

Round Table – VI

(Organised at Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship,
Guwahati, 29th August, 2008)

Proceedings & Recommendations



National Council of Rural Institutes (NCRI)

National Council of Rural Institutes (NCRI)

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ROUND TABLE – VI

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PROGRAMME SCHEDULE

VI ROUND TABLE OF THE NCRI FOR THE NER

Venue: Board Room IIE, Guwahati

Date: 29th August, 2008

Time: 10:00 a.m to 5:00.p.m

Activity	Participant	Time/ Duration
Inauguration		10:00 a.m to 10:30 a.m
Welcome address	Dr.S.K.Saikia, Director In Charge, IIE	
Felicitation to	Justice J. Chelameswar, Chief Justice, Guwahati High court Dr. S.V Prabhath, Chairman NCRI Dr.D.D.Mali, Former Director, IIE Padmashree Natwar Thakkar	
About NCRI & the round table	Dr. S.V. Prabhath, IAS (Chairman, NCRI)	
Lighting up the lamp & Speech	Justice J. Chelameswar, Chief Justice, Guwahati High Court	
Vote of thanks	Dr. P. Deka	
Tea Break		10:30 a.m to 10:45 a.m
Discussion on Round Table		10:45 a.m – 1:00 p.m
Lunch Break		1:00 – 2:00 p.m
Discussion continued		2:00 – 4:00 p.m
Wrap-up session & Recommendations	Chairman : Dr. S.V. Prabhath, NCRI	4:00 – 5:00 p.m
Vote of Thanks	Shri J.C. Kalita, Coordinator, IIE	

THEME PAPER

Based on the recommendations of National Policy on Education (NEP)-1986, the National Council of Rural Institutes (NCRI) was set up in 1995, as an autonomous organisation under the Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD) with a mandate to promote rural higher education based on the Gandhian philosophy of education. At present, Dr. S.V. Prabhath, an officer of the Indian Administrative Service, is holding the position of Chairman.

This theme paper, while highlighting the objectives for which NCRI has been set up, brings out the concerns and the issues discussed in the previous round tables in the exercise of building the vision plan of NCRI.

Objectives of NCRI

The objectives for which the Council is established are:

1. to promote rural higher education;
2. to develop institutions engaged in programs based on Gandhian philosophy of basic education and Nai Talim and consolidate their networking;
3. to encourage other educational institutions and voluntary agencies to develop in accordance with the Gandhian philosophy of education;
4. to strengthen teacher training facilities for Gandhian basic education;
5. to design a variety of courses at the tertiary level around emerging rural occupations;
6. to strengthen the curriculum of all these institutions with emphasis on science and technology;
7. to encourage field-oriented courses of rural institutes;
8. to promote research as a tool for social and rural development;
9. to promote extension services to these institutions through micro level planning and;
10. to advise Government of India on all matters pertaining to rural institutes as may be referred by it from time to time.

Succinctly the objectives focus on:

- Promoting, encouraging and supporting rural education (both higher and school education), research, training of teachers at school level and extension activities – based on Gandhian philosophy,
- Applying science and technology for rural development through institutional support,
- Consolidating, developing and networking with institutions offering Gandhian Basic education and,
- Advising the Government of India on matters relating to rural institutes when referred by it. It does not preclude suo-moto advise to Government of India.

The gap

There has been a huge gap in the past in the activities undertaken by NCRI and the original plan and objectives. A review of NCRI activities from the very beginning reveals that major goals of the institution based on the mandate still remain to be realised. The mainstay of the institution was funding some proposals received from a few institutions across the country. It is now felt important to evolve a systematic approach and well articulated strategy in guiding NCRI to achieve the goals for which it was conceived. This approach also involves reaching out to various stakeholders and influential leaders to obtain their well considered views in developing the road map of the institution. There is also a clear need to sensitise people, notwithstanding several efforts in the past, to understand the efficacy and relevance of Gandhian line of thinking in our various approaches to development, especially in the sphere of rural higher education.

There is a need to take up relevant research projects with a focus on action research. The findings of such projects will be helpful in fulfilling the mission of the Council, especially in generating new knowledge and promoting innovation. This will require strengthening of the organization in terms of personnel and funding.

A Vision for NCRI

As part of the exercise aimed at developing a vision, the NCRI has so far conducted five round tables and a National seminar.

The first round table looked at the gap between the objectives and achievements, besides identifying steps required for taking NCRI forward towards fulfilling its goals. Apart from critically reviewing the working of the Council by way of self-introspection, the meeting looked at strategies for framing and implementing an action plan. Secondly, the meeting also tried to define the contours of the goals of the NCRI to fit into the XI Five Year Plan in the light of Gandhiji's philosophy and its significance in the context of globalisation.

The second round table discussed the ways and means by which the NCRI can promote rural higher education on the basis of Mahatma Gandhi's ideals of education, besides trying to work out strategies for networking with the institutions that are trying to implement Gandhi's ideas of rural development and rural transformation.

The deliberations of the third round table centered on relevance of Nai Talim system of education, criteria to be followed for defining the scope of the proposed rural institutes, research into the reasons for disappearance of many rural institutes, coordination among different rural institutions and the need for creation of institutional back up, introduction of innovative programmes in rural institutes and the role of NCRI in promoting and developing rural institutes, networking among rural institutes, action-based participatory research and changes proposed in the functioning of NCRI.

Discussions at the fourth round table zeroed in on some of the crucial gaps with regard to the legal status of the NCRI and the adequacy of financial support system for it. Its present legal status is considered below par and hence should be upgraded from a registered society to that of a statutory body like the UGC and AICTE. The present allocation of funds to NCRI by the HRD Ministry and Planning Commission is considered utterly inadequate to offer any meaningful services to meet the objectives covered by its mandate. It was, therefore, suggested that NCRI should receive adequate funds. The other recommendations of the 4th round table relate to the use of Science and Technology in rural education, co-ordination between Rural Institutes and Government schemes implemented by various Ministries, co-ordination between mainstream education system and Nai Talim, Development of Nai Talim curriculum, etc. Connectivity &

interdependence between the rural and the urban areas, by which the rural youth can stay back in their areas were the other major issues focused in the round table.

The 5th round table discussions took place in Patna on 16th August, 2008, in collaboration with A.N. Sinha Institute of Social Studies. The discussions revolved around vision plan of NCRI, livelihood support education to Tribal Students, opportunities and challenges in Higher Education, Relevance of Gandhian ideas and the Role of Gandhian organizations. It also discussed about working out finalizing strategies for Teacher training, Peace and Conflict Resolution and Micro-Planning Programmes. An annual seminar on Gandhian activities was proposed at the National and State level. It was also suggested to identify Gandhian workers to implement Peace Programmes and encourage formation of Shanti Samaj at grass root level.

The Brainstorming session on Mahatma Gandhiji's education policy held at Sevagram, Wardha, on 18 -19th August 2007 focused on education for liberation of the total population and reconstruction. It recommended for documentation, preservation and publication programme, Networking with other organisations, fellowships to honour and felicitate scholars and activists in the field of Gandhian Education and development, Gandhian Pedagogy at school level and higher education institutions, organisation of regular meetings, consultations & seminars on specific themes concerned with Gandhian Education and pedagogy, and development of centres of Gandhian Higher Education. Besides, the productive works in terms of self learning of skills in areas such as handicrafts, agriculture, animal husbandry, poultry and environment, were also discussed.

The National Seminar organised at New Delhi, in collaboration with JNU on "Revitalising Rural Institutes – Problems & Prognosis" provided an occasion to review linkages between higher education and rural development as viewed and propagated by Mahatma Gandhi. The seminar also enabled participants and the Council to review the condition of rural institutes in different fields of knowledge & services and the way forward for them in the 21st century India within the liberalisation-globalisation, paradigm. The seminar also recommended to enlarge the scope of activities such as teachers training aimed at the revival of Nai Talim Institutions; peace & conflict resolution; micro-planning, rejuvenation of rural institutions, strengthening of Gandhian

institutions, linkages between various institutions. NCRI's interventions should aim at creation and promotion & dissemination of knowledge relevant to rural higher education.

Issues for the 6th round table

Some of the issues identified for the purpose of the 6th round table for the North Eastern region are:

- Vision plan -- the framework and specific steps--setting out future priorities of NCRI.
- Develop bench marks an evaluation plan and metrics
- Strategies for the flagship programmes proposed:
 - a. New generation Nai Talim teacher training
 - b. Peace and conflict resolution
 - c. Micro-planning (Specific Areas and methodologies of intervention by NCRI)
- Suggestions for revival of Nai Talim
(Modifications if any, to make it relevant to the present society)
- Identification of action research programmes
 - a. A status report on each of the participating rural institutes and suggestions for improvement.
 - b. Building support bases and constituencies for policy advocacy for design of programmes on Gandhian lines.
 - c. Sponsoring studies on Gandhian Institutions and Rural Institutes.
 - d. (Issues relating to replication of successful practices of Gandhian institutions and Rural Institutes)
 - e. Action research on promotion of non-formal education campaigns
 - f. Proposals aimed at creating an impact on public policies based on research carried out
 - g. Rural development – cull out the best practices and convey them to the policy makers in an effective manner.
- Need for changes in the objectives of NCRI, if any.
- Identify and encourage demand-driven field oriented courses, with an extension component, to be taken by Rural Institutes.
- Identify specific areas for networking by Rural Institutes.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Chief Guest

Justice J. Chelameswar, Chief Justice, Guwahati High Court

NCRI

Dr. S.V. Prabhath, I.A.S : Chairman, National Council of Rural Institutes (NCRI).

Other Participants

1. **Padmashree Natwar Thakkar** : Nagaland Gandhi Ashram, Nagaland.
2. **Dr. P.C. Acharya** : Director, Abita Gramin Krishi Unnayan Prakalpa, Assam.
3. **Dr. Indrani Dutta** : Omeo Kumar Das Institute Of Social Change,
Near Tennis Court, VIP Road, Guwahati.
4. **Shri J.C. Das**, Chairman, Barkhetri Unnayan Society, Mulkalmua, Barkhetri Dev
BlockMalkalmua, Nalbari-781126, Assam.
5. **Shri Niranjana Kalita**, Secretary, Gram Swaraj Parishad, Rangia, Rongia, Kamrup-
781354, Assam.
6. **Shri S. Chandra**, Janakalyan Khadi Gramodyog Unnayan Kendra, Raha
Balipara, Assam.
7. **Shri S. Deb** : E.O, KVIB, Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh.
8. **Shri Umesh Chandra Medhi**, Chairman, North Eastern Khadi Gramodyog Mahasangh,
Lalmati, Guwahati-29, Assam.
9. **Dr. D.D.Mali**, : Former Director, Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship, Lal Ganesh-
Guwahati, Assam.
10. **Dr. Phani Deka** : Former G.M, Nedfi, Guwahati, Assam.

11. **Ms. Urmimala Sengupta** : Research Assistant, Peace Studies, OKDISS, Guwahati, Assam.
12. **Shri Ravi Kt.Handique** : Secretary, Peace Foundation Centre Assam, P.o:Naojan Dist: Golaghat, Assam.
13. **Shri Mukut Ch. Nath** : Secretary, Lok Sevak Sangha, Furkating- 785610, Golaghat, Assam.
14. **Shri Mridul Patgiri** : Lecturer, Thonna Degree College, BTAA, Barpeta- 781325, Assam.
15. **Shri W.R.Sing** : Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship, Guwahati, Assam.
16. **Shri A.K.Baruah** : Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship, Guwahati, Assam.
17. **Shri Ratna Bhuya** : Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship, Guwahati, Assam.
18. **Shri Shantanu Dutta** : Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship, Guwahati, Assam.
19. **Dr. S. K. Saikia** : Director I/C, Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship, Guwahati, Assam
20. **Shri J. C. Kalita** : Coordinator, Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship, Guwahati, Assam

PROCEEDINGS

The VI Round Table for North Eastern Region was jointly organised by the NCRI and the Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship (IIE), Guwahati, on 29th August, 2008 in the IIE Premises.

A total of fifty-four participants were present in the inaugural session of the Round Table. Eighteen participants from various organisations of the Region participated in the Round Table.

The objective of the Round table is to draw a Vision plan for rural India to promote, encourage and support rural education and livelihoods based on Gandhian philosophy.

Dignitaries present in the opening ceremony were Justice J. Chelameswar, Hon'ble Chief Justice, Guwahati High Court, Dr. S.V. Prabhath, Chairman, NCRI, Padmashree Natwar Thakkar and Dr. D.D.Mali, founder Director, IIE, Guwahati. The inaugural session was presided over by Dr. Mali, while Dr. Sunil Kr. Saikia, Director I/c, delivered the welcome address.

Justice Chelameswar, in his inaugural address, stressed the need for a comprehensive education policy. He urged to develop education policy in a more holistic manner, with coverage of rural areas, and also examine the feasibility of developing entrepreneurship in the rural areas, based on Gandhian thought. He pointed out that the present education system has been creating a divide between urban and rural, rich and poor, etc. Therefore, a comprehensive education system, where equal opportunities are available irrespective of caste, creed, region, etc. is to be made available in the country.

He observed that while the tremendous political changes throughout the world have brought far reaching economic changes in the urban areas, they were also responsible for the gradual demise of certain cherished values. In this process, he noted that Gandhian values have also become a casualty. Out of necessity, Gandhians have confined their activity primarily to the rural areas. This is an unfortunate development. The urban milieu needs Gandhi as much as its rural counterpart, he added.

Dr. Prabhath, while addressing the gathering, brought to the fore the role and vision of the National Council of Rural Institutes, Hyderabad. He reiterated that in order to establish Gandhi's relevance in present times, a vision plan covering all spheres of life is required, and for this, conducting a series of open dialogues and discussions with the stakeholders is of utmost importance. This would also help in deepening relationships with various institutions and draw programmes addressing specific needs of a region. Nai Talim, which addresses the challenges of transforming rural India, can be one of the instruments in changing the face of the rural economy. The others are Youth Sensitisation Programme (YSP), Micro-Planning and Peace and Conflict Resolution Programme, - - all of them can aid and support rural India.

The Inaugural Session was followed by discussion on various themes like Gandhian thought, Peace and Conflict Resolution, Entrepreneurship development, etc.

WELCOME ADDRESS BY DR. S.V. PRABHATH, CHAIRMAN, NCRI

The NCRI was established, by the Government of India, in Hyderabad in 1995, with the objective of promoting rural higher education in a comprehensive manner. The mandate of the NCRI states that its plans, policies and programmes should be based on Gandhian ideas. It also gives special importance to the promotion of Nai Talim or Gandhian ideas of basic education.

NCRI has been functioning as a catalyst organisation, helping rural institutes, Gandhian organisations, NGOs, universities and state government agencies in various projects connected with the promotion of rural higher education. Its interventions in rural higher education had the larger objective of enhancing support mechanisms for rural development. More specifically, its objectives focuses on micro planning for transformation of rural areas; design of appropriate courses for emerging rural occupations; develop institutions engaged in programmes of Gandhian Basic Education and Nai Talim, through networking if necessary; encourage other educational institutions and NGOs to develop in accordance with Gandhian philosophy of education; strengthen teacher-training facilities for Gandhian basic education; strengthen the content of all these institutions with emphasis on science and technology; promote research as a tool for social and rural development; encourage field-oriented courses of rural institutes; and promote extension services to the community through micro-level planning.

In the last 13 years of its standing the NCRI has been funding several projects of relevance.

We have started the practice of holding consultations through various round tables in different regions of the country for achieving the following:

- a) Opening a dialogue with different stakeholders to enable the NCRI to capture their perceptions.
- b) This process helps us to get a wider perspective on what the NCRI should do in future.
- c) It helps us to deepen our relationship with different outfits working in the same terrain.
- d) It enables the NCRI to make its plans and programmes more suited to the requirements of various institutions working on Gandhian philosophy of education.

The Vision Plan of the NCRI cannot be an isolated exercise. It has a broadening and a narrowing phase. In its broadening phase we find ourselves caught in the conundrum of time where changes in the environment have an unsettling effect with too many demands from the environment. The narrowing phase occurs when we seem to be drifting in too many directions without any consolidation. This logic needs to be applied time and again to have a review of our actions without attributing any blame to the circumstances; one should hold one's head high above waters to find one's path.

This is a very complex exercise involving the organizational architecture, the resources, the continuous throb of environment and, last but not the least, the *raison d'être*.

The exercise associated with the Round Tables has given us many refreshing thoughts. We are now entering into a phase where we have identified certain major thrust programmes to

- a) Work with various institutions in a collaborative manner; and
- b) To work in a programme mode.

This approach we feel will help us to stay focused and aim at achieving organizational goals more effectively.

The major thrust areas identified are:

- a) Training of new generations Nai Talim teachers
- b) Peace and Conflict resolution
- c) Micro planning
- d) Youth Sensitisation programmes (YSP)
- e) NCRI labs (prototypes of best practices)

The overall thrust is to get aligned with the youth of the country giving them benefit of the 5 Es i.e., **E**ducation, **E**ntrepreneurship, **E**mployment, **E**nvironment and **E**xtension.

The North Eastern region has an important place in the developmental plans of the country. We want to work closely with the institutions and the State Governments of all the North Eastern States in finding space for NCRI activities to align with the requirements of the region and to achieve the overall objectives of NCRI.

The North-east presents a paradox. It is a backward region with rich culture. There is openness and spontaneity in the people. Since English is the medium of instruction in most of the North-east it is easy for outsiders to communicate with them. The region requires programmes that generate self reliance as well as those with an accent on peace and conflict resolution. Internal strife can be contained by launching programmes based on the Gandhian paradigm of peace and conflict resolution and sustained efforts by people of the region.

Inaugural address by Justice J. Chelameswar, Hon'ble Chief Justice, High Court of Guwahati

Justice J. Chelameswar, Hon'ble Chief Justice, High Court of Guwahati, stressed the need for a comprehensive education policy.

Speaking at the inauguration of VI Round Table, conducted by NCRI, in collaboration with the Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship (IIE) Guwahati, on August 29th, 2008, Justice J. Chelameswar stressed the need for a comprehensive education policy. He urged to develop education policy in a more holistic manner, with coverage of the rural areas, and also examine the feasibility of developing entrepreneurship based on Gandhian thought. He pointed out that the present education system has been creating a divide between urban and rural, rich and poor, etc. Therefore, a comprehensive education system, where equal opportunities are available irrespective of caste, creed, region, etc. is to be made available in the country.

He observed that while the tremendous political changes throughout the world have brought far reaching economic changes in the urban areas, they were also responsible for the gradual demise certain cherished values.

In this process, he observed, Gandhian values have also become a casualty. Out of necessity, Gandhians have confined their activity primarily to the rural areas. This is an unfortunate development. The urban milieu needs Gandhi as much as its rural counterpart, he added.

ABSTRACTS OF PAPERS

List of Abstracts

1. **Ms. Anuradha Dutta** : NCRI Vision document
2. **Dr. D.D. Mali** : Promotion of field oriented courses on Gandhian lines
3. **Dr. Probin Chandra Acharya** : Nai Talim in the present context
4. **Shri Natwar Thakkar** : Stray thoughts on Basic education (Nai Talim)
5. **Dr. K. B. Jamatia** : Basic Education – The hope of the 21st century
6. **Shri Hembhai** : Revitalise The Gandhian Concept of Education - Nai Talim
7. **Dr. Indranee Dutta** : Vision plan of NCRI
8. **Shri S. Deb** : Suggestions for vision plan of NCRI
9. **Shri Ravi Kt. Handique** : Vision plan for 20 years

1. Ms. Anuradha Dutta: NCRI VISION DOCUMENT

The communal conflicts in Assam a decade ago left over two lakh people homeless. Even today thousands of people are still languishing in camps, due to delays in the process of rehabilitation and a lingering fear psychosis among the victims. A large number of these people are aged between 0-25 years. The relief camps are in a pathetic condition without proper dwelling space, drinking water, sanitation and health facilities. The camps lack proper educational facilities for children and opportunities for skill development for the youth.

Based on her field experience of over 3 years she suggested a tailormade educational package for children affected by conflicts and those who are drop-outs.

A specially drafted programme based on the principles of Nai Talim should be launched for children and youth in the relief camps — this should include themes or activities that will help them overcome their fear and establish a healthy relationship with members of other communities staying outside. The package should also make them realize the value of peace and healthy co-existence, curb negative socialization and make them economically independent.

2. Dr. D. D. Mali : PROMOTION OF FIELD ORIENTED COURSES ALONG GANDHIAN LINES

Education enables individuals to develop the right values and attitude and instills the drive to achieve professional and vocational success. It builds the capacity of individuals to adjust in society and earn a living. Field oriented and practical courses can help develop skills and motivate individuals to use their knowledge and skills to earn a living. Hence it is necessary to identify demand driven courses for promotion in rural areas.

In urban areas, an increasing number of private institutions have emerged to offer courses in various disciplines — mostly for developing skills to take up salaried employment. There is hardly any course that develops an individual's knowledge, skills and motivation for self-employment and an entrepreneurial career.

Generally speaking, the higher the educational qualifications, the greater the tendency to choose salaried employment. Besides, most educated people are averse to manual work.

Moreover, most of them are also unwilling to take up some types of work that they consider inferior. This happens partly because they do not learn a skill that they can use for earning a living and probably because of their status. Our society accords a higher status to persons with jobs and not to self-employed entrepreneurs.

Gandhiji emphasized that while intellectual work is vital, the value of physical work cannot be undermined. Since most educated people are averse to physical work, NCRI can play an important role: firstly, by developing skills in specific areas needed in rural areas, and secondly, by motivating the youth to use their skills to earn a living. There is no harm if these skilled persons take up jobs because they could acquire skills and become employable.

The areas of demand in rural areas are:

Agro-based trade: Improved agriculture practices, horticulture, floriculture, mushroom and diary farming

Repair and Servicing: Domestic appliances and farm equipments, automobiles

Management of Micro enterprises (or Business Management): With emphasis on marketing, accounts and record keeping

Computer training: In many places Governments have been encouraging setting up of kiosks

Training for Job works: Masonry, carpentry and similar trades

Video photography and editing: This has been emerging as an important vocation.

Garment Making: Skill upgradation

Beautification course: Skill development

Such courses may be started right from the high school stage and specialisation may be considered at higher levels.

3. **Dr. Probin Chandra Acharya : NAI TALIM IN THE PRESENT CONTEXT**

Gandhiji's concept of Nai Talim or basic education is a grand idea and was in keeping with the time he was alive. Indeed, after independence there was great enthusiasm in India about taking up basic education in right earnest. Many primary schools were opened and other institutes established. However, such schools have become defunct today with a few exceptions. This points to the fact that the concept of Nai Talim has to be modified with the changing times to keep it viable.

I have the highest regard for Gandhiji's philosophy, but I feel his ideas should be implemented and actualized according to the demands of place, time and persons involved. For example, it is no longer viable to sit on the floor and operate the spinning wheel for weaving cloth when the same can be done at a much faster pace with the help of machines.

The concept of Nai Talim is no doubt commendable, but to keep pace with the demands of our time, our children should go on to be educated at IITs, etc., where, however, some features of the Nai Talim system may be profitably incorporated. The Nai Talim system aims to produce independent and self-sufficient citizens with a healthy respect for and experience of manual labour. That is the need of the hour and can be incorporated in the Nai Talim System of Education. It is recommended that a minimum two hours of physical labour and engagement in productive occupations daily by the students and teachers together takes place as a rule. Correlation between productive occupation and theoretical education should be attempted. E-education, to supplement the knowledge component, may be use with networking of all Nai Talim institutions. Sanitation and agricultural practices may be included as essential components of education. The result will be that students will acquire good management skills and also maintain good health, which is lacking today. They will emerge as self-reliant and confident citizens.

4. **Shri Natwar Thakkar: STRAY THOUGHTS ON BASIC EDUCATION (NAI TALIM)**

Soon after independence, there was great enthusiasm in Assam about taking up basic education in right earnest. Many basic schools were opened and other institutes too were

established. However, nobody speaks about basic education these days and all the schools/institutes started earlier are functioning now as ordinary normal schools.

A Nai Talim school was established in a village called Kandhvari in the district of Nalbari in Assam — Navjivan Buniyadi Vidyalay (NVB), which was inaugurated on 18th October 2000. A prominent and commendable feature of the school is that all the teachers so far work more or less on a voluntary basis. Some honorarium is paid to them occasionally. Once the land begins production, the earning from its proceeds can be used by the school to raise the honorarium for the staff.

This school can be taken up by the NCRI as a laboratory (called NCRI lab) as the school is running along Gandhian lines.

Running of NVB at Kandhbari is at the experimental stage only. However, this experiment appears to suggest a direction. One programme that seems to be worth undertaking by NCRI is to start such schools in different parts. A pattern can be evolved along the following lines:

NCRI may invite voluntary organizations (NGOs), and village panchayats to start basic schools on condition that the community will manage recurring expenses of the school through its working. NCRI, on its part, may see if it can facilitate by way of financial assistance. The steps necessary for providing land for cultivation will also have to be explored. It would be ideal if the State Government can provide the required land. A few such schools in different States can be taken up as NCRI labs for a stipulated number of years. The findings of such an experiment may show the way for further action.

In the Nai Talim pattern of education, schools should not be a burden on the State. The role of the State will be that of a facilitator, to create a pool of expertise in the field of education to act as a guide and reference. The recurring expenses of the school should be met from the work and produce of the school. Provision for capital expenditure has to be made by the State. Every Nai Talim school should cook and serve mid-day meals in the school premises. The work of cooking and cleaning should be assigned to the students under the supervision of teachers and the meal should be shared by them. Wherever possible, residential schools can also be planned. A minimum of three to four hours physical labour and engagement in productive occupations by the students and teachers together should be a must.

One special feature of every Nai Talim school that was stipulated was attempting a co-relation between productive occupation and theoretical learning. Such co-relation is being done in many basic schools in the country. The largest number of Nai Talim schools even today are in Gujarat, where such co-relation is regularly practiced. Spinning and weaving by hand, agriculture and sanitation must form the essential components of education in every Nai Talim school. I had the good fortune of undergoing a year-long orientation in Nai Talim at Hindustani Talimi Sangh, where all the above mentioned characteristics and practices prevailed. A kind of project method was also resorted to. I could see that the students of Uttar Buniyadi School (post basic or high school stages) acquired good management skills and maintained good health.

Finally, the most essential characteristic of this education is that after completion of the post-basic stage a student should emerge as a confident and skilled person, capable of becoming a self-reliant citizen.

5. Dr. K. B. Jamatia: BASIC EDUCATION – THE HOPE OF THE 21ST CENTURY

In 1948, Mahatma Gandhi said, “Basic education is my greatest contribution to my country and the world. This statement of mine may not be agreed upon now. But a day may come when it will not be doubted. I have faith in it. I will live in the minds and hearts of men as long as basic education lives. If basic education is forgotten, I will also be forgotten.” Gandhiji’s scheme of basic education, which was relevant to India, was accepted as the national system of compulsory education after independence. But we have failed to implement it sincerely and seriously. This is mainly due to a lack of vision of the future. Basic education could not be provided sincerely in India because of corruption in the educational system, malpractice in examinations and because of an irrelevant and outdated educational system.

In the words of Sri Arobindo Ghosh, “A time must come when the Indian mind will shake off the darkness that has fallen upon it, cease to think or hold opinions at second and third hand and assert its right to judge and enquire in perfect freedom into the meaning of its own scriptures”.

“The destiny of India is now being shaped in her classrooms”. This historic statement made in the Kothari Commission Report can become a reality if emphasis is laid on intellectual development, skill development, self-reliance, eradication of poverty and inculcation of values among the rural people. “The child is the father of man”. Childhood experiences and the upbringing at home, in the school and in the community determines what type of a man/woman the child is going to be. The 21st century will belong to the village dwellers. “Back to Village” should be the new slogan for India as in European countries. Then only will the true spirit of Basic Education be realized.

6. **Shri Hembhai: REVITALISE THE GANDHIAN CONCEPT OF EDUCATION — NAI TALIM**

Gandhiji had summarized the purpose of education by saying, “Education is a preparation for complete living”. ‘Complete Living’ includes the physical, mental, social, cultural, economic, political, moral and spiritual development of men and society. Basic education must go through these stages to make a Complete Man. The Head, Heart and Hand should be synthesized, declaring war against today’s one-sided emphasis on intellectual knowledge sans productive labour.

Certain suggestions for the new scheme of education for rural institutes are far too idealistic, theoretical and flimsy. Emphasis should be laid on the synthesis of science and spirituality to create better human beings, thus creating a saner society based on universal love and understanding. Universal morality and human values delineated in the scriptures of all religions should be introduced in the new scheme of Gandhian education. National integration, environmental education and universal unity should be incorporated as a practical programme in the curriculum. Genuine, time-tested Gandhian organisations should be entrusted with the task of establishing and running such schools, they should impart extensive and rigorous training in Gandhian education and pedagogy.

Rural and pristine, local and ethnic culture should be preserved through this education and further strengthened. The ancient and age-old relationship between man and nature should be protected. Love and kindness towards animals should be taught. More respect should be given to the Gandhian system of education and the merits of self-employment rather than today’s so-

called education and over-emphasis on self-employment. Students of the North-Eastern states, Jammu & Kashmir, and Andaman & Nicobar islands student should be given all India exposure so that they imbibe strong feelings of national integration. The concept of Shanti Sena (Peace Soldiers) and conflict resolution in a peaceful manner should be taught theoretically and practically.

7. **Dr. Indranee Dutta: VISION PLAN OF NCRI**

Even though India is projected as a growing economy with demographic advantages, human capital formation and creation of a knowledge economy, there is a mismatch between the demand for skilled workers and the adults produced by the present system of education. The recent initiatives towards employability in public and private sectors are mostly superficial, without any real skill development. NCRI should include in their vision plan work-centred education, which will facilitate higher order skills such as strategic thinking, communication skills, creativity, etc.

8. **Shri S. Deb: SUGGESTIONS FOR VISION PLAN OF NCRI**

A profile of school dropouts from Arunachal Pradesh (2001-2008) should be prepared and a plan drawn up to engage them in meaningful and economically gainful activities on the lines of Nai Talim. The enormous traditional skills and knowledge of the people of the state should be taken into account while designing any programmes so that their lifestyle and identity is preserved and the local economy can be self-sufficient. The state KVIB and other departments may be involved in skill development programmes, augmented by financial and technical support to take up viable rural ventures.

9. **ShriRavi Kt. Handique: VISION PLAN FOR 20 YEARS**

The teaching community from the middle school to the postgraduate level should be trained in Nai Talim education. Teachers as well as students in schools and colleges should impart education in peace and non-violence so that students can work as soldiers of peace in times of conflict. Self-help groups should be formed in all villages and trained to set up small-scale village industries, which will help in the economic growth and development of the country.

WRAP UP SESSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

The session was chaired by Dr. S.V. Prabhath, Chairman, NCRI. He stressed that Gandhi, like most great thinkers, had definite ideas about education. Some of them are probably even more relevant today than during his life time. The Round Table meeting conducted by NCRI attempted to examine the Mahatma's educational philosophy and its relevance in the context of the NCRI's vision plan. Speakers at the meeting pointed out the need to examine the feasibility of including entrepreneurship in the curriculum of higher education.

Most of the speakers agreed that education was much more than literacy. It should train the mind and the body to be of use not only to the individual but also to society. They have also referred to the fact that in many universities in the western countries conflict resolution based on Gandhian ideas is offered in course curriculum.

Gandhi's call for all round education has gone unheeded. In fact, the rural-urban divide is more striking today than ever before. While in the urban schools too much stress is laid on studies, the child's all round development is being neglected. It neglects inculcation of values in the child. As a consequence, it would not enable the child to develop egalitarian values, let alone tolerance towards diverse cultures/life styles or different opinions.

MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS

Speakers agreed that education helps to bring about economic advancement; but the consequent changes are pushing urban Indian away from Gandhian principles.

- Education should equip the youth to handle the tremendous changes that a society in transition throws up. For that education should be need based to generate employment and result in economic self-sufficiency. The Indian education system should strike a balance between individual good and community good, some sort of a blend which we have not been able to achieve. Individuals should be trained to think independently, critically and creatively and thereby bring about personal worth, dignity and self-sufficiency, an area in which many of our schools and colleges have to make a mark.

- Youth hold the key to our country's progress. Programmes aimed at youth should also consider how young and old can be brought together. Youth should be made to actively participate in nation building. For education to be a life-long process and an instrument of social change, many participants emphasized the need to make working in rural areas mandatory as is already being done in some states. For instance, doctors seeking a mission in PG courses have to put in rural service.
- Gandhi laid emphasis on need-based education. We have been unable to make any headway in this, especially with reference to village and tribal children. Also, for many first generation learners, education has brought about only marginal improvement in their lot. As such, they are not too keen to letting their children pursue their studies beyond the primary level. Hence, the drop out rate in schools has been increasing in rural areas.
- Besides being child-centric and dynamic, skill development should be integrated into the curriculum.
- Rural education has to be self-supporting. Accordingly, most speakers came out in support of NCRI's vision in the current context to make rural education self-supporting and create the necessary market structures and platforms for them to showcase and market their products. This will help the grassroots level stakeholders to gain a foothold, reduce this dependence on government and gain economic self-reliance.
- NCRI can play a critical role of the facilitator in strengthening grassroots level intuitions in rural areas. This should be brought into the framework to support rural clusters in creating markets. Networking of rural organisations is important for providing the required support to rural sector.
- NCRI lab is a good concept. The design plan helps to support voluntary organisations, which are interested in promoting best practices, Gandhian philosophy and mentoring.
- There was stress on micro-planning and networking of self help groups for greater participation in the development of plans which are more suited to the rural sector.
- In the National skill development plan there is asymmetry of information. In fact, these information gaps have led to lopsided development, it was contended.
- PRA methods are stressed in making development plans. The farmers should be made stakeholders.

- In the north-east there is total lack of culture of education in camps. There is a need to focus on children in camps and the educational programmes should be combined with skills.
- To influence the youth to fall in line with Gandhian ideas it is important to develop proper communication style and idealism.

Besides the following suggestions are also made for inclusion in the **Vision Plan of NCRI**:

A. On Education based on Gandhian Thought (*Buniyaadi* and *Nai Talim*)

1. Terminologies used in Gandhian Education System/ Thought should be acceptable to the young generation.
2. Best practices of both *Buniyaadi* and present education system should be identified and amalgamation and assimilation of both should be made.
3. *Buniyaadi* system should be reintroduced for the large number of school drop outs.
4. Special care should be taken to target the relief camp dwellers affected by ethnic violence, specially in the districts of Bodoland Territorial Autonomous District Council, Assam, and elsewhere in North East India.
5. The society should be the stakeholder of the *Buniyaadi* system and should not depend on government grants.

B. On Micro Planning

1. Traditional and village level institutes should be empowered to take their own decisions, and all development activities should emphasize on reflecting people's aspirations. In this direction, use of methodologies like participatory rural appraisal (PRA) can lead to visible results.
2. Networking among the existing organisations in village level is the need of the hour and NCRI should initiate necessary steps in this direction

C. Linkage of National Level education institutions like IITs, IIMs with village level and Khadi institutions.

1. Suggestion is made towards engaging the students of IITs and IIMs and other higher level institutes for one month with the village level organisations and Khadi institutions to give them a feel of real and rural India so that this experience would help them later to take decisions with a favourable towards real life of India.

IIE, Guwahati suggested action research in North Eastern region in the areas of village and traditional industry sector for identifying need for product development and market linkage and to facilitate linkage with organisations like IITs, IIMs, NID, NIFT, etc. for product development, design intervention and market linkage to attain sustainability of these industries and, in turn, improve their livelihoods by improving income and employment.

We are making progress in the area of primary education. Programmes like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, midday meals and anganwadi training would have gladdened the Mahatma's heart. But there continues to be an alarming drop out rate and everyday we read about teacher less schools and under/mal utilisation of funds. Surely, with concerted efforts of government, NGOs and parents themselves, these problems can be solved.

The country as a whole is witnessing a renewed interest in education. Policy-makers, teachers and parents would do well to bear in mind Gandhiji's ideals while implementing the existing schemes and formulating new educational plans.