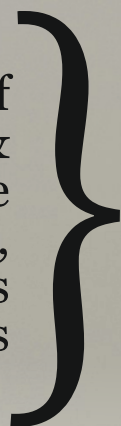


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# Gandhi's Udyogshala

## Training Modern Healthcare Heroes

Historic Delhi's Gandhi Ashram now nurtures, Allied Healthcare Professionals, continuing Mahatma's vision of skill-based empowerment



By Sajid Ali

While millions across the globe pay tribute to Mahatma Gandhi today, one remarkable place in Delhi continues his work in ways he never could have imagined. The historic Udyogshala, established by Mahatma Gandhi within the Harijan Sewak Sangh campus, now houses Tech Mahindra Foundation's SMART Healthcare Academy, where young Indians train to become Allied Healthcare Professionals.

Gandhi established the Udyogshala, literally "skill workshop," to teach poor young people trades such as weaving and carpentry. Nearly a century later, these same rooms where students once learned to spin cotton now echo with discussions about blood pressure monitors and patient care.

The change at Udyogshala makes sense when considering what India needs now. Gandhi taught people spinning and carpentry so they could make a

living. Today's students learn to operate medical equipment, conduct laboratory tests, and provide patient care. The Academy offers advanced training for Emergency Medical Technicians, Medical Lab Technicians, and Healthcare Assistants. State-of-the-art medical labs have been established within the historic structure, creating a unique blend of heritage and modern technology.

Gandhi's Nai Talim philosophy - part of his 18 Constructive Programme - stressed hands-on learning over rote memorization. He wanted education to equip people with practical skills that would benefit society. That is exactly what happens at Udyogshala today - students learn healthcare skills while getting good jobs that serve their communities.

India faces an acute shortage of Allied Healthcare Professionals, forming a significant gap in the healthcare delivery system. The SMART Healthcare



Academy at Udyogshala has achieved remarkable success, with over 80% of its students securing placements. Notably, 70% of the trainees are women, many from rural backgrounds and economically disadvantaged families that Gandhi specifically sought to empower.

Nidhi Priya, a student from Tech Mahindra SMART Academy for Healthcare, hailing from Bihar, carries forward the legacy of her grandfather—who is a staunch Gandhian. She says "Inspired by my grandfather's Gandhian vision of harmony between body, mind, and spirit, I strive to live with peace, creativity, kindness, and love for nature and people".

The Academy follows Gandhi's Nai Talim approach from his 18 Constructive Programme - education that develops head, heart, and hands together. Students here do not just memorize textbooks; they spend most of their time in practical, hands-on training with real equipment and learning compassionate patient care.

Udyogshala emphasizes both clinical skills and human values. Students learn about patient dignity, medical ethics, and community service - exactly what Gandhi had in mind when he designed his educational philosophy.

The focus on marginalized communities remains central. The Academy actively recruits from backgrounds similar to those Gandhi initially sought to uplift, with many students being first-generation learners who see healthcare as their pathway to social mobility.

The Harijan Sewak Sangh campus, where Udyogshala is located, was founded by Gandhi in 1932 for the welfare

of marginalized communities. By establishing his skill development centre here, Gandhi made a powerful statement about inclusive growth and equal opportunity.

Today, the students who are budding Allied Healthcare Professionals practice procedures where freedom fighters once learned traditional skills, the space serves as a powerful symbol of India's journey from its struggle for independence to a healthcare revolution.

Gandhi's Udyogshala is a place where his ideas about practical education help solve today's healthcare problems. By training young people, especially women from underserved communities, for careers in healthcare, the Academy demonstrates how Gandhi's Nai Talim principles remain relevant in modern times. With the success of the Healthcare Academy, Tech Mahindra Foundation has expanded similar programs nationwide, aiming to meet India's growing healthcare needs. The initiative serves as a model for how historical institutions can evolve to serve modern purposes while preserving their foundational values.

Gandhi would care less about the statues built in his honour and more about places like Udyogshala, where his ideas continue to help people lead better lives today. Perhaps, in reimagining skill development for the 21st century, India must revisit the classroom of its greatest philosopher, Mahatma Gandhi.

*Author Bio:*  
Sajid Ali is the Chief Operating Officer at Tech Mahindra Foundation, with over 15 years of experience working in the Education, Employability, and Skill Development Sector.

