

THEME PAPER FOR THIRD ROUND TABLE ON NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR RURAL INSTITUTES

Introduction

The National Council for Rural Institutes was inaugurated by Former Prime Minister Dr.P.V.Narasimha Rao in the year 1995 with an initial outlay of rupees one crore. The NCRI was the outcome of the recommendation of Working Group on Rural Institutes / Universities chaired by Dr.M.Aram, former MP (Rajya Sabha) and former Vice-Chancellor of Gandhigram Rural University. The purpose of promoting NCRI was to strengthen the existing Rural Institutes and to support the emerging Rural Institutes. The focus was on introducing skill-based short-term and long-term training programmes that would help rural youth to find self-employment which would not only bring prosperity in rural areas but would also check migration towards urban areas. The working group in fact has suggested the launching of more short-term certificate and diploma programmes that would help develop a cadre of rural development professionals who would be able to effectively handle issues confronting the rural areas.

Objectives of NCRI

The basic objectives of the NCRI are:

- a. to promote rural higher education
- b. to develop institutions engaged in programmes based on the Gandhian philosophy of basic education and *Nai-Talim* and consolidate their networking
- c. to encourage other educational institutions and voluntary agencies to develop in accordance with the Gandhian philosophy of education
- d. to strengthen teacher training facilities for Gandhian basic education
- e. to design a variety of courses at the tertiary level centered around emerging rural occupations
- f. to strengthen the curriculum of all these institutions with emphasis on science and technology
- g. to encourage field-oriented courses of rural institutes

- h. to promote research as a tool for social and rural development
- i. to promote extension services to these institutions through micro level planning
- j. to advise the Government of India on all matters pertaining to rural institutes as may be referred by it from time to time.

A decade of activities

NCRI has a history of more than 10 years. During this period, it has funded proposals submitted by various Rural Institutes, Gandhian Institutions and NGOs. A cursory glance at proposals funded by NCRI indicates that the projects are assorted in nature. They include.

- Revival of *Nai Talim* activities
- Documentation of *Nai Talim* Institutions
- Skill Development training
- Upgradation of Rural Study centres
- Starting of New Rural Institutes
- Introduction of Certificate / Diploma / UG / PG / PG. Diploma programmes in Rural Institutes
- Introduction of vocational job-oriented courses
- Research studies (theoretical and applied)
- Organisation of workshops / seminars

A look at the objectives and functioning of NCRI reveals that, as a national institute, it has touched only the tip of the ice-berg. It is yet to work towards realising many of its objectives.

Consultations on future role of NCRI

It is time to take stock of the situation. It is time to ponder over what NCRI should i) stop doing; ii) continue doing; and iii) start doing.

NCRI has already initiated the process of consulting its stakeholders through two Round Table Meetings. The first and second round tables were held on 07.01.2008 and 27.02.2008 at Hyderabad. Eminent experts, scholars, and activists participated in the meeting. Pragmatic ideas have emerged out of the Round Table

meetings. A national seminar on “Revitalising of Rural Institutes: Problems and Prognosis” was held in Delhi on 15th –16th March 2008 at New Delhi.

A third Round Table at Gandhigram has been proposed with the objective of harvesting the views and opinions of the experts drawn from various walks of life on the role of NCRI in the changing rural scenario.

Issues for Discussion

1. What is the relevance of ‘*Nai Talim*’ system of education in the present scenario? Where do we introduce the system? What are likely benefits of the *Nai Talim* system of Education? What are the likely limitations?
2. What are Rural Institutes? What are their unique features? Do the NCRI confine itself to traditional and functioning Rural Institutes such as GRU, Gujarat Vidyapeeth, Mahatma Gandhi Gramodaya Viswa Vidyalaya? or Do the NCRI broadbase the concept of Rural Institutes? If so, how do the NCRI go about it? What criteria do the NCRI propose to follow to define the scope of proposed Rural Institutes?
3. Of the various rural institutions promoted, only a few have been able to withstand the test of the time. The rest have withered away. What were the reasons behind the success of a few rural institutes and failure of many Rural Institutes? The examination of factors behind the failure / success would help the institute to position the existing and emerging Rural Institutes in proper perspective.
4. There are different institutions ranging from government to grass root organisations working towards the promotion of the well-being of a rural community. Coordination among these agencies is lacking. As a result, schemes and programmes do not converge to create a discernible impact on the rural community. Can NCRI play the role of coordinating atleast Gandhian Institutions to create a sort of synergy in the working of these institutions? If so how should NCRI go about it?
5. Certain Rural Institutes have taken up the task of training the grass root functionaries in local governance, community based organisations, micro-finance, micro-plan, leadership, peace and conflict resolution, etc. What kind of role can NCRI play in such programmes?

6. Can the NCRI think of introducing innovative programme in the Rural Institute? (e.g *Samaj Silphis* (Change Agents), values and social responsibilities, village as classroom for certain specific programme, etc.)
7. What should be the relation between NCRI and the Rural Institutes? What do Rural Institutes expect from NCRI? What should be the role of NCRI in promoting and developing Rural Institutes? What are the activities that NCRI can take up and do?
8. Should there be a network among Rural Institutes? If 'yes' what type of network is suggested? What are the proposed activities? What should be the role of NCRI in nurturing and strengthening the network?
9. Should we have the network of teachers *Acharyakul* of Rural Institutes? If so, what should be the kind of network and what should be the functions of such network?
10. Rural research, especially action-based participatory research, involving different stakeholders is the need of the hour in the rapidly changing socio-economic scenario of the rural India. What type of research can be taken up? What can be the broad areas of research? Can it be collaborative research? If so, how do the NCRI go about it?
11. What are the changes proposed in the functioning of NCRI?

The Round Table will discuss these and other issues brought up by the members participating in the programme.



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Address by Dr. S.V. Prabhath, Chairman, NCRI

This is an important day for the NCRI as it is conducting its Third Round Table in the hallowed precincts of Gandhigram Rural University. At the outset, I would like to express my profound thanks and gratefulness to Dr. M. R. Kubendran, Chairman, IAC, Prof. N. Narayana Swamy and Prof. S. Narayana Swamy for giving me the necessary support and taking up the burden of holding this event today at this place. I also profusely thank all those invitees who are eminent persons, in their respective fields, for having accepted my invitation and agreeing to contribute their thoughts in today's discussions. For me this assignment as Chairman, NCRI, is a quest and an odyssey in identifying my role in reshaping the activities of this Institute. Any organisation to justify its *raison d'être*, has to stand up to pronounce its mission and goals in conformity with the changing context. The objectives of the institute as contained in the memorandum of association and rules are broad and quite clear. We need to reiterate and reinterpret the same as said in Bob Dylan's song, "***the times they are a changing: come writers and critics who prophesize with your pen and keep your eyes wide. The chance won't come again. Don't speak too soon for the wheel's still in spin.***"

To explain my mission clearly I wish to draw analogy from the great sailing ships of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The first is to *view the purpose from the crow's nest*. The crow's nest is a place high upon the ship's tallest mast. A sailor would climb up the rigging to the crow's nest in order to view the horizon from that higher vantage point and look for enemy ships or breaching whales. For those of us in this peregrination, this view from the crow's nest is essentially the issue of vision of having a sense of where we are going, where the currents are driving us, how we can provide more relevant services, and what the NCRI can do to transform rural higher education. This vision is critical to its advancement.

Perhaps this was best said by the character of Bloody Mary in Rodgers and Hammerstein's wonderful musical *South Pacific*: "You've got to have a dream, if you don't have a dream, how you gonna have a dream come true?" We are all committed to the cause and need to have a dream, a vision, but more important, we need to make sure that this is a *shared dream*. It can't be my dream or your dream it has to be a dream that the entire stakeholder community shares and to which the entire community is committed.

In navigating any organisation, we must *seek signs of being on the right course*. It would be lovely if we had lighthouses to help steer them in the right direction and keep them on the right course. But since no physical lighthouses exist, the key to this navigation is alignment, with the trends and currents. One of the things that I thought I should do is to work on developing that shared vision, need to focus on successful boundary spanning, but most of us need to find activities that will have the approval of the broad spectrum through regular discussions with various units and institutions to make sure this alignment is occurring.

This goal of alignment comes through constant communication and through networking. To stay on the right course, we need to focus on using the expertise available with various institutions to achieve the goals of the NCRI.

For the past four months I have been holding consultations through round tables, organised in various regions of the country, to elicit views from relevant sources across a wide spectrum of the society in order to draw the road map for the Institute. Such a road map/vision plan will have the stamp of a wide variety of thinkers, eminent people, grassroot workers, Gandhians, scholars and this will help me to identify the plans and programmes of NCRI.

Lists of Abstracts

1. Shri. N. Ardhanari : Education for life is true education
2. Dr. Jaya Venugopal : Revamping rural education
3. Prof. K. Kulandaivel : Rural institutes still hold the key to rural development
4. Prof. S. Muthukumaran : Relevance of Nai-Talim
5. Ms. Parivrajika Rajamma : NCRI as a reserve force of non-violence
6. Dr. G. Pankajam : Teacher education in rural institutes
7. Prof. N. Radhakrishnan : The rise of a rural university
8. Prof. R. Subramanian : Focus of research in rural institutes
9. Shri. G. Vasudeo : Skill-based training for rural youth

1. Shri. N. Ardhanari : EDUCATION FOR LIFE IS TRUE EDUCATION

The Rural Institutes are unique because they were mostly started in rural areas. These institutions functioned as laboratories for rural higher education. The students were mostly from rural areas. The subjects taught were rural-biased and oriented towards integrated rural development.

While I was doing my diploma in Rural Services, we studied social education, economics, sociology and languages. We did a great deal of outreach work. We, a group of ten students, had to adopt one village and to work for a period of four years towards its betterment. We saw real India in rural areas. After completing my course, I stayed in a village for a year and coordinated the development works in the village.

Rural Institutes are the hope of the future of the villages. They can impart true education for rural children. Rural Institutes can link the mar, nature, science and spiritualism. They can also help in preserving the Indian heritage and Indian culture.

Rural Institutes, in order to play the path-breaking role, should refashion their teaching, research and extension strategies. They can think of a core syllabus with a focus on location specific problems and opportunities. There should be enough opportunities for the students and staff to have exchange programmes. The students should be vigorously trained to undertake research and outreach activities.

2. Dr. Jaya Venugopal : REVAMPING RURAL EDUCATION

The principles of basic education as enriched by Mahatma need to be translated through life skills, soft skills and aesthetic education. Education in rural areas should be innovative and on par with international standards. It should provide enough space for the students to develop critical thinking and creative expression. The emphasis of education should be on 3 Gs of learning viz Grace in learning, Growth of knowledge and Gestures in presentations and 3 Hs of learning, use of Heart, Head and Hand in learning. Equal emphasis should be given to career oriented certificates and diploma courses that would enforce self esteem and self respect. The rural education system should stress on value system that upholds Indian culture and Indian values.

3. Prof. K. Kulandaivel : RURAL INSTITUTES STILL HOLD THE KEY TO RURAL DEVELOPMENT

The concept of Rural Institutes owes its origin to University Education Commission, headed by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, Former President of India. One of the members of the Commission Mr. Arthur E. Morgan gave a separate note to the Commission stating that University Education does not cater to the needs of villages and hence separate Rural Institutions of Higher Education needs to be promoted to address rural problems and educate the rural youth in solving them.

The Ministry of Education, Government of India, accepted the views expressed by Mr. Arthur E. Morgan and started National Council for Rural Higher Education with 14 Rural Institutes in different states functioning under its control and guidance. Two of them viz Gandhigram Rural Institute and Sri Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya Rural Institute were in Tamil Nadu.

Many Diploma courses and later Post Diploma courses were designed and started and boys and girls from rural areas were admitted and educated. They did research on rural problems and needs, organised extension work in villages, camped there and worked with rural people. This went on with great enthusiasm during the initial years.

4. Prof. S. Muthukumaran : RELEVANCE OF NAI –TALIM

Gandhiji pointed out three prominent aspects in the existing system of Education. They are:

1. It is almost entire exclusion of indigenous culture
2. It ignores the culture of the heart and the hand and confines itself simply to the head; and
3. Real education is impossible through a foreign medium

Gandhiji in order to overcome the defects in the education system, came out with a new system of education. The essence of it is as follows. The text book may be based on indigenous thought and must reflect the immediate surroundings and own culture. Education can be through manual training and therefore all children must learn atleast one vocation which may be useful to them in later life. The medium of instruction will have to be the home language. However, those children who have an aptitude to learn

languages may learn other languages and in later life provide translations of the rich thoughts and new findings in the publication of those languages.

The present scenario very much warrants the micro education of new education in schools. The benefits are quite obvious. First, the young ones will develop good character. Second, they will be self-reliant by undertaking skill-based training in a vocation. Third, they will be proud of their culture and the country. Fourth, they will be contributing to the wealth of the nation through their productive work.

5. Ms. Parivrajika Rajamma : NCRI AS A RESERVE FORCE OF NON-VIOLENCE

1. Vocational activities and linkage of the same with conventional education and syllabus, of course, with minor variations to suit to Rural Institutes, taking parents and local community into confidence through mass awareness and self-employment trainings are to be the step-by-step action-plan. Villages are to be made student's classes by establishing community-based job-oriented units to tackle the main problems of unemployment and economic inequality.
2. Agencies working for promotion of the same have to be knit together or co-ordinated. NCRI, already doing it, has to just to affix the **stamp** – call it **recognition**, if one may say so.
3. NCRI has to be canopy for the Rural Institutes in the country, leading them to universities. It has to shoulder the prime responsibility of amalgamating the cream of all other systems of education to countrywide Rural Universities.
4. Opportunities are to be created for exchange of students in the Rural Institutes through placements throughout the country.
5. Likewise, exchange of staff may be thought of. It will definitely benefit and promote innovative programmes through mutual showing of skill and knowledge.
6. It will also definitely promote action-based participatory research beneficial to socio-economic, well-being of the nation.
7. Skill-imparting vocational programmes along with social, educational, cultural and moral activities with specific emphasis on human values should be the broad areas for individuals, groups and communities.

8. Free and intimate relationship between Rural Institutes/Institutions and NCRI irrespective of positions, areas and other criteria is essential.
9. NCRI has to launch the university programme on this line and seek special responsibility entrusted upon it by the Ministry of Human Resource Development to take over a project of actual Village/Rural Universities in the country. This will enable the NCRI to function as a “Reserve Force of Non-violence” for the country.

6. Dr. G. Pankajam : TEACHER EDUCATION IN RURAL INSTITUTES

Mahatma Gandhi said “if our aim is to create a non-violent and non-exploiting social and economic order, it is possible only through education as education is an instrument for social change.” Mahatma Gandhi propagated the basic education system as an appropriate strategy to achieve this goal. To attain this goal, we have to follow participatory education, through stakeholders’ participation in curriculum development during all stages of the teaching-learning process.

Integrated B.Ed Course at G.R.U.

Gandhigram Rural University (G.R.U) started innovative Teacher Education. It is a competency-based integrated teacher education programme offered to the undergraduate and postgraduate students of the university. It is integrated because the undergraduate students during their third year and the postgraduate students during their second year are introduced to pedagogical courses if they have aptitude for teaching and opt for teacher education in addition to their regular courses of study.

The students have to earn additional credits in pedagogy besides their regular programmes in their respective courses in their final year. The students will be awarded a degree after successful completion of their three year UG or two year PG study. They will pursue their B.Ed. Programme next year with few more pedagogical courses, methodology and the practical components such as micro teaching, preparation of instructional aids, practice teaching and developing proficiency in teaching a vocational course.

Besides learning of content, methodology of teaching and internship in rural and urban schools they have to undergo the village placement programme (VPP) / values and social responsibilities (VSR) and participate in the extension activities. The B.Ed

integrated course aims to promote value system, dignity of labour, social responsibility and accountability to the society which basic education insists.

To spread the message of Mahatma Gandhi and to adopt the principles of Basic Education in schools GHUs / GRIs can organise in-service, refresher courses to the teachers working in schools and Higher Education Institutions

7. Prof. N. Radhakrishnan : THE RISE OF A RURAL UNIVERSITY

The crowning glory of Gandhigram came when it was ten years with the starting of the Rural Institute for Higher Education, one of the fourteen Rural Institutes started by the Government of India as part of taking rural higher education to the very doors of village India.

The Rural institutes, were conceived to be a new system of education with its focus on

- (i) integration of education with productive work; and
- (ii) to prepare the young to face the challenges of the country under transition through the blending of the educational resources, academic excellence, spirit of inquiry, scientific and technological advancement within manageable limits, extension and research, mostly on the Western and American pattern of Community Colleges.

The programmes offered by the Gandhigram were qualitatively different. The emphasis was on character development, skill formation and attitudinal changes, so much so a student of the three-year Diploma Course for example, had to do, besides his optional subjects and languages, compulsory courses in Art Appreciation, Story of Civilisation, Extension Education and Community Development and Hindi. In addition to this, a student had to spend a minimum of three months in villages, during his three-year period of study. As a partial fulfillment of this course a dissertation had also to be prepared by every student. The programme was definitely a bold experiment in offering a modified version of the Gandhian ideas of the Nai Talim in rural higher education.

Another attractive side of the campus life was the spirit of unity fostered by promoting the cultural streams of different segments of Indian society. Almost all the important festivals and occasions connected with major religious groups were organised jointly. There was a Kalabhavan, which trained students in different fine

arts including theatre arts and crafts. The Kalabhavan became the nerve centre of highly creative programmes. A world-class artist and film director like Sri Adoor Gopalakrishnan who was a student of Gandhigram acknowledged his indebtedness to the kind of education that he received from Gandhigram. Another highly useful aspect that attracted many visitors to Gandhigram from different parts of India and abroad was the GRU's adherence to cultural traditions and values and the manner in which they were sought to be promoted.

Mention may be made here about the Youth Organisation, the *Shanti Sena* of the Gandhian vision, and the way Dr. G. Ramachandran tried to integrate this with the main education pattern and community life in Gandhigram. Gandhigram took up the *Shanti Sena* programme in a big way and made earnest efforts to develop a comprehensive youth training programme in nonviolence and conflict resolution.

The disappearance of rural institutes in other parts of India

By the mid seventies the Rural Institutes which were started with great fanfare and expectations in different parts of India were facing crisis due to a number of reasons, the chief among them being the fall in student enrolment and the other related to the apparent failure of the experiment in the present form. The students who were studying in these institutes were clamoring for degrees instead of diplomas which the National Council for Rural Higher Education to which these fourteen institutes in different parts of India were affiliated to was offering. Secondly, under the agreement governing the rural institutes fifty per cent of the total expenditure would come from the Central Government while the remaining fifty would be met by the State Government and the agencies, which were running these Rural Institutes. Several state governments did not care to honor this clause while many institutes did not have the resources to meet even their share of the twenty five percent. At this juncture, the Government of India advised these institutes, including the Gandhigram Rural Institute, either to affiliate themselves with the nearest universities or to the State Agricultural Universities. Dr. G. Ramachandran, the then Director of the GRI, resisted the attempt where as the other 13 Rural Institutes surrendered their identity.

Survival of GRI : Efforts of Dr. G. Ramachandran :

Due to Dr. G. Ramachandran's perseverance, herculean efforts and unrivalled commitment, the Gandhigram Rural Institute not only survived as an independent

entity, but it was also accorded a Deemed University status (7th August, 1976). The Gandhigram Rural University also secured 100 per cent financial assistance from the Government of India. It is a success story of a Rural Institute. Its survival and elevation to the status of a University is primarily due to the record of its work, the astounding leadership of Dr. G. Ramachandran and the support extended by his wife, Mrs. Soundaram Ramachandran and their impeccable credentials as dedicated Gandhians.

Let it be understood that Gandhigram Rural Institute is one of the two or three Rural Institutes which withstood the various pressures while the other Rural Institutes either disappeared or got themselves affiliated with the nearest universities. The experience of GRU is unique in the annals of rural higher education. It has successfully created the potential network and necessary resources for an alternative model of development through restructuring of rural higher education. In this great effort science, technology, literature, arts and crafts, spirituality, etc. could become dependable aids in improving the quality of life in several hundred villages around the centres of learning and thus providing a model in service of the community.

8. Prof. R. Subramanian: FOCUS OF RESEARCH IN RURAL INSTITUTES

The type of research that the Rural Institutes may lay hands on to enrich their proficiency and skill in research-oriented activities is unique and interdisciplinary action-based participatory research. Besides case studies and case analysis, impact of rural research projects and their evaluation can find way in the rural research bag both in the social sciences and physical sciences; opportunities are immense.

Rural Institutes may come together and voluntarily establish collaborative research by starting with simple in-depth studies on a cooperative basis. This could be mutually helpful. RIs may expand the areas on an inter-disciplinary project basis. They may follow the mode of research in western countries, particularly at Harvard University, USA. The faculty have to do self-analysis at first, identifying their scholarly work, distinction, specialisation areas and expertise etc. Above all, they need to mutually respect one another, admire each other's contribution to knowledge generation and intellectual output and capacity to work in a team. This preliminary work would expand into a sort of International Centre for Research in Community

Development at the Rural Institutes, particularly located in a separate structure. Enough funding and encouragement from NCRI in this regard could help to activate RI faculties on an experimental basis.

The pith of the experiment lies in the way the experts meet at the “centre” if and when a project is funded. The experts study the project if it is viable interdisciplinary one. They choose the members most meticulously to make a “team” according to the advice of a chosen leader for the purpose to accept the project for execution or not. If the team decides to start work on the projects, they plan the work phase and fix a time frame to fulfill completion of the project. The moment the whole work is completed, the team is dissolved and the members go back to their respective departments to teach, until another project is taken up. This Harvard mode may take a few months to a few years to crystallise. But the aspirational attempt is worth a trial. The NCRI could slowly start on this work which will help to enhance the prestige of the Rural Institutes.

9. Sri. G. Vasudeo : SKILL-BASED TRAINING FOR RURAL YOUTH

The primary focus of the NCRI is

1. “Introducing skill-based short term and long term training that would help rural youth to find self-employment which would not only bring prosperity in rural areas but also check migration towards urban areas.”
2. What is the real situation? Large scale industries gobble up agricultural lands and cities are extended to their surrounding areas in jet speed. Agriculture is no longer a noble profession or profitable one. The village youth are also ambitious and prefer to be construction or factory labourers.
3. With the mushrooming of large number of new institutions of higher learning in rural areas, the villagers are forced to migrate to the already crowded towns and cities in search of employment.
4. Still the rural areas need all the professionals like the midwives, masons, technicians for repair of agricultural equipment, TV, etc. Therefore if the NCRI can look into this aspect for training the youth in these and also use their good offices to get bank loans to the trained rural people who want to start any enterprise

**RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE THIRD ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE
of the
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF RURAL INSTITUTES (NCRI)
held on APRIL 22, 2008 at
GANDHIGRAM RURAL UNIVERSITY, GANDHIGRAM**

With a view to deliberate upon the objectives, perspectives and future course of its action, NCRI organised the Third Round Table Conference on April 22, 2008 at Gandhigram Rural University, Gandhigram. The aim of the meeting was to discuss the role of NCRI in strengthening the existing Rural Institutes and in expanding the rural higher education programmes. Eminent educationists, administrators, activists from Institute/University of Rural Higher Education, Gandhian Institutions and Non-Governmental Organisations participated in the meeting (List attached).

Welcoming the participants, Dr. M. R. Kubendran, Chairman, Interim Administrative Committee, Gandhigram Rural University said that the Round Table Meeting on Rural Institutes is an unique event in the annals of NCRI and Rural Institutes. He said the participation and sharing of ideas by the most illustrious personalities who have been associating themselves in the promotion of rural higher education on Gandhian philosophy would enrich the deliberations of the meeting. He further stated that the meeting should come out with pragmatic recommendations that would strengthen the functioning of not only the National Council of Rural Institutes, but also the Rural Institutes.

Briefly describing the purpose of Round Table meeting, the Chairman of NCRI Dr. S.V. Prabhath said that he was very glad to be in the midst of most experienced and devoted academicians and activists who have been relentlessly serving the cause of Rural Institutes. He sought the support and guidance of all those present to invigorate the functioning of the NCRI. He said that his interaction with a galaxy of intellectuals and activists across the country through visits, round tables, seminars, etc gave him lot of inputs to position the NCRI in the right perspective.

Based on the interaction, he said he has come out with a proposal for strengthening the NCRI and Rural Institutes. Highlights of the proposals include

- Strengthening of Existing Rural Institutes
- Provision of assistance to *Nai Talim* system of education.
- Identification of specific programmes for

- a. Teacher training for *Nai Talim* teachers and for teachers of Rural Institutes
 - b. Peace and conflict Resolution.
 - c. Preparation of modules on Micro-planning
- Coordination and networking of Rural Institutes and Gandhian Organisations
 - Documentation
 - Fellowship and assistance for Gandhian studies
 - Assistance to Gandhian Institutions
 - Establishment of three new rural institutes
 - Strengthening the NCRI establishment
 - Establishment of Rural Resource Information Centre

The introductory remarks made by the Chairman provided a backdrop for the dialogue and discussion that followed. Dr. C. V. Raghavulu, former Vice-Chancellor of Acharya Nagarjuna University, who acted as the moderator of the meeting, dealt at length about the sincere attempts made by the Chairman of the NCRI to hold a series of consultations for finding ways and means to activate the functioning of NCRI and to develop a vision for the Institute. He thanked the participants for their earnestness in writing papers on the various issues raised in the theme paper and for the depth and quality of the papers. Dr. Raghavulu then invited the participants to speak on specific themes so as to enable NCRI to develop a composite vision about its role. He then initiated discussions on the various issues among the participants which resulted in a set of recommendations on various possible areas of intervention.

Teacher Training

Nai Talim system of education is still relevant. It is being practiced in many of the schools and colleges though in different forms, names and degrees. The participants felt that the entire system of *Nai Talim* needs to be revisited and appropriate measures need to be initiated to strengthen the *Nai Talim* system of education. The measures as recommended by the participants include the following

- *Nai Talim* system of education should be demand-driven which necessarily warrants harvesting of views and opinions of various stakeholders.

- A modified teacher education programme, incorporating the basic principles and elements of Nai Talim system of education, may be formulated.
- The present scenario is not quite conducive for the introduction of Nai Talim system of education. It requires the wholehearted support of pupils, teachers, parents and the government. The state can play an active role in assuring the various stakeholders in unequivocal terms that incorporation of basic principles of Nai Talim would enhance the employability and quality of the human resources.
- The dictum of ‘work while you learn; learn while you work’ should be rediscovered and propagated among the schools, colleges and universities.

The concept of basic education pervades into general education. It should be taken to higher levels. In other words, the concept of Nai Talim in the present context needs to be revisited and mainstreamed.

**Role And Functioning Of NCRI:
Coordination and networking**

Coordination and networking should not be hierarchical in nature. It should be a sort of loose, voluntary and informal network. The network should not be confined to Rural Institutes alone. It should also include NGOs working on the lines of Gandhian Mission and universities and colleges which offer a course on rural development and Gandhian Thought. The NCRI should take up the task of mapping such institutions which in turn would help evolve strategies for coordination and networking.

The activities proposed under this should include:

- Publication of Newsletter (NCRI has already launched a newsletter)
- Annual meeting and interactive sessions by rotation
- Publication of a journal, occasional papers/proceedings of seminars/workshops/conferences
- Creation of a website for NCRI (has already been done)
- Facilitating exchange of students and faculty across Institutes of rural higher education

Collaborative Research

- The research needs to be multi-disciplinary and collaborative. The focus should be theme-based and relevant to rural areas. The scope should be expanded include collaborative writing. The talents in each area of collaborative research and writing should be identified and pooled and should be effectively involved for undertaking research and publication. The NCRI may think of organising a workshop to identify thematic areas for collaborative research and writing. The research should be broad-based, covering local, national and macro issues that have a bearing on the rural lives and livelihood. The suggestive areas for research include public health, gender issues, inclusiveness, social capital, service learning, voluntarism, governance, etc. The list is only illustrative, not exhaustive.

Innovative Programme

- Rural Institutes and NGOs should try to submit innovative programmes and projects for possible funding by NCRI. Such programmes should have a focus on rural livelihoods and sustainability.
- The NCRI may invite innovative proposals every year, if possible through an advertisement on an all-India basis for funding.
- The word innovativeness should be adequately defined. The NCRI may formulate clear-cut guidelines for innovative projects/schemes.

Other financial & technical support

- The NCRI should provide financial support for documenting the success and failure stories of Rural Institutes and Gandhian organisations. This would help draw lessons, which in turn would help in strengthening the existing institutions and promoting new institutions.
- Besides providing financial support to relevant rural-oriented projects, NCRI, with its national stature, may lobby with various national agencies to get financial and technical support for the deserving NGOs and Rural Institutes.

Micro Planning

- There cannot be a single blue-print model of micro-planning that can be applied uniformly for the whole country. However, the Rural Institute concerned may evolve a broad framework for preparation of micro-plans. Each institution with necessary modification may apply the framework, keeping in view the regional perspective.
- Regional expertise/resource persons in the preparation of micro-plans should be identified, pooled, documented and shared.
- Each Rural Institute may organise a cell on micro-planning by pooling up expertise.
- The expertise available in the existing rural institutes may be made use of for training functionaries of panchayats and NGOs in micro planning.
- Micro-plan can be thought of in certain thematic areas such as education, public health, rural industries, natural resources accounting, etc.
- Micro-plan for a panchayat should cover all the subjects coming under its jurisdiction.

Peace and Conflict Resolution

- NCRI may promote the concept of '*Shanthi Sena*' in all universities and colleges if considered feasible.
- NCRI should support or collaborate with institutions which work in the field of peace and conflict resolution.
- The effects of peace on development (peace dividend) need to be studied and documented.
- The NCRI should organise annual oration on Peace and Development by inviting one of the scholars and activists who have done commendable work in the areas of peace and conflict resolution.
- NCRI may promote the idea of peace education in schools and colleges, preferably through role models. It can also support the venture of developing modules for peace education.

Constitution of a Committee

It was suggested that a small committee may be constituted to suggest mode, subject matter and strategies of training the faculties of Rural Institutes, teachers of Nai Talim education and leaders of panchayats. The members of the committee are as follows:

- | | |
|------------------------|----------|
| 1. Dr. K. Kulandaivel | Member |
| 2. Dr. S. Muthukumaran | Member |
| 3. Dr. G. Pankajam | Member |
| 4. Dr. G. Palanithurai | Convener |

Winding up the discussion, Dr. S. V. Prabhat, appreciated and thanked the participants for their presence and unstinted support and cooperation in organising the Third Round Table. He said he was looking forward to more such interactions that would help realise the objectives of NCRI.

Dr. C. V. Raghavulu proposed a vote of thanks. He recommended the sincerity and devotion of the participants towards Gandhian ideals as well as their openness to adopt Gandhian ideas to the emerging situation. He thanked the organisers of the Round Table, especially Professors K. Kubendran, N. Narayana Swamy and S. Narayana Swamy, for their positive attitude, promptness, sincerity, enthusiasm and zeal in organizing the third Roundtable in an excellent manner.