



THE NSS, DEVELOPMENT OF THE PERSONALITY OF STUDENTS THROUGH COMMUNITY SERVICE

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Introduction:

The National Service Scheme popularly known as NSS in the country is a scheme for the student in the +2 level institutions, Colleges of general as well as professional and Technical institutions and Universities. The NSS was launched on 24th September, 1969 by the then Union Education Minister, Dr. V.K.R.V. Rao in 37 Universities with strength of 40,000 Volunteers during the Birth Centenary of Mahatma Gandhi, Father of the Nation. Today, the strength of NSS Volunteers is increasing to more than 2.5 million and is spread all over the Country covering almost all the Universities.

NSS in India:

In India, the idea of involving students in task of National Service dates back to the time of Mahatma Gandhi. The central theme which he tried to impress time and again, was that education should not be confined to class room only but it should be a forceful medium for inculcating social and moral values and that students should go beyond the campus, live with the community, offer social service, understand them their practices and to find means to solve them in the best possible way.

The National Service Scheme was started to establish a meaningful linkage between the campus and the community. Mahatma Gandhi had recognised that the country could not progress in desired direction unless the student youths were motivated to work for uplifting the community/village. For Gandhiji, the villages, where majority of the population lived, represent the country. Therefore, student youths, teachers and the community are considered the three basic components of the National Service Scheme.

Objective of the Scheme, Motto & Symbol:

The main objective of NSS was primarily to give an extension to the higher education system and to orient the student youths to community service while studying in educational institutions. But now the objective has been expanded and is aimed at arousing social consciousness among students and to provide them with the opportunity to work with the people around educational campuses creatively and constructively and to put the conceptual education they receive, for the concrete social use. It has been felt that the primary aim of the scheme is to enable the students to upgrade their personality and experience through community and that it is a means through which such improvement is sought to be achieved. Therefore, the objective of the scheme is "Development of the Personality of Students through Community Service".

The Motto of NSS is "Not Me but You" This expresses the essence of democratic living and upholds the need for selfless service and appreciation of others' point of view and consideration for fellow human beings.

The Symbol of NSS is based on the "RATH", Wheel of Konark's Sun Temple of Orissa. The giant wheel signifies the movement in life across time and space and also portrays the cycle of creation, preservation and release. It stands for community and as well as change and implies on the part of the NSS for continuous striving forward for social transformation and progress.

The Programmes of the NSS :

There are two programmes, (i) Regular programme and (ii) Special Camping programme.

Students selected as NSS Volunteers must work for two consecutive years along with their studies putting in 120 hrs of service in Regular Programme Activities each year and participating in one Special Camping Programme of 10 days duration in the adopted village which should be fully residential. It is mandatory for an NSS Volunteer to attend 15 activities under Regular Programme Activities each year comprising 120 hrs. i.e., 120 hrs x 2 yrs = 240 hrs and another 240 hrs i.e., (10 days x 24 hrs = 240 hrs) for Special Camping Programme.

The NSS Programme is flexible. Any useful programme in the light of the need of the community and the occasion can be taken up in consultation with the College, University and the State NSS Cell on the above two fold manners i.e., Regular Programme and Special Camping Programme.

Activities of NSS:

Various aspects of community service rendered by colleges, universities and +2 level students are Social Service Programmes in the campus/adopted villages, Parks, Tree Plantation Programme, Health and related awareness programme, Promotion of National Integration and Social Harmony, Sanitation drives, Adult Education Programmes, Blood Donation, etc. Besides these, NSS volunteers do commendable relieve work during natural calamities like cyclones, floods, famine, earthquake, etc. from time to time all over the country. The NSS students have also done useful work in organising campaign for eradication of social evil like casteism, dowry system etc.

Incentives for NSS :

The NSS volunteers who participated in various NSS programmes are awarded with participation certificate in general and special appreciation and achievement certificates were also given to those who had participated in the National Integration camps (NIC) or Inter-state camps. The best student volunteer as judged by the competent authority has been given to visit foreign states as good-will visit or in youth exchange programmes.

To encourage and keep afresh the voluntary spirit of the NSS volunteers and also to recognize the valuable work done by the Universities, Colleges, Programme Officers, the Government of India has introduced the "Indira Gandhi NSS National Award" since 1993-94 in different categories i.e., University, Programme Officers, NSS unit and NSS volunteers.

Problems faced :

The objective, motto and the activities of NSS mentioned as per the NSS guidelines are clear-cut and seems positive but implementation in the actual field is very difficult.

Some of the difficulties faced are insufficient fund for the programme implementation due to existing price hike, lack of awareness among the students as well as the community, irregular release of programme fund.

Implementation of special camping programme for 10 days in the adopted village is also a main obstacle due to non-availability of buildings for accommodation for boys and girls volunteers and moreover its lengthy duration of stay restricts the programme implementation itself as well as participation of volunteers as the semester system has been introduced in the universities and degree colleges and that the semester examinations are also held frequently.

Conclusion :

We should not forget the National Policy on Education 1986, with modification undertaken in 1992 envisages that opportunities will be provided for the youth to involve themselves in the national and social development through educational institutions, students will be required to participate in one or the other existing schemes, namely, the National Service Scheme or National Cadet Corps.

In the earlier decades, the Education system aimed at grasping the concepts of higher intellectual level only. With the introduction of the NSS, this concept has been changed into a multi-dimensional approach which aims at all-round development of an individual student besides his normal class room activities. Individual excellence cannot be the sole aim of the education in a free country pledged to democracy, socialism and secularism. Education should develop a sense of social responsibility and commitment to the country. NSS tries to inculcate this in the students.

The NSS tries to bridge the gap between the content and the method of education on the one hand and tries to meet the needs and aspirations of the community, specially the weaker sections on the other. It provides the undergraduate students with opportunities to devote their leisure time to their varieties of social services and developmental activities. It further helps to initiate social action, object, and thereby enhance their own knowledge and skills and test their validity in helping the people to solve their problems with the knowledge they have, and on the other hand acquiring by themselves the knowledge and education of lives, habits, aspirations of the weaker sections of the village and slum dwellers who form the major bulk of the population and who occupies more than 80% of our country.

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