

GANDHIGRAM: AN INSTITUTION COMMITTED TO VALUES

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ABSTRACT

Both in terms of its academic content and practical training aspects, Gandhigram tries to impart knowledge and experience that will stand trainees in good stead when they engage in a career in rural development. This unique institution aims not only at imparting professional skills but also in nurturing individuals who cherish values and dedicate themselves to the daunting task of nation-building.

Key words: Gandhigram; Mahatma Gandhi Values personality development

Gandhigram - A Gandhian Experiment in Imparting Value Education:

The Gandhigram Rural Institute (GRI) was founded in 1956 with an undying faith in, and deep devotion to, Mahatma Gandhi's revolutionary concept of the "*Nai Talim*" system of education. GRI has developed academic programmes in Rural Development, Rural Economics and Extension Education, Gandhian Thought and Peace Studies, Rural Oriented Sciences, Cooperation, Development Administration, Rural Sociology, English and Communicative Studies, and Tamil and Indian Languages. The institute has developed into a towering educational complex comprising seven academic faculties with 24 departments and 7 centres.

Personality and Career Development:

Gandhiji's philosophy of personality development was based on the cornerstones of truth, love, non-violence and peace, which are the building blocks of civilization. Truth is eternal and monochrome, just as it is singular and positive. Without truth no relationship can survive, no trust possible. Love manifests itself in all its forms - spiritual,

emotional and physical - and makes relationships firm and strong. In all relationships, love is the cement that binds individuals with one another - we would find it very difficult indeed to bond with our companions, and go on to build families, communities, societies and civilizations without that blessed tie that binds us all together. Bapu believed that “an eye for an eye” would end up making the whole world blind, and being guided by such a destructive doctrine would have threatened human existence for all time. Youth should be educated throughout life to aim for peaceful co-existence and value non-violence, so that people everywhere might endeavour to live in harmony with nature.

The institute has a student adventure club, a trekking club, and a cell for culture and arts. Life skills education and soft skills are also imparted to students. Environmental study is offered as a compulsory paper for all undergraduates. “Gandhi in Everyday Life” is offered as a special course for undergraduates, and the “Gandhian Way of Management” is offered for postgraduates, so as to propagate and inculcate Gandhian views among rural youth. Academic programmes in the sciences are integrated with teacher education programmes in order to help train students to attain proficiency in teaching. The vast majority of students who enroll in this institute are from rural areas therefore, Gandhi's vision that education should reach the heart of India's rural villages is being fulfilled here. Apart from the Department of Gandhian Thought and Peace Studies, Gandhigram Rural institute has south India's second-largest Gandhi Museum, which depicts all of Gandhi's constructive programmes. The museum is visited by people in and around Gandhigram Rural Institute, as well as by people from diverse parts of the world.

In addition, all undergraduate and postgraduate students are required to undergo a Village Placement Programme (VPP) and participate in rural extension activities. During the course of this particular programme, students visit villages close by, stay there for an entire week and serve the community. As a result, students gain experience in living together with entire families, and it also offers them a chance to provide

extension activities in that particular village. This, in turn, is most helpful in imparting priceless lessons in value education and in being able to witness, at close quarters, its impact among these students. During their 7-day stay in the villages in the vicinity, students collect basic information about each village, observe the general attitude to learning (as well as learning patterns) displayed by the villagers, and study their day-to-day activities. Students offer villagers and rural youth awareness programmes on the need for education, environmental cleanliness, environmental sustainability, and adult education. They organize free medical camps and veterinary camps for the benefit of the village as a whole. Through these assorted activities, Gandhigram Rural Institute is helping promote Gandhian values among rural youth as they pursue courses in higher education.

Conclusion:

Gandhiji had always affirmed that the educational system must be one that promotes the highest possible development of mind and soul, while at the same time instilling courage and self-reliance in the individual and, further, helping them cultivate the highest intellectual scientific, moral, and ethical accomplishments. He aimed at the development of a society that would produce “a socially conscious man, dedicated to truth and nonviolence.” He had very specific ideas about higher education and the acquisition of knowledge. In his view, the purpose of higher education was to perform the two essential functions of providing training, and appropriately inspiring individuals to serve the needs of the nation. It is in this way that Gandhigram Rural Institute continues to uphold Gandhian values in higher education and disseminate these same values to the present generation, and the ones to follow in the future.

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