kerala. The vision is to revamp NSS as a ‘Finishing School’ for the student volunteers, self reliant, confident and sensitive to the problems of the community and the
nation. It also targets for shaping good citizens and good human beings, competent to the core for a successful life in a market oriented globalized premises.

The book has been divided into six chapters. Chapter I deals with historical background, which necessitated the implementation of NSS in India. Chapter II analyses the concept of voluntary service and its potential for development. The benefit of volunteerism to the society is extensively dealt in this chapter. Chapter III examines the extension component of higher education with special reference to the University Grants Commission and the context of Kerala. Chapter IV deals with major achievements of NSS in Kerala. It peeps into the NSS success stories at the national level. It is also trying to create a ‘Kerala Model’ in NSS.

Chapter V analyses the impact of the NSS on the students volunteers and enumerates opinion about the NSS activities, from different sections of its stakeholders. Chapter VI is a concluding chapter, which focuses on the findings, recommendations for the quality improvement of the NSS. It throws light on, the way the NSS is useful for the development of personality of students through community service.

When the political reconstruction of our country was completed, the national leaders concentrated on the material advancement. Subsequently the Five Year Plans, construction of big dams and heavy industries all became major items of the national agenda. It can be considered as their eager
motivation for bringing the country on par with other developed countries of the world. In the process, basic human needs of the country were neglected. The result was that the marginalized sections of the society were neglected. Despite our astonishing advancement in science and technology and improvement in GNP, a good number of people are still living below the poverty line, and suffering from many ‘unfreedoms’ as illiteracy and chronic diseases. It is to be noted that this unhealthy phenomenon exists even after 65 years of independence. The state of affairs amounts to the neglect of the nation itself, as the lion share of India’s population is still living in the backward villages even without minimum facilities. All the material benefits planned and implemented by the government are practically facilitating the progress of a microscopic minority upper and middle classes. In effect, the downtrodden sections have been neglected over the years. This kind of progress cannot be considered as a real one. We are proud of our nation as the biggest democracy of the world but the ground reality is much to be desired.

It is in this context, the history of National Service Scheme in Kerala to be studied. The national development involves tangible and intangible components. The services rendered by NSS volunteers in the community, filling the developmental gaps as a means to the development of their own personality, could achieve many things. Similarly the active involvement of NSS volunteers and key functionaries in such activities have been simultaneously contributing for the national development at the grass root level offering a learning experience to the volunteers at the level of higher education
institutions. It is also an unlearning exposure of many a misconception about the land and the people. For a fast developing country like India, with a population of 1.25 billion, the nation need mobilization and diversion of youth volunteers to creative channels. In the process, it is expected that NSS volunteers have to come physically to the community, interact, observe, compare, reflect and enrich the community with diversified programmes and suitable projects. Looking back at activities conducted by the NSS in Kerala, we have conclusive proof that the NSS is part of nation building at grass root level. Going through the history of NSS in Kerala, one comes across the services undertaken by the NSS fraternity to rightly call them the genuine inheritors of Gandhian reconstruction programme. The extension service activities of NSS in higher education sector have been recognized by the University Grants Commission and the National Accreditation and Assessment Council as a Third Dimension of Higher Education. The NSS is a unique extension of higher education sector, which extensively contributed to the community development in Kerala. Education through Service or Personality Development through Community Service, the two objectives of the NSS at the national level could be attained to a large extent in Kerala.

Concept of Voluntary Service in Indian Tradition

Indian cultural tradition attributes prime importance for voluntary service, manifested in the concept of ‘DANA’. Dana, offering relief, philanthropic service or physical assistance both at individual and social level,
occupied a central position in *Dharma*. Dana was considered a requirement to attain ‘*moksha*’ (salvation).

The idea of student service could be traced to the ancient period in the Indian *Gurukula* education system developed by the *Rishis*, teacher monks, who shaped generations of eminent *sisyas* (disciples). Service-minded disciples were selected by the *Guru* (teacher) for extension activities, during the study, without any material benefits.

The sixth century BC presented a picture of education fermentation not to speak of religious and intellectual. The Buddhist monasteries and Jain *Patasalas* (schools) played a vital role in giving an elite background for the people who were part of the system. This mixed with the Hindu way of life, stabilized and promoted *Gurukula* System, a byproduct that we can identify in the content and spirit of the activities of NSS today. The mode of extension education, as service, carried on under their system, was diverse and remains unparalleled in this context. This justifies revaluation of the NSS as a new incarnation of the old ‘*Gurukula*’ system. Gandhi himself was a product of this oriental traditional education that attributes utmost devotion to the Guru (teacher). The manual household work considered a service, shows that the education system, followed in India has always had a component of extension. The disciples, during their leisure used to engage in firewood collection for food preparation, flower collection, water fetching etc. During their visit, the disciples made contacts with the community. This can be considered a genuine
extension work of antiquity. It appears that the great teachers of ancient India let their students move out from the centre of education (Gurukula, monastery, patasala) to the nearby villages for sensing the pulse of the people. It can be regarded as a learning experience, which shows that Indian system of education always had an inherent component of extension. Similarly, Indian mindset was largely influenced by the education, rooted in four Vedas, 18 Mahapuranas, 104 Upanishads, the whole ‘Smirithi’ and Shruthi, literature. The Buddhist Thripeetakas and the prescription of Ashtanga Marga (eight-fold path), helped moulding Indian mindsets. Apart from this, Thiriratnas of Jainism had a sound base in Indian tradition. All these traditional works were assimilated into the volume of ancient knowledge. During medieval times, production of thousands of Arabic and Persian commentaries and interpretations of Quran and Hadith Literature, the Table Talks of Sufi saints known as ‘Malfuzat’ literature also contributed to the formation of Indian cultural psyche.

The cumulative effect of oriental sacred works deeply influenced by the sages, refined Indian mind. The concept of volunteerism could be derived from the concept of Manava Seva Madhava Seva, which means service to humanity is the service to God. This broad and tolerant Indian outlook has been added to the European system of education. The mix up created some problems out of which India rejuvenated the Gandhian concept of education and reconstruction programme which set store on manual work and self-reliance. It upheld the noble virtues of simple life and conservation of environment enlisting the support of every segment of population, not only for political liberation but also
for the socio-economic emancipation of Indians. The assassination of Mahatma Gandhi sealed the fate of an era; but it was re-invigorated by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru with necessary modifications. The net result proved to be the Gandhian legacy through Nehru’s reconstruction and rejuvenation. In this context, we have to relate Nehru’s significant letters of 1 June 1958 and 1 January 1960, to the state Chief Ministers, regarding introduction of work experience in higher education. It was in this socio-cultural background the NSS was launched by Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India.

**Higher Education Institutions of Kerala on the Eve of the Introduction of National Service Scheme**

Teaching and research are considered as essential functions of higher education. Extension service was neglected in the higher education institutions of Kerala until 1969. Some sporadic community services were rendered under the banner of National Cadet Corps (NCC). It was introduced in colleges based on the NCC Act. Moreover, some community service activities were conducted in campuses by the Social Service League. The birthday of Mahatma Gandhi used to mark the beginning of a cleaning week and social service. Some faith based organizations rendered manual services, in the campuses. Based on the cited practices, no systematic community services were discharged either in schools or in colleges. This way the gap of extension service, in higher education sector was bridged by the NSS in Kerala. One of the main features of NSS is voluntary spirit of community service. The University of Calicut was
the first university, which introduced the NSS in Kerala. Dr. N. A. Kareem, the first NSS Programme Coordinator, was a renowned academician and activist, of the opinion that NSS could bring campuses closer to the community. Moreover, the campus community linkage cleared the doubts about campus and community. The misunderstanding that college students are not disciplined and constructive was cleared by the NSS volunteers in their special camps in villages and slums. The volunteers could also realize the indigenous pragmatic skills of the countryside and slums. This can be regarded a learning experience for the NSS volunteers.

**Conceptualization and Evaluation of the Study**

The National Service Scheme (NSS), a voluntary student Youth Programme, was introduced in the Gandhi Centenary Year 1969, with the sole objective of imparting education with community service. Sometime later, the objective of the Scheme was restated as ‘Development of Personality of Students through Community Service’. The NSS seeks to involve student youth in working with and among people to initiate social action projects and thus enhance their knowledge and skills through confrontation with reality. The Scheme enabled them to use the knowledge acquired in the classroom to solve the community problems and to prepare them for responsible citizenship. The relevance of the programme is reflected in the role of higher education in national reconstruction. The moral imperatives generated the social context and the psychological need of having sense of participation in nation building tasks.
The programme not only serves as a potent extension tool of higher education system and operates on the lofty principles of austerity, group living, and empathy but it also implement low cost structures in order to fetch high social returns.

The NSS is the only co-curricular activity, which stands as an interface between the educational institution and community. The NSS with an enrolment of 3.2 million volunteers has come a long way since 1969 when started with 40000 volunteers. It has 172300 volunteers in Kerala. The Scheme has been financially supported by central and state governments in a tune of 7:5.

Since its inception, the Scheme has facilitated the intervention of higher education system in a range of areas related to development. These thrust areas in which the NSS organization, through its student volunteers, and teachers sensitize the public include human rights, literacy, environment, gender issues, rural re-construction, campaign against HIV/AIDS, water conservation, public health, conservation of monuments, disaster management etc. In addition to awareness generation, the NSS also have been working constructively. It planted and nurtured more saplings than any other organization. When the country was reeling under severe drought in early seventies, the NSS took up relief work on a massive scale, cleaning tanks and dams and digging canals and wells under the banner of a flagship programme called ‘Youth Against Famine’. The first major NSS relief work was in the Bangladesh refugee
camps of India in the wake of the 1971 Indo-Pak war. The Scheme was helped by public and private initiatives in creating durable community assets like check-dams, water harvesting structures, rural roads, playgrounds, community halls, toilets etc. across the length and breadth of the country. Thus, the NSS has forged an enduring alliance between educational process and community building. In the ultimate analysis, both are community service to the nation.

The National Service Scheme essentially falls under the extension dimension of higher education in India. It has two major component services to the nation engaging students in socially productive works, targeting the task of providing a variety of learning experiences, eventually to develop their personality. The NSS provides volunteers opportunities for interactive learning and exposure for developing their social conscience and commitment, discipline and positive attitude with a view of empowering them to be globally competent quality citizens.

During the British period (1757-1947), the indigenous system of education was transformed. By the end of the 19th century a new system of education, intended for expansion of western knowledge and culture through English language as a medium of instruction, was firmly established. The education reforms by Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800-1859) in 1858 is regarded as the Magna Carta of modern English education in India. Macaulay, an English civil servant and historian, laid the foundation for a new education system in India. In Macaulay’s words,
The motive behind introducing English education in India was that we must at present do our best to form a class, who may be interpreters between us and millions we governed, a class of persons Indian in blood and colour but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect.

Even though this system of education created a new awareness and rational outlook among students, basically it was not social oriented and lacked national vision. The leaders of Indian freedom movement realized the fundamental role of education and throughout the independence struggle, they stressed the significance of education for national development. The great Indian reformers Rajaram Mohan Roy, Swami Vivekananda and the reformers of Kerala Sree Narayana Guru, Chattambi Swamikal, and Vakkom Moulavi etc. stressed the need for education. The NSS was profoundly influenced by Gandhian concept of education and national reconstruction, based on Wardha Scheme of 1937. This education system sought to harmonize the intellectual with manual training. Gandhi developed the ideal of a new society where everyone would work with his/her hands. Accordingly, dignity of labour should be the basis of the social structure of a good society. It should be noted that even the identity of NSS was misrepresented in the Malayalam film, Sangham. The hero of the film tell his room fellow to clean the premises of their room, the response was that, “…am I a NSS volunteer to clean neighborhood.”
Indian universities and institutions of higher learning were confined to teaching and research and did not attempt to play a socially relevant role. Kuppuswami, the famous educationist, is of the opinion that the Indian Universities continues to remain alien institutions without any integration with India’s past, present or future. The majority of Indian students and teachers do not have a clear picture or understanding of the grass root realities. This was positively addressed through the NSS special camps in rural areas. In effect, it was a social laboratory of the NSS, a meaningful link between classes and masses.

On 15th August 1947, the British were forced to leave India and a new era in the history of education was ushered. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in his inaugural address of the All India Educational Conference, in January 1948 declared that the entire basis of education must be revolutionized. Continuous efforts have been made in the post independence period to revitalize education and visualize plans and programmes for implementation, which would be in keeping with the needs and aspirations of the people.

The following developments, which posed a challenge for the budding nation in formative years, provoked the thoughts of the national leaders, seemed to have paved the way in the formation of NSS. The post-partition communal polarization and series of violence in different parts of India, left the need for an emotional integration and a generation of empowered youth with patriotic commitment. The Indo-Pak wars, Chinese aggression in 1962, ethnic problems
and the question of Hindi as the national language were some of the reasons which caused centrifugal tendencies. These socio-political questions threatened to hamper national integration, communal harmony and a sense of belonging and ‘we’ feeling among the youth. The attraction of educated youngsters towards Naxalite movement and subsequent unrest in 1960s in the campuses invited the attention of the government to channelize the youth energy to constructive purposes. The economic inability of the country to provide infrastructural facilities for socio-economic development provided space for intervention to fill the gap, especially, in the fields of literacy, health care, sanitation etc. Mahatma Gandhi was successful in bringing the educated and uneducated Indians under a common flag for a common purpose- national freedom. Moreover, his socio-economic reconstruction programme, in 1920s and 1930s, facilitated the interaction between the campus and community but Gandhiji’s unfortunate demise in 1948, aggravated the divide between the campus and the community, resulting in the growing alienation of the classes from the masses.

As we have noted earlier, the participation of students in national reconstruction programmes dates back to the pre-independence era, particularly to the period of Mahatma Gandhi, who wanted to infuse a new dimension in the national education programmes, as opposed to the colonial approach of limiting education to mere training programmes for middle level bureaucracy, transforming them loyal to the British rule and subservient to colonial interests. Gandhi has put in clear terms that:
In order to avoid erosion of social values, it is imperative on the part of students to establish a living contact with the community around them. In the process they would go to the people, living among them, learn from them love them, start with what they know and build on what they have.\(^6\)

Thus having imbibed the above ideas, the post independence era was marked by an urge for social and labour service for students, both as a measure of educational reform and a means to improve the quality of educated manpower. The University Commission headed by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan envisaged the idea of introduction of the national service for the college youth on a voluntary basis with a view -

To developing healthy contacts between the students and teachers in educational institutions on the one hand and the work of national reconstruction particularly in the rural areas on the other.\(^7\)

As a prelude to the concept of social service by students, labour service camp was launched in 1963. The first note worthy reference to the provision of compulsory labor service for students was made by the education subcommittee. The recommendation of the national planning committee was actively considered by the Government of India. It sought to introduce social service experience as a pre-condition for obtaining any degree or diploma. The Ministry of Education prepared a comprehensive note on the Scheme for compulsory physical work for students (which included a brief description of
labour camps for youth in some European countries) and referred it to the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) at its meeting in January, 1950 (vide memorandum on item sixteenth of the agenda for 16th meeting of the CABE). The report of the evaluation team on Labour and social service camps was published.\(^8\)

The committee endorsed the view that students whether in schools or colleges, should devote sometime for manual work. The committee, however, emphasized that the work should be on a voluntary basis and educational aspects and potentialities of such work would be fully explained and stressed upon. The experiences gained in different provinces should be utilized in forming future programs for the purpose.

The CABE considered the proposal recognizing the importance of such work and recommended the Government of India to appoint a committee to consider the question in detail and to chart a programme for such work. The Board also recommended that both teachers and students should participate in such a Scheme.

Meanwhile, in pursuance of the recommendations of Education Ministers conference, Government of India appointed D. C. Deshmuk Committee on 28 August 1959, to make concrete suggestions. This committee recommended “compulsory fulltime national service for a period of 9 to 12 months”.\(^9\)
It was examined at several levels but was shelved because of its huge financial implications and difficulties with regard to implementation. The public reaction to the Scheme was also not favourable due to the compulsory component and for the addition of one more year to the total span of education.

In 1960, Professor K.G. Saidain, the then Education Secretary, deputed by the Government of India to study the Scheme, submitted his report under the title, National Service for the Youth. The Saidain Report favoured the Scheme as an integral part of education, concurrent with studies. It recommended the Scheme as voluntary service, having high educational justification and possibilities. Endorsing this line of thinking, the education Commission (1964-66) recommended that some form of social and national service should be made obligatory for all students and should form an integral part of education at all stages. It was thought that this could become an instrument to build character, improve discipline, inculcate a faith in the dignity of manual labour and to develop a sense of social responsibility. This was taken into account by state education ministers, during their conference on April, 1967 at New Delhi and they recommended that at the University stage, students could be permitted to join in the National Cadet Corps (NCC) which was already in existence, on a voluntary basis and an alternative could be offered in the form of a new programme called National Service Scheme NSS. Subsequently, a Parliamentary Consultative Committee on education, 1967, in their report on National Policy on Education (NPE) recommended for the transformation of education system, strengthen national unity, national and social service
including participation in meaningful and challenging programme of community service or national reconstruction, should be made an integral part of education at all stages.\textsuperscript{13}

As a logical culmination of policy framing in higher education, the conference of Vice-Chancellors on September 1967 welcomed recommendation for NSS programme at college level. On May 1969, the conference of student representatives of universities and institutions of higher learning convened by the Minister of Education and Youth Services and the University Grants Commission, unanimously declared that

NSS could be a powerful instrument of national integration. It could be used to introduce urban students to rural life in other states. Under this Scheme, projects of permanent value could also be undertaken as a symbol of contribution of student community to the progress and upliftment of the nation.\textsuperscript{14}

On September 24 1969, during the Gandhi centenary year, the Union Education Minister Dr. V. K. R. Rao, launched the NSS programme in 37 universities, covering all states involving approximately 40,000 students. The University of Calicut was the first university in Kerala, which introduced the NSS in 1969 itself.\textsuperscript{15}

Over years, NSS has helped in arousing social awareness among students and had provided them with the opportunities of working with the
people creatively and inculcating in them a sense of dignity of labour and social commitment. The researcher attempts to study and analyze the Kerala experience of the NSS in a historical perspective. It examines the spirit of voluntary service and positive role in filling the developmental gaps of the local community as an extension component of higher education. The project proposes to pinpoint significant suggestions for its improvement in the light of field experience.
Reference


